U.S. Senate Chaplain, an Adventist Minister, Speaks Out on American Political Crisis:
America's two political parties have taken their war of words and warlords "outside the ring," to the chagrin of the American public that now rates Congressional performance in the single-digit percentile. Senate Chaplain Barry C. Black, an SDA ordained minister, has not flinched in admonishing for change....

Pacific Press is Getting Out of the Business of Operating Bookstores:
Between 1985 and the present, Adventist publishing has experienced one of its most challenging times, and it's not over yet! Now the larger of the Church's publishers in North America says it is getting out of Adventist Book Center management....

"Disrespect in Disguise" for Ellen G. White:
Is it asking too much to expect the writings of Ellen White—including her very early works—to be flawless? Jack Hoehn says the writings of Ellen White grew in consistency as she personally grew, and that we should respect her growth as we quote her writings....

Frozen Faith:
This lesson penned devotionally by Debonnaire Kovacs from "Beside the River" involves water, mist, frost, and early sunshine. Also transmutation....

A Brief History of Adventist Thought on Women in Leadership (1844-1995):
As historical precedent is bandied about to support or deny ordination to Adventist women, Adventist Today offers this special feature from our brand new issue (this article is open to all members free for three days only) that encapsulates from the Church's earliest days the trajectory of women in ministry.
AT interviews the GC Director of Family Ministries, Willie and Elaine Oliver:
Debbonnaire Kovacs interviews two leading Adventist voices on the family, including the question of how the digital age is affecting family relationships....

Victory Over the Beast, Chapter 26: The Faith of Jesus:
This feature looks at ways we can grow in faith and trust, including use of meditation and a sense of conviction that God will show us pathways to foresight and far-sightedness....
U.S. Senate Chaplain, an Adventist Minister, Speaks Out on American Political Crisis

By Adventist Today News Team, October 7, 2013

The chaplain of the United States Senate is generally expected to say nothing of consequence regarding the governance of the nation; to quietly minister to the personal, spiritual needs of the Senators and their families and staff. In the last week Chaplain Barry C. Black, the first Seventh-day Adventist minister to fill the role, has included some pointed remarks in his daily invocations regarding the current impasse in the Congress and caught the attention of the media for doing so. An article in the Sunday New York Times (October 6) called his prayers "an epic ministerial scolding." Jeremy Peters, the journalist who wrote the piece interviewed Black in his office in the U.S. Capitol and reported that Black, like many government employees, is currently getting paid, but still discharging his duties, although his Bible classes and weekly prayer breakfasts have been canceled for the duration. The Bible studies usually meet several times each week and have 100 to 125 participants, and the prayer breakfasts regularly attract 20 to 30 of the 100 Senators.

"Save us from this madness," he stated in one invocation on the Senate floor. "We acknowledge our transgressions, our shortcomings, our smugness, our selfishness and our pride. Deliver us from the hypocrisy of attempting to sound reasonable while being unreasonable," reported National Public Radio last week.

On Friday he prayed for the Capitol Police who had been involved in a confrontation with a woman who tried to ram officers with her car and was shot dead with a year-old baby in the vehicle, noting that although they were putting their lives on the line to protect the Senators, they were not being paid. Then praying for the Senators, he said, "remove from them that stubborn pride which imagines itself to be above and beyond criticism. Forgive them the blunders they have committed."

Black's words have "cut through as powerful persuasive," the Times stated, in a legislative session "where debate has degenerated into daily name-calling; the Tea Party as a band of nihilists and extortionists and Democrats as socialists who want to force their will on the American people." He has clearly caught the attention of some of the politicians because he was invited on Friday to also give the invocation for the House of Representatives, which has its own chaplain, and Senator Harry Reid, majority leader in the Senate, at one point made reference to "the suggestion in the prayer of Admiral Black."

Black was a Navy chaplain for 30 years after serving as a local pastor in the Adventist denomination, retiring as Chief of Chaplains with the rank of Rear Admiral. He was selected by a Republican leader in the Senate ten years ago to be chaplain, a tradition that dates back to the beginning of the nation.

The role is by definition nonpartisan "and he prefers to leave his political leanings vague," the Times said of Black. "I use a biblical perspective to decide my beliefs about various issues," he explained to the report. "I'm liberal on some and conservative on others, but it's obvious the Bible condemns some things in a very forceful and over way, and I would go along with that condemnation."

Surveys by Adventist scholars have shown in the past that relatively few Adventists in the United States consistently agree with either the conservative or liberal views on politics. Instead, most Adventists have a mixture of views and tend to be equally skeptical of both the left and right. This could be one reason why an Adventist minister is particularly well suited for serving as the chaplain of a legislative body.

Black is also the first African American to serve as chaplain of the Senate. This is also not surprising considering that about a third of the members of the Adventist denomination in the U.S. are from this racial group while it makes up only about 13 percent of the entire American population. The church membership is significantly more ethnically diverse than the national population and no longer has any ethnic majority.

"The situation right now is so extraordinary and so volatile that anything could tip it one way or the other," an Adventist who has worked in politics and lived in Washington DC told Adventist Today. "Who knows, Admiral Black's push might be what brings resolution to the crisis. It really only takes a couple of Senators to get together in a corner and begin to work out something."
**Pacific Press is Getting Out of the Business of Operating Bookstores**

AT News Team, October 9, 2013

The *Adventist Review* released a news bulletin this morning announcing that Pacific Press Publishing Association, one of two publishing houses operated by the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States, will return responsibility for the 25 bookstores that it operates to the local conferences where they are located. This decision was made at a board meeting last week.

The board “voted to request termination of the management agreements” for the stores, which it has managed “over the course of nearly 15 years,” a statement from the organization said. The outlets served “nearly half of the North American Division membership.” A plan to terminate management agreements for the stores should be in place by December 31, 2013, the statement indicated.

“The board recognized that the current business model for these management agreements has experienced challenges due to changing trends in technology and the way people access information,” the PPPA announcement said. Pacific Press took over the operation of the stores from local conferences because the conferences had decided they could no longer subsidize the outlets and few of the stores were making a profit.

An Adventist member who has worked in the publishing industry told Adventist Today that the bookstore business all across the country has been in decline for more than a decade due to the boom in online book sales. “The Adventist Book Centers were mostly located in or near conference offices and away from general commercial traffic and in most cases offered a narrow range of inventory.” One exception, he noted, is the Potomac Conference Adventist Book Center in Silver Spring, Maryland, located in a large shopping center.

This decision is viewed by other observers as a consequence of the fact that merger plans between Pacific Press and the Review & Herald Publishing Association have been called off. Pacific Press said it would not leave any local conferences or members without easy access to church materials. “We are committed to making all quarterlies, magazines, books, and music easier than ever to order,” says Dale Galusha, PPPA president. “For most products, the local church won’t even notice a change in how they are ordered or delivered.” These materials are available online at www.AdventistBookCenter.com.

Pacific Press is a suburb of Boise, Idaho, and produces books and magazines for all ages. The company, which has been in operation since 1874. It moved from the San Francisco Bay area, where it was originally, to Idaho in 1984. That move was intended to reduce operating costs and a few years later Review & Herald moved from Takoma Park to Hagerstown, Maryland, for the same reason.

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THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES,
Volume 5, No. 12,
March 20, 1879.

“The Great Controversy
Between Christ and His Angels and Satan and His
Angels.”

Chapter Eight.

Disguised Infidelity.

By Mrs. E.G. White

It is inappropriate and embarrassing when the partisans of Young Earth
Creationism and the impossible Ussher 17th century dating of creation
republish parts of Sister Ellen White’s rightly intentioned but poorly
informed response to the ideas that influenced Charles Darwin.

The ADVENTIST WORLD August 2013 article (page 33) is republished
online October 1, 2013 accompanied by photos of a scary Tyranosaurus
from Creation Day 6 about 200 million years ago and a small but complex
Trilobite from the sudden Cambrian Explosion of 20 of the 27 animal
phyla found in fossils as sea creatures on Creation Day 5 about 500 million
years ago.

Ellen White’s article is itself a reworking of her chapter of the same name
published 9 years previously in a book as SPIRIT OF PROPHECY,
Volume 1, pages 85-90. I count over 25 words or phrases from that book
that she leaves out in republishing the article 9 years later, including those
claiming Divine instruction. (“I was then carried back to the creation…;
“I was shown that…;” “I have been shown that…;” are all omitted as this
SIGNS OF THE TIMES was a missionary journal for the public and not
written for Adventist believers.)

Most all of the changes are editorial and except for the omission of claims
of inspiration the message of both articles is nearly the same but edited.

But clearly inspiration was Thought Inspiration, not verbal inspiration, and
words can be changed by the prophetess or by editors in an inspired article.
I guess the question we face now is can better arguments be made in
support of a Divine Thought and can mistaken facts be corrected in an
inspired article?

“I at the time of the flood, immense forests were torn up or
broken down and buried in the earth. These have since
petrified and become coal, which accounts for the large
coal beds that are now found. This coal has produced oil.
Large quantities of coal and oil frequently ignite and burn.
Rocks are intensely heated, limestone is burned, and iron
ore melted. Water and fire under the surface of the earth
meet. The action of water upon the limestone adds fury to
the intense heat, and causes earthquakes, volcanoes, and
fiery issues.” (EGW, Signs of Times March 13, 1879)

I am thankful ADVENTIST WORLD/REVIEW has not yet republished
the article in the SIGNS OF THE TIMES from one week before the one
they choose. That article contains Ellen White’s discredited 19th century
understanding of geology.

Anyone who has been to America’s active volcano in Hawaii understands
that Hawaii has no coal, oil, or natural gas to burn (the coal fired power
plant on Oahu burns coal shipped in from Indonesia!). There are no oil
wells in Hawaii. There are no geologists, Christian or otherwise, who
believe any volcanoes are caused by this mechanism.

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The Adventist World/Review editors omit her Genesis 2:4 arguments that the “generations” don’t mean long periods of time for each Creation Day.

They omit her 4th commandment of Exodus 20 arguments.

They omit the argument that this is “unlike (God’s) dealings with mortals” to command us to keep a weekly Sabbath for a longer Creation Day.

They omit the section where she suggests that “many who profess to believe the Bible” accept the old age of the earth, some from the evidence presented by especially those who want to be “feel a freedom” from the fourth commandment.

They omit Sister White’s claim that not only bones but also “instruments of warfare are sometimes found” along with “bones of men and animals” apparently proving humans were much larger than men now living.

They omit the phrase when she admits that “It may be innocent to conjecture beyond” (the inspired record).

They omit the 5 texts she quotes supporting the mystery of creation and our inability to understand God’s mind or plans.

They omit the sentence where she reveals she is fighting against “infidel fables”.

The modern ADVENTIST WORLD/REVIEW version of Ellen White’s article leaves out most of the arguments she offered supporting her statements. This suggests to me that the present day editors expect us to accept as authoritative her assertions, and skip the parts where Ellen White sought to convince us that they were so. The edited version has a “Sister White said it, so believe it” feeling, not the same as the original SIGNS OF THE TIMES article where the prophetess gave arguments and Bible texts to support her statements. The original is much more “this is what I believe to be true, and here is why you should accept it, think about my arguments and see if you don’t agree” feeling.

I don’t accept that the Creation week was 7 short days in length, and they certainly didn’t happen 6,000 years ago.

But I also have no desire to be free of the fourth commandment as a happy and blessed Sabbath keeper.

I am not an infidel or atheist. I am a Bible believing creationist.

I do not accept fables of any kind, infidel or faith based. I do not believe naturalistic evolution or even theistic evolution is possible based on scientific grounds as well as scriptural teaching.

There are no “bones of men” much larger than those now living. That was started with a hoary 17th century misinterpretations of cave animal fossils by a Jesuit Polymath, Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680).

Although there were fossilized giant hoaxes in Ellen White’s day (see this report in Archeology), no humanoid fossil bones of humans “much larger than men now living” have ever been found. We had giant beavers, giant bison, giant turtles, and giant lizards in the past bigger than “animals now living”, but no bones of a human race of giant size other than the occasional pituitary damaged Goliath have been found.

So in the 21st century is a Long Term Creationist or Intelligent Design advocate involved in “innocent conjecture” or is it really the same “disguised infidelity” of the 19th century world of Ellen White?
In 1844 Adventist thought had a published competitor for the minds of men. According to Wikipedia VESTIGES… was published anonymously but was very popular and influential and widely discussed:

“The book begins by tackling the origins of the solar system, using the nebular hypothesis to explain its formations entirely in terms of natural law. It explains the origins of life by spontaneous generation, citing some questionable experiments that claimed to spontaneously generate insects through electricity. It then appeals to geology to demonstrate a progression in the fossil record from simple to more complex organisms, finally culminating in man—with the Caucasian European unabashedly identified as the pinnacle of this process, just above the other races and the rest of the animal kingdom.”

When Ellen White first was inspired to write this article some time before 1870 it was likely not directly against Darwin’s ideas of human evolution. It was more likely against VESTIGES OF THE NATURAL HISTORY OF CREATION a very popular book published anonymously in 1844 by a Robert Chambers. This book was at that time much more popular and widely discussed that Charles Darwin’s first book. VESTIGES… was the book that influenced Ellen’s White’s generation and was much discussed and supported or criticized by both clergy and scientists before Darwin.

ESSAYS AND REVIEWS was published in 1860 by 7 liberal Church of England clergymen and was an influential liberalistic supposedly Christian acceptance of naturalism and the non-historicity of Genesis influencing the churches in Ellen White’s world. ESSAYS… spoke positively of the recently published Charles Darwin’s ORIGIN OF SPECIES in 1859.

Darwin later published THE DESCENT OF MAN in 1871 reformulating the poorly supported VESTIGES… by offering a more scientific theory of how things might have evolved without the need for Divine intervention. Darwin became more famous than the “infidel fables” (bad science, materialistic reductionism and racism) Chamber’s had offered. So in 1870 and 1879 Ellen White would have been writing mostly against Chambers and against liberal Church of England clergy but of course also indirectly against Darwin.

What is the Inspired Center of this brave attempt at defending the truth about Creation?

I believe God inspired Ellen White’s ministry through visions, and through Spirit inspired thoughts. It is clear she was also inspired by Bible study, and by reading good books. I accept her statements that she is not infallible and that truth is progressive, so that in 2013 I expect the church should know more and understand things previously imperfectly understood in 1870 and 1879. So although I find errors of fact in this article, and disagree with some of the arguments offered, I find the core thought to still be true, although it is embarrassing to republish the way it was presented to the church and world in 1879. I am encouraged to find that she edited and improved her article between 1870 and 1879 versions. I think she would completely rewrite it in 2013 if she were alive again today. Here are what I understand as the core ideas:

“Yielding to (Satan’s) devices, men have turned from the plainest precepts of Jehovah to receive infidel fables.”

This is obviously true. The books influencing Philosophic Naturalism above were a bunch of wild speculation, bad science, and European racism, VESTIGES OF THE NATURAL HISTORY OF CREATION, was infidel fables by an anonymous atheist with journalistic but no scientific nor theological expertise. The liberal Church of England churchmen accepted German higher criticism, rejected Biblical historicism including miracles, the virgin birth, and the resurrection of Christ. As one old pastor exclaimed after listening to one of these Christ-less-Christendom presentations, “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.” ESSAYS AND REVIEWS was truly infidel fables in a Christian disguise.
"The great God in his days of creation and day of rest, measured off the first cycle as a sample for successive weeks till the close of time."

I agree with this, but find no evidence in nature nor necessity in Scripture that Creation Days had to be the same length as post creation days. I accept the Creation Week as a "cycle," a "pattern," followed by our week. A "sample" is not necessarily the same size as the real. A model is not the same size as the original. This is the same as the small Tabernacle in the wilderness which was patterned or dimensioned after the much larger Temple of God in Heaven. Our little week is a "memorial of creation," not a clone or duplicate, it is a cycle set by God's great Creation Week.

"When men leave the word of God, and seek to account for His creative works upon natural principles, they are upon a boundless ocean of uncertainty."

Naturalism, unguided, chance naturalism, without outside injection of information as a mechanism for creating novelties in body parts or plans has been shown by scientific evidence from fossils and from our knowledge of information theory as found in the amazingly organized and functional DNA and its supporting mechanisms, to be impossible as an explanation of the origin or complexity of life.

Philosophic Naturalism which intentionally and aggressively excludes any information, plan, design from outside nature is a religion of anti-religion and not based on any available evidence beyond hand waving and speculation.

Explaining the complex and designed creation on purely natural principles is a boundless ocean of baseless speculation and "just so stories."

"Just how God wrought in the work of creation he has never revealed to men."

Meaning that God has NOT revealed in scripture that he created in 144 hours, 6,000 years ago. Your Bible has no dates for that week. Dates in your footnotes are ancient speculations, not revelation. And the assumption that the Darkness followed by Light Great Creation Days were 24 solar hours long is an interpretation. Like all interpretations, they can be revised by subsequent revelations of fact from nature or from later revelations. If you believe God dictated the words of this article to Ellen White, or gave her the details she used to support the central truths, then this may settle this for you. But your doctrine of inspiration may need some fine tuning?

It appears to me that Ellen White is telling me that God has left this mystery of how Creation happened for our investigation and delight by observation of nature, his "Second Book."

(Now of course if you insist on interpreting this lovely statement as meaning, "God has never revealed this to any man, but there is one woman who knows, Ellen G. White!" I will respectfully bow my head in amazement at your argumentative skills. And go talk to someone else.)
Why would God permit his prophetess to make errors of fact?

Jesus used spit and mud to treat blindness. You are not permitted to do this now. God permitted Moses to make a provision for easy divorce. Jesus does not permit us to do so now. God permitted David to have 7 wives plus sexual consorts. Men are not permitted to do this now. Paul told Onesimus to go back to his slave master. You are not permitted to be a slave master now. Truth is progressive. The Bible does not forbid smoking. You may not smoke. Revelation has never revealed scientific truth, God has left this to our study and discovery through nature.

The length of creation days was assumed by the Christian world of Ellen White’s days to be 144 hours of creating followed by 24 hours of rest. For her to have taken another approach would have put her in the godless infidel camp, as far as most Christians were concerned. So using her best arguments she felt that the infidel fables would best be opposed by a Biblical Literalism.

It worked for me until about 2009. It has not worked as long for our scientists who have been prevented from expressing themselves in denominational employment for many years. It will not work for our Children and our Grandchildren.

Republishing Ellen White’s errors or weaker statements without editorial comments and corrections, is actually disrespecting her work as the Messenger of the Lord.

Ellen White writes of Martin Luther in his positive contributions to reformation of Christianity, she retells his high points. She does not recount his ugly and wrong anti-Semitism. She lauds John Calvin for his contributions to Christianity. She does not recount his condoning of the murder of dissenters or the unfortunate consequences of his predestinationism.

There is so much holy and good and beautiful that Ellen White has given me and the world, that I find it “Disguised Disrespect” for editors to try to use her 19th century revelations to contradict known 21st century scientific truth.

The Adventist Review is holding a good and holy woman up to ridicule and making her ministry and influence diminish when they select these fallible weaker passages as useful for the church in 2013. It is our duty to protect the truth about Creation with modern facts and better arguments than were available in Ellen White’s day. Take the core truths and do a better job of defending them with modern arguments and more accurate scientific facts.

Should we still be arguing using the 17th century misinterpretation of fossils and chronologies as the basis of our arguments? Free our scientists from a false doctrine of inerrancy in these chronological statements and ask them to reformulate the doctrine of creation with 21st century facts.
Frozen Faith

By Debbonnaire Kovacs Submitted October 9, 2013

Last night in the dark, some of the water molecules that escaped yesterday, lifted on warm air, sank again and got caught

—immobilized—

crystallized on the hard ground. This morning, frost silvers the edge of every blade of grass. The sun, a pot of melted gold, waits patiently for my bit of the planet to hurdle far enough toward it that the tallest treetops on the other side of the river dip below its fiery edge. The river can’t wait. It is rising up, stretching out misty arms into the light, transmuting into something entirely different — no longer cold water, but transcendent particles, vehicles for the light. When the light reaches the grass, the frost particles relax again. I sit on my flat boulder by the water’s edge, transfixed, hands tucked into my sleeves, blinking slowly like a lizard. The river sings about healing in the wings.

If you sink and get stuck in the dark, just sit tight. Clutch your frozen faith. You’re already rushing as fast as you can toward the Son. He’s almost here.

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Seventh-day Adventists have engaged the question of gender and church leadership throughout their history. Following is a brief survey of major thought developments in this area.

God’s Messenger
The year was 1844. The Second Great Awakening was in disarray. The widely anticipated Advent had not come as expected. Confused believers were desperate for answers.

From amidst the turmoil, a young Ellen Harmon (later Ellen White) emerged with the hopeful message that God had not forsaken them. As her message resonated with despondent believers, the invitations to share it multiplied. She quickly became the most famous preacher among the postdisappointment Adventists.

A woman of such prominence was not unheard of but was still unusual in 1844, especially in church leadership. Although Protestantism had rejected the Catholic priesthood, it had retained gender exclusion among its clergy. In broader society, women were only beginning to earn rights to own property, and they were still three-quarters of a century from securing the right to vote. All in all, their social standing was little better than that of Southern slaves.

Promoting Female Leadership
Within this cultural setting, Ellen’s ministry met with staunch opposition. As a result, Adventist pioneers spent the next several decades defending the legitimacy of women in church leadership, reaching a crescendo around 1881. The following examples represent the general tone of their efforts.

In 1861, Uriah Smith published what he called “a triumphant vindication of the right of the sisters to take part in the public worship of God” and commented that, while Joel’s prediction of daughters prophesying (Joel 2:28-29) “must embrace public speaking of some kind, this we think is but half of its meaning.”

In 1879, John Andrews and James White penned articles to endorse the broader ministry of women.

Andrews addressed texts commonly employed to delegitimize women in leadership (especially 1 Cor. 14:34-36 and 1 Tim. 2:12) and catalogued biblical examples of women who ministered outside of presumed boundaries. Two weeks earlier, John Waggoner had published a similar defense of women in leadership, with the significantly nuanced view that, in Paul’s thinking, women were not generally called to “occupy the position of a pastor or a ruling elder.” However, he termed this limit “restrictive but not prohibitory,” given the biblical examples of women who did serve administrative roles. Andrews offered a similarly qualified acknowledgment of Paul’s restrictive language. Speaking of 1 Tim. 2:12, he wrote: “We
understand this text to give Paul’s general rule with regard to women as public teachers. But there are some exceptions to this general rule to be drawn even from Paul’s writings, and from other scriptures.”

Four months later, James White also defended female leaders in systematic fashion. He did not express the qualifiers that Andrews and Waggoner did. He concluded: “The Christian age was ushered in with glory. Both men and women enjoyed the inspiration of the hallowed hour, and were teachers of the people. ... And the dispensation which was ushered in with glory, honored with the labors of holy women, will close with the same A Brief History of honors.” He then quoted Acts 2:17. White had been writing defenses of female leadership since 1857.

Also in 1879, Ellen White forcefully expressed the same openness, also without limiters: “It was Mary that first preached a risen Jesus,” she wrote. “If there were twenty women where now there is one, who would make this holy mission their cherished work, we should see many more converted to the truth. The refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth.” Ellen White would continue to pen endorsements of women in ministry for the rest of her life, even commenting that “It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God.”

Adventist pioneers did not express significant interest in limiting the roles of women in the church. Their passion was in expanding opportunities for women. Although their views were not the same as progressive views of this century, they continually developed their case for openness.

Throughout 1879, Adventist leaders refuted restrictive arguments being made from 1 Cor. 11:8-10, 1 Cor. 14:34-35, and 1 Tim. 2:12 as they made their case for openness from Joel 2:28-29, Gal. 3:28, and the numerous biblical examples of leading women. A recurrent argument was that God could equip and empower whomever he wished to, so the church should accept his leading when they saw it.

Credentialing Female Ministers
Two years after this flurry of articles favoring women in leadership, the General Conference responded enthusiastically. They voted measures to strengthen Battle Creek College to better fulfill its “purpose of fitting young men and women for usefulness either in the ministry or in fields of missionary labor.”

A motion to ordain women also came to the floor. It read, “Resolved, That females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position, may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry.”

The resolution was referred to the General Conference Committee. Opinions vary on whether it was referred there for implementation or further study. The latter seems most likely. However, the significance of this motion does not rest in whether or not it was adopted, but in its existence. It came to the floor at a time when Christianity was not very open to women in leadership, but it was the natural result of decades spent advocating it.
In the spirit of the 1881 resolution, at the start of the next two-year credentialing period (1883), the church issued Ellen White an ordination credential. It stated that she was an “ordained minister” of the Seventh-day Adventist church. She continued to receive ordination credentials until her death in 1915. This practice demonstrates that Adventist leaders, including Ellen White, were willing to categorize her as an ordained minister.

In the same spirit, the church employed several other women as full-time pastors. According to the Adventist Yearbooks from 1884, when ministerial listings first appeared, to 1915, when Ellen White died, 28 women held ministerial licenses. Of these women, only Ellen White held ordination credentials. Nonetheless, the number of women functioning as pastors is impressive for the time.

Fundamentalism and Feminism
This countercultural posture changed quickly with Ellen White’s death in 1915 and the rise of fundamentalism over the next decade. Fundamentalism found its cause and following in response to liberal trends in theology that swept in from Europe. The clash between liberalism and fundamentalism polarized American Christianity, leaving no middle ground.

Adventism seemed faced with a choice between the rigid traditionalism of the fundamentalists and the inspiration-rejecting wiles of the liberals. Adventists chose fundamentalism. Although it helped preserve some aspects of Adventism—like the authority of Scripture and the value of God’s law—it also radically changed the church, nudging it back toward its pre-1888 legalism, bending it toward stiff support for verbal inspiration of Scripture, and pushing women out of ministry.

It was half a century before the renewed American feminist movement helped make women in ministry an open question again. Secular trends raised the question, and the church answered with theological study.

General Conference Neutrality
The General Conference conducted a full investigation of the subject in 1973, which involved the top biblical scholars of the time. These scholars concluded that there is “no significant theological objection to the ordination of women to Church ministries” and recommended a pilot program for including women in pastoral and evangelistic roles “where the ‘climate’ in the field would appear receptive.” They also recommended that “qualifications for church offices which require ordination ... be listed without reference to sex.”

The General Conference did not substantially act on this report, nor on a series of subsequent GC studies that also favored women in ordained ministry. Although the ordination of female elders and deaconesses has since been approved, and provision has been made for women to train and serve as pastors, the General Conference has not established policy for or against ordaining them.

Since the General Conference never voted the 1881 resolution and did not formally side with the theological position of the pioneers or the 1973 study, it maintained neutrality in reference to
both policy and theology.

At the 1990 and 1995 General Conference Sessions, efforts were made to change that neutrality to a position of endorsement. Both attempts failed to receive adequate support. The popular view has been that these failures resulted in a prohibition of ordaining female pastors. Others observe that restrictive interpretations do not harmonize with procedures for policy creation or the General Conference Working Policy. At present, the Working Policy contains no gender requirement for ordination, leaving it neutral on the question.

Were Adventist Pioneers Gender Restrictive?
Some writers and lecturers have portrayed Adventist history differently than this paper does. They have led a successful campaign to popularize a restrictive reading of the 1990 Session vote and a portrayal of Adventist pioneer views as restrictive. Examination of historical documents does not support these interpretations.

The early Advent Movement had gender inclusion stamped into its DNA when Ellen Harmon (White) surfaced as a spiritual leader. In her defense, and counter to the culture of their times, her fellow pioneers argued that Scripture endorsed women in church leadership. Although trends in culture pushed Adventism toward pastoral gender exclusion and then back toward inclusion, a definitive position remains elusive.

Theologically, we have the early Adventist arguments in favor of female leaders, a century of divisive conversation, and several General Conference studies that sided with the pioneers. What we don’t have is a voted theological position on the matter.

Prior to and following the 1881 resolution, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was also policy neutral on women in pastoral ministry but nurtured a precedent of permission. Following Ellen White’s death and the imprint of fundamentalism, the denomination remained policy neutral but nurtured a precedent of restriction.

In North America, cultural trends have precipitated a clash between these divergent precedents, in the volatile context of theological ambiguity. This theological ambiguity and the underlying clash between the dynamic early Advent Movement and the more static fundamentalist movement are central reasons why the Adventist debate over women in church leadership remains so heated. The pathos of the Adventist brand is at issue.

James Wibberding is a pastor in Boise, Idaho, where he also serves as state senate chaplain and adjunct professor to the Doctor of Ministry program at Andrews University. He has worked at various church levels to advocate for the equal standing of women in leadership.

1Although some women had gained prominence by leading church-endorsed social causes, and opportunities to pray and testify in worship services had increased, Christianity in general remained far from allowing female pastors.
4Ibid.
7Ibid.
8Ibid.
13 Signs of the Times, Dec. 22, 1881.
15 Most other motions recorded from this GC Session are designated as “adopted,” while this one is not.
16 Since 1871 she had received ministerial credentials, but the 1883 document, as well as subsequent documents, designated her as “ordained.” Much has been made of some tampering with the word “ordained” on the 1885 certificate. Nonetheless, the intent, source, and time of this tampering are unclear and, significantly, no such alteration of the word appears on any of the other certificates.
17 A 1909 biographical form and the testimony of her son Willie give adequate evidence that she never had a humanly officiated ordination ceremony. However, church leaders apparently saw her ministry as meriting the level of an ordination credential.
18 Her final credential was issued in 1913, making its effective period span to the year of her death.
19 George R. Knight, A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists (Review and Herald, 2004), pp. 104-106.
22 Although leaders like A.G. Daniells helped Adventism stay conscious of righteousness by faith, the long-term impact of fundamentalism has been to nurture legalism among Adventist members.
23 Verbal inspiration is the view that God dictated every word of Scripture, as opposed to the official Adventist view that God inspired human agents with messages that they communicated in their own words (2 Pet. 1:20-21). The belief in verbal inspiration leads to a focus on isolated words and phrases above their intended meaning in context. This interpretive approach has contributed to gender exclusive interpretations of statements in Paul’s letters.
25 ibid.
27 The General Conference Working Policy section L.45, which governs the ordination of pastors, contains no gender requirement. Nor does the Working Policy contain such a restriction anywhere else. 28 A line in the committee document accepted by vote in 1990 has been widely misinterpreted. It reads, “We do not approve the ordination of women to the gospel ministry.” This appears to be a prohibition until the reader understands that (1) this was the direct and simple refusal of a request to depart from neutrality to approve the ordination of women, that (2) this was a vote to accept a committee report—not a policy vote, and that (3) this did not result in a Working Policy statement forbidding the ordination of women.
A Relationship that Works to Build Relationships

by Debbonnaire Kovacs
submitted October 9, 2013

Recently, husband-and-wife team Dr. and Mrs. Willie Oliver, who direct the General Conference Department of Family Ministries, did a seminar at Oakwood University. The press release that Oakwood sent out listed four questions the Olivers would address:

1. Why is the divorce rate so nationally-high here in Huntsville, in the Bible Belt?
2. Do relationships differ now in this digital age?
3. Why is the divorce rate 50%, but over 60% for African Americans?
4. Why address these issues at Oakwood University which, as a college, is a "laboratory for dating and relationship-building"?

The digital question, in particular, caught my interest as something that Adventist Today readers might be curious about, so I interviewed the Olivers. Here are the results:

AT: How did the two of you get into family ministries?

Dr. Oliver: I have been interested in family issues since I was a teenager. When I went to seminary at Andrews University I chose to do a masters in Religion with concentrations in pastoral counseling (marriage and family). I was elected director of Family Ministries for the Greater New York Conference (the first one) in 1989, after doing several relationship seminars as a pastor in New York City.

Elaine Oliver: I got involved when Willie asked me to present seminars with him when he was the family ministries director of the Atlantic Union. I subsequently worked on contract as a marriage and family consultant for the North American Division while Willie was the family ministries director (1995-2010), during which time we developed more than one marriage conference, wrote a relationship column in Message Magazine, and taped marriage programs for 3ABN and Hope Channel.

AT: What do you see as some of the advantages and disadvantages that digital technology gives family relationships, and how have these things changed your ministry (or our ministry as a denomination)?

The Olivers: It is the best of times and worst of times. The digital age has transformed people in relationships into virtual reality beings taken up with their own slice of artificial reality. Parents and children; husbands and wives have all become ADHD beings for their non-stop use of smart phones, digital tablets, computers and other electronic communication gadgets. The good news is
that we can reach more people than ever through our messages, resources and materials on websites, apps, twitter, Facebook, e-mail, TV, Internet, etc.

AT: What is your favorite thing about your work?

Dr. Oliver: My favorite thing in family Ministries is making a huge difference in the lives of people each day by the many modalities by which Elaine and I communicate wholesome relationship dynamics.

Elaine Oliver: For me it is getting to work with Willie around the world to bring hope to people who are often in despair. We both enjoy pointing people to Jesus, who invented relationships, and is willing to cure people's hurts and give them the power to live victoriously.

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Something I noticed: each of the two, in describing his or her favorite thing about their work in family ministries, mentions the other. Their work is about relationships. In their case, the work they do is through relationship, too. I submit that our work, as Christians, is about relationship. God is love.

Next week, we’ll feature an article about enriching relationships, written by the Olivers. Tune in then!
Learn more at:
http://www.family.adventist.org
The Incredible Power of Trust
by Dr. Ervin Thomson
submitted October 9, 2013

“Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” (Revelation 14:12).

The “patience of the saints,” the “commandments of God,” and the “faith of Jesus” are the fruits of spiritual health evidenced in the life of anyone who solely trusts in the covenant-faithfulness of Jesus Christ. To some, the faith of Jesus is a system of doctrine, by which we claim to hold the same beliefs that Jesus did, but the genuine faith of Jesus is far more than to intellectually believe the doctrines that Jesus believed, for even devils hold that kind of belief (James 2:19).

The academic mastery of the Christian religion, though often helpful to some Christian believers – this is not faith. American writer T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) observed that “the greatest proof of Christianity for others is not how far a man can logically analyze his reasons for believing, but how far in practice he will stake his life on his belief.” [1]

Genuine Faith is Based on the Trustworthiness of Christ

The faith of Jesus is not about a quality of faith, an internal fortitude residing in us, but it is an ever-growing relationship with Christ sustained by the solid trustworthiness of Jesus Christ. Faith is not “confidence in confidence alone.” [2] It is not faith itself which makes us worthy and acceptable to God, for our worthiness is solely derived from the Lamb of God who was declared “worthy” by the witnesses in heaven’s open courtroom. (Revelation 5:12). “There is nothing in faith that makes it our saviour. Faith cannot remove our guilt. Christ is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe. The justification comes through the merits of Jesus Christ. He paid the price for the sinner’s redemption. Yet it is only through faith in His blood that Jesus can justify the believer.” [3]

According to the terms of the everlasting covenant, God’s last will and testament, Jesus Christ has fulfilled all the requirements to be our Savior because He died the death required, for no last will and testament is valid without the death of the testator. Because He died without sin, He presented to God His own perfect righteousness in place of our filthy garments of performance-based religion. On basis of His legally defensible, redemptive work, He presents us to God as sons and daughters of the heavenly Father, fully entitled to all the benefits of His inheritance, which we can start receiving right now. We must not look for some quality inside ourselves that would qualify us as heirs. “All the fitness He requires is to feel your need of Him.”[4] But
remember, faith is only as good as its object. If we trust people, we get what people can do; if we trust money, we get what money can do; if we trust ourselves, we get what we can do; if we trust God, we get what God can do.

**Faith Overcomes Fear**

Many deceptions we have to face are based on unhealthy fears, because we do not trust that God is big enough to handle our problems and guard us as His very own children. Do we honestly believe that fear of the beast and the fear of the seductions of Babylon will enable us to be overcomers, when the Scriptures plainly tell us that the true believers overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony (Revelation 12:11)? “In God (I will praise His word), in the Lord, (I will praise His word). In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (Psalm 56:10, 11).

Many noted Christian thinkers have observed the close connection between fear and faith.

- “The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety” – George Mueller. [5]

- “Faith is a refusal to panic” – D. Martin Lloyd Jones. [6]

- “True faith goes into operation where there are no answers” – Elizabeth Elliott [7]

- “The greatness of God rouses fear within us, but his goodness encourages us not to be afraid of him. To fear and not to be afraid – that is the paradox of faith.” – A.W. Tozer (1897-1963). [8]

- “Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on God.” [8] – Ellen G. White.

Successful living in the hour of His judgment is to recognize that whatever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23). Basically, sin is distrust. “God is behind every promise, and we cannot dishonor Him more than by questioning and hesitating, by asking and not believing, and then by talking doubt.” [9] Faith gives God the honor that sin denies Him.

Faith in the trustworthiness of God is the foundation on which we build in order to overcome our
habitual preoccupation with ourselves.

*For when we live by faith, we will focus on Jesus.*
When we focus on Jesus our faith will grow.
The more our faith grows, the more our experiential knowledge of Jesus grows.
The more our knowledge of Jesus grows, the more we will love Him!
The more we trust Jesus, the more important He will be to us.
He will be our “all in all,” our everything!
The more we trust Jesus, the less self-sufficient and proud we will be.
The more there is of Jesus, the less there will be of us.
The less there is of us, the better, for faith will eradicate self - crucify it.

**Faith as Visualizing the Invisible**

An often overlooked way of increasing faith is that of visualizing the invisible through the agency of a Spirit-sanctified imagination. While there are those who may have abused the practice of meditation through the mistaken belief that through such practices they can create reality, this should by no means prevent Christian believers from entering the God-ordained activity of strengthening their faith.

Recall that when God wanted to increase Abraham’s faith in His promises, He took Abraham outside his tent and asked him to consider the stars in the heavens and the sands of the desert floor, and then to draw conclusions from these. (Genesis 13:14-17; 15:5). Recall the example of Moses who “by faith left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw Him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27 NIV). People of faith can see at a distance; they have farsightedness as well as foresight as they focus on the future. In the smallest of life’s mysteries and even difficulties, they can discern infinite possibilities. Anyone can count the seeds in an apple, but men and women of faith learn to count the apples in a seed.

To exercise faith is to put our God-given imagination to work in personalizing the promises of God through the “eye of faith.” As an aid in the amplification of faith in His promises, God has sometimes communicated to people through inspired scenes of heavenly realities.

- **Elisha** prayed for a discouraged young man, overwhelmed with fear by the presence of the Syrian armies: “I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” This led to the removal of fear, as he heard the prophet say, “Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (2 Kings 6:16,17).
Paul wrote about the apprehension of heavenly realities as a key to overcoming current adversities, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17, 18). He urged believers to live their entire lives on the basis of these unseen heavenly realities. “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:1, 2).

John, the Revelator, as he wept with discouragement, saw this inspired picture of Jesus: “And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne...stood a Lamb as thought it had been slain...” (Revelation 5:6). In Revelation, just look at all the “open doors” – views into heaven itself given to us by John’s visions.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church literally had its birth in a vision as Hiram Edson, on the morning of October 23, 1844, following the great disappointment, walked through a cornfield. He reported having seen a vision of Jesus Christ ministering in the Most Holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. Is it possible that in our desire to be super-correct in all our doctrines, we may subtly have lost the ability to exercise a holy imagination in sensing the presence of Jesus and in hearing Him speak to us personally? Just as Jesus Christ, in 100 AD, used the power of seeing heavenly realities, as recorded in the book of Revelation, to give hope to discouraged Christians, so also God used a similar method, through Ellen White’s visions of heavenly realities, to bring encouragement to some very disappointed believers. You can find many of these scenes in the book Early Writings [9]

Through faith in the sure and certain promises of God’s word, you can through the power of the Holy Spirit obtain vivid pictures of living a God-glorifying future, as you by faith participate in it so it becomes a reality in your life. God wants you to exercise the “eye of faith” for pictures are the language of the heart. Many of us have been trained to exercise the left hemisphere of our brains through the employment of our analytical and reasoning powers, much to the neglect of the right hemisphere – the seat of emotions and affections. God designed that these two areas of the human brain should work in harmony, but much of our Western-world thinking has trained us in the ascendancy of human reasoning to the exclusion of the language of the heart.

In her writings, Ellen White heartily endorses the proper use of the imagination in faith-building exercises; there are more than 200 references to the proper use of the “eye of faith” in the Comprehensive Index to the Ellen G. White Writings. Here is a sampling of a few of these.

· “The eye of faith alone can look beyond the things of time and sense to estimate the worth of eternal riches” [10]

· “When assailed by temptation, steadfastly resist the evil promptings…Cry to the
dear Saviour for help to sacrifice every idol and to put away every darling sin. Let the eye of faith see Jesus standing before the Father's throne, presenting His wounded hands as He pleads for you. Believe that strength comes to you through your precious Saviour” [10]  

“Truth as it is in Jesus is not cold and lifeless and formal… Truth is full of warmth, of evidence from the presence of Jesus…” [11]  

“It would be well to spend a thoughtful hour each day reviewing the life of Christ from the manger to Calvary. We should take it point by point and let the imagination vividly grasp each scene, especially the closing ones of His earthly life. By thus contemplating His teachings and sufferings, and the infinite sacrifice made by Him for the redemption of the race, we may strengthen our faith, quicken our love, and become more deeply imbued with the spirit which sustained our Saviour” [12]  

"Then let your imagination dwell on the thought that you are in the presence of Jesus, walking with God, your life hid with Christ in God” [13]  

“The only safeguard against his [Satan’s] power is found in the presence of Jesus” [17] (emphasis in italics supplied).

There are life-transforming possibilities as we focus on delighting ourselves in the presence of Jesus now through genuine meditation. Such meditation is not just for the intellect, but God wants thereby to access our hearts and our feelings.

“Rest yourself wholly in the hands of Jesus. Contemplate His great love, and while you meditate upon His self-denial, His infinite sacrifice made in our behalf in order that we should believe in Him, your heart will be filled with holy joy, calm peace, and indescribable love. As we talk of Jesus, as we call upon Him in prayer, our confidence that He is our personal, loving Savior will strengthen and His character will appear more and more lovely. . .We may enjoy rich feasts of love, and as we fully believe that we are His by adoption, we may have a foretaste of heaven. Wait upon the Lord in faith. The Lord draws out the soul in prayer, and gives us to feel His precious love. We have a nearness to Him, and can hold sweet communion with Him. We obtain distinct views of His tenderness and compassion, and our hearts are broken and melted with contemplation of the love that is given to us. We feel indeed an abiding Christ in the soul. We abide in Him, and feel at home with Jesus. The promises flow into the soul. Our peace is like a river, wave after wave of glory rolls into the heart, and indeed we sup with Jesus and He with us. We have a realizing sense of the love of God, and we rest in His love. No language can describe it, it is beyond knowledge. We are one with Christ, our life is hid with Christ in God. We have the assurance that when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory. With strong confidence, we can call God our Father.” [18]

The Savior wants us to experience that “in His presence there is fullness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures forevermore!” (Psalm 16:11). The Bible says, “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him” (Psalm 34:8).

We can also strengthen faith through music, for music often accesses the heart. I would highly
recommend that you listen to the late H.M.S. Richards, Jr. reading as oral interpretation the entire book of Revelation with musical background accompaniment by Tim Crosby. [19]

Christian meditation is really not an option, for “there is nothing more needed in the work than the practical results of communion with God.” [20] Through spending time with Jesus in His presence, we will develop a sensitivity to connect with others on a deeper level, the level of the heart. We will begin to realize that witnessing and evangelism is not about winning doctrinal arguments. No longer will we deliver our evangelistic sermons and give Bible studies by following a script, sometimes written by someone else. Rather, we will share from personal experience the story of our own encounters with Jesus, and we will allow the Holy Spirit to custom-design our narrative and testimonies in ways that powerfully connects our experiences with real felt human needs. These words will then become so true about our experience – “I love to tell the story, of unseen things above, of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love…” [21]

Life Applications

Questions to Ponder:

Why is it true that “whatsoever is not of faith is a sin?”

What did Jesus mean when on several occasions He said, “O you of little faith?”

Do you trust in Jesus for your salvation? If you can trust Him for that, are you then able to trust Him for everything else? If not, why not?

Is your personal faith a belief in the truthfulness of certain Bible doctrines or is it a trust in the trustworthiness of God?

Text to Remember:

"And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is He who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:4, 5).

Truths vs. Lies:

You may develop immunity against the deceptions of the enemy as you replace his lies with God’s truths.
### Lies vs. Truths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lies</th>
<th>Truths</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The best way to improve your life is to work on increasing your self-confidence.</td>
<td>The best way to improve your life is to ultimately place your trust Jesus Christ.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Too many people have let me down, and, therefore, I am going to have to live with a lot of fear to make sure it does not happen again.</td>
<td>When people let me down, Jesus is able to transform such situations and enable me to grow thereby.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your God can handle some things, but He is not BIG enough to handle everything.</td>
<td>Your God is BIG enough to handle anything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in the truth of Bible doctrines is all you will ever need to guard you against deception.</td>
<td>Trusting in the sufficiency of Jesus Christ for everything will be your greatest guard against deception.</td>
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[1] T.S. Elliot, [http://www.notable-quotes.com/e/eliot_t_s.html](http://www.notable-quotes.com/e/eliot_t_s.html)
[19] To listen to and/or to download this recording of the book of Revelation, go to this link [http://vop.com/article.php?id=507&search=apocalypse](http://vop.com/article.php?id=507&search=apocalypse)
[20] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 6, 47.
[21] Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal,