SPECTRUM

he Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums • Winter 1999 • Volume No. 27, Issue No. 1

Stars and Emerging Shapes of Biblical Renewal

THE BIBLE AND THE CHURCH

Scenes from a Sabbath

THE PASSION OF ANCIENT POETS

The Virtue of Language

Messenger of the Lord

About the Cover:

The image was created in Photoshop using scans of found materials such as stamps and letters, games pieces, wrappers, printed textures and text. Each scan was placed onto the background as a layer. Ultimately there were over 30 layers (scanned elements) before the composition was complete. The theme was chosen based on the reference in Psalms 8 to the stars. Some of the images are the falling stars from an old Adventist publication, a candy wrapper from some Italian chocolate, and the text taken from Psalms 8.

About the Artist:

James Reeder, A.S. Photography, Graphic Design, Pacific Union College, works as a photographer and designer in the PUC public relations office, and teaches beginning black and white photography for the art department. He is also a freelance fine-art photographer and collage artist, working towards a B.F.A. in fine art.

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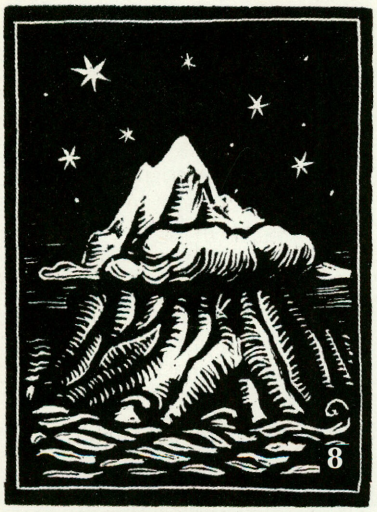

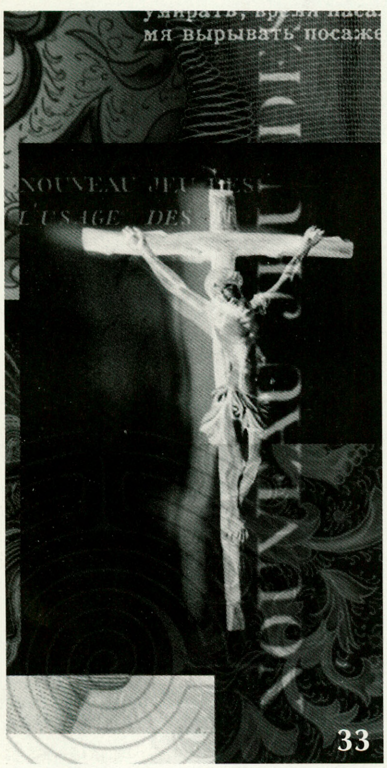

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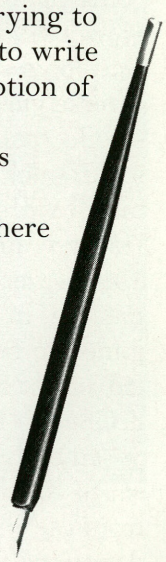
FROM THE EDITOR

The Place of Spectrum

No mortal mind's complete within itself,
But minds must speak and answer,
As ours must, on the subject of this place,
Our history here, summoned . . .
—*Wendell Berry*

Truth be told, I think of Spectrum as a place rather than a magazine. A place that is as important to the growth and development of Adventism as Battle Creek, Takoma Park or Loma Linda. A place where we find community in our conversations, our dreams and ideas, our stories of God with us in past, present and future tenses. A place we are continually remodeling as we renew and reshape our relationships with God and each other.

This time as we gather together we are delighted to have new writers and artists to enliven our conversation. Poet Mike Mennard calls us to worship in his Psalms (page 23), and declares "All are welcome here," to which we add a hearty "Amen." To Mike and to artists James Reader, Milbert Mariano and designer Sharon Fujimoto-Johnson, welcome. To writers Juli Miller, Jennifer Cline, Tom Dwyer, Graeme Sharrock, Julie Lorenz, Julie Z. Lee , welcome. To the advertisers on our pages, welcome. To you, our readers, we are especially delighted to have you in our company. It is you whom we have been trying to imagine as we stare at blank computer screens searching for the right words, make phone calls to write news stories, boot up PageMaker to compose pages. Reading Glen Greenwalt's (page 8) description of the differences in society depending on how stories are told reminds us of you. Reviewing Roy Branson's excellent adventures here (page 3) brings you to mind. Your letters, as always, give us great pleasure. We are glad that you are with us.



In his book *God With Us*, Jack Provonsha talks about "at-one-ment" as a place, a place where we can settle into the concept that God is with us. "Having God with us makes everything new and different," he says. "It makes a difference to our understanding about truth and about God. Whenever God, not men's projected illusions, really appears among men He is perceived as friendly, compassionate, and gracious. . . . It even makes a difference to the way a man sees himself."

Therefore, knowing that God is "the subject of this place," it is my hope that it feels friendly, compassionate, gracious, and not without humor. It is His presence that gives power to this place.

Bonnie Dwyer, *Editor*

Tributes to Roy Branson

La Chayim—to Roy's Life

"The only decent thing to do now is to die," joked Roy Branson on September 19, 1998, after ninety minutes of accolades had been heaped upon him during a special service at Sligo Church in Takoma Park, Maryland marking his 23 years as editor of *Spectrum*. In addition to the regular members of his Sabbath School class, people had come from across the country to pay tribute to what he accomplished for Adventism through the journal. Given that he led that Sabbath School class for nearly as many years as he edited *Spectrum*, the class provided an appropriate forum at which to discuss the Association of Adventist Forums' journal and its editor.

Creation of the magazine was a realization of an idea that Branson wrote about as a senior English major at Atlantic Union College in 1959. After graduation he moved to Michigan and began work on two masters degrees—one at Andrews University in theology and one at the University of Chicago in English—both of which he completed in 1961. While in graduate school, he began discussing his idea for a magazine with the people whom he met there. The concept of the journal, as recorded in the first issue was, "to encourage Seventh-day Adventist participation in the discussion of contemporary issues from a Christian viewpoint, to look without prejudice to all sides of a subject, to evaluate the merits of diverse views and to foster Christian intellectual and cultural growth." While looking for a doctoral program, Branson talked with more people at Berkeley, Harvard and in Southern California. In 1967, several groups of people that were meeting in various parts of the country joined to become the Association of Adventist Forums (AAF). The Association decided to make the journal concept proposed by Branson a reality. A meeting was set to consider the magazine with officials from the church. "It was important for the denomination to recognize the journal, so that the faculty at Adventist colleges could write for it," Branson said. In 1969, the *Review* noted the debut of this new publication. Dr. Mollerous Couperus was chosen to be the first editor. Meanwhile, Branson enrolled in a doctoral program at Harvard. While there he was invited to join the faculty at Andrews University, which he did in 1967, completing his Ph.D. in religious ethics at Harvard in 1968.

Richard Rice remembers Branson's classes at Andrews University from that time. "Nothing pleased Roy more than a frank disagreement among his students in class. He not only permitted us to challenge one another, he encouraged it. In fact, he egged us on. The stronger the confrontation, the happier Roy was."

That seven years later Branson should become the editor of a magazine known for its vigorous discussion of issues was thus most appropriate. He began his editing career with Charles Scriven as a co-editor. Together, the two of them changed the look of the publication from that of an academic journal to a more contemporary magazine. Three years later, Scriven departed. Branson expanded the content of the journal adding news about the denomination. By providing an independent voice within Adventism, the journal acted as the "Fourth Estate" for the church. The value of Spectrum's independence was demonstrated over

Photo: Courtesy of Bronwen Larson

"Roy and I haven't always agreed on some things . . . but we've always been friends." –Neal Wilson, former GC president

and over as the journal tackled topics such as the legal cases against the church (Mary Kay Silver and Davenport), thorough historical examination of Ellen White and her writings, and theological controversies. (For further discussion of the journal's history, see the 25th anniversary edition). Branson also consolidated all phases of the journal's production in Takoma Park, when he moved to Washington, D.C. and joined the Ethics Institute at Georgetown University. Previously it had been edited, at various times, in Loma Linda, St. Helena, and Walla Walla.

With the support of the AAF and the church's academics, the journal grew. Its readers became a special community within Adventism, and no one valued that community more highly than Branson.

In 1996, on the 25th anniversary of the journal, the AAF met in San Diego and honored Branson with a roast. There were many laughs as first Richard Rice and then Jonathan Butler honored/lambasted him.

Rice began by asking, "What can you say in a few short minutes to summarize the life of someone who epitomizes so much that you admire? Someone who combines loyalty to the church with intellectual honesty? Respect for the past with imagination for the future? Probative power with personal warmth? Clarity of expression with originality of thought? How can you capture the life and career of someone who is not just a personality, but an institution? I don't know. But that's not our problem tonight. We're here to talk about Roy Branson. . . ."

"One of the things that has always impressed me about Roy is his ability to converse with people. Roy can talk to anyone, in public, in their area of expertise. He is completely unintimidated by position or reputation. Where others show reverence, Roy is merely courteous. While others are applauding, Roy is rising to ask a question. He will query anybody in any venue. No speaker is too important for Roy to interrogate. Roy makes Mike Wallace seem retiring. I have seen him question Martin Marty, David Tracy, Gordon Kaufman. If you say it, Roy has a question about it."

Butler joked about Branson's family history. He said, "There's a true story: once when Roy was a child at camp meeting, his grandfather, (General Conference President) W. H. Branson, his father (a conference president) and he were on the campgrounds at the same time. They were known as the Father, the Son and the Holy Terror. . . ."

"What has always appealed to me about Roy is his appetite. His zest to feed off the world around him. He takes it all in—politics, literature, art, culture—if they were calories he'd weigh a ton. He's been a skinny Chesterton. Had he been narrower in range, with a blander palate, he might have accomplished more of one thing. But the church has been his magnificent obsession. He's been a teacher, a writer, an editor, an activist, a mover and shaker, exploding in all directions. And the church has benefited from his attention deficit disorder."

"Some people never get to hear such kind words said about them," Branson noted after the special Sabbath School program in Takoma Park. "I've now had the privilege twice."

—Bonnie Dwyer

Photo: Courtesy of Bronwen Larson

"Your vision of a thoughtful, honest and faithful church has encouraged scores of writers and thousands of readers." (from an inscription on the plaque presented to Roy Branson by Les Pitton, former AAF president, on behalf of the members and friends of the Association of Adventist Forums)

Bonnie Dwyer has written for *Spectrum* since 1977.

Blazing Adventist

I first heard about Roy Branson during my senior year of college, when one of my friends claimed that the grandson of the former General Conference president was getting his doctorate at Harvard.

Had the rumor been that he was moving up in the Dodger farm system. . . then I would have been impressed!

In those days my world, especially my intellectual world, was small. I was majoring in theology and biblical languages; from a narrow band of knowledge, I was getting mostly information: answers, not questions. One professor did make American history an adventure, and destabilized my politics. Another, a journalism teacher, terrified me with her relentless and exacting standards, and thereby sparked a love of sentences and paragraphs and ideas. Still, I could not yet appreciate the worth and pleasure of mind-changing education. I could not know fully how much fun it would be to learn under great teachers at a truly great university.

A year and a half later, at the start of my second fall semester at the Andrews University Seminary, I took a class from Roy Branson. Now the man I knew from rumor had earned the degree at his storied university and come to where I was.

He upended my life. All the while he kept it steady.

I had studied the Sabbath School lessons, learned the memory verses—even read the thunderous biblical prophets. But until I sat in a circle with Roy Branson, until I took the jolt of the books he assigned—the one by Michael Harrington on poverty, the one by C. Vann Woodward on the Jim Crow laws, the one by H. Richard Niebuhr on Christ and culture—until that happened, and I wrote the papers and struggled through the classroom crossfire, I didn't understand how revolutionary the Bible is, how it bears on politics as well as private life, how it alters all of consciousness, not just the pious corners. This new teacher threw open a door the seminary, then a startling place, was already cracking open, and I saw how liberating it can be to overcome a prejudice or embrace a new idea.

I've tested orthodoxies ever since—not just for the fun (it is fun) but also for the truth. As an Adventist, after all, I know, or know now, that truth lies always ahead of me, and I must strain after it or betray my hope. I know now that I-have-the-answers-I'll-never-budge fundamentalism is the denial of true Adventism: when you freeze in your tracks you're not marching to Zion.

Roy Branson, a blazing Adventist, taught me this, too. That's how he steadied the life he upended. He said, "Yes," to my heritage—and saw it as a heritage, not only of audacious mission, but also of audacious learning. I could grow in my church, not just grow away from it.

Many others made, and make, a difference. But Roy has lit more fires than most, animated more lives than most. Now, in his new work as advocate at the Center for Law and Public Policy, and as teacher at Columbia Union College, he's still lighting fires and animating lives.

My acquaintance with him started in his classroom, where the challenge of learning was as sweet as cake. I became Roy's friend and sometime colleague and if it would be grandiose to say the rest is history, it's certainly been a lot like history: dreams attained or deferred, ideas embraced or dismissed, people healed or hurt, communities built up or beaten down. It's been an adventure, and perhaps I should say the succeeding years have been the frosting on the. . . .

No, it hasn't been that easy, or that perfect. The man who edited *Spectrum* for twenty-five years comes warts and all, same as the rest of us. So does his church, with its penchant for hyperorthodoxy and its fear of Scripture and discipleship. Meanwhile, the surrounding popular culture remains a supermarket of clueless desire and lost dignity.

What Roy Branson has fought for during his entire life still matters more than anything: the Gospel in word and deed, and the church, despite imperfection, upholding it to all. For that long fight, and for the fighter, I am glad and grateful.

—Charles Scriven

Charles Scriven is president of Columbia Union College. He has served as co-editor of *Spectrum*, pastor of Sligo SDA Church and professor at Walla Walla College. He is the author of *The Transformation of Culture: Social Ethics After H. Richard Niebuhr*.

The Intrepid Editor

As editor of *Spectrum* since 1975, Roy Branson has expanded its interests, enlarged its readership, and extended its influence in the Adventist community of faith. For what *Spectrum* has become, and for what it has accomplished, Roy is largely responsible.

A vigorously independent, intellectually responsible, and thoroughly Adventist publication, *Spectrum* has done what no other publication could do, uniquely enriching the lives and thinking of Adventists. It has been a place where important and constructive conversation has occurred. It has encouraged and facilitated some of the most creative Adventist thinking, and given it a voice. It has opened up new possibilities of theological understanding; it has identified issues which need attention; it has been a model of responsible criticism of official policies and actions that are unjust or unwise.

All of this reflects the person Roy is. A born teacher, he has made *Spectrum* a marvelous means of instruction through which we all have learned. It is difficult to identify anyone in the last third of the twentieth century who has cared more about our community of faith or made a longer-lasting contribution to it. Inevitably the object of short-spirited and sometimes mean-spirited criticism, Roy and *Spectrum* remain shining examples of Adventism at its best—authentic, hopeful, passionate, and progressive.

—Fritz Guy

The name of Fritz Guy, now university professor of theology and philosophy at La Sierra University in Riverside, California, has been listed in every issue of *Spectrum*—as assistant editor, associate editor or consulting editor. He continues to contribute essays in Adventist theology.

If Roy Were a Dessert. . .

If Roy Branson were a dessert, what would he be? To answer that question and several other creative questions, 70 or so friends and colleagues took the following quiz during the September 19, 1998 service at Sligo Church commemorating Roy Branson's 23 years of editorship of *Spectrum*. Here are the results of that quiz:

1. If he were a vehicle, which of the following would Roy Branson be?

Rolls Royce	10
Jaguar	24
Dodge Durango	24
PeterBilt (16 wheeler)	15
French Deux Cheveaux	1

2. If he were one of the Beatles, which of the following would Roy Branson be?

George Harrison	4
John Lennon	22
Ringo Starr	12
Paul McCartney	31
The Manager	1

3. If he were a dessert, which of the following would Roy Branson be?

German Chocolate Cake	20
French Crepe	9
Italian Spumoni	19
English Trifle	26

4. If he were an actor, which of the following would Roy Branson be?

Robin Williams	21
Tom Hanks	21
John Travolta	11
Liam Neeson	19
Paul Newman	1

5. If he were a hymn, which of the following would Roy Branson be?

"Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee"	25
"When All My Labors and Trials Are O'er"	4
"Stand Like the Brave"	39
"How Great Thou Art"	8

The Open Heart

I first met Roy in 1988, when I came to work at *Spectrum* as an editorial assistant. My family was, of course, concerned about the influence of the liberals and cynics of *Spectrum*, thinking I would come to no good end. But truth be told, I was already in full flight from the narrowness and humorless oddity that I thought of as Adventism.

Roy really bothered me. He was clearly intelligent and curious. He was not humorless or narrow, and he was still an Adventist. That made me nervous. But I was confident that eventually I would happen upon some part of his intelligence that he had hobbled or shut away. I was troubled that I had not found that blind spot quickly. I have certain blind spots of my own, and it took me about five years to see what should have been clear.

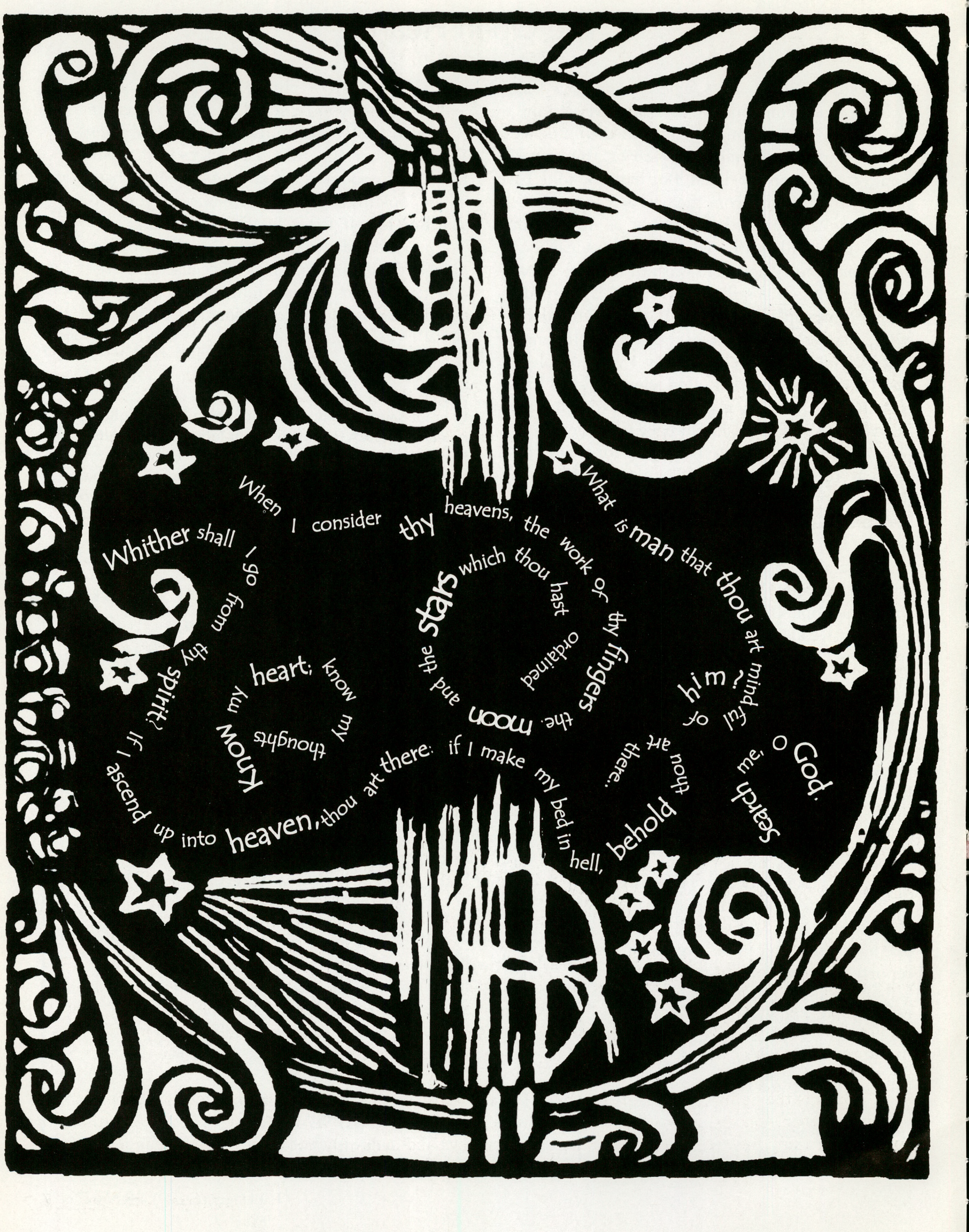
That was 1993, a lively time for reporting news in Adventism. The smoke from David Koresh's compound had barely cleared the Waco horizon. David Mould and his Laymen for Religious Liberty had recently finished papering Florida and Colorado with billboards trumpeting Ellen White's "truth" about the Pope. If my memory serves correctly, we already had in hand an article by Dr. Gilbert Burnham predicting the havoc that AIDS would wreck in Africa, and chidding Adventists for their non-response to it. That essay served, of course, to foreshadow the coming carnage in Rwanda and the subsequent non-response by Adventists. It was business as usual as far as I was concerned.

But then only days before we were to go to press with that issue, Roy burst into my office with a fax in one hand and tears in his eyes. The fax reported a story coming out of besieged Sarajevo. Some Adventists had taken it upon themselves to maintain a postal service there, blind to political or religious affiliations. They managed this, according to a report in the *Washington Post*, because they were religious outsiders—"nobody's and everybody's." Even I had to admit that was a lovely turn of phrase. It wasn't much of a feature story, by most standards. Even after we appended the two columns from the *Washington Post*, the story only filled two pages in the journal. But it was good news after a long spell of bad, and if you look in the October, 1993 issue, you will see that Roy led off the issue with that story.

And it dawned on me then that Roy's allegiance to Adventism was not because he closed down some part of his intellect, but because he could not close down some portion of his heart.

—*Chip Cassano*

Chip Cassano, a graduate of Columbia Union College, received his M.A. in writing from Johns Hopkins University. He works as a writer and editor for the University System of Maryland and teaches creative writing at Columbia Union College. He was *Spectrum's* assistant editor from 1991 through the spring of 1998.


When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained
What is man that thou art mindful of him?
Whither shall I go from thy spirit? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there...
Search me, O God.
Know my heart; know my thoughts

Stars, Texts and Emerging Shapes of Biblical Renewal

By Glen Greenwalt

Biblical scholars now know more about the Bible than at any other point in time. Yet fewer people are reading the Bible and having their lives shaped by its message. Something is obviously wrong, and I think that the move to a critical study of the text has something to do with it. To support this claim, I follow a tale of stars, texts, and emerging shapes of biblical renewal.

And the Stars Sang and Danced

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

—Psalm 19:1-5, KJV

In ages when people still looked at the night sky, before smog or bright lights—that is, throughout all centuries before our own—the starry heavens possessed a value that far transcended the petty things of earth.[1] To the ancients, the stars were not balls of ice, or fire or spent gas hurtling through a void of empty space, but living beings whose voices declared the judgments and praises of gods.

For Israel and most of her neighbors, life came from breath. God breathed and things became alive. In-spiration followed ex-spiration. God breathed out. Life breathed in. Life breathed out. God breathed in. All nature breathed and sighed together. This was also a time when thoughts about God were shared primarily by oral words.

Words have the power of life and death over us, so we sometimes forget how fragile the life of a word itself is. Words have no material existence of their own. They are the most ephemeral of things—thoughts, memories, air sound, silence, the undulation of breath escaping our lips.[2] Oral words, in particular, are dependent upon friends to get passed along. If a story is not remembered it is forever lost. There are no records, no recordings, to bring the story back to life. "In effect, if the story is not heard; the story is not told."[3]

Such is the nature of oral stories that they require relationships to get passed along. It should not surprise us, then, that the logic of stories is not that of the syllogism. Those who live in a world without texts do not think like we who do. Hammers, boards, saws and nails may not belong together in a set of logic on an IQ test, but they do belong together for someone who works from dawn to dusk building houses. In a society without texts, or books, there are no dictionaries to define the meanings of words, no catechisms to pass on beliefs, no how-to manual to explain how to do things, no protracted arguments to prove things. Meanings arise rather in the interplay between things. In an oral society there is no study. One learns, as the Greek roots behind the words *text* and *rhapsody* suggest, by becoming "woven" and "stitched" into the fabric of things. In an oral society, people learn by the habits of their lives. Moral systems are tested by experience. "Every story is an experiment in living," as John Gardner suggested in his book *The Art of Moral Fiction*, where he proposed that we test moral systems by trying out their claims in the writing of fiction to observe what happens in the lives of the characters.

The logic of a story is different, then, than that of a text. The logic of a story is found in its movement, rather than its deductive powers. Throughout the pre-Socratic philosophers of Greece we find examples that reveal the original oral context of meanings. Nowhere is this clearer than in the baffling oddity of Zeno's riddles. Throughout these riddles we are confronted with the strange logic that something becomes larger by a "head" which is something small, so that one becomes larger by what is small; or one becomes heavier by a pair of sandals that are light. What we see in these riddles is evidence of a time when the "to be" form of the verb still designated only states of beings and not characteristics of things. It took the Greek philosophers some time to recognize that truth statements only apply to sentences and not to objects in the world. A red house is never true or false, but a sentence about a red house may be true or false. Thus, truth without texts is not a proposition, but a state of being.

Truth in an oral society, on the other hand, means living in relationships that are true to some measure, or resident to some harmony, even as a plumb line is "true," or the strings of a lute are "true." The storyteller takes in a breath, and the breath sets the body to swaying and pacing to the plot of the story. Stories cannot be told without movement. In part this has to do with memory. Rhythm and motion reinforce memory. In oral societies, the insignificant, the accidental and the cluttered pass almost immediately into the forgotten and therefore into the unknown. Only events that fit into and are reinforced by the picturesque, the paradigmatic and the peripatetic endure and are passed on.

STORIES ARE ALWAYS JOURNEYS. THEY FOLLOW PATHS... THEY SET SAIL...

But even more importantly stories are always journeys. They follow paths .... They set sail.... They get on board .... And along the way they pick up things, not many things, mind you—

otherwise they get bogged down. But stories, like travelers' satchels do thicken through time. They echo other stories. They repeat themselves. They follow diversions, from which only a master storyteller can extract them. At times they even contradict themselves and throw barriers in our way. What they seldom do is ask us to say "yes" or "no" to things. And what they never do is ask us to "Sign on the doted line." Oral stories in particular never retrace the same way twice. What oral stories do is ask us to stand by our word and give up our lives for certain things. The way of stories is just the opposite of the way of indoctrination. We discover the truth of a story by vicariously entering into the struggles, disappointments, dead ends, and victories of the protagonists in the story. Stories never dictate conclusions. Stories call us into themselves to share their journeys. The test of the story is the outcome of the life.

THEY GET ON BOARD.

I sometimes wonder, as I drive by the Alkali Flats Café in the early morning and see all the pickups parked outside, or when I drive by the jammed parking lots of Popular Street theater on Saturday night, or at those times when I go out with my wife or a colleague to eat at a local deli, and listen in on the stories of the adjoining table, whether the world really needs another commentary or thesis on inspiration. Perhaps what the world needs is a story of the God who still breathes. Perhaps, just perhaps, in stories God is yet breathing the world alive.

There are, of course, difficulties as well as pluses to the oral culture that underlie most of Scripture. Not all stories are good just because they endure. Facts, are facts, no matter how we story them. And some things are just more complicated than can be remembered in story or dance. But most troubling of all, oral societies (in that they are dependent on living memory) possess few resources for change.

And the Stars Became Numbers and Then Objects

The Pythagoreans, as they are called, devoted themselves to mathematics; . . . they supposed the elements of numbers to be the elements of all things, and the whole heaven to be a musical scale and a number.

—Aristotle, *Metaphysics*

In time, the stars became silent. In their place, rocks and stones became fixed in the heavens. But this silencing did not happen overnight. Nor did it happen as the result of the triumph of science over religion, as is often suggested. As late as the 18th century, Newton still wrote about the music of the celestial spheres. The silencing of the heavens followed rather the gradual evolution of ever more precise ways of inscribing language. As Walter Ong has powerfully argued, the fragmentation of the modern world traces the history of the gradual enclosure of language first into writing, then print, and finally specialized notation. Inevitably our tools for thinking affect what we think. As believers we need to remember this.

The earliest writing was all pictographic. Certain stylized images stood as mental reminders of the everyday world. As a consequence, pictographs cannot be translated without knowledge of the oral world they depict. Even the first alphabetic writing, invented by Semitic peoples, cannot be read or spoken unless one is first acquainted with the spoken language, since it contains no true vowels. It was not until the Greeks invented an alphabet with vowels that for the first time in human history meanings could be conveyed, theoretically at least, without contact with another human being other than the person who first taught one to read.

Yet even with the rise of the alphabet and the possibility of constructing formal arguments, that are dependent upon writing for structure and conveyance, the philosophical tradition long retained a preference for oral disputation. Pythagoras, who is credited with having provided the mathematical foundation of science, left us no writings, and the teachings that come down to us through his disciples are in the form of cryptic aphorisms and riddles. Plato, whose writings remain to this day the benchmark of philosophy, was leery of writing, and so wrote in dialogues in order to retain something of the give-and-take of everyday conversation in his writings. Even Aristotle, whose temperament and authorship most approximates that of our technological societies, was known as a 'Peripatetic,' by way of his habit of strolling up and down in the covered walkway (the Peripatos) of the Lyceum where he taught. In fact, the oral form of education conducted by Socrates and continued by Plato and Aristotle continued clear through medieval times. In fact, in the Latin there is no word for examination as practiced in education today. Learning was not a matter of studying and memorizing texts, but of defending one's argument in oral debate.

The great gap that exists today between the knower and the everyday world of families, labor, government and nature did not become pronounced, until Gutenberg's invention of the printing press in 1450. Handwritten manuscripts moved language from the world of speaking and listening to one of space and texts, but much of the oral quality of language remained. Sentences in manuscripts break off and start over again. Conversations that take place in the margins get passed along with the text. Sometimes even the disposition of the author gets transcribed in the penmanship. But print changes all of this. Print locks words on to the surface of the page with a precision and finality that is never found in writing (and certainly not orally). It aligns words into straight rows and ruled margins. It impresses us with its infinite repeatability. Typographical errors jump out at us. Print provides, that is to say, precisely the world in which not only science and technology arise, but the world in which dictionaries, commentaries, catechisms, creeds, and bureaucratic institutions arise as well.

Seen in this light, the *via modern*, with its suspicions of metaphysics and its turn toward texts gave rise to Protestantism and created a world where science could flourish. But a high price was paid on earth and in the heavens. One might argue that print first created a science of texts before it created a science of the heavens. The Protestant Reformers, who were almost to a person educated in the *via moderna*, employed the textual skills they learned from the Renaissance Humanists to combat the vacillating dictates of popes, lords and church councils. If later, the Enlightenment thinkers turned to Newton as their hero, rather than Luther or Calvin, it was not because Newton had turned his back on religion, but because Newton had brought an order to the heavens that the Protestant Reformation had failed to bring to the earth. This point needs emphasis. Newton was not doing a different kind of thing in his approach to the heavens than the Reformers were doing in their approach to the text. Both sought to provide a more precise understanding of the phenomena at hand. Protestants moved from allegorical and spiritual readings of the Bible to historical and grammatical readings. Newton discovered differential calculus that allowed him to plot and map the heavens with precision that was unimagined before. In both cases, the aim grew out of deep religious motivations. Unfortunately, in both cases, God became distanced from the earth and heavens.

BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP MUST ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY, IN PART AT LEAST, FOR THE FISSURES THAT

The sad fact is that the entire history of Protestantism can be written as the story of a conflict of interpretations. From the very beginning Luther and Zwingli could not agree on the meaning of the Eucharist, and things have not gotten much better since then. The record of Protestantism is that of one division after another. To overcome this divide, liberal scholars have proposed one new method of reading the text after another—to no avail. In reality, the growing sophistication in historical and grammatical understandings of the text serves most often to distance the living voice of God from the text, until in the end biblical scholarship seems incapable of extricating itself from the text. It is of no small importance, that it was heterodox Lutheran scholar, Matthias Flacius Illyricus, who was the first author of a treatise on biblical hermeneutics. Nor is it of minor significance that in his treatise, *Clavis Scriptura sacrae* (1567), Matthias argues that the Hebrew vowel points and indeed all of Scripture is divinely dictated. Unfortunately, however, even an absolute text does not end controversy. Inevitably the text requires a divine commentary, and the divine commentary requires a divine teaching office, which itself falls into controversy and requires a single seat of authority. History recapitulates itself. Conservative scholars, on the other hand loudly proclaim the perspicuity or clarity of the text, but inevitably turn to powerbrokers outside of the text to reinforce their beliefs when challenged.

Is it any surprise, then, that the Bible has so little power in the life either of the church or the world? Biblical scholarship must assume responsibility, in part at least, for the fissures that are growing in the church and society. It was after all, our dependence upon texts that contributed to the replacement of shared-collaborative ways of

ARE GROWING IN THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY.

knowing with impersonal, objective, bureaucratic structures of knowing and regulation. The recent work of Alden Thompson and Samuel Koranteng-Pipim illustrate the problem posed by a linear, text-bound epistemology. Despite major differences in their theology, both follow a very similar form of argumentation that spends little or no time talking about the living God who breathes the text, focusing rather on methodological issues that are perhaps important, but certainly not of primary

interest to a community of faith. In the end, neither is able to resolve the conflict of interpretations that threatens the church. Neither Thompson nor Pipim explain how their methodology resolves outstanding differences of interpretation between themselves and fellow adherents of their respective methods, let alone between themselves.

Perhaps Stars and Texts Can Sing and Dance Again

. . . the space telescope showed that galaxies—the 50 billion collections of stars, gas and dust that speckle the universe like beacons in a dark sea—are not the isolated, static structures they were once thought to be. Instead, they collide and merge, cannibalize each other, fade. Flare and change shape like flubber. "This is a huge revolution in thought," says Astro-physicist Alan Dressler of the Carnegie Observatories in Pasadena, California.

Newsweek, November 3, 1997

Today, stars are no longer viewed as static structures fixed in the heavens but as stages in a cosmic saga that ultimately involves you and me. We are bits and pieces of stardust that stare back at the heavens with wonder. And, as we might expect, this revolutionary way of seeing the stars was anticipated by a new technology of communication—in this case, the computer.

In 1982 when Walter Ong wrote his classic study of orality and literacy, he dismissed computers as simply further intensifying the "sequential processing and spatializing of the word. . ."[4] Little did Ong know that a revolution was taking place just outside of the public view that radically changed the way we see the world. The revolution was in non-linear ways of knowing. What people like Michael Feigenbaum, Edward Lorenz, Benoit Mandelbrot and others were discovering was that by a few simple algorithmic rules, they could approximate complex patterns and shapes in the natural world. In less than two decades, computers have been transformed from machines to crunch numbers and write documents into 3-D windows on the world—as anyone with an eleven-year-old boy knows. Suddenly knowing has shifted from linear, deductive knowing to *interactive processes,* where learners participate in creative and active ways with what they observe and know. In the new knowledge what matters most is not the capacity to draw fine lines of distinction, but of being able to recognize, organize, and interrelate apparent chaos into patterns, shapes, coherent wholes. We are returning, that is to say, to the world Gerard Manley Hopkins described in his poem "Pied Beauty":

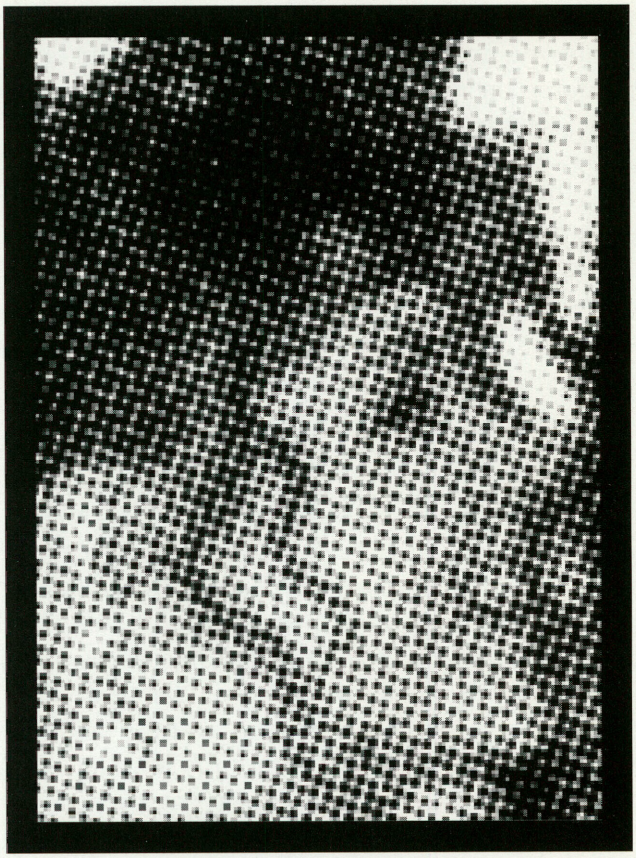
> *"all things counter, original, spare, strange;*
> *Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)"*[5]

While this new technology of knowing is still emerging, I am attracted to it for the promise it holds of returning knowing more directly to the everyday world of belief and action.

The Big Picture Is Truth

Truth, according to the emerging logic, is located in the Big Picture. Individual points of data have significance only when graphed and plotted on a larger grid. The tracking of the weather phenomenon of El Nino is a great example. In the winter of 1982-1983, when El Nino struck the California coast, the force of the storm came as a surprise to most professional weather watchers. That year, because of the immense data that had been gathered, the overall pattern of the storm was apparent even to the most illiterate weather watcher. Furthermore, because of the big picture, a relationship was established between such diverse phenomena as fishermen catching marlin off the coast of the State of Washington, forest fires in Indonesia, a hurricane in Mexico and the promise of great ski vacations at Aspen.

What might this say to biblical scholars? At the very least, it suggests that we are remiss as scholars if we can trace the textual history of the Pentateuch, outline the structure of Matthew, or decipher the theology of Paul in Romans, but fail to relate our study to the everyday lives of our students as they seek life partners, choose careers, or struggle to make sense of emerging cosmologies. Malcolm Maxwell used to talk in classes about "The Truth About God." We may have smiled at his audacity, but we never left class not knowing what mattered. The letter kills. The Spirit makes alive. I fear that biblical theology, with its focus on texts, has forgotten this fundamental truth. The rules of analysis and criticism—whether practiced by liberals or conservatives—divide and take apart. Perhaps the new epistemology can lead us to find



ways of uniting and drawing together again around what really matters in life—which I suspect has little to do with either historical or grammatical ways of knowing, and much to do with our hopes, dreams, fears, and aspirations as human beings on a very small and frail planet.

The Big Picture Is Made of Many Parts

When the new epistemology locates truth in the big picture, it emphasizes at the same time that the big picture is made of many parts. Anyone who has scanned a picture into a computer, or has been scanned by MRI technology, knows that the image that emerges on the screen is comprised of millions of points of data. In a word, knowledge is holographic. Every point of individual data is necessary to see the whole—as is made clear by the image of Marilyn Monroe that emerges on the (October, 1996) cover of *Life* magazine out of a computer-generated arrangement of past covers.[6] This suggests that in reading the Bible we must allow the many pictures of the Bible to come together into a central image. Rather than viewing the Bible as an encyclopedia or a history of determinative faiths, the new epistemology suggests that the truth of the Bible is found when the many pictures within Scripture—whether they arise in poetry, saga, proverb, chronicle, law, or aphorism—are brought together to create an overarching image. On this view the Bible might be visualized as a place of council (in contrast to counsel) where the entire church—past and present, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, male and female—gather together to hear God's will for us today. In this council, the voices of Scripture are privileged over all other voices because they speak from a time closer to the founding moments of faith, and because their voices have proved trustworthy to the Christian community thus far. On this view, then, the unity of the Bible is more an action than a set of propositions. The validity of Christian claims is demonstrated when the Bible creates one people out of us who were previously separated by whatever walls that divide us.

Truth is Recognized in the Clarity of the Image

If there is a fundamental assumption of the emerging epistemology, it is the ecological notion that all things are constantly changing; yet all things are fundamentally one. A paragraph from a recent *National Geographic* magazine captures the essence of this idea. Jim Brandenburg created a photographic journal of the North Woods of Minnesota by taking a single photograph each day for 90 days. Of this experience Brandenburg writes, "All around me I witnessed cycles of life and death—with deer becoming wolves, bones becoming soil, lichens eating rocks, herons stalking fish. Irate wolves chased ravens, which in turn teased indifferent eagles, while I wandered in the knowledge that my every sense would lead me to them so that I might paint them on film."[7] This poses a problem. If things are constantly changing, how can any distinctions be made? Is there no difference between one thing and another, or one belief and another? The solution to this problem, according to the new epistemology is located in the notion of emergence. The idea is that even within chaotic structures, certain relatively stable patterns emerge out of the blooming, buzzing background from which they stand out—as evidenced in a recent set of photographs in which an image of Bill Clinton is transformed into an image of Jimmy Carter. Although images can be morphed into one image after another, the distinctive pictures of Carter and Clinton are clear in comparison.

To apply this insight to the interpretation of the Bible suggests that the faith of the Bible not be determined by any single feature, or even group of features, but by an emerging image that gathers through time. In the Christian faith, the image of Jesus is without doubt the paradigm image of faith, but this image is not a singular sort of thing, but an image that emerges out of many pictures of Scripture—those of Moses, Joshua, Emmanuel, suffering servants, the son of David, nursing mothers, the Messiah, the Son of Man, the lion of Judah, a lamb, a hen gathering her chicks, priests, tabernacles, etc. Now on the surface, at least, many of these images seem to fall into conflict. It is only by setting these pictures against pictures of a serpent, the tower of Babel, pharaoh, Baal, tyrants, Babylon, antichrists, beasts, dragons, false prophets, a pit of nether gloom, etc. that the interconnection of the pictures that comprise the image of Jesus Christ becomes clear. On this sort of reading, what matters most is whether we are becoming formed in the image of Christ, or that of the serpent and other beasts. Such skills are perhaps caught rather than taught. Still, a study of art interpretation may help. Here the paintings of Picasso's study of the masters is instructive. At first glance Picasso's paintings appear to bear no likeness to classical art. However, when compared with the originals he is interpreting, one sees that Picasso has not abandoned the tradition that went before him, but offered his own interpretation of that tradition. The question naturally arises within a conservative Christian tradition as to how far interpretation of a tradition can go before the truth of the tradition is itself obscured if not lost. Could a student working before the truth of the tradition ever reproduce the image of the earlier masters from what she saw in Picasso's painting alone? Perhaps not, if the student is ignorant of the classical work. But this is not to necessarily indict Picasso. It is only to point to the fact that any interpretation must be set in a history of interpretations. Admittedly, at some point of change, the incongruency may become so great that an interpretation represents not simply a difference of style, but a new school or tradition of paintings. One has to live with art closely to make such distinctions.

To apply this insight to a tradition such as Adventism is to suggest that Adventism is not determined by any single feature, or even a collection of things, but by an emergent image that is ordered and shaped out of many features. Viewed from particular perspectives, Adventism may be closer to other faith types such as Catholicism, Methodism, Anabaptism, or even Mormonism. Adventism's identity, and therefore its uniqueness, is located not in the fact that it shares no features with other faiths, but that its particular unity of features is different from any other community in the world. Likewise, as Adventism itself changes over time, identity is not preserved by not changing (which indeed threatens the essence of Adventism if its spirit is the continuation of reformation), but that the distinctive elements of Adventism continue to shine through. This is why I am opposed to identifying Adventism with either a generic statement like "they keep the commandments and have the faith of Jesus," or a creedal statement limited to a set of propositions. Neither captures the essence of how images emerge and are retained through time.

Ultimately Images Must Come to Life to Be Real

It is at this point that we see the radical difference that exists between an interactive, image-generating rationality and the rationality based on print. Textual reality is based upon skills of dissection and analysis. In contrast, in the new way of knowing, reality comes into view, as an emergent image comprised out of many points of view. Reality is not an abstraction, but what is really real. In this regard, an image itself is never the real thing. The image of Aunt Lulu, whether a picture, an anecdote, or genetic scan is not Aunt Lulu. Only Aunt Lulu is Aunt Lulu.

This suggests that our teaching of the Bible is never real, unless the reality of the biblical world somehow comes to life. The Word of Christian faith is not a text, however important, but the living Word who still comes "to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old, by the lake-side, He came to those men who knew him not. He speaks to us the same word: 'Follow thou me!'"[8]

Truth from a Christian standpoint is not a proposition but a way of life. The test of Scripture is never a creed nor a methodological program, but a demand to recognize that Christ is present wherever two or three are gathered together in His name. This suggests that we must move our teaching beyond the analysis, criticism, and syntheses of ideas, into the realms where we walk, talk, and breathe. This is the world in which the stories of the Bible were first told and heard. And it is the world we as scholars must reconceive. How we will do this is open to a great number of strategies. That we must do this is without question, if the Gospel is to be heard by this generation.[9]

Notes and References

1. Jamie James, *The Music of the Spheres: Music, Science and the Natural Order of the Universe* (New York: Copernicus Springer-Verlag, 1993).

2. Walter Org, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Metheum, 1982), 9.

3. Ibid. 10.

4. Ibid. 136.

5. Gerard Manley Hopkins, "Pied Beauty," *The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 4th ed. Revised and enlarged, ed. W. H. Gardner and N. H. Mackenzie (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), 70.

6. The One of the new epistemology is less the One of Plotinus and more the One of Hegel's Trinitarian love or Troelsch's understanding of Spirit as a kind of *gestalt.*

7. Jim Brandenburg, "North Woods Journal," *National Geographic* 192, 100.

8. Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede,* trans. by W. Montgomery (London: A&C Black, 1910, reissued with new introduction by James M. Robinson, 1968), 403.

9. I am interested that two new youth magazines of the Adventist church express by their titles and style the kind of visual, interactive logic of which I speak: namely, *Scanner*—produced by the Glendale Adventist church and *Adventist View*—produced by the Youth Department of the General Conference.

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The Bible and the Church

By John C. Brunt

Preface for Publication

The following paper was presented as the presidential address at the November 1997 meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies. I have chosen to resist the temptation to edit this paper either to bring it up to date or to transform it from an oral presentation to a written essay. Because it was presented at a time when we at Walla Walla College were in the middle of a tense situation, I prefer to leave it as an accurate transcript of what I said on that occasion.

Fortunately, by God's grace, the heat of battle has given way to a wonderful process of healing. In December 1997 the commission set up by the Walla Walla College board presented its report to the full board. This balanced report examined at least a half dozen specific rumors that had circulated about the school of theology and exonerated the school in each case. It also spoke in a broad way to the theological situation within Adventism and offered constructive criticism both to the college and to its critics.

The board submitted the report to the college for its response. In March 1998, the college presented a response prepared by a committee that included faculty from both theology and other disciplines, a staff member, a student, and was chaired by Stephen Payne, then vice-president for admissions and marketing. The board was visibly moved by the tone of the report. Several members said they believed it showed the character of Walla Walla College as a place of spiritual and denominational commitment. The board accepted it without modification, and the college is currently implementing its 37 recommendations for making its commitment more intentional and visible.

In light of the process of healing, this paper would be somewhat different if it had been written today. In places the tone would be more gentle, although I stand by the basic content and concepts. I hope that its publication now will neither renew the heat of battle nor interfere with the process of healing. Rather, I hope these ideas may help us avoid future battlefields.

The Bible and the Church

The Adventist Society for Religious Studies, November 1997

Some papers are born, nurtured, and grow in the library, others on the battlefield. I personally prefer those that come from the library. They fit my left-brained approach to life. In the past year, however, I must admit I have spent more time on the battlefield than in libraries.

In case you live in another universe, those of us who teach theology at Walla Walla College have been under attack. My colleagues and I have spent two days with denominational administrators listening to charges, many based on rumor, others on outright falsehoods, and a few that probably represent legitimately different perspectives on the task of religion teaching. I have spent two and a half hours with a special board subcommittee (a wonderfully friendly and dedicated group for the most part) set up to investigate the school of theology, answering questions going back to what a pastor supposedly overheard me say to a colleague in the hall when he was a student in the seventies. I fear this paper reveals its battlefield provenance.

I would like tonight to introduce the weekend by offering a prolegomena to our topic for this conference, biblical passages and resources for the renewing of Adventism. This topic implies several things. First it implies that the church needs renewing. That is hard to debate. That the Anglo church in America is not growing is a cause of concern to everyone. I recently visited a large Western city where I used to pastor. I attended a church that had been formed by the merging of three former congregations, yet it was smaller than any of the former three had been when I was there. But size is hardly the major concern. Adventists from all ends of the spectrum recognize an identity crisis.

The topic also implies, however, that the church is renewable. Optimism is implicit in it. And finally, the topic suggests that Scripture is a source from which we must legitimately expect renewal to come. I agree with all the implications.

It seems to me, however, that the Bible has not fared well in the church in recent times. Several years ago at one of these sessions in Anaheim, I pled that Adventist Bible teachers not only address their scholarly concerns, but also work to make the Bible interesting, accessible, and relevant to the church. I could hardly have dreamed how beautifully this wish would be realized. George Knight envisioned and initiated the most significant event for the Bible in the Adventist church in four decades since the publication of the *SDA Bible Commentary.* In the *Bible Amplifier* series Adventists make Scripture come alive in an interesting, readable way that leads the reader into the actual study of the Bible. Jon Dybdahl's *Exodus*, George's *Matthew*, and John Pauliens' *John* have all been a blessing to me. Yet, by and large, these books sit on inventory shelves and the whole project has been canceled because Adventists don't seem to be buying serious Bible study, even when wrapped in such an interesting, readable, attractive package.

On the other hand, church members seem to have flocked to buy a book that doesn't help them understand the content of the Bible, but rather talks about the Bible and the methodology the author thinks should be used in its study. With an almost tabloid-like sense of conspiratorial distrust (and an often tabloid-like sense of accuracy and fairness as well) the author misrepresents most of the Adventists who have attempted to write about what the Bible says for our day. And this sells. In fact, it sells well.

Given the popularity of *Receiving the Word* [1] and the demise of the *Bible Amplifier* series, is there much hope that the Bible can be a source of renewal for the church?

I wish to propose three prerequisites to the Bible being a source of renewal for the church. I believe that if the Bible is to renew our community, we must first value the reason that God has given us to understand the Word, we must also value the diversity of both the Bible and the members of the body of Christ, and we must see the ethical and moral dimensions of Scripture as an integral part of its message. Let me speak to each of these three convictions.

Reason and the Life of the Mind

Then Jesus opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

—*Luke 24:45*

Before the ascension, Jesus opened the disciples' minds so they could understand Scripture. Actually, Jesus had been opening their minds the whole time He had been with them. He did it by telling them parables and challenging them with new metaphors. He did it by asking them questions and waiting for answers.

The mind, with its ability to reason, is the gift God has given to humans to enable them to live in God's image and understand God's Word and will. Coyotes, cucumbers and caterpillars don't study Scripture. Only humans with the ability to reason can do that.

The Bible can only fare well in a church where reason is valued and the life of the mind is appreciated. Yes, reason is fallible and minds, without the aid of God's Spirit, can plot demonic actions. But without reason, there can be no understanding of Scripture. It is through reason, aided by God's Spirit, that we understand the meaning of Scripture that God has for us. As Ellen White has said:

It is God's purpose that the kingly power of sanctified reason, controlled by divine grace, shall bear sway in the lives of human beings.[2]

Yet reason is under attack from both the right and the left today and from both inside and outside the church. On the left there are those who question the very concept of meaning in texts or in human discourse. They argue that there are only social constructions of reality and of meaning. No text has meaning in itself. There are merely different readings of texts by different communities with no basis for placing any one above another. As one paper I heard a few years ago at the Society of Biblical Literature meetings (the primary biblical studies of Bible teachers from all denominations and religions), all texts are like the stars. There are infinite ways we might organize them into constellations, and various societies have organized them differently. In the same way, various communities read texts and impose meaning on them, but there is no meaning apart from those social constructions, just as there are no constellations in the stars until we impose them on the heavens.

Certainly there is more than an element of truth in all this. We all know how much of our own prejudice we impose on any text or event. Our family lived in Atlanta for three years when our children were in elementary school. On Sabbath afternoons we would often go to one of two mountains (although to call them such is laughable by Western standards), Stone Mountain on the east of the city and Kennesaw Mountain on the west. The former is a memorial sponsored by the State of Georgia. The latter is operated by the U.S. government. They both memorialize the same war, but even after almost a century and a half, a visitor can hardly tell that they have to do with the same events. Even the name of the primary event is different. The U.S. memorial is about the Civil War, but you will never find those words at Stone Mountain. There it is the War Between the States. On the west of town one hears about General Sherman, the brilliant military strategist, while on the east the emphasis is on how General Sherman needlessly raped, pillaged, and burned his way across Georgia. Humans always bring something to every event and text that they study.

To conclude from this, however, that we must give up the attempt to find a consistent message in a text is a needless depreciation of the gift of reason that God has given us. We can never leave all our prejudices behind, but with the aid of the Spirit we can hear the gospel in God's Word, *if* the reason that God has given us to help us overcome our prejudices is valued. This same reason enables us to carry on the work of exegesis, which is nothing more than asking questions of the text in a disciplined way to help us find a message in Scripture that transcends what we bring to the text, by seeing it within the light of its historical and literary context. Too much postmodern thought, with all its important insights, depreciates the role of reason and thus our ability to understand Scripture, hear God's message in it, and find renewal.

On the other hand, reason is also attacked from the right. Instead of being understood as a tool to help us understand God's revelation in Scripture and other sources, reason is contrasted with revelation. All thinking is suspect. As one person told me recently, "I'm so glad that when I went to college, my teachers didn't raise any questions or try to make me think. They simply indoctrinated me into the Adventist message so that I know what I believe." Does he really, or does he only know what his teachers believed? When I heard this I couldn't help but think of a statement from the *Testimonies*:

Teachers should lead students to think, and clearly to understand the truth for themselves. It is not enough for the teacher to explain or for the student to believe; inquiry must be awakened, and the student must be drawn out to state the truth in his own language, thus making it evident that he sees its force and makes the application.[3]

This is a process of studying Scripture that necessitates reason. It can only take place where there is a positive regard for the mind as God's gift. A church that is afraid to awaken inquiry cannot be renewed by Scripture. Only a healthy appreciation for the mind can liberate us to feel comfortable with the spirit of inquiry. If we are to be renewed by Scripture, we must rekindle the kind of positive regard for reason that made Ellen White call for thinkers, not reflectors of the thoughts of others.

One final caveat about reason: We should think of it holistically, not as intellectualization alone. Bible study includes reason, but involves the whole person. Notice what Ellen White says as she fleshes out what "sanctified reason" means for the study of Scripture:

With your Bibles open before you, consult sanctified reason and a good conscience. Your heart must be moved, your soul touched, your reason and intellect awakened by the Spirit of God; the holy principles revealed in His word will give light to the soul.[4]

Unity in Diversity

Let all be fully convinced in their own minds.
—*Romans 14:5, NRSV*

With these words, Paul tells the Romans that they don't have to agree on every detail of practice, but he does go on to tell them they do have to welcome one another and refrain from judging or scorning those who hold a different perspective.

Diversity in the church and in the Bible has been a problem from the beginning of Christianity. In fact, diversity was such an embarrassment that many in the early church had problems with the existence of more than one Gospel to tell the story of Jesus.

Now clearly the early church didn't accept every story of Jesus. There were gospels that the church did not believe gave authentic voice to the words and deeds of Jesus. Christian identity will always demand that there are limits to diversity. It is possible to preach a different gospel that is not truly Christian, as Paul warned the Galatians in the first chapter of his letter to them. But God did allow even such a vital body of information as the story of Jesus to come to us in four different versions which, if we are honest, we must acknowledge have not only different details at times, but also different perspectives.

What are we to make of this? As I said a moment ago, this was a problem for some church members. Marcion, who was declared a heretic by the church at Rome around the middle of the second century accepted only Luke. Tatian tried to weave all four Gospels into one in his *Diatessaron.* The problem of four Gospels became such an issue that Irenaeus felt compelled to argue that there should be precisely four Gospels. With logic that will hardly be convincing to any of us, he argued:

It is not possible that the Gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are. For since there are four zones of the world in which we live, and four principal winds, while the Church is scattered throughout all the world, and the 'pillar and ground' of the Church is the Gospel and the spirit of life; it is fitting that she should have four pillars, breathing out immortality on every side, and vivifying men afresh.[5]

Far more convincing is Ellen White's reasoning, which gives a very different reason for the existence of four Gospels and the other writings of the New Testament. She says:

"Why do we need a Matthew, a Mark, a Luke, a John, a Paul, and all the writers who have borne testimony in regard to the life and ministry of the Saviour? Why could not one of the disciples have written a complete record, and thus have given us a connected account of Christ's early life? Why does one writer bring in points that another does not mention? Why, if these points are essential, did not all the writers mention them? It is because the minds of men differ. Not all comprehend things in exactly the same way. Certain Scripture truths appeal much more strongly to the minds of some than of others." [6]

The notion that the minds of human beings can legitimately differ is not popular today in some circles. "Pluralism" has become the four-letter word of Adventism. But the church will never again be the monolithic, homogenized group of people who all look and act alike as I perceived it when growing up in the 50s. Of course, it wasn't really that monolithic then; we simply didn't have the global view that let us see beyond our own fairly circumscribed world. Diversity wasn't an issue because most of us could live our lives with people like us. In such an environment it was easy to ignore the diversity of Scripture.

What Ellen White does is transform the *problem* of diversity in Scripture into the *advantage* of diversity in Scripture. The diversity of Scripture makes God's message available to a diverse world with diverse minds. In a church that is as diverse as ours, this is good news, if we will accept it and appropriate it.

For example, in the rich diversity of Scripture there are multiple perspectives on the meaning of the atonement. Each of these adds something important to our understanding of this mystery that will engage our minds for eternity. Yet the tendency today is to make allegiance to one of these biblical models over the others a litmus test for orthodoxy. In fact, legitimate biblical perspectives are virtually demonized in order to uphold the one, supposedly orthodox perspective. We have not learned Ellen White's lesson. The minds of humans differ. The perspectives of biblical writers on the atonement also differ in order to appeal to different minds. This is an *advantage*, something we should appreciate. How can a diverse church be renewed by Scripture if we don't appreciate this profound truth?

Scripture can only renew us today if we are willing to accept its diversity and ours. Yes, this diversity will always be a diversity within limits, and no, it will never be neat and easy to determine the precise lines of those limits. But if we try to homogenize the Bible into one mold and squeeze all of us into that same mold, we will cut off many opportunities for the Bible to challenge even our most cherished traditions and call us to new plateaus of theological understanding and ethical responsibility.

Even in Scripture, truth often emerges from tensions, and recognizing those tensions creates balance. Such recognition allows the Bible to challenge us from opposite directions at different times when we have strayed too far in either direction.

Ethics and Mutual Responsibility

For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
—Galatians 5:14, NRSV

I am grateful for the statement of 27 fundamental beliefs voted at the 1980 General Conference at Dallas. I believe they set forward the basics of Adventism with some beauty of language that actually made it through the process of committee editing and amendments from the floor. They certainly offer many improvements over the previous statements of belief in Adventism. I am also grateful for the preface to the statement, which puts the whole set of beliefs into a context that avoids creedalism.

Although I believe and appreciate this statement, I am grateful that my only creed is the Bible, for it contains much more than statements of beliefs. As important as they are, there is more to Christian life than statements of belief. Christian life involves building up a community of believers, caring about one another, and treating each other with respect.

I worry that the Bible cannot renew us as it should because we focus so much on its theoretical formulations, or more precisely on the doctrinal formulations drawn from it, that we forget the weightier matters of the law, and in the name of doctrinal purity ignore the very foundations of the gospel. Perhaps we need at least a dose of Karl Barth's famous dictum that dogmatics is ethics.[7]

I hesitate to tell this story for I know that the very telling may contribute to the polarization I abhor, but I want to illustrate what I'm talking about. When the Walla Walla religion teachers met with the conference and union leaders to hear charges against us, we were told (without any details) that there were elements in our dissertations that proved we were not truly Adventists. A few days later we heard that several Adventist scholars and teachers from other parts of the country had had a tele-conference with our Northwest administrators. These scholars and teachers had presumably been asked to review our dissertations and other writings in order to find items that might incriminate us and then share them with the administrators. From things that some of the administrators said it became obvious that statements had been taken out of context and misrepresented.

Rumors do get out, and when I heard about this I decided to call one of those who, according to rumor, was involved in this teleconference, and see if it was true. I had known this teacher since elementary school and felt comfortable talking with him. When I called and asked him about it, there was a very long silence on the other end of the telephone and then I heard, "There has been a breach of ethics here, because we were promised that no one would ever know.'"

Indeed there was a breach of ethics, but it was not that the secret got out of the bag. It was that colleagues, in defiance of Matthew 18, were willing to speak in damaging ways about other colleagues behind their backs without ever speaking to them directly. The quest for doctrinal purity does not negate the Bible's message of ethical responsibility to one another.

As I said, Scripture is neither a series of doctrinal statements nor merely a source for finding doctrinal statements. Its holistic message addresses our life together as fellow believers. The rich blend of histories, stories, poems, proverbs, letters, visions, and Gospels addresses and challenges every aspect of our lives. The opportunities for renewal will increase as we open ourselves to all of this rich diversity. And as we do, it will become apparent that God is not only concerned with what we believe, but also with how we live together in mutual care and respect for each other. It is here that we are most in need of renewal.

Conclusion

I have spoken boldly about some prerequisites that I believe are necessary if we are to open ourselves for biblical renewal. But we must never get the idea that we own the Bible and will decide how and whom it should renew. The Adventist Society for Religious Studies (ASRS) does not own the Bible, and neither does the Adventist Theological Society (ATS.) Church administrators do not own the Bible, but neither do church religion teachers. The Bible is God's word in which God addresses us and challenges us all. We must ask the Spirit to open us to be renewed by God's message.

After all, what is the church? It is not a corporate headquarters building on Old Columbia Pike in Silver Spring. It is not a building at all. It is not a college or university. It is people who are committed to Jesus Christ and become part of his body. We cannot renew the church out there, we can only renew ourselves as part of the body and pray that we will then be God's channels for further renewal.

In trying times we are tempted not only to lose heart, but also to point the finger at those who oppose us, forgetting that we have responsibilities, too. Once when David Ben-Gurion was prime minister of Israel, he was reviewing a group of new soldiers. He stopped and asked one of them, "When will there be peace?" The recruit replied, "I don't know, it depends on the Arabs." Ben-Gurion added, "And on us."

I am grateful that long before this current battlefield experience, God sent a witness and mentor who has given me courage and perspective. I refer to Sakae Kubo, who taught me at the seminary in the 60s and with whom I had the privilege of working at Walla Walla in the late 70s and early 80s.

Once I asked him how he had kept his courage and loyalty through the years of exile when he was not allowed to teach. He told me that he had endured because he loved the church. I hope we are all here because we love the church. I think of Philip Yancey's words about his own experience: "I rejected the church for a time because I found so little grace there. I returned because I found grace nowhere else." [8]

This conference focuses on biblical resources for renewing the church that we love. It is my prayer that this conference will allow us opportunity to open God's Word, and with sanctified reason and good conscience, find our hearts moved and our souls touched, so that *we* may be renewed, and through our renewal, new life may flow to the church that we love.

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The Passion of Ancient Poets

Exploring Why the Psalms Offend Us

By Mike Mennard

The ancient psalmists loved God, but they also loved their poetry. Their God-love is evident in the Psalms. However, their poetry-love is less obvious to casual readers. Some have naively suggested that the Psalms are spontaneous, coarse prayers uttered in the midst of passion. It is the view I learned as a boy in grade school. Yet a more critical study of the Psalms reveals something different. It shows me that the ancient psalmists, spanning more than a thousand years of Hebrew history, meticulously crafted their poetry with daring emotion and imaginative conventionalism.

The Psalms offend many modern readers because of their passion. Fiery curses, self-righteousness, arrogance and cruelty often surface in the Psalms. God is called upon to "bash the heads of infants,"[1] (Psalm 137) and "starve the children of enemies"[2] (Psalm 69). For many long-time Bible readers, these terrible images have become so familiar that they have lost their inhuman shock value. Yet this inherent anger and violence has made the Psalms, according to C. S. Lewis, "largely a closed book to many modern church-goers."[3] Many Psalms go essentially ignored by clergy and readers simply because they don't know how such images fit into Scripture.

The Psalms as Poetry

To appreciate or tolerate the passion of the Psalms, we must understand that the writers were—first and foremost—poets. C. S. Lewis, in trying to come to grips with the Psalms' meaning said, "Most emphatically the Psalms must be read as poems; as lyrics, with all the licenses and all the formalities, the hyperboles, the emotional rather than logical connections, which are proper to lyric poetry."[4] These ancient poets did not write theological theses or compact sermons. Their intentions were less doctrinal than liturgical and literary. Acceptance of this point alone starts us on a road towards increased inspiration and delight in the Psalms, and we, the modern readers, can ably confront what offends us.

Art is never produced in a vacuum. Artists, more than most, are moved by their environment and surrounding events, and the psalmists were no exception. Ancient Jewish history is a heart-breaking sequence of savagery and destruction. Many of the Psalms date back to the kingdoms of David and Solomon. And although this era represents the peak of Hebrew imperialism, the era was a brutal one.

David's regime was ruthless by necessity. Little nations throughout the region constantly postured themselves for stability and domination. For this reason, the David-Psalms solicited God for stability, as well as for revenge against those who threatened stability. I'm sure David would prove an interesting psychological study. Sometimes he manifests symptoms of paranoia common to leaders in precarious power; other times, he is a mature leader. Most importantly, he is real. And the ancient poets, unlike us today, never shied away from personal reality. This, perhaps, is the rub that offends our modern ears so concerned with appearances.

The most appalling Psalms appeared during and after the exile in Babylon and Persia. With the ten northern tribes essentially destroyed and Judah and Benjamin severely humiliated by exile, the poets' work grew darker. Horrible scenes and stories of fellow countrymen impaled on poles, flayed or dismembered still churned the stomachs of the poets. Psalm 137, maybe one of the latest of the Psalms, pulls at the heartstrings with gentle homesickness, but cuts deep with its call for severe retribution. It is an anger I do not pretend to relate to, but I recognize its heart-smashing terror, agony and anger in the voices of Auschwitz survivors and Gulag alumni.

Thus, this offensive anger and language does not provide a pattern to live by, but rather a realistic view into the soul of an insufferably abused people. Although a God-blessed people, they were plunged into hell innumerable times and were keenly aware that life stinks. The psalmists never bandaged-over this realization with a panacea of euphemisms, and they littered their liturgical worship service with these dark images. In my mind, this open acceptance of life's horrors and human emotion makes the equally intense praise Psalms more powerful and profound.

Still, these arguments do little to help more modern readers accept their violence. This may be why we prefer to view the Psalms as "spontaneous" expressions of emotion, almost as if we're catching godly people off-guard. We imagine the writers blowing off steam, only to regret their words after a little prayer and a good night's sleep. But it is difficult to see how perfectly constructed poems—crafted according to conventional formulas—can be spontaneous. Rather, the quality of the Psalms—and the attention such quality demands—tells us that the psalmists meant what they wrote. And despite all this, I can find little evidence that God was offended by the psalmists' unharnessed emotion, and I was startled to learn that Jesus often quoted these raging poets.

The Feud Between Art and Religion

In college, I simultaneously pursued two degrees: theology and English literature. The strange tug-of-war between artists and clergy fascinated me—especially the internal struggle within the minds of literary artists who were also ministers such as John Donne, George Herbert and—one of my favorites—Lewis Carroll. The love-hate relationship between art and religion is a complicated one that I don't intend to dive deeply into. But I can't help but wonder if the underlying rift is this: art is very *worldly*—unafraid of the gruesome reality of life—while religion is *other-worldly*—focused largely on an ideal vision of the "yet-to-come," as well as the "as-it-should-be." Religion fears that dwelling on life's morbid reality may cause its parishioners to question the goodness or the omniscience of God. On the other hand, art—at least in the modern sense—fears that if life's cruelty and humanity's weaknesses are hidden, people will be unnecessarily burdened and guilt-whipped by their own and by religion's idealism. It is a vicious cycle that the ancient psalmists and priests apparently licked.

Most notably during the Solomonic kingdom, the temple employed a guild of poets to enhance the nation's worship. Many of the biblical Psalms grew out of this guild, as well as other Psalms that appear throughout Hebrew literature. Skilled poets and musicians were commissioned to create pieces for holy days, important feasts and specific temple functions, as well as to accompany the worshipping pilgrims as they journeyed to the temple and ascended the temple's stairs. For primitive people who rarely ventured beyond their hometown border, the dynamic, vibrant Psalms must have added a magical ingredient to their God-worship. The cold realities embedded in the Psalms struck sympathetic nerves, and the exalted acknowledgment that the world has a benevolent Creator filled their poor lives with rich pride. It is a moving, primal, fertile mysticism that is lost in the current war between religion and art.

Modern religion has tried to recapture the magic, but instead has only conjured up mediocre art. Explore any Christian retail store and see its noteworthy but failed attempts. The walls and shelves are filled with cheap ceramic figurines, hastily-made poster prints (with convenient Bible texts) and scads of bumper-stickers, T-shirts and music—all bursting with conventionally-shallow church-jargon and cliches.

Likewise, art has tried to fill its religion-shaped void with anger and despair without hope. This has resulted in a glorification of suicide, drug-abuse, sex and death. In a recent visit to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, I nearly cried at the skillfully-crafted hopelessness in some rooms. In many ways, the art culture has created a religion of its own—one that celebrates human ingenuity but lacks the mind-exploding concept of divine imagination.

Of course, I'm making broad generalizations and polarizations, but only to make a point. I still highly recommend visiting art exhibits, just as I still highly recommend church. But I'm consumed with the idea that the marriage between quality art and religion must be repaired. Neither can achieve its magical paramount without the other. My study of ancient Hebrew poetry has instilled in me a covetous craving for this union.

Calling All Artists

I love the Psalms for their God-love, their passion and their craftsmanship. But I often wince at how we squash their soul-stirring zeal with mundane responsive readings and/or outright neglect. The Psalms, like all poetry and drama, should be skillfully read (or sung) aloud. Imagine how worship might be heightened if churches invited talented orators and readers to dramatically present the Psalms. What's more, imagine if churches commissioned talented writers within the congregation to write new Psalms appropriate for worship, dedications and other special occasions. It might be a small step towards a rekindled marriage between religion and art.

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Recommended Reading

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one

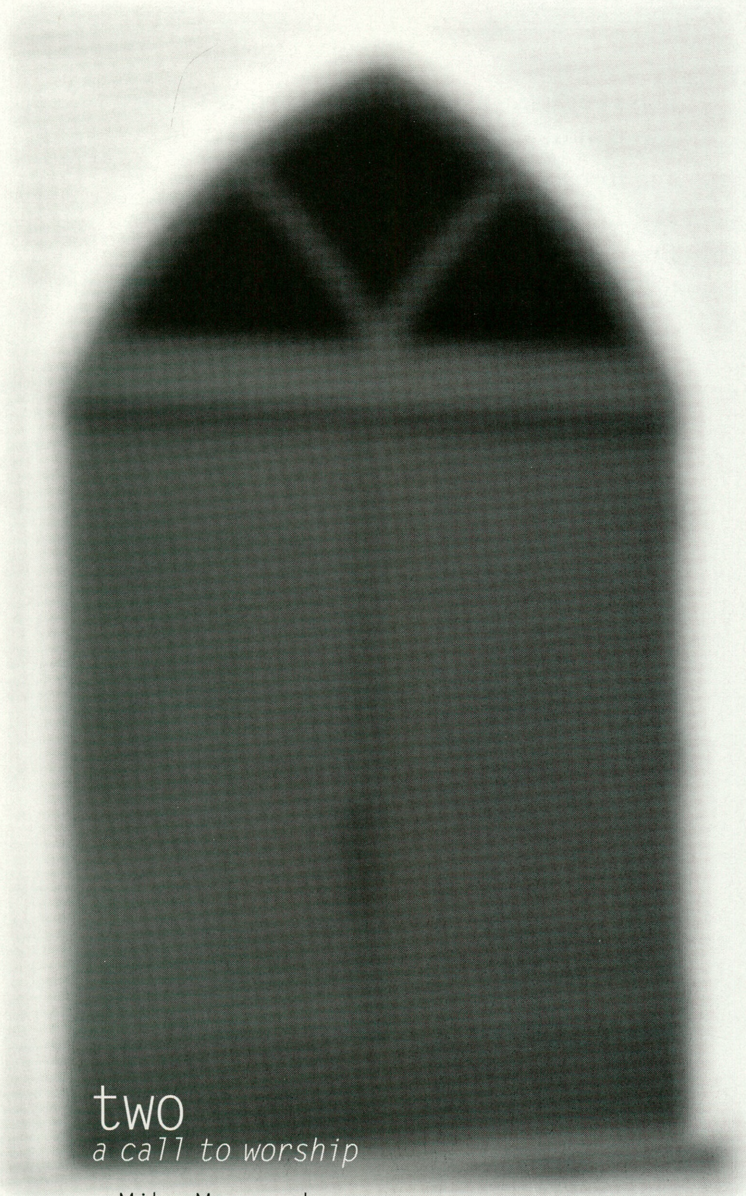
—Mike Mennard

Like the truck stop coffee I gulped late
outside Coalinga,
my worship is weak, salty,
gritty at the bottom.

Awaken me—in spite of my dilution.
Elyon (my feeder and potency), blacken
these lightly roasted grinds, leaking
only yellow, tasteless water
through a thick filter.

With heated squirts of mind
and emotion, recharge me,
revive me.
Then I will thicken with meaty flavor,
and you may sip of me.

And rich like a worshipper's soul
and a prophet's memory,
I will dance on your tongue
and warm your belly.



two
a call to worship

—Mike Mennard

If you're a molester, a thief,
a slut, come inside—
you are welcome here.

If you're a cross-burner, a hater, a liar
a wife-beater, a grudge-keeper,
a junk bond dealer, come inside—
there is still room.

Have you ever ignored
or admired someone because of creed
color, gender, poverty,
wealth—*yes*—you belong here, too.

Crowd in. *Crowd in!*
Make room for the selfish, the proud,
the pious.

Make way. *Make way!*
Pushers and junkies must be greeted as well.
And you—slave-chained to your liquor,
your sex, your food, your appearances, your status,
your religion—*yes*,
even you will find room enough here.

Welcome. *Welcome!*
Come warm yourselves in my huge house,
for I am Elyon, the God
who forgives you.
Come sit at my feet—press in tightly, please—
and let me see your hard faces twisted
with hellish hopelessness.

I have such immense dreams for each of you!
Come inside, please,
while there is still room.

three
a lament

—Mike Mennard

Then the ocean ranted,
pounding her foamy fists
on the sand.

And I stood silently
on the shore, sharing
her anger.

Seagulls hung from a truth-blown
wind that slit my lips
& trilled void in my ears.

With white bread & jerky,
I chased the birds
for answers.

The good gulls chanted—
I've never seen the righteous forsaken
But I threw sand at them & cried out—*I have!*

I've seen the cancer and sipped
the motor-oil they call coffee
in the surg-floor's waiting room.

I've seen first-hand the ballooning bellies,
the softball-sized knee-caps,
the bleached eyes of starvation.

I've seen fierce urban faces and their smirks
emptied by fear
and forced to feel nothing—or less.

I've heard the gospel gigs—
big on hair and bass, but light
on hell & poverty.

I've cried with convalescents,
tasted their mashed-carrot-and lima-bean medley,
and mopped up their cold urine.

I've cursed Elyon
with gusty screams that gashed the walls:
Why did you leave us?

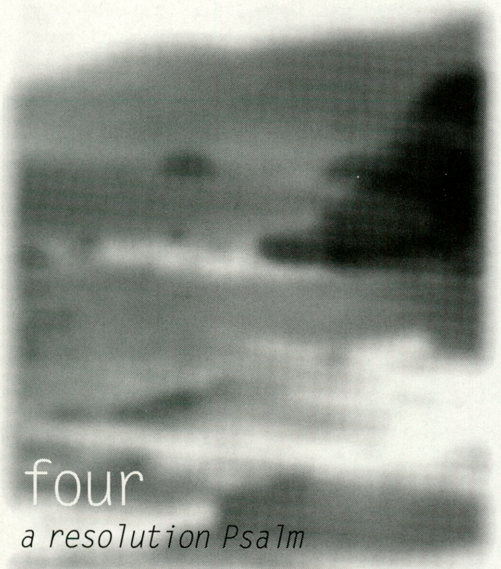
Nearby, little boys constructed sand castles
forged with styrofoam cups,
and I watched & remembered.

When the boys ran off in search of crabs,
high-tide crumbled their castles
into smooth bumps.

Elyon, I whispered, *thus is my life.*
Allow me this rage—this inner,
ardent rage.

Then the ocean ranted,
pounding her foamy fists
on the sand.

And I stood silently
on the shore, sharing
her anger.



four

a resolution Psalm

—Mike Mennard

Though memory pirates me—rips me apart
like a ragged sail in a raging storm—
I will not be moved

Though wise-cracking reviews deflate my enthusiasm—
I will not be moved

Though backstage fear pinches my bladder—
though conniving contracts cheat me with prolonged fine print—
though record execs change my name and tinker with my lyrics—
while image consultants point out my crooked teeth
and hairline—still—
I will not be moved

I covet—Elyon—nothing more—
nothing less
than rightness with you

Your big hand holds my head—your little hand my soul—
and though committees and columnists (and those kids
who rollerblade in the auditorium's parking lot)
shake scrutinizing fists at my face—
though I hack and vomit with fear—
your unwarranted esteem sticks to me—
and I—
I will not be moved

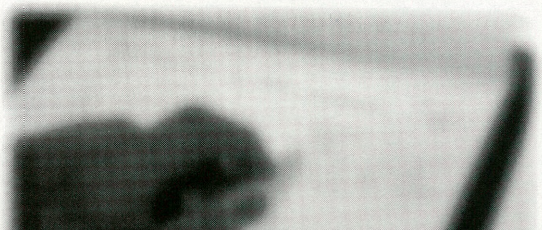
—Mike Mennard

And then I, the commoner, asked Elyon:
Why are your hands dirty?
Your jeans are caked with mud
and your patches peeled off—*Why?*

Elyon answered:
I live among the dung huts of the Maasai
and carry reeds down muddy paths to Calcutta.
I walk with Irion Jaya's naked men
and eat pureed broccoli with convalescents.
I sleep on benches beneath the eucalyptus trees
of Golden Gate Park and wake six stories high
to the Bronx's roar.

The commoner said:
Elyon, come inside
We've erected churches for you—synagogues,
cathedrals, and temples for you to warm yourself.
See, we're the loyal custodians of your comfort.

Elyon answered:
Then why are your hands clean?



—Mike Mennard

In your literate hand, Elyon, I'm a tool,
a number two pencil.
Uselessly dull, I have felt your curved fingers grab me
and lift me from a haphazardly packed desk drawer.
I have experienced the hot, benevolent mouth
of the sharpener,
known the pain of its fangs, ripping
apart my petty gripes, shredding
my sham façade, tearing
at my arrogance, exposing
for once a sharp
point.

seven

—Mike Mennard

Today, Elyon, we're shopping for wigs.
It's a fun, family jaunt. I hope to buy some jeans as well.
My two sisters mockingly mimic the armless—
almost anatomically correct—mannequins,
and doubtful anyone in Penny's notices the daisy-printed scarf
gripping Mom's head.

Today, Elyon, we're shopping for wigs.
And we hope to catch a matinee or late lunch afterwards.
Overwhelmed by the variety—
some pieces look real—I can't resist trying on a few myself.
It's easier to laugh while sporting
a bright red bouffant.

Today, Elyon, we're shopping for wigs.
It takes longer than it should, but I'm no shopper.
I'd rather find a bench and watch my sisters help Mom choose—
amuse her, even—make her smile with exaggerated gestures
and fake Italian accents.

Today, Elyon, we're shopping for wigs.
Faith comes loose in fistfuls, plugs the drain, and I'm left looking
for a new cosmos to succeed my current model.
Yet it's not enough to feel essential in the herky-
jerky of inanimate stuff.
I liked it better when the sun and stars revolved
around the earth, and the heaven's eleven layers hovered
over my head.

Tomorrow, perhaps, you will make something manageable
out of these moments—
provide me with an anecdote with a tidy moral at the end,
or a narrative open to amendments fit to modify
my ineffective universe.

But today, Elyon—
today, we're shopping for wigs.

—Mike Mennard

From Young's Observatory, I stared
into pale eyes of the past.
Blurred light from Andromeda—

having traveled through the space of space—
completed its two million year pilgrimage
at my eye.

The universe expands—in all directions
expands—but no hub
has yet been found.

Suns cluster into galaxies; galaxies
cluster into clusters
of galaxies; and clusters of clusters

cling to more clusters,
until I grieve at my
smallness.

I'm a fleck on an ill-fated rock
that spins within
the Milky-Way's swirling arm.

Yet my infinitesimal prayer to Elyon-gargantuan
is that my life's pilgrimage
—seventy years if I'm lucky—

might end at his eye.

Mike Mennard is the senior writer and editor for Pacific Union College's office of public relations. He is also a songwriter and recording artist and has released two albums with Eden Records.

The Virtue of Language

The Artwork of Milbert Mariano

Most words are accompanied by a solid form that exemplifies its meaning, such as "book" corresponding to a real, visible book. But certain words lack this illustrative referent. They are what French philosopher Jacques Derrida calls "first principles," conceptual terms that cannot be linked to tactile elements such as love, liberty and God. But whereas literary theory reveals this absent link between metaphysical and material, art closes this gap by creating the referent. This is the intrigue of art, the ability to make manifest what was once abstract. Art is the mastery of translating mere contemplation into a visualization of human thought. Milbert Mariano's work is a perpetuation of this ideology, rendering spirituality, philosophy and language into tangible representations.

The collection features an amalgamation of language and the divine—one a marker of distinct cultures, the other a reminder of a prevailing universality by using parts of Ecclesiastes from a Russian Bible. These verses are threaded throughout the five pieces, creating an individual theme for each, but also providing a collective motif.

The collages explore the intertextuality of culture and religion, history and philosophy, by mingling icons from various societies. Yet the art is not only multi-layered in technique, but also in meaning. The first in the series, "Nouveau Jeu," interprets "a time to be born and a time to die" from Ecclesiastes 3:2. A crucifix is superimposed against the faint outlines of a labyrinth, creating a fascinating metaphor of spiritual journey; but it collides against a backdrop which displays the intricate designs of currency. Another is a time line of Filipino history, tracking symbols of heroism and defeat that have dominated the country. The colonization of the Philippines and the first step towards democracy are both condemned and celebrated through deliberately fragmented images of key leaders from the country.

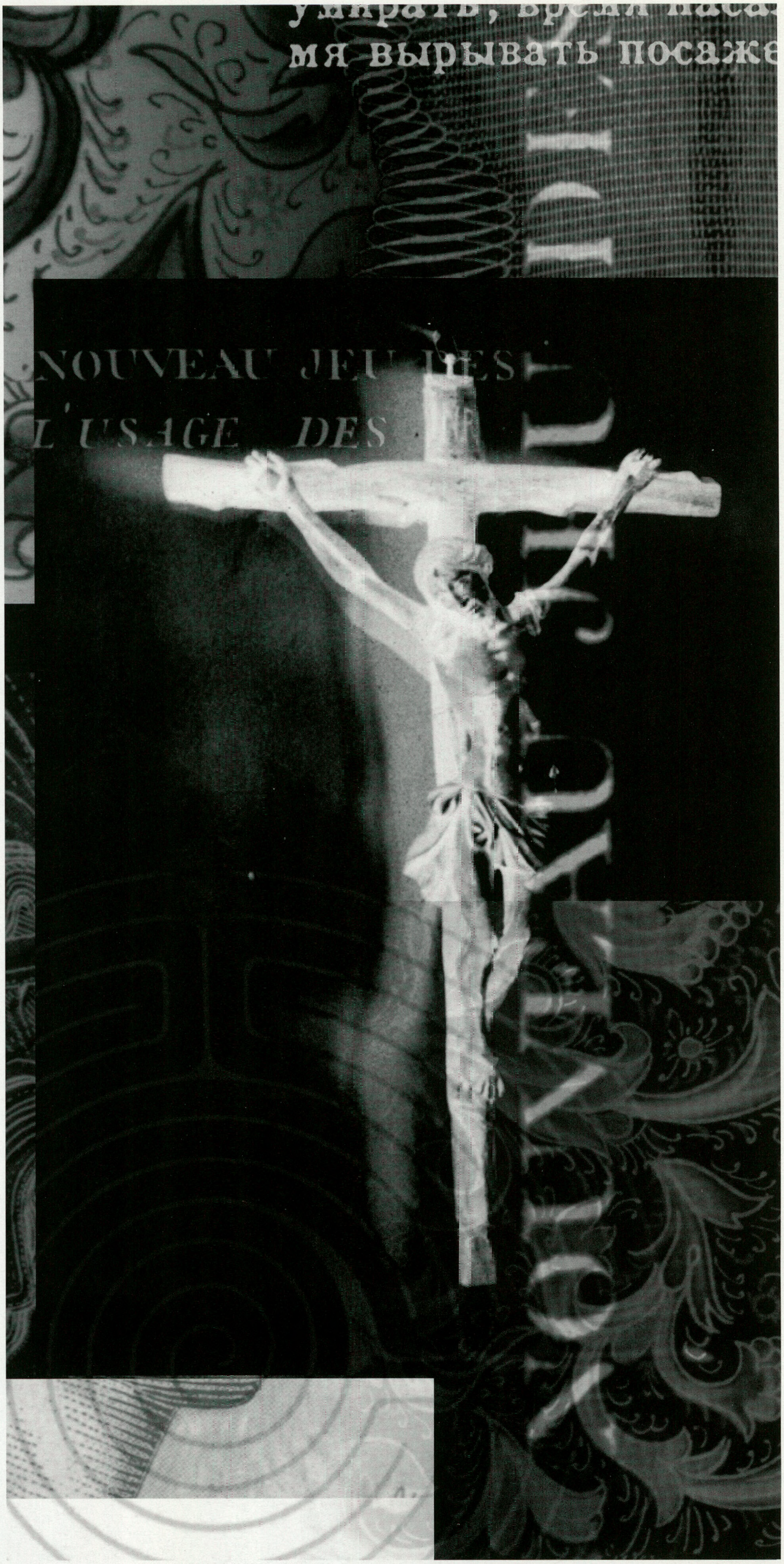
The subjects portrayed in the art are themes that have held much relevance in the artist's life. Mariano is interested in the relationship between culture and spirituality and the shared ideologies that exist within them. He is also a student of language; currently he has been practicing his "very limited" conversational Russian. His past collections have focused on historic women from different cultures, meditation and prayer. For this series, he wanted to incorporate language and type to illustrate spirituality in a way that would transcend culture, needing not to be translated, but found.

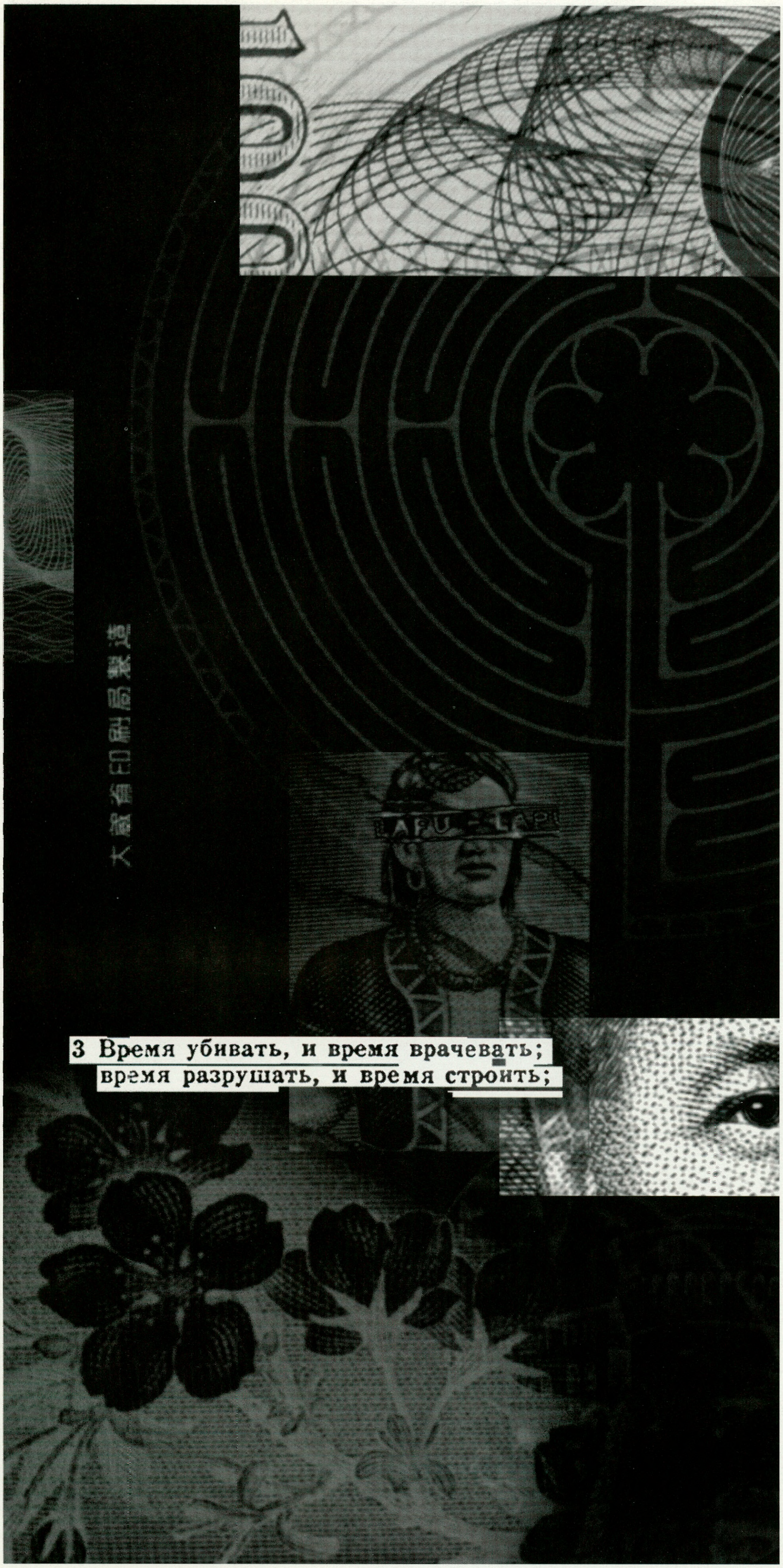
—Julie Z. Lee

Milbert Mariano is an assistant professor of art at Pacific Union College and a graphic designer for the college's publications. He graduated with a bachelor of science degree in graphic design from PUC and is currently working on his master of fine arts at the Academy of Art.

Julie Z. Lee is an intern writer at the Pacific Union College office of public relations. She graduated from PUC in 1998 with degrees in English and psychology.

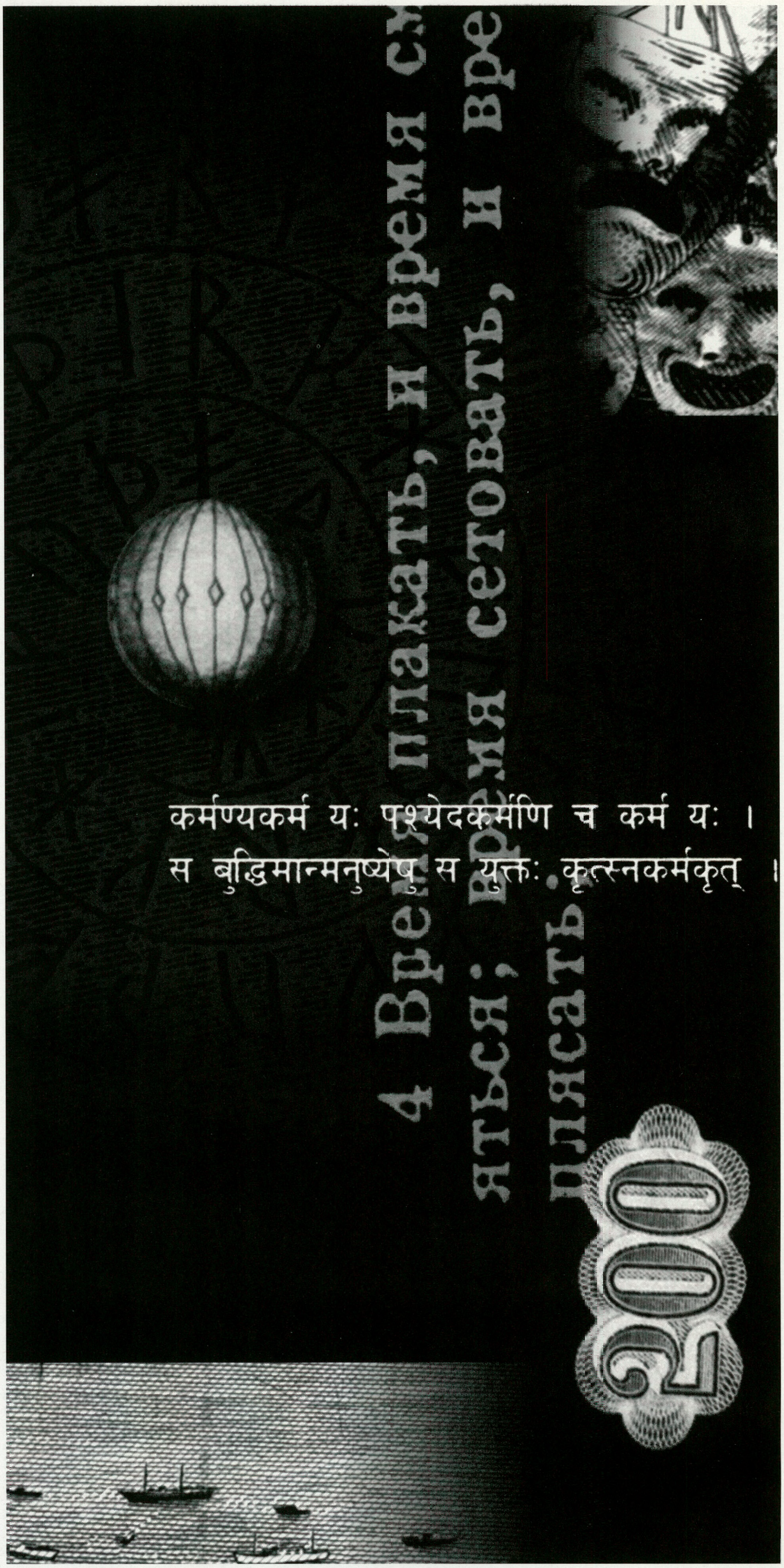
Nouveau Jeu

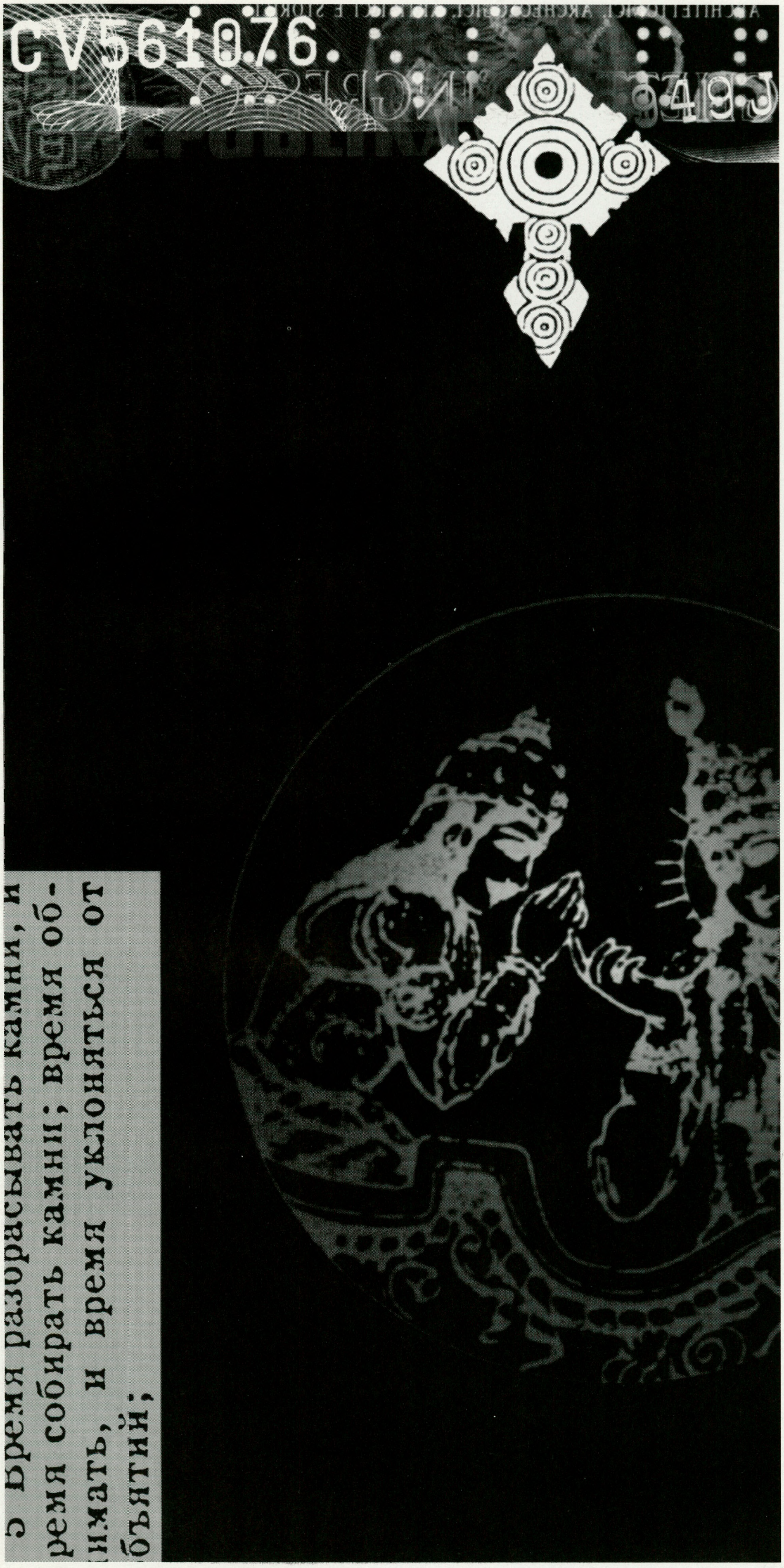




From Lapu-Lapu to Roxas

To Mourn–To Dance





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5 Время разорасывать камни, и
ремя собирать камни; время об-
нимать, и время уклоняться от
объятий;

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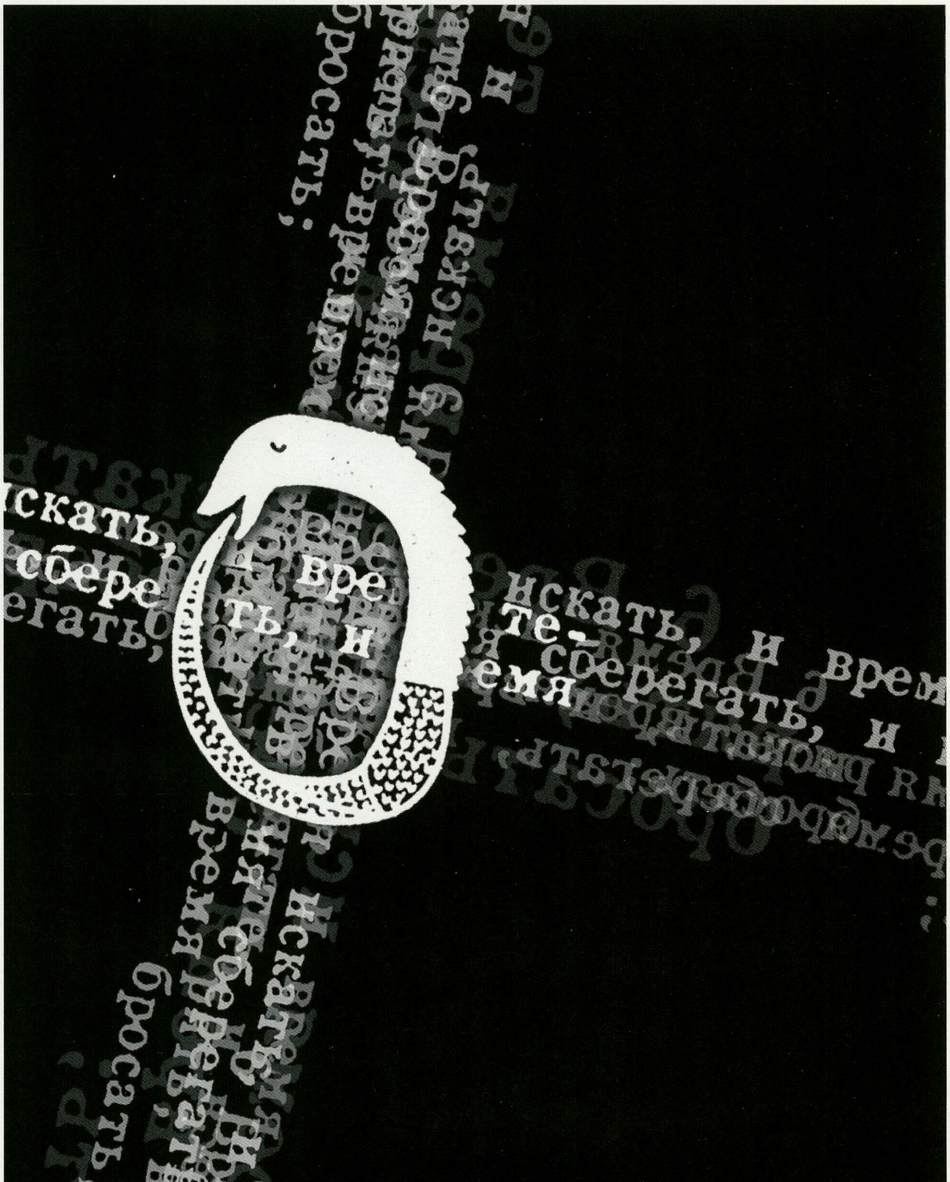
Infinity



Wendell Berry's Vision of the Sabbath, Ecology and Poetry

By E. Graeme Sharrock

There is a day
where the road neither
comes nor goes, and the way
is not a way but a place.
—1997, VII

Not since Rabbi Abraham Heschel's vision of the Sabbath as a temple in time[1] have we read poetry or prose about the sacred day as evocative as Wendell Berry's recently published volumes.[2] In our manic world, the Sabbath is a quaint religious ritual but, seen through Berry's eyes, the rhythms of time stimulate in us a healthy delight in and a holy defense of life. He is a poet who makes us feel we are part of creation, as if for the first time. Farmer, prize-winning writer, professor of English and vigorous ecologist, Berry is probably best known for his trenchant *The Unsettling of America.*[3] As one of the leading voices in the American environmental movement, he has challenged the divorce of culture from agriculture, promoted a radical return to stewardship of the land and advocated a new model of responsible citizenship. His writings and moral vision are deeply rooted in his farming practice in northern Kentucky where he enjoys the "ancient happiness of slow work." (1992, VIII) Since 1979, some 125 pristine poems have sprung from these fields and woods, bearing a new post-modern theology and poetics of the Sabbath.

Reading them, we first picture Berry heading into the forests and fields, ignoring the town bell that calls his neighbors to indoor worship:

I hear, but understand
Contrarily, and walk into the woods.
I leave labor and load,
Take up a different story.
I keep an inventory
Of wonders and of uncommercial goods.
—1979, IV

Instead, he gently walks on Sunday mornings across the bottomlands of his farm, watching, listening, smelling. His meditations log his encounters with creatures whose existence stands as continuing testimony to the Edenic Sabbath, the ancient time of comfortable co-existence between human, animal and plant:

For as I walked the wooded land
The morning of God's mercy,
Beyond the work of mortal hand,
Seen by more than I see,

The quiet deer look up and wait,
Held still in quick of grace.
And I wait, stop footstep and thought.
We stand here face to face.

—1980, II

Continuing to walk, we are immersed in a profusion of wild bluebells, light breaking through large trees, the crunch of brittle grass, the smell of cut cedar and rain resting upon shining leaves. For a moment, humanity perceives itself in the context of the natural—that is the power of deep reflection, of great poetry and of the Sabbath.

What is Berry's experience of Sabbath? First comes the six days' work in which we impact nature with our plans, efforts, tools and technologies. Berry never devalues the work week in favor of the Sabbath; work grounded in a positive evaluation of life must precede the day of rest if the latter is to be meaningful. Instead, the Sabbath is a return to *being with* after a week of necessary *doing to* nature. Only then does mental and physical rest become transcendent, allowing us to briefly experience a "healed harmony" between the world given to us and the world we must someday return to our children and to our Maker. (1979, VII) Refreshed in body and spirit, we return to our work, but with a compassion for all that is, as it is.

Sabbath is also a joyful submission to the limitations of human experience. Unlike the devotees of the myths of industrialization and progress, Sabbath-keepers can acknowledge their limits in the face of uncompleted tasks. Ultimately, they can fall back onto God's creative action, prior to their own, as the ground of all they do and is done to them. As a bird's song becomes lost in the thicket, so human achievements disappear into the long lines of cause and effect we call history. By paying attention to the vast domain of life outside human intentions, the human mind turns momentarily from its narcissism. Even the desperate craving for knowledge has a terminus in the givenness and greatness of the created order.

The mind that comes to rest is tended
In ways that it cannot intend:
Is borne, preserved, and comprehended
By what it cannot comprehend.
Your Sabbath, Lord, thus keeps us by
Your will, not ours. And it is fit
Our only choice should be to die
Into that rest, or out of it.

—1979, II

All orders made by mortal hand or love
Or thought come to a margin of their kind,
Are lost in order we are ignorant of . . . .

—1980, VI

In Berry's understanding of time, Sabbaths are sacred rests in the ongoing rhythms of life. If we are aware, there are experiences of time as large as the "pulse of the great sea" or as small as the "steady counting in the wrist." (1987, III, IV)

Out of disordered history
a little coherence, a pattern
comes, like the steadying
of a rhythm on a drum, melody
coming to it from time
to time, waking over it,
as from a bird at dawn . . . .

—1982, VI

Berry analogically extends the experience of Sabbath rest to time periods beyond the literal week: moments of loss, stillness, silence, winter and death. In the act of non-action, of pausing, of meditation, we momentarily feel the luminosity of life; in our own sorrows, we discover the limits of our expectations. Even after a long and useful life, the Sabbath of final rest is unavoidable; we all must surrender to the great cycle of life.

Where human striving ceased
The Sabbath of the trees
Returns and stands and is.

—1989, II

In his later poems, such as those that mourn the passing of his friends, Berry writes as "a man learning / the limits of time." (1997, VI) Just as Sabbath makes time for reflection upon and repair of the previous week, old age provides for remembrance and reconciliation. In his maturity, Berry has reached the age when he is "remembering the world / once better than it is . . . ." (1988, I) In fact, Berry's creation-centered spirituality places the metaphor of the Sabbath, with its nostalgia for

The Poetics of Time

Unlike his earlier experiments with free verse, Berry's Sabbath poems embody a special poetics of time. "One of the great practical uses of literary disciplines," Berry writes, "is to resist glibness—to slow language down and make it thoughtful . . . . Verse checks the merely impulsive flow of speech, subjects it to another pulse, to measure, to extra-linguistic considerations."[4]

Who makes a clearing makes a work of art,
The true world's Sabbath trees in festival
Around it. And the stepping stream, a part
Of Sabbath also, flows past, by its fall
Made musical, making the hillslope by
Its fall, and still at rest in falling, song
Rising. The field is made by hand and eye,
By daily work, by hope outreaching wrong,
And yet the Sabbath, parted, still must stay
In the dark mazings of the soil no hand
May light, the great Life, broken, makes its way
Along the stemmy footholds of the ant.
Bewildered in our timely dwelling place,
Where we arrive by work, we stay by grace.
—1983, IV

By using periods and commas to great effect, Berry here brings a literary experience of Sabbath to the reader. The first comma, where we expect a period, links the first line to the idea of the trees which surround the clearing. By the time the sentence ends, we have been "around" the words and back at least twice, so that we intuitively sense the tree-lined space in the woods. In the next sentence, the stream of alliterative "s" sounds, interrupted six times by a comma, evokes the sound of a falling brook as it steps down the hillside, mimicking the six days of work, before it reaches the field, its place of rest. The comma after "musical" suggests that we emphasize the last syllable: "by its fall / made musical." If we don't, we completely miss the rhyming sound. That's the point: if we don't take the time to pause and listen we will miss the music of life, the "song /Rising."

The field, like the clearing among the trees higher up, is man-made, but, unlike the clearing that requires only one cutting, a field requires ongoing instrumental action by the farmer: "by . . . by . . . by . . .". In the next few lines, the commas, periods and line endings almost confuse the reader. The subject of the thought, "the Sabbath, parted" disappears somewhere in the "dark mazings of the soil" and turns somehow into "light, the great Life, broken." We are buried for a few seconds at ant-level, in the mysterious workings of the soil where warmth and moisture invisibly nourish growth. Yes, as humans we *are* momentarily "bewildered" (note the *wild*) and grateful for the return to stability and form provided by the neat rhyming of the final couplet.

In this immaculately-crafted poem, we have cascaded down a hillside from a high clearing to the deep world of the soil. At the start and at the end of our journey, the Sabbath is present. In the metaphor of the clearing, the Sabbath provides a natural and necessary border to human effort, especially our consumptive behaviors; in the figure of the field, Sabbath is a life-giving power that secretly complements human effort and enhances human productivity. Like the weekly cycle, the falling waters link the two, engaging in the "making" of the world while constantly falling into "rest." The Sabbath evokes a sense of en/closure to the human week and reminds us of the grace by which are sur/rounded.

perfection, at the heart of several theological themes: grace, resurrection and divine mystery.

Remember the body's pleasure and its sorrow.
. . . Remember the small
secret creases of the earth—the grassy,
the wooded, and the rocky— . . . .
Remember the great sphere of the small
wren's song, through which the water flowed
and the light fell.
—1990, III

For those readers who can recall the Sabbath commandment, it is no surprise that we are asked *to remember.* In the Sabbath we are both given and called back to the source of our being, lest we forget.

It is impossible to follow Berry into these sacred places and times without hearing a prophet, like William Blake, tirading against the excesses of industrialization and aggressive urbanization. In this poem, Berry has married his ecological concerns to the courage of the Beat poets such as Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder:

Hail to the forest born,
that by neglect, the American benevolence,
has returned to semi-virginity, graceful
in the putrid air, the corrosive rain,
the ash-fall of Heaven-invading fire-
out time's genius to mine the light
of the world's ancient buried days
to make it poisonous in the air.
. . . we must pray for clarity to see,
not raw sources, symbols, worded powers,
but fellow presences, independent, called
out of nothing by no word of ours,
blessed, here with us.
—1982, IX

Some poems, combining traditional religious language with a bold irreverence, express anger at modernity's squandering of its stewardship of the natural world. Suburban developments and the intrusion of highways with their "shiny cars speeding / to junk" seem to drown out nature as a place of peace. Listen to his biting satire directed at the "Stranger with Money," whose new buildings on scraped earth "seal and preserve the inside/against the outside:"

The highest good of that place was the control of temperature
and light. The next highest was to touch or say
no fundamental or necessary thing. The next highest
was to see no thing that had not been foreseen . . . .

Where the Sabbath of that place kept itself in waiting,
the herons of the night stood in their morning watch,
and the herons of the day in silence stood
by the living water in its strait. The coots and gallinules
skulked in the reeds, the mother mallards and their little ones
afloat on the seaward sliding water to no purpose I had foreseen.
—1987, III

Since the recent rise of ecological consciousness, keeping Sabbath means standing in solidarity with an abused creation against environmental pollution, sprawling urbanization and irresponsible capitalism. Even to sing to our Creator, like the water thrush at sunset—"the Sabbath of our day"—requires "Air worthy of the breath / Of all singers that sing . . ." rather than a tainted atmosphere. (1983, III) Sabbath also needs quiet, the kind that returns at the end of vacation when "The fume and shock and uproar / of the internal combustions of America / recede . . . ." (1985, V) Instead of focusing on matters of *observance* (an unfortunate word that perpetuates the spectator stance of modernity), this poetic theology of the Sabbath values *participation* with nature and *protest* against the abuse of creation.

Abraham Heschel was the first modern Jewish writer to make the seventh day accessible to urban, educated Americans. "Judaism teaches us to be attached to sacred events, to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of a year. The Sabbaths are our great cathedrals."[5] Using familiar Western architectural figures, Heschel symbolized sacred time as a central, protected space within a tolerable modern civilization. But he barely hinted at the importance of the natural world.

A generation later, after the ecological crises of the '60s and '70s, Berry places the Sabbath back in its original relation to nature, at the metaphoric edge of our modern technological experience. There are other important differences. Heschel focuses on a specific time, the seventh day of the week, the biblical Sabbath. Unlike Heschel, Berry is not writing from within a specific historical and religious community such as Judaism. He contemplates the Sabbath in a generic way—arising from Sundays enjoyed exploring the hills of Henry County, Kentucky, but extending far beyond.

In Judaism, the Sabbath is a bride, a queen, an object of desire within the human community. For Seventh-day Adventists, continually rehearsing their lives before a cosmic audience, keeping Sabbath is a great performance in the theater of salvation. For Berry, it is a deer, threatened by human intrusion, yet capable of fixing our gaze upon what is vulnerable and evocative in our world.

Rather than the architectural, artistic images of Heschel, Berry's poetic voice is unified by his agricultural and organic metaphors, such as the "brotherhood of eye and leaf." (1985, V) At one moment, Berry's *Sabbaths* seem as solitary as Thoreau's *Walden*, isolated and insulated from the world of human productivity. Yet the poems are deeply rooted in Judeo-Christian thought (Psalms, Genesis, apocalyptic and wisdom literature, St. Francis) and the English literary tradition (metaphysical poets, Milton). As a writer he is also a representative of American naturalism (Jefferson, Emerson, Dillard), affirming the value of the world as creation and with an emphasis on the unity of soul and soil, but the first to include the Sabbath in the celebration of nature.

In his essays and poems, Berry combines ancient traditions with a current concern for both natural and human communities, for "traditions . . . have always bound poetry to the concerns and values of the spirit."[6] The Sabbath exists alongside the wheel of life, the cycle of the seasons, the ancient circle of the dance, the ascent and descent of gravity—other cyclical metaphors linking time and spirit. Berry incorporates Native American ethics and Hindu cosmology as easily as Judeo-Christian symbols and criticizes Western Christianity's preference for the spirit when it derogates the body and nature.

What is less clear is how the Sabbath can be authentically experienced by those living within a highly urbanized and technologically-savvy culture. Very few American families today reflect Thomas Jefferson's agrarian ideal of a nation of small farmers. Is one's experience of Sabbath dependent on the nature and dynamics of one's environment? Is Berry's kind of Sabbath available to a city-dweller? To an ER nurse on the p.m. shift? To those living within "the order of spending and wasting?" (1990, III) Yes, he seems to say, but only in "moments when heart and mind are open and aware."[7] It is by knowing some place in nature with attention and care *some* place in nature, that we can develop our spiritual sensitivities.

Although many poets and writers have disclosed the ecological crisis to our minds, Berry is the only contemporary American poet, Jewish or Christian, to present the Sabbath and its meaning for the environmentally conscious. What is new in Berry's poems is his elucidation of the Sabbath theme and its association with a critique of the human (mis)use of nature within a specific bio-region. It is inescapably apparent that Berry has lived his poetry, that his *Sabbaths* are deeply literate meshings of the natural and metaphysical worlds. Seventh-day Adventist and other Sabbath-loving readers will find here a clear and ringing affirmation of the weekly holy day as an experience of "inextinguishable delight." (1997, VI) In polishing these eloquent jewels, Wendell Berry has shown us that our most evocative theological expressions may come not from systematic or reason-driven thought but from the meditative, Sabbath-like space of poetry.

Notes and References

1. *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar 1951)
2. Berry's Sabbath poems have been published in *Sabbaths* (San Francisco: North Point 1987) and *Sabbaths 1978-90* (Ipswich, U.K.: Golgonooza 1992). His new volume *A Timbered Choir: The Sabbath poems 1979-1997* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1998) reprints almost all the poems from the earlier volumes, along with those written in the last seven years. Quotations from the poems are year/poem # (eg. 1989, V).
3. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977.
4. *Standing By Words* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983), p. 28.
5. *The Sabbath*, p. 8.
6. "The Specialization of Poetry," *Hudson Review* 28 [1975]: 11-27.
7. *A Timbered Choir*, p. xviii.

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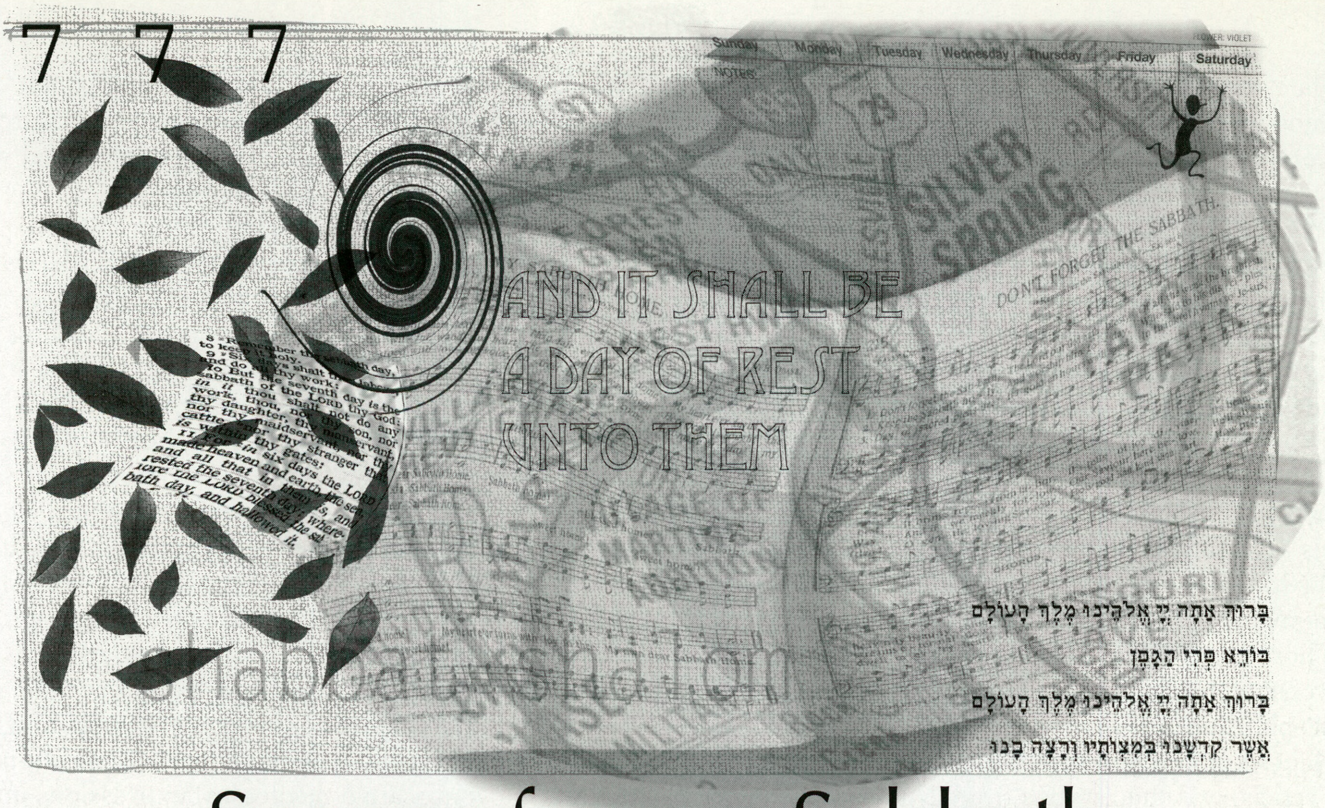

Scenes from a Sabbath

"In the beginning was the Word," we read, and we take it as a charter for multiplying the words of our religion—from memory verses to proof texts, from doctrinal statements to critical reflections and systematic theologies. In the meantime, we live our lives and seek to live the sacred words into our lives. But the divine Word, the *Logos*, was and is more than an assemblage of characters laying quiescent on a page. It is more even than a spoken recitation of sacred texts. The Word is act, the ongoing creative and redemptive activity of Christ as He sustains and reconciles all of creation to Himself.

We keep Sabbath, as our Exodus 20 memory verse has always told us, in remembrance of God's act of creation. If we memorized the Deuteronomy 5 version, we would know that our Sabbath-keeping also recalls God's redemption of an enslaved people from oppression, His creation of the Chosen People. The Sabbath commandment has been spoken into our midst and into our souls, and we have become God's people. Every time we cease from our labors on Friday night, we seek to quiet our souls so we can hear—still, again, anew—the creative redemptive Word.

If we want to do theology, if we must multiply our human words about God, we do well, then, to attend to these and many other "scenes from a Sabbath." God is with us in those scenes, even as He calls us to be with each other. The Word can be heard over and through the throb of an airplane engine, and it can ring like music from the mountains and meadows we fly over. The Word can be heard in the warm and trusting prayers of church folk who bear one another's burdens and welcome the stranger in their gates. It can be heard in the cross-currents of casual talk among family members who each have their peculiar agendas, but whose spirits are joined in the weekly rhythm of Sabbaths shared over decades and generations. God lives, let the earth be glad.

—A. Gregory Schneider

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Meeting God Halfway

By Juli Miller

Hailey, Idaho—I start the engine, check my gauges, switch on the radio and lights and tighten my seat belt and shoulder harness. Worship service is about to begin.

My greeter is Dan up in the airport tower. "Gooooooooooood morning! Super Cub eight-two-three-one-four cleared to taxi to three-one." The sound track encoded onto my ear's permanent CD begins to play Purcell's *Trumpet Tune and Air*, a stately invitation to a major celebration. I make the long taxi to the other end of the airport in order to take off to the north into the wind and towards the mountains. As I roll past the rows of still-sleeping single-engine, twin-engine, and jet aircraft, the smile on my face gets broader, and my toes dance on the rudder pedals to the music.

"Cub three-one-four, cleared for take-off. Wind three-four-zero at niner. Altimeter three-zero-zero-two. Have a good flight." I take three deep breaths of the cold morning air, scan the instrument panel one more time and put my hand to the throttle. Bach's dramatic opening bars of *Toccata in D Minor*—the organ's lower register rumbling in anticipation—and the sound of the engine at full throttle fill my ears as I accelerate down the runway, lift the tail, pull full flaps, and we're airborne. Amen!

Rising over the town of Hailey, I maneuver to the right a bit to follow the noise abatement procedures, putting me over the cemetery and then the bike path. Tombstones and cyclists and cars shrink; the mountains and clouds loom larger. The ridges are etched with sunrise gold, and I hear Grieg's *Morning*, the simple melody of uncomplicated innocence with majestic possibilities, as I make my way between the Pioneer and Smoky ranges.

I continue my ascent abeam the ski lifts and lodges of Sun Valley. In a minute, civilization is behind me. The Wood River flows below, meandering from one side of the broad valley to the other, sharing its cheerful company with the colorful rock walls and aspens of the Boulder Mountains and the hot springs in the grassy meadows below the Smokies. Sometimes

I hear the swirling and twirling of Smetana's *Moldau*, sometimes Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, depending on the colors and shadows beneath me, the mood of the heavens.

Dependent on a continuous feed of voicemail, e-mail, faxes, FedEx's, phone calls, meetings, memos, press releases, and reports to do my daily work, I long for worship experiences free of words, talk or messages. Free of human babble. *Come unto me and I will give you rest.*

I level the plane at ten thousand feet, kneeling at the pew of the White Cloud Mountains, glimpsing into the Promised Land of the awe-inspiring Sawtooth Mountains and the baptismal headwaters of the Salmon River. Creation on a grand scale. My kind of nature story. *My Lord! What a morning!*

Crossing over Galena summit just over the tree tops, I catch a thermal and gain a few hundred feet before I bank the plane into a lefthand turn in order to cross over into the jagged snowy peaks of the Sawtooth range. The sun is finally high enough to send some warming rays into the cockpit window. I close my eyes for a few seconds, savoring the heat and inhaling the fragrance of the high forest.

Antelope run beneath me in the field next to the cows. In every direction I look, there are more mountains, more sky, more river canyons and creeks, more forests. I begin to see aquamarine glacial ponds tucked between the sharp-edged peaks. Tchaikovsky's *Piano Concerto #1*. Soaring violins. Majestic piano chord progressions. The plane floats through the intricate and spectacular Sawtooths, and I am thinking about unseen forces: density, altitude, lift, drag, thrust, fronts. Angels, Holy Spirit, faith, prayer, universal truths.

I turn out of the Sawtooth range over the breathtaking Redfish Lake, not far from the small community of Stanley and close to the famous stretches of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. Hearing other air traffic on the radio, I announce my position and intentions: "Cub three-one-four at eight-point-five over Redfish for Smiley Creek."

A familiar male voice responds, "Hey, is that you Top Cub?" It's Hurricane Hannah, one of my fly-buddies.

"A—'firmative!"

"Where you been?"

"Church."

"Where are you going?"

"Heaven!"

"You cleared for landing?"

"You betcha! Cleared to land."

"See ya."

"See ya."

I descend over Galena summit and head for home.

Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!
. . . When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur and hear the brook
and feel the gentle breeze
Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art!

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Shut-In, Not Shut-Out, At Home with LLBN*

By Thomas G. Dwyer

Loma Linda, September 19, 1998— My 82-year old mother, Ruth, is sitting on the couch in her aqua velour warm-up suit, sipping coffee, and working the *Sun* crossword puzzle. My 81-year old father, Charles, is still asleep, as is my 11-year old son, Mark. But both soon join us.

Ruth:	"Hello, Dearie."
Tom:	"Good morning, Mom."
Ruth:	"There's some fruit I just cut up in the kitchen and some doughnuts. Help yourself."
Tom:	"Are we going to church today?"
Ruth:	"Well, we usually just stay here and watch on TV."
Tom:	"Okay, that's fine."
Ruth:	"But, if you want to go, take the car. I just can't fight the parking over there."
Tom:	"I think it's best that you stay right here. I don't want you driving any more than you have to. I have nightmares of you running over some poor freshman med student in the crosswalk."
Charles:	"Hello, Lump. When did you arrive?"
Tom:	"Late last night."
Charles:	"Was I awake?"
Tom:	"Well, you were up. I'm not sure how awake you were."
Charles:	"How did you get here?"
Tom:	"We flew."
Charles:	"From point A to point B?"
Tom:	"Yes."
Charles:	"But how did you get here?"
Tom:	"We rented a car, since it was so late."
Charles:	"And the little man came with you?"
Tom:	"Yes."
Charles:	"We're glad you fellas came. Can I get you some coffee?"
Tom:	"No, I'm fine."
Mark:	"Well, what's the plan?"
Tom:	"We're going to stay home and watch church on the television."
Charles:	"Okay, where's the hoocus?"
Mark:	"Here's the remote, Grandpa."
Marvin Ponder:	"Joyful observance of this holy time, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts. Join us on the campus of Loma Linda University for the music, prayer and study of God's word at the Sabbath Church."

*** Loma Linda Broadcast Network**

Brass Ensemble: "Lead on, oh, King Eternal"

Charles: "There's old Dennie! He can really blow that horn, can't he?"

Audience: Applause.

Marvin Ponder: "Good morning, and welcome to worship at the University Church. We're glad you're here this morning. The lavender insert that you see is about the Real Life Seminar that is to happen Wednesday night. And Doug, I see your name on that sheet."

Doug Mace: "Have you ever said this: 'You know when I was a teenager we used to do it this way at my church.' And before they finish I'd like to stop and say, 'Oh, oh, oh, wait a minute. It's a different church and a different time. This community is very unique. Loma Linda is very unique for teenagers. Teenagers now have Daytimers. . . . So, come out, and worship with us in vibrant discussion and talk about what's so unique about the teenager of Loma Linda"

Tom: "That's enough doughnuts, Mark. We're going out for lunch later."

Marvin Ponder: "Let's worship together now in the beauty of holiness."

Brass Ensemble

Organ and Choir: "Face to Face."

Tom: "Hmmmmmmmmmmmm."

Ruth: "How do you know what song that is?"

Tom: "It's, 'Face to Face.' See, there are the words."

Ruth: "You're right with it."

Esther Ames: ". . . . some of our members and some of our families are in isolation. But as a family we come to you to worship. . . . "

Charles: "Shall I clear?"

Tom: "Um, I guess I'm finished."

Charles: "Another cup of Joe?"

Tom: "Okay."

Bernard Taylor: "I'd like to welcome you to Systematic Benevolence 101. This is not a tithe envelope, though it's often referred to that way. If you notice, it says "Tithes and Offerings," so that when you have opened it and put your tithe in there, you have not put it to its full use. In fact, tithe is just the first of many things listed here. Church budget is put along with tithe inside a tithe and offering envelope. They're your friends. Put them to good use. The deacons will now receive your church budget and your tithe this morning."

Brass Ensemble: "Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing."

Audience: Applause

William Loveless: "Oh, yes, yes. Thank you, Duane and Brass. . . . Did you hear that rag lip on the trumpet way up high there this morning?

"Where's Jennifer. Here she comes. Come over here Merlin."

Ruth: "Did you know Jennifer got married? They had the whole church service."

Tom: "Who did she marry?"

Ruth: "I don't know."

William Loveless: "This is Sabbath church continuing from the sanctuary of the University Church in Loma Linda, California. The choir have their boots on now. They're going to be 'Wading in the Water' as they bring us our morning anthem."

Sanctuary Choir: "Wade in the Water."

Ruth: "We usually see Becky in the choir. There she is."

Charles: "She's about the last one left on our little cul-de-sac. Did you know Nate moved out? He's down in Mexico. Teaching, I think."

William Loveless: "Our Scripture lesson just said that Jesus has made a place for us, and He will come, and we will be with Him, that we don't know when this is going to happen, that this will surprise many and that's a straight forward idea."

Tom: "Is that another bowl of cereal, Dad? Aren't we going out for lunch after church?"

Charles: "Okay, I'll eat lunch then, too."

William Loveless: "Not a head of your hair will perish. A great deal of reassurance and confidence right in the middle of this discussion."

Charles: "Willie has been eating well, too."

William Loveless: "It's time now, until I come back again, for you to spread out across the world with your resources and energy and your time and your talents and tell the world. Teach them about me, and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Here's what you do 'til I come back."

Charles: "Did you know Willie and I are twins?"

Tom: "Twins?"

Charles: "Yeah, we were born on the same day."

William Loveless: "All of this gives us hope. Most people who are older in this congregation thought when they were kids they would see Jesus when He came. Paul thought that, too."

Charles: "Ole Willie had quite a series back in the old days at Hyattsville. Really brought them in. Sonny Liu, I think, was with him. We had a good group back then. Paul Hines, Ophah Mays and all the Sines boys. We all pitched in."

William Loveless: "This is not a discussion of marriage, this is a discussion of the end of time. He isn't talking about marriage. He's talking about the end of the world. That's the thesis of this passage. He says, 'I want to spare you trouble.' Not spare you trouble of getting married. Ha, Ha, Ha. No, that's not it. No, that's not the point. Ohhh, it's way off, 380 degrees off target if you read that into it. It's a discussion of the end of the world."

Ruth: "Is that Edna Maye?"

Tom: "I think so. She was a patient of mine in dental school, you know. I think I did two fillings for her."

William Loveless: "Yet we find all this build-up of plaque around this simple, simple beautiful teaching of the return of Jesus. What we have done to this beautiful, simple teaching is unconscionable."

Charles: "I think I must have nodded off."

Mark: "You were snoring, Grandpa."

William Loveless: "Jesus is coming personally. He will appear to us. He has come to take us with him, and during any terrible time of difficulty, He will protect us until the end of the age. Not a head of our hair will perish. He is able and promises that."

Mark: "Ya know, at home I don't get a whole lot out of the sermon. So I try to pay attention in Juniors and the study the *Guide* and try to get something out of the lesson. But it's hard to listen to the sermon.

Charles: "Well, Mark, I guess a lot of us could say that."

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Sabbath Thoughts: September 19, 1998

By Jennifer Cline

I have just arrived in Rhode Island. I start an internship on Monday. I still haven't found a place to live. I am frantic to move out of my car and into an apartment, but instead I am calling the hotel desk to see if I can borrow an iron.

For on the fourth time in three years, I am going to church. I tell myself that I could spend the morning so much more productively. I need to go over the ads for apartments in the paper one more time. I need to leave more messages for realtors. I want to explore the area better. Once work starts I really won't get much time to see the sights. When I realize that I have produced the ultimate of excuses ("The Starr Report" has just been released), I go back to my car, find the garment bag, unwedge a few boxes to uncover some suitable shoes and grab a coffee from Best Western's continental breakfast table as I pick up the iron.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church of Wickford, Rhode Island, est. 1960—the sign is small with dark blue lettering outlined in gold. In a place were most buildings date back to the early 1800s, I wonder why they have bothered to include the 1960 establishment date at all. The building obviously is not historic. Here in the east, where a sense of history is so important, I guess it is better to have some link to the past, however limited. It is really only by chance that I have found the church, located right across from a Rhode Island welcome center. Perhaps it is because of this symbolic finding of an Adventist church in the town where I decided to look for an apartment that I feel compelled to be here this morning.

At 9:25 a.m. my Cherokee is one of four cars in the parking lot. I try to find an anonymous place to park, but this is next to impossible. Besides, it will be obvious that I am *the* visitor. Hiding the California license plate is the least of my problems. As I open the double white painted doors I feel strangely at peace. There is blue carpeting in the foyer. There is a table filled with adult lesson quarterlies. Even the standard scenic photograph on the cover of the bulletin is familiar, putting me at ease.

While signing the guest book I find myself telling the hostess, a wonderful Italian grandmother named Mrs. Parisi, all about my last two days in Rhode Island. I describe what my internship will entail, where I have been looking for an apartment, where I went to college and "maintain" my church membership. Practically my entire life story spills out into her warm handshake. And to my surprise she hugs me. Kisses me on the check. Tells me how happy she is that I will be with them for the next six months.

I gulp. Did I really promise to come every week for six months? What have I gotten myself into? Next thing I know she will be asking me to play special music. Sure enough, when I begin to listen again I hear her asking me what my talents are. Talents? "Ahhh," I pause as I politely try to back myself out of any obligation that might require singing. Quietly I take a seat near the back of the church.

About this time I look around and realize how few people are here. I count 21. This includes me. Wow! This phenomenon is totally foreign. I grew up in Loma Linda where people are packed into the large sanctuary for both services. I glance at the bulletin and see that the service will begin with church followed by Sabbath School, and then potluck dinner I imagine. Because I am a visitor and here this early, I will be required to stay for all the activities, I think. Ouch. I didn't calculate on having to spend the day here. I thought I might get it over with early and then go on to my apartment hunting.

I motion Mrs. Parisi over and ask, "Will anyone be offended if I don't stay for Sabbath School and lunch?" Then I go for the confession and tell her shyly about my appointment to look at an apartment. She takes my hand, and gives me the sweetest smile. "That is between you and God, honey." I am left to ponder the words, because she needs to take her seat. The piano is playing. Elders are taking their place on the platform. I look closely, trying to determine which one is the pastor. Seat order and ties do little to illuminate which man this might be. There is one good omen. A woman is joining the men already kneeling. I immediately feel more at ease.

Song of Prayer, Call to Worship, Invocation, Opening Hymn, Receiving of Tithes and Offerings. I check them off in my mind as we go. *Offering Meditation. Doxology. Scripture Lesson.* Everything is progressing in traditional form. But suddenly I am confused. People are speaking out from the congregation. This seems highly unusual. I look down at my bulletin to see where we are in the program. *Prayer of Intercession*, yes, that's the right order, but speaking out like this, I don't know . . . .

I listen more closely and realize how deeply personal the requests are that are being spoken. People are sharing their truest heartfelt needs. The trials facing their families—children, spouses, siblings; illnesses inflicting them; friends' faces they are missing; their trials at work. Mrs. Parisi, bless her, is even interjecting on my behalf, *"and help Jennifer to find a safe place to live, Lord, you know she needs to find an apartment."* I find myself flushing in embarrassment, but no one is looking. This kind of appeal is totally natural to them. They are used to sharing their problems with their church family and calling upon God to assist with their most intimate needs.

A smile comes to everyone's face as the pastor shares his weekly car trials. In what must be ongoing saga, he tells of his "auto mechanic skills" and thanks the Lord for being able to get his ailing car through another week of commuting.

The rest of the service is a bit of a blur to me. I remember the sermon seemed wise, focused on the tribulations our country is facing politically. But while the rest of the church received the pastor's blessing, I could not get past what I had just witnessed. Wickford church shared a level of intimacy I had never felt in an Adventist church before. It began with Mrs. Parisi, her warm greeting, and then her words of wisdom, "That is between you and God." The prayer circle in which 21 people barred their souls to each other openly, and called upon their God in faith introduced me to a church family that had found a way to bring God into their daily lives. Somehow it all collided with my twenty-something Adventist angst and made me realize the beauty of my Adventist heritage.

I don't know how often in the next six months I will feel compelled to search for that suitable pair of shoes early on Sabbath mornings. I now define my relationship with God outside and beyond my traditional Adventist upbringing. But the Wickford Church of Rhode Island, established 1960, helped me to reexamine my Adventist roots, the role it plays in shaping community, how it can inspire faith and most importantly what it means to have a sense of where to find God.

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Scenes from the Bible: *Al Fresco*

By Julie Lorenz

"Okay, let's get started," said the pastor. We'd gathered for Sabbath School *al fresco* at our annual church campout, but we didn't feel ablaze with the Spirit. The sun hadn't risen high enough above the pine trees to dispel the chill of a fall morning on the shores of Lake Tahoe. Most people huddled miserably in their lawn chairs, frozen and tired after a night in cheap sleeping bags. The only patch of sunny ground was infested with ants, and the church members brave enough to sit there stared at the area around their ankles in a riveted manner.

"Okay, let's get started," the pastor said again. "Back home, we usually split up by age for Sabbath School, but today I want us all to participate in an activity everyone can enjoy together. Divide yourselves into teams of six or seven and create a Bible scene using materials from nature. You'll have about 20 minutes. Then, we'll gather together and go around and try to guess what each team has created."

The adults reluctantly hauled themselves to their feet and eventually formed themselves into groups at the edges of the campfire circle, while the children danced around excitedly.

My team consisted of the pastor, a retired colonel, his wife and several teenaged boys. We stood considering.

"Let's make the giant bed of Og the King. Nobody will ever guess that!"

"I've played this game before. My friends made the head of John the Baptist out of a pine cone and put it on a paper plate next to a pocket knife. Let's do that."

Suggestions were made and dismissed rapidly. The team finally chose to implement one of the colonel's wife's suggestions—the Ark of the Covenant. We decided to use aluminum foil to make the angels over the Mercy Seat.

"Aluminum foil isn't nature," grumbled the colonel, but everyone ignored him as we went looking for an ark-shaped rock, two appropriate sticks for rods and pine needles to lash it all together. The colonel's wife went to her campsite for a sheet of aluminum foil, and we assembled our ark before the 20 minute time limit.

"Time's up," said the pastor.

By the picnic tables, several families had made a circle of upended firewood logs. We all gazed at it solemnly. One of the fathers reached over and tapped the wood with his foot, and all the logs fell down.

"The walls of Jericho!" we shouted in unison.

Another display had small sticks arranged all over the ground. A few half-hearted suggestions were thrown out until someone ventured tentatively, "Ezekial's bones."

"What? What's that story?" several asked.

"It's that weird story about the bones coming back to life. You know, there's a song about it: 'The ankle bone's connected to the . . . leg bone. The leg bone's connected to the . . . knee bone.'"

We moved over to the next creation. Ours. "It's the ark!" a child shouted.

"Hey," someone said, "Aluminum foil isn't nature!"

The group drifted on to look at several more displays . . . the huge bunch of grapes carried by the spies out of Canaan, the manger scene, the other ark with small bits of wood lined up two by two.

The next team had started a small fire. One of the "cool" young mothers of the church pulled three dripping pine cones out of a bucket of water and gently tossed them into the flames. She then threw in a rock. "It's Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace," laughed several people, and everyone burst into a spontaneous round of applause. "The rock is the Son of God walking in the midst," prompted one of the creators of the best scene of all.

By now the sun had cleared the tree tops, and we were finally warm. We complemented each other's creations and knelt in the dirt beside our scenes to pose for photographs. We admired the displays hastily put together by a couple little boys who had decided the game was too fun to stop. We told the pastor what a good idea he'd had for Sabbath School. Then, we returned to our lawn chairs for a few energetic choruses before the church service and the rest of our campout Sabbath.

Still to come was the inevitable Adventist potluck, then a nine mile hike into the mountains for the tough among us and a one mile hike to the lake for the rest of us. That evening, as we prepared for a campfire vespers, we could see our miniature Biblical scenes slowly disappearing into the landscape like future archeology sites.

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Photo: Courtesy of *Ellen G. White Estate*

A Conversation with Herbert Douglass about Ellen White

In November, 1998, Herbert Douglass was in Battle Creek, Michigan working on the Adventist Historic Village when he suffered a heart attack. Two weeks and four hospitals later he was back home on Hope Hill in Northern California ready and eager to talk to *Spectrum* about his latest book *Messenger of the Lord.* Seated by the fire in his office he talked about the past fifty years as being necessary preparation for writing the book. Douglass' career includes time in both academia and publishing. He taught religion first at Pacific Union College and then at Atlantic Union College where he became the academic dean and then president. Several years each at the *Review and Herald* and Pacific Press preceded his appointment to the presidency of Weimar College. He is the author of numerous articles and books. Now retired, he lives, writes and gardens in Weimar, California, when he is not on the road on behalf of the "village."

Douglass: It seems like this book was such a natural thing to do after fifty years of professional life. I know I couldn't have written this twenty years ago. I probably could do a better job five years from now. I would be more specific in some areas, but they limited me. They said, 'it's getting too big.' I had to cut out areas that would be interesting in a scholarly journal where you go after things differently.

Spectrum: Is that why people like Walter Rea and Ron Numbers don't appear in your book?

Douglass: I do reference Ron occasionally. Further, I understand well where Ron and Walter are coming from. But I had to make the decision as to whether I was going to deal directly with personalities (such as Walter or Ron) who have been interpreted as being critical of Ellen White or speak directly to the issues that they and others have struggled with. Early on I made the deal with the White Estate (and nobody could have been more supportive than Ken Wood) that we would face every issue, leaving no stone unturned and track the truth wherever it led us. I think that every essential issue that Ron or Walter emphasized is dealt with in *Messenger.* In my introductory overview, alert readers will quickly recognize this procedure.

From the 1950s, I had known about Ellen's use of other literary materials. I could handle that within my understanding of how revelation/inspiration works. However, I was not aware of the extent of her "borrowing" until the 70s when I read the diligent works of both Ron and Walter. When I say "borrowed," I mean that remarkable selectivity that only the Holy Spirit could have given her. She could take a book here or a chapter there and find clarity of insight, selecting out the helpful phrase or thought and leave behind all the junk. That is why Dr. Kellogg wrote and spoke so highly of her, the more he practiced medicine.

Spectrum: We have a series of questions to ask concerning the relationship between inspiration on the one hand, infallibility and authority on the other. Would you be willing to say that in some sense Paul was inspired when he wrote Romans, Handel was inspired when he wrote the Messiah, and Ellen White was inspired when she wrote

Desire of Ages? Would you be willing to say that in some sense that would be true of all three of them?

Douglass: We have to have a common understanding of revelation. God chooses people at certain times to set things straight, to clarify His program. He speaks to them and they understand that something is being revealed to them. Handel was inspired in the way that I look at those roses, and they give me wonderful thoughts. But we are dealing with the definition of "inspiration." Ellen G. White received the very same kind of attention that Moses and Daniel were receiving, but the way she passed on this revelation took different forms, such as diaries and personal letters, in addition to printed books and the spoken word.

Spectrum: So of the three, Paul, Handel and Ellen White, it would be better in your view, to put Handel in a different category. That leaves Paul and Ellen White. How would you describe the similarities and differences between Paul and Ellen White with respect to how God worked through them?

Douglass: Well, forthrightly, I have to say, number one, there is no half-way inspiration. When God chooses messengers, the quality of the inspiration is exactly the same. The revelation is given some conceptual framework that they now put into their own words. The messenger's understanding is a lot different in the 19th century than it was in the first century. Number two, prophets can only receive what their experience has committed them to understand. God doesn't give a divinely complete encyclopedia every time he sends down a message. The messenger works with his/her intelligence and emotions.

Spectrum: If God worked through Paul and through Ellen White in fundamentally the same way—

Douglass: Absolutely, the Spirit of prophecy works as only the Spirit works.

Spectrum: Okay, if God works through both fundamentally the same way, does that suggest that we should canonize the writings of Ellen White like we have the Scriptures? And if not, why not? How would you approach this issue?

Douglass: If you were asking that question in 62 AD, somebody might say to you, "Pastor, you've been reading Paul's letter to the Ephesians almost as if you were reading Moses. Paul is a great man, but we wouldn't want to canonize Paul! We have the Bible, the Bible is what Jesus used. Don't you think we're safer if we just stay with the Bible that Jesus used?" Of course, everybody in the church will say, "That's right, that's the safest thing to do, stay with the Bible."

Spectrum: That response suggests that maybe we should canonize the writings of Ellen White.

Douglass: No, no, because she would turn over in her grave. The misunderstanding would be counterproductive to the time in which we live and to her own expressed purpose of getting us back to the Bible.. It would get us off on the wrong track.

Spectrum: Okay, now moving from the question of inspiration to the question of infallibility. Would it be fair to summarize your position by saying that Doctor Douglass believes that neither Paul nor Ellen White were infallible messengers of the Lord? Is that right? What would you add to that?

Douglass: Both were faithful commentators on the Bible as it had come to them. Both were faithful messengers of unfolding truths as God used them to serve his purposes. In 1982, the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University surveyed a large sampling of Seventh-day Adventists, noting the differences between those who regularly read Ellen White and those who did not. The differences were remarkable, such as 82 percent of the readers usually or always had personal Bible study, while only 47 of the nonreaders did, that the readers were more likely to be stronger Christians in their personal spiritual life and in their witnessing to their communities than the nonreaders, etc. What I'm saying is that there is fruitage in listening to Paul and there is fruitage in listening to Ellen White, and the weight of that evidence keeps me an Adventist.

Spectrum: Suppose an Adventist became convinced that Paul had erred in some respect, and that's possible because we don't believe that Paul was infallible, or contrarily that Ellen White had erred in some respects, again in principle that's possible because we don't think that she is infallible, then how should that Adventist proceed?

Douglass: You have a way of asking the central questions. If I didn't go at that central question from the beginning, I wouldn't have written *Messenger*. That is the question behind every Adventist problem today. Every question, every problem in every area, goes back to "What are you going to do with Ellen White?" Knowing that she is fallible, people then begin to focus on the candlestick and not on the light. If we start looking at the container and not the content, we are in real trouble. None us know of Isaiah's or Paul's idiosyncrasies. What we do know is their message. The prevailing principle that kept me going every day on this book was that the message is more important than the messenger.

Spectrum: What about that old communication theory of Marshall McLuhan's that the medium is the message?

Douglass: I wrote an article about that for *Insight* using that line to explain why Jesus came to this world. But Ellen White is not the message; she is the messenger. She is not the content; she is the container. The message is the Great Controversy theme. This integrating, coherent principle provided the distinctiveness of our health message and our educational principles. But more importantly to all else, this principle helps Adventists to transcend the age-old paradoxes and tensions that have polarized and paralyzed Christianity for 2000 years. It is the reason why I remain an Adventist theologian.

Spectrum: How did your view of Ellen White change while writing the book?

Douglass: My appreciation for her as a person constantly deepened. To write the section on the "real Ellen," I went over diary entries and much original material. It was like I was living with her. She was a remarkable wife and mother under an incredible schedule that never let up! Traveling, writing, speaking so much of the time and yet she would be out at 5 a.m. planting her seeds or cuttings before she would leave for the next trip. It's amazing when we realize that the Transcontinental Railroad was completed in 1869, and by 1885, she had crossed this country at least 25 times. When others had given James up to die, think of what she did for her stalwart husband, especially after his strokes and deepening depression, caring to speak to no one. Yet, Ellen found ways to get James to meet people in their home after she made it clear that he had better answers than she did, and that he was needed. Or when she told neighbors not to volunteer their help in getting their hay. And when James slumped into discouragement because neighbors were too busy, Ellen made it clear that they and Willie would do it themselves. Getting him even to leave the house was a great victory, and to watch 5 ft. 2 in. Ellen in the wagon stacking the hay was enough for his manliness to pick up the scythe and start working again, and his health speedily improved. Many are these examples of her common sense.

How about sending kids to school before the age of eight to ten? Let's go to St. Helena in 1904. The board meeting was held in her living room. (The minutes from that meeting weren't recovered until the 1970s.) What she said at that meeting, in essence, was, "Some of our lynx-eyed children are wandering all over the sanitarium grounds, getting into mischief. The best that we can do is to have a school where they can be under the restraining hand of a good teacher." When astonished parents quoted her earlier writings about early school attendance, she answered, "Let's use common sense. When I wrote those words from the light given to me at that time, we didn't have a Sabbath-keeping church school anywhere, but circumstances have changed."

I didn't understand the extent of her common sense before writing *Messenger*. Think of her common sense regarding the use of salt and eggs, for example, or in accepting government aid. But after saying all this, she is still the candlestick, not the light; the messenger, not the message. If we overlook her message, we will all end up as any other church today, lost in the fog of pluralism. If we don't understand the Great Controversy theme, we will never understand the relationship between the cross and our Lord's high priestly ministry, nor even the essence of the Gospel being restoration, not merely forgiveness. This emphasis on the Great Controversy theme is the greatest hidden silence in our church, it seems to me. That's what kept me writing.

A Kinder, Gentler Ellen White

A Review of Herbert Douglass' *Messenger of the Lord*

By Alden Thompson

My passion for the ministry of Ellen White makes me a bad risk for reviewing Herbert Douglass' book,[1] *Messenger of the Lord.* I multiply words and overstate both praise and lament. But the temptation was more than I could bear . . . .

With 603 double-column pages (including front matter and indices), *Messenger* deserves the label "monumental." Its arguments and omissions may anger critics; its assertions may unsettle defenders, but the book will be a benchmark for Ellen White studies as the church continues to explore her role in the church.

The author is a respected elder statesman in Adventism who served as a religion teacher at Pacific Union College and at Atlantic Union College, dean and president at AUC, associate editor of the *Adventist Review*, and book editor at Pacific Press. A published author/editor,[2] Douglass holds degrees from Andrews University and a Th.D. from Pacific School of Religion.

The preface, attributed to "The Board of Trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.," indicates that the book is authorized by the Estate and co-sponsored by the General Conference Department of Education and the Board of Higher Education. It was edited by Kenneth Wood and dedicated to him. Wood, former editor of the *Adventist Review* (1966-1982) has been chair of the White Estate Board of Trustees since 1980.

The book's massive size increases its resource value, but reduces the possibility that it will replace T. H. Jemison's *A Prophet Among You*[3] as a college textbook.[4] Although the table of contents distributes the 47 chapters into eight sections, with an Appendix of 16 items (some documentary, some explanatory), an author's "overview" lists five main sections: I. God's Communication System; II. The Real Ellen White; III. Messenger to the Church; IV. How to Listen to the Messenger; V. Continuing Relevancy of the Messenger.

As a potential textbook, one striking deficiency is the absence of any kind of comprehensive listing of Ellen White's books. Appendix D provides a partial list of Ellen White's visions; I found nothing comparable for her writings.[5]

But the book is more defense than introduction. Thus Douglass tackles a wide range of problems, from "the wicked children God does not love" (p. 59) to "a little domestic wine" (p. 306) and Ellen White's 1882 oyster purchase (p. 315), to mention just a few. The "shut door" looms large, earning a full chapter of a dozen pages plus another 21 pages in the appendices.[6] Throughout, the footnotes are voluminous, often providing valuable content and context.

But if the book is to be a defense of Ellen White, I could wish that it had come closer to her ideal that the "bitterest opponents should be treated with respect and deference," to quote Ellen White's counsel to A. T. Jones.[7] Too often the rhetoric of Ellen White's defenders has betrayed their anger even as they try to keep the critics nameless and faceless. Douglass is not angry. But I do wish he could have moved us a step closer to maturity by respectfully naming the critics and listing their writings.

The book is haunted by the long but largely unnamed shadows from the 1970s and 1980s: Numbers, Ford, and Rea.[8] Science historian, Ronald Numbers, analyzing the nineteenth century historical context of Ellen White's health message, raised questions of originality, literary dependence, and scientific accuracy.[9] Desmond Ford, an Australian Adventist theologian, pressed the question of Ellen White's role as exegete and doctrinal authority.[10] Walter Rea, long-time Adventist pastor and publisher of Ellen White topical compilations, accused Ellen White of plagiarism.[11] *Messenger*'s handling of Rea strikingly illustrates the deliberate plan to ignore the critics. An excerpt from my *Spectrum* review of Rea's *The White Lie* deletes Rea's name without using ellipsis marks, replacing it with a bracketed substitution.[12]

Criticizing for omissions is dangerous business, to be sure; a careful re-reading could uncover missing evidence. But I found myself fervently wishing for an index of Ellen White citations, an index of authors cited, and a full bibliography, all of which would have significantly enhanced the resource value of the book.

In the darker recesses of my mind, I am tempted to think that the modest index and bibliography may have been planned to obscure the omissions. The principle of selection in the "select" bibliography is curious. Unpublished manuscripts and doctoral dissertations are included, but no periodical or journal articles. That means no references to *Spectrum*, *Ministry*, or *Adventist Review*.[13]

Also largely ignored is the debate over inspiration, which has intensified since the appearance of my book *Inspiration* in 1991.[14] Whatever the reasons for avoiding that debate, the general approach in *Messenger* is clear: filter out virtually all voices deemed to be "critical" of Ellen White.[15] The notable and remarkable exception is the handling of the "shut door" controversy. Appendix L is a blow-by-blow catalog: "Chief Charges Against Ellen White Regarding the Shut-door Issue and the Responses Through the Years." That would have been an excellent model for handling other major issues as well.

Given the striking omissions from the bibliography, some of the additions are even more surprising. Are the three books by Norman Cousins[16] more pertinent then the relevant periodical literature? But maybe Cousins is more symptomatic than most of us care to admit, symbolized perhaps in the subtitle of one of his books, *The Biology of Hope*. In our attempts to defend Ellen White, are we simply being "hopeful," optimistic in the classic American sense, making her into what we wish her to be? We don't really want her to be a hard-hitting, time-related prophet. We want her to be nice, gentle, and attractive — a younger, fresher Ellen White, like the picture on the cover of Douglass' book, or like the almost sensuous Harry Anderson rendition on the brochure accompanying *The Published Ellen G. White Writings on Compact Disc* (1990-1994). If Jack Blanco's *Clear Word*[17] can transform a raging and irrational King Saul into a joyous participant in worship at the school of the prophets (1 Samuel 19:19-24), if an official Mormon publication can turn Brigham Young into a monogamist[18], can't we make Ellen White into what we would like her to be? I sense that yearning for a nice Ellen White in Leo Van Dolson's *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* when he says, "What a pleasant surprise it is to learn how human, even fun-loving, Ellen White was. She was a pleasant, happy person to be around." Interestingly enough, the comment appears under the heading, "Testing the Prophetic Gift."[19]

> "If we follow Ellen White's lead and recognize that 'God and heaven alone are infallible,' then all human formulations of doctrine fall short of the absolute . . ."

It is in connection with that tendency to idealize Ellen White that I have read Douglass with a great deal of interest. Have we come clean? Do we have a model that will enable the church to deal with all that we know about Ellen White? Not quite. But in important ways Douglass moves us in the right direction.

Perhaps most importantly, in spite of lingering skirmishes, he has stepped away from inerrancy and infallibility.[20] If the book can help break the stranglehold of inerrancy in Adventism, it could be a great blessing.

Toward that end, several of his ideas are worth exploring. First, his "ellipse of truth" is an attempt to push paradoxes toward integration, to join "twin truths."[21] Chapter 22 lists 16 pairs under the heading of "The Great Controversy Theme" (e.g., "repentance and reformation"; "believing in Christ and abiding in Him"). Maintaining two focal points instead of one would protect against all-or-nothing thinking and help integrate seemingly contradictory elements. "Ellipse" is too abstract a label to have a chance. But his intent is clear. Douglass is understandably allergic to "contradiction"[22]— the word has been too much anathematized in conservative circles. But a (renamed) ellipse has potential for reducing the gnawing fears that haunt many devout believers.

Second, one of Douglass' specific applications of the ellipse concept unites what he calls the objective and the subjective, perhaps the beginning of a bridge between the theocentric (objective) Calvinists with their emphasis on the sovereignty and grace of God and the anthropocentric (subjective) Arminian Methodists with their emphasis on human freedom and responsibility. Adventism has suffered much over that tension; it may have been the real issue in the Ford controversy, with "objective" Ford pointing to the sovereignty and grace of God and the "subjective" Douglass and Wood pointing to the freedom and responsibility of humankind. Perhaps the remarkable absence of Ford's name from the book finds its remarkable and healing counterpart in the absence of the perfectionist writings of Douglass and Wood. That Douglass' "harvest principle" is missing is particularly noteworthy.[23] Is it possible that these two elder statesmen in Adventism, Wood and Douglass, have listened more carefully to Ellen White and have stepped back from the controversies of the 1970s and 1980s so that her writings might inspire and unite Adventists, rather than condemn and divide? I think Ellen White would have liked that.

Third, the words "time-related" instead of "time conditioned," terminology Douglass credits to Rolf Poehler in his work on the shut door,[24] could help move the church toward a more realistic assessment of how God acts within history.

The last point may be particularly crucial. For if the Lord's messengers really are "time-related," then time and setting are crucial. The point is well illustrated by Douglass' careful treatment of Ellen White's move from shut to open door. Given his opposition to "contradiction" (e.g., pp. 31, 403, 458), his statements that Ellen White rejected "theological errors" (p. 503), avoided "erroneous concepts" (p. 461), and his position that "New truths do not make old truths obsolete" (p. 531), a disinterested observer might say that his treatment of the shut door gives away the store.

I don't think so; but he does need to bring his rhetoric into line with his arguments and the evidence. If we follow Ellen White's lead and recognize that "God and heaven alone are infallible,"[25] then all human formulations of doctrine fall short of the absolute: "The Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech, in order that the degenerate senses, the dull earthly perception, of earthly beings may comprehend His words. Thus is shown God's condescension. He meets fallen human beings where they are."[26]

> "If the 'person' is inspired, then God is free to work through the 'degenerate senses' to lead that person and the people where they need to go. That means more than just growth, it means change. . . ."

Following the lead of Ellen White, Douglass has made the important move away from inspired words. But he has landed on inspired "thoughts"—which can be almost as troublesome as the words—unless one has a strong doctrine of divine condescension. But Douglass wavers on that point. My preference is to follow Ellen White's lead further and move from inspired word to inspired person: "The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen..."

"It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself . . . ."[27]

If the "person" is inspired, then God is free to work through the "degenerate senses" to lead that person and the people where they need to go. That means more than just growth, it means change: from shut door to open door. The prophets are not God, and they are not above the fray. They will be a step ahead of the people, but not much more than that or the people won't be able to follow.

The models of "inspiration" bequeathed us by evangelicals and fundamentalists are inadequate for the task because they simply focus on correct information; models proposed by the secularists and rationalists are likewise inadequate because they deny God's involvement in human activity. But if we adopt the moral foundation laid down by Jesus in His two great commands, allowing it to be further structured by the decalogue, then we see how every thought and deed must somehow "hang" on these great moral imperatives: love to God and love to humankind (Matthew 22:35-40). Ellen White's explicit statements on inspiration point to such a moral/ethical model and, unless we are afraid, it makes room for whatever she has written, "time-related" as it inevitably will be. Adventists have a model that allows us to be honest with God and with the evidence. We've just been too frightened to get there easily.

Fortunately, Ellen White herself pointed to a model which allows for change. And our current (1980) statement of fundamental beliefs comes close to predicting it, declaring in the preamble that "Revision of these statements may be expected. . ."[28] Douglass often lays out the evidence for change, but his love of a gentle Ellen White and his fear of contradiction still tempt him to be selective.

I will admit, for example, that I was looking for the one quotation from the *Testimonies* that stands out in my mind as vividly as any other. It is an 1856 quote found on p. 137 of volume one: "As soon as any have a desire to imitate the fashions of the world, that they do not immediately subdue, just so soon God ceases to acknowledge them as His children." It belongs with the discussion of the 1860 quote, "Wicked children God does not love" (pp. 59-61), but I did not find it in Douglass. He fearlessly presents the later "contradictory" statement from *Signs of the Times*, February 15, 1892: "Do not teach your children that God does not love them when they do wrong...." But his explanation simply imposes the kinder, gentler 1892 statement on the 1860 letter, thus blurring the stark "time-relatedness" of the earlier quote.

Ellen White's language of "spiritual unity" and "underlying harmony" enables us more readily to trace the movement toward the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The kinder, gentler God wins in the end; but we don't have to remodel anything en route. "No one can improve the Bible by suggesting what the Lord meant to say or ought to have said," Ellen White wrote.[29] Good words, those.

Now that the White Estate has moved toward full disclosure, the need for an adequate model is more urgent. The *Published Ellen G. White Writings on Compact Disc* does not include dates. It should — and Douglass perhaps inadvertently reveals why, explaining that when *Steps to Christ* was first published by the non-Adventist publisher, Fleming Revell, the opening chapter, "God's Love for Man" was not included, but was added for a new edition in 1892 (p. 445).

From George Knight's *Meeting Ellen White* (p. 110), I discovered that the words "God is love" are the great pillars on which the Conflict series is hung, the first three words in *Patriarchs and Prophets* and the last three in *The Great Controversy.* Intrigued, I picked up *Spiritual Gifts,* volume. 1 (1858) and carefully read through Ellen White's 200-page portrayal of the controversy in that early publication (pp. SG 1:17-219). "God is love" is not there. Check the EGW disc. It's amazing.

Amazing, yes, but not frightening, at least not for me. For I, too, have tasted the great joy that comes from discovering that Jesus came as God in the flesh. And it came late for me, too. I was a fourth generation Adventist in the second year of seminary when John 14-17 came home to my heart.[30]

Douglass' book will be good for us. And I must say that I was encouraged by his choice of sources in his final paragraphs: quotes from the current General Conference President Robert Folkenberg, from the sometimes-vilified former General Conference President Arthur G. Daniells of 1919 Bible Conference fame, and from Jack Provonsha's *Remnant in Crisis.*[31] Provonsha's book makes the "Select Bibliography," too. That's a good note on which to end.

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Notes and References

1. Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1998).

2. The book itself says little about Douglass. The "Select Bibliography" only lists one of his own books: *The End* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1979) and one which he edited, *What Ellen White Has Meant to Me* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1973). One of his best-known contributions to denominational literature was as co-author (with Edward Heppenstall, Hans K. Larondelle, and Mervyn Maxwell) of *Perfection: The Impossible Possibility* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1975).

3. Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1955.

4. A more likely candidate for undergraduate usage is George Knight's Review and Herald trilogy, *Meeting Ellen White* (1996), *Reading Ellen White* (1997), and *The World of Ellen White* (1998).

5. The inside covers of both Jemison and the three-volume *Index to the Writings of E. G. White* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1962-1963) feature a schematic chart, "Development of the Ellen G. White Books, 1844-1911." A generation knowing little about Ellen White's writings needs that kind of help. In Douglass, only chapters 39 and 40, some 20 pages, are dedicated directly to the preparation of her books.

6. Chapter 44. Nine of the sixteen Appendices (E through M) are dedicated to shut-door topics.

7. *Testimonies for the Church* vol. 6:122.

8. Behind the largely unnamed major critics is a significant history which goes unnoticed in Douglass. Early issues of *Spectrum* played a key role in focusing attention on Ellen White's literary borrowing. In 1970, William Peterson implied that the use of lesser or erroneous authorities calls into question the prophet's inspiration and authority ("A Textual and Historical Study of Ellen White's Account of the French Revolution," *Spectrum* 2:4 [Autumn 1970], 57-69). The dialogue continued over several issues, but the definitive response came from Ronald Graybill who demonstrated that Ellen White didn't borrow from lesser authorities, but from Uriah Smith ("How Did Ellen White Choose and Use Historical Authorities?" *Spectrum* 4:3 [Summer 1972]:49-53).

Ironically, closer attention to Ellen White's own statements about her use of sources and quotations would have pointed in the right direction. In the "Introduction" to *The Great Controversy*, she states: "In some cases where a historian has so grouped together events as to afford, in brief, a comprehensive view of the subject, or has summarized details in a convenient manner, his words have been quoted; but except in a few instances, no specific credit has been given, since the quotations are not given for the purpose of citing that writer as authority, but because his statement affords a ready and forcible presentation of the subject."

Most pertinent to Peterson's critique is the concluding sentence: "In narrating the experience and views of those carrying forward the work of reform in our own time, similar use has occasionally been made [1911: similar use has been made] of their published works." Note the two bracketed changes between 1888 and 1911, both moving in the direction of more candid disclosure.

As one of my students spontaneously exclaimed after reading how she used her sources: "That's illegal!" By modern academic standards, yes—but more innocently illegal than sometimes allowed by her critics.

9. Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976). A revised and enlarged edition was published by the University of Tennessee Press (Knoxville, 1992). The first edition is cited in Douglass' select bibliography, but not the second. In the main body of the book, I found two references to Numbers in the footnotes (p. 285), each citing him as an authority on 19th century health conditions, not as a critic of Ellen White. Without mentioning Numbers' name, one footnote cites *A Critique of Prophetess of Health* (1976) the White Estate response to Numbers (p. 498). In Appendix L, Numbers is mentioned by name in the survey of "shut door" critics (p. 565-66).

Douglass rightly places the emphasis on Ellen White's health principles, rather than on the details. And when it comes to science, Douglass is headed in the right direction when he lets the prophet off the hook for incomplete information: "Prophets are not called to update encyclopedias or dictionaries... If prophets are to be held to the highest standards of scientific accuracy (every few years these 'standards' change, even for the experts), we would have cause to reject Isaiah for referring to 'the four corners of the earth' (Isaiah 11:12)" (p. 490).

But in actual practice, examples of "new" light are easier to handle than reversal of the "old." The astronomy vision which convinced Bates (p. 491) and the 1863 health vision which reversed Ellen White's earlier (1858) stance on pork (pp. 157-158; cf. *Testimonies* 1:206, 207 [1862]) fit this pattern nicely. But her statement that "phrenology and mesmerism are very much exalted. They are good in their place..." (*Testimonies* 1:296 [1862]) is simply overlaid with the 1884 "correction" that "the sciences that treat of the human mind are. . . good in their place" (*Signs of the Times*, Nov. 6, 1884). Douglass suggests "printer's error" for the earlier statement. "More probably," he continues, "it was a general statement, corrected later, that reflected the commonly used terms for psychology in the mid-nineteenth century" (pp. 389-390; cf. also pp. 494-95). The same reluctance to admit scientific error is found in the discussion of her comments on volcanoes (pp. 492-493) and wigs (p. 495).

In 1963, the third volume of the *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen White* included an Appendix E, "Helpful Points in the Interpretation and Use of the Ellen G. White Writings" (pp. 3211-3216). Point 7 is "Recognize that the counsels are scientifically sound." Douglass has backed away from that point-blank confidence, but still ends up holding the prophet hostage to science.

10. At Pacific Union College, on October 27, 1979, at a meeting sponsored by the Association of Adventist Forums, Ford, on temporary assignment at PUC, expressed his conviction "that there is no biblical way of proving the investigative judgment." He also declared that Ellen White's role in the church should be "pastoral, not canonical."

The audience was sharply polarized as was the church at large. He was given a six-month paid leave to prepare his defense. After the Glacier View Sanctuary Review Committee, August 10-15, 1980, Ford's ministerial credentials were removed. His published defense is entitled: *Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment* (Cassleberry, Fla.: Evangelion Press, 1980).

While not conceding any doctrinal points, Douglass states his view of Ellen White's role in a bold-faced section heading: "Primarily a Commentator, Not an Exegete." Within that section, he is even more blunt: "She never expected anyone to consider her the Bible's infallible commentator or interpreter" (p. 419).

11. Rea published his allegations as *The White Lie* (Turlock, Calif.: M & R Publications, 1982). Interestingly enough, in spite of the furor caused by Rea's material, Douglass says relatively little about Ellen White's use of sources. In contrast with Warren Johns' cluster of articles in *Ministry* (June 1982, pp. 5-19), *Messenger* includes no visuals illustrating Ellen White's borrowing or her use of sources.

12. *Spectrum* 12:4 (June 1982): 51. The original quote reads: "The 'cover-up' argument is clearly the most difficult for conservative believers to handle. But I am convinced that Rea's experience provides some of the best evidence as to why there has been a necessary and well-intentioned 'cover-up'..." Douglass' footnote replaces "Rea's experience" with "[the experience of such believers]" (p. 464).

13. To cite just one example of the disadvantages of the selection procedure: Bert Haloviak's unpublished article, "In the Shadow of the 'Daily': Background and Aftermath of the 1919 Bible and History Teachers Conference" is listed in the bibliography and deserves to be because it is more comprehensive than the shorter piece published in *Spectrum* 12:4 (June 1982), pp. 19-34. But the more accessible (and still comprehensive!) *Spectrum* article is not mentioned.

14. Alden Thompson, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest*

Answers (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1991). In his Acknowledgments (p. xi), Douglass graciously credits me as one of his conversation partners. Footnotes (pp. 75, 457, 463) mention my five-part series, "From Sinai to Golgotha" (*Adventist Review*, December 3, 10, 17, 24, 31, 1981; with follow-up response, July 1, 1982), published while Kenneth Wood was editor of *Adventist Review.* The additional article on the investigative judgment ("Even the Investigative Judgment Can Be Good News," *Westwind* [Walla Walla College alumni journal], Winter, 1982, 4-7, 11) is not mentioned. Douglass also notes (123) my four-part series on inspiration in the *Adventist Review* ("Adventists and Inspiration," September 5, 12, 19, 26, 1985), the forerunner of *Inspiration* which elicited the invitation from Review and Herald to write the book. But the book itself is not mentioned. The Adventist Theological Society's response to my book, Frank Holbrook and Leo Van Dolson, eds., *Issues in Revelation and Inspiration* (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society, 1992), is cited once in a note (p. 23) but not as part of the debate. And there is no reference to Samuel Koranteng-Pipim's *Receiving the Word* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Berean Books, 1996).

15. In a handful of instances, *Spectrum* is cited in the notes, but never in a way that could be construed as being critical of Ellen White. When the 1919 Bible Conference minutes are mentioned, the *Spectrum* edition (10:1 [May 1979], pp. 23-57) is sometimes referenced in the footnotes (pp. 191, 424, 442-443, 525), but not always (e.g., 441, note #2). I found footnote references to three other *Spectrum* articles: on p. 227, Jonathan Butler, "Ellen G. White and the Chicago Mission" (Winter, 1970); on p. 453, Donald R. McAdams, "Shifting Views of Inspiration: Ellen G. White Studies in the 1970s" (March 1980); and on p. 464, my review of Walter Rea's *The White Lie*, "The Imperfect Speech of Inspiration" (June 1982), but with all references to Rea removed. See note #12 above.

16. *Anatomy of an Illness* (1979); *Head First: The Biology of Hope* (1989); *The Healing Heart* (1984).

17. Jack J. Blanco, *The Clear Word [Bible]*, Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald [printer and distributor], 1994). To indicate more clearly that *The Clear Word* is devotional commentary rather than Scripture, "Bible" was dropped from later editions.

18. Associated Press column by Vern Anderson, cited in the *Walla Walla Union Bulletin*, May 17, 1998. Reference is made to a new "official" Mormon Relief Society "lesson manual" which tells the story of Brigham Young. According to the manual, Brigham Young had one wife instead of 55.

19. "Studies on Revelation and Inspiration: God Shows and Tells," *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, First Quarter, 1999 (Lesson 8, Tuesday, February 16, 1999).

20. See, for example, pp. 376, 419, 470, 519. But Douglass is not as blunt as George Knight is with his title for chapter 17 in *Reading Ellen White*: "Realize that Inspiration Is Not Infallible, Inerrant, or Verbal" (pp. 105-112).

21. His primary discussion is found in chapter 22, "The Organizing Theme," pp. 260-263 and in Appendix P, pp. 573-575. A diagram on p. 575 illustrates the use of the "ellipse" in connection with both Soteriology and Atonement.

22. See, e.g., pp. 31, 403, 458.

23. An eschatological approach to perfection based on Ellen White's comment in *Christ's Object Lesson*, p. 69: "When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own." Douglass develops the idea in "Men of Faith — The Showcase of God's Grace," *Perfection* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1975), 9-56.

24. Rolf Poehler, "'...And the Door was Shut' — Seventh-day Adventists and the Shut-Door Doctrine in the Decade after the Great Disappointment," unpublished paper, Andrews University, 1978. See discussion in Douglass, 501-502, 510 [note #13], and 550-552.

25. See p. 501, citing *Review and Herald*, April 15, 1880.

26. From "Search the Scriptures," *Review and Herald*, July 26, 1892; published in *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 37 (1946).

27. Letter 121, 1901; published in *Selected Messages* 1:22 (1958).

28. It is revealing that the preamble was completely omitted from the first edition of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . . A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines*, published by the Ministerial Association of the General Conference in 1988. The third printing (March 1989) includes the preamble in the front matter (p. iv).

29. Manuscript 16, 1888: published in *Selected Messages*, 1:22 (1958)

30. The issue of Trinity is crucial to the discussion and is now cropping up in official Adventist publications as well as in the literature of the independents. The Adventist Review of December 25, 1997, published an excerpt from an 1872 article from Ellen White (*Review and Herald*, December 17, 1872) with contrasting ideas represented in the first and last sentences. A letter published in the February 26 issue put it this way: "Help! I need a theologian. What is the true status of God the Son in His relationship to God the Father? In 'The First Advent of Christ," the first sentence states: 'The Son of God was next in authority to the great Lawgiver.' The last sentence describes Christ as 'the Majesty of heaven, equal with God.'"

The editors commented: "Your question is too important to attempt an answer here. But we'll keep it in mind for possible future treatment." Important indeed. And volatile.

On the independent front, one newsletter (*The End Times*, April 1998) printed an inquiry asking about the Trinity. The editors commented: "You are correct in that the Doctrine of the Trinity is a Roman Catholic doctrine, rejected by the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist church, but now fully accepted by the leadership and foisted on the laity."

31. Jack Provonsha, *Remnant in Crisis* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1993).

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Gary Shearer is an Adventist Studies Librarian at Pacific Union College. He read his way into the Seventh-day Adventist church at the age of 19. He is a 1965 graduate of Union College. His area of specialty is Millerite/SDA history.

G.C. Approves Proposal to Control Theological Education and Theologians with "Endorsement" Policy

By Bonnie Dwyer

When the 1998 Annual Council voted to approve the International Coordination and Supervision of Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial and Theological Education in Brazil, it took some church educators almost completely by surprise. A committee of five, led by General Conference President Robert S. Folkenberg, spent three years developing the proposal. It was not circulated until the pre-sessions two weeks prior to the 1998 Annual Council. The policy sets up a two-tiered review system of theological education at the General Conference and divisional levels. Undergraduate and graduate theology programs as well as faculty will be evaluated by the new review boards, and individual faculty who are authorized to teach in theological programs will be required to go through a process of "denominational endorsement."

Serving with Folkenberg on the drafting committee were: Al McClure, president of the North American Division; Calvin Rock, vice president of the General Conference; Tom Mostert, president of the Pacific Union; and Humberto Rasi, director of education at the General Conference.

Rasi sent a notice with the wording of the new policy to all the directors of education departments and world divisions October 19, after the vote in Brazil had taken place. He noted, "the main motive behind this action of the Annual Council is the desire to maintain and strengthen theological unity in the training of pastors, theologians, Bible/religion teachers, chaplains and church administrators. This becomes urgent in view of the rapid growth of the church around the world and due to the emergence of many programs offering graduate theological education in several educational institutions."

In North America, questions about the procedures set forth in the proposal surfaced as soon as the document was circulated. Some people asked whether or not the suggested process contradicted the North American Division Working Policy on Higher Education which states, "The government, control, conduct, management, and administration of each of the institutions shall continue to be vested in the board of trustees of such college or university."

The endorsement proposal creates in each division a Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (BMTE) which has been given eight duties including, among others, to:

"Monitor quality assurance and establish outcome expectations necessary for employment.

"Review and endorse the recommendation for president/dean/director of one or more candidates identified by an institutional search committee. This search committee should have participation from the institution and from the division. After review and endorsement the recommended candidates will be returned to the institution's administration for submission to the college/ university board or council.

"Affirm the faculty authorized to teach in these programs through a process of denominational endorsement implemented by BMTE. This endorsement may be valid for up to five years as long as the faculty member is teaching in the program for which he/she was endorsed, and may be renewed."

University trustees who have been through accreditation processes for their institutions say regional accrediting bodies may question whether college and university trustees do in fact govern the institution if decisions about recruitment, appointment, retention, promotion, and tenure of faculty are not controlled by trustees without interference from a higher body.

The action taken in Brazil was brought to the delegates at the North American Division meetings in November as an information item. NAD President Al McClure stated there would be no discussion of the item on the floor of the meeting. However, the college and university presidents did discuss the proposal for several hours on their own. According to La Sierra University President Lawrence T. Geraty, not a single president spoke in favor of the policy, and all were present except Loma Linda University President Lyn Behrens who had to be away for an accreditation visit. During their meeting, the presidents decided to prepare a statement on the proposal. After some negotiation and compromise, they were permitted to read their statement at the Division meetings. As originally prepared, the presidents' statement had expressed "deep disappointment" in the process used to develop the original document. In the negotiated statement, the wording was changed to say, "We would have hoped that the process used in the development of the original document would have involved more consultation, with those who hire, with those who train, or those who listen to ministers."

Some wording compromises had also been negotiated in Brazil during the presessions, according to Calvin Rock. In the discussion of the curriculum, the term "core curriculum" was changed to "basic subject areas," and the term "credential" was changed to "process of denominational endorsement." Rock added, "Like all other policies, this document is not in cement. Where experience and logic suggest, improvements can be made at any subsequent annual councils."

DON'T WE REALLY HAVE TO FIRST DEFINE WHAT IS MEANT BY THE WORD "ENDORSE?"

The educators who were in Brazil negotiated the addition of a clause to the proposal: "Divisions wishing to operate under alternative procedures to those described under paragraphs a) to g) above, may do so provided the following is observed: (1) The alternative procedures lead to the achievement of the same outcomes. (2) The proposed alternative procedures are submitted to and authorized by the IBMTE at its meeting to be held in conjunction with the Annual Council of 1999. (3) Approval is granted by the IBMTE before the alternative procedures are implemented." Officials at the colleges in North America now await the appointment of a committee by Al McClure to take up the discussion of alternative procedures.

Statement of the North American Division Adventist University and College Presidents

In Response to the International Coordination and Supervision of Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial and Theological Education

In a rapidly growing church with increasing diversity we appreciate the need for improving the quality of church ministry and applaud the desire of church leadership to improve the theological formation of the pastors with a sharp focus on the mission and message of our SDA Church.

It is appropriate for the church to set the standards for ministerial training and to invite divisions to apply those standards to their unique territories. We are pleased that our division is about to take up this assignment.

We would have hoped that the process used for the development of the original document would have been prepared with more consultation with those who hire, with those who train and those who listen to ministers.

We are pleased to hear that the division president will convene a committee to address the division specific needs as an alternative procedure for ministerial preparation, and in this connection we recommend the following:

A process that assures broad participation:

- By those who train pastors
- By those who hire pastors and
- By those who listen to the pastors in the pew.

International Coordination and Supervision of Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial and Theological Education

RECOMMENDED, To approve the International Coordination and Supervision of Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial and Theological Education document, which reads as follows:

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, in its 150-year history, has experienced dramatic growth and has entered most nations of the world. The gospel message, as understood by the Church, has been embraced by millions of people from different cultures, enriching the denomination with their diversity. These cultural, national, and linguistic differences present a challenge to maintaining theological unity. The primary way by which the Church fosters a common understanding of its message is through the work of its spiritual leaders-pastors, theologians, Bible/religion teachers, chaplains, and administrators. The Church, through its teaching ministry, needs to continue to preserve its message and mission within this diversity.

Preserving the Message and Mission

1. The Church has the responsibility of defining the type of training it requires and provides for the ministers, theologians, Bible/religion teachers, and chaplains that it employs in order to carry out its mission. (In this document, these individuals will be referred to, collectively, as leaders in ministerial formation.)

2. This important responsibility will be implemented by representative bodies chosen by division and General Conference leadership and includes decisions on the professional training required for entrance into the practice of ministry in each division, the admission requirements for that training, the basic series of subject areas, the selection and endorsement of the faculty involved, the institutions where such training will be offered, quality assurance, and the professional internship.

3. The need to assure church unity and coordination in these areas has become urgent in view of the international growth of the Church and the development of multiple programs for training leaders in ministerial formation offered by a number of institutions around the world.

4. The General Conference, its world divisions, and educational institutions will work in close cooperation, through interconnected boards, policies, standards, and procedures, to foster unity, determine quality standards, and strengthen focus on the Seventh-day Adventist message and mission in graduate, undergraduate, and other levels of education for leaders in ministerial formation.

5. The framework recommended below builds on the action taken by the 1994 Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee, which placed all graduate programs in ministry, religion, and theology under the direct supervision of the respective world division.[1]

6. This proposal envisages that organizations employing leaders in ministerial formation shall employ individuals who have received their ministerial training in schools/colleges/universities in which the basic series of subject areas and teaching faculty involved have been endorsed as provided for in these guidelines. Any exception shall be voted by the next higher organization.

Proposal

This proposal envisages the establishment of an integrated structure at both division and General Conference levels; and, where applicable, the replacement of the Ministerial Training Advisory Council. On the basis of the rationale and objectives listed above, the procedures as outlined below are to be followed by the world Church:

1. Each world division shall establish a Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (BMTE) to provide guidance and oversight to all programs for leaders in ministerial formation, such as pastoral ministry, theology, Bible/religion, and chaplaincy offered within its territory.

    a. Duties:

        1) To authorize programs for the development of leaders in ministerial formation, as follows:

            a) Designate the institution(s) in which professional training for leaders in ministerial formation will be offered.

            b) Review and recommend to the International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (IBMTE) (see paragraph 2 below), new undergraduate and graduate programs for leaders in ministerial formation, as proposed by the institutional boards where such programs are to be offered.

2) Recognizing the importance of effective pastoral training, and the vital role of the faculty in achieving that goal, the BMTE, in fulfilling its responsibilities to ensure the highest quality of training for leaders in ministerial formation, will engage in dialogue with the leadership of the relevant departments involved in the programs. Informed by the dialogue as described above, the BMTE will fulfill these responsibilities as follows:

a) Establish appropriate requirements for entry to the program of professional training for leaders in ministerial formation.

b) Stipulate such additional basic subject areas, to those determined by IBMTE, as may meet its division's specific needs for all students in pastoral ministry, theology, Bible/religion, and chaplaincy.

c) Provide guidance to each institution on the design of the overall curriculum for the training of leaders in ministerial formation.

d) Monitor quality assurance and establish outcome expectations necessary for employment.

e) Design the internship for each of these professional areas referenced in b) above.

f) Review and endorse the recommendation for president/dean/director of one or more candidates identified by an institutional search committee. This search committee should have participation from the institution and from the division. After review and endorsement the recommended candidate(s) will be returned to the institution's administration for submission to the college/university board or council.

g) Affirm the faculty authorized to teach in these programs through a process of denominational endorsement implemented by BMTE (see paragraph 2. a. 3) below). This endorsement may be valid for up to five years as long as the faculty member is teaching in the program for which he/she was endorsed, and may be renewed.

h) Divisions wishing to operate under alternative procedures to those described under paragraphs a) to g) above, may do so provided the following is observed:

(1) The alternative procedures lead to the achievement of the same outcomes.

(2) The proposed alternative procedures are submitted to and authorized by the IBMTE at its meeting to be held in conjunction with the Annual Council of 1999.

(3) Approval is granted by the IBMTE before the alternative procedures are implemented.

3) To monitor the implementation of the goals and objectives of Seventh-day Adventist training for leaders in ministerial formation.

b. The membership of the BMTE shall be as follows:

Division President (chairman)
Division Vice President or Secretary (vice-chairman)
Department of Education Director (secretary)
Ministerial Association Secretary (associate secretary)
Division Treasurer
Appropriate representation from union/conference leadership
Appropriate representation from relevant institutional training programs
Experienced pastors
Active lay persons

Members will be appointed by the division executive committee and will serve on staggered three-year terms, to ensure continuity. Members may be appointed to serve for more than one term.

c. Meetings:
The BMTE will meet at least once a year to conduct its business.

2. The General Conference shall establish an International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (IBMTE) to work with the divisions' Boards of Ministerial and Theological Education in coordinating and supervising all undergraduate and graduate programs in pastoral ministry, theology, Bible/religion, and chaplaincy offered by the Church.

a. Duties:

1) To establish the general goals and objectives for Seventh-day Adventist undergraduate and graduate education for leaders in ministerial formation in the world field.

2) To establish a basic series of subject areas, international guidelines, standards and policies for admission, and faculty selection that will meet the needs of the field and foster the mission of the Church through undergraduate and graduate programs for leaders in ministerial formation.

3) To provide guidelines to be used by BMTEs for faculty endorsement and to design the faculty application procedure. The IBMTE will consider, for approval, both the guidelines and application procedure at its meeting in conjunction with the 1999 Annual Council.

4) To arrange for surveys and to grant recognition to the new programs for leaders in ministerial formation recommended by the respective division BMTE.

5) To facilitate the exchange of endorsed faculty from among the recognized programs offered in the world divisions.

6) To grant or to renew denominational endorsement for faculty at General Conference institutions who teach courses for leaders in ministerial formation.

b. Institutions in which the approved programs are offered shall follow the normal process for accreditation from the Adventist Accrediting Association.

c. Membership:
*General Conference President or designee (chairman)
*General Conference Vice Presidential Advisor for Education and
Vice Presidential Advisor for the Ministerial Association (co-vice-chairmen)
*Department of Education Director (secretary)
*Ministerial Association Secretary (associate secretary)
*General Conference Secretary
*General Conference Treasurer
*Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries Director
*Biblical Research Institute Director
Division Presidents
Additional members selected from among college/university board chairmen, presidents, presidents/deans of graduate programs in the divisions, department chairmen of undergraduate programs in ministry, religion, or theology, and individuals experienced in religious education.

*Members of the Executive Committee of the IBMTE plus up to five individuals appointed by the IBMTE.

d. Meetings:
The IBMTE will meet at least once a year to conduct business.

ENDNOTES

1 1994 Annual Council Action, 286-94G Graduate Ministerial/Religious/Theological Education Programs –To be Under Supervision of General Conference or Division

"**RECOMMENDED**, To place all graduate ministerial/religious/theological education degree programs offered by church colleges and universities under the responsibility and supervision of either the General Conference (for Andrews University) or the respective division, in order to strengthen the worldwide unity and mission focus of these programs."

"New graduate ministerial/religious/theological education degree programs may be initiated only with the formal approval of the respective division and the International Board of Education."

International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education

RECOMMENDED, To appoint an International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education, with membership as follows.

MEMBERS:

Folkenberg, Robert S, Chairman
Rock, Calvin B, Vice-chairman
Bediako, Matthew A, Vice-chairman
Rasi, Humberto M., Secretary
Cress, James A, Associate Secretary

Allen, Gregory
Andreasen, Niels-Erik
Baker, Delbert W
Becerra, Enrique
Behrens, B Lyn
Birkenstock, David
Blanco, Jack
Bocala, Violeto F
Chun, P D
Daniel, Luka T
Evans, Laurie J
Ferreira, Teofilo
Frikart, Ulrich
Han, Sang Woo
Huff, C Lee
Kloosterhuis, Robert J
Leito, Israel
Mayer, Carlos
McClure, Alfred C
Mueller, Ekkehardt
Nagel, Ruy H
Paulsen, Jan
Rawson, Robert L
Raelly, L D
Reid, George W
Remmers, Rick
Rodriguez, Angel M
Stenbakken, Richard O
Thompson, G Ralph
Vyhmeister, Werner K
Wade, Eloy
Watts, D Ronald
Wiklander, Bertil
Winslow, Gerald R

International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education Executive Committee

RECOMMENDED, To appoint an International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education Executive Committee, with membership as follows:

MEMBERS:

Folkenberg, Robert S, Chairman
Rock, Calvin B, Vice-chairman
Bediako, Matthew A, Vice-chairman
Rasi, Humberto M, Secretary
Cress, James A, Associate Secretary

Allen, Gregory
Becerra, Enrique
Ferreira, Teofilo
Mueller, Ekkehardt
Rawson, Robert L
Reid, George W
Remmers, Rick
Rodriguez, Angel M
Stenbakken, Richard O
Thompson, G Ralph
Vyhmeister, Werner K


Say Yes to
the Rest of Your
C.U.C.
COLUMBIA UNION
L
CROSS COUNT

Letters to the Editor

On the "Laughter" issue:

May I be so bold as to congratulate [Roy Branson] for his superior editorial skill in selecting his own article for the January issue? I found "The Sacredness of Laughter" a delight, a refreshing change from SDA crisis journalism and beautifully written. You fooled me. I never detected the soul of a poet beneath that editorial facade or the severely logical ethicist cloak. Nurture that muse carefully. We desperately need more poetry in the church, as well as massive infusions of life-saving humor.

Fred Hoyt
La Sierra University
Riverside, California

I sit here and chuckle to myself. I have just read some articles and letters about other articles in the January issue of *Spectrum* which have been written by some theological giants of the Seventh-day Adventist church in North America. I have had to laugh when I noticed how much is said about so little in some of the articles and letters.

I must admit I am simple in my understanding of the investigative judgment, the nature of Christ and of the expectation of what state we must be in to be ready for Jesus' imminent return, but I do enjoy studying about the life of Jesus, His teachings and what He is to me. That is enough!

Could we expend some of the energies we put into debate into sharing the Good News with our youth and with others who haven't heard?

Rose Stickle, Secretary
Youth Department, EAD
Zambia

P.S. I did enjoy reading most of the articles and have even been truly blessed! "The Sacredness of Laughter" was beautifully written.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Why and How To Study Ellen White

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets,
but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil.
—I Thessalonians 5:19, 20, NRSV

Spectrum has published 85 articles on Ellen White over the years, according to Gary Shearer (see p. 66). This is a good thing. We do well to foster an awareness of our heritage as Seventh-day Adventists. In this issue, too, there is a review (p. 58) of a recent book about Ellen White and an interview with the book's author (p. 55).

When examining the works of any author, it is often helpful to distinguish four types of discourse that vary according to their function and degree of generality. One way to do so is to differentiate among: (1) *particular judgements* ("It would not be best for me to ride this cow today."); (2) *directional themes* ("It is usually better to milk cows and ride horses than to try the opposite."); (3) *primary commitments* ("Common sense should shape the way we treat horses, cows and all other animals."); and (4) *cosmic visions* ("Human and non-human animals fit into the overall scheme of things as friends."). An approach such as this one can help us sort and weigh an author's various assertions, even if initially they look alike.

As the adventures of Christopher Columbus demonstrate, it is possible to make valid assertions at one level of discourse and fail to do so at another. Clearly, Columbus made a mistake when he judged that he and his companions had landed on the shores of India. Just as clearly, however, he was on target when he envisioned our planet's roundness as a globe (basketball) rather than a flat sphere (dinner plate). Interestingly enough, he could not have *misunderstood* his location the way he did if he had not *understood* the shape of planet earth so well! Nevertheless, how much more valuable to us is the "big" thing about which he was right than the "small" matter about which he was wrong!

Something similar can be said about the contributions of many writers, Ellen White included. Not everything she wrote can stand the test of time, something no reasonable person would expect of any human author no matter how divinely inspired. And yet, her cosmic vision —her view of the universe as a stage upon which the saga of divine love is playing, her sense that in this drama we too have parts which we are actively writing for ourselves—this sweeping view of all things continues to appeal and hold, and rightly so.

When we study what Ellen White or any author has written, we do well to pay some attention to *particular judgements*, more to *directional themes*, still more to *primary commitments* and most of all to *cosmic visions.* In this kind of study, debates about things that are particular—specific and concrete—rarely amount to much, no matter which view prevails. A great deal can be at stake, however, when we discuss claims made at a more general level.

"God is love." With these three words, Ellen White began her "Conflict of the Ages" series. With these same three words, she concluded this series five books, hundreds of pages and thousands of words later. More than any other, this is the claim that best expressed her cosmic vision. Of all her assertions, this is the one that most deserves our serious and sustained study. If it is true, everything else falls into place. If it isn't, little else matters.

Why attend to lesser issues?

David R. Larson, *President*
Association of Adventist Forums

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