NEWS

Major Cinema Challenge Mounted by Adventist Film Makers on Valentine's Day Weekend: In a world where sex on the first date is more the rule than the exception, an independent movie by two Adventist producers is finding "Old-fashioned" success with a storyline galaxies removed from "Fifty Shades of Gray"....

2015 Summit of Adventist Internet Workers and Initiatives is On Line: The annual gathering of Adventists who use the Internet for faith sharing and mission began Wednesday night and continues through Sunday....

Wilson Meets with President of Tanzania, Addresses Crowd of 50,000 in National Stadium: The General Conference president continues a leadership style of extensive travel and participation in public events that mix civic and evangelistic content in ways that galvanize local media and attract vast, drive-in crowds....
How Should We Deal with Adventist Heretics? Do Our Mormon Friends Have the Right Idea?:
Failure to encourage traditional standards and doctrinal purity are said to be a pressing need in the worldwide Church. Perhaps we should borrow a few good ideas from our friends, the Mormons?

What Would Daddy Do about the Ordination Issue?:
Monte Sahlin sees historic Adventism as accepting women as ordained Church leaders, as did the late father of Ted Wilson himself. Most objections have come from those who have adopted "Male Headship" theology, traditionally not accepted by Adventist leaders....

Jim White Visits Silver Spring: Suppose Adventist pioneer James "Jim" White reappeared among us today, to study the Church he and Ellen helped established 150 years ago. Guest columnist Edwin A. Schwisow shares a concept of what the 19th-century patriarch might tell a young Adventist Today reporter in 2015....

Elijah's Memoir (DEVOTIONAL): Deep emotions and ironclad conviction vied for control in the personality of Elijah, the foremost prophetic voice after Moses in the Old Testament. Debbonnaire Kovacs profiles the psychology and spirituality of a man who knew Jesus before, during, and after He walked among men....

Liars - Columnist Mark Gutman examines the role of faulty memory and urges us to accept the evidence that human recall can be extremely tenuous, especially at highly emotion-charged times....

The Inspired Expired-3 [Last of a three part series.]: This is a third column in a series by Jack Hoehn, dedicated to helping readers understand the gift of Ellen White, in the 100th year since her 1915 death. Can we accept that gift and contend with its wrinkled wrapping and blush-worthy moments? On-line comments are encouraged....
FEATURE

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

Welcome Home...Maybe? Part Two: It can be heart-rendingly difficult to return to Adventist fellowship after once severing ties, writes Debbonnaire Kovacs in this series. Adjusting to the nuances and emphases of the Church may be the most trying part of all....

POETRY & ARTS

God Will Provide (VISUAL): God's care for the little creatures of creation tells us He's is mindful of our needs, even when the manna of life seems boring in its seasonal sameness....

HERB DOUGLASS MEMORIAL

A Memorial Service commemorating the life of Adventist theologian, educator, and administrator Herbert E. Douglass will be celebrated Sabbath (Feb.14) , at 4 p.m. in the Carmichael SDA Church, 4600 Winding Way, Sacramento, CA 95841 (http://www.carmsda.org).

Dr. Douglass died Dec. 15, 2014, at age 87. A man of wide accomplishments and acclaim, in recent years his columns for Adventist Today were widely read and appreciated on the AT Web site.
Major Cinema Challenge Mounted by Adventist Film Makers on Valentine’s Day Weekend

By AT News Team, Feb. 12, 2015:  It is a David and Goliath moment this coming weekend in America’s cinema industry. Valentine’s Day is a big opportunity for new films with a love story as many couples plan a special date. The big-budget blockbuster this year is *Fifty Shades of Grey*, based on the best-selling erotic novel that includes bondage, domination and sadomasochism. Also opening this weekend is *Old Fashioned*, an independent movie that features a romance in which the couple waits for sex until after the wedding.

The indie movie is the work of two Adventist film makers. Rik Swartzwelder, who wrote the script, directed the movie and stars in it, grew up in rural Ohio and earned his college degree at Washington Adventist University (WAU). Producer Nathan Nazario is a member of the Apopka (Florida) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In three preview markets last weekend, *Old Fashioned* attracted large crowds. It earned a very strong average $12,988 per screening in Orlando (Florida), Washington DC and Grand Rapids (Michigan). At the same time religious leaders such as the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cincinnati, Dennis Schnurr, condemned *Fifty Shades of Grey*. He labeled it “a direct assault on Christian marriage” and urged the faithful to inform their communities about “the destructive message” of the Hollywood feature drama.

*Old Fashioned* is a classic romance story centered on Clay Walsh (played by Swartzwelder), a former frat boy who gives up his carousing and now runs an antique store in a small, Midwestern college town. When Amber Hewson (played by Elizabeth Ann Roberts), a free-spirited young woman with a restless soul, rents the apartment above the store, she finds herself surprisingly drawn to his lofty and outdated ideas about love, which are new and intriguing to her. Clay must step away from his relational theories and Amber must overcome her fears and deep wounds as the two of them attempt the impossible; an “old fashioned” courtship in contemporary society.

Sex is so common in the movies today that a public school teacher in Monessen, a suburb of Pittsburgh, handed out word search puzzles to middle school students based on the *Fifty Shades of Grey* movie and novel, reported the Associated Press yesterday. Some parents objected and a school board member explained it to journalists as “a huge but unintentional error.”

According to Match.com’s annual singles survey, 55 percent of single adults have sex on the first date. The majority believe that single adult couples should be sexually active by the third date. This is in stark contrast to the story told in *Old Fashioned* which is designed to demonstrate that traditional ideas of chivalry are still appropriate and even romantic; “romance with Christian values,” according to Swartzwelder.

Pastors have rallied behind *Old Fashioned*, seeing it as an opportunity for outreach in their communities. Pastor Allan Martin has been preaching a series of Sabbath sermons at the Arlington (Texas) Adventist Church in the suburbs of Dallas entitled “The Old Fashioned Way.” The production company has provided video clips, discussion guides and a host of advertising materials and handouts at a Web site: www.oldfashionedmovie.com/churchresouces.
WAU has named Swartzwelder its 2015 Alumnus of the Year despite the fact that he went on to Florida State University to earn an MFA in motion picture production. He will be a featured speaker at the Alumni Weekend, April 9-12.

- 1
- 54
2015 Summit of Adventist Internet Workers and Initiatives is On Line

By AT News Team, Feb. 11, 2015: This year the annual gathering of Adventists who use the Web for ministry will be a live online event open to all who are interested. It begins today at midnight GMT. That is 7 p.m. in Washington where the denomination’s headquarters are located, 4 p.m. in Los Angeles and 8 a.m. tomorrow in Manila.

The Global Adventist Internet Network (GAIN) is a yearly forum organized by the communication department of the General Conference (GC) of Seventh-day Adventists. It includes both denominational employees and independent initiatives. It will continue through Sunday (Feb. 15).

The keynote speaker today is Nancy Lamoreaux, chief information officer for the GC. Her focus will be on how the Web relates to the mission of Christ in the world and the diversity of methods the Internet makes available. A panel discussion with live question-and-answer time will follow each presentation.

Other speakers will include Jesse Johnson, president of NetServe about the free StudyTracker software his company developed to support custom development of Bible studies online; Harvey Alferrez from the school of engineering at Montemorelos University in Mexico on building mobile apps; Kirk Nugent, IT director for the denomination’s Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division; Daryl Gungadoo, global resource engineer for Adventist World Radio; and Sven Fockner, Bible correspondence school director in Europe for the denomination.

Two American pastors will share the results of experimental projects. Pastor Dean Waterman will talk about multi-site churches that use technology to connect multiple locations for live worship and learning activities on a regular schedule, weekly or more often. He is lead pastor at Courthouse Road Adventist Church in Richmond, Virginia. Pastor Jerry Chase from Akron, Ohio, will demonstrate the use of mapping software for planning outreach and church planting, as well as a powerful tool for strategic planning by conferences and institutions.

Pastor William Costa, communication director for the GC, will preach for the worship service on Sabbath. D. P. Harris, chief information officer for Loma Linda University, will speak on interactive engagement on Sunday.

The complete agenda and the schedule for rebroadcasts designed to cover all the time zones around the world can be seen at www.gain.adventist.org on the Web. It is necessary to register for the event in order to gain access to the online sessions.
Wilson Meets with President of Tanzania, Addresses Crowd of 50,000 in National Stadium

By AT News Team, Feb. 12, 2015: More than 50,000 Adventists from 11 nations in east Africa gathered in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, last weekend for a Celebration of God’s Blessing, reported the Daily News. Speakers included Pastor Ted Wilson, president of the denomination, and Mohammed Gharib Bilal, vice president of the country. The event was held in the National Stadium.

In his remarks, Bilal stated that the right to worship is guaranteed in Tanzania’s constitution and stressed that this means people must respect the religion of others, according to The Guardian newspaper. “The doors are open so we may consult and encourage one another in matters related to our people,” the vice president said. Bilal also appealed to Tanzanians to vote in elections later this year. “We have opportunity to pray for peace and tranquility in this country,” he stated in view of the discord and violence that has often accompanied elections in the region.

Two other cabinet members were on the platform; Bernard Membe, foreign minister, and Stephen Wasira, agriculture minister. Wasira is an Adventist.

Membe told the gathering that religions have a critical role in creating a God-fearing community with high values, according to the Daily News. Religions are duty-bound to mould capable and God-fearing national leaders who focus on integrity, love and humility, he continued. He commended the Adventist denomination for being a good example of religious tolerance in the country, noting their knack for cooperation with all religions. He said that he had never heard of Adventists having conflicts with the government or other faiths. “This is a great and good lesson for Tanzanians with their diverse ideologies, faiths, ethnicity and color,” he was quoted by the newspaper.

Membe assured the Adventist denomination of the government’s commitment to cooperate with them for the welfare of the country, “adding that the state has the duty of supporting religion and encouraging interfaith harmony.” He applauded the Adventist initiatives to meet human needs in the developing nation, including 15 secondary and primary schools, a university and two hospitals.

In contrast to this emphasis on cooperation, Wilson expressed a more limited view in his Sabbath sermon, according to a transcript almost immediately published in the online edition of the Adventist Review. “We should not align ourselves with any other religious organizations or ecumenical bodies,” the transcript states. Wilson emphasized the “distinctive” aspect of the Adventist faith, stating that “in the last days … anyone worshiping on another day that the seventh-day Sabbath will receive the mark of the beast.” He specifically included language that is proposed but has not yet been voted as part of the denomination’s official Statement of Fundamental Beliefs, that Earth was created “in six literal, consecutive, contiguous, 24-hour days.”

Wilson also stated his concern about the tradition in Tanzania of businesses and schools operating on Saturdays which creates problems for Adventists. He also said that the denomination had been kept from acquiring property in the central part of Dar es Salaam for both worship and community services, according to The Guardian.

The meeting with Jakaya Kikwete, the president of Tanzania, came when Wilson and a group of Adventist leaders were invited to a dinner at the State House, the president’s official residence. The talks lasted until 10:30 p.m. reported the Adventist Review.

“I wish to congratulate you for enhancing peace in your country and other African countries,” Wilson told President Kikwete. He said the history and contribution of Kikwete in working for peace in Africa will always be remembered, reported The Guardian. “You have done a great job in Tanzania and Africa. To us, having peace is the most
important thing because it allows us to continue preaching the Word of God."

Vice President Bilal announced that the Tanzanian government would help church members to acquire land for development initiatives, also reported The Guardian. "According to [Wilson] the church is proud of the success that has been made in spreading the gospel and social services," stated the Daily News.

Two hundred buses brought groups from Kenya and there were people in the crowd from Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Similar events with Wilson as the main speaker were held in South Korea in 2013 and in Brazil last year, the Daily News reported.

A major evangelism campaign was implemented in the three weeks leading up to the major event. During the weekend at least 2,309 people were baptized in Dar es Salaam alone. Pastor Geoffrey Mbwana, a vice president of the denomination and native of Tanzania, spoke daily on radio, television and the Internet from January 10 through 31, and there were more than 100 local seminars throughout the city with more across the country.

The event was an occasion for social action projects as well as an evangelism campaign. Last week the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) gave $40,000 worth of lab equipment, textbooks and shoes to public schools in one district. Nyachia Robert, program director for ADRA, told the Daily News this included a pair of shoes and science, math and English textbooks for 3,000 students as well as lab equipment and supplies for three secondary schools.

Robert told the newspaper that supporting the next generation was crucial to development. "We want more scientists in the country," he stated in explanation of the specific type of aid provided. He said that ADRA was the Adventist expression of Christ's example of serving and caring for those in need. "The agency searches out deprivation, social injustice and need, then works to eliminate them." ADRA is representative of Adventists' desire to improve the quality of life.

Free health screening was provided to the public as part of the event. This included blood tests for HIV-AIDS, heart disease and diabetes. At the same time participants could donate blood to the National Blood Transfusion Service.

It was also significant, given the traditional attitudes toward women in leadership expressed by some Adventists from Africa, that three of the denomination’s top-ranked women were speakers during this event. They were Dr. Lisa Beardsly-Hardy, director of education; Heather-Dawn Small, director of women’s ministries; and Linda Koh, director of children’s ministries.

The Daily News reported that there are five million Adventist believers in Tanzania, a country with a population of 49 million. The most recent official report of church membership for the denomination in Tanzania is 420,640 as of December 31, 2013. There are nearly 4,500 local congregations.

- 1

Sharing is caring!
How Should We Deal with Adventist Heretics? Do Our Mormon Friends Have the Right Idea?

by Ervin Taylor, February 11, 2015:

Mormon Voices, “an organization that seeks to assist the media in reporting on Mormon-related topics . . . [and which] is supportive of, but independent from, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” posted a story dealing with the excommunication of a member of the Mormon Church.

The story reports that “outspoken Mormon Stories podcaster and self-described progressive activist John Dehlin lost his membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for reasons of apostasy. Based on documented statements made by Mr. Dehlin, he long ago ceased to believe in the basic tenets of the faith, and according to his local leaders, he has acted to deliberately draw others after him in his disbelief . . . [Mormon ] leaders worked very closely with Mr. Dehlin since 2006, trying to draw him back into the fold . . . Mormon Voices has compiled a summary of the circumstances and events leading up to the excommunication of John Dehlin....”

As many know, the Seventh-day Adventist and Mormon churches have many things in common. Both rose up in the early part of the 19th Century in the northeastern United States. Both have prophets—Joseph Smith, Jr. in the case of the Mormons and Ellen G. Harmon White in the case of the Adventists. Both prophets had visions. Both churches have special books written by their prophets, which are considered in part or in whole inspired by God. Orthodox members of each church believe that they possess and preach the pure “Truth.” Both have organizations that uphold and promote orthodoxy within each religion. The Mormons have “Mormon Voices” and the Adventists have the “Adventist Theological Society.”

But Adventists and Mormons have evolved their polity—their internal political organization—in somewhat different directions. Mormon membership is tightly controlled by the central Mormon organization, centered in Salt Lake City. Excommunication of Mormons judged to be heretics and apostates can be efficiently and easily accomplished with no appeal process to those in the upper reaches of the Mormon Church hierarchy. Power is centralized at the top and leaders are selected from a very, very small group of insiders, with no input at all from lower levels in the church structure. Local leadership at the parish level—known as stakes and wards—is appointed from above.

By contrast, membership functions in the Adventist Church are controlled at the local parish level. A local parish—or local church—is the only body that can vote individuals in and out of membership. That function cannot be exercised at any higher level. Instances in which Adventist conference, union, or even General Conference officials have attempted to control church membership have often been protested and, in some cases, where local lay leadership is strong, officials have had to back down. On the other hand, the power to ordain individuals to the professional clergy is held at a level above that of the local church, squarely in the hands of professional clergy.

The official Adventist view is that the Adventist organization is operated by a “representative” political body even though laity is greatly underrepresented in the higher levels of the Adventist Church bureaucracy.

While Adventist Church officials themselves currently do not have the power over membership that Mormon Church officials possess, one suspects that there are individuals within the Adventist Church administrative structure who think the Mormon Church has the right idea when it comes to controlling membership. Any idea of “big tent” Adventism is anathema to these people. The things that Adventists must believe are clearly spelled out in the 28 Fundamentals, it is said, and if you don’t believe those things, you should not be allowed to remain an Adventist and should be expelled from membership.

Which is the better way, Adventist or Mormon? Opinions are solicited.
What Would Daddy Do about the Ordination Issue?

By Monte Sahlin, Feb. 11, 2015: As Elder Ted Wilson, president of the General Conference, approaches what will likely be the make-or-break GC Session of his career, will his thoughts turn to his father’s role in the issues related to ordination and the role of women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church? A research assistant reminded me this morning of a document from the fall of 1977 which reveals the views of Elder Neal C. Wilson, then president of the North American Division.

On October 25, 1977, Elder Neal Wilson spoke at Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Takoma Park. Many of the GC staff were members of that congregation at the time. He spoke about the role of women and the ordination issue, and he answered questions during an open forum. A record of the event and his presentation was published in the November-October issue of Sligoscope, the church newsletter.

“Among the theologians and scholars upon whom the church generally relies for Old and New Testament exegesis, I have yet to find one who takes the position that the Scriptures or Ellen White forbid the ordination of women,” Elder Wilson said. He stated that he had been told that there were Adventist Bible scholars who opposed the ordination of women but none had come forward with such a view.

Elder Wilson went on to say that the denomination’s leaders were not promoting or pushing the ordination of women, but see no reason to forbid it. “We must leave room for the Holy Spirit to work among us.”

Elder Wilson said he has discovered that people commonly in levels of sacredness attached to ordination. “They tend to think that being ordained as a deacon is introductory; becoming an elder is extra special; and finally, you reach the zenith with a special holiness and a certain portion of God’s character when you’re ordained a gospel minister. But the Scripture indicates no such differences. Seventh-day Adventists have never taken the position that ordination is a sacrament that adds certain mystical powers to the one ordained.”

Elder Wilson stated that the reason the GC had not voted to ordain women to the gospel ministry was recognition of sociocultural considerations, not theology. He noted that Ellen White seems to recommend an ordination with laying on of hands for women in certain kinds of ministry. Asked if a local church must wait for the GC to vote something to ordain women as deaconesses, Elder Wilson said that they did not need to wait. “The matter is open. A local church would violate nothing by going ahead.”

He announced that the 1977 Autumn Council (the annual meeting of the GC executive committee) had decided to authorize five scholarships at the seminary to encourage women students who want to prepare for the ministry. He admitted that women hired as “associates in pastoral care” were not paid at the same level as men doing equivalent work. (I saw him in the 1995 NAD Year-end Meeting nearly two decades later when we both voted in favor of a policy change that would assure the same pay for men and women clergy.)

During the question-and-answer time at the October 1977 meeting at Sligo Church, Elder Wilson was asked why many people speak of “God’s original plan for women,” but ignore “God’s original plan for men.” In response, Elder Wilson said that the question pinpointed some spiritual short-sightedness. “We’ve created roles for men which God never intended.”

A man in the audience asked where all the discussion about the role of women in the church had started. “The same question was once asked about black people,” Wilson said. “Asking the question shows us the problem. The heart of it is that if we have something to give blacks or women, then we must realize we also have something we can take away. There must be no major and minor stockholders in the church.” He also noted that women held many more leadership positions in the Adventist Church a few decades ago than they currently do.
A Different Meeting in 1989

I can give first-hand testimony as to another meeting where Elder Wilson expressed his views along the same lines. In the fall of 1989 he asked me, along with my good friend Bruce Campbell Moyer, to present a paper to the Global Strategy Committee on the growing urbanization of the world and what that would mean for Adventist missions. This committee met at Cohutta Springs, Georgia, the week following the meeting of the Commission on the Role of Women that crafted the recommendation ultimately voted at the 1990 GC Session the following summer in Indianapolis. In fact, a number of key individuals served on both committees.

As Bruce and I were waiting for the meeting to get started, when most of the members were present we sat near the chairman (Elder Wilson). Dr. Gottfried Oosterwal, a veteran missionary with a PhD in anthropology and chairman of the department of world mission in the seminary at Andrews University, asked for the chairman's indulgence before the committee got started. He stated that since the committee the previous week had come to some conclusions on the role of women in the church he felt that a similar commission was needed on some other issues. He listed a number of issues all rooted in cultural differences; the use of drums in worship, how to deal with people in polygamous marriages who wanted to be baptized, etc.

Elder Wilson responded very firmly. No, there would be no such commission. “The divisions and unions will have to resolve those issues.” At the moment, I did not know the outcome of the meeting in the previous week, but I remember clearly being aware of Elder Wilson's body language and tone of voice which indicated that he was not entirely pleased with the result. He did not want to go down that road again.

What Does This Mean?

You are certainly free to draw your own conclusions, but to me it is clear that Elder Wilson sensed that on issues where cultural differences outweighed the extent of Scripture guidance it could spell shipwreck for a global denomination of such diversity as the Adventist Church. After one attempt to settle such an issue in 1988-89, he was ready to use the decentralized structures of the denomination to deal with future issues.

When the issue of ordination for women was first studied by the leaders of the Adventist movement, both in 1881 and again in the 1970s there were no voices claiming that the Bible restricted ordination to one gender. These did not emerge until later, after the Southern Baptist Convention and other Evangelicals had fleshed out their doctrine of male headship. Why should this view be given more consideration now? Would Elder Neal Wilson think it a good idea to do so?

Monte Sahlin is executive editor of Adventist Today. He served for more than 40 years as a pastor, urban missionary and administrator in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He is the author of 22 books, 117 research monographs and many magazine articles. He retired from denominational employment last year.
Jim White Visits Silver Spring

by Edwin A. Schwisow, AT Director of Development/Guest Writer, February 12, 2015:

What would happen to our Church today if James “Jim” White could visit? An interview with a young Adventist Today reporter might go something like this.

Adventist Today: Elder White....

Jim White: Hold it there, just hold it. Call me Pastor Jim, will you? Let’s not get into old-fashioned titles and such, okay? I never cared for hierarchy and its trappings....

Adventist Today: Sure thing, Pastor Jim. So....Here’s my question: Our General Conference president today believes that we need to return to a simpler time and pattern our behavior after the Blueprint of your times. What do you say to that?

White: Well, I’m tremendously flattered, but concerned too.

If you try to return in time to an era when things were simple and absolute, be very careful—that era probably didn’t really exist the way you think it did. And how far back do you want to go? To the time when we believed Jesus was simply a created being (however exalted)? Should we go back to a time before Ellen received her first credentials as an ordained minister? How about a time when we were all devout Sunday-keepers? When does “going back” start to consume the meat along with the apostate fat?

Our early days were rife with fear, doubt, and confusion. We were young and unsettled, and winds of doctrine blew hither and yon. There was absolutely nothing simple during those times, except that a lot of us were at each other’s throats. Yet, if we had been told not to study, not to speculate, not to try new things, we as young people would have given up and I’d have ended my days as a church school principal somewhere. That’s my take....

AT: How can we harmonize the vision of you as a young man seeking truth from many sources, and the man who became the most renowned chief executive of the Adventist Church, in any era?

White: You’re much too kind; I made many, many mistakes in my time. Every generation has to rediscover Christianity for itself, and this is why I am set against long creeds and required lists of beliefs. These kinds of documents militate against our youth remaining active with us. I believe this was one of the great downfalls of Protestantism. In my day in the Adventist Church, we had no list of Fundamental Beliefs, other than the Second Coming, the Pre-advent Judgment, the Law of God and Sabbath, and the Old Testament sanctuary service as a microcosm of the Plan of Salvation.

AT: We see in the Church today an increasing tendency for young people to move away from the denomination, especially during certain phases of life—in their early 20s, about the time you and Ellen married. How did you in those early days contend with youth who seemed bent on leaving?

White: As a writer and publisher, I worked diligently to write fairly about even the most speculative ideas of our time in the pages of our journals, believing that if we did not discuss them there (and write fairly about them, let me emphasize), the youthful membership would sample and discuss them anyhow. I also encouraged letters and essays of response that represented a wide range of thought. It made the old Review and Herald a must-read publication, and it allowed me as editor to “get there first” on topics of emerging interest. I understand that Adventist Today does much the same thing. Many of these issues are near and dear, especially to perceptive, thoughtful
youth. By bringing forward these issues from primarily a centrist position, you are providing a tremendous value to the denomination, while modeling to the youth a sense that the Church is not closed to new light. Throughout my short lifetime much “new light” reached our readers, particularly the conviction that in our earliest days we had done a deplorable job of preaching Christ and Him crucified.

AT: Looking back on your youth, what advice would you give us today, when there seems to be a growing conservative wave in the Church, coupled with an increasing level of youthful departure from fellowship....

White: It may be that the word “conservatism” is interpreted differently in your time, but I can say without hesitation that in our day we were seen as very liberal. Our position on the Second Coming was seen as outrageously destructive of the conservative Christian order. Our preaching on health was seen as wildly speculative; our views on abolishing slavery were clearly not in line with conservative Christian beliefs. Certainly our acceptance of a woman as a co-founder and primary promoter of our denomination played very poorly in conservative churches.

We need conservatives, for conservatives are the preserving salt of the earth; but it’s the so-called “liberals” that often shine new light on old problems. Neither conservatives nor liberals are “dangerous” except where the concentrations become too great. Too much salt desolates the soil of growth and turns people away from the banquet table of Christ; too much light at one time, or light inappropriately filtered or framed, can turn people away from salvation. We ideally seek a balance, and we find that balance in the ministry of Ellen and many early, young leaders. We had the flame of liberalism, but the maturing strength of conservative conviction. We did not multiply many rules, but the guidelines we established were carefully maintained and articulated. Youth seeks and values structure, but not a rigid template. I would recommend that same moderation in the Church today. Neither demonize your older conservatives, nor impugn your young firebrands. Grow together, press together. Do not separate into labeled camps, insofar as possible.

And by all means discuss new ideas continually; never blacklist a young person because he or she brings forward what to you may seem heretical ideology. Don’t fear getting those ideas out in the open for analysis and study. Challenges to orthodoxy in the early Adventist Church were some of the greatest stimulants to serious Bible study and revival.

Young People Are Rambunctious

Finally, recognize that young people by nature are a rambunctious lot. Had Ellen and I been in our 40s at the time of the Great Disappointment, I doubt we would have had the energy or impulse to help form a new denomination. We wanted to see change, and we recognized that the Protestants of our day were determined to reject our message. If we wanted to do things in an orderly way, we would have to form a new organization.

We remained open to change, in part because of the influence of Ellen as a messenger, calling us to higher standards, calling us away from over-emphasis on legalism. The other Advent denominations became enclaves of resistance to new ideas, and most are technically now extinct.

If we retrench and become yet another restrictive faith where new light rarely shines and the ground of faith grows increasingly salty with caustic levels of preservative, our denomination will follow the ways of those denominations. First our youth will give up on us, as consortia of liberals and conservatives battle for the crumbs, and the rest of us flail at windmills and dragons whose threats may be obsolete....

Let me suggest you take these steps as we look back and learn from the past 100 years since Ellen’s passing: (1) Consider your youthful lay people as your most precious treasure as a community of faith. Treat them well, listen to them well, bring them forward as quickly as possible into positions of strong relevance in your churches; (2) Plan to face troubling issues squarely and fairly, at least once each new generation. Communities of faith go through stages. The teachings of the Church must be experienced again and again, emotionally, with
passionate writing and provocative discussion; (3) **Encourage young thinkers to begin writing and publishing at an early age.** Keep doing what you’re doing, just do it better on behalf of youthful writers; and finally, (4) **Maintain your independence, but treat the denomination kindly, with gentle Christianity and dignity.** Use humor and irony, and use it well. The support the youth see you give to this magazine will send a strong message to them about where their Church is headed, with them or without them.

**Note:** *Adventist Today* is dedicated to including more and more young people in its talent base of writers and workers. These young people, like James and Ellen White of old, can help us express things in new ways that are more readily understandable by younger, contemporary people of the world. During the past 10 weeks *Adventist Today* has raised $20,000 to help begin this initiative. Our campaign continues through the month of February, and we invite you to participate. Phone me at 503 826-8600 and we can discuss this outreach and its challenges, or donate through [www.atodayarchive.org](http://www.atodayarchive.org)….We live in exciting times…. EAS

- 7
Elijah’s Memoir

By Debbonnaire Kovacs, Feb. 11, 2015

There were times, when I was working as a prophet, that I secretly wished I’d said No. They didn’t last, and I was only serious once, but it’s an incredibly difficult life, speaking to the people for God, speaking to God for the people. More of the time, though, the blessings outran the frustrations many times over.

God’s power can rest heavily on a person, but what it can do will take your breath away! I was blessed to see so many miracles, and even to have my tiny part in them. The people (when they weren’t reviling me or arguing with me) tended to think the power was mine, but of course not one drop of it was. I was blessed to help get the Schools of the Prophets set up so that more people could learn about God’s power. But God’s use of me still amazes me, looking back after all these years.

I was the one who prophesied that three-year drought in Israel, and then I was kept through it (along with many others) by the hand of God. For myself, it was pretty astonishing—to be fed by birds and then by that gentle young woman and her son. All our hearts beat a little faster every morning when we looked in the oil jug and flour jar and there it was—enough for one more day! And then—that boy’s death! I could hardly believe it! Why would God keep the child alive through miraculous means and then let him die?! Those were some of the most urgent prayers I ever prayed. But God answered! Now that was a stunning moment!

I was the one sent to Ahab to tell him the rain would begin again, and that confrontation led to the one everyone else thinks of as defining my life. 400 prophets of Baal…vs me. Seem like overwhelming odds, don’t they? And they are—one idol (or even the entire legion of demons encouraging its worship) vs the Most High God! No contest. The prophets’ roarings and ragings and weepings made me laugh and jeer (I shouldn’t have done that), but when it came down to it, my heart suddenly overflowed with love and compassion for God’s misled, ignorant people, and when my turn came I called them close and just spoke to the Lord on their behalf. And God sent the fire. Not just to the altars, but into the hearts of all who would accept it.

You’d think a person would start to be less worried after a while, but I still remember my heart pounding when I was praying (and praying) for the rain to begin again—even though God had impressed me that now was the time. I kept sending my servant to check again…and again…and still I felt the thrill of relief that weakened my knees when it began.

And then I outran Ahab all the way to Jezreel!

All of these miracles would make a sane person simply let go and trust. Not me. Not in those days. When I heard that Jezebel was out for me, I lost it. I looked back on that episode with shame for a long time, but now the forgiveness and compassion of my God have finally erased that. I fell into such a depression I couldn’t even think straight. I thought—in fact, I swore up and down—that I was the only one left in Israel who was faithful! If God were really the being my mindset made of Him in those days, I would have been cast out and abandoned. To this day, tears well in my eyes when I think of that time. This is the episode I feel defines my life. I remember the starvation of my soul…and the food of angels. I remember the blackness of the cave…and the overwhelming awe of the wind, fire, and earthquake. And then…

I remember the Voice. The gentle, gentle Voice. I couldn’t possibly describe that moment to another living being.

That was the day God said to me that it was time for me to recruit help, and sent me to call Elisha. It seems like only a short while from that time until the time that also stops my heart and fills my eyes with tears. God sent a heavenly chariot for me. For ME!! Unbelievable.
And here I am. All these years, all these decades, all these centuries. In heaven with God and the angels and Moses. The great leader of Israel! He’s my friend now. He and I often sit together and retell stories of God’s astonishing love and power and gentleness. And forgiveness. Forgiveness. Complete and total. You’d think God has no idea we’ve both killed people, and doubted Him, and…well, anyway.

What? Oh, yes, of course, coming!

God is calling me—both of us. He has a special task…

Oh, my dear Lord in heaven, really? Can it be possible?

I can’t breathe…

You want me—us—to go down and comfort Your Beloved One?! Wait, what? You say He’s getting discouraged?

Moses and I look at each other. I know his heart is pounding like mine, but…we do know that feeling. And, hard as it has been to believe and to follow for 33 years, God the Son is only a little, human man now. Well, not only, but…never mind. Unexplainable.

Yes, Lord. Of course we’ll go. We’ll share our stories, and listen to His. It will be the greatest honor we could ever imagine.

This will be the new episode that will define our lives forever.
Liars

by Mark Gutman, February 10, 2015: Brian Williams, NBC news anchor and “marquee face,” has “temporarily” stepped down from his post in the face of accusations of lying about a helicopter ride in Iraq. Williams’ critics have produced timelines showing how his accounts from Iraq have become more lurid with each passing year. How can he explain such falsehoods? We expect more honesty from someone in his position.

Hold it! Not so fast. We vigorously scold others for dishonesty or lying because we are unaware of our own problems with misstating facts. We all suffer from “the illusion of memory.”

“The illusion of memory leads us to assume—unless we receive direct evidence to the contrary—that our memories, beliefs, and actions are mutually consistent and stable over time.” Remember the day the Challenger blew up (January 28, 1986)? How could you forget? Well, the next morning two Emory University professors had a class of their students “write a description of how they heard about the explosion, and then...answer a set of detailed questions about the disaster: what time they heard about it, what they were doing, who told them, who else was there, how they felt about it, and so on.” “Two and a half years later, Neisser and Harsch asked the same students to fill out a similar questionnaire about the Challenger explosion. The memories the students reported had changed dramatically over time, incorporating elements that plausibly fit with how they could have learned about the events, but that never actually happened.”

How did the students respond to the revelation that their memories were haywire? “Many were shocked at the discrepancy between their original reports and their memories of what happened. In fact, when confronted with their original reports, rather than suddenly realizing that they had misremembered, they often persisted in believing their current ‘memory.’” In effect, “I don’t care what I wrote the next day; my memory is better now.”

We are so confident we are right until we are forced to admit we are wrong. Especially about our crystal clear memories. There’s just “no way” we can be wrong about some of those memories. And since people usually don’t have a video to show us how often we are wrong, we operate under “the illusion of memory” and heap scorn on those whose misremembering suffers public exposure.

Hillary Clinton took some heat when she related the story of her scary visit to Bosnia, “landing under sniper fire.” Videos and newspaper articles of her visit proved that there was no scare at all, as she finally admitted. George W. Bush remembered seeing the first plane hit the World Trade Tower on television before entering the elementary school class. Except that no video (or television) was available of that first plane’s hitting until long after September 11. Hillary and George simply take their place alongside thousands of others whose memories have been proven wrong by videos or DNA or newspaper. Although we’ve probably all gone back to visit a place and discovered that it wasn’t at all the way we remembered it, we’re still quite positive that all our other memories are very accurate.

We picture our memory as having stored away little videos of each event in our lives. Remember the day you turned thirty? Or the time you ran out of gas on a crowded freeway? You mentally pull up the little video and watch it as you describe an event in your life to others. But your “video” is a put-together from several places in your brain. And you don’t realize that extraneous material was swept into your video and has become vividly clear as indisputable fact. So you end up as a liar. No, you’re not a liar. You’re just a human being with unwarranted extreme confidence that your memory is foolproof because no one has provided a video that demonstrates how distorted your memory is. Unaware that your memory is like Swiss cheese, you’re free to judge such a deficiency in others.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. . . . The standard you use
in judging is the standard by which you will be judged (Matthew 7:1f, NLT).” Part of the reason for his counsel may have been the fact that we hardly begin to understand how well (other) people do with the limitations imposed by their brains. We understand that people who suffer from schizophrenia or bipolar disorder and haven’t taken their medication can do things that they would not do if their brains were not impaired. But if a person is not diagnosed with a brain tumor or disease, we give her no quarter when it comes to condemning her for her clearly disgusting actions or words.

In Matthew 12:7, Jesus talked about those who “condemn the guiltless.” He quoted Hosea 6:6: I desire mercy [which should be translated “compassion”7], and not sacrifice. With our limited understanding of how people’s brains function, we find it easy to accuse people of things they are not guilty of. Williams’ story is exaggerated, at best, or flat-out wrong. No question. Hilary and George W. told stories that were fiction. But though we know what they did, we don’t know what was going on in their minds. We don’t know that they intended to deceive people. Nor do we know that our story telling is any more accurate.

If your dramatic story about the day you turned thirty was proven to be wrong in some key points, you would probably dismiss your lying, er, your mistake: “I didn’t realize. I really thought that that was exactly what happened. I can’t understand how I got so mixed up.” If you can imagine asking for a break on a mistaken memory, how about being as willing to give someone else (e.g., Williams, Clinton, your opponent) the same break? As human beings, they might have simply gotten mixed up as their minds processed the past.

I may believe you are wrong about your thirtieth birthday or a Bible doctrine or a fact of science. But it is not for me to say that you are intentionally promoting something you know is wrong. Let’s be less accusing. We can declare that someone is wrong about a fact or story, but we can rarely assert that a person is knowingly wrong (meaning, lying). We don’t have to believe the inaccuracy, but neither do we have to equate faulty memory with moral deficiency.8

Same thing for others’ actions. I may believe the president, the pastor, or the banker is acting badly, but I shouldn’t be too quick to assume it’s because he’s morally defective. Human beings make mistakes. In Matthew 18, Jesus told of a man who was forgiven a huge debt but was hard on a person who owed him a relatively small amount of money. When we fail to take into account what’s going on in the brain of someone else whose actions we look down on, we are replaying the role of that unforgiving servant in Matthew 18. Especially when our own brain has similar problems.

Of course, we can and should tackle inaccuracy and unfairness – in Williams or Clinton or anyone else. But let’s be slower to equate defective behavior with defective character. Things are not always what they seem. Shining lights may turn out to be dim bulbs, while “bad” people may be more Christian than we thought. What’s that old saying? Something like, “People with defective memories shouldn’t . . . .”

1http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2015/02/08/brian_williams_and_the_mists_of_memory_125523.html

2http://www.buzzfeed.com/andrewkaczynski/ben-carson-book#.yuyxV2jwA3 The realclearpolitics.com article also discusses this.


4Ibid., 73

5Ibid., 73


8 See my earlier column in http://www.atodayarchive.org/article/2182/opinion/gutman-mark/2013/wrong-mistaken-wicked-synonyms

- 2

Sharing is caring!
The Inspired Expired-3

[Last of a three part series.]

by Jack Hoehn, February 13, 2015: What to Do with a Deceased Prophetess –

[Part 1 of this series discussed the world Ellen White was born into and ministered in. Part 2 of this series discussed the aging and death of Ellen White, and the steps taken by her church and her descendants after her death. This article will attempt to offer some suggestions of what do we do, now that our prophetess is truly dead and gone, with the literary trove she left behind. Do we bury her books with her body? Or should we attempt a partial or total resurrection of Ellen White?]

What do we do now?

Adventism’s supporters and detractors struggled with the place of Ellen White in the church while she was alive. And certainly since her death in 1915 at the beginning of the previous century, there has been no more divisive topic in Adventism than what to do with her now.

I am not going to do anything more than mention the pivotal 1919 Bible Conference suppression,[1] and then the decades of ascendancy in Adventism of a practicing inerrancy for both the ancient inspired writers of the Bible and for our recent prophetess’s inspiring works. Personally, in my childhood and youth I think I was blessed by being taught that Ellen White spoke for God and that was that. If Sister White said it, then God said it, so who was I to quibble? And there is a concrete and satisfying solidity to this that can appear on a bumper sticker.

1.) GOD SAID IT. ELLEN WROTE IT.

I BELIEVE IT. THAT SETTLES IT.
It did not lead me far astray. It kept me from many dangers and snares. It made me a bit cocky and argumentative. But youth thinks, I still have time. I am not perfect now, but I am young, if I work a little harder, or live a little longer, or try a little harder, I will overcome cheese and sugar and pickles and listening to football games on Sabbath or enjoying *Playboy* magazine or releasing sexual tension by this means or that. I'll be an overcomer.

It is harder to do that when you get to the other end of life and you learn that pickles and coffee and earrings are not the real barriers to righteousness. You also begin to see that a simplistic view of life does not answer the actual complexities of life. That simple view of inerrancy may erode all at once when the guardian angels promised do not appear when you really needed them. Or when a dread disease takes away some beloved perfectly practicing vegan health reformer.

Perhaps it comes like the young mother who suddenly understood that by not having sugar and cookies and icing in her kitchen, she was depriving her children of all the happy childhood memories she had had, by a health reform totalitarianism. They'll never know what a cupcake is, she suddenly realized.

Or in my own case, when time after time after time I began to see that the world absolutely, positively, conclusively was older than 6,000 years by so many different forms of evidence that my simplistic young earth creationism could only be supported by denying truth.

John Walton, a conservative Old Testament scholar who concludes that Genesis 1 is telling about the inauguration of worship by God, not the chronology or physical formation of life, was approached by a lady with her KJV Bible in hand who demanded of him, “Professor Walton, why don’t you just take the Bible and accept it as it reads?”

He says he wanted to hand her his copy of the Hebrew Bible and say, “Here, friend, why don’t you?”

### Inspiration Doesn’t Prevent Mistakes and Errors

Ellen White has written many things that are right (see below). But she has also said some things that are quite wrong. You all know some of them. It is not always a sin to be sick. Volcanos and earthquakes are not caused by burning coal fires underground. Human children in heaven may not sprout little wings. Waldensians may not have been seventh-day Sabbath keepers. Amalgamation of man with beast may not have created certain brownish races of men. Masturbation may be a blessing, not a curse, at some times in life. And a vegan diet may only be healthy with great care, not being ideal for most of the world, although largely plant-based diets certainly are healthy, with a little animal food or with supplements. All modern drugs are certainly not poisons although most 19th century ones were.[2]

The Bible itself must also be interpreted to understand the truth. It is impossible to take every word literally without interpretation.[3]

### Errors and Sins

Scriptural inerrancy is an unsupportable heresy. The same is true of Ellen White inerrancy. Both views are idolatrous – worship of a fallen human prophet, instead of the Creator. Bibliolatry – worshiping the words of Paul, John, James, or Moses – is an error that can be forgiven, as long as we don’t stubbornly refuse to believe the truth when it is shown to us. Accepting as infallible truth every message Ellen White gave as from the throne of God was always an error, but persisting in this inerrancy error, when God shows us greater truth, is also a sin.

But there is another sin even worse than these.

### 2.) WHITE’S ERRORS PROVE SHE WAS A FALSE PROPHET. BURY HER DEEP AND THROW AWAY THE SHOVEL.
Jesus warned that the sin of ignoring the Spirit when He prophesies whenever or wherever or by whomever He wants to is not pardonable.[4] Can you disregard Jonah's message to Nineveh just because he was a coward and a grumbler? Will you cut out the Psalms because David was a man of blood, sexually hard to satisfy, and at times quite dishonest? Will you ignore Paul because he used hard-to-understand arguments, some of which don’t make sense? Will you ignore the preaching of Peter because he lapsed into racial discrimination after God told him not to discriminate?

**Dare you ignore these?**

Will you deny this? “True love is not a strong, fiery, impetuous passion. It is, on the contrary, an element calm and deep. It looks beyond mere externals, and is attracted by qualities alone. It is wise and discriminating, and its devotion is real and abiding.” (*Adventist Home*, p. 51)

Or this? “A Christian reveals true humility by showing the gentleness of Christ, by being always ready to help others, by speaking kind words and performing unselfish acts, which elevate and ennoble the most sacred message that has come to our world.” (*Life Sketches*, p. 86)

Will you refuse to be moved by this? “The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.” (*Education*, p. 57)

The first book in her Conflict of the Ages series begins: “God is love. His nature, His law, is love. It has ever been; it ever will be.” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 33)

Her last book in the same series ends: “The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.” (*Great Controversy*, p. 678)

And most helpful to me personally: “Every association of life calls for the exercise of self-control, forbearance, and sympathy. We differ so widely in disposition, habits, education, that our ways of looking at things vary. We judge differently. Our understanding of truth, our ideas in regard to the conduct of life, are not in all respects the same… So frail, so ignorant, so liable to misconception is human nature, that each should be careful in the estimate he places upon another.” (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 483)

Now I understand that Ellen White said her works were a lesser light to the Bible, and that she was not a prophet but a messenger or servant of the Lord (although I am not sure I understand the real difference). But frankly, now that Ellen White is dead and has been physically buried, I don’t think we should resurrect her, or deify her, or ignore her. I think we should canonize her.

**3.) TRUE PROPHETS LIKE ELLEN WHITE SHOULD BE CANONIZED.**

“What!” you exclaim. Are you trying to make Ellen White equal to the sacred Scriptures? Yes, but you may not understand what I mean, so let me explain a little more.

Canonizing does not mean taking all 2,500,000 words, all 5,000 articles, all her recorded sermons, all her Testimonies to individuals, all her 100 books or even *Steps to Christ*, and making them a new Bible. It means doing
what the church did to Moses, and to James, and to Esther, and to Nehemiah, and to the Psalms, and to the Gospels or the letter of Paul to the Laodiceans.

The church over time selected those portions deemed inspired and, as directed by God, preserved those that became sacred, not because everything the prophets wrote was of equal validity or was perfect logic and factually immaculate, but because through the imperfections of human messengers we glimpsed pictures of God.[5]

It is clear that all the Bible has been edited. The Hebrew was edited; we have only copies of copies. The Greek was edited; we have only copies of copies. Everything James said (he made some errors in his speeches in Acts) is not accepted as inspired – just those key 5 chapters in his little book. And even those Luther had problems with! But they have been edited and selected by the church.

How dare we edit the messenger of the Lord? How dare we not![6]

Ellen White is situational and persuasive

Ellen White need not be an infallible authority to remain our inspiration. Wheat is a valuable seed, enclosed with a small coating of chaff. You release the value of the wheat by smashing it and then winnowing away the chaff to leave the wheat. You thresh it. You refine it. This is what has been done with all inspired writings.

I have read all the published works of Ellen White, and hundreds if not thousands of her articles. I have learned time and again that her authority is both situational and persuasive. Sister White did insist that we listen to her,[7] but she then tried to persuade us with logic, reason, and quoting scriptures. She does say, Because God spoke to me, listen. But she never says, Because I heard God, you just have to believe it or else, and I never make mistakes.

Much of her practical instruction was given in a 3rd world situation. Ellen White’s details often fit better in a developing world than a developed world. We may need one kind of book very slightly edited for use in the rural 3rd world not yet plumbed and electrified, and a different, more updated and edited book for use in the developed cities of the world.

Replace the Estate with an Institute

The time for the preservation in an embalmed form of all the 19th century writings of Ellen G. White as quasi-infallible is over. The church needs to replace the Ellen White Estate dedicated to protection and conservation of a dead person, with an **EGW Institute of Advanced Communication**, where her works are edited and improved instead of merely conserved. A place where the new and young of today translate her works not into German or Zulu or Chinese, but into videos and internet blogs. Where the emphasis is not on preserving her words, but on reapplying her ideas and principles to the problems and needs of today.

The timeless insights and inspired ideas Ellen White was given should be edited, collected, freed of obvious errors and misstatements, and republished in today’s language.

Two Suggestions for Readers

#1) It is time to stop trying to believing something just because Ellen White saw it, if you can’t also see it yourself. Ellen is now dead and asleep in Jesus. You are the one with your eyes open, and if God can’t help you to see something, don’t pretend you do just because our deceased prophetess saw it. She is responsible for what she saw; you are responsible for what you see.

#2) On the other hand, don’t ignore anything she said just because you don’t understand it at first glance! Is all fiction bad for you? Are movies places where the angels leave you at the door? Natural 21st century self says,
What crazy ideas! Wacko!

But is it? Is it possible much or most fiction is bad for you, even if not all? Is it true that all movies have no effect on you? Would some things you watch not offend angels? Would you and Jesus sit together and watch “24 Hours” or “Game of Thrones” every week? I don’t offer an answer, but think about it.

Consider what she wrote; give it a chance. Then reject the chaff and modify the absolute statements, but keep the kernels of truth found in most of them. Cheese may no longer be completely “unfit for human consumption,” as it was before pasteurization, but it is still pretty high in saturated fat and cholesterol.

Unlock Ellen White from the false burden of infallibility, and welcome her back into your life as a good and wise friend. As we must do with all our friends, forgive her when she makes a mistake or is frankly wrong, but love her when like a good friend she is so often just exactly what we need.

Death Freed Ellen White of Infirmity; We May Free Her from Irrelevancy

By editing out the situational and questionable parts of her writings, by consensus of believers, we can offer our children and our communities a great blessing, inspired direction for their lives from Ellen White. Her edited words can stand beside those of the other inspired spokesmen and women for God through the ages.

I will close this series with my personal testimony that a fallible Ellen White remains the most important spiritual influence in my life, bar none. God has spoken and continues to speak to me through her writings. God who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke to our fathers through the prophets, and then sent his only beloved Son, has not left us now without witness, His servant, Ellen White. So I finish with a bit of plagiarism.

“Friends, Adventists, countrymen, lend me your ears,
I come to praise Ellen, not to bury her.

The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones.

Must it be so with Ellen?

I speak not to disprove what others say,
But here I am to speak what I do know.

You did all love her once, not without cause.
What cause withholds you then to honor her now?

Bear with me. My heart is in the coffin there with Ellen,
And I must pause till it come back to me….

Here was a prophetess, when comes such another?” [8]

(This is the last of a three-part series on The Expired Inspired. If you found this series interesting, please share it on Facebook or other media with interested friends. Concise constructive comments and suggestions on the proper use of the writings of Ellen White are now welcomed from readers. Please read all three parts before you comment. All comments will be read with interest, but may be edited by the author to retain those that are constructive and on the topic of these articles.)

FOOTNOTES:
I have published on Ellen White and Medicines in *Adventist Review*, April 25, 2002.


Mark 3:29.

*Encyclopedia Britannica* summarizes: “The process of canonization was relatively long and remarkably flexible and detached; various books in use were recognized as inspired, but the Church Fathers noted, without embarrassment or criticism, how some held certain books to be canonical and others did not. Emerging Christianity assumed that through the Spirit the selection of canonical books was “certain” enough for the needs of the church. Inspiration, it is to be stressed, was neither a divisive nor a decisive criterion. Only when the canon had become self-evident was it argued that inspiration and canonicity coincided, and this coincidence became the presupposition of Protestant orthodoxy (e.g., the authority of the Bible through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit).”

Ellen G. White: “There is no excuse for any one in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation.” (*Review and Herald*, December 20, 1892)

I believe that to overcome the 1800’s culture of gender discrimination and general dismissal of Adventists after 1844 as foolish enthusiasts, the supernatural was necessary to gain the prophetess a hearing. This is not simple enthusiasm; this is something more. “Listen up!” is the message the public visions gave. But being inspired did not overrule the need for persuasion and reason in Ellen White’s ministry, as all her written works attest.

My paraphrase is, of course, from Marc Antony’s speech in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*.

- 9
Welcome Home...Maybe? Part Two

By Pastor Gregory Matthews, Feb 11, 2015, Published by permission from the author.

As Susan listened to the idle talk of the patrons of the bar one of the men mentioned God. Another joined in. Something that was said triggered long-lost memories in Susan's mind. With the Spirit of the living God helping her, she began to give a witness to the Christ she had once known. By the time she had finished, Susan had resolved to return to God herself.

At this point, Ralph entered Susan's life. He had lived a full life for God. Ralph was a prominent businessman and the pastor of a small community church. As he and Susan discussed marriage they decided that their home would be centered on Christ. Considering this, Susan reached back into her background and shared with Ralph what this would mean to her. Ralph agreed to attend the Adventist church with Susan and they were married.

Anna, Ralph's daughter, could not understand the change she saw in her father. She went to Susan for answers. The answers did not make sense to her and Susan began to doubt them herself. With tears streaming down her face, Susan fell on the floor one day. She called upon God to reveal himself to her and to open his word to her understanding. The answer was immediate: "Here I am. I have never left you. I will give you a hunger for and an understanding of my word."

Susan arose from the floor of the bathroom that day a new person. She dedicated an early morning hour to the study of the Bible. She now learned that God had won the battle with sin. God loved and accepted her regardless of her past. On Calvary, Christ had won the battle against sin.

This was hard for Susan to understand; it seemed out of harmony with the Adventism that she had once experienced. God was still leading, and Marla came from the local church to work with Susan. Marla had also traveled the road of a prodigal. She shared her spiritual journey with Susan and introduced Ralph and Susan to the tapes and writings of Morris Venden. This was a new perspective to them. Susan began to share this perspective with her children. A daughter, Cynthia, joined the church and married a local leader in the congregation.

I wish that I could tell you that at this point that Susan had finally reached a time of spiritual peace. But my story is real life and Susan had not yet reached that place of spiritual nurture. The local members were not as ready for Susan as she was for them. What Jesus did for us on Calvary was so central to Susan's spiritual life that she sometimes got in the face of people who did not see spirituality as she did. Some of her doctrinal understanding lay on the edge of Adventism. For example, she honored the Sabbath, but the manner in which she kept it offended some. As Susan evaluated Adventism in the context of the local congregation she decided that in honesty to where she was spiritually, she would worship in that congregation, but she would not formally become a Seventh-day Adventist. So that is what she did. She faithfully attended services each Sabbath. But, she did not join the denomination.

About this time several Adventist-oriented, but private, discussion groups arose on the Internet. Susan turned to one of these for spiritual growth. That experience was a mixed one. Some told her she was a child of God, welcomed her and sought to lead her spiritually. Others told her she was eternally lost because she had left the true church and was no longer a formal member. Paul publicly told her that when Christ came the second time he would stand on the wall of the New Jerusalem and wave at her on the other side. The message Susan received on the Internet was mixed and flavored with rejection.

This feeling of rejection became complete with the break-up of daughter Cynthia's marriage. Emotional and physical abuse was charged. The local congregation sided with the husband's family, who provided substantial financial...
support to the church. Children were left in need. Coupled with this were problems that developed in Susan's own marriage. At this point in time, Susan decided that she could no longer attend the local Adventist church. She resolved that she would never again place her trust in any human organization. She would depend only on the Lord.

Then, three major medical crises in a twelve-month period made it unlikely that Susan would ever attend any church again. At that time her association with Adventists became limited to the Internet. Susan was a prodigal who had returned to Christ, but not to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She was indebted to the Adventists who gave her that early start. There were grandparents and in-laws who took her in when she was abandoned and in need. God used those people and others. They exemplified the love of Christ as they related to her. They are likely part of the reason that Susan returned to her fundamental heritage. There are clearly those who have fulfilled the ministry of Christ to reach out with the love of Christ to those who have struggled with sin. A Seventh-day Adventist minister traveled to visit Andrew, her second husband, in the last few hours of his life.

The power of the resurrected Christ has been felt in the lives of people who have shared Susan’s journey. One former lover remains free from alcohol and serves in a leadership position in his local Adventist church. Cynthia remains a single parent. Her life has been a struggle. She is on a spiritual journey and the God who continued to seek the salvation of her mother continues to work for Cynthia, too.

As for Susan, her life was ended by cancer on April 12, 2002. I spoke with her by telephone a few hours before she died. Her confidence in Christ remained firm. She had heard the voice of Jesus say to her: “Welcome home.” She rests in confidence that on that resurrection morning Jesus will welcome her with open arms and there will be no one who will say, “Wait a minute!” When the news of her medical condition was published on the Internet, there was a great deal of support for her. People who had disagreed with her doctrinal positions publically supported her, and wished her well. This included the person who had previously been most negative toward her. As she discussed this with me, she shared that it brought her great comfort. She died feeling loved.

[i] It must be noted that at a later time Paul publicly asked Susan to forgive him for making that statement. She forgave him.

Copyright 2001, 2002 and 2009. All rights reserved. Permission is granted to make one copy of this for personal use. Permission to further publish or to circulate is denied.
God Will Provide

Feb 11. 2015  Photo taken by Cheryl Morrow, Paris, Ontario

They all wait for You
To give them their food in due season.
You give to them, they gather it up;
You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good.–Psalm 104:27, 28