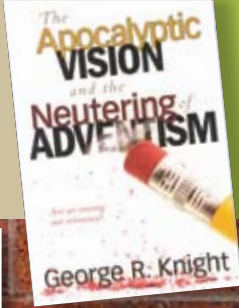




The End of
Ministry as
We Know It



Islamic
Connection



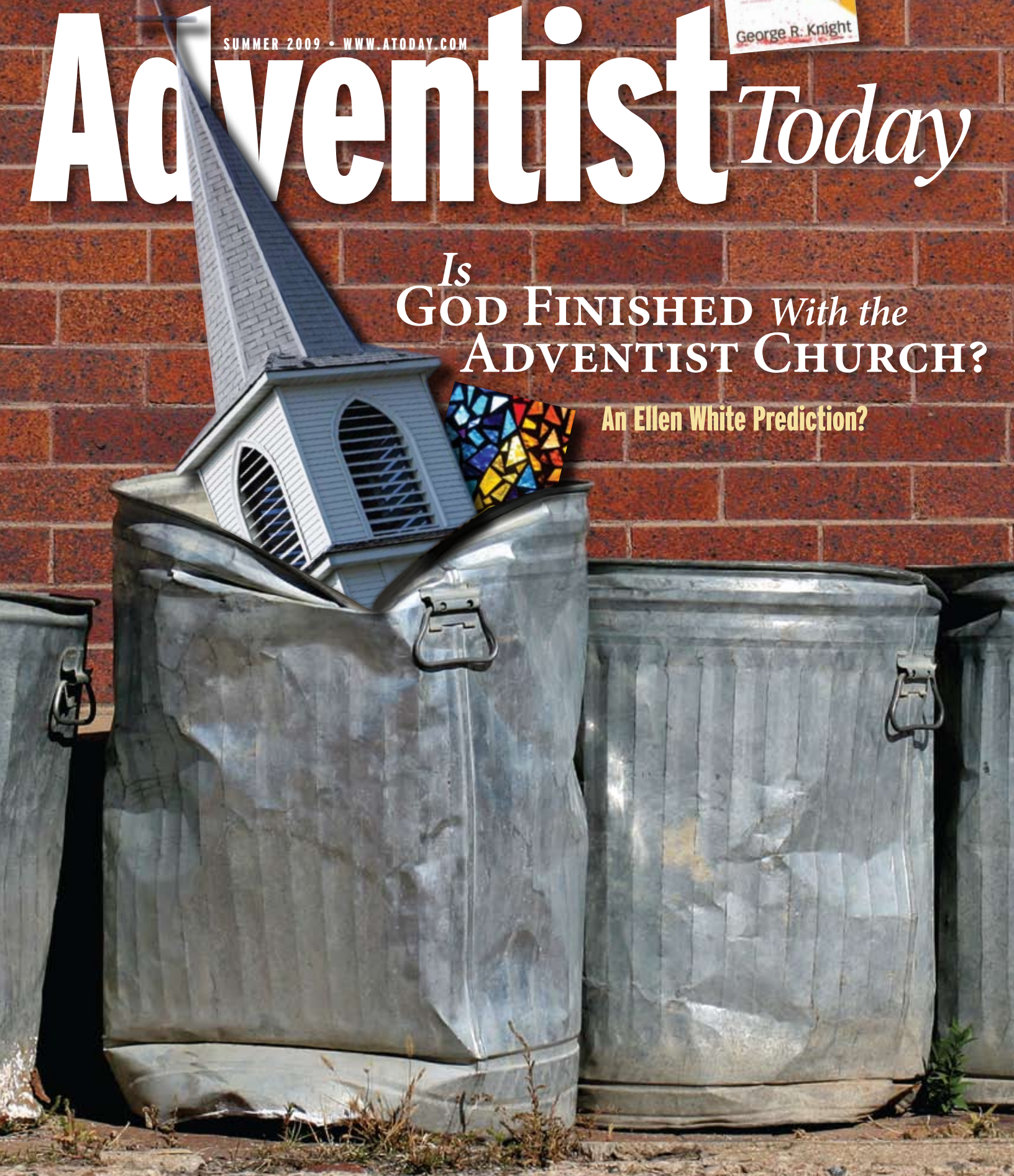
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Adventist *Today*

Is
GOD FINISHED *With the*
ADVENTIST CHURCH?

An Ellen White Prediction?



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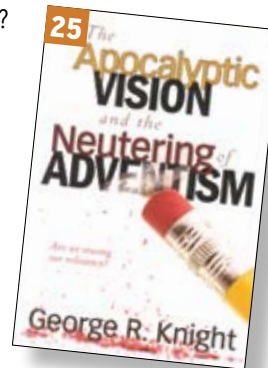
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George Knight and the Neutering of Adventism

J. David Newman

George Knight has published what he considers to be the most important book of his career. Ervin Taylor reviews *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism* in this issue. His summary of the book is outstanding. You may or may not agree with his conclusions, but they are worth reading.

I have my own issue with the book. Knight never really deals with why we are still here. On page 104 he writes: “In the face of what seems to be an ever-delaying Second Advent, many Adventists, especially talented young ones, are searching for a relevant, meaningful message for the new century.”

Knight suggests that we still preach the prophecies of Revelation but call it neoapocalypticism. Cut out the “beastly preaching” but make it Christ centered—or, as he phrases it: “Jesus the hope of the world is neoapocalypticism in a nutshell” (p. 105).

I have no doubt that God raised up the Adventist Church for a specific mission. In the Spring 2009 issue of *Adventist Today*, four authors gave us their vision of what Adventism is. In this issue, see my separate article “Is God Finished With the Seventh-day Adventist Church? An Ellen White Prediction.”

What puzzles me most about our church today is the lack of debate over why we are still here. A church that believes it was raised up to herald the second coming of Jesus is a failure until Jesus actually returns. In less than 40 years, we will be 200 years beyond the epochal date of 1844. And no one seems to really care. We carry on holding General Conference Sessions, devising new yearly slogans. For example, 2009 is the year of evangelism. Does that mean evangelism was not important before 2009 and will not be important after 2009?

Knight is trying to wake us up, and I hope that he succeeds. Personally, I have given up apocalyptic

preaching as my main emphasis. The church I pastor targets the totally unchurched, and for them last-day events have little or no meaning. They are more concerned with finding a job, dealing with work-place issues, trying to hold their family together, and just making it financially. What relevance does the Adventist Church have for these people?

I have been studying with a young man who has a Jewish mother and a Lutheran father but who is an atheist. He wants to know if there is a God. How do you know there is a God? How do you find this God? He is asking the most basic questions—questions Adventism has not been used to answering.

I plan to teach a series on the book of Revelation this fall. I have never done this before. I will take up Knight’s challenge. Can I teach a series on Revelation that is Christ centered and not beast centered?

Roy Naden wrote a commentary on Revelation (published in 1996) that was completely Christ centered. It was called *The Lamb Among the Beasts*. It never caught on. Preaching the beasts is much more captivating than simply preaching Christ. We want to be scared, frightened, whipped into shape. Love is not enough. We need a healthy dose of fear.

I don’t profess to have all the answers. I just know that we are still here, and I want to go home. I want to be with Jesus. I am tired of sin and my struggles with it. I want to be free from sin and live with Jesus forever. What about you?

Who *Adventist Today* Reaches

Adventist Today is reaching more and more people. Two thousand and fifty subscribe online and with the print issue. Two thousand receive the e-newsletter. And 10,000 people visit the *Adventist Today* website each month.

Preaching the beasts is much more captivating than simply preaching Christ. We want to be scared, frightened, whipped into shape. Love is not enough. We need a healthy dose of fear.



What Is an Adventist?

Just finished scanning the latest issue of *Adventist Today*. I find the forthrightness and transparency of the articles/dialogues/debates to be a great tonic to my “Adventist soul.” Why did it take so many decades to get to this kind of journalism!

TOM STAFFORD
Battle Ground, Washington

I read with interest the essays and comments in the Spring 2009 issue of *Adventist Today*. I was reminded of the story of the blind men who described the elephant. One said that this thing was like a rope; another contended that it was not a rope but a wall, etc. Each of these authors was correct from a personal point of view that was less than the whole. Can the answer be encapsulated into 25 words or less, 100 or even 500 words?

Personally, first of all, I am a Christian who loves, believes in, and follows to the best of my ability our Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, Savior, and soon-coming Lord God, Jesus Christ. What I think, do, or don't do is not to follow any list of do's or don'ts to earn or obtain God's favor or to belong to any specified group. It is because of a growing understanding, friendship, and love relationship with my god—the one and only true God as briefly described above.

I know that may sound simplistic and there are many who believe that they are following God's will. If God is fair—and if he isn't, Lucifer's accusation

before there was war in heaven was correct—then every individual must have opportunity to make a conscious decision to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Such a follower would be “safe to save,” as sin will not arise again. No one now has all the answers. All who are “saved” will continue throughout eternity to learn more and more of God's love and His great plan of salvation.

Over my 80 years as a fifth-generation Seventh-day Adventist, and presently as a member of a small but growing church-planting group here on Guam, I have observed many changes in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. My prayer is that we continue to grow in grace reaching out to others while looking for the soon coming of Jesus.

RUBY STAHLNECKER, ED.D.
Yona, Guam

Holy smoke (and mirrors)! The series of articles reminded me of a story a great clinician laid on us in medical school.

Seems that there was some kind of blizzard in Minnesota, and when the preacher showed up for divine services on Sunday (he lived across the street), the only other person there was the janitor (who lived next door).

“Well,” says the preacher, “there's just the two of us, John. Should we cancel for this week?”

Replies John, “If I take a load of hay out to feed the cows and only find one cow, I don't go back without leaving any hay.”

So they had an invocation, sang a couple of hymns, had a Scripture reading and another prayer, and then the preacher launched into his sermon. Feeling more and more inspired, he warmed to his task and preached for an hour and a half. Then they sang another hymn and had a benediction.

As they got to the front door, the preacher says, “Well, John, how was that?” To which John replies, “If I take hay out to

the pasture and only find one cow, I sure don't dump the whole damn load.”

I couldn't help wondering what the articles would have looked like if the authors had been instructed to limit themselves to the same number of words that Lincoln used in the Gettysburg Address. Especially after seeing the following article by Alden Thompson, written for a different purpose, that nevertheless summarizes the whole idea of what an Adventist should be noted for in less than a column of type. If you don't love God and your neighbor as yourself, what good are all the other doctrines anyway?

GORDON SHORT
Salt Lake City, Utah

Adventist Man

Thank you for confirming what I've always suspected about strictures on pop music. My son is looking forward to the day when nursing home sunshine bands belt out Scandinavian Death Metal. Has Led Zeppelin been beatified yet? Also, if folk rock has been made holy, does that cover, say, a new folk rock group starting out with original material in 2008? Or does it only include bands from the 1970s?

Who is your cartoon avatar based upon? Is it a real person, or some sort of cultural stereotype? Just asking.

To the rest of you: Leave Adventist Man be. Sometimes he gets off the reservation, but you can't tell me that any (conscious) person hasn't thought about the same things. Better to have it out in the open, I say!

ANONYMOUS

True story:

Whenever somebody rants about how dry the Adventist church is, I say, “No way! You should read Adventist Man.”

This statement helps to end the

conversation with a certain degree of harmony, especially if an *Adventist Today* magazine is nearby.

Thank you, Adventist Man. You're one of my heroes.

STEPHANIE KAY
Binfield, Berkshire, UK

Adventist Fears

In your Winter 2009 issue, Alden Thompson identifies fearfulness as an Adventist danger. He says, "We are afraid of ideas...fearful of Adventists who don't share our fears." It seems ironic that the same issue begins with an editorial where Andy Nash expresses his fear of thought leaders who raise doubts about significant points of Scripture. The same issue also includes an article that raises doubts about the scriptural prohibition of women in ministry. Andy, what is the difference? Will the real *Adventist Today* please stand up? I'm not sure who you are anymore.

ANONYMOUS

Dear Anonymous:

I'm not sure who you are either. As to your question, there's a difference between grappling with Scripture (which is a good thing) and disregarding its authority altogether.

—Andy Nash

Ford Responds to Kirkpatrick

Elder Kirkpatrick (Spring, 2009) says many good things, though I am surprised he still holds to the 457-458 [B.C.] schema, something that was given up by most SDA scholars decades ago.

But he is misrepresenting Wesley. The quote he gives from Sermon 5 only means that God knows exactly what he is doing when he imputes righteousness to the sinner. In Sermon 20, Wesley quotes from Calvin approvingly and on p. 212 of Volume 3 of *Wesley's Works*, he writes: "I think on justification just as I have done any time these seven-and-twenty years; and just as Mr. Calvin does. In this respect I do not differ from him an hair's breadth."

Psalm 32:3 is not contradicting the previous verse. It only reminds us that while justification is distinct from sanctification, it is never separate. The justified believer gives up guile.

As regards the Finger quote, here again the difference between "distinct" and "separate" is vital. The legal use of *dikaioo* would be impossible without the basis of the ethical meaning.

Romans 3:9-10 is clear enough that all of mankind by nature is separate from God. All are "under sin." That is more than their own behavior. See also Ephesians 2:3.

Kirkpatrick is not true to Luther. Any compendium of Luther's sayings makes it clear what he was teaching. To select an isolated statement as Kirkpatrick does is quite unfair and misrepresents the Reformer.

Where does Adventism come in? See Revelation 14:6. It comes in with "the everlasting gospel," not some new creed.

There cannot be various versions of the gospel (Luther's, Wesley's, etc.). The meaning of Galatians 1:9 is clear whichever version you choose: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel" (KJV). That which is not THE gospel of the Reformers is ANOTHER gospel.

DESMOND FORD
Caloundra, Queensland, Australia

Just a Thought

As usual, Kevin Paulson (Letters, Spring 2009) does not know what he is talking about. I am not a dispensationalist (and I have written at length against dispensationalism), and neither was F.F. Bruce a dispensationalist, as he clearly states in the introduction he wrote for my black *Daniel* (Southern Publishing Association, 1978). I took no classes with Bruce in my time at Manchester University.

Kevin has not read Romans 3-5 very closely, or he would have seen that holiness (righteousness) is the inevitable fruit of the gospel and the law is not made void. Here Kevin, again as usual, departs from plain scriptural teaching, the Protestant Reformers, and E.G. White. Again his comments on Daniel 8:14 shows his unawareness that for over half a century the chief SDA scholars have rejected Kevin's understanding (the traditional one) of that verse.

DESMOND FORD
Caloundra, Queensland, Australia

Marriage, Homosexuality, and the Church

Andrews University has scheduled a conference October 15-17 on Marriage and Homosexuality. You can access the details for this conference at <http://www.plusline.org/eventdetail.php?id=10180>

The conference is open to all who wish to attend. The planners indicate "it will be of special interest to pastors, chaplains, counselors, psychologists, lawyers, religion teachers, theologians, and others who deal with the issue of homosexuality and church teaching and policy." Some involved with the conference have indicated that it is a response to the recent book *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives*. Speakers include Dr. Stanton Jones, Dr. Robert Gagnon, Dr. Richard Davidson, Dr. Roy Gane, and Pastor Dwight Nelson. According to the website, "The basic structure of the conference will be that of a typical scholarly conference with a series of substantive presentations followed by general discussions." The conference should provide insights on the direction the church plans to take on this important issue.

Registration for the event is \$80. There is a spouse registration fee of \$35, but this fee does not provide an additional copy of the papers presented at the conference. To register online, follow PlusLine's online registration link. For information or to register by phone, call PlusLine at 800-732-7587.



Why I Am a
**Seventh-day
Adventist**

BY JOHN TANGEN

W

“What Is an Adventist?”, along with the four viewpoints accompanying it, invited some reflection on my part regarding my own involvement with the Adventist Church. I’d like to share my thoughts on why I identify with this sometimes puzzling, sometimes infuriating, yet overall satisfying denomination. This reflection will be primarily a left-brained, cerebral approach—for that is largely the way I operate. My feelings, my emotional reaction, will have to wait for another time. So here is who I am, spiritually and ecclesiastically.

First, I am a Christian. I believe in Jesus, the God-man, and accept the essentials of Biblical faith. I appreciate the historic creeds and confessions of faith, though the Bible alone must stand as the ultimate, final authority.

Second, I am Protestant. I identify with Reformation faith as begun by Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli—*solus Christus, sola gratia, sola fide, and sola scriptura*. That is, Christ alone, grace alone, faith alone, the Bible alone.

“Christ alone” means that Jesus is my sacrifice, my priest, my mediator. No other being, living or dead, can stand between God and me.

“Grace alone” means that salvation and acceptance with God is all a free gift. Whatever holiness I experience is never meritorious.

“Faith alone” means that forgiveness and salvation become mine through faith, or trust—simply accepting them as a free gift; they are not earned by penance, indulgence, or pilgrimage.

“The Bible alone” simply means that Scripture is the final authority. All secondary sources (such as creeds, confessions of faith, or spiritual gifts) must bow before the greater authority of the Bible, God’s written word.

Historic Protestantism also rests on a fifth pillar—the priesthood of all believers. In a spiritual sense, there is no such thing as clergy. Before God, all are on equal ground. All are equally in need of grace, equally offered grace, and equally called to minister that grace to others.

Third, I am an Evangelical Protestant Christian (as contrasted with Magisterial Protestantism).¹ That means I affirm salvation as personal and experiential. Becoming a Christian is a personal encounter with God rather than initiation into a visible organization. The “means of grace” (that is, how we are justified) is faith—not baptism, not communion, not church membership.²

Consequently, Evangelical Christians usually practice believer’s baptism; for them, baptism is a symbol of their conscious acceptance of God’s grace. Salvation first, baptism commemorating it.

As an Evangelical, my roots go back to the Radical, or Evangelical Reformation. My spiritual heroes are found among

men like Peter Waldo, Menno Simons, Hans Hut, Hans Denk, John Bunyan, Roger Williams, and John Wesley.³ Men who presented “church” as a voluntary association of committed believers—separate from, yet respectful of civil powers. Who evangelized through persuasion, not compulsion. Who left the choice of denominational identity to the individual rather than to the governor of the province or king of the nation. That is why they championed church-state separation.

The Evangelical Reformation was radical in that it broke completely with ecclesiastical tradition and restored a “free” church (without civil connection); it emphasized a direct, invisible connection with God and a radical return to primitive Christian faith.

Among some of the radicals are found increasing emphasis on practical Christian living and the joyful hope of Christ’s return. These further truths build upon the biblical foundation already rediscovered by the Magisterial reformers. While some of the Radicals (spiritualizers and militants) took things to extremes, in general these Evangelical reformers gave Protestantism greater clarity and consistency.

Yes, I am a Radical, or Evangelical, Protestant Christian.

Fourth, I am an Adventist Protestant Christian. For me, Christian faith is not just a circle with the cross at the center; it is more of an ellipsis with two center points: the cross (first advent) and the Parousia (second advent). The first advent is the kingdom inaugurated; the second advent is the kingdom consummated. My gaze, my spiritual focus, is on both.

Fifth, I’m a Sabbatarian Adventist Christian. The Sabbath, for me, is a confession of my faith in Jesus as Creator; it offers me tangible, ritual expression of my gratefulness and delight to be God’s handiwork. To me, it is an “extra,” a delightful gift of grace from a thoughtful God. The ruler of the universe offering a whole day each week to be, in a special sense, with his human family.

The Sabbath also offers me an expression of my trust in Jesus as Savior. It commemorates deliverance from bondage: the bondage of guilt, shame, and fear. In the Old Testament Sabbath passages, grace comes first; Sabbath celebration follows. Those

who don't share in the ritual of Sabbath joy can still know heart-rest in Christ, but I think they're missing some of the thrill of their spiritual birthright inheritance.

Sabbath a Joy

(I can't resist adding that for me, the Sabbath has always been a day of joy. Some of my earliest Sabbath memories are of early-morning canoe paddles along the North Dakota-Manitoba border. It was there that I developed a love for the outdoors, first sighted the magnificent blue heron, first heard the haunting cry of the loon. In fact, "Sabbath" is now almost synonymous with "canoe," though nowadays it's more often a kayak. Far from being a legalistic requirement, Sabbath is a joyful treasure.)

And as a Seventh-day Adventist Protestant Christian, I see my identity in terms of God bringing me into especially close confidence. Speaking more intimately about himself, his plans, his hopes, his feelings. (Perhaps this is the purpose of the book of Revelation—to see history, to see God's passion, through his eyes.) I see him hoping, longing for friends with great understanding, with great sympathy with his heart. What a privilege—and what a responsibility!

And yet, I must remember that I am still a ragamuffin, in need of his love, his forgiveness, his healing. He is my Savior; I am not his!⁴ I am one with all other Christians before him. And in need of their witness and service to me, too.⁵

Yet it still seems to me that the Christian church needs what Adventism at its best has to offer: the gospel presentation in the context of the cosmic conflict. God's reputation cleared from false understandings of judgment and vengeance. (And yes, Adventists have had to learn—and unlearn—too. And undoubtedly have more to learn—and unlearn.⁶)

Sixth: Finally, as I observe the variety within the Adventist family—mainstreamers, historicists, 1888ers, liberals, etc.—I find that what my mind sees as most authentic, and what my heart most beats in harmony with, is what some have termed "Evangelical Adventism." That means that all doctrine, all truth, important as it may be, must be understood in the light of the gospel, and in particular, to Christ's atoning death on Calvary. Assurance of God's love, assurance of eternal life for all who trust him, is the cornerstone of Evangelical Adventist faith. Whatever else we believe becomes valid and significant only as seen in the light of Christ's cross.⁷

While I am deeply intrigued by the Progressive, or Intellectual, strain of Adventist faith—it is well worth one's time in study—Evangelical faith remains my passion.

And so, I am first of all a Christian; second, a Protestant; third, an Evangelical; fourth, an Adventist; fifth, a Sabbatarian; and finally, an Evangelical Seventh-day Adventist.

I must add one more word—not only to Adventists who want to speak well of the gospel, but also those who want to speak well

of the God of the gospel. Believing that one reason Jesus came to earth was "to show us the Father," we read Scripture carefully and find that even in his dealing with the unrepentant, God's loving justice is revealed. Thus hellfire will put an end to sin and suffering rather than perpetuate it forever. I plan to be in heaven, not just to escape the flames, but to enjoy eternity with the kind of God Jesus has shown.

So we want to represent God aright to a skeptical world—not for making it to heaven, but for serving him honorably. I choose to identify with those who see death as an enemy, an intruder. It is resurrection, not death, that is the Christian's hope. Because of the resurrection, death has lost its sting; we look with confidence to Christ's return, when the dead will rise. It is right to sorrow when faced with death. But that sorrow is tempered with hope—"the blessed hope"!

Hellfire

And I must choose a fellowship that holds firmly to hellfire being the destruction of sin, rather than its eternal continuation. It is God's strange act, done reluctantly and sadly. (And, I believe, as quickly as possible.) The God I know does not use his creative power to keep people alive for no reason but to torture them—and that endlessly, throughout all eternity. No, he makes an END of sin; he creates ALL things new (even hell!), and wipes away ALL tears. Throughout the vast creation will be felt one pulse of harmony and gladness. Every living creature uniting in heartfelt allegiance to the Creator. Surely this is Evangelical Christian faith at its mature best.

In conclusion, I would say that at its worst, Adventism can be a bigoted, exclusivist, legalistic cult. Yet at its best, it's a vibrant community of faith with a timely emphasis that can add to the wholeness of Christian witness as we near the climax of history. **AT**

John Tangen is a cook/baker presently working at Pacific Union College in Angwin, California. In his spare time, he enjoys exploring the foot trails and waterways of the high Sierras.

¹ I use "Evangelical" in its historical sense, not as a synonym of "Fundamentalist."

² And that means that "church" is first and primarily a spiritual, invisible reality.

³ I am indebted to W.L. Emmerson's *The Reformation and the Advent Movement* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983) for this list of Radical reformers.

⁴ This should suggest caution when speaking of some generation of Christians vindicating God's character. Ultimately, it is God himself who vindicates his name.

⁵ For example, the Catholic writer Brennan Manning.

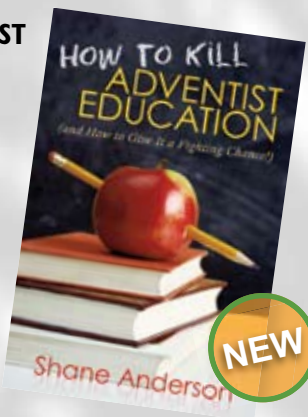
⁶ This writer is impressed with Pastor Kenneth Richard's candid article "Daniel 8 & 9: The Way I See Them Now" (in *Adventist Today*, November, 2006). I submit that we have not yet heard the last word on this topic.

⁷ And here I learn from speakers/writers with Light Bearers Ministry and the Good News Tour (www.heavenlysanctuary.com). While "justification" is a metaphor borrowed from the legal world, undoubtedly it may carry a deeper meaning as well, suggesting restoration of relationship and intimacy. The *meaning* of the cross also invites close study.

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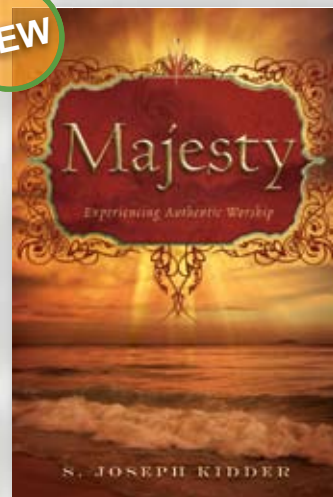
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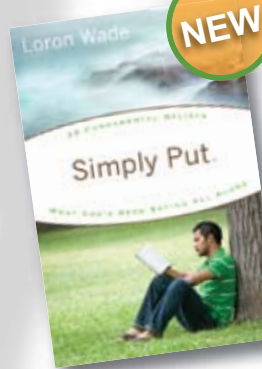


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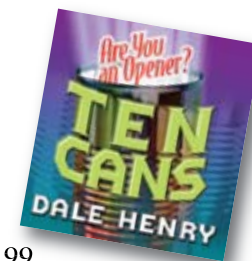


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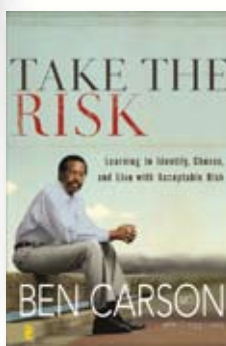
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Is **GOD FINISHED** *With the* **ADVENTIST CHURCH?**

An Ellen White Prediction?

BY J. DAVID NEWMAN

A little-known Ellen White prediction could mean the end of the Adventist Church as God's premier instrument in finishing his work on planet Earth.

It was 1950. I had just turned 7. My father was a delegate to the General Conference Session in San Francisco, Calif. I remember the day as if it were yesterday. The leaders had called for the first Sabbath of the Session to be a day of prayer and fasting. My parents said: "We do not believe that we will live to see another General Conference Session (back then they were held every four years). The world is in such a sorry state (it was right after World War II), and the signs of Christ's coming are so many, that we will see Jesus come before 1954."

Since then my parents have died. I am now a grandfather, and still Jesus has not come. Why? It is not the purpose of this article to try to answer that question. The purpose of this article is to ask this question: Could God be finished with the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

Second Century Later

We are now in the second century since 1844, some 165 years later. Does the Seventh-day Adventist Church still have the same mission it had in the 19th century? Does God have another plan that does not involve the Adventist Church?

A little-known statement by Ellen White suggests that God does not need the Adventist Church to finish his work. “In the balances of the sanctuary the Seventh-day Adventist church is to be weighed. She will be judged by the privileges and advantages that she has had. If her spiritual experience does not correspond to the advantages that Christ, at infinite cost, has bestowed on her, if the blessings conferred have not qualified her to do the work entrusted to her, on her will be pronounced the sentence: ‘Found wanting.’ By the light bestowed, the opportunities given, will she be judged?” (*Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, p. 247).

This statement comes from an article with the title “Shall we be found wanting?” that Ellen White wrote on Apr. 21, 1903. She begins it by saying: “Our position in the world is not what it should be. We are far from where we should have been had our Christian experience been in harmony with the light and the opportunities given us, had we from the beginning constantly pressed onward and upward. Had we walked in the light that has been given us, had we followed on to know the Lord, our path would have grown brighter and brighter. But many of those who have had special light are so conformed to the world that they can scarcely be distinguished from worldlings. They do not stand forth as God’s peculiar people, chosen and precious. It is difficult to discern between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not” (*Ibid*, p. 247).

On page 248 she writes: “Solemn admonitions of warning, manifest in the destruction of dearly cherished facilities for service, say to us: ‘Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works.’ Revelation 2:5. Why is there so dim a perception of the true spiritual condition of the church? Has not blindness fallen upon the watchmen standing on the walls of Zion? Are not many of God’s servants unconcerned and well satisfied, as if the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night rested upon the sanctuary? Are there not those in positions of responsibility, professing to know God, who in life and character deny Him? Are not many of those who count themselves as His chosen, peculiar people satisfied to live without the evidence that of a truth God is among them to save them from Satan’s snares and attacks?”

Church Doing Well

The editorials and articles in today’s official church papers confirm what Ellen White is saying here. “Why is there so dim a perception of the true spiritual condition of the church? Has not blindness fallen upon the watchmen standing on the walls of Zion? Are not many of God’s servants unconcerned and well

satisfied, as if the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night rested upon the sanctuary?”

There is little call to revival and reformation in our papers and from church leaders, but there is much about the progress of the Adventist Church throughout the world, as if the growth of the Church is God’s measure of our purpose.

I am not writing this to be a prophet of doom. I am not writing this to lambast our church leaders (many of whom I know well). I have worked 40 years for the denomination and believe God still has a purpose for it, but time is running out.

Our Church illustrates the story by Hans Christian Anderson of the emperor’s clothes. The emperor thought he was dressing in an invisible suit for which he had paid a fortune. Everyone was told that if they could not see his clothes, it was because they were either stupid or incompetent. So everyone went along with the charade on the day of the great parade, with everyone saying how wonderful he looked.

Reality finally struck when a little boy yelled out, “He is naked.” Only then did the emperor look down and admit that he was, indeed, naked. The problem is that no one in the Adventist Church wants to admit that we are naked, even though we have biblical proof.

Split Personality

It seems that we have a split personality. We read Rev. 3:14-19 (NIV) in two different minds. “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.”

On the one hand, we say that we are in a Laodicean condition—“wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked”—but on the other hand we ignore the remedies to get out of this condition and continue to praise how well we are doing in growing the church around the world.

A good example is an editorial by Roy Adams in the *Adventist Review* with the title “Thinking Aloud About Laodicea” (Aug. 28, 2008). Adams writes: “But what if—and that’s the thought that came to me—what if ‘Laodicea’ is more comprehensive than our usual interpretation has envisioned? What if ‘Laodicea’ applies to the entire Christian church today? How might that affect our mission and our evangelistic strategy?” He then shows how Ellen White applied the Laodicean message not only to Adventism but also to all Christian churches.

I agree with him. But what is missing is any emphasis from denominational leaders on the remedies to the Laodicean condition—“gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.”

“In the balances of the sanctuary the Seventh-day Adventist church is to be weighed. . . . Found wanting.” The phrase “found wanting” is taken directly from Dan. 5:27, when Daniel pronounces God’s judgment on King Belshazzar, whose kingdom was overturned that same night.

Original Purpose

The challenge for Adventism is to determine whether or not we still have the same purpose since Jesus has not returned. It was the purpose of the Adventist Church to herald the second coming of Jesus. Arising out of the ashes of the disappointment on Oct. 22, 1844, came a group believing that Jesus would come in their lifetime.

Here is what Ellen White wrote in 1864: “I was shown the company present at the Conference. Said the angel, ‘Some food for worms, some subjects of the seven last plagues, some will be alive and remain upon the earth, to be translated at the coming of Jesus’” (*Spiritual Gifts, Vol. 4*, p. 18). No conditions were attached to this statement. In fact, Ellen White recorded that these words came directly from an angel.

It is also seen in the aim of the Adventist Youth Society: The Advent message to all the world in this generation. When does this aim become meaningless?

As the church aged, it began to argue over its mission. The changes in the mission statement of the General Conference Constitution illustrate the dilemma of the church.

The constitution of the General Conference did not state the object of the institution until after the 1888 General Conference. As reported in the 1889 *SDA Year Book*, it read: “The object of this Corporation is to diffuse moral and religious knowledge and instruction, by means of publishing houses for such purpose, publications there from, and the further means of missionaries, missionary agencies, and all other instrumentalities and methods appropriate and available for and tending to the advancement of the ends and aims above specified.”

This rather cumbersome statement lasted until 1904, when it was revised to simply say, “The object of this Conference is to teach all nations the everlasting gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” This endured until the tumultuous General Conference of 1921, when the words “the commandments of God” were added before the “everlasting gospel,” so that it now read, “The object of this Conference is to teach all nations the commandments of God and the everlasting gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The commandments of God took precedence over the everlasting gospel. This remained the order until the 1950 General Conference reversed the order so that it now read, “The

“Although there are evils existing in the church, and will be until the end of the world, the church in these last days is to be the light of the world that is polluted and demoralized by sin.”

object of this Conference is to teach all nations the everlasting gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and the commandments of God.”

It remains as the object of the General Conference to this day.

This brief history demonstrates the difficulties we have faced in deciding what our emphasis should be. While both grace and the commandments are important, one is based on the other, and we finally got it right in the 1950 revision. But—and here is the but—we are still much

more Adventist than Christian. If you ask the average person who knows anything about Adventists, the response will not begin with the first part of the General Conference mission statement, the gospel. People will not say, “Oh, you are the people who are full of grace and love. You are the people who help others the most, who demonstrate the love of Christ in this world.”

No! They will usually say, “Oh you are the people who worship on Saturday (or don’t eat pork...or run great medical institutions).”

“In the balances of the sanctuary the Seventh-day Adventist church is to be weighed.” Ellen White makes it clear that there are conditions attached to the future of the Adventist Church, just as there were for ancient Israel. Many Christians make the mistake of assuming that the prophecies regarding Israel were unconditional, hence the intense interest in the fate of Israel today. But we need to be careful that we don’t make the same mistake regarding the future of the Adventist Church. Ellen White makes clear that if our church does not fulfil these conditions, the same judgment will be entered against her as was entered against ancient Babylon through the writing on the wall: “Found wanting.”

Church Cannot Fail or It Can

But some will ask, “What about those statements by Ellen White that say while the church may seem about to fall, she will not?” Here is one of them. Ellen White is addressing the leaders of the General Conference. She is writing from Australia on Dec. 23, 1892. “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.”¹

She writes in *The Signs of the Times*: “It may seem wonderful to us that Christ should reveal Himself to John as He is, strange that He should thus address Himself to the churches. But we should remember that the church, enfeebled and defective though it is, is

the object of Christ's supreme regard. Constantly He watches over it with tender solicitude, and strengthens it by His Holy Spirit. Will we, as members of His church, allow Him to impress our minds and to work through us to His glory? Will we heed the messages He addresses to the church? Let us determine to be among the members who shall meet Him with joy at His coming, and not among those who 'shall wail because of Him.' Let us make certain our redemption by obeying the messages that He gives to His church."²

The title of the article was "Lessons From First Chapter of Revelation." However, nowhere does she explicitly identify "church" with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. In 1886 Ellen White wrote: "The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place."³

"Although there are evils existing in the church, and will be until the end of the world, the church in these last days is to be the light of the world that is polluted and demoralized by sin. The church, enfeebled and defective, needing to be reproved, warned, and counseled, is the only object upon earth upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard."⁴

Who Is the Church?

Here is the big question: Is Ellen White talking about the Adventist Church or the Christian church? Her statements about the church being "enfeebled and defective" yet still loved by God do not have "Seventh-day Adventist" attached to them. Yet there are some statements that seem to indicate a special blessing on the Adventist Church.

"I am instructed to say to Seventh-day Adventists the world over, God has called us a people to be a peculiar treasure unto Himself. He has appointed that His church on earth shall stand perfectly united in the Spirit and counsel of the Lord of hosts to the end of time."⁵

Ty Gibson, in his book *Abandon Ship*, says: "Ultimately, God must have a people who will triumph with the gospel and not fail. And He will have such a people. The divine agenda reveals that this vital transition from failure to triumph will occur with the Adventist movement" p. 65. Further on the same page he says, "There is no inspired word, either in the Bible or the Spirit of Prophecy, that foretells the failure of the Advent movement and the rising of another." However, he never deals with Ellen White's conditional prophecy of the Adventist Church being weighed in the balances.

Conditions

Notice the conditions attached. "She will be judged by the privileges and advantages that she has had. If her spiritual experience does not correspond to the advantages that Christ, at infinite cost, has bestowed on her, if the blessings conferred have not qualified her to do the work entrusted to her, on her will be

pronounced the sentence: 'Found wanting'"

There are two conditions attached to the final success of the Adventist Church: spiritual experience must correspond to the advantages Christ has bestowed, and she must let the conferred spiritual blessings qualify her to do the work.

Are Adventists the only ones God is using and blessing to take the everlasting gospel to the world? Many in our ranks would answer yes. In 1990 we launched the great initiative called Global Mission. I was a member of the strategic planning committee that developed this initiative. I was given the task of writing the first draft of its mission, vision, and goals. The purpose was to reach people who did not know Jesus. The measure was an organized church in the territory where no church had previously existed. The document prioritized whom we were to reach. It said that we should first seek to plant churches where there were no Christians. This meant taking a hard look at Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist areas of the world. Once we had done this, we would then plant a church where there were other Christians but no Adventists.

This set of priorities lasted through two drafts of the document, then it disappeared. The goal became simply to plant a church wherever there was no Adventist church. So the first few years of the initiative showed great results, because we concentrated on Christian areas of the world. It is much easier to convince other Christians about the doctrines of Adventism than it is to convince people from the other world religions.

When I wrote the document, I wrote under the assumption that people who were Christians already knew their way to heaven, but non-Christians were in great danger of losing out on eternal life. But we are confused about our mission. Is our mission to bring people to Christ? Or is our mission to make people into Adventists? Is our primary mission to lead people to Christ or tell them the three angels' messages and the mark of the beast?

Our general practice has been to make people Adventists. When success is measured by how many baptisms you have, it is clear that other Christians will be the primary target rather than secular people or people from non-Christian religions, because it is much harder to win them.

It is not the purpose of this article to attempt a solution to this problem. That is a whole different subject. A common definition of insanity is to keep doing the same thing over and over and expect different results. The Adventist Church has been doing the same thing over and over and getting the same result: Jesus has not come. We don't want to even think for a moment that God could be finished with the Adventist Church. Yet the haunting decree "Found wanting" rings in my ears. How do we avoid that fate? **AT**

J. David Newman is the editor of Adventist Today and the senior pastor of New Hope Adventist Church in Fulton, Maryland.

¹E.G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 15.

²E.G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, Feb. 4, 1903.

³E.G. White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 2, p. 380.

⁴E.G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 49.

⁵E.G. White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 2, p. 397.



BY SETH PIERCE Islamic Conn

At the end of Disney's hit movie *National Treasure 2*, the writers set themselves up for another smash sequel by ending with the main character having a hushed discussion about what is on page 47 of the President's Secret Book. The audience is not told what is on the page—because according to the DVD commentary, the writers have no idea yet. However, Walter Veith may have an idea they could use.

According to a lecture entitled *The Islamic Connection*—part of his *Total Onslaught* video series—Walter Veith asserts that the Catholic Church intentionally created the religion of Islam and that the Jesuits and Freemasons are in on it too. By carefully combining conspiracies including groups such as Freemasons, Assassins, and—the old Adventist favorite—Jesuits, Veith crafts a convincing case for those ignorant of history and devoid of a knowledge of pseudo-history's real Holy Grail: reliable sources.

Veith uses a quasi-proof-text method of historical investigation, bombarding his audience with photos and quotes from a variety of questionable sources totaling more than 90 minutes of nonsense. It will not be possible to address every assumption and insinuation he makes. However, an examination of a few foundational problems may reveal that someone has built a house on the “sandy shore.”

Not a New Argument

As a wise man once said, “there is nothing new under the sun.”¹ This is true no matter what planet you may get your history from.

The origin of *The Islamic Connection* is rather comical. Seriously, it's found in a comic book/tract created by a man named Jack Chick.

Mr. Chick is a fundamentalist cartoonist with a hatred of Catholicism that rivals historic Adventism. In addition to his polemics, he comes complete with a former-Jesuit sidekick named Alberto Rivera, who is full of secret knowledge. His straight testimony is recorded in a comic entitled *The Prophet*.² According to Jack Chick, “as soon as Alberto Rivera went public with his testimony, the Roman Catholic Church began its damage-control operation. Alberto knew too much! Having been prepared for leadership in the Jesuit order, he had been briefed on things too sensitive to put in writing.”

Until now.

About 00:33:20 into Veith's video, he quotes Alberto Rivera as an authoritative source proving the Catholic-Islamic Connection. It is imperative that we delve into background of Chick and his Jesuit escapee friend, whose secret intel gave birth to *The Islamic Connection*.



ection

How One Adventist Believes Islam Was Birthed by the Roman Catholic Church

There are a number of problems with Rivera, and even in the video Veith acknowledges that his testimony is highly suspect. But as with all conspiracies, if someone questions the conspiracy they must be a part of it, so sources that are criticized must be true...right? In any case, there are several studies out there questioning everything from his lack of integrity to his existence—including an entire book dealing with Rivera’s claims about Islam and Catholicism.³

However, the most delightful dent in Rivera’s armor comes from the fact that as an ex-Jesuit privy to all manner of secrets to bring down Protestantism, he has aligned himself with Jack Chick—a man who promotes the secret rapture.⁴ The secret rapture is one of the most well-documented Jesuit counter-reformation doctrines to take the heat off of Rome. It is so well documented that it even appears on Walter Veith’s own website:

“To meet the challenge and exposure of the Papacy as the Antichrist and the Pope as the “son of perdition,” the Jesuits were summoned to counter the reformers’ teachings and here two Jesuit scholars stand out in particular. They are Alcasar and Ribera, and they developed the preterist and futurist systems of prophetic interpretation. The preterist interpretation puts all

prophecy pertaining to the Antichrist into the past (persecutors outside the Jewish or Christian religion), **and the futurist interpretation puts them into the future after the Christian dispensation and the Secret Rapture...** According to the futurist view, the antichrist was to come from the tribe of Dan, and would make his appearance after the secret rapture.”⁵

Perhaps Rivera was using the restroom during the secret Jesuit meeting where this particular item came up on the agenda.

That Veith would use an unreliable source fits well with another source he cites that provides a critical link between Islam and Catholicism—a link I call the “Khadija Connection.”

The Khadija Connection

At 00:06:03 into Veith’s lecture, he cites the Internet source Jahtruth.net, which informs us that “Mohammed married Khadija, who was a Roman Catholic, when he was 25 and she was 40. Her cousin was called Waraquah and was also a Roman Catholic Meccan.”⁶ Veith then goes so far as to say Khadija was a Roman Catholic Nun, thus establishing a Catholic influence on Muhammad’s career.

Now I am not sure if it’s because Veith has not been in graduate school in a number of years, or if it’s because he does not have

access to peer reviews due to self-publishing, but would someone please explain to Dr. Veith [and my parents] that not everything online is credible?

While Jahtruth offers scholarly insights into Islam, it also provides incredible insight on Darth Vader⁷ and UFOs⁸—which are no doubt also linked to Catholics and/or Jesuits.

The Great Pet Detective, Ace Ventura, once said, “Fiction can be fun, but I find the reference section much more enlightening.” Let’s see what recognized Islamic historians have to see about Khadija.

Muhammad and the Rich Nun

To give an accurate—albeit much more boring—biographical sketch, I offer three examples from biographies on Muhammad that provide a good representation of a larger quantity of books I have read that contain information on Khadija.

- “A distant relative, Khadija bint Khuwaylid asked him to take some merchandise to Syria for her. City life gives certain women a chance to flourish in business and commerce...Khadija had been married twice and had borne a number of children...she was able to make a very good living as a merchant.”⁹

- “Khadija was a woman of honor and great wealth. She used to hire men to bid and compete in the market on her behalf and rewarded them with a share of profits. Being of the tribe of Banu Asad and having married twice within the tribe of Banu Makhzum, she had become very rich.”¹⁰

- “She was a member of the Banu Asad tribe who married not once but twice into the Meccan clan of Banu Makhzum. Each husband died in turn, leaving her with a huge personal fortune... she had one daughter from her first marriage and a son and a daughter from her second.”¹¹

So, let’s recap some key points. She was the inheritor of wealth of two previous marriages, had three children, and was a successful business woman. There is no mention of convents or celibacy. This raises the question: Which of the following traits are typical characteristics of Roman Catholic nuns: they have children from previous marriages, run lucrative businesses with wealth inherited from previous husbands, and marry a third time only to have more children?

That’s right. None.

What About Waraqaah?

Now we must begrudge Doc Veith one key point. Muhammad did have contact with Christians before the creation of Islam. As a matter of fact, his contact with certain monks led to his understanding of his prophetic role. Gasp.

However, to assert that it was some sort of Catholic conspiracy to raise up an Arabian prophet is as stretched as a sumo wrestler’s briefs. Here is what we know of Muhammad’s Christian connection:

“Who was the first, after his wife Khadija, to encourage Muhammad to take the experience of his personal revelation seriously...Remarkably it was a Christian, Waraqaah, a cousin

of Muhammad’s wife. Waraqaah ibn Nawful...‘who became a Christian, had read the Holy Scriptures and had learned from the adherents of the Torah and the Gospel’, was probably a Jewish Christian, as he clearly did not read the Bible in Greek but in Aramaic...”¹²

But wait! That’s not all, folks! Jack Chick has this to add:

“Waraqaah...defiantly announced that he was going to become a Christian, but he was advanced in age and settled into a quiet life as a retired, though disgruntled, merchant, said by some to have translated into Arabic a few scattered messages from the Gospels” [see footnote 4].

What we know of Khadija’s cousin is that he was a late convert to Christianity and a retired merchant—not a Roman Catholic Priest. He possibly had some skill translating scripture. But he isn’t the only Christian to believe in Muhammad. After Waraqaah was hired by Khadija and sent out on his first caravan, Haykal notes that “when he arrived at Busrah...came into contact with Syrian Christianity and talked to monks and priests some of whom were Nestorians.” Emerick also echoes this, saying that “he saw Roman and Syrian Christians (mostly of the Nestorian sect)...”

Armstrong records that one of Khadija’s servants reported that a monk took him aside and told him that Muhammad was the prophet whose coming was so eagerly awaited in Arabia.

So what we have is Muhammad being encouraged by believers who were most likely of the Nestorian faith. The natural question that arises is: Who were the Nestorians?

In short, they were founded in the 5th century by Nestorius. They believed that Christ was only a perfect man morally linked to divinity. They took emphasis off of Mary, as they felt she was unduly exalted. And they believed that Christ exists as two persons, with a human side and divine logos—a Christology not supported by Roman Catholicism.¹³

To support his “history,” Veith uses a dazzling array of symbols to bamboozle his audience.

Connect the Symbols

One of Veith’s favorite games is to play “connect the symbols.” He begins just under the one-hour mark to highlight “pagan” symbols in mosques and cathedrals that match each other. Ever the studious archaeologist, Veith also concludes that because mosques and cathedrals are built over pagan ruins, they must indeed be worshipping Satan. After all, “Why would you build your church on a pagan site?” An interesting but flawed hermeneutic.

Who among us can forget the memorable game of our youth in those treasured coloring/activity books: connect the dots? Sitting in a church pew or lying on the living floor racing from one number dot to the next in great anticipation as a picture slowly developed from our lines. The part that made it easy was that the numbers never changed their value as you made your lines. “1” was always followed by “2,” etc. You never had to worry about some treacherous “22” suddenly turning into an “87”. If only language were as static.

Words are all made up of letters—symbols—that stand for sounds. When these sounds are connected, they form symbols called “words” that carry meaning. Whether it be an observation about an object (i.e., “This curry is really spicy”), an expression of how we feel (“My stomach is burning”), or a plea for assistance (“If I’m not out of the bathroom in 10 minutes, call an ambulance”), our language is symbolic. What is exacerbating—especially when learning foreign languages—is that symbols change meaning.

For example, the cross was an instrument of Roman torture, so in the first century to adorn your house of worship with a cross or wear a tidy little crucifix around your neck would give the impression of some sort of masochistic tendency. Even modern occult symbols, such as the pentagram, have gone through changes. During 300-150 B.C., it was considered the official seal of Jerusalem and has been called Solomon’s Shield in Jewish Mysticism; yet during the Middle Ages, it became associated with the Devil.¹⁴

As cultures develop, they build upon previous cultures and adopt their languages and symbology. In the Bible, Gideon takes the wood from an Asherah pole and uses it in a sacrifice to God.¹⁵ In the book of Revelation, John employs Greek mythology to convey the meaning of prophecy,¹⁶ and I sincerely doubt that when the Romans decimated the Temple in Jerusalem, erected a temple to the pagan god Jupiter on its ruins, and then taxed the Jews to pay for it—Veith would accuse them of secretly worshipping the Hebrew God.¹⁷

Veith also conveniently misses other symbols within his own faith tradition. According to another questionable source he uses to connect Freemasonry symbols to just about everything, “*In Continental Freemasonry the monument in the Master’s Degree is often made in the form of an obelisk, with the letters M. B. inscribed upon it. And this form is appropriate, because in Masonic, as in Christian iconography, the obelisk is a symbol of the resurrection.*”¹⁸ Not only do Masons and Christians share symbology [meditate on THOSE implications], but standing secret and at attention atop Ellen White’s grave is none other than the Masonic Obelisk.¹⁹

Is he willing to suggest Ellen White was a Freemason? I doubt it.

To me, it almost seems as though Veith “googled” the word “conspiracy,” copied each web page’s contents and pasted them into a PowerPoint presentation, and then arbitrarily attached texts from Revelation onto them to make the theories fit our eschatology.

Conclusion

Adventists love a good conspiracy. They are exciting, make our eschatology come to life, and give us a sense of mission without witnessing. And while I do not disbelieve the existence of conspiracies, I do demand stronger evidence to support them. And if they are true, so what? If there is a New World Order being developed between the Vatican and the Oval Office, what are we to do about it? Does it change our mission?

Too often we are so concerned about the work of the enemy that we don’t do the work of Christ—which incidentally seems like a better Jesuit plot than creating Islam. Hmm...

The now-cliché illustration of how the best way to detect counterfeit money is to study the genuine article also applies. Is it possible to present the Three Angels’ Messages without conspiracies? Is the truth compelling enough to present without speculating the secret workings of Jesuits and Freemasons? Are we so bad at telling our story that we need to weave historical fiction around it to make it interesting?

Consider the following answer: “Those who have the outpouring of the gospel of Christ which comes from the heart imbued by His Holy Spirit will give light and comfort and hope to hearts that are hungering and thirsting for righteousness. It is not excitement we wish to create, but deep, earnest consideration, that those who hear shall do solid work, real, sound, genuine work that will be enduring as eternity. We hunger not for excitement, for the sensational; the less we have of this, the better. The calm, earnest reasoning from the Scriptures is precious and fruitful. Here is the secret of success, in preaching a living, personal Saviour in so simple and earnest a manner that the people may be able to lay hold by faith of the power of the Word of Life.”²⁰

Seth Pierce is pastor of the Omaha Golden Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church in Bellevue, Nebraska.

¹Ecclesiastes 1:9

²You can read a full color PDF comic of Rivera’s “testimony” at www.chick.com/reading/comics/0112/albertoindex.asp. It is an incredible piece of propaganda alleging alternate black popes and secret masses by Jesuits who wear Masonic rings. The alleged connection of Masonry is another conspiracy for another time...

³Catholic.com offers an analysis of Rivera at www.catholic.com/library/sr_chick_tracts.asp, an article by Gary Metz entitled “Alberto Rivera: Is He for Real?” appears in the March 13, 1981, issue of *Christianity Today*. Also, an analysis including other sources is made by Gary Dale Cearley in his self-published book *Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness: The Truth About the Vatican and the Birth of Islam*, (Lulu.com, 2006). While the author acknowledges the dangers of self-published material, I found this book well documented.

⁴Jack Chick offers the tract entitled “Here He Comes!” available at www.chick.com for your viewing pleasure.

⁵<http://amazingdiscoveries.org/the-counter-reformation.html>

⁶<http://jahtruth.net/dates.htm>

⁷<http://jahtruth.net/darth.htm>

⁸<http://jahtruth.net/ufos.htm>

⁹Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).

¹⁰Muhammad H. Haykal, *Life of Muhammad*, 1933.

¹¹Yahiya Emerick, *Critical Lives: Muhammad* (Indianapolis, IN: Alpha Books, 2002).

¹²Hans Küng, *Islam: Past, Present, and Future* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007).

¹³Earl E. Cairnes, *Christianity Throughout the Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996).

¹⁴Carl G. Ljungman, *Dictionary of Symbology* (W.W. Norton & Company, 1994).

¹⁵Judges 6:26

¹⁶Revelation 1:18, 6:8, and 20:1. Hades was the Greek god of the dead and the name of several whimsical heavy metal bands.

¹⁷Goodman, Martin, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations* (New York: Knopf, 2007).

¹⁸Mackey, Albert, *Mackey’s Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* (The Masonic History Company, 1929).

¹⁹At the time of publication, a picture of the obelisk on Ellen G. White’s grave is viewable at <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=4483>.

²⁰White, Ellen. *The Paulson Collection of Ellen. G. White Letters* (Payson, AZ: Leaves-of-Autumn Books, 1985), pp. 101-102.



The **END** of MINISTRY as **WE KNOW IT**

By Loren Seibold

The next generation of North American Division pastors might have quite a different ministry from mine. When I entered pastoral ministry about 30 years ago, the job was pretty clearly defined. I knew that the conference office would assign me to a church or district where I'd preach, teach, give Bible studies, visit, marry, bury, baptize, help with Pathfinders, meet with church boards, and all the other things that happened in the church I grew up in. The conference would pay me a decent but not lavish wage plus benefits. I'd move a few times and maybe end up in a big church somewhere.

So far, I'm right on track.

But I see signs that track is crumbling, and I'm beginning to wonder if there really is going to be ministry as we know it now by the time I retire.

Why so pessimistic? A few observations.

Giving

Church members aren't tossing their money into the kettle as readily as they used to. They'll still give, but to what they want to, not to what we tell them to.

I don't look at my church members' individual giving; they're grown-ups, I've reasoned, and their stewardship is on their consciences. But I did ask my treasurer, "Who is paying tithe and offerings?" She said, "If it weren't for the little old ladies in church, you'd have a lot less tithe." Others? Many pay church budget. Some direct their giving to special projects. Some give to missions projects. Some don't give anything at all.

I don't know all the reasons, though I suspect a general mistrust of church organization has something to do with it. But already this bird is flying in tighter and tighter circles and is about to crash into its own tail. Most conferences haven't kept up with cost of living and regional wage adjustments. And many, like mine, have a money-saving bivocational or lay pastor program for small churches.

New Ways of Doing Ministry

Some changes, like bivocational or lay ministry, have been thrust upon us. But some very creative people are just doing church differently, like Milton Adams'

Simple Church and Peter Roennfeldt's Fresh Expressions. These are nothing like church as we know it, and even if they are part of the structure now, they are much slipperier entities and may not always respond as cheerfully when we say, "This is the program you're going to run, and here's where you'll send your money."

Other conferences are pulling more of their pastors from Bible-training courses like Mission College of Evangelism or Amazing Facts, sometimes for less than full wages, with a job description that is entirely evangelistic, giving less attention to church nurture and community building.

Should these new expressions of church take hold, they won't need stuffy guys in suits who can read Greek and know Robert's Rules. At least not as many. And this might also contribute to the money problem, because these new entities tend to be oriented to local community ministry, not church structure.

Demographic Redistribution

The rural North Dakota church I was born into, a few years after World War II, was

thriving. Not anymore. It, and thousands like it, are barely holding on. A majority of churches in my conference have almost no members between 15 and 35. The median age in the NAD church is 51 and rising. More people are in the few “big churches:” 60 percent of the members in the largest 10 percent. We are clustered nicely in a few places, but almost non-existent out on the land.

Many of these churches *can't* reach out to others: they're gasping for air themselves. Pastors don't like taking on a big district of them, which is what is necessary to make it pay. What growth there is in the NAD is largely in immigrant churches, mostly Hispanic, which attract people but not money. Because subsidizing professional ministry to these churches is expensive, the Hispanic churches do what they did in their home countries: have one pastor and many lay preachers.

Dispirited Pastors

Recently I wrote an article in *Best Practices for Adventist Ministry* (an NAD e-newsletter for pastors that I edit) about pastors who are burned out by conflicts in their churches. I knew I'd get some response, but I was surprised at the volume and intensity of it. Those who went the whole professional route into parish ministry appear especially disillusioned. One pastor wrote me that at a recent pastors' meeting in his conference, when the pastors gathered in small groups for confidential sharing, 60 percent to 70 percent confessed that they had given up and would move on to another vocation if they could afford to.

I also got a lengthy email from a layperson who had no sympathy for pastors: his pastor isn't running the church like a business, and “what are we paying him for, anyway?” I don't know the validity of his grievance—there certainly are some incompetents among us—but the takeaway for me is that pastors and churches aren't understanding one another very well anymore. The automatic

respect that we pastors used to receive, if not already gone, is fading fast.

This doesn't look good for the future of parish ministry, and already I find that in our conference personnel committees we're seeing fewer sterling candidates. Perhaps the word is getting out that what awaits them out here isn't the professional setting they're being schooled for. In my congregation there are nine people who've studied for Adventist ministry (excluding retirees), and only two of us are still pastors. The rest are in church administration, interfaith chaplaincy, or counseling.

A Money-sapping School System

A talented pastor friend in a big institutionally-connected church complained to me that his congregation sometimes seems to exist only as a support mechanism for a school. It was an exaggeration, but not by much. A massive slice of his church budget goes to keeping the day academy in fighting trim, and there's little left to do the creative outreach that he sees in growing churches in his city.

The irony is that I know of few schools (including his) that aren't just barely surviving, even with the subsidies. As the median age of the church has gone up, we have fewer children to educate and drastically fewer families willing to send their teens away to board for high school. At least one conference I know of builds its whole program around keeping alive a white elephant of a boarding academy, built for 300 but schooling about 50, and has adjusted the number of pastors and the size of its districts accordingly.

That, friends, is where our money goes.

A Stuck Church Structure

Our denominational leaders are largely honest and have the best of intentions. But in the last 100 years we've been able to make none but the most minor adjustments (i.e., a few conference and union mergers back in the late '70s, few of which worked very well) to our outmoded church structure. All the bureaucratic

levels Ellen White knew are still there, and no one seems able to subdue administrative office inflation for very long. One reason might be an overriding fear that without a strong hierarchy, churches could become independent and self-sustaining—the dreaded “congregationalism.”

The result is that a lot of our resources go into remote management instead of the franchises in the field. It isn't the money that's the main loss, though. It is that some very good pastors think of ministry as something to climb *out* of, into office work, where they generate paper, instructions, programs and seminars, and rack up frequent flier miles, for not much local result.

Sadly, with all that leadership, there's not much original thinking coming from above: the default recommendation is still that pastors do lots of eschatology-based event evangelism in the vein of George Vandeman and Mark Finley—a good program, but hardly cutting edge.

The profession of pastoral ministry won't disappear overnight. But trust me, it is changing. The NAD church that your children or grandchildren will go to when they grow up—if there's still a Seventh-day Adventist church in their community at all—is going to be pastored differently than their church today is.

And should they feel a call to ministry, don't expect they'll step into the same role my generation of pastors did. It may not be there to step into.

Loren Seibold is senior pastor of the Worthington Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Worthington, Ohio.

The NAD church that your children or grandchildren will go to when they grow up—if there's still a Seventh-day Adventist church in their community at all—is going to be pastored differently than their church today is.

AT

Babylon Is Fallen—Or Is It?

Adventism's Tussle With Culture

BY ALDEN THOMPSON



Are we at risk? Yes. But the risks of immersion may be no worse than the risks of isolation. Indeed, I will argue here that involvement with the larger world could force us to rediscover the Bible and enhance our mission.

Two angels from the book of Revelation have shouldered the burden of protecting Adventists from the dangers of modern culture. “Babylon is fallen!” shouts the second angel of Revelation 14. “Come out of her, my people,” trumpets the angel of Rev. 18:4, “so that you do not take part in her sins” (NRSV).

Those two voices have often pushed us deep into the wilderness in search of safe havens for our children and our schools.

But, alas, our schools introduce Adventist students to the exciting world of ideas and people. And now our children are in the thick of it. In the cities. In business. In commerce.

Are we at risk? Yes. But the risks of immersion may be no worse than the risks of isolation. Indeed, I will argue here that involvement with the larger world could force us to rediscover the Bible and enhance our mission. That would be good. Very good.

So here are five examples that focus on the question of how culture impinges on belief and practice. Two are from the Bible; three are from our day.

1. According to Ex. 23:19, Israelites were forbidden to boil a baby goat in its mother’s milk. Why? Culture.

2. According to Acts 15:28-29, the fledgling Christian Church decided to require its members to refrain from eating food offered to idols. Why? Culture.

3. In 2005 the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists voted to add a 28th Fundamental Belief, “Growing in Christ” (listed as #11 of the 28). Why? Culture.

4. In 1965, the year I graduated from Walla Walla College, dormitory students were required to attend 15 religious services a week. Count them: 15. Why? Culture.

5. In 2009, the year I retired from full-time teaching at Walla Walla University, unmarried students under the age of 25 were required to attend one religious service per week. Just one. Why? Culture.

We’ll return to those examples. But first let’s ask what they might mean for our understanding of “truth.” Adventists have always loved the “truth.” Indeed, in an earlier era, joining the church meant accepting the “truth,” leaving the church meant leaving the “truth.” And almost from the start we have referred to cutting-edge insight as “present truth.”

But can we know when truth is enduring and when it is shaped by culture? That’s one of the most challenging questions facing the church today. Yet the answer is simple: all truth that can be known by humans is shaped by culture. All. Ultimate or absolute truth is indeed untouched by culture. But Isa. 55:8-9 makes it clear that we cannot know ultimate or absolute truth: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (NRSV). Ellen White was equally clear: “God and heaven alone are infallible,” she declared.¹

When we say all that out loud, however, it sounds dangerously like “relativism,” an alarming word to many devout believers

because of the anything-goes relativism everywhere evident in today's popular culture. But if we can think in terms of a *biblical* relativism rather than an anything-goes relativism, we can begin to see how the diverse examples in Scripture simply illustrate how the practical truths found in God's word were lived out in different times and places. By comparing these biblical examples with each other, we gain a clearer understanding of what is enduring and what is simply a more local application of enduring principles.

Such a *biblical* relativism points toward "applied" truth rather than absolute truth and allows the diverse illustrations in Scripture to fall into place as part of a larger coherent picture. The touchstone for such an approach must always be the words and acts of Jesus, especially the principle of putting people first. In everything, said Jesus in Matt. 7:12, treat others as you would want to be treated. This is the law and the prophets. Paul agrees: "The whole law," he says, "is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal. 5:14, NRSV).

Focusing on people as Jesus and Paul did allows us to see "truth" in a much more practical light, enabling us to deal positively with those who may not share our personal perspectives. If we think we have "absolute" truth in Scripture, we too easily fall to quarreling, simply defending ourselves rather than understanding others.

Here Ellen White's comments are revealing. "A jealous regard for what is termed theological truth," she declares, "often accompanies a hatred of genuine

truth as made manifest in life."² The test for "genuine truth"? "Men may profess faith in the truth," she says, "but if it does not make them sincere, kind, patient, forbearing, heavenly-minded, it is a curse to its possessors, and through their influence it is a curse to the world."³

Put quite simply in another way, the "fruit of the Spirit" should be reflected in all our words and deeds: "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23, NRSV).

Now let's return to our five examples and ask questions about truth and culture. And here I assume that God and his people will always seek to follow the Pauline principle of being "all things to all people" so that they "might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). We should also note, however, that for very good reasons, God works through human messengers. Thus we will frequently have the opportunity to say (with Ellen White) that "such an expression [in the Bible] is not like God."⁴

1. Don't boil a baby goat in its mother's milk (Ex. 23:19). Why? Although the Bible does not explain this law, the best judgment of biblical scholars is that it spoke to the threat posed by degraded Canaanite fertility practices. In short, the Canaanites attempted to re-enact on earth the sexual orgies they imagined happening among their gods. The biblical law spoke to that specific cultural threat and was just what was needed at that time. In our day, we should speak to those symbols that imply horrible things about God and human beings. The

symbols will be different, but the need to address them will be just as urgent.

2. Not eating food offered to idols (Acts 15:28-29). Why? Food offered to idols wasn't an issue in the Old Testament. But in the New Testament era, emperor worship made it a very real issue indeed, symbolizing a loyalty to the emperor that took precedence over one's commitment to God. Thus, at the Jerusalem Council, the young Christian community spoke out against eating food offered to idols. The prohibition addressed a real cultural threat in their day.

But what is so intriguing about this issue is that the threat was being recast within the New Testament itself. In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul argues that the issue of food offered to idols only affects those who think of an idol as a living force. For mature believers, Paul declares, an idol is nothing. Yet even as Paul is gently recasting the action of the Jerusalem Council, he articulates another principle with far-reaching implications for us today. If someone else is still gripped by the potential power of idols, Paul says, never let your liberty lead them astray. In short, we act for their sake, not for ours.

If believers could adopt this "weaker brother" principle in addressing the issues of our day, it would transform life in the church and in the world. Yes, the issue of food offered to idols was driven by their culture, not by ours. But it is still a powerful example for us when we confront the competing symbols of our day. To live for another rather than for ourselves is the very heart of the gospel. And the New Testament has shown us how to do it.

3. “Growing in Christ,” the new Fundamental Belief #11, voted by the General Conference in 2005.

Interestingly enough, Fundamental Belief #11 nowhere reveals why it was so urgent. Without a knowledge of the driving cultural issue, it is likely to be puzzling rather than revealing. In short, it is needed, especially in Africa, where new believers can still be gripped by their previous experience with demonic

Individualism and freedom are significant values within Adventism. But our secular culture can commandeer those values and use them to destroy the community that gave them birth.

powers. So the church adopted a forceful declaration of Christ’s victory over evil: “By His death on the cross,” says the statement, “Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His early ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom.” The statement is true even if one does not understand the

cultural issue. But knowing about believers who are locked in life-and-death struggles with the forces of evil helps us recognize the statement as a powerful application of the gospel to a specific cultural need in our world today.

4 and 5. Required worships in Adventist schools. The comparison between the 15 required worship appointments in 1965 and the one solitary requirement in 2009 is a powerful testimony to the effect of modern culture on campus life. In an increasingly secular world, individualism and the love of

freedom have joined forces to make requirements of any kind a difficult sell.

What I find troubling, however, is not so much the change in the requirements for students, but the double standard of requiring of students what is no longer expected from the entire campus family. “They” need public worship; “we” don’t. From what I have seen, the dilemma haunts every Adventist campus.

So why should the campus family worship together? To preserve those values that a secular culture puts at risk. Heb. 10:23-25 presents the biblical argument for communal worship: “Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering,” pleads the New Testament author, “...not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (NRSV).

The biblical writer sensed intuitively what modern sociological analysis confirms—namely, that much of what we consider reasonable is often little more than the consensus of the people around us. In an increasingly secular world, our very existence as a believing community is at risk. Sociologist Peter Berger, for example, argues how important it is to “huddle together closely and continuously with one’s fellow believers” if one is to believe “what one wants to believe” in our modern world.⁵

C.S. Lewis, certainly no sociologist, recognized intuitively the multiple threats to our convictions. “If we wish to be rational, not now and then, but constantly, we must pray for the gift of Faith, for the power to go on believing not in the teeth of reason but in the teeth of lust and terror and jealousy and boredom and indifference... ”⁶

In that same essay, Lewis also offers this candid insight: “The society of unbelievers makes Faith harder,” he

observes, “even when they are people whose opinions, on any other subject, are known to be worthless.”⁷

Individualism and Freedom

Individualism and freedom are significant values within Adventism. But our secular culture can commandeer those values and use them to destroy the community that gave them birth. That’s a threat we should take very seriously.

In short, I long for that dynamic experience to which Acts 15 bears witness. In a world threatened by an alien culture, the believers met together, talked it through, prayed it through, until they could preface their conclusions with these words: “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28, NIV). Then they gave a list that addressed their culture, a list prepared under the guidance of the Spirit as they sought to be faithful witnesses in their world.

I pray that such a meeting of minds and hearts could happen more often in Adventism as we ponder the multiple threats posed by a pervasive secular culture. Babylon has fallen. But we still have work to do. Like Daniel, we are called to be in the court of the king, witnessing for our faith. We must engage our world as believers committed to the One who walked among people of every shape and flavor, declaring that the kingdom of God was at hand. The kingdom is still at hand. And his task is now ours.

¹Ellen White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 26, 1892 [also published in *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 37].

²Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 309.

³Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.

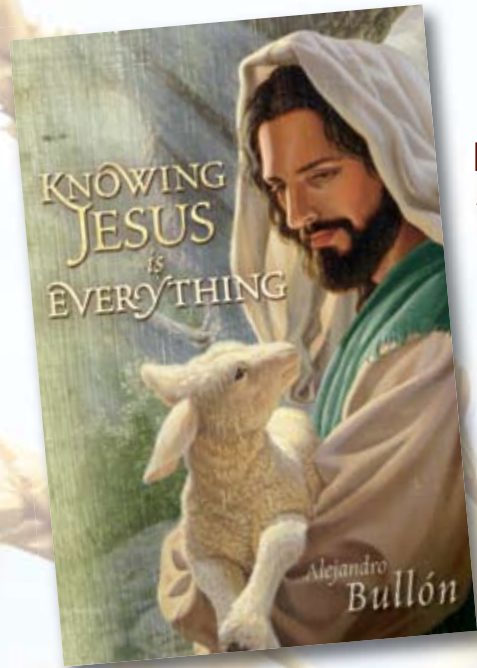
⁴Ellen White, Manuscript 24, 1886 [published in *Selected Messages*, Vol. 1, p. 21].

⁵Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969, 1990), p. 164.

⁶C.S. Lewis, “Religion: Reality or Substitute?” in *Christian Reflections* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995) p. 43.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 42.

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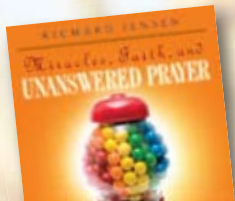
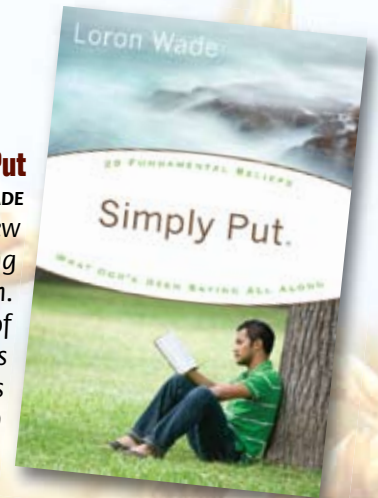
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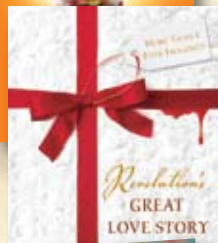
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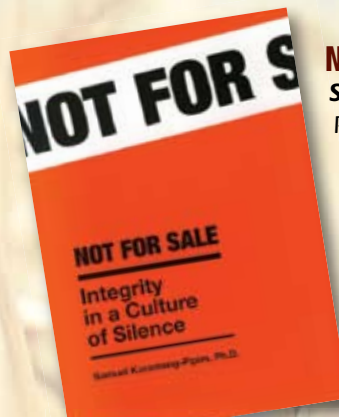
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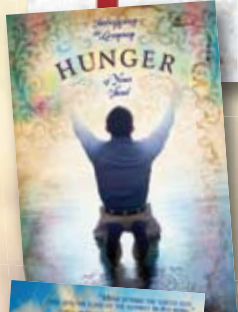
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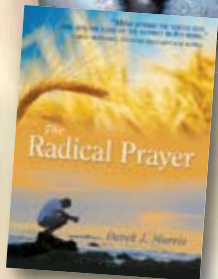
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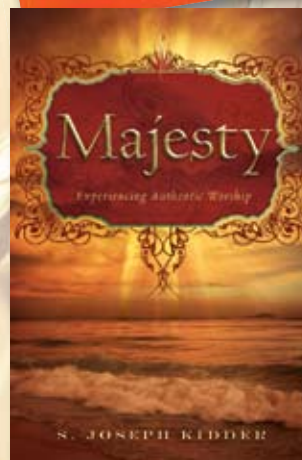
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Adventist Today Survey Provides Surprising Insights



To help editors and staff fine-tune *Adventist Today's* coverage for its broadening readership, *Adventist Today* this spring completed its first-ever comprehensive survey of reader attitudes.

Though readers agree on certain basic tenets—for example, that the magazine should remain independent of the corporate church in its ownership, editorial policy, and choice and manner of coverage—significant preferences seemed to track readers' age and will present a challenge to editors in the months and years ahead.

"All in all, the survey shows more points of strong agreement than disagreement among our readers, as to the direction of the magazine," said Edwin A. Schwisow, development director, who managed the direct-mail survey.

"Our core readers, however, belong primarily to two strongly opinionated generations of Adventists—generations born between 1925 and 1960. Those born in the 1920s and 1930s were affected in young adulthood by the *Questions on Doctrine* reforms that seemed to be directing the church toward the mainstream—a trend abruptly interrupted 25 years later as Boomers, again in young adulthood, saw the denomination's foremost evangelical preacher, Desmond Ford, pronounced unfit for the Adventist pulpit. These two groups represent two strong *Adventist Today* groups of readers, and they share many points of interest," said Schwisow.

"Readers born after 1961, however, have markedly different interests, and more research is necessary to determine how to best serve those in their 20s, 30s, and 40s. We have some early indicators in this survey that they are less interested in the church's policy-making and internal operations and far more captivated by material that helps them relate and

adjust, as Adventists, in a complex and crazy world. To serve these younger readers, while continuing to serve the generations more attuned to church policy and doctrinal matters, will undoubtedly take a deft editorial hand," he said.

A total number of 1,598 surveys were mailed out March 1, 2009, of which 30 percent had been returned by May 1 and were used in the analysis.

Exposés vs. Challenge of Traditional Thinking

The survey clearly reveals that topics such as "exposés of controversy in the Church" *diminish significantly in importance with the reader's age* and that those who highly rate "exposés of controversy in the Church" are generally some of the oldest readers, who also donate more generously to the nonprofit Adventist Today Foundation. This suggests that whereas in the past the exposure of mismanagement, injustice, and dishonesty in the Adventist culture has driven support for the magazine, this may not be as true in the future among younger readers, who rate such coverage lower on their hierarchy of preference.

To remain viable while finding receptor points with its middle-aged and younger readers, *Adventist Today* must remain active in seeking out and exposing problems in the Adventist culture, while providing material that stimulates readers to consider ways to manage overall change in the Adventist culture.

"Through this two-pronged editorial policy, the magazine will bring value to its donor base while expanding its influence and presumably its subscriptions among younger readers," Schwisow says.

Reason for Being

The survey also points out a significant, generation-driven dichotomy in perception of the "reason for being" of the magazine. Although all age groups view the magazine as primarily "an independent, analytical, Adventist source of information," beyond that one area of agreement, the younger readers tend to see the magazine as "representing NOW the ideas and issues the corporate church will be forced to face TOMORROW," a view not shared strongly by older readers.

"Again, we see a challenge to *Adventist Today* to speak to the needs of its base while providing younger readers with a reason to remain loyal to a magazine that provides the guiding light they expect," Schwisow said.

Article Preferences

Seasoned readers uniformly saw "articles about how and why the church grows, or doesn't grow" as the most relevant and rewarding in the publication, whereas readers under 45 years of age saw "coverage of the Adventist culture, how we react and educate our kids, and how we can more effectively observe our Adventism" as most important.

Younger readers, however, also place "articles about how and why the church grows" fairly high on the list, indicating at least some consensus that such articles are of encompassing interest to all readers.

All age groups also placed "coverage of decisions young people are making" high on the list, as well as "coverage of the church's world mission program."

Noted, however, was a distinctive *decrease in interest* among youngest readers for "coverage of financial concerns in the church," an area of interest quite high among older readers.

Web Presence

All age groups decisively reject the prospect of the magazine appearing only on the Internet. Young and old alike favor continuation of the paper-and-ink version of the publication.

Think Tank Prospects

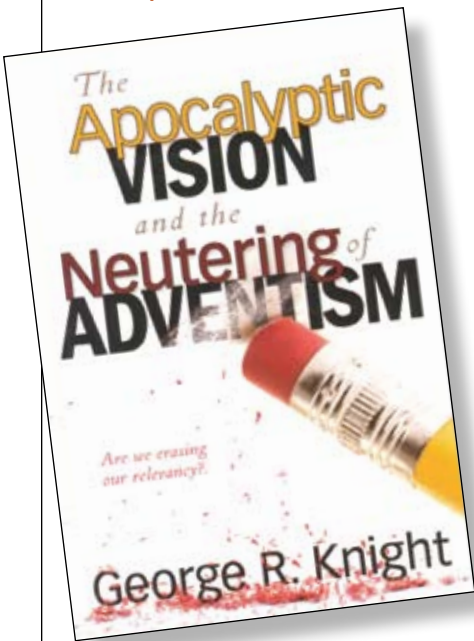
There was general support for the concept of *Adventist Today* launching a "think tank" to help it prepare more deeply researched material, though all voiced caution that the "think tank" should proceed at a deliberate and cautious pace.

Continued on page 31

Neo-Apocalyptic Adventism: Vision or Nightmare?

George R. Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2008), 107 pages.

Reviewed by Ervin Taylor, emeritus professor of anthropology at the University of California, Riverside.



Summary

The author of this slim volume proclaims that it is a “tract for the times and a wake-up call based on the gut-level feeling [of the author] that [Seventh-day] Adventism is losing its way” (p. 106). On the cover, a question is posed: “Are we [the Adventist Church] erasing our relevancy?” The message of the book was widely touted in official Adventist circles and was a “Book of the Month” at Adventist Book Centers.

The author, Dr. George Knight, is a distinguished retired professor of church history at the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University. He suggests that many younger Adventist ministers and members have never heard traditional

Adventism’s “apocalyptic vision” (p. 106). He also insists that many older ministers cannot or will not preach it, and many members don’t believe it.

The central thesis of this 107-page book, which the author says is “the most important of his career” (back cover), is that “if Adventism loses its apocalyptic vision, it has lost its reason for existing as either a church or a system of education (p. 11). He is convinced that “If Adventism’s apocalyptic big picture isn’t valid, the most sensible thing is to shut up shop, go home, and do something meaningful with our lives” (p. 54). He suggests that “when a church becomes politically correct in all its claims and when it loses a *proper* [his emphasis] amount of sanctified arrogance regarding its message and mission, it manages to neuter itself, even if it continues to brag about its potency” (p. 16). He further insists that “Adventism became strong by proclaiming that it had a prophetic message for our time. And it is that message repackaged for the twenty-first century that will give Adventism strength both in the present and the future” (p. 19). He argues that “*Adventism cannot escape the dilemma between being meaningful or being neutered. It can’t have both.*” [italics in the original] (p. 19). The general context for these statements appears to be two of his firmly held beliefs, which form the basis of what he characterizes as a neoapocalyptic Adventism. The first is that there is not any contradiction or conflict between preaching the apocalyptic vision of Adventism and the Christian gospel, since he insists that “apocalyptic is gospel” (p. 11). The second is his conviction that “Adventism has only one real theological problem—Jesus hasn’t returned.” (p. 59).

The book begins with the question

“Why be Adventist?” The author says that some “can’t help it” because they were “born that way.” For others it is “an addiction.” He informs his readers that he was neither born Adventist nor is he addicted to it. For him, “[t]here have to be good reasons . . . to be an Adventist—or even remain one” (p. 7). To the author, being born an Adventist is neither a “good reason” to be an Adventist nor to remain one.

The author explains that, as a teenager, he was a non-Christian agnostic. Then, over the strenuous objections of his father, he converted to Adventism at age 19 as the result of a series of evangelistic meetings. Knight relates that this meant “an uprooting from job, friends, and family when [he] accepted Adventism” (p. 9).

Leaving the Church

He then describes how he obtained three academic degrees in Adventist theology and became an Adventist pastor. After experiencing a crisis of faith, he left the Adventist ministry and the Adventist church. While wandering “spiritually in a ‘far country’” (p. 8), he obtained an Ed.D. degree in educational philosophy from the University of Houston.¹ By this time, he “had concluded that philosophy was bankrupt in terms of answers to life’s most basic questions.” He indicates he had entered on his studies hoping to find the “‘real meaning’ of life that had eluded me in my Adventist experience” (p. 8).

His major professor, who is characterized as a non-observant Jewish agnostic, was the catalyst for his understanding that “all religious communities consist of two sorts of members—believers and cultural adherents.” In Knight’s view, cultural adherents belong to a religious community, but they really “don’t have to

believe” its theology. To him, that is the equivalent of “playing church” (p. 9).

The author’s return to the Adventist Church came as the result of an experience with an individual whom he describes as his “first Bible teacher.” As a result of that encounter, he states that “14 years after I had become an Adventist, I became a Christian. To put it another way, my Adventism got baptized” (pp. 9-10). He reconnected with Adventism, he says, not because “Adventism’s theology was perfect...but because its theology was closer to the Bible than that of any other church that I was aware of. In short, I was and am an Adventist by conviction rather than by choice” (p. 10). However, he believes that traditional Adventism has been a victim of “beastly apocalyptic preaching” and has “suffered from overexposure to the ad-nauseam bickering by some Adventists over apocalyptic minutia” (p. 11).

Why Have an Adventist Church?

He asks: “Why have a Seventh-day Adventist Church? What function or use does it have? Is it important or even necessary? Is it merely another denomination that turns out to be a bit stranger than some of the others because of its “hang-up” with the seventh day and certain dietary issues?” He notes that such questions “raise complex issues... [that] ought to stand at the center of discussion” (p. 12). He insists that the “plain fact is that many, including those raised in the church, really have no grasp of why they are Adventist or even if it makes any real difference... Adventism today has the highest educated clergy and laity in its history. Yet all too many of us are afraid to affirm much of anything, unless it’s our doubts” (p. 58).

Knight sees three types of Adventists. At one end of a continuum are “Adventist Adventists,” who view everything taught by the church as being uniquely Adventist. In the middle are “Christian Adventists” who find “meaning in the

evangelical framework that we share with other Christians.” At what he calls the other “extreme end” are Adventist “Christian Christians” who are “overjoyed to be evangelical and shy away from Ellen White, the eschatological implications of the Sabbath, the heavenly sanctuary, and so on.” He does not state explicitly where he positions himself, but he says that “balance is the goal” (p. 13).

Standing for Something

Before proceeding in his analysis, Dr. Knight is especially concerned with pointing out “the obvious truth that Jesus of Nazareth was not politically correct in His statements...He stood for something...He believed that there was error—that some people and ideas were just plain wrong...” Knight insists that Jesus embodied and expressed “sanctified arrogance” (pp. 13-14). Given that reality, the author thinks that “Jesus would not fit well into our twenty-first-century culture (including many of our churches)” (p. 13).

“Early Adventism,” he insists, “suffered largely from the same ‘cultural defects’ that Jesus did. It believed that it had *the* truth or present truth for its day” (p. 14). Early Adventists “were impelled by an apocalyptic vision straight out of the heart of the book of Revelation” and held “some politically incorrect understandings regarding *truth* and a sanctified arrogance that reflected on the shortcomings of other branches of Christianity...” (pp. 14-15).

In contrast, the author suggests that “Adventism in the early twenty-first century, especially in developed nations, has largely moved beyond such ‘primitive’ and unsophisticated ideas. ... Rich and increased with politically correct assumptions, [First-World Adventism has] lost that sanctified arrogance that made us believe that we had a message that the whole world *must* hear” (p. 15). The result, he argues, is “[s]hrinkage in the [non-immigrant segments of the] North American Division (and other developed

world sectors of the church).” Later he notes “shrinkage among born-in American members...in the North American Division” as well as the aging of these populations (p. 54). Part of the reason for this, he argues, is that “Adventism has to a large extent lost the apocalyptic foundation of its message” (p. 15).

To illustrate his point, he relates an experience at a “symposium of Seventh-day Adventist religion scholars who were addressing the issue of why they personally were Seventh-day Adventists.” Despite testimonies “from across the theological spectrum,” all of the presentations Knight thinks “shot wide of the mark.” Why was this? To Dr. Knight, it was because “the reasons largely centered on cultural and relationship issues... a lot of warm fuzzies of religion.” For “insiders,” he suggests, this approach is “O.K.” But “as an outsider to the club of the born-in-the-church community, I saw absolutely no reason to become Seventh-day Adventist from what I heard...” If Adventism is just a bunch of “warm fuzzies” then, he argues, “there is no really good reason to be an Adventist unless you were born that way or are so socially and culturally impoverished that you lack other satisfying alternatives” (p. 16).

Being Neutered

The author compares the loss of an apocalyptic emphasis in the Adventist Church to the process of neutering, “even self-neutering” (p. 16). To make the point most explicitly, the word “neutering” is placed in large type as the first line on the text of the outside back cover. In his view, the best example of this in the modern world is “Protestant liberalism, which by the 1920s had divested itself of such ‘primitive’ ideas as the virgin birth, Christ’s resurrection, the substitutionary atonement, miracles, the Second Advent, creationism, and of course, a divinely inspired Bible, [the kind of Bible that]... had information from beyond the human realm that could be obtained from no other source but divine revelation”

(p. 17). Liberal Protestants “sought to be relevant to their culture” (p. 19). In contrast, in the view of Dr. Knight, classical Adventism “became strong by proclaiming that it had a prophetic message for our time.”

“Adventism, whether it likes it or not,” the author insists, “is firmly rooted in the apocalyptic visions of Daniel and Revelation” (p. 20). In his view, three elements in Adventism have “neutered” its apocalyptic orientation: (1) “beastly preaching” (2) a de-emphasis on the importance of the blood or sacrificial atonement of Jesus as the slain “Lamb of God,” and (3) a de-emphasis on the “wrath of the Lamb” who is also a “Lion” who “will not forever tolerate... sinful attitudes and actions...” (p. 25). To him, “beastly preaching [is the type of preaching that]... fails to put Christ and the love of God at the center of every message” (p. 21). If you “[t]ake away the Lamb who died on our behalf... all you have is ethics” (his italics) (p. 23). He combines all of these concerns by concluding that “*An Adventism without the Lion [i.e., the wrath of God] is a neutered Adventism, just as a Christianity without the slaughtered Lamb [i.e., the substitutionary atonement] is a neutered Christianity... A neutered understanding of sin leads to a neutered Lamb and a neutered Lion... they add up to neutered preaching and religious meaninglessness*” (his italics) (p. 25). He calls on the Adventist Church “to move beyond beastly preaching and other forms of neutering the apocalyptic vision and toward a renewed examination of the apocalyptic vision in relation to Adventism and the world for the twenty-first century” (p. 26).

In a section of the book devoted to his analysis of apocalyptic prophecy and Adventist history, the author asserts that, from its earliest years, “Seventh-day Adventism has viewed itself as a called out people with a prophetic mission. Adventism has never seen

itself as just another denomination. It is that understanding that has given the Adventist movement power. While the Adventist denomination is evangelical, it has never been merely evangelical. Rather, it has been evangelical with a prophetic message for the world centered on the Lamb of God and the apocalyptic Lion of the tribe of Judah” (p. 28).

Prophetic Interpretation

As one of the best-informed students of Adventist history, Dr. Knight is particularly aware of the central role the conventional Adventist interpretation of the 2300-day prophecy in Daniel had in the development of traditional Adventist theological ethos and identity. Thus, he spends many pages seeking to demonstrate that all of the theology developed in classical Adventism around the 2300-day prophecy, the pre-Advent Investigative Judgment, the importance of Sabbath observance, the entire Great Controversy worldview or metanarrative (pp. 28-51), Adventism’s historicist position as a means of interpreting prophecy, the Year-for-a-Day Principle, and the cosmic relevance of 1844 and Sanctuary metaphors (pp. 59-76—these doctrines, if all properly understood, represent without question God’s message for today.

Interestingly, in a surprisingly brief discussion of Adventism’s most questionable traditional sectarian position, the concept of “The Remnant,” Dr. Knight is careful to say “[m]any have concluded on the basis of Revelation 12:17 and 14:6-12 that Seventh-day Adventism is the remnant church.” He does not say if he belongs to the “many.” He notes the conflict and “tension” between the SDA baptismal vow and the wording contained in the 28 fundamental beliefs (pp. 77-78). Does he believe that the institutional SDA denomination is “The Remnant Church” of Revelation? Strangely, he does not share his opinion on this matter with his readers.

To provide Adventism with a 21st-century, updated version of its 19th-century apocalyptic vision, he insists that one problem is that “most of us suffer from... straight-line thinking.” This causes many within Adventism to become “scoffers” because of the delay in the second coming (p. 80). His antidote for this problem is to realize that “the biblical picture is not one of gentle continuity into the future but of crisis and radical discontinuity in a rapid time frame that ushers in the final crisis” (pp. 80-81). While insisting that “[n]ot being a prophet, I don’t know much about the future,” (p. 83) he expresses great confidence that the “end of straight-line thinking and living awaits only a sufficient crisis and its accompanying panic” (p. 85).

Most Dangerous Delusion

According to the author, living Adventism’s neoapocalyptic vision in the 21st century involves, first of all, not being seduced by the “most dangerous delusion... that time will go on indefinitely. Tomorrow can be a dangerous word. It is against this attitude that Christ warns us in the first of His five parables on watchfulness and readiness... Readiness for the return of Christ does not mean passively waiting for the events. Rather, readiness is responsible activity that produces results for the kingdom of heaven—results that the Master can see and approve of” (pp. 92, 94). The author is clear in his view that following the “example of Jesus in social justice, feeding the poor, and so on” should not be the “primary mission of the church” (pp. 98-99). While Jesus “did much for the poor and suffering throughout His ministry, He realized that the world’s problems would never be solved in that way” (p. 99). “*Jesus the hope of the world is neoapocalypticism in a nutshell*. All else flows out from Him” (p. 105).

Dr. Knight leaves the best story that most directly illustrates his point for

near the end of his book. He recites a passage from the exploits of the fictional English detective, Sherlock Holmes. On a camping trip, Holmes awakens Watson in the middle of the night and asks, “What do you see?” Watson “waxes eloquent about the beauty of the stars, the shape of the Big Dipper, and the magnitude of the Milky Way. ‘You fool!’ Sherlock shouts, ‘Someone has stolen the tent!’” Dr. Knight then intones: “That story reminds me of twenty-first-century Adventism. We have lost something of crucial importance, yet we sit gazing at the stars. But without that something we have a neutered message” (p. 86).

Knight’s Own Perspective

The author is a talented, highly motivated, and prolific Adventist writer with at least 10 books published by Adventist presses to his credit dealing with a number of different topics—historical, educational, and, most recently, devotional. This reviewer has read a number of them—mostly those dealing with the history of the Adventist Church. Even though his area of doctoral studies was neither theology nor history,¹¹ Dr. Knight has made major contributions to scholarship in his series of books on the development of Adventist theology, history, and identity.

A well-respected historian now at Vanderbilt University, Paul Conkin, in his widely cited volume *American Originals: Homemade Varieties of Christianity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), notes that Knight’s *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (1993) reflects “the views of a very sophisticated Adventist scholar.” We might note that in his study of the indigenous American religions, Conkin characterizes Seventh-day Adventists, along with Jehovah’s Witnesses, as representing the uniquely American versions of “Apocalyptic Christianity.”

In reading a number of his other works, it was difficult for this reviewer to pin down exactly Knight’s own perspective on Adventist theology. With this book, it is different; he comes clean. The author reveals with great gusto his own personal “take” not only on Christianity in general but the Adventist brand of Christianity. For example, to him, “*Christianity is an abnormal religion. God wants us to be abnormal by this world’s standards*” (his italics) (p. 21). That certainly is clear enough. As for Adventism, the picture he paints of significant elements of contemporary First-World Adventism having evolved away from an interest in apocalyptic prophecy is essentially accurate. Some, including this reviewer, would see this development as the result of a natural maturation process that should be welcomed and nurtured. In stark contrast, Knight reacts very negatively to such developments within North American and other parts of First-World Adventism.

The author appears to be speaking primarily from the perspective and emotional experience of a convert to Adventism—actually as a double convert—even though these events for him occurred many decades ago. In that context, his theological perspective might be considered to be an excellent example of where theology is primarily biography recast in cosmic or metaphysical terms.

To Knight, those Adventists who are born into this faith community and whose identity with respect to Adventism is primarily sociological or cultural are, at best, second-class Adventists—or worse. They are, in his words, “playing at church.” To him, these Adventists “can’t help it” because they either they were “born that way” or they are so “socially and culturally impoverished that [they] lack other satisfying alternatives.” He is dismissive of Adventists whose identity, to quote him, is “largely centered on cultural and relationship issues.” These reasons are to him “a lot of warm fuzzies.”

Attempt at Atonement?

These statements make sense if one is a convert to this faith community, and especially if one is converted, then unconverted, and then reconverted to it. The difference, of course, is that in his case, following his reconversion to Adventism, a large part of his subsequent professional career was spent in examining the historical roots of his acquired and then reacquired faith community. In doing this he uncovered some, shall we say, unpleasant episodes and very odd personalities. Perhaps this book might be viewed as, in part, his atonement for all of the embarrassing or, at the very least, problematical things he discovered and wrote about in disclosing the history of his adopted/readopted religious tradition.

His attitude toward Adventists who do not share his views as to the basis of their adherence to Adventist Christianity is illustrated by his brief summary of a conversation he had with a “certain Adventist intellectual” some years ago:

“After talking over Adventism a bit, he wondered out loud how someone as smart as I could believe all that stuff [traditional sectarian Adventist theology and particularly its eschatology]. I responded with the suggestion that I didn’t see why someone as intelligent as he was would remain in Adventism if he didn’t believe it” (p. 53).

Perhaps it is a part of Dr. Knight’s insistence on not being “politically correct” and even exhibiting a “proper” amount of “sanctified arrogance” that he is willing to express so openly such a little regard, bordering on contempt, for a large group of his fellow church members in North America and other parts of the First World. He should be commended for being honest and open in his expression of opinion. This is certainly refreshing in the Adventist

subculture. However, to some, including this reviewer, his attitude is viewed, at best, as disappointing, or, at worst, simply arrogant.

Since Dr. Knight sees virtue in expressing “sanctified arrogance,” this reviewer will concur by noting clearly and directly that his comments might remind a reader of the types of attitudes that one would be more likely to associate with someone who was a founding member of the Adventist Theological Society or who believes that the opinions and works of Colin Standish and Russell Standish make positive contributions to the contemporary life of the Adventist Church.

The Center of Discussion

On the other hand, I would think that many educated North American Adventists who were born into the church would very much agree that his question “Why have a Seventh-day Adventist Church?” is an important question to address. It does indeed, as he says, “raise complex issues... [that] ought to stand at the center of discussion.” If a reader takes Dr. Knight literally, he appears to be arguing that the one and only valid reason for the 21st-century Adventist Church to exist is to advocate boldly, with some relatively minor exceptions, a 19th-century theological system created in the context of a uniquely American-denominated experience dominated by a particular take on apocalyptic prophecy endorsed by the visions of Ellen G. White. I hope I am wrong and have misunderstood or misinterpreted his statements, but that is what he seems to be saying.

If a reader is interested in considering a much more hopeful and positive approach to answering the question “Why be an Adventist?” one might begin by consulting Richard Rice’s *Believing, Behaving, Belonging: Finding New Love for the Church* (2002). Dr. Rice’s book can be

read as antidote to the retrogressive and negative tone of Dr. Knight’s book. Rice provides a forward-looking, progressive vision for a mature 21st-century Adventist Christian church, not the nightmare scenario of a retrogressive sect-type Adventism caught up in a 19th-century time warp.

A Tragedy

If the Adventist Church as an institution seeks to implement the positions espoused in this book even more than they already have, this will, in the view of this reviewer, result in consigning 21st-century Adventism to continuing to be regarded as a small, marginalized sect as far as mainstream Western civil and religious society is concerned. But that is perhaps precisely what Dr. Knight has in mind!

As several of Dr. Knight’s own histories have noted, it has only been five to six decades since Adventism in North America and in other parts of the developed world—such as Europe and Australia—began the process of emerging from its fundamentalist-oriented sectarian cultural isolation. Dr. Knight’s personal prescription for the Adventist future seems to be largely to return Adventism to where it was in the 1920s and 1930s minus of course, the “beastly preaching” and “cultural Adventists.”

In the view of this reviewer, that would be a tragedy of major proportions. Fortunately for First World 21st-century Adventism, any such process, even if actively pursued by certain reactionary Adventist political interest groups, will not be able to halt the essentially inevitable movement toward a post-fundamentalist, non-sectarian Adventism among large groups of educated Adventists. Any focused attempt by backward-looking administrative clerical elements to impose or reimpose the form of classical sectarian Adventism advocated by Knight would most likely be eventually deflected and dissipated

at major Adventist educational and medical centers. However, the types of collateral damage that might be inflicted on First-World Adventism as the result of reigniting another round of Adventist “cultural wars” is difficult to anticipate. One wonders about the degree to which Dr. Knight has really thought through the larger implications of what he is so strongly advocating?

If he wishes to project or model a vigorous 21st-century Adventism that will avoid creating a new round of Adventist internal conflicts, this reviewer suggests that Dr. Knight might wish to look to the future rather than the past and envision a broad spectrum of “Adventisms” at peace with each other or, at least, agreeing to disagree without exchanging invectives. This 21st-century First-World Adventism would include a traditional Adventism within which Dr. Knight would be comfortable, a progressive Adventism, a historical Adventism, an evangelical Adventism, and a number of other Adventist subsets—not an Adventism characterized and dominated by a single “repackaged” 19th-century prophetic scenario using 21st-century terminology and examples. We can already read about that single monolithic traditional Adventism (minus the 21st-century terminology and examples) in the excellent history books previously written by Dr. Knight.

¹ The information concerning his Ed.D. degree from the University of Houston is not noted in the book. Dr. Knight states only (p. 8) that he “studied philosophy for my doctorate.” This reviewer, recalling a statement once made by Dr. Knight, inquired of the University of Houston and was informed that the title of his dissertation was “An Analysis of the Educational Theory of George S. Counts.” George Counts (1889-1974) was an early 20th-century American progressive educator, educational sociologist, and political activist. Counts focused his studies on the relationships between social conditions of students and schools and educational outcome. Counts believed that primary and secondary schools in the United States should be vehicles to advance radical social change.

7 QUESTIONS
for...Ron Gladden

By Marcel Schwantes



Ron Gladden served the Seventh-day Adventist Church for 27 years in five unions as full-time evangelist, pastor, ministerial director, and director of the Adventist Church Planting Center. In August 2004, Ron broke away from the denomination and

founded Mission Catalyst—an association of outreach-focused, grace-oriented independent churches that embrace the core beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and proclaim a common view of Biblical truth.

Several conference-employed pastors have traded team jerseys and joined his growing network. Like Gladden, they are attracted by the possibilities of leaving behind what many consider a controlling top-heavy organizational bureaucracy for a flat organization with very little overhead, so that tithes go to the front lines to produce maximum kingdom impact rather than to purchase the next expensive office copier machine for the conference president. They are inspired by the possibilities of exchanging ineffective traditions and standards of the 1800s for a vibrant first-century Biblical spirituality delivered in 21st-century language and custom. And by crossing over to the greener grass, they understand there may be consequences, like the possibility of ordination credentials being voided. Gladden's own credentials were revoked by the North Pacific Union Conference in 2007.

In 2007, Mission Catalyst birthed a congregation dubbing itself as “non-denominational.” The Vancouver, Wash.-based Epikos (which translated from the Greek is “word” or “story”) had Gladden on staff as its directional leader but had no lead pastor. So they went out and got one of the Adventist Church's brightest young stars: Sam McKee, formerly pastor of Sunnyvale Seventh-day Adventist Church in Northern California.

Author and church growth/evangelism expert Russell Burrill stated in a letter to you a few years ago that by going independent, you purposefully started a new denomination. Was that your intention from the beginning?

Not at all. No one today is starting a new denomination. Instead, networks of churches are springing up that exist to (a) facilitate the evangelistic success of the local church, and (b) coordinate global mission initiatives. Some people labeled Mission Catalyst as a denomination, but it inaccurately characterizes our ministry. We are, in fact, a network of churches.

A religious denomination is a system of governance that exercises a tighter degree of control or authority over a collection of congregations than do other systems of governance, such as associations or networks. The Mission Catalyst governance is minimal.

Five years later, what response have you seen from Adventist administrators to what you're doing?

There was a surprisingly vigorous outpouring of opposition from a few administrators during the early days. Other administrators expressed their support and let us know they were praying for our success. Some even sent us money—and still do. As time rolled forward, the criticism shifted onto our new congregations. We haven't heard much from the critical side for quite some time, but I expect they are reading this interview with a bit of interest!

The Mission Catalyst dream is quite ambitious. It's stated to be “a healthy, happy, unselfish church in every city in America.” How many churches are in the network so far, how many do you plan to have, and by what year?

The gospel commission seemed ambitious to those who heard Jesus give it. They offered what they had, and *Wow!*, God blessed! How could the Mission Catalyst dream be anything less than a church in every city? We have 15 churches in the network so far. We're not sure how many years it will take, but we won't stop until Jesus comes.

What happens when a pastor who is part of the Mission Catalyst (MC) network decides his vision of ministry and that of the MC organization are incompatible?

We wish them well, and we pray for their success. We are always disappointed, and we probably feel a bit like Paul when he and Barnabas went their separate ways (Acts 15:36-41).

Is there a “star church” in your network you'd like to brag about? What have they done right? On the flip side, have you had failed churches, and if so, what were the lessons learned there?

Epikos Church in Vancouver, Wash., started with six people in a living room and has been worshipping weekly for nine months. We are in awe at how many nonchurched people the church is reaching. At a recent service, total attendance was 112, only nine of whom attended any Adventist church before Epikos started. The stories are amazing. I wish you could meet Silas, whom we met on the football field and who was baptized last month. Or Steve, full-time worship pastor at a mega church, who volunteers each week because he believes in our mission. (Check out the video stories at epikoschurch.com.)

Have we had failed churches? Yes. We are a free-market system, which means that some will fail while others hit the ball out of the park.

Who monitors theological orthodoxy in Mission Catalyst? How would MC decide if a pastor's or congregation's theological stance was too aberrant to continue in the MC organization?

We haven't created the position of theological monitor yet! When a church joins the network, we insist on agreement with our doctrinal summary, and we urge the churches to embed their doctrines in their bylaws. None of our churches has drifted theologically. By the way, we don't see our unique teachings as a barrier to growth. When there is no label on the church up front, people are totally open to new perspectives on God and Biblical truth.

If restructuring and mission revision ever occurred in the Adventist Church, what direction would you take Mission Catalyst at that point, given your support for both the Adventist message and movement? Would MC's work be stronger if fully tied with the church?

Wow, you are optimistic! That's a pretty big “If.” Here is the bottom line: Nothing matters more than the mission. When a local church has freedom, flexibility, and funds, it can achieve its maximum redemptive potential. Any relationship with the denomination would necessarily preserve the primacy of the local church, where actual lives are changed.

Visit our website at www.atoday.com to read the exclusive follow-up interview with Epikos pastor Sam McKee.

Adventist Man

Survey continued from page 24

Quarterly Issues

Respondents from all age groups generally supported the decision to move from bimonthly to larger, quarterly issues.

Financial Assistance

Those who responded to the survey also included donations totaling \$22,180. "This figure exceeds what we had expected, given our nation's depressed economic condition," says Schwisow. "I am exceedingly encouraged by the sacrifice and loyalty this demonstrates. It's a privilege to be associated with such a supportive group of readers. We need to continue to build the magazine to its full potential, and with this kind of support, I know this will indeed occur in months and years to come."

Summary

Adventist Today readers are primarily in their 60s, 70s, and 80s—which reflects the overall aging of the Adventist Church in North America—and *Adventist Today's* core readership lies within this group.

While the readership may be very attached to the magazine and very supportive per capita, a strongly homogeneous readership also demands certain kinds of coverage that may have fewer receptor points among younger Adventist readers.

Adventist Today must continue to fulfill its mandate as a canary in the mines of the Adventist culture, while it establishes new ways to engage the interest of a wider group of younger Adventists who are struggling to adapt and remain in the Adventist culture. Clearly, *Adventist Today* possesses the ability and vision to accomplish both, but doing so will require the patience and understanding of its core support group.

Adventist Today must address issues of importance to a broad group of readers, which makes the decision to publish larger, quarterly issues a propitious one. More pages mean more receptor points for the interests of more readers. The decision to become a quarterly publication should translate into increasing general interest in the magazine, and potentially more subscriptions. To the extent that new subscribers are younger and well-educated, the publication stands an excellent chance of expansion, growth, and solvency in an improving economy.

G is for ? Paypal or Papal Pope or Antichrist

What does the middle initial of Ellen White's name stand for?

That mysterious "G" stands for "Gould," a name with Anglo-Saxon roots and having to do with someone who works in "gold" or someone who is as precious as "gold." Mrs. White's "bling" was shortened to "G" to appeal to a more urban audience.

What's the difference between PayPal and Papal?

An excellent question. While Papal refers to a religious system that people give money to, PayPal refers to an online banking service that people give money to. However, it is important to note that according to traditional Adventist eschatology, there will come a day when if you aren't willing to give to anything Papal, then you are going to pay, pal.

When is it the right time to reveal to someone that the Pope is the Antichrist?

Great follow-up question. As a rule, before you even meet somebody. Take the example of Pastor Raphael Perez, founder of The Eternal Gospel Church in W. Palm Beach, Fla. His mission to spread the Third Angel's Message has led the church to post 25 billboards across this great nation proclaiming the Eternal Gospel—namely, that the Pope is the Antichrist and Sunday is his Mark. Outraged sinners convicted of this message have voiced their complaints inside and outside the General Conference; but one



need only direct them to John 12:32, where Jesus clearly pleads with us to post billboards exposing the man of sin and his Sunday observance when he says, "And I [Jesus], when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (RSV).

Does raising hands in church lead to speaking in tongues?

Only if you're lucky. But typically Scripture uses it in connection with surrender and worship to God, not as a lightning rod for tongues of fire.

The First Adventist Man Has Retired

We can now reveal his name: Chris Blake, a contributing editor to *Adventist Today* and a professor at Union College. The new *Adventist Man*, for his safety, is continuing the tradition of anonymity.

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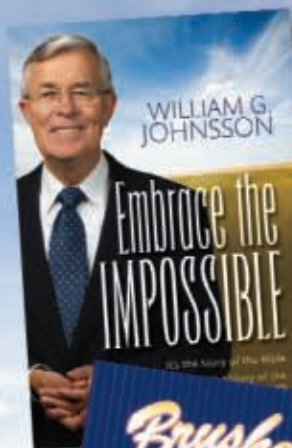


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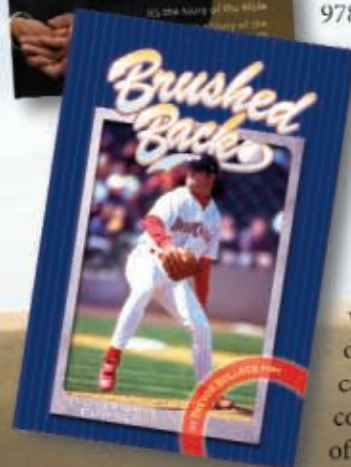


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