First Study Papers Released from Theology of Ordination Committee:
Twenty-three separate papers have been written by participants in the Theology of Ordination meetings held this year. Those papers show the diversity of thought and opinion on the issue, and *Adventist Today* provides links and invites response....

Adventist Church Caught Up in Crisis and Violence in Egypt: Though the Adventist Church has relatively few members in Egypt, its name and some of its members are improbably playing an embattled role in the struggle. The General Conference has gone to crisis mode....

Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries Pledges $1.2 Million to 38 Ministries: The 2013 ASI Convention is now history, but the ripples from its philanthropic largesse are spreading among ministries large and small....

Editorial Follows Adventist Women's Congress in Africa: "Sideline Women at Your Own Peril": The Adventist Church has been heralded in Rwanda for championing The Beauty of Adventism:
Beautifully balanced pieces of art, music, sculpture, poetry, and prose have one common thread—they can be hard to classify. Blogger Stephen Foster sees Adventism a bit that way, somewhat fundamentalist in the religious realm, more progressive in the social department—a balanced whole....

Wandering Down Watchtower Way: Adventist administration seems all too eager to "merge" Adventist ministries like publishing. Consolidation was once the default approach for creating institutions too large to fail, but modern times require better ways, says *AT* Development man Ed Schwisow....

A 12-rung Ladder: “The truly good Christian would so wholly submerge herself in Christ that she would disappear entirely”—literally true or mystical musing? Devotional writer Debbonaire Kovacs shares the 12 "Steps of Humility" in the Rule of Benedict and considers what humility really is all about....
women's rights and women's potential, and during a recent convocation drew delegates from 11 nations to a country where 56 percent of Parliament is now female....

**FEATURES** *(available to logged-in AT subscribers)*

**Two Women, One Spirit:** Liz Dolwig and Peach Knittel travel the world, holding seminars for pastors and church leaders, teaching them to build true relationships that edify the churches from within. God’s Spirit has brought them wide popularity; this week we hear Dolwig's side of the story....

**Victory Over the Beast, Chapter 18—Meet the Beast:** In Dr. Thomsen’s 18th chapter of *Victory Over the Beast*, we "meet the beast" at long last. What he turns out to be may surprise you. Writes Thomsen, “Come to the Bible’s cartoon gallery, the book of Revelation, to laugh with God.... Don’t just limit the applications of these symbols to others...but open your mind to see their intensely practical applications to your own life.”...
First Study Papers Released from Theology of Ordination Committee

Submitted: Aug 13, 2013

By AT News Team

Late last week the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church released via an official Web site the first of the papers that are part of the denomination's current study of the theology of ordination. A total of 23 papers are available to be downloaded by anyone who wishes to see them along with a number of related documents.

The papers were released in two batches at the same time, one includes the papers presented at the January meeting of the committee and the other includes those presented at the most recent meeting in July. The first set of papers focuses on more general topics while the second set focuses in more specifically on the role of women and the issue of extending ordination to women serving as pastors and local elders.

Dr. David Trim is the author of two papers, one in each batch, which specifically trace the history of the issue in the Adventist Church. He is an historian originally from Newbold College in England and currently serving as director of archives, statistics and research for the GC. "Ordination in Seventh-day Adventist History" (29 pages) is in the first batch and "The Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Policy and Practice" (24 pages) is in the second batch. He carefully leaves the door open to both pro and con conclusions on the larger issue while bringing greater specificity to the historiography.

Others who take a position limiting the role of women or against extending ordination to women include "A Study of 1 Peter 2:9-10 and Galatians 3.28" (77 pages) by Pastor Steven Bohr, director of the Secrets Unsealed evangelism ministry and senior pastor at the Fresno Central Church in California; "Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3: Ontological Equality and Role Differentiation" (65 pages) by Pastor Paul Ratsara, president of the denomination's Southern Africa Division, and Dr. Daniel Bediako, a theologian on the faculty of Valley View Adventist University in Ghana; "Biblical Hermeneutics and Headship in First Corinthians" (46 pages) by Dr. Edwin Reynolds, a religion professor at Southern Adventist University; and "Adam, Where Are You?--On Gender Relations" (75 pages) by Dr. Ingo Sorke, chairman of the religion department at Southwestern Adventist University.

Papers that clearly present a Biblical basis for opening the door to women in the ordained clergy of the Adventist Church include "Back to Creation: Toward a Consistent Adventist Creation--Fall--Re-creation Hermeneutic" (38 pages) by Dr. Jiri Moskala, the new dean of the seminary at Andrews University; "Should Women be Ordained as Pastors?--Old Testament Considerations" (89 pages) by Dr. Richard Davidson, the noted Old Testament scholar at the seminary; and "Ellen White, Women in Ministry and the Ordination of Women" (32 pages) by Dr. Denis Fortin, who recently left the seminary dean role to go back to full time teaching at Andrews. All three men have published papers in the Journal of the Adventist Theological Society as well as in the Andrews University Seminary Studies.

Others with a positive perspective include Dr. Darius Jankiewicz, another church historian on the seminary faculty at Andrews University, who wrote "Authority of the Christian Leader" (29 pages) in the second batch and "The Problem of Ordination: Lessons from Early Christian History" (29 pages) in the first batch. Also "Paul, Women and the Ephesian Church: An Examination of 1 Timonthy 2:8-15" (37 pages) by Dr. Carl Cosaeri, a religion professor at Walla Walla University; and "Trajectories of Women's Ordination in History" (18 pages) by Dr. John Reeve, another church historian on the seminary faculty at Andrews University.

Two of the papers were written by women. Dr. Teresa Reeve, a New Testament scholar on the seminary faculty at Andrews University, wrote "Shall the Church Ordain Women as Pastors?--Thoughts toward an Integrated New Testament Perspective" (38 pages). Laurel Damsteegt, a seminary graduate who has written articles in the independent journal Adventists Affirm against women's ordination, contributed "Women of the Old Testament: Women of Influence" (23 pages). Two other documents by women included in the second batch are transcripts of devotionals presented during the July session of the committee.

More neutral views were presented by two other historians, both on the faculty at Andrews University: "Ellen White, Ordination and Authority" (44 pages) by Dr. Jerry Moon, chair of the church history department in the seminary faculty; and "The Ordination of Women in the American Church" (38 pages) by Dr. Nicholas Miller, an attorney as well as a historian. It includes an appendix with a seven-page table listing every denomination in the United States that ordains women clergy, the date when this practice began, its position on homosexuality and its church growth record in recent decades. (A download of this appendix is included in the full paper and also listed as a separate downloadable document.)
The documents from the January meeting of the committee include seven study papers. One of these has been published as a series of articles over recent months in *Ministry*, the denomination's journal for clergy. "Dealing with Doctrinal Issues in the Church: Proposal for Ground Rules" (45 pages) was written by Ratsara and Davidson. "The Proper Role of Ellen G. White's Writings in Resolving Church Controversies" (22 pages) was authored by Pastor William Fagal, a member of the White Estate staff. As editor of the independent journal *Adventists Affirm* he has taken a position in opposition to ordaining women.

Also included in the January batch of papers is "Towards a Theology of Ordination" (55 pages) by Dr. Angel Rodriguez, the retired former director of the Biblical Research Institute at the GC. This is evidently the working paper that led to the much shorter consensus statement released by the committee at the end of the July meeting. It is listed on the menu leading to the January papers as "by Angel Rodriguez, et al" although no additional authors appear on the document itself. The guidelines for Biblical studies acceptable to the denomination voted in 1986 at the annual meeting of the GC executive committee are included both as an appendix to the Rodriguez paper and (in different type face) as a separate downloadable at the end of this batch.

Adventist Today is seeking analysis from any interested writer. AT will publish pieces that provide additional insight to these study papers and the committee process, not necessarily those that consist entirely of expressing opinions.

The first batch of papers from the January meeting of the committee is available at this page: www.adventistarchives.org/january-2013-papers-presented#:~:text=UgoAz-8CzA
The second batch of papers from the July meeting of the committee is available at this page: www.adventistarchives.org/july-2013-papers-presented#:~:text=Ugo_dD-8CzA

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Adventist Today

Adventist Church Caught Up in Crisis and Violence in Egypt

Submitted: Aug 15, 2013

By AT News Team With additional information at the end of the story.

An Adventist pastor and his wife have been reported kidnapped in the aftermath of an assault on their church in Assiut, Egypt, according to a list of 56 Christian churches, schools, offices and monasteries attacked by supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood. The list was compiled by three Egyptian Christians who identified themselves on the Internet as Mai El-Sadany, Amir Beshay and Amira Mikhail. The report of the kidnapped Adventist couple was also published in the Egyptian newspaper Watani and by the Religion Today international news service. Sources have told Adventist Today of at least one other Adventist Church that may have been burned. It had extensive coverage of violence against Christians by partisans of Mohamed Morsi, the president deposed by the nation's military with widespread popular support.

A crisis committee met today at the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in Silver Spring, Maryland, to review the situation in Egypt. The immediate area around the Egypt-Sudan Field office and Nile Union Academy in the Heliopolis neighborhood of Cairo was reported to be peaceful.

There are fewer than a thousand members and 17 Adventist congregations among a population of 116 million; definitely a minority religion. The secondary school has been operating at it’s capacity of 135 Egyptian and Sudanese students and expects to open a new school year at the end of August.

Addendum Thursday Evening

The burning of the church in Assiut "was not part of a wider, organized political movement," a statement later in the day from the Adventist New Network (ANN) said. "The pastor and his wife hid in their upstairs apartment and were not found by the attackers, who set the building on fire. The pastor and his wife were rescued from the burning building by Muslim neighbors." "This was a small group of people bent on doing harm ... not representative of Egypt or the people of Egypt," ANN quoted Pastor Llewellyn Edwards, president of the Egypt-Sudan Field. "As Adventists we want our relationships to be strong with Egyptians of all faiths." The Muslim neighbors rescuing the Adventist couple showed "the true picture of most people in Egypt," Edwards said. He told ANN that the government has announced it will pay for the rebuilding of all churches destroyed last night during rioting in several cities.

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Adventist Today

Adventist Laymen's Services and Industries Pledges $1.2 Million to 38 Ministries

Submitted: Aug 14, 2013

By Adventist Today News Team

At the end of its annual convention last week in Orlando, Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries (ASI), the denomination's recognized association of small businesses and independent ministries, released a list of the 38 projects promised funds from the special offering collected at the convention. The funds are actually managed by a separate nonprofit organization, ASI Missions, Inc. The board of this organization selected the projects to receive these grants.

The offering goal is $1,184,000 and donations and pledges are still being rounded up to achieve that total. Each project is slated to receive a designated amount and two projects will receive more if the giving totals more than the goal. At least three of the ministries are denominationally-affiliated while most are independent organizations.

Advent Home Learning Center ($30,000) operates a boarding school for students with ADHD, ADD, academic and behavior challenges. Many have been dismissed from church-related and public schools. Advent Home provides counseling support, tutoring, advanced and accelerated classes, social skills training, outdoor education, parent education, character development, community service, youth leadership, placement and follow-up. Because the founders and directors of the ministry are planning to retire, Advent Home is developing a succession plan that will lead to considerable change, including a less centralized management.

Adventist Southeast Asia Projects (ASAP) Ministries ($30,000) works to spread the gospel through evangelism, education and humanitarian activities in Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar and Thailand, as well as assisting refugees from those countries. ASI funds will help launch a microloan project to help marginalized women and their children in Cambodia. The grant will provide an initial loan fund and help with the cost of managing the project.

Adventist Youth for Christ ($20,000) began in 2006 at Gateway Adventist Centre in Melbourne, Australia. It trains Australian young people for evangelism and is working toward a multi-site evangelism campaign in August and September of 2014. The grant will support pre-campaign training and costs for preachers and site coordinators across the country.

Amazing Facts College of Evangelism ($20,000) will extend its evangelism training to pastors and church members in India. Trainees learn to conduct an evangelism campaign in their own communities. Amazing Facts is a media ministry of the Northern California Conference.

Amazon Lifesavers Ministry ($10,000) is a volunteer group that seeks to meet the physical and spiritual needs of remote communities along the great river in Brazil. It is modeled after the legendary Luzereiro medical missionary launches which were begun in the 1930s by Adventist missionary couple Leo and Jessie Halliwell. The grant will help to support Bible workers and build a new school.

AudioVerse ($11,000) is a volunteer group that has produced thousands of hours of religious content. The grant will help the ministry replace and upgrade equipment.

Better Living or Mieux Vivre ($50,000) is a French-language media ministry based in Quebec. The grant will help it move into larger facilities and develop a new program with Dr. Neil Nedley on depression.

Centro Misionero de Salud ($10,000) in Galeana, Mexico, includes a vegetarian restaurant, health food store, bakery, natural treatments, and bookstore. The grant will help pay for a new water system.

Congo Frontline Missions ($20,000) seeks to bring hope and salvation to the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) through an FM radio station which it reports is now the most listened to radio station among the 3.5 million people in the signal area. The grant help CFM to produce programming in three languages, not only for its own station but also for other Adventist stations across Africa.

DayStar Adventist Academy ($20,000) is a small boarding academy in Castle Valley, Utah, connected to Outpost Centers International (OCI). The grant will fund landscaping and irrigation to make the campus more attractive and curtail mud and erosion issues on campus.

E. A. Sutherland Education Association ($25,000) provides accreditation, professional development, service learning and teacher certification to independent Adventist schools.

Ellen G. White Estate ($30,000) is an official denominational entity. The grant will help fund its ongoing effort to put the White materials in languages other than English into digital format.
**Fountainview Academy** ($40,000) in rural British Columbia is a boarding school for grades 10 through 12 partly supported by an organic carrot farm. The grant will help it complete a documentary based on Ellen White's book *The Great Controversy* with John Bradshaw, the director of the It Is Written television ministry.

**Generation Youth for Christ** ($50,000) is an independent youth organization which organizes a large, annual event to create networking opportunities and encourage young people to take leadership. The grant helped support a GYC afternoon outreach during the convention in Orlando.

**Heritage Academy** ($12,000) in Monterey, Tennessee, strives to prepare young people to be leaders and teach them the value of self-sacrificing service to others. This includes training students in the academy's disaster response ministry and the grant will help purchase a mobile kitchen for the ministry.

**International Caring Hands** ($10,000) provides dental treatment and works to prevent dental disease in collaboration with ADRA, Maranatha Volunteers International, Riverside Farm Institute and the Adventist Church in Africa.

**Kibidula Family Development International** ($30,000) works in Tanzania engaged in training Bible workers, health evangelism, rural evangelism, book distribution, agricultural development and One-Day Church construction. It supports 34 missionaries in unentered areas where many new churches have been established and has 46 agriculture students. The grant will help it achieve optimum use of its 4,776 acres and prevent loss of some of its acreage to the local government.

**Lay Institute for Global Health Training** ($50,000) has trained more than 6,500 volunteers in 70 nations over the past five years. A total of 18 LIGHT training centers have been established and its curriculum is being translated into more than a dozen languages. The grant will support trainers while they pioneer new projects with the goal of becoming self-supporting within three years.

**Light Bearers Ministry** ($60,000) is an independent evangelism and revival program that reaches internationally. It is currently providing three containers of literature for an evangelism campaign in Luanda, Angola, with more than 250,000 Bible studies being distributed and 5,000 people already baptized. The grant will replenish funds and resources.

**Little Light Ministries** ($20,000) conducts multi-media seminars on the dangers of the entertainment industry and involves Adventist high school students as part-time workers in the production of media materials communicating the gospel. It provides media services to other Adventist ministries. The grant will be used to replace an outgrown production stage, provide green screen capability and construct sound and edit stages and office space.

**Living Springs Overseas Missions** ($10,000) operates two Bible schools, two orphanages and a midwifery training school in India. The grant will help support the midwifery program and complete construction of a new clinic.

**Loma Linda University Earth and Biological Sciences Department** ($20,000) offers the only doctoral programs in the world based on a biblical view of creation and geological history. It sponsors research to prepare students to teach biblically-based views within the Adventist school system. The results of this research demonstrate that work done by creationists is of the highest quality and that a biblical view leads to insights often missed by other scientists. The grant will fund equipment essential to the success and accuracy of the research.

**Maranatha O.S.** ($25,000) is a nonprofit civic association in the Czech Republic which exists to involve youth in evangelism. It has been involved in children's ministries, health and science evangelism, publishing and humanitarian activities. The grant will help fund a Youth for Jesus program to reach the primarily secular populace of the Czech Republic.

**Miracle Meadows School** ($30,000) has served elementary and secondary students who exhibit at-risk behaviors for 25 years and enrollment of children age 12 and younger has significantly increased in recent years. Most have suffered abuse, neglect, and trauma before the age of 3. MMS is one of only a few facilities in the nation meeting the needs of this age group. The grant will help fund a separate residence which is being constructed especially for children ages 6 to 12.

**Myanmar Frontier Missions** ($5,000) is a church-planting ministry and operates ten nursery schools that generate income as well as provide opportunities for contact in local communities. This year, MFM has been planting churches in Meiktila and Pwintphyu, with plans to plant seven more churches in middle Myanmar over the next three years in locations where the ministry is already operating nursery schools.

**New Beginnings DVD Evangelism Project** ($25,000 plus a quarter of any amount given beyond the goal) has widely distributed this series of evangelism presentations designed to be used with groups and individuals. ASI distributed more than 10,000 copies at the 2010 General Conference Session in Atlanta alone. The DVD has recently been updated with new technology and a number of training events are planned for the coming year.

**One Day Church Project** ($100,000 plus three quarters of any amount given beyond the goal) is a joint effort between ASI and Maranatha Volunteers International which has constructed thousands of church and school buildings primarily in Africa. An estimated 100,000 more buildings are needed with requests coming in from new regions and countries every day.

**Outpost Centers International Education Assistance Plan** ($35,000) helps to pay for the education of OCI ministry staff and their children. It provides loans that are forgiven when the recipients serve an OCI ministry for a specified period of time. Some applicants continue to work while obtaining their education.

**Outpost Centers International Missionary Assistance Plan** ($61,000) provides financial support to 30 missionaries serving at OCI ministries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America. OCI is a fellowship of 80 ministries in 36 countries. OCI missionaries are not on denominational payroll, but support themselves through practical skills while operating schools, orphanages, lifestyle centers, clinics, training programs, publishing and media centers, vegetarian restaurants, health food stores and bakeries.

**Questline Productions** ($25,000) publishes evangelism tools such as *In Search of the Truth* and the new *Thunder in the Holy Land*, a video Bible study series in HD.
which features on-location reports in the Middle East.

**Riverside Farm Institute** ($40,000) operates medical clinics in Zambia serving those who have little access to health care as well as a lifestyle center which has provided prevention education to some of the nation’s most influential leaders. During 2012, average occupancy in the lifestyle program was near capacity and the grant will expand its capacity.

**Shelter from the Storm** ($10,000) provides a structured living environment for men and women recently released from prison in Gainesville, Florida. It provides housing for up to six months, as well as assistance with finding employment and life-skills training. It helps parolees strengthen their relationship with God through Bible studies, church attendance and fellowship with other Christians. SFS operates three homes and a thrift store that provides employment for some residents, as well as a lawn service that provides employment and operating funds. The grant will fund heating, air conditioning, floor repair, and painting of one of the homes.

**Springs of Health** ($15,000) publishes a lifestyle magazine distributed throughout the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Several times a year the ministry rents a hotel to host a NEWSTART program with 250 guests per year and the staff has worked with one of Prague's largest hospitals in research on diabetes. A community center in downtown Prague has been opened to serve the needs of the urban community and the grant will help support a full-time manager for the center.

**The Healing Place** ($15,000) is an outreach center in downtown Denver which provides meals, personal care items and Bible studies every Friday evening with about 20 people attending regularly. The ministry also reaches out with health programs to those who live and work in downtown. The Healing Place is in a prime location in a building that also houses a health club attended by thousands of young adults each week. The grant will be used to connect with these individuals' interest in health and build relationships that will lead to opportunities for sharing Christ.

**Three Angels Broadcasting Network** ($100,000) is an independent television ministry that operates worldwide in competition with the denomination's official Hope Channel. It broadcasts the yearly ASI convention as well as hundreds of programs featuring ASI members and ministries. The grant will be used to convert production facilities from video tape to digital HD servers.

**We Have This Hope Christian Radio** ($20,000) is a network of stations in Minnesota, ranging from 6,000 watts to 100,000 watts and including both AM and FM. Operating expenses are generally covered by listener donations. The grant will help relocate and expand station KOLJ in Warroad, a small town near the international border with Canada.

**Weimar Center of Health and Education** ($50,000) is an independent Adventist college near Sacramento which after many years of operation without accreditation is now seeking accreditation through the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). It offers bachelor degrees in natural sciences (pre-med), theology, pastoral studies and Christian education, with a focus on health, evangelism, manual labor and a commitment to excellent academics. It also operates a boarding secondary school and is home to the well-known NEWSTART lifestyle education program. The grant will help update Weimar's cooking school facilities.

**Youth for Jesus** ($50,000) is a summer program operated by ASI that involves teens and young adults in door-to-door outreach, Bible studies, evangelism campaigns, recreation and more. The grant will help pay for trainers and Bible workers to serve as mentors and complete evangelism field work after the summer.

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Editorial Follows Adventist Women's Congress in Africa: "Sideline Women at Your Own Peril"

Submitted: Aug 12, 2013

By Adventist Today News Team

Last week the East-Central Africa Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church held an International Women's Congress in Butare, Rwanda, with 1,500 delegates from 11 nations. Jeannette Kagame, the nation's First Lady, was a keynote speaker and there was coverage both by news media in Africa and the Adventist News Network (ANN), the denomination's official news service.

Monday (August 12) The New Times, one of Rwanda's leading newspapers, published an editorial affirming the Adventist Church for "actively encouraging debate among its members about such an important public issue as gender equality." The editorial stated that "gender equality and women empowerment are critical subjects in modern-day society" and urged efforts to "advance these values" because it is "the right thing to do."

"Women have generally found themselves in a disadvantaged position compared to men and even in countries where they are increasingly taking their place they are playing catch-up," the editorial observed. "It is important that participants at the Adventist congress ... return to their respective countries with a clear message: Sideline women at your own peril."

It is unclear to what extent the editorial writer was aware of the current discussion among Adventists around the world about removing gender discrimination from the ordination of clergy. The editorial came a few days after the release of the first papers about the issue from the General Conference (GC) Theology of Ordination Study Committee.

According to the ANN news release, delegates discussed "challenges facing women, including gender-based violence and obstacles to socio-economic development," as well as "living a purposeful life." It quoted Pastor Esron Byiringiro, the denomination's union conference president in Rwanda, that the location was chosen "because the country is a strong advocate of women's empowerment and gender equality." ANN explained that 56 percent of Members of Parliament are women, "the principle of gender equity and equality is enshrined in the Constitution [and] the country's laws protect women's rights to equal opportunity."

Similar Adventist congresses have been held in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania in recent years. Part of the event was a large exhibit hall that displayed "homemade food, new technology, clothing and interior design" produced by women. The denomination's women's ministries department played a key role in organizing the event. The New Times ran a picture of Raquel Arrais, associate director of women's ministries at the GC, with First Lady Jeannette Kagame.

The Adventist Church is the largest Protestant denomination in Rwanda, with nearly one million adherents out of a population of 12 million. The denomination operates a hospital and seven community health centers in Rwanda, three secondary schools and the Adventist University of Central Africa, as well as a number of projects under the auspices of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).
The Beauty of Adventism

Submitted: Aug 9, 2013

By Stephen Foster From the perspective of at least this Seventh-day Adventist, the beauty of Seventh-day Adventism is that it is essentially about balance; New Testament and Old Testament, faith and works, grace and law, mercy and justice.

Now, of course, from one of these aspects or another, this is undoubtedly viewed by many as its weakness or flaw because some may claim that Adventists seek or attempt to have it both ways.

Clearly, you can’t please everyone, and balance doesn’t necessarily mean that Adventism is successful at being all things to all people. For that matter, perhaps balance doesn’t require Adventism to try to be all things to all people; though Adventists perhaps should. There goes that balance again; it’s inescapable.

While engaged in a recent discussion of the concept of fundamentalism versus pluralism which had been prompted by Monte Sahlin’s provocative piece on ‘The Problem With a Fundamentalist World View,” the thought occurred to me that another aspect of Adventist balance is that while many of us hold to many fundamentalist beliefs concerning Biblical authority, the divinity of Christ, the seventh-day Sabbath, the literal return of Jesus, among others, we nonetheless are advocates of societal pluralism.

Historic Adventism is fundamentalist in its Biblical approach yet pluralistic in its social approach. Though having some fundamentally non-negotiable doctrinal beliefs, ‘we’ advocate for secular and pluralistic approaches to many if not most public policy issues.

Although we have much in common with Christian fundamentalists theologically, and perhaps even more in common culturally, because of our distinctive Sabbath doctrine and historic eschatological interpretations, we perceive dangers in religious fundamentalist approaches to public policy. Consequently, we have much in common with secularists; that is, insofar as general approaches to public policy are concerned.

As a theoretical example of this balance, we support a relatively large parochial school system/network while opposing (in theory anyway) the government getting its nose under that tent.

Another example would be that although we believe the world was created by God, we would not advocate that our belief/doctrine of this be taught in public schools as science.

Arguably we are religious fundamentalists who see and fully appreciate the dangers of fundamentalism. To me, that balance is indeed admirable.

What is somewhat amusing/bemusing/intriguing/noteworthy to me personally is, again, that many Christian fundamentalists see the pragmatic value of secularist approaches to public policy in the Arab world but don’t want this in America; and that some former Adventists see the threat that religious fundamentalism poses to societal peace and freedom, yet ignore, if not deny, what historic Adventist eschatology interprets prophecy as predicting will occur in the U.S. Wouldn’t a balanced approach, with a consistent standard and consistently applied principles, be advisable?

In many aspects, such an approach is the beauty of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Some would argue that an even more balanced approach to any number of internal issues would be advisable for our church and its leadership; but that’s another blog.

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Adventist Today

Wandering Down Watchtower Way

By Edwin A. “Ed” Schwisow, Guest Blogger
ADSecretary of Development
Submitted August 15, 2013

Dense doom swirled through the billows of rancid smoke that engulfed the frontier boom-city of Battle Creek, Michigan. It was the final day of 1902, and one of the mightiest religious publishing houses in the western US was burning to the ground. The Review & Herald Publishing Association (R&H) had been following the trends of the American Gilded Age, compensating its executives luxuriantly and placing great emphasis on growing R&H to a point where it would be too large to fail. But the fire that consumed it showed no regard for either executive compensation or sales output, and grew so intense the Battle Creek fire department could do nothing to save either structure or content. Chastened by this catastrophe, the small Adventist community in Battle Creek determined to decentralize and rebuild the now far larger than the venerable R&H. Both Pacific Press and Review & Herald are solvent, but pressures are being exerted from the very highest levels to combine North American publishing work into a single enterprise. Will the denomination follow the lead of its distant cousin, the Jehovah’s Witnesses? Will it create a central enterprise to try to produce intellectual material broad enough and deep enough to represent the complexity of thought of one of the most diverse, highly educated, and intellectually far-ranging denominations on the North American continent? Warnings from the Watchtower

One look at the effect of the billion-dollar Watchtower Corporation in Brooklyn should raise serious flags of caution. The content of its two primary magazines is planned by a single board of nine males (women are apparently not deemed spiritually capable of contributing centrally to the editorial enterprise).

A prevailing style of unsigned articles created under the heavy editorial supervision of elderly males gives the product a generic tone and appearance, like a timepiece from 1965. In fact Watchtower executives require this level of uniformity. All publications are printed on similar paper, an oddball stock that sets the publication apart as assertively impersonal. So, though The Watchtower prints 40-million copies of its main magazine each month, the accession rate of those who receive the publication is exceedingly low, and readership is a negligible percentage of its circulation.

The Watchtower was founded in the early 1930s, at the same time strong-fisted central control over all congregations was established from the East Coast under the new name “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” with imposition of strict standards of living and a requirement that all able members knock on doors and give out copies of The Watchtower’s output.

This protocol continues yet today among members, though door-to-door literature work has reportedly become increasingly non-productive among Anglo-Americans. Clearly the act of consolidating has inhibited rather than expanded its long-term versatility and effectiveness (though other factors contribute to this decline, not least of which is a continual dabbling with time-setting prophecies of Christ’s super-imminent return).

We can see this to a lesser degree in the Adventist Church, when the thriving Southern Publishing Association in Nashville was closed in 1980, on the reported assumption that preserving the Review & Herald was more important than safeguarding one of the more influential and creatively sophisticated ones, in the South.

Moving Toward the Watchtower?

Proposals were recently made by the General Conference to merge and consolidate Adventist publishing houses in North America, and though public outcry has led to the disbanding of the task force empowered to accomplish this work, the goal appears essentially the same. Yes, the publishing world has changed immensely, and is changing still, and the two publishing houses in North America are vastly oversupplied with printing capacity at this time (as has indeed been the case for a long time). But the apparent preference by Church leaders to merge and consolidate, rather than employ tactics gentler to the creative soul, that preserve creative competition between the two houses—this continuing penchant sends out alarming signals. There seems to be a Watchtower mentality in play, in the face of clear evidences that of the three main denominations created in 19th-century US, the Adventist Church (the least centralized of the three) has fared best in growth, in competition between the two houses—this continuing penchant sends out alarming signals. There seems to be a Watchtower mentality in play, in the face of clear evidences that of the three main denominations created in 19th-century US, the Adventist Church (the least centralized of the three) has fared best in growth, in dispersion, in intellectual development, and in ability to integrate itself into local communities. We have thrived best by offering a home to a wide variety of members—scientists, intellectuals, and other professionals, as well as newcomers to Christianity from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

What if This Trend Continues?

Insistence on uniformity and centralization in the discredited mode of the late 19th and early 20th centuries could produce an Adventist Church that reverts to days when even relatively small matters nearly tore the denomination apart, as happens quite regularly today among Jehovah’s Witnesses. We know reliably that their attrition rate is extremely high, much greater than ours,

What We Must Do?

We must recognize that under the current Adventist Church administration, consolidation and corporate standardization are highly favored. And we must further recognize that this tendency will place heavier and heavier responsibilities on the independent Adventist press to share needed information and analysis, to maintain the vibrancy of a Church long on record as opposed to creedal dryness. This is already happening, and Adventist Today is “reading the signs of the times,” as it were, and adding staff and writers to meet the task ahead. As it is today, most of the content of corporate communication is public relations in form and tone, and either is highly commending of traditional ways, or ignores controversial or negative information almost entirely. A Church built on a thirst for knowledge and understanding like ours cannot stand, or long endure, while paternally sheltered from reality.
Adventist Today receives absolutely no funding from tithe dollars or donations to local Adventist congregations. Our income sources come about evenly from subscriptions and donations, which means those who believe in us and our mission contribute up to $100,000 a year. Now, at midyear is a great time to help Adventist Today replenish its resources. Our vital signs are good, our subscribership is moving upward, and our focus on reaching the younger and young-in-mind, inquiring Christian is undiminished.

“Remember the Watchtower” and consider what you can do to help guarantee that you, your children and grandchildren will have access to the kind of open and free reporting and opinions represented by Adventist Today, now one of the most versatile and credible sources of information for thinking Church members in North America and around the English-speaking world.

Remember the Watchtower, yes. But even more apropos, remember Adventist Today this summer, while expenses may be lower for you, and as AT recharges its financial and intellectual batteries for the challenges ahead.

Click here to remember Adventist Today!

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I decided to break a pattern today. I’ve been doing a sort of review/devotional on each chapter of Joan Chittister’s *The Monastery of the Heart*. But the one on humility is longer, and has such great precepts in it that I decided to do a second on that same chapter.

Maybe it’s because I feel so strongly the need of true humility. In academy, we used to sing earnestly, “Humble me, humble me, O Lord.” I think I had the idea, common among many Christians (especially new or young ones) that humility, or self-denial, meant to deny the self—to deny it existence, rather than to deny it things you wanted but didn’t need, or things and ideas that would be destructive to the self or others. I thought it meant eventually not having a self. Or if I didn’t take it quite that far, it was close. That the truly good Christian would so wholly submerge herself in Christ that she would disappear entirely.

“Not I, but Christ . . .” We sang that, too, and like most 17-year-olds, I took it entirely literally. To be humble meant to always put others and their needs ahead of oneself and one’s own needs. It meant others were not only more important, but probably more worthy.

As I grew older, I learned better. I began to realize that it was to save my self that Jesus came, and that the goal was to uncover and develop that real self, the one He created me to be, the one that was buried underneath the pride and false humility and self-abasement, and was no more nor less important or worthy than any other self. But the damage was done. It took years of counseling to dig out the roots of the false attitudes I had been taught.

Now, I feel more whole, and more ready for words like these:

*Humility teaches us, ultimately, that person growth is a process, not an event, and that self-love, the narcissism that makes us the center of our own universe, is destructive of the self.*

Once upon a time, I would have nodded wisely, never catching that last line: that destruction of the self is not a goal to be desired! Here are the full twelve steps as outlined in the *Rule of Benedict*. They are all completely Biblical. And completely impossible—unless one has allowed one’s true self to sink deep into the love of God.

*Humility leads us:*  
1. To recognize that God is God.  
2. To know that God’s will is best for us.  
3. To be willing to receive direction.  
4. To endure and don’t grow weary.  
5. To acknowledge faults.  
6. To be content with less than the best.  
7. To let go of image making.  
8. To learn from the community.  
9. To listen to others.  
10. To abandon the urge to ridicule.  
11. To speak kindly.  
12. To be simple; to be serene.

www.joanchittister.org

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Two Women, One Spirit

Submitted: Aug 14, 2013
By Liz Dolwig, guest contributor

with Debbonnaire Kovacs

Liz Dolwig and Peach Knittel are two women, both widows, who are working for God in some amazing ways. You can definitely expect to hear more about them in future issues of Adventist Today. They were told “by the Ministerial Director of one of the large African Divisions that no one in the entire denomination is doing what we are doing and he considered it to be the single most important thing that is being done today.”

What is it, exactly, that these two women do that is so important? You could say they are evangelists to the evangelists. Read on, to hear Ms. Dolwig’s side of the story, told in her point of view. AT hopes to soon get more of the story from Ms. Knittel.

“You two are crazy running around the world for months at a time, sleeping in the back of churches, pumping your own water, using a hole in the ground and eating who knows what. At your age you should stay at home and enjoy your grandchildren, play golf or travel for fun.”

How many times we have heard that! It’s true. We could stay home and take it easy, but that wouldn’t fill the desire we have to share His love and message with those who don’t know Him.

It is amazing how the Holy Spirit works. I was in Africa getting ready to go upcountry to do a campaign. I had been given a roommate who spent her entire time complaining. I was so frustrated with her; I left the room at 11 o’clock at night to cool down and go for a walk.

I saw a light on in the auditorium and walked over to see what was going on. A group of people had just come in on a plane and were getting something to eat. They were leaving early the next morning to go somewhere else to hold a campaign.

I walked over to a table with a lady and a gentleman and introduced myself. It was Peach and her husband. I found out they were from the United States; as a matter of fact they were from California. Even more surprising, they were from Yountville, which is exactly 70 miles from Sacramento where I live. We had traveled half way around the world to meet each other.

We all left the next day to go our separate ways, but we kept in touch. Little did we know the amazing plans God had for us!

Thirteen years ago I started doing campaigns with all the lights and films and music. Oh, I baptized a lot of people. It was not until I was in India that I realized there was more to it than “dunking them and dropping them.”

Sometime after I met Peach and her husband, I had been involved in a big campaign in India that was beginning to wind down, when a man came up to me and said, “I was born Hindu and I tried
to read your Bible, but I couldn’t understand it. One day I saw a small paper with a picture of a white woman on it saying there was going to be some meetings. I decided to come to one time to see what you had to say.

“I have been to every meeting and now I understand the Bible. I am going to be baptized and so are my wife and young son. I don’t want to be a Hindu any more. Give me a Christian name.” I named him Daniel.

That night I spoke to the thousands of people, who were at the meeting; telling them I would have come half way around the world for any one of them, because the thrill of seeing the Holy Spirit change the life of one person was worth the entire trip.

After Peach’s husband died, she said she would like to join me in doing campaigns. So, the following year we returned to India together. I could hardly contain myself. I was sure that Daniel would have converted every Hindu in the city; he was so in love with the Lord.

It was disappointing when Daniel did not come to the meetings or call me or drop me a note. I asked the pastor why Daniel had not come to the meetings.

“Daniel smoked,” he said, “and I told him not to come back to church until he stopped smoking.”

I could hardly believe what he was saying. They drove him out of the church!

Believe me; I know how addictive cigarettes are. When I first came to the church, I was still going through 5 packs of cigarettes a day. I would drive up to the church property, take a last drag on my cigarette, flutter my hands over my mouth to get rid of the cigarette smell, and assume no one knew I was smoking.

Certainly I must have stunk from smoking all those cigarettes, but not one person said anything to me. If they had I would probably have left the church like Daniel did. Eventually it was God who took the addiction from me.

That night Peach and I came to the conclusion that if we do not show the love of God to the members who come into our church, and help them to overcome their addictions, we should not be baptizing them into the church. We decided to step outside the box and completely change our direction.

We locked ourselves in our hotel room for two weeks, living on egg salad sandwiches, because it was all we could afford. (To this day I can’t stand to even look at an egg salad sandwich!) We went over every single sermon and topic, and reworked them all.

We would no longer be going after baptisms. We would mentor our own members and help them build relationships. We would teach them to become a sermon in shoes because when Jesus is seen in our lives, it will draw others to Him. We would help them accept others regardless of their addictions, and realize that we are all sinners.
We had a special burden for pastors, who often have burdens they don’t feel that they can share with others. In our busy lives we seldom think of the burdens carried by the pastors and their families. We expect them to be ready to serve us 24 hours every day. They are expected to have a certain number of baptisms, be creative in raising money, and be ever ready to solve all marital problems. We never give a thought as to the problems they might face in their own homes. We place them on a pedestal and expect them to be some kind of supermen. They know in their own hearts that that is not possible to be all these things, and the majority of them suffer from depression. On top of all this are the cultural difficulties they face in other countries, that we would not be familiar with in the United States. For instance, within our church, arranged marriages are still the norm in some places. This practice leads to unhappiness and sometimes horrifying abuse. Sadly, abuse and unhappiness are just as prevalent in western countries, too.

Peach and I wanted to help them build real relationships, based on trust and on the certainty of God’s love for every feeble, hurting, messed-up one of us.

We began doing seminars only for church members, and the response was overwhelming. Today, we travel all over the world. We hold seminars just for the pastors. We hold meetings with principals, teachers and youth pastors in addressing the problems that they have and work in helping them to find solutions. We live with the people and stay long enough to bond with the people. Possibly because of our age, they trust us and share their burdens with us. The big campaigns do a wonderful work, but they do not have the opportunity to stay and live with the people as we do. We fill the void before or after a campaign in reaching the people.

We also (especially Peach, whose specialty this is) work with youth. When we look around, we see our young people leaving the church. They have been exposed to so much in the world through television and the internet. It breaks our hearts to see so many of our members, young and old, sitting in our churches, knowing about Jesus but not knowing Him. They do not have a relationship with Him. All the doctrines in the world will not save you, if you do not have a relationship with Him. It is the single most important thing in life.

It is hard to describe the thrill of seeing the Holy Spirit working in the lives of the people. It becomes addictive. You want to see all of those who do not know the love of God, suddenly light up when they realize He loves them.

The Lord is so good. We have been blessed so mightily. We love people and we love doing the work we do. Never ever underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit or what He has in mind for you.
Victory Over the Beast, Chapter 18--Meet the Beast

Submitted: Aug 14, 2013
By Ervin Thomsen

Revelation’s Cartoons of Holy Humor

Cartoons can powerfully illustrate that a picture is worth a thousand words. The political cartoons in the underground newspapers of the former Soviet Union helped expose its crumbling political system. In one such cartoon a Soviet party official says, “After the revolution everyone will eat strawberries and cream” to which a Russian citizen replies, “But I don’t like strawberries and cream.” The communist party official responds, “After the revolution everyone will like strawberries and cream.”

Another cartoon depicts Mr. Gorbachev standing at the edge of a precipice, exclaiming, “Our nation has come to the edge of an abyss, and under my leadership we are prepared to take a few bold steps forward.” Cartoons like this helped bring down the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall in 1989. Is it possible that God also wants to use cartoons to bring down the walls in your life and set you free from the bondage of Satan’s deceptions?

In the book of Revelation, God uses several pictures of “holy humor” to portray in caricatures the incongruities of His enemies. In Revelation chapter 6 the writer, under divine inspiration, depicts Jesus as a Lamb, before whom His terrified enemies exclaim, “Hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!” (Revelation 6:16). Why would great men, rich and mighty men be terrified by a lamb? In Revelation chapter 17 John portrays Babylon as a foolhardy woman, a harlot, riding a dangerous beast in the wilderness. She claims to be “no widow, and will not see sorrow” (Revelation 18:7) – a make-believe situation as ridiculous as the fairy tale, “The Emperor’s New Clothes.”

In Scripture God challenges us to see evil from His perspective. “The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, for He sees that his day is coming” (Psalm 37:12, 13). John Newton, of Amazing Grace fame, in his hymn “Glorious Things of Thee are Spoken” wrote “…with salvation’s walls surrounded, thou mayest smile at all thy foes.”[1] Similarly, Martin Luther in his hymn, “A Mighty Fortress”[2] wrote, “the prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him; his rage we can endure, for, lo, his doom is sure, one little word shall fell him.” On Calvary’s cross Jesus uttered the words that finished him, “It is finished!” (John 19:30). This is God’s method of fear-reduction for the believer.

Cartoons of inspired holy humor, found in the book of Revelation, can elicit our smiles and cause us to laugh as we see the sin and wrong from God’s perspective. The writer of Revelation used such cartoons of “holy humor” to expose with exaggeration the absurdity of Satan’s devices in contrast with God’s plan of salvation. The Bible’s cartoon gallery in the book of Revelation can give us reasons to laugh with God, to laugh at the enemy, and to laugh, or even cry, at ourselves. It is interesting that Jesus called Herod a "fox" and told a parable about a general who went to battle with not enough troops (a well-known political/military blunder). Even the Pharisees caught the subtle, gentle, wrapped-in-humor jabs of Jesus. It drove them crazy. And the crowds
loved it!

**Holy Humor**

Come to the Bible’s cartoon gallery, the book of Revelation, to laugh with God, and to see the great controversy between good and evil from His perspective. Don’t just look for the next event on the prophetic timetable; don’t just limit the applications of these symbols to others, to nations and counterfeit religious movements, but open your mind to see their intensely practical applications to your own life. To understand the historical applications of the beast, while ignoring the experiential applications could result in eternal loss. While you may be living on “high alert” trying to stay updated on every move of the historical beast, is it possible that you may be susceptible to the last-day deceptions of the historical beast, because the beast “virus” may already, without your knowledge, have invaded and damaged your spiritual operating system?

**The Cartoons of the Beast and the Lamb**

Take a moment to contrast the Lamb (Revelation 5) with the beast (Revelation 13). There seems to be a definite inspired artistic purpose in all the details of the beast’s appearance. Seven heads,
seven mouths, ten horns, and seven crowns on its head. Contrast that with the Lamb’s one head, seven horns and seven eyes – and besides, the Lamb is depicted in the act of ultimate weakness – in the act of slaughter for sacrifice.

Have you ever taken your children on a trip to the zoo? What are the animals they want to see first – the exotic and dangerous animals such as tigers, lions, bears, and leopards? Of course, you would not want your children to get too close to these dangerous animals. But at the petting zoo they can get really close to the lambs. As you look at Revelation’s cartoons of the beast and the lamb, ask yourselves these questions:

- Who is more approachable – the Lamb or the beast?
- Who appears to be the strongest – the Lamb or the beast?
- On whom would you place your bets for winning? Judging from appearances alone, who would most likely win in a contest – the Lamb or the beast? And yet, according to Revelation, it is the Lamb who wins!

The Beast – an Unholy Terror!

Look closely at the appearance, traits, and behaviors of the beast.

- “Like a leopard, feet like a bear, mouth like a lion” (Rev. 13:2) – predatory and exotic animals known for their ferociousness.

- Seven heads (Rev. 13:1). This beast is a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional animal. Seven heads would also have seven mouths – there’s a lot of talk and threats coming out of its mouths.

- Ten horns (Rev. 13:1). Appearance of immense strength and power.

- Ten crowns (Rev. 13:1). His prideful and arrogant appearance is designed to impress and to control others.

- A mouth speaking great things and blasphemies (Rev. 13:5). And on his heads blasphemous names (Rev. 13:1). Blasphemy is to assume prerogatives for yourself that only belong to God. During His earthly life Jesus was accused of blasphemy – forgiving a sick man his sins and calling Himself equal with God – but because Jesus is truly God,
there was no blasphemy involved. Since it is only Jesus Christ who can save from sin, might we not then also be guilty of blasphemy, just like the beast, if we try to do Christ’s work for Him?

- **His authority** comes from the dragon – this is just a *make-believe* authority, for at Calvary’s cross the Lamb took away the dragon’s authority (Revelation 12:11, Colossians 2:15). So his authority is all a pretense, just like an impostor who flashes a policeman’s badge.

- *They worshiped the beast…* (Rev. 13:4). Why would anyone worship, admire and trust a beast, an antichrist? Would you ever engage an attorney to represent you in court who had flunked the state bar? Would you knowingly ask a physician to diagnose and treat your illness if you knew he was practicing medicine without a license? Then why would anyone give their allegiance to someone as untrustworthy as the devil, who with the resounding approval of the heavenly court has been disbarred from practice in heaven’s court-room? Why would anyone worship a loser? Genuine worship is to give supreme allegiance, loyalty, admiration, adoration and trust to the only One worthy of such worship – God the Father and Christ the Son (Rev. 4:11; 5:12). They alone are worthy to receive worship because God is Creator and Jesus is the slain Lamb.

**Who or what is antichrist?**

To prepare for the final deception, don’t just confine your alertness to the last-day impersonation of Jesus Christ, but understand first the *antichrist principle*. This principle has been active and working in every generation, pretending to do God’s work in God’s behalf, when actually it is at total enmity against Him. By diligent research, but more often by rumors, we may think that our accumulated information on the last-day events will be sufficient to enable us to withstand the final great deception. And yet, we may be totally unaware of the deceptions of the beast on the *personal and experiential* level.

So in addition to looking at the historical operations of the beast, let us seek to discover some very specific areas where the beast principle may already be operating in our own lives, and mostly likely without our knowledge. You may have visited your personal physician and heard him tell you that he was prescribing a *broad-spectrum antibiotic* to treat all possible infections in your body. Likewise, it is a must for every believer to understand the beast principle, in whatever disguises it may occur, in order to overcome all the broad-spectrum deceptions of Satan, and our pre-existing internal susceptibility to deception, which is self-deception.

So what is the *beast principle*? The beast is anyone – or anything – that is a substitute for the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on Calvary’s cross and His intercession for us in the heavenly sanctuary.
We may unknowingly “worship the beast” when we…

- attempt to save ourselves by our own good works, thus doing Christ’s work for Him. We have not been given the authority by Christ to save ourselves. He alone is truly the Great Physician. What patient on an operating table would attempt to assist the surgeon performing the operation?

- look to ourselves and our own good works for assurance of salvation, trusting in our own performance of the “works of the law” to save us, rather than trusting in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 3:27,28).

- posture as powerful and strong in order to control others though in reality we are weak and defenseless.

- take pride in our own good works and try to use such to impress God and others. You can fool others for a while, but God is not deceived.

- depend on anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ to satisfy our deepest needs.

- believe that God is not doing His job of saving us, or not doing a “good enough” job for us, so we try to do the job ourselves by inventing our own custom-designed substitutes (idols) to do His job for us. Remember how the Israelites at Mt. Sinai custom-designed a beast, a golden calf, to do God’s work for Him. What is the current “beast” resident and operational in your life?

Beast worship, on the experiential level, is anything that is substitute for the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, beast worship can also be legalism in disguise. Legalism is the most dangerous and deceptive of all heresies, because it promises to deliver what only Christ can provide – complete salvation through His blood (Romans 3:25). Legalism is able to make good impressions by its purported desire to uphold God’s law and the standards of the church. The problem with legalism is its pretense to be a perfectly legal way to be saved, while it is an illegal way of salvation because it bypasses the blood of the slain Lamb. Remember, the Lamb was slain; the beast was only wounded.
The beast – the anti-Christ, may also be cartoon of your own life

Look again look closely at the beast, not just as a depiction of Satan’s last-day deceptive work, but also as a cartoon of what your own life may become when you seek to save yourself?

Multiple heads, horns and crowns. These indicate the multi-faceted hard work that the beast has to do. The Lamb has only one head and seven horns. The beast has crowns already mounted on His horn; the Lamb receives His crowns from those who worship Him. The appearance of the beast is utterly sensational. Have you ever allowed the sensational features of anything to draw you away from the simplicity of the gospel of Christ? The beast says, “Look at me! Here I come! Don’t stand in my way! I am really somebody!” When we do not have positive assurance of salvation, we will in a worst-case scenario have to work hard to impress God and others with our own significance and self-worth.

Mouths speaking great things. Ask yourself, do you spend an inordinate amount of energy in much speaking, self-justification, explaining, rationalizing, excusing, and defending yourself, rather than simply and humbly admitting and confessing your sins? Does your righteousness arise from a comparison of your good works with the shortcomings of others? Do you willingly accept correction from others? What kind of person do you become when others point out your blind spots or challenge your do-it-yourself methodology of salvation?

Blasphemy. Again, ask yourself these questions: What are some of the subtle ways in which you go about trying to do God’s work for Him? Do you ever look upon yourself as righteous and acceptable for salvation because of your church membership? Do you ever believe yourself to be a notch above others because you understand the intricacies of certain doctrines and their accompanying proof texts? By trusting in anything or anyone other than Jesus Christ, are you not thereby doubting the judicial verdict in heaven’s courtroom, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and glory and honor and blessing” (Revelation 5:12)? Can you think of a greater blasphemy than to spurn the sufficiency of Christ’s atoning death on Calvary’s cross as your only qualification for eternal salvation?

Making war with the saints. We may become defensive, abusive, and retaliatory toward anyone who challenges our goodness, or good works, or who sins differently than we do. We will have no tolerance whatever for those sins in others of which we are in denial though they are present in ourselves. The anti-Christ shows his true colors by carrying on warfare against the Lamb and the followers of the Lamb, the saints of God. The true saints of God are those who are saved by the merits of the Lamb, the genuine Messiah. (Philippians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1).

The beast is really a controller, and while control in its most extreme example is persecution, there are other methods of control: force, fear, threat, coercion, intimidation, manipulation, and domination. Control over another person can also take place through guilt, shame, and taking advantage of the weaknesses of others. Do you sometimes say to yourself, “Somebody has to stand up for the church standards, and I am just such a one? Where would our church be without someone like me to call sin by its right name?” And have you thus started making war on the saints in your own congregation by shooting your own side first? In your attempt to maintain the
standards of the church, have you ever erected crosses, designed in the image of such standards
and behaviors where you are strong, in order to crucify those who sin differently than you do?

Do you ever think of yourself as one directed and deputized by God to “cleanse the camp”? Are
you ever guilty of using the methods of the beast to do the work of the Lamb? Do you sometimes
work like the devil for God– an unholy terrorist? What kind of person do you become when you
do not get your own way? Are you aware of how your personal program of self-salvation blinds
you to the most dangerous of all sins – pride? Have you ever seen how your system of religion
may damage the church and the lives of others? Do you ever portray yourself as a lamb, but
when cornered you come out as a raging, angry beast? Ask yourself, what kind of person do I
become when things do not go my way? Do troubles and unfavorable circumstances sometimes
release a beast inside of you, over which you have no control? There is nothing a controller fears
more than control by others. Are you able to exercise the patience of the saints and patience with
the saints, particularly those upon whom you look with contempt because of their sins?
Remember Ellen White’s statement about our real enemy. “We cannot afford to let our spirits
chafe over any real or supposed wrong done to ourselves. Self is the enemy we most need to fear.
No form of vice has a more baleful effect upon the character than has human passion not under
the control of the Holy Spirit. No other victory we can gain will be so precious as the victory
gained over self.” [3]

The Beast is a Contagious Carrier of Spiritual Disease

The church in Galatia was afflicted by beast-like behaviors: “But if you bite and devour one
another, beware lest you be consumed by one another” (Galatians 5:15). To church members in
Philippi, Paul wrote, “Beware of dogs” (Philippians 3:2), and the apostle Peter referred to certain
members as “brute beasts” (2nd Peter 2:12). The virus of the beast touches everything with its
destructive behaviors: This beast virus reproduces itself even among Christians whenever Jesus
Christ is not trusted and worshiped as our only Savior.

Face the Enemy Within

Do you see some of your own personal traits in the beast cartoon? Have you, because of church
membership, correct doctrine, comparisons with others, and a lot of good behaviors ever thought
of yourself as a loyal follower of the Lamb? The deceptions of the beast will ultimately give you
the illusion of being on God’s side when in reality you may be His enemy. You can even be
working like the devil for God (just like Satan in the wilderness temptations of Jesus “only
wanted to help Jesus do a better work”). By looking closely at the beast cartoon in Revelation
can you now see that it is not the image of the Lamb, but the image of the beast that has
reproduced itself in your life? Is it possible that God wants to use the cartoon of the beast to
expose the “beast in you”?

It is not too late to switch sides. It is not too late to give up on yourself by accepting that a
 correct diagnosis is necessary to cure your personal sin-disease. The diagnosis is: You cannot
save yourself. The cure is: but Jesus can! If you see parts of yourself in the beast cartoon, then let
this be the start of a life-changing revolution where the walls of defensiveness and self-
justification in your life, maintained by pride, come crashing down. Never be fooled by the
impressive sensational appearance of the beast, no matter how holy and righteous its disguises. It is still the Lamb who wins.

Life Applications

Questions to Ponder:

When, if ever, do I engage in god-playing, sometimes acting like a holy terrorist? How do I do it?

What are some traits of the beast that may possibly be operational in my life at this time?

Am I ever impressed by that which appears sensational? Has it really changed my life for the better?

The beast has mouths speaking great things? What are some possible ways in which I may make impressive claims for myself that really misrepresent the Lamb?

Truths vs. Lies: Replace the lies of the enemy with these truths that will set you free:

“Behold, you desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden parts You will make me to know wisdom”
Psalm 51:6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lies or half truths</th>
<th>Truths</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My identity is found in impressing others with my worth and significance.</td>
<td>My identity is found in an honest self-assessment of being a “chief of sinners,” yet deeply loved by God in Jesus Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is what I do which determines who I am.</td>
<td>It is who I am which determines what I do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The information I have obtained about the operations of the historical beast is sufficient to save me.</td>
<td>The greatest protection against the beast is the genuine worship of the Lamb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My fear of the beast will guard me against all deception.</td>
<td>Only in trusting the Lamb will I find rock-solid security. See John 10:27-29.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My only security against deception is to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of my sincerity in doing good and religious things, and because I know so much Bible truth, I can be sure that I am not deceived and that I will not be deceived. Daily accept my identity in Christ and His cross. "God forbid that I should boast save in the cross of Christ my Lord" (Galatians 6:14)