Tom Foley, Former Leader in United States Congress Remembered by Adventists in Washington State:
The death of Tom Foley marks the close of an era when Adventists had extremely close ties with one of the most powerful speakers of the House of Representatives....

Landmark Surveys Reveal Beliefs and Perceptions of Seventh-day Adventist Church Members:
A new worldwide survey shows Adventists in strong support of the seventh-day Sabbath, but less steadfast on the question of the imminent return of Christ and other tenets and traditions....

Earthquake in the Philippines Hits Adventist Hospital:
A 7.2-magnitude quake that killed 185 damaged the upper floors of an Adventist hospital, requiring evacuations....

Only Adventist Hospital in New Jersey May be Sold by the End of the Year:
Hackettstown Regional Medical Center in northern New Jersey may end its affiliation with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination and proceeds from its sale could help build a new campus for Washington Adventist Hospital....

British Court Protects Religious Right of an

Volvo Church:
Some of the safest cars in the world are built in Sweden at the Volvo plant. Opinion writer Jack Hoehn visited the plant, bought a car, and wonders what would happen if the Church were as meticulous for the safety of its members as Volvo is for the occupants of its cars....

The Discomforts of Faith:
Preston Foster wonders why acknowledging one's faith lowers one's value in the workplace and among professional colleagues. It doesn't seem just: it just doesn't seem fair....

Jesus: The Center of it All:
The Church is regressing to its pre-1888 mindset and feeling the highly negative effects, says AT editorialist Dean Waterman....

Clouds From Both Sides:
Debbonnaire Kovacs asks, “If you live under your emotions, they cloud your view of the Son, but if you live above them, they cloud your view of the earth.
Adventist Couple to Abstain from Computers, Cell Phones:
Should we legally be allowed to refuse use of all screen-driven electronic communication gadgets—even if the "A" in our faith stands for "Adventist" rather than "Amish"?...

Where are you supposed to live?"

FEATURES
(Available to logged-in subscribers only;
to apply for a free 30-day subscription, click here...)
Tom Foley, Former Leader in United States Congress Remembered by Adventists in Washington State

By Adventist Today News Team, October 23, 2013

Tom Foley died last week. He served as Speaker of the House of Representatives in the United States Congress from 1989 to 1995, and for 30 years represented the Fifth Congressional District in the State of Washington, the location of Walla Walla University (WWU) and Walla Walla General Hospital, institutions affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A number of students from WWU served as interns on Foley's congressional staff over the years, including George Fearing, a church member and long-time attorney in Kennewick who was recently appointed an appeals court judge in Washington's District 3. Pastor Leslie Bumgardner at the Pasco Riverview Seventh-day Adventist Church remembers the summer of 1975 when she and Clair Meske, son of long-time WWU staff member Walt Meske, worked in Foley's office in the nation's capital. Foley "was very supportive of the Adventist Church and welcomed me the summer I first arrived in D.C.,” Bumgardner told Adventist Today. "I found him to be a man of integrity, compassion and conviction ... respected by his congressional colleagues and their staffs." At the end of the summer she was offered a full-time staff position and ended up working for Foley for five years before she returned to denominational employment. She was a legislative aide in the areas of education and health. Don Eichner was a vice president at WWU in the 1970s and became acquainted with Foley. He arranged for Adventist students to serve as interns in the congressman's office.

Share your thoughts about this article:

Log In to Post a Comment. Log In| Register
Landmark Surveys Reveal Beliefs and Perceptions of Seventh-day Adventist Church Members

Based on a Report from Adventist News Network, October 22, 2013

The most extensive research ever conducted on the attitudes, beliefs, experiences and spiritual practices of the members of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination reinforced some long-held assumptions about the denominational loyalty of members, yet revealed an emerging trend toward secularization that is worrisome for some church leaders. The findings were released last week at the annual meeting of the General Conference executive committee. The research comes from five separate studies with more than 41,000 respondents around the world, including 4,260 pastors, nearly 26,000 church members, 1,200 college students and recent graduates, and 900 former Adventists. Research teams from Adventist universities on several continents were involved in the unprecedented effort commissioned by the Office of Archives, Statistics and Research over the past three years. Among the most significant findings, according to Dr. David Trim, director of the office: • Sabbath School teachers were ranked higher than pastors and elders when church members were asked who had a positive effect on their spiritual lives. • About three-fourths of Adventists strongly embrace the prophetic ministry of church co-founder Ellen G. White. • Only about one in three families worldwide conduct daily worship. Previous studies have shown a higher percentage in North America. • Almost half of college students and recent college graduates said they would accept practicing homosexuals as church members in good and regular standing. • About 9 in 10 people who left the Adventist church were never contacted by their pastor after they stopped attending. “In terms of both the breadth and depth,” said Trim, “this is the best snapshot we’ve ever had of the worldwide church.” As he introduced the report to hundreds of church administrators, Trim warned the group to not be quick to judge. “Data is what it is,” Trim said. “What it means, is something else.” The findings debunked long held assumptions about the denomination’s gender makeup. The church is 57 percent female, and 43 percent male, quite a ways off from the belief that 65 percent of worshipers were female and 35 percent were male. The findings also showed a denomination that is young. A total of 54 percent of the members worldwide are between the ages of 16 and 40. This has two disadvantages, according to Trim. For one, young members may be called too quickly into leadership positions without sufficient experience. In addition, older leaders may need training to learn how to understand and work effectively with the younger generation. Only 10 percent of church members globally are older than 60, and the largest proportion of aging congregants are in North America, Europe and Japan. Research done for the North American Division put the median age there at 51. In contrast, Trim said, “Our church in Latin America and Africa in particular is an extremely youthful church.” The findings contained several bright spots, Trim said, including a statistic that shows that 53 percent of respondents stated that the Sabbath School adult Bible study guide helped “very much” to develop their religious life. The study guide is least popular with worshipers in North America, parts of Europe, Australia and New Zealand. “As someone who is both from Australia and Europe, and married to an American,” Trim said jokingly, “I will accept the blame for all those things. We are very cynical people in America, Australia and Europe.” Another “success story,” Trim said, was that 92 percent of Adventists have an overwhelming conviction that the Seventh-day Sabbath is the true Sabbath, and only 3 percent disagree. Because that particular survey’s margin of error was 3 percent actual disagreement could be nearly zero. The findings also pointed to several areas deemed problematic, such as people leaving the church unnoticed, and the seeping influence of secular values, Trim said. Interestingly, the vast majority of inactive and former members do not reject the message and mission of the Adventist church. “They are moving with the strong dynamics of contemporary society away from established forms of religious activity,” Trim said. “The fabric of most Adventist local churches is not sufficient to stem this tide.” He then told the committee, “Brothers and sisters, I think this is a real challenge to us.” While only 9 percent of these inactive and former members were contacted by their pastor after they stopped attending church, a larger number said they had been visited by elders or other church members. However, the findings show that 4 out of 10 inactive and former Adventists slipped out of the church without ever being contacted by anyone. The fact that members leave unnoticed is a “tragedy,” Trim said. From 2000 to 2012, more than 13.6 million people joined the church, mostly through baptism. But during the same time, 5.9 million Adventists were lost (and that doesn’t include those who died). That’s a loss rate of nearly 43.4 per 100 new converts. “That is too high,” Trim said. Approximately 90 percent of respondents strongly agreed that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God’s true last-day church with a message to prepare the world for the Second Coming of Christ. When asked if they expect the world to end within the next 20 years, just 22 percent of respondents strongly agreed, and 45 percent strongly disagreed, Trim said. “It’s not that people don’t believe that Jesus is coming, but there does seem to be some kind of skepticism about Him coming soon.” The report concluded that secularization is no longer limited to America, Europe and Australia. “It’s a globalized society,” Trim said. “People are watching the same television programs, reading the same apps and websites on their phones and computers, and secularization is a problem.” Pastor Benjamin Schoun, the General Conference vice president in the chair at the time of the report, acknowledged the challenges facing the
denomination. “We have much to learn and we probably need to incorporate these results into our strategic planning,” he stated, “because it is a very sobering picture in some cases, even though we have our strengths as well.” This report is based on a bulletin from the Adventist News Network, the official news service of the denomination.

Share your thoughts about this article:

Log In to Post a Comment. Log In Register
Earthquake in the Philippines Hits Adventist Hospital

Adventist News Network, October 23, 2013

A hospital and other ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Philippines were damaged by the 7.2-magnitude earthquake which hit the island of Bohol last week. The disaster killed at least 185 people, injured hundreds more and reduced thousands of buildings to rubble. A half million families are left homeless and more are camping out in fear of aftershocks.

The upper floors of the Adventist hospital in Cebu were damaged, forcing staff to move patients to lower floors and nearby shelters. Walls cracked and ceilings caved in at the church’s East Visayan Academy. The Capital Seventh-day Adventist Church in Cebu also reported damage, church leaders said.

Travel remains a challenge on the island of Bohol due to impassable roads and interrupted communication services, relief workers said. Although airports and seaports in Bohol and Cebu City are operational, on-the-ground communication, transportation and emergency relief efforts have been hampered. Despite the obstacles, leaders and staff from the church’s Central Visayan Conference, headquartered in Cebu City, flew to Bohol with other Adventist volunteers to begin distributing food, water and medicine to affected families. Local Adventists are supporting the effort by collecting supplies and supplying off-road vehicles to navigate the debris.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency in the Philippines is monitoring the situation and continues to assess needs. Agency officials said their initial response includes water, food and other basic supplies for the most vulnerable people, such as children, the elderly and pregnant women. ADRA is also coordinating with local government relief efforts to support the broader humanitarian response.

The local conference is made up of more than 1,200 churches in the central Philippines with a membership of 166,000.
Adventist Today

Only Adventist Hospital in New Jersey May be Sold by the End of the Year

AT News Network, October 24, 2013

Hackettstown Regional Medical Center located in northern New Jersey in the outer suburbs of New York City may end its affiliation with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination by the end of 2013. Adventist Today reported last year that administrators were searching for another organization to cosponsor or take over the hospital and yesterday (October 23) the Washington Business Journal reported that a document filed with the Maryland Health Care Commission suggests that cash from the sale of the New Jersey hospital might play a role in developing a new campus for Washington Adventist Hospital (WAH).

On October 4, Adventist HealthCare, the denomination's hospital organization in Maryland, affiliated with the Columbia Union Conference, filed an application with state authorities for a certificate of need. This is a step that the law requires before construction can begin on a new facility in White Oak about four miles from Takoma Park where WAH has been located since 1907. It began as the Washington Sanitarium, started on the same property and at the same time as what is now Washington Adventist University soon after the denomination's world headquarters was moved from Battle Creek, Michigan, to the United States capital region in 1903.

The WAH facilities in Takoma Park are "landlocked" in a neighborhood that resists the widening of streets and would prefer that ambulances not arrive at the hospital during the night time. Plans for the new campus which would have access to major highways and be located next door to a large U.S. Navy facility instead of long-established residential neighborhoods have been opposed by other nearby hospitals. Last year the Maryland commission turned down an earlier application because commission members said that they were not convinced that Adventist HealthCare had sufficient financial resources to complete the plan.

"It is currently anticipated that a signed agreement for ... a sale may be executed prior to the close of the calendar year," Washington Business Journal quotes the application. The newspaper also reports that the document says "there is no assurance" that such a sale will actually occur in the time frame and "what the exact terms will be." Negotiations are evidently in process.

When and if such a move is implemented it would not end Adventist health ministry in Takoma Park. Community health services, doctor's offices and nursing home care would continue on the old campus. The facilities might also provide some room for WAU to continue its expansion, especially its large nursing school and other health-related programs.
Adventist Today

British Court Protects Religious Right of an Adventist Couple to Abstain from Computers, Cell Phones

Adventist Today News Team, October 24, 2013

Graham and Abigail Blackburn are members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United Kingdom who believe that the Bible instructs them to refrain from contact with television, computers, cell phones and other high-tech media. They make their living as beekeepers in rural Cornwall. The gathering and sale of honey involves certain taxes which Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) requires be conveyed to the government electronically. The Blackburn's appealed this requirement on the grounds of their religious beliefs which are protected by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. They told the court that "the Bible, which provides their only creed, told them to shun contact with all [electronic] devices," according to The Independent, a newspaper in England. "Blackburn argued that screens 'blinded the minds of non-believers' and that people were so pre-occupied with gadgets that they did not have time for religion." And stated the couple wanted "to keep 'bad content' away from their children."

Blackburn stated that as a matter of conscience he could not go to a public library and enter his tax return from a computer there nor allow someone else to do it for him. He told the court that he was willing to close down his business if necessary.

Attorneys representing the government stated that "the decision not to use a computer was a personal preference rather than integrated into the [Adventist] religious faith, arguing that the Seventh-day Adventist Church maintained its own website." In fact, it would be difficult to find anything in Adventist theology to support such a practice.

Pastor Victor Hulbert, communication director for the denomination's British Union Conference, told the newspaper that church members do use the Internet and related technology. The Blackburn's "have a valid point of view although they are probably the exception within the Church," he stated. Adventists are taught to "live modestly, rejecting alcohol, tobacco and often meat," the newspaper reported.

"This is a belief that would be more akin to the Amish or very conservative types of Mennonites," an Adventist scholar who studies contemporary religions told Adventist Today. "Although, in the early decades of television there were many Adventist families in America who refused to have TV sets in their homes because of their fear of exposing their children to popular culture."

In what The Independent said was "a test case" that "could prove to be a landmark ruling," Judge Barbara Mosedale ruled that HMRC must exempt the Blackburns from the requirement to file their taxes on-line. "I find that, by entirely shunning computers, the Blackburns considered they were acting, as the Bible required them to do, in accordance with their religious conscience. They were manifesting their religious beliefs by refusing to use computers," and these are protected by law. Government lawyers are likely to appeal.

There are about 250 Seventh-day Adventist churches in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. It is estimated that there are a total of 35,000 adherents. The offices of the Trans-European Division of the General Conference are located in England, as is Newbold College and Stanborough Press.

__________________________Share your thoughts about this article:

Log In to Post a Comment. Log In  Register
Volvo just gave me a vacation.

For the price of a new station wagon for Deanne, they paid for round trip tickets for “Deanne and me” to Gothenburg, Sweden. There at the factory they handed us her new car built of Swedish steel at the rate of 54 cars an hour, the majority of which end up shipped to the USA, their largest market.

I’ve never owned a Swedish car before, although several people I like and respect have. One is my son Andrew. “Dad, do you know what the Volvo Mission Statement is?” he asked. I didn’t.

Perhaps, I teased, it is: “We no longer make the funniest looking cars on the road.” “Volvo’s don’t last forever; they just look like they do.” “Can’t afford a tank? Buy a Volvo.”

No Dad, those would be advertising jingles. I mean a Mission Statement, a statement of goal or purpose.” “OK tell me.”

No one will ever die in a Volvo by 2020.”

I let that sink in for a minute. Frankly I was very impressed. That was a lot deeper and more important than I had imagined. Volvo plans to build an injury proof car; so there will be no fatalities in one of their new cars within the next 6 years. (They are already producing their 2014 models.)

VIKINGS

Sweden, Norway and Denmark are lands of the Vikings. Vikings lived on the glacier scoured granite of Northern Europe. In their well-built wooden longboats with tall curled dragon prows, they either traded with or more often terrorized the rest of Europe, until Christ came in the form of missionaries. Christianity soon replaced their Pagan religion with the story of a god-man who turned the other cheek and was bruised for our iniquities.

Instead of feared attack boats furthering rape and rapine, Scandinavians began to build wooden stave churches, using the same dragons found at the prows of their boats as the finials of the church roof, this time showing that Christ had tamed the Dragon. There would be no more human sacrifice, Valhalla heaven of endless warring gods, praise of bloodshed, and glorification of death culture. Jesus of Nazareth took down another culture.

Sweden today seems to be post Christian, but their national glory is still clearly Protestant culture based. Their national hero, King Gustav Vasa, used Luther’s rebellion to support his own, and Sweden became a refuge for persecuted Protestants, and in modern times, a refuge for the oppressed and downtrodden of all nations. The Nobel Peace Prize comes from Scandinavia. Many human rights organizations are Swedish based.

VOLVO SAFETY

The Volvo factory runs 5 days of the week with just 2 shifts a day, no night shifts. Maintenance and repairs are done during the regular work day, no less-healthy night crews needed. It is Swedish neat and clean and non-polluting. Workers health and safety are carefully...
maintained. Each of an 8 or 10 person team changes their job every hour or so, to avoid boredom and repetitive work injuries. The 6 different models they make come down the assembly line in random array, so the worker is working on an XC 90 one minute, and an S 60 the next. Each model has a tank grade Swedish steel guard rail engineered into the side doors. Volvo invented and made freely available to all manufacturers without charge the 3 point seat belt all modern automobiles use. Their side air bags are different from the front air bags you have in your car, in that they are engineered to last for 6 seconds when inflated, unlike the front airbags’ immediate deflation after inflation, so that in a roll-over accident you will have protection for the period when the car continues to roll. So far only Honda and Volvo have re-engineered their cars to be safe in a partial offset frontal crash, where your front just clips a telephone pole or the headlight of an oncoming vehicle, unlike the head on crash for which all modern cars are designed for greater safety. (The majority of deaths in automotive crashes now come from partial offset crashes, now that full on frontal crashes have been engineered much safer.)

The Flamenco Red XC 70 all-wheel-drive station wagon they had built for Deanne is pictured here. Her car warns us when it wanders from its lane. It tells us when another vehicle is in the blind spot if we wish to change lanes. It automatically slows down from cruise speed when coming up behind a slower vehicle on the freeway. And it will stop itself below 30 mph if another vehicle, a bicycle, or a pedestrian suddenly moves into its path, with aid of a radar recognition system.

There are over 3,000 employees building Volvos in the huge complex northwest of Gothenburg. (They also assemble some models in Belgium, and their engines are built in other parts of Sweden. They partner with several companies for the marine engines, heavy trucks, and construction equipment Volvo also makes.) But instead of just the 3,000 assembling their cars, they also have over 6,000 engineers designing and refining their cars for safety and durability on the same site. They also design vehicles in California to make them visually attractive. But frankly they got me as a customer by their Mission Statement.

SELLING VOLVOS?

I’m not personally selling Volvos; I’m selling Jesus and his church.

So what is Adventism’s current Mission Statement? Sometimes they seem to be: “Sabbath starts at sundown.” “No pork or shrimp or coffee.” “No women in our pulpits.” “No domestic happiness permitted for homosexuals.” “No books or sermons by non-Adventists allowed.” “The world is 6,000 years old, believe it or not.” “The mother of Christ is not immaculate, but Sister Ellen was.” Ouch, it hurts me just to mischaracterize my church!

So here is a mission statement I’d like to copy from a Swedish business, once owned by Ford and now by a Chinese businessman.

"No one will ever be hurt in an Adventist church by 2020.” So help us God.

__________________________ Join in the discussion:

Log In to Post a Comment. Log In  Register
The Discomforts of Faith

By Preston Foster, October 21, 2013

It’s not easy to be counted among the faithful.

The problem isn’t that it’s hard to be accepted by God. That’s easy (John 6:37). The problem, if you are faithful, is getting respect from those who (seem to) matter most down here on the ground.

Faith is not a norm of the professional class. If you care at all how you are perceived in the professional world—by those who are accomplished, lettered, and prestigiously affiliated—it can be very uncomfortable to be a Christian. Faith and professional credibility are at odds. Among professionals, credibility is seasoned with skepticism and baked with realism. Objective proof is valued; faith is not. Most in the professional class view faith as a poor substitute for knowledge. Faith is for the unexposed, the gullible, the primitive, and the incurious. Faith is, at best, valued only in private.

For many intellectuals (real and aspiring), engaging with the world of faith risks public insult. It invites the ridicule of those who believe that the faithful are superstitious dolts who can be cured, if at all, only by education from progressive thinkers.

Faith doesn’t pay (well). Literally. When intellectuals or professionals who are believers share their faith in the public square, their value erodes. Publicly expressed faith—particularly about things like believing the literal biblical account of the 6-day creation or in the literal resurrection of Christ—makes believers less valuable to universities, publicly traded companies, (traditional and electronic) publishers, and think tanks. Ridicule of believers is available from sources ranging from Bill Maher to Bill O’Reilly. In the professional realm, those (few) who do believe do well to keep their seemingly magical beliefs to themselves.

So, here, in this space, we find ourselves in richly frustrating conversations about faith, spiritual issues, church history and traditions, the Bible, Christ, and more. We sharpen our iron on those with whom we disagree (Proverbs 27:17). It’s great fun.

However, as one of the AT founders insistently points out, the purpose of this site is to exchange and develop ideas that build the Kingdom of God. So it seems appropriate to press this issue here. Why is it that so many who once believed now do not? Many have been candid about the abuse of indoctrination-mad teachers, administrators, church members, and others. Others trace their point of departure to the place where confidence in Ellen White and the prophetic narrative of Adventism became problematic for them. Finally, others credit their spiritual skepticism to a deeper immersion in science, logic, and objectivism (of course, these categories overlap).

This column is addressed to the members and observers of that last group.

To what extent does social acceptance adversely affect faith? Does protecting one’s public profile include the purposeful exclusion of faith from one’s portfolio? Is skepticism presented as currency for entrance into influential and prestigious social groups?

I’d love to chat about it here. However, it is more important to me (re: building the Kingdom) that we challenge ourselves with these questions.

Log In to Post a Comment. Log In  Register
Jesus: The Center of it All

By Dean Waterman, October 20, 2013

I am not sure why we as Adventists have such a difficult time putting Jesus where He belongs, but we do. Admission to the Adventist Church requires baptismal candidates to answer “yes” to a baptismal oath, when the Bible states unequivocally the only requirement to be saved, and baptized, is belief in Jesus, not an adherence to doctrines. Our evangelism methods are based on the transmitting of information, while Christ’s methods were love transformation. We wonder why churches of other denominations (in particular non-denominational churches) continue to grow, while the Adventist Church in the United States grows more slowly than does the general population. Furthermore, our young people are leaving the church they grew up in, seeking a relationship with God, not just rules for behavior. You might think this is a new problem for the Adventist Church, but a reflection on our history shows it is not.

On October 17, 1888, the delegates of the then twenty-five year old Seventh-day Adventist Church met together in Minneapolis for what would be a defining moment in church history. Until that moment much had been debated about the law and the remnant people adhering strictly to obedience of the law, and not much about the Jesus who embodied the law. E.J. Waggoner and A.T. Jones, editors for the Signs of the Times magazine, had been building to this confrontation for several years, as they declared the merits of righteousness by faith and putting Jesus at the center of our faith and existence as a people of God. George Butler, then General Conference president, was not thrilled with these men coming to the GC Session, much less letting them speak their thoughts on Christ as our righteousness, as it went against the grain for the traditionalists who made up most of the delegates and leadership of the Adventist church at the time. Ellen White spoke in favor of Waggoner and Jones, and more importantly took a stand in uplifting Jesus as central to our faith. She wrote only a few weeks after the session ended: “My burden during the meeting was to present Jesus and His love before my brethren, for I saw marked evidence that many had not the spirit of Christ.”[1]

The desire for Jones, Waggoner, White, and others who embraced the message of righteousness by faith was to point listeners to Christ’s merit over our works. To this point, most of what Adventists had embraced centered around the law and other Biblical truths, requiring a person to be obedient to the law, and accept the doctrines which were Adventist unique. Waggoner and Jones didn’t suggest the law was dead, but rather a person’s works would never save them; it was the merits of Christ’s death and a person’s belief in Christ’s sacrifice which made the difference. Furthermore, putting Christ as center put the law and Biblical truths in a very different light. This perspective provided by Waggoner and Jones was not new to Christians, but certainly felt new to Adventist Christians who seemed to have placed their entire Adventist beliefs on the Third Angel’s message of a remnant people who would adhere to God’s commandments. Lost in Revelation 14:12 through four decades of preaching was the statement of “faith in Jesus”, which points to salvation in Christ alone, not only obedience to the law and compliance to information and doctrine.

Adventist author George Knight says, “The significance of the 1888 meetings is they baptized Adventism anew in Christianity... From that point on, they could preach a full message that taught the distinctively Adventist doctrines within the context of the saving work of Christ.”[2] Indeed, for those who embraced this radically new perspective, it allowed them to see in a new way how Christ as center to their beliefs and obedience took the weight off of what they could be in their own works, and put the emphasis squarely on Christ, which in turn led to joyful obedience and belief of Biblical truths. The Adventist message took on a different feel, and those who preached did so with a new freedom and vigor, pointing people to a life transformation through Christ.

125 years later it feels as if it’s 1888 all over again. We have a contingency in the church who would side with then-president George Butler and the majority of delegates who preached strict obedience to the law, and those today who would embrace the message of amazing salvation and grace through Christ alone, preached with hope and vigor by A.T. Jones and E.J. Waggoner. The difference between the two viewpoints is how we interact with other members, and how we share our message with those in the world around us. For some, what you know is the most important part of becoming an Adventist, while for others it is simply Who you know in following Him as a disciple and a taking the name of Christian.
I have experienced it both ways. I grew up in a legalistic home, which preached obedience and belief first, Jesus accidentally second. As I have grown in my personal walk with God and in my pastoral ministry, I have learned that while the law and my belief of Biblical views held by Adventists is important, my trust and love for Jesus is even more so. Without the one—love and faith in Jesus—the other seems useless and often hopeless. However, as I have grown to love and place my faith in Jesus, my obedience is organic, and my appreciation of the Biblical truths as a reflection of God’s character has taken hold.

As we reflect on this anniversary of 1888, may our attention once again turn to Christ as the center of our beliefs and actions, trusting in His grace and love to change us. The difference in our evangelistic and outreach efforts will bear the fruit, for one relies on the transfer and acceptance of information, which can often be disputed, while the other relies on a life transformation through Christ, a testimony to love which cannot be doubted.


Log In to Post a Comment. Log In  Register
Clouds From Both Sides

by Debbonnaire Kovacs
Submitted Oct. 23, 2013

This morning I was writing about something in my journal, and decided I’d edit a nice devotional out of it. But when I clipped and reread it, I decided I’d rather just share it with you as is and ask your own opinions. So all I did was take out personal references. Here it is:

I was beside the river enjoying the sun on my face, even though it was blinding, especially on the water, when a sudden chill of darkness came. It was just a small cloud, and only lasted a few seconds. I thought that clouds are like emotions. They come and go, you can’t predict them, they don’t faze the sun. . . but more came of that and I haven’t quite figured it out yet. I thought, if you live under your emotions, they cloud your view of the Son, but if you live above them, they cloud your view of the earth. Where are you supposed to live? Surely not in them, which would simply fling you every which way. If living in them represented those who are at the mercy of their emotions, then what represents the best and healthiest way to see emotions?

I used to believe you should “live above the clouds, where the Son is always shining.” I didn’t really even realize this obscured my view of the earth, and if it did I didn’t care, since I thought I was supposed to view only God, anyway. But the truth is, we can’t really live there—you could say my mind was like a plane, and sooner or later it has to come down and refuel, or it gets caught up in a storm and crash-lands. . . When that happened, I believed I was like Peter,* losing faith and falling unnecessarily into the water, so I set my mind to try again (and again and again and again) to float above.

*Judging Peter, let me just add!] So then along comes everyone, his brother, his sister, and his dog, to say that I’m “out of touch” with my feelings, I’m supposed to “feel” them, “experience” them, “be present to” them, yada yada. A pastoral counselor finally succeeds in making me trust him enough to even try to believe him, plus I’m in such desperation by then that I’m willing to try anything. Slowly, in fear and trepidation, checking constantly with the Son (who is still up there!) I try living down below, and paying more attention to the landscape around and within me than I’ve been used to. Ever! One advantage: if you pay more attention to clouds and wind and such, you can have a better idea of weather, so you’re not taken quite so much by surprise by the storms. . . Is that true? Or anyway, not as blown away by them? Some of the time I lived in the clouds and tempest, which was awful, and disorienting, but educational, to say the least.

If I’m going to use this as a devotional, I have to figure out some kind of conclusion. Live below, but pay attention? (Of course, I can just ask readers.)The truth is, by not paying attention to clouds and wind and snow and so forth, you also miss a lot of beauty. Live where you are. That’s what my counselor would say. It’s all truth. You don’t pick one over the other. You ride above the winds sometimes and bask in the sun sometimes and cower in the snow sometimes and hide your face from the hail sometimes.

And the Son is always, always there.

So, readers, what do you think?

Share your thoughts about this article:

Log In to Post a Comment. Log In  Register
When Patricia Conwell was growing up in a close-knit Seventh-day Adventist family (“right smack in the middle of four brothers!”) there was an underlying assumption that she never questioned. Someday, she would get married and have kids.

When she went to Oakwood [then College], she assumed she would find her man there. It wasn’t that she just went to get her “MRS degree,” as so many women have done over the years. “It wasn’t a driving force in my life, or anything, but nobody ever said ‘if you have kids’ or ‘if you get married.’ It was ‘when you get married and have kids,’” Conwell says now. “It’s not why I went, but there was an underlying expectation—if not there, then where?”

But Conwell left Oakwood as what she calls “one of the unfortunates. Not engaged, not in a relationship.” She had dated, but nothing had clicked. She says she didn’t think that much about it then. She moved to Baltimore, Maryland and began to get involved in her career, working with a non-profit organization called The Fund for Educational Excellence. She started out as executive secretary, but she was also doing some public relations work for them, which is what she really loved and wanted to do. She asked if she could switch to PR. The firm couldn’t afford to hire a full-time PR person, but they did hire her for part-time, and Conwell was in the enviable position of being able to make it on part-time work, because she lived in a basement apartment belonging to relatives.
All was well until, she reports, she turned 29 “and started doing that self-assessment you do when you’re staring at 30. I realized suddenly that my life didn’t look like I’d imagined—I didn’t have a husband, I didn’t even have a full-time career!” For the first time, Conwell began to ask herself, *What if I never get married at all?*

She decided to start writing, mostly for herself, about her expectations, her disappointments, her mixed feelings. If she was single for life, could she still be happy? Could she be a complete person in herself? She looked at her married friends. Some were happy, some were not. She was sick of “the dating thing, and the whole ‘kiss all the frogs to find the prince’ mindset.”

She says she thinks it’s in part the independence fostered by her stable, loving family and by growing up among brothers that made her able to decide that yes, she could be happy. She was enjoying her life, involved in school mentoring and literacy, free to travel. After a period of “reflective, cathartic writing,” Conwell had a book manuscript called *Nobody Ever Told Me I Might Not Get Married.* She thought a little about publishing, but did nothing with the manuscript at that point.

A year later, a friend set her up with someone, and it clicked. Another year passed, and Conwell was married. She assumed the book she had written was now irrelevant, not just to her but to others as well. Women are getting married later, getting their careers going first. She was surprised when, in 2012, a god-sister in her mid-30s asked, “What about that book?” Two or three weeks later, someone else asked, “What about that book you told us about?”

“Well, Lord, are You trying to tell me something?” Conwell asked. She got out the manuscript (it was on floppy disk and she had to retype the whole thing!) She edited while she was at it, and then, still not that convinced, asked several of her students to create focus groups of single women of all ages, racially diverse, and single for any reason whether never married, divorced, or widowed. She sent each group three chapters and asked for their input. To her surprise, feedback was not only overwhelmingly positive, but they were all saying, “Yes, it’s relevant—you’re talking about me! My friends and I need this book!” The only change they asked for was that she add a chapter about dealing with sexual issues.

So she took the plunge. The book was put out as an e-book, and is being marketed by Deon Stokes at Joint Effort PR & Marketing [http://jointeffortllc.com]. But that wasn’t all God had in mind. Conwell felt led to create a Youtube show based on the chapters of the book, called Simply Single. She asked for help from the broadcast journalism classes at Oakwood University, “And they took it way beyond what I had in mind! They tape it in all kinds of locations, with groups of women just getting together as girlfriends, to talk.” The women are as diverse as possible. “I’m the bridge,” Conwell says. “I was the single 30something, and now I am married and a mother. I can testify that you can be happy either way.”

The show premiered Tuesday, October 15, and had 173 views in less than 48 hours.

Conwell’s advice to singles is, “Look at yourself. Work on yourself. Get to a place where you can be joyful and content. If your life changes, if God sends someone, good, but if not, you can
be happy. And you’re a lot more likely to be happy *with* someone if you’re happy with yourself and God first!”

Links:
Website: www.nobodyevertoldme.net
Blog: http://nobodyevertoldme1.blogspot.com/
Youtube Channel: http://www.youtube.com/user/NETMSIMPLYSINGLE
Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Patti-Conwell
Twitter: http://www.twitter.com/PattiConwell
Victory Over the Beast, Chapter 28: This is my Story, this is my Song

By Dr. Ervin Thomsen
Submitted October 23, 2013

Key to Revival and Reformation

As Seventh-day Adventists we have claimed to be a people of prophecy. We are well acquainted with the various prophetic timelines found in Daniel 2, 7, 8, 9 and Revelation 12 and 13. God uses such prophetic timelines to give us a preview into the future He has prepared for us. But in Bible times, God also used timelines as a rearview mirror of past history, a God-inspired means of bringing revival and repentance to His covenant people. You will find examples of these covenant timelines in Deuteronomy 32, Psalm 78, Psalms 105, 106, 107, and Daniel 9. Did you know that on two occasions in the Old Testament, God used the timeline of the covenant song of Deuteronomy 32, dictated by God Himself to Moses, as the spark plug to bring revival and reformation to His people?

During the reign of good king Josiah, someone found the law (the Pentateuch) containing also the covenant song of Deuteronomy 32, and brought it to the king (2 Chronicles 34:14 – 35:19). As the king listened to the reading thereof, he tore his clothes in repentance, and this led to a reformation in the putting away of idols. This process finally culminated in the celebration of the Passover, in a way that it had not been celebrated since the time of Samuel the prophet centuries earlier.

Following the return from Babylonian exile, the returned exiles brought Ezra the scribe and priest the Book of the Law of Moses. As Ezra read from this document, the people answered with Amens, lifted up their hands in worship, and bowed their heads with faces to the ground. There was weeping among the people (Nehemiah 8:9-12). Then Nehemiah and Ezra gave these instructions, “This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn nor weep…go your way…and do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

As recorded in Nehemiah 9, the leaders of the people prayed a rather lengthy prayer which was really a timeline of the history of God’s people from the time of Abraham down to the time of the return from exile. In this prayer they did not just recount the convenient memories of God’s election of them as His special people, but they also included events of apostasy, rebellion, and unfaithfulness as they recalled the past history of God’s people. Their only hope was not in their promises to do better, but in trusting solely in God’s covenant faithfulness.

Facing the Judgment – The Evidence in Your Own Timeline

What you find in Deuteronomy chapter 32 is really a timeline of the history of Israel’s wilderness wanderings, as recorded by God and used by Him, as plaintiff, prosecutor and judge, both against and for them. The reason for dictating it as a song was no doubt to facilitate the recall of their past history. Learning from past history is a divinely ordained means of spiritual growth. You have heard it said that “we have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.” [1] It is comparatively
easy to remember the past, but to acknowledge that we did not learn from our experiences can be a most uncomfortable experience.

Is it not possible that God would want you to examine the timeline of your entire life, and that He would use the pattern of this covenant song as dictated to Moses, as a pattern for you to construct your own timeline, and to see the events of your life from God’s point of view?

Only Jesus knows your life better than you do. Because He is the Great Physician, why not turn your life over to Him for a complete spiritual check-up? According to the book of Revelation, His eyes are like fire (Revelation 1:14), so you can be sure that His penetrating gaze will not miss anything. Don’t be surprised if Jesus does not always deal with you directly in exposing sins in your life. More often than not, you will find that many of your sinful behaviors will come to the surface in your interactions with other people – especially those in your own family and your own church. In all of your relationships of rubbing shoulders with others (especially people you don’t like), you can be sure that, sooner or later, there will be a revelation of the beast and Babylon viruses within your own life.

As you write a personal timeline of your entire life, recall then the times when you first sensed the reality of God in your life, realizing that He had chosen you as His very own.

Then recall the following –

- How did you handle good times and prosperity?
- Were you always faithful to the Lord?
- What idolatrous pursuits did you engage in?
- How did this affect you? your family? your children?
- How well did these idols perform? Did they do a better job than the God who created heaven and earth? How well have your pet idols served you? Were they superior in their performance to the God who created heaven and earth, and who, with the precious blood of His own Son, paid the redemption price at Calvary’s cross for your salvation?
- What were the personal values for which you lived? Our idols always define our values.
- How should God reward you for your unfaithfulness?
- What is your only hope?

Since the lyrics of this song consist in processing the events of your own personal experience, here are some suggestions you may find helpful.

1. Include in your personal timeline also your painful experiences, regardless of whether they were caused by others or by yourself. Have you processed these painful memories though acknowledgement, confession, seeking forgiveness, and extending forgiveness? Do not let residual bitterness become the seedbed for the formation of personal idolatrous strategies to cope with and to escape pain.
2. Discover where you have pursued with a divided heart the attractions of Babylon – designer deities made in the image of the unfulfilled covetous expectations of your own heart. What are some possible idols to which you have become addicted, that is, you just don’t see how your life will work out for you, should you surrender these to Jesus, and worship Him alone. God wants you to dismiss the harem of your pet idols, and to love Him only. Recall your negative and painful experiences.

3. Give your life to Jesus Christ as you trust that every sin is covered by the blood of the Lamb, and that the only sure basis for your salvation is found in His covenant faithfulness. Faithful is He who promised it, and who will also do it (Hebrews 10:23).

4. In what ways did the experiential traits of the beast erupt in your life when someone confronted you about your addictions to your pet idols? Do you want to remove such addictions from your life?

5. Visualize through your sanctified imagination that you are standing there before the throne singing the song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb, and thank Him for the assurance found in His word that you will be there, not because of your accomplishments, but only because of Christ’s work of atonement, that is, the perfect record of the entire life of Jesus being credited to your life.

To make this process even more beneficial, ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of sin – not just the outward acts, but the attitudes and motivations of your heart. If your personal physician were to treat you, would you not want him or her to also include an X-ray or MRI of you if necessary? How would you feel if he missed some abnormality, and later you discovered it was cancerous? You wouldn’t want the Great Physician, Jesus Christ, to miss anything, and be assured that He won’t. But the success of His treatment is dependent on you letting Him share with you the results, His diagnoses, and also His cure.

Before we can receive the benefits of the everlasting gospel, we must first enter a “guilty plea” before God’s tribunal. If we don’t, we will manufacture our own make-believe gospels, which will be all about saving face through our own attempts to manufacture more fig leaves to cover the shame of our sinful deficiencies. Or, we will try to write checks drawn on our supposed good deeds on our behavioral bank accounts, knowing full well that we should be declaring NSF – non-sufficient funds.

The everlasting gospel is about how God justly indicts us for our sins, and how we come to
heaven’s courtroom expecting our just sentence, but instead we receive a verdict of acquittal. We approach God as sinners deserving judgment for our moral and spiritual bankruptcy. Instead, we walk away from the courtroom knowing that someone has paid all our debts, and on top of that has adopted us as His very own sons and daughters, and has included us as heirs in the family will. We come to the courtroom in fear and trembling as rightfully indicted criminals, and we then leave the courtroom with new identities as the Judge’s very own adopted sons and daughters.

All of this is possible through the heavenly court-appointed attorney for our defense, Jesus Christ, who took our place and bore our punishment. What could be better than this? It is the experiential knowledge and application of this, the credit of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ to our delinquent accounts, which Satan fears more than anything else; because he knows that it will break his power. “The thought that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, not because of any merit on our part, but as a free gift from God, is a precious thought. The enemy of God and man is not willing that this truth should be clearly presented; for he knows that if the people receive it fully, his power will be broken.”[2] So many have tried their entire life to produce a good record to present to God. Now we discover that God only accepts the perfect record of His Son, Jesus Christ, and then He imputes Christ’s perfect record to take the place of our sinful record.

Right now is the time to start practicing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. You don’t have to wait for certain calamities to take place before you enter a crash course of trying to cram for the final conflict. What could be better for you when you come to the end of recalling the timeline of your entire life, than to read and believe these words: “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people” (Deuteronomy 32:43)?

Just imagine what could take place in your own life when you ask Jesus to help you process everything through the gospel – which means that no one will be lost because they sinned, but only because they did not bring their sins to Jesus, coming to Him just as they are, without any alibis of self-deception rooted in self-justification.

Just imagine how this process could be powerfully used by God to bring revival and reformation to your local church. And then, what could happen on the various organizational levels of the church as leaders would follow the examples of King Josiah, the governor Nehemiah and Ezra the priest? If you claim to be a leader anywhere in this church, but you choose not to do this, then you are not really a leader, for spiritual leaders will lead the people to the Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place as the only place where sins are atoned for. Ask yourself, are there areas in that part of the organization where you currently serve, where you have allowed the spirit of Babylon to hold sway, and tolerated un-christlike methods in order to feed the idolatrous beast of success? How many of us have quietly believed the lie that success is not the only thing – it is everything. If you look at the life of Jesus, from a purely human perspective, Calvary was not a success, but it was still the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. God has not called us to be successful but faithful. [1]

The Ministry in the Most Holy Place
Our church has since 1844 rightfully focused on Christ’s ministry in the Most Holy Place. We have had a great deal to say about the Ark of the Covenant, the tables with Ten Commandments in the Ark of the Covenant, the Mercy Seat, but we have had very little, if anything, to say about the song contained in the scroll placed at the side of the ark. Some would no doubt say that this scroll contained just the ordinances, other laws, civil and ceremonial, besides the Ten Commandments. But would a reading of such rules and regulations really bring about a change of heart resulting in revival? I personally believe that it was the recital of God’s continuing covenant faithfulness to His people, in spite of their treachery and apostasy, that made the difference, for it is the goodness of God that leads to repentance (Romans 2:4). It is now time for the church to get on with the real work of “finishing the work,” by letting Jesus Christ, as our great High Priest, finish His work in us. Let us, both individually and corporately, process all the events of our lives according to the pattern of the covenant scroll at the side of the ark; and then let us bring the contents of the covenant scroll of our lives to the Mercy Seat.

The Testimony of our Timelines

God will powerfully use both your personal, and our corporate timelines, to bear a personal testimony to others, to our enemies, and to principalities and rulers in heavenly places (Ephesians 3:10, 11). Notice how God in Bible times used such testimonies to magnify His glorious purposes and to lead others to salvation in Jesus.

- On the day of Pentecost, Peter recounted in his sermon the timeline of God’s covenant dealings with His chosen people. The result: listeners were cut to their heart, and more than 3,000 were baptized.

- As Stephen gave his defense before the council, he also gave a running account of the timeline of the covenant people. As he closed his testimony, he declared that he saw the heavens opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56). He lost his life because of that testimony of Jesus.

- As Paul appeared before king Agrippa, he summarized his personal testimony by recounting his conversion experience on the Damascus road, and closed with remarks about his divine mission, to “open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” [Jesus] (Acts 26:17, 18).

- In his letter to the Philippians, Paul gave as his testimony a summary of God’s intervention in His life. He shared freely about his previous religious experience as a
church official; but after meeting Christ, his personal testimony was that he considered it all dung and garbage, and that the highest value in his life now was to be found in Christ, “not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death” (Philippians 3:4-10). This was really a statement of how meeting Jesus on the Damascus road had changed all his values.

Remember then the words of Revelation 12:11, “And they overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.” This kind of witness will be so effective, for “the humblest workers, in co-operation with Christ, may touch chords whose vibrations shall ring to the ends of the earth, and make melody throughout eternal ages” [2]

The words of a very familiar hymn go like this,

“I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love. I love to tell the story, because I know ‘tis true, it satisfies my longings, like nothing else can do. I love to tell the story, ‘twill be my theme in glory, to tell the old, old story, of Jesus and His love.” [3]

The Christian faith is really about the telling our own personalized story of this drama, for “in the Biblical drama, all of our expectations, assumptions, and cherished ideas are thrown into question,” as noted by Christian writer and theologian Michael Horton. He continues…

“God the judge bears the sentence that his own justice demands. The offended party becomes the redeemer, even as he is subject to further acts of the most heinous violence from those he redeems. The outcasts become royal heirs, the outsiders become insiders and the insiders outsiders, those who thought they were righteous are in fact condemned and those who were beyond any hope of moral recovery are declared righteous. A strange story, indeed.” [4]

No wonder that Ellen White could write that “the cross of Christ will be the science and the song of the redeemed through all eternity.” [5]

This kind of testimony will bring credibility to our witnessing.

“Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven's chosen agency for revealing Christ to the world. We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience. We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that is divine. Every individual has a life distinct from all others, and an experience differing essentially from theirs. God desires that our praise shall ascend to Him, marked by our own individuality. These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christlike life, have an irresistible power, that works for the salvation of souls” [6]
What the world needs most now is not our prophetic timelines giving the specifics of how the end-time events will come to pass. But they are hungering to hear in an authentic way our story and our song, just as it is pointed out in the lyrics of Fanny Crosby’s “Blessed Assurance” –

“This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.”

The influence of such personal testimonies will be so far-reaching, for “the humblest workers, in cooperation with Christ, may touch chords whose vibrations shall ring to the ends of the earth and make melody throughout eternal ages.” [7]

If you are enjoying these chapters and would like Dr. Thomsen to make a presentation at your church or organization, visit www.streamofhealing.org