

Saving \$100 Million By Cutting Unions is Only Hype

The article "North America—Can Cutting Unions Save \$100 Million?" (*Spectrum*, Vol. 23, No. 5) propagates the same misguided savings hype as does the original proposal, upon which it is obviously based. What few seem to take account of is that, in the Lake Union's case, at least—which is typical—over 33 percent of the tithes received by the union is typically appropriated back to the conferences and schools in addition to an even greater amount from non-tithe sources. Even if the proposed operating budget for the new re-

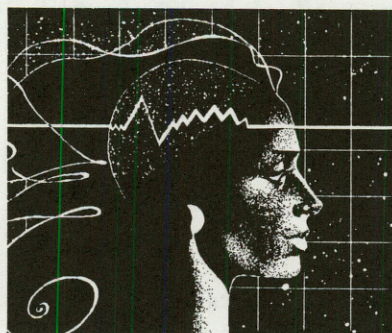
gional offices were realistic, the lost appropriations would seriously diminish the proposed savings.

I feel that a serious study on restructuring is probably long overdue. However, publishing statements such as "[it] would leave more than \$20 million each year that is not available to the local conferences"—which is untrue—raises unrealistic expectations that have no hope of being realized.

Harvey P. Kilsby
Lake Union Conference
Berrien Springs, Michigan

Defense of Hypnotism as Any Altered State of Consciousness

Readers react to hypnotism, cutting unions, female metaphors for God, and Scriven on the Atonement.



I wish Dr. Provonsha (*Spectrum*, Vol. 23, No. 4) was more aware that the meaning of the term *hypnosis* has undergone an evolution of major consequence.

First of all, one would have to

use a current definition and understanding of what current hypnotists mean when they discuss hypnosis. For example, quoting Ellen White about a physician's use of "drugs" is to be hopelessly irrelevant. Her use of the word, which was uniformly condemnatory, excluded any knowledge of anesthetics, antibiotics, antihistamines, or any of the psychoactive medicines we now call "drugs." Using references written in her day as valid commentary about drugs today would be anachronistic.

Second, one should at least tend to accept the results of valid re-

search, most of which has been done in the last 50 years, in understanding the nature of hypnosis, as well as the effects and capabilities of hypnotherapy.

Current practitioners of hypnotherapy regard any "altered state of consciousness," such as is produced by prayer, listening to music, Christian style meditation, listening to parables—in short, any indirect manner of communication—as being a use of hypnosis. (Hence Provonsha's reference to Lifton's discussion of brainwashing, which he equates with hypnosis, as virtually inseparable from what is commonly found in education, politics, and religion.)

Consequently, since contemporary specialists in hypnosis would affirm that the use of prayer, music, and parables (called "therapeutic metaphors," in current terms) increases suggestibility, we would find these practices therefore under the condemnation of Provonsha's first paragraph. By today's definitions, Jesus regularly used a number of hypnotic techniques.

We should not be contributing to the exaggerated fear of "mind controlling mind." None of us favors this happening, but it happens mostly without hypnosis. People are shamelessly manipulated to their own hurt every day all around us. But what we need to know, and that which would resolve our paranoia in this regard, is that it can only happen to us if we are willing collaborators. (The current fear-mongers are creating an anxiety that we might be hypnotized against our will and without knowing it!) Most of the fears are generated by misuse of quotations from Ellen G. White. Here is her own answer: Even Satan, with all his skills, "cannot control minds unless they are yielded to his control. The will must consent, faith must let go its hold upon Christ, before Satan can

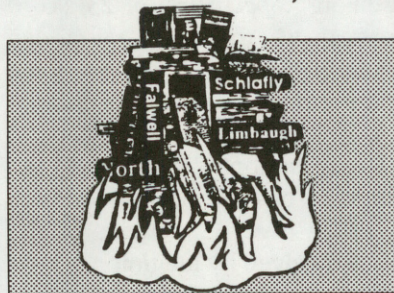
exercise his power upon us" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 125).

So, to seek therapy from anyone, whether they use hypnotherapy or not, puts one in a position of asking to be influenced, no doubt desiring better relationships with others or circumstances, and this invited influence involves risks. The influence may be carried too far and become inappropriate manipulation. Certainly, in most cases where this has happened, hypno-

therapy was not the stated treatment. And it should be pointed out that in going to a medical doctor, the use of many psychoactive drugs involves identical risks. The same dangers are faced. A significant percentage of prescriptions today are in this category, and any surgery always includes such in the process of anesthesia.

Elden K. Walter
Springfield, Oregon

For E.G.W., Inaction was Heresy



The cover (*Spectrum*, Vol. 23, No. 4) said, "Is Conservatism a Heresy?" and I was interested. I turned to page 12 and there it was again, with a subhead saying that Ellen G. White used the term 30 times, and always in a negative sense. Then I looked at the art beside the title, and saw books burning—books labeled as though written by Jerry, Ollie, Phyllis, and Rush. "Oh-ho," says I, "finally they are going to take the gloves off and really bash political conservatives." For that is what these people are labeled—so-called right-wing conservatives.

Then I read the article, and we aren't talking about that at all. We are flagellating *religious* conservatives. But not really. If you take the four quotes on page 13, you will find that either the semantics have changed, or something else is definitely wrong. Today, Ellen G. White—or her secretaries—would have used the words *restrained*, *restricted*, *hesitant*, *inhibited*, or

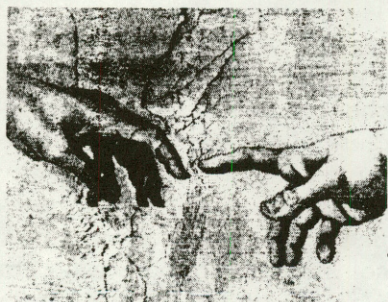
something related.

Those quotes are in no way talking about what the author says the dictionary defines conservatism as: "devoted to the existing (religious) order of things, opposition to change." That would be a bias toward holding to old beliefs, and a resistance to changing those beliefs. Mrs. White's statements are not criticizing their beliefs as much as they are criticisms of the individuals' unwillingness to personally move out on what she—and, presumably, they—believed. They each address the lack of action on the part of the addressee. The quotes tell me that they just didn't have a fire in the belly to suit her. (Maybe they were still Methodists, but that isn't what Mrs. White is chewing on them for.) The author's professed shock at finding the quotes will subside when he realizes that the language has changed, and that she wasn't upset about a resistance to change, just a resistance to doing something about it.

And so the writer's piece doesn't match either the subhead or the art. The writer pretty well demonstrates that religious conservatism is heresy, but he sure doesn't buttress the top half of page 12.

Bob Patchin
Villa Park, California

More than Design, in God's Creation, Play is the Thing



When Yale biologist G. Evelyn Hutchinson selected the title for his celebrated book, *The Ecological Theater and the Evolutionary Play*, he coined one of the great metaphors of contemporary biology. His title encapsulates a central tenet of life science—that organisms interact with their environment and change as their environment changes. John Baldwin's recent article "God and His Most Glorious Theater" (*Spectrum*, Vol. 23, No. 3) thus caught my eye.

Baldwin demonstrates how William Paley in 1802 used an "argument from perfection," a subspecies of the design argument, to counter challenges leveled against the creatorship of God by Erasmus Darwin and other naturalistic thinkers. Specifically, the argument from perfection focuses on the "rise *de novo* of the 'first' new body part, instinct, or ability." It asks "how, biologically speaking, a brand new, first-time-ever body part can originate over many generations by means of many small, incomplete, initial stages called incipient forms, if none of these structures are useful entities in themselves . . . Thus in effect the argument from perfection holds nothing works until everything works."

Baldwin shows how this argument impacted the writings of 19th-century biologists, as well as publications by contemporary thinkers

from philosopher Alvin Platinga to paleobiologist Stephen Jay Gould. He suggests "that the evidence points more convincingly to some kind of originating causality that in the final analysis lies beyond the reach of 'methodological naturalism.' Thus, for Adventists and other theists concerned about creation, the theological implications of the argument from perfection call for a fresh, continuing study of the issue of the relationship between God and the world."

Baldwin deserves credit for reviving this compelling, two-century-old argument at a time when reflective scientists exhibit less and less confidence in wholly naturalistic presuppositions. As a Christian biologist who revels in nature and views life as a gift from the Creator, I resonate with Baldwin's conclusion—I see many of the intricacies of life as props in God's "most glorious theater." But while Baldwin makes a convincing case for design, his argument fails to consider evidence for God's "most glorious play," a process only dimly perceived in Paley's time and still incompletely understood today.

Recently my family and I watched a performance of the "Christmas Carol" at a nearby theater. The curtain rose on a beautifully crafted set. We marveled at the care taken to assure that everything from costumes to stage set was well designed and skillfully crafted. However, we had come to see more than pretty costumes and a colorful stage—we had come to see a play. While the theater was "perfect," it was the play that inspired us.

As a boy I was dazzled by the variety and elegance of life. I watched birds. I collected insects.

I searched for fossils. I kept pet snakes. I read books on mammals. I spent much of my time getting to know the props and actors in the theater of life. But as a professional biologist I now see beyond the "perfectly" designed theater to an unfolding play. It's a play that began at creation and continues today. No one has seen the final act. It's a play infinitely more interesting and awe-inspiring than the theater, impressive as that is. Indeed, the theater itself changes as the story unfolds. This is no ordinary play. This is God's most glorious play!

Evidence for God's play is just as compelling as evidence for God's design. It permeates contemporary life and fossil record. Life was created with the incredible capacity to respond to environmental change. In some cases, responses have been minor; in others they have been extensive—God's play features both subtlety and crescendo.

When God created eyes, for example, he created "perfect" structures—but not unchanging structures. Eyes exhibit only secondary adaptation to dim light, prey movement, submersion, water-air interfaces, and burrowing. Some eyes, like those of bats and rhinos, are barely adequate; others, such as those in birds of prey, reach acuities far exceeding those of human eyes. Still others, like those of cave animals, are sightless. The same could be said for any other anatomical structure or behavioral modality—all have experienced modification, often at a "macro-evolutionary" level.* To posit that many of these changes occurred as the result of sin does not alter the simple fact that, at the most fundamental level, all organisms are designed with the capacity to change.

Thus the concepts of change and creation are not antithetical. Indeed, they complement one another. The computer I'm now using

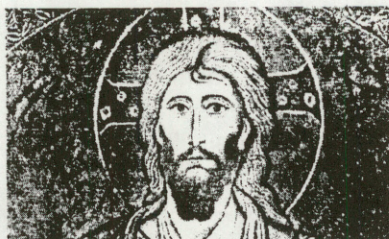
functions "perfectly." It is a marvel of design. It does exactly what I want it to do. I can link it to peripherals, make it talk to other computers, program it to sort data, and even add to its memory. But if someone decided to change the form of wall receptacles or the magnitude of voltage surging through them, a new generation of computers adapted to the change would not be spawned by my computer and its contemporaries! Humans make unchanging machines. God creates changing organisms.

Kudos for John Baldwin's insightful article. We glory in the perfection of God's theater. Are we ready, now, to embrace his play?

James L. Hayward
Berrien Springs, MI

* "Macroevolution" refers to alterations such as the change from herbivory to carnivory (and vice versa) among animals, the development of complex life cycles among parasites, and dramatic shifts in leaf shape and function among plants. Seventh-day Adventist creationists have acknowledged the existence of such changes for a long time, though they have usually avoided referring to them as "macroevolutionary" (see the appendix to my article in *Spectrum*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 23-33). Mechanisms of macroevolutionary change are not well understood, but are becoming more comprehensible as our knowledge of developmental genetics improves. Increasingly, I hear Adventist biologists using the term "megaevolution" to refer to postulated changes of magnitude unacceptable within a creationist paradigm—tacit recognition that the evidence for *macroevolution*, as commonly defined by biologists, is hard to ignore.

No to Scriven's "God's Justice, Yes; Penal Substitution, No"



My disagreement with Dr. Charles Scriven's article "God's Justice, Yes; Penal Substitution, No" (Vol. 23, No. 3) is over emphasis, scope, and theology. Agreed, the gospel is social. But it is also more than just social. If by gospel one means "good news," the good news certainly is about God and his character, and one aspect of this is the way he runs his government and how he reunites his universe-wide family. This, to me, the universe-wide family reunited and living together with mutual trust and trustworthiness, is truly a "social" concept.

Dr. Scriven would lead us to believe that "God's justice is central." I have no problem with this. However, would it be any less true to say, "God's righteousness is central"? As Dr. Scriven so amply points out in his applauded criticism of the penal or forensic theory, the weakness of *substitution* as a metaphor is that it obscures the fundamental purposes of the cross. I believe he is also guilty by choosing *justice* as his metaphor. I am told the Greek word for *justice* is the same word for *righteousness*. On what basis then is each word chosen? Why are these two often separate concepts allowed to remain so? Is it possible to discover a concept common to both, perhaps closer to the modern meaning of *righteousness*—doing the right thing?

I believe *justice*—even, in fair-

ness to Dr. Scriven, "God's justice"—fails as an accurate metaphor for atonement precisely because of the way it "shap[es] the way we think and live." Again, why is *justice* separated from *righteousness*? Is it a mere accident? I think not. In any event, I believe modern *justice* as a metaphor cannot help but put our thinking in a legal mode and turn the atonement into a mere adjustment of legal standing. What a shame! Justice is a poor metaphor because it is often seen as a distinct concept from righteousness—an artificial distinction, at least biblically. This is often reflected in questions such as: "Can God be just and yet merciful?" Doing the right thing, the correct thing, *is* the just and the loving thing, and I believe this is more closely captured in the modern term *righteousness*. God's character is the real issue here. This is what was on display throughout Christ's life and especially on the cross. The term *justice* often obscures this connection and is more easily isolated, as if it is above God (as many forensic theorists' will portray it).

In the same vein, surely God saves through partnership with people "called for witness." But in emphasizing "social justice" as God's means of salvation, is not Dr. Scriven guilty of the same egocentric view he so accurately laid on the proponents of the Latin theory? The penal theory makes salvation strictly an appeal to an individual; so also the "social justice" theory—as posed by Dr. Scriven—makes an appeal limited to the earth. This is one of many worlds! Dr. Scriven's view does not take into account those

not living in the squalor of sin and its injustices.

We as Seventh-day Adventists believe the conflict—the Great Controversy—is universal. Satan has centered his attack squarely on God's character—his way of doing things and, along with many of us, portrays him as arbitrary, vengeful, severe, exacting, and unforgiving. Those who have not sinned still need to have these questions of God's character answered for the universe to be truly secure. The Bible (and E. G. White) speaks of only one salvation, not a legal (or social) one for us sinners on this earth, versus a trust earned by demonstration and backed with evidence for the on-

looking universe. Should we not attempt to be as encompassing as possible in our descriptions of salvation, the atonement, the gospel, and yes, even violence and the nature of sin? Is not God's character, as revealed perfectly in Christ (fully God himself), the basis for us to trust God to heal the damage done by sin (salvation), and the basis for reuniting the universal family (at-one-ment or reconciliation)? Is not his character and the truth that he is "not what his enemies have made him out to be," the best of news, the real gospel?

Kevin G. Drew
Berrien Springs, Michigan

In his article, "God's Justice, Yes; Penal Substitution, No" (*Spectrum*, Vol. 23, No. 3), Dr. Charles Scriven has apparently taken issue with the Reformation doctrine, the substitutionary death of Christ on Calvary's cross. For your consideration, I would like to point out that the 27 fundamental doctrines published by the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has some thoughts on the subject.

1.) Christ's substitutionary death provided the deliverance from the penalty of sin and the gift of eternal life for repentant sinners (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 6:23; 1

Peter 3:18), (p. 113).

2.) Scripture clearly teaches the universal nature of Christ's substitutionary death, (p. 113).

3.) He (God) accepted Christ as man's representative and divine substitute to receive his judgment on sin, (p. 111).

Our church hymnal and the writings of our much respected Ellen G. White are also apparently in conflict with his nonsubstitution thesis. An article by an Adventist scholar standing by the substitution theory is certainly needed.

Paul W. Jackson
Chester, Pennsylvania

In *Spectrum*, Vol. 23, No. 3, you have an article by Dr. Scriven entitled "God's Justice, Yes; Penal Substitution, No." It has a serious flaw. It tries to discuss God's justice without doing so in the light of his judgment. As a result it comes to some very questionable conclusions.

Jesus mentioned God's judgment repeatedly, especially in his parables—most particularly in the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13. It brings out a vital point. The tares, or weeds, were not preserved out of a sense of what justice to them requires, but only to make clear that burning is the only proper end for them. Dr. Scriven may not consider this burning to be penal; I do.

The article closes with a section on "nonviolence," saying that Jesus "espoused" it. On an individual basis this is true, but we will search in vain for statements showing that he condemned the punishment of violent criminals by those chosen to protect society. His statements about forgiveness are directed to us as individuals. It is presumptuous of us to forgive wrongs committed against others. In Romans 13:4 we are told "... the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer" (NRSV).

Kenneth H. Hopp
Yucaipa, California

Scriven Says Penal Substitutionary Atonement is Still Unbiblical

My argument in the article, which was originally presented as a paper at a conference on Christian ethics, is that the Jesus story, leading up to the cross and climaxing in the resurrection, proves that the Gospel of God is social as well as personal. God

wants, through covenant partnership with each of us, to heal the human *community* as well as the individuals who make up that community.

The argument rests most of all on a single claim: that to the Hebrew mind divine justice, said by

Paul (in Romans 3) to have been "demonstrated" at the cross, is steadfast and compassionate faithfulness; it is faithfulness in meeting the needs of the creation, especially the needs of the vulnerable, and in building community within that creation. The view that God's justice is *essentially retributive*, or focused on correct punishment, is unbiblical. It's true that the wages of sin is death. It's true that Jesus bore undeserved punishment on

our behalf. But it's not true that biblical justice required the murder of Jesus in order to legitimate divine forgiveness. Since the penal substitutionary theory rests on this mistaken view, it is itself mistaken.

For Scripture, just deeds matter more than pious words. But in this case the doctrinal error is worth fussing over because it sabotages the right *practice* of the Christian faith. The whole psychology of the penal substitutionary interpretation is individualistic. As I argue at length in the article, both God and the followers of God become preoccupied with their own inner life, their own holiness, their own prospects for personal integrity. Attention to matters outside the self is bound to suffer under these conditions, and it does: popular piety shaped by the penal substitutionary theory displays, as a rule, little interest in the questions of community and justice that

stirred the prophets and their successor Jesus, whom we believe to be the promised Messiah and the very Son of God.

I have spent a lifetime changing my mind under the influence of thoughtful Christian fellowship and conversation. One reason is that the Seventh-day Adventist Church's statement of fundamental beliefs, embraced at the Dallas General Conference in 1980, begins with acknowledgment that God's Spirit will lead us to "fuller understanding" and "better language." My reflections on the blood atonement of Christ are offered in the spirit of this acknowledgment and this document.

I am ready to change my mind here, too. It's just that someone must *show* (by attention to the general pattern, not just a key text or a stretched interpretation) that when Jesus and the prophets spoke of

justice they had in mind a lawyerly retribution rather than God's compassionate faithfulness to the original community-building promises. None of *Spectrum's* correspondents addresses the heart of my argument. None attempts any exegesis of any scriptural passage, let alone the ones on which I remark.

Nor does any, by the way, acknowledge that we may embrace God's wide concern with community and *still* affirm the divine offer of *personal* forgiveness and call to *personal* commitment. As I said in the article, "the personal is not a frill but a fundamental." Yet if, by design or misleading metaphor, we limit God to the personal, then the famous phrase of J. B. Phillips, the Bible translator, applies precisely: Our God is too small.

Charles Scriven
Takoma Park, Maryland