Adventists in the U.S. Congress Re-elected (NEWS): The Republican ascendancy in the recent US election fell short of dislodging Adventist incumbents from two of the nation's most populous states....

Reviewing - God's Prophetic Movement, Message, and Mission and Their Attempted Neutralization by the Devil (OPINION): Andy Hanson sees in recent remarks by the denomination’s president a return to a darker strain of Adventist thought....

Adventists Celebrate 100 Years in Andhra, India (NEWS): Adventists in the Southern Asia Division rose to the festive occasion in celebrating the centennial of the Church's arrival in the region....
Preparing for a Time of Trouble? (OPINION): Guest writer Ed Schwisow says looking to the past for impetus to move forward can be taken way too far--and undoubtedly is in the matter of strong opposition to women's ordination and exclusive support for a literalist Genesis 1 and 2 position....

Adventist Bishops and Archbishops (OPINION): In some parts of the Adventist world, for public consumption the traditional titles "bishops" and "archbishops" are used to denote conference/mission and union conference/mission Adventist leaders. Opinion writer Ervin Taylor suggests we consider standardizing this nomenclature throughout the world Church....

Coronation Time (OPINION): Harry Banks urges us to consider that the coronation of Christ in our lives takes place "among confession, tears, and great laughter," when the lost is found and redirected to the source of strength....

A Woman of Fiery Spirit (DEVOTIONAL): Dedicated women have always possessed a bit of fire in the spirit. Read a bit of thought purporting to be from Judge-and-Prophet Deborah's point of view...and then read some quotes from The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary that particularly fascinate in their heated context....

FEATURE
(Available to all logged-in subscribers; to apply for a free 30-day subscription, click here)

New Book: A Day in the Life of Jesus: An Alberta (Canada) pastor's family has worked after Dad's tragic death to make his dream come true, editing and publishing a devotional book, A Day in the Life of Jesus, which uses imaginative, first-person narrative to look at Jesus through the eyes of those he walked and worked with daily....
POETRY & THE ARTS

Autumn Splendor (VISUAL): A breathtaking maple in all its autumn glory (photographer Debbonnaire Kovacs says she needs more visual arts submissions, so she doesn't have to dip into her own files so often....)

The Northwest Quadrant (PROSE): S M Chen shares some thoughts and a graph, as he looks at the existence or non-existence of God....
Adventists in the U.S. Congress Re-elected

By AT News Team, November 12, 2014

The two Adventists who serve as elected members of the United States Congress won new terms in last week's national election. Representative Sheila Jackson Lee from Houston and Representative Raul Ruiz from the Coachella Valley in southern California are both members of the Democratic Party and won despite the nationwide "wave" for the Republican Party.

Ruiz is a physician first elected two years ago, defeating incumbent Rep. Mary Bono Mack, a Republican and widow of the famous pop singer Sonny Bono who entered politics after his singing career ended and served in the same seat up to the time of his death. Ruiz beat Brian Nestande, a member of the state legislature, in California's 36th Federal Congressional District.

In his victory speech, Ruiz announced that he and wife Monica are expecting twins in April. He told his constituents he will continue to push for immigration reform, for support for veterans and seniors and "equality for everyone." He also reached out to Nestande's supporters; "My door is open. I want to hear your concerns, I want to understand your views," he said. Her served as associate dean for the School of Medicine at the University of California Riverside prior to running for Congress.

Lee defeated Sean Seibert in Texas' 18th District with 72 percent of the vote. She was first elected to Congress in 1994. After two decades she is a powerful member of the national legislature in America serving on committees that oversee foreign affairs and homeland security. She is currently working for the passage of a law against bullying, led the fight for passage of the Fair Sentencing Act and gathered unanimous support to amend the 2012 Defense Authorization Bill that creates a day of honor for the return of American troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Lee earned a college degree in political science from Yale University and a law degree from the University of Virginia. She is married to Dr. Elwyn Lee, an administrator at the University of Houston, and the couple has two adult children.

Officials of the Southeastern California Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination declined to identify which local church Ruiz belongs to although they did acknowledge that he is an Adventist. The denomination's South West Region Conference gave much the same response to an inquiry about Lee.

Ruiz is Hispanic and Lee is an African American. Adventists in the United States are well represented in both ethnic minority groups and have had significant growth among both communities. For decades there were two Adventists in the U.S. Congress who were both male, both white and both from the Republican Party.
The re-election of these two public servants is an indicator of the demographic changes occurring among American Adventists. It may also point toward cultural changes among Adventists as the majority in the U.S. Congress moves in a more conservative and nationalist direction, but Adventist elected officials are not part of it.

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Reviewing - God’s Prophetic Movement, Message, and Mission and Their Attempted Neutralization by the Devil

Ted N.C. Wilson’s sermon at the 2014 Annual Council - Posted October 11, 2014
Reviewed by Andy Hanson, November 13, 2014

I was appalled by this “message” to the Adventist worldwide community. Its narcissistic tone is frightening. Relying heavily on quotations from Ellen White, Ted assumes the ability to speak Truth to all those who question his authority. He is entitled to overrule the decisions of those who disagree with him. His lack of empathy is astonishing. He uses fear and threats in an attempt to manipulate the behavior of others. And he demonstrates a lack of remorse for the feelings of those he castigates.

For the complete complement of Wilson religious pronouncements, see footnote.

In this Prophetic Movement message, Ted describes his foundational Adventist belief in “sola Scriptura” this way. “It is in that very Word of God that the Lord reveals that His last-day people would be guided by the prophetic gift! The Spirit of Prophecy is a wonderful blessing to lead us back to the Bible and to make clearer its meaning and application in our lives.” Consequently, Ted’s version of reality is strongly influenced by the writings of Ellen White (EGW), as evidenced by the fact that he quotes and paraphrases EGW’s words twenty-four times, and a third of his words (2025 out of 6530) are direct EGW quotes or attributed paraphrases.

The word grace appears only once. It’s used in the phrase, “grace and righteousness of Christ.” The words love and loves appear only in this sentence: “Church members love what the world loves.” Satan or the Devil is referred to twenty-seven times.

In this speech Ted asserts that Seventh-day Adventists are God’s exclusive remnant because they “keep holy” the fourth of the Ten Commandments; subscribe to the literal truth of the first eleven chapters of Genesis, particularly the creation story; and “are guided by “the prophetic gift” of Ellen White. He demonizes Catholics, independent religious thought, historical analysis of the Bible text, and the questioning of the Church’s administrative authority.

I asked a friend and former colleague in Chico State’s Psychology Department to read the transcript of this speech. He returned it to me with some of the following words scribbled in the margin: “grandiose,” “demonizing,” “this sounds Catholic,” “I thought Christ’s crucifixion was more than an offer,” “the only chosen?” “His family members are on Satan’s hit list because he is who he is?” “my way or hell?” “dictating worship practices?” “you guys are God’s favorite human beings?” “God’s waiting on his probationers?” “Andy, you are ‘dead meat.’”

When I debriefed my friend, I was surprised by his “so what” attitude regarding Ted’s theology. He was acquainted with the beliefs held by other fundamentalist denominations, and wondered at my consternation. But what he said next blew my mind. “The picture of that guy translating the speech into French as if his salvation depends on getting it right is really disturbing. The fact that your President’s words will be translated into hundreds of languages and considered to be God’s word by millions of uneducated and naive listeners is a moral and intellectual tragedy.”
Ted’s narcissistic and terrifying world is not the one I live in, and his God is not mine. Even though I was influenced by teachers who shared Ted's worldview early in my life, I met other Adventists who inhabited a different world, a world of inclusive, joyful worship, whose inhabitants loved and encouraged me to fearlessly find my own way in the world; who lived lives of Christ-like service; who believed that scientific reasoning was God’s gift; who inspired me to ask questions; whose words and deeds defined integrity; and who lived the two great commandments: Love God—meaning: honor God by your willingness to do what is right, using Christ’s life as the moral standard; and Treat Your Neighbor As Yourself—meaning: take care of each other because we are all God’s children.

I’m convinced that C. S. Lewis knew religious authorities like Ted. I’ll close with his words. “Of all tyrannies, a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive. . . . Those who torment us for our own good will torment us without end for they do so with the approval of their own conscience.” (9)


(2) The Devil will work “from the inside to weaken the church through dissension, discord, and conformity to the world.”

(3) “God has given us light in regard to the things that are now taking place in the last remnant of time.”

(4) Satan will foster “charismatic and Pentecostal music approaches…rather than focus on truly worshiping God.” Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, page 470

(5) Satan will use “skepticism about the veracity of the scriptural record of the origin of life and early history,” bringing in “controversy and discord over Bible doctrine.”

(6) “We are in the shaking time, the time when everything that can be shaken will be shaken.” “The Lord will not excuse those who know the truth if they do not in word and deed obey His commands.” Last Day Events, page 173

(7) Satan is: “doing everything he can to attack the Seventh-day Adventist movement”; working “from the inside to weaken the church through dissension, discord, and conformity to the world”; trying “to neutralize our efforts by secular diversions”; absorbing “people in financial deals and materialistic matters”; encouraging “poor health habits and lack of respect for God’s natural laws that enfeeble the mind and numb the senses”; using “skepticism about the veracity of the scriptural record of the origin of life and early history”; bringing in “controversy and discord over Bible doctrine”; encouraging believers to function “independently from the main body of the church”; suggesting “that reformation within the church consists in giving up our unique doctrines”; scheming “to quell our effectiveness with terrible physical challenges”; attempting to “drown out the proclamation of the Advent message through wars and rumors of wars”; tempting believers “to be so cozy with other religious organizations” that it will neutralize “your own effectiveness through unbiblical ecumenical bonds”; fostering “charismatic and Pentecostal music approaches…rather than focus on truly worshiping God”; and “strengthening [the devil’s]cause by sweeping all into the ranks of spiritualism.”

(8) “Time on this Earth is short…those who are living upon the Earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above, are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator.” The Great Controversy, page 425
“Disasters, moral decay, and financial woes in this very country will lead apostate ministers to rally citizens to demand the enactment of the Sunday law, and the world will follow this lead.”
_The Great Controversy_ pages 587, 590, 592 and 607

“God’s last-day people, their faces radiating the presence of the Spirit, hasten from place to place proclaiming the three angels’ messages and working miracles.” _The Great Controversy_, page 612

“Satan will bring a false revival in those churches under his influence. People will think that God is doing marvelous things among them, but the power is not from God. Through this false revival Satan will spread his influence through Christian churches.” _The Great Controversy_, page 464

“We are in the shaking time, the time when everything that can be shaken will be shaken.” “The Lord will not excuse those who know the truth if they do not in word and deed obey His commands.” _Last Day Events_, page 173

“God has given us light in regard to the things that are now taking place in the last remnant of time.” _Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers_, page 470

“By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our Lord’s return.” _Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing_, page 119

(9) C.S. Lewis. _God in the Dock: Essays on Theology (Making of Modern Theology)_
http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/526469-of-all-tyrannies-a-tyranny-sincerely-exercised-for-the-good
Adventists Celebrate 100 Years in Andhra, India

By AT News Team, November 10, 2014

Adventist missionaries first came to Andhra Pradesh State in southern India a century ago and the centennial was celebrated the weekend of October 26-28. It is the tenth largest of the 29 states in the south Asian nation, situated on the southeast coast. According to the 2011 census, it has a population of 49.4 million. The major language is Telugu and 92 percent of the residents are Hindu, seven percent Muslim with very small segments of Christians, Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists.

It was a “time for festivities, not only for the church but for the whole Southern Asia Adventist community,” wrote Dr. M. S. Jeremiah, president of METAS Adventist Colleges, in an Email news bulletin. “Held in a carnival like atmosphere with lots of gaiety, color and enthusiasm the moments will remain forever etched in the hearts and minds of the thousands of people who congregated in Nuzvid to share in the glory of the church’s historic journey.”

The members of legislative assembly and the municipal commissioner from Shri Prataprao made appearances at the event, congratulating the Adventist denomination on its achievements. Pastor Ted Wilson, president of the denomination’s General Conference, was also present with his wife, as well as the officers of the denomination’s Southern Asia Division. “Wilson was carried in ceremony and brought to the grounds in a well festooned chariot. During his entire ride he was flanked by thousands of cheering children, decked in finery, showering petals, dancing and singing, exhibiting their love for their beloved president in uninhibited, unrestrained manner that brought a lump to the throat,” wrote Jeremiah.

Pastor Measapogu Wilson, union conference president from East Central India, narrated the growth of the faith over the century. He recounted how the first seeds for the Adventist faith in this state were planted by two literature evangelists, William Lenker and A. T. Stroup. The East Central India Union Section currently has about 2,500 congregations and nearly one million members.

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Preparing for a Time of Trouble?

by Edwin A. Schwisow, November 12, 2014

As we draw nearer to General Conference Session in San Antonio, we hear graphic predictions that the Church is in danger of splitting, and solemn avowals that ordaining women could be like throwing the Church off a rock wall—shattering it beyond repair.

The Church is in danger! it’s said. And we should be very afraid.

But that’s not all. To avoid further disaster, we’re told it’s imperative that we vote a tightly drawn, fundamentally literalist interpretation of the Genesis creation story, for all to believe, lest the Church fall victim to wholesale revisionism! And for those with even a slightly different interpretation of Genesis? Well, there would be, perhaps, the “Just Say Go” program. A few weeks ago we heard strong sentiments to this effect directed at teachers by none other than our world President, Pastor Ted Wilson.

So it occurs to me with tongue partially in cheek that in the nine remaining months before what surely will be one of the hottest General Conference sessions in history, some remodeling may be in order at the 23-year-old world headquarters building (see rough sketch above). The design is acceptably conservative (even medieval, though as a mere journalist, I am not top-rank in critiquing historical architecture). There would also be specially reinforced sections to hold petitioners whose employment status is on appeal; a room for filing whistle-blower information confidentially and for a witness-protection plan; and libraries to hold documents that support the measures voted in San Antonio.

This may sound silly, but stay with me. Audacious plans call for audacious symbolism, especially as we contemplate a Time of Trouble in San Antonio. But maybe there’s something we can do before that has a chance to happen.

Struggling with Genesis

The urgent move to accept a single, closely-worded, narrow interpretation on Genesis as a general position for all worldwide members is particularly troubling, because from the beginning (historically) we have been a Church very shy of presidential power (Number One), especially when combined with strong, creedal positions on subsidiary matters of faith (Number Two). We have feared top-down traditionalism that tells us exactly how we must believe. Our Church has drawn up purposely inclusive doctrinal positions on a number of topics to allow various regions of the Church to
adjust in their own, unique ways, to cultural demands in proclamation. For example, the Middle East is undoubtedly a region of the world where immediately implementing wide-scale women’s ordination could be a stumbling block. Likewise, imposing a stringently literalist interpretation on First World teachers, pastors, and evangelists would seriously impact our ability to reach educated, young metro types.

As I have through the years discussed the Bible and Adventism with young, highly educated universitarians, one of the first questions they ask is, “Ed, does your Church demand that you believe in an absolutely literal interpretation of Genesis?”

For the past 35 years I have been able to say, “No, but we do hold without reservation that God created the world. And yes, there’s room for interpretation and study on what exactly took place.” Their faces relax and they nod, “Okay, just wanted to make sure, because we had an Adventist neighbor who insisted that his beliefs on Genesis were absolutely correct. I could simply not discuss matters of faith with him.”

Likewise, my youthful Bible students have often asked me about the Church’s position on women in ministry. Being well-informed, they know it’s a hot topic, and they want to know. They are not prepared to take seriously a Church that discriminates against people based on the restroom facilities they happen to find most useful. Could we say that the door to conversation slams shut as quickly as the “Occupied” sign on a lavatory door during class break?

So We Have a Problem or Two

The primary problem we have as we face these potentially Church-shattering issues in San Antonio is a question of information and trust. It has become popular in today’s Internet world for progressives to paint conservatives in the darkest of diabolical hues; likewise, for conservatives to attribute the opinions of progressives to unspeakably sinister agendas. Providing careful historical and background information is the only way to cast light on the ramifications of strongly divergent positions.

Here’s what *Adventist Today* (AT) is doing to foster that kind of dialogue:

1. *Adventist Today* is preparing to distribute worldwide a pre-Session special issue to all subscribers and to the pastors and officials in those union conferences that request it. It will also make copies available to delegates at the Session itself. It will be colorful and engaging, looking at major issues, including the ones mentioned here. The costs will be in the five figures, and it will be extra-rich in content. It will not be inexpensive to produce, but the cost to the Church of not doing so will be even greater. People expect AT to provide guidance at all phases of our preparation for the Session, and more and more non-North American readers from developing nations are turning to AT for credible, unbiased reporting on hot topics.

2. *Adventist Today* is completing (as I write) a new and expanded Web site, at considerable expense, to handle the burgeoning traffic as we move toward San Antonio. The old site is seriously underpowered for the upcoming task.

3. *Adventist Today* is sending four seasoned reporters to the Session, who will be filing stories throughout the Session, providing on-the-spot analysis and coverage.

4. *Adventist Today* will be filing stories based on interviews and other newsgathering resources not available through other Adventist-associated media. The AT Web site has a very high level of visitor-ship, perhaps the highest in the denomination at this time.

5. *Adventist Today* will publish a wrap-up of the General Conference Session and the implications of actions passed, or defeated, as we survey the road ahead for the Church.
(6) Adventist Today will pay particular attention to the slate of officers voted at the Session, with early analysis of prospects ahead under their stewardship.

The Challenge This Autumn

As we enter the autumn season, moving toward the Session in less than nine months, Adventist Today seriously must raise approximately $30,000 extra to underwrite the reportorial expenses associated with the Session.

It may surprise you that the total (normal) annual budget of Adventist Today is about the same as the costs associated with the salary and benefits of just one conference pastor or worker. That’s because Adventist Today owns no real estate, has no salaried administrators, clerks, secretaries, or reporters, and operates solely with stipendiary, contract, and volunteer help. It would instill great confidence in our team if we could raise $25,000 between now and Thanksgiving ($19,000 already raised) to help us continue moving forward, publishing a blockbuster issue for World consumption prior to GC Session.

Our Hope

And when that happens, and all is said and done, I hope we can trash my medieval file of sketches as we plan to confidently move forward as a Church, no longer in extremis and fearful for the future, but confident and flexible as the historic founders clearly wanted us to be In the Beginning.....

Sincerely,

Edwin A. Schwisow

_______________________

Join in the discussion:

Dingdong
Reply
3 days ago

Its not in danger of splitting, there already is a split.....what will materialize is the physical split...that is coming soon.....

Ella M
Reply
3 days ago

I tend to disagree in a physical split in the denomination. Our members are more tolerant than that and understand the love of God is more important than their opinions. The danger is that over the last several years we have been subjected to negative and divisive leadership on all levels until we have been made to think we can't get along. The biases, as in any worldly political arena, causes division.

I fear the church institution has become worldly in its administrative behavior while accusing its members of being worldly. This has probably been going on for decades and not something new.

This is a bit of a generalization and certainly not true everywhere.

Ella M
Reply
3 days ago

A check is in the mail. Come on people, we need reports from an independent source.

Anonymous
We Adventists in First World countries sometimes think of Adventism in Third World countries as being, shall we say, somewhat traditional and conservative. A report out of an African country should lay that bias to rest. It appears that local Adventist Conference officials in Uganda are referred to in local press accounts as “bishops” and union conference officials are known as “archbishops.” To read the media report where these terms have been used, one can go to an article titled “SDA Church in Uganda Gets New Archbishop” at http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/661692-sda-church-in-uganda-gets-new-archbishop.html#.VGK5kXao2r0.email

The assumed opposition of African Adventist leaders and members to the ordination of women perhaps now makes sense. Since all local Adventist bishops (local conference presidents), and archbishops (union conference presidents) are male, perhaps the negative views of our Roman Catholic friends as to having female bishops and archbishops may have influenced the opinions of Adventist members in those countries.

Maybe those of us living in First World Adventist communities might wish to emulate the understandings of our African co-religionists. Perhaps calling Adventist pastors “priests” might be a little too radical for some. However, using the term “bishop” for local conference presidents and “archbishop” for union conference presidents might be considered. Also, we might wish to consider the terms “Metropolitan” or “Patriarch” for presidents of Divisions. And then it would be appropriate for us to refer to General Conference Vice Presidents as “Cardinals.”

This whole scenario, of course, would bring up the question of what to call the Adventist General Conference President. As we all know, Adventists in former times used to use fictional kin terms to refer to each other, as in, “Brother Smith” and “Sister Jones.” This is how we indicated whether someone was or was not “in the Truth.” We even called one Adventist writer, “Uncle” as in “Uncle Arthur.” And, of course, many still refer to the Adventist prophetess as “Sister White.” And, back in the 19th century, William Miller of 1844 fame was called “Father Miller.” Thus, using a fictional kin term to refer to the General Conference President would not be unusual.

As everyone knows, our Roman Catholic friends call the head of their church by a kin term based on the Latin word for “Father,” or Pater, and thus the term in English, “Pope.” The current GC President is sometimes already referred to as Wilson II and his father, also a GC President, as Wilson I. Now, given the unfortunate history of less-than-positive attitudes toward the Roman Catholic tradition exhibited by some Adventists, many might not want to use that term for the head of the institutionalized Adventist Church. In light of the controversial nature of any such suggestion, perhaps it would be better to have an extended discussion concerning this topic.

Suggestions on this point are solicited.
Coronation Time

by Harry Banks, November 11, 2014

His beard was too long. It was too unkempt. The clothes were wrinkled. But there was a simple appeal for help in his face… and for some reason I chose to stop and pick up this hitchhiker.

Times of human vulnerability get me to asking questions like: Where do human beings get the courage to face another day? What sort of desperation causes a person to throw his lot to the chance of a ride to make his way into the future? Such simple needs.

The recent article on atoday.org¹ about Natalie Bruzon watching young adults walk out during sermons made me think of some of the young people I have joined in the parking lot. This makes me wonder what gives a young person the confidence to allow an older person to witness his budding incomplete faith and risk insult to his hungry soul. Such simple needs.

But there he was - a symbol of simple human needs… He needed a ride…

I remembered my own hitchhiking days, when at age 21 I was attempting to travel from Torino, Italy, back to France over the French-Italian border. I was ill that day and must have looked ill, because it was the worst day of hitchhiking of my life. 60 miles in 12 hours. I could have walked nearly that fast.

At the end of the day I was walking up a lone mountain road. I was approaching the border, and all the local traffic had turned off the road for their nearby destinations. There I was sick, weak, alone. No one knew where I was. No one knew who I was. And I had no idea where I was, and was considering trying to find a farm and sleep in some hay, and picturing a pitchfork in my buttock for an alarm clock.

I had no status. I had no value to anyone at that moment. I felt this was the common denominator for humanity. Ok, so if you were wondering, about two miles further up the road I did find a hotel right at the border… But that’s another story…

Back to my hitchhiker… My rider sat silent in the back seat. Unknown. No status. No history. Just a human being. Is this the humanity the great Creator Redeemer God meant to rescue from personal and spiritual annihilation? A question or two, and the story tumbled out.

He had been incarcerated for a rather minor offence. He had a lady move into the house he had crafted and built with his own hands. She had turned it into a human and animal barn. It was destroyed, as far as he was concerned. He had been living in a tent. Since he was recently out of jail, he had no job. No money. He had had nothing to eat or drink for a couple days. He had an illness he needed medication for, and was heading into town to meet with a physician whom he considered a friend and who knew his medical needs.

I stopped to get my laundered shirts at the dry cleaners near the grocery store he named as his destination. I happened to be carrying some bottled water in the car… dug it out from some of my bags and gear. It was so simple
but it was like giving him a link back to life. He was so very grateful.

He borrowed my cell phone to call his friend and make arrangements to meet. While he was calling, I estimated the cost of about a week or two's worth of groceries and handed him enough cash to get him through the end of the month.

He cried.

I'm not sure if the following items are directly related but at the moment they seem to cohabitate in my mind.

Today I was reading about Frederick Buechner and how he was always trying to reach those who don't want to touch religion with a ten-foot pole. Someone has called them "cultured despisers of religion." It got me thinking about what is the basic level at which redemption takes place. Someone else observed that they won't remember what you say, but they will remember how you make them feel. Buechner experienced his driving force to translate the gospel to the cultured despisers because of how a few words from George Buttrick made him feel.

Buechner heard Buttrick describe the inward coronation of Christ as taking place in the hearts of those who believe in Him "among confession, and tears, and great laughter." Those phrases created in him a compelling need to know this Christ; to know the Old Testament because it was His Bible, to know the New Testament because it was all about Him, and "about the history of the church, which had been founded on the faith that through Him God had not only revealed His innermost nature and His purpose for the world, but had released into the world a fierce power to draw people into that nature and adapt them to that purpose...." He said, "I had been moved to astonished tears which came from so deep inside me that to this day I have never fathomed them. I wanted to learn more about the source of those tears and the object of that astonishment."

I have since wondered if my Christianity is so tepid, so insensitive, so shallow, such an insult to hungry souls, because I have not fully invited that inward coronation of Christ, among confession, tears, and great laughter.

Another point for pondering... How does that fierce power draw people into the practice of faith and touch the spiritual hunger of our world?

Maybe here is a clue from Buechner: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Will the world feel the tears and laughter of redemption as I brush shoulders? Looks like I need to get on with that coronation.

2 This quotation and all the following quotations are from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Buechner
A Woman of Fiery Spirit

By Debbonnaire Kovacs
Submitted Nov. 12, 2014

Based on Judges 4 and 5

They say with age comes wisdom. I don’t know, but I can say that with age comes weight. Weight of years, weight of worries over an all-too-dull and faithless people. Weight of old bones.

I sit under my favorite palm tree, and they come. They bow before me and ask my advice. They seek redress of wrongs, real or perceived. They ask me to deliberate, to discern, to judge between them and their brothers and sisters and wives and husbands. They all want me to vindicate their side, of course.

I do the best I can. Then they go away and do whatever they choose to do, whether it’s following my judgment or not. Oh, many of them do follow my advice. I have gained some name for wisdom, not because of any extra ability in myself, but because the Spirit of God is with me—and I actually listen to it, unlike many. The Most High must grow so weary of us! We say, “Oh, yes, oh, yes, we will follow!” Then we proceed to do the exact opposite…until the next crisis.

We’re under a new crisis now. Sisera and his nine hundred iron chariots are coming against us, as is only just, since we have backslidden yet again from our determination to follow God’s life of love instead of running solely after our own selfish wishes. I’ve told King Barak to go up, taking ten thousand soldiers from Naphtali and Zebulun, and he says he’ll go if I go with him.

I’ve promised I will, but the sad part is, I think he believes that having me at his side equates to having God at his side. If only I could help him, and all of them, to understand they can go to God for themselves! It is God who wins the battles; our part is only to be faithful and trusting.

Here comes the chariot sent to pick me up. I must stand tall in the strength of the Most High this day.

Of course we all know the story of Deborah and Barak, and how God brought victory by the hands of two women (plus 10,000 foot soldiers!) I found the following interesting notes in The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Vol. 2. I feel it important to note, given the context, that this book was published by the leadership of this church in 1954. In the front matter, it states: “Both contributors and editors have sought to make this commentary reflect the consensus of Seventh-day Adventist thinking.” They list the ten “representative men in the ranks of the Adventist leadership and ministry” who read the galleys of each volume. [p. 10] You’ll see in a moment why I find this interesting, particularly in the present context of Seventh-day Adventist leadership in the 21st century.

The following is a quote from two parts of page 330:
[Verse] 4. Deborah. Literally, “bee.” Of the judges whose exploits are recorded in this book she is the only one mentioned as possessing the prophetic gift.

Lapidoth. Signifying “torches” or “flashes.” Some have thought the phrase “wife of Lapidoth” should be translated “woman of fiery spirit” which indeed may not have been too inapplicable an appellative in the light of the sequel.

...

[Verse] 8. Go with me. Barak probably realized that by himself he could not sustain the morale of the Hebrews. Deborah’s presence would serve to make clear that the undertaking was of God. He probably wanted it to be clearly understood by all that it was she, the prophetess, who was initiating the campaign, and not he himself. It is to the credit of Barak that he followed prophetic guidance in the dangerous undertaking. It is also worthy of note that Deborah did not draw back from the course she had prescribed for others. As for Barak, he preferred the humbler role of one who was executing the command that had come from the Lord. He voluntarily retired behind the authority of a woman whom God had animated and inspired. The need today is for men who will obey the divine voice as Barak did.

Interesting. That’s all I have to say.
“He was a really imaginative guy,” reminisces Dennis Nickel’s wife, Jenny. “He found that the gospel came alive for him if he put himself in it. So he was the paralytic, he was the blind man, and so on. He used his senses to imagine the scene. During his devotional time in the morning, he went through the four gospels chronologically. He would go online and research the distances Jesus had to walk to get from one town to another, etc. He did all that in the morning, then he’d write the story. He decided to write a devotional book, but he didn’t plan or outline, he just wrote. He was really excited because it just happened that Day 365 was the last thing he wanted to say!”

So began the story of a remarkable book. It is billed as “a daily devotional that takes you on a chronological journey through the Gospels from the perspective of those who interacted with Jesus. See life through the eyes of the people who walked and talked with Jesus as they share their first-person accounts of what they heard, saw, and experienced. Each day features a Bible reference and corresponding story based on the accounts of the four Gospels.” [http://www.teachservices.com/day-in-the-life-of-jesus-a-nickel-dennis-kindle/]

Dennis Nickel was born in British Columbia and spent part of his youth in Washington and California. When he was twenty-one years old, he returned to Canada and worked for several years in the logging industry. Educated in theology at Canadian University College and the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary and Andrews University in Michigan, Nickel spent a brief period in the mission field (teaching English in Thailand), but spent the rest of his career, 30 years, pastoring in the Alberta, British Columbia, and Upper Columbia Conferences. He married Jenny Nielsen in 1977, and together they raised one daughter and two sons.
It was in the final years of this long and faithful career that his devotional book was written. His dream was to edit and publish it, but besides being the pastor of three churches, he was deeply involved with the local church school and with the community. It seemed he never had time. On top of that, for the last ten years of his life, he had a slow-growing form of cancer, and before the Publish the Book dream made it to the top of his list, his time had run out.

Adventist Today spoke with his wife, Jenny, about those days. Besides the struggle of caring for and watching the death of a beloved husband, she was well aware that his dream of publishing the book wasn’t going to happen. She was the one who had typed up his handwritten stories for him, and she began to wonder—might she be able to accomplish his dream in his honor?

After his death on August 4, 2011, Nickel says, “I was kind of here and there for over a year. His dad was sick with leukemia, and his mom wanted to stay home and care for him. I went down [where they lived in California] to help with that. Then his dad passed away, so I stayed with his mom for a while. Then my daughter in Alberta was pregnant, so I hung out and helped her some when possible. I didn’t really have a home of my own. So I would edit and work on the book whenever I was in one location for a while.”

Finally, she says, she moved to Alberta and had a place of her own. By this time it was 2013, and “once I found work, I said, ‘Okay, I’m going to do this!’” She completed the editing and put all the stories together in a notebook as a present for Dennis’ mother’s 90th birthday in August 2013.

“It was so great to be able to do that for him,” Nickel says, and this writer believes it was probably a richly healing activity for her as well.

She bills the project as one done by Pastor Nickel’s wife and children, because their children, as well as Dennis’ sister, were so supportive. They also contributed financially to the publishing.

The book wasn’t the only project the family worked together on for their husband and father. Both he and their youngest son shared music in common, and the son, Brad, had a small studio. The pastor had recorded some songs, but hadn’t been able to get that out either, so that was first project, Nickel says. “Brad got it all mastered and ready, we did a cover, then I just let people know about it that knew him and would want one. I would send it to churches, [in the areas where he had worked] and ten people or fifty people might want one. Also, individuals would contact me from Facebook, and I’d send them out. It was a real pain, and I didn’t want to do that with the book. I wanted someone else to be responsible for all that.”

She had read about TEACH services (www.teachservices.com) so she chose them and they agreed to publish the book as A Day in the Life of Jesus, now available on TEACH’s website,
Amazon, Barnes & Noble, or you can order it from any local bookstore. In the near future you will read a review of the book in these pages.
Autumn Splendor

http://www.atodayarchive.org/article/2788/poetry-the-arts/visual-arts/autumn-splendor

Photo by Debonnaire Kovacs
Submitted Nov. 12, 2014
By S M Chen  
Submitted Nov. 12, 2014

It was in school that, along with fellow students, I read about the Northwest (Pacific) and the Northwest Passage.

I first encountered the term ‘Northwest Quadrant’ a number of years ago when I was investigating financial asset managers. One particular firm named itself Northwest Quadrant for the reason that it purported to occupy, on a graph, that quadrant that minimized risk and maximized returns, if risk were placed on the abscissa and return on the ordinate.

I have not followed the performance of Northwest Quadrant (appropriately enough located in the Pacific Northwest), and this is intended as neither endorsement nor criticism of their strategy (and consequent performance).

The reason I mention the Quadrant is that, on a weightier note (the pharaohs proved you can’t take it with you), in a matrix depiction of Pascal’s Wager (as below)

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>God exists</th>
<th>God does not exist</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belief</td>
<td>(infinite gain)</td>
<td>(finite loss)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disbelief</td>
<td>(infinite loss)</td>
<td>(finite gain)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

that quadrant represents the best of all possible outcomes, when plotting the existence of God (yes or no) on the abscissa, proceeding east from imaginary point 0, and belief in such a deity (no or yes) on the ordinate, proceeding north from the same point.

All other quadrants/combinations represent less favorable outcomes, although, if one believes in the existence of God and God does not exist, one’s loss is finite, as is one’s gain if one disbelieves in a God who does not exist.
The one situation to be avoided is disbelief in a God who does indeed exist, in which case Pascal posits infinite loss. On the other hand, the potential gain in the northwest quadrant is infinite, and an inducement sufficient to motivate virtually all Christians.

For reasons of simplification and common understanding, as well as my belief that it approximates Pascal’s intention when he formulated his Wager in “Pensées” in the 17th century, I herein define ‘God’ to be the Abrahamic monotheistic (albeit triune) deity elucidated in Holy Writ. Critics of Pascal’s Wager, including proponents of polytheism, are free to take issue with this decision.

I learned a new word recently, which attests to my own ignorance as well as my contention that life is one long learning process.

Antimetabole is derived from the Greek (‘anti’ = against; opposite; ‘metabole’ = change, turning about).

A prime example of an antimetabole is astronomer Carl Sagan’s quotation: “Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.” While I maintain that if one exercises perspicacity (faith?), evidence of God exists (I find support among apologists such as Philip Yancey, who senses evidence of the Almighty in a triad of classical music, nature, and romantic love), I grant that atheists and agnostics contend that there is absence of evidence of God. But, as Carl Sagan stated with eloquent pith (although his context was likely different from mine), those arguments do not prove the nonexistence of God.

I somewhat dislike (because of its implied certitude bordering on smugness) this familiar quotation, but it is yet somewhat germane: “To those who do not believe, no proof is possible; to those who believe, no proof is necessary.”