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<td>Within some conservative Christian circles it has become fashionable to oppose electing women to leadership roles, based on &quot;Headship Theology&quot; which is said to forbid doing so. Adventist Seminary theologians have now gone on record against this teaching, and tell exactly why in a position paper linked to <em>AT</em>'s news story.</td>
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<td><strong>Adventist Leaders Speak Out on Unrest in Ferguson, Missouri:</strong></td>
<td>As Pastor Ted Wilson and a select group of conservative Adventist theologians and scientists labor to promote 6-day/6,000-year creationism as the only viable Adventist interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2, Ervin Taylor wonders if the Church may be entering a stage of existence not dissimilar to the counter-reformational era created by the Roman Catholic Church in the 15th and 16th centuries.</td>
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<td>As world headlines focus on the unrest in the St. Louis area after Michael Brown was killed by a policeman, Adventist leaders have spoken out for calm and healing in this region of North America, where Church membership and influence is heavily black-driven.</td>
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A Curious Conference: John McLarty, longtime editor (1997-2007) of Adventist Today, comments on the many quaint and curious aspects of the lengthy "International Conference on Bible and Science: Affirming Creation," whose primary purpose seems to be to bolster the case for biblical literalism in Genesis 1 and 2....

Whose Faith and Science Conference?: A review of the speakers and their topics at the General Conference Faith and Science Conference reveals that those selected to make presentations are members of a very select fraternity of thought....

The Midwife's Tale (Devotional): Debbonaire Kovacs relates a harrowing tale of the midwife who served Jochebed at Moses' birth and who disobeyed the Pharaoh of that day by sparing the life of the future prophet and leader of the Exodus....

On the Unique Headship of Christ in the Church - A Statement Of The Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary (Announcements): The Andrews University Seminary has released a statement seriously questioning the biblical credentials of Headship Theology....

Morning Silence (Visual): Photographer S M Chen records an early-morning scene on the seashore as men practice Tai Chi, near Hangchow, China....

Riding Against Abuse (Feature): An Adventist pastor/grief counselor in the Pacific Northwest is riding his bicycle many, many miles to help bring awareness of and fight the incidence of family abuse of women and children....

Web Site Changeover Continues

On Tuesday, August 19, we began the transition to the new Adventist Today website. The "old" site will continue to be available at a new URL, www.atodayarchive.org. The "new" site will be located at www.atoday.org.

For a period of time, while we make the transition, new articles will be posted at both locations. The new site will have some pages that will show "Under Construction" messages while we update their content. At the point that everything is as we want it at the new site, we will stop....
posting new material at the old site. Over the next several months we will move our shopping system and archives to the new site, as well.

Thanks so much for your patience and support as we make this transition and position *Adventist Today* for the future!

Monte Sahlin  
Executive Director  
*Adventist Today* Foundation
Adventist Today

Adventist Seminary Theologians Condemn "Headship" Theology

By Adventist Today News Team, August 22, 2014

The faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University has released a statement clearly opposing from the Scripture and Adventist heritage the headship theology which is used by some to argue against the ordination of women to the gospel ministry. It is a very clear indicator that thinking among the denomination's Bible scholars is moving away from blocking permission for the ordination of women clergy.

The six-page document includes a careful Bible study and extensive references to the writings of Ellen G. White to support its conclusions. It was adopted by a very strong majority vote of the entire seminary faculty, the most important group of Bible scholars and theologians in the denomination.

In the conclusion the document affirms four things as biblical and rooted in Adventist heritage: (1) "That there is only one Head of the Church, Christ, and this headship in the Church is non-transferable and inimitable." (2) "That leadership in the Church should be modeled after Christ's servant leadership and grounded in love, with the recognition that Christ's manner of leadership is to be reflected by Christian leaders." (3) "That Church leaders possess stewardship responsibilities of the affairs of the Church, carrying out the decisions of the Church made in committee and business sessions." And (4) "The priesthood of all believers ..."

And the document denies four things as unbiblical and out of line with the Adventist heritage: (1) "That any human can rightly assume a headship role within the Church." (2) "Any Church government that results in sacramental, elitist, and headship-oriented leadership, which are counterfeits of Christ's moral government of love and usurp His unique role and authority as Head of the Church ..." (3) "That any mere human is invested with final decision-making authority in regards to Church teaching, ritual, or doctrine. (4) "Any elevation of Church leaders as ... head of ... the Church."

The document also specifically states that "the role of 'head' in the home (Eph 5:23) is not transferable to the realm of the Church" just as "one's role in the home obviously does not translate into a similar or analogous role in one's workplace." This clearly counters a common argument against women serving as leaders in congregations which is taught by the Southern Baptist Convention and other Evangelical religious leaders and has been proposed by some Adventist clergy.

The entire document can be seen without commentary by clicking this link:

On the Unique Headship of Christ in the Church - A Statement Of The Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary
Creation-Evolution Issues Focus of Meeting & Field Trips

By AT News Team, August 19, 2014

This week about 300 faculty from Adventist colleges and universities, along with church administrators and pastors, are participating in an International Conference on the Bible and Science convened by the General Conference (GC) of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination at the Dixie Convention Center in St. George, Utah. The meeting includes presentations by Adventist and other Christian scholars, as well as field trips to look at various examples of geology.

Pastor Ted Wilson, the president of the GC, gave the keynote sermon last Friday morning (August 15) and made it clear that science teachers in Adventist schools are expected to believe in creation, not evolution. “As teachers on the campuses of Seventh-day Adventist academies, colleges and universities, and leaders in God’s church … hold firmly to a literal recent creation and absolutely reject theistic and general evolutionary theory,” Wilson said. “I call on you to be champions of creation based on the Biblical account and reinforced so explicitly by the Spirit of Prophecy,” he said referring to the writings of Adventist Church co-founder Ellen G. White.

Wilson pointed to Bible passages such as Genesis 1, 2 and Psalm 33:6, 9 and the writings of White to reject the Bible interpretation that each day in creation week might have lasted a long period of time, making the world older than a few thousand years. This is an interpretation widely accepted among Christians, even conservative Protestants.

According to the Adventist Review, it "has crept into some Adventist schools in recent years and prompted, in part, a decision ... to start organizing Bible and science conferences in 2002." The event this week is another in the series of such meetings.

Field trips during the meeting include a half day viewing the geological column in the Virgin River Gorge, most of Sabbath (August 16) touring Zion National Park and an entire day on Wednesday (August 20) on a geology tour of the Grand Canyon. More than 70 presentations will be made over the 10 days, including at least 30 of a scientific nature and nearly 40 on theology, Biblical studies and related philosophical topics (including devotionals).

Most of the presentations will be made by Adventist scholars and scientists from the Geoscience Research Institute, the research center funded by the GC, and several Adventist universities. A few Adventists who work as scientists at secular institutions are also included, such as Dr. Ossi Turunen from the University of Helsinki in Finland.

At least four of the speakers are Christians from other denominations. Dr. Kurt Wise is a Baptist who directs the Creation Research Center at Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland, Georgia. He earned a PhD in geology from Harvard University and is well known for his writing on the topic of creationism.

Dr. John Baumgardner was a scientist at the Los Alamos National Laboratory with a PhD in geophysics and space physics from the University of California at Los Angeles. In 2002 he became a staff member at the Institute for Creation Research. In 1997, US News & World Report labeled him "the world's pre-eminent expert in the design of computer models for geophysical convection." In 2005 he began the development of a computer program to model the accumulation of mutations in a genome so that the validity of neo-Darwinian theory can be tested.

Dr. Marcus Ross is a professor of geology at Liberty University in Virginia. He earned a PhD in geosciences from the University of Rhode Island and was featured in a New York Times article in February 2007 about his doctoral dissertation which involved animals generally understood to have been extinct for millions of years. He is also assistant director of the Center for Creation Studies at Liberty University.
Dr. John Whitmore is a geology professor at Cedarville University in Ohio. It is a Baptist institution fully accredited by the regional accrediting body with about 3,200 students, most in undergraduate programs. Whitmore earned his PhD at Loma Linda University.

The meeting also included a presentation on academic freedom by Dr. Lisa Beardsley-Hardy, the education director for the GC, and several opportunities for the participating science teachers to declare their position on the controversial topics under consideration. Some observers have called the meeting an exercise in “laying down the law” to Adventist scientists.

It is also important to note that on the last day of the meeting (Sunday, August 24) there will be a cluster of presentations on environmental issues. This is a new development in the long-standing Adventist interest in issues related to origins, but not out of line with the Adventist history of concern for natural living and conservation.

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Pastor Daniel R. Jackson, president of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in North America, released a statement early Thursday morning (September 21) about the ongoing civil unrest in Ferguson, Missouri. "As a part of the larger family of America, Seventh-day Adventists grieve with Michael Brown's family and extend our heartfelt condolences for their tragic loss," he said. "We are praying for our Ferguson community family who are in such great pain."

"We pray that justice will replace injustice, that truth will replace deceit, that inequality will be replaced by equitable brotherhood and that God's peace will prevail. We pray that the deeper issues made obvious by this situation will be addressed with immediacy, courage and effectiveness. We acknowledge that the pain being experienced today has not emerged out of this single incident but is rather a part of a much larger universal cry for justice."

"I pray that we will all hear with our ears and our hearts the words of a wise man who once said: 'He has shown you O man what is good. And what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.' We will keep praying." The quote is from Isaiah in the Bible's Old Testament.

There are 16 Adventist churches in the Saint Louis area, none of them in the suburban town of Ferguson itself. Seven of these are historically African American congregations with a total membership of 2,300. The membership of the other nine congregations totals 1,400.
Adventist Today

Campaign Against Abuse to be Launched on Sabbath

From ANN, August 22, 2014

Adventist congregations around the world are being asked by leaders of the denomination to focus on the prevention of abusive family relationships on Sabbath (August 23). The goal is to educate church members and local communities about domestic violence, sexual abuse and other forms of mistreatment which tend to hurt women and children more often than adult males.

"We urge every local church to observe this," said Dr. Willie Oliver, the denomination's director of family ministries. "Abuse in families, even in the church, is a sad reality we must confront with compassion, awareness and education."

"There are so many people suffering silently and they think the church doesn't care," said Heather-Dawn Small, director of women's ministries. "The church does care, and that's why this initiative is on our denomination's world calendar." Small said she encounters women whose abusers justify their behavior on what they claim is Bible principle. "That is a wrong use of the Word of God, and we need to get that straightened out."

A campaign to "End It Now" is jointly sponsored by ten Adventist organizations: the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, Adventist Review magazine, and the departments of children's ministries, education, family ministries, health ministries, women's ministries, youth ministries and the ministerial association, the professional organization for clergy.

In some areas of the world the Adventist denomination has turned the initiative into massive community demonstrations, while other regions hold an additional campaign during another time of the year. In May a workshop was held at the denomination's headquarters in the Washington DC area to train first responders in local congregations. The goal is to have a trained responder in each Adventist congregation worldwide. Adventist Today sent one of our editors, Debbonnaire Kovacs, to attend the event and we have published detailed reports.

The theme this year is "Freedom in Relationships." A package of resource materials is available at www.adventistwomensministries.org and more information can be obtained at www.enditnow.org as well.
On the Unique Headship of Christ in the Church - A Statement Of The Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

We, the faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, affirm that Christ is the only Head of the Church (Eph 1:22; 5:23; Col 1:18). Therefore, while there exists legitimate leadership in the Church, no other human being may rightfully claim a headship role in the Church. As Head of the Church, Christ provides the ultimate manifestation of God's love (Eph 5:23, 25), demonstrating and vindicating God's moral government of love (Rom 3:4, 25-26 5:8), and thus defeating the counterfeit government of the usurping "ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 16:11; cf. DA 758; 2T 2:211). God's Moral Government of Love

Christ's headship in the Church is inextricably bound up with the love of God and is itself the ultimate explication of God's love for the world (John 3:16; 15:13; Rom 5:8). As the sole "head of the church," Christ "loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:23, 25). [i] Christ's demonstration of divine love as Head of the Church directly reflects God's moral government of love, within which the law is a transcript of God's character and, conversely, love is itself the fulfillment of God's law (Matt 22:37--39; Rom 13:8; cf. TMK 366).

Since love requires moral freedom, God does not exercise His headship power or authority to coerce or determine the moral will of His created beings. God permitted rebellion, at the highest cost to Himself, because He desires willing obedience that is motivated by love rather than fear. Such voluntary obedience could not be obtained by the exercise of power or authority, but can only be freely given. In this way, God's government is based on freely bestowed mutual love wherein God does not deterministically impose His will, but does hold intelligent creatures morally accountable to His perfect law of love.

Accordingly, rather than exercising His infinite power to unilaterally prevent or overturn the rebellion by removing the freedom necessary for a genuine love relationship, God has allowed the enemy's counterfeit government to manifest itself, while actively demonstrating the nature of His moral government of love in direct and striking contrast. Whereas the enemy grasps for power and domination, Christ, who possesses all power, does not dominate, determine, or coerce but "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant [doulos] . . . He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phil 2:7--9, NKJV). In this way, Christ, the unique Head of the Church, "demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). Consequently, God's government of unselfish love is clearly and supremely manifested.

The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan

The Great Controversy originated with Satan's direct attack against the nature and role of Christ in heaven, seeking to displace Christ and exalt himself to be like God (Isa 14:12–14; Ezek 28:12-19; cf. Rev 12:7-9). In the history of the Great Controversy, the usurping "ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; cf. 2 Cor 4:4), although defeated at the cross, continues his quest to exalt himself by dominating others. He attempts to replace God's government of love with an alternative form of government that grasps for a domineering, self-seeking authority. He seeks to replace Christ as the Head (2 Thess 2:3-4), injuring both Christ, the sole Head of the true Church, and Christ's corporate body, His Church.

From the second century onward, post--Apostolic Christianity gradually implemented a system of church
government that reflected Rome’s conception of authority as the power to arbitrarily command and coerce obedience and replaced the headship of Christ with the headship of mere humans. This counterfeit system of church governance was (1) hierarchical, based on a chain of command with a monarchical bishop at the “head” of the Church, with complete and final control over its affairs; (2) sacramental, meaning that the spiritual life of believers, including their very salvation, depended on ordained clergymen; (3) elitist (i.e., sacerdotal), meaning that the rite of ordination (laying on of hands) infused the clergy with special powers; and (4) headship-oriented, meaning that those who received the rite of ordination were thereby married to their Church and thus took on “headship” roles in the Church in place of Christ the Head (“in persona Christi Capitis”; cf. Vicarius Filii Dei, “in the place of the Son of God”).

This system of government has been implemented in various forms, amounting to the usurpation of Christ’s headship in the Church by mere humans. Indeed, this very system is that of the sea beast of Revelation 13-14 that was granted power and authority by the dragon (13:2, 4), counterfeits the resurrection of Christ (13:3), accepts the world’s worship along with the dragon (13:4, 8), blasphemes against God and His sanctuary, and exercises worldwide authority to persecute God’s people (13:5-7). This antichrist power which usurps the role of Christ on earth in keeping with the ancient attempt by Satan to replace Christ in heaven, seeks to destroy the everlasting gospel and ultimately commands obedience and enforces false worship. This culminates in severe persecution of those who refuse to worship the beast and his image, the remnant who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus, those who place no confidence in mere humans with regard to their salvation (Rev 13:6-8; 14:6-12).

The antichrist system of church government sets the stage for the climactic events of the final conflict in Revelation by, among other things: (1) asserting authority to appoint humans to Christ-replacing headship positions in the Church on earth (globally and locally), (2) thereby claiming to uniquely possess authority to interpret and teach Scripture and thus have the final word on all matters of doctrine and ecclesial practice while (3) wielding the spiritual power and authority to command and coerce obedience using both spiritual and civil tools.

This system of government stands in direct contrast to Christ’s headship and His teaching on the nature of the authority of Church leaders. Christ reflected God’s moral government of love by exemplifying service leadership (Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45), including a kind of authority that does not seek to subject the wills of others or enforce obedience. Rather, it leads by the example of service and unselfish love, which draws (rather than compels) others to willing service in love (Gal 5:13). All authority “in heaven and on earth” was given to Christ (Matt 28:18), but Christ does not remove graciously endowed free will and force His created human beings into obedience, but “loved [us] and gave Himself up for us” (Eph 5:2). The closest the Church comes to acts of enforcement is when it engages in discipline as a corporate body based on very clear teachings of Scripture. Such discipline is not the responsibility of any one person, or even a small group, but must be an action of at least the local congregation. Even then, such discipline does not result in coercion, but in restricting the individual from privileges of membership for a time in order to allow them to come to repentance and restoration (Matt 18:12-17; 1 Cor 5:5).

Church members (including but not limited to Church leaders) are called to follow Christ’s example of unselfish love [Eph 5:1]. They are to have the mind of Christ, which includes the willingness to humble oneself and take on the role of a slave (doulos; Phil 2:5-8), or servant (diakonos) of Christ (Matt 20:26), even as He humbled Himself to the point of death. Whereas the leaders in the Roman Empire of Christ’s time “lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them” (Matt 20:25), it is not to be so with God’s people but “whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant [diakonos], and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave [doulos]” (Matt 20:26-27).

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Thus, the one who would be great is the one who is the slave [doulos] of all (Mark 10:44), and the “greatest among you shall be your servant [diakonos]” (Matt 23:11; cf. 9-12). The Bible outlines essential roles of leadership and authority in the Church. However, all leadership within the Church must be servant leadership. First Peter 5:1-3, 5-7 adroitly balances the affirmation of leadership within the Church with the humility that such leadership entails: “Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ . . . shepherd
the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. ... You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time” (Cf. AA 359-60; DA 817).

Accordingly, Church leaders should be humble servants. At the same time they should be respected and deeply appreciated for their diligent labor (1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 5:17; cf. Heb 13:7) even as they also show proper respect to others by demonstrating the mutual love and regard for others that is to take place among all Christians (1 Pet 2:17). [ii]

The authority of those leading the Church is conveyed to them by the Church. This authority is delegated by Christ to His Church and implemented through its representative system. Thus appointed leaders become stewards of a power that should be exercised on behalf of Christ and for the benefit of those they lead. The functionality of authority does not negate equality among the members given to the Church by Christ. As the Spirit leads the body of Christ, not just the few in leadership, those leading out should seek to allow their decisions to be guided, insofar as possible, by the wisdom and insight of the group. As a Church, we thus give decision--making authority not to any single president or chairperson, but to committees, where those that lead the group are seeking the wisdom and, where possible, consensus of the group.

God’s remnant, then, will treasure a system of Church government, authority, and leadership that reflects (as much as is humanly possible) the ideal of God’s government of love, within which moral freedom is cherished and leaders are the humble servants of all, even as Christ gave Himself up for all. This very kind of humble servant leadership, grounded in love, was perfectly modeled by Christ who, as unique “head of the church . . . loved the church and gave Himself up for her” (Eph 5:23, 25), supremely exemplifying God’s character and moral government of love.

The Unique and Non-Transferable Headship of Christ

Scripture affirms that the Son is eternally equal with the Father and the Spirit (Col 2:9; Heb 1:3; Matt 28:19; John 1:1; 5:18; 8:58; 14:9; Phil 2:6; Rom 9:5; Col 1:15-17; DA 469, 530; GC 495; 7ABC 437-40; TM 252; TA 209; RH April 5, 1906). Scripture also affirms the temporary voluntary functional subordination of Christ the Son in order to accomplish the salvation of humanity (John 5:19; 8:28, 54; 14:10, 28; 17:5; Phil 2:7-11; Col 1:18-20; Eph 1:23; Heb 1:8; 1 Cor 15:20-28; Isa 9:6-7; Dan 7:13-14; Rev 11:15; PP 34; RH, Oct 29, 1895; RH, June 15, 1905; FLB 76). The interpersonal relationships within the Trinity provide the ultimate model of love and self-sacrifice for us. As such, they do not furnish a model for a top-down governmental structure for human leadership within the Church.

According to Scripture, Christ is the only Head of the Church and the human members of Christ’s Church collectively (male and female) make up the body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23; 5:23; Col 1:18; 2:19; cf. 1 Cor 11:3; Col 2:10). Likewise, Ellen White counsels: “Christ, not the minister, is the head of the church” (ST Jan. 27, 1890), and “Christ is the only Head of the church” (21MR 274; cf. DA 817, GC 51). Neither Scripture nor the writings of Ellen White apply the language of headship in the Church to anyone other than Christ. Further, neither Scripture nor the writings of Ellen White endorse any transfer of the role of head in the home to roles within the Church body.

Since Christ is the only Head of the Church, no other can be head of the Church. That is, headship in the Church is unique to Christ and is non-transferable. All those who would follow Christ’s method of ministry cannot do so by taking on His role of headship in the Church but by serving others in accordance with the “mind of Christ” (cf. Phil 2:5) and God’s moral government of love. Deviation from the unique headship of Christ in the Church follows the enemy’s practice of domination and counterfeit government, which directly contradicts and opposes God’s moral government of love.

Accordingly, the role of “head” in the home (Eph 5:23) is not transferable to the realm of the Church. Indeed, the idea
that the role of “head” in the home would or should transfer to other realms is a fallacious non sequitur (that is, the transfer from one realm to another does not follow logically). For example, one’s role in the home obviously does not translate into a similar or analogous role in one’s workplace.

Beyond the logical problems inherent in the move from head of the home to headship in the Church, two demonstrably biblical rationales exclude such a transfer. First, as already noted, Christ is the only Head of the Church. Any attempt at proliferation of “heads” in the Church is thus unacceptable for it is a step toward usurping the unique headship role of Christ, who is the only mediator between God and humans. It is unscriptural to speak of any kind of headship in the Church apart from that of Christ.

No inspired writer teaches the headship of man over woman at the Creation. Rather, Genesis 1 teaches us that male and female participate equally in the image of God, with no hint of pre-fall subordination of one to the other (Gen 1:27). Genesis 2 reinforces Genesis 1 in this regard. Eve’s creation from Adam’s side shows that she is “to stand by his side as an equal” (Gen 2:21-22; PP 46). Although various interpretations of Gen 3:16 have recognized some kind of post-?Fall disruption of this pre-Fall egalitarian ideal, the Bible consistently calls us back to God’s original plan for full equality without hierarchy (Song 7:10; Isa 65:17, 25; cf. Gen 1:29-30). Paul’s writings, though often misunderstood (2 Pet 3:16), maintain this Eden model (Eph 5:21--?23), affirming with the rest of Scripture the Gospel ideal of the ultimate restoration of the Eden model (cf. Matt 19:8; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 3:28). Ellen White also underlines this redemptive paradigm: “Woman should fill the position which God originally designed for her, as her husband’s equal” (AH 231). “The Lord desires His ministering servants to occupy a place worthy of the highest consideration. In the mind of God, the ministry of men and women existed before the world was created” (18MR 380). “Infinite wisdom devised the plan of redemption, which places the race on a second probation by giving them another trial” (3T 484; cf. PP 58--?59, and 1T 307-308).

Second, every member of the Church is part of the body of Christ, who is the One Head. Since each member of the Church (male or female) is a part of the body of Christ, a member cannot at the same time exercise headship in the Church. In the same way, since Christ is the unique Husband of the Church (Christ’s metaphorical bride), the members of the Church cannot themselves be husbands of the Church but collectively, men and women together, are the bride of Christ. That the Church as family of God is analogous to human families only serves to suggest that humans should manifest the love of God in their family relationships even as Christ does in relationship to His bride.

Within the body of Christ, the only Head of the Church, every member of the Church body receives spiritual gifts: the Spirit gives to “each one [hekastos] individually just as He wills” (1 Cor 12:11). The Holy Spirit is given to all believers at the time of the end: “And afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28-30 NIV). Within this very context, Scripture emphatically excludes the notion of elitism within the Church body of Christ, proclaiming that “we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many” (1 Cor 12:13-14; cf. Gal 3:28). Thus, no member of the body is “any the less a part of the body” regardless of one’s role (1 Cor 12:15-16) and, indeed, those that are deemed “less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor” (1 Cor 12:23).

In all this, every gift and ministry is nothing without love, for “the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13; cf. all of chapter 13; cf. Rom 12:3-10; Eph 4:11-16). Here again, the unselfish love that is central to God’s moral government should be reflected in humble service to one another within Christ’s body and bride, the Church.

This is reflected in Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief No. 14, “Unity in the Body of Christ,” which reads in part: “The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or
There is no third category between the Head and body of Christ, or between the corresponding bridegroom (Christ) and bride (the Church). The minister is not to be separate from the body of Christ, but is likewise a member of Christ's body and thus plays a non-elitist role in service to and alongside the other members that corresponds to the individual's Spirit-bestowed gifts and accords with the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet 2:5-9; Rev 1:6; 5:10; cf. Ex 19:5-6). Because it is the Spirit who gives gifts to each one (male and female) as He wills (1 Cor 12:11; cf. 12, 18, 19, 27-31; Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:18; Rom 12:4-8; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Pet 4:10), the Church confers no spiritual powers or gifts on anyone but merely recognizes the gifts that God has granted and facilitates corresponding opportunities for ministry within the body of Christ. Leadership ministries within the Church are facilitated by the Church body as a recognition of the particular Spirit-given gifts and characteristics of servant leadership that reflect God's moral government of unselfish love (cf. Phil 2:5-8). In this way, both individually and collectively the Church is to complete its mission of proclaiming the Three Angels' Messages and revealing God's character of love, the last revelation of God's mercy to the world (COL 415).

In sum, any form of headship claimed by a mere human, whether male or female, usurps the sole headship of Christ over the Church. Christian service, including Church leadership, is to reflect but never usurp Christ's leadership. Thus, while Christ's manner of leadership is to be reflected by believers, Christ's particular role of leadership is unique and not to be encroached upon by any mere human.

Christ alone is the Head of the Church body, of which all Christians are members and submitted to Him. No human leader, then, may rightfully assume a headship role within the Church; the highest level that any leaders can "ascend" corresponds directly to the depths to which they are willing to descend in loving and humble service, giving themselves for Christ's body even as Christ gave himself for his body and bride, his beloved Church, the object of "His supreme regard" (2SAT 215).

Affirmations and Denials

1. We affirm that there is only one Head of the Church, Christ, and this headship in the Church is non-transferable and inimitable. Thus, Christ's particular role of leadership is unique.
2. We deny that any human can rightly assume a headship role within the Church.
3. We affirm that leadership in the Church should be modeled after Christ's servant leadership and grounded in love, with the recognition that Christ's manner of leadership is to be reflected by Christian leaders.
4. We deny any Church government that results in sacramental, elitist, and headship-oriented leadership, which are counterfeit of Christ's moral government of love and usurp His unique role and authority as Head of the Church (His body) and husband of the Church (His wife).
5. We affirm that Church leaders possess stewardship responsibilities of the affairs of the Church, carrying out the decisions of the Church made in committee and business sessions.
6. We deny that any mere human is invested with final decision-making authority in regards to Church teaching, ritual, or doctrine.
7. We affirm the priesthood of all believers and that no human mediator is needed between God and humans.
8. We deny any elevation of Church leaders as mediators between God and humans or as head of or in the Church.

[i] Unless indicated otherwise, the biblical text is quoted from the New American Standard Bible (1995).
[ii] It is worth noting that some statements that refer to leadership roles within the Church use language that many English versions translate as "rule." For example, 1 Tim 5:17 states: "The elders who rule [prosttites from the root proistemi] well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and
teaching” (cf. the similar use of this root in Rom 12:8; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:4-5, 12). The root proistemi, here translated “rule,” literally refers to those who “stand before,” beneficially leading and ministering to the community, and should not be confused with some kind of monarchical rulership or sovereignty. In the LXX it refers to the household “ministry” of a servant of the prince (2 Sam 13:17; cf. 1 Tim 3:4--5, 12) and the noun form of this root, prostatic, refers to Phoebe’s ministry as diakonos (Rom 16:1-2).
Morning Silence

http://www.atodayarchive.org/article/2649/poetry-the-arts/visual-arts/morning-silence

Photo by S M Chen
Submitted Aug. 21, 2014

Tai Chi. Westlake. Hangchow, China. 1980
Riding Against Abuse

http://www.atodayarchive.org/article/2650/features/articles/riding-against-abuse

by Debbonnaire Kovacs
Submitted Aug 21, 2014

Dr. Colin A. Dunbar, Sr., pastor and grief counselor in the Upper Columbia Conference, is on vacation. So, every morning he gets up and is on his bicycle by 4:50 to 5 am, ready to ride another 60-100 miles, or even more. Why? Is this his way of relaxing? Well, yes, he does love his biking, as well as long-distance challenges, up to and including a 50-day, 3667-mile ride across America at one point. This ride is a little shorter than that—from Maine to Florida. But he’s not just doing it for the fun of it.

America By Bicycle is a bicycle touring organization who have planned and are executing this ride, called Ride the East. There will be around 20 people involved, 17 riding the whole way, with a few joining for some portion of the tour. Most are riding simply for the joy they find in the physical and mental challenge. Some are riding to raise funds for one or another non-profit organization. Dr. Dunbar and Phyllis Ruper, from Chisolm, MN, who has also ridden many miles in her time, in Canada, New Zealand, and across the States, are two of those. They are riding to raise awareness and funds for the Women’s Healing and Empowerment Network (WHE Network), based in Spokane, WA. You can read more about WHE below.

In an interview with Adventist Today (from Washington, D.C., where he was on Tuesday, August 19) Dr. Dunbar reflected on the question, “Why do I do it?” He may be surprised when he reads this, but it seemed to me as I read over his responses that they flowed naturally into three main categories.

As a husband: “I believe God has called my wife to do this ministry. I know some pastors, some husbands would not be the most comfortable with seeing their spouses giving so much time to an area that is not necessarily producing the big bucks, not producing a steady wage. But I have seen God’s call in Mable’s life, and I’m here for her. I believe God calls me to support her.”

“As a minister,” he continued, “I firmly believe that this is what Jesus would do. I firmly believe that the method that God would use is one that provides healing, not just spiritually but healing of the heart. I am of the conviction that we would make greater inroads in society if we would seek to discover the needs of the people we are trying to minister to and minister to them in a disinterested way so that their needs are met, so that as a result of our love and acceptance they would see the God who loves them, who calls them, who comes back for them and does not want them to be in an abusive situation. I’ve been involved in pastoral ministry for 36 years now, and I’ve had people who have been abused in various ways. This is gravely needed.”

As a man: “We know that most victims are female, and most perpetrators are male, hence, in attempting to effect healing, there is the need for a male image that represents gentleness, appropriateness, trustworthiness. I am committed, I believe in that type of ministry, even beyond
that I provide the religious aspect to the WHE network. I am not the only one; there are other pastors, some outside of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. I believe that is a contribution I can make as a man.”

He adds that he is “somewhat handy with my hands,” and sometimes helps with repairs, painting, mowing, and so on.

And then there’s the bike. “God has given us various talents, one of which is health—he has blessed me abundantly as a 65-year-old, never hospitalized, not sickly. I believe God wants each Christian to use all his benefits to maximize the associations we come in contact with.” Dunbar has four weeks of vacation coming. He is spending the first three riding hundreds of miles which he described as “very challenging,” especially the grades, some of them 12-15% for up to two miles at a time, and as high as 4600 feet (1400 meters) in elevation, hoping to raise both awareness and funds for a vastly underserved group of God’s hurting children. Then he’s spending the last week “doing something more personal with Mable.” (One of the best ways to maintain healthy marriages and prevent abuse!) Here is a rundown of what WHE stands for, as well as links to webpages of interest, and ways you can donate.

In this interview, Dr. Dunbar reiterated the heartbreaking statistics you’ve read in this space (and others) before: one out of four girls and women have experienced or are experiencing abuse, and the statistics are the same across all walks of life, all socio-economic levels, all religions and denominations. Dunbar’s wife, Mable Dunbar, wanted to do something besides talk about it, worry about it, or even pray about it, important as that is. She is founder and CEO of the WHE Network, which, Dr. Dunbar explained, has six main components.

1. Education and abuse recovery. They go into schools, churches, offices, or wherever they are asked, to do trainings and lectures on such subjects as being more sensitive to workplace sexual harassment, or dating issues. They also do larger educational “summits,” with doctors, lawyers, social workers, clergy, and survivors who are willing to speak on the subject. Dunbar said there is one “coming up soon,” but didn’t have details, and they are not on the WHE website yet.

2. Networking and consultation; “In order to address this pandemic situation,” Dr. Dunbar said, “one entity is not broad enough to arrest the abuse that is being experienced across this country—WHE endeavors to network with various bodies or administrations that are already engaged in some kind of work or ministry against abuse, including advocacy, expert insight, and so on. Without prevention, it’s just a matter of time before abuse recurs.”

3. “Probably what is appreciated most by the clients, is that WHE runs healing centers for women and children.” Dunbar spoke of centers in Niles, MI, Spokane, WA, and other places, including one being set up in England. Actual locations, of course, are kept secret for the safety of the women and children they serve.

4 WHE has a special program for children called PROTECT: Preventing and Reducing Oppression To End Childhood Trauma
5 They also provide crisis counseling for the abusive perpetrators. Sometimes the law requires
some form of counseling, and in any case, all workers in this field recognize that it will never
stop until we rescue and re-educate the perpetrators. “WHE provides qualified counselors to
educate and correct remediably,” Dunbar said.

6 Cleone’s Closet. This is not presently available at all healing centers, but it is not only a thrift
store that provides for the vulnerable, but also provides activity and income for shelter residents.
“It is a way of keeping the clients active,” Dunbar explained. “Once they’re in the homes or
healing centers, about four times a week they are in group sessions where they are educated on
various themes pertinent to changing their lifestyle and the mentality that would make them
victims. With that educational component, they do physical work as in gardening, and also
manage and operate Cleone’s Closet.”

http://www.whenetwork.com
I, for one, was extremely impressed with the first words that greeted me on the WHE landing
page: “If you are in an abusive relationship and there is a chance your abuser may check your
internet usage, use the quick exit in our menu bar to get out of our site fast from any page and
clear your history when done. **Please consider this before proceeding.** Abuse in any form is
NEVER God’s plan for your life!”

http://www.abbike.com/Misc/about.shtml Across America by Bicycle, the organizer of this ride.

http://www.whenetwork.com/ride-the-east-fundraiser.html More details about Dr. Dunbar and
Phyllis Ruper, and links for donations. They appreciate anything, but are especially looking for
those who could commit to giving any amount regularly.

http://sol1ny.macmate.me/gallery/ABB%20-%20RtE14%20North/ (pictures)
Jack’s question to Ted Wilson and Ed Zinke was removed by the editors of the Adventist Review website 10 minutes after it was published, so you will have to read it here.

It took 10 minutes for the Adventistreview.org website to disapprove of my question as the first comment on a news article posted on line this morning. So for 10 minutes you could read my unedited comment, before it was vetoed. I tried to be respectful and courteous to the reporter, to Ted Wilson, and to Ed Zinke, even though they were asking me to leave my church.

According to the news article, those who have a different scientific opinion on the age of the earth and life on it than Mr. Wilson, and those whose theology does not require the same Biblical Literalism that Mr. Zinke sees as essential to my salvation, are invited to leave Seventh-day Adventism.

“World church President Ted N.C. Wilson forcefully asserted that life has existed on the Earth for only a few thousand years, not millions of years, as he opened an educators conference in Utah on Friday, and he said teachers who believe otherwise should not call themselves Seventh-day Adventists. . . .” according to Adventist Review news editor Andrew McChesney.[i]

Mr. Wilson’s assertion on the age of the earth must have been forceful because of the fact that he is “World Church President,” as there is no scientific model available to support his “forceful assertion” of a few thousand year history of life on earth.[ii] So I guess my question was, does a man elected to his office by people like me have the right to disenfranchise people like me who elected him to his position, based on a scientific opinion different from his? “Ed Zinke, an Adventist theologian, businessman and co-organizer of the conference, explained in an interview that the implications of misinterpreting the Bible could run deep and seriously harm a person’s relationship with God,” McChesney continues.

Mr. Ed Zinke and I attended the same classes at Pacific Union College; we had the same theology teachers for my religion major and his theology major. I have read and valued the teachings of Ellen G. White as Ed does. I have worked for the Seventh-day Adventist church all my life both as a denominational employee in African mission service (13 years) and in the Adventist Health system for the rest of my career. Yet Ed thinks that Ellen White cannot be right on the fact of creation and at the same time be wrong on the chronology of creation.

Ed should know as well as I do that according to the Ellen G. White Encyclopedia, pages 706 and 707, “Nothing would prevent those who value her writings today from accepting the conventional age for the universe determined by scientists. . . . Ellen White’s references to about 6,000 years of earth history and about 4,000 years from creation to the Incarnation cannot rightfully be used to provide a complete chronology, because Ellen White relied upon Archbishop James Ussher for these and other dates that were found in the margins of most Bibles in the mid-nineteenth century. . . . Just as we should caution against using Ellen White’s
writings to settle the date for Creation, so we must caution against using her writings to settle the date for the Incarnation or the Crucifixion. For her, chronology is never an end in itself, but a means to an end.”[iii]

So, trying very hard to be approved by the website, I wrote a respectful and courteous question as the first comment to the article. I wanted to ask Andrew and Ted and Ed,

“Jack Hoehn
So what shall the rest of us call ourselves now? Seventh-day Scientists, Seventh-day Realists, Seventh-day Old Earth Creationists? Has anyone the right to call for a purge of Seventh-day Adventists, based on a scientific opinion?”

My question was removed by the editors about 11 minutes after I posted it, and they “will not be able to respond to inquiries regarding that.” But then that is exactly why you read Adventist Today. Your answers to this question are welcome.

An Update by Jack:

~~August 19, 2014 Update: A Stranger Story. On the Adventist Review website under McChesney’s news article on the morning of 8/18/2014 there were “No Comments” when I made mine, I was offered the opportunity of “Be the first to comment.” My comment and question was taken off the comments 11 minutes after I wrote it from the blog. I then wrote my Adventist Today blog above.

Miraculously on the Adventist Review site later that day my comment/question then reappeared, with comments of 3 days and 2 days age above mine, and replies by two commenters below mine. Happy that dialog was now permitted, I replied briefly to one who commented on my question.

Oh no, my brief response to the comments have again been removed by the editor when I check back this morning 8/19/2014.

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[ii] The Seventh-day Adventist Geological Research Institute has admitted that there is no suitable scientific model yet available supporting a recent age of the earth. As one avid Young Earth Creationist (David Reed, May 12, 2010) wrote, “I think GRI is a disappointment, not just with regard to the La Sierra controversy but more generally. The denomination has never gotten a good return on its investment in GRI. One of the early directors, Richard Ritland, became a long-ages advocate. The current director seems deeply troubled by radiometric dating.” Perhaps our GRI scientists are “deeply troubled” by the evidence, or perhaps they are “deeply troubled” by being forced to only have one acceptable age of the creation?

Adventist Today

GC President Wilson II Ex Cathedra Pronouncement: “Believe My Theology on Young Earth/Young Life Creationism or Get Out”

by Ervin Taylor, August 18, 2014

On August 17, 2014, the news editor of the Adventist Review (AR) reported the following: “World church President Ted N.C. Wilson forcefully asserted that life has existed on the Earth for only a few thousand years, not millions of years, as he opened an educators conference in Utah on Friday . . . [He] said teachers who believe otherwise should not call themselves Seventh-day Adventists or work in church-operated schools.” He expanded on this his view with the comment that “If one does not accept the recent six-day creation understanding, then that person is actually not a ‘Seventh-day' Adventist. . . .” His remarks were made at an invitation-only meeting of what were characterized as “mainly teachers.”

He addressed his remarks specifically at those who taught at Adventist “academies, colleges and universities” (as well as "leaders in God's church") and continued by telling his listeners that they should “hold firmly to a literal recent creation and absolutely reject theistic and general evolutionary theory.” He was further quoted as having cautioned Adventist educators “against associating with scientists, humanists and 'some who claim to be Seventh-day Adventists' who have embraced an evolution-based creation theory.” He further called on these Adventist educators to be “champions of creation based on the [b]iblical account and reinforced so explicitly by the Spirit of Prophecy,” i.e., the 19th-century views of Ellen White. According to Wilson II, they should reject a “popular teaching” that the “world [is] much older than the 6,000-odd years that Creationists believe have passed since the Earth was formed.” He noted that this “popular teaching . . . has crept into some Adventist schools in recent years and prompted, in part, a decision by the Adventist Church to start organizing Bible and science conferences in 2002.”

Commentary: One interpretation of what Wilson II is attempting to accomplish is to force the institutional Adventist Church to embrace overtly the kind of hyper-sectarian, anti-intellectual fundamentalism that characterized it in the early part of the 20th century. He and his supporters in the Adventist Theological Society are carrying out their long-term plan to return Adventism to what it was theologically from about 1920 to 1940. One part of that openly-declared plan is to add explicitly fundamentalist language to SDA Fundamental Belief number 6 to state that the days of creation were six, literal, 24-hour days. That plan now appears also to include a publicly-declared direct frontal assault on Adventist higher education with the intention of dismantling the intellectual and academic freedom that has come to characterize a number of Adventist academic institutions. It may not be an exaggeration to suggest that what might literally be at stake is the theological and intellectual soul of 21st-century Adventism. To attack openly several fields of theological and scientific study in the manner that Wilson II has done will inevitably foster the kinds of intellectual and political repression that inspired the forces that organized the 16th-century Catholic Counter-Reformation and particularly that institution known as the Inquisition. What Wilson II apparently wishes to do is to be the presiding pontifical cleric of a 21st century who will establish the Adventist version of the Counter Reformation-and Inquisition with the intention of turning back the clock on Adventism and returning it to an intellectual Dark Age. What will be interesting to watch is the public reaction of moderate and progressive Adventist academics to this public frontal assault on Adventist higher education with the intention of dismantling the intellectual and academic freedom that has come to characterize a number of Adventist academic institutions. But this is the 21st Century and there are other channels of communication,
and there is now a free press in Adventism in the form of *Adventist Today* and *Spectrum* and their web sites. The question will be whether key members of the Adventist academy will publicly confront the propaganda issued by Wilson II and his supporters. The behavior of Adventist academics will be a critical element in determining whether an intellectually viable Adventism will continue to expand and flourish. If those who have led in moving Adventist theology and higher education in a positive direction over the last four decades are now rendered silent by this direct attack and a new type of Dark Age descends on our faith tradition, there may rapidly come a time when there will be little left to recommend the Adventist faith tradition to our children and grandchildren.

As additional information leaks out from this meeting of Adventist educators, it will be reported and commented upon.
A Curious Conference
by John McLarty, August 18, 2014

Friday, August 15, 2014, was opening day for the “International Conference on the Bible and Science: Affirming Creation.” The following description is posted on its web site: The biblical creation is central to the message of salvation found in the Bible and the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The purpose of the International Conference on the Bible and Science: Affirming Creation is to bring together Adventist educators to explore the creation through both Bible study and study of the creation itself. Ultimately, it is hoped that participants will leave better equipped and inspired to teach about the creation in an informed, responsible and faith-affirming way. Held primarily in St. George, Utah, this conference features Christian speakers and invitees from the global community of faith in the Creator God as revealed in the Bible. In his opening address, Elder Ted Wilson, president of the General Conference, called on the 350 participants “to be champions of creation based on the Biblical account and reinforced so explicitly by the Spirit of Prophecy.” This introduces one of several curiosities of this conference. Elder Wilson is quite adamant about the need for Adventist educators to adhere to and wholeheartedly advocate the Biblical account of creation. However, the details of the Adventist interpretation of Genesis 1-9 are in flux. First curiosity: Based on the presenters at this faith and science conference, Adventists no longer believe God created the heavens and the earth 6000 years ago. Richard Davidson and Randy Younker (and by implication Elder Wilson) believe God created the heavens 14.5 billion years ago. They believe God created the material of earth 4.5 billion years ago. They disagree with science only in their dating of the phanerozoic rocks. (To be more precise, in papers presented at earlier faith and science conferences, Davidson and Younker argued that Genesis One gives us no information about the date of the creation of extra-terrestrial or pre-biological material, which leaves the conventional dates unchallenged.) Adventists no longer believe the Flood created all the fossils. Current orthodoxy is that the Flood created only the Paleozoic and Mesozoic fossils. Second curiosity: Elder Wilson famously urged Adventists to refrain from reading non-Adventist authors in areas that touch on theology and spiritual life. This conference features presentations by non-Adventists, including John Baumgartner, Kurt Wise, Marcus Ross, and John Whitmore. Except for these non-Adventists, all the other presenters are the old stalwarts of Adventist creationism. The only new voices are these non-Adventists. Third curiosity: Ed Zinke, one of the organizers of the conference, scheduled himself to speak seven of the nine days of the conference. His prominence in the conference program is problematic because he has not held a pastoral, faculty or elected position in the church in years. I have to wonder how the conference participants who are actually involved in the life of the church will respond to being instructed by someone who lives and thinks completely outside the accountability structures of the church. Especially in light of Elder Wilson’s strident advocacy of accountability. Fourth curiosity: Secrecy. This from the conference web site: Resources provided for invitees to the International Conference on the Bible and Science: Affirming Creation (ICBS) are solely for the use of those who received invitations to attend this conference from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and actually do attend the conference. By accessing these resources you are stating that you are an invitee to the ICBS with permission to access and use them. All resources linked to from [sic] the “ICBS – Materials for Invitees” (http://fscsda.org/icbs/icbs-program/) website remain the property of the conference presenter who provided them. They are made available solely for the private use of invited attendees of the Faith and Science Council sponsored “International Conference on the Bible and Science: Affirming Creation” held in Las Vegas, Nevada, and St. George, Utah, August 14-25, 2014. Those who are not invited attendees may not access these materials and may not be provided with either links to these materials or the passwords necessary to access them. These materials may not be redistributed in any form or via any media without the express written permission of the person who provided them to the conference organizers. By clicking on any of the links in the “ICBS – Materials for
This secrecy was apparent even before the conference began. There was no general announcement that the church was going to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to gather educators for this conference. In May I was in the field with an Adventist geologist and met a couple of the organizers at an outcrop in southern Utah. We spent a couple of hours together. They carefully avoided the slightest mention that they were in the area scouting sites for the Faith and Science Conference. I will refrain from speculating about the reasons for the secrecy, but it is an “in your face” feature of the conference. A final non-curiosity: If you wish to know the content of the presentations at the conference, all you have to do is Google the presenters. They are well-known and their views are readily available.
Whose Faith and Science Conference?

by Ervin Taylor, August 21, 2014

The website that contained information about the SDA General Conference Faith and Science Conference starkly reveals the narrow range of opinions held by the Seventh-day Adventists who were permitted to be presented at this conference. In no sense can the presentations made represent the views of a majority of Adventist scientists, as revealed in surveys obtained a decade ago. Those surveys showed that a majority of Adventist scientists did not support the idea that earth or life upon it was only 6,000 years old. It would be very surprising that such views could have changed so radically in just 10 years. Whether the theological views expressed at the conference represent those held by a majority of Adventist theologians is therefore open to question. If the titles of the presentations are any indication of content, what was permitted to be presented were only the most radically conservative viewpoints, bordering on explicitly fundamentalist.

In many respects, a more accurate title for the conference should have been, “The Brand-Davidsons-Chadwick-Zinke Faith and Science Conference.” Their multiple presentations dominated the schedule. Their names and how many times they made a presentation (in parentheses) is: Leonard Brand (12 times), Richard and Jo Ann Davidson (separately a total of 10 times), Art Chadwick (9 times) and Ed Zinke (7 times). Wilson II is on the program twice, speaking on: “God’s Authoritative Voice” and the last presentation of the conference, “God’s Final Message and Your Role.” From the titles, some might wonder how Wilson II receives his information—straight from God by some special supernatural means or does he obtain it the same way that other humans receive information?

Whose Faith and Science Conference is this? It is certainly not a Faith and Science Conference representing the wide spectrum of views held by Adventist scholars, both scientists and theologians. It is a conference to advance a highly focused rightwing theological agenda of certain members of the Adventist Church, an agenda which was first clearly articulated by the Adventist Theological Society more than a decade ago and is now being carried out.

If anyone would like to obtain a copy of the program, please feel free to email me at erv.taylor@atoday.org and I will be happy to email it to you.
The Midwife’s Tale

by Debbonnaire Kovacs
submitted Aug 21, 2014

I usually tend to think about the story of baby Moses from either Jochebed’s or Miriam’s point of view. Occasionally, I’ve wondered what it was like for the princess. But today I think I’ll consider some people I haven’t really thought about before: the midwives.

Possibly the most amazing thing about the account of these women is that they are named. This is a rare honor for any female in the Bible, and particularly rare for one of low caste such as a midwife. No one knows how many midwives served the large Hebrew population; these are clearly only two of many. There is some question in the text as to whether they are Hebrew women, or simply serve Hebrew women, but according to the Jewish Women’s Archive, the names are Semitic, not Egyptian, so it is most likely they were Hebrew. This site also points out that the fact that God honored them by giving them families implies that they had been barren before this, and also that they were still of child-bearing age, which was not always the case with midwives of the ancient world.

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From long practice, I can rub sleep out of my eyes, pull on my outer gown, grab my bag of necessities, and run from my hut in about ten seconds flat. It’s always in the middle of the night. I believe babies like to start making difficulties for us as soon as possible. As I breathlessly trot after little Miriam down the darkened alleyway, I hear the slap of sandals from a side street, and Puah joins us, panting even harder than I am. We can neither of us run as Miriam can, dashing along in front of us, turning back to hurry us onward.

“It’s okay,” I try to gasp, “we should still have plenty of time, child!”

We skid to a stop at Amram’s house. Even if we didn’t already know the right one, we’d know it by the man pacing outside distractedly. He sees us and rushes to pull at us. “Hurry! She’s in pain! What took you so long?”

We just smile. We’re used to husbands, too.

We duck into the doorway and find Jochebed pacing, rubbing her belly and looking as if she’s far away in another world. As always, I experience that jab of envy. They always look like that—like something has taken them over, something alien and unknowable. Childbirth is both the most natural thing in the world and the most supernatural.

That’s what I think, anyway, but Puah always says I’m too dreamy.

For the rest of the night, I’m too busy to dream. Little Aaron has been hustled off, still mostly asleep, to a neighbor’s house. Miriam is old enough to be of some help, and the three of us walk with Jochebed, give her water, let her clutch our hands, encourage her, rub her back. I always wonder what it is we actually do, unless something bad happens. Which I pray it won’t. These days, too, we have a different prayer.

_Holy One, let it not be a boy!

Who, in a million years, would ever have believed we could ask such a thing? To not want sons? It seems almost
blasphemous. But the men have it worst, right now, in any case, quite aside from that appalling decree. We feel, more
than see, Amram's shadow passing the doorway, first one way, then the other. He's not just pacing in the
time-honored childbed wait. He's on guard. He'll let us know immediately if any Egyptian comes. Jochebed's pains
are taking her hard, now, and Puah muffles her groans in the front of her skirt. "Shh, shh, mistress, bite down! Don't
scream!"

They mustn't know. Not till it's over. I try to be as reassuring as possible, especially seeing the fear in Miriam's eyes.
Hard enough for a girl, when she's first present at a birth. Lately, every one is even more of a crisis than usual.

When the child finally slides into my waiting hands from between the stones Jochebed crouches on, I can't help giving
despairing look to Puah. Jochebed intercepts the glance. "It's a boy?" she gasps.

I nod, rubbing the slippery little body with olive oil and preparing to cut the cord.

"A fine healthy son!" says Puah, too brightly.

In a few minutes, the baby is clean, afterbirth is disposed of, Jochebed is back in her freshly made bed, and we call in
Amram. I stand back and watch, as I always do. The weary serenity on a mother's face is always another pang to me.
Again, she is in a world from which I have been excluded. This time, the serenity is troubled, like the surface of a lake
before a storm. Miriam huddles at her mother's shoulder, chin trembling, and I see Jochebed reach for her. "Trust
God, my daughter," she murmurs, but her voice, too, is wobbly, and not entirely from exhaustion.

Amram's chin seems granite-like as Puah hands him his son. He looks into the tiny face, then holds the baby high in
the air and looks up. "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God of Joseph, whom You made as a father to Pharaoh,
look down on this Your son. You give him to us; we give him back to you. Put Your mighty wings over him." Amram
brings the baby back down to his chest as a thin wail arises. The little one is discovering hunger. "Blessed be the
Name of the Lord," the father whispers, as he hands the child to Jochebed.

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A few weeks later, I can barely walk for the terror that grips me. I clutch Puah's hand convulsively and try to keep from
stumbling as we follow the palace officers who stride along, ignoring us, knowing full well we will be right behind them
when they turn to usher us into the presence of the great Pharaoh himself. My heart beats so hard I feel sick. The
king has learned that there are baby boys in Goshen, living, kicking, crying baby boys. I am sure we are not the only
midwives who are refusing to kill them at birth.

The guards swing to the side at a huge doorway and motion us past them. I catch only a glimpse of a gold-covered
throne and harsh, eagle eyes, before dropping my petrified gaze to the mosaic floor beneath my feet.

"You know the command," growls the voice of power.

We can only nod. I am concentrating on not vomiting on the mosaic.

"Why, then, have you allowed these Hebrew boys to live?"

I want to shout, "What kind of monsters do you think we are? We bring life! We do not destroy it! Who could kill a
baby?" But I simply cower in silence.

"Well?" demands the voice angrily.

We are not likely to leave the room alive. I should just go ahead and say it. But then, who would save the boys that
are growing in their mothers now? Somehow, we have to keep working! Holy One! my mind gibbers incoherently.
And then Shiphrah takes my breath away. Sounding quite calm (only her death-grip on my hand betrays her), she says reasonably, "Lord, the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women. They are strong, and give birth before the midwives can even get there."

I hold my breath. He will never accept this answer. It implies that Egyptian women are pampered, weak creatures. But silence falls, and I dare to sneak a glance. He is rubbing his chin thoughtfully. A minister leans in, and I hear part of the whispering. "…not like us…breed like animals…get more use out of them…"

Shiphrah and I hold our breaths and share a sideways look. Are they taking this as a compliment?

"You may go!" comes the order, and we get out as fast as we can. I privately promise an extra sacrifice to the God of our fathers. And mothers.

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Three months later, I can hardly stop crying long enough to tell my husband… he is to be a father.

_Blessed be the Name of the Lord._

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