



Embracing the Spirit

The president of Columbia Union College, decrying a drift towards fundamentalism, embraces “life in the Spirit.”

by Charles Scriven

“I have wept over the laxity of the church.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

WHETHER AS A TEACHER, PASTOR, OR COLLEGE president, I have wanted to assist in the making of a faithful community, a people who radically conserve, in both word and deed, the truth of the everlasting gospel.¹

In this light I have resisted the seductions of fundamentalism on the one hand² and of liberalism on the other.³ Each throws obstacles onto the path of faith; each frustrates the one wish proper to all disciples: that, by God's grace and against every inducement to the contrary, we may uphold and live by the *reality of the risen Christ*.

So I speak neither lightly nor recklessly when I take exception to the drift toward

hostility to truth—hostility, indeed, to the Spirit of the risen Christ—that is, at this moment, pulling Adventism toward the maelstrom. It is with all my heart and mind, moreover, that I oppose the effort of a few in our circle to align the rudder of the church with the direction of the drift. As I will show, this effort drags us toward fundamentalism and goes against the grain of Scripture, strewing harm along the way. Antagonism to the adventure of truth subverts the ideals of the Remnant. It damages the energy and imagination—and the hearts and minds—of the church. As God's grace allows, it must surely cease.

Across North America many leaders, both lay and ordained, are offering energetic and visionary guidance to Seventh-day Adventist conferences and congregations; they open their lives to the adventure of truth. We may all be deeply grateful to them. But those few who are stifling the church's quest for deeper understanding injure faithfulness and thus bring injury to the body of Christ. The effect may be unintended, but it is real nevertheless.

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This is nowhere more evident than in the Pacific Northwest, where a tumult of suspicion against Walla Walla College faculty—in particular, religion faculty—is spreading dismay that reaches beyond the campus to the church's wider precincts.⁴ As is widely known, the energy behind all this is supplied in part by an Andrews University graduate student who, it turns out, illustrates and reinforces the church's current drift. His writings, which have found a larger-than-expected readership, lean precipitously toward anathematizing the adventure of truth and nullifying the work of the Spirit.

This writer is Samuel Koranteng-Pipim; of the two books for which he is known, the one now in the forefront is *Receiving the Word*. Not just in the Northwest but also outside of it, this book has become a rallying point for those who (effectively, if not deliberately) are stifling the adventure of truth within Adventism. I may focus my concern, indeed, by saying that it is persons with the outlook and attitude expressed in Koranteng-Pipim's writings who belong to the circle from which I am respectfully dissenting. I have no others in mind.

Published in 1996, *Receiving the Word* calls admirably for a church with "courage" to live "by the Word" and to cast off "sophisticated Laodiceanism."⁵ I agree enthusiastically with this call, but for the author it is, unfortunately, a side trip, not the main journey. Koranteng-Pipim's chief concern is to characterize some of the best-known Adventist efforts to refine and renew the church's understanding as not simply fallible (which they surely are) but as *pure threat*. They undermine the Bible, they demean historic teaching, they accommodate secular assumptions.⁶ Koranteng-Pipim's point, indeed, is not so much conversation as indictment. The authors he names and writes about have in many cases devoted a lifetime of loving attention to Scripture, yet he dismisses them, all too easily, as "Bible doubters" and purveyors of (naturalistic) "higher criticism."⁷ They seem not to engage his curiosity so much

as his ire, and he leaves the unmistakable impression that the *attempt* at refining and renewing belief is what he objects to, what he finds simply unacceptable.

This attitude to renewal of understanding profoundly contradicts the spirit of the Bible. Because it is an attitude that appears to be spreading, I am inviting us all to rejuvenate our interest in the Holy Spirit. The drift toward hostility to the adventure of truth, illustrated in the book, moves the church ever closer to religious fundamentalism. This is a grave danger. The danger admits of one protection only: the embrace the Holy Spirit. That alone can help us conserve—radically conserve—the truth we are called to live and share.

The Temptation of Fundamentalism

With the church's older strongholds suffering from flat or declining enthusiasm and faithfulness, the temptation of fundamentalism should perhaps be no surprise. Fundamentalism has an appeal that touches both current and potential members, and so offers, in some eyes, the prospect of church growth. Equally important, those drawn to fundamentalism have a low tolerance for the kind of learning that invites substantive change either of themselves or of the church authorities with whom they are aligned. To leaders who identify with religious fundamentalism, and anticipate growth of the similarly minded, fundamentalism thus holds out the prospect of a dutiful following.

Nevertheless, fundamentalism is a snare. Although it may here and there abet growth in numbers, it cannot build the full-bodied spiritual strength that makes a constructive difference in the wider world. It may even fail to build extended commitment to a faith community. Often, as with the Jehovah's Witnesses, fundamentalism simply creates congregations

of poorly educated members who win converts, it is true, but have great difficulty passing their vision to succeeding generations and make little if any transformative difference in their surrounding cultures.⁸ Over the long run, fundamentalism tends, indeed, to generate as much listlessness as enthusiasm. And even when fundamentalism succeeds in generating enthusiasm, the enthusiasm is to one degree or other misguided and unfaithful.

In trinitarian terms,⁹ the chief difficulty with fundamentalism, and the reason for its unhappy effects, is resistance to the Holy Spirit—in particular, resistance to the Holy Spirit's teaching function. The suspicions and distrust that now trouble Adventism ensue, I am suggesting, precisely from such resistance. The healing that we need must come about through deliberate and confident embrace of the Holy Spirit as the *teacher* of the church.

If problems such as resistance to the Holy Spirit follow from Adventist movement in the fundamentalist direction, we must be clear about fundamentalism's defining traits. The term itself goes back to a conservative Protestant effort, culminating in the 1920s, to stave off the dangers associated with modern thinking, especially modern thinking about evolution and the critical study of the Bible.

The effort of these conservative Protestants was by no means entirely misguided, and has often been ridiculed unfairly.¹⁰ By now, however, *fundamentalism* has acquired connotations of group-think, fear of knowledge, and hostility to innovation. I use it here with this development in mind and with specific reference to the shape of fundamentalism in Chris-

tian religious communities. The point is neither to oppose the 1920s movement in all of its particulars, nor to embrace the movement's liberal opponents, who at important points were misguided themselves. Nor do I suggest that persons in the circle I dissent from are *pure* fundamentalists. Although Koranteng-Pipim, for example, shows a certain sympathy for fundamentalism, he does not, to my knowledge, support it unequivocally.¹¹ Still, to the degree that the church is drifting in the fundamentalist direction, he is abetting the drift, and so are those who endorse his writing.

By *fundamentalism*, then, I indicate three

tendencies.¹² *First is the tendency toward a flat, mechanical reading of the Bible.* Here, every part of Holy Writ—every text, every book—is said to have equal sway over Christian thought and life. One count against this view is that it cannot be upheld consistently: Few fundamentalists, for example, consider the earth flat, or promote

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death by stoning as a fit punishment for rebellious sons.¹³ Another, more important, count against this view is its failure to see that the Bible story *ascends* toward Jesus, who is the *final* "Word" of God and the *final* authority for thought and life.¹⁴ The failure, moreover, to notice the subtleties of the *story* plays out in the additional failure to notice the subtleties of the *poetry*, of the images, that is, which point beyond themselves to deeper understanding. Fundamentalists read the Bible literalistically, and their literalism, though meant to protect the Christian message, may simply divert attention from it: Often, for example, the fundamentalist focus on the arithmetic of the Creation story goes hand in hand with

negative (and essentially pagan) feelings about the material world. The potential for such failure of insight is no doubt why Jesus himself, though committed to the *realism* of God's message, resisted literalism. When he saw Nicodemus and then the woman at the well missing the truth he told because they literalized his poetic images, he nudged them gently toward more imaginative—and more redemptive—understanding.¹⁵

Second is fundamentalism's tendency toward rigidity and arrogance with regard to customary understanding. For fundamentalists, the knowledge of God's will and way is not so much a quest as an achieved state, and the Bible not so much a life-changing story as a catalogue of proof texts: It does not challenge present thinking but only validates it. The object of study is to learn a sacrosanct (as opposed to sacred) tradition or to fend off criticism of that tradition, rather than to open the heart and mind to a God who is always ahead of us and always inviting us to take the next step of the journey. For believers at Pentecost, the "common life in Christ," James McClendon remarks, "was by nature adventure, daily discovered, daily risked."¹⁶ Fundamentalism shies away from the ethos of Pentecost, afraid of the openness, courage, and passion for learning that are basic to genuine spiritual growth. All too often, the result is the blinkered outlook of hyperorthodoxy: limited, unaware, self-satisfied, yet eager to track down and penalize every effort at constructive innovation.

Third is the tendency toward reactive, inward-looking separatism. Fundamentalism began as a reaction to perceived evil in the wider society. Fundamentalist communities still define themselves as enclaves of right organized against a world of wrong. They see their antagonists as hostile, and tend to regard "separation" from these antagonists as their main reason for existing. There is much right, of course, about the sense of being an alterna-

tive community; it reflects the biblical tradition, the biblical sense of how God's people, by refusing to be ordinary, can be a blessing to the wider world. The trouble is preoccupation with difference to the *neglect* of substance. Fundamentalists tend to focus on distinctives—in language, customs, and behavior—that mark them off from others. All too often, these markers—sometimes highly contestable, often merely external—have little to do with the mind of Christ and the soul of discipleship. Adherents of fundamentalist communities tend to digress into the legalism their preoccupation with difference calls forth, and to attend more to possibilities for impurity and defilement than to possibilities for compassion and justice. They rend their garments easily, their hearts less easily. Authentic separation, rooted in the core meanings of the gospel and meant to transform surrounding culture, degenerates into mere separatism.

To one degree or other, these three tendencies appear in *Receiving the Word*. All three tempt the Adventist community as a whole, just as they tempt other Christian communities. All of them jeopardize the spirit of adventure and hope, joy, and generosity that is at the center of the biblical vision. But they can all be overcome through renewed attention to the gift of the Holy Spirit, and to the journey into truth that goes along with that gift.

The Spirit and the Truth

It is a commonplace in Christian piety that the Holy Spirit has the power to change lives. But the Spirit also has the power to change *minds*, and to change them toward fuller comprehension of Christ. This is a point we Adventists consider little, and need very much to consider more. The Bible says that the Spirit's work, in large part, is to uphold Christ as *the Word* of God and to guide the church, now and always, into *deeper* understanding,

more faithful common life, *more transformative* mission to the wider world. The Spirit precisely *subverts*, in other words, the three tendencies of fundamentalism, and does so precisely to enhance the energy and authenticity of the church.

According to John's Gospel, Jesus and his disciples ate supper together the day before Passover. The festival that had brought them to Jerusalem took place in remembrance of Israel's liberation from Pharaoh. Jesus had come to be associated with the possibility of liberation from Israel's current oppression, and the air around him and his band of followers was crackling with excitement and danger.

John tells us that during the meal, Jesus washed the disciples' feet, embodying the humility and service he hoped they would emulate. Even so, Judas, one of the Twelve, left the room in order to betray Jesus to the authorities who feared

his movement and wanted to arrest him. The meal continued, nevertheless, and Jesus assured the disciples that neither the lethal harm that lay before him, nor the hatred of his followers that would grow up once he was gone, should cause them to lose heart, disavow their love for one another, or cease their witness in the world.

Twice during his remarks Jesus promised the disciples that the Holy Spirit would come, keeping his own presence alive on earth and helping his followers remember, and more deeply understand, all that he had taught them.¹⁷ In a startling sentence, he declared: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12, NRSV).

Jesus said many surprising and insightful

things during his public ministry; he lived a dramatic, unconventional life, full of grace and truth. From the standpoint of the gospel, to have seen him was to have seen God.¹⁸ Yet, according to John, Jesus told the disciples they could not yet bear to know the full meaning of his vision and life. Thus, even the original disciples could not claim complete understanding of the truth of Christ.

But as part of the promise about his own continued presence through the Spirit, Jesus went on to say: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:13, NRSV). In Jesus' absence, minds

would change, understanding would grow. And as the gospel immediately makes clear, the Spirit's guidance would center on Christ: To gain deeper *Christian* understanding means precisely to gain a deeper understanding of Christ.¹⁹ The unmistakable implication is that new insight, insight yet to enter Chris-

tian minds, would sometimes entail a difficult departure from the customary. It would be insight the disciples themselves were not ready, at that moment, to bear. (Down the centuries, minds indeed would change in ways unforeseen by the disciples: Christians would come to favor complete abolition of slavery; they would defend liberty over despotism; they would further weigh, and further support, equal rights and opportunity for women.)

Nothing in the gospel suggests that any disciple or community of disciples would arrive, in this life and age, at complete understanding. Before Christ's return, no one fully comprehends the truth of God, or the true worship of God.²⁰ Not only for John but also

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for other Bible writers, God is in heaven and we are on earth, and that relation remains intact even for believers: God's "thoughts" and "ways" are not identical with ours, but "higher," said the prophet to the Jewish exiles (Isaiah 55:8, 9); our knowledge, including our prophecy, is merely "partial" and will come to an end; we only "see in a mirror, dimly," said Paul to the believers in Corinth (1 Corinthians 13:10, 12, NRSV). What Scripture assures us of, in other words, is growth; there is no promise, nor even the prospect, of perfect knowledge. We hope for that, and work toward it, but we do not now have it. Our "thoughts and words" about God, Karl Barth rightly declares, are "eschatalogical"—they point to a God we cannot fully grasp until the Christian hope is fully realized.²¹

The Church Resisting the Spirit

All this should constitute the death knell for fundamentalism. Failure to accept and celebrate the ultimacy of Christ relative to other authorities—including other prophets²²—flies in the face of the Spirit through whom Christ now works. So does failure to accept and celebrate the believer's adventure into deeper truth. If authentic separation from evil degenerates into mere separatism, and blurs communal insight into the core meanings of the gospel, it, too, flies in the face of Christ's Spirit. Thus the root tendencies of fundamentalism truly imperil the Christian community: they rebuff, or even shut the door on, the Spirit of the risen Christ.

I have mentioned listlessness as one of fundamentalism's characteristic ill effects. Listlessness is the by-product of mechanical readings of Scripture combined with refusal of intellectual adventure and assent to inward-looking separatism. If a community of believers sees no need or prospect for new (and

perhaps jarring) insight, and if it cannot see beyond itself to the full-blooded adventure of mission, its conversation will be bland and spiritless. Learning will be the absorbing and collating of information—texts, catechisms, creeds—and not the far more riveting business of acquiring wisdom, including wisdom to transcend customary prejudice.

Such refusal of adventure goes a long way toward explaining the alarming tedium (and non-participation) associated with many Sabbath schools of North America and other older strongholds of Adventism: Nothing excites the mind once the initial excitement of new vision is past. Listlessness results, too, from the dissatisfaction that emerges when, as a result of stunted understanding, a community's practice of faith is also stunted. All human communities are flawed and displeasing, but the prospect of growing together, and of expanding the meaning and scope of mission, keeps boredom and discouragement away. When refusal of the Spirit's power to change minds strikes a blow against that prospect, and the practice of faith—the quality of spiritual life—ceases to improve, the impact is deadly.

If listlessness is one ill effect of fundamentalism, misguided passion is another. Not all fundamentalists are bored. Mechanical readings of Scripture, refusal of intellectual adventure, and espousal of mere separatism sometimes generate enthusiasm. But always the enthusiasm is, to one degree or other, unfaithful. Within our extended family, an egregious example was the clot of zealots, mostly schooled in Adventism, who assembled around the wild, ominous energy of David Koresh, a former Adventist and a devotee of apocalyptic speculation. Whatever pretense of intellectual adventure Koresh may have made, he displayed little humility and little focus on the Christ to whom God's Spirit bears a witness. He had many answers and few questions. The conclusion was madness and a fatal fire.

This drew the shocked attention of people

everywhere. Although the tragedy was distant enough from mainstream Adventism to invite denial of its relevance, it was close enough to leave thoughtful members rueful and perplexed. The point here is the lesson in Koresh's misguided passion: Unless we see the Bible as a Christ-centered, life-changing story, and thus a daily challenge to present thinking, we run the risk of misguided passion ourselves. When fearful members turn accusatory at every prospect of substantive critique and revision of Adventism's speech about God, the fearful accusation signals resistance to the Holy Spirit; it also signals, as I keep repeating, the prospect of harm.

The Church Embracing The Spirit

I do not say, of course, that anything goes. I do not say that any critique may be accepted, or even tolerated. Within mission-minded communities, limits apply, and they apply even to those with prime responsibility for truth, such as college and university faculty. Institutions of higher learning have the right to stand for distinctive vision; they have the right to hire teachers and researchers who, in their various ways, assist in promoting and refining that vision. Adventist colleges and universities should be partisan to the mission implicit in the church's calling as the Remnant. If pursued aright, this partisanship is entirely compatible with the equally important requirement of intellectual accountability.²³

Teachers in religion departments bear particular responsibility for passing the Adventist heritage on to the next generation and for training the church's future lay and ordained leaders. They also bear particular responsibility, through preaching, seminars, and writing aimed outside their traditional student bodies, for the continuing theological education of the wider church. We entrust them, in a word,

with intellectual leadership in the building up of the body of Christ. We have the right and obligation to *require them* to be faithful and effective in that leadership.

But the body of Christ is the body of the one who promised his disciples the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit. We may thus expect those charged with intellectual leadership in that body to nudge us toward the insights, sometimes hard to bear, that Jesus said would come. That is part of the job we give them, and the point is that the church should find and live out an ever-deeper authenticity and faithfulness.

During the Protestant Reformation some Christians—our own spiritual ancestors, it turns out²⁴—broke with Luther and Zwingli in the desire to create a still more faithful form of loyalty to Christ. Known as Anabaptists (or “re-baptizers”), they did not yet fully share a common vision when many of their leaders gathered on a mountainside near Schleithem, a town on the Swiss-Austrian border, in 1527. They knew that medieval “Christendom” was doomed, but it was not yet clear whether their own vision, fragile and still in the making, would survive or drift away.

A man named Michael Sattler emerged as the leader at Schleithem. He and the other participants agreed to approach their differences through conversation, and to arrive thereby at the kind of shared understanding that would build up the life of the church and enhance its authenticity and faithfulness. The result was a confession of faith—a covering letter, with seven articles—that gave energy and longevity to the radical movement known as Anabaptism and still variously manifested in the attitude and outlook of Baptists, Adventists, Mennonites, and others all around the world.

James McClendon calls the method the Anabaptist conferees settled on “the *dialogue of those concerned*.”²⁵ Those with responsibility for Adventist colleges and universities may think of this, together with a focus on Christ

and an openness to his Spirit, as the test of faithfulness for those entrusted with the intellectual leadership of the church. Their dialogue must be the dialogue of those concerned, those determined to build the church and enhance its authenticity and faithfulness.

Ruled out is the narrow, unimaginative thinking that develops from the three tendencies of fundamentalism. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Christ is the center and a flat, mechanical approach to the reading of Scripture is set aside. Under that same guidance, arrogance with regard to customary understanding is also set aside, and so is preoccupation with customary, inward-looking marks of communal separation. The Bible is a daily challenge to current understanding, not just a validation of it, and the object of learning is wisdom, including wisdom to transcend customary prejudice.

The Spirit and the Heritage of Adventism

Happily, the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Statement of Fundamental Beliefs begins with the very point I am making here. Calling the Bible "our only creed," the statement's preamble declares that future General Conference sessions may revise the document "when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word."²⁶ The premise, little noticed but terribly important, is the ongoing dialogue of those concerned—enlivening our classrooms and Sabbath schools—without which no such revision would ever be considered.

By this language of openness to change, set forth at the 1980 General Conference, the church upheld the teaching function of the Holy Spirit, and made the point I here am only echoing. It expressed the very feeling

Ellen White poured forth when she connected spiritual decline with "the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth" and to shy away (as fundamentalists do) from the "new questions" and "difference of opinion" that are indispensable to spiritual growth.²⁷

Adventists who incline to fundamentalism mine our heritage, at times with seeming success, for supporting quotes of their own.²⁸ None of these, however, can gainsay the story in John of Jesus' last words with the disciples; none can gainsay the biblical truth that life in the Spirit is a journey into ever-deeper understanding; none can gainsay the listlessness and misguided passion that, all too often, accompany refusal of this journey.

The Good News of God invites grateful humility. Grateful humility invites, in turn, openness to the Spirit's gifts. Openness to the Spirit's gifts invites further openness to the Christ whom the Spirit glorifies—the Christ

Adapted from a cover illustration by José Ortega



who moves our attention toward human needs and our hearts toward generosity and justice. The Spirit instills, it turns out, the very ethos of the Remnant, the faithful heeding of God in the light of Christ.²⁹

To fill out his conception of discipleship, Jesus remarked that unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it “remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24, NRSV). The suggestion here, put felicitously by Ellen White, is that the lives of Christ’s followers “must be cast into the furrow of the world’s need.”³⁰ Yet even though this parable is available to every Christian, the mid-century effort to bring full civil rights to black America, and thereby answer manifest human need, met with listlessness and, sometimes, misguided passion on the part of much of the white clergy. Many Christian pastors stuck with customary understanding (and backed it with reassuring proof texts) in order to stay away from the furrow of the world’s need. Knowing this, and languishing in jail for his own leadership on behalf of others, Martin Luther King, Jr., exclaimed: “I have wept over the laxity of the church.”³¹

In the end, laxity is the outcome of fundamentalism. If laxity results also from liberalism,³² the point still holds. The three tendencies of fundamentalism—toward flat, mechanical readings of the Bible, toward theological rigidity and arrogance, toward reactive, inward-looking separatism—all conspire to keep the church from the adventurous faithfulness that is the earmark of the Remnant and the gift of true believers to all the children of God who long for hope and joy and justice.

It is life in the Spirit—the life-changing, mind-changing Spirit of Jesus Christ—that turns spiritual laxity, wherever it is manifest, into faithfulness and creative passion. Against the destructive tendencies of fundamentalism, and against the tilt of our own community in their direction, we must pray anew for that Spirit-filled life, that connection with the risen Christ, that full-hearted openness to the adventure of truth.

Only thus can our truth be what Ellen White called “an advancing truth.”³³ And only thus can the Adventist reading, understanding and living out of the gospel be, as God intends, salt and light for the world.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See, e.g., my “Radical Discipleship and the Renewal of Adventist Mission,” *Spectrum* 14 (December 1983), pp. 11-20; and my (unfortunately, pompously titled) “The Real Truth About the Remnant,” *Spectrum* 17 (October 1986), pp. 6-13.

2. See, e.g., “The Case for Renewal in Adventist Theology,” *Spectrum* 8 (September 1976), pp. 2-6; and “Fundamentalism Is a Disease, a Demonic Perversion,” *Spectrum* 23 (May 1993), pp. 45, 46.

3. See *The Transformation of Culture: Social Ethics After H. Richard Niebuhr* (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1988), and also these representative essays: “When the Jailhouse Rocks: A Defense of Evangelism,” *Spectrum* 18 (February 1988), pp. 22-28; “The Reformation Radicals Ride Again,” *Christianity Today* (March 5, 1990), pp. 13-15; and “The Unembarrassed Adventist,” *Spectrum* 26 (January 1997), pp. 40-50, another version of which is forthcoming in 1999 in the journal *Religious Education* and has appeared under the title “Schooling for the Tournament of Narratives: Postmodernism and

the Idea of the Christian College,” in Stanley Hauerwas, Nancey Murphy, and Mark Nation, eds., *Theology Without Foundations* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), pp. 273-288.

4. Conversation with religion faculty and church and college administrators in North America will confirm this.

5. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Receiving the Word* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Berean Books, 1996), p. 311. Koranteng-Pipim has also written *Searching the Scripture: Women’s Ordination and the Call to Biblical Fidelity* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Adventists Affirm, 1995).

6. See, e.g., *Receiving the Word*, pp. 13, 34, 60, 82, 83, 132.

7. See *ibid.*, pp. 60, 69, 82, 83.

8. On this see, e.g., Ron Lawson, “Sect-State Relations: Accounting for the Differing Trajectories of Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses,” *Sociology of Religion* 56 (Winter 1995), pp. 351-377. Jehovah’s

Witnesses actually discourage higher education, have fewer "hereditary" members than Adventists and a stronger "negative" image in surrounding society. They have at times, it should be said, resisted evil admirably, as during the Nazi era in Germany.

9. In the second of the 27 Fundamental Beliefs of our church, we affirm the Trinity: there is, the document says, "one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit . . ." See *Adventist Review* (May 1, 1980), p. 23.

10. For another expression of this opinion, see Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 816.

11. Notice *Receiving the Word*, p. 10, where Koranteng-Pipim, appearing to sympathize with fundamentalism, says the term *fundamentalist* as "one of the epithets hurled at Bible-believing scholars"; cf. the related footnote on p. 18. Cf. also, in the "Glossary" on pp. 363ff., his explanations of "Fundamentalism/Fundamentalist" and of "Historical-Grammatical Method."

12. I rely on various authorities for this characterization, including James Barr, *Fundamentalism*, 2nd ed. (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1981), and Martin E. Marty and Scott R. Appleby, eds., *The Fundamentalism Project* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991-1995), 5 vols.

13. See Revelation 7:1 and Deuteronomy 21:18-21.

14. See Hebrews 1:1-3; see also, e.g., John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:15; and 1 Timothy 2:5.

15. See John 3 and 4.

16. James W. McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology: Doctrines* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), vol. 2, p. 106.

17. See John 14:15-25 and 16:12-15.

18. When Philip asks Jesus to show the disciples "the Father," Jesus replies: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9, NRSV).

19. According to verses 14 and 15 of John 16, the Spirit "will glorify" Christ and will "take what is" Christ's and "declare it" to the disciples.

20. According to John 4:23, Jesus tells the woman at Jacob's well: "The hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in

spirit and truth . . ." (NRSV). There is understanding now, but only in the hour that "is coming" will understanding be complete.

21. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I, 1, p. 464. Barth relies here on such passages as 1 John 3:1f., where the biblical writer says "we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed," and then declares that one day we will know God "as he is."

22. Again, consult Hebrews 1:1-3.

23. A fuller defense of this point appears in my essay, "The Unembarrassed Adventist."

24. See my "Radical Discipleship and the Renewal of Adventist Mission" for article-length treatment of this point.

25. James W. McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology: Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), vol. 1, p. 270.

26. From "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," *Adventist Review* (May 1, 1980), p. 23.

27. Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1948), vol. 5, pp. 706, 707.

28. Koranteng-Pipim, e.g., invokes, on p. 149, a reference in Ellen White to "the unerring pen of inspiration" (*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 370). But he fails to counter the obvious rejoinder that this must be considered in the light of her insistence, fully backed by the Bible, that everything human, including inspired writing, is "imperfect." Acknowledging that people often find in the Bible something that is "not like God," she says, "God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible" (*Selected Messages* [Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1958], book 1, p. 20).

29. See Revelation 12:17 and 14:12.

30. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publ. Assn., 1898), p. 623.

31. From King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail," published in *The Christian Century* (June 12, 1963), pp. 767-773, and otherwise widely available.

32. I argue this at length in *The Transformation of Culture*.

33. Ellen White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 34.