NEWS

Adventist Media Innovator Warren Judd is Dead: The creator of some of the most memorable SDA awareness TV ads, who helped associate the denomination with publicly spirited Christianity, has made his final exit....

Adventist Community Services Volunteers Helping Families in Small South Dakota Town Hit by Tornado: A local Adventist pastor in a small tornado-ravaged town has become the go-to administrator of a relief program that is bringing hope and strong commendations....

Adventist Health Services Reach Towns in U.S., Mexico as Well as Zimbabwe: The worldwide initiative to link Adventist health services with outreach in the cities appears to be functioning well; time will tell how efficiently the combination will work as a mainstay of urban evangelism....
My Take: A 'No' is a Deeper 'Yes'!: Columnist Raj Attikien looks again at the unusual wording of the GC's question on Women's Ordination, and believes the process has produced a useful conversation, that regardless of the voted outcome, will benefit the Church.

A Response to the 10 Questions asked by Pastor Tom Hughes: Guest columnist Tapiwa Mushaninga takes a critical reading of questions asked about Women's Ordination.

Why Official Adventism Opposes Evolution and Long Ages for Life on Earth: Part I: Columnist Ervin Taylor looks at the reasons the SDA denomination has opposed evolution so strongly through the years, and the role of Ellen White in that opposition.

A Response to the Pew Report: World Christianity is clearly in decline, says a recent Pew (survey) report. But surely the Adventist Church can rise above this sobering reality! Columnist Lawrence Downing takes a closer look.

God's First Feminist: Dr. Jack Hoehn takes a fresh, new look at the historical New Testament's teachings on Christian women and sees a rising tide of female ascendancy happening long before the births of Gloria Steinem or Germaine Greer.

Flataxia--A True Story (DEVOTIONAL): Debbonaire Kovacs contemplates Trinity Sunday (coming this weekend) and indulges us in a space fantasy, "Flataxia."
FEATURE & THE ARTS

Tangible Love (FEATURE): Once again, young guest writer Helena Pett wows us with a story of how cooking equals love and love equals cooking....

Shelter in the Storm (VISUAL): We are reminded of nature’s awesomeness during summer storms commemorated in Isaiah 25:4....

Nothing In My Hands, Chapter Two (PROSE): An Adventist teacher and her daughter are embroiled in scandal, and lose their standing in the Adventist community.... (The continuing account of an Adventist family caught in the throes of loss and redemption.)
Adventist Media Innovator Warren Judd is Dead

From News Release, May 27, 2015 [Updated May 28]: Despite a large, international prayer network, Warren Judd lost his battle with cancer yesterday and went to his rest in Jesus. Calling him “a visionary media professional,” an official bulletin from the North American Division (NAD) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church announced his passing last night “with deep sorrow.” He was an assistant vice president of the NAD who coordinated the Adventist media ministries based in the United States and Canada.

Judd was also responsible for the audiovisual operations of the last five General Conference Sessions including San Antonio in 2015, for which planning has been several years in the making. Judd started his service to the Adventist denomination in Australia and helped to found the Adventist Media Center there. He played key roles for decades at the Adventist Media Center in California which was closed down last year. He was a gifted producer in multiple media.

The son of a pastor, Judd trained as an X-ray technologist, but his first love was music. He was a church musician starting as a youth and became a very gifted arranger and accompanist. He started as a musician at the Adventist Media Center in Sydney (Australia) and with his technology training soon became a producer, and eventually the manager. He worked with evangelist John Carter and moved with The Carter Report team to the United States in the mid-1980s.

Judd became vice president for production at the Adventist Media Center in California in the late 1980s and was a moving force in the development of NET evangelism events, the Adventist Communication Network, global satellite evangelism campaigns and the establishment of the Hope Channel. He ran Adventist Media Productions for many years and served as a producer for scores of major video and film projects. He was a huge fan of gospel music and helped produce the Voice of Prophecy Family Reunion music videos, remembers Phil Draper, a veteran musician for the radio ministry. His wife, Jan, was also a musician and they often performed together. He was a “perfectionist,” Draper stated, “and eternally kind!”

“We offer our deepest condolences to the Judd family in this time of such great sorrow,” said Pastor Daniel R. Jackson, president of the NAD. “Warren was an accomplished media authority and talented musician. But most importantly, he was a devoted husband, father and a committed Christian. Warren helped significantly advance the use of audiovisual technology in the Adventist Church. He will be missed.”

Judd’s daughter, Andrea, posted the following statement through several Internet venues: “Dad went so peacefully at about 9:45 a.m. this morning, at home, family by his side. He must have been waiting for a clean shave, which precious Yonni was in the midst of doing when she noticed a sudden color change and a change in breathing. Mum and Marc were each holding a hand of his as he breathed his last breath. We cried and we thanked God for His mercy in allowing Dad to breathe his last so peacefully. We praised God that Dad’s breath is with Him. Only Dad’s earthly body has died, and with that, the cancer is defeated and forever destroyed! Praise God!

“Mum has been a rock through all of this. Certainly not without tears and great heartache, but with a greater faith! On top of it all, today is her 70th birthday. And she said, ‘I know many might feel differently and not understand, but I’m actually glad he died on my birthday. It makes it a very special and sacred day.’ God is good.”

A Celebration of Life for Judd will be held at the Loma Linda University Church in Loma Linda, California, on Monday, June 8, at 6:30 pm. Because of “Dad’s influence literally all over the world, we are going to … live stream … the service,” said his daughter Andrea Judd. It can be viewed on the web: www.lluc.org/article/40/media/worship-live
Judd’s widow has asked that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to the media ministry at the Loma Linda University Church where he had planned to volunteer his time in retirement. Checks can be sent to Attention Media Department, Loma Linda University Church, 11125 Campus Street, Loma Linda, California 92354. Donations can be made electronically at the following web address: www.lluc.org/article/5/giving Be sure to designate donations for “Media.”
Adventist Community Services Volunteers Helping Families in Small South Dakota Town Hit by Tornado

By AT News Team, May 27, 2015: More than half the households in Delmont (South Dakota) have been helped by the resource center set up in the American Legion Hall two days after a tornado hit the small town on Mother's Day (May 10). It is managed by Adventist Community Services (ACS), the relief agency sponsored by the Adventist denomination in the United States.

Pastor Bob Forbes is the ACS disaster response coordinator on site in Delmont, reports the Bismarck Tribune. “We generally tell people to take what they need and don’t be afraid to come back later. That’s what we are here for," he told the newspaper. Forbes leads the Adventist congregation in Lehr, North Dakota, and works as an ACS volunteer for the denomination’s Dakota Conference.

About $55,000 worth of donated items have arrived in Delmont so far, Forbes estimated. There are still supplies that have not yet been unpacked and inventoried, although about 170 of the 300 residents in the village have come in and obtained emergency items they need because their homes are destroyed or damaged. This includes groceries and household items "ranging from paper plates to blankets to small fans, and from shampoo to Rice-A-Roni," stated the newspaper.

Perhaps the most unique item donated will not be found at the American Legion Hall. A man in Corsica (South Dakota) has offered a single-story home he owns if the family that receives it will arrange for it to be moved to their land.

There are a few items ACS is asking that no one donate; clothing. They have already received 26 boxes of clothing from Connecticut, which more than meets the need. ACS does not distribute second-hand socks, underwear or shoes because of sanitary issues. “There's no solid way to know that those items are clean and disinfected," according to the newspaper.

One of the local residents displaced by the storm, Marjorie Gilbert told the newspaper about the ACS center; “It’s been a godsend. You don’t have the stuff around that you’re used to having and for these folks to be here providing goods here and giving us what’s needed, you can’t thank them enough.”

ACS is a separately-incorporated public charity organization from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists with a 501(c)3 tax-exempt status under United States law. ACS provides disaster response services under contracts with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the American Red Cross, although it does not get any funding from either organization.

Adventists are committed in writing to respond to any disaster in the U.S. declared by the president or a state governor. Each conference in the country must maintain a qualified response team and provide regular training and funding for disaster operations, although the ACS national office provides seed money each time there is a disaster response project.

ACS is always looking for volunteers who want to get the training so they can be prepared to help when disasters strike. Spontaneous, untrained volunteers can also be used, but a core of trained personnel are necessary for ACS to work in areas restricted by state police and emergency services. If you are interested in current disaster response projects underway by ACS, want to donate to support the center in South Dakota or in other places, or want to learn about disaster response training, there is more information at this Web site: www.communityservices.org
Adventist Health Services Reach Towns in U.S., Mexico as Well as Zimbabwe

By AT News Team, May 28, 2015: The same week that a free clinic served thousands in Harare, Zimbabwe, reports emerged of a similar project by an Adventist university in Mexico and a local newspaper in Dalton, Georgia, reported that Adventist Health System (AHS) is helping a small town save its hospital. These events illustrate once again that one of the ways in which the Adventist faith makes its greatest impact is in health care.

"Rural hospitals across the [United States] are facing increased financial pressure," stated the Dalton Daily Citizen, "but officials say they believe a recently approved agreement between the Hospital Authority of Murray County and Adventist Health System will allow Murray Medical Center to not only survive but prosper in years to come." Unlike the short-term clinics in Zimbabwe and Mexico, the rural Georgia project involves a daily presence by AHS for years to come.

"We believe they are going to improve all services that we currently provide and they will be adding services," the newspaper quoted a local civic leader in reference to the Adventist health ministry. "The know how to run a hospital. They turned around Gordon Hospital [in Calhoun, another Georgia small town] and we think they will do the same thing for us," stated Randall Richards, chairman of the County Hospital Authority.

On May 1 the state regulators approved a five-year lease of the hospital by AHS which was negotiated late last year. The Adventist organization has paid off $5.1 million in debt and "as soon as they took over day-to-day operations they began bringing in new equipment, include a mobile MRI and new beds and furniture for the patient rooms," according to the newspaper. The 43-bed hospital is small and without the larger resources and expertise that the Adventist team brings to town, it would probably have closed. Some 50 rural hospitals have closed in the U.S. since 2010, according to a recent report from the Associated Press.

Some 135 teachers and students from Linda Vista Adventist University in Chiapas State, Mexico, treated more than 800 residents of Rincon Chamula, a barrio with a population of 1,500 located three kilometers (1.5 miles) from the campus. First a team from the university met with community council members and got the collaboration of Celin Clemente Vargas, the top public health official in the area. Vargas provided six physicians and medical supplies to assist the volunteers.

Chiapas State is one of the poorest in Mexico, located along the international border with Guatemala where the drug trade and violence are problems as well as poverty. The Adventist university has had conflicts with the local residents in the past. "We had not taken intentional actions to connect with them and develop good relations in the past," Raul Lozano, university president, told the Adventist News Network (ANN).

Southeast Adventist Hospital, located 130 kilometers (80 miles) away in Villahermosa, provided volunteer physicians, dentists and optometrists. The free clinic provided medical checkups, dental work, eye exams, lab tests and specialized care for women and children. Students from the nutrition and medical technology programs at the university also provided nutrition counseling, medications, haircuts and donated clothing.

The clinic was such a success that the university is developing a long-term relationship with the community. The plan next semester is for student volunteers to help clean up the streets, paint and repair dilapidated buildings and help with construction projects, as well as continued health services and health education events. The university president said that the effort had only just begun, ANN reported.

Whether it is a city in Zimbabwe alongside an evangelism campaign or a rural hospital in the United States or a
village in Mexico, Adventists can be mobilized to meet the health needs of entire communities. That is one of the missionary traditions of the Adventist denomination that remains strong in today's world.
My Take: A ‘No’ Is a Deeper ‘Yes’!

by Raj Attiken, May 28, 2015: The Adventist Church has again picked up the ball regarding women’s ordination that it has fumbled many times over the years and is running with it. But which goal line is it running towards this time?

In my opinion, it is superfluous to ask General Conference Session delegates whether it is “acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry.”[i] The reason should be obvious. General Conference Sessions do not regulate what issues Division Executive Committees address or do not address.[ii] No authorizing action at a General Conference Session is needed for a Division to consider any matter of significance to its territory. Even as some local Conferences and Union Conferences have already addressed the issue of ordination, so can Division executive committees, should they so choose. A “yes” vote in San Antonio will not obligate every Division executive committee to take up this matter for their regions. Nor will a “no” vote prevent all Division committees from addressing the issue.

A further irony regarding the wording of the question to be placed before the delegates in San Antonio is that it implies an acknowledgement of the appropriateness of ordaining women to the gospel ministry. For surely the Church would not be asking whether a practice should be adopted regionally if, from the outset, the practice was recognized to be unacceptable on biblical, theological, ethical, moral or any other basis! It appears to me, therefore, that even the option of a “no” vote has a deeper “yes” embedded in it.

Unless the motion that is presented to delegates on July 8 is markedly different from the action proposed by the published question forwarded from the 2014 Annual Council, the delegates will not be asked to vote in favor of, or in opposition to, the ordination of women to the gospel ministry. This is a rather startling reality, given the intense focus on the theology of ordination in recent years! I am not aware if the wording of the published question represents a strategic intent or if it is an inadvertent misstep. By framing the issue as it has, the Church has resisted the temptation —at least in this one instance — to act as if it is God’s official question-answering machine churning out definitive resolutions by majority vote on any given divisive issue. This is sensible, since the world is not hanging with bated breath on our answers to this question! Nor are most Adventists!

It certainly is possible that the Chairperson at the Session could invoke a parliamentary procedural maneuver that allows him to introduce for a vote an alternate concept that is disparate from the originally published question. Or the Chair could permit a delegate to initiate such an action from the floor. In either case, such maneuvers — even if preceded by prayer — will demonstrate a lapse in ethical integrity, and would tarnish the significance or validity of the decisions made.

For some time now we have been treated to a good deal of heavy breathing and earnest handwringing about the issue of women’s ordination. Much serious study, deliberation, and prayer have also occurred. Although a great deal of time has been invested by many people, and the costs to convene meetings and publish reports have been considerable, the exercise has been good for the Church on many fronts. It has confirmed for the Church that the issue of ordaining women to the gospel ministry is not directly addressed in the Bible. It has allowed us to weigh the merits of varying and opposing perspectives and interpretations. It has helped us understand that the Church’s unity is in Christ and not in the uniformity of its practices, policies, rituals or programs. It has assured us that the practice of ordaining women is compatible with well-grounded biblical and theological principles. It has animated us to the possibility that the Church, at long last, could witness the unfolding of the “kingdom” ideal in this regard, where women and men are equally valued, equally called, recognized as equally gifted, equally needed, and equally mobilized in mission and ministry. In my biased opinion, these are all positive outcomes.
In two previous columns I opined that the issue of women’s ordination to the gospel ministry does not belong on a General Conference Session agenda and that regardless of the vote on the proposed question to be placed before the delegates, women will increasingly be ordained in various parts of the world. I argued that the primary impact the vote in San Antonio will have would be on the speed at which the practice becomes more widely adopted. Although both of these notions ascribe a diminished significance to the vote in San Antonio, I here advocate for doing what Hall of Fame philosopher Yogi Berra proposed: “When you come to a fork in the road, take it.” If a vote is to be taken at all, the reasons for a “yes” vote are both compelling and persuasive (as many have presented in this and other forums with logical, well-articulated commentary and analysis).

A hymn sung at the Commencement exercises at a theological seminary over the past weekend led me to think about the flurry of current activity in the Church in anticipation of the General Conference session. The lyrics, written by Thomas H. Troeger, included these lines: “May our learning curb the error which unthinking faith can breed, lest we justify some terror with an antiquated creed.”[iii]

It is time we curbed the error of denying ordination to qualified women pastors. It is time we acknowledged that diversity of practice in this matter does not impinge on the faith-content of Adventism but that it is an ecclesiastical reality that merits celebration and affirmation. That’s my take!

[i] The full text of the question that delegates will be asked to vote on July 8 is as follows: WHEREAS, The unity for which Jesus prayed is vitally important to the witness of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and; WHEREAS, The Seventh-day Adventist Church seeks to engage every member in its worldwide mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ among people from every nation, culture and ethnicity, and; WHEREAS, Various groups appointed by the General Conference and its divisions have carefully studied the Bible and Ellen G. White writings with respect to the ordination of women, and have not arrived at consensus as to whether ministerial ordination of women is unilaterally affirmed or denied, and; WHEREAS, The Seventh-day Adventist Church affirms that “God has ordained that the representatives of His Church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference Session, shall have authority”; THEREFORE, The General Conference Executive Committee requests delegates in their sacred responsibility to God at the 2015 General Conference Session to respond to the following question: After your prayerful study on ordination from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and the reports of the study commissions, and; after your careful consideration of what is best for the church and the fulfillment of its mission, is it acceptable for division executive committees, as they may deem it appropriate in their territories, to make provision for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry? Yes or No."

[ii] The boards and executive committees of each organizational level of the church have the authority to independently determine what is placed on their respective meeting agendas. Unlike Unions and Conferences, which have their own constituencies, Divisions are “divisions” of the General Conference. As such, they do not have their own constituencies, but operate through their elected executive committees. Division presidents are vice presidents of the General Conference.


- 3
- 215

Sharing is caring!
A Response to the 10 Questions asked by Pastor Tom Hughes

by Tapiwa Mushaninga, May 26, 2015: As a lay member in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I too have seen many controversial issues in the church. 10 questions have been posed, challenging those who reject women's ordination, and I feel I must respond to these questions raised by Pastor Tom Hughes. This issue is important to me because I believe that compromise on how we read the Bible, interpreting it to suit popular culture, will send us down a path away from God. Biblical fidelity must be upheld at all times, as any deviation from it will only lead to ruin eventually.

First Question: Do you believe in the priesthood of all believers, or the Levitical priesthood and Catholic concept of ministry in the New Testament?

I believe the question is based on two erroneous presuppositions. One of the presuppositions is that the Levitical priesthood was replaced by the priesthood of believers, and the second is that the priesthood of believers is a New Testament concept. I disagree entirely with both of these presuppositions, as they are based on extremely faulty theology. The Levitical priesthood was replaced by Christ's ministry in the sanctuary, as he is the true high priest. This is why the priesthood system ceased to function after the cross, where type met antitype. I also have a problem with the question's assumption that the priests and Levites were the only ones who exercised religious leadership, when there were other leadership structures that ran parallel to the priesthood. Take the 70 elders of the Israelites who were all men, the judges set up by Moses after heeding the advice of Jethro. Then you have the judges of Israel, i.e., Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, etc. You also have the kings of Israel. An important note would be the fact that the priesthood and these other leadership structures were predominately overseen by men. These structures were basically set up in a time when other religions and cultures had female priests, mediums, monarchs, etc. I do not think that these cultures were more enlightened than the Israelites or had a better understanding of gender equality – or maybe they did?

The second presupposition that I believe is not faithful to the biblical consensus is the belief that the priesthood of believers is a New Testament concept. Its patent falsity is shown by this verse: *Exodus 19:6: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.*

We clearly see here that every Israelite man, woman and child was designated as a priest, and that this privilege extends to all believers in the New Testament, as they are the spiritual Israel. Peter was not formulating a new doctrine when he said that we are a royal priesthood, but was simply reiterating the Old Testament and extending the privilege to gentile believers. I am not sure I can answer this question, as it is based on false premises and is setting up a false choice. I definitely believe in the priesthood of believers but this does not negate the biblical principle of male headship in the church and home.

Second Question: Do you believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

I believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit but I also believe that the Holy Spirit inspired the Bible with regards to Church hierarchy and order.

Third Question: Do you believe that the gifts of the Spirit are gender-specific?

I believe this question is elaborating on the second question; I will focus my response here. Again, this question is designed to trap opponents of women's ordination into a false choice. The question is not and was never about the giftedness of women but rather the capacity in which these gifts may be used in the church. I will be the first to concede that the Bible is silent on the gender-specificity of the gifts of the Holy Spirit; I have no issue there. Where I have an issue is the capacity and the extent to whom and how these gifts are to be used in the church. The Bible
makes it abundantly clear the leadership of the church should be male-based, and this is what proponents of women’s ordination deny. Again, the issue is not spiritual gifts but on how gifts are regulated by the Bible with regards to leadership.

Fourth Question: Why are you trying to exclude the gift of pastoring from women?

No one is trying to exclude the gift of pastoring from women per se but the issue I have is with women exercising roles that are clearly disallowed in the Bible. I do not make the rules; I simply live by them. Every single Adventist made a conscious decision to join the Adventist church knowing that it does not ordain female pastors. The exclusion of female ordination is not some new phenomenon but has been with the church since its inception. My question for proponents of ordination is why they consciously joined a church that they knew did not include women in the leadership role of the pastor. I would implore proponents of women’s ordination to redirect this question to God; only He can give a reason why He set up things the way they currently are. In the Bible many beings/people have felt excluded from some sort of ministry they felt they deserved: Lucifer, Eve, Korah, Dathan, etc. I sincerely hope the proponents do not find themselves unwittingly in this list.

Fifth Question: Do you believe women can have the gift of prophecy?

Of course I believe women can have the gift of prophecy! There are many examples of women in the Bible who had the gift of prophecy, e.g., Miriam, Deborah, the daughters of Philip, etc. I feel there has been a conflation of two gifts, namely prophecy and pastoring. They are not the same gift and serve different functions for the church. Ellen White was a prophet but she did not serve in the capacity of a pastor; she did not baptize, conduct weddings or ever refer to herself as a pastor. I feel this question is digressing from the real issue of whether women should serve as pastors, as I see a wave of women and their supporters clamoring not for the office of the prophet but for the office of the pastor. Women have demonstrated that they can be given the gift of prophecy and many other gifts but this does not translate into role interchangeability.

Sixth Question: Why are you contradicting her plain statement endorsing colporteuring as training ground for ministers, including women, to be pastors who wear the yoke of Christ?

I am not sure why this question was asked. It gives the impression that those opposed to women’s ordination deny colporteuring as a training ground for ministers. I believe that would be stretching the truth. It is true that Ellen White suggests that women can be pastors but we need to fully understand the context of what she meant.

Here is an excerpt from an article by White Estate associate director William Fagal in 1989:

“In the above statement about women who should labor in the Gospel ministry, she describes that labor as we would the work of a Bible instructor. She associated this work with care for (visiting) the flock of God. This statement may provide a key to understanding more clearly a statement published a short time later in an article entitled, “The Canvasser a Gospel Worker”:

‘All who desire an opportunity for true ministry, and who will give themselves unreservedly to God, will find in the canvassing work opportunities to speak upon many things pertaining to the future, immortal life. The experience thus gained will be of the greatest value to those who are fitting themselves for the ministry. It is the accompaniment of the Holy Spirit of God that prepares workers, both men and women, to become pastors to the flock of God.’

The remainder of the paragraph describes the character-building benefits of engaging in the canvassing work.

Was Ellen White here calling for women to be appointed pastors of churches, and therefore perhaps even to be ordained to that ministry? There are several indications that she was not.

First of all, when Ellen White wrote about ordained church pastors, she typically referred to them as ministers rather than pastors. In cases in which she used the term pastor she seems to have done so with a specialized meaning in
mind, using the term to refer to a person doing personal labor in the nurture of the flock, rather than a particular church office or position.

For example, she wrote about an Elder H who “would tell the poor sheep that he would rather be horsewhipped than visit. He neglected personal labor, so pastoral work was not done in the church and its borders. . . . Had the preacher done the work of a pastor, a much larger number would now be rejoicing in the truth.”1

Speaking of ministers who devote excessive time to reading and writing, she said: “The duties of a pastor are often shamelessly neglected because the minister lacks strength to sacrifice his personal inclinations for seclusion and study. The pastor should visit from house to house among his flock, teaching, conversing, and praying with each family, and looking out for the welfare of their souls.”2

She again expressed her concern for personal care for the flock this way: “Responsibilities must be laid upon the members of the church. The missionary spirit should be awakened as never before, and workers should be appointed as needed, who will act as pastors to the flock, putting forth personal effort to bring the church up to that condition where spiritual life and activity will be seen in all her borders.”3

In each instance, the concept of pastor is associated with the function of personal work for the flock of God, even when it is done by members of the church other than the minister. One who visits families, who teaches and prays with them, who shows personal care and interest, is doing pastoral work.

If Mrs. White intended to open the regular pastoral ministry to women, we might well expect her to give strong emphasis to the point rather than simply mentioning it as an aside in an article focusing on the canvassing work. Also in volume 6 of the Testimonies we find an article entitled, “Women to Be Gospel Workers.”4 Its focus also is on personal work in families and with other women, with no mention of the workers being ordained ministers.

The same volume also includes a chapter entitled “Young Men in the Ministry,” in which, after saying that the Lord calls for more ministers to labor in His vineyard, she adds, “God calls for you, young men. He calls for whole armies of young men.”5 18 The whole chapter is a call for men to enter the ministry, with no mention of women doing so. The same sort of gender-specific call for the ministry of men also appears in the chapter The Need of Educational Reform.6 It seems only natural to expect these articles to urge women also to join the ranks of ministers if Mrs. White believed that women canvassers were preparing for ordination.

It seems that Mrs. White did not envision men and women doing the same work of ministry. Rather, she called for women especially to undertake a personal ministry of visitation and instruction in the home. Such a work was necessary, important work, and was in the line of ministry, though often neglected by the men. The work of these women would complement rather than duplicate the regular ministry of the men.

And there is no call for ordination connected with it.”

Seventh Question: Why are you being so harsh, unkind and attacking in your language and demeanor?

I do not believe that this behavior is representative of all the opponents of women’s ordination, and I do not feel that proponents are exempt from this accusation either. I have encountered many proponents of women’s ordination who have been mean, elitist and even racist but I recognize that they are not representative of the larger group and thus I would also welcome the same courtesy from those who disagree with me/us on women’s ordination. I do, however, agree that we should converse in a polite manner with the Holy Spirit aiding us.

Eighth Question: Why do you deny the truth of Romans chapter 16?

I will not give an in-depth Bible study of Romans 16, but I will focus on whether Junia was an apostle. Here is a major debate in theological circles pertaining to the gender of Junia/Junias. There is currently no consensus as to whether the person aforementioned is in fact male or female. There is also a debate on whether verse 7 indicates...
the person was highly regarded by apostles or was a prominent apostle, although the majority of scholars believe it means the latter. Then there is the context of Romans 16 itself.

At least four inferences drawn from Romans 16 militate against the understanding that Junia/Junias was an authoritative apostle, whether man or woman. First, Andronicus and Junia/Junias are buried amidst a number of greetings that Paul extends to members of the Roman church. It seems odd and interesting that Paul would not refer to two apostles until well into his greetings; one would think that they would be more prominent among the individuals mentioned. The fact that he mentions Phoebe, Prisca and Aquila, and others first suggests that Andronicus and Junia/Junias were not as prominent in his mind. Second, Andronicus and Junia/Junias do not receive the extravagant praise that these others, such as Phoebe, Prisca and Aquila, do. Why would two prominent apostles be given less praise? Third, if we are to understand the gender of Junia/Junias to be feminine, the fact that she is mentioned second to Andronicus suggests that she may have been less prominent than he was (cf. the order in v. 3, where Prisca is mentioned first). The fact that Junia/Junias is mentioned second suggests a subordinate role, or at least one of less prominence. Finally, the fact that Paul refers to the “apostles” in the third person suggests that he was not himself among this group. This means that he was either referring to the first group listed above, the Twelve, or to the third group. Since the former is not possible, it must be the latter. All of this evidence suggests that Andronicus and Junia/Junias were not among the first or second groups called “apostles,” but rather among the third group, the “messengers.” As such, Paul was not using the term in a technical, distinctly Christian way, but rather generally, as it was used in the culture at large. Are we to believe that Paul here thinks of Andronicus and Junia/Junias as standing out amidst the company of Peter, James, John, the rest of the Twelve and, not least of all, Paul himself? I think this highly unlikely; Paul is using the word ‘apostle’ in a non-technical sense here.

In conclusion, I do not believe that Romans 16 gives the impression that Junia/Junias were prominent among the apostles. We have to wonder how some can assert that Andronicus and Junia/Junias were prominent, authoritative apostles, when they never appear again in any other verse in Scripture. Our verse says that they were Christians before Paul was, and yet we have not the slightest hint of them in Acts or anywhere else in the New Testament.

Ninth Question: the Bible clearly teaches that the gift of pastoring and the gift of elder are the same office. These are gifts of the Spirit and a calling of God. Why do you deny they are the same gift?

This is a good question and it underscores the importance of not compromising on principle. I agree that they are the same gift, and here in Africa we treat them as the same gift, so we do not have female elders or female pastors. I would be interested to find out how females in other parts of the world became ordained elders.

Tenth Question: we have allowed women to teach and minister as elders for decades in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Why are you trying to deny this gift and remove them from office and stop their ministry?

As I stated earlier, we are only seeking to remain faithful to the Bible and we are not arbitrarily looking to “purge” the clergy of women. Sometimes we do not fully understand why God asks us to do certain things or to do them in certain ways. We should always seek to ask God to empower us to do His will regardless of how uncomfortable, unpalatable it may seem. God never calls people contrary to His Word, Korah and company had to learn this the hard way. It is my wish that women fulfil their calling but according to God’s word.

The issue of women’s ordination has a much bigger issue at stake; i.e., how we read the Bible. We should not allow sentiment, emotion, human opinion, or vagaries of personal experience to determine our policy; only the Word of God. A misguided sense of equality can have unintended and devastating consequences on the church and I am sure we all want what is best for the church. Let us not be like Israel, who wanted a leadership structure like that of other cultures and religions. God took it as a rejection of himself. Let us remain people of the book and not people of popular culture or human-based morality.

Tapiwa Mushaninga is a member of the Avondale Seventh-day Adventist Church in Harae, Zimbabwe, where he is
employed as a project manager. He has a university Honors Degree, although it is not in Biblical studies or Biblical languages.

2. Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, p. 266.
4. Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 114-118.
5. Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 411.
6. Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, pp. 126-140.

- 2
- 48

Sharing is caring!

by Ervin Taylor, May 25, 2015: The Web site of an online news organization on May 22 provided readers with a story written by reporter, Sarah Barth, with the title, “Five Christian Denominations with Most Conservative Stance on Evolution.”

Her report begins with the observation that “Evolution and religion are two controversial topics, and opinions vary widely even among different Christian denominations about where the truth lies. The Genesis story of Adam and Eve and the idea that society slowly developed from adaptation do not align. With Christianity as complex and divergent as it is, denominations take widely varying stances on this hot topic.”

She then provides a short overview of the positions taken by five Protestant denominations with a conservative stance on evolution. The following mostly quotes her descriptions:

1. Southern Baptist Convention’s R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kentucky, told Time magazine in 2005 that evolution and biblical views could not be reconciled: “I believe the Bible is adequately clear about how God created the world, and that its most natural reading points to a six-day creation that included not just the animal and plant species but the earth itself”;

2. Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (a Baptist-derived denomination) lays out its objection to evolution on its Web site, citing passages from Genesis, Hebrews, Exodus, Jeremiah, and Revelation that reject evolution. Its belief statement says, “The Genesis account of the creation is true. The simple yet profound revelation must be received by faith. The theory of evolution, which teaches a continuous natural development from the lowest to the highest forms of life, is a contradiction of the teachings of the Bible”;

3. The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod — (the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America supports the theory of evolution in union with a non-literal reading of the Bible) directly rejects the conciliation of evolution and religion. In its Creation and Evolution pamphlet, President Dr. A.L. Barry writes that Adam and Eve and the Genesis story of Creation are true, “not merely a ‘myth’ or a ‘story’ made up to explain the origin of all things. …Many aspects of evolutionary theory are directly contradictory to God’s Word. Evolution cannot be ‘baptized’ to make it compatible with the Christian faith”;

4. Seventh-day Adventists — The Adventist Church’s president, Ted Wilson, spoke in 2014 in vehement opposition to the theory of evolution: “If one does not accept the recent six-day creation understanding, then that person is actually not a Seventh-day Adventist since the seventh-day Sabbath would become absolutely meaningless historically and theologically,” Wilson said;

5. Amish—Lastly, the Amish, who stop formal education after the eighth grade, cited religious objections as one of the reasons its denomination opposes the idea of evolution. On its Web site, they state, “Theories such as evolution are objectionable to the Amish, who take a literal view of the Bible and the Creation story.”

Commentary

In light of the fact that several other Christian denominations reject the idea of evolution, the observation that the views of Ellen White alone are responsible for the position taken currently by traditional Adventism on the subject of evolution and long geological ages clearly needs to be significantly nuanced. The historical facts are much more complex.

It appears to be clearly more historically accurate to suggest that when the early Adventist Church emerged toward
the ending phases of the Second Great Awakening in American religious history, it was at a time when opposition to evolution was widespread within conservative Protestant Christian circles, due to its association with Deism, skepticism and rationalism. However, it should be immediately noted that even some of what we today would label as the most conservative individuals within the Christian communities of the time—both in England and the United States—had been able to reconcile evolution and the Genesis account, using various strategies. Ellen White and early Adventism adopted views on these topics largely because the specific sectarian groups out of which most Adventists emerged had not accommodated their religious views with evolution.

As most readers will know, the immediate historical context for the rise of early Adventism was the so-called “Great Disappointment” that ended the Millerite Movement, one of the periodic episodes in European and American religious history where there is a proclamation that the Second Coming of Jesus is imminent. One of the three co-founders of Adventism was the young charismatic visionary, Ellen Harmon. Some of Ellen’s out-of-body-experiences (“visions”) provided authoritative collaboration for her assumption of the role as a divinely inspired prophetic figure who provided divine guidance in the formation of what originally was the smallest group to emerge from the debris of the Millerite episode.

All of Ellen’s early “visions” were edited and published by her chief advisor, who became her husband, James White. These writings were taken as divinely inspired by most of her followers, and the views expressed within the edited texts of these views were embodied into normative Adventist theological lore and lifestyle habits. However, again, it needs to be noted that some of these views were widely shared with the most conservative of the contemporary Protestant faith communities. What was emphasized by early Adventist propagandists and evangelists were the theological points that most contrasted with those of other conservative Protestant groups. That evolution was not true was not one of these unique beliefs.

As the 19th century came to an end, Protestant America witnessed its second major schism within its major denominational traditions. The first schism had occurred in mid-century at the time of the American Civil War—in the South, known as the “War for Southern Independence.” Southern segments of the Presbyterian, Baptist and Congregational churches broke away from those in the North. The issue that caused the separation was the institution of slavery. Southern Protestant branches used biblical statements to support slavery while the Northern segments objected to such interpretations. When the Civil War ended, the institutional separations continued. The Adventist Church was too small and almost all of its members lived in northeastern or north-central portions of the United States, and thus no organizational separation over slavery was experienced.

In contrast, the late 19th-century schism in many church bodies making up Protestant America was caused by major cultural and theological differences. Those differences resulted in the split between American Modernist and Fundamentalist Protestant Christian bodies.

In Part II of this blog, we will review the impact the rise of Fundamentalism had on the still-relatively small Adventist denomination and how Fundamentalism has influenced discussions within Adventism over the subject of evolution and long ages in the fossil record.

For those who wish to consult sources that will provide details about the historical and theological contexts and issues considered in this blog, a list of references will be included at the end of Part II.
A Response to the Pew Report

by Lawrence Downing, May 28, 2015:

America’s Changing Religious Landscape — Christians Decline Sharply as Share of Population; Unaffiliated and Other Faiths Continue to Grow.

The above title heads the 2014 survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for Religion & Public Life. The Center surveyed more than 35,000 individuals in all 50 states. The findings, published in May 2015, might well give pause to those associated with, or who are leaders in, contemporary religious organizations. For example, the survey found that 70.6% of those surveyed above the age of eighteen count themselves as Christian. Sounds good, until we learn that in 2007, the figure was 78.4%. As the percentage of those who count themselves Christians fell, the percentage of those who state they are atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular” jumped from 16.1% to 22.8%. Add to these numbers the 5.9% who identify themselves with non-Christian faiths. The greatest decline, approximately three percentage points since 2007, was in the mainline Protestants, including Seventh-day Adventists, and Catholics. Evangelical Protestant groups have also declined as a percentage share of the American population, but the decrease, something like one percent, is less dramatic than among the larger religious groups.

Adventist may be tempted to deny or ignore the above data. Historically, we have not identified ourselves as evangelicals or mainline, and certainly not Catholic! Adventists are a self-identified “remnant” group, separate from the others. Our inclination may well be to look at the data, dismiss the findings as not applicable to our case, and do nothing. We are, after all, growing at a pace that surpasses the majority of other religious organizations, so why worry? We can take satisfaction in our numerical growth – until we consider the North American Adventist church. Suddenly, the Pew study has pertinence. Those who pastor North American Adventist churches do not need the Pew study to tell them that problems beset our local congregations. Budgets are under strain. Attendance is down, and the majority of those who do attend are in their 50s or older. Those who study Adventist youth find that fifty percent or more will leave the church by the time they reach their early twenties. The Pew study, when viewed from a longitudinal perspective, indicates that ties to the church will be even less secure among today’s academy and college students than among those of us who graduated in the 1950’s or ’60s. Questions multiply: what now? How are responsible and concerned church members to respond? Are we to let fate and circumstance control our destiny or is there a place for intentional action? If so, what action is appropriate and effective?

Be assured, I do not have the answers that will reverse the trends that affect the Adventist church. I have given thought to what we might do and areas that I believe need attention. These include, but are not limited, to the following:

1. Admit there is “trouble in River City!” Until a matter is identified and owned, there is little chance for change.
2. Define our place among those who follow Jesus Christ. How do we want to demonstrate our intent? What are the behaviors and attitudes that are consistent with our claims?
3. Identify the people we attract and hold and those we exclude. Are we satisfied with what we find? If not, what needs modification? We know that Millennials are not attracted to organized religious organizations. Do we ignore this demographic? What about other people groups that that do not trust organized religion? Write them off, too?
4. How can we address contemporary concerns and remain true to our values?
5. Define the purposes for which our ecclesial and organizational structures exist. Determine how each entity succeeds or fails to meet its function. Enhance those that succeed. Delete those that do not.
6. What are we willing to “pay” to set our church upon a course that leads to excellence and superior performance, and eschews mediocrity?

7. What will inspire church employees, including pastors, and members to be proud of their church and what it promotes and practices?

8. Determine whether we are an open or closed society. How might we bring our actions and practices to align with our responses?

9. How can we best affirm and support our younger members? Church leaders, both local and national, have at times been more effective blockers than facilitators.

The above points are not offered as solutions to our problems. Not at all! Each statement may contain fundamental flaws. People will be scandalized by some, repulsed by others, and write off still others as the product of a fool. Be that as it may.

When women and men determine that the Adventist church can be more than a footnote in a History of 21st-Century Religion in America textbook, they will do more than agonize over membership loss. They will act. The local parish is the first, the most vital, and most effective responder. It is not realistic or reasonable to look to church officials for answers or for effective solutions to what ails the church. What denominational administrators can do that will assist in these matters is to keep quiet! It is not necessary or beneficial to the local church when leading denomination personnel make statements that divide and alienate our church family. What is necessary and beneficial is for competent, caring people in a local parish to initiate and promote an atmosphere that values and welcomes people.

I invite you to add your suggestions to the above list. Your observations and suggestions are likely as good as the next person’s, perhaps better.

• 28
God’s First Feminist

by Jack Hoehn, May 29, 2015: The first female author may be the “violet-haired, pure, honey-smiling Sappho,”[1] a poetess considered during her lifetime and for generations later one of the 10 greatest poets. From the Island of Lesbos she wrote love poems that resonated with her contemporaries and many generations afterwards. Sadly, now only fragments and comments about them remain. Here is a translated fragment that I’d call Lady Luna:

Awed by her splendor
stars near the lovely moon
cover their own bright faces
when she is roundest
and lights earth
with her silver.

Sappho (circa 600 BC)

Women in Antiquity

Although there are other “golden-haired women with the gift of the Muse,” in fact few women wrote in antiquity because girls were largely not taught to read and write. But ancient Greek male authors wrote about women. Homer’s epic poem had many Nymphs in it, supernatural women usually tempting men into trouble. Aristotle said that man is by nature superior to the female, so the man should rule and the woman should be ruled. Male schoolchildren learning to write often copied this aphorism, “A man who teaches a woman to write should know that he is providing poison to an asp.” The famous orator Demosthenes is said to have written, “We keep hetaerae for the sake of pleasure, female slaves for our daily care and wives to give us legitimate children and to be the guardians of our households.”[3]

One writer summarizes it this way. “It seems clear, then, that Athenians saw women as beguiling creatures capable of causing considerable harm to themselves and others, and weaker in mind and body than men. Many believed that young girls were somewhat wild and difficult to control, and that virgins were subject to hallucinations that could encourage them to be self-destructive. The solution was an early marriage, for only after a woman had delivered her first baby could she be a fully-operational female.”[4]

Women in the Old Testament

The Hebrew Bible talks about women, of course. Beside Eve there are Noah’s wife, Sarah and Hagar, Rebecca, Leah and Rachel, Miriam, Hannah, and three books are girl stories.[5] But never in human history was there one writer, male or female, secular or sacred, who picked up a pen, clay tablet, or chisel to write, clearly and unambiguously, that women were actually equal to men.[6]

Never.

Not once.
Until a stubborn Jew became a Christian.

**The First Person in History**

The *Hinges of History* series author, Thomas Cahill, claims that the first clear affirmation of sexual equality in *any* of the many literatures of our planet was written by St. Paul!  **Paul is the first person in history to ever write down an insistence that there was an essential equality of the sexes.**[7]

Girls and women raised in Adventist Christianity may be surprised by this statement.  Because the New Testament writings of Paul have been misused for two thousand years to support male superiority over females.  This is true both in the marital relationship and in church hierarchy, such as the “Ordination of Women as Pastors and Administrators” controversy in our own church.

Men presently in positions of power (and some of the complementarian women they love) both feel the Bible teaches some kind of female subordination.  They quote confidently from Paul's writings to support their assertion that “the Bible clearly teaches male headship.”

Of course, all honest Bible students have to agree:  the Bible, written about the past 6,000 years of human history post-Eden, records the fact that in all cultures women have been subordinated to men in all kinds of unhappy ways.  You might start with Moses.  He permitted a form of divorce (that, as Jesus explained, was not God’s plan but was due to the hardness of male hearts).  There was toleration of polygamy by men God was working with in the Hebrew Bible.  Also, there were no statements against slavery or bloody wars of extinction (genocide) or political government based on hereditary kingship (although again, not God’s recommendation).  Prostitution of daughters by Jews was forbidden and the religious prostitution of pagan religion was strongly condemned.  But the actions of Tamar and Rahab as prostitutes were not condemned in the Bible on moral grounds.  Jepthah was allowed to foolishly sacrifice his daughter[8]; the Levite sacrificed his concubine[9]; Lot offered his daughters up for gang rape.  In those last two cases, women were misused in order to protect men from sexual misuse.

**The Bible Tells What Was, Not What Should Be**

The Bible always tells us faithfully what was, but the Bible does not always tell us what should be.  Bible stories show God working for the good of His creation, as the lovely King James intones, “In sundry times and divers manners.”

But to use Bible stories to inform Christians in the 21st century how to arrange their home and church affairs is a form of bookish and academic idolatry, called Bibliolatry.  This means to be more interested in doing what the Bible says, or what we think it says, than in doing what Jesus is actually telling us to do.

Jesus made it clear that what we thought the Bible taught was to be changed, corrected, improved, and sometimes completely contradicted by what He taught.  “You search the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life!”  *But listen to me, not what you think the Scriptures say.*[10]  In His most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, He quoted six Bible texts and then contradicted or refocused their misunderstanding of those texts.[11]  After His resurrection He chided two Bible believers for being “foolish and bradycardic (slow of heart)”[12]  and then explained to them what they had been unable to see in their Bibles.

It is understandable, but dangerous, for Seventh-day Adventists to claim that we can only use “what the Bible says” as the basis for our faith and practice.  Because what we think the Bible says and what God wants us to do are not always the same thing.  Claiming that the Bible is always clear and simple and can be understood by anyone who can read English may earn us Christ's declaration that we are in fact “foolish and bradycardic” in our simplicity and unwillingness to move beyond the text.

If we could walk beside Jesus as did Cleopas and his wife and hear Him explain the sometimes confusing and
partial truths of Old Testament Scripture, truly our hearts might “burn within us” as things we thought were true are suddenly consumed by the revisions and updates to our Bible-thinking.[13]

**Bible Based, not Bible Bound**

Our doctrines must certainly be based on the Bible, but never restricted by the Bible. Otherwise, Adventists could all smoke, have several wives, use our second tithe for alcoholic beverages, and keep slaves where permitted by law or custom. I’ve lived long enough to remember the Bible being quoted to support obligatory segregation of races in schools and worship in places such as Alabama and Pretoria. In church school in Southern California we were told the Bible forbade inter-racial marriages between Asian and Caucasian, African and Indian, and even German with English!

Avoidance by 21st century Adventists of all these un-Christlike practices (smoking, polygamy, slavery, purchasing liquor with tithe) is based on principles found in the Bible, but not clearly commanded or required by “the Bible and the Bible alone.” The Bible **alone** is incomplete and risky.

It is a holy record of God’s actions with mankind, but it is a human book. It is the Word about God, not the Word of God, with the exception of a few quotations said to have been written with His finger. And even here we don’t have the originals but two different versions of those 10 Commandments.[14] Besides, we are actually quite sure God doesn’t have a physical finger. At least not till Mary’s womb.

We are not just to march off willy-nilly making up our own rules about life and church. To say that “the Bible clearly teaches women’s subordination to men” is not sufficient to restrict us from ordaining women to the ministry of the Gospel, if the Holy Spirit leads us, as Jesus did, to new understandings and interpretations of ancient Scripture. He already has done this about slavery, tobacco, alcohol, and vegetarianism. We draw these Christian-Adventist principles from the Bible and apply them to where God wants us to advance. None of these advanced Adventist teachings and practices are “clearly taught” in the Bible, but all have solid Bible support, properly interpreted.

**St. Paul on Gender Equality**

So now I wish to return to the assertion that St. Paul was moved by the Holy Spirit to teach the young Christian church something that no Bible text, no philosophic doctrine, no religion, no preacher, prophet, or sage had ever clearly revealed to humanity—that now in Jesus Christ and in His new church, there was to be equality of gender, race, and economic status.

Surprisingly, it comes in the middle of some Pauline church discipline to the Corinthians.[15] The Corinthians were the Las Vegas of churches! A sailor town connecting two sea routes, Corinth, says Cahill, was “a boomtown, full of retired army grunts, resettled freedmen, and assorted misfits and refugees from more conventional lifestyles, a place where anything might happen.”[16] In the church some “spirit” people with a rarefied “wisdom” (Gnosis) were happily “speaking in tongues,” and had no problem with incest and other sexual irregularities. (For example, some claimed that free in Christ meant freedom from marriage since “it is good not to marry.”[17] But then “everything is permissible for me,”[18] so that “a man has his father’s wife”[19] and another “unites himself with a prostitute”[20].)

Cahill suggests, then, that 1 Corinthians 11 is in the context of how these “holy-roller, free-in-Christ, secret-knowledge” church members were handling worship. It seems to Thomas Cahill that the Lord’s Supper in one of the houses was led by a male cross-dresser with long hair up, woman-like, and a woman sporting a butch haircut (never worn by women in the ancient world, except for humiliated prisoners of war).

In essence Paul cries out, “God help us, a man should dress like a man and a woman like a woman!” He is actually only reminding them of the conventions of the time (and that anything too boldly theatrical can give unnecessary scandal to more conventional palates), but he ends with the true democrat’s ultimate stance:
‘The decision is yours. Does it really seem right to you that a woman should pray to God with her hair exposed (something that was never seen in any temple or shrine of the ancient world)? Doesn’t nature itself teach you that a man with the elaborate hairdo of a woman is impossible to take seriously, whereas a woman with long hair is a glorious instance (of God’s creation)? Wasn’t it God himself who gave her this covering…? But if anyone wants to get into an argument over all this, then I say we don’t—nor do any of God’s churches—have such a thing as ‘custom.’”[21]

Sadly, Cahill avers, Paul’s attempt to correct an unfortunate circumstance in Corinth has been misinterpreted by earnest literalists as the source about hats in church (always for women, never for men)! Then he continues: “The earnest misinterpreters have managed, however, to slide over the most important—and only ageless—point Paul has to make in this whole business about dress.”

“In the end—and in the Lord—woman is not otherwise than man, and man is not otherwise than woman: and though woman came from man [since Eve came from Adam’s side], so does every man come from a woman—and everything comes from God” (1 Corinthians 11:11,12).

“Equality, not complementarity, is Paul’s subject: what he is doing here is taking the Genesis account of the Creation (which was the aboriginal Jewish locus classicus on the inequality of women) and turning it on its head by subtly reminding his readers that even the Messiah needed a mother. Most of us should be cheered that here, plunk in the middle of this old-hat stuff about what to wear, we have the only clarion affirmation of sexual equality in the whole of the Bible—and the first one ever to be made in any of the many literatures of our planet.”[22] Paul is the first person in history to insist on the essential equality of the sexes.

What about 1 Timothy?

Some will point to the scholarly accepted idea that 1 Timothy, perhaps written 40 years after Paul’s death, may have been written by a ghost writer in Paul’s name. That would have been done to give it authority at a time when Bishops began to emerge, trying to get a little order into the “free in Christ” churches Paul had started.

But there is another explanation that I find better than just saying, Paul didn’t really write that….

1 Timothy may be another example of the same “secret knowledge” that makes the “free to do whatever we want” Gnostic fanaticism in Ephesus, the same as Paul had to labor with in Corinth.

The letter introduces the trouble in Ephesus with “certain persons” (male or female) teaching “false doctrine.” These included “myths,” “endless genealogies” and “meaningless talk.” Chapter 2 then informs us that here was a danger of these false doctrines causing unrest and disquiet and unruly noise. And who knew! These Gnostics were again into looney dress and hair! Their badge of “secret knowledge” seems to have been that they could braid their hair with gold and pearls and outlandish clothing.

Worse, they decided that since Jesus came from Mary, the Bible must have been wrong, and really Eve was first, and bore Adam! And these “spiritually enlightened” Gnostic women had no need of men, and could even divorce their husbands, or at least live celibate, sex-free lives while married to them. They were now “spiritual,” superior to men, and therefore free of marriage, and free of sex (unlike those “lesser women” still bearing children)!

There were many Gnostic Creation accounts which gave Eve primacy over Adam. In Gnosticism, Eve is regarded as the first human being (and in some Gnostic texts, even as a member of the Godhead). Eve is sometimes referred to as “the daughter of light,” “the creator of the Logos,” “the virgin,” and even specifically as the mother of Jesus. In Gnosticism, it is Eve who gives life to Adam. Moreover, Eve was a heroine to the Gnostics because she desired knowledge (ginōsis) (Gen. 3:6).”[23] In twisted logic they decided if Jesus was the 2nd Adam then Mary was
the 2nd Eve!

In this heretical context, then, this could be what 1 Timothy 2: 9-15 is saying:

“I want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not (outrageously) with braided hair or gold, or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. A woman should learn quietly and respectfully. I do not permit the teaching that women authored men (that Eve came first) (Alternate – I do not permit a woman to teach that they are allowed to harm men.) Silence, (Gnostic) woman. The Bible is clear that Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner (not an enlightened one) by eating the forbidden Gnosis! Of course, women having children can be saved! If they continue to live (as wives with their husbands) with faith, love, holiness and propriety.”

It’s Not True Now

If it was true then that outrageous men and women were distorting their freedom in Christ and taking into fanaticism their “secret knowledge” that made them “above the rules” that ordinary people had, then being Gnostic was as spiritually dangerous as professing to not be able to know anything, or to be Agnostic. Both extremes, knowing nothing and knowing more than you know, are distortions of the message of Christ. But advice on curing this heresy says little about the place of women in God’s plan for humanity, equality, in the Christian Adventist church today, unless we are fighting similar fanaticisms.

As Thomas Cahill concludes, “Women were as free to speak, to evangelize, and to administer the Pauline churches as was any man…Paul is actually the New Testament’s ultimate democrat; and it is a pathetic irony that the first person in history to exclude consciously all social grades, isms, and biases from his thinking, believing that nothing—not birth, nor ethnicity, nor religion, nor economic status, nor class, nor gender—makes anyone any better than anyone else, should so often be made to stand…accused of the opposite of what he believed so passionately.”

Listen to Christ, and Then Reinterpret Your Bible.

“The cosmic Christ, whose glory knocked Paul from his horse on the road to Damascus, who sums up in Himself the whole of the created universe, eventually leads Paul to thoughts that no one has ever had before—thoughts about the equality of all human beings before God. In this ancient world of masters and slaves, conquerors and conquered, a world that articulates at every turn, precisely and publicly, who’s on top, who’s on the bottom, Paul writes the unthinkable to his Galatians...”There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”[24]

So what will our church do? Listen to men who claim that male position and privilege is God’s never-changing will? Or listen to Paul’s revolutionary teaching that abolished racial and economic discrimination, and should now remove gender discrimination from our church?

FOOTNOTES:


(Hetaerae = paid female companions, courtesans who offered companionship as well as sex to wealthy males.)

These quotations and others are collected on [http://www.womenintheancientworld.com/whatathenianmensaid.htm](http://www.womenintheancientworld.com/whatathenianmensaid.htm)

Ibid.

Ruth, Esther, Song of Solomon.

Genesis 1:27 is surely equalitarian. And my Adventist Today article, "Not a Rib" discusses the equalitarian “side” or “half” translation in the Genesis 2 human creation story. But these examples are inferential, and can be disputed by the eternal subordinationists.


Judges 11, a tragic story about being too proud to admit you made a terrible mistake and repent of your oath.

Judges 19, a male religious leader with a concubine was not the issue, nor was his sacrifice of her for his own safety condemned by the Bible, although now we who read the story post-Christ must do so loudly and unequivocally.

John 5:36-40.

Matthew 5.


Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 have different records of the 10 Commandments. And Jesus summarized the 10 Commandments as two commandments.

1 Corinthians 11.

Cahill, P. 136.

1 Corinthians 7:1. Note that the Corinthians wrote to Paul, It is good for a man not to marry, and his comments are in that context; this was their notion, not Paul’s.

1 Corinthians 6:12.

1 Corinthians 5:1.

1 Corinthians 6:15,16.

Cahill, p. 141.

Ibid.


Cahill, p. 147. Quoting Galatians 3:28. If you wish to find what the Bible clearly says, I don’t know how it can be clearer than here.
If you find this article interesting or stimulating, please SHARE using the choices below, or email a copy to your friends.

If you have a comment for the author (other than “You are wrong!”) and wish to help this article with a clarification or improvement, please email me at drhoehn@msn.com

Useful contributions may be added as editorial comments.

Thank you.

• 148
Flataxia–A True Story

By Debbonaire Kovacs, submitted May 27, 2015

Here is something special for Trinity Sunday…

Once upon a time, there was a nice little planet called Flataxia. Everything and everybody was flat. You see, Flataxia was a two-dimensional world. They had length and breadth, but no depth. Just a lot of flat little people sliding around in their flat little houses, or going out in their flat cars and slipping along their flat roads. They were all very happy with their flat little lives.

Then one day an amazing, astonishing, inconceivable thing happened. A Flataxian prophet came along, who claimed to come from a three-dimensional world. Most Flataxians knew such a thing was completely impossible, and ignored, or even ridiculed the prophet.

“That’s nonsense!” exclaimed one old Flataxian elder. “I know your parents—perfectly respectable Flataxians, both of them. And I saw you when you were just a little baby, as flat and perfect as could be! You should slide on over to the beach and lie beside the sheet of water for a while.”

But the prophet kept on slipping around, telling the most outlandish stories, insisting that he, in fact, was a part of the One Great Being who had created Flataxia and all its inhabitants, and that there was yet another member of this threesome, too, whom the prophet called the Breath.

“That’s impossible!” said the Flataxians. “The Great Being is One!”

The prophet nodded. “Yes. That’s what I said.”

“That is not what you said! We just don’t get it!”

So the prophet tried to explain. He slid around the landscape, telling stories, doing miraculous healings, and insisting on this odd place where there was something called “depth.” It was really hard even for him to explain. “You know what a square is, right?”

“I didn’t say that. Now, try to imagine a whole bunch of squares stacked on top of each other. That’s a cube.”

“What is ‘on top of’?” asked the Flataxians, slithering their hands sideways to scratch their flat little heads.

“Well…then imagine six squares folded up together, kind of like…just try to trust me! There is such a thing as a cube! And it has length, breadth, and depth!”

Over time, some people came to believe the prophet, so that when he went back to his three-dimensional world, promising to come and take them to live on his planet one day, there were many believers in the three dimensions.

Right away, they started flat little churches where they discussed this concept, and sang about it (a little flat), and played on their flat little instruments about it. Almost as soon as they began, they started arguing. Some insisted that the Three-Dimensional Cube looked like this:
They called it The Church of the Straight Truth.

Others were certain it looked like this:

They named theirs The Church of the Folded Cube.

And of course there were die-hards who would stake their lives on the absolute fact that it looked like this:

They designated themselves The Church of the One True Cube. “It’s exactly like a square,” they would pontificate, “only deeper.” This was not much help, since no one knew what “deeper” meant, but by now, it was terribly important not to admit what you didn’t know. You had to spend your life clinging buckle and thong to what you knew for certain.

And I suppose all the Flataxians are there still, arguing in their little flat (square) churches and explaining to each other what they know for certain.

———

“God is One. Anything else is polytheism!”

“There is one God, Jesus is His Son, and they have a spirit of truth and love.”

“The Father, Son, and Spirit are three emanations of just one Being.”

“It’s not Father, Son, and Spirit, it’s Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost/Spirit.”

“There is a big throne in heaven, where Jesus and the Father sit side-by-side. The Spirit flows from them.”

“No, the Spirit comes direct from God only.”

“No, Jesus said He would send the Spirit!”

“The Spirit is a knowing Being.”

“The Spirit is a man.”

“The Spirit is a woman.”

———

Here is actually the only thing I know for certain: There is a God. That God is Love. That God is One. Somehow or other.

———

I am indebted to C. S. Lewis for the idea, which he used in his book _Mere Christianity_. For the record, all he said was that it’s as hard for us to conceive of a three-personality person as it would be for people on a two-dimensional world to conceive of three dimensions. But I like to think Dr. Lewis would have enjoyed the lengths to which I take it!

• 4
"We all have to eat, there’s no two ways about it,” said Ingrid Beer, professional personal chef, recipe developer, and blogger.

Ingrid, who attends Glendale City Church in Glendale, CA, first got into cooking after deciding to make homemade baby food for her newborn son. She was raised in a family where cooking was a big part of their life and Eastern European culture, so she had always been able to do some basic cooking. But by making her son’s food and watching the Food Network, she found that cooking was something that she “absorbed…and was quickly falling in love with.”

Ever since she was 12 years old, Ingrid had dreamed of becoming an actress. She loved knowing exactly what she was supposed to do, what routes she was to take, and she could just envision herself acting. At the age of 17 she moved from Michigan to California to pursue this acting dream. After experiencing the acting world, encountering interesting experiences and people, she found that this path was only a “primer” for the path God was leading her towards—the path of “nurturing, encouraging, and feeding people, both literally and figuratively.”

Ingrid decided to go back to school in 2003 for her formal education at Le Cordon Bleu of Culinary Arts (formerly the California School of Culinary Arts). Shortly after graduating, Ingrid became the executive chef at different rehab facilities. It was here that Ingrid was able to see firsthand just how food is able to heal, encourage, and nurture. “There is something magical about coming up with combinations of ingredients and creating something that both feeds the soul, and feeds the physical body,” she says.

Then in 2012 Ingrid and her husband, Michael, started their blog together. “The Cozy Apron” (http://thecozyapron.com/) is a project of theirs that allows them to work together creatively (since that's what they do best), and to provide their visitors with “food” that is both physical and spiritual in nature. Due to the many correlations between food and life, they hope to introduce people to their own personal relationship with their God, maybe causing them to think about the spiritual concepts found in both food and life. Through this process they pray that people are able to “get back in touch with their better, higher selves, which is what Michael and I are constantly being inspired to do, as well.” Their dream is to be able to make their blog/website their full-time business, offering more content, e-books, videos, and products.

When asked about advice for those wanting to enter the culinary arts, Ingrid says that having a passion to cook, a desire to give, and a love for service is critical…after all, it is the service industry. It is easy to see the Food Network celebrities and think that is what food/cooking is all about. But in reality, Ingrid says at least in the beginning is not a glamorous, high-paying career. Hard work, long hours, and dedication are necessary.

Throughout all of this, Ingrid kept pointing back to God, for humoring her interest in the acting industry, and then directing her towards her culinary career, and refreshing her when she gets tired physically, emotionally, and spiritually in this line of work. But ultimately she says, "I give ALL credit to God for this career path that I'm on. Frankly, there are many times I cannot believe that I'm doing what I'm doing, as I never in a million years would have imagined myself working with food. Never. Being able to express a tangible love, and being able to express nurture through a creative process, is my favorite thing about cooking."
Sharing is caring!
Shelter in the Storm

Photo by Debonnaire Kovacs, submitted May 27, 2015

For You have been a defense for the helpless,

A defense for the needy in his distress,

A refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat;

For the breath of the ruthless Is like a rain storm against a wall.

Isaiah 25:4, NASB.
GROWING PAINS

Once more Grace and Dianne had an apartment in the school. This school had only ten students: five in grades 1-4, and five in grades 5-8. Grace taught them all. Dianne enjoyed the atmosphere. There was another girl in the sixth grade and they became fast friends. They planned their lives together and agreed that they would attend academy at the same boarding school and would room together.

Grace met a man at this town and became involved with him. They talked of marriage. Dianne recalls that she did not like the man but never told Grace. They would travel together and visit back and forth in each other’s homes. One day the conference superintendent of the schools visited at the school and Grace began packing. When Dianne asked what was happening, she was informed that they were moving to Portland.

It was much later that Dianne discovered that the man with whom her Mother was involved was coming to their apartment late in the night and spending the nights with her Mother, arising before Dianne got up and going to his own home. Some of the members of the church had observed this and Grace was relieved from her assignment and her teaching credentials were removed.

The conference education department was good to Grace though. They arranged for her to have employment at the hospital in Portland and found her an apartment in the basement of the home of a retired minister/missionary and his wife.

The move was not all that bad, though Dianne missed her friend from the small school. She looked forward to the day when they would room at academy together.

Dianne now found herself in a very large SDA school and she really had no experience in making friends. She found herself very shy and reticent to participate. However, she got along well and attended Pathfinders at her local church. She loved Pathfinders. Her directors devoted their lives to the youth group which was extremely active.

At this time also, Dianne’s father, Donald, separated from his second wife, Arleen. Donald and Arleen had two daughters and they began attending the same church where Grace and Dianne attended. Dianne loved the idea of having siblings and enjoyed both of the girls and their mother. Donald, infrequently, came to town and would visit with Dianne but they had very little commitment to each other.

Too quickly, Dianne was ready for academy and she was enrolled at the boarding academy about 35 miles from Portland. Her friend from the small school was also enrolled and when Dianne saw her she was excited and ran to her to make sure that they would get their room together.

Dianne’s friend told her that she had decided to room with her sister instead, and once again Dianne found herself in the midst of strangers. This time she was even living with them.

Boarding school was not good for Dianne. She missed her family and by now had become insecure. Grace was not a stable person and frequently would lash out at Dianne, telling her that she didn’t know how to love anyone, that she never would love anyone, and that no-one would ever love her. She criticized almost everything that Dianne did and told others how awful her daughter was. One lady approached Dianne and asked if Grace was her natural
mother. When Dianne answered in the affirmative and asked why, the lady said that she just didn’t think that a natural mother would talk that way about her daughter.

Dianne had discovered boys but Grace would not recognize that Dianne was no longer a baby. She would not allow her to communicate with the boys. Dianne took to hiding, making phone calls to the boys when Grace was not around. There were some unsavory types who obtained her phone number and called one night, late in the night. Since Grace and Dianne also shared the telephone with the minister/missionary and his wife, the gentleman answered the phone. The boys asked for Dianne and when he asked them what they wanted with her at that hour of the night, the boys proceeded to tell him. The gentleman and his wife became very concerned and shared their thoughts with Grace.

Dianne did not want to stay at the boarding school but because of this incident, Grace determined that she would not leave the boarding school. Dianne became ill and was sent home. The doctors determined that she had appendicitis and made arrangements for surgery but after Dianne had been home for a week or so the symptoms disappeared and it was determined that the stress of the boarding school had brought about the symptoms of appendicitis. Still, Grace would not allow Dianne to return home.

Grace did recognize, however, that Dianne was not going to thrive in the residential situation and so she began making plans to move to the village of the academy and drive back and forth to the hospital.

She found an old tumbledown shanty with an outhouse, a bucket-drawn well, wood heat and cooking, and holes in the walls. In these conditions, Dianne moved back in with her mother.

Dianne now felt that her life was being manipulated and that she was not trusted. She resented the academy because it was mandated that she be there because the boys had called her home. She felt that it was not her fault that they had called and this added to her feeling of not being trusted.

She “arranged” that she be kicked out of school but when it happened, once more she felt insecure. She had never been a “bad” child and now she felt “bad.”

Dianne had become fond of a senior boy from the village. They began spending time together and Dianne would visit in his family’s home and he in hers. His mother liked Dianne but his father did not. Since his mother liked her, Dianne was accepted.

After the boy, Alex, graduated from academy, he sought work for the Boeing Company in Seattle. Grace found a place for him to stay with Lorraine and her husband who now lived in Seattle, where Lorraine’s husband was an architectural engineer.

Once again Grace packed up and moved, this time to Seattle, where Dianne could be near Alex. Grace and Dianne moved in with Grace’s sister and her husband, and Grace obtained employment in a local nursing home. Dianne had not returned to school and she was now a drop-out as a sophomore. She, too, found employment in a nursing home but it didn’t last long.

Alex was not happy staying with Lorraine and her husband and after several months he, too, moved in with Grace’s sister and her husband. This was a relatively small house and had only three bedrooms. Grace’s sister had five children, including a set of twins, and now the family consisted of ten people.

Alex, by now, was working full-time for Boeing in a good position and asked Dianne to marry him. Dianne was excited but according to tradition, she had to “think it over” and it was all of about two hours before she told Alex, “Yes.” And so the wedding was planned. Dianne was now nearly seventeen years old.

Two weeks before the time of the wedding, which was planned for a Saturday night, Dianne returned to the home of George and Ruth to get everything together. It was a grand reunion and Ruth and Dianne had good fun making all
the arrangements, getting the license, selecting the flowers and enjoying each other’s company.

The family gathered on Friday evening. Alex drove down from Seattle, bringing Grace with him. It was a large wedding with approximately 500 guests. Unlikely as it seems, the pastor from the academy where Dianne and Alex had attended, performed the ceremony.

While still in Seattle, Dianne and Alex had picked out a home and made arrangements to purchase it. It was a small, two bedroom doll house, and Dianne finally felt as if she would have her own home and that she would be secure. She loved Alex with all of her heart. They would not be able to take possession of their new home for about two months, but Alex had found them a small two-room apartment in downtown Seattle for the interim. Rentals were extremely hard to find at that time, for the World’s Fair had just opened in Seattle. The small two-room apartment was in view of the Space Needle and Dianne was anxious to begin married life.

On the night that Dianne and Alex were married, they went to a motel nearby. Their room was actually two rooms, each containing a bed. They had agreed that someone needed to know where they were in case of an emergency and had let Grace know where they could be located.

As luck would have it, when they left the reception, the best man had driven their car. They had gone to a park with the best man and his wife until the hubbub of the reception had died down. Then they returned to the parking lot where the best man and his wife had left their car and each couple went their own way. On their way home though (about 65 miles away), the best man and his wife stopped for gasoline and discovered that he had left his wallet in Alex and Dianne’s car and they had to return to George and Ruth’s home to try to find Alex and Dianne. Grace was able to supply them with the information and late in the night Alex and Dianne heard a knock on their motel door.

Sixty-five miles was an awfully long way to drive after they had attended church during the day, been in the wedding that night then had driven part way home and had to return. Alex and Dianne suggested that the other couple spend the night in the other bedroom at their motel and this set the tone for Alex and Dianne’s marriage. They were very rarely without company.

Dianne was in a dream world as she began her marriage and, like her mother before her, was very proud of her husband. Sabbath mornings were their special time and Dianne would fix a breakfast which contained special items that were nearly instant to fix.

Grace continued staying with her sister but would come to Alex and Dianne’s apartment on Friday nights to spend the Sabbath and attend church with them. Seemingly it was a wonderful life.

The two months passed quickly and Alex and Dianne moved into their own home.

It was there that the storm clouds moved in around them.