Dissecting a Frog: We begin with a whole frog* and with a sharp scalpel, tweezers and magnifying glass slowly peel away layers, muscles, blood vessels and organs, laying each piece carefully aside and cutting deeper ... When reading the Bible we often assume the most profitable form of study is to take it apart piece-by-piece — perhaps delving into the meanings of the original languages — and the meaning will become clear. ... And, while useful to varying degrees, it can be likened to dissecting a frog writes Nathan Brown.

*A no frogs were harmed in the writing process

A Time to Question: Honest doubt is not a threat but an opportunity, writes Melissa Howell. When someone voices skepticism about the Bible, are we willing to explore that doubt with them, over time? Or do we defensively reply with strong and demanding platitudes? Doubt can be a faith-building experience, she writes, and we should grasp the opportunity for faith-strengthening interaction.

Progressive Neolegalism: Back to the Future of Adventism: Nate Schilt says "I have noticed something strange in the SDA progressive liberation movement. The sins of listening to Elvis and attending Beatles’ concerts have simply been replaced by the sins of listening to Rush Limbaugh, watching Glenn Beck, or being in favor of Proposition 8" (For non-Californians, this was the proposition passed by California voters to define marriage as between one man and one woman.).

Foot Washing: An Irrelevant and Antiquated Ritual? Some Adventist congregations are now celebrating the Lord's Supper without first hosting the Ordinance of Humility. Are these congregations by default behaving like the betrayer Judas? Read Cindy Tutsch’s blog and decide for yourself.
Death of the Liberal Class*: We borrow the terms "liberal" and "conservative" from politics, but often know little of their history or meaning. Why is being called a "Liberal" now an insult? Author Chris Hedges, a self-declared liberal, explains not only why, but how the insult may be at least partially deserved. (*atoday.org subscription needed)

Academy Principal Stabbed

As Benjamin Franklin Said

The Care and Feeding of the (American) Political Animal

Render Unto Rome (atoday.org subscription needed)

The Association of Adventist Women's Annual Conference is being held at La Sierra University, October 13-16, 2011 ... See more details

The AT "Comments" response option has been a work in progress during the past few weeks and has been upgraded to allow review and editing functions. Enjoy the new safeguards and freedoms as you post your comments this weekend. Give it a whirl and a high-five!
Dissecting a Frog

Submitted Aug 19, 2011
By Nathan Brown

We begin with a whole frog* and with a sharp scalpel, tweezers and magnifying glass slowly peel away layers, muscles, blood vessels and organs, laying each piece carefully aside and cutting deeper. By examining the contents of the tiny stomach, we are able to identify some of the small bugs the frog had eaten.

Perhaps we identify the little froggy heart. Though we call it a heart, it bears little resemblance to the ox heart we may have dissected the previous week. It is so called more for function than form—while bearing many similarities, the circulatory system of a large warm-blooded mammal works differently to that of a small cold-blooded amphibian.

And so it goes through the different pieces of what was a frog. After a time of careful study, we may have a much greater knowledge of frog componentry. For those studying these creatures, such knowledge can be important in better understanding how a frog moves, eat and lives.

But at the end of the process we do not have a frog. Instead we have a small pile of rather unattractive mushy stuff that once was a living, breathing, hopping frog. The process of exploration has also been a process of destruction.

Reading is a difficult task. We are told we learn how to read in the early years of primary (grade) school but we bring a lifetime of learning to reading and understanding. To do it well, reading is something that must be practised with care and patience. And few of us do it well.

When reading the Bible we often assume the most profitable form of study is to take it apart piece-by-piece — perhaps delving into the meanings of the original languages — and the meaning will become clear. With such a background, we tend to then bring this way of reading to other pieces of writing, becoming literal, word-by-word readers. But this is just one way of reading. And, while useful to varying degrees, it can be likened to dissecting a frog.

To see a frog hopping across the dewy morning grass, frog-kicking across a shaded stream or lying in wait for a small insect — to hear a frog croaking in appreciation of an approaching rainstorm or crying out in distress as it tries to escape a predator — is a long way from the dissection lab. The frog in context is a wonder of creation, a living reality that all the dissection in all the high school science departments of the world could never discover.

Context is important. Some would go so far as to argue this realisation renders the making of worthwhile dictionaries near impossible. The use of language changes with time and words can have a variety of meaning at any given point in time, depending on context. As such, an appreciation of context is vital to the careful reader’s task.

For example, the best tool for understanding a single Bible text is an overview of the Bible as a whole, its direction, purposes and overarching themes. To explore a word, sentence or verse apart from its context can give shades of meaning. But if when taken back to that context the ‘dissected’
meaning is inconsistent with the larger meaning of the chapter or book from which it was extracted, to insist on that meaning is absurd — and a serious example of bad reading.

Which is why I am surprised — in working with our church magazines — when an article is read as somehow undermining the core beliefs of Christianity and the church. Why would a magazine whose primary focus is to share the good news of the church, encourage the faith of church members and further the kingdom of God, simultaneously work to undermine that (consider Matthew 12:25)? The context must guide the reading.

Yes, as writers, we struggle with inexactness. We don’t always express things as well as we might. But we also need readers who will read with broadness of mind and openness of heart. And together we can all continue to learn how better to read — and not just to dissect, but to live it.

*Note: This column is not about frogs. And no frogs were harmed in the writing process.

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**Ella M.**

3 days ago

Your frog metaphor is excellent and one I have used as well when discussing the Bible. How can we get this message out? The Bible needs to be taken as a whole to be understood as a living book and not analyzed and dissected til there is nothing left but a confusion of words on paper.

Take the Bible as a whole—I think the Adventist church pioneers had this in mind when they rejected the idea of an eternally-burning hell for the wicked. There are places in the Bible that cannot be taken literally but are metaphors, allegories, and symbols. But this does not include the life stories of real people who lived and wrote about their experiences in their own languages and settings; though even those have parallels in human history to the current day.

The Bible is an overview of God's love to humans.

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**Steve Billiter**

3 days ago

“Why would a magazine whose primary focus is to share the good news of the church, encourage the faith of church members and further the kingdom of God, simultaneously work to undermine that (consider Matthew 12:25)? The context must guide the reading.”

I’ve seen many articles that do not support the Adventist mission, and disagree with Scripture and Ellen White. For example, there was one supporting drummers and drums in the Review some years ago, and even sported a picture of a young drummer with tattoos! (Tony Yang, 2008, http://www.adventistreview.org/issue.php?issue=2008-1511&page=28) The writer says, “After praying for a drummer for a few weeks, I was starting to realize how hard it was to find a drummer, let alone a good one.”

While the story is “good” in that a young person joins the church who plays drums, the concept of drumming in church is presented as if it were acceptable praise to God when it is not. I shudder to think of the evil results of this article as Adventist worship leaders take solace from this misleading work and choose to continue their baleful influence.

Indeed, the magazine articles that drift the furthest away from solid Adventist pillars of faith are Spectrum, and this one, Adventist Today, the bastions of liberalism in the church. The articles that undermine the true mission of the church that originate from these two publications are simply too numerous to list. As a defender of all the 28 beliefs, Present Truth, traditional Adventist teachings on Daniel and the Revelation, and not least—Ellen G. White, I’m surprised that I’m not censured—at least not yet, here. I simply do not have time to post on Spectrum as
well. My prayer and hope is that some reading will see glimmers of truth and decide to truly commit to Jesus and follow Bible truth.

Kevin Riley 3 days ago

I began the study of Greek with the hope that it would clear up the messiness and inconsistencies I found in the English Bibles I read. Perhaps the fear I had when I began the study of Hebrew a year later that knowing one more biblical language would lead to the discovery of yet more inconsistencies and yet more messiness indicates how effectively my hope had been crushed. Yet, 21 years after my last Greek and Hebrew class, and 16 years after resigning as a pastor, I cannot bring myself to regret studying either language, and still spend time to ensure my knowledge of Greek does not entirely die. I still have hopes of relearning Hebrew and learning Latin in my retirement years - that's when I believe I will again have time for such activities. Knowing some Greek does help with understanding some parts of the Bible. But I have found my other years of study in social science also helps. In fact, life itself seems to help by teaching me more about how life really works. Sometimes that makes the Bible clearer, sometimes it forces me to look again at what the Bible says. Both are good.

During a couple of years when I was doing research for my PhD, before everything (or even anything) had fallen into place, I often took refuge in the old saying that "confusion is the beginning of wisdom". Sometimes I have to remember that when I read the Bible. If my confusion leads me to more study, then it is a good thing. If my continued confusion leads me to talk to God, that is an even better thing. I am grateful for the many people who have commented on the Bible and shared their understanding. Some of my favourite authors are people I disagree with because they push me to face the inconsistencies in my own understanding of the Bible. Standing back and remembering the wider context is helpful. If what I understand from a text does not fit with the bigger picture of God as our creator and redeemer, then perhaps I need to look again. Or sometimes just leave it alone until more information, or more experience, makes it clearer.

As I deal with the trauma of realising that the year I turn 50 is approaching with a rapidity I find disturbing, I also find that I am becoming more willing to allow God, and life, to bring answers more slowly than I once found comfortable. Perhaps I am becoming reconciled to the fact that I will die not knowing everything. God is good, He loves me, He is in control - the rest (even the bits in the Bible) is just 'nice to know' rather than 'need to know'.

Steve Billiter 3 days ago

Kevin, what a sad story you tell. Understanding the original languages is not the key to understanding the Bible--it is important though to understand the mistranslations of words in vital doctrines and certain other places even in the best Bible, the KJV and its variants (AKJV, KJV2000, NKJV). Using modern versions such as the NIV will certainly lead to confusion.

You said, “I often took refuge in the old saying that "confusion is the beginning of wisdom". While your meaning seems to make some sense, it just does not line up Scripturally. Not understanding is not confusion—confusion is a false understanding of the Bible—errors if you please. Babylon means confusion. We may at first puzzle over a text, but that is not confusion by any means.

Pro 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.
Good article Nathan—and I agree wholeheartedly with what you say about taking the whole Bible as an overview and seeking to understand the context in which the verse or verses are contained. However, what is not stated in what concerns me, and I quote,

“For example, the best tool for understanding a single Bible text is an overview of the Bible as a whole, its direction, purposes and overarching themes. To explore a word, sentence or verse apart from its context can give shades of meaning. But if when taken back to that context the ‘dissected’ meaning is inconsistent with the larger meaning of the chapter or book from which it was extracted, to insist on that meaning is absurd — and a serious example of bad reading.”

No so. The best and most foundational tool that we must bring to God first is a seeking and longing after Him—a desire for righteousness. We must humbly come to Him who gave the Word asking God to reveal its meanings to us. When we are converted as a consequence of studying God’s word and are baptized—we then have the fuller guidance of the Holy Spirit to help our studies.

John 7:17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

1Cor. 2:14 But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

These verses speak of what I previously stated. Obedience to Him and that desire to be like Jesus will open the door to the great truths of the Bible where no humanistic methods will work. Dissecting a frog as an analogy for correct Biblical understanding gives the impression that we can do it our way—apart from how God’s says we must seek Him to understand His Word. Yes, context is important in the overall picture, and I also note you have left out another Biblical principle that is vital to understanding truth, and that is simply letting the Bible interpret itself:

Isa 28:9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.

Isa 28:10 For precept must be on precept, precept on precept; line on line, line on line; here a little, and there a little:

While learning from good teachers is vital, we should also be “weaned from the breast” and do our own studies under God’s guidance. Difficult verses—especially that of prophecy in Daniel and Revelation require “line upon line” “precept upon precept” and “here a little, and there a little,” going to the proper places in Scripture that interpret the chosen texts. Sadly Nathan, not once have you given Bible or EGW references in its proper context in just how we are to understand God’s Word to the saving of our souls. Instead, we see a human attempt to put only man’s limited measuring stick on something that is eternal truth—that which we should handle with the utmost reverence and awe coming to Him only for understanding.

He who will study the Bible with a humble and teachable spirit will find it a sure guide, pointing out the way of life with unfailing accuracy. But what does your study of the Bible avail, brethren and sisters, unless you practice the truths it teaches? That holy book contains nothing that is nonessential; nothing is revealed that has not a bearing upon our actual lives. The deeper our love for Jesus, the more highly we shall regard that word as the voice of God directly to us. {5T 303.2}
Brethren, cling to your Bible, as it reads, and stop your criticisms in regard to its validity, and obey the Word, and not one of you will be lost. The ingenuity of men has been exercised for ages to measure the Word of God by their finite minds and limited comprehension. If the Lord, the Author of the Living oracles, would throw back the curtain and reveal His wisdom and His glory before them, they would shrink into nothingness and exclaim as did Isaiah, ‘I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips’ (Isa. 6:5).” — Ms 16, 1888; (1SM 15-18).

(Written at Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the autumn of 1888.)

Steve Billiter

Thomas, I understand the context I've read it before. However, a truth is a truth still, in principle and other applications besides the obvious context. In fact, I am correct still in what I say, and your analysis is quite narrow. Please consider:

9. Whom shall he teach? The priests and prophets whose business it was to teach the people were themselves misled, and therefore in no position to carry out their responsibilities (see on Matt. 23:16). They were so befogged that God could not teach them. It was necessary, therefore, that they be put aside and new leaders chosen—men who were both meek and willing, alert and spiritual-minded. The old leaders whose minds were spiritually befogged
must be replaced by men to whom God could speak His messages of truth and wisdom. These might be regarded as babes by the learned priests, but they were humble and teachable and able to learn the ways of God.

10. Precept upon precept. Truth must be presented clearly and logically, one point leading naturally on to another. Only thus can men become thoroughly acquainted with truth. Instruction must be given as if to children, by repeating the same point again and again, and going on from one point to another by easy and gentle degrees as men whose minds have been darkened by sin are able to follow. Such instruction may appear simple, but it is effective.


Those who are in responsible positions are not to become converted to the self-indulgent, extravagant principles of the world, for they cannot afford it; and if they could, Christlike principles would not allow it. Manifold teaching needs to be given. "Whom shall He teach knowledge? and whom shall He make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." Thus the word of the Lord is patiently to be brought before the children and kept before them, by parents who believe the word of God. "For with stammering lips and another tongue will He speak to this people. To whom He said, This is the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken." Why?--because they did not heed the word of the Lord that came unto them. {TM 418.2}

This means those who have not received instruction, but have cherished their own wisdom, and have chosen to work themselves according to their own ideas. The Lord gives these the test, that they shall either take their position to follow His counsel, or refuse and do according to their own ideas, and then the Lord will leave them to the sure result. In all our ways, in all our service to God, He speaks to us, "Give Me thine heart." It is the submissive, teachable spirit that God wants. That which gives to prayer its excellence is the fact that it is breathed from a loving, obedient heart. {TM 419.1}

Thomas "Vastergotland" 2 days ago

Steve

Am I correct in surmising from what you write and quote that these verses from Isaiah 28 represents such a scripture where a metaphorical understanding is to be preferred over a literal one?

Ella M. 2 days ago

I like John 5:39: "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

The Jews searched the scriptures and the leaders studied them extensively but did not see Christ in them. I would say Christ was an over-riding truth in the OT, yet I suspect the Jewish leaders dissected the scripture and missed the bit picture.

As I read your above EGW quotes, they seem to indicate that studying the Bible precept upon
Elaine Nelson
3 days ago

"Some of my favourite authors are people I disagree with because they push me to face the inconsistencies in my own understanding of the Bible."

How few dare to read with what they might find disagreeable? But how is one to learn if his conceptions are not challenged? Good lawyers must be able to prosecute or defend both sides of any argument. Only then can they be assured that they are fully informed.

As I have already passed 80, I have discovered many new and challenging facts about the Bible: its writers; it's many changes; its inconsistencies; and it's many contradictory statements. Also, realizing that there are NO original manuscripts and that all have been orally passed down and copied and recopied many times should give us caution at presuming any text is exactly as it was heard!

Some of the most challenging books I have read are by Orthodox Jews on the Hebrew Bible; Karen Armstrong on all world religions and especially the discordant history of evolving Christianity through the tumultuous years following its birth; the Bible as literature; and how the text has been corrupted through the years by scribes and even additions of entire stories to the earlier manuscripts. How, and why were the final choices made for inclusion in the NT when there were as many or more "Gospels" and Letters being used throughout the Christian world? Were the compilers inspired? Or was inspiration only with the writers?

One may not find answers to all questions, but not to ask them is to remain where one has always been. The purpose of education is to have your presuppositions challenged.

Steve Billiter
2 days ago

Elaine,
You are quite mistaken. There are no contradictions or inconsistencies in the Bible, unless you compare the KJV and the NIV, which is Satan's attack on His word. God has given sufficient evidence in His Holy Word that not one person needs to be lost unless that person so chooses to do so. If you think or suppose there is such a thing, then why don't you post your questions so they can be answered?

Ella M.
3 days ago

For me this is found in the belief of a Holy Spirit that leads our understanding. I do not think one can read the bible for spiritual understanding without the Spirit or we will only find the inconsistencies and focus on doubts and cynicism. The Bible is for our character and spiritual journey more than the legalistic (what we call human reason??) belief that it should be perfect thus
resulting in a doubting cynicism or a literal interpretation that makes no sense. It is inspired poetry, stories, experiences, and symbolic prophecy. It has the joy of mystery, hope, comfort, peace, and the pointing to Christ.

It was the Holy Spirit who guided the minds of our ancestors who chose what would be in the Holy Book and the scribes so that they would not miss the overview of God's love. This is my belief and I feel a logical one for one who believes in the God family of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as found in the Bible and experienced in the life of the believer (and even in other religions to those of an honest and open heart of love).

This doesn't mean I don't read other books, but we need to read them with prayer for the Holy Spirit for understanding where the writers are coming from. Sometimes one can even find that flash of intellect in these other writings that may add to one's Christian experience; but to do so means leaning on God for understanding and not one's own reason.

I found that if I applied what I learned in Psychology at Whittier college years ago to my Christian belief system, it fit so well, and I became closer to Christ through learning more of His wonderful works.

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**Steve Billiter**  
2 days ago

Ella,

I have had, and still have to take psychology in college, and I find almost all of it wars against Christ and the Bible. Please give an example of which you speak of, and perhaps I can better understand what you mean. My take is that psychology is man's attempt apart from Bible truth to understand and prevent deviant behaviour, as well as to understand the basic workings of the human mind. Some of this "understanding" is through faulty studies and research that becomes false science. Only the Creator understands the human mind that He made.

Col 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

1Ti 6:20 O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:

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**Elaine Nelson**  
3 days ago

How is it that two people can earnestly seek the Spirit while reading the Bible and come up with entirely different concepts? How is one to "know" that his conclusions are what the Spirit intended when they may be different than others, even the majority?

How is one to understand the Bible apart from his own reasoning ability? If the mind is not the access to our understanding, what is? Do we doubt the Spirit's leading or others' reasoning ability if it differs from ours? Shouldn't God alone be the judge?

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**Preston Foster**  
2 days ago

Elaine,

My view is that most of us are not acquainted enough with the Spirit to have confidence in His leading. Adventists, of different leanings (progressive, traditional, etc.), for different reasons,
depend on other sources of authority (intellect, EGW) to interpret the Bible for us. We have unwittingly avoided intimacy with The Holy Spirit, rendering our confidence in His leading weak -- increasing our dependence on these other sources, all of which lack the power and authority of the Spirit.

Ron Corson
2 days ago

Actually for Steve Billiter babylon means "gate of the gods"

"Babylon
mid-14c., from Gk. version of Akkad. Bab-ilani "the gate of the gods," from bab "gate" + ilani, pl. of ilu "god" (cf. Babel). The O.Pers. form, Babiru-, shows characteristic transformation of -l- to -r- in words assimilated from Semitic.

Online Etymology Dictionary, © 2010 Douglas Harper"

The play on words of what happened in Bable is what you seem to be thinking of:

"Babel 1 (ˈbēbəl) — n 1. Old Testament a. Also called: Tower of Babel a tower presumptuously intended to reach from earth to heaven, the building of which was frustrated when Jehovah confused the language of the builders (Genesis 11:1--9) b. the city, probably Babylon, in which this tower was supposedly built 2. (often not capital ) a. a confusion of noises or voices b. a scene of noise and confusion [from Hebrew Bāḇhēl , from Akkadian Bāh-īlu , literally: gate of God] " http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Babel

I am not certain as to the point of the article a sentence deconstructed does not real damage to the sentence it can be read as before no assembly required it is nothing like a frog deconstructed. In fact we do this all the time in language, why in language we even use tone and facial expression nearly instantly. I am thinking this is all from some article he was accused of writing which did not uphold traditional Adventist views. As if someone from the church or even published by the church could never do such a thing. Praise God they can still slip such things through. But then I don't look at these things from the perspective of someone under the thumb of the denominations employment power. So my views may differ.

Steve Billiter
2 days ago

Ron,
Babylon comes from "Babel" which in the Hebrew means confusion. This is my meaning. "Gate of the gods" must have applied directly to the city of Babylon itself and is simply an additional definition. Our word "babble" as a baby might attempt to speak, or as someone may say, "what are you babbling about? Is similiar.

H894
בּבל
baw-bel'
From H1101; confusion; Babel (that is, Babylon), including Babylonia and the Babylonian empire: - Babel, Babylon.
I like Strongs definitions in the KJV--to me they make the most sense and are very clear. My free Bible software, E-sword, has the Strong's embedded numbers in the KJV+ version, so I can instantly see the Hebrew, or Greek definition of every word in the Bible.

Kevin Riley
2 days ago

Do you know why Strong's agrees with the KJV? Because he does not set out to tell you how the Hebrew or Greek people understood the words, but how the KJV translated them. If you look at any modern standard lexicon of Biblical Hebrew you will find the match is not so good. I prefer not to use the KJV or Strongs, but more reliable sources.

Ron Corson
2 days ago

That is one of the classic mistakes people make, thinking the root word means the same as the word in question. It is rather like in English when we say butterfly thinking that the root word is butter therefore a butterfly is butter.

Connie Severin
1 day ago

My favorite is the Spanish "embarasada" - which contrary to many novice language students, doesn't mean embarrassed but rather "pregnant."

Thomas "Vastergotland"
1 day ago

But it is hard work actually learning a foreign language..

Trevor Hammond
1 day ago

A proper interpretation and understanding of the Holy Scriptures is at ALL times PRIMARILY dependent on the power of the Holy Spirit and Secondarily the sincere teachable heart that humbly seeks after truth and embraces it by faith. I have asked this before: are there any Biblical Study or Christian Theology teachers/lecturers/professors who start their class off with a prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to be their Guide in the study of the Scriptures (on any campus for that matter)?

We shouldn't question/doubt the Holy Spirit for the many 'different' Christian denominations around but rather the mess of dodgy theology that has crept in as a direct result of 'major dissection'.

That's one reason why God gave us the gift of prophecy in the writings of a truly 'inspired' Christian woman: Mrs. Ellen G. White.

Are theologians or scholars of biblical studies not then guilty of'dismembering' the 'BODY OF CHRIST' which has resulted in so many different churches?

T
Elaine Nelson 1 day ago

Even at the beginning of the early church there were followers of Cephas, followers of Appolos, followers of Paul. Many of the various churches had their favorite leader and there was a variety of position in the very earliest Christian church: see the separation that began in Jerusalem between the Jewish and Gentile Christians. When has there ever been complete harmony?

Trevor Hammond 1 day ago

It does get a bit hilarious doesn't it with these words that are often misunderstood? For example, the word "SEVENTH" as in Seventh-day, to some does not really mean seven to some but the FIRST! : )

T

You do not have sufficient permissions to post a comment.
This morning I read the story of Jesus calming the storm, to my boys and husband from the *My Bible Friends* series, as we all snuggled in bed for family worship. We marveled at the picture of the calm, starry night sky the disciples sailed under when Jesus first fell asleep (it’s not very often that we see the stars here in Seattle). Next, we pointed out the size of the waves in comparison to the small boat, and my sons found Jesus sleeping in the stern. Then at the end of the story, we talked about how Jesus still keeps us safe from storms and troubles in our lives today. But when the story finished, a marked quiet came over my oldest son – the sort of quiet which signals he is deep in thought. We waited. Finally, very softly, he whispered to me, “I think the boat sank, Mommy.”

Shocked, I asked, “You mean you don’t think Jesus calmed the storm?”

“No. Well, yes, maybe He did later, I guess. But the boat still sank. It did Mommy. It sank.”

Today wasn’t the first time he has heard this particular story. In fact, we’ve been reading it for years. He literally has dozens of books with differing colorful depictions of this very same event. And in the past, he has always believed wholeheartedly in the miracle of Jesus that night – His sovereign control over the winds and the waves. But today, for the very first time ever that I know of, my son doubted his Bible.

I expected this day to come…eventually. But not this soon. Not today.

Without even thinking, my immediate response was to reassure him. “No sweety, look! It says right here, see? The boat didn’t really sink at all, Jesus calmed the storm and the disciples all made it to the other side! They were safe honey, the boat didn’t sink.” And then I realized what just happened: I was so uncomfortable with his questions and with his little doubt that I wanted to squash it immediately. His doubt troubled me, and I instantly wanted to redirect him to faith. I did not like to see him in a place of skepticism, and I wasn’t willing to risk leaving him there.

The Adventist Church is no stranger to this same reaction. I know we strive to be a safe environment in which questions and doubts can be asked, raised, and answered in faith-building ways. I strive for that very thing in my classroom, honestly, and so does most every colleague I work with. But I also know that we are a group of people who tend to prefer solid, hard and fast answers. We really aren’t in our comfort zones when doubts are afoot. If a doubter does expose himself, often he is judged for having a weak faith. Sometimes, we even go so far as to outright discourage any doubts from being raised. Is this healthy?

I suppose it’s understandable to prefer our safe answers because, well, many of us have built our lives around these answers – around the Sabbath, the health message, the beginning of the investigative judgment marking the last days on earth, and more. And I think it is because we have built so much upon them that we become uncomfortable or uneasy when these answers of ours are challenged. They threaten us, and all that we have built. So instead of allowing the doubts to exist for a time, instead of allowing people the risk of their own journey, our knee jerk reaction is sometimes
to just put them down – squash the doubts!

But if I’ve learned anything at all from the teenagers I’m so blessed to work with, it is that detours of questioning DO serve an important purpose along the journey of our spiritual lives. In fact, I think they are necessary stops. It is within these dark hours of doubt, in these earnest times of wrestling, that we come to personally own our faith. And once we own it, we also begin to learn how to truly live it, and share it.

But we would be fools to forget the dark cave of doubt can sometimes morph into a black hole, which too many do not ever emerge from. For some, the deeper they question and the more they embrace doubt, the shakier their faith becomes until, one sad day, they abandon it altogether. Sure – this is the extreme, but let’s be honest. It’s what we are ultimately afraid of, isn’t it? That if we let our children doubt, they will doubt themselves right straight out of our back doors.

I believe our church is still seeking that fine balance between allowing doubts and building faith. If we never allow our kids (or anyone else) to question, it’s going to result in them ending up with a shallow, unexamined faith. However, if we indulge our doubts too far, we may arrive at the dangerous destination of cherishing them and preferring them over the sometimes more difficult task of choosing faith.

When I discover one of my students loitering in doubts, one wise pastor taught me to ask them a simple question: “Are you trying to get in, or are you trying to get out?” Meaning – are you asking these questions to grow further into a relationship with God (and this church), or are you asking these questions to find a way out of the relationship, and out of your calling and duties as a Christian. It’s this examining of our motives that will help us keep regular tabs on the state of our hearts, and allow doubting to remain useful instead of dangerous.

In this church, when we find ourselves becoming uncomfortable or disturbed by the questions and doubts of other Adventists around us, I think we need to remember that “If ours is an examined faith, we should be unafraid to doubt. If doubt is eventually justified, we were believing what clearly was not worth believing. But if doubt is answered, our faith has grown stronger. It knows God more certainly and it can enjoy God more deeply.” (Os Guiness, God in the Dark, 14) Restated: we should not be afraid when someone seeks to examine, question, or doubt our cherished beliefs – for if they are in fact the truth, they will be able to stand up to questioning and still emerge as truth.

As for me, honestly, I’m not ready yet to simply stand by and allow my little boy to freely doubt the stories of scripture. But I may have no choice in the matter, either. What I can purpose to do – and what our church must endeavor to do also – is to combat doubt with faith and prayer, and to work towards being people who are confident enough in the strength of our truths that we are not afraid for them to be examined. Even by a 4 year old.

If, in the quest for intangibles such as truth & enlightenment, the seeker finds a path that no longer requires sectarian membership in a man made church, in what way is he / she morphing into a black hole of doubt? At some point, everything that is now fully accepted as Christian orthodoxy was considered to be blasphemous by those holding opposing views. Spiritual growth can be achieved outside the limits of dogma. Those who dare choose that route will surely be morphing, but not into a black hole.
Elaine Nelson

“Are you trying to get in, or are you trying to get out?”
This is very demeaning approach. Would you ask your son such a question? We should listen to any questions as an honest desire to have rational reasons that do not infer that one is seeking ways to either get in or get out.

Answers will depend on the maturity of the questioner, but all questions should be honestly answered.
Example: what should you tell a teenager when she asks why it is wrong: to wear makeup, read fiction, attend movies, or even why only SDAs observe Saturday as a holy day? If they don't ask, be assured they are asking others are silently wondering. If they read the Bible they may discover texts that have never been answered in either church or their SDA school. Do they know there is not a single Bible text about wearing jewelry, makeup, attending movie or reading fiction (how much of the Bible is fiction?), and that there is no command to observe ANY holy day in the entire NT?

Yes, there is a risk; but if faith is too fragile to receive honest questions, of what worth is it? Does mere silence mean assent to all doctrines? It may mean they questioner realizes that his actions are not worthy of answers, or else there are no "good" answers.

BTW: was your son satisfied with the answer you gave? Be prepared for many more like that in the future. Can you not explain the idea of metaphors or symbols? Aesop's fables have good morals, but no one considers them to be literal. Why not the same application to the Bible. Does faith depend on all the Bible stories being literal?

Ranald McLeish

Oh for the day when, " --- we should not be afraid when someone seeks to examine, question, or doubt our cherished beliefs – for if they are in fact the truth, they will be able to stand up to questioning and still emerge as truth."

As questioning the voted fundamental beliefs of the church is considered an open inveration for ridicule and persecution, it appears few are prepared to question Church teaching today. For example consider the current teaching that the Papacy has taken away, not only Christ's ministry in Heaven, but has replaced the the Heavenly host with a host of its own. And that the persecuting rule of the Papacy continues for 2,300 years.

As it appears most Adventists are unaware of these teaching of the church that you and I love, the reader is invited to consider the following teachings.

**How long does the little horn reign?**

Stefanovic, _Wisdom to the wise, p. 310-311_. Commenting on Dan. 8:13-14: *The question How long? Literally means “Until when?” putting the emphasis --- on the point in time that will demarcate the end of the rebellion. --- The visions main points can be summarized as follows: It speaks of the removal of the continual sanctuary services, the rebellion that causes destruction, and the surrender and trampling of the sanctuary underfoot. As in verse 11, the continual*
sanctuary service pertains to the whole service in the sanctuary and should not be limited to the morning and evening sacrifices. The rebellion that causes desolation is best understood as the type of aggressive rebellion that results in the destruction of the services of the sanctuary and of some of the people who serve in it.

*Teachers SS Quarterly, 2002, p. 45.* After a discussion on how this little horn (the LH of 8:9) would oppose truth, it is revealed that it would be allowed to do so for “two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” (Dan. 8:14).

Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel,* p. 127. Only after 2300 evenings and mornings will the destructive rampage of the little horn stop,--- .

*Ibid.* p. 131, Chapter 8 is even more explicit: the reign of the little horn lasts 2300 evenings and mornings. --- (equaling 2300 years).

Gerhard Pfandl, *Daniel,* p. 61. In Daniel 7 the little–horn power, follows the four beasts, which together account for a reign of at least 1,000 years.

Where does the little horn rule?

2002 SS Lesson, p. 41. But then, the little horn (8:9) does something that no other kingdom has done: It goes against the Prince of the Host in the heavenly sanctuary.

*Ibid.* p. 44, The same picture is used in Daniel 8. The little horn attacks the heavenly host and casts “down some of the host” (vs 10); it then goes into the sanctuary where he “exalted himself as the Prince of the host” (vs. 11, NKJV). The little horn is attacking heaven and a ministry in heaven. --- Hence the text says that the horn misappropriated the daily ministry of Christ and then “set over,” or appointed, its own host to control or minister it. p. 48.

c. Stefanovic, *Wisdom to the wise,* p. 311. The rebellion that causes desolation is best understood as the type of aggressive rebellion that results in the destruction of the services of the sanctuary and of some of the people who serve in it.

12BC 394-395. Since the “Prince of hosts” is a heavenly being (cf. Joshua 5:14) the sanctuary in Daniel 8:9-14 must be the heavenly one. --- The main concern of this vision is the attitude of the little horn toward the sanctuary and the priestly work of the Prince (verses 11, 12) It attacks the host of heaven, defeats them (verse 10), and goes after the Prince and the sanctuary. --- The tamid is taken away from the Prince, and the foundation/place of the sanctuary is cast down and rejected. Then in a spirit of rebellion/transgression (verse 12), the little horn sets up its own force to control the tamid. --- The little horn somehow affects the Princes tamid, or mediatorial work in the holy place. The question of the horn’s interference with the mediatorial work of the Prince in the Most Holy Place is addressed in Daniel 8: 13, 14.

As a result of statements such as the above, I have asked the following question at all levels of the church: Is the teaching that a Papal host has replaced the Heavenly host, the church's official position regarding the little horn today? I have had little response, and it appears the church is not open to frank discussion regarding this fundamental belief.

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Elaine Nelson 3 days ago

Will the real Adventist doctrinal authority stand up and be counted for all the answers above? Is
there any wonder there is so much confusion on one of the most "unique" doctrines only promoted by Adventism?

**Ervin Taylor** 3 days ago

Is it a blessing of the Adventist Today web site that very few of those posting have any interest in the strange interpretations that are created by some Adventists based on a few verses in the books of Daniel and Revelation. Usually these interpretations are taken totally out of the historical context which created the original texts.

Although I have many reservations about parts of the theology of Martin Luther, I am 100% with him when he questioned the helpfulness of the materials in Daniel and Revelation. May I venture to suggest that removing them from the canon of Scripture would be of positive benefit to the life of the Christian Church in the modern era. Just think how Adventism would be changed for the better if they were no longer afforded the standing that they currently enjoy in traditional Adventism.

**Vernon P. Wagner** 3 days ago

Brother Ervin has stated an excellent point. History is replete with examples of clergymen who used those books to predict the end of time / second advent, and ALL of them have been WRONG!

**Kevin Riley** 3 days ago

Let us not forget what Daniel and Revelation point out very clearly: In the end, God wins. If people misuse them, if they come to all sorts of strange conclusions, should we not do something about the people rather than the books? I have never been fascinated by the details of Daniel and Revelation as many SDAs have. But every time I have reead them, I have been struck by their central message that God is in control, and no matter how bad things get, He is with us and He will set things straight.

I disagree with traditional Adventism on a number of points, but I am quite happy to stand with traditional Adventists in voting against removing any book from the Bible. We need the books of Daniel and Revelation for many reasons, not all of which may be apparent to any of us today. If nothing else they keep us from assuming that once we become Christians everything is sunshine and light. We are in a war zone, and casualties are to be expected. It would be nice if so many weren't from 'friendly' fire, but it is still good to be reminded that all will not go well in this world because it is a contested space. Knowing that, in the end, God wins, can make the journey easier.

**William Sandborn** 3 days ago

The book of Revelation is all about Christ. Why would anyone want to get rid of it.

William Sandborn
Elaine Nelson 3 days ago

We needn't eliminate Daniel and Revelation, but neither do we eliminate Ecclesiastes, Numbers, and the Song of Solomon, but they are seldom used for doctrines. D&R represent the birth of Adventism, and thus will always have a unique position, however faulty, in Adventism's history.

Would Adventism not have any salvific value without those two books? How do they contribute to anyone's salvation or eternal hope? Are we given insufficient assurance of God's being in control by the other 64 books? These apocryphal books present a conundrum that Adventists have claimed to have "unlocked the key" to their mysterious symbols and only they have the vision to interpret them.

Ranald McLeish 2 days ago

Are we considering the consequences of where these new teachings are leading? For example, does the Papacy arise after the four beasts? Do the four beasts rule for approximately 1,000 years? Does the Papal little horn rule for 2,300 years? Has a Papal host replaced the Heavenly host? Is the end of the 2,300 years 2838 A.D.? If these teachings are correct, what happens to Fundamental Belief No 24, and the historical teachings of Adventism in particular?

In the light of the above should we reconsider counsels such as the following, When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers have an entirely different religious experience. --- FILB 345. There will be a new perception of truth, and it, will have a clearness and a power that all will discern. COL 130.

Ervin Taylor 2 days ago

I’d like to suggest answers to Mr. McLeish questions:

1. Does the Papacy arise after the four beasts? Answer: No. Comment: No Biblical author including whoever wrote the books of Daniel and Revelation had no idea that an institution called “the Papacy” would exist. The existence of the Christian Church with all of its major divisions and denominations lasting over 2000 years was never even envisioned.

2. Do the four beasts rule for approximately 1,000 years? Answer: No. Comment: First explain what the “four beasts” have to do with anything.

3. Does the Papal little horn rule for 2,300 years? Answer: No. Comment: Same as Comment 1.


5. Is the end of the 2,300 years 2838 A.D.? Answer: No. Comment: I thought that one of the few things that corporate Adventism has learned is not to “set dates.” Remember what happened the first time we did that!
6. What happens to Fundamental Belief No 24, and the historical teachings of Adventism in particular? Answer: If I may use a delightful term of a recently deceased GC president, Fundamental Belief No. 24 should go into the “dust bin” of Adventist history where it belongs.

Might I suggest that this the most helpful understanding of the comment of Ellen White “When the books of Daniel and Revelation are better understood, believers have an entirely different religious experience.” Ignoring them would be a good start.

William Sandborn

Just because a denomination has misused some books doesn't mean we get rid of them. Hebrews has been misused also but read as written it gives valuable insights into Christ's ascension to the right hand of God and much other information also. The problem is that we sometimes try to make the Bible fit our doctrines instead of making our doctrines fit the Bible. The same is true of Revelation.

William Sandborn

Ranald McLeish

Hi Ervin,

Am I to take it that along with the books of Daniel and Revelation, you would include the book of Acts on the basis of 17:11, the book of Isaiah on the basis of chapter 28, and especially verses 10-13; and the books of Timothy on the basis of 2 Tim. 2:15 and 3:16, to name a few?

Is it not just possible that when God's people take heed of counsells such as the SOP quoted above, the riches of Heaven associated with the Latter Rain will be poured out in abundance.

*Those who are true to their calling as messengers of God, will not seek honor for themselves. Love for self will be swallowed up in love for Christ. They will recognize that it is their work to proclaim, as did John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."* [John 1:29.] {GW 56.3}

*The soul of the prophet, emptied of self, was filled with the light of the Divine. In words that were almost a counterpart of the words of Christ Himself, he bore witness to the Saviour's glory. "He that cometh from above" he said, "is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: He that cometh from heaven is above all." *For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God.* [John 3:31, 34.] {GW 56.4}

*In this glory of Christ all His followers are to share. The Saviour could say, "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." [John 5:30.] And John declared, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him." So with the followers of Christ. We can receive of heaven's light only as we are willing to be emptied of self. We can discern the character of God,
and accept Christ by faith, only as we consent to the bringing into captivity of every thought to
the obedience of Christ. And to all who do this, the Holy Spirit is given without measure. In Christ
"dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him." [Colossians 2:9,
10.]

Ervin Taylor

We can certainly honor Ellen White and her views as as providing a point of departure for the
Adventist tradition. In the spirit of the "present truth" concept she presented in the 19th century, it
is appropriate that 21st century Adventism move beyond her and advance a 21st century "present
truth" Adventist vision. Not quoting Ellen White as authoritative is one of the ways that we can
move beyond her.

Ron Corson

Ervin take some time to examine what Adventists mean by the term present truth. It is a code for
Adventist doctrines. You can't recover the term in Adventism simply by redefining the term. See
the article:

William Sandborn

Revelation 22:19 says " And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this
prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city, and from the things that are
written in this book." If those that wan't to do away with Revelation are wrong, their loses are are very large and
eternal.

William Sandborn

Ron Corson

Melissa, I like your child. You wrote:
--
"Then at the end of the story, we talked about how Jesus still keeps us safe from storms and
troubles in our lives today. But when the story finished, a marked quiet came over my oldest son –
the sort of quiet which signals he is deep in thought. We waited. Finally, very softly, he whispered
to me, “I think the boat sank, Mommy.”

Shocked, I asked, “You mean you don’t think Jesus calmed the storm?”

“No. Well, yes, maybe He did later, I guess. But the boat still sank. It did Mommy. It sank.”
--

You know what you told your child is not true, Jesus does not keep us safe from the storms and
troubles of life. Your 4 year old knows that and thus questioned the whole thing, the boat sank...it is
not still around they got old and they were torn apart or sank. Whatever he may have been thinking
he seems to have realized the error of the lesson you applied. Trouble comes and we live through it. Bad things happen to people even if they follow Jesus. You know doubt mean your statement in a much more narrow way, that is God will ultimately save us and bring us to Him in the end.

What is interesting is that a lot of the questions that get asked are because of impossible statements that Christophers have made which everyone pretty much knows can't be as stated. The church in its quest to protect particular doctrines has been terrible in this regard. some of the above conversation is quite useful in pointing those kind of errors in overstated ones. out.

Elaine Nelson

When bright children ask questions, they should be answered honestly; to do less is to be disengenuous and children realize it. Those who don't question will have doubts in their mind and understand: either questions are not to be asked, or that answers are not proper.

This is the story of Adventism: those who dared to ask questions have been shown the door, beginning with Canright and many more. When questions aren't honestly answered, those people will simply dismiss the church.

Ervin Taylor

If I might respond to Ron. Redefining the meaning of words is at the very center of the history of Christian theology. New Testament writers took terms from the Old Testament and reinterpreted and redefined them. Thus, I submit that we can take a term used by traditional Adventists and redefine it in any way that a contemporary context requires. Remember, traditionalists do not control how the rest of us can employ words and their meanings. If we allow them to control the discussion, that is our problem.

Ron Corson

Actually redefining words is central to cults. That is why Walter Martin in his information about dealing with cults said the first thing is to get past the language barrier. That is they redefine words to mean something different from what the rest of Christians mean. I can't think of any terms the New Testament redefined, you would need to give me an example. They reinterpreted them in the light of the risen Christ and His instructions. Something of a bit more import then we today can say for why we should redefine a term. After all the English language has over a million words we could certainly come up with a new term for our definitions if we wanted. Why continue the confusion or add to it. Even then if you are trying to redefine a term you had better go to some trouble to explain the redefined meaning as a simply courtesy to any reader.

The use of ill defined terms is symptomatic to those spreading propaganda as opposed to those seeking to find or disseminate truth or knowledge.

Stephen Foster

For an Adventist Erv, you are clearly so “out there” (as the kids say) in your belief that The Book of (the Prophet) Daniel and The Revelation of Jesus Christ should be removed from the canon for
all practical purposes (please correct me if I have in fact mischaracterized your position) that there
is almost nowhere to go with you on this topic.

The Biblical prophecies are among the more “probative” things about the whole “God” concept. IF
God has, through human agencies, predicted—in detail—world events which eventually came to
pass, and has predicted that which is currently happening and/or will happen; it is certainly
suggestive or evidence supernatural intelligence.

If there is no benefit to Bible prophecy, that is, if God did not inspire what is written in those books
concerning “things which must shortly take place,” then there is no foundation, or basis, for belief
in God at all; especially if the Genesis creation narrative is mythology. If this is your point, say so.

Elaine, you seem to believe that other Christians can and do somehow continue as Christians
without these books. If this is true, which of course it is not, for what purpose and to what end? As
Kevin has pointed out, if there is no Biblical assurance that God “wins” in the end, what is the
point?

The doctrines of heaven and hell are in part derived and certainly reinforced by The Revelation of
Jesus Christ. Are there Christians who don’t believe in either? Oops.

Ervin Taylor 2 days ago

It is certainly correct to suggest that I am in a minority of contemporary Adventists concerning the
suggestion that these two books should be viewed in the same way that Martin Luther regarded the

However, I hope we all will recall that what writings are regarded as "in the canon" is a product of
a process of decision making by humans over centuries. I see no problem is saying that, in some
cases, certain books were very helpful to the Jews (in the case of Daniel) and to early Christians (in
the case of Revelation) when they were written, but, 2000 years has come and gone, conditions
change, and with it, the source of what we think of as "inspired" literature also changes.

Is it not correct that different religious communities decide which books are considered to be in and
out of the "canon" and which are to be regarded as "inspired." The traditional members of each of
these different communities think that "their" books are to be regarded as the most "truth filled." I
am sure that members of the Adventist faith community along with the vast majority of Christians
do not regard the Book of Mormon to be "truth filled." I certainly share that view.

In the same way, no matter what strange statements are contained in the writings of Ellen White,
traditional members of the Adventist community seem to view these works as "truth filled." The
vast majority of Christians obviously do not.

Just as I would suggest that certain books of the Bible (my list includes Daniel and Revelation)
need to be consigned to the same place that James was consigned by Luther, certain things that
Ellen White wrote also could benefit being added to an updated version of the Books of the New
Testament apocrypha. Just a suggestion.

Ranald McLeish 1 day ago
Ervin said: *Redefining the meaning of words is at the very center of the history of Christian theology.*

Wouldn't it be more accurate to say redefining the meaning of the words of Inspiration, 2 Tim 3:16-17, (not verbal dictation) is the first step men and churches takes in thinking to change the word of God, to suit their own doctrines. Eg. The change of the Sabbath etc. by the Catholic Church.

Don't the new teachings of Daniel amount to the same thing? Why is it that it appears no one feels comfortable, or confident, to question these particular teachings?

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**Ervin Taylor**  
I'm afraid Mr. McLeish has done it again in suggesting that it was the Catholic Church who "changed the Sabbath." He needs to read a good church history book by a modern reputable scholar. I hope our knowledgable Roman Catholic friends will excuse people such as Mr. McLeish who insists on repreating in the 21st century, the anti-Catholic propaganda current in 19th century America. Regretfully, some of these anti-Catholic sentiments made it into Ellen White's Great Controvery volume, although when you compare some of the language her assistants put into some of the chapters, they are not as vitriolic as other statements that were circulating in 19th Century America. This does not mean to deny that some Catholic authorities in the Middle Ages including a number of Popes, engaged in some behavior which all Christsians including contempoary Catholic scholars and others, condemn and deplore. But to continue to make false statements about modern Roman Catholic intentions that ignore the many changes that have gone on in that faith community over the last hundred years should also be deplored and challenged.

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**David**  
Ervin is so predictable, when he wanted to refute a point, he points out to look for "modern reputable scholars" he never gives the sources. Please define and provide the sources if you wanted to have credibility.

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**Elaine Nelson**  
"The change of the Sabbath etc. by the Catholic Church."

This theme by Adventism has no basis in fact, other than it was taught by early Adventism and confirmed by their imprimatur, Ellen White.

A bit of history: Many of the earliest church fathers have written that the Christians began celebrating the day of Resurrection beginnning in 100 A.D. Barnabas, Justin, the Gospel of Peter, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian,Origen, Ignatius, Athanisus and Augustine, to name a few.

In addition, SDA theologians, Mervyn Maxwell, P. Gerhardt Damsteegt, and Kenneth Strand have documented that the vast majority of early Christians began observing the first day of the week in honor of the Resurrection.
As this became the day for early Christians to meet and observe this event, by the time Constantine became ruler of the Roman Empire, he gave the first ruling of religious liberty in 315 A.D. that all religions were now free to practice their beliefs: pagan, Christian and Jews. A few years later, he gave another order that all the empire should rest from work on the first day of the week. He never ordered it to be a holy day, but like the Jewish Decalogue, that it should be a day of rest from work.

In 325, because of such dissension in the Christian world, particularly of the nature of Christ, Constantine called for a church council to settle the arguments on the nature of Christ. At no time did the church move to change the Sabbath. There was no need as by then almost the entire Christian world had been celebrating the first day for more than a thousand years. Catholic claims are merely that: claims, without any evidence, yet still promoted by the SDA church. Few have read and studied the history, so the blithely repeat what they have been taught.

Isn't it funny that the SDA's are trying to support the false claims of the Roman Catholic church, in effect giving it a start so much closer to the fictional start of the Roman Catholic's with Peter as the first Pope. But then when you go with tradition, Peter can be the first Pope and the Roman Catholics can change the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. What else does one really need, I think I will get out my soundtrack of the musical fiddler on the roof. Let's all sing "tradition"

Erv,

What precisely is, or what qualifies as, an/the “ant-Catholic” statement or sentiment? Surely you are not suggesting that the mere claim that the RCC has transferred the day of weekly observance and worship from the Sabbath to another day is “anti-Catholic.”

It may help to consult the Catechism of the Catholic Church for some context:

"Those who lived according to the old order of things have come to a new hope, no longer keeping the sabbath, but the Lord's Day, in which our life is blessed by him and by his death.108

2176 The celebration of Sunday observes the moral commandment inscribed by nature in the human heart to render to God an outward, visible, public, and regular worship "as a sign of his universal beneficence to all."109 Sunday worship fulfills the moral command of the Old Covenant, taking up its rhythm and spirit in the weekly celebration of the Creator and Redeemer of his people.”

This sounds like change.
Trevor Hammond

Hey, Mrs. Howell

Ma'am, it's so good to know that you have Family Worship. Kids are such fun to have around at this time. I note that your 4 year old doesn't asked a question but rather makes a statement that 'the boat sank'. This in itself is NOT doubt Ma'am. He just draws a conclusion based on his understanding of what he thinks happened. 'Bless his dear heart' though, for his sincerity in what he understood happened. Sincerity in insisting something happened is NOT doubt: it only reflects the persons misunderstanding of something which they perceive to be true or their perception of what they understand is a possible outcome.

Perhaps the mention of the BIG w~a~v~e~s in contrast to the tiny boat seemed to have given him the very realistic view of a no way of escape situation, considering that even the disciples themselves thought the same was going to happen to them. Perhaps too, your son and the many others like him that we may come into contact with are not really doubters but seekers. Maybe they simply seek a reassurance of the 'it is well with my soul' experience which reaffirms their understanding of what it means to have the MASTER with us on the boat.

It would have been doubt had the disciples not called to Jesus for help in their desperation; but they did, and even though they didn't know that Jesus would calm the storm miraculously they believed He could help them. There's a beautiful song I heard which has this line in it: "Sometimes He calms the Storm and sometimes He calms His Child..." Though difficulty and calamity may come, when He is with us, it is unDOUBTedly a win win situation where doubt should always sink: not the tiny boat.

T

Preston Foster

Erv,

I'm curious as to how these Catholic scholars got the impression that their church had, indeed, changed Sabbath observance to Sunday:


"Question: Which is the Sabbath day?"

"Answer: Saturday is the Sabbath day."

"Question: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?"

"Answer. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday."


"Nowhere in the Bible is it stated that worship should be changed from Saturday to Sunday .... Now the Church ... instituted, by God's authority, Sunday as the day of worship. This same Church, by
the same divine authority, taught the doctrine of Purgatory long before the Bible was made. We have, therefore, the same authority for Purgatory as we have for Sunday."


"Regarding the change from the observance of the Jewish Sabbath to the Christian Sunday, I wish to draw your attention to the facts:

"1) That Protestants, who accept the Bible as the only rule of faith and religion, should by all means go back to the observance of the Sabbath. The fact that they do not, but on the contrary observe the Sunday, stultifies them in the eyes of every thinking man.

"2) We Catholics do not accept the Bible as the only rule of faith. Besides the Bible we have the living Church, the authority of the Church, as a rule to guide us. We say, this Church, instituted by Christ to teach and guide man through life, has the right to change the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament and hence, we accept her change of the Sabbath to Sunday. We frankly say, yes, the Church made this change, made this law, as she made many other laws, for instance, the Friday abstinence, the unmarried priesthood, the laws concerning mixed marriages, the regulation of Catholic marriages and a thousand other laws.

"It is always somewhat laughable, to see the Protestant churches, in pulpit and legislation, demand the observance of Sunday, of which there is nothing in their Bible."

Elaine Nelson 1 day ago

It is always disconcerting to find so many believe the "anti-Christ's claims" regarding the changes they made, rather than studying history to determine what really happened. Long before there was a Roman Catholic church, there was only one Christian church and that church never claimed to have changed sabbath to sunday, but they were the first to celebrate the only and only reason to be Christians: the Resurrection. Is it so strange that the entire reason for Christianity was the Resurrection? There will always be the Sabbath celebrated by Judaism, but for those who didn't or don't recognize Christ, they ignore the Resurrection.

Ask any Christian: "Why are you a Christian?" Will they ever say "The Fourth Commandment convinced me to be a Christian," or "I wouldn't be a Christian had I not realized the Sabbath is the day we should celebrate."

To ignore celebrating the Resurrection for many years, which the SDA church did, is a renunciation of the raison de' etre for Christianity. Strange?

Ervin Taylor 1 day ago

David wants sources. He might begin by reading the essays in Volume 1 of the Cambridge History of Christianity: Origins to Constantine (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

He also might want to read the work of an Adventist scholar who taught at the SDA Seminary at Andrews, the late Samuel Bacchiocchi. His study clearly brings together the historical evidence that while some Christian groups continued to observe the Sabbath, a growing number of Christian
congregations were worshiping on Sunday by the end of the second century AD. Obviously, there was no Catholic Church in existence at that time. The reasons for the slow change from Sabbath to Sunday worship in the Christian communities are complex. However, the one thing you can definitely conclude is that the Roman Catholic Church had nothing to do with the change. I’m afraid that Ellen White’s sources got that very wrong. She accepted those sources and included their views in her Great Controversy volume.

Elaine Nelson 1 day ago

Those who claim the Catholic church changed Sabbath to Sunday are clearly confining their Christian history to Ellen's writings where she was terribly wrong. Anyone who accepts only one fairly recent writer such as Ellen, who had an extreme anti-Catholic bias which was common to her era, are illustrating their extreme deficiencies in early Christian history.

It's rather strange for those who reject all Catholic teachings, to accept their statements on sabbath!

Stephen Foster 1 day ago

Elaine,

It does not follow that if you observe the creation Sabbath of the Lord, that you therefore/necessarily ignore the resurrection of the same Lord. That doesn’t compute. The pagan rituals generally associated with the annual celebration of the resurrection have as much to do with the actual resurrection as Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer has to do with the actual birth of Christ.

As to the transference of the weekly day of observance and worship, this has little to do with EGW; while few Christians would claim the Sabbath as the only reason they are Christians, there must be some reason for the unmistakable instruction to “no longer [keep] the sabbath…” Furthermore, how does this square with Matthew 5:19; not to mention the Daniel 7:25 prophecy?

Editor 1 day ago

**Posting Alert:**

We in Adventist Today appreciate your time and interest in making comments on articles produced by our dedicated writers. However, you do an injustice to authors when comments have little-to-nothing to do with the topic presented, as in the bulk of those with this blog. Please stay on topic and give consideration to the author and blog content by addressing concerns or comments on the subject presented.

Deletion is an option, but our preference is to request you address off-topic items as a sidebar and not the main theme of your comment. Please consider this a strong request to stay on the topic, as presented by the author. CH
Erv. I'm familiar with Bacchiocchi's book. They were several factor that influenced the change from Sabbath to Sunday in early christianity, nevertheless it is a fact CC was very much involved making official. Preston's quotations from Catholic Scholar are correct. Elaine not offense... but I prefer the insights of Ellen White that from Elaine Nelson.

Editor,

The topic was questioning, and apparently there are more answers than questions, which is often the case with religions: answering questions, that no one may be asking.

The assumptions of many Adventists have little factual basis and often the more strongly held the less need to inquire as to the reasons for beliefs. This is well illustrated here by those who have received most of the Christian history from Great Controversy. Had there not been a resurrection, there would be no Christians today, and certainly no Adventist Christians.

The Jewish Sabbath was the principal hallmark of Judaism and as the Church became predominantly Gentile in membership, the first day of the week, Sunday, became holy to Christians. Sunday, no longer Saturday, as the proper time when Christians assembled to worship. Named "The Lord's Day" (see Revelation), Sunday became a symbol by which Christians differentiated themselves from Jews. The Jews met their denoument when the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. and afterward, the Christian church became a Gentile church, no long associated with Judaism.

Why have Adventists adopted so much of Judaism and less of Christianity as defined by the NT?

As I recall, EGW was Methodist prior to the Millerite hoax of 1844. When a 7th Day Baptist joined the 'Little Flock,' they picked, and chose which Talmudic Laws to be adopted. Jewish rabbis of today find this totally unacceptable. "Either observe all the Mosaic Law, or none of it," they say.

A book by Michael Schemer, 'The Believing Brain...How We Construct Beliefs and Reinforce Them as Truth' states the following: "We believe before we reason. Once beliefs are formed, we seek out confirmatory arguments and evidence to justify them. We ignore contrary evidence or make up rationalizations to explain it away. We do not like to admit we are wrong. We seldom change our minds."

Vernon, unfortunately, the quote is all too true, unless people become aware.

To day the various churches seek to manipulate the Scriptures to suit their individual doctrines, while the members choose to adopt the teaching of their favourite pastor, evangelist, or theologian.
This approach is commonly referred to as diversity, variety, or pluralism, none of which is pre-eminent, none of which controls or rules the other. Thus today, in this regard, neither the Scriptures, or the Church, speak with one voice today. In the resulting confusion, the issue is not whether a doctrine is true, but is it an honest belief? Thus people are deceived into believing, sincerity, and honestly held belief's, (!!) override the word of God.

In the churches today (the SdAchurch included) not only are people creating their own truth's, it is accepted that they have the right to do so. Thus today, doctrinal authority is being transferred from God through His Holy Word, to individuals. What greater deception could there be?

Very soon according to Daniel and Revelation the right to worship according to one's personal belief will be taken away again. During this time the wheat will be separated from the tares. Will we treasure the probationary time we have been given to prepare for this great test and trial of our faith?

Preston Foster  1 day ago

Vernon,

Thanks, very much. Your post says more, in fewer, words than most.

Trevor Hammond  1 day ago

It comes as no surprise that those who wear the so-called progressive badge use intellectualism as a crutch to pass off their dodgy unbelief as legitimate credible voices of reason which has unfortunately duped many into thinking that they are some sort of ‘illuminati’ (for want of a better word) who will lead the way forward in their efforts to 1] stamp out the Sabbath  2] promote homosexual perversion  3] get rid of Daniel and Revelation 4] disregard Bible Creation, 5] promote anarchy within the organized church  6] denigrate the writings of inspired gift of prophecy writer, Ellen G. White  7] cast doubt on the word of God  8] and justify the error of their ways.

As these neo-fundamentalist extremists (or illuminati) strengthen their forces of insurgents against Adventism on the pretense of saving the day, they destroy and slowly erode the faith of many and encourage the unconverted into thinking all is well with their souls. This is a far greater danger and threat that even Traditional Conservative Adventism ‘at its worst’ has never treaded on.

This unDOUBTedly has encouraged many others to join the 'doubters anonymous' faction and more especially those that are gullible and looking for any excuse to disobey God and make their sinful ways seem a legitimate sought after virtue of heaven. Satan tried this questioning philosophy in heaven and just take a look around at the disastrous results of what 'intellectualised' apostasy can do: Doubt is just a terrible symptom of rebellion. I suppose that perhaps when these misguided off-shoot individuals 'mature' in their understanding of the error of their ways they will hopefully 'turn' from the darkness of error and embrace the God of the Cross.

T
David

1 day ago

I’ll add to Trevor’s comments. You that once believed in the present truth, that now systematically opposes what the Bible clearly teaches… repent, repent, repent, before is to late. “But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea”

Stephen Foster

1 day ago

OK, in the interests of staying on the general topic of questioning authority: suppose for sake of argument we stipulate that there had been among some early Christians a tradition of gathering on Sunday. Clearly the RCC has institutionalized Sunday sacredness AND teaches that the Sabbath should “no longer” be kept—without any Biblical authority for either position—no matter what the history of tradition had been prior to its establishment. Does Elaine, or Erv, or Vernon, or Ron, or anyone actually QUESTION this?

Intellectual curiosity, it would seem, would extend to QUESTION how the institutionalization of the changing of practice and of nomenclature (from the “Sabbath of the Lord” claimed by the “Lord even of the Sabbath” to “the Lord’s day;” for which there is no Biblical authority nor scriptural evidence that the Revelation 1:10 reference was any other day than the Sabbath) juxtaposes with Matthew 5:19; or Daniel 7:25 for that matter.

Ron Corson

1 day ago

I would agree that the RCC institutionalized Sunday as the day of worship, it appears simply by going with the predominate practices. But any church organization seems to start institutionalizing things. After the bishops of the city moved to individual churches and then to the Pastors that we see in most all churches now.

If you problem is the institutionalization of practices I am in full agreement with you. It is the real danger and it is what happens when the church or people in authority start to worry when someone questions their institutionalized tradition. The Adventist church is no exception and when we declared our first set of 27 fundamental beliefs we probably moved one more giant step in the institutionalization process.

One of the big institutionalization behaviors is that you must believe in the Biblical interpretation of the mother church. This greatly destroys the ability to question and the chance of growth for both the person and the church. Questions lead to changes, and aside from the incorrect quote above people do change their minds and they change them more often then many people think. In fact if anyone changed their mind it proves the quote wrong since it said ""We believe before we reason." If that was true then even a seldom change of mind would not happen.

Elaine Nelson

1 day ago

Stephen,

Adventists have similarly "instituted" Sabbath keeping as their most important doctrine. It is the one identifying difference from all other Christian bodies.
Why not answer questions in the same manner in which you would listen to a prospective convert who truly wanted to know the reasons why certain doctrines are important? What are the sources? When did this practice begin?

I thoroughly agree that there is no scriptural evidence for observing Sunday, nor have I ever stated that. Likewise, there is nothing in the New Testament where the Gentile Christians were instructed to BEGIN observing the seventh day, a day that they had never previously observed. Failure to supply such a text sorta removes the sandy foundation on which the seventh day was ever commanded of CHRISTIANS.

---

Trevor Hammond
22 hours ago

Is there a time to question the Sabbath when even the New Testament writers and Jesus Himself makes no reference to such change? The same promise God made to Abraham continues in the Christian Church and obviously the handwriting of ordinances (ceremonial laws) were nailed to the cross by way of Christ fulfilling its significant requirements. Christians therefore are heirs according to the Promise. \[Gal 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.\] \[Gen 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless."\] Obedience to God is a required even in the 'new' covenant which remarkably He makes provision for in Christ as seen in \[Gal 2:20\].

One of the terrible ailments of Laodicea is that they are spiritually blind and therefore unable to discern between truth and error; darkness and light; right and wrong; righteousness and unrighteousness. If the ever was a time when people think they are spiritually rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing - this is such a time: not to QUESTION but to humbly submit to Jesus Christ and receive the remedy He freely offers for our maladies.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it Holy, is a part of God's immutable law, which is a perpetual sign for those who have chosen to follow His precepts and receive the Promise. Obedience to God is required for those who walk in newness of life and this is only made possible by faith in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Just imagine He even provides the means for obedience...and declares us righteous by the same means in Christ.


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Elaine Nelson
20 hours ago

There is absolutely no record in the Bible of the Fourth Commandment being given to anyone other than the Israelites. It explicitly states in the preamble:

"I am Yahweh your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt"
And afterward, God said to Moses, "Tell the SONS OF ISRAEL.." Never were they given to anyone else.

"Yahweh our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. IT WAS NOT WITH OUR FATHERS THAT God made this covenant, but with us, with us who are here, all living today."

Neither Jesus nor the apostles ever changed a day of worship. It gradually became a custom to celebrate, not as a holy day, the day of Resurrection. Eventually, by the fourth century, all Christendom was meeting on this day. History has no record of Christian Jews after the first century, so it became recognized as a special day by simple practice. Just as many customs and traditions begin without ever making an official record of a formal change.

How does one explain the several places where Paul says we are not to judge in "regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day"? Paul was not writing to Jewish Christians but Gentile Christians and in the Jerusalem Controversy it "seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things you will do well."

The ASSUMPTION that Gentile Christians began observing the seventh day as the sabbath has no Bible support whatsoever. Where is the command given to Christians? The Jews still observe the seventh day as their heritage to whom it was given. Can anyone imagine Christianity without the Resurrection? It was only natural for Christians to begin celebrating their whole reason for existence. Please answer this simple question: Would there be a single Christian today if there had been no Resurrection? To return to Judaism while claiming Christianity is a strange mixture; yet Jewish food laws and rules still encumber Adventism.

Trevor Hammond

Heb 8:8 For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, Heb 8:9 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

Heb 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

It is clear that the New Testament Church is referenced as (spiritual) Israel and the Ten Commandments are written on their hearts - Sabbath et al. Those that are still steeped in the religion of Egypt and Babylon won't appreciate the 'brought thee out of Egypt' part.

Elaine Nelson

How can there be a "new covenant" if it is identical to the old covenant? "If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second." "Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant." "For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also." What was the change of law?
"we are "servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death IN LETTERS ENGRAVED ON STONES came with glory...how shall the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory?

If the old covenant was letters engraved on stones, is the new covenant the same? Is the same covenant written on stone the identical one now on the heart? Why?

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**David**  
16 hours ago

Elaine says "There is absolutely no record in the Bible of the Fourth Commandment being given to anyone other than the Israelites". looks like you really...but really need to read your Bible. here this proof that the Sabbath is and was more than just for one nation or one period of time. Jesus himself stated "The Sabbath was made for man"

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**Steve Billiter**  
13 hours ago

Elaine,  
The 4th Commandmenmt was given at creation:  
Gen 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

Gen 2:2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

Gen 2:3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

God, Adam, and Eve, all reasted and enjoyed God's creation according to the commandment

We can have no better lesson book than nature. "Consider the lilies of the field; . . . they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Let the minds of our children be carried up to God. It is for this that He has given us the seventh day and left it as a memorial of His created works. {CG 55.1}

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**Bill Garber**  
13 hours ago

Of course, David, reading the rest of the conversation that includes 'The Sabbath was made for man' reveals it to be a conversation between Jews with regard to how Jews were to 'keep' the Sabbath. There is nothing in the conversation suggesting that Jesus recognized the Sabbath as predating Judaism or was universal. Rather he is addressing Sabbath in terms of a Jew, himself, and of Jewish leaders who were using the Sabbath to abuse their fellow Jews. Jesus could just as well have said, the Sabbath was made for me. I wasn't made for the Sabbath. And his hearers would have felt equally insulted.

Indeed the phrase, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath' may well be, indeed inferentially appears to be referring to exactly the introduction of the Sabbath at the launch of the Jewish nation. I must admit that in following up here, I was a little surprised not to have
found the word Sabbath in Genesis, though I'm sure Elaine knew that. Contrary to how I felt, Sabbath as a word is not mentioned until Exodus 16:23. Oh, and for what it is worth, the word Sabbath does not appear in Revalation, either.

In the spirit of not letting old-earthers go without a challenge, your sport, David, Elaine seems to be doing quite well not letting theological inferentialist get buy with assumptions equally deserving to be challenged.

That said, the two of your would be most interesting dinner guests at the same table. I'd pick up the tab!

Stephen Foster 12 hours ago

Ron,

Again on the subject of questioning institutional authority, or the authority of institutions, isn’t it what things are being institutionalized that matters? To the extent that any church dares to institutionalize a man-made tradition by first rationalizing said tradition to the point that it teaches the tradition as doctrine; that would obviously be a "problem."

Which brings us to Elaine; who has a problem with Adventists upholding the Biblically sanctioned, God-ordained and sanctified Sabbath of the Lord—in the face of tradition to the contrary. The “Sabbath was made for Jews” argument flies in the face of Jesus’ teaching. But of course this is further rationalized by claiming that Paul’s contextual letters contradict and supersede his Lord’s clear and timeless instruction, which they do not; or by claiming that Jesus’ reference to “man” applies only to Jews—as if He Himself is only Lord of the Jews—which is of course patently ridiculous.

Trevor Hammond 12 hours ago

Bill Garber is saying that because cigarettes isn't mentioned in the Bible either, so it's a good argument for the Christian Church to condone smoking. Huh?

(Are some of you guys saying 'the boat (sabbath) sank'?)

1] God did REST on the seventh day of the Creation account in Genesis:

Gen 2:2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.

Gen 2:3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

2] Take note - just past Revelation there is a new heaven and earth and Guess what day we will worship on? I'll give you a clue: it starts with S. (but it ain't Sunday)

Isa 66:22 "For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain.

Isa 66:23 From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to
worship before me, declares the LORD.

3] Here's Jesus (a Sabbath Keeper Himself and the Creator who rested on the Seventh day too) talking about some time in the future which is obviously after his death and resurrection. Matt 24:20 Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.

The Sabbath was NEVER done away with, although many, even today, try their level best to SINK it. It is obviously not something unbelievers are keen on. Only those searching for Truth see the SENSE of what the Sabbath is all about (seventh day rest / no. 4 in the immutable Ten Commandments / a perpetual sign). It WILL BE the final test that will divide the true worshippers of God Almighty and those who opt for the spurious counterfeit man made religion of ancient Babylon and Egypt ... and now R0m3. --- ?

In the Christ of the Holy Sabbath

T

Ranald McLeish 10 hours ago

Am I to understand that there are not only Adventists who are quite happy to do away with the Sabbath, there are SdA's who are quite happy to do away with the Lord of the Sabbath. The surprizeis, or is it a surprize, this is apparently the current teaching of the SdA Church to day. ie. Not only has a Papal host killed Christ and replaced the Heavenly host, the Papacy's persecuting rule will continue for 2,300 years!!!

While the debate continues regarding the Sabbath, I am surprized all remain quiet regarding these new teachings.

One senior minister has responded as follows:-

If that is the case, when is Michael going to stand up, or is He there with his hands tied behind his back?
Or it may be that the 2300 days is just beginning and we got the prophecy wrong !!! Now that is a thought that could blow the Big boys away.

Vernon P. Wagner 5 hours ago

If a 7th Day Baptist had not joined the Whites, would they have advocated switching from their Mehtodist roots to observing the Jewish sabbath? I'm not knocking the sabbath thing, but it WAS given to the Jews. Watching Jews observe it in Israel is simply beautiful. The Whites decided to keep dietary laws, tithing, and the 7th day while ignoring the rest. In what way did EGW's decision differ from that of Joseph Smith who chose to advocate polygamy?

In '07, I toured Israel with a group of non-SDA Christians. We shared communion in front of the Garden Tomb. The blessing we all felt at that time & place can't be fully described.

Elaine Nelson 2 hours ago
Vernon, you are reminding us of what many know: the FOUR unique Adventist "pillars" are all directly from Judaism, and none from the NT:

1. Sabbath
2. Unclean meats
3. Tithing
4. Sanctuary doctrine, including the interpretation of Daniel's prophecies.

Now, if we are Christians, isn't it strange that the SDA doctrines not held by any other Christian body are directly from the Hebrew Bible?

Bill Garber has also asked a question: where, in the entire Hebrew Bible, is there a command or account of anyone observing sabbath until several thousand years later at Sinai? To claim a consistent "chain" from creation has absolutely no substantiation. Such a claim in a student paper would demand documentation or receive a failing grade.

Bill Garber

Trevor, I would love for you to join Elaine and David for dinner. I'd sure pick up the tab. You are a master of inferences. I suppose, truth be told, we all are, and without choice in this regard.

In any event, at dinner I'd be interested in hearing the three of you converse about a more pressing as well as personal matter, soteriology. Sort this out, and quite possibly the other items that draw such attention of those posting here, no matter the original topic, will lose their urgency ... or not as the case may be.

Perhaps we could start by asking, What role do we allow the Seventh-day Adventist church as a church and as a compendium of beliefs to play in our personal understanding of soteriology for us individually and for humanity in the main? To what extent does this, rather than 'plain scripture,' determin what we 'find' in scripture?

That said, it may be more a social than a soteriological attraction. Despite the manifest differences here, there are undeniable attractions, if yet undefined.
Progressive Neolegalism: Back to the Future of Adventism

Submitted Aug 18, 2011
By Nate Schilt

I entered both adolescence and adulthood in the 60’s. I knew the difference between right and wrong, and I knew what that difference looked like in real life. Even shades of gray were clearly defined. We didn’t have T.V. growing up in Denver, but when we made the weekly drive to Boulder to visit grandparents, we were allowed to watch certain programs like ‘The Andy Griffith Show’ and ‘Make Room for Daddy’. ‘Lassie’ and ‘Seahunt,’ were strictly forbidden - too much suspense - and ‘Leave it to Beaver’…well, I’m not sure what was wrong with that. I just knew my mother disapproved. Perhaps she saw it as television’s version of an ‘entry’ drug. I know she suspected – correctly it turns out – that T.V. itself was an entry drug to secular culture. But her fleshly weakness found the benign wit of Danny Thomas and Uncle Tonoose irresistible. And so began the downhill slide of a boy raised on industrial strength Adventism. Of course the Beatles and Elvis Presley were way off limits. But then so were Andy Williams and Perry Como.

Along came the ‘70’s, and the enlightenment dawned on Adventism. During the next three decades, “I’m not okay, and you’re even more not okay” was replaced with the Gospel of love, tolerance, and even acceptance. Adventist progressivism began to gently and constructively challenge not only the traditional interpretation of the Church’s sources of authority, but the authoritativeness of the sources themselves, prying the Church loose from its militant, paranoid sectarianism.

Over time, not only were guitars and drums welcomed to church platforms, but listening to rock music and going to the movies ceased being occasions for adding names to prayer lists. Despite progressive whining that the Church hasn’t moved far enough fast enough, the subculture of Adventism has “progressed” dramatically over the past 40-50 years.

But I have noticed something strange in the SDA progressive liberation movement. The sins of listening to Elvis and attending Beatles’ concerts have simply been replaced by the sins of listening to Rush Limbaugh, watching Glenn Beck, or being in favor of Proposition 8 (For non-Californians, this was the proposition passed by California voters to define marriage as between one man and one woman.).

So what gives? How did those who have led a movement that prides itself on having pushed the Church towards greater tolerance and diversity of opinion become so non-diverse, judgmental, and condemning? How did the Gospel of freedom, preached by progressives to release Adventism from the chains of traditional legalism, become a guilt-inducing weapon of choice for Christians whose politics leaned left? Having experienced considerable success in freeing Adventists from the bonds of their voluntary baptismal vows, progressives now seek to bind them by compulsory legal obligations and political sentiments to a new kind of righteousness by works – all in the name of Christ. The war against legalism, it turns out, really wasn’t about legalism per se. It was simply a battle to clear the way for a new political canon of Church authority.

I’d love to gain some insight and understanding from those who don’t see a double-standard here. Why is it okay to use scripture as foundational authority to compel legislative and regulatory implementation of Left wing public morality (can anyone say theocracy?), but not okay to use scripture as authority for implementation of the Church’s moral and religious beliefs? Is it unreasonable to use the word “neolegalist” to describe those who urge the Church to adopt political
agendas and beliefs on the authority of God’s Word?

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<th>Pat Travis</th>
<th>4 days ago</th>
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<td>Nathan, I believe it is essential to separate the secular/political from the theological, as well as the terms applying to both, when discussing your premise. The difference between &quot;conservative and liberal/progressive&quot; theological issues (not defined by SDA terms) is primarily related to one's view of scripture and inspiration. In the secular realm, in the US, I would suggest &quot;originally liberals and now conservatives&quot; choose limited government as defined by the Constitution as did Jefferson and Madison...vs. the &quot;progressives favoring more government presence and provisions now known as &quot;liberal&quot; contrary to the 18th century meaning with the associated view of the constitution as a &quot;living document&quot; to be interpreted at will apart from &quot;original meanings.&quot; In a way both in the secular and theological realm, &quot;progressives&quot; feel at liberty to change the foundational authorities as societies perceived &quot;needs and understandings&quot; change over time. I suggest &quot;moral issues&quot; regarding secular application must also be seen in light of 18th and 19th century held morality acceptably enforced by the state regarding the &quot;last 6 commandments.&quot; If we don't keep our meanings and definitions to an understandable meaning you end up with yet another layer of confusion. I can be a theological conservative and appear to be a &quot;liberal SDA&quot; regarding personal practices. A &quot;conservative SDA&quot; may practice all the oughts of SDA practices and in fact be a &quot;theological liberal&quot; who follows tradition and a less than orthodox view of scripture. This lack of clarity in what we are talking about and going from one realm to another simply adds another layer of smoke and confusion...in my view. If I am grasping you properly, I have always felt that when the federal government provided in ways the church agreed with you would quickly see the &quot;wall of separation&quot; miraculously disappear...not realizing that is the ultimate modus operandi, I suggest, to a control that reduces choices ultimately religious one's. regards, pat</td>
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<th>Preston Foster</th>
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<td>Wow. My head is spinning -- from the spin.</td>
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I thought political conservatives were against victimhood and such. Apparently, it makes a comfortable cloak for keeping your views safe and warm.

Nate, you answered your own question -- re: the so-called "double standard."

It is perfectly reasonable to use all means (i.e., scripture or other moral sources) as the foundational authority to influence others to accept a public morality. The key words are "influence" and "public." It is both unacceptable and, in my opinion, unconstitutional to establish the scripture or Church as the authority to compel compliance to a church standard. The key words there are "establish," "authority" and "compel."

The difference is that in the former case, you are saying "Here are reasons why we should consider adopting this (fill-in-the-blank) public policy. Included in these reasons are these moral touch points, which you may or may not consider to be valid or compelling.

In the latter case you are saying, "Scripture and the Church (BTW, just which 'Church' were you referring to?) are authoritative in our society, we must enforce their agenda, through law." There is where theocracy lies.

No where, do I find anyone calling watching Beck or listening to Rush "sin." I'm sure you purposefully overstated your case to dramatize your point. Or, perhaps, you have simply deified them yourself, making political opposition to them sound like sin to you.

But I am happy to leave this to a public referendum: who is more likely to establish a theocracy in America -- Governor Perry or President Obama?

Really.

---

**Pat Travis**

Preston

Theocracy isn't going to be the issue, I suggest, as before with you. How the state views freedom of religion if it violates the states or church-state overtone alliance view...example Hitlers "German progressive church" and "state rule."

Really.

pat

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**Mark Bauer**

Nate I do appreciate your thoughts and comments and it is obvious that you have spent some time thinking about your positions, but if you are saying that there is ANYTHING redeemable about the loud arrogant bigoted trash talk of Glenn Beck or Rush or any of the other loudmouthed idiots cramming our TV and radio waves these days, then I have to respectfully disagree. In fact I think that you can easily make a case that these idiots, who are only in it to fatten their own pockets btw, are responsible for a large part of the dysfunction that now paralyzes our political system of government. Regardless of their positions, some of which I can even agree with, the way they
demonize all who disagree with them and the way they foster "us vs them" is so opposite the way Christ dealt with His enemies that I don't know how any "Christian" can bring themself to admire, much less follow these folks. They have turned America ugly. And the comment above about Rick Perry turning the US into a Theocracy is not off base. He is an energized version of W Bush who can speak the English language better but is at least as dangerous to our health and well being as W was. Does that mean the left or democratic side of politics or the progressive side of the church has it all together? Of course not. But it is easy to see how we slipped into this current ugly morass that faces both the country and the church, and it starts with how we have decided to treat those who disagree with us as ugly worthless no good evil people. Instead of demonizing, we need some old style leadership like the kind that took place in a gentler age where opposing politicians and opposing leaders of faith actually got to know each other and spent time socially with each other. It is hard to hate when that standard is upheld.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preston Foster</th>
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<td>Pat,</td>
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<td>I know we (mostly Stephen and you) have been around the barn several turns on this, so there's no sense in going there again. The issue may indeed be the &quot;church - state alliance,&quot; which, plausibly, can come from the right or the left. However, I was responding to Nate's concern about the possible formation of an American theocracy. On that matter, I'll stick with my &quot;bet.&quot; Cheers!</td>
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<th>Pat Travis</th>
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<td>Cheers to you Preston,</td>
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<td>Sorry confused you primarily with Stephen on this issue. I'll stick with this bet...whatever religious backing &quot;forms&quot; won't represent orthodox Protestant Christianity nor a &quot;conservative reading of the constitution&quot;...but a left/right compromise for the &quot;good of the nation and world.&quot; Cheers, pat</td>
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<th>Stephen Foster</th>
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<td>Perhaps it would help if you were to provide examples of what you mean by “Left wing public morality.” That is, what area(s) of “public morality” would be considered (by you) to be “Left wing”?</td>
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I would caution that labels can be hazardous to the cause of gaining “insight and understanding,” however; as you may discover.

Some of us view the efforts to undermine the historic doctrinal beliefs of Seventh-day Adventism, and the efforts to demonize those who would use Caesar’s tax receipts to help feed, clothe, and medically care for the poorest among us, and the efforts of religious people to gain control of the levers of civil power in America, to be part of the same religio-political movement; whether those involved with any one of these efforts realize it or not.

Finally, I would suggest that “industrial strength Adventism,” some of which I too have been exposed to in my youth (in varying degrees of potency), should never have been confused with Adventist doctrine or Christianity.

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Elaine Nelson 3 days ago

Much of this Adventism that labels "conservative" and "liberal" are limited to the U.S. as political descriptions. Liberal or conservative would be entirely different in most of the middle eastern nations, and is different in Europe.

Most Adventists have little knowledge of the U.S. Constitution and how it should function. How many Christians believe that the Constitution declares that this is a "Christian nation"? The marriage of Christianity with U.S. patriotism is too well known to elaborate. Politicians are interrogated about their religious beliefs and most are eager to comply, regardless of how they practice or their plans if elected to office that are at cross purposes with the First Amendment. Wrapping themselves in the U.S. flag and Christianity, is almost expected of electable politicians.

---

Pat Travis 3 days ago

This is the compromised form I expect in any "church state" combine.

Grenz in "The millennial Maze", IVP., says it this way, “As the nineteenth century unfolded, church centered optimism was replaced by an optimism that focused on society. The dream for the truly reformed church was transformed into a blueprint for a new world order…when theological liberalism exchanged original sin for human perfectability and replaced Christ as our substitute with Jesus as the model for the new human, the triumph of this-worldliness was complete and the way was open for the church to join the secularized millennial vision. The flowering of the utopian optimism of theological liberalism came with the social gospel movement. The salvation of souls gave way to the salvation of society.”

regards,
pat

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Kevin Riley 3 days ago

Having only recently gotten into the whole history of Christianity in the US, the connections between theology and social policy were a revelation to me. When our church started, most people in the US were perfectionists of one sort or another. There may have been arguments over the tools to use - religion, health, etc - but it seems no one seriously disagreed with the idea
that perfection was both desirable and achievable. Coming from a culture where such optimism has always been looked upon as somewhat odd and naive, it helped me to understand our history as a church. The liberal/fundamentalist split was not about whether perfection was achievable, but over the best way to do so. While we have now moved to a cultural position where perfection is seen as an illusion, I am not convinced that religion - of any kind - is so far removed from culture that a common cause for a perceived necessary 'improvement' in society could not be formed rather quickly between church and secular authorities from any side of politics.

Preston Foster 3 days ago

Pat,

I think that's a pretty good bet.

Preston

Jim Miller 3 days ago

Where I attend church there is absolutely no legalism against listening to Rush or Glen. If anything, the legalism questions whether a "liberal" (anyone who is not an extreme conservative) can also be a Christian.

I am blissfully unaware of Glen Beck's approach, but there is a HUGE problem with Rush Limbaugh for anyone who appreciates Biblical values. Rush is a gossip. He enjoys malice and he speaks for those who enjoy malice. He spends at least half of his time making fun of names and making other personal attacks unrelated to the issue at hand. He even makes fun of personal appearance. This is from someone who is both obese and on his fourth wife. He lives in a glass house, like most gossips, and gets away with throwing stones because other gossip-minded people are delighted with his material.

There are sober-minded people who speak for conservative values. I just haven't seen them discussed here.

Jim

Elaine Nelson 3 days ago

"There are sober-minded people who speak for conservative values."

Names, please.

George Tichy 3 days ago

I would love to see an example...

Nathan Schilt 3 days ago

My point, folks, wasn't to get into a debate over which side is right in the political debates, but to inquire why those who have been accusing the Church of legalism and judgmentalism seem quite
comfortable with arguing that the causes supported by the Left - GLBT rights, universal health care, illegal immigration, wealth redistribution, etc., are Christian obligations. As an example, John McClarty, former editor of AToday, and certainly an adversary of legalism, stated in an editorial around the Spring of 2003, that no follower of Christ would support the Iraq war. I see the Adventist Left as being highly legalistic when it comes to Christian obligations vis a vis social and political agendas, so I'm just looking for a principled justification for selective legalism.

From what I have read of Preston and Stephen's opinions, I think they are actually quite consistent in the way they see the roles of Government and the Church. They favor an authoritarian, activist model in both spheres - one that knows the Truth, speaks the Truth, and promotes practices and beliefs that will encourage/coerce citizens and members to do the Truth. I am really questioning those who use the Bible to fight against righteousness by works in the Church, but use the same scriptures to promote righteousness by works when it comes to political issues.

Stephen Foster 3 days ago

C’mon Nathan, authoritarians?! The fact that we do NOT want those with overtly religious agendas controlling secular civil government, or that we might prefer “Caesar’s” tax burden to fall more on the upper income earners than on the middle income earners, or that we may also prefer that his tax revenues go toward workplace and product safety, and commercial fair play regulation, and/or to assist the poorer segments of our population, may qualify us as “leftists” in your view—but authoritarians?

Likewise those who believe that the world was created by God in six literal earth days, and that He ceased creative activities on this planet, in this solar system, on the seventh day and immediately set it apart as holy, and later commanded those who would claim Him to rest on that day in commemoration of His creative acts, and believe that He is returning to take those who claim Him (as Savior and Lord) to paradise with Him, may in fact be fundamentalists—but is that authoritarianism?

Labels are problematic. Thus I take issue with your characterization of my opinion; unless of course you are saying that actually believing that the Bible is authoritative, and believing EGW to have been prophetically gifted, is the very definition of authoritarianism.

Preston Foster 3 days ago

I guess Nathan missed, "Nailed to the Cross," an article dedicated to promoting freedom from the law and freedom in Christ -- the polar opposite of authoritarianism. But, then, the facts would interfere with a skewed generalization that simplifies the point of view of those who think differently.

austudent 3 days ago

Nate has a very good point which is that some on the left are becoming just like that which they have been fighting against. The problem with humans is that we have an us vs. them mindset (ingroup vs. outgroup). Those who were considered "progressive" in the church united as an
"ingroup" among themselves in challenging the traditionalism of the church.

Now however, that the "progressives" have gained some victories they are going further in their focus moving beyond religious ideological unity to political ideological unity. This is pushing political conservatives out of the "progressive" camp. It's easy to hear their replies posted quite numerously above here. They basically resort to attacking the merits, beliefs, and ideas of political conservatives, and become extremely judgmental I might add. Essentially progressives who attack fans of Beck & Limbaugh (regardless of whether these men are extreme) are doing the same thing they themselves hated: creating a rigid ideological standard.

One can speak against the abuses of political conservatives without attacking those who are themselves politically conservative. Acceptance and tolerance must extend both ways. Otherwise progressives will become just like their counterparts with the only difference being which issues they cut off "the other" from.

No Fool 3 days ago

To be honest, I don't follow the argument. The term "legalism" doesn't appear to be properly applied to people who reject simplistic, reductionist interpretations of moral or political issues—arguing rather that these issues need to be addressed based on fundamental principles of fairness and reciprocity. In fact, this is virtually the opposite of legalism.

Further, the use of "righteousness" to describe a desired political outcome relies on a parallel between the religious and political spheres which simply isn't there. I know what Christian righteousness, salvation, and grace are; what political righteousness, salvation, and grace are, I haven't a clue.

Connie Severin 3 days ago

Elaine - you want some sober-minded conservatives to discuss? How about Charles Krauthammer, Thomas Sowell, William F. Buckley, William Bennett, and many hundreds of others. Rush is an entertainer with humor that has a bit more Don Rickles to it than Uncle Milty. Glenn Beck is sort of beyond description (I personally think he's around the bend, but that's just me).

Nathan, I tend to agree with you that people who decried legalism back in the day seem to have the more restrictive approach today, wishing to regulate every aspect of people's lives (salt in restaurants, toys in Happy Meals, dust particles on farms) while rigidly enforcing political correctness in thought and speech.

Elaine Nelson 3 days ago

I prefer Thomas Friedman, David Brooks, Fareed Zakira, Kathleen Parker, to name a few. William Buckley has been dead a few years so has no comment on current events. I never listen to Faux News and only on John Stewart or Stephen Colbert do I see the Faux News as only their irony can show. I read 5 daily newspapers, 4 weekly news magazines (Time, Newsweek, The Week, the...
Economist), all very sober in news reporting. PBS nightly TV gives in-depth news rather than news bites. Only by reading and listening to a variety of news is one able to get a more complete analysis.

George Tichy
3 days ago

Elaine, Did any journalist ask you what do you read?
It seems that you learned from Sarah Palin, and were very well prepared for the occasion....

Jim Miller
3 days ago

I might add Paul Krugman (did I get that right?) as a sober conservative.
I might add on gossip that we all live in glass houses, that is one reason why we should not gossip. Gossip is corrosive to the person gossiping and to those who listen / read that gossip. It is not legalism to warn against gossip.
Jim

Elaine Nelson
3 days ago

Yes, I always read Krugman. His is the most sincere and cogent economic position, along with Warren Buffett. Too bad that no one seems to be listening to him.

Ron Corson
2 days ago

That is funny Elaine, as Krugman recently said we should manufacture a threat of alien invasion to help the economy. I guess the wars in Iraq, Afganastane and now Libia are enough. When I hear people praise the Political Progressive Krugman I sudder, and Jim Miller thinks Krugman is a sober conservative!

Stephen Foster
2 days ago

Hooray! Ron Corson and I finally agree on something…Paul Krugman is not a conservative.

Ron Corson
2 days ago

Afghanistan Libyan. The stupid new Firefox does not work with the google toolbar and I lost my spell checker in these boxes. I am lost!

Kevin Riley
2 days ago

If you get "Add-on Campatibility Reporter" from the list of add-ons for Mozilla, it will allow you to use your google toolbar. I am thinking much kinder thoughts of Mozilla and google since I did so.
Ron Corson 2 days ago

thankx but it is not working at all either google toolbar spell check or the firefox spell check

I guess I will have to use ie till they get their act together. This is the first firefox update that really does not work well for me

austudent 3 days ago

George Will and Peggy Noonan are pretty "sober conservatives" as well.

Mark Bauer 3 days ago

Nate, just curious, in hindsight do you believe McClarty was wrong about the Iraq war? Was it a necessary thing for America to do? And if we had stood up against it more at the time would this country be better off now? It seems pretty clear to me that it was a total fiasco, both in human lives and in the financial cost which we will bear for generations. It just does not seem like the sort of thing Jesus would champion... just saying!

Nathan Schilt 17 hours ago

Thoughtful questions and comments, Mark. Of course I do not believe that political punditry of any sort is "redeemable". My question is why some Christians fight religious wars with righteous zeal on the political battlefield, but demand tolerance and love from the church on all nonpolitical religious issues. Why is it okay to make people feel morally judged and condemned by God for their political views, but not okay to make people feel judged and condemned by God for their personal moral behavior and religious views?

In answer to your question about John McClarty, I think he was deeply wrong in his assertion that no follower Christ could support the Iraq war. He had similar views regarding the invasion of Afghanistan. In hindsight, I believe both wars were a bad idea, particularly in their execution, even though I was strongly supportive at the time. This is way off-topic, so I will resist the temptation to go into my reasons. Suffice it to say that toppling a loathsome dictator or regime in order to pave the way for political "self-determination" by religious fanatics, doesn't seem like a good reason to go to war or support revolution, a lesson I fear we will shortly have to relearn from the harvest that was seeded by the Arab Spring.

Elaine Nelson 3 days ago

Show me what a person reads and I can tell you his beliefs.

Bill Cork 2 days ago

Oh, this progressive legalism extends further. Look at the recycling fundamentalists, and the Global warming fundamentalists, who look at the car you drive, the clothes you wear, the garbage you
throw out, etc., and judge you accordingly. Look at how they demand agreement on all sorts of issues--health care, homelessness, international policy, saying, "If you followed the real teachings of Jesus, you would adopt X or Y position." And on this webpage, and certain others, if you accept belief in Jesus, if you quote Scripture as authoritative, if you have any fondness for Ellen White, how do the denunciations fly! Someone mentions enjoying Steps to Christ and they start throwing Walter Rea at them. And they do tend to be of a certain generation. Is it any wonder why young people flock to GYC ...?

"Family Ties" has finally reached Adventism.

Connie Severin

Elaine, I can't match you on number of extracurricular reading material, though my variety is perhaps a little broader. For the left I usually read most of Time Magazine (we subscribe) and Liberty. For the right I prefer National Review and the Spectator and read most of them. Discover and a couple of trade journals. I catch assorted articles and news from our local paper plus NY Times, and despite what you claim about them "Faux" News - it's more balanced than Stuart or Colbert. At any rate, I'm not here to brag about my reading material, and the liberals who imply conservatives aren't particularly intelligent do so at their own risk.

Back to the topic of Adventism and liberalism, the biggest problem I see is that liberalism is being generous with other people's money. It allows one to ignore the human problems around them, nigh even prohibits it if you present any religious aspect with your help. If "the government" takes care of those people, you don't have to. If the health department decrees you can't take food to the park for the homeless; hey, you're off the hook. But wait. You're a "good" person and you really want those homeless people taken care of. So you vote Democrat, and propose more and more "helpful" programs which cost twice as much as the church versions and don't feed the people with any of that unhelpful Christianity stuff.

I'll admit to exaggerating for effect in the above paragraph, but if it makes you just a little uncomfortable, could there be truth in it?

Elaine Nelson

Sorry, if I were made uncomfortable by such trite statements rather than laughing, it might be a problem.

Stewart and Colbert are comedians, but they do satirize the news, which points up the idiocy of both sides, as they often do: they are equal "skewers" or pompous politicians and they have unlimited supply for scripts.

As far a "liberalism being geneous with othe people's money" which party got the U.S. involved in two of the longest wars in U.S. history, and the costliest? Who's money has paid for that?

I lived through the Great Depression, and am not anxious to experience another, but I know how to survive being extremely poor, so am in a much better position than those who only always had plenty.

Living longer gives one a historical perspective that contemporary news can never match. History
recycles every 20 years or so.

George Tichy
2 days ago

And who was "generous" with the surplus left by Clinton, and delivered a government in deep "red" to the present administration?
Let's not even start trying to find out who protects the middle class and who protects only the richest and care less about the middle class. (Well, it's all evident anyway, isn't it?...)

Ron Corson
21 hours ago

It was not a surplus it was a projected surplus and it was very much related to the Republican takeover of the house and Senate. But today it should point out the danger of the 10 year projection. They are illusions and they are enforceable by no one. The one exception is baseline budgeting which includes a constant increase in the costs of the government so that every year it grows by 5-7 percent. Thus the recent budget cuts that supposedly cut 2 trillion dollars will end up in 10 years that we will be another 7 trillion in debt instead of the 9 trillion increase in debt just from the baseline budget increases. Of course if during the Clinton Administration we really had a surplus we could have spent it on paying off the debt. but as I said the surplus did not exist. Unless they have a balanced budget they is no hope to pay off any debt.

Elaine Nelson
19 hours ago

Which president was in office when Afghanistan and Iraq were invaded in the longest war in U.S. history? When is there a projected "ending" for Afghanistan, and how much have both those wars indebted us? While the U.S. has policed the world, the other nations have cared for their own first, still remembering the awful costs in lives and money from two world wars which never involved fighting on U.S. soil.

The talk of our military "protecting our freedom" is a big lie. When and where was our freedom at stake since WW II? If the U.S. does not develop a less military stance to all the world's problems, we will soon be defense heavy and citizen poor. The U.S. is building infrastructure in Afghanistan and Iraq while there are similar needs here in the U.S. that cannot now be built because of lack of funding. The DOD is the most wasteful government organization with apparent unlimited funds. With all the private contractors who have been paid "no-bid contracts" no one has a good account of where and how those funds have been spent.

Pat Travis
2 days ago

Isn't it amazingly apparent why "socio-economic politics" has no place in the actual SS and worship services?
I simply refuse to go there "at church" and attempt to stop it if within my ability past generalities.

No political or economic system performs holistically like the OT theocracy did. It was land based with sabbatical years. It had "private property" and "limited the kings/governments rights." We are working in the area of incomplete applications trying to make certain "justice" from the uncertain
conditions.

Many try to make the "planet in rebellion" the continuing hope for utopia.

What is extremely apparent today is that governments, Zombie Banks of all nations and many individuals are overleaveraged. They all have been operating on false assumptions. Promises made that are unrealistic with no one with the integrity to demand financial accountability without either central banks inflating the currency to cover governments and financial institutions or demanding more taxes to attempt to accomplish the same.

regards,

pat

Nathan Schilt

23 hours ago

Let me see if I can reframe the question without using conservative/liberal labels:

Some Adventists use the Bible, and even Ellen White, to establish moral obligations when it comes to extending the benefits of citizenship to non-citizens; economic policies that favor government confiscation and redistribution of private wealth and earnings; weakening of U.S. military power; and promoting social policies that undermine traditional family values.

These same Adventists have no compunctions about using their interpretation of the Bible, and even Ellen White, to judge and condemn Adventists such as me, who read the Bible differently. No one has ever made me feel more judged and condemned by God for my beliefs or behavior than I feel from those who urge that the Bible is an authoritative source of political values. Mind you, I understand how they get there. If your political positions are the result of divine revelation (Muslim theology), how can you negotiate with or ignore God's will? But if that is your position, how can you possibly condemn as judgmental the standards of a small Church which idiosyncratically uses Scripture to establish an authoritative fence around its subculture? You can certainly argue that the Church is wrong, but how can you condemn it for being judgmental?

Preston, if you haven't heard Adventists use the word sinful to describe the views of Glenn Beck and Rush Limbaugh, it's only because that adjective is too mild for those who vilify these pundits. You argue for a distinction between "church standards" and "public policy". It seems to me that this distinction begs the question. What makes a belief a "church standard", and why is it okay to use Scriptural authority to judge and condemn as evil the political beliefs of others, but not okay to be judgmental when it comes to church standards and beliefs? If the Church politically engages to oppose laws restricting commercial activity on Sunday, or to support laws penalizing/restricting smoking and alcohol use, would it be impermissibly using standards to shape public policy or permissibly using Biblical principles to oppose or support a public policy argument? No wonder your head is spinning!

Pat Travis

22 hours ago

Nathan,
I think your "complaints" are most valid. Those of "political progressive views" do judge those that oppose ever bit as much as do the "religious right who aso are teapartiers."

Cindy Tutsch's recent article of WWJD is an obvious example. If I disagree with Cindy's "Jesus' view" where does that leave me? An obvious unbeliever?

While we banter about on this site, I feel the church organization should have a very limited role in politics and then only if a very "explicit" biblical argument exist for it's presence. This discussion exhibits the reason why it creates unnecessary conflict on non-specific public involvement in the political process.

regards,
pat

Trevor Hammond
21 hours ago

The article says: "I knew the difference between right and wrong, and I knew what that difference looked like in real life. Even shades of gray were clearly defined."
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If spiritual discernment was so sharp in those bygone days, then something was done right back then, more than what we see today. So what has changed? The Bible is still the same. The Church today is still in the clear majority fundamentally the same. The SOP inspired writings are the same. It seems that the world around us has drastically changed us rather than we changing the world (typical Israelite golden calf syndrome). Secular political and cultural agendas have consumed our 'old time religion' faith. To add to our woes, destructive theologians and academics have offered a spin-doctored fly by night opiate religion to the masses which has been engineered by political and cultural mandates seeking to gain turf in the church/state divide.
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Some say "we need a new coat for every man". Others say "we need a new man in every coat". What's wrong with the church saying "we need a new coat for every man AND a new man in every coat". I don't mind if my taxes are used for the poor, the sick and the needy - it's not just 'other peoples money' - it's mine too! ...Although I'm apolitical myself and don't even vote, I realise that we (the church) are part of a Political System which just cannot be avoided especially within a culture that heavily encroaches on our Christian Beliefs and Practices. A Total Onslaught if you please...
-----
Acts 20:35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

T

Kevin Riley
10 hours ago
I think what has changed is that many SDAs have realised that what we saw as black and white in some cases was not. Many have come to realise that there is a section in the middle that is grey, and that finding where to draw the line is not easy. I believe that process was good for the church, but I also believe we lost confidence in some things that we shouldn't have lost confidence in. When I was a kid there were a number of people who said of the Bible and Ellen White (and often the church) "If it/she/we are wrong about even one thing, then it/she/we may as well be wrong about everything". An illogical thing to say in many ways, but I suspect many among us, having realised that we did indeed make an error or two, now are afraid that we may indeed not be entirely correct about anything.

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Kevin Riley
8 hours ago

I don't know that it was ever an official position, but it is certainly fairly well-known among long-term SDAs. I know it was never EGW's position, but the last person I heard say it also said "I don't care what Ellen White said, I believe she was infallible". Logic, or the lack thereof, does not stop something being widely held. There are many things held, often quite widely, among us that have never been the subject of official debate or any official pronouncement. Remember, we are only just, as of the last GC, looking at what ordination is. We have never been a church for spending a great amount of time debating anything that was not so urgent it was likely to destroy the church. I'd suggest you do a bit of research in the online GC archives if you want to know if the sentiment ever appeared in print.

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Elaine Nelson
3 hours ago

Waiting for the "official" pronouncement of the church to define church doctrines is an exercise in futility. Have you not read the 1919 Bible Conference transcripts? That would be a good place to begin.

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Trevor Hammond
2 hours ago

Here's Randall Herbert Balmer's take on the disastrous negative influence that politics has had on religion in America, taken from an article entitled 'Jesus is not a Republican':

- Indeed, the most effective and vigorous religious movements in American history have
identified with the downtrodden and have positioned themselves on the fringes of society rather than at the centers of power. The Methodists of the 19th century come to mind, as do the Mormons. In the 20th century, Pentecostalism, which initially appealed to the lower classes and made room for women and people of color, became perhaps the most significant religious movement of the century. The leaders of the religious right have led their sheep astray from the gospel of Jesus Christ to the false gospel of neoconservative ideology and into the maw of the Republican Party. And yet my regard for the flock and my respect for their integrity is undiminished. Ultimately it is they who must reclaim the gospel and rescue us from the distortions of the religious right. The Bible I read tells of freedom for captives and deliverance from oppression. It teaches that those who refuse to act with justice or who neglect the plight of those less fortunate have some explaining to do. But the Bible is also about good news. It promises redemption and forgiveness, a chance to start anew and, with divine help, to get it right. My evangelical theology assures me that no one, not even Karl Rove or James Dobson, lies beyond the reach of redemption, and that even a people led astray can find their way home.

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My point is that Christianity in the West, including Protestantism, is somehow been 'controlled' by the political 'big wigs' who use money, power and systems to their advantage thereby eroding the very tenets of our faith. (Please note that I'm not even talking Freemasonry which plays a major part in this and of their very real active participatory role these in all of this politicking). The 'progressive' faction within Adventism shows that our church has also been a casualty in this rat race.

T
Foot Washing: an Irrelevant and Antiquated Ritual?

Submitted Aug 15, 2011
By Cindy Tutsch

Speaking hither and yon on behalf of the White Estate, I’ve noticed some trends in youth ministry. Indeed, some of these trends extend beyond youth ministry. One such new wrinkle in Adventism is to conduct Communion, or the Lord’s Supper, without the formerly requisite washing of each other’s feet.

So, what gives? Is foot washing before Communion optional for Adventists? Is it just an archaic, old-fangled practice, inconvenient to old and young alike, and wholly irrelevant as a precursor to partaking in the symbols of Christ’s death? Or is the foot washing an essential and biblical practice?

Foot washing history in a nutshell: The night before Christ’s crucifixion He and His disciples celebrated the Passover in an upper chamber of a dwelling in Jerusalem. Undoubtedly, Jesus was hoping to share words of warning and comfort about the events soon to transpire so that His friends would not be devastated by His imminent trial and untimely death. But the soon-to-be church leaders were embroiled in a serious power struggle and were in no frame of mind to listen to spiritual realities, even from the Savior.

The protocol at such an occasion was a servant should wash the feet of the guests. The disciples were well aware of this custom, and in fact, the pitcher, basin, and towel had already been laid out. Everyone knew that someone should do it, yet everyone pretended that nothing was amiss.

Everyone, that is, except Jesus.

In my mind’s eye, I see Jesus waiting to see what His friends, so close and dear to His heart, would do. When it became apparent that no one, not even John, was about to lift a finger, Jesus must have sighed. Taking off his long robe, He tucks the towel around His waist. In stunned silence, the disciples watch Jesus pour water in the basin, kneel in front of one of the disciples, and begin washing his feet.

As Jesus moved from disciple to disciple, I can imagine how utterly ashamed they must have felt. This was Jesus — Creator of the world, their Master, their Lord, their Redeemer, their God! Why was HE washing THEIR feet? In the palpable silence of the ‘aha’ moment, Christ’s example of servant leadership sweeps away their selfish ambitions, greed, political posturing and dissention. Only Judas is disgusted by what he perceives as a degrading and unessential act. Christ’s foot washing service is deemed unnecessary humiliation by Judas, and he is confirmed in his purpose to disown his Lord.

Lest believers in the future should consider themselves un tempted by selfish ambitions, greed, political posturing and dissention and feel no need of a similar service of humility, Christ gave specific instruction about the perpetuity of the foot washing service.

“As after washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, ‘Do you understand what I was doing? You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because it is true. And since I, the
Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. How true it is that a servant is not greater than the master. Nor are messengers more important that the one who sends them. You know these things — now do them! That is the path of blessing.” John 13:10-17 NLT

Pretty straight-forward injunction, it seems to me. But could it be that in our too-cool-for-school egotism, we want to do stuff ‘our way,’ with little regard to whether our choices are rooted in Scripture? Unfortunately, ‘our way’ may be just another evidence of a heart unwilling to give up works’ righteousness in exchange for accepting the righteousness of Christ alone. Because in disregarding Christ’s instructions, we are in reality rejecting Christ and His atoning sacrifice on our behalf.

Except Judas, the disciples had committed themselves to Jesus long before that fateful night in the upper room. Christ had accepted them as His, and they had been “washed in the great fountain opened for sin and uncleanness.” But even after choosing to serve Him, His disciples struggled with alienation, jealousy, and pride. The foot washing that night was not only a symbol of loving service to others, essential as that is. The disciples had ‘fallen away’ from their first love, and the foot washing also represented Christ’s willingness to restore them to relational community with Him, to wash away their sins by His cleansing grace. Their hearts must be cleansed before they could benefit spiritually from the symbols of His death.

Are we any less in need of Christ’s cleansing grace today? Or in our arrogance, do we feel no need of the symbol of Christ’s renewal before the Communion and thus trust in our own goodness, heedless of Jesus' instructions to wash each other’s feet in remembrance of how we are saved?

It was Jesus Himself who instituted the religious ritual of the foot washing. And Jesus says, “If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.”

Cindy - While I agree that the ritual of foot washing offers for many a rich symbol of submission and surrender within a community of faith, I must confess to being bothered at your need to slip in, as scriptural, Ellen White's extra-Biblical embellishment of the story. The Bible does not tell us what Judas' reaction was. It only tells us of Peter's self-centered, prideful response. Grafting sectarian details into the story is unnecessary and speculative. Much more profound and Biblical is Peter's reaction, which you ignore.

I fear that for many in the SDA Church, foot washing is an occasion for judgmentalism - a prideful sign of orthodoxy: Sigh..."It's so sad that so many Adventists skip The Ordinance of Humility." It is a huge stretch, I think, to argue that Jesus intended to establish a ritual. He said, "Do as I have done to you," - not "Do this in remembrance of me." The place that the Ordinance of Humility had in the early Christian Church might help us to understand how early Christians interpreted Christ's words to do as He had done. Do you know what that was? Perhaps a historian of early Church history could enlighten us. In context, it appears that Jesus was providing a model of servanthood in the most difficult arena of life - those we live with, work with, and dine with. Once we start turning the master-servant tables upside down in real life, aren't reverse status symbols sort of meaningless?

The reality of service is so much more difficult and important than the ritual which it spawned. So why emphasize the ritual? Furthermore, when we look to establish rituals, why do we have to be
able to demonstrate a Biblical mandate in order to set apart portions of our lives and time as sacred places to remember and reinforce God's presence in our communal lives? If you didn't feel Jesus had actually commanded the ritual, would it have any less meaning for you? And why, if the symbol ceases to speak powerfully to our lives in a transformative way, do we make an idol of it?

Perhaps what you see in youth ministry, Cindy, is a reflection of the fact that young people don't see a relationship between symbol and reality in the lives of older generations of Adventists. Is it possible that God finds the ritual of washing self-bathed, already clean feet to be a stench in His nostrils? Perhaps not. At least not for the humble hearted who do it in love rather than out of obligation. But I suspect that a Church which believes those who do not participate in the Ordinance of Humility are omitting the ritual due to arrogance and self-centeredness will become a stench in His nostrils.

Bill Cork

Scriptural background is a little more complex than what is suggested. The synoptic Gospels say the last supper was a Passover, and say nothing about footwashing. John says it wasn't a passover (the lamb hadn't been sacrificed yet), and he says nothing about the institution of the Lord's Supper (only that they ate), but he does have footwashing. Paul, who reiterates the institution narrative similar to what we find in the synoptics, says nothing about footwashing, either as a practice of the churches to which he wrote or as a command of Christ.

Turning to John's gospel, where does John say it was before supper? Or that feet were dirty?

KJV: "And supper being ended ... He riseth from supper ..."
NIV: "The evening meal was in progress, ... so he got up from the meal..."
Amplified: "So [it was] during supper, ... [That] Jesus ... Got up from supper ..."
Young's Literal: "And supper being come ... Jesus doth rise from the supper ..."
ESV: "During supper ... Jesus ... rose from supper ..."

The majority of translators have it either during supper or, in the case of the KJV, after. In any event, they are already at the table. They are already reclining (if this was about dirt, they would have been washed before they reclined). Jesus gets up from the supper. There is an interruption. He surprises them by getting up after the meal has started.

So where do we get the idea that their feet were dirty? Or that servants were missing? Or that it was before they sat down? Or that it was a necessary part of the New Testament observance?

(All these, I think, are separate questions from whether we should do it--I will take Jesus' command to "do this" as seriously as I take his command to break bread and drink wine in remembrance of him.)

Foot washing is mentioned in 1 Tim 5:10, but as something widows did as a ministry of service: "Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work."

There is a scattered history of mentions in the early church (summarized here, with references http://www.yourbook.com/displayarea/IP27072-08.pdf).
Now, when I look at EGW's discussion of it, I find her contrast between the foot-washing and communion very interesting.

But the Communion service was not to be a season of sorrowing. This was not its purpose. As the Lord's disciples gather about His table, they are not to remember and lament their shortcomings. They are not to dwell upon their past religious experience, whether that experience has been elevating or depressing. They are not to recall the differences between them and their brethren. The preparatory service has embraced all this. The self-examination, the confession of sin, the reconciling of differences, has all been done. Now they come to meet with Christ. They are not to stand in the shadow of the cross, but in its saving light. They are to open the soul to the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. With hearts cleansed by Christ's most precious blood, in full consciousness of His presence, although unseen, they are to hear His words, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." John 14:27.

The foot-washing service is about confession of sins and restoration to fellowship with Christ. It recalls baptism. The communion service, on the other hand, is about fellowship with Christ. It is a celebration of new life. It is an experience of his peace. It is a time of joy. How often, though, do we reverse this? How often is communion a kind of somber funeral service for Jesus? Of uncertainty?

A couple of historical observations: Ellen White had no problem with someone participating in communion who chose not to participate in footwashing (Ev 276). Early Adventists often had communion as a special service in the afternoon or evening (3SM 262; 2MR 116, 346; 3MR 290).

R.C. 1 week ago

Cindy wrote:
"Foot washing history in a nutshell...
Only Judas is disgusted by what he perceives as a degrading and unessential act. Christ’s foot washing service is deemed unnecessary humiliation by Judas, and he is confirmed in his purpose to disown his Lord."

Really, so where do we find that about Judas in the story? Is it somewhere in the Bible. Or is this simply another example of an Adventist that can't tell the difference between Ellen White and the Bible, after all as another blog on this site says Jesus told us not to eat cheese also. Maybe the question should be what is the nutshell? If someone cannot be honest to the Biblical story is there any real reason to take them seriously when they talk about the Christian religion which after all is based upon the Bible particularly the New Testament.

A sad and rather dramatic example of the the confusion in Adventism.

Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

Matthew has no mention of foot washing; Mark knows nothing about it; Luke never mentions it; John, alone, writes of this before the Last Supper. John adds much more than do the other three Gospels. Why should we depend on only text to be mandatory for Christians today? A practice that had great symbol in that time and has absolutely no possible symbol to our lives today.

We still eat, so the Last Supper has significance, but without any meaning, such practices are
Elaine Nelson 1 week ago

Foot washing is as antiquated as the custom of walking as the only means of transportation; it is as antiquated as the many feasts that Christ participated in as a good Jew. Humility is much better demonstrated in other words than in washing someone's feet in modern times when those same feet were probably leaving a shower only a few hours earlier. Not to mention the difficulty senior citizens have with such a ritual. Young people are quick to see through such meaningless rituals. They prefer active expressions such as helping people who need food or clothing, not their feet washed.

R.C. 1 week ago

For another perspective see my blog article http://cafesda.blogspot.com/2009/10/foot-washing-ritual-why-really.html

Glenn Hansen 1 week ago

"Now, having washed the disciples' feet, He said, "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." In these words Christ was not merely enjoining the practice of hospitality. More was meant than the washing of the feet of guests to remove the dust of travel. Christ was here instituting a religious service. By the act of our Lord this humiliating ceremony was made a consecrated ordinance. It was to be observed by the disciples, that they might ever keep in mind His lessons of humility and service.

This ordinance is Christ's appointed preparation for the sacramental service. While pride, variance, and strife for supremacy are cherished, the heart cannot enter into fellowship with Christ. We are not prepared to receive the communion of His body and His blood. Therefore it was that Jesus appointed the memorial of His humiliation to be first observed." DA 680

EGW says that Jesus made foot washing a "consecrated ordinance. It "is Christ's appointed preparation for the sacramental service." The implication of her remarks is plain: One can not be spiritually prepared for communion without footwashing.

No footwashing=go straight to hell.

Bill Cork 1 week ago

>>>Young people are quick to see through such meaningless rituals.

Sure. Which is why at the Newman Center I worked at UCSB when we did footwashing with everyone on Maundy Thursday hundreds of students took part.
Ervin Taylor

Cindy asked if foot washing is an “archaic, old-fangled practice, inconvenient to old and young alike, and wholly irrelevant as a precursor to partaking in the symbols of Christ’s death?” That’s exactly what it is! I can’t think of any better way to put it.

We should all thank Cindy for bringing this topic up so we can develop a strategy so that foot washing can be retired to the same place that the custom of asking during Sabbath School how many “treatments” each member has given. (If you don’t know what I’m talking about, then you must be younger than 65 years old)

Glenn Hansen

Erv, I recall the missionary report at the beginning of Sabbath school. Questions about daily lesson study, pieces of literature given away [I blew the competition away on that one], Bible studies given, and so forth. What happened? How is something like that phased out of church practice? Can it be reinstated [luckily, I don't attend SDA church]? Seems like there were some questions about Dorcas participation as well.

I must admit, from an early stage, I thought the Sabbath School lessons were bogus. I figured that the number of pieces of literature I gave away made up for my neglect of the Sabbath school lesson.

An elderly [nonSDA] gentleman I worked for remarked that a retired SDA minister who visited him always made a check in a little book he carried to indicate that he had made a visit.

Bill Cork

So Erv and Elaine don't like footwashing ...

They get it in India. http://blogs.covchurch.org/newswire/2009/10/02/7332/


It proved controversial at Savannah State--students wanted to do it and the university claimed it was "hazing." The university was overruled. http://www.alliancedefensefund.org/Home/ADFContent?cid=4219

It was done by hundreds of Presbyterian youth at a youth conference. They found it relevant. http://www.kauffmanpost.com/2008/07/presbyterian-youth-experience-foot.html

It's done at lots, and lots of youth and young adult retreats in lots of denominations.

But Elaine and Erv think it irrelevant.

Elaine Nelson
Bill. those churches also have their worship services on Sunday, so it must follow that because "they do it" we should also follow their example? "Everybody's doing it, so we should, too"?

Ervin Taylor  1 week ago

I obviously can't speak for Elaine, but I guess that means that I'm old fashioned. If "young people" like it, more power to them. Let ten thousand flowers bloom!

Thomas "Vastergotland"  1 week ago

Footwashing can be relevant, but only so far as it is not turned into a tradition. An ordinance of humility would have an effect if the two participants take the opportunity to reconcile from a power struggle through the act. But if you wash your best friends feet "because that is what we always did", what would be the relevancy?

Bill Cork  1 week ago

What's the relevancy of putting up a Christmas tree, or putting candles on a cake, or a bride wearing white. Traditions are traditions because they are things that we do, that have been done, that will be done. They are things that collectively we use to mark occasions, to tell stories. They are common frames of reference that remind us that there are things that last, that all does not have to be "relevant" in the secular media's way of thinking. Thank God for traditions that are not "relevant."

This reminds me of a poetry class I once had, in which the teacher was saying that lots of Christian symbols are not meaningful. Yet she found meaning in goddess temples on her home island of Malta. I wrote this poem for that class (which, ironically, she loved). I was Catholic at the time, and wrote in reference to a recent papal mass in New York.

Ozymandia of Malta

The bleached bones of the goddess temple
Lie scattered over the treeless shore,
And the solstice sun exposes
Her once carefully concealed private parts
To the curious gaze of a solitary modern pagan
While academicians in airless offices
Ponder broken figures and wonder:
Was this god male or female?

While in the shadow of the glittering temples of Mammon
Stands a makeshift altar in a place of play
And a hopelessly outdated high priest
Of an irrelevant faith
Elevates a meaningless symbol
And 300,000 youthful voices
Sing with renewed joy
Before the silenced, non-blinking eyes
Of the cameras of the world:
  Christ has died!
  Christ has risen!
  Christ will come again!

Glenn Hansen
1 week ago

Bill,

I don't understand why you were rebaptized when you rejoined Adventism. Above you said you were "catholic at the time" you wrote the poem. Just when did you apostasize from Christ? Did you consider becoming a RC apostasy from Christ? Were you bowing to images, kissing the host, praying to Mary, and so forth?

Catholicism is a big tent. At least some of its adherents eschew many of the same things Adventists do. There are certainly Christians within its fellowship who need not be rebaptized to switch denominations.

An acquaintance of mine had been baptized in Adventism about 6 times, at last count. Seems that none of them really took hold. I was rebaptized once. In retrospect, I consider it a mistake, an act of violence against a sacred ritual. It was a useless exercise in my case as well. I'm as bad or worse than I was before being rebaptized.

It's my understanding, that the footwashing ritual was introduced to perform the function that rebaptism often does. Historically, people visited public baths and then got cleaned up by the footwashing, since their feet were dirtied by journeying.

Footwashing condemns the doctrine of sinless perfection. Had Christ expected people to remain sinless after baptism, footwashing would not have been introduced.

Bill Cork
1 week ago

And when we are sinless, or no longer offending our brothers and sisters, then it will be irrelevant (I'm skipping all the rest, since it isn't relevant to this particular discussion <g>).

Elaine Nelson
1 week ago

Foot washing is optional. That should please everyone. Has anyone else noticed that when "Communion Sabbath" is announced for the following week that attendance is much lower than normal? I wonder why. If this ritual has meaning for people, they are free to follow it; for those who find no meaning in it, we can reject it and without feeling guilty.

Bill Cork
1 week ago
When Peter said, "I don't find meaning in it. I reject it and you can't make me feel guilty," Jesus said, "If I don't wash your feet, you have no part in me."

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<tr>
<th>Pat Travis</th>
<th>1 week ago</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Lord's supper is to be celebrated &quot;till He comes&quot; in Remembrance of Him by believers. Regarding foot washing, I suggest, if one finds meaning in community fine...it is not an obligation. Let each be convinced in one's own mind...being content with what is meaningful to others. regards, pat</td>
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<th>Elaine Nelson</th>
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<td>The Lord's Supper was to be remembered; the ritual of foot washing has no such recommendation.</td>
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<th>Pat Travis</th>
<th>6 days ago</th>
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<td>Elaine, Neither are &quot;potluck&quot; dinners but they are meaningful to some for community but not an obligation. :-) There can be many &quot;traditions&quot; that can be useful to a local or larger community as long as they are not obligatory or create of themselves a way to stratify &quot;more sincere&quot; believers. regards, pat</td>
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<th>Elaine Nelson</th>
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<td>Many members do not care for potlucks, and as you say, they are not mandatory nor do other members make them feel &quot;guilty&quot; for not participating. Potlucks have not yet taken on a sacred obligatory ritual, which separates them from foot washing.</td>
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<th>William Noel</th>
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<td>Cindy, My first reaction wa like your's, that foot-washing was essential. But as I've thought about it I have come to realize that the topic gives us a classic example tradition to which we attach meaning and give the status of a divine command and an actual divine command. I did not realize this fully until I went back and read all the scriptural accounts of the Last Supper. Foot washing was a tradition whenever someone entered a home. Celebrating the Passover was something quite different</td>
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because it was one of the annual sabbaths reminding Jews of their heritage and the power of God displayed to their ancestors. But Jesus takes the occasion to point the attention of his disciples forward to his death.

There is no command in scripture to practice the foot washing. It is mentioned because Jesus took on the role of a servant when he was their leader. The "this do in remembrance of me" commands were limited to the sharing of the bread and wine as symbols of his body and blood that were about to be shed. Does this mean the foot-washing is not meaningful? Absolutely not! For me it is very significant because it is the tradition I was taught from earliest childhood and continue to practice. Still, I have to recognize that it was not part of the specific command Jesus gave to remember so it is not a binding command on us. The significance of the foot washing is what we give to it. We can limit it to the communion service. Or, we can understand that Jesus' action that night was an expression of his character and his willingness to serve others and see that as our model for how we should be willing to serve others in whatever opportunity we find.

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**Pat Travis**

6 days ago

Elaine,

The "supper" is remembered by Paul for the NT church in 1 Cor.11:23-31 and as you say there seems to be no explicit instruction for the tradition of foot washing.

I would place it personally in the same context of Rom.14 concerning foods and days and how there is to be charity towards others non-obligatory non-explicit practices. If it is meaningful to a believer then practice it respecting your brother/sister's right to abstain from all things that may be meaningful to individuals.

BUT REMEMBER, that sword cuts both ways on our favorite NT non explicit meaningful tradition.

The beauty of RBF/JBF "alone" is that we are not judged by the expectations of others that have no explicit biblical teaching for the NT church. Thus Luther even said the celebration of Sunday was useful only for a common meeting day but not "obligatory" in itself. The practice had a useful community purpose for the weekly gathering together of the saints. I suggest he grasped the true meaning of Rom.14.

regards,
pat

---

**Elaine Nelson**

6 days ago

If only the "foods and days" that Paul says that no one should be judged on, were adopted, they would be in opposition with Fundamental Beliefs of Adventism. But, I cannot agree with many of those FBs simply because Paul's comments have been ignored, but they have been formulated on the OT, not the NT.
Pat Travis

Elaine,

That is another "dog fight" that hijacks this strand. My only intent was to suggest that explicits be separated from debatable as relates to the "foot washing" which in that day had a practical intent also of getting the dust off one's feet...and the humility of serving another in that capacity.

There are other ways to show humility...sometimes by not being over humble...or "forgiving" without proper process of the issues.

regards,
pat

Trevor Hammond

Wow! I marvel when I think of how the King of Glory would so willingly come to our reprobate world and die on the cross: notwithstanding the shame and suffering of such horrific callous torture and YET still do it for us (for me) with a heart full of love and forgiveness which demonstrates His amazing grace. I stand in awe at this: He pitched His tent among us. The Master became a servant.

The foot washing in the Upper Room reminds us just what His mission was about. It sets the tone of the great sacrifice at Calvary. Clearly this was a planned event, yet notably though, no servants are mentioned. Jesus uses every opportunity during these critical hours before his ordeal to still teach important lessons. The disciples seemed to have been ‘allergic’ to humility. Pride so far had ruled them and the arrogance of who was to be the greatest in the kingdom dominated the mood of this solemn moment. At a certain time, when there could be no excuses for any of the disciples not doing this lowly task of foot washing, Jesus the Master becomes the servant of his disciples: He washes ALL their feet.

What a privilege it is for men and women today to embrace such a relevant service of humility and be ever willing to serve those whom we are called to serve by God’s grace. Though symbolic, it teaches the same lesson. Who else but John the beloved would include this occurrence in his writings who notes and pauses at every perceived sign and wonder which the Son of God impressed upon his dear heart. He was their ‘brother’: one in service, in fellowship and love. [John 15:13] “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

In Service
T

Elaine Nelson

"Becoming a servant" might much better be expressed by driving the elderly widow to church; by assuring that she had sufficient food and fuel; that the fatherless child had some role modeling for a "father figure"; that the family out of work had help so as not to lose their house. These are much better and very practical ways to demonstrate humility rather than washing clean feet. Better to...
paint a house that needs painting, or wash a car that need washing.

Cindy Tutsch 6 days ago

Elaine, I totally agree that helping those who have the least in society is essential. Victims of injustice, or those who are grieving and alone, are often neglected. But perhaps this "should have been done and the other not left undone?"

R.C. 6 days ago

Trevor wrote:
"What a privilege it is for men and women today to embrace such a relevant service of humility and be ever willing to serve those whom we are called to serve by God’s grace. Though symbolic, it teaches the same lesson"

Actually that is the thing when something is done as symbolic it no longer serves the same function. Jesus washed literally dirty feet, not symbolically dirty feet. Thus the humility is real. Look at it this way. There was recently a royal wedding in England the prince and his intended had lived together for about 2 years before the wedding. The bride wore white. Was the symbol of the white gown symbolic or actually significant of virginal purity? The tradition was fulfilled the meaning of the symbol was illusionary. That is what has happened with foot washing where symbol has overtaken substance.

Pat Travis 6 days ago

Sometimes the "easy humility" is at church in front of others & seen by others. Good points of "silent service" Elaine.

pat

Bill Cork 6 days ago

"Jesus washed literally dirty feet"

Not according to John. He washed feet during or after the meal, while people were reclining. Dirty feet got washed before you reclined (didn't want to get that dirt on the couches).

Jesus didn't say to do it?

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

William Noel 6 days ago

Bill,
OK, you got me there. I missed that one.

R.C. 6 days ago

Right Bill so they had their feet washed by someone, though there was no servants to do the washing and then later maybe an hour or two later Jesus did it again. I see you and Cindy must use the same logic coach.

R.C. 6 days ago

Actually it appears we have no idea if there were servants from the accounts. But all three gospels say they were reclining at the table

Luke 22:14
14 When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. (NIV)

Mark 14:18
18 While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me-- one who is eating with me." (NIV)

Matt 26:20
20 When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. (NIV)

It seems really silly to make this a ritual when it is entirely ignored by 3 of the 4 accounts.

Glenn Hansen 6 days ago

Last time I attended an SDA church, footwashing was optional. Those who find it meaningless can skip it. Communion is still available to them if they can wait a few minutes. Certain things are meaningless to people who have no faith or are dead spiritually. Baptism, for a lot of kids who grew up Adventist, is meaningless. The Bible is essentially meaningless to people who believe in evolution, for example. If a doctrine which permeates the Scripture is actually a fiction, then that book is more or less meaningless.

In the COC, Boston, nothing was meaningless. If you thought it was, bye bye. You would be shown the door, ostracized, shunned. If you weren't on "fire" find another denomination where you can be an infidel and enjoy the social. The Anglican church might be more suitable. You can enjoy homosexual clergy, AIDS ravaged deacons, beautiful architecture, nice music, and a solemnity which escapes Adventist churches.

Cultural Adventists would rather destroy Adventism than move along.

Ervin Taylor 6 days ago

It would be very interesting for Mr. Hansen to attend our Sabbath class and express the opinions he did on the nature of "Cultural Adventists." I think he would receive quite a shock.
**Pat Travis**  6 days ago

Something for consideration. It seems to me that one of the arguments against JBF/RBF "alone" is that it destroys the necessity of so many "cultural teachings" that are not explicit in scripture. It makes waste of many of the Roman Churches beliefs as necessity by those who so opposed the Protestant doctrine.

It is interesting to see how far individuals will go to make "explicit for others" what they feel is important...rather than that being a clearly explicit duty.

While it may be a sincere seeking for duty, might it also be a sincere effort to justify ones own understanding as superior though in fact it may merely be implied or non-explicit for a particular situation and people.?

There is a place for judgement by the church...but only on the clearly explicit as far as obligation. Otherwise, let each be convinced in their own mind and blessings to those thing meaningful to you but not necessarily an obligation for others.

regards,
pat

---

**Bill Cork**  6 days ago

"Right Bill so they had their feet washed by someone, though there was no servants to do the washing and then later maybe an hour or two later Jesus did it again."

Where does John say anything about servants?

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**Ron Corson**  6 days ago

I already covered that above Bill, try to keep up. But if you want another answer you will find the servants right next to the couches you mentioned.

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**Glenn Hansen**  6 days ago

I wonder what per cent of the people who find footwashing an irrelevant, meaningless ritual think the same of the "blessed" sacrament. My guess is that most of them do but they don't complain because it doesn't involve having their feet touched by a stranger, which, incidentally, I find repulsive as well.

---

**Elaine Nelson**  6 days ago

It is interesting that in the OT, "feet" was a euphemism for genitals. Ruth went into Boaz' tent and uncovered his "feet."
Elaine,

Correct or not that can only be done by a CNA in a legitimate setting for a legitimate reason...not church though it may increase attendance. :>)

Elaine Nelson
6 days ago

The term foot/feet is sometimes used to refer to the male genitals (for example, when the Old Testament refers to Saul going into a cave and uncovering his foot).

Whether it would increase or decrease church attendance, I don't believe anyone is willing to institute this practice ;-)
service. The Jesus Way! I'm so grateful and thankful to be a part of such a humble Seventh-day Adventist Church where Jesus is honoured wherever, whenever, however and for whatever reason - Praise the Lord!

In Service

T

PS - sometimes the wheelchair knocks against my car while I try and help the brother get on - I don't mind 'cos the Brother is more important... and that's the difference with foot washing - others are more important.

Bill Cork 6 days ago

What I would like to see is for those who have gripes about foot-washing to stop giving theological justification and get down to brass tacks. Use "I messages," as marriage therapists would say. "I feel ... when I wash someone's feet. I feel .... when someone washes my feet. This is why I do not like to participate in it."

Elaine Nelson 6 days ago

But Adventists always need a text to support a position they have adopted. Then, there are some who so firmly believe that a text is necessary for every occasion, will dump guilt on another who does not accept a "proof text" as sufficient support, especially since of the four gospels only one has chosen to add this story. Had it been of significant importance, why did only one even mention it? But that seems to be the SDA reasoning: one text is sufficient to form a doctrine.

Cindy Tutsch 6 days ago

I am not suggesting in this blog that those who are infirm and thus unable to participate in the foot washing should therefore not partake of the Lord's Supper. (My dad is 92 and still partipates in the foot washing, but I realize he is pretty exceptional!) But most of us are not infirm. If we refuse to participate because it's inconvenient, or humiliating, or otherwise contrary to our natural inclinations, we lose a sacred blessing (and maybe more than a blessing--John 13:8; Matthew 10:38).

Some of my most precious foot washing experiences have been washing the feet of someone whom I had never met before --either because I was the "stranger in their midst," or because the person with whom I participated was a visitor. For me, the preparation of my heart to be able to receive the blessing has been an essential component. But I am still growing in my ability to comprehend the depth of what Jesus was teaching by example on that long-ago night.

Elaine Nelson 6 days ago

Receiving any blessing from a ritual is totally subjective: either the participants receive a blessing as they feel, and those who do not receive any blessing are also basing it on subjective feelings. A
"blessing" can only be determined by the participants. Otherwise, it is simply going through the motions based on habit.

Trevor Hammond 5 days ago
Ok, I'll say it: "It's usually the haughty-nose-in-the-air-snobs who are 'allergic' to foot washing...
T

Trevor Hammond 5 days ago
Mrs. Nelson asks:
"Had it been of significant importance, why did only one even mention it?"

Well that's what John was there for. He wrote of these occurrences which showed the significant signs and wonders of Jesus the Son of God - and let's face it, this was a significant occurrence!

T

Glenn Hansen 5 days ago
Elaine's salacious remarks, in addition to being factually inaccurate, don't suit the context. Saul went into a cave to "cover" his feet, not "uncover." A similar expression is used in Judges. In both cases, defecation rather than urination suits the context.

The Hebrew word translated as "feet" in Ruth is translated in the LXX by a word that definitely refers to the feet, as normally understood. So her suggestion is ridiculous rather than informative.

Gailon Arthur Joy 4 days ago
"Judgementalism", another code word for open dissidence and opposition to the fundamentals of Seventh-day Adventist beliefs...and open rejection of the clear biblical instruction. It is "open rebellion" to reject clear biblical instructions and I am compelled to call for a serious assessment regarding your "standing" in the Brotherhood of Faith and if you simply deplore the biblical standard, again, there are loads of wonderful humanistic organizations that will be happy to embrace your beliefs.

The Lord’s own example and counsel is clear here and is developed for very specific purpose in the plan of redemption. The abhorrence of this counsel and the wonderful insight provided by the Lord’s contemporary light in the form of Sister Ellen G. White, clearly a spokesperson for the Godhead to this time in history, is a demonstration of the fruits of the spirit, and easily judged by the most elementary person of Faith.

Person's of Faith are compelled to implore the party in rebellion to “come together” that we may “study” and show ourselves “approved” before God, the final Judge of our rebellious spirits. And we must invoke this remedy in keeping with the Matthew 18 counsel and that every member
become at one with the Brotherhood of Faith.

The alternative is simple enough and if atonement is not feasible, one must be separated from that Brotherhood until they will submit to the Spirit and the Counsels.

I must end with a hearty “Hear, Hear” to the author of this Blog and call all back to the fundamentals of Faith, including the recognition that Sister Ellen G. White is “inspired counsel”.

Gailon Arthur Joy
AURreporter
Ervin Taylor

“[O]ne must be separated from that Brotherhood until they will submit to the Spirit and the Counsels.”

“Brotherhood?” Only males need to submit to the Spirit and the Counsels? Let’s overlook that for the moment.

I wonder if Mr. Joy would enlighten the rest of us how he proposes to carry out that “separation” process?

Elaine Nelson

Would Mr. Joy choose to be the leader of such an inquisition? Why not make up a list of the questions to ask all who wish to remain in the “Brotherhood”? Remembering, that no single member has any influence whatsoever outside his own congregation. All members are chosen or disfellowshiped ONLY by their local congregations. If the local congregation does not choose to impose a questionnaire, it is free to do so.

Vernon P. Wagner

I vaguely recall, that this function was referred to as the 'Ordinance of Humility.' As I complete my 73rd year on this planet, I've already gained enough humility to last three lifetimes. During almost 50 years of medical practice, I can vouch for having washed a lot more than just feet!

Ella M.

If one feels foot-washing or communion (it is not a sacrament as someone called it) meaningless, then they should not do it.

However, for me I find it to be, with communion, a profound spiritual experience and would not like to see it become history. I especially want to be at church on these occasions more than at an ordinary Sabbath service. They are special to me. Ideally one should read the biblical accounts to prepare for it and understand the symbolism and enjoy it as a spiritual discipline. What I do think is Adventist tradition is the timing (four times a year). It might be be more special once a year near Easter/Passover time and have that be a Sabbath set aside for celebration. Communion could be any time.

Mennonites also practice foot-washing as do some other Christians; some on special occasions as retreats. I think that's great.

Steve

Being a farmer and working in the dirt and walking in the dust at times I do realize how dirty the feet must have been in those days as they walked nearly everywhere. As the Bible points out they
must have had a special person (servant) to wash the feet to help them feel more relaxed as they sit down to a meal or recline as is sometimes mentioned. After a hard day's work it feels so good to clean up and relax especially in hot weather. I see no problem with the church having foot washing. I can only speak for myself on this but I do think of Jesus and His walking everywhere and how dirty He must have become doing so and how good it felt to have His feet feel freshened up. He knew also that others would enjoy the clean feeling as well so He just did it Himself so all would feel better. Jesus was thinking of the comfort of others even when He knew He was facing a terrible night.

<table>
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<th>Bill Cork</th>
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| Communion "is not a sacrament as someone called it."

Of course it is. It is understood by all Christians as such--including Ellen White.

> Though Jesus knew Judas from the beginning, He washed his feet. And the betrayer was privileged to unite with Christ in partaking of the sacrament. . . . To him had been offered the bread of life and the water of salvation. To him the Saviour’s lesson had been given. But Judas refused to be benefited.—Manuscript 106, 1903. {CTr 264.8}

> Though Jesus knew Judas from the beginning, He washed his feet. And the betrayer was privileged to unite with Christ in partaking of the sacrament. A long-suffering Saviour held out every inducement for the sinner to receive Him, to repent, and to be cleansed from the defilement of sin. This example is for us. When we suppose one to be in error and sin, we are not to divorce ourselves from him. By no careless separation are we to leave him a prey to temptation, or drive him upon Satan's battleground. This is not Christ's method. It was because the disciples were erring and faulty that He washed their feet, and all but one of the twelve were thus brought to repentance. {DA 655.4}

> And the administration of the Sacrament was to keep before the disciples the infinite sacrifice made for each of them individually as a part of the great whole of fallen humanity. {DA 656.5}

> But though Jesus knew Judas from the beginning, He washed his feet. He who was to betray his Lord was privileged to unite with Him in partaking of the sacrament. And today none who claim to be Christians should be excluded from this service, for who can read hearts? Who can distinguish the tares from the wheat? {20MR 149.2}

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<tr>
<th>Ella M.</th>
<th>2 days ago</th>
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<td>Roman Catholicism, as I understand it, uses the term &quot;sacrament&quot; as something you do as a means to salvation, along with their baptisms, including infants. At least this is the way I heard a respected SDA theologian explain it. I suppose it means something different to each one who uses it--like so many religious terms. For example is our baptism a means of salvation? Some SDAs seem to indicate it is, but is there biblical rationale for this? I don't think so. Any way that's a different subject not to be discussed in this thread.</td>
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<th>Kevin Riley</th>
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20 of 27 8/23/2011 3:04 PM
What is not agreed upon among Adventists is what exactly a sacrament is. We often say that Communion is 'merely a memorial', but then conduct it as if it really is a sacrament.

<table>
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<th>Bill Cork</th>
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| "We often say that Communion is 'merely a memorial', but then conduct it as if it really is a sacrament."

As if a "memorial" is something other than a "sacrament" ...? I don't follow. I'm not sure what you mean by "sacrament" the way you are using it.

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<th>Kevin Riley</th>
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<td>I understand 'sacrament' to mean an action that is both symbolic and effective - it does not just remind us, it changes us. A common understanding within Adventism is that communion and baptism don't actually 'do' anything, they are just to remind us of what has been done. I believe that in baptism what is symbolised is also realised. The same with communion - we don't just remember, we are also changed by and through our action. This was part of the dispute within the Reformation. We have tended to side with Zwingli, whereas I believe he is wrong on this.</td>
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| OK. Just wanted to be clear. :-)

Brief summary for those not following ...

Zwingli went back to the Latin, sacramentum, and made it a kind of pledge or oath to God--something we do.

Luther stayed with Augustine, that a sacrament is a "visible word"--the word added to the sign, retaining all the effectiveness of the word, but embodied that we have something to grasp onto.

For the Reformed "Heidelberg Catechism," "The sacraments are holy visible signs and seals, appointed of God for this end, that by the use thereof, he may the more fully declare and seal to us the promise of the gospel, viz., that he grants us freely the remission of sin, and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross."

For Wesley, "an outward sign of inward grace, a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof."

Yes, many Adventists say that Zwingli was right. Yet Scripture speaks of both baptism and the Lord's Supper as "doing something." And so does Ellen White (good Methodist that she was). Desire of Ages shows she clearly was no Zwinglian--more of a Calvinist.

I remain more of a Lutheran, myself. Hier stehe Ich, Ich kann nicht anders. :-)

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21 of 27 8/23/2011 3:04 PM
Kevin Riley

Luther, I think, comes too close to accepting the 'real presence' for me to be comfortable. I think I will go with Ellen White and my maternal grandmother's family tradition on this and follow Wesley. Any resemblance to Calvinism is purely coincidental :)

George Tichy

Look folks, in reading these comments, one thing remains clear: There are too many ADventists who cannot survive without EGW. They could not even know what is to be a Christian if they had "the Bible only." The Bible is incomplete and insufficient to those.

I am just amazed. It's what EGW said that counts, no matter what the Bible says, right? This is just insane! Why do people need to defend all that BS (Better Scriptures...) all the time? Some cannot write a post without resorting to some paragraph from the BS they have at home. Is this really the best use of the intelligence given to us humans by the Creator? I can't believe this! It's just too ridiculous!

Using and citing EGW is not what bugs me the most. **It's the fact that those people keep saying also that they accept the Solla Scriptura principle. This is overt hypocrisy!** They should admit once for all that they actually consider EGW's BS as part of the Bible, that the Bible is incomplete and ineffective without her "clarifications" - some of them, of course, .... copied from other sources of... inspiration! No wonder her visions often occurred late at night... That's when everyone else was sleeping and she was "seeing things" in the books of other authors... and plagiarizing. She was right, "I saw..." - she really did!!!

Elaine Nelson

George, on the thread of "Emergent Heresies" EGW is almost extensively used, despite there is no Scriptural justification for defining "Omega as heresy." John's Revelation defines the Lord God as both the Alpha and Omega, but the EGW devotees insist that EGW trumps the Bible with an entirely new and different definition.

George Tichy

Elaine,

All throughout my life I had the hope that ADventism would one day grow out of this insanity a little bit. Equating Her writings to the Bible (or even putting them on a higher pedestal as it happens most often) is certainly a cultic way of committing SACRILEGE.

It's sad that after all these years, it seems that there has been no progress at all. Especially now when the church is being pushed back to the past by ONE guy who campaigned for a long time to become the GC president (certainly inspired by the "Spirit", right?) and is making sure HE will control everything: LSU, ADRA, and whatever else is happening around the World.

Well, there is one thing he cannot touch: OUR FREEDOM TO THINK! (At least yours and
mine...) Though some people will certainly surrender/sucumb to his "self given" so called "authority".

Yeap, it seems there is actually no hope... The "cult" will prevail! With all the BS (Better Scriptures)...

Vernon P. Wagner  2 days ago

Well said, George!

Bill Cork  2 days ago

All this negativity and hostility ... on a post reminding us that Jesus said the true sign of discipleship was whether we could shut up, kneel down, and wash one another's feet ....

Kevin Riley  2 days ago

It wouldn't hurt if we occasionally took notice of another sign - which he said was the main one - "by this will everyone know you are my disciples: if you love one another". Footwashing seems to me like one possible way of putting that into practice.

Ella M.  2 days ago

Although I do not like Tichey's angry outburst, I can understand a bit how he feels. I believe that EGW was inspired, but her works are overused in proving points. (I've done it myself.) She did not want this and spoke against it. We are to study the Word that she always upheld; it seems half of her work is Bible quotes. Many members treat every comment the poor woman made as biblical truth.

I don't believe this was God's intention for her or anyone else. It wasn't the way she perceived it. Yet we have a group intent on doing this. Why? Maybe someone can tell me. I fear for the church if it continues. One side ends up rejecting it all like Tichey and the others cease to study the Word and will prove every doctrine and belief by what this Christian lady wrote. (I think plagiarism is a nonissue.) Yes, she gave important warnings, but so does the Bible.

The Bible books may have been written long ago, but at least scholars have put it in modern English. That hasn't been done for EGW books which still uses 19th-century terminology as if its words were more valued than the Bible.

In the end times we will be asked what the Bible says not EGW. In fact her overuse will be against us. Also the Bible indicates there will be many with the gift of prophecy in the last days—not just one. Why do we ignore that? That is a good question for the EGW Estate, and I say this respectfully, for I value their work and information.

George Tichy  2 days ago

Angery outburst? You certainly don't know me, at all! ...

Being very assertive and straightforward: yes.
Dealing with the issues in the open: yes.
EGW wrote many good things: yes.
Sola Scriptura means the Bible only: yes.
The Bible is self-sufficient and needs no "additions": yes.
EGW's writings should be used to establish biblical doctrine: a no-no.
Plagiarizing and saying "I was shown" about it is dishonest and unacceptable: agree 100%.
Some biblical truths can be understood only utilizing EGW: absurdity.
Each person has the right to think and speak freely: an untouchable right of every human being.
The church (or GC President...) defines what we should believe: No
The list continues...

I don't see any "angry outburst" in taking these positions. But this is just me...

Vernon P. Wagner
5 hours ago

George has spoken for many of us!

I only differ on Sola Scriptura. A serious review of how our present Scriptura came about offers considerable room for discussion. Christian leaders who held other writings as inspired were summarily eliminated by Rome. Does the Sermon on the Mount not echo the teachings of Buddha? HERESY...I'm surely headed for the Inquisition now!

Cindy Tutsch
1 day ago

Ella,

Actually, EGW is now in modern English. The entire conflict series has been modernized—the first four are now available at the ABC or online, and The Great Controversy, the last in the series, is at the publishers.

Additionally, there are the following adapted English EGW books for contemporary readers:

A Call to Stand Apart—a "footnoted to the original" paraphrase of EGW for young adults on the issues of salvation, wellness, careers, relationships, social justice, and the authority of Scripture.

Messiah—a paraphrase of Desire of Ages by Jerry Thomas

Blessings—a paraphrase by Jerry Thomas

True Education—an adaptation of Education

Ministry of Health and Healing—an adaptation of The Ministry of Healing

Kevin Riley
2 days ago

It is strange that the only doctrine generally held by Protestants that you can't prove 'sola scriptura' is 'sola scriptura'. Perhaps if we all agreed the Wesleyan Quadrilateral is the way to go, we could all agree to stop arguing over Ellen White (who does an excellent impersonation of 'tradition') and Sola Scriptura. Just a suggestion :)

http://www.atoday.org/article.php?id=809&action=print
Trevor Hammond

Steve made this comment: "Jesus was thinking of the comfort of others even when He knew He was facing a terrible night."
-----
I like it...
That's our Jesus for you. He is such a wonderful example for us to follow.
T

Cindy Tutsch

Ella,

Continuing the modern English of EGW thread from above somewhere!:

The rationale for the White Estate's choice for adapting Ellen White into contemporary language is ably expressed by Bill Fagal in the May, 2011, edition of *Adventist World* in an article titled *Adapting the Writings of Ellen White*, and (hopefully ably expressed!) in my January 2010 article in AW titled *Making Ellen White's Writings Kid-Friendly*.

Elaine Nelson

Is there a need for kids to read Ellen, no matter how "kid-friendly" the attempt? Are there no other reading available for kids that will aid their faith and trust? To introduce her to kids, what is the reason, other than she is an SDA institution which is part of Adventism? Does "kid-friendly" avoid all the prohibitions that children innocently enjoy: bicycle riding; movies, and fiction, and eliminate all those "unpleasant" parts?

Alle

Kid-friendly EGW now that's a scary prop for those who are truly familiar with her writings!

Elaine Nelson

Why would a parent feel the need to "introduce" Ellen in a "kid-friendly" way? Are there insufficient Christian books available that are far superior to 19th century ideas? How about a sample of how such "kid-friendly" stories have been re-written to appeal to children today.

Apparently, the EGW Estates need to bring in more revenue by "revising" editing, and making a long-dead writer applicable to the world today. A perfect "book-making" operation that will continue to infinity. Few dead writers have achieved as much.
Trevor Hammond
21 hours ago

Why would a non-believer in Ellen White's inspiration be so concerned about those who believe she was inspired and therefore value her writings been used for their children's education? Ellen White has clearly left a significant mark on our planet and why should children be denied the benefit of this. Is it perhaps that her influential writings will expose the shaky caricature of the progressive facade?

Elaine Nelson
19 hours ago

"Ellen White has clearly left a significant mark on our planet."

Where is she even known outside Adventism? To make such a remark there should be substantial evidence that the "planet" has been significantly impacted.

Vernon P. Wagner
6 hours ago

Kid-friendly EGW....LOL

Nathan Schilt
1 hour ago

This is an interesting and worthwhile discussion. I especially resonate with Kevin's and George's comments. A Spirit led faith community does not cling to its symbols like life rafts in the middle of the ocean. It does not need to sacralize 100+ year old reflections of a Godly woman, transforming a symbol of freedom by surrender into a yoke of institutional loyalty. I know, Cindy, that is not your intention. You want to remind us that this beautiful, traditional symbol of the Church is lamentably falling into disrepute.

I too find the Ordinance of Humility deeply moving. Whether Christ actually intended to start a ritual is highly doubtful to my way of thinking. But it doesn't matter. It is embedded in my identity as a Christian SDA, just as the symbolic significance of abstaining from alcohol transcends the logic and authority of those who gifted me with this lifestyle choice.

What I do not understand is why one would want to sully a symbol that many Adventists cherish by turning Christ's command to love by serving into a command to prove loyalty through a ritual. So what if many do not find foot washing meaningful. We will never persuade them by scolding, especially when Ellen White is used to slap us into line. Cindy, if you have to invoke the authority of Ellen White for your assertion that foot washing is not optional, then I conclude that it is optional. If there is no need to invoke her as an authority, why do so?

Had you merely given us a personal testimony of what the Ordinance of Humility has meant in your life, no one could have argued with you. But you obviously have a vested interest in making sure Ellen White's writings are seen, in the words of Fundamental Belief #18, as "a continuing and
authoritative source of truth" - in other words, "as law". Even accepting, as I do, that Ellen White was a manifestation of the gift of prophecy, it is only through an almost fraudulent, institutionally self-serving overlay that one can Biblically see her as "a continuing source of authoritative truth."

As I have said many times, if the interpreter and expounder of a text is given authority to do anything which does not contravene the text, that person is not merely a "lesser light to lead to the greater light." That person is a super authority - or, in the case of Ellen White, a super prophet. She becomes, *de facto*, The Guide with a flashlight, leading us through labyrinthine, previously concealed passages of Scripture in ways that - Surprise, surprise! - reveal that the heroes of Scripture were all really pre-Adventists, with a distinctly Adventist worldview. Since some of what she teaches - e.g., The Cana Grape Juice Myth - requires a leap of faith or tortured "higher criticism", it is difficult to believe that the authority historically vested in her by the Church does not include an occasional trump card, in the unlikely event that Scripture alone seems to provide a shaky foundation for Adventist orthopraxy or doctrine.

Why can't we trust that the same Spirit which led Ellen White to see truth in her time will also lead us into truth for our time through the Wesleyan Quadrilateral that some have felicitously alluded to? Ellen White belongs on the top line of that quadrilateral - tradition - not the bottom, which is Scripture.

---

**Vernon P. Wagner**

1 hour ago

"Felicitously?" I think not.

*Few SDA's consider the Millerite, Wesleyan, and Baptist mix that made up the present Church.*

'Made in the USA' religions were popping up everywhere in the 19th Century with each one declaring absolute 'truth.' IMHO, a step back for some serious objectivity would be helpful for all such churches.
Okay, this is a book about politics, and politics doesn't affect religion these days, right? It does, of course, and has as long as both have existed—so much so, that the Founding Fathers ruled that they should be sent to their respective corners of society's boxing ring and NEVER be allowed to engage in tag-team competition. That they still try is confirmation of the natural fatal attraction of the two, and the need for society to discourage their destructive cohabitation.

This book is highly recommended, rating near five stars on Amazon.com, though the writer is himself a liberal, and therefore not "unbiased." Still, the book is written in a critical way by a liberal, bewailing his class's own departure from historical orthodoxy and avoiding the almost kneejerk tendency in today's America to blame the “other side.” A confirmed conservative reader will enjoy the book, if only to bask in the liberals' confessional squirm!

But I digress. The author's primary thesis is that while America began as a "liberal" nation in a sea of monarchist warmongers, the "liberal class" in recent decades has been perverted, primarily during the 1960s, and that the caricatures of liberals today painted by self-avowed conservatives are in some cases well-deserved—not because liberalism is wrong, but because liberalism sold out.

In some ways the hypothesis fits the experience of Adventism during that same decade, as it clearly moved from sectarian status, to the mainstream—a move toward the gentler side of Christianity, under the slogan “The Caring Church.” This metamorphosis continued haltingly through the 1970s, but returned to a more “tough love,” disciplinarian approach that continues in many Adventist congregations to this day. Liberal Adventism was essentially aborted, and that which is portrayed as “liberalism” by today’s conservatives is often more about liberalism’s bathwater than about its baby. A reading of this book will help any reader begin to assimilate a fairer picture of the basic elements of American liberalism—where the attributes of a Dwight Eisenhower are seen as more endemic of liberalism than those of a Bill Clinton; where a Reuben R. Figuhr is seen as a better liberal fit than a Dale Ratzlaff.

In essence, the Liberal Class has traditionally favored favors greater local control of administration, elimination of most hierarchical power, freedom of expression (including expression of new and perhaps untested insights, without fear of being branded as un-American or heretical), and concentration on nurture over compulsion; of diplomacy over war; of discussion over issuing of edicts. Interestingly enough, many so-called “conservatives” today both in the church and in the nation favor several, if not all, of these basic values.

The book is terse rather than florid, logical rather than expansive, and as such is a useful adjunct to study for any Adventist interested in tracing the history (as seen from within) of the traditional Liberal Class in America. That it does not blame the “other side” for its downfall is a refreshing bonus.
Academy Principal Stabbed by 17-year old Student

Submitted Aug 10, 2011
By Atoday News Team

A 17-year-old student from the Seventh-day Adventist's Memphis Junior Academy in Tennessee is being held in custody after a 48-year-old teacher was found in a pool of blood in a classroom Wednesday morning.

Police did not release the teacher's name, but an official for the Seventh-day Adventist national network identified her as Suzette York, who had been at the school for more than three years, and also the school's principal, The Commercial Appeal reports.

Several sources report that York was stabbed to death, but police have not confirmed the claims.

"We have lost a great teacher and valuable member of our school," a school administrator told WREG-TV Wednesday. Memphis Mayor A.C. Wharton said it was an isolated incident.

The victim was pronounced dead at the scene when police arrived just before noon, according to The Commercial Appeal. School was promptly dismissed and will not be in session for the rest of the week, WMC-TV reports.

Another source, same story, more details:

Student charged with first-degree murder, more details

Trevor Hammond

This is so sad...

My condolences to the bereaved family. Only a few weeks ago some elderly close relatives of mine (both retired school principals and active SDA Church members) were cowardly attacked by a known twenty two year old knife wielding assailant who callously killed one of them. The other survived very serious injury. This form of crazed bloodthirsty despicable acts of violence seem to be more prevalent today and may very well be the result of a dysfunctional shameless society which has lost its way. The words "Violence fills our land" is most appropriate and the thought has crossed my mind that maybe there is even 'violence' at the heart of Democracy and the free world.

May the they rest in peace...

T

Vernon P. Wagner

Sad truth: church schools are not demon-free zones.
Murderers stroll the halls, and pedophiles teach classes.
Trevor Hammond

I think Mr. Wagner needs to substantiate his very extreme remark that "pedophiles teach classes"- unless of course he is referring to the overt sexual abuse and subsequent cover up of the Catholic Church in this accusation. Also, I think that even mentioning such a 'sicko' accusation in a report of the murder of a 'teacher' reeks of malicious anti-SDA innuendo. Can I say shame on you!

T

Trevor Hammond

Apologies Mr. Wagner. I hereby retract the "Can I say shame on you!" comment I made above which was clearly uncalled for. I was just thinking out loud...

edit - substantiate

T
School Principal Found Allegedly Stabbed To Death, 17-Year-Old Student In Custody (VIDEO)

First Posted: 8/10/11 03:12 PM ET Updated: 8/11/11 10:28 AM ET
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The victim was pronounced dead at the scene when police arrived just before noon, according to The Commercial Appeal. School was promptly dismissed and will not be in session for the rest of the week, WMC-TV reports.

The school has about 75 students and teaches those in pre-kindergarten through 11th grade.
MEMPHIS, Tenn.—A 17-year-old student charged with first-degree murder in the killing of a Christian school principal told investigators he had planned to stab the woman on the third day of classes, when he knew he'd be alone with her in a classroom, police said Thursday.

Eduardo Marmolejo was held without bond and ordered to undergo a mental evaluation by a Juvenile Court judge during a hearing Thursday. State law allows police to release the names of juveniles charged with first-degree murder.

Marmolejo has been charged with planning the killing of 49-year-old Suzette York for months. York's body was found by a teacher in a classroom on Wednesday at Memphis Junior Academy, a Seventh-day Adventist school of less than 100 students.

The thin teenager with short brown hair appeared before Judge Sheldon McCall, wearing a bright orange jail jumpsuit. Marmolejo was joined by his parents, who both wore black shirts and blue jeans.

Prosecutor Chris Lareau said the killing was premeditated and asked McCall to detain Marmolejo. Both Lareau and the two defense attorneys appointed by the court asked for mental evaluations of the teenager.

The judge appointed the two attorneys after Marmolejo's mother said the private lawyer she hired did not make it to the hearing.

Suzette York, the principal of a small Christian church in Memphis, was found slain on Wednesday.
said she could not remember the attorney's name.

During a break, Marmolejo asked for his glasses, which a court officer provided. Marmolejo's mother, whose name was not made available, asked for tissues.

**Video: Administrator found dead in Memphis school** (on this page)

The judge then returned to the courtroom and ordered the mental evaluation.

"Our main concern is to determine if he is a danger to himself and a danger to the community," McCall said.

After the hearing, the parents were shuttled away in a van and were not available for comment.

The killing shocked current and former students of the school, located next to a church and a cemetery in a residential section of east Memphis. They described York as a caring person who taught science and math before becoming principal in 2008.

York's body was found at about 11:20 a.m. Wednesday. Parents were called and students were sent home after the body was discovered.

Police said Marmolejo told investigators he planned to kill York because he did not like her and she had made him angry. Marmolejo told authorities he knew that he was going to be alone with York in a classroom, police said.

Marmolejo was one of the oldest students at the school, which has students in pre-kindergarten through high school.

York is survived by her husband, who lived with her in an apartment in suburban Memphis.

About 30 friends and current and former students attended a tear-filled prayer service for York on Wednesday at Mullins United Methodist Church, located next to the school.

Peter Hunter, a former student who also has a cousin currently attending the school, said York tried hard to nurture a family atmosphere at the school.

"She was a person who was very much involved with the students," said Hunter, 25. "She cared deeply about the development of her students."

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August 11, 2011 1:51 PM

Police: Teen waited months to kill principal

MEMPHIS, Tenn. - A 17-year-old student charged with first-degree murder in the slaying of a Christian school principal told investigators he had planned to stab the woman on the third day of classes, when he knew he'd be alone with her in a classroom, police said Thursday.

Eduardo Marmolejo was charged with killing 49-year-old Suzette York on Wednesday at Memphis Junior Academy, a Seventh-day Adventist school of about 100 students, Memphis police said Thursday.

Memphis principal found dead; student in custody

CBS News affiliate WREG-TV in Memphis reports that Marmolejo had been planning to kill York since he learned in May that he'd be returning to the school, according to the police.

State law allows police to release the names of juveniles charged with first-degree murder. Online records do not indicate if Marmolejo has a lawyer. Marmolejo had a court hearing scheduled for Thursday afternoon.

The killing shocked current and former students of the school, located next to a church and a cemetery in a residential section of east Memphis. They described York as a caring person who taught science and math before becoming principal in 2008.

York's body was found lying in a pool of blood by a teacher at about 11:20 a.m. Wednesday. Parents were called and students were sent home after the body was discovered.

Police said Marmolejo told investigators that he planned to kill York because he did not like her and that she had made him angry. Marmolejo told authorities he knew that he was going to be alone with York in a classroom, police said.

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As Benjamin Franklin once said, “Two plus two equals four.” You don’t remember that famous quote? Come to think of it, I don’t think I’ve ever seen Ben quoted as saying that either, although I have reason to think that he said it. Why don’t we give him credit for the line? Or why don’t we give some other famous person credit for saying it? After all, aren’t witty and profound statements normally made by famous people?

John F. Kennedy is known for saying, “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country,” but he (or his speechwriter) appears to have lifted the quote from General Omar Bradley and/or Cicero (hard to pin down on the internet). Quoting Kennedy carries more clout nowadays than quoting either Bradley or Cicero, so we’ll give credit to the one with the highest current star power.

Putting words into the mouth of a celebrity seems to give the words more clout. You are more likely to pay attention to a statement I make if I tell you that some famous person said it.

I submit that the truth of a statement is more important than who said it, or didn’t say it. I don’t believe that $2 + 2 = 4$ because Benjamin Franklin said it, nor do I disbelieve it because Adolf Hitler said it. The statement can stand on its own. A similar logic can apply to religious matters. A statement is not true because an authority figure said it; rather, authority figures state (generally) what is true.

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“$2 + 2 = 4$”

Benjamin Franklin

Religious people sometimes are more interested in who said something than in whether or not a statement makes sense. In 1 Kings 13 a prophet delivers a message to King Jereboam and then refuses Jereboam’s offer to come over for lunch because God told him to turn down such offers. Later the prophet is given another offer to eat with someone and again turns it down, only to be told by the new would-be host that, “God told me to have you come and eat with me.” “God said it” packed a punch that altered the prophet’s thinking – bad move. “God said it” turned out to be a claim that was not supported by evidence. And even today people fall into line if, evidence notwithstanding, they are convinced that “God (or God’s equivalent) said it.” Remember Jonestown and Heaven’s Gate and the recent Harold Camping story. Could Adventists ever quit thinking on an issue because of a mistaken thought (misinterpretation) that God said something?

Even in the everyday world, we add to our attempts to persuade by depending on something other than “logic” or “common sense.” If you are riding in a car with me and you see that I’m not wearing a seat belt, you may recommend that I belt up, reminding me that I’m better protected in case of an accident. But say that I don’t belt up. I counter that there are many cases where people died because they were either...
trapped in a vehicle by a seat belt or held where they couldn’t be thrown clear of something that hit them. So you raise your case to a new level, telling me that belting up is the law in this state, and that I can get pulled over by police for not wearing a seat belt, even if I’m not guilty of any other infraction. In other words, if you can’t achieve what you want by appealing to safety reasons, appeal to a higher authority. Use the police to add weight to what you’re saying.

Of course, you can do better than relying on my fear of the police; instead, you could refer to Romans 13 and the Bible’s admonition to follow the rules of our government. So rather than merely referencing the state government, you could warn me of divine punishment. Hard to top that! While I might not have a new heart that wants to wear a seat belt, you might at least bring about (coerce?) some outward conformity. (Many church members are more likely to be coerced by the police than by Romans 13.)

Reminding me of the risk of a fine might be a good idea, and one that I would appreciate if a police car sailed past me. But isn’t it a shame that I’m not moved to action by something more logical – by the nature of reality, by the fact that I am more likely to be better off if we are in an accident, which by its very nature is unexpected? Disobedience to the state could cost me over $100, but disobedience to God has more long-term consequences. For some people, that rebellious act of defying the state and thus defying God could be inviting God’s retribution (revenge).

I’ve noticed different topics of interest in the church over the years: movies (well, movie theaters), Sabbath activities, cheese, jewelry. Those are behavior topics. Then there are the theoretical, relatively non-behavior topics, such as salvation, inspiration, creation, and whether or not Jonah was a real person. For such topics, I find two types of persuasion tactics. One is a natural consequences, reality-based view, corresponding to the safety argument for using seat belts: Doesn’t this make more sense? Doesn’t this fit the evidence? Can’t you see how you would be better off if you agreed with me or did things the way I think you should? The other approach is the if-you-don’t-agree (with my understanding of a rule or theory), an authority figure will step in and administer the punishment you richly deserve.

I may find it frustrating when obvious (to me) truths are unseen or rebelled against by others, but should I load my argument by insisting that my quotation of God settles a matter? If you don’t eat the way I do (and that I think you should), why can’t I just let the natural consequences of your eating show that when you put two and two together, you get four? Isn’t the “wrath of God” his giving people up to natural consequences (Romans 1)? Similarly, if you don’t buckle up but are never involved in a car accident, it didn’t matter that you didn’t buckle up, so why should punishment be added on top of the risk you ran? Your rebellious attitude probably reaps troublesome results in other ways.

“**The gullible believe anything they’re told; the prudent sift and weigh every word.”**

Proverbs 14:15, *The Message*

We do find some sources more helpful for guidance and learn to rely on them. If two people disagree over the correct spelling of a word, they will usually agree that a dictionary should settle the argument. Taber’s can be used for settling a medical dispute, and the Baseball Almanac may help a manager who tangles with an umpire. But can the Bible be used as a dictionary or a Taber’s? Or can Ellen White? For some people, one or both can. For those people, a preacher’s case is stronger if he uses a Bible text or an Ellen White quotation. Even in matters which cannot be proved otherwise, some people feel that the Bible has shown its trustworthiness in enough matters that it can be used with authority even when other evidence is lacking or ambiguous. Ditto for Ellen White. Of course,
interpretation can be tricky, as two informed, sincere people can interpret the same passages in very different ways. Which can make it tricky to use a Bible or Ellen White quote to buttress an argument. For some folks, adding quotes from inspired writers is tantamount to bringing in Ben Franklin to help convince someone that two plus two equals four.

Two plus two equals four, no matter who says it, no matter who agrees or disagrees. Same goes for the Proverbs 14:15 quotation. Those who act in harmony with both those quotes will be better off than those who don’t. No one will need to impose a penalty for disbelieving either sentence.

Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago Reply

There is no one who has more clout among Adventists that Ellen White. She is the most liberally quoted, in fact, probably 10x more than any who is second. If someone can't come up with his own opinion, she shuts all else out.

Steve Billiter 1 week ago Reply

Ellen White was the instrument that the Holy Spirit spoke through, Indeed, those who have a problem with her writings, as a consequence always have problems with the Bible and God. The fact of the matter is: concerning Bible truth: The Spirit of Prophecy brings it out in such clear, amplified detail that no one can hardly mistake its meaning. BTW, there are plenty of evangelists, preachers, and teachers who liberally quote EGW along with the Bible when it seems prudent, including me. The "gross neglect" of her writings, while true, shows the apostasy and the presence of the tares with the wheat in these end times. It is simply impossible for Adventists to truthfully proclaim, "The Bible only" and reject the Spirit of Prophecy. Self deception is a terrible and tragic condition.

"It is Satan's plan to weaken the faith of God's people in the Testimonies. Next follows skepticism in regard to the vital points of our faith, the pillars of our position, then doubt as to the Holy Scriptures, and then the downward march to perdition. When the Testimonies, which were once believed, are doubted and given up, Satan knows the deceived ones will not stop at this; and he redoubles his efforts till he launches them into open rebellion, which becomes incurable and ends in destruction." {4T 211.1}

Trevor Hammond 2 weeks ago Reply

Interesting article! Since Ellen White seems to emerge from this 2+2=4 SUMising (sic) it is evidently clear that some who have long parted ways with Adventism are a tad 'out of touch' with current trends in the Church - well, at least in terms of the frequency of her writings been used. I'm afraid there is hardly much of her quoted from the pulpit or pews in most Adventist churches. In fact there is a gross neglect of her writings.

1cross + 3nails = 4given

T
Elaine Nelson

Perhaps the latest article here about Vegans went unnoticed? EGW was quoted many times, and adding to the Bible what could not be found in its pages. So much for "hardly much of her quoted from the pulpit or pews" but liberally in articles here and in other official SDA publications. Ever read the Review?
The Care and Feeding of the (American) Political Animal

Submitted Aug 5, 2011
By Stephen Foster

As some may recall, last month I engaged in a colloquy with a few of this site’s more frequent participants on the subject of the danger of religion’s influence in American politics; that is, from an historical and eschatological Seventh-day Adventist perspective. In fact, in so doing, we essentially took Dr. Cindy Tutsch’s, “WWJD” blog in a direction that she could not possibly have foreseen. However this almost inevitably goes with the blogging territory; and can, of course, happen to any of us at any time. LOL

My objective in this blog is two-fold, and these reasons should be revealed or become evident as this is being read. First of all, I would suggest that although I am somewhat fascinated with the world of politics and public affairs, particularly American political science/history, and have considerable respect and admiration for many public servants, I consider the practice of politics — the art and science of getting elected — as, all too often, a dirty business; with striking similarities to the ‘industries’ of gaming and prostitution.

We would of course like to think that most public officials are idealists who believe they have an obligation (or a duty of sorts) to contribute their talents and abilities for the benefit of the communities from which they come, on behalf of their families and fellow citizens.

Public service is one thing; what it takes to serve the public as an elected public official, and to remain in office once elected — that is to say, the game or business of politics — is quite another.

When beneficial political outcomes are accomplished, they are accomplished by those who make public policy AND by those who have influenced the formation of beneficial policy. The problem is that public service and public affairs commonly represent an entanglement of competing social and economic interests; all of whom ostensibly view their particular interests as being in the public interest. Needless to say, they cannot all be right.

The skeptic, or cynic, in me tells me that some of those who represent certain interests have to know what they are seeking to accomplish is not actually in the public interest, but rather merely in the narrow interests of a particularly influential and powerful constituency or portion of the electorate. Some may actually be so narrow minded and provincial in their thinking as to believe that whatever is in their constituencies’ interest is somehow also in the public interest.

Whether a politician is sincere, or sincerely delusional, what they are in search of, for good or ill, is power; pure and simple. My observation is that this is the basic, instinctive motivation of most politicians; and the key to understanding them.

In the American political system, power in the legislative branch of government is most easily acquired, amassed, or accumulated by seniority. Seniority is acquired by being repeatedly reelected. Reelection is accomplished by piecing together a decisive, yet not divisive, coalition of the electorate; and amassing a sufficiently large campaign war chest. Campaign war chests are amassed by voting and/or promising to vote in the interests of those who have contributed most to the campaign coffers.

Those holding executive offices in the American political system include mayors, governors, and the President of the United States. Although these office holders obtain power through similar processes of
election; they function differently than do legislators. Instead of voting in the interests of their most vocal and deep-pocketed supporters, executive office holders support, promote, champion, and eventually sign into law initiatives favored by the most vocal, deep-pocketed, and thus influential members of their electoral coalition; whatever those issues may be. Certainly, those perceived to be the most effective and 'successful' executives do anyway.

As we have noted, the two major types of political animals are the politicians who seek, or are elected to, public office and the political activists and operatives who influence and/or 'handle' these politicians. Political activists, of course, include those interests and/or interest groups who 'petition' their government by means of lobbying or through the funding of what have been termed issue ads; and those who likewise seek to inform and influence the public and public office seekers and holders, but perhaps by less expensive means (often of simple financial necessity). Political operatives are largely represented by the necessary entourage of politicians who, among other things, manage political campaigns and deal with the press in spokesperson capacities.

According to Bradford Fitch of the Congressional Management Foundation, and author of the, Citizens Handbook to Influencing Elected Officials, the political class is generally much more responsive to interests than they are to opinions. In other words, for all practical purposes, interest groups are more influential than are individual constituent opinions.

As identified by clifffnotes.com, interest groups in American governmental politics can be generally categorized to include economic groups, including for example the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the AFL-CIO, and the American Medical Association; public interest groups, such as Common Cause and the League of Women Voters; government groups such as the National League of Cities and the National Governors Association; civil rights interest groups like the NAACP and the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund; officially ideological interest groups such as Americans for Democratic Action and the American Conservative Union; single issue groups like the National Rifle Association and Mothers Against Drunk Driving; AND religious interest groups such as the North American Division of SDA Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and The Christian Coalition.

Recent Court rulings, notably among the Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission have made it possible for interest groups to spend unlimited amounts of money to convey campaign electioneering messages in or during political campaigns; thus strengthening the power of at least the most affluent interest groups to influence public opinion (in :15,:30, and :45 second intervals, at that) at the critically few times the public is paying some attention to issues and political candidacies. Some interest groups have effectively eclipsed the roles of political parties in this regard. Former U.S. Congressman Tom Davis (R-VA) has recently noted, for example, that the '527' entity American Crossroads spent more money in the 2010 mid-term election (on the unofficial behalf of Republicans) than did the Republican National Committee.

Unsurprisingly, the religious interest groups are of particular concern in this space. Make no mistake about it; religious interest groups are no less 'interested' in influencing public policy than are other interest groups. As we have noted, either money or the ability to otherwise sway public opinion is what makes an interest group effective. The latter is the natural currency in which religious interest groups operate. Religions do, after all, seek to influence, if not completely change, 'hearts and minds.’ This is in fact their raison d’être; so to say, that they are somewhat effective in mobilizing the opinion of the faithful is axiomatic.

It is therefore safe to conclude that religious interest groups represent the strongly held views and
opinions of segments of the electorate; and depending on the cultural demographic of any given electorate, a given religious interest group will have more or less influence. Where religious interest groups have the most influence is where they find the greatest number of adherents to the ‘principles’ and policies for which they advocate. Put another way, politicians will advocate for principles and policies that are most commonly held by those whom they purportedly represent; and again make no mistake, politicians who are elected in states, districts, or municipalities where religious interest groups are most influential — because of the particular cultural or religious composition of their particular constituencies — are just as willing to listen to, and act on behalf of, those interests as they are any other similarly influential interest group.

Such is the nature of the beast.

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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Ella M. 2 weeks ago Reply

Are there any powerful anti-religion groups? Aren't labor unions a powerful lobbying force? More than religious groups? Highly-paid celebrities and media producers could also be in this group--they are often anti-religious. There are several high-profile atheists with lots of money and power.

Iaffal 2 weeks ago Reply

I believe a question that fits here is this... who's actually the $$$ source that comes thru the Lobbyists? If you can track the $$, you can find the link to those who are seeking to assume / execute power. In politics, as is in this world, everything is not as it seems / appears.

Elaine Nelson 2 weeks ago Reply

The slogan "Follow the Money" was never more relevant than in watching how laws are made. Anyone who believes that the lobbyists have no influence is from another planet. Currently, the huge financial and business corporation are the largest contributors to Congress. If someone has a solution, the Supremes have now allowed no limit to such "free speech."
Stephen Foster 2 weeks ago Reply

The point Ella is not that religious interest groups are necessarily any more powerful than others, or that there are not other groups whose interests clash with those groups of the religious variety, but that religious interest groups function in a similar capacity and in a similar environment and with similar intent (that of influencing policy makers and implementers) that other interest groups do; AND that politicians are just as likely to respond to their concerns, assuming the same leverage (they have—or might have—in given states, districts, or municipalities).

Ella M. 1 week ago Reply

Are you saying that religious groups should not be involved in public policy at all? Some would say they should take a stand on issues that involve the public good such as drugs or alcohol as Adventists did concerning prohibition. They should not be promoting religious laws—that would be breaching the separation of church and state. A similar breach would be a law that denied religious freedom to some even though it may not be presented as a religious law. An example would be a Sunday-closing law such as they now have in Germany that impinges on the religious liberty of some but is not perceived by the secular government as religious. Another would be a law that forced Sabbathkeepers to work on Saturday. I don't know if Muslims work on Fridays, but the same would hold true for them. That is why not allowing Muslim women to wear a headcovering would be a violation of their religious liberties.

Stephen Foster 1 week ago Reply

No Ella, I’m not saying that religious groups should not be involved in public policy at all. What I am saying is that because of the nature of politicians (political animals, if you will; certainly American politicians at least), we should not be deceived into thinking that they cannot be influenced by religious interest groups to do their bidding—whatever that may be at any given time—given the right leverage, or pressure, applied by these groups.

I am also saying that these groups are as motivated and determined to gain leverage and apply pressure to politicians (though perhaps for differing reasons) as are most, if not any, other type of group.

Steve Billiter 1 week ago Reply

"the art and science of getting elected — as, all too often, a dirty business; with striking similarities to the ‘industries’ of gaming and prostitution" (Stephen Foster). Well said, I totally agree. It appears to me that selecting a candidate for political office is very difficult in terms of how can we really believe their rhetoric, which we know is designed to get the vote, primarily.

I personally do not vote, nor do I take part in any form of the political processes. Why? I believe that we are so close to the image of the beast being formed in America, that I spend my excess energies (and Sabbaths) into presenting the 3 angels messages in some form, whether it be Bible studies, literature work, writing articles, giving money, or other supporting efforts. Certainly, it was necessary for A.T Jones to lobby effectively in Congress to oppose the Blair Bill, which was Sunday legislation brought forth in 1889. No doubt, such a need will arise again soon, even though all such lobbying will fail in its purpose, although some may be converted in the process. Occasionally, a proposition put to
vote will be of such that responsible Christians should vote to uphold legislation that supports Bible principles. I especially like what the Spirit of Prophecy says about political endeavors:

"Those who teach the Bible in our churches and our schools are not at liberty to unite in making apparent their prejudices for or against political men or measures, because by so doing they stir up the minds of others, leading each to advocate his favorite theory. There are among those professing to believe present truth, some who will thus be stirred up to express their sentiments and political preferences, so that division will be brought into the church." {CCh 316.1}

"The Lord would have His people bury political questions. On these themes silence is eloquence. Christ calls upon His followers to come into unity on the pure gospel principles which are plainly revealed in the word of God. We cannot with safety vote for political parties; for we do not know whom we are voting for. We cannot with safety take part in any political scheme." {CCh 316.2}

"Those who are Christians indeed will be branches of the true vine, and will bear the same fruit as the vine. They will act in harmony, in Christian fellowship. They will not wear political badges, but the badge of Christ." {CCh 316.3}

Ella M. 2 days ago Reply

Even though I don't like using EGW quotes for every question that comes up, these are excellent ones for this particular subject. Also Jesus said "render unto Ceasar the things that are Ceasar's and unto God the things that are God's." Matt 22:21 You seem to be doing this.

Stephen Foster 1 week ago Reply

Steve Billiter,

Thank you for your observations! I too believe that we are close to the image on the beast being formed here, and that as EGW has noted, “We cannot with safety vote for political parties; for we do not know whom we are voting for.” I have also observed that labeling political personages and entities is asking for division and discord.

I do vote however, with the knowledge that “we cannot with safety vote for political parties; for we do not know whom we are voting for.” Additionally, the nature of the political game/science/animal being what it is, we never can be absolutely certain for what we are voting either.

You are also spot on in your observation that we will undoubtedly be engaged in lobbying against legislation that will be reminiscent of the Blair Bill and that ultimately such efforts will fail, but that some (I believe many) “may be converted in the process.” It is a fact that this reality ironically contributes to the tension between enlightened non-partisanship on the one hand, and enlightened watchfulness on the other.

Markham 6 days ago Reply

"Those who teach the Bible in our churches and our schools are not at liberty to unite in making apparent their prejudices for or against political men or measures, because by so doing they stir up the minds of others, leading each to advocate his favorite theory. There are among those professing to
believe present truth, some who will thus be stirred up to express their sentiments and political preferences, so that division will be brought into the church." {CCh 316.1}

I fully believe that this advice is still relevant to the modus operandi of committed SDAS. I do believe we can function as citizens by intelligent voting. That doesn't mean we will agree on all issues and candidates but that we will seek the Lord's guidance in our voting. Insofar as being political candidates associated with a political party -- I cannot see how this meets the standard of the quote. Nonpartisan candidacy presents a possible option.

Elaine Nelson 6 days ago Reply

How is a "nonpartisan" candidate discovered? As there are two major parties and a few Independents, are there any "nonpartisan" candidates running for state or national offices presently?

Stephen Foster 4 days ago Reply

Nonpartisan candidates, I am afraid, are nonexistent.
Render unto Rome: The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church


Adventism from its beginnings has spent a great deal of time gazing on the Roman Catholic Church, publicly denouncing the ‘Papacy’ in its publications and soul-winning crusades, and proclaiming it ‘Antichrist’ and the Dragon’s handmaiden, while managing to quietly imitate it in much of its administrative structure.

Render unto Rome: The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church, is written by a practicing Catholic journalist who makes this the third of three highly acclaimed books on the topics of money, secrecy, and revelations of pedophilia among Catholic priests. The author does not excuse any of the church’s behavior, and like a journalistic John the Baptist, makes a serious and plaintive call for the church to change its ways.

Berry points out that the church keeps its financial records vague at best, and unavailable at worst, though one horrendous figure is known officially: Between 1950 and 2009, Rome has spent $1.775 billion to compensate victims of child abuse and provide treatment for errant priests. It is also known that a great deal of that cash has come from the closure of churches and the selling of real estate, to the tune of 1,373 parishes in the U.S. since 1995—more than one a week for the past decade-and-a-half. Yet, during that same time, the church has often elevated priests who participated in its many cover-ups—hardly acts of a contrite and humble spirit! The author characterizes the experience of the typical Catholic lay person as “passive,” in which the parishioner is told to “pray, pay, and obey.”

The past 60 years for Rome has been a near-constant litany of revelations involving embezzlement, sexual indiscretion, and downsizing. Yet, the book does not see Catholicism as either retreating or changing. Secrecy under the most recent two Popes has remained the status quo, and able fund-raisers apparently continue to be rewarded with virtual immunity. One priest, in particular, was known to have two common-law wives and more than a dozen young lovers, both male and female. Yet, his ability to raise funds was so pronounced, the institutional church declined to look into charges against him.

Adventist laymen would do well to read this book — a litany of factual information at times smothering in its detail — and contemplate the lessons it teaches on the need for transparency and accountability, two attributes often lacking in both Adventism and Catholicism. Perhaps by observing the shameful behavior of our proverbial antagonist, we can avoid some of the same pitfalls encountered by her on a scale roughly 100 times our size.

Edited and posted by Clive Holland

Steve Billiter
Interesting and valid points you make, Edwin, concerning the twin issues of transparency, and accountability. For us, La Sierra University and the continuing shameful episodes there are significant. I do not really think that we can go to Catholic writings and discern virtues we need reformation on and neglect the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. The 7th Day Adventist Church is the only depositary of God's truth on earth today, and until the end. However, we can peruse Catholic writings in matters of Sunday promotion, and the papacy's current plan for worldwide domination once again. God is not against people--He has a great many faithful followers among Catholics who live up to all the light they have, and will come out of Babylon when we give the call.

The shameful and tragic results of forbidding priests to marry are well documented in current history--the verses below having a dual application:

1Ti 4:2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;
1Ti 4:3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God has created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

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Steve: Can a secretive organization do great good? Undoubtedly! Can a transparent organization do great evil? Absolutely! BUT there seems to be at least a loose correlation between secrecy and entrenched evil; it's just a lot easier to behave badly when you know nobody is likely to find out. Therefore, if and when an organization's cultural commitment to secrecy leads to a shielding of evil, it's incumbent on its own parishioners (Berry is a Catholic journalist), to help lift that secrecy, so the entrenched and hidden evil can be exposed, ventilated, and treated.

I suggest that the independent Adventist press (among other contributions) at times does what Jason Berry, the author, has done, helping to expose and remedy entrenched cultural shortcomings within our communion of faith. Public exposure of the imperfections of an organization rarely leads people to abandon the organization itself; but it does sensitize the members to the need for change and can suggest pathways to that end.

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The SDA church has been similarly secretive about its sexual predators as the Catholic church. Only the differences are in numbers. SDA sexual molesters are simply shunted from one conference to another, just like the predatory Catholic priests.

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Association of Adventist Women

Get Involved in the AAW Conference

October 13-16, 2011
La Sierra University, Riverside, California

Mark Your Calendar to Attend the Twenty-eighth Annual Conference of the Association of Adventist Women:

October 13-16, 2011

Conference Online Registration

AAW Conference Schedule

(Schedule subject to change)

October 13-16, 2011
La Sierra University
Riverside, California
Thursday, October 13

6:30        Registration
7:00        Get to Know Your New Friends
7:30        Keynote Presentation – Chris Oberg

Friday, October 14

8:30        Plenary Session — Carla Baker, Bonnie Dwyer
Where the Church has Been and Where It Is Going:
Perspectives from Within the Organization and from the Laity

9:45        Break-out Sessions
a. Sometimes a Woman is the Best Choice: Ellen White on Women in Pastoral
   Ministry — Ginger Hanks Harwood
b. Laughter, The Best Medicine — Lee Berk
   “Happy Rooms” Around the World — Iris Landa
   Forgiveness — Cheryl Simmons

10:45       Break

11:00       Break-out Sessions
a. Women as They Serve and Lead Around the World — Carla Baker
b. Health Benefits of Nuts — Joan Sabaté
c. Abuse in the Christian Home — Audrey Johnson
   Coping with Menopause — Danielle Sawyer

12:15       Lunch

1:30        Plenary Session: Women Professionals in a Man’s World
Linda Wysong Becker, Lisa Beardsley, Elaine Hagele, Andrea Luxton

2:45        Break

3:00        Panel Discussion: Women’s Ordination and Ellen White
Trisha Famisaran, Lisa Beardsley, Larry Christoffel, Chris Oberg

5:30        Supper

7:00        Mini-concert: La Sierra University String Quartet

7:30        Agape Supper: Guest speaker: Ella Simmons
Also featuring Praise and Peace, Body and Soul
(Liturgical Dance, Joyce Christoffel, director)
Communion

Get Involved in the AAW Conference http://www.aaw.cc/GetInvolved/AAWConference.html
Sabbath, October 15

9:30  Worship Service — Chris Oberg

10:45  Sabbath School: *Female Metaphors in the Bible* — Lora Geriguis

12:30  Lunch

3:00  Panel Discussion: *How the Church Can Support Women in Leadership*  
Carla Baker, Yami Bazán, Lisa Beardsley, Dilys Brooks, Bonnie Dwyer, Elaine Hagele, Andrea Luxton

6:00  Woman-of-the-Year Awards Banquet

8:00  Business Meeting

Sunday, October 16

10:00  Brunch at the Mission Inn

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Conference Registration form -- .doc file
Conference Registration form -- .pdf file
Online Conference Registration

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