**NEWS**

**Ballot Issues that Impact Religious Issues: An Analysis of Election Results Across the United States:** In a night of surprises Tuesday, November 6, US voters not only delivered an electoral landslide for the status quo, but decided ballot issues at the state level with deep implications for faith and religious liberty....

**Adventist Church in North America Votes Strategic Goals, Funds Disaster Response:** Reflecting on a year of declining membership growth and the reality of the recent devastation from Superstorm Sandy, North American leaders addressed these and other issues brought on by changing demographic realities....

**Churches and Volunteers in New York City Help Neighbors to Survive the Storms:** As the East Coast faces blasts of snow and freezing winds this weekend, Adventists in Eastern coastal areas continue their ministry for the physical and spiritual needs of their neighbors....

**Oxford University Press Book by Adventist Included in Christian Century Top Books for 2012:** Adventist Nicholas P. Miller, a professor at Andrews University, has had his book *The Religious Roots of the First Amendment: Dissenting Protestants and the Separation of Church and State* listed among top religious books published this year. The book, from Oxford U. Press, re-examines the roots of the religious liberty movement in context of historical Protestant dissent....

**One Project’s Second European Gathering Convenes this Week in Denmark:** A renewed and intense study of Jesus as the focus of hope and faith continues to advance around the world, currently in Denmark, with an upcoming date (February) in Chicago, and Newcastle and Sydney (Australia) in July....

**OPINION**

**God's Days and Our Days:** The Genesis account of creation is all about God's work, not the work of humanity, writes blogger Jack Hoehn—and as in the heavenly sanctuary, God's creative and salvific work are by no means identical to the finite chronological reckonings of His
Dr. David Wilbur: Power and Illusion: Religion and Human Need. Part 4: Why is it that millions in the world seem ready to lay down their lives for religious beliefs held to be patently non-factual by science as well as competing religionists? Blogger Ervin Taylor continues his quest for understanding....

A Nice Little Love Story: Devotional writer Debbonnaire Kovacs takes a closer look at the story of the biblical Ruth, who decisively and with humble single-mindedness chose to make a radical cultural and religious transition in the wake of family tragedy....

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Gilded Soldiers (poetic homage to veterans): "Cry not for men who won't grow old, sing instead and mine for gold," writes poet Timo Antero Onjukka in a Veterans Day tribute to "Gilded Soldiers"....

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Ballot Issues that Impact Religious Issues: An Analysis of Election Results across the United States

Submitted: Nov 8, 2012
By Michael D. Peabody

On Tuesday (November 6) voters in many states had the opportunity to make decisions on state laws through ballot measures. Voters in Maine, Maryland, and Washington voted in favor of measures that would legalize same-sex marriage. Voters in Minnesota rejected a proposed constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, and voters in North Carolina voted to define marriage as solely between one man and one woman.

Voters in North Dakota rejected a Religious Freedom Restoration measure that would have required the government to demonstrate a compelling reason for imposing laws that are intended to be neutral but adversely affect the free exercise of religion. North Dakota also rejected a bill that would have increase criminal sanctions against certain types of animal cruelty.

California voters approved increased sanctions against human trafficking but rejected a measure that would have called for labeling foods that contain genetically modified ingredients.

Several states also approved laws that would allow the recreational use of marijuana and expanded gambling. Ballot measures are subject to Federal pre-emption and judicial scrutiny but they are a reasonable way to gauge the mood of the voters in any given year. This year, after an intense campaign battle, the nation seems to have taken a decidedly left turn.

State by State Review

States not listed had no relevant ballot measures or no ballot measures of any kind.

Alabama – Two amendments related to constitutional rights and health care passed. Amendment 4 removes language from the Alabama Constitution that referenced segregation by race in schools and repealed Section 259 which related to poll taxes. Amendment 6, prohibiting mandatory participation in any health care system passed.

Alaska – Ballot Measure 1 which would create a convention to revise, alter, or amend the state constitution was defeated.

Arkansas – Issues 3 and 4 would have allowed 24-hour casinos in seven state counties. Although they were on the ballot, the results are not being tabulated due to litigation. Issue 5 which allows medical marijuana appears to be narrowly passing although results are not yet official.

California – Proposition 34 which would have eliminated the death penalty in California and replaced it with life in prison without the possibility of parole was defeated. Proposition 35 which would increase prison terms for human traffickers, require sex traffickers to register as sex offenders, and impose additional sanctions and mandate law enforcement training passed 81.4% to 18.6%. Proposition 37 which would require labeling on food indicating whether it contained
genetically modified ingredients failed.

Colorado – Amendment 64 which legalizes marijuana for recreational use in the state passed by a margin of almost 10%. The legal question is whether this will pre-empt federal laws against marijuana use and possession.

Florida – Amendment 1 which would prevent penalties for not purchasing health care coverage to comply with federal health care with forms failed. Amendment 5 which would give the Legislature increased control over the judicial branch failed. Amendment 6 which would prohibit public funds for abortions failed. Amendment 8 which would repeal a ban of public dollars for religious funding failed. The Seventh-day Adventist Church went on record against Amendment 8 as a violation of the establishment clause and the potential for government regulation of publicly funded religious activity.

Illinois – A citizen-initiated advisory question on same-sex marriage and “marriage-like rights” in opposition to a civil unions law passed June 1 last year (2011) failed the filing deadline.

Kentucky – There were no relevant measures on the ballot because some proposed measures did not make the ballot, including an expansion of legal gambling in the state, legalization of medical marijuana, and a law that would have prohibited the state supreme court from ruling on disputes over funding schools.

Maine – Voters approved Question 1 which overturned a 2009 voter-approved ballot measure that banned same-sex marriage in the state. Question 1 asked, “Do you want to allow the State of Maine to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples?” It passed 53.89% to 47.11%. It is noted that the ballot language initially proposed included a protection of religious freedom and asked, “Do you favor a law allowing marriage licenses for same-sex couples that protects religious freedom by ensuring no religion or clergy be required to perform such a marriage in violation of their religious beliefs?” The final language was more simple although it does not diminish the rights of clergy or religious groups to decide which groups can get married.

Maryland – Maryland voters approved a measure that would allow same-sex couples to obtain a civil marriage license by a margin of 52.1% to 47.9%. Voters also approved a measure that would allow the expansion of commercial gambling.

Massachusetts – An “Act Relative to Death with Dignity” which would allow for terminally ill patients with six months or fewer left to live to be given lethal drugs was narrowly defeated. Voters approved a bill that would allow the use of medical marijuana in the state.

Minnesota – Voters rejected Amendment 1 which would ban same-sex marriage by recognizing marriage as solely between a man and a woman by a margin of 52.34% to 47.66%.

Missouri – No relevant measures on November 6, 2012. On August 7, 2012 as part of the Primary election, voters approved Constitutional Amendment 2 “Religious Freedom in Public Places” that guaranteed a citizen’s “right to pray and worship in all private and public areas including schools so long as the activities are voluntary and subject to the same rules and
regulations that apply to all other types of speech.” The measure closely tracked existing Federal constitutional provisions in that it also prohibited the establishment of an official state religion and coercion of any person to participate in religious activity.

Montana – Voters approved a measure that will require parental notification prior to an abortion for a minor. Notice is not required if it is an emergency, it is waived by a youth court in a sealed proceeding, or it is waived by the parent or guardian. Violation of the act is subject to criminal prosecution and civil liability. Montana voters also approved the Montana Marijuana Act which creates a registry program for cultivating, manufacturing, transportation and transfer of medical marijuana and allows inspections. The primary purpose behind the medical marijuana act was to regulate the implementation of an existing law allowing medical marijuana possession and use.

North Carolina – Voters approved Amendment 1, “Defense of Marriage” amending the state Constitution to only recognize marriage between one man and one woman by a margin of 61.04% to 38.96%.

North Dakota – Voters rejected Initiated Constitutional Measure No. 3 that would prevent the government from burdening the sincere exercise of religious liberty by a person or religious organization absent proof of a compelling government interest, and then only by use of the least restrictive means by a margin of of 64.04% to 35.96%. This measure, also called the Religious Liberty Restoration amendment was a response to the 1990 Supreme Court decision in Employment Division v. Smith, 494 U.S. 872, that has allowed state laws to burden the free exercise of religion so long as the law is neutral and not intended to discriminate. Many churches promoted the measure, which the Seventh-day Adventist Church has promoted in many jurisdictions, but Planned Parenthood poured money into the opposition and claimed it could have opened the door for it to be used as a defense in breaking state laws involving abuse, domestic violence, and discrimination. While such application would not overcome a compelling state interest in safety, the arguments against this measure ultimately carried the day and people of faith in North Dakota can still have their religious free exercise rights taken away by “neutral” laws that adversely affect them. The “compelling state interest” test was initially applied by the Supreme Court in 1963 in a case involving a Seventh-day Adventist who had been denied unemployment benefits because her faith would not allow her to work on Saturdays. The North Dakota Measure as well as a previous federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act drew on the Court’s language in Sherbert v. Verner, 374 U.S. 398 (1963)

North Dakota voters also rejected a measure that would make it a class C felony to maliciously and intentionally harm a living dog, cat, or horse that would not apply to production agriculture, trappers, veterinarians, scientific researchers, or lawful defense of life or property failed. Voters also repealed the state constitutional provision that allowed the legislative assembly to levy an annual poll tax.

Oklahoma – Voters approved State Question No. 759 which amends the state constitution to prohibit affirmative action in the form of special treatment or discrimination based on race or sex in public employment, education, or contracts. There are three exceptions to the ban on affirmative action, including when gender is a bonafide qualification, it will not override existing court orders and consent decrees, and will not apply if affirmative action is needed to keep or obtain federal funds.
Oregon – Voters rejected an Measure 80 which would allow personal cultivation and use of marijuana.

Rhode Island – Voters approved two measures that would allow state-operated casino gambling, such as table games, at two specific existing facilities.

Virginia – Voters approved a measure that attempted to overturn the United States Supreme Court decision in *Kelo v. City of New London*, 545 U.S. 469, that upheld the eminent domain taking of private property and transfer to private business for economic development purposes. The measure specifies issues involving the extent of permissible taking, an expanse view of the value of such taken property, and that the purpose of the taking must be for a public use.

Washington – Washington voters approved Referendum 74 approving same-sex marriage. The measure reserves domestic partnership designation only for seniors and uphold the right of clergy or religious organizations to refuse to perform, recognize, or accommodate any marriage ceremony. Voters also approved the legalization of marijuana use by individuals over age 21 with certain licensing requirements for growing and selling marijuana.

Wyoming – Wyoming voters approved a state constitutional amendment that specifies that competent adults have the right to make their own health care decisions. The amendment was drafted in opposition to the federal Affordable Care Act.

*Research and Analysis by Michael D. Peabody, an attorney in Los Angeles and editor of the ReligiousLiberty.TV website located at [http://www.religiousliberty.tv](http://www.religiousliberty.tv) He is available for speaking appointments and to provide analysis of constitutional trends involving liberty of conscience.*
Adventist Church in North America Votes Strategic Goals, Funds Disaster Response

Submitted: Nov 9, 2012
By AT News Team

Six strategic goals for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America and more than a million dollars of relief for the survivors of Hurricane Sandy were voted during the annual meeting this week of the North American Division (NAD) governing body. The NAD executive committee began its meeting Friday, November 2, as a massive storm brought record rain and winds to the Washington DC suburb where it convened and worse damage further north.

The committee voted to appropriate a half million dollars to Adventist Community Services (ACS) to establish the Hurricane Sandy Relief Fund and called upon local churches to match this amount with a special offering on Sabbath, November 10. Before the meeting ended on Tuesday the General Conference (GC) world body of the denomination announced its gift of $200,000 to the fund. Other gifts by denominational units announced by ACS this week include $30,000 from the Atlantic Union Conference where the greatest damage was sustained, $20,000 from the Guam Micronesia Mission half way around the world but also part of the NAD, and $10,000 each from the Pacific Union Conference and the Southern Union Conference.

“It’s important for our church to be there to help people who have been affected by widespread devastation,” Pastor Dan Jackson, president of the Church in North America, said to the group. “We could be the Jesus that some of these people will only see and experience from these acts of kindness.” More information about Adventist groups involved in the disaster response efforts is reported by Adventist Today in other news stories.

The committee established six major goals for the denomination as well as a revised mission statement, “To reach North America and the world with hope and wholeness.” The strategic goals include:

1. “Retention of young adults … through a revitalized campus ministries program along with [local] church activities that engage their interests and energies.”

2. Extending “Adventist education [to] everyone using innovative online modalities to increase enrollment of school-age children and youth” as well as “enable the local church to serve as a key community learning center.”

3. Expanding “the potential and practice of women clergy” including “better member education, increased mentoring and [improved] recruitment, support and affirmation” from Church administrators.

4. “Evangelism and outreach specifically targeted to large cities and native-born [North] Americans.” In the NAD territory four out of five residents live in the metropolitan areas and three out four are native-born, not immigrants while Adventist growth is concentrated among immigrants and local churches are more likely to be in non-metropolitan communities.
5. Develop “a coherent media strategy with an emphasis on social media” instead of traditional television, radio and print formats.

6. Continue to evangelize “emerging immigrant people groups” where the Adventist Church has had the most significant response in the last three decades.

In a keynote sermon on Friday evening, Jackson spoke against “inauthentic, judgmental Christianity” and urged the denomination to face the fact that “genuine fellowship is often lacking our churches … it is not seen and experienced in the way we treat those who disagree or in the way we treat one another … and it is killing us. It turns people off.” Church administrators from local and union conferences in Bermuda, Canada, the United States and the U.S. Pacific territories spent Thursday and Friday in a workshop on diversity.

Adventist membership in North America stood at 1.2 million as July 1, the 300 committee members were told by NAD executive secretary Pastor G. Alexander Bryant. There were nearly 6,200 local congregations and the growth rate for the previous 12 months had slowed to 1.35 percent, down from about two percent in the previous year.

Bryant affirmed the 13,651 short-term and regular missionaries that the NAD shared with the denomination in the rest of the world over the last 12 months, as well as the 34,450 volunteers active in Adventist Community Services. He expressed concern that the percentage of young adults among the members is about half that of the general population and that while 60 percent of the members are women only 14 of 214 church administrators are women.
Churches and Volunteers in New York City Help Neighbors to Survive the Storms

Submitted: Nov 9, 2012
By AT News Team

Last Sabbath (November 3) the New York City metro area was emerging from Hurricane Sandy; this Sabbath it will be blasted with snow and freezing winds. Not only are Adventists gathering for worship despite the weather, they are also caring for suffering neighbors in the communities where congregations are located.

Pastor Todd Stout, senior pastor at Church of the Advent Hope, the Seventh-day Adventist congregation in the Upper East Side of Manhattan, sent his members an Email on Friday asking them to dress in work clothes. “We have work to do to help the hurricane victims.” His members spent the Sabbath preparing and distributing hundreds of meals in the Long Beach and Canarsie neighborhoods of Brooklyn and on Manhattan in the Lower East Side. The church is continuing to work with nearby Christ Church NYC from another denomination to collect coats and toiletries for distribution to storm survivors in shelters and on the streets.
Pastor Tony Romeo, leader of the Manhattan Seventh-day Adventist Church and director REACH-NYC, reports that his congregation in the West Village area of lower Manhattan served breakfast on the sidewalk in front of the church and then had a “relaxed” Bible study as well as a time of testimony during which people shared their storm stories and praised God to still be alive. The group went out in the afternoon to nearby Washington Square Park and other neighborhood locations to share soup, hot chocolate and sandwiches. His wife had prepared “freshly made hot Pasta Fagioli Soup, an Italian classic.” Church members, as well as visitors from Loma Linda (California) and Texas, pitched in to make the sandwiches and help distribute the food to grateful neighbors.

Donations to support the activities in New York City can be sent to REACH-NYC, P.O. Box 651, North Salem, NY 10560. If “Hurricane Sandy” is written in the memo section of a check, it will be used only for relief efforts, Pastor Romeo told Adventist Today.

Volunteers from many Adventist groups—units affiliated with Adventist Community Services (ACS) and independent ministries—have been streaming into the hard-hit areas of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut all week. A group of 60 volunteers from Heritage Academy in Monterey, Tennessee, worked at the emergency distribution center in Hoboken, New Jersey, immediately across the river from lower Manhattan. A team of 10 faculty and students from Union College are working in the Toms River area north of Atlantic City, one of the most devastated regions. Both are part of ACTS World Relief, a volunteer agency run by Adventists.
Both of these volunteer teams are highly trained and travel with a complete array of rescue and survival equipment, including generators, chain saws, etc. The Union College team is from the institution’s academic program in international rescue and relief. The Heritage Academy students have all completed the Federal government’s CERT training as emergency responders.

“Normally we tell volunteers they are not needed,” the city official in charge of the Hoboken center told ACTS World Relief director David Canther, “but because of your training, please work with the National Guard in distributing emergency supplies.” National television news has run pictures of this National Guard operation in Hoboken much of the last week. This city official is a CERT trainer and immediately recognized the expertise that the Adventist student volunteers brought to the scene.

ACS has trained tens of thousands of volunteers across the country in the last decade through its Disaster Response program, although it remains largely unknown to most church members. “The members who invest themselves in ACS are unsung heroes,” one church administrator told Adventist Today. “They are like the adults who staff Pathfinder Clubs in that this is a specialized ministry that is usually ignored, but does great work, makes a large impact and is an amazing expression of the faith and sacrifice of large numbers of Adventists.”

Hurricane Sandy did massive damage on a number of Caribbean islands before it roared up the east coast of the United States. This is a story largely lost to the American news media, but it has the attention of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA). The organization is working to help 1,200 families in the Dominican Republic who lost their homes in a mud slide and has been distributing blankets, hot meals and personal care kits in Jamaica.

ADRA has set up a Hurricane Sandy emergency fund and donations can be sent directly to ADRA International, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, or placed in an offering envelope at any Adventist church and marked “Hurricane Sandy Relief.”
A book by Nicholas P. Miller, a professor at Andrews University, was included among the top religion books for the year in lists released this week by Christian Century, the well-known journal oriented toward mainline Protestants in the United States. Entitled The Religious Roots of the First Amendment: Dissenting Protestants and the Separation of Church and State, the volume was published in June by Oxford University Press.

The First Amendment protections of religious freedom and prohibiting religion prescribed by law in the United States constitution has traditionally been seen as rooted in the Enlightenment, but Miller’s book links it to several lines of Protestant dissent leading up to the American revolution. He does not try to dislodge the traditional explanation, but to show more clearly its connection to developments in the history of Christianity, specifically the concept of private judgment in Biblical interpretation and the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

The book documents how the nonconformist tradition among some Protestants led to the triumph of the concept of separation of church and state. This view found development largely among the smaller, separatist sects instead of the goal of many larger Protestant denominations to establish the “right” kind of official church.

Miller is an associate professor of church history in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews. He has a law degree from Columbia University in New York City and a PhD in American religious history from the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. He is 45 and has worked for a number of Adventist religious liberty organizations, currently as director of the International Religious Liberty Institute at Andrews.

Miller has produced programs for the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), an evangelical parachurch ministry with right-wing political connections. He has also published an article in the journal Christian Ethics Today critical of the religious. “Those who advocate the enshrinement of uniquely Christian values in the laws of our land are literally advocating that force be used to coerce people to conform to spiritual ideals,” he wrote.

The need for a “principled” approach to religious freedom was outlined in a recent article by Miller in which he reflected on the “disorienting game of … musical chairs” in current political developments related to religious liberty. He was even-handed in his critique of the positions of both Mitt Romney and Barack Obama. This article can be seen on line: http://religiousliberty.tv/human-rights/human-life

Miller has also recently spoken and written of his concern that the growing trend toward allowing same-sex marriage in America may put pressure on the right to propagate a religious teaching that view homosexual behavior as sinful, such as that taught by the Adventist
denomination. He was a key organizer for a symposium on this and related topics at Andrews University, the papers from which have recently been published as a book.
One Project’s Second European Gathering Convenes this Week in Denmark

Submitted: Nov 4, 2012
By AT News Team

“Two days of only Jesus” is happening the second time in Europe hosted by the Danish Union of Seventh-day Adventist Churches in Nareum. More than 150 people are signed up to attend, reports One Project coordinator Japhet De Oliveira. The preachers at this event will work their way through the first chapter of Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians.

The next One Project gathering in North America is scheduled for February 11-12 in Chicago. The deadline for pre-registration to make sure to get into this event is November 15. Those interested in more information can send an Email to info@the1project.org and ask how to pre-register and make a hotel reservation.

A number of “conversation groups” will meet the evening before the Chicago event begins. These will provide an opportunity for people interested in various topics to connect and share. Each will be limited to eight participants and the seats are available to those who reserve space ahead of time on a first-come first-served basis. Topics listed in the October 29 issue of the One Project Newsletter include young adult faith, intergenerational churches, worship, relevancy, Christian faith in urban culture, cross-cultural ministry, the Scriptures, preaching, mentoring, following, vision, prayer, and the Body of Christ.

If you would like to talk personally with a representative of the One Project, Kessia Reyne Bennett will be at the Adventist Society for Religious Studies meeting in Chicago on November 15-17. Tim Gillespie will be at Southern Adventist University on November 15-16.

One Project gatherings are being planned for Australia over the next three years. Specifics about location are under development, but the plan is to meet in Newcastle on July 20-21, 2013; in Sydney on July 19-20, 2014; and in Perth on July 25-26, 2015. The planning committee includes Tony Knight, Rod Long, Jeffrey Parker and Cheonneth Strickland.

The One Project is about helping people find and strengthen a Christ-centered faith, including Adventists and others. It is sponsored by a network of pastors, youth workers and others of an Evangelical orientation in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
God's Days and Our Days

Submitted: Nov 6, 2012
By Jack Hoehn

Genesis 1 and 2 is not about human labor, it is about God’s labor. God, not man, is the only functioning character of these chapters, He occupies central stage. (Everett Fox, “The Five Books of Moses”, p. 10.) Genesis 1 is not about human work, or human days, it is about God’s work, and God’s days. The Genesis creation story divides God’s work into 6 Heavenly Days, plus a seventh for His rest.

Man’s work, of course, can also be divided into 6 days, plus a seventh for man’s rest. Man’s days are 24 hours long. Must God’s Days, upon which our week is modeled, also be 24 hours long?

Heavenly and Earthly Sanctuaries

Moses was shown a Heavenly Sanctuary, upon which he was instructed to model an earthly sanctuary.[1] The earthly was a “shadow” of the heavenly things; it followed the “pattern” of the heavenly sanctuary.

Now, we know for sure that the earthly sanctuary in the wilderness has a court of 50 x 100 cubits (90 x 180 feet), and the sanctuary was 10 x 20 cubits (18 x 36 feet). This was Moses sanctuary; does it mean that God’s Heavenly Sanctuary was 10 x 20 cubits? Does God’s Court have to measure 50 x 100 cubits?

You and I both suspect that the Heavenly Court and the Heavenly Sanctuary are infinitely larger than 90 x 180 or 18 x 36 feet. The earthly sanctuary was modeled on the heavenly. It was made after the same pattern. But it was scaled to fit our human needs.

So the earthly week with its 6 days of labor and 7th day of rest, is patterned, modeled on God’s Creation Week.[2] But it is scaled to fit our human needs. As God divided His work of creation into 6 yom or Days, so he asks humans to divide their work into 6 yom or days followed by the Sabbath.

Reading Genesis Literally

When I read the Genesis story literally, it appears to me that a literal reading of the Bible requires Creation Days to be longer than 12 hour daylight days or 24 hour solar days. This is clear especially for Creation Days 3 and 6.

Creation Day 3
First on the 3rd great Creation Day dry land appears. Ur, Artica, Nena, Atlantica, Pangaea, or Gondwana[3] lift above the waters. Then “God said, Let the earth sprout forth with sprouting-growth, plants that seed for the seeds, fruit trees that yield fruit, after their kind, in which is their seed upon the earth! It was so. The earth brought forth the sprouting-growth, plants that seed for the seed, after their kind, trees that yield fruit, in which is their seed, after their kind. God saw that it was good. There was setting, there was dawning: third day.”[4]

So after appearance of the continents, land drying off, how quickly can a plant sprout? And it was not instant creation, God doesn’t say “let plants be”, it was a spoken command “let earth bring forth sprouts”! God’s command to the earth requires days, weeks, months or years for obedience. The “earth brought forth” plants, God watches and approves. Now if you want to read it symbolically that it all happened suddenly, not really “sprouting forth”, OK, but recognize you are not reading the text literally!

A Very Busy 6th Day

If we read Genesis 1:24-31 and 2: 4-25, about the 6th Creation Day, scripture reveals God’s following accomplishments on this one day:

a.) God creates land animals, domestic herds.
b.) God creates crawling things.
c.) God creates wild animals not domesticated.
d.) God discusses the creation of mankind with heavenly associates.
e.) God forms Adam, vitalizes him, on the earth, outside of Eden.[5]
f.) God then plants a garden in Eden which grows. [6]
g.) Then God puts Adam into Eden. [7]
h.) God Gives Adam his work and explains the Great Controversy existing outside of Eden.[8]
i.) God next tasks Adam as a scientist with taxonomy naming “all the animals”. [9]
j.) Adam notes the sexual dimorphism of the animals.
k.) Adam experiences his aloneness.
l.) God performs surgery under anesthesia.
m.) Eve formed and vitalized as the crown of creation.
n.) Adam wakes smitten with Eve, saying “it’s about time, here is what I’ve been missing”. [10]
o.) God explains to the two of them dominion responsibilities for the creation.[11]
p.) God explains botany. Teaches them in a no killing animals world, plants were meant to grow and then die a painless death in service to animals.[12]
q.) The humans then figure out how to become one flesh, naked and not ashamed![13]
r.) And all this on one 12 hour day or even 24 hour night and day? Talk about a frantic Friday, this would be the worst preparation day in history, to try and rush all this before sundown and the first Sabbath!

Time it for me, people. Use your stopwatches. I can see it taking days at least, and yes, years are quite plausible. This can NOT all happen from sunrise to sunset of a solar day. If you read your Bible literally, with a real God working with real humans, and not just a felt board cartoon of these events, the 6th great Creation Day surely must be longer than 12 or 24 solar hours.
Dividing our work and rest into 6 x 24 hour days followed by a 7th 24 hour Sabbath is patterned after God’s Creation Week. Our work and worship is modeled after God’s Work and Rest pattern. But just as the earthly sanctuary and court are smaller than the Heavenly Sanctuary and Courts, there is no reason to conclude that God’s Great Creation Week was 144 solar hours long. We need not make the Bible impossible by imposing an assumption about the length of Creation Days on it. Listen again to our Bible.

“But you must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day.”[14]

[1]Hebrews 8:5  “… the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, [that] thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.”
[2] Exodus 20:9-11  “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day [is] the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: [in it] thou shalt not do any work… For [in] six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them [is], and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.”
[3] Names given to some of the landmasses in the geologic history of our planet.
[5],7,8 Genesis 2:7, Adam created before planting Eden. Genesis 2:8, God planted garden; God then placed the human in the garden he had planted.

[8] Genesis 2:15-17. God explains that before Adam’s fall, there is a choice to know Good or Evil, and that in this new world there was a consequence known as Death to be avoided. How long would it take to tell these stories to the new man?
[9] Genesis 2:18 announces that God clearly had a plan for introducing Adam to his mate, what follows was orchestrated. God desired to awaken in Adam an awareness of his need for a partner. Was this done in seconds or minutes?
[10] Rich Deem, http://www.godandscience.org/youngearth/genesis1.html#day6  “Adam's response to Eve's creation is also telling. Upon seeing Eve for the first time, Adam says 'at last.' This is not exactly the response one would expect from a person who had waited for less than one day. So, we must conclude that the sixth day was most certainly longer than 24 hours, and probably took at least several years from Adam's response.”
[11] Genesis 1:28. Unfallen humans were told they had to “subdue” the earth. What in a perfect creation would need subduing? Does this not suggest that inside protected Eden and outside on the rest of the earth different conditions were present? Adventists expect geology to have no remnants of Eden, it was removed from earth. Geology shows what was happening on earth outside of Eden. A wild earth in conflict? The great controversy between light and darkness? The place where plant and animal death existed unhindered by access to the Tree of Life?
How long would this take? Especially if only one of you had had a few minutes watching pairs of animals. Please give these newlyweds a little time, folks. Don’t try to trivialize this holy naked but unashamed oneness into an unlikely, unseemly, ugly rush just to preserve a not fully explored “chronology” of creation.

2 Peter 3:8, New Living Translation.

“… the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, [that] thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.”
Dr. David Wilbur: Power and Illusion: Religion and Human Need. Part 4

Submitted: Nov 6, 2012
By Ervin Taylor

This is part 4 of a discussion of Dr. Wilbur’s book which here considers his Chapter 3. It should be emphasized that all of the text in this series of blogs in bold font in the body of the text of the chapter summary has been kindly provided by Dr. Wilbur. If there are any of my own comments, they will follow in regular type.

Summary for Chapter 3: Unique Power of Religious Belief
The usefulness of religious beliefs in molding our social reality is at least partly related to the power these beliefs wield in a majority of human minds.

Emotional Power and Truth.

The power of an idea in a human mind seems to be little related to its ontological truth. Men often die on both sides of a battlefield thinking that they are dying for God and Truth while supporting conflicting visions of these things. Religious beliefs are probably seldom selected on the basis of a rational analysis. Instead they are supported by an emotional response that is at least partly related to our acculturation. This positive emotional response confirms the “truth” of the belief.

The long term success of a religious belief system seems most related to how it deals with human nature and culture and with the physical realities of the world we live in—not to some unique understanding of the universe or the supernatural.

Presumed Sources and Reinforcements

Most current religions claim to be supported by ancient texts that are attributed to divine or semi divine sources. These include the Bible, Qur’an, Vedas and Upanishads, Analects, Daodejing, etc. Such texts are given worshipful respect by believers regardless of all the critical questions that surround their origins and interpretation.

The second support of religious belief is mystical experience—ranging from a warm feeling of acceptance by God during private or public devotions to visions and dreams thought to be sent by the Divine.

Complete Knowledge without Struggle: Standing in God’s Place

Religions usually offer a claim that they have a complete understanding of man and his duties and place in the universe. This is available for any believer and comes without the intellectual struggles of science or philosophy.

Magic and Religion
The practitioners of magic (often called “black magic”) and religious petitioners for divine interventions in the world both share a claim that this can be arranged—that such power is available. The only difference would seem to be that the religious believer expects moral restraint if/when his power acts.

**Immortality and Reward**

Most religions describe some form of conditional subsequent human existence. Great power may flow to a religious organization that seems able to arrange a good place or even the avoidance of a bad place in this inevitable future.

**Ritual**

Most religions are supported by ritual systems and these systems seem to have powerful effects on many participants—for instance conversion experiences in Christianity. They appear to reinforce the central religious mythology and make it more real to the believers.

**Religion and Social Psychology**

Influence in our social world can sometimes be obtained by using reflex responses to particular social situations. Religions are adept at using some of these including reciprocity, commitment, authority and social proof. The religious use of these social impulses is about as follows: reciprocity says you owe the divine world something for all the blessings you have, commitment refers to your obligation to something after you publicly support it, authority refers to the use of designated authorities to answer important questions, and social proof refers to the attempt to establish a belief system’s authenticity by an appeal to the wisdom of those who publicly support that system now or have done so in previous ages.

**The Self Reinforcing Nature of Some Religious Belief Systems**

If one believes that success in this world is a sign of God’s blessing one may always find reinforcement for that belief. The world is complex and causes only partly known. Confirmation bias guides us to support our beliefs. Once enmeshed in such a belief system it may be frightening to even question it.

Religion addresses things outside the empirically evaluable world that are of great intrinsic interest to human minds. It mobilizes powerful emotions in its work and makes offers many find hard to refuse. Thus it’s huge impact on all human civilizations.

Comment [ET]

In the previous chapter considered (Chapter 2), Dr. Wilbur quoted a statement attributed to Heraclitus “Religion is a disease, but it is a noble disease.” The use of the word “disease” suggests the idea that religion is a pathology of human societies. If this is what Heraclitus meant, may I suggest that the choice of his words (in Greek, and assuming that the English
translation communicates the original meaning) is rather unfortunate. Unfortunate, in part because the members of all known human societies have been reported to manifest behaviors which we moderns call “religious.” (We will not consider the problem that many societies don’t have a separate category “religious.” That’s a modern Western construct.) If religion is a disease, then all known humans are infected with some sort of “religious” pathogen or infection. May I suggest that a better word that might be considered is “condition.” Thus the quotation that I would like to read would be: “Religion is one of the conditions of being human, but it can be a noble condition.” I don’t know if that helps or not.
A Nice Little Love Story

Submitted: Nov 8, 2012
By Debonnaire Kovacs

The book of Ruth is such a nice little love story.

Or is it?

Have you ever really considered what it might have been like to be Ruth?

First, she is a Moabite, presumably from a family which worships the national god of the Moabites, Chemosh, and his consort, Ashtar. As a young girl (likely a very young girl) with or without her will and consent, she is married to a young man from an immigrant family, living in Moab to escape a famine in their homeland of Judah. In this family, she learns of a God they call “the one true God,” or “God most high.” She learns that instead of being named “Destroyer” (one meaning of Chemosh) and demanding human sacrifice, this God cares personally for his people and has actually given them a whole system of substitutionary sacrifice instead. Whether Elimelech’s family understood about the foreshadowing of the Messiah, we don’t know, but this new faith must have been an improvement for Ruth, based on the attitudes she will soon demonstrate.

Either Ruth does love her husband or at least she comes to love his family, especially his mother, Naomi. When tragedy strikes and all three men die—not, apparently, at the same time (see 1:3-5)—and Naomi decides to return to her homeland, Ruth passionately refuses to leave her. It seems to indicate, though of course we can’t know, that Naomi is more of a mother and family to her than she found at home. She specifically mentions, too, “Your God will be my God.”

So off they go to Bethlehem, and Ruth goes to work as a gleaner (a respectable form of welfare which, unlike begging, allows the gleaner to keep the self-respect of working for her own support and that of the senior citizen of the family). She is very fortunate in the dog-eat-dog days of the judges to find an honest landowner who clearly sees his responsibility of sharing his bounty with those less fortunate. The story concentrates on Ruth, but it is obvious in the context that Boaz takes better care of all his workers, hired or not, than some of the local landowners do.

So far, so good.

Then Naomi announces, "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do." (3:1-4)

What would you do if you were Ruth? Well, if you were actually a young woman raised in this
era and area, you would probably respond as Ruth did, no matter what your personal feelings: “All that you tell me, I will do.”

Now, I’ll admit it, I like to think Ruth had an eye for Boaz already. It does seem he had one for her. On the other hand, it doesn’t seem, on the face of it (though you never can tell these things with Bible stories) that it hasn’t been long at all since her husband died. Still, she may have felt she had little choice. She has shown already that she can speak her mind and cling to an idea if she feels it’s important enough, but two women alone in those times had a very hard time surviving. At any rate, the story seems to have a happy ending, and someday Ruth will learn that she became the mother of kings and eventually of the Sacrifice that ended all sacrifices.

What does all this mean to us? How can Ruth’s attitudes and actions inform and inspire our attitudes and actions when we seem to have trouble after trouble?
Innovation Conference 2012—Part 5—Reconciliation

Submitted: Nov 8, 2012
By Debbonnaire Kovacs

This is the fifth and final article in a series of reports on this year’s 8th annual National Conference on Innovation, sponsored by Seventh-day Adventist Partners in Innovation, Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and others. The conference was held in Columbus, OH, on October 7, 8, and 9, 2012.

For our final main meeting, Tuesday morning, Dr. Miroslav Volf, Founder and Director of Yale Center for Faith and Culture and Henry B. Wright Professor of Theology at Yale University Divinity School, began by informing attendees that he had decided to change what he planned to say “because you drew so many things out of me last night” [in the Q&A session].

He labeled his presentation in three parts: Reconciliation and Justice, Reconciliation and Memory, and Reconciliation among different faiths, traditions, and cultures.

Reconciliation and Justice

This was one of the most powerful concepts that had clearly caused struggle and question among the group the evening before. Earlier, in a different presentation, a video clip had been shown. Interviewers went to people on the streets and asked them what they believed about forgiveness. One teenage boy said, “We didn’t forgive Osama bin Laden, that’s all I’m going to say!” Dr Volf reminded the group of that clip and pointed out, “Our acts are more powerful than our words—if a transgression is so great that it requires such summary justice, does that preclude forgiveness?”

He went on to tell a story of his parents choosing to forgive a soldier through whose negligence Volf’s 5-yr-old brother died. They did it because the Bible says to, but the personal struggle only began there. “It came up in our family as something the Volfs do—we forgive. So what message have we given this boy and his generation?”

Forgiveness, Volf believes, belongs in the economy of grace and not in the economy of just deserts. You do get repayment, but you get it in a different currency—“you get yourself back.”

Forgiveness is not just accepting, condoning, or excusing. “Forgiveness means that what happened matters. There’s been injury. As soon as you see this, you see that forgiveness and justice go hand in hand. Forgiveness intrinsically blames.” Volf pointed out that Jesus named sins, claimed what he stood for, said what was wrong, then pulled back and forgave. His willingness to forgive led all the way to giving his life for our salvation. Jesus demanded change; then, through forgiveness, gave the gift of freedom in which to change.

Reconciliation and Memory
Far from “forgive and forget,” Volf believes that it is only because we remember, that we can forgive. [I found this portion of the presentation particularly enriching, and find that I can report his teaching best by simply quoting him at length.]

“Because we remember, we can carry a grudge. If you don’t remember, you dishonor those who have suffered. Memory can be placed in the service of grace or of revenge. And all of us are both victims and perpetrators. . . .

“Victims have their own sense of justice, often skewed. The closer we are to our own hurts, the less we are able to see clearly—this can turn into a search for revenge and for justification of revenge. Is it possible to remember, not just so I can have a shield to protect myself, but also so that I can build a bridge to the other person? This is the way in which the Bible and the Christian faith suggest to us. We remember in order to reconcile.

“Everything is measured by what happened on the cross. Think about your memory of the sin against you in the light of the memory of the cross. It is true that we have not deserved what was done to us, but it is not true that we are generally innocent. At the foot of the cross, I remember sins against me as a person who has also sinned against others. Both of these sins have been died for. What somebody has done against me has already been borne on the cross! Already forgiven by God. That person may or may not have accepted it, but it’s been covered. Remember that sin is already forgiven.

“This is very hard. The next step is even harder, maybe. One died so that all may be one single community of light and life. That person and I are already, in some sense, reconciled. We belong to the same God. (Whether we know it or not.)”

Reconciliation between Faiths

In some ways, Volf says, there’s nothing to reconcile—there is much to discuss and attempt to understand. Having open and listening conversation often deepens your own faith. Having to describe your own beliefs, as well as hearing from the other person’s point of view, can clarify your thinking. Some people don’t even want to open the subject. They are afraid of understanding, maybe afraid they’ll lose faith, but usually faith is strengthened by this sort of discussion.

What’s important is not what happens between faiths, but what happens between people of different faiths. He doesn’t believe it’s necessary for us all to believe the same things. Though he does wish the day would come when all would accept Jesus as revelation of God, who died on the cross for all sin of all humanity. But he can get along and disagree faithfully at the same time. Friendships are what matter.

Volf is friends with Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad of Jordan. At one point they ended up in a strong debate over evangelism. Volf assumed the friendship was over, but it was strengthened into the kind of friendship where each can say what he feels honestly. Both bore witness to their own faith and were strengthened. “That’s how reconciliation can happen—both can honor the other’s faith and stand for one’s own. Everyone can have an interfaith friendship. It’s strange that
we don’t mind having friends that are secular, but we are sometimes afraid to have friends of other faiths.”

Bearing witness is essential, but it’s bearing witness to Christ, not to Christianity. “I am a Christian,” said Volf, “because of Christ, not because of Christianity.”

“We must rejoice in the truth wherever it’s found. I want Prince Ghazi to want me to know Mohammed better or even to be a Muslim. I honor those wishes of my friend. But I’m not going to agree with him. My deep hope is for Ghazi to learn to love and trust Jesus as a self-revealing of God, but I am only meant to bear witness, not to fish and try to manipulate Ghazi ‘out of his own pond and into mine.’”

Dr. Volf’s final point might have been one of the most beautiful: “What you have in your hands is this incredible treasure. Just let it shine! It will shine, not you.”

Conclusion

As it is every year, the Innovation Conference was challenging, thought-provoking, and stretching. I highly recommend it. To learn more, go to www.sdapartnersininnovation.com.
Gilded Soldiers

Gilded soldiers, tents of skin,
march through time reflecting Him!
Above the rubble, quiet din,
the truth she trumps for fallen men.
Laying poppies, tears forlorn,
we lament those once firstborn.

Hold the trumpet, bold and loud,
Proclaim the message, men once proud.
Bugles tap and drums cadence,
cry out soldiers, spirits whence.
Cry not for men who won't grow old,
sing for we who mine for gold.

Thumbing, seeking, gilded pages
and gaining wisdom of all ages.

Bullets, arrows, shall take their toll,
yet who remains called to the roll?
Stand with me, brave and true,
seek Him 'cross deep skies of blue.
Hold the standard close to heart,
the final conflicts near to start.
March with me, we're heaven led,
follow Him whose mercy bled.

March with me, old and young;
battle won though death n'er stung.
Gilded soldiers, leather bound,
proclaim all Victory's ever found!
Gilded soldiers, rich words of love,
loud they cry for Heart above.
Cry not for men on poppy fields,
Cry out to HIM whose mercy yields.

For ever Justice, truth prevails,
despite that sin against us rails.
Hold us in your hearts awhile,
remember Him who had no guile.
We marched ahead, got lost in time,
await in darkness sweet sublime
Wait that final trumpets call,
when gilded soldiers never fall!

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