### NEWS

**Internet Criminals Stole a Half Million Dollars from the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference:** A large sum of money has been stolen through electronic means from the accounts of the Church's general headquarters in Maryland....

**Florida Hospital will Permit Bacon to be Sold in a Leased Restaurant on its Property:** *Adventist Today* has devoted electronic paper and ink to how Adventist Health System leaders "bring home the bacon." But this time, it's no pun: what's bacon in Orlando is meant to be served—literally....

**Canadian Volunteer Missing in Belize is Found Murdered:** This news sequel to the story last week of a missionary who disappeared in Central America provides details since uncovered, including the circumstances of the missionary's death....

### OPINION

**Jealousy, Elitism and Self-righteousness: Warnings from the Parables to Church Lifers:** Columnist Danny Bell says the temptation to ascribe superiority and sanctimony to one's own self is a major shortcoming of religious people, and that Christ's parables speak out against those who feel they are better than others....

**Imagine:** John Lennon's lyrics ask us to consider a future when divisive struggle brought on by religious ideology ceases to disrupt a paradisical world where peace and love are the norm. Guest columnist Greg Prout says the problem is not faith but religion that has become elitist and exclusionary, a better-than-yours attitude fraught with competition and anger....

### FEATURES, Poetry and the Arts

(available to logged-in subscribers; to apply for a free 30-day subscription, click [here](#))

**Innovative Artist Greg Constantine Points the Way for Young Artists:** Constantine has been teaching art at Andrews University for 40-plus years, and still finds time to exhibit his work all over the world, as he did recently at Southern Adventist University's art gallery....

**Flight Leader (PHOTO):** S M Chen shares a photograph of waterfowl in flight, with a poetry clip by William Cullen...
Vector Protocols, Working Faith and a New Year: "Truth" is rarely detailed, but usually directive. It points to destinations, but does not give a specific route. We are left to work out the details with God and with our fellowmen. Sometimes, though, we feel that "our" way is the only vector (direction) to God. Think again, says columnist Harry Banks....

Aha Moments: Epiphanies are revelations, right? Great new truths, or ideas, or...something. But do they just arrive, without effort? And...are they always welcome?....

Creationists Who Didn’t Know it was Sabbath: Columnist Jack Hoehn tells of his Sabbath-day experience in Seattle, exploring with non-Adventist Christians new discoveries and thoughtful analyses of what Genesis may be saying between the lines about Creation....
Last week the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church released a statement that it had been the victim of online theft. No personal information was taken, but about $500,000 was stolen, according to the statement released by Adventist News Network (ANN), the official news service of the denomination.

The theft involved a transfer of funds for an organization or institution within the denomination. Church officials are cooperating with Federal authorities in the United States who are investigating the crime. They are also working with the banks and insurance companies to determine what recoveries may be possible. Information so far suggests that there was no insider involvement in the crime.

“No personal information such as private information, personal donor records or internal accounts were accessed or compromised in the scheme” assured the denomination's treasurer, Bob Lemon. “We are modifying procedures to do our best to prevent this from happening again.”
Florida Hospital will Permit Bacon to be Sold in a Leased Restaurant on its Property


By AT News Team, January 8, 2014

Florida Hospital, the flagship institution of the Adventist Health System (AHS), has agreed to allow a Panera Bread restaurant being opened on hospital property to include bacon on its menu. That is a change in policy, reports United Press International (UPI) in its "Odd News" category.

For more than a decade, a Wendy's restaurant on hospital property has not been permitted to serve pork products. The hospital maintained this policy "due to religious reasons," according to the UPI report. AHS is affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church which teaches its members to observe the Old Testament prohibition of "unclean" meat from Leviticus 11, in part due to the extension of the concept to Christians in Acts 15:29.

The UPI story quotes David Banks, identified as senior executive for the Florida Hospital campus in Orlando, that the hospital's thinking on the issue has "evolved" over time. "We really wrestled with the issue," he said. "Those are two decisions separated probably by 20 years." He indicated that the situation with Wendy's may be reviewed.

Pointing out the difference between the beliefs of church members and the use of property rented by an outside organization, Banks continued; "We deeply believe in the things we believe in. However, we also want people to have choice. While it is an important part of the Adventist subculture, it's not the main thing we want to be known for."
By Adventist Today News Team, January 3, 2013

The body of a volunteer from Canada has been found just over the border in Guatemala, according to a bulletin from the Canadian Press news service and broadcast on CTV News. Brian Townsend went missing on Christmas eve after working with an Adventist congregation and school in rural Belize for nine years, as Adventist Today has previously reported.

Brian's son, Kory Townsend has been in Belize for more than a week helping to search for his father and he confirmed the identity of the body from photographs supplied by the Guatemala police, stated Dinsdale Thompson, the superintendent of police in Benque Viejo, Belize. "There was some type of violence that occurred in the home," Thompson told Canadian Press, and the body had large chop wounds like those that might be inflicted by a machete.

Local police buried the body in Santa Helena, Guatemala, before it was identified, Thompson said, and the police in Belize have applied for the right to exhume the body. A laptop computer, clothing and Townsend's Chevy Silverado truck were taken from his home, Thompson reported, and these things have yet to be found. Police will pursue the perpetrators of the crime.

"He was doing a lot of ... projects," stated Kory Townsend of his father. "He built a school [and] he was doing a vocational school, things like gardening and a wood shop. There are few people who can live a dream or live a goal, and embrace it with the passion he had." The younger Townsend also affirmed his father's commitment to his Adventist faith. "This was a lifestyle for him. It was not just a project ... he lived here."

"Townsend came to ... build a school and church which now has about 50 members," said Pastor Dennis Slusher, president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Belize. "He stayed on after the construction was finished, continuing to work for the betterment of the local community."

Denominational staff and many members have participated in a number of prayer meetings for Townsend in the last two weeks.

"We have celebrated what Brian has been able to do in Belize and the difference he has made in the community" there, stated Ian Lund, a spokesman for the Townsend family. "I challenge each one of you to do the same, make a difference, be that close to home or far way. Know however,
that you already have made a difference in your support of us." Adventists across North America have been praying for Townsend and have contributed funds to help pay for the travel expenses of his son's trip to Belize, etc.

The Seventh-day Adventist denomination has 85 local churches in Belize with a total membership of about 38,000 or an estimated 45,000 adherents. The population of the country is 326,000 with about 15 percent from Adventist households, one of the highest ratios of any nation in the world. It is a generally peaceful and secure country with a growing economy and a relatively high number of residents from the United States, Canada and Europe.
Innovative Artist Greg Constantine Points the Way for Young Artists

http://www.atoday.org/article/2253/features/articles/innovative-artist-greg-constantine-points-the-way-for-young-artists

by Debbonnaire Kovacs
submitted January 9, 2014

Perhaps it’s a statement that could be made of many, if not most artists, but Greg Constantine definitely has a quirky sense of the world. He also has an eclectic taste in art, having experimented with an amazing variety of techniques and subjects during his decades as a working artist. You can read about some of his wide array of works on his website at http://www.andrews.edu/~gregcons/pages/career-narrative.html. You can also see samples of quite a few of them.

By his own account, Constantine has been teaching “painting, drawing, and art history at Andrews University for forty-three years while conducting sixteen art history summer sessions for students in Europe. As my exhibition record reveals, I began exhibiting nationally in 1969, and since 1975, numerous one man shows including seventeen in New York City that have dealt with Art about Art.”

He has become quite well-known over those years, his work being displayed all over the US and Europe.

He first came to our ears at Adventist Today because of an innovative exhibit that ran from October 10 to December 15, 2013, at the John C. Williams Art Gallery at Southern Adventist University. This exhibit was based on three books Constantine wrote during 2009-10, imagining the childhoods of well-known artists from Leonardo da Vinci to Andy Warhol. As Constantine describes it, he studied actual biographical information about the artists, then imagined not only how these events affected their childhoods, but how they might have affected the art produced when they grew up. The books are called When Big Artists Were Little Kids, When MORE Big Artists Were Little Kids, and When Big Architects Were Little Kids.

“On the left side of the spread,” explains Constantine, “the book reveals an incident from the artist's childhood, and on the facing page it shows how that may have influenced their adult work. It helps to be somewhat informed about what the artist ultimately achieved, and if not, one will learn even if one doesn't realize it.”

At Southern’s gallery, the art from these books was on display, and Southern invited 40 schools in the vicinity to come to the exhibit. They were hoping to inspire young people to see that their childhoods could be used as inspiration for their futures, whether those futures included art or not. (After all, most kids are artists until they’re told they aren’t!)

"I enjoy Greg’s sense of humor about art," said Giselle Hasel, gallery coordinator and assistant professor for the School of Visual Art and Design. "Our childhood memories are important in
forming the people we become. In a college setting where we are all busy ‘growing up’ and
making a career for ourselves, it is important to consider that we all have been children once.
The games we played and memories we formed became the dreams we attempt to accomplish

[Note: I am attempting to contact Southern to see how the exhibit went. Watch for more details
later.]
"He who, from zone to zone
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight
In the long way that I must tread alone
Will lead my steps aright."
FROM *TO A WATERFOWL*, by William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878)

*Photo credit, S M Chen*
Jealousy, Elitism and Self-righteousness: Warnings from the Parables to Church Lifers

By Danny Bell, January 6, 2014

Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little." (Luke 7:47 NIV)

Jesus dropped this bombshell after telling a parable of the Money Lender in the presence of Simon the Pharisee at his home. It came when Jesus read Simon’s thoughts towards a woman who was touching his feet and compared the Pharisee’s lack of devotion with the woman’s actions. Jesus highlighted that when the Money Lender forgave all debts, those who most appreciated it were the ones who owed more versus those who owed less.

When Jesus spoke these words he was targeting certain attitudes that were common in the religious life of professed followers in his day. Many had the privilege of being born into the Jewish faith, attended the best schools, were 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th generation practicing Jews. They had not known any other life but the privileged one they had been in. Indeed many Jewish lifers had followed their religion so dutifully that they believed this association meant blessing and salvation for them and their families.

Attitudes of self-righteousness, jealousy, and elitism (looking down on others who were “of the world”), coming from those who professed to be God lovers, were offensive to Jesus. Holding genuine seekers at arm’s length and blocking the way to the Kingdom were among the actions of core Jews that Jesus tried to expose in his parables.

And here’s the thing, Jesus targeted these attitudes in most if not all of his parables. Particularly self-righteousness and elitism. The Prodigal Son is a classic example of this and can easily get lost in our enthusiasm to show the love of the father for his returned boy. But there is another lesson here in this parable, just as strong and mentioned by Jesus for a reason. When the older brother realises what has taken place, he becomes angry and jealous:

“The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’ (Luke 15:25-30).

The older brother is represented by those that never left their father’s house. They are not in the world, nor did they come from it, but have stayed the course and been obedient to the duties of the family business--a credit here at least, they attribute to their own goodness. Church lifers, who stayed inside the walls and never put a foot wrong, bearing the heat of the day while the vagabonds of disobedience squandered money, had sex and smoked dope.

We are not told of the epilogue to this story, but we sense here a compassionless elitism coming from the older brother which conceivably could turn into a scenario where the younger brother is despised and treated harshly. In a church environment, this could easily translate into spiritual bullying of those who have come in from the cold at such a late hour, saved and rewarded. Church lifers can chafe under feelings of disbelief and jealousy when they see a worldling going to the front of the line and given the same privileges and honour as themselves.

This is born out in the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16). The ingratitude and jealousy of the early workers (those who were there all along) is exposed by Jesus when the landowner pays them. As in the Prodigal Son, the older hand is agitated when the newcomer receives the same honour as themselves, who had a long a weary climb to the top. Jesus goes on to warn in this parable attitudes that will keep one out of the Kingdom; “So the last will be first, and the first will be last” (vs. 16).
The more we look into the parables, we see Jesus implanting this important lesson over and over again. Here are just a few of the stories that expose the self-righteousness, jealousy and elitism that impregnates most parables:

**The parable of the Unmerciful Servant** (Matthew 18:23-35). A parable that highlights the lack of appreciation of what God has done and attitudes towards the servant while ignoring the golden rule, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

**The parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector** (Luke 18:9-14). A parable showing the elitism of the one who worships ostentatiously and is self-righteous in his own eyes versus the outcast, one who senses his spiritual poverty.

**The parable of the Kings Banquet** (Matthew 22:1-14). Shows the attitudes of the Kings “subjects” – those who are supposed to be his friends and have been under his protection for many years. Their lack of appreciation for their privileged status and their cruelty towards the under classes is in sharp contrast to the way the outcasts quickly fill the “hall” and accept the invitations readily.

**The parable of the Ten Virgins** (Matthew 25:1-13). Five of which were foolish and five wise showcases the self-sufficient attitude of the foolish virgins. The contrast of the deep felt need and poverty of the wise virgins causes them to carry extra oil and is characteristically compared to the confidence of the foolish. The motivation of the wise virgins for staying up to meet the groom was borne out of the need to not disappoint. The foolish virgins took it for granted they would be ready, thus they were found wanting at the crucial moment.

Again and again the parables ooze this significant point: those who love much appreciate their blessings and new found status, whereas the subjects of the Kingdom take for granted what they have and so love little. The self-righteous and elite lifers of the faith show their true colours when asked to accommodate and have compassion on those coming in from the cold. A kind of selfish jealousy consumes them and blinds them from seeing things in the light that Jesus shed on the parables. From disinterested neglect to heartless beatings of the Jonny-come-lately, the spirit of the older brother is exposed as a warning to us all.

Our spiritual grandmother had this to say:

*It seems to me that the Lord is giving the erring, the weak and trembling, and even those who have apostatized from the truth, a special call to come fully into the fold. But there are but few in our churches who feel that this is the case. And there are still fewer who stand where they can help such. There are more who stand directly in the way of these poor souls. Very many have an exacting spirit. They require them to come to just such and such terms before they will reach to them the helping hand. Thus they hold them off at arms' length. They have not learned that they have a special duty to go and search for these lost sheep. They must not wait till these come to them* (Testimonies, Vol. 2, page 20).

The church has changed and we are far removed from the time of Christ. One thing that has not changed however is our enemy and that he knows how to exploit human weakness; as he did then, he will now. The spirit of the older brother is with us today in our business and board meetings, our classes, our sermons, evangelistic efforts and publications. Jesus exposed the self-righteousness, the elitism and jealousy that can possess church lifers who think they are owed something for being good for so long.

We are most at risk of this insidious disease who have long lived within the confines of church walls and taken for granted the price paid to secure us our positions of comfort and ease. It tortured the heart of Jesus when he encountered a self-sufficient spirit, but as in his final message to his last day people, he stands at the door of the blind church and knocks (Rev. 3:14). Isn’t it also ironic too that the image is presented as them being behind a closed door and Jesus knocking? The door is closed to the man in humble garb, if only they realised who it really is who is trying to get in.
Adventist Today: Jealousy, Elitism and Self-righteousness: Warnings from... http://www.atoday.org/article/2248/opinion/bell-danny/jealousy-elitism-...
Yes, indeed, Stephen, my experience has been just like yours. As for music, we're afraid to mention it on Sabbath School Net. ;)

And, yes, it seems that, on the whole, newer converts usually have less tolerance for those who see things differently. Have they been taught that, or is that a danger inherent in having a set of teachings that lines up so well with the Bible? Do we just attract people who "want to be right"? Or do we teach them that attitude??

Ella M
Reply
a day ago

It's like someone who has stopped smoking not long ago. They want to preach to everyone about their new lifestyle. Or even with dieting or new food choices. We don't give them that attitude, it seems to come with the "conversion" to a new way of life that they now totally believe in.

William Noel
Reply
3 days ago

Stephen,

Excellent observation about Christian music.

Recently in North America various ultra-conservative Adventists have become alarmed by statements made by a new believer who used to be part of a famous rock music group. Because of his background they accept his statements as authoritative about music. He described a particular form of musical syncopation as evil because it is used in some rock songs, so they are using his statement to criticize the use of any worship music newer than what is in the church hymnal as satanic. But they conveniently overlook that the syncopation he describes was part of the cultural music of ancient Israel and used in the worship of God! The man is not authoritative about music and makes numerous statements showing his spiritual immaturity. Those who give him credibility are easily deceived by whatever blows in on the wind. But don't tell them because they'll think you're under the control of Satan!

Dingdong
Reply
3 days ago

I have come across many Adventists, usually very conservative, who try to use their own previous experience as the proverbial sinful prodigal son as some sort of additional authority to justify their very conservative Adventist viewpoint.

From my observations Steve, I do see that but only when the proselyte has been coached by lifers. It comes into the realm of Jesus' rebuke of the Jewish borgeous, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are. Matt 23:15.

The classic example, and I have heard it several times from different people over the years, is on the subject of music. Very often, conservative people would say that modern contemporary Christian music is evil and of the devil, and they know this because they were once in the world and went to knight clubs, so they should know.

Yes you do get that but this usually subsides in most cases. I was like that when first coming into the church - could not believe the music coming from the youth shed and condemned it as a knee jerk reaction. I can imagine the younger
brother saying the same thing when fresh out of the nightclubs of the world. Some sounds and sights remind him of where he came from - not that the music was evil but its a normal reaction for new converts from such extreme lifestyles. Ther passion runs deep and can be misunderstood for legalism but its just that they were dying and lost and now they are saved - they love much because they have been forgiven much. The lifer has not been forgiven much because he has not done much wrong.

Sorry how this sounds but the article is a pretty big slap in the face I know. It wasnt easy to write and I am also reminded of my own danger of being an older brother as time can blur the lines. We cant escape the fact about the theme that runs through the whole bible - older brother jealousy. Even in the Jewish/Arab conflicts - Ishmael was the older brother and this conflict transferred down to Jesus' time: "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. (Luke 9) - Jealousy, pure and simple.

Remember the biggest faith Jesus found while on earth was not from an "hier" but a gentile centurion. The stories of the troubled loser winning and coming out in front of the jocks [not sure if I am using this word correctly] is a strong scriptursal theme - Jacob, Joseph, Jesus, David, Moses....and many more are all there. The parables only compound the thought.

Stephen Ferguson
Reply
2 days ago

Just I think your comments true here also. I agree many very fanatical converts are that way because they have indeed usually been coached by some Church Lifer - I guess the covert is often the cannon-fodder in those disagreements.

I also agree about the Church Lifer thinking they don't need much because they haven't been forgiven much. For me personally, I see the biggest problem for the Church Lifer is not in becoming too conservative but becoming too libral.

For example, many Church Lifers now in effect feel embarassed by Adventism, especially its eschatological teachings. This is in large part because they had it thrown down their throats when they were young.

Thus, the Church Lifer is the consumate Sadducee, who you recall were the hereditary Temple elite and therefore the 'original' Church Lifers, who is a cultural member but not really a believer, in the same way the Sadducees rejected the supernatural such as the Resurrection. Older denominations like Anglicans and Lutherans seemed to have become Church Lifers en masse.

I see in Jesus' parable about the prodigal a son a warning to two groups - two extremes - two dangers in how we act and treat each other. You saw both extremes in Jesus' own day with the ultra-conservative Pharisees and ultra-liberal Sadducees.

Lynn
Reply
3 days ago

Surprisingly, the most macho thing a Knight of Christianity can do is HAVE NO MERCY ON ANYBODY and absolutely punish, berate, flay, and humiliate his lessers into submission and degradation. That's is very manly indeed, to treat the world like its a feral animal in heat and here for us to dominate.

Church lifers not only deluded by mythical goodness, justify ways to dominate others, consumed w/ vengeful pride and
vain egotism, but finally the Older Brother was willing to have a Dead Younger Brother than a living one that has been forgiven.

Sadly, a darkness in our machoism has us prefer quick death w/ our sins than "tortuous" life of constant forgiveness. Pray God give us a willing heart from our desire of misery, strife, and blood. Give us a willing heart b/c that is true courage and true love of WHICH our human bodies are naturally opposed to receiving and sharing.

Ella M
Reply
a day ago

Lynn,

This sounds harsh and certainly a gross stereotype of "lifers." I didn't grow up in the church, but among those I know who did, the largest percentage of them (who stayed) do not fit your stereotype. A large group of others have left.

Then there are those to whom it is a culture to be protected and among them you might find the judgemental.(Possibly they serve as a scapegoat.) Their big problem, when they get into the church hierarchy, is becoming too issue-centered in protecting the institution. Your diatribe shows no mercy!

Lynn
Reply
a day ago

They are only words to capture feelings. Forgive me, I meant no personal offense or categorize ALL as being so heinously un-Christian. But Christ did issue parables of late arriving workers to the vineyard getting the agreed upon universal wage, the man who had his debt forgiven by the king and would not forgive his own servant, and the older brother that despised his father and formerly lost brother for their forgiveness rather than dishing an entree of righteous punishment w/ a side of death. It happens and frankly more often in private circles than you've suggested. However, I don't want to categorize a group and which I happen to be a 3rd generation member. So we are not all bad, just totally bad and totally sinful.

Truth Seeker
Reply
a day ago

Strange venue to attempt to justify some of the insufferable crooning that poses as music. Isn't it all about me, me, me? I want this trashy music played in a sacred service because *I* like it. Heaven help us!
Isn't it being judgmental to accuse those who have come into the church and find that their prior preference of music is unsuitable in the church of being led by others and essentially indicating they are not sincere in their convictions?

Isn't being judgmental anathema to the liberals?
Maranatha

Ella M
Reply
a day ago

Why do you think it is "trashy?" Is it the words? I have heard music with a beat and drums in church, but never anything "trashy?" How do you understand the word? Where do you live?

Lynn
Reply
It may very well be trashy! Whadya think Mary Magdalene was a prim and proper lady of court- she was a "lady of the night" sitting at the Last Supper as a VIP guest. So trashiness has always been lovingly apart of Christianity, so bring Christ the trashiest people we can find- prostitutes posing as musicians will do just fine as long they are praising God and not themselves and other deviancy. We should to hear souls and not our favorite instruments. Let them sing freely in attendance, praise God for whatever youths He gives. Leave judgments for Sadducean establishment that legalistically perverts the gospel and strips music among other things.

Anonymous

Posting as Andrews University Library - 1, James White Periodical Libr Subscribe to comments
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Again and again the parables ooze this significant point: those who love much appreciate their blessings and new found status, whereas the subjects of the Kingdom take for granted what they have and so love little. The self-righteous and elite lifers of the faith show their true colours when asked to accommodate and have compassion on those coming in from the cold. A kind of selfish jealousy consumes them and blinds them from seeing things in the light that Jesus shed on the parables. From disinterested neglect to heartless beatings of the Jonny-come-lately, the spirit
of the older brother is exposed as a warning to us all.

Our spiritual grandmother had this to say:

*It seems to me that the Lord is giving the erring, the weak and trembling, and even those who have apostatized from the truth, a special call to come fully into the fold. But there are but few in our churches who feel that this is the case. And there are still fewer who stand where they can help such. There are more who stand directly in the way of these poor souls. Very many have an exacting spirit. They require them to come to just such and such terms before they will reach to them the helping hand. Thus they hold them off at arms' length. They have not learned that they have a special duty to go and search for these lost sheep. They must not wait till these come to them* (Testimonies, Vol. 2, page 20).

The church has changed and we are far removed from the time of Christ. One thing that has not changed however is our enemy and that he knows how to exploit human weakness; as he did then, he will now. The spirit of the older brother is with us today in our business and board meetings, our classes, our sermons, evangelistic efforts and publications. Jesus exposed the self-righteousness, the elitism and jealousy that can possess church lifers who think they are owed something for being good for so long.

We are most at risk of this insidious disease who have long lived within the confines of church walls and taken for granted the price paid to secure us our positions of comfort and ease. It tortured the heart of Jesus when he encountered a self-sufficient spirit, but as in his final message to his last day people, he stands at the door of the blind church and knocks (*Rev. 3:14*). Isn’t it also ironic too that the image is presented as them being behind a closed door and Jesus knocking? The door is closed to the man in humble garb, if only they realised who it really is who is trying to get in.
Imagine

http://www.atoday.org/article/2251/opinion/visiting-bloggers/imagine

By Greg Prout, January 8, 2014

It's funny how song lyrics can sleep in one’s brain for years and then suddenly reappear demanding another look. Almost as if the lyrics had a life of their own, waiting patiently in your mental library, and when they feel the time is ripe, they check themselves out. John Lennon’s “Imagine” (1971) is like that. The lyrics:

Imagine there's no heaven, it’s easy if you try/ No hell below us, Above us only sky/ Imagine all the people, Living for today... Imagine there’s no countries, It isn’t hard to do/ Nothing to kill or die for, And no religion too/ Imagine all the people living life in peace... You may say I’m a dreamer, But I’m not the only one/I hope someday you’ll join us, And the world will be as one. Imagine no possession. I wonder if you can/ No need for greed or hunger, A brotherhood of man. Imagine all the people Sharing all the world... You may say I’m a dreamer, But I’m not the only one/I hope someday you’ll join us, And the world will live as one.

I have always loved this song, but dismissed the lyrics as politically whimsical and possibly detrimental, as he suggested we do away with religion. I disagreed, believing religion, like a bus, was the vehicle God drove as He came to visit us. Now I have a different view. Religion is a body of beliefs that identify one group while excluding another, and that is precisely what's wrong with “religion.” I suspect that was Lennon’s point. Such segregation is very human but not very divine. Sure, religion has beneficial qualities, like a sense of belonging, but fundamentally, I believe religion by its exclusion misses the embrace of God, who “will draw all men to Himself (Myself)” John 12: 32. Diana Butler Bass, a leading authority on American religion, gives a good definition of the religion of which I speak: “In modern times, religion became indistinguishable from systematizing ideas about God, religious institutions, and human beings; it categorized, organized, objectified, and divided people into exclusive worlds of right versus wrong, true versus false, ‘us’ versus ‘them.’”

There are 40 million people in America today who refer to themselves as “Nones,” denying religious affiliation and opting for their own blend of spirituality. The Nones, also called the “Prodigals” by Kinnaman, claim religion has failed, authoritarian churches and doctrines have been weighed and found wanting. Perhaps the traditionalist dismisses this horde as simply evidence of unbelievers being shaken from “the Church,” a faithless rabble persistent in rebellion. For others like myself, I see this as an indictment against strict church dogma that excludes via elitist piety; that falsely believes their Truth sets them apart from errant masses as they sit in arrogant citadels of religious self-importance. Religion fosters this perception, false or not. People nowadays want more than to know about God via doctrines and creeds; they want an encounter with God without jumping through hoops of church dogma.
Experience over knowledge is the new reality. Again, Diana Butler Bass writes, “We need religion imbued with the spirit of shared humanity and hope, not religions that divide and further fracture the future.” For millions it is more popular to refer to one’s self as “spiritual,” as opposed to “religious”; impugning the word “religion.” “Spiritual” expresses the experience of God over the religion about God.

Though I am bedrock Christian, I understand why myriads today are turning from the Christian religion to find spiritual satisfaction elsewhere. Unfortunately, like George Costanza (dramatized) turning his girlfriend Susan into a lesbian, the action and history of authoritarian religion has turned many into non-believers.

Harvey Cox describes our times as the “Age of the Spirit” where the “experience of Jesus” is paramount and where people seek “nondogmatic, nondenominational, and non-hierarchical Christianity, based on a person’s connection to the ‘volatile expression’ of God’s Spirit through mystery, wonder, and awe…. A religion based on subscribing to mandatory beliefs is no longer viable.” We can dismiss his observations, but he is not alone. A plethora of literature, researchers and studies, scholars and theologians across the spectrum of Christianity are making similar observations.

What is happening? I have observed in my own religio-social circle a common theme of grown children of pastors and conference personnel, of family and friends, of fellow believers, exhibiting a diminished fervor for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, many no longer attending. My guess is you have as well. Like society at large, there is a great divide in the Church with an alarming number finding their answers outside Adventism while simultaneously there is resurgence and re-trenching of traditional Adventism symbolized by our current World Leader.

Something is definitely brewing. Clearly there are rumblings of a significant number wanting more than what is traditionally offered. We can ignore it or dismiss it, but if we’re serious about the love of Jesus, we must address it. I see no North American trends of masses running to embrace our historical-religious platform. Our club-footed reluctance to ordain women is further evidence of authoritarian religion practicing exclusion thus turning off and turning away many hungry for spiritual community. Apparently our leadership views their long-held position against ordination of women as an indication of their careful regard for God’s holiness, as if segregation reflects God’s heart.

Perhaps a review of God’s holiness is required to underscore the church’s need for more focus on compassion and community. Adventists historically have viewed God’s holiness as autoclaved, gloriously uncontaminated, hyper-sensitive to humanity’s bacterial nature, requiring a buffer between us and Him to save us from instant extinction. His honor is petulant and ready to strike with consuming fire anyone foolish enough to consider approaching. Thank God for Jesus! He saves us from the Father’s holy, obsessively moral, surgically clean and wholly unrelational character. The violated Law dictates God kill somebody to satisfy its need for justice, thus setting Him free to forgive offensive humanity. Jesus says, “Kill me.” The Father agrees. “I will kill my Son and the Law will be placated, and I can forgive-love humanity.” Holiness in this case fixated on “legal perfection” and “moral rectitude” as if this was the driving force about God. Jesus, therefore, is our Savior from the Father’s justice.
But switch gears and take another look. View God’s holiness as the perfect love and community that exists between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; witness their pure unalloyed relationship. This is His character which sets Him apart from our selfish fallen nature: His unspoiled selfless sharing, communing and compassion. Jesus didn’t come to save us from the Father’s consuming fire of holiness, or deliver us from His cold forensic justice, but instead He arrived to “explain the Father” (John 1: 18); the Father is just like the Son (John 14: 7, 9); Jesus sent from the Father manifests His name (John 17:6, 26). In other words, the Father is no different than Jesus in His adoration of us. He sent Jesus from His bosom (heart)–John 1: 18–to demonstrate His embrace and inclusion of you and me. Again, Holiness is God’s perfect love as seen in His flawless relationship and community displayed in the fellowship of the Trinity, the holiness for which the world is starving. “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6: 36).

Immanuel.

While we’re examining our self-righteous navel, the recipients of our message are going elsewhere. We are engaging in inbreeding by preaching to a choir that is leaving the building. In place of such septic theology, we need to throw open the doors of our church and show the world that Adventism is about a compassionate God eagerly seeking to welcome and accept; a church of which John Lennon might sing.

Lennon’s lyrics are a chorus of love to me now. Imagine is about ridding things that divide us. Things like politics (countries), religion, and material things; things like identities that alienate and separate; things and ideas that exclude rather than gather; and he dreams of a world no longer a place of divide, but of oneness and inclusion. He sings about togetherness and peace here and now. Yes, a dream, but he touches a rich spirit that transcends the physicality of things and the tenets of dogma, a spirit that calls us to a higher place. Perhaps Lennon represents the man or woman who stands outside the walls of the Church, a child of God who by the Church’s ecclesiastical standards has an unwashed view of truth; nevertheless he longs for a place stuffed in his heart by his Creator, an environment of peace and belonging, a place we call “heaven.” Lennon here is prophetic.

Could it be that our esoteric view of truth, our arcane understanding of our place and purpose needs some serious tweaking? If truth is so dynamic that only eternity can address it, could it be our 19th century religion needs a new face, like remodeling an old house of great value? What keeps the organized church from such dreams? Why do we fumble intensely with issues of women’s ordination or aggressively resist the inclusion of gays? Why do we fight so fiercely to protect our name and identity, our golden calf, as if that was our mission on earth? Why are we so impervious to the radical idea that “Love changes everything”? Jesus says, “Love your enemies.” Sent from the Father, He came instructing us to love and bless, not judge and condemn. Could it be fear, (and not love) which underlies our exclusive behavior, that breeds the view our image will be tainted by the addition of Samaritans we believe unacceptable? Are we afraid of loving others unlike us, frightened to include them in our church families; fearful that by acceptance we enable them in their sin? We therefore condemn and judge and feel safe separating ourselves from their unholy behavior. We walk by as they lay dying in the road.

Too often we embody the “prodigal’s son’s” older brother. Our holiness is offended at God’s extravagant treatment of those we have judged as pigs. We are proud of our faithful service, our
years of obedience, our Sabbath, our Prophet, our striving to protect God’s holy honor, and we’re indignant that God has not thrown us a party. We know Samaritans are lost. Our younger brother (gays, women, secularists, atheists, etc.) don’t deserve such celebratory love, and we are not pleased to embrace them, let alone attend a party thrown for them by God Himself. We are afraid to love as God does.

God never treats us that way nor did He give us such a commission. “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you” (John 15:12). Why can’t we extend charity without agenda in the way God loves us? It is the “ultimate reality” Rob Bell describes in Velvet Elvis, the life of the Kingdom: the God of love, the ultimate truth. 1 John 4:8. It is what Lennon longed for.

Across America millions are waking up to the short-comings of authoritative religion. In our world beyond modernism, where expansive narratives about authoritative truth no longer prove persuasive, people are looking for beliefs that include and accept; they hunger for the Gospel the organized church has failed. Religion can no longer afford to say: “Believe like us and you’re in; if you don’t, there’s the door.”

There's a better way. I have discovered amidst the evolving religious experiences in North America, love seems to be what interests people most; it defies all objections and questions. It’s the stuff I think of Lennon's lyrics for “Imagine.” The church must re-invent its current image and find a way to reach out and embrace humanity in spite of its unique doctrines. If dogma cannot celebrate and lift up unreserved compassion for the Other, then its value is dubious. Love cuts across all authoritarian labels as well as all “spiritual pursuits”; compassion is the common denominator that binds and heals, and the greatest of the Spirit’s gifts (1 Cor. 13). Even atheists respond to benevolence. In Joan Baez's “God is God,” she sings about believing in miracles, and the miracle I believe in most is the possibility to love others simply because they exist. It is an ideal of compassion and generosity that soars above the boundary of country, possessions, and even standard-riddled religion. It's a love so unlike me and yet so inspiring. I can only imagine…
vi Ibid, pp. 68, 110.
vii Seinfeld TV Show, Episode 61 (April 15, 1993).
Hitchhiking in a foreign country without knowing the language is an adventure.

What's a vector?

First let me tell you a story. In the 1960’s I attend Newbold College in England just west of London, and in the spring decided to catch a ferry across the channel and tour the continent. I arrived in Dunkirk at about 5:30 on a Whitsun holiday morning.

(Whitsun is a European holiday on the seventh Sunday after Easter, celebrating the falling of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. ... for those of you who care…)

Anyway there were huge flags all up and down the main thoroughfare. Not a soul on the streets, just the tap, tap of my own footsteps and the whisper of breeze through the limp flags. No people. No traffic. A holiday! It didn’t look like I had planned very well for a trip depending on the kindness of traveling strangers.

I was armed for this adventure with a small greeting card-sized map of Europe in the back of a diary my aunt had given me, and maybe a five-word French vocabulary. No French money (it was before the Euro) and no French phrase book.

So the problem was how to get to Paris. My in-depth research had at least informed me that the French pronounced Paris as Pa-ree. I walked through town. Still no traffic ...

Finally, I found a motorist picking up his early Sunday paper. A short ride for a few blocks. Then the decision where to next? My little map didn’t really have that level of detail.

I pointed left. Pa-ree? No.


I pointed right? Pa-ree? A head nod.

Ah! That was all I needed. I jumped out of the car and started down the next road.

That is how vector protocols work.

You get to a location and all you are told is, if you follow that sign post you will eventually get to your desired destination. You don’t know how far. (Sometimes you may get a hint about the
number of intersections.) You don’t know how many twists and turns. You don’t know how reliable each route is going to be. All you know is that if you take off in that direction it leads to your destination.

(And for those of you who care, I did make it to Paris that day. But, that’s another story. It really was filled with unexpected adventure.)

**Vector faith versus proclamation truth.**

Meanwhile back at the intersection: I’ve marveled over the past several years about how little my Adventist heritage of faith seems to facilitate a working faith, a working vector based faith.

Let me explain. It seems we mostly focus on proclaimed truth. Proclaimed truth is not faith. Proclaimed truth is just that, a statement of some fact or belief. It is not character. It is not following a journey when things are less than complete. Proclaimed truth can lull the proclaimer into feeling that they have the complete map. (I had a complete map of all of France; it just lacked detail.) But what do we have to say about how we find the intersection a person is at? What do we have to say about helping that person develop navigational skills to move to the next path?

**Would developmental faith be a vector faith?**

At my college we invite the community to come for education. Not everyone has a full college-ready set of skills. So, for example, someone with minimal or no math skills shows up, takes a placement test, and is placed in what we call a “Developmental Math” class. That’s where they have a chance to acquire those missing skills and become ready for the challenge of college.

I’m just not seeing the “Developmental Faith” classes in the church. I see “Developmental Indoctrination” classes; but they are devoid of living faith skills, devoid of love, devoid of forgiveness, devoid of resources for long-suffering and patient example-ing (modeling) of a redemptive servant Savior.

This year I have been spending my Sabbaths with a nondenominational In His Steps Community Fellowship which meets Saturday mornings at the phone company for Bible study. We are a group which includes a former atheist, some Baptists, some Methodists, some Pentecostals, some truly nondenominational (and yes we have figured out that even nondenominational people have a “set” of beliefs), and a group of Adventists. We often wonder at some of the strange sets of circumstances which have brought us together. (But that is another story.)

The focus of the group is to take anyone (Did I say “anyone”?) where they are and provide a place of warmth and acceptance while they safely explore their personal experience and figure out where they need to go next.

**The Christmas story is full of vectors.**

This Christmas season we have been watching and discussing Kyle Idleman’s “The Christmas
Experience” DVD series. It seems that the Christmas map was very incomplete for each player. I’m not even sure Joseph and Mary knew their ultimate destination. They seem to only get guidance like “go to Bethlehem,” or “go to Egypt.” Nothing more comprehensive.

And then just to throw another sample into the mix, “Abraham went out an knew not wither he goeth.” Hmm. ... It pretty much sounds like “vector” faith to me. All I know is I’m leaving town.

Vectors don't have all the answers.

So what I’ve been puzzling over is this: How do we find our way? How do we find where we really are? And how do we learn the next path?

And then there is the human/Divine set of questions: How do we facilitate the growth of faith in each other? How do we practice Christian behavior so well that someone can start to trust God? How do we love someone through the dark night of the soul when they can’t pray? How do we and our spiritual friends make our way through the cloud of unknowing?

And then there is the human/Divine set of questions: Did I start my day too fast? Did I take time to listen for God’s will? Did I ask for strength to carry out his will? Do I talk too much when I do my prayers? Is my spiritual practice for others to see or the private inner life God seems to prefer.

Vectors require a comment to the path.

This Christmas as I have looked at the denominational push-pull leadership struggle, the focus on divisive issues, the failures of morality, the international imprisonments, the Samoan fight over the dateline, I wonder where is the clear indication of God’s action? How does one determine one’s own way? Are these the most critical issues for a self-destructing world. I recently sat down with local and state police, nurses, hospital personnel, assistant district attorney, client advocates, nonprofits and discussed the implementation of a SART team. (Sexual Assault Response team in my community.) I was amazed by the dedication, training, and commitment each of these players had, some for decades; a commitment to healing the devastation of sexual assault. Their commitment took the concrete form of money, time, training, accountability, teamwork.

I know we have some notable centers of outreach, but at the conference and local church level we seem to demonstrate near total apathy to the real challenges of our communities. Is this the way the “remnant” are to respond to their neighbors? Peter at least noticed the cripple at the temple.

So whatever spiritual place you are in where is the next part of your journey? Are you following a map? Whose map? Is it really complete? Where are you headed?

A New Year's Wish

My wish for you in 2014 is that you will find an opportunity to strike out in a new, fresh spiritual
adventure with Divine enablement.
Epiphany! What is that, anyway? As Adventists, we (like many other Protestant denominations begun in the early centuries of this nation) largely ignore what is widely known as “the church calendar.” If you read my devotions on a regular basis, you know by now that I believe we have often thrown out some important blessings by so doing.

It wasn’t that special a word, to begin with. “Epi” just means “to or at” and “phony” comes from “show or manifest.” According to Wikipedia, the Greeks used it for all kinds of things, including dawn, or the appearance of an enemy in war. The word “theophany” comes from the same base and would be more astounding—a showing or revealing or manifestation of God—“theo” or “deo.”

In the early centuries of church history, this word “epiphany” or sometimes “theophany,” was used for a celebration that included the birth, childhood, and baptism of Jesus, and in some cases, the first miracle at Cana! But over the centuries, in the West it became attached specifically to the visit of the magi “from the east” to the Christ Child. Today in common usage, we tend to use it for revelations (literally, revelations) that are particularly exciting: “I had an epiphany!” meaning we suddenly realized something new. Or to put it another way, something “dawned on” us.

I’ve been thinking about this, and two things strike me. First, what kinds of epiphanies do we experience in our lives, and are they always welcome? I have experienced what might be called epiphanies not only in my spiritual life (which are usually exciting and good) but also in my work life, home life, creative life, and so on. Sometimes they are not pleasant. It can and does dawn on people that their life partner doesn’t love them, or that they are in the wrong jobs, or that their health is failing.

The second thing that struck me, and this is quite startling, is that an epiphany implies an advent that is unexpected or sudden, and yet the magi studied, possibly for years, and then traveled, at least for weeks and perhaps for months, to find the “newborn king.” This is surely a different kind of epiphany than I’ve considered before. Can you call it an epiphany if you’ve actively sought, maybe even fought for it?

What kinds of epiphanies have happened to you? Did you like them, or not? What were their results?

What, if anything, does this concept of epiphany have to do with the start of a new year?

And…what would you do to seek an epiphany you seriously wanted? How far would you go?
By Jack Hoehn, January 9, 2014

The Discovery Institute in Seattle, Washington assiduously seeks to remain agnostic about the Intelligent Designer. They wish to fight the battles over Intelligent Design (ID) free from the accusation of religious sectarianism, as an evidence-based scientific enterprise. All they are asking is to acknowledge that this earth and the complex life on it is better explained as being the result of intelligent action than by random undirected purposeless chance. They claim this conclusion can be made based on scientific evidence alone, free from any theological or holy revelations of any kind.

This attempt at religious neutrality may be quixotic since their Darwinian opponents usually call them “a thinly veiled front for Biblical Creationism,” and try to tar them as religious fanatics who are just pretending to be scientists.

There is no denying that most ID proponents are Christians or Jews, although recently some notable agnostics support ID. But these positions lead to the paradoxical situation of Christians arguing the science without reference to theology. And atheists and agnostics arguing against ID with their own version of theology! (They use the “what kind of a God would create this…” type of arguments.) Other combative Darwinians use the tactic of simply ignoring or dismissing the ID scientific evidence with a wave of the hand, because “they are all Christians.” (So?)

I was excited then when the Discovery Institute sponsored a seminar on Science and Faith at the Greenlake Presbyterian Church north of downtown Seattle on Friday night and Saturday (May 31-June 1) because it may not be enough to have good solid scientific arguments about Intelligent Design without a better theological understanding of the Intelligent Designer and the Bible that has introduced most of us to him. One good thing about this venue is that it was only a few blocks from Seattle’s famous vegetarian restaurant, Carmelita’s, so my brother Ted and I had a great supper of plant based foods before going on down to the church. (Sadly Carmelita’s has since closed, but try Café Flora your next trip to Seattle.)

C. JOHN COLLINS—SCIENCE AND FAITH

Jack Collins is a Professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis. He has written a book with the same name as the conference, and was the keynote speaker Friday night and Saturday morning. I owned that book already, as well as a second more recent one called Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? (Who They Were and Why You Should Care). (See a list of his books available here.)
As a Hebrew scholar he does not care much for trying to make the Hebrew for “day” in Genesis 1 (יָם) mean “age” or “aeon.” He says it is just the word for “day.” While it may be used for other things than 24-hour days, just as in English we can say “back in the day” or “day of the Lord,” meaning an indefinite period of time in the past or future, that is not how he handles the chronology of creation questions.

He points out that Genesis 1, while not poetry, is also not science. And while historic, it is not strictly history. He calls it “exalted prose” and suggests its purpose is to introduce Israel to their Creator God and the position he wanted humanity, and now Israel on the way to their promised land, to fill in the world. Instead of the word for sky, it speaks of “the expanse” or firmament. Instead of using Hebrew common words for sun and moon, it calls them “the greater light” and “the lesser light.” Instead of just saying he made all the animals, it categorizes them in broad groups such as “domestic animals,” “wild animals,” and “creepy crawlers.” Not scientific categories, not species, semi-poetic groupings. Not birds, bats, and dragonflies, just “flying things.”

He then points out that the six Creation-days are not the first six days of the Universe, which was created before the six in the indefinite past, “In the beginning.” And it was not even the first six days of earth, since at the start of the six Creation-days, earth already existed, formless and unorganized.

He next says that these six Creation-days are God’s days, not human days. And the “evening and morning” are to tell us that God set a pattern of work with resting followed by working. The pattern was “not doing” followed by “doing,” and was repeated 6 times by God, His days being a pattern for our work week and our days.

Jack Collins expands God’s Creation-days as longer than 24-hours with two examples. The first is the Sabbath, which does not have an “evening and morning” phrase, and which by New Testament references may never have ended. God has Sabbathed from creating since Eden. He is Sabbathing now. We are to enter into his rest, his Sabbath. We do not see active creation of new kinds of life going on today. We simply see alterations of previously created kinds of life. So for God, his 7th Creation-day Sabbath is still continuing.

The second example of a Creation-day not being 24-hours is Genesis 2. Here Moses in more detail explains the events of Creation-day six. Jack Collins feels the story of mankind’s creation starting with a Palestinian dry season (“for the Lord God had not sent rain”), then timed to the time when the clouds and mist start to form at the beginning of the rainy season (“a mist came up from the earth”) suggests at least a year or more for the creation of mankind alone. (I’ve previously discovered that Creation-day six, if read very literally, has too many activities to permit a 12-hour or even a 24-hour period).

Collins was not offering a specific chronology of creation. What he was saying is that God’s Creation-days were the pattern for our work week, but not identical to it. He reminds us that when the Bible speaks of “the eye of the Lord” it does not have to be a human eye. It refers to God’s visualizing us, like a human eye visualizes, but tells us nothing about how God does that. “If the hand of the Lord is upon you, it doesn’t mean God has fingernails.”
So if God did his creation work in his “six Creation-days,” and tells you to work in “6 human-days” followed by the Sabbath, that doesn’t tell you how long God’s Creation-days were, just that we are to have 6 of them like God did, followed by a Sabbath. God’s Eye, God’s Hand, God’s Workdays are analogies to our eye, hand, and days, not identical to them.

My conclusion from this conservative Christian scholar?

“**Genesis tells us what God did, not necessarily when or how.** Its purpose is to give us

a.) the reason for our worship of him,

b.) a pattern for our work and rest cycles,

c.) an explanation of our sexual natures and relationships,

d.) the purpose of our existence,

e.) and why we fail of accomplishing those purposes.”

**CASEY LUSKIN—THE SCIENTIFIC CASE FOR ID**

Casey is an attorney, author, and the fast talking spokesman for Intelligent Design. He also is a co-author of *Science and Human Origins* about humanoids and humans. He is also co-editor of a new textbook for home schoolers called *Discovering Intelligent Design* that comes as a text and an accompanying workbook just published. It is written for middle school to adults, so both you and your children could study this together. I think many progressive adult Sabbath Schools could take this as a weekly study; it has 20 lessons.

Casey confirmed that his wife of 5+ years has an Adventist background, but I haven’t had a chance to meet her yet. I know Casey has spoken to Adventist groups before. He gave a rapid fire summary of the many converging lines of scientific evidence pointing to intelligent design as the more reasonable explanation for both the origin and the complexity of life, given the time constraints of the geologic history of life on earth. He was excited about the new pivotal book against naturalistic Darwinism he assisted with—*Darwin’s Doubt* by Stephen C. Meyers.

**JOHN G. WEST—COURAGE FOR THE STRUGGLE**

The speaker I knew the least about was John West, Senior Fellow at the Discovery Institute. A Ph.D. in politics, former professor at Seattle Pacific University, he has edited a recent book called *The Magician’s Twin*, which is about C.S. Lewis on Science, Scientism, and Society. He gave a spirited challenge to all Christians to be willing to challenge Darwinism or Materialistic Naturalism. He explained that he was not speaking for the Discovery Institute, but more as his own personal testimony as a concerned Christian. He gave examples of scientists being punished for supporting ID, and also the even more serious threats from Darwinism to not only morals and society, but also to Christian teaching and belief.

It is important for Adventists to understand that believing that the universe is as old as scientists suggest, and that Creation took as long as scientists suggest, does not mean they are therefore Darwinians. Chronology and Darwinism are separate issues. Bible believers can accept an Old Earth Creationism and still be vigorous opponents of Darwinian or Neo-Darwinian thought. Dr.
West also suggested that the so called Theistic Evolutionist was a difficult to support position, and that Intelligent Design was far more compatible with Biblical Orthodox Christianity. After listening to Dr. West, I eagerly ordered a copy of his book.

The meetings finished Sabbath afternoon, and I felt I had had a wonderful spiritual experience and a Sabbath blessing in a friendly Presbyterian church full of Creationists, very few or none of whom knew they were actually sharing a wonderful Sabbath with my brother and me! Not many if any of these ID Christians believe creation happened 6,000 years ago in 144 hours. Not many or any of these ID Christians believe that creation happened by unguided evolutionary mechanisms. They would agree with Adventist conservatives that Darwinism is dangerous and to be opposed. They would agree with Adventist scientists that creation didn’t have to happen recently or quickly. And each speaker seemed comfortable with the idea that Moses presented in Genesis the charter for humanity, given to Israel and then through Christ to the Christian church and gentiles, to restore Eden and expand it on earth.

CELTIC WOMEN AND CREATIONISM

I had tickets for a Saturday night concert that night with my wife, called Celtic Women. As later I watched these talented and very feminine vocalists and musicians and their accompanying band sing Irish folks songs including several secular hymns like Amazing Grace, Ava Maria, A Bridge Over Troubled Waters, You Lift Me Up, with grace, wit, talent and charm—in my frame of mind I felt, here they too are Creationists.

They are promoting with theatric assistance an Edenic ideal of female beauty, wit, grace, talent and charm, equal or superior to, yet not threatening male talent and ability. Beautiful long hair, lovely fabrics and colors, clear bell-like voices and energetic music and dance—it was four Eves offering a world of music, joy, and harmony. They smile and touch and harmonize with practiced ease.

It was truly a wonderful out-of-Adventist-boundaries Sabbath. I enjoyed the vegetarian feast from secular Carmelita’s restaurant. I did not want the Sabbath with non-Adventist ID Creationists to end. And how pleasurable to watch a group of talented women share an outside-of-church but inside-of-creation vision of Eden restored. How great the potential for Adventism to add depth and theological support for a deeper and broader Creationism. Would that Adventism could become an open and welcoming home for all Creationists in a revitalized Sabbath week after week after week after week.