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Adventist Like Me

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Editorial | Ervin Taylor

Celebrating Unity and Diversity

The heads of most religious institutions understandably promote “unity” within their communities of faith. Many modern Christian bodies, including our own small Protestant denomination, invest considerable corporate energy in promoting internal cohesiveness and countering what are considered divisive influences.

To advance organizational togetherness, some church officials often refer back to an imaginary “golden age” in the history of their faith, insisting, for example, that all “true” Christians (or “true” Adventists) at the beginning of Christianity (or Adventism) were totally united in religious belief and practice. Regrettably for this argument, what actually has occurred does not support this understanding.

Essentially from its inception, Christianity developed a variety of groups with variant understandings about what the Christian message was all about. Various divisions and factions emerged, based on the interactions of complex and changing combinations of ideological, sociocultural, ethnic, political, economic, and organizational factors. Both *orthodoxy* (“right opinion”) and *heresy* (“deviating or nonconforming opinion”) were defined by small groups of individuals who came to assume positions of authority.

Although the process was often complex, those beliefs generally considered orthodox reflected majority views held by a politically dominant group. Theological opinions held by those in the minority and out of power were often labeled heretical. That which was orthodox in one period was sometimes later labeled heretical, reflecting a change in which group was politically dominant. Some ancient Christian minority beliefs declared heretical included Apollinarianism, Arianism, Docetism, Donatism, Modalism, Monarchianism, Monophysitism, Nestorianism, Pelagianism, Socinianism, and Tritheism. In many cases, the adherents of minority views were excommunicated (disfellowshipped). When Christianity became the state religion, excommunication brought with it serious practical consequences.

Like most other Christian bodies — ancient and modern — Adventism has had its share of splits and divisions, both in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In the latter part of the 20th Century and continuing into the first decade of this century, a type of factionalism has clearly emerged — a factionalism experienced by a number of other American and

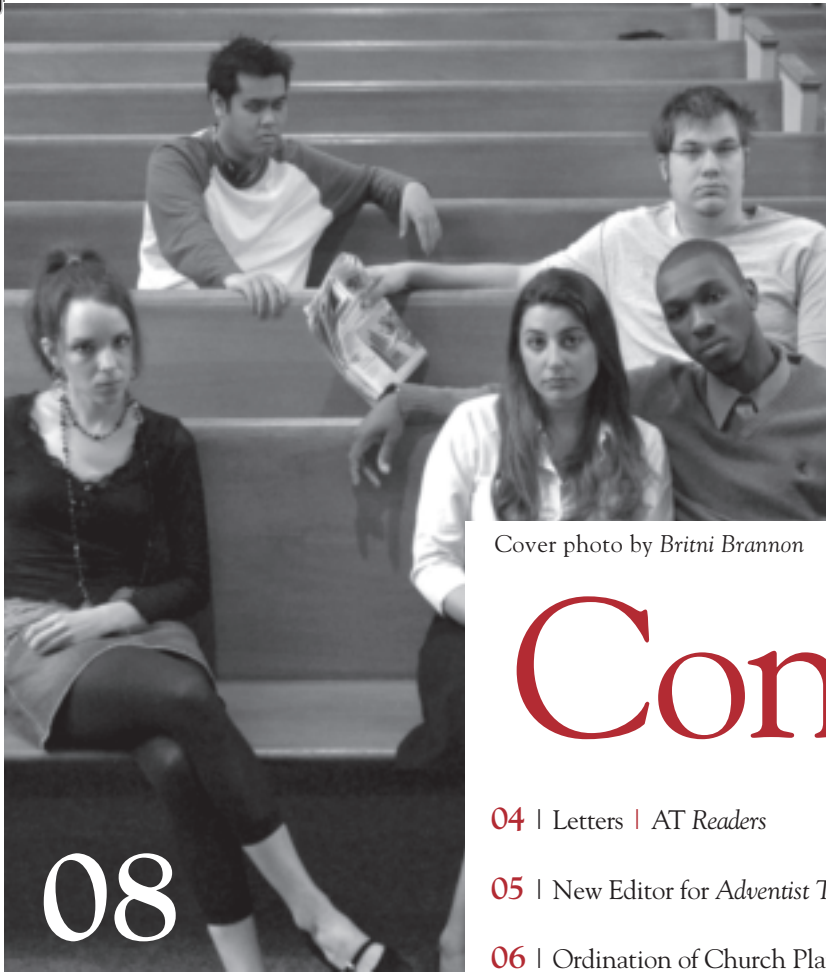
European Protestant denominations many decades earlier.

In the 1920s, various American Protestant groups had to deal with conflicts between liberal/modernist and conservative/fundamentalist elements in their midst, and in 1930s’ Adventism, despite some obvious doctrinal differences, it was generally assumed that Adventism would naturally align with Protestant fundamentalists. However, Adventism had embedded within its cultural and intellectual fabric a variant thread that clearly set it apart from other American fundamentalist church bodies — a strong commitment to education in the health sciences.

As is now well documented, largely due to the need to obtain accreditation for the denomination’s medical school at Loma Linda and the resultant requirement that medical students receive their *baccalaureate* degrees from fully accredited liberal arts colleges, Adventist colleges were required to apply for and obtain accreditation. This set in motion a process whereby faculties for these colleges were required to obtain Ph.D. degrees. Since no Adventist college at the time conferred this degree, these were obtained at institutions where many Adventist students faced theological, historical, and scientific points of view and data that, in some cases, ran directly counter to the cherished traditional beliefs of their faith community. In the face of much evidence, some were convinced by the data to take what might be regarded as Adventist minority positions.

The leadership of 21st Century corporate Adventism, especially in North America, is currently confronted with an opportunity to rethink how it will deal institutionally with the reality that many loyal and committed Adventists in educational and medical centers hold what can be considered minority views on a whole host of topics. Is the Adventist Church now mature enough to embrace an appropriate unity, where diversity is recognized as a vital part of growth? Or shall we follow the counsel of those who, even in the pages of the *Adventist Review*, regularly call for the exclusion of minority viewpoints from Adventist university and college campuses and Adventist pulpits? Pluralism and tolerance are adult virtues that deserve a significant place in the increasingly complex Adventist world.

Ervin Taylor serves as Executive Editor of Adventist Today and writes from Loma Linda, California.



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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

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Send postal correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *Adventist Today*, P.O. Box 8026, Riverside, CA 92515-8026.

READERS RESPOND

letters

» The reality is, Ellen White and her counsel have become quite personal to each of us, and as varied as our mixed multitude.

MERGER OF AMAZING FACTS AND 3ABN

Regarding the merger of Amazing Facts and 3ABN, I am so happy for 3ABN, our church, the reputation of our blessed faith, and all those unduly hurt and/or wearied during 3ABN's "bad leadership moments"! May God be praised! Thank you for sharing the good news.

Linda Weaver — Via e-mail

BATCHELOR AND 3ABN

I fear that Doug Batchelor has cast his lot with a system that may be his downfall. I have never approved of the present 3ABN under the leadership of Danny Shelton.

J W Henson — Ringgold, Ga.

THE CHURCH : NO LONGER CO-OPTED

Thousands of Christians [including Adventists] marched and prayed for peace this weekend. Some 37 Church organizations made themselves heard in Washington. The same happened across the country. The Church has long been quietly active for reason and peace, just one example being the recent multi-denominational delegation to Iran for dialogue. The Church apparently does ask more from its followers than that they comfort themselves, that they are the chosen. Standing up for justice, regardless of the cost, still seems to be a critical tenet of Christianity.

Donovan Russell — Moravia, N.Y.

WHEN THE ELEPHANT GOT THIRSTY

Ah, WWED? "What would Ellen do (or think)?" The question Adventists ask in addition to "What would Jesus do?" But, speculating about Ellen White's possible response to the sale of Paradise Valley Hospital (*AT* Mar/Apr 2007) also raises traditionally unsettling issues about her work,

and the continuation of the gift of prophecy in general. For instance, when Sister White advised the founders to buy the health resort, did she foresee the eventual sale of PVH? Are we living in a time beyond what she was shown, when there is "no word from the Lord" to direct us, at least in regard to some matters? Who decides when a prophet's earlier counsel is incomplete or outdated, and should be revised or disregarded? And, what are the criteria for making such a determination, and directing the current course of action?

Adventists profess an openness to further manifestations of the prophetic gift before Christ returns. Really? If a modern-day Ellen had sat down recently with the PVH Board and told them that she had been shown "three times" to keep the hospital, would Adventist Health still own the institution?

The reality is, Ellen White and her counsel have become quite personal to each of us, and as varied as our mixed multitude. James Stirling's Ellen understands that the sale of Paradise Valley was necessary due to a change of circumstances.

My Ellen sits, slowly shaking her head in stunned disbelief. My friend Ken doesn't really care that the hospital was sold, so his Ellen doesn't seem to mind. For those Adventists who will probably never know that Paradise Valley has been sold, maybe their Ellen will never know either.

Steven Hadley — San Marcos, Calif.

WHITE'S LITERARY BORROWING

During McLarty's term as editor, *AT* has been fair in reporting issues and events within the church that provoke thought and reflection. The dedication to truth by the editorial staff is a highlight. Thank you for the last 10 years.

Regarding White's literary borrowing, the concern expressed by Stirling, Walters, and Hoyt and Willey (*AT* Mar/Apr 2007) is appreciated. Although Francis D. Nichol acknowledged White's dependence on outside sources in the 1950s, a more rigorous analysis in the 1970s revealed the full extent, including her responses when questioned about her work. As a result of the latter investigation, we have witnessed White's testimony made of none effect among many Adventists.

White's literary borrowing is a problem only within our SDA Church, inasmuch as copyright laws were not in existence, as Ramik asserts. For God's people today, however, the gift of prophecy is a test

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New Editor for *Adventist Today*: Andy Nash



Cindy and Andy Nash

Andy Nash, 36, has been appointed by the Adventist Today Board as the new *Adventist Today* (AT) editor, succeeding John McLarty. McLarty, who has served in that capacity for 10 years, will continue at AT as a senior contributing editor.

This issue of AT contains articles by Nash's students at Southern Adventist University and a Nash editorial. However, Nash will begin his formal tenure as AT editor, beginning with the first issue of 2008 (January-February). At that time, a major redesign of the magazine will be unveiled.

Nash comes to this position with impressive credentials and extensive experience. He received B.A.s in Print Journalism and English from Southern Adventist University, where he was editor of the school newspaper. He holds an M.A. in English from Andrews University and has finished his Ph.D. coursework in Creative Nonfiction at the University of Nebraska.

From 1996 to 1999 Nash was the youngest assistant editor at the *Adventist Review*. He worked as an assistant professor of communication at Union College (1999-2002) before becoming the publisher of the award-winning *The Front Porch*, a magazine feature currently syndicated in newspapers throughout the United States. Nash has also worked as a newspaper and magazine columnist.

Nash will serve as the AT editor while also working as Associate Professor of Journalism and Communication at Southern Adventist University, where he has been since 2003.

"The appointment of Andy Nash as editor reflects an important aspect of the major initiative now under way at *Adventist Today* as part of the 2007 Quantum Leap process," says Ervin Taylor, executive editor. "He brings to the AT editorial group a fresh approach with new ideas and perspectives that will be in tune with a younger cohort of potential readers."

As 2008 approaches, Nash will communicate his vision for the future of AT. "I'm delighted to join a talented staff and strong support base — people who care about things like balance, honesty, and excellence in the Adventist Church," Nash says. "I see no reason why *Adventist Today* shouldn't be the most well written, most well produced, most professional magazine in the church. We also need to be full color starting in January, so we'll be grateful to everyone who can help us achieve this financially."

"One of Nash's major interests is for *Adventist Today* to become a magazine of constructive dialogue between conservative-traditional, center-evangelical, and liberal-progressive Adventist Christians on the central issues of the day," says Lee Greer, AT Associate Executive Editor and the editor of the online newsletter *ATNewsbreak*.

Nash says he welcomes direct communications and can be reached at andy.nash@atoday.com.

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letters

(Revelation 10:11). God will find a human voice to speak for Him whenever there is a need. The facts of the case simply reveal just how fallible human beings are. Only God is infallible. Jesus stated that He is the Truth (John 14:6).

All truth originates in Him. Therefore, should not Christ ultimately be given credit for every high and lofty thought that represents truth? Perhaps only an author can excuse a plagiarist on these grounds.

R. W. Fanselau — Via e-mail

ADVENTIST TODAY AND HONESTY

Thank you, AT for your honesty, integrity

in searching for truth. The best of journalists and cartoonists have always been torched for putting their pencil (or processor) where it hurts. . . keep at it!!

By the way, I did attend Renaissance in Monterey last year. Excellent work by all. . . Alden, Londis, Des were superb.

If our church is ever to pull out of this spiral we must be honest about our situation, the Bible, EGW, the Gospel, our sometimes dysfunctional history and cover-ups.

Families that refuse to cover-up, but love relentlessly tend to blossom.

Shane Dresen — Via the Internet



News | Edwin D. Schwisow

Ordination of Church Planter Voided

Serns says that before NPUC Executive Committee members voted to recognize the voidance of the ordination, he visited with Gladden several times in an attempt to convince him to modify Mission Catalyst and place it in harmony with the Adventist Church.

Ron Gladden, former director of church planting for the North Pacific Union Conference (NPUC) and the Mid-America Union Conference (MAUC), lost his ordination as an Adventist minister when the NPUC Executive Committee voted to formally recognize the voidance of his ordination at their March 14, 2007, meeting. This action was in response to Gladden's involvement in the creation of Mission Catalyst, an organization that plants churches that hold to beliefs paralleling those of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Gladden's membership as a Seventh-day Adventist was not affected by the action, since such a matter is most commonly addressed at the local church setting.

Gladden, who directs Mission Catalyst out of its Camas, Wash., headquarters, says that the decision will not affect his ability to minister with Mission Catalyst, since its board of directors has voted him full ministerial credentials. He sees the decision to void his ordination as a simple power play by denominational leaders.

"Apparently they don't want someone to preach their message without their control," Gladden says.

NPUC Explains Decision

North Pacific Union Conference officials say that the termination of his ordination was Gladden's own doing.

"Ultimately the NPUC Executive Committee voted to acknowledge that Ron had voided his ordination to the Seventh-day Adventist ministry by his decisions and actions over the past few years," says Dan Serns, NPUC ministerial director, who also now coordinates church planting for the Union.

Serns says that before NPUC Executive Committee members voted to recognize the voidance of the ordination, he visited with Gladden several times in an attempt to convince him to modify Mission Catalyst and place it in harmony with the Adventist Church. Serns says that Mission Catalyst's guidelines regarding tithe paying, the formation of new churches, and church membership conflict with the voted policies of the Adventist Church, as outlined in the *Church Manual*.

Shortly before his ordination was to be discussed by the NPUC President's Council and, ultimately, the NPUC Executive Committee, Gladden was invited to discuss his situation with Union leadership. Gladden declined this request when Union leaders were unwilling to allow an audio recording of the proposed meeting, as Gladden insisted.

Gladden explains that he made this request to prevent rumors from being spread about the voidance of his ordination.

"If we had recorded the meeting in February 2004 when I was pressured to resign," Gladden says, "their subsequent communication would have been very different. A voice recording would have protected both parties from misrepresentation and misunderstanding."

In a letter to Gladden dated March 19, 2007, and acquired by *Adventist Today*, Bryce Pascoe, NPUC Executive Secretary, explained how the NPUC had recognized the voidance of Gladden's ordination.

"It was determined, due to the organization which you established, to recognize and accept, with regret, the voiding of your ordination from the Seventh-day Adventist gospel ministry," Pascoe wrote.

According to North American Division policy, once a church body acknowledges and votes that a pastor has voided his ordination, he (women are not eligible for ordination in the Adventist Church) is ineligible to be employed as a Seventh-day Adventist pastor thereafter.

Though Gladden apparently will never again be eligible to serve as an Adventist minister, Serns says he hopes there will be redemption and reconciliation between Gladden and the church.

Gladden Shares His Concerns

Gladden says he is concerned about how he and Mission Catalyst have been treated by officials from the organized Seventh-day Adventist Church.

His first concern has to do with the rightness of administrators in recognizing the voidance of his ordination.

"Is it appropriate or biblical to permanently ban someone from gospel ministry where there has been no immorality, heresy or breaking of the law?"

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Gladden asks. “How is that consistent with the gospel of forgiveness?”

Gladden also has concerns with what he perceives as the tendency by some administrators to think they have a monopoly on sharing the Adventist message.

“Does God restrict his blessing to those who work within the official system and seek permission from a committee before preaching the gospel?” Gladden asks. “Jesus said, ‘He who is not against me is for me.’”

He says that he organized Mission Catalyst, not because of a personal dispute with his former employers, but as a way to spread the gospel.

“Mission Catalyst started exclusively for the purpose of mission,” Gladden says. “This is not about a dispute between Ron Gladden and the NPUC.”

Gladden says Mission Catalyst has not denounced, and will not denounce, the organized church and that it has been the organized church that has attacked him, not vice versa. Instead of fighting back, he says his organization has chosen to spend its energies on ministry.

“Our sole issue is the structure that has severely drifted from its priority of winning souls, Gladden says. “We pray that God will bless the Adventist denomination and all of its work.”

Six Years of Church Planting Leadership

Gladden was employed from 1998 through the spring of 2004 as director of church planting for the NPUC and MAUC. The two unions each supplied just over a third of his salary, with the North American Division providing the remaining funds.

Early in 2004, Gladden says he was asked to resign by NPUC and MAUC administrators. Gladden says that when he asked them if they had concerns over his morals or theology and they responded that they did not, he asked them why he should resign.

Later, in early March 2004, in a meeting with NPUC and MAUC administrators, Gladden was told that his position was being eliminated. The official reason was a lack of funds, an assertion Gladden disputes.

“The day before they claimed they couldn’t find the funding, the NPUC budget showed up on my desk” Gladden says, “The church planting program was in the budget, fully funded.”

A New Organization

Gladden says initially, after his position had been eliminated, he had no desire to start a separate organization.

» Gladden also has concerns with what he perceives as the tendency by some administrators to think they have a monopoly on sharing the Adventist message.

“Does God restrict his blessing to those who work within the official system and seek permission from a committee before preaching the gospel?” Gladden asks.

“I thought I’d be an SDA pastor until I was too old to stand in the pulpit,” Gladden says.

He says it was only after his friends and family urged him to consider the idea that he began laying plans for Mission Catalyst. In its corporate bylaws, ratified in April 2004, Mission Catalyst lists an 11-point Statement of Faith that parallels the 28 fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, Gladden says, the Statement of Faith does not include all the beliefs of Mission Catalyst.

“The Adventist Church believes a lot of things that are not included in their 28 fundamentals, and so do we, Gladden says. “Our list of 11 is not meant to cover everything we believe.”

Mission Catalyst churches give 10 percent of tithes and offerings to the organization’s support office and retain 90 percent of all tithes and offerings locally. The only exception is funds set aside for the construction of new church buildings, which local churches keep entirely.

Pastors in Mission Catalyst are employed by and answer directly to their local congregations. Each participating church is required to support a mission project located at least 100 miles away from its home base. In the three years since its incorporation, Mission Catalyst has grown to include 12 churches in Canada and the United States.

Edwin D. Schwisow is an editor and writer who markets his work primarily through LifeScape Publishing in Sandy, Oregon. He can be reached by e-mail at edschwisow@hotmail.com.





Feature | *Andy Nash*

Adventist Like Me

»» What happens when these university students change their appearance and go undercover to small Adventist Churches?

What if some of our students altered their own appearance — made themselves look less “Adventist”?

At the invitation of *Adventist Today*, my publication editing class developed several features for this edition. As we brainstormed ideas, it quickly became apparent that these students weren’t interested in a redux discussion of 1844, Ellen White, or creation/evolution. They were more interested in the way we treat each other — the heart of Christ’s message. One class period we discussed John Griffin’s book *Black Like Me*, the early 1960s’ story of a white man who medically changed the pigment of his skin and traveled through the Deep South to see what it was really like to be black. The experience was heartrending and sobering — and ultimately benefited the wider country. So we wondered: What if some of our students altered their own appearance — made themselves look less “Adventist” — and visited a few small Adventist Churches? That’s exactly what Melanie Eddlemon, Anh Pham, and Christina Zaiback did. A fourth student, Terry Paxton, didn’t need to go undercover; his real-life experiences gave him enough to write about. We didn’t view this short experiment as scientific but only as an anecdotal peek into the enduring question of how we treat each other. Britni Brannon and Melissa Mentz provided art direction for these features. It’s a privilege working with the newest generation of Adventist communicators.



Andy Nash is associate professor at the Southern Adventist University School of Journalism & Communication, in Collegedale, Tennessee.

Silver Didn’t Matter

I don’t normally wear long, dangling earrings. I don’t normally wear earrings at all. So naturally, when I wore them to church I was mesmerized by the soft chime of their silver each time I turned my head, which I made sure to do as often as possible.

The frigid February air greeted me unexpectedly when I opened the car door to the church parking lot. I wished for a warmer outfit — I wasn’t exactly dressed for winter. But I was willing to brave the cold of the outside, so long as the church was warm on the inside. And it was. That is, I didn’t need a coat.

The night before, my friends and I had sat

around the kitchen relating horror stories about the chosen church of prey. Gaudy jewelry and excessive makeup? The church would swallow me alive.

“They made me wear a suit jacket to preach,” said one.

“Over 60. And strict,” said another.

“Ooh-ooh! I could spy with you,” my friend said, laughing. “Woman staring, six o’clock. Evil eyes, back pew.”

It’s the perfect church, we had concluded. And there was a nod of finality.

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Of course, by perfect, we meant rigid and judgmental. After all, stories of chastisement by church people always make entertaining conversational pieces.

The cold was tolerable, so I took a moment to examine my disguise in the glass of the church door. But my mirror suddenly swung away when the door opened. Realizing a man had opened it for me, I stepped inside, hoping he hadn't noticed the fascination I had with my own reflection.

On the other side of the door, I was startled by an animated woman who greeted me.

"You must be from the college!" she said with wide eyes and cheery dimples, which seemed genuine.

"We wish folks from the college would come over more often."

She handed me a bulletin.

"I know how you all get hungry, so we have a potluck afterward. You're welcome to come." She motioned to the Sabbath school classrooms, and I proceeded to a room full of statuesque church veterans.

In silence broken only by clinks and clanks of dangling adornment, I sat, shifting my eyes from pew to pew to detect any sign of disapproval. Already we had become rivals — they had silver hair. I had silver earrings.

With the attentiveness of a surveillance camera, I watched them. I waited for their reaction. Their reprimanding. Evil looks. Glares. Whispers. I waited for the elderly woman in front of me to look back. When she eventually reached back to rest her arm on the pew, I braced myself for her accusing looks. But as I waited for a reaction, I became distracted with her hands. She had polished fingernails! Silver

fingernails, for that matter. And I no longer expected a reaction.

In the hours that followed, I stopped waiting for reactions altogether. Most people tried not to make any eye contact. In fact, no one glanced over to see who was sitting in the pew next to them. It became evident that my warm reception at the church door would not be followed by a warm reception inside the building.

It's tempting to pretend that outsiders are on the outside because of their excessive jewelry, odd behavior, unkempt attire, irreverence. But church is not a style of dress, worship, or preaching. It's a group of people who care because God asked them to. It's the stranger who sits next to me and pursues a conversation, just to spend a moment with me. I was an outsider, with or without chiming earrings, not because I wasn't accepted, but because I wasn't invited. The woman with silver fingernails had a pew to herself. She probably felt it, too. We were both alone.

As I left the church, I passed through the door into the cold air outside, which didn't seem so harsh anymore. In fact, I felt more comfortable there than inside the church. I had expected things to warm up when I entered that morning. But they hadn't, really.

Closing my car door, I took a minute to collect my thoughts, as I watched the silver-nailed lady walk alone across the parking lot to her car, her arms securing her coat around her. Maybe if I had shared the pew with her, church wouldn't have felt so cold.

Melanie Eddlemon is a senior public relations major from Chico, California.



Punk Like Me

The best reception I ever received at church was when I used my wife's cosmetics to smear on black eyeliner and paint my fingernails and streak my hair purple.

My wife took one look at me and said, "Scary."

Scary is not how I like looking on Sabbath. I always wear a suit and tie for church and blend in quite well with the other worshippers. But sometimes I've wondered if my wife and I blend in too well at the churches in and around Collegedale, Tennessee.

Before the Sabbath I dressed up as a punk rocker, my wife and I had church-hopped for a year in and

around Collegedale. Too often we were welcomed only by the greeters and sometimes by the pastor. During potlucks we sometimes ate and conversed alone, despite being surrounded by others. I wondered about the reception I received those times and how people would respond to me now.

I guess Satan has more than a few people in churches where he wants them: too shy or entrenched in their own worlds to step out of their comfort zone and share Christ. No wonder Jesus once said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few" (Luke 10:2).

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My wife took one look at me and said, "Scary." Scary is not how I like looking on Sabbath.

Continued from page 9 - Adventist Like Me

Punk Like Me

Thoughts like these ran through my mind when I checked my makeup and hair one last time in my rearview mirror. I gave my outfit an oatmeal-colored t-shirt with long brown sleeves, khaki cargo pants, and headphones around my neck one last adjustment before getting out of the car.

Before heading into the church, I glanced at myself and had second thoughts. The black eyeliner was caked on and jagged around my eyes, giving me a somewhat deranged look.

And perhaps that's what the greeters at the little church thought. I came to church alone and after a pregnant pause as I stepped through the doors, the four people standing there smiled, handed me a bulletin and welcomed me.

After standing in the foyer for a minute, flipping through the bulletin, attempting to find a Sabbath school class to attend, a smiling greeter came over and directed me to where I wanted to go: the main adult Sabbath school in the sanctuary. I figured I would find the most members there, thus giving me a lot of reaction regarding my appearance.

I had arrived late, so I marched in halfway through the class and took a seat in the middle section. The adults there had no trouble discerning my spiky, purple hair and casual clothes from the suits, ties and properly applied makeup.

Right away a senior couple a row in front of me looked over, smiled, and said hello. It was followed by another greeting from a middle-aged lady three seats to my left.

The closest thing to an unfriendly welcome came when a little, old lady in front of me during Sabbath school did a quick double take, and then never turned around again. During the worship service, little kids looked at me, eyes wide, before burying their heads in their mothers' sides when I looked back.

My plans hit a slight snag when I ran into a classmate — a casual acquaintance from three semesters ago. He immediately recognized me, smiled, walked over and gave me a handshake. He made friendly small talk with me for a few minutes — our longest conversation ever before he had to join the pastor on the platform for worship service. He acted like my look didn't bother him and he didn't ask about my drastic change of appearance. He concluded our conversation by inviting me to stay for lunch.

I received more greetings and invitations to stay for potluck. Almost everyone there didn't blink an eye when they saw me (at least face-to-face) and were quick to introduce themselves. They asked me my name, where I was from, my major, and what my future plans are for after college.

I had a row all to myself until two college-aged men joined me, one of whom was a theology major serving at the church as an extern, training to become a pastor.

Right after service, another extern introduced himself warmly and asked me to stay for potluck.

Before leaving the sanctuary, I had a nice conversation with the Sabbath school teacher, who also asked me to stay for potluck, even though he had to leave for something else. After a quick trip to the bathroom to check my makeup, I walked into the dining area and received a friendly greeting from a middle-aged man.

After conversing for a minute, he led me over to where the college students ate together, which included the two friendly externs.

As a visitor, I was invited to go through the potluck line first, and I was self-consciously aware of the looks I was getting. Working my way through the line, I noticed there was at least a one-yard gap between me and a young boy at other churches, potluck lines are usually elbow-to-elbow.

Throughout my meal with the externs and other college students, we had an easygoing conversation. It didn't seem forced, and they seemed to take a genuine interest in getting to know me. I appreciated how one of the externs continued to invite me to the evensong he was singing in.

The following Monday, I ran into the extern in the school cafeteria, who again warmly greeted me, asked me to e-mail him if I ever needed anything, and invited me back to church.

"You know where we are now, so please come again," he said.

I talked about my experiment with friends a few days later. We concluded that perhaps why I had such a nice reception dressed as a punk, as opposed to when I wore my suit and tie, was because I obviously looked like someone who needed to be ministered to. When I was dressed in my suit and with my wife, I looked like a typical Christian and thus didn't warrant a special "evangelistic" effort from the church members. Consequently, my wife and I often left a church we visited without making any new acquaintances.

There is truth to our conclusions. Part of the problem is that people are more focused on themselves and less sensitive to others' needs. So it takes something obvious, like dressing as a punk, before church members share Christ with others.

Now, that's scary.

Anh Pham is a senior print journalism major from Hurst, Texas.

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Invisible

The history of the South has left it with an unfortunate stigma of racism that inevitably seeps through daily life. Has it managed to seep through the walls of our church?

To find out, I decided to go to church with a friend of African American descent as an interracial couple.

Before going to church, scenarios raced through my mind about how people would react to an interracial couple in a predominantly white congregation in the heart of the Bible Belt. I wasn't expecting people to ask us to leave. Rather, I was expecting stares and perhaps whispering to one another with a nod of the chin toward the lonesome, interracial couple.

The morning of our trial came, and I woke up with a sense of excitement. The phone rang. It was my date, ready to drive me to church. As I made my way toward his car, I asked him, "So, are you ready for this?"

"Truthfully, I'm a little nervous," he replied.

We arrived at church, and I started feeling a little nervous. I questioned why I would need to be nervous when I was going to church. After all, it is God's house, and we are welcomed there. Aren't we?

Then I remembered going to church in the Bahamas with my parents and feeling overwhelmed by the excited greeters at the door, the kisses from elderly women, and lengthy conversations with church members. The pastor once called out to us from the pulpit as we were tucked away in the crowded balcony and told us our light pigmentation made us hard to miss.

The cold wind against my face brought me back to reality as my friend put out his hand for me to hold as we made our way in the church.

Once inside, an older gentleman walked in our direction and made eye contact with us. I was anxious to see his reaction. Refreshingly he gave us a genuine smile with a playful salute to my date. I was very pleased.

The doors to the sanctuary opened. Judgment was seconds away. We walked through the doors hand-in-hand with an artificial sense of confidence. As we made our way to a pew, I glanced at the onlookers to capture their reactions, if any.

From the corner of my eye, I saw a few of the elderly members linger with their stares. Some of them became frequent lookers throughout the sermon, but that was it.



Alas! A young girl sitting next to me seemed to be curious about us. Every so often I noticed she looked our way, almost as though she was studying us.

Perfect, I thought. Finally someone is puzzled by us. As I would turn and look at her, she greeted me with an excited smile and looked away as though she was pleased our eyes met.

Was this it? No one seemed to disapprove of the interracial couple? No one glared in our direction with disappointment? In all honesty, I was disappointed. Just then I appreciated the excited greeters at the door and embraces from perfect strangers who were so happy to see a new face coming to church.

Christina Zaiback is a senior public relations major from Silver Spring, Maryland.

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Was this it?
No one seemed to disapprove of the interracial couple?
No one glared in our direction with disappointment?



The more I stood out in church, the more accepted I was. When a greeter would notice my anomaly in appearance, I'd get special attention —

Continued from page 11 - Adventist Like Me

I Have Smelled Like Smoke Before

I've smelled like smoke before. I've looked unkempt before. I've not led a perfect life. Some of my peers went to church disguised, but I had no need. I have been there. There is a place that church occupies in my heart — a very complicated place.

When I was a child, church was forced upon me, and I never really appreciated it. My church attendance was stellar while under my parents' roof. Except for the time when my mission trip got back late Friday night and, of course, Sabbath hiking trips, I was always at church.

But now, when I feel I'm heading down the wrong path or I'm just depressed, I think of church — in a positive way. This is amazing to me. I didn't really like church in my younger years, but now I seek it when my life isn't where it should be.

As I reflect on time, as it has led to now, church has impacted my life in many ways.

The more I stood out in church, the more accepted I was. When a greeter would notice my anomaly in appearance, I'd get special attention — a handshake or maybe even a hug. As I walked

further into the church, though, the reactions were different. The older generation often gave me disapproving looks. Ironically, when I was most in mental limbo regarding life and church, I stayed away from my peers. People my own age were the most intimidating — I compared myself to them. Most were well dressed and looked like their life was in perfect order. This took my shaky foundation and rattled it some more.

So I usually went to the adult Sabbath school. Making my way into the adult Sabbath school felt like a trial by fire. As the smoke meandered from nose to nose, I felt I deserved the looks I got. But their attention was fleeting as I settled into my seat and searched my soul and felt my thoughts go inward: Do I deserve Jesus' gift? Am I worthy? Why am I here? I don't feel like I belong in this holy church. And yet, somehow, this place is meant for me.

Terry J. Paxton is a junior mass communications major from Sacramento, California.



"From where I sit perched on my ivory tower. . . it's easy to forget."

Opinion | Angela Palmer

A Call to Self-Sacrifice

When I was younger, my bedtime prayers centered on thankfulness.

"Wow, God — you've blessed me so much! Thank you that I never have to wonder where my next meal is coming from, that I have a warm, comfortable bed to curl up in, that I've had the opportunity to know you from a young age." Overwhelmed by my blessings, I would drift off into a peaceful sleep.

The implication of those innocent prayers, of course, was that other people did have to wonder when they would eat again, did have to sleep out in the cold, and didn't have any idea that there was a God who loved them.

The day I realized that, I began being haunted by the question: Why me?

Why would God choose anyone to be born into comfort and peace when so many are born and die in starvation, pain, and ignorance?

Conventional wisdom tells us we have been blessed with plenty so that we may have the life more abundant, with some leftover to help those in need. Recently Oprah Winfrey shared an experience that exemplifies this mindset. "I was coming back from Africa on one of my trips," she said. "I had taken one of my wealthy friends with me. She said, 'Don't you just feel guilty? Don't you just feel terrible?' I said, 'No, I don't. I do not know how me being destitute is going to help them.'"

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Keeping Me From God

We all know what it means to be Adventist, right? It's what we've been taught since Day One: The seventh day is the Sabbath. No work from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday. No alcohol, caffeine, meat, cursing, gambling, smoking, heavy makeup, or jewelry. Haystacks are a staple; cheese and veggie meat provide protein. We send our kids to Adventist schools from ages 5 to 25; they get baptized at 13. We don't date non-Adventists hardly even know any, actually. We work, work, work ourselves to death, because that's what Jesus is looking for hard workers and this way we can claim His promise: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

And that, in a nutshell, is what I have been my entire life. Or, at least that's what I used to be. Because, I have to admit, I've been a rebel. I began wearing makeup when I was 13, dated a non-Adventist at 14, got my ears pierced when I was 16, and have been eating chicken since I was 18. I have cursed on occasion and listened to non-Christian music during Sabbath hours. I've even been found still vacuuming after sundown on Friday, and don't even get me started on coffee. Let's just say I'm an avid Starbucks drinker, and no, I don't get decaf.

Probably the only thing I have not strayed from in mainstream Adventism is the idea of being a hard worker. I've gone to Adventist schools my entire life and worked my hardest at whatever task has been at hand. I've worked, worked, worked for straight A's, to be the teacher's pet, for my parents' approval, to keep up with my peers — to fulfill expectations in every aspect of life. I've been involved in everything that everyone has ever thought was good for me, including band and choir, varsity sports, church programs, community outreach, mission work, and so on.

And somewhere in the midst of all that busyness, and perhaps in my rebellion, I woke up one morning and realized I was missing something. Forget all the rules and the dos and don'ts and the to-do lists. What was any of this all about anyway? Wasn't a relationship with God supposed to fit somewhere into this picture? That was the goal — the whole point — right?

So I began to evaluate what I could do to find God. I thought about all the advice I'd been given over the years: No work on Sabbath, no alcohol, no

caffeine, no meat, no cursing. . . . Wait. That wasn't it! I thought again: Read your Bible, go to church, pray, pray some more, lend a helping hand. . . . Ahh, that seemed more like it.

And so I tried. I really did. I pulled out my Bible, but where to begin? I know, the Gospels, that's it — that's where I'd start. And I'd begin plowing through Matthew, until, oops! Look at the time! I had so much to do before 8 a.m. tomorrow, and that was all stuff I'd be graded on! Thus, with a "Sorry, Matthew," the Bible would be laid aside to make way for more pressing matters, and my search for a relationship with Christ would make very little headway that afternoon.

As the hours pressed on that evening, however, and 8 a.m. the following day drew ever closer, I'd realize that my "pressing matters" were going to have to give way to an even more pressing matter — sleep and Hey, I haven't tried prayer yet! What better time to try to find God than in my prayers before I go to sleep? And I'd crawl into bed and try my hardest to find the right words to connect with an infinite God, and I'd realize I had absolutely no idea, and also that I was more infinitely tired than I had originally thought.

Suddenly 8 a.m. would come, and the whirlwind would begin anew and the search for Christ with it. And each day the same scenario, the same longing and searching and striving and failing, until yet another fateful day when I realized I needed help and, that again, I had no idea where to begin. Because, you see, I was a rebel. I had my ears pierced, had dated a non-Adventist, and ate chicken once in a while. With a lifestyle such as that, how could I possibly hope to find God?

And every time I'd approach my pastor, he'd be too busy staring at my earrings to hear what I had to say. If I talked to my teacher, he'd point to the chicken on my plate instead of where I should turn. If I talked to my friends, I was sure to hear, "You knew dating Andy was a bad idea." And talking to my parents would only result in a slow shaking of heads and a mumbled, "We should have been better examples."

But Mom, Dad, friend, teacher, pastor, none of that is what's keeping me from God. What's keeping me from God is trying to please you!

Jessica Cyphers is a senior English major from Placerville, California.



"I'd crawl into bed and try my hardest to find the right words to connect with an infinite God."



Opinion | Anh Pham

Pure Religion

Religion is boring and the church is dead. At least that's what you, I, and its critics might say. But if the Bible says you and I are the church, then wouldn't that mean we are boring and spiritually dead?

»» As Christians, our battle is not against Satan — Jesus already fought and won — but of maintaining faith in Christ and knowing that we are incapable of doing anything until we daily surrender to him.

Too often this is the Sabbath morning routine of many: Go to Sabbath school (if they haven't slept through or skipped it), where someone lectures for an hour, and people aren't prepared to contribute because they haven't studied their lesson. Sadder still, people may have little or nothing to share about what God has been showing them throughout the week, because they haven't had their daily morning devotionals with God. During worship service, they try resisting the tidal pull of boredom that increases. It all seems too routine and structured and leaves no room for congregational interaction aside from putting money in the offering plate, kneeling for prayer, and singing. The worship service isn't "entertaining." At least not as entertaining as the television, Internet, or other distractions people devote time to during the week.

Some people might feed their spiritual needs for the first time that week, feasting off of the bread of life the pastor offers (the sermon and that depends on whether the preaching holds their attention), and maybe, just maybe, having a nice potluck and decent conversation (gossip?) with people they only see on Sabbaths.

And don't forget lay activities. No, not sharing Christ with others. I mean the nice post-potluck nap as the countdown continues until Sabbath is over and they can finally have some fun (i.e., more movies, Internet, etc.). This isn't religion, says God's word, for in James 1:26-27 we read: "If anyone thinks himself to be religious and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world."

The first sentence is a warning to those who do not heed Luke 6:45: "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks."

When people recognize that they are sinners and need the free gift of God found only in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, they realize the salvation given to all people long ago as so eloquently described in Romans 5:6-10.

This brings us to the second referenced verse in James, regarding "pure and undefiled religion." If we don't spend time when we first wake up, putting on the armor of God, we're vulnerable to Satan's attacks. Imagine a soldier waiting until a battle begins to put on his armor. Christians become stained by the world because they put their armor on sideways or not at all. We need to begin our day, before anything else, alone with God through prayer, Bible study, and meditation, so that we may remain in faith and better perceive God's will.

With Christ's life in us, we'll want to visit orphans and widows or participate in outreach opportunities. With Christ's mind in us, love will come forth that otherwise we would be incapable of producing. We'll be co-workers with Christ, with him using our legs to visit the poor in spirit, using our arms to hug and comfort the hurting. James is urging us to keep our faith in Jesus. As a result, we experience his love as He works through us for the redemption of others.

For we are all orphans, and there are two fathers trying to claim us as their own: God and Satan.

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In John 8, notice how Jesus addresses himself and the Pharisees, beginning in verse 42: “If God were your Father ye would love me. . . . Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lust of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. . . . He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God.”

If we don’t spend time getting to know God, he won’t be the Father who adopts us. Choosing not to know God is choosing the world and Satan as our father.

A large reason religion is boring at times and some churches are dead is that the people involved have forgotten that once one receives the knowledge of their salvation, they must act on it and share the gospel with others. Followers of Christ should expect to give — putting others before themselves as Christ did.

Christ’s final words in Matthew 28:19-20 are, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. . . .”

One of Christ’s greatest examples of putting others first is when he was on the cross.

He didn’t focus on his physical pain, the crowd’s ridicule and separation from his Father. Christ gave salvation to the repentant thief. He thought of his widowed mother and gave her to John.

Religion and church should be exciting, throughout the week and especially on Sabbath mornings, when we recognize and embrace the principle of Revelation 12:11: overcoming the devil through the blood of Christ and by the word of our testimony.

As Christians, our battle is not against Satan — Jesus already fought and won — but of maintaining faith in Christ and knowing that we are incapable of doing anything until we daily surrender to him. Then we will have a testimony worth sharing, even at church. Imagine how powerful Sabbath school and worship would be if church members had testimonies of what Christ had done through them the previous week.

Anh Pham is senior print journalism major from Hurst, Texas.

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A Call to Self-Sacrifice

Oprah has a good point. She’s incredibly wealthy and incredibly generous. But I’m not wealthy; I’m a college student. For me to give might just make me destitute! At the least, it would make me uncomfortable.

When one truth-seeker approached a teacher from Nazareth, asking what he must do to be saved, Jesus told him that to be perfect, he must sell all his possessions, distribute to the poor, and follow him. This ruler, we read, was overcome with sorrow. Give up his wealth? His title? His silver-platter lifestyle? Jesus had just told him to become very, very uncomfortable.

With that command, Jesus struck at both the curse and the blessing of wealth. The blessing is that if we’re willing to give it up, we can help those who really need it. The curse is that, like the ruler, we might become enslaved by love for it. It’s not just money with which we are stingy: it’s what it buys us. Time. Ease. Those little treats we “deserve” for our hard work. And as we grow more and more accustomed to our cushion of privilege, most of the world’s people God’s people are being crushed by poverty and hopelessness.

From where I sit perched in my ivory tower eating Veggie Links on Sabbath afternoon, it’s easy to forget. The

homeless — do we have those in Chattanooga? Darfur — what’s that? Jesus hasn’t everybody heard of him by now? Animal-tested lipstick and sweatshop-produced clothing does it really matter as long as I look good? From my elevated status, it’s much easier to remember to buy a \$15 compact disc than to remember to send \$15 to ADRA to help bring clean drinking water to a village in Ethiopia.

We believe Jesus wasn’t satisfied to sit on a throne in heaven while His people suffered want of what he could offer: hope, healing and salvation. Nor should we be satisfied to sit in our reclining chairs while our neighbors suffer for lack of what we are privileged to offer.

While we put off our opportunities to share the gospel of truth and of mercy with our fellow travelers through this world, let us ask ourselves: On that last day, will I know that I did all I could? Or will I cry out in regret for my own self-absorption?

Angela Palmer is a senior English education major from Hamilton, Alabama

Glimpses:

READERS SHARE PERSONAL MOMENTS
WHEN THE KINGDOM BREAKS THROUGH

A Full Cup

I didn't want to go to work that day. Maybe it was the early morning hour or perhaps that yesterday had been so long and rough. Either way, when the alarm blared at 5:30, I groaned and threw my blankets over my head. Not again.

I dressed on autopilot. In the car I tried to refocus: "Your job is a mission field. These people need you." But my pep talk didn't turn me into Super Nurse. As I walked into the oncology unit, everything seemed peaceful. No one was running or calling. Maybe I could just coast through the day and make it to 7 o'clock.

As the morning progressed, things still were looking benign. Going in and out of my patients' rooms, I focused more on the tasks and diagnoses than the names and faces. Everything went well until after lunch.

Dr. Mann, notorious for his bad bedside manner, had come to see one of my patients. Mrs. Andrews's illness had been a mystery. She had transferred from one institution to another, undergone a myriad of tests, and seen countless doctors but nothing could explain her symptoms. Dr. Mann had finally come to her with some answers.

I knocked on the door of Mrs. Andrews's room during my rounds. "Has the doctor been in to see you yet?" I asked.

Her eyes were swollen and cheeks moist. Her shoulders began to shake as she started to sob.

"Cancer," she said.

I wasn't sure what to do. I had come to check her IV site, maybe fill her water pitcher. Certainly

not to deal with this. What could I say to her? How could I give her hope?

"I'm so sorry, Mrs. Andrews. May I pray with you?"

As I leaned over her bedside and touched her hand, her trembling stopped. Mine had only started. While praying I thought, "What can I say next? I don't have the answers." My mind was in a whirl. As I said amen, my heart skipped a beat. Here I was, the nurse, called to care for and comfort patients, and I had entered the room with my cup empty. I knew I needed to say something, something that would lift her spirits and dissipate her despair. But no words came. I paused, feeling that with every tick of the clock her pain was growing.

At last she spoke, of fear and then of hope. She spoke of the battle waging in her life and then asserted that the battle had already been won and that her body was disposable. She spoke of the need for courage and the strength she had gained from friends, family, and, most significantly, nurses. I stood there amazed. I should have been the one telling her these things. I should have been strengthening her faith. I should have been the strong one. Now I, the giver, was receiving the gift. I held her hand as tears welled up in my eyes.

"It's going to be okay," she said. "It's going to be okay."

I left the room. My cup was full.

Jessie Brodis writes from Collegedale, Tennessee. Names in this piece have been changed.

The Beauty of a Falling Star

A good friend once told me that life is like a roller coaster: Sometimes you're on your way up, and other times you wonder if you could fall any faster.

I was falling. It was my senior year of college. I had no idea where I was headed after graduation. My girlfriend and I had just split, and my boss was agitated with me.

Crawling out of bed became a more exasperating feat as each day passed.

Fortunately, the mundane routine that had become my life was broken on Wednesdays when I got to hang out with Jesse, a 12-year-old boy who lived in downtown Chattanooga. I had met with Jesse through a nonprofit company who ran a Big Brother-Big Sister program. I was hesitant at first, but after only a few meetings, I began looking forward to our time together.

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Glimpses: The Beauty of a Falling Star

As I cruised down the Interstate one Wednesday to pick up Jesse, I began daydreaming about my life. As I pondered the lack of effect I'd made on Jesse, my self-esteem began eroding at the same rate my car's tires sped over the pavement. I had always thought children were easier to mold than warm butter, so the fact that I hadn't gotten through to him made the last bit of my ego deflate. I had failed at something as simple as hanging out with a kid. It had been almost three months, and Jesse seemed to be the same misguided child I had inherited to mentor. As Jesse got into my car I put on a counterfeit smile, feeling about as bright as a burnt-out light bulb.

"Hey, Bud, how are you?" I asked.

"I'm fine," he answered. "I brought my glove so we can play catch."

After a few more minutes of typical questions

and answers, Jesse changed the subject to something unexpected.

"I had my mom pick up that Switchfoot CD we listen to," he said.

Only a month ago Jesse was a kid who proudly displayed his ability to rap his favorite song by Eminem, which included enough profanity to make a sailor blush. Hearing him mention a Christian band like Switchfoot was baffling to me.

"I can't stop listening to that CD," Jesse said. "You know, I think Switchfoot is my new favorite band."

With the first serene look my face had donned in many days, I turned to Jesse. "That's great, Buddy. Really great."

Alex J. King writes from Redlands, California.

Seeing God in Our Daily Life

That morning had been a tug of war to get to church. I was down. I thought, "Oh, if God would just hug me a hug I could feel." Pushing through the apathy, I went. The sermon spoke to my heart; I enjoyed the spirit-filled singing. The

Sabbath blessing had been received. But I had also received a gift! An unexpected gift.

The Sabbath before Valentine's Day, before the church service started, a couple handed me a box, beautifully wrapped in red paper with a red-and-white pinstriped ribbon. I was speechless. They said something about appreciating me. Me? I wondered. When I opened the card, I fully understood their kindness and God's graciousness.

Several months earlier I had shared my testimony at church how God knew my deepest needs. During my childhood, I endured physical and sexual abuse. I looked fine, but inside I was broken by something I wouldn't have words for until years later. Ten days before my wedding, my youngest sister was murdered. Fourteen months later, I stood with my husband before the tiny white casket of our stillborn son. Two years later our marriage dissolved. I couldn't attend the final hearing, because I had undergone extensive surgery for Crohn's Disease. I was 24.

At the end of my strength, alone in my hospital bed with tubes and gushing machines, I cried out to God, "If you are real, you have to show me. If you aren't, I can't go on!" Warmth surged through my limp, beaten body. A peace that passes all

understanding changed my life forever. The difference was so profound I was invited to share my experience at that teaching hospital with the medical personnel.

Seven years passed before my search for truth led me to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I was remarried to a wonderful husband, had a beautiful son and daughter, and was on a quest to find the stories my mother had read to me as a child. They were wonderful character-building books. I had looked everywhere. At last I found an information card advertising *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*. Ecstatic, I mailed the card. The colporteur finished my order and invited me to study the Bible with her. "I would like that," I said.

I was baptized in February, 27 years ago, and on this February afternoon, I had received a gift. The couple's card said, "At our weakest, most difficult moments, God looks at us full-face and is aware of every detail in our lives: fear, illness, anger, loss, hurt. He cares. He never takes his eyes off us." They had heard my testimony several months earlier, and it had deeply touched their hearts. The hug I needed had come in the form of fleecy white pajamas with three words interspersed with red hearts: love, joy and peace. When I put on the pajamas, I know God uses special people to hug me for him. Every time I wear them, I remember the thoughtfulness of this dear couple and God's wonderful way of "satisfying the desires of our heart" (Psalm 103:5).

Nancy Cutler writes from Calais, Vermont.

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Feature | Andy Nash

Resting Again in Adventism

As have so many others (whether privately or publicly), I had entered the desert of theological grappling that threatened to dry up my confidence in many Adventist teachings, including the place of Sabbath to the New Covenant believer.

MMy first two years working at Southern Adventist University, I'd blow out of town as fast as possible. I'd finish my teaching and office tasks and then literally race out of Collegedale to our home 15 minutes away, sometimes with tears in my eyes, always with angst in my soul. It wasn't that I didn't like teaching; I've always enjoyed college students very much, both at Southern and at Union College where I taught previously. Being on a college campus wasn't the issue; it was, suddenly, being in such a heavily Adventist setting.

As have so many others (whether privately or publicly), I had entered the desert of theological grappling that threatened to dry up my confidence in many Adventist teachings, including the place of the Sabbath to the New Covenant believer. Texts such as Colossians 2:16-17 and Galatians 4:9-11 particularly challenged me. It wasn't that I was losing faith in Christ. Actually, I was more focused than ever on Christ's once-for-all sacrifice, as I studied Scripture deep into the night. The question I pondered, to use terms from the Colossians passage, was: If Christ is the substance, do we still need the shadows? For that matter, do the shadows distract us from the glory of the Cross? Through this process, I was actually pulling for Adventist beliefs to be exegetically supportable; but more important to me was following truth wherever it led, even out of this church and everything I knew.

Added to the theological wrestling were concerns I've always felt, even as an assistant editor at the *Adventist Review* magazine, about the focus our church places — and the time it spends — on the unbelievably trivial. Majoring in minors, by definition, means that we minor in majors. It didn't help that here at Southern itself, one of the heaviest ongoing topics of discussion among staff was the jewelry policy. Honestly, I thought, are we still talking about this stuff? Can't we encourage good taste in all things — rather than sweepingly discount the stuff of young people's lives altogether (which just makes them discount us altogether)? Then I'd walk across the street to the Village Market, where I'd see a man who looked like James White standing outside warning whoever would listen — in this case, a polite Asian student who didn't seem to know how to get away — about the end of the world. "September 11 was only the start," James White said, his face turning crimson. "The next time it's going to be a bombshell!" To me this represented the worst of Adventism, and it repelled me all the more.

» Finally, I went deeper into my study, past the well-meaning but "easy" answers provided by some Adventist ministries. And I got my questions answered, including my questions about the Sabbath.

Yet I couldn't let it all go. I would talk often with close Adventist friends I respected, expressing my doubts and struggles, listening for better scriptural answers than the ones I'd been given. I had no truer friend during this period than Clifford Goldstein — you know, the conservative Adventist writer and editor. Cliff called me at least once a week, not to debate, but just to see how I was doing. (I had concurrently been through a hard business experience that sent me reeling.) I didn't always answer my cell phone, because I didn't have the energy to talk, but it meant a lot to me to know Cliff was calling.

Others were there for me as well.

Chris Blake, author and teacher, had registered plenty of his own concerns with the Adventist Church over the years. "My approach," he told me, "is not to let the bad guys win."

"The church has problems," said my Australian friend Gary Krause, director of Adventist Mission. "But what appeals to me about the Adventist Church is its focus on wholeness."

Once a month I had lunch with my former journalism professor, Dr. Lynn Sauls, who systematically worked through difficult texts with me — and on his own dime, bought me several pertinent books to read.

It dawned on me that I had to decide who was the church: Was it Mr. Bombshell, or was it people like Cliff and Chris and Gary and Dr. Sauls and their families? For that matter, when I looked in general at who emerged as the leaders of the church — good, balanced people like Bill Johnsson (then-editor of the *Adventist Review*) and Gordon Bietz, Southern's respected president — I found hope returning.

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Living with the Fish

I've always secretly identified with the apostle Thomas. Upon hearing eyewitness accounts of the Lord's resurrection, Thomas stubbornly said, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." Doubting Thomas could have been a journalist.

When I became a Christian, I began looking for real-world evidence to bolster my faith in Christ — whether that evidence came in the form of threads snipped from the Shroud of Turin or splinters supposedly from Noah's Ark. I rebelled at the sneering claims of atheistic evolutionists such as Daniel Dennett and Sam Harris, who assert (with complete faith) that a proper understanding of physical law leaves no room for "the God hypothesis."

Every science course I ever took assumed that we evolved from "primordial soup" in a random, purposeless process. No God required. What I read in Genesis didn't seem to square with mainstream scientific theory, so I decided the theory was wrong. After all, "objective" scientists with naturalistic agendas had fallen for hoaxes before (just google "Piltdown Man"), and what little fossil evidence there was seemed skimpy. I wasn't alone in my skepticism. According to Gallup, approximately half of Americans express serious doubts about evolution.

Last year, however, came word of *Tiktaalik roseae*, which looks discomfitingly like those offensive "Darwin fishes" on the cars of smug college professors. Giddy evolutionists immediately hailed the 375-million-year-old fossil as a "missing link" between fish and land animals. "It's a really amazing, remarkable intermediate fossil," scientist Neil H. Shubin told *The New York Times*. "It's like, holy cow."

So what's a Doubting Thomas to do? First, we need to remember that scientists have hailed "missing links" before, only to be embarrassed when further evidence came out. The Discovery Institute, which supports Intelligent Design, noted that enthusiasm over this latest find is a backhanded admission by paleontologists that the fossil record has not been kind to Darwin's theory.

But what if *Tiktaalik roseae* turns out to be an indisputable evolutionary missing link? Certainly millions of Christians — including the late John Paul II — have believed in both evolution and God without apparent spiritual harm. They say evolution is the method God used to create us. Francis Collins, who heads the Human Genome Project, is one of them.

"The evidence mounts every day to support the concept that we and all other organisms on this planet are descended from a common ancestor," Collins told me. "When you look at the digital data that backs that up — which is what DNA provides — it is extremely difficult to come to any other conclusion. There are many things written within our instruction book that not only tell us how we function but also represent DNA fossils left over from previous events. And those fossils, in many instances, are found in other species in the same place, in the same way. Unless you're going to propose that God placed them there intentionally to mislead us, which does not fit with my image of God as the Almighty Creator, then I think one is, like it or not, forced to the conclusion that the theory of evolution is really no longer a theory in the sense of being untested. It is a theory in the sense of gravity. It is a fact."

This "fact," interpreted through the lens of faith and not doubt, can perhaps deepen our understanding of our Creator, who works all things according to the counsel of his own will. If evolution, messy and circuitous as it appears, is true, then God is more mysterious than I imagined — but no less God. Scientists say that the carbon that makes life on earth possible — part of the "dust" out of which we are formed — was ejected from the cores of dying stars billions of years before we ever came on the scene. Such a long-range perspective gives us a new appreciation for the verse that says, "A thousand years in [his] sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night." God is never in a hurry.

And accepting the idea of common descent doesn't mean abandoning our belief that the created order declares the glory of God. Increasing numbers of world-class scientists, as a matter of fact, are in awe of the apparent design and fine-tuning of Creation. "The more I examine the universe and the details of its architecture," physicist and mathematician Freeman Dyson notes, "the more evidence I find that the universe in some sense must have known we were coming."

No, this kind of evidence won't prove God's existence to the Doubting Thomases of the world — including me. But it doesn't hurt.

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Every science course I ever took assumed that we evolved from "primordial soup" in a random, purposeless process. No God required. What I read in Genesis didn't seem to square with mainstream scientific theory, so I decided the theory was wrong.



For a believer, turning the world at the right time and in the right way requires an abundance of God's grace. It also means time, energy, patience, and perhaps most of all, courage.

Feature | Alden Thompson

Adventist Like Me: Old, Impatient, Hopeful

The editors tell me that in this issue of *Adventist Today*, I am supposed to be the voice of “wisdom and experience” in a chorus of otherwise young Adventist voices.

Interesting.

Dangerous.

I can hardly wait to find out what I am going to say. . . .

That last line, incidentally, echoes a powerful impulse among “young” Adventist voices. When I was in college (1960s), student week-of-prayer speakers were expected to submit completed manuscripts to their adviser, well in advance. The results were predictable: sometimes substantial, often dull, never surprising.

Today’s college students speak with passion and openness. But the focus is almost always personal. Don’t expect substantial grappling with the great questions facing humankind or serious interaction with a specific passage of Scripture. The pendulum may be swinging back toward greater substance and a stronger biblical focus. But I distinctly remember a student week of prayer a few years ago, when audience attention seemed directly proportional to a speaker’s confessed lack of preparation. Indeed, virtually every speaker would start with a deep breath and say, “Let’s pray.” Then, in quiet desperation: “Lord, I have no idea what I am going to say. Please be with me as I speak.” Because I was away for part of the week, I listened to several of the sermons by tape. That’s when I noticed that those opening lines had become virtually a fixed pattern.

Furthermore, in public worship in general, both hymnals and Bibles have become redundant. Everything you need is on the screen. Biblical and classical allusions don’t work anymore; the audience lives in a world of movies and contemporary music. The NIV pew Bibles in the College Church were a gift from the senior class a few years ago. But the rustle of Bible pages hasn’t returned. In the past, traveling Adventists didn’t need the Gideon Bible in their hotel room; they always had their own. Maybe all that is changing.

Meanwhile, in the classroom, our students have become handout dependent. Listening and watching have replaced reading and note taking. And the addiction is not limited to the young. Just walk through any Adventist retirement community and count the screens.

As I write, I am just hours away from giving the dedication homily for our religion and theology seniors. What should an “old” teacher tell them? When I was in college, our teachers told us they were preparing us to be the change agents of the future. Alas, churches typically aren’t interested in change. In a chaotic and dangerous world, church is supposed to be a safe haven, a place to meet the God who declared, “I am the Lord. I change not.” Church is a place to help us stay in touch with the Jesus Christ who is “the same yesterday, today and forever.”

But our own Adventist history vividly illustrates the danger of boarding an oceangoing vessel that stays in the harbor. The issue came to a head at the great “righteousness by faith” General Conference of 1888, just 25 years after Adventism formally organized as a church. “Let the law take care of itself,” Ellen White exclaimed. “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).

“As real spiritual life declines,” Ellen White warned, believers “discourage any further investigation of the truth. They become conservative and seek to avoid discussion. When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures,” she noted, “when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition and worship they know not what” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, 706-707 [1889]).

So I will tell our seniors that setting up housekeeping in a safe haven is not for us. Adventism is a coast guard cutter, not a houseboat. The law is a marvelous anchor. But Jesus is the wind in our sails and we must head out to sea. People are drowning out there. We can’t rescue the perishing from the harbor, and we don’t just gather by the river on this side. The real river is on the other side, and we face daunting challenges before we reach the only harbor that is truly safe.

But for all the unhappy things I see in the church (and I see plenty), I am excited about the present and future of the church. Young Adventists are making a difference in the world, getting on with things that matter. This year, for example, students on our campus raised more than \$15,000 to help

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purchase a safe house in Calcutta, where girls from the red light district can escape the sordid trade that has brutalized their prostitute mothers.

This generation of Adventist young people is seeing more than just fun and games in our self-centered world. The vision is alive in young hearts and minds. That's good. Very good.

And speaking of facing challenges and catching a vision, I am intrigued by the "dedication" in Bart Kosko's *Fuzzy Thinking: The New Science of Fuzzy Logic* (Hyperion, 1993). God lurks only in the shadows of Kosko's book, but his words ring true in a faith context as well: "For the young men and women who stick with their training while their youth calls, it's hard, it will get harder, but it turns the world."

For a believer, turning the world at the right time and in the right way requires an abundance of God's grace. It also means time, energy, patience, and perhaps most of all, courage. And here I will tuck in a story about courage that threads its way in our direction through the lives and words of two Adventists and a Scottish novelist. When it comes to courage, we can help each other.

The story begins with the Scottish novelist and dramatist, J. M. Barrie (1860-1937), the creator of Peter Pan, who delivered an address on "Courage" at the Scottish University of St. Andrews. It was published as a small paperback, one that brought a life-transforming moment into the life of H. M. Tippett, a well-known Adventist teacher, author, and editor of an earlier generation.

Tippett had just received the crushing news that his lifelong dream of earning a doctorate had been denied him, after he had completed all degree requirements, including a dissertation. Deeply depressed, he wandered into a small used-book store in Chicago. After a couple of hours of aimless wandering, he picked up Barrie's little book and spotted the lines that would rekindle the fire in his soul:

Fight on, my men, said Sir Andrew Barton,
I am somewhat hurt, but am not slaine,
I'll lie me down and bleed awhile,
And then I'll rise and fight againe.

Tippett tells the story in the last chapter of his little book, *Who Waits in Faith* (RH, 1951). Milton Murray, a former (lackluster!) student of Tippett's at Andrews University (Emmanuel Missionary College), but who had since matured, bought the book, "determined to make up for misspent opportunities," as Murray put it. Destined to become the leading light in the development of Adventist philanthropic endeavors, Murray discovered Tippett's version of the story and drew strength from it, not just once, but many times: "An administrative decision that blocked a given program was no problem — I just read 'To Bleed Awhile. . . ' When budgets were slashed, my secret weapon was H. M. Tippett's chapter on bleeding!"

I heard all this from Murray in 1997 when he attended the Sabbath school class I was teaching. He told the story and gave me a copy of Tippett's book, along with a two-chapter version he had distributed when he was in church work. I cherish the Post-It note he put inside the front cover: "We gave these chapters to hundreds of young people who always seemed to have itchy feet and little patience."

Are you suffering from "itchy feet and little patience"? Just lie down and bleed awhile — then rise to fight again! The church needs you and so does the world. And if by God's grace you do rise to fight again, old, impatient Adventists who still live in hope will rise up and call you blessed.

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

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Resting Again in Adventism

And the students themselves — I began to look into their bright eyes. Compared with the heavier expressions I saw on other campuses, these students were absolutely the kind of people I wanted to be part of. I realized that my eyes had once been bright too.

Finally, I went deeper into my study, past the well-meaning but "easy" answers provided by some Adventist ministries. And I got my questions answered, including my questions about the Sabbath. It hadn't been replaced by the rest of God, as the true shadows — the sacrifices offered on holy days — had been replaced by Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. Rather, the Sabbath had always coexisted with the "rest of God" (see Hebrews 4).

And eventually I found rest again myself.

One Sunday morning (a time when we had been visiting other churches to see what was out there), my family and I drove out to the country. "What are we doing, Daddy?" said my eight-year-old daughter.

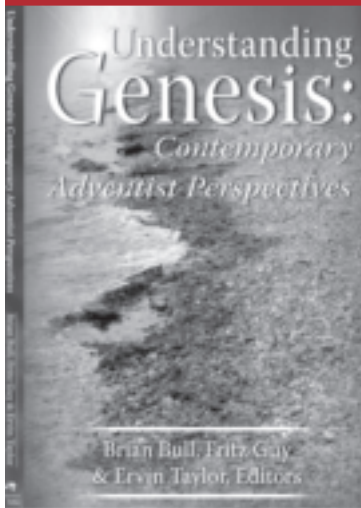
"Healing," I said.

My wife, Cindy, looked at me, smiled, and nodded. She had been on her own journey, a similar one. We both had some healing to do. Does this mean that I now view the Adventist Church as heaven on earth and that there's no place for reform?

Of course not. I still have questions and concerns, as most thoughtful Adventists do (whether privately or publicly). But there can't be healthy reform without love, and I feel love again for this church.

Perhaps those of us who have had these desert experiences — and I know many of you have — can in some way help others through the desert, to Christ, where we can all find rest for our souls.

Andy Nash is an associate professor of journalism at Southern Adventist University, near Chattanooga, Tennessee.



Book review | Ronald L. Numbers

Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives

EDITED BY BRIAN BULL, FRITZ GUY, AND ERVIN TAYLOR.
RIVERSIDE, CALIF.: ADVENTIST TODAY FOUNDATION, 2006.

For more than a century no denomination has boasted a higher percentage of strict creationists — that is, members who believe in a literal six-day creation week, a recent appearance of life on earth, and a geologically significant Noachian flood — than the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

This book says nothing new. Nevertheless, it represents a pioneering contribution to Seventh-day Adventist discussions of creation — and many readers will no doubt find it scandalous. It is one of the first public attempts since Richard M. Ritland's *A Search for Meaning in Nature* (1965) to wean Adventists from an intellectually unhealthy reliance on Ellen G. White's scientific writings.

In introducing their readers to consensus thinking about the meaning of science and the Bible, the authors bring impeccable credentials to the project. All but one of them — Ervin Taylor (University of California, Riverside) — teach at Adventist universities. Four of them are theologians: Dalton D. Baldwin, Ivan T. Blazen, Fritz Guy, and Richard Rice. Three are physical scientists: Richard Bottomley, Brian S. Bull, and Ritland. Three are archaeologists: Douglas R. Clark, Lawrence T. Geraty, and Taylor.

For more than a century no denomination has boasted a higher percentage of strict creationists — that is, members who believe in a literal six-day creation week, a recent appearance of life on earth, and a geologically significant Noachian flood — than the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This resulted, more than anything, from the influence of Ellen G. White, who actually witnessed the creation week in vision. Because White wrote about the existence of millions of other inhabited worlds, Adventists, unlike most young-earth creationists, have rarely insisted on the recent creation of the universe or even of the inorganic materials of the earth.

In 1994, *Adventist Today* published the shocking results of a survey of the views of science teachers in Adventist colleges and universities. The study revealed that only 43 percent subscribed to a literal six-day creation “less than 10,000 years ago.” Nearly one in five affirmed that “God created life millions of years ago and then over this period guided its development,” while four heretics claimed that “life as recorded in the fossil record has evolved over several billion years by exclusively natural means.” A follow-up survey in 2003 showed that the gap between traditional Adventists and the Adventist science community was turning into

a chasm — and that Adventist theologians weren't too far behind their scientific brethren on the road to evolution.

These findings prompted the *Adventist Review* (24 July 2003) to publish a diktat by a scientifically illiterate spokesman, Clifford Goldstein: “I speak, I believe, for millions of Seventh-day Adventists, when I declare that whatever the age of the earth itself, we will *never* make room for anything other than a literal six-day creation for life here — never,” he wrote defiantly. “And for those who want more, you'll have to fight us for every extra minute — much less your millions of mythological years beyond — of which the Word of God knows nothing and with its first verses utterly denies.”

The contributors to *Understanding Genesis* have taken up the gauntlet. Most provocatively, they generally set aside what God revealed to White and focus instead on God's two other revelations — the Bible and the Book of Nature. They find that a knowledgeable reading of Genesis does not require a literal six-day creation, the recent appearance of life on earth, or a worldwide flood at the time of Noah. This is fortunate for Bible-believers, because at least since the late 1830s the unambiguous testimony of the rocks, even for most evangelical Christians, has ruled out this version of earth history. As the editors of this book note with understatement and not a little vagueness, “A rational examination of the evidence aided by a modicum of basic information in the earth sciences, strongly suggests that the earth is very old, along with an even older solar system and universe, and that life on this planet has been in existence for a long time” (p. vi). Three and a half billion years is “a long time”!

Ronald L. Numbers is Hildale Professor of the History of Science and Medicine at the University of Wisconsin and author of The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design, expanded ed. (Harvard University Press, 2006).



Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives

EDITED BY BRIAN BULL, FRITZ GUY, AND ERVIN TAYLOR.
RIVERSIDE, CALIF.: ADVENTIST TODAY FOUNDATION, 2006.

As Adventists are wed to Genesis 1 and 2, and the founders of the movement consummated the marriage by putting the Sabbath at the very core of their belief system, thus binding themselves to a literal seven-day Creation. This leaves little wiggle room for those more contemporary believers who see the strong scientific evidence for a very old earth, and the history of death and suffering stretching back over eons of time. Quite a pickle.

If Darwin had not been so tardy in publishing his book on evolution, this all could have been avoided.

But not to worry! Relief is in sight. The Firm of Bull, Guy, Taylor and associates has developed a manual that may be just the ticket for those seeking an amicable separation, if not an outright divorce. The full force of their expertise has been marshaled to address the issues.

There are several tacks available for those looking to distance themselves from the aging spouse. Associates Dalton Baldwin, Fritz Guy, Warren Johns, and Lawrence Geraty have examined the marriage contract carefully. They have found numerous faults in thinking and reasoning and feel that the wording there can mean that the earth is indeed old and the flood a local phenomena. Some say, in fact, that the contract is irrelevant to

the question. Dr. Baldwin is very subtle in his arguments and accepts the opinion of critical scholarship as reliable.

Others vouch for the credibility of the other woman. The ancient rocks cry out for recognition as the rightful spouse. And the fossils and radioactive clocks raise their voices in concert to demand full respect. How can Adventists cling to the old lady, when this one offers comfort and beauty and can move in the most sophisticated of circles without embarrassment?

Not that she is flawless. The Associates have failed to mention some minor blemishes: the erosion constants for the continents, and the undisturbed nonconformities found in the sediments (see Ariel Roth, *Origins*, pp. 222-229, 262-271). Then there were those sordid little affairs with Marx, Lenin and Hitler (see David Stove, *Darwinian Fairytales*, pp. 106-110). And of course those pesky relatives, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul just keep butting in, causing trouble.

But then perhaps this was a marriage made in heaven, and what God has joined together, man should not put asunder.

And what about the children, who would care for them?

Allen Shepherd, M.D. is a former surgeon who has been pastoring in Northwest Indiana for the last four years.

Continued from page 16 - Glimpses

Sometimes I'm the Jerk

The woman slammed the brakes and laid on the horn as she screeched to a halt. I looked over my shoulder as I backed out of my parking space. What's her problem? I thought, slamming my truck into drive and reaming the gas. I shot past the car as she made an explicit gesture. I stared intently into her eyes and just missed her front bumper. What a jerk, I thought. I had plenty of time to get out of my spot.

Later, still fuming, I reflected on the event. I wonder if I'll see her again. Man, if I do. . . . Revenge scenarios played in my mind. I would get even. Then it hit me: Get even for what? I was mad because she blew her horn at me? She was mad because I impeded her carefree journey across a parking lot? What was wrong with us?

My attitude switched gears. I was no longer upset by her behavior; I was embarrassed because of mine. To be honest, I

didn't know why I reacted so angrily toward a complete stranger. She hadn't inconvenienced me. My face flushed as I thought about what the woman must think. I bet she's telling her friends what a jerk I am. Who knows, we live in a small community — maybe one of her friends knows me and will recognize the description of my truck. I began to see the power one person in one moment could have.

In a moment a woman's perception of who I am was altered forever. Instantly I was labeled: young, hotheaded, arrogant, thug. It's all she knew of me and probably all she will ever know. Now I wanted to meet her more than ever. I wanted to tell her I am not such a bad guy. But more important, I wanted to show her I wasn't such a bad guy.

Charles Cutler is a senior mass communications major from Calais, Vermont.



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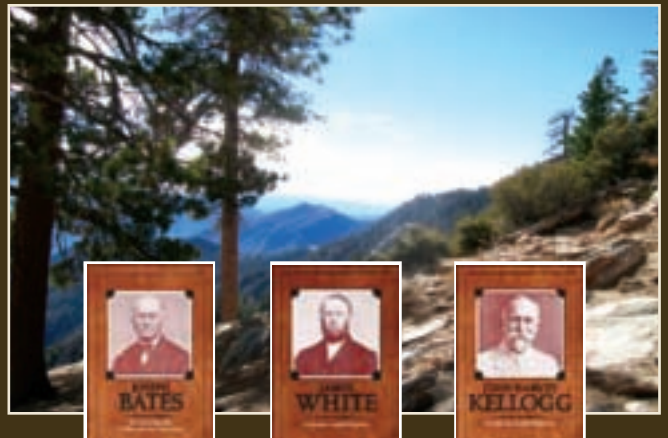
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