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## *Defining Plagiarism*

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Editorial | John McLarty

# Term Limits

February 2007 issue of *Ministry* magazine includes an article by a conference president on the subtle dangers of moving from the pastorate into administration. Such a move inevitably alters one's view of church and spiritual life. The longer a man is president (all church presidents are male), the greater will be the distance between church as he experiences it and church as members and pastors experience it. Church administrators — presidents and departmental leaders — love the church. But it requires nearly superhuman empathy for those in administration to retain a gut sense of what congregational life is really like, after decades of committee meetings and conversation with other bureaucrats.

» *Adventist Today* continues to provide a crucial channel of information and opinion, helping the church face itself more honestly and deal with issues more openly.

On the other hand, until one has sat on a conference committee or served in an administrative office, it is impossible to fully appreciate the complexities and difficulties of making decisions in that arena.

Setting term limits is one way the church can keep presidents closer to the real work of the church, which happens primarily in congregations. The practice will also create a cadre of pastors with deep appreciation for what happens in the bureaucracy. Every presidential position — Conference, Union, Division and General Conference — should be constitutionally limited to two or three terms. Lay people will have to lead on this issue. Few presidential clergy are likely to voluntarily step down. Few pastoral clergy can survive the political consequences of publicly calling for constitutional limits on the tenure of the bureaucratic clergy. But strong lay leadership could compel this kind of change. Once conferences vote term limits, conference leaders may then force the unions to

make similar constitutional changes. Term limits are not a panacea, but they will help us create stronger links between denominational leadership and congregations.

## Speaking Personally

I have been the editor of *Adventist Today* for 10 years, working to shape the magazine as an honest, feisty, principled, independent voice within the Adventist Church. I like the church and believe an independent press helps it come closer to its ideals. I have worked to make our affection for the church evident, while preserving our independence. While editing has been strenuous, it has offered rich (non-monetary) compensation. People frequently tell us, "I am an Adventist because of your magazine." Journalists working for the denomination thank us for increasing the freedom they experience in their work (when someone wants to restrict information, the perfect rebuttal is, "If we *don't* cover it, *Adventist Today* will!"). Longtime denominational employees tell us, "We read every word. It's good to know what's going on in our church."

We haven't always gotten it right, of course. We've made our share of mistakes, but *Adventist Today* continues to provide a crucial channel of information and opinion, helping the church face itself more honestly and deal with issues more openly.

After 10 years, however, it is time for the new vigor a change of leadership can bring. *Adventist Today* has launched a search for a new editor. The new editor will continue to broaden the reach of *Adventist Today*, making it must-reading for all Adventists who care deeply about their church — clergy and laity alike. In addition to the needs of the journal for renewed vitality and vision, this change is also prompted by my own need for a respite from the demands of editing and a full-time pastorate. I will continue to write, but I am handing over the leadership and decision-making, so I can give more time to my church and my family.

Term limits help counteract the natural tendency of clergy to feel we are indispensable in God's cause. It's time for me to acknowledge my own dispensability. Adventism, and *Adventist Today* will all thrive with someone else in the editor's chair. Through your financial support, letters to the editor, article submissions, and promotion of the journal among your friends, you can help make sure of that.



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# letters

## BRAVO/AMEN FOR ANITA STRAWN-OJEDA'S ARTICLE

May I commend Anita Strawn-Ojeda for hitting the nail right on the head in her excellent article in the most recent *Adventist Today* (AT March/April 2007). I too have been raised an Adventist, and can appreciate the rigidity of some of our beloved members — older and younger. Too often I have seen genuine, potentially substantial, financial donations

» Even if what you say is half true about 3ABN, your actions are in no way redemptive or Christian. There are proper channels to follow to deal with such issues, but I believe you are just after a story.

turned down by pastors and/or church boards just because they weren't how "they" wanted to use the money, or thought it should be used. Sounds almost biblical, what with the reaction to Mary and her expensive gift of an extravagant item for Jesus by the powers that be of that ancient time.

Let's let others know that we're Christians, even Seventh-day Adventists, by our love, not our rules.

Robert D. Sewell, M.D. - Shelton, Washington

## LIFE AND DEATH IN CREATION

If the scientific interpretation of the geologic column is correct, and if God created through the process of evolution, a lot of death was involved.

While I still believe in creation by divine fiat, I don't mind so much if I'm wrong and God used evolution to make the world. But I do mind very much if God always intended death to be a part of His creation.

Tomm Lemon - Via email

## TOMMY SHELTON

First, I would like to say how very much I have been enjoying reading the AT Newsbreak...it is so refreshing to be able to peruse a wide variety of viewpoints. We have been dealing with faith issues in Adventism since the Glacier View days. Our current pastor directed us to this web site, which in my view is a most encouraging sign.

But mainly I wanted to comment on the Tommy Shelton story and ask, How can we get involved? We recently attended a workshop on preventing sexual abuse within our church. This situation appears to be a pretty classic scenario, and if it is swept under the rug yet again, it would seem to be almost an advertisement that the Adventist church is and will continue to be a safe haven and happy hunting ground for sexual predators. Is there a petition we can sign, or some other way you can recommend that we can express our desire that our church deal with this openly and forcefully?

Thanks for drawing our attention to this issue, and thanks for an excellent and thought provoking newsletter.

Marilyn Topper - Via email

## In Coming Issues of *Adventist Today*:

### Book Reviews of

- ~ Fernando Canale. *Creation, Evolution, and Theology: The Role of Method in Theological Accommodation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University LithoTech, 2005)
- ~ Marvin Moore. *Could It Really Happen? Revelation 13 in the Light of History and Current Events* (Nampa: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2007)

### Future Topics in *Adventist Today*:

- ~ "The Best of Adventist Theology"
- ~ "The Future of Adventism in North America"
- ~ "Theological Diversity in the Contemporary Adventist Church: Bounds and Limits"

If you have suggestions for articles and/or topics, please write to us at: [editor@atoday.com](mailto:editor@atoday.com)

## SAVE 3ABN

Thanks for your thorough review of 3ABN-related events since 2004 (AT March/April 2007). In view of the severity and multiplicity of misleading actions taken by the President/CEO of 3ABN, which were publicly supported by the Chairman of the Board of 3ABN, it would seem appropriate that an open letter signed by contributors to 3ABN, who so desire, request that both individuals voluntarily remove themselves from the offices they presently hold.

The negative publicity of the questionable legality of Danny's divorce, the repeated hiring of Tommy Shelton in spite of their knowledge of allegations of sexual abuse against him, as well as the misuse of 3ABN funds is enough to bring financial crisis to 3ABN.

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Most importantly, with the substantiated gross lack of morality and integrity, it would seem appropriate to do whatever is necessary to restore and maintain integrity, respect, and trust in the administration of an organization which has been such a powerful means of spreading the gospel to the world. God requires accountability from each of us. The Old Testament is full of examples when this principle was not practiced. Maybe this is a call for us to rise to action? In spite of whatever action any of us takes, God will have His way and His message will be spread.

**Myrna Huenergardt - Via email**

### LABOR WITH THE ERRING

While what you print is true, wouldn't it be a better way to spend time to labor with the erring than to spread their sins for all to see? My other question to ask is, "What would Jesus do?" His answer is pretty plain: "Those of you who are without sin, cast the first stone." When we hurt others, we hurt our own soul. None will be translated to heaven while their hearts are filled with the rubbish of earth.

**Mary Bunn - Via email**

### REDEMPTIVE CHANNELS FOR 3ABN?

Even if what you say is half true about 3ABN, your actions are in no way redemptive or Christian. There are proper channels to follow to deal with such issues, but I believe you are just after a story. You will reap a terrible harvest for this. How very, very sad. I pray you will be more considerate and thoughtful with your actions.

**Pastor Adrian Ebens - Australia**

### INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT AND SALVATION

The Nov/Dec 2006 issue of *Adventist Today*, "Perspectives on 1844: Putting the Pieces Together," contributed little or nothing to accomplish such. The Letters section illustrated this fact. Certain of the letter contributors were extreme in their comments, so extreme as to advise those not accepting their views to leave the church. The unreasonable stand: our church's *raison d'être* is 1844, the Investigative Judgment. What? I couldn't believe what I was reading. Question: Those so disposed to such an extreme stance would conclude that this is a salvation issue? If so, book, chapter and verse from God's holy word must be presented.

We as a denomination have much more reason to exist than this controversial doctrine of the Investigative Judgment. One contributor called to our attention the subject of Amalgamation by

Ellen White. It has been eliminated in subsequent revisions. Why not include this controversial stand we have on the Investigative Judgment along with this as something that has no relation to salvation?

Computer technology has made possible the immediate securing of answers to very complex problems. Our God turning pages, going over the records of each person who ever lived, certainly could be done with the flick of a button with "God's computer." More than 162 years have transpired since the Investigative Judgment was to have commenced. Think about it. And the pages are still being turned to learn who is and who isn't saved?

I think C.S. Lewis had words of wisdom when he said that he would avoid delving into complex theological problems about which even experts haven't agreed.

**Paul W. Jackson, M.D. - Wallingford, Pennsylvania**

### DANIEL AND THE HISTORICISTS

Regarding Chris Mack's essay, Daniel, Daniel, etc. (Atoday.com Web site). There is a reason why Adventists appear so fixed on Daniel as compared to other books of the OT, or the whole Bible for that matter. We have been called to meet the skepticism of our faithless age with a reason for our faith. And Daniel offers an answer to that skepticism.

The most effective answer to unbelief is a loving and lovable Christian. But for thoughtful seekers who desire more than personal testimony (though this is very effective), objective evidence for the truth of Scripture is necessary. Daniel's prophecies give this evidence. This evidence also confirms and strengthens the faith of believers.

The Bible has been assailed on every side. We at this time must defend it, for it contains the only truth that can save this dark planet. So to show this truth, we emphasize the book of Daniel. I do not believe we need to apologize for this or change our emphasis.

I do not see that Jesus or the apostles wrote against Daniel. One can see all the schools of prophetic thought in the New Testament in different passages. The historicist view has a long and venerable history. We Adventists appear to be the only ones holding to this thinking, and offer the world insights that others do not have. We need not be ashamed of this, nor alter our views because we are in the minority.

Mack strikes at the very purpose of our existence. To abandon our position would be fatal to our message. It is a road that leads to uncertainty and lassitude and should not be trodden.

**Allen Shepherd, M.D. - Via e-mail**

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## Letters policy

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

*Adventist Today* welcomes letters to the editor. Short, timely letters that relate to articles appearing in the journal have the best chance at being published. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. In publishing letters, *AT* does not necessarily endorse the views represented, but believes in giving voice to differing viewpoints. We prefer messages sent by e-mail, addressed to [atoday@atoday.com](mailto:atoday@atoday.com). Please include your complete address and telephone number — even with e-mail messages. Send postal correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *Adventist Today*, P.O. Box 8026, Riverside, CA 92515-8026.

# Readers Respond to Abortion Articles

## The Church and Abortion

I was interested to read both Nic Samojluk's and James Walters' opinion pieces on abortion and the official church statement on abortion (Jan.-Feb. 2007 issue).

What troubles me most about Samojluk's piece is his use of Bible passages that seem to argue against abortion without paying even passing attention to other potentially valid interpretations, such as those Walters mentions.

On the other hand, what troubles me most about Walters' piece is his bald assertion that "fetuses, as such, are not souls." He appears to base this on two pieces of evidence. First, since we are created "in the image of God," he suggests we are not of full moral worth until we can think, since God can think.

Obviously, fetal human life has not yet developed the capacity to think, and thus the Adventist focus on what it means to be in God's image has direct implications for the moral status of fetal human life.

But this argument has the obvious danger that it can be carried over into the realm of the born. A one-day-old child can hardly think at all, let alone like a five-year-old or a 25-year-old. Is his life less morally valuable because of that fact?

Walters' second bit of evidence is Exodus 21:22-25, in which a man who hits a woman and causes a miscarriage is merely fined, while if he harms the woman herself, the principle of an eye-for-an-eye applies. This is fine as far as it goes. I, too, use this passage in discussion with others to show that it is simply not provable from the Bible that human life morally equal to born human life starts at conception; that at least this one passage seems to powerfully indicate otherwise.

But when I argue either way, I am never wholly convinced of my own argument. Would Jim, for example, really use this passage in Exodus along with his other points of argument to keep partial birth abortions legal or simply a fineable offense? Would Nic, for example, really want all abortion doctors prosecuted as murderers, which is the logical upshot to his unswerving and unnuanced view?

My tentative and therefore humbly held belief has always been that nascent human life likely escalates in moral value up until the time of birth. As a result, I have preferred to leave abortion-on-

demand legal in the first trimester, and only then, with caveats applied even there.

This seems, in the latter part of his essay, to be Walters' view, as well. But what troubles me is his air of certainty about it all, his unruffled faith in the SDA position as the best one, even in light of where such fence-sitting has gotten our society.

I'm shifting politically toward the pro-life stance because of the excesses of the pro-choice lobby. The fact that the laws currently in place have led to so much abortion, a trivial view of the human fetus, and legalized partial-birth abortion troubles me terribly. I do not hear this angst at all in Walters, only a pro forma concession that he may turn out to have been wrong.

I am almost to the point where I would rather have the evils that would ensue from outlawing abortion altogether (and I recognize we would likely have a civil war in this country first) than the evils including the approximately one and a half million annual US abortions that exist presently, if we as a country can come to no better middle ground than what we have now. The status quo may not rise to the precise definition of a holocaust, but I do think it is an abomination.

**Janine Goffar - Loma Linda, California**

### NIC SAMOJLUK RESPONDS

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter to *Adventist Today*. I will try to address the many issues you have raised.

• **Jim Walters' Admissions.** I would like to start with a couple of Jim Walters' admissions. In his *Adventist Today* article (Vol. 15, Issue 1), he admitted that "future civil society will ban abortion as barbaric." I fully agree with this statement, and I am glad that this came out of his mouth and not mine. The other admission was made by him over a decade ago in an article that was included in the book edited by David Larson, *Abortion: Ethical Issues and Options*: "Given the denomination's generally conservative theology and its extensive health commitment, one would guess that the denomination would be strongly pro-life; yet it is not. ... We could reason that progressive revelation of God's will on abortion is leading us to declare the "present truth" that the million-and-a-half

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I, too, use this passage in discussion with others to show that it is simply not provable from the Bible that human life morally equal to born human life starts at conception; that at least this one passage seems to powerfully indicate otherwise.

abortions each year in this country are nothing short of mass murder” (pp 173-174,181).

- **The Price of Living in the Future.** If “future civil society will ban abortion as barbaric,” then my question is, “What is the price of living in the future now?” The cost is quite simple — Isn’t nine months of inconvenience significantly less evil than the permanent and irreversible deprivation of life of a totally innocent individual? After all, the law allows the pregnant woman contemplating abortion to carry said pregnancy to term and leave the unwanted baby at any hospital without incurring in any penalty. Why punish the poor creature when there is a viable alternative?

- **The Shedding of the Blood of the Innocent.** The Bible condemns the shedding of innocent blood. Does this apply to the unborn? I think it does. By the twenty-second day of conception, the developing fetus already has a beating heart. The heart’s function is to pump blood throughout the developing child’s circulatory system. This means that by the time a woman discovers that she is pregnant, there is already blood in the child’s body.

- **The Exodus Passage.** Regarding the controversial biblical passage found in Exodus 21:22-25, remember that the original Hebrew term has a double connotation: “miscarriage” and “premature birth.” You are free to choose either one, but remember that the second option fits the context much better. This is why the NIV reads as follows: “If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined.... But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life.” The “miscarriage” choice in this context doesn’t make sense, unless you think that the death of an unborn baby is not the result of injury. Nevertheless, if you still think that “miscarriage” is the better choice, then remember that in the Old Testament society the life of women was not worth more than the life of a slave: thirty pieces of silver, and slavery, genocide, and polygamy were unjustly tolerated for centuries due to the “hardness of their hearts.”

- **The Moral Worth of the Fetus.** You suggest in your e-mail that the texts I used in my AT article “were not intended to address the moral worth of the fetus.” You are partially correct. They were not intended to deal with the abortion issue, but God’s concern for the unborn is clearly evident in them. This is the reason I included those biblical statements. Jesus’ concern for children is patent in the New Testament. He told us in Matthew 25 that our eternal destiny will be determined on how

» We value human beings on the basis of their achievement. Heaven does the opposite and values them on the basis of their vulnerability and their need for love and care; children qualify better than anybody else, and this includes the unborn.

we treat the little ones. We value human beings on the basis of their achievement. Heaven does the opposite and values them on the basis of their vulnerability and their need for love and care; children qualify better than anybody else, and this includes the unborn. Jesus also stated that he came that we “might have life, and have it more abundantly.” How can the unborn enjoy life more abundantly if their life is snuffed before they have a chance to take their first breath? And let us not forget that the term “fetus” is the Latin equivalent for “child.”

- **The “Lesser Evil” Argument.** Jim Walters and the SDA official “Guidelines on Abortion” argue that killing the unborn is the lesser of two evils. My question is: Lesser evil for whom? For the pregnant woman, for society, or for the unborn? Can anything be worse evil than being burned by chemicals, being torn limb from limb, having your brains vacuumed out by a machine, or having a needle inserted in your heart to stop its beating? This argument won’t stand careful and loving scrutiny. The “lesser evil” theory does not apply to the pregnant woman, because she will have to live with a guilty conscience for the rest of her life, burdened with the knowledge that she did take the life of her own child. It does not apply to society either, because it condones the destruction of the innocent, and it could never apply to the innocent victim – the unborn.

- **The Moral Gradation of Human Life.** Walters is convinced that the person with the ability to read *Adventist Today* is morally worth much more than the unborn. I question that assumption, because it represents a humanistic approach to the value of life. From God’s perspective, as I have noted above, the reverse is true. Jesus told us in Matthew 25 that our eternal destiny will hinge on the way we have treated the least. I think that the unborn do qualify as the least among the members of humanity. The life of a president might have more value in the eyes of men. Not so in the eyes of the Creator. We have no idea about God’s plan for every developing human life.

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## The Church and Abortion

• **The Spontaneous Abortion of Fetuses.** Walters argues that there is a large number of spontaneous abortions effected by nature. This is true. Nevertheless, do not forget that nature also kills by means of tornados, earthquakes, and tsunamis. Does it follow that we should imitate nature? Is it morally acceptable to kill the innocents just because nature does this spontaneously? Nature does kill innocent children, but we should not.

Nic Samojluk - Loma Linda, California

*(Editorial note: To access the original unedited article written by Nic Samojluk and the unedited comments he received so far, use the following Internet link: <http://sdaforum.com/ipw-web/bulletin/bb/viewtopic.php?t=7349>)*

» If, as you suggest, freedom and personal religious liberty are the most prominent reasons for the church's hands-off policy toward abortion, the policy is firmly planted in the clouds.

### NATE SCHILT RESPONDS TO JIM WALTERS ON ABORTION

I found the exchange between you and Nic Smojluk most stimulating and provocative. I confess that it is not a subject to which I had previously devoted much thought or emotional energy. My dispute with *Roe v Wade* was not so much that it was unequivocally and strongly pro-choice as that it violated the Constitution in the name of the Constitution and took away the ability of States to legislate their own values or to find the middle ground, which you seem to believe is appropriate. But the interchange in *Adventist Today* engaged my mind and heart more deeply.

I agree with your conclusions and some of your analysis. But "freedom" and "lowered moral status for fetuses" seem to me pernicious and unnecessary grounds for the church's position on abortion. Long before *Roe v Wade*; long before freedom of choice and lowered fetal worth were invoked to open the floodgates for abortion on demand, most of the civilized world, including the several states of our Union, permitted abortion under exceptional circumstances such as those you articulate. So why

create moral arguments in favor of abortion that overwhelm the exigencies you believe must exist to justify abortion? Church guidelines arrive at a default position that in general abortion is evil, and you seem to agree. But your arguments in favor of exceptions in unusual circumstances support a pro-choice default position.

If, as you suggest, freedom and personal religious liberty are the most prominent reasons for the church's hands-off policy toward abortion, the policy is firmly planted in the clouds. We live in an Orwellian world where, in the name of freedom, our government pays artists and university professors to assault Christians and Christian values, but forbids generic prayers at public school commencement services. Freeway billboards bombard us with ads promoting sexual perversion, but they cannot advertise cigarettes. In often bizarre and ridiculous ways, life in civilized societies is circumscribed at every turn with natural and societal rules that infringe on personal freedom. It is disingenuous for the church, which actively lobbies to take away freedom for tobacco and alcohol industries and consumers, to suddenly discover the importance of freedom when it comes to abortion. Given the significant constraints that Church Guidelines impose on the freedom that they purportedly hold so dear, the talismanic invocation of personal freedom to justify abortion is philosophically confusing and conceptually meaningless.

Justifying abortions in the name of religious liberty is even more mystifying. Since when was abortion a religious ritual, except for members the Church of Now? Even the five Supreme Court justices who discovered a Constitutional mandate for the government to aid and abet abortion on demand could not hawser abortion rights to First Amendment religious liberty rights.

Devaluing human life at the fetal stage seems equally questionable and unnecessary to justify abortion in exceptional circumstances. The distinction between being a soul and having a soul seems more semantic than substantive, and finds little support in Scripture, which characterizes the soul as an aspect of human being rather than a synonym for human being. The reality is that neither SDA theology nor Scripture give much guidance about when humans acquire souls, become souls, or lose their souls. I do not understand why, as you argue, belief in the immortality of the soul is a precondition to believing that the moral duty to refrain from taking human life begins at conception.

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It seems to me that belief in a separate, immortal soul could lead, and has led, to a devaluation of mortal human life in Third World countries where Catholic philosophy predominates. Soulhood, I submit, is rocky soil in which to plant a doctrine of abortion.

What is most intriguing about your argument is the suggestion of a value spectrum for human life, on which fetuses have relatively low moral standing. I think you correctly reject a “flat view” of human life, though it is far-fetched to suggest that *Roe vs Wade* articulated either past or present values of Americans. The fact that you allude with approbation to such a radically pro-choice decision makes one suspect that you favor a much more liberal position on abortion than what is articulated in the church guidelines.

But I agree that we intuitively and reflexively place different value on both human and animal life in different forms and at different stages, even within species. We generally value a frog over a tadpole, a butterfly over a caterpillar or cocoon. But that valuation process does not follow a continuous spectrum. We do not place greater and greater value on life as humans get older, wiser, and develop more “robust souls.”

Children and newborns are, at least in civilized society, deemed worthy of protection above all other human life. Women and children get first dibs on the lifeboats. By your valuation scale, a newborn’s limited capacity to think — much closer to a fetus than a “robust mortal human soul” — should accord it relatively low moral status on the “human life value continuum.” But in reality, society does not respond that way. So a human value continuum that denigrates fetal life does not comport with intuition or experience.

I was amused by your decidedly correct observation that Samojluk employs a contrived view of Scripture to support his position. But if you were more sympathetic to his conclusions, I suspect you might more charitably characterize his references as — what do you call it? Oh yes, “selective retrieval.”

But here is my primary concern with your analysis: Even if your pro-choice arguments are valid, should we not be appalled by the consequences of that rationale — 50 million human lives destroyed since *Roe v Wade* in the US alone, the overwhelming majority being lifestyle choices? Highly respected intellectuals in the early Twentieth Century advanced scientific discoveries and the insights of social Darwinism to promote the eugenics movement. But when the world saw the moral consequences, intended and unintended, of these theories — particularly as embraced by fascism — they were repudiated, not because the science or theories were necessarily wrong, but because societies

know, or should know, that theory cannot be isolated from consequences and experience. Regardless of the abstract justifications for abortion, our moral sentiments should lead us to emphatically renounce rationales that are used to justify the destruction of nearly 50 million human lives worldwide every year. Now that would be the lesser of evils.

Nate Schilt - Loma Linda, California

» Given a society’s right to selectively decide when citizens can exercise relative freedom, I don’t see the freedom allowed women in *Roe* or in the SDA Guidelines as “philosophically confusing and conceptually meaningless.”

### JIM WALTERS RESPONDS TO NATE SCHILT

Thanks for the careful attention you gave the interchange between Nic and me on abortion.

As you note in your final paragraph, your primary objection to my position is my tolerance of the number of abortions done each year (about 1.5 million in the US). And this is so reprehensible to you, you want to “emphatically renounce rationales” that allow these abortions.

Please pardon my directness, but I think that you and I differ on your primary concern, because your basic intuitions are closer to Nic’s than to mine — even if you charitably agree with some of my logic.

Let me comment further on where I see our basic disagreement. Although you say that I “correctly reject a ‘flat view’ of human life,” I am not so sure you accept that rejection in your heart. And I do. And you see that my position is, or could be, more pro-choice than is Adventism’s, in that you at one point say as much.

Theoretically I am more pro-choice than Adventism, but practically I am not. Let me explain. A theory that I have developed at some length in what I have published on the topic holds that the moral status of human beings escalates from conception to adulthood and diminishes rapidly as one approaches undisputed death. This needs much more elaboration for clarity, but suffice it to say that I do not so much want to propose a novel theory as clarify one that seems implicit in our collective intuition as a people — i.e., that it is a

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# 3ABN Used by Adventist Retirees for Inspiration and Witnessing

**W**hen retired pastor Gwynne Richardson, then 65, accepted the call to pastor a small Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church located on the campus of a retirement center in the Portland, Ore., area, he met the formidable challenge of sharing the SDA message with a community that is 50 percent non-Adventist, but does not allow proselytizing of any kind. How could he and his congregation witness to the surrounding community without breaking the rules of the center?

»» “There’s no question that the Lord is in it,” says Gaelen, a retired physician. “I see God using Danny like he used Peter; showing His power one miracle after another.”

As he visited his parishioners, he noticed that many had bought satellite dishes that received programming from Three Angels Broadcasting (3ABN), a network that promotes the Seventh-day Adventist message. What if each of the 160 units in the center could be outfitted with similar satellites? he wondered. He approached the center’s administrators about the idea, and they agreed to install dishes that would enable each unit in the complex to pick up 3ABN, as well as Loma Linda Broadcasting and the North American Division-sponsored Hope Channel. The dishes were installed last year, and Richardson says that several of his parishioners have already fielded questions from their non-Adventist neighbors about 3ABN.

“Many of the (non-Adventist) people here don’t realize that these stations are Adventist when they start watching,” Richardson says. “Many times

they’ll be visiting with their Adventist neighbors and say, ‘Did you see such and such on 3ABN?’”

Richardson says that of the three stations offered on the satellite package, 3ABN is the most popular. He bristles when he hears some in the Adventist community speaking negatively about 3ABN and its leadership.

“Here, 3ABN is a sacred cow,” Richardson says.

## 3ABN Viewing Habits

At the conclusion of a recent Wednesday-night prayer meeting, Richardson and 17 of his parishioners sat down with me to discuss their 3ABN viewing habits. All agreed that 3ABN is a source of inspiration and comprises an important part of what they choose to watch on television each week. Most of the retirees say that they watch 3ABN for at least an hour each day.

All respondents said that each week they watch the Central Study Hour, a presentation of the SDA Sabbath School lesson by Doug Batchelor or one of his staff at the Sacramento (Calif.) Central Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is Written, Exploring the Word with Lonnie Melashenko of the Voice of Prophecy, and 3ABN Today are also shows that many at the center say they watch each week.

The best-known personalities on 3ABN are Doug Batchelor, 3ABN President Danny Shelton, It is Written’s Shawn Boonstra, Lonnie Melashenko, and Steve Wohlberg, who hosts a program focusing on prophecy.

## Unanimous Support

Dorotheia, a retired nurse, agrees with many at the center who see 3ABN as a powerful tool for God.

“3ABN is part of God’s plan to share the gospel with every kindred, tongue, and people,” Dorotheia says. “I’m especially glad they have the Sabbath School lesson on TV. I also like the programs on prophecy. Really, there isn’t one I don’t like.”

Russell, who made his living as a truck driver, echoes Dorotheia’s assessment:

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“God has richly blessed Danny (Shelton) in sharing the gospel of the kingdom. The Lord is 100 percent behind all the programs being presented. Without 3ABN, there wouldn’t be much in life much of the day.”

Most support Danny Shelton and urge others to be careful before they criticize him. “If the Lord is in it, those who criticize could be talking against God,” says Marge, a retired nurse.

“There’s no question that the Lord is in it,” says Gaelen, a retired physician. “I see God using Danny like he used Peter; showing His power one miracle after another.”

“Danny asks people to bear with him. He says ‘I’m just a carpenter.’ God has used him as he is,” says center resident Arnold, husband of Marge.

Several center residents say they appreciate 3ABN’s use of traditional music in their programming. “I just want to really emphasize how much I love all the music,” says Gilbert, formerly a maintenance man.

### Questions about Linda

Although most hold Danny Shelton in high regard, many miss seeing his ex-wife Linda on television and wonder openly why they weren’t told more about why Danny and she divorced.

“I feel like we ought to be given more of the details about his divorce and remarriage,” says Gilbert.

His wife, Carrie, an 86-year-old retired school teacher, agrees.

“You don’t treat your wife the same way you would treat another of your employees. My life is better because of both Linda and Danny,” she says. Some say that the quality of the 3ABN interview programs has suffered since Linda left.

“In interviewing, Linda helped balance Danny out,” Marge says.

### Worthy of Giving

Their questions about Danny and Linda’s divorce don’t dissuade center residents from supporting 3ABN financially.

“I think the best thing we can do is to help with finances, since we don’t have the physical tools anymore,” says Gilbert.

“We need to put the rest of our money someplace.” Arnold says.

Ultimately many at the center see the positive programming 3ABN broadcasts as a reason to support them both spiritually and financially.

As Marge says: “When you see that, no matter what the entity is, it’s a worthwhile place to put your money and prayers.”

### Conclusion

Over the last decade, Adventist pastors have used technology such as Microsoft PowerPoint, blogging and podcasting to reach audiences that are growing increasingly technologically savvy. Pastor Gwynne Richardson is using technology to spread the gospel as well, to an audience that is quickly redefining the term “TV generation” in the Adventist church.

This generation of septa-, octa- and nonagenarians forms a core quadrant of 3ABN’s viewers. As 3ABN airs its programming and network personalities react on-air to public criticism of some its practices, one thing is for certain: these faithful viewers will be watching.

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# Defining Plagiarism

» Copying, Posner says, can improve on the original. In fact, he points out, “sheer originality in literature and the arts is greatly exaggerated.”

**W**riting in the January 29, 2007, issue of *Forbes* magazine, Judge Richard A. Posner\* tackled a critical

problem for writers and publishers — plagiarism. He observed that the typical definition of plagiarism is “literary theft,” but went on to say the definition should be restricted to instances in which harm is done to a source, a competitor, or an audience. While theft typically deprives the owner of something desirable, unacknowledged copying alone may not do that. He says it is not like stealing the only copy of someone’s manuscript.

A sensible definition, Posner says, should include the notion of fraud, with its concept of harming someone. Plagiarism by students who palm off the work of someone else as their own is harmful to other students, he says, because it gives the plagiarists “a leg up” on those who have to write

their papers the hard way, and it creates nothing of value. However, an unacknowledged passage appearing in a published work can increase the pleasure of the reader.

Posner gives examples of writers who have copied from others writing in the same field and who thus have committed unfair competition. But he also cites other, sometimes famous, writers like William Shakespeare, who drew on others’ writings but with brilliant embellishments. Copying, Posner says, can improve on the original. In fact, he points out, “sheer originality in literature and the arts is greatly exaggerated.” Many great writers and painters were great in large part because of their skill in “creative imitation.” He says that if writers must acknowledge their copying of works that are not in copyright or where they have been given permission to copy without acknowledgment, then “creative work will be cluttered with acknowledgments.”

If the judge’s unofficial opinion is adopted generally, this narrowed definition of plagiarism to include only the element of fraud and the harming of other writers or the reading audience may give writers a feeling of greater liberty in their use of “creative imitation.”

*\*Richard A. Posner is a Federal Circuit Judge and a senior lecturer at the University of Chicago law school. He authored *The Little Book of Plagiarism* (Pantheon).*

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much greater tragedy for a med student anticipating marriage to be killed than it is for a girl to take a morning-after pill or for a centenarian who is dying in pain to be withdrawn from IV tubes.

Most people do not like the nuanced distinctions that a person like me draws. Because I understand that and appreciate it, I see the value in broad laws that treat all human beings as possessing equal moral worth — and murder of a newborn or a senile old man is just as illegal as murder of you or me. So, practically, I see the benefit of a policy in Adventism (and in society) that discourages abortion, but finally allows it in certain circumstances.

Beyond this basic difference that I see between us, let me comment on several specifics in your response:

- **Freedom as a value.** You are insightful in indicating the idiosyncratic way we exercise it today — banning cigarette ads in places where porno houses are promoted. Freedom is not, and should not, be total. Finally, the body politic decides whether physical health or sexual purity has greater societal standing — and our society and that of the Puritans starkly differ here. Given a society’s right to selectively

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# Letters *Continued from page 12*

decide when citizens can exercise relative freedom, I don't see the freedom allowed women in Roe or in the SDA Guidelines as "philosophically confusing and conceptually meaningless."

• **Religious liberty.** This is even "more mystifying" than freedom in this context, you say. I don't follow you here. Abortion is a significant religious issue, for me, because I believe that the judgment that the killing of a 10-week human fetus (for whatever or no good reason) is wrong/right is a profoundly religious (or, deep philosophical) decision.

• **The soul.** In many places the Old Testament speaks of souls and humans in an interchangeable manner. Being a mortal soul, and having an immortal soul are profoundly different. In my piece I refer to a Vatican document that speaks of all humans as being "persons" from conception (when each human being is a single cell) on. Am I illogical in seeing a relationship between

conceptual ensoulment/personhood and an adamant antiabortion stance?

• **Scripture.** Yes, I see Nic using a contrived method of interpreting scripture. It is contrived in that he takes passages out of context to bolster his antiabortion stance. On the other hand, selective retrieval of certain passages or elements of one's tradition is a method of mining one's past for elements that speak to contemporary needs. My description, admittedly, makes the distinction between Nic's and my use of scripture sound more distinct than it may be, but when questioned, all honest Bible scholars should be able to give a coherent and honest account of how they are using an ancient sacred text.

Thanks, Nate, for providing thoughtful issues to which to respond!

Jim Walters - Loma Linda, California

## *Continued from page 18* The Specter of Plagiarism Haunting Adventist

### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White. *Testimonies*. 1892. Vol. 1. p. 15. Borrowed from John Harris's book published in 1836, titled *From the Great Teacher*, p. 159. "But the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which he bestows His supreme regard."

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White. *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. July 26, 1906. p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth H. Woods. *Adventist Review*. June 1, 1981. p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Herbert Douglass quotes Alexander Lindey. *Plagiarism and Originality*. NY: Harper & Brothers, Publ. 1952. pp. 2, 5, 14. "There can be no plagiarism without the thief's posing as originator; infringement may occur even though proper authorship credit is given." See [www.whitestate.org/books/mol/Chapt.40.html](http://www.whitestate.org/books/mol/Chapt.40.html).

<sup>5</sup> William A. Spicer. *The Spirit of Prophecy in the Advent Movement*. Takoma Park, Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publ. Assoc. 1937. p. 56. William G. Johnsson. "Reflections on Ellen White's Inspiration." *Adventist Review*. November 27, 1980.

<sup>6</sup> Walters. "Ellen G. White & Truth-Telling: An Ethical Analysis of Literary Dependency." *Adventist Today*. March/April 1998. <http://www.atoday.com/430.0.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen G. White. *Selected Messages*. Washington, DC: Review & Herald Publ. Assn. 1958. Vol. 1. p. 27. Another example found in *Selected Messages* Vol. 3. p. 92. "As spoken by the heavenly agencies, the words are severe in their simplicity; and I try to put the thoughts into such simple language that a child can understand every word uttered. The words of someone else would not rightly represent me."

<sup>8</sup> James and Ellen White. *Life Sketches. Ancestry, Early Life, Christian Experience, and Extensive Labors, of Elder James White and his Wife, Mrs. Ellen G. White*. Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-Day Adventist Publ. Assn. 1880. p. 329. Note: James White passed away in 1881. When the next edition was reprinted in 1888 this paragraph was dispatched (not printed). It is presumed it was removed under the distress of charges made by Canright of plagiarism found in the Daily Democrat on September 18, 23, and 25 in 1887, a newspaper in Healdsburg, California.

<sup>9</sup> Roger W. Coon. *Ellen G. White as a Writer. Part III. The Issue of Literary Borrowing*. Lecture outline from Andrews Seminary GSEM534. April 12, 1995. p. 14. [www.andrews.edu/~EGWPlagiarism-Coon-98.htm](http://www.andrews.edu/~EGWPlagiarism-Coon-98.htm).

<sup>10</sup> Daniell's letter quoted in Robert W. Olson. "Ellen White's Denials." *The Ministry*. February, 1991. p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Daniell went to see Ellen White in California, and she refused to see him. There was talk that Daniell might write a book on the Spirit of Prophecy. Letter from W. C. White to L. E. Froom on January 8, 1928. *Selected Messages*.

Book 3. Appendix C. p. 454. It would have been most interesting to see what Daniell would have written.

<sup>12</sup> W. C. White Letter to L. E. Froom. January 8, 1928. *Selected Messages*. Book 3 Appendix C.

<sup>13</sup> This is not exactly so. The *Review* pointed its readers to an awkward fact that "Everything of value in Christian Science has been borrowed from the higher teachings of modern Spiritualism. The plagiarism is concealed by the bewildering negations and unwarranted assertions its advocates proclaim to the world." *The Review & Herald*. April 18, 1899. p. 249. Before that, in September 6, 1864 the *Review* objected to plagiarism in stealing poetry from Adventist author Annie R. Smith, published in 1851. "We are perfectly willing that pieces from the *Review*, or any of our books should be published to any extent, and all we ask is, that simple justice be done us, by due credit being given."

<sup>14</sup> Francis D. Nichol. *Ellen G. White and Her Critics: An Answer to the Major Charges that have Been Brought Against Mrs. Ellen G. White*. Washington D.C.: Review & Herald. 1951. Grandson Arthur White supplied documentation to Nichol from the White Estate. Over one hundred scholars, pastors and administrators "surveyed the manuscript and their various suggestions were well studied by another responsible committee." *Ministry*. January, 1951.

<sup>15</sup> Moses Hull, the original author, published earlier by the church's Battle Creek Press. It appears the copyright was owned by the Adventist publishing house and the publisher could have asked for a revision from another author (for various reasons) without literary infringements. The end-of-time clock (in the last days) must have been set off by Canright in 1889, as his renunciations were most severe against the prophetess (see note 8).

<sup>16</sup> Quoted by Robert W. Olson in "Ellen White's Denials." *Ministry*. February, 1991. p. 18. White Estate Document File 213.

<sup>17</sup> Fred Veltman. "The Desire of Ages Project." *Ministry*. October, 1990. p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Ellen G. White Estate. "The Truth About The White Lie." *Ministry* Insert. August, 1982. p. 4, 14.

<sup>19</sup> Ellen White. *Education*. Washington DC: Review and Herald Publ. Assn. 1903. p. 57. The framework for this quote came from *The Advent Review & Sabbath Herald*. "Selected." Vol. 37 (6). 1871. This same piece appeared again 10 years later in August 30, 1881 in *The Review and Herald* under credit to the newspaper *Louisville Commercial*. "The great want of this age is men. Men who are not for sale. Men who are honest, wound from center to circumference, true to the heart's core—men who will condemn wrong in a friend or foe, in themselves as well as others. Men whose consciences are as steady as the needle to the pole. Men who will stand for the right if the heavens totter and the earth reel."

# Posner Is Wrong on Plagiarism

» Believing that an author's words are his or her own is but a part of the warp and woof of a healthy society, and our society's ethos is already sufficiently threadbare — without legally justified literary theft.

Justice Richard Posner's essay and most recent book (*The Little Book of Plagiarism*, 2007) have value, but far greater disvalue. He helpfully reminds us that the author of a piece is not necessarily the writer (e.g., President Bush's speeches, and a justice's written opinions). Further, he insightfully observes that originality is "greatly exaggerated" as the basis of creative activity. Regarding one of Posner's examples, of course Manet should not have inscribed on his great "Olympia" canvas that Titian's "Venus of Urbino" inspired the woman's pose!

However, Posner's complaint about our "strong norm against plagiarism" is wholly misplaced and would be socially pernicious if implemented. In his one-page essay, published in *Forbes*, January 29, 2007 (and on which this commentary is based), Posner cites a dozen cases of plagiarism, and if our standards were relaxed our disbelief in the authenticity of writers' words would increase exponentially. And our civilized life would suffer, accordingly. All types of life-affirming behaviors — such as hallway pleasantries, freeway etiquette, and truthful conversation — typify a civilized society. Believing that an author's words are his or her own is but a part of the warp and woof of a healthy society, and our society's ethos is already sufficiently threadbare — without legally justified literary theft.

But copying another's words need not be theft or plagiarism, claims Posner. He would restrict the definition of plagiarism to copying that results in harm. In his example, Shakespeare's direct, unattributed use of Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Life of Mark Anthony* "did not hurt North" and thus was not plagiarism. Shakespeare was just one of those "great writers" who were great, in part, because of "their skill in creative imitation."

Now, just why would a brilliant attorney (simultaneously a justice in the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit and a senior lecturer in the University of Chicago Law School) argue for lowering our standards on literary copying? One has to understand Posner. First, he is a brilliant, even "outrageous" (Wikipedia) thinker. For example, he contends that the rule of law is an accidental, finally unnecessary part of legal ideology. He is a classical liberal, even libertarian in appearing to argue for the selling of babies on the free market and for the legalization of marijuana and LSD.

Second, Posner has strong pro-growth economic leanings. This is seen in his co-founding of the economics and law movement — an emphasis on the law's role in aiding economic development. Posner generally favors changing laws and social mores if such changes advance our creativity-dependent economy. Accordingly, regarding plagiarism he argues: "There is a danger that our broad and strict copyright laws...when coupled with a strong norm against plagiarism, can, paradoxically, stifle creativity." When I first saw that Posner's essay on plagiarism was published in *Forbes* magazine, I was puzzled. But after looking into his background, his essay on loosening our strictures on plagiarism to enhance writers' creative production makes perfect sense.

It's not that Posner would drop all strictures against plagiarism, but when he cites his leading exception, his logic is faulty. Whereas he wants to give professional writers and professors greater latitude in unacknowledged copying from others' works, he is against students' copying, and here he cites his golden standard for plagiarism — it "harms" them: "Plagiarism by students is one of the clearest examples of plagiarism, because it harms the students who don't plagiarize by giving a leg up to those who do, without creating anything of value...."

However, join me in imagining a brilliant student newspaper reporter, who has studied Posner's ideas on plagiarism. This graduate student justifies her plagiarizing essays from undergraduate students.

Well, the eminent Richard Posner contends that Shakespeare was justified in surreptitiously using North's translation of a book by Plutarch. He says that Shakespeare wasn't hurting North,

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On the one hand, Ellen White said: "An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood."

“who was not a competing playwright.” Further, Shakespeare wasn’t “competing unfairly” with other playwrights, “since they were as free as he to copy passages from other writers.” So, I too sometimes copy key paragraphs from some of my bright friends’ essays. Since I am a writer for Student Voice, I am in a situation similar to Shakespeare’s: First, I am not hurting lower division Lit class students, since they aren’t competing reporters, and I’m not a competing student. Second, I am not competing unfairly against other reporters, since they are as free as am I to copy paragraphs from these students. And finally, like Shakespeare, I embellish what I copy and create pieces of significant, prize-winning value.

As this parody shows, Posner’s reasoning has a problem with internal consistency. But another problem is practicality. His so-called “sensible” definition of plagiarism is simply related to fraud and harm. The Forbes essay title says it all: “In Defense of Plagiarism: No Harm, no Foul is what the law ought to be.” If there’s no harm, there’s no plagiarism. But who determines whether there is harm? Only in occasional instances would courts do so. In day-to-day cases, the individual contemplating copying another would determine harm. On a case-by-case basis potential harm is determined anew. In moral theory this could be called “act-ethics” — in an ethical quandary each contemplated act is weighed as to its morality.

An alternative approach to ethical quandaries advocates “rule-ethics” — in an ethical quandary one follows the rule that applies to the immediate and similar cases. Following this approach, one would contemplate copying from another — for whatever reason — and apply a categorical injunction against plagiarism, such as defined in the dictionary: “The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and thought of another author, and representation of them as one’s original work.”

If our society continues to value truth-in-authorship, the rule-ethics approach is more likely to yield engrained habits and practices of authentic authorship. Posner’s agent-based determination of harm in each case is a recipe for wanton plagiarism.

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It’s unlikely that this focus section would be appearing in this publication, except that Adventist church prophetess Ellen G. White engaged in extensive copying from numerous works in producing many of her books.

Interestingly, were Justice Posner trying Ellen White for plagiarism, he likely would have exonerated her, much as did attorney Vincent L.

Ramik, a principal with a Washington, D.C., law firm commissioned 26 years ago by the Seventh-day Adventist denomination (“The Ramik Report, Literary Property Rights, 1790-1915,” August 14, 1981). Whereas Posner advances a philosophical-economic argument, Ramik’s is focused on legal statutes and cases. Ramik’s brief cites the uplifting intent of White’s books and copyright laws of the time, and he argues that White’s use of others’ work was not “substantially a copy” of the original works. He concludes: “Based upon our review of the facts and legal precedents, we conclude that Ellen G. White was not a plagiarist and her works did not constitute copyright infringement/piracy.”

It will be revealing to see whether the White Estate will use Posner’s new book to bolster its long-standing contention that Ellen White did no wrong in her use of others’ writings. The official church should not take this opportunity, because the point isn’t whether Ellen White can be exonerated through some legal theory or by any particular attorney. As important as it is, the issue isn’t even whether Ellen White’s copying practices were appropriate for writers in her time — or ours. Although law and social ethics are vital, the issue here is religious: Prophetess White set a high standard of honesty for others in her public writings, and she failed to measure up to that standard in her private literary practices.

On the one hand, Ellen White said: “An intention to deceive is what constitutes falsehood. By a glance of the eye, a motion of the hand, an expression of the countenance, a falsehood may be told as effectually as by words. All intentional overstatement, every hint or insinuation calculated to convey an erroneous or exaggerated impression, even the statement of facts in such a manner as to mislead, is falsehood” (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 309). On the other hand, when directly confronted with her deceptive literary practices, she was unrepentant. This denial does not make White a false prophetess, and I have sympathetically argued that given her worldview, she likely was capable of self-justification. (See James Walters, “Ellen G. White and Truth-Telling, An Ethical Analysis of Literary Dependency, *Adventist Today*, March/April, 1998.) White, like King David, was a genuine but morally flawed leader of God’s people.

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# The Specter of Plagiarism Haunting Adventism

T. JOE WILEY, REPORTING ON A PRESENTATION BY  
FREDERICK HOYT

**E**llen G. White's plagiarism is like a cork — it keeps bobbing to the surface. A recent example was provided by Seventh-day Adventist historian Dr. Frederick Hoyt,

Emeritus Professor of History at La Sierra University in an unambiguous presentation of the plagiary effect haunting the church. Hoyt described his research at a meeting of the Adventist Forum in the Tierrasanta Adventist church in San Diego on August 12, 2006.

While many Adventist audiences could be expected to believe in the verbal inspiration of the "Spirit of Prophecy," in the manner they were raised, they may not be aware of scholarly work demonstrating that she borrowed from other writers and avoided telling the whole truth about the matter. Hoyt gathered up the evidence and granted that the church would truly benefit from holding beliefs that are true, which turn out to be genuinely beneficial to the believers.

True beliefs lead to good consequences and false beliefs to bad ones. For instance, the White plagiary effect could lead to a basic misalignment of the prophetic message, as found in the statement from Ellen White designed for the remnant Adventist mind, but which was copied word-for-word from a non-Adventist, Sunday-keeping Congregationalist minister:

*"I testify to my brethren and sisters that the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard."*<sup>1</sup> (Ellen G. White, "Testimonies to the Church," vol. 1, p. 15, [1892]. Borrowed without credit from John Harris, "From the Great Teacher," p. 159 [1836].)

Professor Hoyt began by saying, "An extremely serious and very basic problem at the heart of Adventism's ecclesiastical body has festered so

long in a neglected and untreated condition that it cries out for competent diagnosis and immediate treatment, even if heroic measures are mandated."

He asked, "Why has nothing been done about this issue?" Here's the predicament: Do literary borrowings in the writings of Ellen White imply that church members must scale down their epitome of the angel Gabriel descending from heaven, carrying prophetic visions and dreams to the remnant?"

This is not a new problem, of course, and the General Conference and the Ellen G. White Estate, Inc., believe they have created a well-packaged response to it. No other charge leveled against Ellen White has more potential than this to harm her credibility or destroy her crowning achievement in producing truth-filled literature. White's long-term practice of copying others and then presenting these "borrowed" words as her own stands against her claim that the Lord provided "the help of his Holy Spirit. These books . . . contain light from heaven, and will bear the test of investigation."<sup>2</sup>

In 1980, after the *Los Angeles Times* carried a front-page article titled "Plagiarism Found in Prophet Books," the editor of the *Adventist Review* defended the prophet, stopping just short of describing her sourcing as a lofty or exalted gatekeeper — "She was told that in the reading of religious books and journals, she would find precious gems of truth expressed in acceptable language, and that she would be given help from heaven to recognize these and to separate them from the rubbish of error with which she would sometimes find them associated. How wonderfully God fulfilled His Promise!"<sup>3</sup>

Hoyt whisked away the church's defensive term "literary borrowing" as "euphemistic manipulation and unacceptable in reality." He attached "plagiarism" to White's writing practices and defined it as "stealing the words or ideas of others and

True beliefs lead to good consequences and false beliefs to bad ones. For instance, the White plagiary effect could lead to a basic misalignment of the prophetic message as found in the statement from Ellen White designed for the remnant Adventist mind but which was copied word-for-word from a non-Adventist Sunday-keeping Congregationalist minister.

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presenting them as your own.”<sup>4</sup> Hoyt did not trace the origin of the standing of the prophet as verbally inspired, but asked, “How was it possible a sickly, poorly educated woman could improve her writing skills to reach the sophisticated level represented in creating *The Desire of Ages*?” The answer to this question can be found in Mrs. White’s own clarification: “Of myself I could never have brought out the truths in these books, but the Lord has given me the help of His Holy Spirit.”

With a long career in teaching and guiding students writing history papers, Hoyt may have heard this ruse before. Neither did Hoyt “buy” into hagiography provided by the *Review* in 1980: “As early as 1904 while Ellen White was still alive and writing, there was acknowledgment of her literary appropriation. And numerous statements have appeared in books and magazines since that time.”<sup>5</sup> The historical fact pattern on the ground does not support this *Review* assertion.

For about a century the church thought there was only a light dusting of literary dependency. But the evidence that Hoyt presented undermines the traditional view that God was directly responsible for every word, or even a fair percentage of words, in the inspired writings of White. He summarized the plagiary observations made by D. M. Canright, John H. Kellogg, Donald McAdams, Ronald L. Numbers, Walter Rea, Raymond Cottrell, Walter Specht, James W. Walters, and Fred Veltman. And as more of the “colorable alterations” (paraphrasing) surface, it is likely that the convictions of countless faithful Adventists will be deformed and their view of White’s inspiration weakened. As Hoyt pointed out, copying is not the main problem. Mrs. White “exhorted her followers to be law-abiding citizens and opposed stealing, falsehood, and deceit.”<sup>6</sup> When asked about her dependency on other writers, her response was always steadfast. “In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper, expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision — the precious rays of light shining from the throne.”<sup>7</sup> If the Holy Spirit could suspend White’s breathing during visions for up to four hours, why could it not also supply her with enough verbal material to keep her writing free of plagiarism?

A year before his death, protector and booster James White preemptively tried to stifle suspicion about his wife’s copying. “Mrs. W. has written and spoken a hundred things, as truthful as they are beautiful and harmonious, which cannot be found in the writings of others. ... From what source has she received the new and rich thoughts which are to be found in her writings and oral addresses? The case is a clear one. It evidently requires a hundred times the

credulity to believe that Mrs. W. has learned these things of others, and has palmed them off as visions from God, that (sic) it does to believe that the Spirit of God has revealed them to her.”<sup>8</sup> (*Life Sketches*, 1880 edition, p. 329.) According to Roger W. Coon, this “somewhat exaggerated” paragraph was removed in the next edition after James passed away.<sup>9</sup>

In 1907, after trying to defend White’s plagiarism from criticism voiced by doubters in the Battle Creek church, General Conference President A. G. Daniells wrote to Willie White: “I think that you and Sister White should make a clear-cut statement with reference to this question of plagiarism. Give the exact reasons why there was a failure to give proper credit to the authors quoted. I presume we all must admit that it would have been better to have given quotation marks or some other kind of credit than to have put the matter out as it was.”<sup>10</sup> Later, at the 1919 Bible Conference, Daniells regretted writing such a straight letter.<sup>11</sup>

Willie White’s own account of his mother’s plagiarism is mortifying: When asked about it he said; “... yet she always felt most keenly the results of her lack of school education. She admired the language in which other writers had presented to their readers the scenes which God had presented to her in vision. And she found it both a pleasure, and a convenience and an economy of time to use their language fully or in part in presenting those things which she knew through revelation, and which she wished to pass on to her readers.”<sup>12</sup>

The justification for Ellen White’s serial plagiary follows a rickety rationale that “borrowing” without credit was a common practice among religious writers in the Nineteenth Century.<sup>13</sup> Religious authors “felt that they were writing, not to advance their own interests, but the interests of the Kingdom of God.” Actually, plagiarism has never achieved the ideal standard for producing literary materials. This may explain why in recent times the church’s “held-in-common literary pool” defense has shifted to redefining the inspiration process from verbal dictation to thought-inspiration (Plenarist theory).

Hoyt took issue with Francis D. Nichol (past editor of the *Review and Herald*) in the apologetic manner that Nichol used in defending White’s “alleged” borrowing. In *Ellen G. White and Her Critics*,<sup>14</sup> Nichol maintained that Ellen White, like “other great religious writers,” borrowed without giving credit. He maintained her “orders came directly from God” and so used materials that were “already validated by God as true.” Nichol maintained the amount of source dependency in *The Great Controversy* was limited — estimating an insignificant four percent. Nichol opined that there was absolutely no intent by Ellen White “to

The justification for White’s serial plagiary follows a rickety rationale that “borrowing” without credit was a common practice among religious writers in the nineteenth century.

13 Religious authors “felt that they were writing, not to advance their own interests, but the interests of the Kingdom of God.”

Actually, plagiarism has never achieved the ideal standard for producing literary materials.

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## The Specter of Plagiarism Haunting Adventist

In the end Hoyt, as an academician, searched for a way to reconcile his discomfort in the prophet's plagiarism. He is convinced that traditional Adventists hold an overpowering belief in the infallibility of Ellen White as the Spirit of Prophecy.

deceive.” To frighten off critics, Nichol reinforced White’s position that Satan (just before the Second Coming) will create confusion in the church by destroying the credibility of a prophet of the Lord. Nichol also trumpeted the plagiary exhibit of ex-Adventist minister Dudley M. Canright’s book *The Bible from Heaven* — although Canright never claimed to be a prophet. In 1889 Canright publicly charged White with plagiarism, but himself had copied another Adventist author.<sup>15</sup> Hoyt was disturbed that Nichol called the kettle black. To do so was ludicrous and blasphemous, especially the part: “So it’s okay to do this since everybody is doing it.”

The late Loma Linda University Professor of Ethics Jack Provonsha entered the presentation when Hoyt described how Provonsha was chagrined to discover that the 1919 Bible Conference proceedings sat moldering in the General Conference Archives for over 50 years, holding valuable insights into how Ellen White produced her articles and books. Provonsha said, “Even well-intentioned people who concealed these facts of life from us all of those years, out of a mistaken impression that we couldn’t handle them,” should be chastened.

In the end Hoyt, as an academician, searched for a way to reconcile his discomfort in the prophet’s plagiarism. Because of a long-standing inability to admit to this plagiary effect, Hoyt is convinced that traditional Adventists hold an overpowering belief in the infallibility of Ellen White as the Spirit of Prophecy. Early on there was a chance this could have been different. In 1907 church leaders decided that, “W. C. White shall prepare quite a full and frank statement of the plans followed in preparing manuscripts for publication in book form, including (if Sister White gives her consent) a statement of the instruction which Sister White received in early days as to her use of the productions of other writers.”<sup>16</sup> This request was never carried out.

Fred Veltman (former Religion Department chair at Pacific Union College) conducted the most extensive analysis of the sources used in the compilation of *The Desire of Ages* (TDA). The project was formidable, so from the total of 87 chapters in TDA, he randomly selected 15. During this eight-year project Veltman, along with volunteer helpers, examined more than 500 other books, chiefly on the life of Christ. This did not include other sources that White was known to use,

including newspaper clippings, religious articles, sermons, and devotional books. Veltman was unable to work from White’s primary documents, because they no longer exist. He admitted it was impossible to know many of the sources that could have found their way into TDA.

Veltman discovered at least 23 literary derivatives (books) of various types, including fiction, in the TDA.<sup>17</sup> Approximately 31 percent of TDA had identifiable literary dependency, but he was unsure whether there could not have been more. He skirted away from calling this plagiarism, even though White had denied any dependence from others. In a careful statement Veltman wrote, “I must admit at the start that in my judgment this is the most serious problem to be faced in connection with Ellen White’s literary dependency. It strikes at the heart of her honesty, her integrity, and therefore her trustworthiness.” One can sense his regret and sorrow in finding this much usage: “As of now I do not have — nor, to my knowledge, does anyone else have — a satisfactory answer to this important question.”

Before Mrs. White died she was asked about her use of other writers and possible infringement. She replied, “Who has been injured?”<sup>18</sup> Knowing what we know today, no doubt some earnest students who took a college course called “Principles of Christian Education” will feel a touch of disillusionment when they discover a relatively well-known recitation was “derived” without source credit from the newspaper, *Louisville Commerical*. (Note improvements by White’s “bookmakers.”)

*“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.”*<sup>19</sup> (*Education*, p. 57.)

Refer to page 13 for End Notes.

*T. Joe Willey, Ph.D., now retired, taught neuroscience at Loma Linda University’s School of Medicine for almost 20 years, and also taught at Walla Walla College and La Sierra University.*

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# Unity and Tolerance in the Church, Part 1

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I know Seventh-day Adventists who believe that God created this world over a period of millions and millions of years. Generally, they sit in church right next to other Seventh-day Adventists who believe God created this world over a period of six literal days, about 6,000 years ago. Let this be the first snapshot of unity and tolerance in our church. And please, please, do not forget that the point of all this is to help us live together in peace. This is the push of Christian ethics.

How should we deal with this very important matter of belief in God as creator? Is there room in our church for those who believe the earth is hundreds of millions of years old? Are these Adventists believers in evolution? And if so, does that make them enemies of God and those of us who believe in creation? On this issue, one church leader wrote: “For those among us who have already decided — despite the Bible and Ellen White — on evolution, there are plenty of other churches for you. Ours isn’t one.” Perhaps, as this person suggests, we should just show them the door and ask them to leave. We would be better off without them. Or so the thinking goes.

Over the next three columns I want to take a look at a couple other snapshots of unity and tolerance in the church. I’ll clue you into my bias right now. I believe that Seventh-day Adventists as Protestants have always been and should always remain tolerant of a wide range of beliefs, particularly as it relates to our ability to worship together in Christ.

I believe this for what I take to be three good reasons: Jesus encourages tolerance toward those of us who believe differently (Matthew 13:30). Ellen G. White discourages us from thinking that unity will come from an overwhelming assertion of what we do believe. And finally, our current General Conference president, Jan Paulsen, in his role as leader in our church wants us to uphold unity and tolerance even in the face of our very real diversity around the world.

» While it is true that in some cases lines have been drawn and people have been disfellowshipped, for the most part, I see a tolerant church that has some sense of unity even in the wide range of beliefs we find among us.

I could choose among many family snapshots of the struggle to maintain unity and tolerance in our Seventh-day Adventist history: the Sabbath conferences in our early days, the Trinitarian conflict, the 1888 message, the health message, the inspiration of Ellen White, the 1919 Bible conference debates, the Ford controversy and Sanctuary Doctrine, and the structural debates that have plagued the General Conference throughout our history. In each and every case, strong-willed positions have been taken on both sides of these issues. While it is true that in some cases lines have been drawn and people have been disfellowshipped, for the most part, I see a tolerant church that has some sense of unity even in the wide range of beliefs we find among us.

In the end, I’ll come back to the question of God as Creator. In the meantime I’ll try to shine a light on the following two snapshots; the conflict over Trinitarian doctrine and the inspiration of Ellen White. These two items of belief seem fundamental to Seventh-day Adventism and yet as we look at our history we will find important differences of belief. Perhaps we can learn from our past about how to deal with our present.

Just so you have something to think about until the next column, ask yourself how it would feel to sit next to someone in a worship service who doesn’t believe Jesus was co-eternal with God the Father; in other words, that Jesus was a created being. How would it feel to sit in church next to James White, Joseph Bates, or Uriah Smith?

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Feature | Mark F. Carr

# Unity and Tolerance in the Church, Part 2

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**S**o what should we do about diversity of belief among Seventh-day Adventists? Part one asks this question in relation to our beliefs about how God created earth.

Imagine now worshipping together with some of the most important founders of the church, men like James White, Joseph Bates, and Uriah Smith, who did not believe in the Trinity the way you do.

» Our beliefs did not drop out of heaven in a neatly packaged statement toward which all Adventists held immediate and unwavering conviction. There has always been a good deal of diversity among us regarding what we believe and how open we are toward God's leading in the future.

Adventist church historians note that these leaders believed that Trinitarian ideas were unscriptural and brought into Christianity through paganism and Roman Catholic theology (*Light Bearers to the Remnant*, p. 167). In fact, as we developed formal statements of our beliefs as Seventh-day Adventists, the doctrine of the Trinity was nowhere to be found. The first and second paragraphs of the 1872 statement do focus on God the father, who is represented by the Holy Spirit, and Jesus, the Christ who is "the son of the eternal father." But, importantly and purposefully there is no assertion of a belief in a Triune God. Today, points 2, 3, 4, and 5 of our statement of "Fundamental Beliefs" all focus on the Trinity.

Point number two begins this way: "There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons."

The point is that our beliefs did not drop out of heaven in a neatly packaged statement toward which all Adventists held immediate and unwavering conviction. There has always been a good deal of diversity among us regarding what we believe and how open we are toward God's leading in the future.

Recall that our church founders struggled through an intensely difficult time of rejection because of their beliefs in the Second Coming of Jesus. Most of them were rejected by their churches because of their belief in William Miller's preaching about Jesus' coming. Later when they organized formally they did not want their unity to result in the type of harsh exclusionism that they themselves had suffered.

The difficulty the church faced in the development of our belief in the doctrine of the Trinity is a good illustration for today. In the former trouble, no one questioned whether or not Jesus was our savior and Lord; the difficulty lay in how we understood his relationship with God the father. So in our current difficulty, no one is questioning whether or not God is the creator of all the universe; what some are struggling to understand is just how he went about it.

Writing about unity and tolerance in the church, Ellen White said: "We cannot then take a position that the unity of the church consists in viewing every text of Scripture in the very same light. The church may pass resolution upon resolution to put down all disagreement of opinions, but we cannot force the mind and will, and thus root out disagreement. These resolutions may conceal the discord, but they cannot quench it and establish perfect agreement. Nothing can perfect unity in the church but the spirit of Christlike forbearance" (11MR 266.1).

It is "Christlike forbearance" to which I call us in our present turbulence over SDA beliefs in God as creator. In Part One I quoted Clifford Goldstein's thoughts on how much room for diversity we ought to have as a church. In the next and final part, I'll highlight what Jan Paulsen, our General Conference president, has to say about unity and tolerance in the church.

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# Unity and Tolerance and Ethics in the Church, Part 3

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**M**y seminary professor Raoul Dederen once noted in class that it normally takes a Christian denomination about 150 years to work out the details of what it believes. What I have begun to wonder is what happens after that? Do we as the people of “present truth” become a people theologically fixed by our statements of fundamental belief?

» Many who once worshipped with us have been forced to leave because their beliefs were not consistent with official teaching of the church. I find this tragic; not that they believed differently, but that they were forced out as a result.

No doubt many have left our fellowship over the years because of controversy surrounding our fundamental beliefs. In this series, I’ve mentioned the debate over the nature of Christ, creation, and I might also mention the debate surrounding the life and ministry of Ellen White. Many who once worshipped with us have been forced to leave because their beliefs were not consistent with official teaching of the church. I find this tragic; not that they believed differently, but that they were forced out as a result. Protestants wrestle with statements of doctrine; always have, always will. By some counts, there are over 6,000 Protestant denominations; is it any wonder that there will be diversity of belief within Seventh-day Adventism? How many Seventh-day Adventist denominations do we want?

I believe that Seventh-day Adventists as Protestants have always been and should always remain tolerant of some diversity of belief, particularly as it relates to our ability to worship together in Christ. I certainly am not advocating that the church change its fundamental beliefs on

creation, Christ, or the nature of Ellen White’s inspiration. But if we reject our open approach to God’s leading and become fixed on our statements of belief as a creed to which we are all held as a litmus test of faith, I fear for our church.

I greatly admire the efforts of our current General Conference president, Jan Paulsen, in helping our church remember the “Christlike forbearance” that Ellen White called us to so long ago. Speaking to a group of theologians and church administrators, on the question of unity and diversity he said this about our church, “...two realities which are constantly before it are unity and diversity.... When unity and diversity fight each other the loser is always the church. The church does best and is most effective as an instrument of mission when unity and diversity coexist in a non-hostile tension....”

But unity and diversity of culture and lifestyle is slightly different than allowing for diversity with regard to our fundamental beliefs. Many among us are able to deal with much diversity in the former but not the later; we want uniformity of beliefs even if we can deal with diversity in culture and lifestyle. On the question of theological differences in our church Paulsen has this to say: “There is some theological polarity in our church. Whether they be to the right or the left, reactionary or liberal, they are there. What should we do about it? Anything? No one should be surprised at their existence, nor should we expect that there will ever come a time when they will be gone. What do we do with all of that? In the main, I suspect that we just learn to live with it. Little is to be gained by chasing these polarities. Doing so has a way of usurping the church’s agenda, and the environment created within the church becomes hostile and strained. I say we *learn to live with it*, with the proviso that the church, in its teachings, programs, and activities, must at all times be visibly loyal to our heritage and our identity” (“The Theological Landscape,” *Adventist Review*, June 13, 2002).

*Mark F. Carr, Ph.D., teaches ethics at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, Calif.*



There is some theological polarity in our church. Whether they be to the right or the left, reactionary or liberal, they are there. What should we do about it? . . . I say we learn to live with it, with the provision that the church, in its teachings, programs, and activities, must at all times be visibly loyal to our heritage and our identity. Dr. Jan Paulsen, President, General Conference of SDA.



Feature | Alden Thompson

# Buckle Up: A Commentary on the Adventist Soul

It's one thing to take care of our bodies. But only God can tame the soul. That's why the 1888 message brought such a crucial corrective to that seductive Adventist temptation to believe that we can earn salvation. The hard but liberating truth is that only God can change the human heart.

Here's a short story about seat belts with applications to the Adventist soul.

First some questions:

When did you first start buckling up? And what made you do it? Or maybe you are one of the few remaining renegades who insists on a life of unfettered freedom.... I don't remember when or why I started wearing them. Typically I'm fairly obedient in practical matters — I only rebel when someone tells me I have to do something. Initially I buckled up more faithfully when I was driving than when I was a passenger. But since the winter of 1963 I wear a seat belt all the time. I was a passenger without one and popped my head through the windshield. I can still rub the scar on my forehead and feel it in the middle of my scalp. It's a convincing argument in favor of seat belts.

But if seat belts are such a benefit, why doesn't everyone wear them? Of course they restrict our freedoms and of course they're uncomfortable. And yes, one can even cite examples of accidents where it was more dangerous to wear a seat belt than to be without. Still, the evidence in favor of seat belts is overwhelming.

So the people we have elected to govern us decided to help us wear our seat belts. The first efforts were gentle and kind, buckles in the shape of hearts with a "loving" message: "Buckle up — we love you!"

Didn't work. Let's try a harder line: "Buckle up! It's the law." Stronger words, but still not much muscle. Sometimes the hard rhetoric was softened just a bit: "Buckle up! It's our law."

But only when it turned expensive — "Click it or ticket!" — did the habit begin to catch on. In Washington State, where I live, the fine is \$101 for riding without a seat belt. Next door in Oregon it only costs \$94. But in both states the authorities issue tickets with no qualms of conscience. Still, I am amazed at how often the report of a fatal accident includes the line, "The driver was not wearing a seat belt."

Now let's bring God into the picture. Should God be concerned about such things as seat belts?

Why not, if God, like John, wants us to "prosper and be in health" (3 John 2)?

So God sets about the task of helping us protect ourselves and others. In short, to make us be good. Well, *make* is a bit strong. *Encourage? Entice? Coax?*

You see the problem. Paul lays it out — his dilemma, ours, and God's: "What would you prefer? Am I to come to you with a stick, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?" (1 Corinthians 4:21).

Now let's turn over specifically to the Adventist soul and note some highlights in our corporate pilgrimage. Prior to the 1844 disappointment, eschatology was the only Adventist game in town. The goal: Let's get out of here.

Didn't work. As our forebears then struggled to make sense of their experience, they came to the conclusion that the "cleansing of the sanctuary" had more to do with heavenly than with earthly matters. Very soon, however, focusing on the heavenly brought them back down to earth again, for in 1846 Ellen White saw in vision a scene from Revelation 11:19: "God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple." In the open ark she saw the Decalogue with a soft halo surrounding the fourth command. That vision made it clear to her that the little flock of faithful believers must keep all of God's commands. In short, our pioneers realized that they were called to be an obedient people. Eschatology was still alive. But now the call to obedience was equally important.

The real Adventist revolution, however, began in 1863 when Ellen White received her famous health reform vision. I say revolution, for what that vision did was set Adventists on a collision course with the dominant evangelical impulse that pits law and grace against each other. For many evangelicals, law condemns; it is grace that saves. Ellen White's health reform vision helped Adventists re-discover that Old Testament truth that the law is God's gracious gift to his people. It is good news. To be very blunt, it is Gospel.

One senses the euphoria in Moses' voice as he describes the awe and envy that their God-given law elicits from neighboring nations: "Surely this great nation," Moses quotes their neighbors as saying, "is a wise and discerning people!" Then in his own words he tells why: "For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we

*Continued on page 23*

call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?” (Deuteronomy 4:7-8, NRSV). Psalm 119, the longest psalm of all, can’t stop singing the praises of the law. Paul and other New Testament writers may have struggled with ambivalent feelings toward law (another story for another time), but not Moses or David.

Adventists in the 1860s had urgent reasons for learning the good news about “natural” law, for they were dying off like flies. They needed to recognize that the “laws of nature,” or “the laws of our being” are just as much a part of God’s law as the Decalogue. In the words of Ellen White, “It is just as much sin to violate the laws of our being as to break one of the Ten Commandments, for we cannot do either without breaking God’s law” (2 Testimonies 70 [1868]).

With such a view of law, punishment for sin is not something mandated by a sovereign God; rather, it is the built-in and natural result of breaking a “natural” law. It is the stomachache from eating stolen green apples, not the whipping administered by an irate authority.

The pressing need for discovering the link between “natural” law and God’s law was highlighted in a report cited several years ago in the Senior Sabbath School Quarterly (1/13/93). Based on the deaths of 63 Adventists whose obituaries were published in the *Review and Herald* in the year 1862, the study revealed an appalling fate awaiting young Adventists:

Under age 7	18	=	29%
7 - 20	9	=	14%
21 - 40	14	=	22%
41 - 60	14	=	22%
Over 60	8	=	13%

Can you imagine a world in which only eight of 63 people live past 60 years of age? I picked up a copy of the North Pacific Union *Gleaner* (July 12, 1993), and tallied the 56 obituaries listed in that issue. Here are their ages at death:

Under age 59	2	=	4%
60s	4	=	7%
70s	13	=	23%
80s	27	=	48%
90s	9	=	16%
100s	1	=	2%

Small wonder that Ellen White turned passionate on the benefits of “natural” law. After

ticking off the hazards of bad health and noting the transformation that health reform had brought into her life, she had spunky words for the believers in Battle Creek: “There is not one woman in a hundred that could endure the amount of labor that I do. I moved out from principle, not from impulse. I moved because I believed Heaven would approve of the course I was taking to bring myself into the very best condition of health, that I might glorify God in my body and spirit, which are His” (2 Testimonies 372 [1870]).

A deadly backspin, however, lurks in this “good news” approach to law, namely, the powerful impetus it gives to salvation by works. Health reform can be practiced. It can be done. We can keep God’s law!

But somewhere along the line each of us has to confront the reality of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and the horror of the tangled mess within. It’s one thing to take care of our bodies. But only God can tame the soul. That’s why the 1888 message brought such a crucial corrective to that seductive Adventist temptation to believe that we can earn salvation.

The hard but liberating truth is that only God can change the human heart. We must come to him and be broken. It is his gift that forgives and saves, not our efforts to take care of our bodies. As Ellen White exclaimed: “Let the law take care of itself. We have been at work on the law until we get as dry as the hills of Gilboa, without dew or rain. Let us trust in the merits of Jesus Christ of Nazareth” (MS 10, 1890).

Note that she speaks of a spiritual malady, not a physical one. However hard we may try to whip our bodies into shape, it is only the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that gives us salvation.

It’s a good idea to take care of our bodies. I must admit — if I could say so without being arrogant — that I like the idea of a conscientious Adventist being the healthiest and most productive worker in a crowd of a hundred. But gratitude must always be the driving force, not our efforts to earn a ticket to heaven.

Finally, don’t be too surprised if God sometimes uses the “click it or ticket” approach on you. It could save your life; it could even save your soul. It’s not his preferred method. But God is a great pragmatist, fully capable of being all things to all people in order to save some. The “some” may include you. It may include me. We must speak again on these things.

*Alden Thompson, Ph.D., teaches religion at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.*

# Contemporary Adventism: The Owl and the Aging Tiger



THE FOLLOWING IS A COMMENT OF MILTON HOOK FROM HIS FORTHCOMING BIOGRAPHY OF DESMOND FORD

“The reality is that Adventism can be characterized as the Owl and the Aging Tiger. The Owl is on the endangered list but occasional sightings still happen. One was an Alden Thompson variety called *Inspiration*, spotted in America. And a Kai Arasola species, *The End of Historicism*, was seen in Europe. A few small colonies are said to exist.

Being shy, nocturnal creatures they are difficult to trace.

“On the other hand, The Aging Tiger still roams at large. He has appeared in the form of author Clifford Goldstein’s unbelievable publications, Gerhard Pfandl’s implausible Sabbath School Lesson quarterly, *Daniel*, and Erwin Gane’s quarterlies, especially *Enlightened by the Spirit*.”



## NOTABLE ATTENTION-GETTERS

### At San Diego Adventist Forum

Available on audiocassettes — usually two cassettes per session

- 10-95 Raymond Cottrell, PhD  
*Biblical Hermeneutics: What Difference Does It Make?*
- 2-02 Raymond Cottrell, PhD  
*The “Sanctuary Doctrine”: Asset or Liability?*
- 2-04 Jack Gent, MD  
*Enigmas about Ellen* w/ Ben Herndon, MD
- 2-06 Albert Koppel, DDS  
*Truth Decay: A Call for Accountability*
- 8-06 Fred Hoyt, PhD  
*EGW & Plagiarism from an Historian’s Perspective*

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