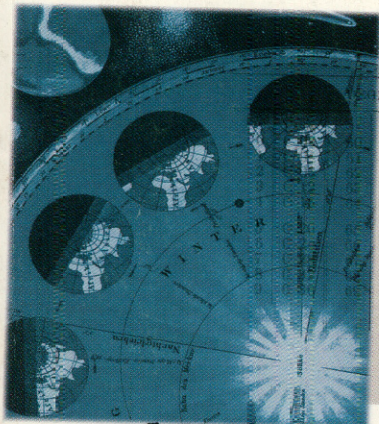


SPECTRUM

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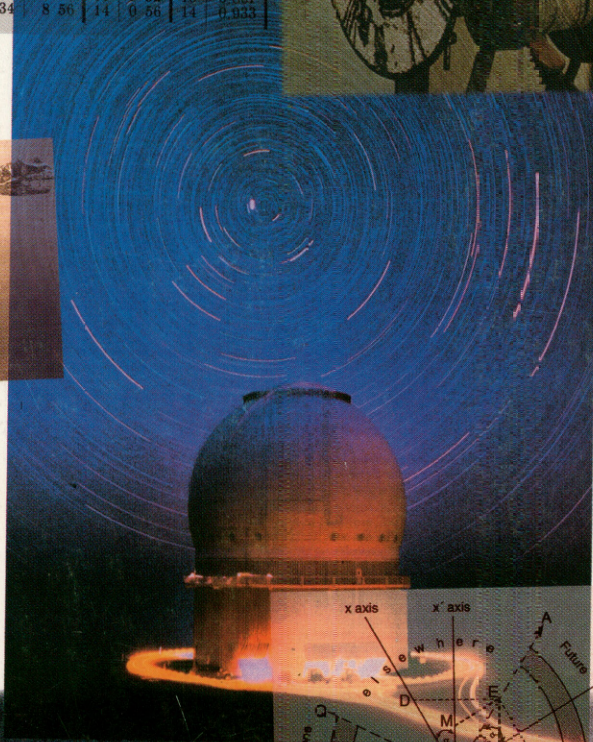
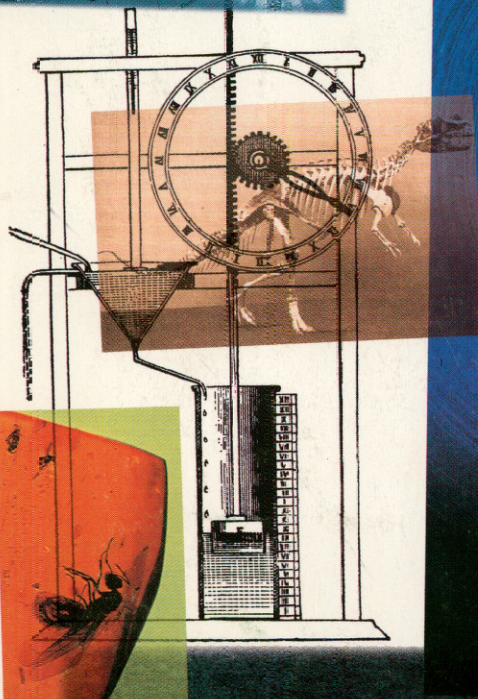


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4	32	128	8	32	8	0	0.533	0.08	0	00
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4	40	130	8	40	10	0	0.667	0.10	0	00
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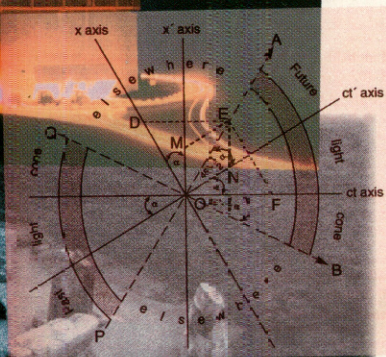


God's
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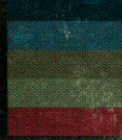


Gone
Fishing

Why Can't
We Be
Wrong?



Marketing
the Rapture



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About the Cover

Some of the effects of time and ways to measure time are suggested by this digital photocollage. The images are (clockwise from upper left): an illustration of the earth's seasonal rotation around the sun, a chart to convert arcs to time, a fourteenth-century German clock, a time-lapse photograph of stars circling around celestial north, the Loedel Diagram of space-light-time, Stonehenge, an insect fossilized in amber, a diagram of a water clock, and the skeleton of *Ceratosaurus nasicornis*.

About the Artist

These days, if he's not in the classroom teaching art at Pacific Union College, Thomas Morphis can usually be found building a new art studio at his home in Angwin, California. He says, "In the race between the roof and the winter rains, time has been a stongly felt presence (mostly in the 'elsewhere' shown on the cover diagram)." Morphis received his M.F.A. in painting from Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1984.

SPECTRUM is a journal established to encourage Seventh-day Adventist participation in the discussion of contemporary issues from a Christian viewpoint, to look without prejudice at all sides of a subject, to evaluate the merits of diverse views, and to foster Christian intellectual and cultural growth. Although effort is made to ensure accurate scholarship and discriminating judgment, the statements of fact are the responsibility of contributors, and the views individual authors express are not necessarily those of the editorial staff as a whole or as individuals.

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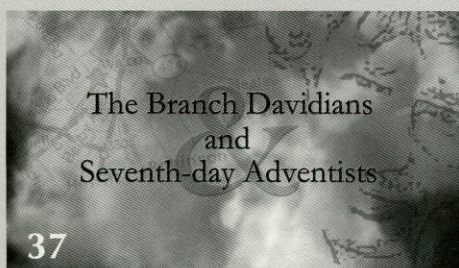
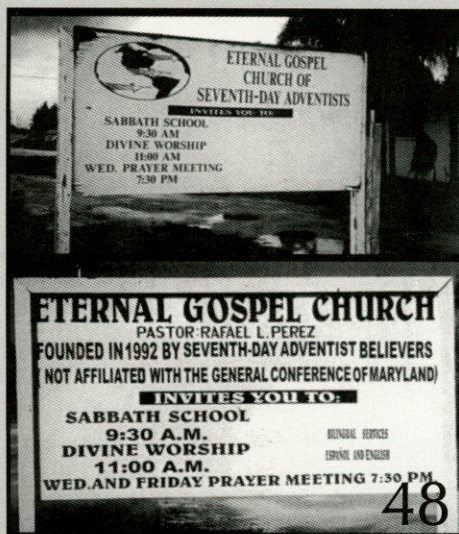
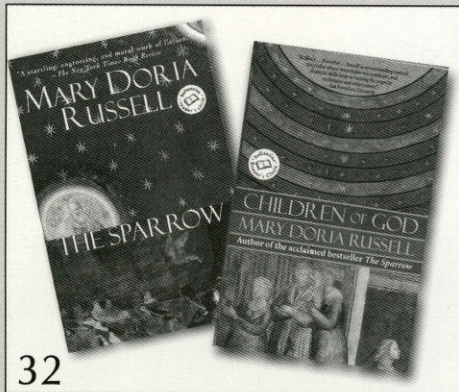
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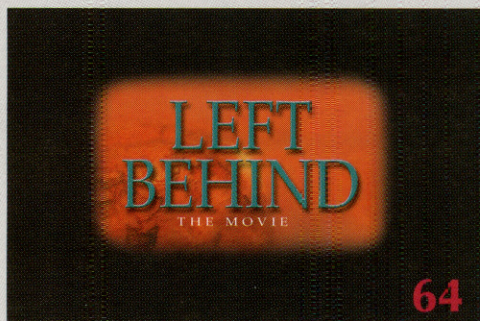
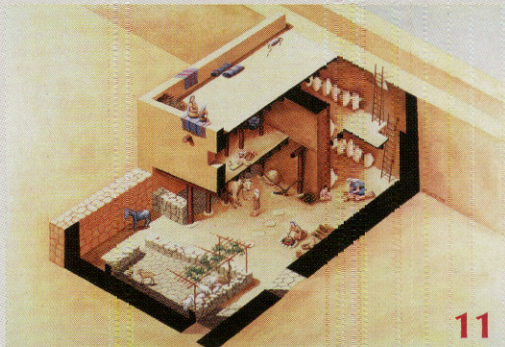
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The Question Quest

Elie Wiesel recently told an interviewer, “We are all partners in a quest. The essential questions have no answers. You are my question, and I am yours—and then there is dialogue. The moment we have answers, there is no dialogue. Questions unite people, answers divide them. So why have answers when you can live without them?”

Good question.

Siroj Sorajjakool posed another intriguing question at the annual meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies.

“What’s wrong with being wrong?” he asked. His rhetorical question came as part of a presentation on “Archetypes, Unconscious, Formation of the Self, and the Adventist Church.” He spoke from a Jungian perspective.

“Why can’t we be wrong?” he asked. “Perhaps our theology suggests that it is wrong to be wrong and so we have the urge to right all the wrongs. Perhaps we have to be right to belong. Perhaps we do not have the right to belong. . . .

“I wonder if we as a church decide our value based on being right because our identity is being questioned. I do not really know the answer to this question, but if it is true that we seek self-affirmation through being right, we are faced with two complications. First, obsession with being right removes us further from truth. Second, it reinforces self-doubt.”

Sounds like it is time to ask ourselves some serious questions.

We identify ourselves with concepts of time. We look to the future and Christ’s Second Coming that we know will take place because of what we have been told in the past. Sabbath is the element of time that secures us to the present that gives us time to be with God now. Is time a quantity or a quality? We’ve asked a few creative people to address the topic of time in this the beginning of a new millennium.

If you have answers for some of the questions in this issue, let us know. But, as Alex Tribec would say, please give us your answer in the form of a question.

Bonnie Dwyer
Editor



Is There No Balm in Gilead?

Rescuing Jephthah's Daughters

The Bible, Archaeology, and Faith for the Twenty-first Century

by Douglas R. Clark

One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the Lord and Satan also came among them. The Lord said to Satan: "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the Lord: "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it." The Lord said to Satan: "Have you considered my servants, the biblical archaeologists? There are none like them on the earth, blameless and upright, fearing God and turning away from evil." Then Satan answered the Lord: "Do biblical archaeologists fear God for nothing? Have you not put a fence around them and their institutions and all they have, on every side? But now stretch out your hand and send them, with full funding, to excavate at the site of biblical Jericho or Ai and they will curse you to your face!"¹

So thought Joseph Callaway, following excavations at Et-Tell, biblical Ai, where he hoped to find evidence of the encounter between local Canaanite citizens and the blitz-krieging Israelites on their way toward rapid conquest of the Promised Land. The disappointment of uncovering nothing from the time of transition between the Late Bronze Age and the early Iron I Period (ca. 1200 B.C.E.) registered profoundly on Callaway's Baptist faith and contributed to a total reassessment of the account in Joshua of Israel's entry into Canaan. And it continues to create Joban shockwaves among people of faith who want to take seriously the Bible and the results of recent archaeological research. In fact, not only have some discoveries of the past several decades eaten away at the history of the settlement, the period of Israel's ancestors seems to have lost some of its luster, the Exodus has little direct archaeological corroboration, and, according to some extremists, reassessments of later periods have also taken their toll.

The situation may appear bleak and biblical archaeologists on the verge of a massive crisis of faith, but there is plenty of good news to accompany the challenging. In this article I want to explore the dynamic relationship among biblical studies, Syro-Palestinian archaeology, and faith, commenting on what I see and recommending a few modest proposals for the future.

To do so, I thought to take a simple story from the Bible and see where an exploratory investigation might lead us biblically, archaeologically, and perhaps existentially . . . so, why not the Jephthah narrative in the well-known and deeply appreciated popular and warmly devotional book of Judges? But, to begin, some definitions of terms.

Some Definitions

The Bible is a collection of sacred books that carries divine credentials and human fingerprints. I affirm the inspiration of the Bible, although I cannot prove it empirically. At the same time, I observe and study the human activities that lie behind its initial proclamation, written expression, and final shape.

Archaeology is the systematic recovery, analysis, interpretation, and preservation of ancient human cultural remains. Biblical archaeology is the same plus the line: relating to biblical people, places, events, chronology, culture, concerns, and so forth.

Faith is an experiential reality beyond what can be proven, but not independent of facts, knowledge, and reason. Although any line of rigorous inquiry cannot form faith, it can, in the words of James Charlesworth about archaeology, "help inform faith."² However, I am struck by insights from those who, while admitting that faith goes beyond evidence, do not deny that rational inquiry also plays a role.

As we turn to the story of Jephthah, I have to admit that I typically follow a centrist approach. I am neither a thoroughgoing positivist when it comes to the results of archaeological investigation, nor an inerrantist regarding the Bible, nor a fundamentalist in the arena of faith. Unfortunately, since these discussions involve issues of science and religion, Bible and history, belief and reality, this leaves me vulnerable from all sides of the debates. It reminds me, in the words of some of my Texas teaching colleagues several years ago, that there is nothing left in the middle of the road except dead armadillos.

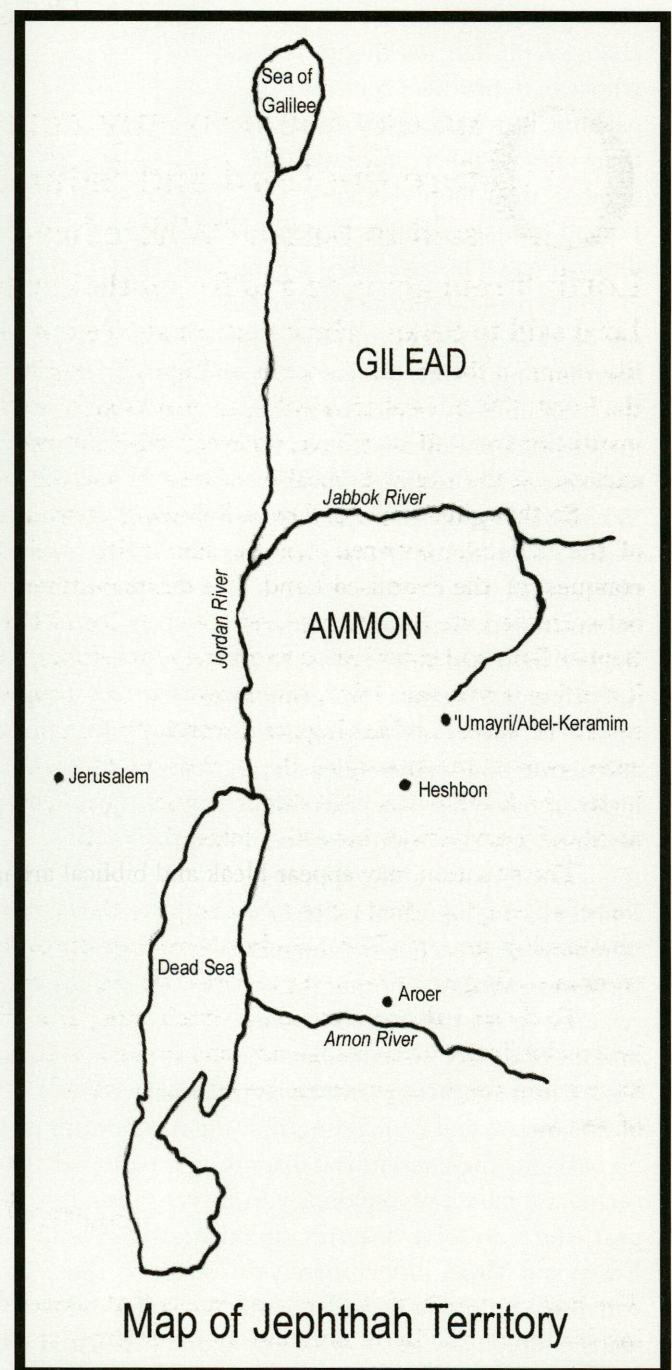
The Story of Jephthah

Occupying most of chapters 10-12 of the book of Judges, the Jephthah story begins at the same place that most of the major judge accounts start: "The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord" (Judges 10:6). This patterned editorial template sets hearers and readers up for human collapse, divine punishment, human despair, and supplication to God, and finally divine rescue.

The narrator takes us to northern Transjordan, where the Gileadites were attempting to hold off aggressive Ammonites encamped on their southern borders. This was a time of tremendous upheaval. It was an interval, according to what appears to be a growing consensus about life and survival during this period, of shifting subsistence strategies growing from a developing symbiosis of pastoral and agricultural economies, combined rural and urban lifestyles in the setting of the remote central hill country of Transjordan and Cisjordan, and melding religious traditions and practices.

We read in the narrative about the worship of the Baals and the Astartes, consequent oppression by

the Ammonites for a number of years, and a plea to God for deliverance. The literary template stretches a bit in the Jephthah story, as God feigns unwillingness to intervene one more time on behalf of the ever-stumbling tribal groups who lay claim to this god's allegiance, even if they have once again cried out for rescue. Eventually, Israelite separation from local deities and the Lord's compassion in the face of continued suffering results in divine intervention. When Ammonites then muster themselves for battle, Gileadite tribal leaders mumble among themselves about who should lead the counterattack.



As we wait for the opening shofar to sound, the narrator distracts us temporarily from the imminent battle by informing us of the search for a qualified military commander who will become the political leader, as well. Expectations run high for a hero. The battle can wait for now; the inhabitants of Gilead are in search of leadership and we should anticipate the strongest candidate if they have any hope of pulling off a victory. So they select well; they choose Jephthah, an illegitimate son whose half brothers sent him packing, not wanting to divide up their father's inheritance with the child of their family's shame. Forced to make a living in nontraditional ways, he assembles a gang of thugs around him and survives off of raiding forays into the surrounding countryside.

An unlikely choice by all measures, Jephthah continues to surprise us as the story unfolds. While the rest of his tribe has been chasing local deities from place to place, at least Jephthah confirms his commitments to the tribal elders "before the Lord at Mizpah." Not only that, he engages the Ammonites with remarkably extensive and astute diplomatic endeavors in order to bring about a peaceful resolution to the dispute between the warring parties. In addition, Jephthah, the banished child of humiliation, preaches the longest sermon in the book of Judges, recounting for the Ammonites the history of Israel's exodus from Egypt into southern, central, and northern Transjordan, and concluding that the Ammonites had no basis for their territorial dispute against Israel. The sermon, a model of diplomacy in its recounting of past efforts to solve disputes diplomatically in both Edom and Moab, unfortunately foreshadows the collapse of diplomatic efforts with the Ammonites; shuttle diplomacy failed with Edom and Moab and so

Temporary Communal of a Capital Sentence

"My father," she replied, "you have given your word to the Lord. Do to me just as you promised, now that the Lord has avenged you of your enemies, the Ammonites." . . . And he did to her as he had vowed. And she was a virgin.

—Judges 11:36, 39

The maidens wept, while God
and the men of Gilead remained mute.
I, Jephthah's daughter, will never marry,
will be nameless, forgotten, ignored.
I did not plead as Iphigenia did. No goddess
delivered me, no Artemis from Olympus
rebuked Agamemnon. No One saved
me from Father's stone knife and the flames.
No sheep substituted. Abraham never promised me
"Yahweh will provide."

I spoke: "I need two months
to roam the hills and weep with my friends,
for I will never marry."
"But grant me this one request," I
said. Two months. I suppose I could have fled,
could have sloughed off my virginity, bare shoulders
escaping a goat-hair robe. I could have given my
father milk — driven a tent peg through his temple.
"Go," my father said. When I returned, Father did
as he had vowed and Yahweh smelled the smoke
of my burning corpse ascending to the heavens.

by Andrew R. Becraft

A graduate of Walla Walla College, Andrew R. Becraft is a documentation manager for a software development company in Seattle. He lives with his wife Elizabeth in Bellevue, Washington. During the summer of 1994, he worked with Doug Clark's team in Tall al-'Umayri.

it would with Ammon.

The stage is thus set for battle, for the movement of the Spirit of the Lord and, surprisingly, for an astonishing and rash vow. "If you will give the Ammonites into my hand, then whoever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be the Lord's, to be offered up by me as a burnt offering" (Judges 11:30-31



Photo: Douglas R. Clark

Aroer at the southern border of Ammon.



Photo: Douglas R. Clark

Umayri, perhaps Jephthah's Abel-keramim.



Photo: Douglas R. Clark

The Jabbok, border between Gilead and Ammon.

NRSV). No one required or demanded the vow; the elders had already promised him leadership over Gilead without the condition of victory and the spirit of the Lord had already come upon him. Interrupting the narrative flow of the story, Jephthah demonstrates no longer faith but unfaithfulness as he tries to ensure victory with his loaded declaration. Without needing to, he sets out on his own in search of guaranteed military success, having locked himself rigidly and inextricably into the vocabulary of his vow.

The battle, which we expect to occupy center stage momentarily, given the sermon and vow leading up to it, takes fully two verses to describe and bring about to a conclusion. Beginning, oddly, along the southern border of Ammon/Moab, at the town of Aroer on the escarpment overlooking the Arnon River canyon (the modern Wadi Mujib), Jephthah marches his forces northward. How he penetrates to the south to attack in a northerly direction is not spelled out, but this represents the flow of the story.

With lightning speed, the narrator transports us from Aroer up the Transjordanian plateau. Jephthah inflicts death and destruction on twenty towns in the process. His approach to the neighborhood of Minnith, likely somewhere in central Transjordan north of the Madaba Plains, and finally his conquest of Abel-keramim (perhaps the site of Tall al-'Umayri, identified with the help of a written itinerary of Pharaoh Thutmose III) signal the conclusion of his military accomplishments. The Ammonites are subdued and the battle is over. Victory is assured in the space of four verses: two verses for the vow to God and two verses for the war against the enemy.

Upon Jephthah's return to his home in Mizpah, the joy of celebrating victory quickly collapses into a heap as his dancing, singing daughter, who knows nothing of the vow and whose name we don't even know, leaps from the courtyard to greet an exuberant and successful military and political leader, only to discover the immeasurable weight of Jephthah's verbal commitment to a now inscrutable God.

Sacrifice. She is now the whole burnt offering Jephthah unnecessarily pledged to God. She has become the innocent holocaust victim whose life represents the obligatory cost of a superfluous sacred saying, an unwarranted utterance. Boldly she requests time for wandering mountain valleys and bewailing the mounting weight of her virginity. Unfortunately, two months lamenting on the mountains only extends the misery of father and daughter . . . and the mystery of Deus Absconditus. This death, according to several

authors, is not only unnecessary to the war against the Ammonites, it is to the war hero's daughter premature and will leave no heirs. In the memorable words of Barbara Shenk's poem, "Jephthah's Daughter,"

I hope God has a meadow in the sky
For us who leave the earth too young to die.³

The story of Jephthah, drawn from near the end of the book's record of the slide of early tribal groups into civil and theological anarchy and oblivion, carries with it enough challenges to faith as to eliminate the need to survey archaeological features of the period for problems they might entail. Questions about divine silence in the face of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter jump out at us like so many terrified Gileadite elders from Mizpah in desperate search of a qualified leader.

How is it that a vow to God for survival through conquest of the enemy can put a daughter's survival at risk through the banned practice of child sacrifice lies far outside most modern ethical hierarchies. Where is the God who stayed Abraham's hand, raised in preparation to take Isaac's life on Mount Moriah? Where was this God on the mountains of Jephthah's home? God demonstrated mercy on the idolatrous, although repentant, Israelites at the beginning of our story because he could no longer bear to see them suffer. How did God overlook the suffering of Jephthah's daughter? Is there no balm in Gilead?

Archaeological Dimensions to the Story

It is the outcome of archaeological research that has long held my interest and lasting appreciation. What can it tell us about the biblical world that might illustrate the life of people who inhabited the stories and those who first heard them? Thus, to archaeological issues we turn. We do so by proposing a number of ways in which archaeology contributes to and illuminates our story. We then take on the task of assessing several serious challenges recent archaeological investigation has raised in the context of this particular narrative.

On the one hand, while we do not have evidence, inscriptional or otherwise, to confirm the names and events reported in the story of Jephthah, we are currently in a position to speak extensively

about life and culture in the hill country of Cis-Jordan and Transjordan during the Iron I Period (ca. 1200-1000 B.C.E.). The debate has been long, heated, and, happily, productive about the settlement of the mountainous regions on both sides of the Jordan. In general, the evidence matches extremely well the picture we have in the book of Judges. Ami Mazar put it this way:

Assuming the ethnic identification used in this chapter is correct, we can draw some conclusions concerning the socio-economic



Photo: Douglas R. Clark

Hill country typical of Cis-Jordan and Transjordan.



Photo: Douglas R. Clark

'Umayri cultic installation similar to the one described in Judges 17.



Baal statue.

Photo: Biblical Archaeology Society



Female fertility figurine, perhaps Asherah.

Photo: Douglas R. Clark

structure of [early] Israelite society. In fact, these conclusions correspond to the social structure described in the biblical sources concerning this period. This was a nonurban, sedentary population of small communities, each numbering several dozens of people who subsisted on farming and herding. It appears to have been an egalitarian society, striving for a livelihood in the difficult environmental conditions of the forested mountains and semiarid regions of Palestine.⁴

We have learned a significant amount from recent excavations and surveys about such matters as worship practices, village life, domestic architecture, and agricultural and pastoral survival strategies. Given the extent and expertise of archaeological research currently underway, information has exploded across the landscape more quickly than Jephthah's march through Ammonite territory.

Worship installations like the one at Tall al-'Umayri in the Ammonite hill country of central Transjordan indicate typical features of a standing stone, votive altar, paved floor, and postbases for a curtain wall separating the worship space from a household food preparation area. This was a household shrine likely similar to the one described in Judges 17. The recovery of ceramic fragments of chalices and bronze cymbals also points in this direction.

Cultic practices involving the Baals and the Astartes (or Asherahs) are amply illustrated by finds like Baal statues fashioned for mounting in wooden holders, as well as fertility figurines found everywhere in the hill country. In a world of numinous unease and profound uncertainties surrounding the survival of family, crops, and flocks, we should expect more of a theological smorgasbord that allowed a mixed population to select from among competing deities. The book of Judges, like the archaeological record, certainly assumes this setting.

Although only some of the Ammonite and Gileadite sites mentioned in the Jephthah story are identifiable with any certainty, excavations and surveys have added to our knowledge of central and northern Transjordan. Extensive survey work has suggested an explosion of sites in these regions, some very small and by far most (over 90 percent) still awaiting excavation. Following a long period of abatement in land use and observable population, there sprang up nearly 150 hill-country sites (all the way

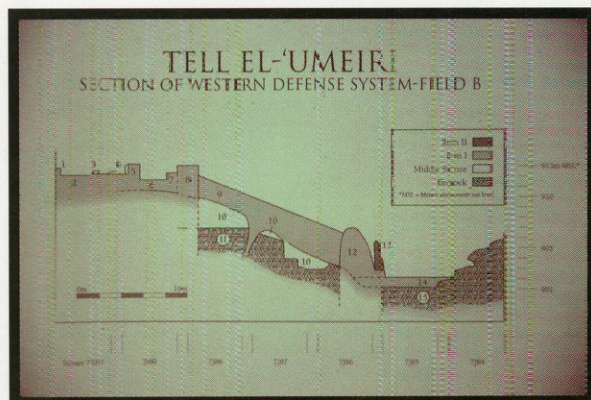
down to simple sherd scatters) in the area between the Arnon and the Jabbok rivers during Iron I (1200-1000 B.C.E.), the general territory claimed by the Ammonites fighting against Jephthah. Over one hundred appear between the Jabbok and the Yarmuk rivers, in the territory of Gilead. Another fifty sites from this time have been identified in the Jordan Valley.

Of the towns and cities mentioned in Judges 10-12, many are debated as to location and identity. Those known include Sidon, which plays no role in the geography of the story, Kadesh, Heshbon, and Aroer. Among disputed towns are Mizpah, Jahaz, Minnith, Abel-keramim, and Zaphon, the final site showing up in the civil war appendix to the story (Judges 12). The town of Aroer has been excavated and contains the remains of a few houses from this period. Kadesh and Heshbon have been thoroughly studied. Tall al-'Umayri, which the Madaba Plains Project has cautiously identified with Abel-keramim, where I am currently codirecting excavations with Larry Herr, has been tremendously productive as a source of information about this period and this part of the country.

Following a strong earthquake around 1200 B.C.E., inhabitants of 'Umayri invested a significant amount of energy and expense in refortifying their four- to five-acre settlement. Its dry moat, retaining wall, steep rampart, and perimeter wall system speak volumes regarding the importance of protecting the town. Although we have documented a massive destruction of the city around 1150, there is no way to identify the external forces that instigated the disaster. Even if this were Abel-keramim, and even if Jephthah were responsible for the destruction, he left no business cards.

In any case, the site offers a remarkable picture of fortified town life and architecture from this time because of the accident of incredible preservation of transitional Late Bronze Age/Early Iron I walls and buildings. Because of the destruction debris, accumulated up to six and seven feet thick in places, at least one important building was immortalized in a condition like it had the day it collapsed to enemy assault. There is something perverse about an archaeologist's delight in destruction layers. After all, people suffered painful injuries; they bled and died and burned and became disarticulated skeletons. Because of this fiery destruction, 'Umayri can now boast the best preserved typical Iron I domestic "four-room" house anywhere in the Levant, and one of the oldest.

What might we learn from 'Umayri, especially from this four-room domestic house, that might illuminate the Jephthah story? Since this type of



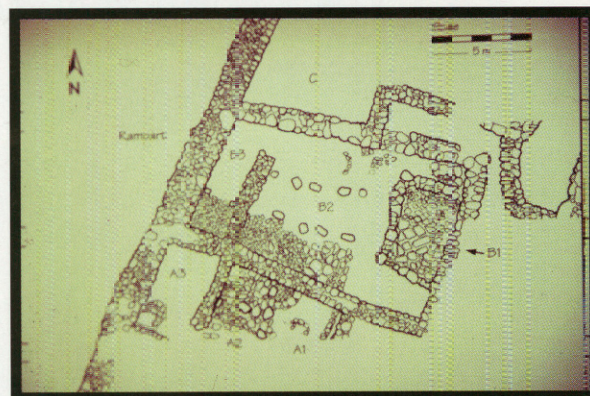
Section of defense system at 'Umayri.

Photo: Douglas R. Clark



Four-room house like one Jephthah might have lived in.

Photo: Douglas R. Clark



Top of four-room house at 'Umayri.

Photo: Douglas R. Clark

household architecture is typical of contemporary and later hill country sites on both sides of the Jordan, we might be able to expect that Jephthah and his daughter encountered each other just outside the courtyard of such a house.

The house, as we excavated it over the span of several seasons, was clearly two stories in height. The first floor consisted of stone walls, three long rooms divided by wooden posts set on stone postbases, and a back broad room. Stone pavements suggest animal stabling in the side long rooms, as well as in the courtyard pen. The broad room in the back contained the fragmentary remains of approximately forty large, collared store jars or *pithoi*, half of which fell from a

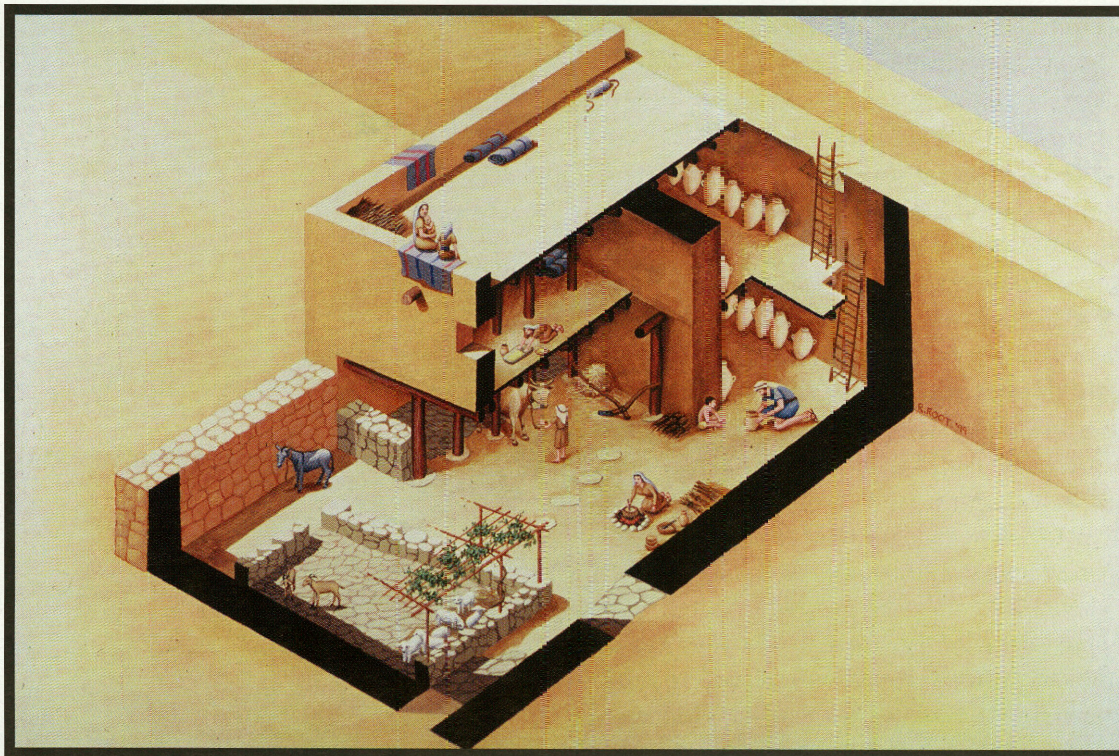


Photo: Rhonda Root

"Iron Age House (Umayri, Jordan)" by Rhonda Root, 1999. 24 x 32 inches, acrylic on canvas. An artist's rendition of a four-room house from the time of the Judges.

similarly constructed second-story store room and nearly all of which await reconstruction in basement laboratories of Bowers Hall on the Walla Walla College campus.

Builders constructed the second floor of sun-dried mudbrick, likely along the same general room-division pattern as we have seen on the ground floor. Storage of foodstuffs, food preparation activities, and domestic quarters occupied this level of the house. The language of the ill-advised and poorly planned vow might actually allow for a vulnerable animal exiting through the doorway to become the burnt offering, but, according to the story, this did not happen; Jephthah's unnamed and vulnerable daughter assumes the role of holocaust victim.

In spite of how archaeology has illuminated the territory and terrain of Jephthah's travels, there are problems. If God appears absent from pivotal parts of the story, so is archaeological evidence for many of the sites mentioned there. Although by no means impenetrable dilemmas, the current data do remain perplexing and problematic. Remaining problems include events and locations mentioned in Jephthah's sermon to the Ammonite tribal chief: (1) the Exodus, (2) the site of Kadesh, (3) Edomite occupation of southern Jordan, and (4) the town of Heshbon.

It is well known that even though there exists a significant and growing body of circumstantial

indications for the Exodus from Egypt, there is no concrete or direct archaeological evidence linking known facts to any person, place, or event in the Exodus story. This has been disconcerting to multitudes of believers over the past several decades, as have other very recent public debates involving the periods of the ancestors, the settlement, the united monarchy, and even now the divided monarchy. It has even hit the news stands in sources like the Israeli *Haaretz* newspaper in October 1999; *Science* magazine, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (both in January 2000) with bad news about ancient Israel's past.

Although without as much fanfare, the results from archaeological research at Kadesh in the northern Sinai are as problematic. No remains at all exist from the Late Bronze or Iron I Ages, at the time of the wilderness wandering. The tenth century represents the first settlement there after a millennium of abandonment. This is hundreds of years too late for the account.

Potentially even more difficult is the lack of an archaeologically definable occupation history for Edom in southern Transjordan during this time. Except within the deep river valley of the Zered, today's Wadi Hasa, which formed a boundary zone between Moab on the north and Edom on the south, there are only a handful of sites with Iron I ceramic remains. Since borders were seldom drawn along

rivers themselves (inhabitants would evidently occupy the entire river drainage system and draw political lines elsewhere), it appears that an extremely small number of sites in Edom date to the time before the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.E. Whatever resistance Edom presented against encroaching Israelite tribal groups from the southwest, it would have come solely from nomadic entities in the scarcely populated region. This phenomenon has generated a small wheelbarrow full of articles pro and con.

Finally, the excavations at Heshbon, where I was privileged to cut my archaeological teeth in the early seventies, produced little ceramic and no architectural evidence of settlement here before about 1100. Apparently, at least at this location, there was no Heshbon when tribes on their way to Canaan came through.

So, what do we have at the end of the day except perplexities and puzzles? Perplexities concerning the Jephthah story itself and how it relates to modern faith in a just God. Tensions between the Jephthah story and recent archaeological research. Pressing disquiet about the relationship between archaeology and modern faith in the Bible's historical reliability.

How do we address these problems? Is there any hope of rescuing the Bible, archaeology, or faith? Have they become too much like Jephthah's daughter, cheerfully hoping to celebrate some victory while walking unwittingly outside the safety of a secure courtyard into the disarming world of sacrificial victims? Is there any hope, given what we know today, of saving these three?

Without attempting to be reductionistic, flippant, or trite, I believe that we should attempt to keep an open mind about some of these problems and maintain research programs, thereby continuing the exploration of the wide and wonderful world out there. We may over time find historical or archaeological evidence for resolving some of these questions about sites and stories, thus confirming elements of the historical background of the Bible. (We are not talking here of "proving" the Bible, as that represents an impossible task. Archaeology may be able to demonstrate a destruction mentioned in the Bible, but it is hardly capable of determining whether or not God did it.)

However, until then, we are obliged to go with the best results we have and not bury our heads in the sands of ancient Gilead or Ammon. We also have to recognize that the Bible comes to us by means of a process "centuries old" of editing, transmission, and translation. It is also not unlikely that ancient inspired



Satellite map of Exodus area: Egypt, the Sinai and Caanan.

Photo: Biblical Archaeology Society



Edom, where nomadic groups might have resisted Israelites.

Photo: Douglas R. Clark



Heshbon produced little evidence of settlement before 1100.

Photo: Douglas R. Clark

writers, some recording events long after they occurred, connected them with sites they knew as contemporary locations. Or, maybe some of the sites have shifted in the course of the years of their unfolding history. It also appears to be the case, if one takes seriously the literary analyses of people like Robert Alter and others, that these stories grow from some kind of historical kernel, taking on embellishments and enrichment in the centuries-long process by which they travel through oral and written manifestations on their way to the Bible.⁵ Variations occur in all parallel biblical accounts, suggesting that we not press the Bible into an historically unwieldy mold. The Bible, after all, is a literary document, characterized by

literary features and stylistic finesse and flair, with great attention to plot, suspense, character development, irony, humor, and so forth.

These observations suggest that we be flexible, that while taking the Bible, archaeology, and faith seriously, we don't become as unyieldingly rigid as Jephthah with his unnecessary vow. This will result in no one's survival. These daughters are worth too much to sacrifice to unbending inflexibility. If there is hope for dialogue in today's world, and into the future, among people of faith who study archaeology and the Bible, if we anticipate that the rescue of these avenues for inquiry is possible, if we hope to ensure a responsible future for the past, then we will find ways to celebrate curiosity and with humility open ourselves to new possibilities.

To do otherwise is to hand ourselves over either to "maximalists" or "minimalists." The former make more of the evidence than is responsible, usually in an attempt to prove the Bible; the latter often limit themselves to a bare minimum of absolute, concrete evidence, sometimes while aiming to disprove biblical history. Both groups, in the arenas of Bible, archaeology and faith, border on being vow takers. Perhaps it is within the ambiguities apparent within history, science, and faith that we will find common ground for future discussions and innovative approaches. It is certainly the case that life is more interesting when lived in liminal zones between disciplines and ideologies. It is also more dangerous, especially for those of us who do take seriously scholarship and faith.

So, what of the future? I am tempted to follow the advice of a fortune cookie I received at the Centennial Celebration of the American Schools of Oriental Research in Washington, D.C., last year. The message read: "You are fated to make the past last." This would be rather easy and reasonably painless. But if we wish for the continued survival of these three arenas of personal and professional life for informed people of faith, fortune cookie prognostications will likely not do.

I am optimistic, however. It appears to me, in spite of a history of conflicts between extremists and more moderate types—sometimes more vicious than when Ammonites and Gileadites took to the field—that this century can provide a safe place for the Bible, archaeology, and faith. A few modest suggestions for ensuring such a future:

- honest, responsible biblical study, on its own terms

- honest, responsible archaeological research, on its own terms

- conversation among informed practitioners of all disciplines and perspectives

- taking advantage of emerging consensus positions

- painting the future with broad strokes to allow for ambiguities and flexibility

- avoiding the extremes of maximalist (fundamentalist) and minimalist (nihilist) positions

- minimizing agenda-laden approaches

- continued exploration of the dynamics of faith and how they are grounded and nurtured

- emphasis on the illustrative rather than the apologetic value of archaeology.

The survival of the Bible, archaeology, and faith for the twenty-first century depends on hard work, honesty, integrity, deep faith, conversation, and flexibility. We may never come to completely satisfying results in our quest to keep responsible research and unfailing faith together, but we will know more about the Bible and its backgrounds and we may discover new dimensions to faith, as well. This endeavor deserves our best efforts if we are to avoid sacrificing archaeology, the Bible, and faith on the altar of inflexible and unnecessary vows.

Notes and References

1. Adapted from the NRSV translation of Job 1:6-11.

2. See page 19 of his article, "Archaeology, Jesus, and Christian Faith," in *What Has Archaeology To Do With Faith?* eds. James H. Charlesworth and Walter P. Weaver (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 1-19.

3. Barbara Shenk, *The God of Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1985), 53.

4. Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the Land of the Bible, 10,000 - 586 B.C.E.* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 354

5. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).

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This piece is adapted from the presidential plenary address for the Pacific Northwest Region of the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature, which Clark delivered at Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington, on April 28, 2000.

What is Time?

“

Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I

drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its

thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink

”

deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars.

—Henry Thoreau



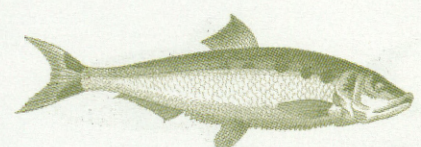
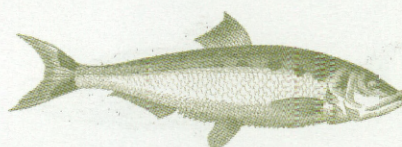
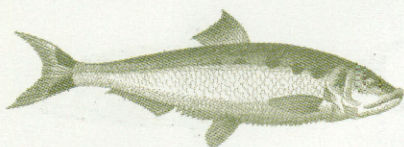


“Gone Fishing . . .”

by Nancy Hoyt Lecourt

At the end of *The Little House in the Big Woods*, Laura lies tucked into her trundle bed; outside the winds of late fall blow the brown leaves around her family’s little house. A fire warms the family, while Pa plays the fiddle. As she is falling asleep, Laura thinks to herself, “This is now.”

Early childhood seems a boundless time, unencumbered by ticking minutes and deadlines. A baby simply is, now—whether hungry or cranky or delighted—but always now. A toddler wishes to stay in the park, or build a block castle, now—until she tires of it. The mother tugging the little arm and saying, “Time to go! We’re late!” is an alien from another reality.



Sometimes caretakers of small children, if they are lucky, come to share a little in the eternal present of childhood. I remember long days with my first child, when I wasn't working and had few friends or obligations, having just moved to Switzerland. We would walk down to feed the swans on Lake Geneva, slowly, stopping along the way to visit the cows that gave our milk or drop by the hospital kitchen to say hello to the Italian cook, who often had a cookie for a tiny fist. There was nothing else to do, and watching a hedgehog cross a field was an activity worthy of our time and attention. In winter, the cows had to stay indoors, and I remember finding them in the warm wooden barn that smelled of hay and sugar beets. A little winter sun streamed through tiny windows and but for the solid earth beneath our feet we might have been in Noah's Ark.

Then comes a moment when, like Laura, a child enters time. He not only becomes aware of time passing, aware that "this is now," but also recognizes that he himself exists, in time. This is the birth of human identity, the beginning of self-consciousness. It marks the end of the spreading eternity of childhood, the moment when immortality puts on mortality, the fall itself reenacted. We cease to be like the cat purring here beside me and become as gods, knowing that we know. The clock begins to tick; we enter time; we become ourselves.

We step into the stream that cannot be entered twice, and once our feet are wet there is no climbing out again. We go to school, make friends and enemies, learn and grow and change. In what sense are we the same person we were ten, twenty, fifty, or eighty years ago? We have the same name, social security number, finger prints. But that girl in the plaid dress who swirled in the teacups of the Mad Hatter's ride at Disneyland thirty years ago—that was me? That baby whose soft pink chin I tickled—can it be the same person as the tall, dark, opinionated young man who visits me between college semesters?

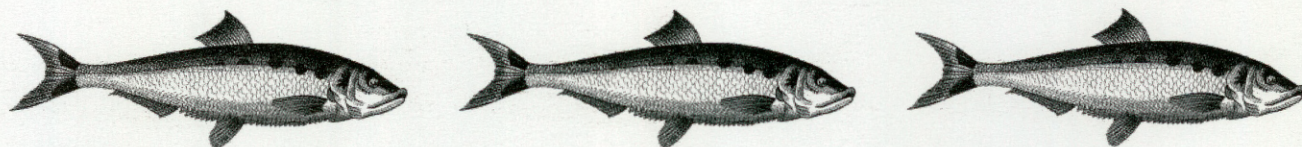
Time sweeps us along, changing us almost beyond recognition, yet it also gives us meaning and structure. We plan ahead and look back, standing



firmly within the known boundaries of hours and years. We complain about our busy-ness, but I wonder if we could really bear the boundless emptiness of eternity, that vast and sublime expanse that surrounds our comfortable, predictable world.

When I was quite young I had a series of nightmares from which I inevitably woke screaming. They were all variations on the same theme. I dreamed I was in a small room with no doors or windows. Round and round I would walk, trying to find my way out. But it was endless, endless, always the same, round and round. Or I was on the platform of an underground train. It rushed by, lighted windows roaring past, but it never stopped, never slowed, a train with no ending forever flying through the darkness. I tried to explain to my mother what was so frightening about a little room, an endless train, but I could not. I was haunted by the idea of the eternal.

Finally I grew a little older and realized what I was afraid of. As a young Adventist I had been taught





that the highest reward was to live forever. I knew that if I was good, I would live in heaven for eternity. I was certainly very good; the contrary was too awful to contemplate. (Indeed, my fear of living forever was no doubt a substitute for a fear of eternal damnation. My brother dreamed about *that*.) But what of the reward? No one asked me if I *wanted* to live forever. What if I got tired? Shouldn't everything have an ending?

Having brought the fear out into the conscious light of day, I could deal with it rationally. I finally decided that I couldn't imagine actually wanting to die, couldn't really think that a day would come when I could say, "Okay; I'm done now. Tomorrow I'd like to die please," and that surely God wouldn't offer me

something that wasn't genuinely good, and the dreams stopped.

But I still remember them over forty years later, the terrible fear of timelessness. I don't want to die, but oh! to live forever? How will I recognize myself, a million years from now?

This is one of the paradoxes we live with: eternity should be our home, yet we fear it. We are more comfortable in the everyday world of longing or regretting, looking forward to tomorrow or back to yesterday. Rarely do we find the grace to live in the present moment, the tiny unfurling edge where the past becomes the future, the now, the only time that truly exists.

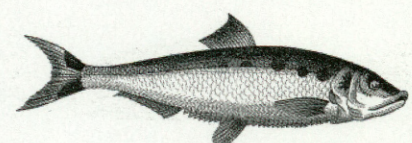
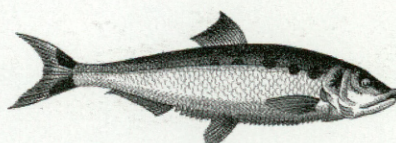
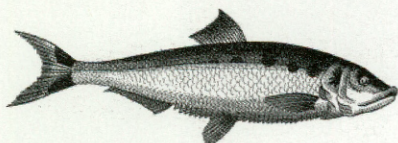
To live then, both in time and in eternity, to be our human, mortal selves, always changing, and yet to keep one foot in eternity, knowing that the present moment and the eternal are one and the same—this is our balancing act. Henry Thoreau expressed it as beautifully as anyone I know:

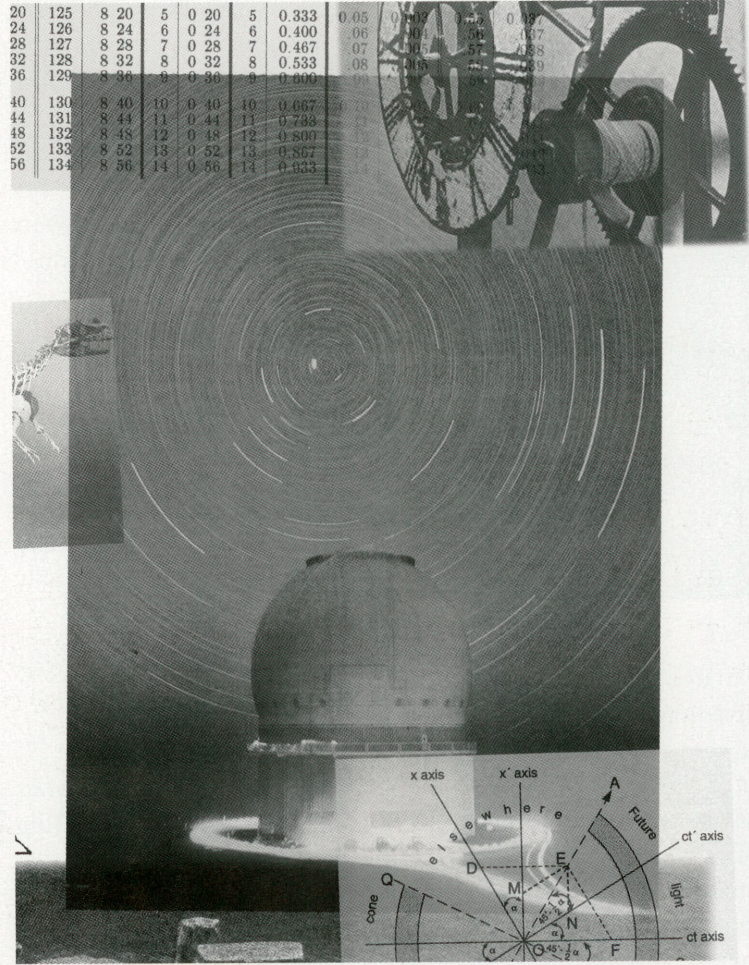
Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars.¹

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Thomas Morphis

God's Time

Infinite Temporality and the Ultimate Reality of Becoming

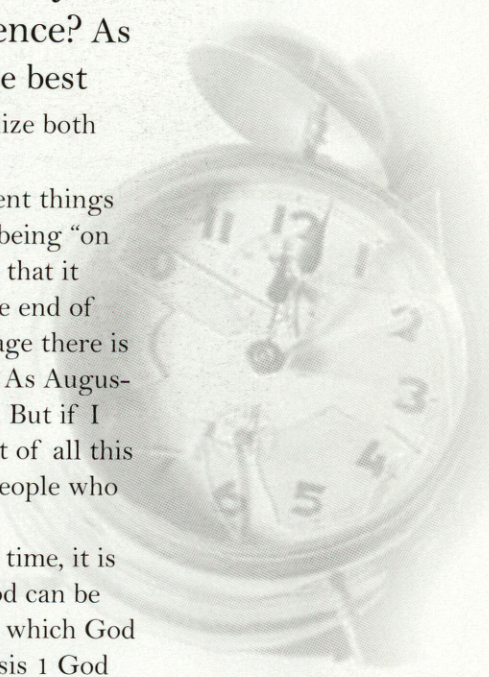
by Fritz Guy

Is time an essential feature of all reality? To be more specific, is time a characteristic even of ultimate reality—that is, God's infinite reality—as well as the finite reality of the created cosmos and our own human existence? As in the case of many other fundamental questions, the best answer here is “Yes, but. . . .” And it is important to recognize both the basic affirmative and the modifying adversative.

First, some clarification. The word “time” means quite different things in different settings. We talk about “saving” and “losing” time, of being “on time” and “out of time.” We say that time “flies” and “stands still,” that it “waits for no one,” and that it “heals all wounds.” We speak of “the end of time” and “the time of the end.” In addition to the diversity of usage there is also the difficulty of definition. Time has long been a conundrum. As Augustine famously said, “Provided no one asks me, I know what time is. But if I want to explain it to someone who asks, I don't know.”¹ The result of all this is that there are almost as many meanings of “time” as there are people who think and talk about it.

In spite of our common, metaphorical ways of talking about time, it is not some sort of container that someone or something or even God can be “in” or “outside of.” Time is not an entity that God creates or with which God has to deal. It is interesting (and, I think, significant) that in Genesis 1 God does not say, “Let there be time.” And time is not a force or a limitation; it doesn't “do” anything; it doesn't make anything happen or keep anything from happening. Time is simply a relationship of events that occur. In this discussion, the word “time” will refer primarily to the temporal succession and relation of events—that is, to “after-each-other-ness.”²

But, as usual, things are not quite so simple. So, at the risk of seeming



pedantic but in the interest of being as clear as possible, I will often use the word “temporality” along with or instead of “time.” Whereas “time” may be easily misunderstood as referring to some sort of substance or entity, “temporality” has the advantage of suggesting a characteristic of something. The word “temporality” here points specifically to temporal succession and relation, as well as duration. That is, it includes what is sometimes called “temporal passage” or better, “temporal becoming.” This is the idea that “events are first future, then become present, and finally become past,” which in turn means that “future events do not yet exist, present events exist, and past events no longer exist.”³

Time, Nature, and God

Everyone agrees that for us human beings, the past, the present, and the future are *experientially* very different from each other. This is just the way we encounter reality. We remember the past but not the future, we plan for the future but not the past, and we act in the present but not in the past or the future. The disputed issue is whether these temporal “phases” (as I will call them) are also *ontologically* different—whether “our undeniably real experience” of temporality gives us any valid reason to suppose that temporality is an aspect of reality as such.⁴ In other words, is time—that is, temporality—more than an artifact of human experience, a mental construction based on our perceptions of things and events?

Certainly many ancient and modern theorists have thought of time as a strictly a human phenomenon. At the beginning of the fifth century Augustine concluded that time is an “extension [literally, a “distention”] of the mind.”⁵ And Albert Einstein is quoted as saying at the beginning of the twentieth century that space and time are “modes by which we think, not conditions under which we live.”⁶ So the question remains: Is there such a reality as “objective” or “external” time, or is this merely “a manner of speaking” that has no literal meaning?⁷

This question has been described as “the profoundest issue in the philosophy of time,” but it is fortunately not intractable.⁸ Contemporary philosophy has addressed the issue by means of two related sets of questions about the temporal order:

- Are the successive events of the past, present, and future equally real, or is the present in some way “more real” than the past and the future? Are things that happen “now” real in ways that things that happen “then” (either “back then” or “not until then”) aren’t?
- In order to describe events fully, is it necessary to employ the temporal *properties* of pastness, presentness, and futurity, or can we simply use the temporal *relationships* of earlier, simultaneous, and later? Again, does the fact that an event is “now” make an objectively real (as distinct from a humanly perceived) difference?

Those who regard the past, present, and future as equally real, and believe that the only real temporal differences are matters of “earlier,” “at the same time,” and “later,” are proponents of what are called “tenseless” or “stasis” theories of time. Those who regard the present as uniquely real

in comparison with the past and the future, and who insist on the ontological importance of grammatical tenses are proponents of “tensed” or “dynamic” theories.⁹

The differences between these two kinds of theories are particularly interesting—and particularly challenging—at the ends of the spectrum of reality. And it turns out that the answers to the questions about temporality at these opposite ends are logically related to each other.

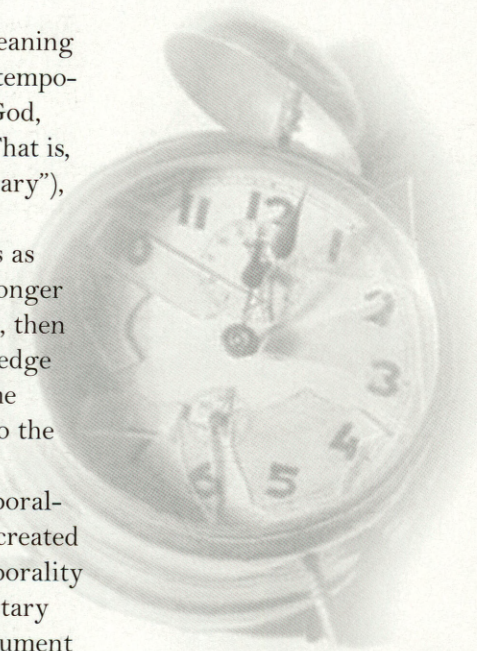
On the one hand, if the temporal phases of “past,” “present,” and “future” have no fundamental meaning in the natural world, then nature is essentially “nontemporal” or “timeless.” So it would be entirely reasonable (though not logically necessary) to suppose that God, too, is “timeless.” That is, the phases of time would have no essential relation to God’s being, and God would know the past, present, and future of the world (and of

“Time is not an entity that God creates or with which God has to deal. . . . Time is simply a relationship of events that occur.”

our human lives) all at once and all in an eternal, “timeless” now, since finite reality itself is timeless.

On the other hand, if the temporal phases do have essential meaning in relation to fundamental natural processes, so that nature is truly temporal, it would be appropriate, and perhaps even necessary, to regard God, too, as in some important sense “temporal” rather than “timeless.” That is, God’s own reality would be temporal (though certainly not “temporary”), and God would know (and relate to) the past, present, and future in sequence and in fundamentally different ways. The reasoning here is as follows: If some reality is essentially temporal, with a past that no longer exists, a present that now exists, and a future that does not yet exist, then knowledge of that reality is also (necessarily) temporal. This knowledge “becomes” as the known reality “becomes.” If the knowledge of some reality is thus temporal, the knower must also be temporal at least to the extent that the knowledge “becomes.”

So our thinking about God’s time—that is, about God’s temporality—logically presupposes an understanding of the temporality of created reality. Although there is no “slam-dunk” argument in favor of temporality as an essential feature of the natural world down to its most elementary particles (like quarks and bosons), even less is there any decisive argument against it. It is entirely plausible to understand nature as essentially temporal, and this view has the advantage of being supported by universal human experience. So I will proceed here on the basis that time—temporality and temporal becoming—is not just a human experience but is indeed “an essential feature of the universe.”¹⁰



God "Outside of Time"

Until the twentieth century, Christian theologians and philosophers strongly favored the idea that God is essentially timeless. "God," they said in effect, "is outside of time." Three factors help to account for this consensus.

In the first place, the universal human experience of temporality was (as it still is) an experience of radical transience and insecurity. For us, to be temporal is to be temporary, subject to disease and decay, dissolution and death; and none of this applies to God.

Our experience of temporality, furthermore, results in the pervasive human desire for a locus of permanence, security, and meaning. Such a locus must transcend our ordinary temporal experience; in some sense it must be "timeless." In one way or another, we all sing and pray,

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away.
Change and decay in all around I see
O Thou who changest not, abide with me."¹¹

A changeless, timeless God meets our profound emotional and spiritual need for a sense of ultimate stability.

Such an understanding of God, furthermore, seems to have scriptural support. The prophet quotes the divine word: "I the LORD do not change" (Mal. 3:6). The psalmist prays, "You are the same, and your years have no end" (Ps. 102:27). The apostle describes God as "the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change" (Jas. 1:17).

In the second place, classical thought offered to early Christianity just such a sense of permanence by way of the idea of "timeless" being. The Greek philosopher Parmenides of Elea (ca. 515-450 B.C.E.) had been convinced that "Being has no coming-into-being and no destruction, for it is whole of limb, without motion, and without end. And it never *was*, nor *will be*, because it *is* now, a *whole* all together, a continuous *unity*."¹² A century later Plato (ca. 428-348 B.C.E.), perhaps the most influential figure in the history of Western thought, had made a radical distinction between created temporality and uncreated timelessness:

The nature of the ideal being was eternal, but it was impossible to confer this characteristic in its fullness upon something generated. So [the Creator] resolved to have a moving image of eternity, which we call time. . . . The past and future are created species of time, which we unconsciously but wrongly transfer to eternal being. For we say that it "was," or "is," or "will be," but the truth is that "is" alone is properly attributed to it, and that "was" and "will be" are only to be spoken of becoming in time.¹³

Six centuries after that the Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus (C.E. 204-70) further elaborated the idea of timeless eternity:

We know it as a Life changelessly motionless and ever holding the universal content in actual presence—not now this and now that other, but always all; not existing now in one mode and now in another, but a consummation without part or interval. All its content is in immediate concentration as at one point; nothing in it ever knows development; all remains identical within itself, knowing nothing of change, forever in a “now,” since nothing of it has passed away or will come into being. But what it is now, that it is ever. . . . Thus we come to the definition: the Life—instantaneously entire, complete, at no point broken into period or part—which belongs to the authentic Existent by its very existence, . . . this is Eternity.¹⁴

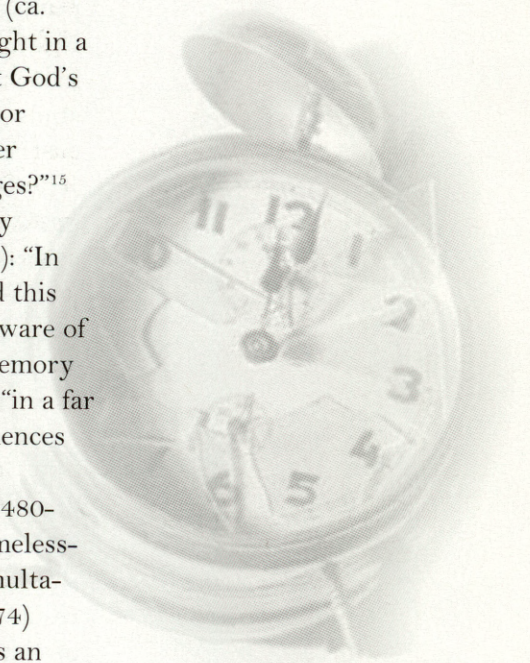
“On the other hand, if the temporal phases do have essential meaning in relation to fundamental natural processes, so that nature is truly temporal, it would be appropriate, and perhaps even necessary, to regard God, too, as in some important sense ‘temporal’ rather than ‘timeless.’”

In the meantime, the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (ca. B.C.E. 25–45 C.E.) provided a synthesis of biblical and classical thought in a treatise titled *On the Unchangeableness of God*. Here he insisted that God’s life is “not a time but eternity, . . . and in eternity there is no past nor future, but only present existence.” And, Philo asked, “What greater impiety could there be than to suppose that the Unchanging changes?”¹⁵

Philo’s example of Biblical-classical synthesis was followed by influential Christian thinkers, most notably by Augustine (354–430): “In the Eternal nothing passes away, but . . . the whole is present.” And this presence of the whole is not like the human experience of being aware of a whole psalm while singing one part of it, which is a matter of memory and expectation and a kind of expansion of the mind. By contrast “in a far more wonderful and far more mysterious way” God actually experiences the whole content of time at once, without succession.”¹⁶

A century later, a Christian civil servant named Boëthius (ca. 480–524) formulated what came to be the classic definition of divine timelessness: “the complete possession of an endless life enjoyed as one simultaneous whole.”¹⁷ In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) defined eternity with typical succinctness: “Eternity itself exists as an *instantaneous whole* lacking successiveness.”¹⁸

In the third place, the idea of divine timelessness offered a way of resolving the vexing logical problem contained in the idea of God’s foreknowledge of future free choices. The problem was (and is) this: if God knows infallibly today what I am going to choose freely to do tomorrow, am I actually free to choose not to do it, and thus falsify God’s fore-



knowledge?¹⁹ If, however, God's knowledge is timeless, it is not, strictly speaking, *foreknowledge* at all, but simply an eternal observation and awareness of all that has ever happened, all that is happening now, and all that will happen in the future (including free choices). This resolution of the problem on the basis of divine timelessness is still regarded by many as the best one available,²⁰ sometimes with an appeal to the logical possibility of additional dimensions of reality.²¹

Some modern philosophers have attempted to combine affirmations of both divine temporality and infinite foreknowledge (in contrast to *timeless* knowledge). It has been claimed, for example, that God's knowledge of an event is not, strictly speaking, *caused by*, but is rather *contingent on*, that event, and that "earlier events or states of affairs can be logically contingent upon later ones."²² But it is not at all clear that the temporal logic of a *contingency* relationship is decisively different from that of a *causal* relationship.

Again, it has been argued that the theoretical possibility of tachyons (particles traveling faster than light, which are not known to exist but have not been proved not to exist)²³ suggests the further possibility of a kind of time reversal that would enable God actually to know an event before its occurrence.²⁴ But even if tachyons do exist and appear to "travel backward" in relativistic time, the application to divine foreknowledge seems to be an implausible extrapolation of relativity theory.

The source of an idea does not, of course, determine its validity. So the philosophical ancestry of the idea of divine timelessness does not in any way count against its truthfulness. But this ancestry does raise the question whether the idea appears in the biblical documents, which are the primary source of Christian belief. A careful reading of the materials cited in favor of God's timeless eternity (such as those mentioned above) indicates that they refer to God's *character*, not God's *being*. And a further study of the biblical materials related to eternity shows that they refer to everlasting time rather than timelessness.²⁵

Yet it is easy to see why the idea of divine timelessness remains attractive and widespread in popular Christianity. It offers a sense of spiritual assurance in a world of change and decay; it has an impressive philosophical pedigree; and it provides an explanation of divine foreknowledge. Its slogan is short and simple: "God is outside of time."

God's Temporality

During the twentieth century, however, the idea of divine timelessness—which is properly defined as the absence of temporal succession, relationships, and duration—has "fallen on hard times."²⁶ This development is a result of doubts not only about the conceptual coherence and intelligibility of the idea of divine timelessness, but also about its biblical, theological, and practical adequacy.²⁷ For example:

- A truly timeless God could not properly be said to act or exist "now," or "at" any other particular time—before the foundation of the world, in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, or at the end of the present age. This would result in a logically odd situation for Christian belief, to say the least.

- A truly timeless God could not hear either praise or petition as they actually occur. Such a God would certainly know what musical notes follow others in a song or a symphony (as they exist, for example, in a musical score or a compact disc), but could not actually hear either melody or rhythm, for these phenomena are by their very natural temporal realities.

- A truly timeless God could not make a particular response to particular events as they occur, and hence could hardly be regarded as “personal” in any meaningful sense.

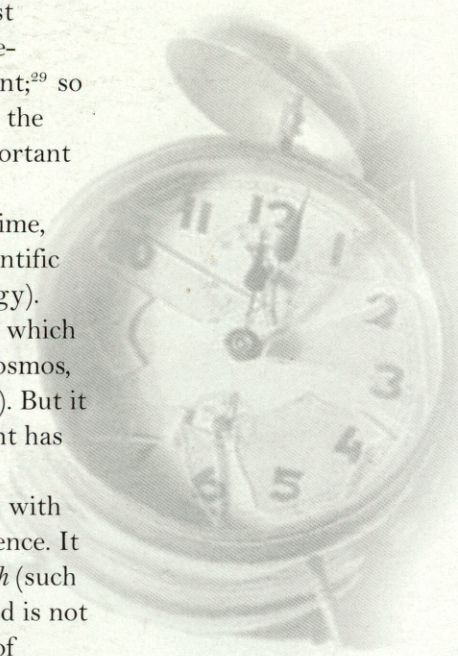
In contrast to this predicament, according to the idea of divine temporality a personal God knows and experiences the events of the created world as they happen, responds to them, and takes the risks inherent in the actualization of future free choices. This is often called

“During the twentieth century, however, the idea of divine timelessness . . . has “fallen on hard times.” This development is a result of doubts not only about the conceptual coherence and intelligibility of the idea of divine timelessness, but also about its biblical, theological, and practical adequacy.”

“the open view of God,” which in Adventist thought has been most clearly articulated by Richard Rice.²⁸ Here the divine eternity is regarded not as the negation of time but as its totality and fulfillment;²⁹ so it might well be called “infinite temporality” to distinguish it from the “finite temporality” of human and natural existence.³⁰ In this important sense, God is *more, not less temporal* than nature and humanity.

We can conceptualize a first event, the beginning of cosmic time, before which no other event occurred (such as the “big bang” in scientific cosmology, or the initial creative act of God in theological cosmology). And we can conceptualize a last event, the end of cosmic time, after which no other event will occur (such as the possible “heat death” of the cosmos, which has no parallel in the biblical picture of an everlasting future). But it is not clear that the idea of a completely nontemporal, timeless event has any meaning at all.

God’s temporality is required by the idea of divine interaction with the world—that is, with the created universe and with human existence. It is, of course, quite possible to think of a nontemporal, timeless *truth* (such as the mathematical truth that $2 + 3 = 5$) that does not “become” and is not part of a sequence of events. It is even possible to think of a kind of nontemporal, timeless *existence* (such as Plato’s ideal “forms” that were supposed to be the eternal, celestial realities of which earthly, temporal entities are imperfect actualizations). But it is impossible to think coherently of a nontemporal, timeless *interaction*. For an interaction is necessarily an event with temporal relationships, an event in relation to which other events are necessarily earlier, simultaneous, or later.



The Christian understanding of God as personal entails interactions—actions in relation to other actions or events (which may be divine, human, or natural). However nonliterally anyone interprets the creation story of Genesis 1:1-2:3, it describes divine actions in a temporal sequence—at the very least, creating and resting. The same is true of other “mighty acts of God”—in the liberation of the people of Israel from Egypt, for example, and in their later Exile and Restoration. All of these events are described as divine-human interactions: God acts in relation and response to human acts (good or bad).

Again, whatever was involved in the incarnation of God in and as Jesus of Nazareth, it was a temporal event that was once future, then present, then past. Of course it has continuing consequences and is in this limited (and metaphorical) sense “timeless”; but the whole of Christian faith is based on the conviction that something *happened*, and that the very reality of God was truly and directly involved. God was certainly more than a timeless observer, a spectator “outside of time.”

But God’s temporality is unique. Although it is true temporality (in that it entails temporal succession, relation and duration), it is infinite temporality and therefore radically different from any and all the finite temporalities of the cosmos and of humanity.

- Infinite temporality is universally and temporally inclusive: it is omnitemporality. God coexists with every time and all time.
- Infinite temporality has no sense of recency, of having come into existence relatively late, after much natural and human history has already occurred. God is prior to all other reality.
- Infinite temporality perfectly retains the positive meaning and consequences of all events in all time. God makes the past present in ever new ways, so that nothing good is ever lost.
- Infinite temporality has none of the transience and insecurity that come from natural entropy and biological mortality, but is the eternal source of creativity. God is the proper ground of stability and hope.

Because of this radical uniqueness, God’s temporality has been called “relative timelessness.”³¹ This terminology is certainly plausible and arguably appropriate, because the words “time,” “temporal,” and “temporality” are so colored by our finite, human, and often negative experience of time that we may unconsciously project this coloration onto God’s very different temporality.

Nevertheless I prefer the term “infinite temporality,” which calls attention to an important truth that the term “relative timelessness” tends to disguise. This is the truth that God’s reality is truly temporal. It includes the knowledge and experience of futurity, presentness, and pastness, because it involves interaction with natural and human events as they happen, and because, therefore, it includes temporal becoming.

The Reality of Becoming

So we should regard time—temporal becoming—as an essential feature of God’s reality, but we should regard it as infinite temporality.

Whether we recognize all reality, including nature and God, as truly temporal depends partly on our attitude toward human experience as a

valid indication of the character of reality. Although we can always exclude the phenomena of human experience as undependable and potentially illusory, we can just as plausibly hold that such an exclusion would be arbitrary and unwarranted. There is no compelling reason to suppose that human experience is irrelevant to an understanding of all reality, including its temporality, "as it really is."

If we do recognize temporal becoming as an essential feature of all reality, then the proper illustration of time is not a line along which human consciousness travels (like following a fence across a field), but a line that continually extends itself forward (like a trail being blazed in a forest) as natural, human, and divine events and actions occur. We—along with God and nature—are not following a path into the future; we are all

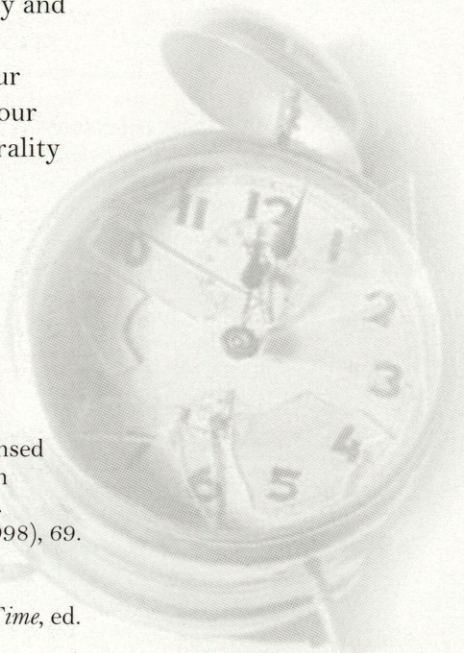
"God's temporality is required by the idea of divine
interaction with the world—that is, with the created
universe and with human existence."

blazing a trail. Like human existence, nature too has a history, and also a future that is not entirely predictable. Even ultimate reality is best understood as essentially temporal—but infinitely temporal. Like humanity and nature, God too has both a history and a future.

To be sure, temporal becoming has a different significance in our understanding of God's reality than it has in our understanding of our own and natural reality. But it is just as essential. For infinite temporality is the ultimate reality of becoming.

Notes and References

1. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.14.
2. In German, *nacheinanderheit*.
3. Quentin Smith, "General Introduction: The Implications of the Tensed and Tenseless Theories of Time," in *The New Theory of Time*, ed. L. Nathan Oaklander and Quentin Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 1.
4. See, for example, D. H. Mellor, *Real Time II* (London: Routledge, 1998), 69.
5. Augustine, *Confessions*, 11. 26. Augustine evidently coined the term *distentio* here. It is usually translated "extension."
6. David A. Park, "Time in Modern Physics," in *The Encyclopedia of Time*, ed. Samuel L. Macey (New York: Garland, 1994), 465.
7. Eva Brann, *What, Then, Is Time?* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 201.
8. George Schlesinger, *Aspects of Time* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980), 23.
9. Philosophers often identify the two contrasting theories of time by the designations coined by J. M. E. McTaggart: the A-theory (the "tensed" or "dynamic" theory) and the B-theory (the "tenseless" or "stasis" theory). These designations are admirably nonprejudicial, but unfortunately uninformative.
10. G. J. Whitrow, *The Natural Philosophy of Time*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford



University Press, 1980), 375.

11. Henry F. Lyte, "Abide With Me" (1847), in *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Washington: Review and Herald, 1985), no. 50.

12. Parmenides, "Way of Truth," 7-8.

13. Plato, *Timaeus*, 37d-38a.

14. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 3.5.

15. Philo, *On the Unchangeableness of God*, 32, quoted by John Sanders, "Historical Considerations," in Clark Pinnock et al., *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994), 70.

16. See Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.11, 31.

17. Boëthius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, 5.6: "interminibilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio."

18. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1.10.1.

19. For brief, complementary surveys of this issue in the history of Christian thought, see William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), 1-29; Alan C. Padgett, *God, Eternity, and the Nature of Time* (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), 38-55; and Sanders, "Historical Considerations," 59-100. For a sampling of comparative recent literature, see *God, Foreknowledge, and Freedom*, ed. John Martin Fischer (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1989).

20. See, for example, Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann, "Eternity," *Journal of Philosophy* 78 (1981): 429-58; Paul Helm, *Eternal God: A Study of God Without Time* (New York: Oxford, 1988); Brian Leftow, *Time and Eternity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

21. See Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 172-79. But this assumes that the future already exists; see L. Nathan Oaklander, "Time and Foreknowledge: A Critique of Zagzebski," *Religious Studies* 31 (1995): 101-3.

22. Stephen T. Davis, *Logic and the Nature of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 64.

23. Paul Davies, *About Time: Einstein's Unfinished Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 280.

24. William Lane Craig, "Tachyons, Time Travel, and Divine Omniscience," *Journal of Philosophy* 85, (1988): 135-50.

25. The classic study is Oscar Cullmann, "Time and Eternity," in *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950).

26. Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge*, 144.

27. In addition to the classic critique by Nelson Pike, *God and Timelessness* (London: Routledge, 1970), and the analyses by Hasker and Padgett (see note 19 above), see, among many other sources, Richard Rice, *The Openness of God: The Relationship of Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will* (Nashville: Review and Herald, 1980); reprinted as *God's Foreknowledge and Man's Free Will* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1985); Richard Swinburne, "Eternal and Immutable," in *The Coherence of Theism*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 217-38; Clark Pinnock et al., *Openness of God*; David Basinger, *The Case for Freewill Theism: A Philosophical Assessment* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996); Keith Ward, "God and Time," in *Religion and Creation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 256-84; John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998); Gregory A. Boyd, *The God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2000).

A very recent introduction to the discussion is Nicholas Wolterstorff et al., "God and Time," *Philosophia Christi* 2/1 (2000): 5-59.

28. Rice, *Openness of God*. This title, coined by Rice and later utilized by Pinnock et al., has yielded the term "the open view of God" as a designation for the related movement in evangelical theology. See, for example, Boyd, *God of the Possible*.

29. The idea of eternity as the totality and fulfillment of time is shared with the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead and his followers, but is not dependent on it. See Hasker, "A Philosophical Perspective," in Pinnock et al., *Openness of God*, 138-41.

30. The term "infinite temporality" comes from Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 499 n. 13. See also Schubert Ogden, "The Temporality of God," in *The Reality of God and Other Essays* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 145.

31. See Padgett, *God, Eternity, and the Nature of Time*, 122-46; see also Padgett, "God the Lord of Time: A Third Model of Eternity as Relative Timelessness," in Wolterstorff et al., "God and Time," 17-20.

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Looking for God in the Literature of Time and Space

In this world, time is a local phenomenon. Two clocks close together tick at nearly the same rate. But clocks separated by distance tick at different rates, the farther apart the more out of step. What holds true for clocks holds true also for the rate of heartbeats, the pace of inhaled and exhaled breath, the movement of wind in tall grass. In this world, time flows at different speeds in different locations.

Alan Lightman, *Einstein's Dreams* (New York: Warner Books, 1993), 153.

The silence in the room came alive, like the positive space in a Chinese landscape painting, or the words left out of a poem. Something buried so deep inside her that she had forgotten it was there rose to the surface.

How long, O Lord, will you forget me?

How long will you hide your face?

Loneliness, the hole in the center of her being.

Look at me, answer me, Lord my God!

The answer came in the form of understanding, and it came all at once, as if a dam had burst in her soul. Her search for God had been like a hand trying to grasp itself. God, who is infinite, cannot become present because He can never be absent.

You were here all along. . . .

Nothing was changed, yet everything was changed. Compared to this, she felt as if she had been sleeping all her life. "God is here," she answered. She picked up the pin and guided it through the fabric.

Mark Salzman, *Lying Awake* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 115.

The linear concept of time is practically useful; but its influence on historians has long been undermined, and all the teleological constructions of the past, which it formerly encouraged, have been abandoned.

Current fashions in historical writing reflect instead a concept of time which has no direction at all – neither linear nor cyclical. It is imagined in a state of chaotic, directionless flux; or it is classified as a mental construct which can safely be omitted from any attempted account of an objective world.

Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, "Time and History," in *The Story of Time*, ed., Kristen Lippincott (London: Merrell Holberton, 1999), 249.

In our society it is difficult to embrace people instead of things, to cherish time rather than space. So much of our technologically efficient and materially exploitative culture militates against these values. Accordingly, we must, by deliberate effort, consciously establish our intentions. Moreover, if we keep the Sabbath by embracing persons, that practice invites us to carry those same values into the other six days of the week. Our Sabbath remembering strengthens us to stand against the technologization of our culture and pursue the intimacy of Christian community and Christ-like caring.

Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989), 123.

Time that is driven by the humming engines of the clock and the global marketplace has a different quality than time that is given the graceful turning of the earth toward the darkness that marks a biblical day's beginning and end. At first glance, these appear to be oil and water: Who can mix them? If we are honest, however, we recognize that they provide, together, the single stage on which we who live at the beginning of the third millennium will pass our days. Time is the gift of God, now as in every age. And at the same time, we dwell in a society that puts so much pressure on time that it is often difficult to notice the gift.

Dorothy C. Bass, *Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000) 29.

Space Odysseys *and* Time Dilation

S. Clark Rowland

What is time? What is space? All events that we observe are located in space and time, and Albert Einstein helped us understand that when we observe something traveling close to the speed of light, we find its time dilated and its length contracted in the direction of motion. Two events that we observe occurring simultaneously in different locations would be seen by an observer traveling close to the speed of light to happen at different times.

One of the early observations that confirmed Einstein's model was the existence of very short-lived cosmic rays on the surface of Earth. These cosmic rays were produced at the top of the atmosphere and their lifetime was so short that, even if traveling close to the speed of light, they would not have been expected to exist at ground level. Their existence at the surface was consistent with Einstein's proposal. This example illustrates time dilation, which specifies that, for objects we observe traveling close to the speed of light, all physical processes occur more slowly than they would if the same objects were at rest on Earth.

Many people seem to view these implications of relativity only as elements of science fiction. However, the scientific validity of such concepts as time dilation, length contraction, and the relativity of simultaneity is well established. A personal example comes to mind while considering these concepts.

Spaceship Eden

In the early years of my teaching, I looked for a good example of time dilation while discussing relativity. I decided to use my experience with a homework problem to construct what I came to call a "Spaceship Eden" model. I had recently listened to Jack Provonsha suggest the possibility that some of what is found in the geologic column could be the result of demonically directed genetic engineering. Combining his suggestion with my homework problem on time dilation, I suggested to my students that our traditional short-chronology approach to Earth origins could be combined with the best scientific models.

We assumed the complete traditional understanding of the creation week. Adam represented this earth on the heavenly council. The Creator called a meeting to introduce him to the other members. Since it was a significant trip, God instructed Adam to take Eve along. Of course, they needed a vehicle in which to travel. It is commonly held in some Seventh-day Adventist circles that the Garden of Eden was transported to heaven at the time of Noah's Flood, so we assumed that they used a transportable Garden of Eden as a spaceship.

Not knowing where the council meeting might have been held, we assumed that the destination was perhaps one-tenth the distance across the universe and that Adam and Eve traveled at speeds that approached the speed of light. We then assumed that the meeting took place and that perhaps it lasted a couple weeks. During the meeting, all representatives were able to tour the Garden of Eden and meet Adam and Eve. At the end of the meeting, Spaceship Eden took off for the return trip to Earth.

Meanwhile, back on Earth, at least a few microbes had been left around the perimeter of the garden when the Garden of Eden left. With this raw material, the devil was assumed to have begun an intensive genetic engineering program immediately upon the departure of Adam and Eve. His aim was to reproduce the flora and fauna that God had created in the garden. In time, it appears that he succeeded amazingly. Due to time dilation, a short trip of a few years in Spaceship Eden would have corresponded to a period on Earth of a few billion years.

After Spaceship Eden arrived back on Earth, Adam and Eve found that the flora and fauna on Earth approximated the kind originally in the garden. Some time passed, and the fall occurred. For Adam and Eve, the time from creation to the fall would have been very short, perhaps a few years. However, on Earth that same interval would have been several billion years.

Science Fiction and Time

This model is technological fiction in much the same way as some science fiction, such as Mary Doria Russell's two-part story of Emilio Sandoz's journeys into space, as told in *The Sparrow* and *Children of God* (See pp. 32-33, below). As with the Spaceship Earth model, it is important for readers of such literature to distinguish between the fiction and the science.

In the *Children of God*, Sandoz finds himself

immensely wealthy because a modest investment made prior to his departure forty years earlier has grown exponentially and turned him into a multimillionaire. He has made a round-trip to the planet Rakhat, which according to clocks on Earth took thirty-four years. However, according to the story, only one year has passed for Sandoz. In addition, he spent about four years on Rakhat and by the time he learned about his wealth he had spent at least a couple years back on Earth. Thus, he was about thirty-three years younger than he would have been had he stayed on Earth the entire time.

There is nothing fictional about the physical principles involved in these stories. The extent of time dilation is exaggerated under the circumstances, but time dilation would nevertheless be involved. Part of the fictitious part appears in the description of the space station, a suitable asteroid outfitted with life-support systems that breaks down silicates for fuel and is supposedly capable of accelerating so that the force exerted on an individual will be constantly equal to the weight of that person on Earth for almost the duration of the trip. To achieve the relativistic time dilation effects described in the story, acceleration would need to be considerably more rapid than the story indicates.

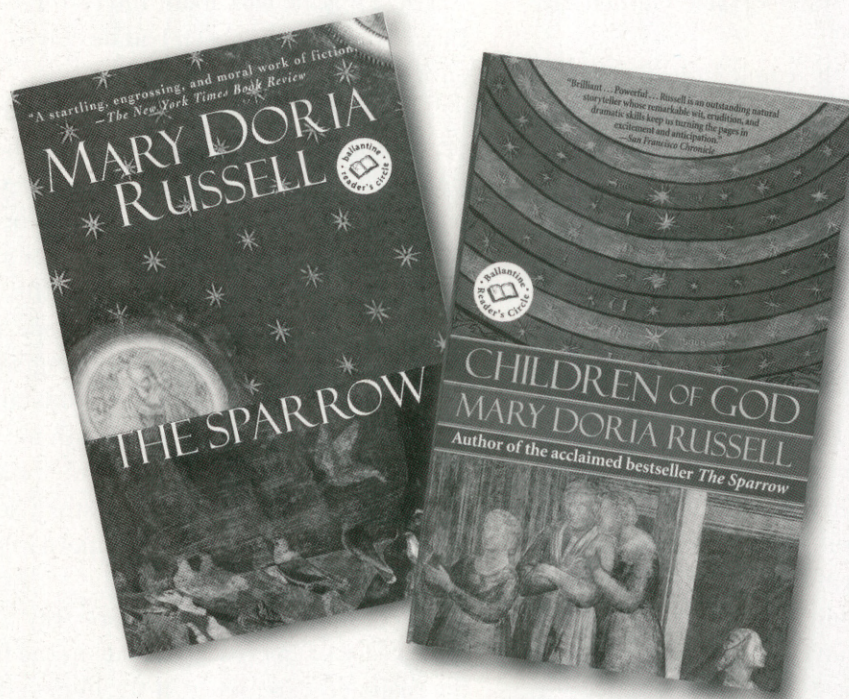
Technological fiction is one way to bring effects observed on a microscopic scale in the laboratory into the realm of experience in the human dimension. In this way, it assists those seeking to relate to otherwise esoteric phenomena. Stories of this kind are especially useful in communicating the impact that time dilation would have on humans. Although they make interesting fiction, however, our technology is simply not capable of creating conditions where major time dilation occurs for human beings, and it is highly unlikely that such a capability will be developed in the future. Readers would be wise to remember these differences as they read these stories and consider the nature of time.

Time stories help us better understand the limitations that exist within the chunk of time that we are each given. Time is relative to our experience.

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A Soul Looking for God

A Synopsis of *The Sparrow*



by Norman L. Wendth

The *Sparrow* opens in December 2059 and closes in August 2060. During those nine months, a team of Jesuits work to understand—and perhaps heal—Emilio Sandoz, priest, linguist, and sole survivor of a missionary expedition to the planet Rakhat. Sandoz has returned to Earth a broken man, his hands destroyed by some little understood ritual on Rakhat, his soul destroyed by the loss of the

rest of the expedition and by experiences that he is having great trouble processing. Sandoz doesn't want the team's help, however; he refuses to tell even the bare facts of his story and responds violently when others try to talk about what happened to him. He resigns from the Jesuits.

The team must continue to try to work with Sandoz, however, and not only because they wish to heal a fellow Jesuit. The trading expedition that followed the Jesuits to Rakhat and brought Sandoz back to Earth has accused the priest of a variety of scandalous behaviors including prostitution and murder, and the press is whipping up a public frenzy. Perhaps most importantly, the Jesuits are preparing another mission, and obviously need to understand why the first expedition failed in order to better prepare the second.

The Jesuit team—and the novel's readers—do not understand what has happened to Emilio Sandoz until the last chapter of the novel. Even while we follow the steps of Sandoz's recovery, however, his story unfolds in a series of flashbacks that reveal not only the roots of his own trauma, but also the stories of others on the first expedition.

The novel's main action begins in 2019, when astronomer Jimmy Quinn records a radio signal that turns out to be a musical broadcast coming from a planet near Alpha Centauri, a mere 4.3 light years from Earth. While the United Nations debates endlessly, the Society of Jesus secretly mounts a mission to the music's source. The society retrofits a mining asteroid, christens it the *Stella Maris*, and sends a company of eight, including Quinn and Sandoz, on a seventeen-year voyage "to learn, not to proselytize."

Rakhat turns out to be a planet of many surprises, starting with a breathable atmosphere. Despite that hospitable happenstance, one member of the mission dies mysteriously within the first few days, and, although the cause is apparently environmental, Anne Edwards, the team physician, never can learn why the death happened. Three suns, exotic vegetation, and many other planetary details are carefully and precisely presented, and although colorful, they are somewhat expected "surprises."

Much more important to the novel is the genuine surprise that two very different intelligent species

have evolved on one planet. Initial contact is made with the Runa, a pastoral, highly social people who accept humans as potential trading partners. Runa assign children, with their natural language-learning ability, to new cultures to be able to communicate as quickly as possible; Askama is the Runa child assigned to learn from and teach Sandoz. Back on earth, the Contact Consortium will accuse Sandoz of her murder.

The other species on Rakhat are the Jana'ata. The Jana'ata are a fierce, carnivorous species with a complex, rich, and subtle culture filled with both political intrigue and exquisite art. They are the dominant species on Rakhat. After Sandoz has learned enough of the Runa language to communicate, he meets Supaari VaGayjur, the Jana'ata trader who controls the territory in which the Jesuits have landed. Many Earth items, especially aromatics, would clearly be treasures worth extremely high prices in Jana'ata cities, and Supaari is quick to capitalize on his good fortune. Through Supaari the mission enters the VaRakhati cities and eventually meets the great poet Hlavin Kitheri, the Jana'ata Paramount whose songs brought the Jesuit expedition from Earth in the first place.

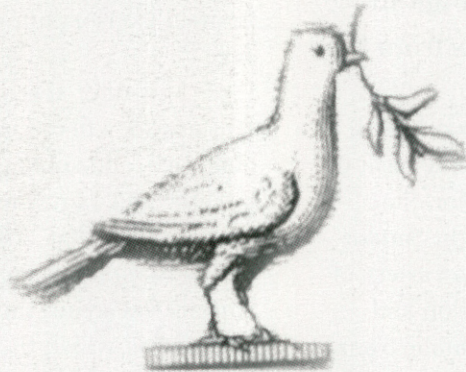
Russell ends her prologue "They meant no harm." However, just as the less altruistic Europeans entering the "new" world in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Jesuits cannot avoid doing harm. They know and discuss the possibility going in and hope to avoid the worst problems, but despite their efforts mistakes are inevitable, and all the sadder because the VaRakhati societies are so beautiful and the novel shares so many moments of pure joy.

It would be unfair to those who have not yet read *The Sparrow* (or its sequel *Children of God*) for us to reveal the way they hurt most the ones they love most and upset the balance of power between the Runa and the Jana'ata. But when all is said and done the mission is destroyed, many on Rakhat are dead, and Emilio Sandoz returns to Earth highly damaged, questioning God, and under what amounts to house arrest.

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Blessed Are the Peacemakers

Elie Weisel, Fanaticism, and the Truth



by Renard Doneskey and Robert R. Mendenhall

Seven years have passed since the Branch Davidian compound went up in flames. But only this past September did a judge rule that the federal government cannot be held liable for the wrongful deaths of those who perished in the fire. Although the original compound burned to the ground and many Branch Davidians died that April day in 1993, the teachings of their founder, David Koresh, and his followers live on. These believers have a new prophet and the teachings of the Branch Davidians continue to evolve. At times we may ask ourselves how such teachings gain proponents. What characteristics do such charismatic leaders have that inspire such loyalty in their flock?

At least part of the answer lies in the nature of their belief system. In this regard, Elie Weisel, author of *Night* and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, has much to say.¹ He recently visited Fort Worth, Texas, and on September 20, 2000, spoke to an audience at Texas Christian University about "The Seductions and Dangers of Fanaticism." Weisel's lecture, although not directly about Waco or the Branch Davidians, touched upon all types of fanatical behavior—religious, political, and racial.

"I shall speak tonight about fanaticism." Weisel's voice was calm and quiet. Almost as one, the four thousand or so people who came to hear him leaned forward in their seats and focused all their senses to hear this mild man through the low purr of the air conditioning system. He spoke directly to the point, but without hostility or hatred.

As we listened, we wondered how he could maintain his composure after all he has seen: this man who as a boy of fifteen was deported by the Nazis from his home in Sighet, Romania, and sent to Auschwitz; this man whose mother and younger sister perished there; this man who with his father was later transported to Buchenwald, where he watched his father die; this man who could write, "Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust."²

Elie Weisel has good reason to scorn, to revile, to vilify those who have so terribly hurt him—and to do so passionately—but he does not. Weisel began with the story of a father and son taking a walk one morning, just after daybreak. They find a coin on the ground, clearly dropped by some recent passerby. The father, who wants his son to learn the importance of rising early, says: “Do you see my son, the value of waking up before others are out and about? We have gotten up early enough to find this coin.” The son replies “But whoever dropped it woke even earlier than we did.”

In this story, Weisel noted, neither the father nor the son displayed an important characteristic of fanaticism: an unwillingness to communicate. Fanatics, Weisel said, don’t communicate with each other, at least in the sense of trying to understand and be understood. Rather, fanatics desire to make others conform to their sense of how the world should be run. “The fanatic,” Weisel said, “believes life must be governed according to his rule.” Weisel cited some examples of such fanatical policies in history: the European Crusades against the Holy Land, the Nazi party’s crusade against the Jews, the American South’s crusade for racial segregation, and apartheid in South Africa.

Another characteristic of fanatics, according to Weisel, is that they have no desire to learn. Rather, “fanaticism kills the mind; [it] kills the heart.” The fanatic hates true learning, which requires a mind open to all possibilities. Why would anyone become a fanatic? Weisel asked. “Because it’s so easy,” he answered. “The fanatic has all the answers. The fanatic has answers before he has the questions.”

In contrast, the open-minded person is one who realizes the value of learning and education. Without education, Weisel noted, we have no humanity. Further, education must be undertaken with a sense of humility, avoiding the sense of superiority that might come with higher learning. Weisel emphasized his point by saying: “One minute before I die, I hope I’m still looking for the secret of life.” He implied that those who feel they have that secret are prone to fanaticism.

A child, Weisel noted, can only learn hatred after the age of three. Up to that point the child is a *tabula rasa*. Since racism and hatred are learned, Weisel said, they can be unlearned through proper education, especially at an early age. Fanatics also desire to segregate and establish scapegoats. The fanatic wants power, Weisel noted, but only the power to destroy.

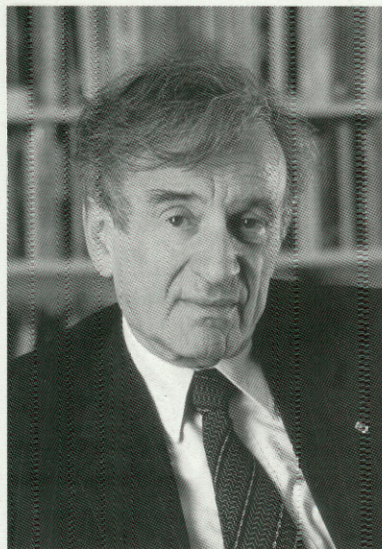


Photo: Boston University

Elie Wiesel (1928-) has worked to defend human rights throughout the world. He has supported the cause of Soviet Jews, Cambodian refugees, South African apartheid victims, famine victims in Africa, and prisoners in the former Yugoslavia. He received

the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986 for his efforts. He is the recipient of numerous other awards, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the United States Congressional Gold Medal and the Medal of Liberty Award. Wiesel is the founding chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council.

Wiesel has also authored more than thirty-five books, many of which address the suffering of Jews in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. His first book *La Nuit (Night)* describes his personal experience of being deported at fifteen to Auschwitz with his family. Both of his parents and his younger sister died at the hands of Nazis. Other books by Wiesel include *Dawn, A Beggar in Jerusalem, The Testament: A Novel, The Forgotten*, and two memoirs: *All Rivers Run to the Sea*, and the sequel, *And the Sea Is Never Full*.

“Fanaticism,” he said, “must diminish others to feel powerful—must put others in prison to feel free.”

Again, by way of contrast, Weisel noted that the nonfanatic actively tries to establish equality. To illustrate this point, Weisel explained his theory of why God originally created only one man and one woman rather than a host of people. Weisel suggested that God gave us common ancestry so that “at no point in time and space can anyone say ‘I am superior to you.’” With Adam and Eve as original father and mother of all, each of us traces our heritage, our race, back to them.

In his concluding remarks, Weisel, with the quiet dignity that marked his entire lecture, asked, “What

have we learned? Everyone is unique. . . . No one has the right to say 'I have the key to the truth.'" And the key to the Truth is exactly what the followers of David Koresh still claim to have, a claim voiced through their current prophet. We find these words on their official Web site: "The mysteries of God's Word shall be clearly seen, that God's plan of salvation may be understood for those who live in the latter days. To not heed unto Present Day Truth, which this book reveals as never before, is to have no regard for the Spirit of Prophecy, therefore showing that you have no interest in God's Word."³

Here we find clear evidence that the remaining Davidians do claim to have the key to the truth. Further, they suggest that if you reject their version of the Truth you are committing the unpardonable sin: "However, if you break God's laws by rejecting Present Truth, then you . . . have committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. All manner of sins against man's laws shall be forgiven you, but those who sin against the laws of God, as revealed through the Seven Seals Scroll, shall not be forgiven, neither in this life or the life to come." And in another passage: "To reject the explanation of prophecies contained in the Seven Seals, which are found in this book, is to reject the Holy Spirit."⁴ The Davidians, then, claim to have the Truth and state that if you don't agree with their biblical interpretations of the Seven Seals, you have rejected God and have committed the unpardonable sin. Let's recall Weisel's words: "No one has the right to say 'I have the key to the truth.'"

Does any of this have relevance for the contemporary Seventh-day Adventist Christian? After all, aren't the Davidians just a cult with very distant connections to traditional Adventism? At first glance, it may seem so. For example, the Adventist Church was quick to distance itself from the Waco Davidians. While the initial news reports of the February 28, 1993, raid connected the Branch Davidians to Seventh-day Adventists, the Adventist Church successfully argued that any reference to Seventh-day Adventism was inaccurate, since the Branch Davidians had only distant historical connections to present-day Adventism.⁵

Nevertheless, we should not forget that the Branch Davidians have their roots in Seventh-day Adventism. Koresh targeted members of Seventh-day Adventist congregations for recruitment. Among the

eighty-six people who died at Mt. Carmel, the majority were former Seventh-day Adventists. Not all of these people fit the stereotype of fanatic cultists. Some were well-educated, intellectual people grounded in Seventh-day Adventism. Two of the Davidians had degrees in theology. Another was a graduate of Harvard Law School.⁶ That these particular people joined the Branch Davidians must give us, as Seventh-day Adventists, pause to analyze our own theological stance.

Are there aspects of Seventh-day Adventist belief that leave us vulnerable to fanatics like David Koresh? Do we, for example, believe we hold the key to the Whole Truth? "God," Weisel said, "is the fanatic's prisoner." We see this concept exemplified in many places in the contemporary world. In the last twenty-five years we have seen "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo; the tribal warfare between the Tutsis and Hutus; the genocidal actions of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia; and other such atrocities throughout the world. In the face of all this fanaticism, Weisel remains hopeful: "On the edge of the abyss," he said, "it is possible to dream dreams of redemption. . . . I belong to a generation that has learned that whatever the question, indifference is not the answer."

Notes and References

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2. *Ibid.*, 32.
3. *Seven Seals Revelation Library* <www.brandavidian.com>
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The Branch Davidians and Seventh-day Adventists

by Kenneth G. C. Newport

Without doubt, the most disturbing of events in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist movement were those that took place in Waco, Texas, from February 28 to April 19, 1993. "Waco," as it has become known among academics in a variety of disciplines, has had lasting consequences: scholars of religious movements are still debating the significance of what happened in terms of the inner dynamics of religious groups and, in the United States, legal battles such as the recent wrongful death lawsuit are still in progress. Most important, the deaths of some eighty-four persons have left a negative legacy on the lives of many families, friends, and survivors.¹

The obvious question to ask is of course "why?" Why did it happen? What led to this siege and its terrible consequences? Of course, many answers have been offered before, but most of what has been said on this issue has been at best only part of the answer. Indeed, some of the contributions have not even been that. For example, one particular view to which not a few seem to have subscribed, including some in the Seventh-day

Adventist Church, seems completely wide of the mark. According to this view, Waco was the result of a combination of Koresh's presumed insanity, his manipulative powers, and the sheep-like mentality of his followers, or, to put it in popular terms, Waco was the predictable outcome of brainwashed acolytes mindlessly following a demented and manipulative leader.² However, as sociologists of religion know only too well, charismatic leaders of Koresh's ilk are seldom, if ever, insane, and those who follow such leaders are often persons of the highest intellectual calibre, completely in control of their mental faculties and fully able to exercise free choice. Whatever went on at Waco, it was not simply a descent into religious insanity and brainwashing.³

Others have sought to analyze the extent to which the deaths were due to the bungled actions of the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms and the FBI. A good deal of the heavyweight academic literature published to date has focused precisely on this issue.⁴ The results of these studies have been distressing, and it is now generally argued that the actions of these government agencies did contribute to the catastrophic outcome. However, any explanation of Waco, it seems to me, must be able to explain not only why the FBI handled the situation so badly, but also why the Davidians themselves behaved in ways that the FBI did not anticipate. Indeed, it must also explain what the Branch Davidians were doing at Mt. Carmel in the first place, where they came from, what their beliefs were, and why they seemed so determined to stand by those beliefs and the leader who exemplified them.

Starting from these assumptions, then, that Koresh was not insane, that his followers were not brainwashed, and that an adequate explanation of Waco must involve more than just pointing a finger at the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms and the FBI, a fresh and full enquiry into the underlying reasons for the Waco tragedy is called for. Such a task is currently underway, and in this brief article I wish to set out the general context of that project.⁵

The Seventh-day Adventist Context

It is my fundamental belief that what happened at Waco is in essence explicable only if seen in the context of Seventh-day Adventism, that is to say, if Waco is going to make sense it will be Seventh-day Adventist sense.⁶ This belief partly comes as a result

of the simple observation that almost all those who lived at Mt. Carmel were either former or not-yet-disfellowshipped Seventh-day Adventists, and that the mission of the Branch Davidians seems not to have been to the world-at-large, but to members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁷ Livingstone Fagan, for example, had been a Seventh-day Adventist pastor immediately prior to leaving for Waco; the Henry family were all members of the Old Trafford Seventh-day Adventist Church in Manchester, England; and Steve Schneider and indeed David Koresh himself had been Seventh-day Adventists. Koresh was disfellowshipped as, it seems, was Schneider.⁸

Given this intimate link between Seventh-day Adventism and the Branch Davidians we must surely explore further the possibility that there is something within Seventh-day Adventism itself, something perhaps in Seventh-day Adventist self-identity or theology, that predisposed certain persons to accept the Branch Davidian worldview. So what is the link? What is there about Seventh-day Adventism that apparently predisposed some members of that community, including Koresh himself, to become Branch Davidians?

Before proceeding with this question it must be acknowledged that the methodology adopted here has an obvious weakness. In stressing the Seventh-day Adventist context for Branch Davidianism one might rightly be accused of ignoring the many, often very fundamental, differences in the traditions. I recognize this. I recognize, for example, that the apparent interest of the Branch Davidians in guns is wholly different from the traditional role of Seventh-day Adventists as noncombatants. Similarly, I recognize that Koresh's taking of several wives is not in accord with Adventist doctrine, and his view that his literal children were destined to be the twenty-four elders gathered around the throne of Revelation 4 is a view that Seventh-day Adventists would find totally unacceptable, if not blasphemous.

I recognize also that Koresh's claim to be "a" (though probably not "the") Christ is totally foreign to anything claimed by anyone in mainstream Adventism. One could go on, for there is no doubt whatsoever that Koresh in particular and the Branch Davidians in general differed on numerous and often very basic points from the Seventh-day Adventist mother faith that had given them birth. They were rather wayward children and as such they behaved and thought in ways that their parents would find totally unacceptable. But children they were, and as with physical

children, they shared some basic characteristics with their parents, characteristics that meant the claims they made to other prospective Branch Davidian converts from Seventh-day Adventism at least made some sense, even if at first they sounded rather strange. Later in this article I will explore some of those doctrinal links.

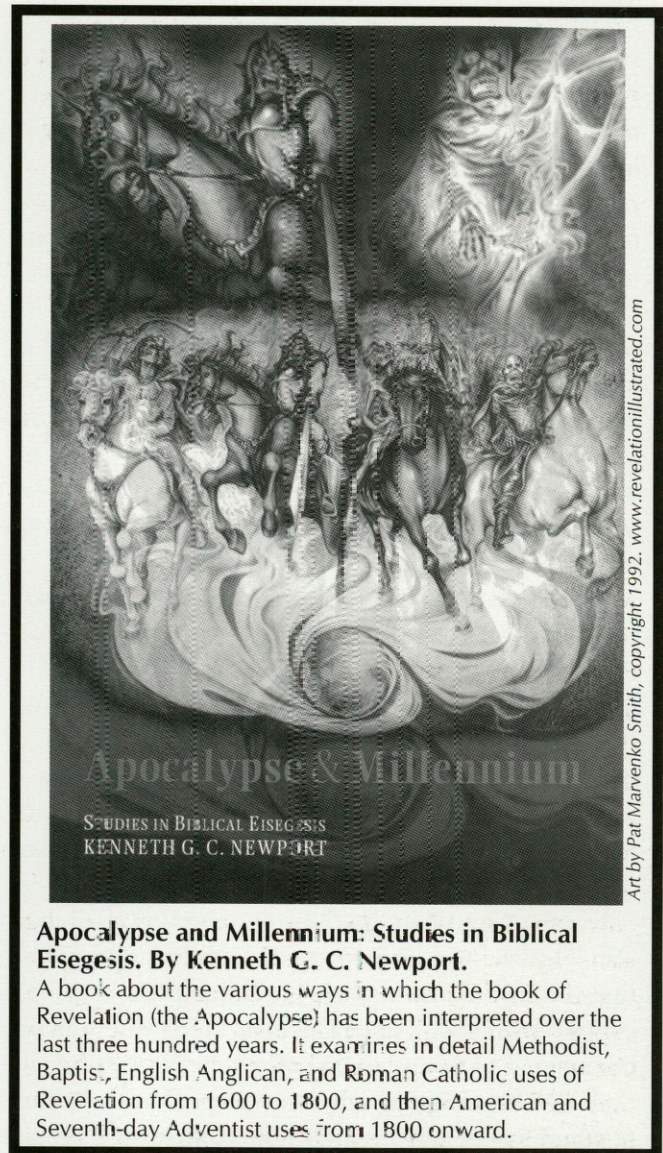
A Brief History of Branch Davidianism

Before going further, however, a brief sketch of the historical roots of Branch Davidianism seems in order, since it will show the historical context of the movement. The history of the Branch Davidian movement is complex.⁹ However, the basic trajectory from William Miller to David Koresh is direct and relatively easy to trace. In a nutshell, what happened was as follows. As is common knowledge, it was from among the ranks of the disappointed Millerites that the early Seventh-day Adventist Church emerged. Further, it was directly from Seventh-day Adventism that, in the 1930s, a movement known as the Shepherd's Rod came into existence.

In the 1940s, this Shepherd's Rod movement found it expedient to change its name to Davidian Seventh-day Adventists. Due to another failed prediction regarding the end of the world similar to that suffered by the Millerites, the Davidian Seventh-day Adventists almost went out of existence in 1959, but were saved from that fate by the rise of another leader, Ben Roden, who reformed the group under the name of the Branch Davidians. Leadership of this group passed from Ben to his wife Lois and then, after some internal struggle, passed to Vernon Howell, otherwise known as David Koresh.

The most significant person in the emergence of this trajectory of Seventh-day Adventism was Victor T. Houteff (pronounced "Hoteff"), a Bulgarian immigrant to the United States who was converted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1919, being baptized on May 10 at Rockford, Illinois.¹⁰ During the 1920s, Houteff became increasingly convinced that he had been called by God to reform the Seventh-day Adventist Church from within. The Church had, he argued, erred on several fundamental doctrinal points, especially those that relate to the interpretation and fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

Thus, the opening words of volume one of



Apocalypse and Millennium: Studies in Biblical Eisegesis. By Kenneth G. C. Newport.

A book about the various ways in which the book of Revelation (the Apocalypse) has been interpreted over the last three hundred years. It examines in detail Methodist, Baptist, English Anglican, and Roman Catholic uses of Revelation from 1600 to 1800, and then American and Seventh-day Adventist uses from 1800 onward.

Houteff's two-volume work *The Shepherd's Rod*: "It is the intention of this book to reveal the truth of the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation 7 but the chief object of this publication is to bring about a reformation among God's people. The truth herein contained is divided into seven sections, giving proof from seven different angles, to prevent any doubt or confusion. This subject is made clear by the use of the Bible and the writings given by the Spirit of Prophecy." With this call Houteff launched his mission to reform Seventh-day Adventism. He had little concern about Christians in general, and less still about nonbelievers. His mission, as he understood it, was to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which he believed to be the true church, but one that had in the latter days slipped from the purity of the faith.

It is of fundamental importance here that this direct link between the Shepherd's Rod and the older

Seventh-day Adventist Church is noted. Houteff was not starting a new movement, but rather seeking to reform an older one from within. Even allowing for the fact that, sociologically speaking, it is often precisely this kind of "movement from within" that provides the seed from which another movement altogether will eventually grow, it is likely that that seed will share at least some of the major characteristics of its parent body.¹¹ In the case of the Shepherd's Rod this is certainly so, for much of what is found in the Shepherd's Rod tradition, including views of "the remnant," the importance of typology as a hermeneutical method, the status of Ellen White, and the historicist, premillennial reading of Daniel and Revelation, is simply a continuation, with some further fine tuning, of established Seventh-day Adventist views. To put it in Thomas Kuhn's terms, there was no paradigm shift as yet.¹² Houteff was working within the older paradigmatic structures.

Houteff's voice, or, as he would have said, "The Rods," (cf. Micah 6.9) fell on deaf ears, and like so many other would-be reformers he was eventually forced to leave the ranks of the group he sought to reform. On November 20, 1930, a motion was passed by the Olympic Exposition Park Seventh-day Adventist Church in Los Angeles disfellowshipping him.¹³ He did not give up easily. Now from the sidelines rather than as a active participant in the game, he continued to shout advice and warnings to his former teammates. Over the course of the next years his output was prodigious, the most important statement of his views by far coming in the completed 559-page work *The Shepherd's Rod*, and he was successful in gaining a modest following. In 1935, the group took up residence at the Mount Carmel Center in Waco, Texas. It was in this area, though not on this precise site, that the movement and its most prominent successor, the Branch Davidians, remained until April 1993. The land remains the property of the Branch Davidians and in 2000 a new Branch Davidian church opened on the site.¹⁴

In 1942, the pressures of conscription made it necessary for the group formally to take on a name. To this point it had operated under the title of the chief publication of its founder, namely *The Shepherd's Rod*. It chose "The Davidian Seventh-day Adventists" in recognition of the fact that Houteff and his followers saw themselves first and foremost as Seventh-day Adventists whose tradition they claimed as their own. However, the word "Davidian" was added in an attempt to identify the movement as one that looked

forward to the restoration of the Kingdom of David prior to the premillennial coming of Christ. This "kingdom," which would be based in Jerusalem, would be ruled by the antitype of King David.¹⁵

Houteff continued the leadership of the movement until his death, at which point it was taken up by his wife, Florence. Her rule was disastrous and the movement reached the point of near collapse, especially after the failure of her prophecy that the world would end on April 22, 1959. During this time the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists sought to bring the Davidians back into the fold, but the attempt failed.¹⁶

Florence Houteff's role as leader of the Davidians did not go unchallenged and after some dispute and failure to reach agreement on the issue of leadership a second "Davidian" group arose, namely the "Branch" Davidians. The word "Branch" was added to the name since "the Branch" was the name of Christ himself. The group continued to look forward to the establishment of his Kingdom; this premillennial rule of Christ would be nonphysical, but nevertheless very real.¹⁷

This "Branch Davidian" successor to the nearly collapsed Davidian Seventh-day Adventist movement began under the leadership of Ben Roden (1902-78), another ex-Adventist reformer.¹⁸ Roden felt that God had called him to bring order to the increasing chaos of the Davidians following the death of Houteff, and saw the action of God in the history of salvation as coming to a head in the three final stages. The first of these was the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the establishment of the Sabbath truth, the second was the Davidians and the gathering of the remnant people, and the third was the Branch Davidians. This latter movement had the seal of the name of Christ (the Branch) and constituted the hub of the 144,000 of Revelation 7:4; 14:1, 3. These 144,000 were to be formed perfectly into the image of Christ prior to Christ's coming in glory. There is of course a basic theological continuity with the Adventist tradition here, at least on points one and two.

After Ben's death, the leadership was taken by his wife, Lois, whose claim to the office had first been made even before her husband's demise. Her energies were largely given to seeking to establish the doctrine of the femininity of the Holy Spirit, and the view that the second appearance of the Messiah would see him (her) in feminine form.

Lois was not, however, the only relative of Ben

Roden to stake a claim to the leadership of the movement. Their son, George, was particularly clear that God had called him to this role, and he sought to wrest control from his mother. Her choice of successor, however, was not her own son, but a young man named Vernon Howell, later to be known as David Koresh. After a complex series of events, including the famous “resurrection contest” organized by George, Howell and his followers took possession of the center on March 23, 1988, and they remained there until the fire in April 1993.¹⁹

There is, then, a basic historical continuity between Seventh-day Adventism and Branch

and develops in ways that are unconnected to the older mother faith.

However, this is not the pattern one observes in Davidianism/Branch Davidianism. This trajectory has been substantially shackled to its Adventist mother faith from which it has never truly broken free. There has been no significant development of a separate Branch Davidian leadership—Houteff, as we have seen, was an Adventist, and Roden and Koresh were both recruited directly from the ranks of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Other key figures such as Schneider, Livingstone Fagan, and Wayne Martin were direct ex-Adventists. Thus the umbilical cord has never quite been cut; Branch Davidianism has remained inseparably tied to, indeed dependent for its viability upon, Seventh-day Adventism.

“The umbilical cord has never quite been cut; Branch Davidianism has remained inseparably tied to, indeed dependent for its viability upon, Seventh-day Adventism.”

Theological Continuity

It would be wise at this point to say a little more about these historical and socio-

Davidianism. Further, and in my view very importantly, this is not quite the same as saying, for example, that Methodism is a continuation of Anglicanism, for in the case of Branch Davidianism and Seventh-day Adventism the relationship seems to go beyond the birth of one movement from another. This is seen in two obvious ways. First theological continuity, which I will address shortly, and second in the case of the extraction of Davidian/Branch Davidian converts and particularly Branch Davidian leaders.

John and Charles Wesley, of course, were both Anglican priests as were many other individuals central to the early Methodist leadership. However, after the introduction into the Methodist tradition of lay preaching and, in 1784, of ordination, there developed an entirely separate line of leadership passed on through the generations so that quite quickly the Methodist leadership lost its contact with the Anglican hierarchy and it was soon no longer the case that Methodist leaders had been Anglicans. The same is true of the general membership. Such a movement quickly learns to stand on its own two feet

logical factors relative to Davidians and Seventh-day Adventists. However, in the space that remains I want to touch briefly on what seems to be another aspect of continuity, namely overlap in theology. This article will then conclude by suggesting why the kind of analysis I have been conducting might be important.

The question of the theological continuity between Seventh-day Adventism and Branch Davidianism is complex and we can touch here on only two key points: the use of typology as a method of biblical interpretation and some general aspects of the interpretation of the book of Revelation.

The Use of Typology

In many ways the use of typology is perhaps the most obvious point of continuity between the Branch Davidians and mainstream Seventh-day Adventist theology. By “typology,” I mean the assumption or, one might say, methodological premise, that certain parts of the Old Testament foreshadow the New. In Christian biblical interpretation the method is at least

as old as St. John, who presented Christ as the “real” or, in later terminology, the “antitypical” Passover lamb. Readers will hardly need reminding of the centrality to the Seventh-day Adventist theological system of the typological interpretation of the Old Testament sanctuary service to be found in the book of Hebrews. It is safe to conclude, I think, that typology is a central part of Seventh-day Adventism.

It is absolutely central also in the Branch Davidian tradition. Indeed a good deal of that which is distinctive in Branch Davidian theology seems to be the result of an extension of Seventh-day Adventist typological hermeneutic. In fact, I would suggest that to some degree the appeal that the Branch Davidian message had to mainstream Seventh-day Adventists—and that it had such appeal is clear from the recruitment statistics—is centered upon the basic consistency between traditional Seventh-day Adventist typological interpretation of the Old Testament and that offered by Branch Davidian theologians. We need look no further than the name. Almost from its inception Davidianism looked for the coming of the antitypical King David who would rule over an antitypical kingdom. Such a view is pre-Branch: Victor Houteff looked for the coming of this figure, whereas Florence Houteff seems to have argued that Victor himself would be raised from the dead and return as the antitypical King.²⁰ From Davidianism it came into Branch Davidianism, and both the Rodens continued to look for the antitypical David.

Perhaps an even more obvious illustration of both this particular aspect of typological interpretation and the use of the method in general is the fact that Vernon Howell changed his name to David Koresh. The reason for this change lies in typology. As we have noted already, Branch Davidians, and indeed before them the Davidians, had looked for the antitypical King David. Vernon Howell thought he was that figure and so changed his name from Vernon to David. But he took it a little further. Not only was he the antitypical King David, he was also the antitypical Cyrus, or, in Hebrew, the antitypical “vr,wOK”; his “type” was the Cyrus of Isaiah 44, 45, and so forth, who had come to destroy Babylon. The Babylon that David Koresh had come to destroy was, of course, the antitypical one, namely apostate religion. (Incidentally we note another common thread here, for the equation of latter-day, antitypical Babylon with apostate religion—both Protestant and Roman Catholic—is, as we know, a commonplace in Seventh-day Adventist literature).²¹

Much of this detail is of course entirely foreign to the Seventh-day Adventist view of things. Adventists do not look for the coming of the antitypical kingdom of David on this earth to be ruled over by a particular individual. Neither do they look for an antitypical Cyrus to destroy antitypical Babylon. What is instructive, however, is to note that when individuals like Steve Schneider, an exceptionally impressive preacher who conducted a recruitment campaign in Manchester, England, in the very early 1990s, used the typological method of interpreting the Old Testament to seek to persuade his listeners, all Seventh-day Adventists, to accept the “new light” as he called it, he was at least speaking a language that his audience could understand and with which they already had some basic sympathy. As Seventh-day Adventists, members of Schneider’s audience were fully acquainted with the basic idea that parts of the Old Testament foreshadow what is to come. They knew all about types and antitypes. Schneider simply extended this scheme to cover the notion of an antitypical Cyrus and an antitypical David and in doing so he was in effect asking his audience to go further along a road that they had already traveled. They were not asked to set out on a new route altogether.

The Book of Revelation

We turn now, briefly, to the interpretation of Revelation. Whatever else we know or do not know about the theological views of the Branch Davidians in general and of David Koresh in particular, one thing is certain: the book of Revelation was central. I have to say straightaway that on many individual points the Branch Davidian interpretation of Revelation is quite different from that traditionally adopted in Seventh-day Adventist circles. I would add further that in fact Koresh in particular took the Branch Davidians along exegetical pathways completely unknown to the Adventist tradition. It would be very easy to list them and to counter with such statements as “well, that is not the Seventh-day Adventist view on the seven seals,” or “Adventists have never argued that the two hundred million horsemen of Revelation 9:16 are an exact number.” However, I think it would be a mistake to get bogged down in too much detail here, for in doing that we would stand the risk of failing to see the woods for the trees.

I am keen to understand what made Koresh’s and

Schneider's converts listen to and accept what they had to say, and it will simply not do to argue that it was all because of highly manipulative techniques or anything similar. The audience must have found something intrinsically appealing and, in my view, that appeal is related to basic theological continuity. It is worth noting in passing that Koresh seemed to give people a "cooling off" period before accepting them into the Mt. Carmel community. For example, after member David Thibodeau had been given "the light" Koresh sent him home to Bangor, Maine, for a while to think things through. Such behavior seems entirely out of keeping with the view that Koresh wore people

"The appeal that the Branch Davidians had to mainstream Seventh-day Adventists . . . is centered upon the basic consistency between traditional Seventh-day Adventist typological interpretation of the Old Testament and that offered by Branch Davidian theologians."

down through endless preaching and then got them to accept things when in a weakened state.²²

Koresh's central claim was that God had given him the task of interpreting the book of Revelation. It was his prophetic task, he argued, to explain this book to the world in these last days. In this context, there is a very interesting account, given by Thibodeau, of what appears to have been David Koresh's own experience of his call. The vision came in the late 1970s as Koresh—or Howell as he was then known—was praying. Suddenly, he said, he felt he was being taken up an elevator shaft and after the ascent he saw two gigantic walls one of which had "law" written on it, the other "prophecy." Koresh then told how he saw God himself, who had in one hand a book, while holding out the other to Koresh, who reached forward for it.

What happened next is not described. I suspect, but suspicion is all it is, that if we were able to follow this up, we would find that this was seen by Koresh as a call to open the book that God had in his hand—his "anointing" perhaps as a chosen one: a Christ. The meaning of this word in both Greek and Hebrew (and

Koresh had at least a smattering of both) is of course "anointed one." Koresh believed that he, like Jesus (Cyrus too is called "anointed"—Isa. 45), had been "anointed" or "set apart" by God for a number of purposes, the most important of which in Koresh's case was to unlock the secrets of the book of Revelation. This is the root of the popular misconception that Koresh thought that he was Jesus.

Not many, perhaps, would be sympathetic to Koresh's claims to this visionary experience. Perhaps he was simply lying. Others might say that he had the "vision," but that it was not actually given him by God. I do not want to get into this. What is impor-

tant, I think, is how such a claim might have been taken by other Seventh-day Adventists, people like Livingstone Fagan or Cliff Sellers, perhaps. Why would people who had a good education (Fagan was a graduate and Sellers was an "A" student in the final year of an Adventist undergraduate religion degree) be likely to accept Koresh's claim to be the one who had come to reveal the prophecies?

It has to be said that such individuals would probably not have ruled out altogether the possibility that Koresh was the kind of figure he claimed to be, for there was already something in their tradition that made it at least a theoretical possibility. In particular, Koresh appealed to Adventist thinking on the seven thunders of Revelation 10:6. Ellen White herself had once said that the messages of these thunders "relate to future events which will be disclosed in their order," a thought reproduced in substance in the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, which says: "These messages of the seven thunders obviously were not a revelation for the people of John's day. They doubtless revealed details of the messages that were to be proclaimed at 'the end of time.'"²³

Koresh simply plugged into this and said in effect "the time has come and God has sent me to unlock the secrets of the seven thunders and indeed the whole of the book of Revelation." He thought that the message of the seven thunders was a progressively revealed message given in a sequence of seven messages or messengers. These messengers stretch from Miller himself down through White, the Houteffs, and the

Rodens to Koresh himself. Koresh hence claimed to be the seventh messenger or seventh "angel," and in so doing he appealed directly to Ellen White, quoting her saying that a figure who could reveal further light was yet to come.²⁴

Few, perhaps, would want to follow Koresh in this. However, the basic point should not be missed: on this issue as on many others Koresh took his cue from Ellen White and parts of mainstream Adventist thinking, and, as Paul discovered when he preached his new message in the old synagogues, when you have something radical to say to potential converts, it is best to start on common ground.

I now come into sensitive territory, and not many Adventists will agree with what I have to say, but it does seem to me at least that it is also true that the very fact Seventh-day Adventism has laid claim to "the Spirit of Prophecy" as a mark of the end-time church may have also played a role in this context. This is true in a general sense of Adventists being rather unusual among Christian denominations in allowing for the possibility (in the case of Ellen White, they claim, the fact) of the continuation of the prophetic gift. It is true also in the narrower sense of there already being in Adventism the model of an inspired interpreter of the inspired text. One is aware, of course, of the statements about lesser lights leading people to greater lights, but in a sense that is exactly the key point. Koresh said basically the same thing. He did, it is true, claim to have brand new revelations given to him, but like Ellen White, his chief claim to authority was that he was able to interpret the text, and like Ellen White he insisted that if what he said did not make sense in the context of the Bible itself, he ought to be dismissed as a fraud.²⁵

This kind of thinking ties in of course with the more general view in Adventism that God's act of revelation is progressive and that the gift of prophecy will continue to be one of the distinguishing marks of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For example, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* states, pretty unequivocally,

There is no biblical evidence that God would withdraw the spiritual gifts He gave the church before they had completed their purpose, which, according to Paul, was to bring the church "to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature

of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13).

Because the church has not yet reached this experience, it still needs all the gifts of the Spirit. These gifts, including the gift of prophecy, will continue to operate for the benefit of God's people until Christ returns. Consequently, Paul cautioned believers not to "quench the Spirit" or "despise prophecies."²⁶

In the book, of course, this is all a preface to the claim that Ellen White manifested the prophetic gift, but time and time again both here and elsewhere in Adventist literature one is reminded that it is a general principle that prophecy is one of the gifts of the Spirit and that God will give the gifts of Spirit, including prophecy, to the remnant church.²⁷ Ellen White may have manifested the gift. But in theory at least she was not the last one who would do so. The standard Seventh-day Adventist argument appears to be not that God would send a prophet, that is Ellen White, for the last days, but rather that the gift of prophecy did not end with the New Testament and that, as Ellen White demonstrates, the gift is still active in his remnant community. There is nothing really to suggest that Ellen White would necessarily be the last.

Conclusions

It is hence my view that, despite first appearances, appearances that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has, for good reasons, been keen to stress, it simply will not do to describe the success of Koresh (and Schneider) in recruiting Seventh-day Adventists to the Branch Davidian cause as an act of unfathomable (if not satanic) intellectual deception. The Seventh-day Adventist ground provided fertile soil for the Branch Davidian seed. The two movements are inextricably intertwined historically, doctrinally, and in terms of the core membership.

What this means, it seems to me, is that if we are going to understand the Branch Davidian phenomenon, a phenomenon that has been of importance in the context of American civil, political, and religious history to an extent that far outweighs its numerical size, we are going to need to see them in the context from which they came: Seventh-day Adventism. It is true, of course, that formally the Branch Davidians are an "offshoot of an offshoot" (a phrase used in

Adventist sources at the time of the siege), but it is an offshoot of an offshoot that has historically been almost entirely parasitic upon the mother faith for its existence. To see the Branch Davidians in any other context is to misunderstand them, and to misunderstand them will do no one any good at all.

It will do no academic good. For unless we understand the appeal of Branch Davidianism to some Seventh-day Adventists in general we will not appreciate how it is that some persons come to join groups such as that led by David Koresh. It may be advantageous in some contexts simply to see the phenomenon of Waco as wholly inexplicable, or to argue that it was

“If we are going to understand the Branch Davidian phenomenon, . . . we are going to need to see them in the context from which they came: Seventh-day Adventism.”

all due to brainwashing and manipulation, but that will hardly further our understanding of how and why people really join religious movements.

It will do no prophylactic good, for unless we learn the lessons of the past we cannot expect to be prepared for the future. Other Wacos will happen and unless we learn how the members of such groups think and what the dynamics of the group are we may not be in any better a position in the future than the FBI showed itself to be in the past to deal with such situations. Ignorance, especially that of the anticult lobby, must be counterbalanced. The academic guild has a responsibility to play its part in that exercise.

Finally, and here I hesitate to speak out of place, it seems to me that for the Seventh-day Adventist Church at least it will do no pastoral good. Of course this is not really my concern. I come at this as an outsider and primarily as an academic. However, in my work on the Davidians I do communicate with several of the Waco survivors, who in some cases have lost both family and friends and are now serving long prison sentences. Although the actual number of people involved is small, the

wounds that have been inflicted are in each individual case very deep. I have no authority to speak on this issue. Nevertheless, let me say this: Now that the dust has settled it might be appropriate to remember that at heart the events of Waco are a pastoral matter and not a public relations one.

Notes and References

1. This count includes the four BATF agents who died in the initial assault (Steve Willis, Todd McKeenan, Conway LaBleu, and Robert Williams). Of the Davidians, fifty-three adults and twenty-one children died during the period of the fire, though some died not from the fire itself but from gunshot wounds. Six other Davidians died during the period from February 28 to April 19, all from gunshot wounds.

2. Such a view was common not only in media reports at the time, but also in many books that came out in the immediate aftermath of Waco. See, for example, Brad Bailey and Bob Darden, *Mad Man in Waco* (Waco: WRS, 1993); Clifford L. Linedecker, *Massacre at Waco, Texas: The Shocking Story of Cult Leader*

David Koresh and the Branch Davidians (New York: St Martin's Paperbacks, 1993). On the second page of the preface to Cari Hoyt Haus and Madlyn Lewis Hamblin, *In the Wake of Waco: Why Were Adventists among the Victims?* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1993), we read that one of the questions the authors wish to address is “why did intelligent, educated people give up their incomes, wives, freedom, and lives for a mentally unbalanced high school dropout?” See also Raymond Cottrell, “History and Fatal Theology of the Branch Davidians,” *Adventist Today* 1 (May-June 1993), which states that “Howell maintained tight control of every aspect of the lives of his followers, who were not allowed to think for themselves. Those who broke with him, he warned, were certain to go to hell.” Charles Scriven, in what is actually a rather open-minded piece, thinks that “religious nuts” is an appropriate description of the Branch Davidians, who were “not just weird but weird to the point of lunacy.” Scriven, “Fundamentalism is a Disease, A Demonic Perversion,” *Spectrum* 23 (May 1993): 45. On the Adventist response to Waco see also several other articles in *ibid.*, 2-52, and in particular the excellent account given by Ronald Lawson in “Seventh-day Adventist Responses to Branch Davidian Notoriety: Patterns of Diversity within a Sect Reducing Tension with Society,” *Journal of the Society of the Sociology of Religion* 34 (1995): 323-41.

3. It is a mistake to equate intelligence with the accumulation of degrees. However, the fact that (Douglas) Wayne Martin was a Harvard Law School graduate should

not be missed. Livingstone Fagan has a degree from Manchester Metropolitan University and an M.A. through Newbold College, whereas Steven Schneider had an M.A. in comparative religion from the University of Hawaii. On the issue of free choice see especially Eileen Barker, *The Making of a Moonie: Choice or Brainwashing?* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984). Regarding the internal logic operative within religious groups, and the extent to which religious views that outsiders might judge irrational are actually perfectly reasonable when seen from the perspective of the believer, see especially Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

4. The key works here are James R. Lewis, ed. *From the Ashes: Making Sense of Waco* (Lanham, Md: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994); James D. Tabor and Eugene V. Gallagher, *Why Waco? Cults and the Battle for Religious Freedom in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Dick Reavis, *The Ashes of Waco: An Investigation* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1995); Stuart A. Wright, ed., *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). Although sections in all four of these works deal with the beliefs of the group itself (this is especially the case with Tabor and Gallagher, *Why Waco?*), on top of the agenda is a discussion of the relative roles of the BATF, the FBI, and the Branch Davidians themselves in bringing the siege about in the first place and then engineering its catastrophic climax.

5. Kenneth G. C. Newport, *The Branch Davidians: The History and Beliefs of an Apocalyptic Sect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

6. This point is made by Haus and Hamblin, *In the Wake of Waco*: "Because Davidian theology could be built only on Adventist theology, you had to have an Adventist understanding even to understand what the Davidians were talking about" (p. 69). Lawson, "Responses to Branch Davidian Notoriety," is also well worth reading in this context, as are several of the contributions to *Spectrum 23* (May 1993).

7. I have not been able to ascertain precisely how many of the Waco group were not former Seventh-day Adventists. Certainly there were at least two: Jaime (Jamie) Castillo, a Pentecostal who joined the Branch Davidians after Koresh answered an advertisement that Castillo had placed saying that he was interested in joining a Christian musical band. Castillo's mother was a Jehovah's Witness. David Thibodeau, a Waco survivor who was in Mt. Carmel throughout the enter siege, had no religious affiliation at all when he met David Koresh and Steve Schneider in a music shop. Reavis, *Ashes of Waco*, 292-93; David Thibodeau and Leon Whiteson, *A Place Called Waco* (New York: Public

Affairs, 1999), 17-18, 29-30.

8. Vernon Howell's mother, Bonnie Clark, had been raised a Seventh-day Adventist. He was initially sent to Dallas Seventh-day Adventist Academy, but later transferred to a public school. He did poorly and dropped out altogether in the eleventh grade. At the age of nine, he attended the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Richardson, Texas. In 1979 he attended a Seventh-day Adventist Church in Tyler, Texas, where he was baptized but later disfellowshipped. He was married to Rachel Jones and had several children by her and others; it is possible that these children included Cyrus, Star, Bobbie Lane, Dayland, Paige, Serenity, Chica, Latwan, Chanel, Startle, Mayanah and Hollywood. He was buried on June 4, 1993, in a quiet Texas ceremony.

Steven Schneider was a figure of central significance in Koreshian Branch Davidianism. He was raised a Seventh-day Adventist and attended Newbold College for a while, but was expelled after a bout of drunkenness. A resident of Hawaii, Schneider was introduced to Branch Davidianism by Marc Breault, a childhood friend, during the highly successful Branch Davidian recruitment campaign in Hawaii in 1986. Reports indicate that he was disfellowshipped from the Diamond Head Seventh-day Adventist Church in Hawaii (along with his wife Judy, Jeff Little, and Sheri Jewell) sometime in June or July 1986. Schneider himself conducted a campaign in England in 1990-91, and I have in my possession a series of twelve audio tapes of meetings he held in Manchester during that time. He was clearly a preacher of exceptional ability and persuasive power who, like Koresh, knew the biblical text extraordinarily well. During the siege, Schneider played the role of negotiator. According to Tabor and Gallagher, *Why Waco?* 216 n. 14, who quote from a report by the U.S. Department of Justice, FBI negotiators spent ninety-six hours talking to Schneider and sixty hours talking to Koresh. Schneider died from a gunshot wound fired into the mouth at close range.

9. See especially William L. Pitts, Jr., "Davidians and Branch Davidians, 1929-1987," in *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict*, ed. Stuart A. Wright (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 20-42

10. Victor Houteff, *History and Teachings of "The Shepherd's Rod"* (Los Angeles: Universal, 1930-32), 1:3.

11. Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), argue this case throughout.

12. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

13. Houteff, *Shepherd's Rod*, 1:4-6

14. Photographs and other information are available at <www.rebuildthechurch.com>

www.religionbookreviews.com

15. Thus, on page 2 of *The Leviticus of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (1943), Houteff wrote:

The name, Davidian, deriving from the name of the king of Ancient Israel, accrues to this Association by reason of its following aspects: First, it is dedicated to the work of announcing and bringing forth the restoration (as predicted in Hosea 1:11; 3:5) of David's kingdom in antitype, upon the throne of which Christ, "the son of David," is to sit. Second, it purports itself to be the first of the first fruits of the living, the vanguard from among the present-day descendants of those Jews who composed the Early Christian Church. With the emergence of this vanguard and its army, the first fruits, from which are elected the 12,000 out of each of the twelve tribes of Jacob, "the 144,000" (Rev. 14:1; 7:2-8) who stand on Mount Zion with the Lamb (Rev. 14:1; 7:2-8), the reign of antitypical David begins.

16. Regarding Florence, see Pitts, "Davidians and Branch Davidians," 30-31. Between June 24 and July 7, 1959, the parties held a series of sixteen public meetings. These led to another forum, held between July 27 and August 7 of the same year. See Lowell Tarling, *The Edges of Seventh-day Adventism* (Barragga Bay, New South Wales, Australia: Galilee, 1981), 128.

17. The key passage here was Jer. 23:5: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth."

Following Houteff's lead, the Branch Davidians developed this understanding of "the Branch." According to them one should also consider Isa. 11:1: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." According to Ruth 4:17, Jesse was the father of David. This, as Pitts has noted, made the link with the Davidians while allowing the movement to argue for its own special status in the sequence of remnant communities. Pitts, "Davidians and Branch Davidians," 32.

18. Most of the biographical information I have on the Rodens comes from an address delivered at Ben's funeral, an audio copy of which is in my possession. What little else there is on Ben, Lois, and George Roden I have gathered together in my book *Apocalypse and Millennium*, 235-36. It is a pleasure to acknowledge the assistance of Mark Swett in compiling the information.

19. See Pitts, "Davidians and Branch Davidians," 36-38.

20. Such a view is hinted at in Tabor and Gallagher, *Why Waco?* 38, and elsewhere in the literature on the topic, though I have not to date been able either to confirm it definitely or to exclude this belief on Florence Houteff's part.

21. See Koresh's "Letter to the Seventh-day Adventist Church": "My name is Cyrus, and I am here to destroy Babylon (Rev. 9:14)." A copy of this letter is in my possession. Francis D. Nichol et al., eds., *The Seventh-Day Adventist Biblical Commentary: The Holy Bible with Exegetical and Expository Comment in Seven Volumes* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1953), 7: 828-30, provides an extended note on the meaning of the term "Babylon" in Rev. 14:8.

22. Thibodeau and Whiteson, *A Place Called Waco*, 61.

23. See the *SDA Bible Commentary*, 7a: 971. At the

beginning of a tape of Koresh's thoughts on Revelation 13 he can be heard to say "but she [Ellen White] herself speaks of another angel to come." A copy of this tape is in my possession. I am not at all clear on the reference that Koresh is making (though from my other work on Koresh I would assume that he did have a direct reference in mind). The document "Will There Be Another Special Messenger?" by Arthur L. White, which is available from the Ellen G. White Estate, is worth reading in this context. See also *ibid.*, 7:797-98.

24. The remark is found right at the beginning of the tape on Rev. 13.

25. This general point was clearly expounded by Koresh in a talk that he gave in October 1989, an audio copy of which is in my possession. Koresh says on the tape that he has had various visions over the course of the past five years but that he has hardly mentioned them to anyone. He then says, with obvious emphasis in his voice, that the message he has to give is "strictly biblical" and is not taken from his visions. Koresh seems to have followed this through to the point that even his "new light" doctrine (i.e. that God had decided Koresh should father many children by the women of the community) was argued in the context of Old Testament polygamy.

26. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, D.C.: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 219-20.

27. See, for example, Richard Rice, *The Reign of God: An Introduction to Christian Theology from a Seventh-day Adventist Perspective* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1985), 194-98.

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West Palm Beach
NEXT 6 EXITS

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA

GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

[22] Plaintiff
[23] Defendant

[24] Monday
[25] 10:21 Tues
Miami, FL

[26] 10:00 a.m.

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5 DEFEND
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EXB. 1
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EXB. 3
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Photos: John Nicolici

The West Palm Beach group originally called the "Eternal Gospel Church of Seventh-day Adventists" changed its name to reflect the court ruling that followed a trademark lawsuit by the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

What's in a Name?

Reflections on the Advertising Campaign
of the Eternal Gospel Church

by Pastor Tom O'Hanley (a pseudonym)

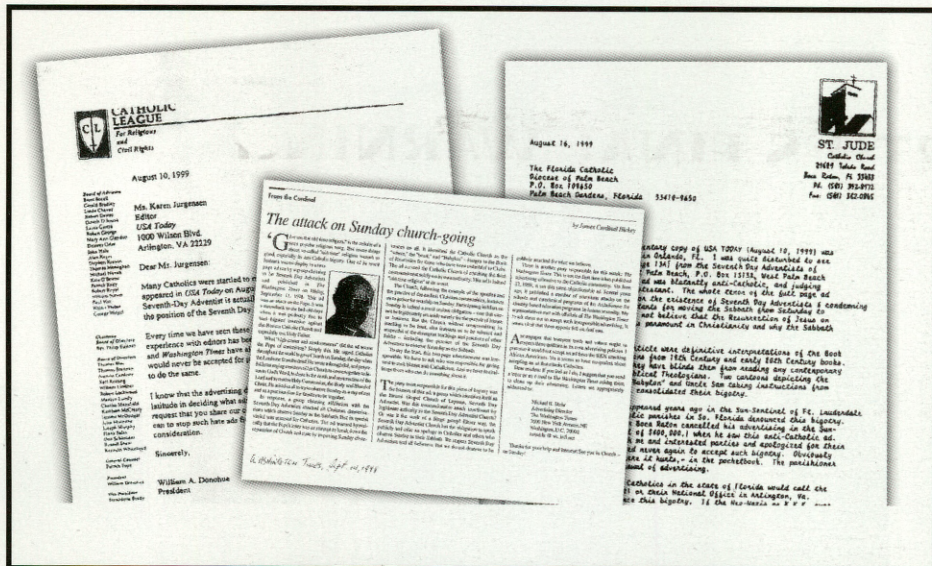
It was one of my church leaders who called to let me know that a group identifying itself as the Eternal Gospel Church of Seventh-day Adventists, of West Palm Beach, Florida, had put a full-page advertisement in our local weekend paper. With garish line drawings and screaming capital letters, the advertisement identified the pope as the Beast of Revelation thirteen and targeted Roman Catholics and non-SDA Protestants as the source of future persecution for keepers of the Saturday Sabbath.

"Did they say anything contrary to Adventist doctrine?" I asked.

"Well," a long pause followed, "it wasn't so much what they said as how they said it."

This was the first of many times I would hear that phrase. In all of my conversations about this advertisement no one dealt face on with the issue of whether what the ad said was true in any significant way.

The boilerplate letter that came from the union office, signed by my conference president and ultimately published in our newspaper, skirted the issue. "The Eternal Gospel Church is not affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church," said the letter. Far from being religious bigots, we real Seventh-day Adventists "cooperate with other religious organizations." Our "Adventist Development and Relief Agency works with the United Nations against world hunger, and Adventist Community Services joins with the Red Cross, the Salvation Army,



Material: John Nicolici

Those who reacted to the ad included Cardinal James Hickey, who called on the Seventh-day Adventist Church to offer an apology to Catholics and other Sunday-keepers (*Washington Times*, Sept. 14, 1998). The president of the Catholic league for Religious and Civil Rights wrote to newspapers to protest what he called “anti-Catholic” ads (letter dated Aug. 10, 1999). The General Conference demanded that the Eternal Gospel Church discontinue using the designation “Seventh-day Adventist” and threatened legal action.



Photo: John Nicolici

From left: Robert Nixon, Walter Carson, and Vincent Ramik. Ramik along with Jeffrey Tew represented the Seventh-day Adventist Church in court. Nixon and Carson, General Counsel of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, were in attendance on behalf of the plaintiff.

Adventist eschatology with which I grew up. I find it neither spiritually useful to me nor of much pastoral utility. Please note that I am not saying Seventh-day Adventist eschatology is “untrue,” nor that it will prove to be an accurate description of the future (though it has not, in my view, described very much

the point, however: Whatever the character of developing nineteenth-century Adventism, there is in fact a standard Seventh-day Adventist theology and eschatology that has been accepted as orthodox throughout most of the twentieth century.

More to the point, our official eschatology has

that has happened in the past 150 years.)

There are spiritual principles in our eschatology that I find helpful. I do want Jesus to come, and I hope he comes soon. Along with *The Great Controversy*, I recognize the danger when religion and government cross wires. Though I have not experienced it myself, the threat of religious persecution is something against which we should always be on guard. I am proud of my church for taking a lead in defending religious liberty. Were the pope to exercise a liberty threatening influence in world government, I would be very concerned. Yet I am very much aware that official Adventist eschatology, which proceeds from our acceptance of the Spirit of Prophecy, is far, far more specific. My personal version is a much-too-weak brew by official standards. It would not stand the scrutiny of a church inquisition that asked me, “Do you, or do you not, believe that Ellen G. White’s eschatology in the *Great Controversy* is a precise description of what will happen at the end of time?”

Some have argued that historical Adventist theology was sufficiently fluid to preclude us being locked into only one understanding.¹ That argument misses

been without major variation since the final revision of *The Great Controversy*. Yet the old eschatology is seldom heard in progressive pulpits nowadays. Even our evangelists (note Dwight Nelson's highly successful Last Millennium seminar in 1998) finesse these ideas to the point that veteran *Great Controversy* students could hardly recognize them. As a result, some younger church members have said to me (not unlike what I said to my local newspaper) "Those are old ideas that aren't held by our church any longer."

I have asked those who argue this point with me simply to go back and read *The Great Controversy*. They are often shocked to discover that all of the themes they thought archaic whims of long-ago evangelists (Sunday laws, the exclusive salvation of Sabbath-keepers, the silent close of probation, persecution of Seventh-day Adventists at the hands of Roman Catholics and allied Protestants, and the alliance of other Christians with spiritualism) are there in perfect detail; not a jot or tittle has ever been renounced by the Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

One negative effect of *The Great Controversy's* eschatology can be heard in conversations with church members who lived through the era when the traditional perspective was frequently voiced. Many Seventh-day Adventists born and raised in the Church tell stories about the utter terror they felt as children when they heard about the time of trouble, the Mark of the Beast, and the close of probation. When they speak candidly, many admit that these fears have haunted them throughout their lives. Although these themes still seem to have a certain perverse appeal to a few who seem to thrill in response to such narratives, others have left the Church because they couldn't live with the fear. (Such fear may also explain why some members so quickly seem to forget such eschatological themes when pastors stop mentioning them.)

More importantly, it has been over 150 years since we began to tell people that Jesus was coming soon ("soon" meaning as soon as next year, or at least in the next decade) and encouraging them to live in constant anticipation. Yet it has become increasingly harder to maintain the urgency as the decades have



Robert Pershes (left) defended the Eternal Gospel Church on behalf of Pastor Raphael Perez (right).

Photo: John Nicolici

passed. As blue laws have fallen by the wayside and legal protection for religious beliefs has actually improved in the United States, we have had to work harder and harder to find potential new threats. A Roman Catholic president, the Ecumenical Movement, the Religious Right, New Age religions, evangelical Protestant-Roman Catholic détente—each has had its day in the sun as the latest prophecy-fulfilling threat. We have now left the twentieth century and even the seventh millennialists have passed their most significant psychological marker.

Early in my ministry I took an evangelism training course in which the teacher said that Adventist eschatology was important because it constituted our most compelling evangelistic argument. In the traditional evangelistic scheme, he pointed out, the Church's eschatology is a powerful incentive for non-SDAs to accept our message. Inasmuch as eschatology forms the matrix for all our teachings, it defines Seventh-day Adventists' Christianity, sets it apart from others, and gives us a reason to call others out of their churches to join ours.

Yet my own attempts to prove this true have been disappointing. Many of those I have brought into the Church by means of the traditional eschatology-heavy catechism simply have not adjusted well to church life. In my evangelistic efforts, I would raise their enthusiasm for the impending crisis and cultivate paranoia toward other Christians. However, these new Adventists have often lost interest after finding out that most folks in the everyday life of the Seventh-day Adventist Church do not live in a con-



Photo: John Nicolici

On April 27, 2000, a Florida court ruled in favor of the plaintiff, ordering the Eternal Gospel Church to refrain from using the designation “Seventh-day Adventist,” the acronym “SDA,” or any similar words. The case was appealed by the Eternal Gospel Church and finally settled in court-ordered mediation.

stant state of crisis, that Adventists invest money in churches and schools, and that we continue to put our time into ongoing church programming and long-term relationships as though we plan to be here for another century.

How They Said It

The problem was not that the Eternal Gospel Church’s ad did not speak for Seventh-day Adventists. What the ad presented, amateurish as it was, was reasonably close to orthodox Seventh-day Adventist eschatology. However, the message in the advertisement didn’t speak for me—or apparently for many of my friends and church members.

Noting this, I occasionally (I confess, out of sheer orneriness and some curiosity) pressed the point. “But isn’t this exactly what *The Great Controversy* says? Isn’t this what our evangelists have always taught us?”

“It isn’t what the ad said,” I would hear again, “it’s how the Eternal Gospel Church said it.”

It is this statement of the situation, as it arose in response to the ad, that deserves some rethinking. If the ideas in *The Great Controversy* are deeply meaningful to us, why do we hesitate to express them? If they are true, why are we embarrassed when they are said aloud? And if we feel they are neither true nor meaningful, are we not compelled to rethink them? Two

relevant points come to my mind in relation to these questions.

First, I find myself doubtful of the claim from at least some of those who objected to the ad that they were merely concerned about how its message was presented. The reaction was deep embarrassment—embarrassment that far exceeded that required for a simple case of inadequate tact. Although few could see their way clear to say, “I simply don’t believe that any longer,” the reaction from many was visceral. Only one person out of hundreds of Adventists who read my words in the local paper

objected when I completely disassociated the denomination from the advertisement.

Second, I believe we should ask ourselves whether our eschatology is still in harmony with the gospel message. One of my colleagues told the paper’s religion reporter, “The things in this advertisement are advanced Adventist theology (what you would get into in a college course) not what people need to know for everyday Christian living.” He went on to reiterate that we Adventists are actually quite nice people, that we love everyone, follow the Bible, and preach the gospel. But his remarks left me wondering if we are fair to conceal such a potent secret. Should the meat of the word, the advanced theology, be so fundamentally at odds with what we say to folks at first?

While I was once doing premarital counseling with a couple, a potential groom privately admitted to me that he had several significant secrets that he hadn’t told his bride-to-be. “Why should I tell her these difficult and potentially damaging things up front?” he asked. “By the time she finds out, we’ll be married, she’ll be more deeply in love with me and more able to understand me.” I found his logic flawed. He was presenting himself as something he was not. The way he presented himself in courtship was deeply at odds with what his wife would later discover about him as a husband, and I refused to assist him in keeping his secrets.

Ultimately, those who join the Seventh-day

Adventist Church will need to discover that the very eschatology that now seems to embarrass some of us is in fact a foundational narrative of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Although they hear grace preached from our pulpits, ultimately they must learn that we possess a set of darker, more sinister beliefs.

The Nutty Relatives

Another attempt we all (locally, and with the denomination's administrative bodies) made to minimize damage from the ad was to say that the Eternal Gospel Church of Seventh-day Adventists was merely a fanatic offshoot. This is true, as far as it goes. The Eternal Gospel Church is not an official congregation of the denomination, and I suspect (though I don't know) that there are other characteristics that distinguish it apart from its illegal use of the Seventh-day Adventist copyrighted name and a penchant for blunt advertising.

A few years ago, while I was participating in a ministerial support group with pastors of many denominations, the crisis in the Waco compound came to a head. As I arrived at my group one day, several clergy asked me, "These Waco folks are Seventh-day Adventists, aren't they?"

"Of course not," I protested. "They are an independent group, not connected to us." The clergy dropped the subject, fortunately, and I didn't have to tell them that Koresh and his people were students of Ellen G. White, just as I was, that they had been Seventh-day Adventists, and that some still were.

By the convenient subterfuge of pointing out that they didn't have an official connection to our church, I managed to put the other questions aside. The General Conference, I soon discovered, assumed a similar "We don't know them" attitude. We got away with it that time. And I suspect I got away with it in my city, too, in the latest flap with the Eternal Gospel Church.

So why not leave things as they are? In order not to cause controversy, let these hard teachings remain the official eschatology of the Church, and let those who will, teach them, while pastors and congregations like mine will simply leave them to languish, and skirt the issue in public. One reason not to follow this course is that sooner or later we will be found out. We will be forced out of the closet by folks like the Eternal Gospel Church of Seventh-day Adventists.

More important, though, if we don't confront

our embarrassing secrets, we leave a fundamental unsoundness in our church personality. Though we don't say it, and in fact might even publicly deny it (as I did), we know that a deep suspicion of virtually all other Christians lies at the heart of who we are. One never works out those demons by keeping them secret, by pretending that they never were us. In fact, they were, and in many parts of the Church, still are, us, just as David Koresh and his followers were. There is little to be gained by pretending that the nutty relatives aren't really our relatives, nor for that matter that now-unpopular ideas never were ours, when we know they were, and in fact continue to be a significant segment of the Church.

Perhaps the Eternal Gospel Church of Seventh-day Adventists is actually doing us something of a favor by forcing us to remember and to rethink ourselves. I believe in the large principles of *The Great Controversy*: that Jesus may soon come, and in the meantime we must be alert to threats to liberty and stand firm for our faith in Christ. But given the widespread embarrassment that results in North America when the specific narrative is voiced aloud, perhaps someone needs to decide when we have reached the point where we can say, "Blaming Roman Catholics as potential persecutors, frightening our children with stories of the time of trouble and the close of probation, accusing other Christians of complicity with Satan because of their day of worship—these things represent a religious reality of a century ago. They no longer represent who we are, or what we live our Christian lives in expectation of."

When will someone in authority—someone among those church leaders and scholars who roll their eyes when we converse about the Eternal Gospel Church of Seventh-day Adventists—show that kind of courage?²

Notes and References

1. See, for example, George R. Knight, "The Church and Change," *Adventist Review*, Dec. 30, 1999, 22-25. All of Knight's examples of the church's flexibility happened before 1900.

2. A recent court decision has prohibited the Eternal Gospel Church from continuing to use the Seventh-day Adventist Church's name.

Why Can't We Be Wrong?

Archetypes, the Unconscious, Formation of the "Self," and the Adventist Church A Jungian Perspective

by Siroj Sorajjakool

One day, a student came to my office and said, "You can't be wrong and be an Adventist. If you are an Adventist, you've got to be right. That's the way it is supposed to be."

Why can't we be wrong? Perhaps our theology suggests that it is wrong to be wrong and so we have the urge to right all the wrongs. Perhaps we have to be right to belong. Perhaps we do not have the right to belong.

I grew up with a dad who was an evangelist. Although I learned many wonderful things from him about Christianity, I also inherited a certain categorical thinking that came with evangelism. "If we ain't right, we ain't nothing. If we do not have the truth we are nobody." Growing up hearing these messages, I started thinking, I am valuable because you are wrong. And you have to be wrong so that I can be valuable.

When I started taking care of my little boy, I thought that I would be the best father. I was wrong. But my son would come around giving me a hug and say, "It is okay dad." Then I started to realize that I could be wrong and be valuable at the very same time.

My hunch is that we have attached our value as a church to being the best, to being right. We can't be wrong because that is how we value ourselves. We are valuable because we are right. And we do not hear God's voice when God says, "You may be wrong, but I still love you."

I remember growing as an Adventist in Thailand, where the majority of the population was Buddhist. There were less than eight thousand Adventists at the time, while there were over 50 million Buddhists.¹ I represented the smallest minority group of the population. As a minority, my identity was being questioned. I maintained my identity through compensation. I was a part of a group that took the narrow path. I had something that the majority of the people did not have. I was right and they were wrong. I wonder if we as a church decide our value based on being right because our identity is being questioned. I do not really know the answer to this question, but if it is true that we seek self-affirmation through being right, we are faced with two complications. First, obsession with being right removes us further from truth. Second, it reinforces self-doubt.

Alienation from Truth Itself

The problem with such an obsession is in wanting to be right we move into the realm of cognition. Jung points out in his little book, *The Undiscovered Self*, that a strictly cognitive self will ultimately face self-alienation. "When any natural human function gets lost, i.e., is denied conscious and intentional expression, a general disturbance results. Hence, it is quite natural that with the triumph of the Goddess of reason a general neuroticizing of modern man should set in."² Again in *The Problem of the Attitude-Type* Jung writes, "the will

that is grounded in reason is valid only up to a point. The further we go in the direction selected by reason, the surer we may be that we are excluding the irrational possibilities of life which have just as much right to be lived."³ We hear similar concerns expressed by Raimondo Pannikar: "The holistic attitude has been lost because the person has been reduced to reason, reason to intellect, and intellect to the ability to classify and to formulate laws about how things work." Hence "We are no longer able to play because we are too occupied by the analysis of the various parts into which we have dissected reality."⁴ For Jung, pure cognition is not able to grasp the totality of the self. This is mainly because logic cannot maintain tension and life cannot be reduced to a logical conclusion. Life requires the ability to remain in chaos.

How does an obsession with being right alienate us from truth? Jung believes that the level of obsession corresponds to the level of shadows. The stronger the shadow, the stronger the obsession. Obsession also suggests one other factor: Conscious denial of shadows results in its suppression in the unconscious. Because I can't be wrong, I have to try diligently to be right and in the process I suppress all self-doubt in the unconscious mind. The problem is, what gets suppressed will be projected. The unconscious self does not remain silent. It will be projected. Projection interferes with our perception of reality. The stronger the projection, the stronger the misrepresentation. The stronger the projection, the more we become unable to see things as they are. This is so because through projection the self becomes undifferentiated. The "others" form a part of the self. Objectivity is lost. There is no real "other." There is only the "self-other." There is only the other as perceived by this self with all its complexes and we are left to deal with our projection.

Identity and Self-doubt

In addition, obsession with being right is a symptom of self-doubt. An obsessive-compulsive person who keeps washing her hands experiences an overwhelming sense of uncleanness. A controlling personality seeks controls as a way of calming the inner chaos. A self-righteous and judgmental person judges others as a way of externalizing personal shadows. The level of defenses parallels the strength of one's identity, one's ego.⁵ This symptom of "I can't be wrong" seems to suggest a weak sense of identity. I am not suggesting that we have to be

wrong to be healthy. I am suggesting that if we are obsessed with being right, there is something wrong. Obsession with being right is an attempt of the unconscious at self-assertion. Self-assertion is a compensatory process that grows out of a sense of self-doubt. As someone once said, "When in doubt, shout."

In *Stages of Life*, Jung argues that adolescents caught in self-doubt often find achievement as a way out of confusion. Achievement becomes that criterion whereby they measure themselves, whereby they validate their identity. But by such an attempt, argues Jung, "The serious problems in life . . . are never fully solved. If ever they should appear to be so it is a sure sign that something has been lost."⁶ He further explains:

And so it is with the ideals, convictions, guiding ideas and attitudes which in the period of youth lead us out into life, for which we struggle, suffer, and win victories: they grow together with our own being, we apparently change into them, we seek to perpetuate them indefinitely and as a matter of course, just as the young person asserts his ego in spite of the world and often in spite of himself.⁷

In finding ourselves through achievement, we are indeed losing our true sense of self. We achieve "at the cost of a diminution of our personality."⁸

Maturation and Identity

How then can one move toward maturity according to Jung? One needs to turn toward one's inner psychic reality. In turning toward one's inner psychic reality the primary archetype one needs to confront is one's shadow.⁹ Maturity is the ability to embrace oneself. Maturity suggests self-awareness. This involves awareness of one's strength and weaknesses. Maturity is the gift of freedom, the freedom from having to be apologetic or to justify the persons that we are. For Jung, the willingness to embrace our wrong moves us toward health and wholeness.

The journey toward maturity is inward. It involves listening to God's voice through symbolism. In looking at the psychic reality of the collective unconscious of Adventism, I wish to submit that the beast that we often discuss in our evangelistic meetings is archetypal.¹⁰ It is the voice of the unconscious speaking to us through symbols as a result of the religious function of the psyche.¹¹ It emerges from the

unconscious mind making us aware of our shadows so we can learn to withdraw our projection. It plays a special role in calling us toward wholeness. The beast that symbolizes the possibility for untruth is calling us to look into ourselves, to recognize that the possibility for untruth remains within each of us.

The symbolism of the beast is God's voice that calls us to look inward and locate the beast within ourselves. It is God's way of saying that we have the potential within us to persecute, to set ourselves as judges over others, to change God's law by thinking that interpretation is fact. It is God's way of saying that we may be wrong but that does not make us any less valuable. Due to our inability to embrace this beast and recognize that we can be wrong, we project this beast onto others.¹² Perhaps it is easier to deal with the beast that has been externalized, projected. But, for Jung, this is not the path toward maturity. When we can embrace this possibility within us, we no longer need to suppress. Without suppression there is no projection. Without suppression we can see more clearly and be closer to truth itself.

Identity Formation: Taming the Beast

How do we move toward identity formation without sacrificing our personality, our sense of self? Edinger's understanding of archetypes as described by Ann and Barry Ulanov offers an insight into this process.

Edward F. Edinger, a Jungian theorist and practitioner, addresses his attention to the subjective experience of religious symbols. . . . Through attention to the psychological equivalents of religious themes, we come to understand certain objective and typical psychic themes as they are represented by religious symbols. For Edinger, the figure of Jesus Christ symbolizes the archetype of the individuating ego; that is, he is a model for an ideal ego that separates itself from the larger, unconscious "objective psyche," and, once firm in its own ego identity, finds a way back into relationship with this larger self. The incarnation, for example, is achieved by an emptying process, the kenosis of Phil. ch. 2. . . . It is this emptied ego state, Edinger says, that is praised by Christ in

the Beatitudes. Only the emptied ego is blessed because it alone can be filled. Only by seeing its proper but limited place in the psychic universe can it be connected to the riches of the deeper psyche.¹³

Jung's interpretation of the symbol of Christ offers us great insight into the process of identity formation. We are often seduced by the idea that forming identity involves being the best, being right, making no mistakes. However, for Christ, identity is formed through emptying. Identity is formed when we are able to look into ourselves and be present in the midst of our weaknesses, failures, and infirmities. This, to me, is the process of taming the beast. We tame the beast by becoming aware of its presence in our lives. Awareness, for Jung, takes away the power of the beast to assert its influence on our lives.¹⁴ And the symbolism we need in order to remain in the presence of the beast, of our infirmities, of our possibilities for untruth, is the cross. Perhaps this beast, which is archetypal, is God's way of calling us back to the cross. The more ferocious the beast, the more grace we need.

Over the past hundred years or more the Adventist Church has grown in various ways. The Adventist Church has contributed much to the society in research, theology, medicine, humanitarian outreach, and education. A couple of years ago, I worked for a small college in Thailand. We provided education for a few hundred students who otherwise would not have had an opportunity to receive college education. Many of these students were children of poor farmers or tribal villagers. They moved from remote villages to becoming professionals through Adventist educational systems.

We have come a long way in defining our place in the ministry of Jesus Christ. There is a wonderful self emerging from the historical movement of the Adventist Church. Through our involvements we spell out our self-definition. I have a hunch that perhaps we do not see who we really are because we get caught up in wanting to be right. Perhaps what we need is to move into the chaos of uncertainty and struggle with grace existentially. Perhaps what we need is the imprint of the cross on our psyche that we may sit in the presence of the beast. And when the symbol of the cross sinks deep in our psyche and our projection is lifted, we will wonder why we ever wanted to be right.

"Why can't we be wrong?" This question does not seem to make sense any more.

Notes and References

1. A 1992 official list places the total number of Adventists in Thailand at 9,470. Yvonne Terry, *The Bestowal of Blessings: A Journey into the Meaning of Mission* (Bangkok: Thailand Publishing House, 1994), 242.
2. Carl Jung, *The Undiscovered Self* (New York: Mentor, 1958), 7.
3. Carl Jung, *Collected Works* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), 7:490.
4. Raimon Pannikar, *A Dwelling Place for Wisdom*, trans. Annemarie Kidder (Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 10.
5. Ego is not something stagnant or immutable but a function or a process that emerges from the interaction between the unconscious and the external environment. It evolves from childhood in response to existential demands. Carl Jung, *Portable Jung*, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York: Penguin, 1971), 139-44.
6. *Ibid.*, 11.
7. *Ibid.*, 12.
8. *Ibid.*, 12.
9. Shadow is often referred to as the dark side of each of us that we seek to hide. The ego seeks to delineate the shadow from consciousness because of its unwillingness to incorporate and acknowledge the shadow as part of the self. This unwillingness is derived from our sensing that there is something "evil" about us that need to be covered. It is "evil"

because it contains culturally undesirable attributes such as primal feelings, aggression, hate, envy, and antisocial qualities. The shadow does not seem compatible with our ego-image. In covering, we repress. In repressing, it is no longer present in the consciousness of our ego. It remains in the unconscious and is typically projected onto others. The shadow as an archetype seeks to tell us that we need to recognize and acknowledge the shadow as an essential part of us. David Rosen, *Transforming Depression: Healing the Soul through Creativity* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 67.

10. The collective unconscious is not made up of individual contents but represents something universal. Within the collective unconsciousness resides instincts and archetypes. "In addition to our immediate consciousness, which is of a thoroughly personal nature and which we believe to be the only empirical psyche, there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited."

Archetypes refer to the typical modes of apprehension, to the patterns of psychic perception and understanding common to all human beings as members of the human race. An archetype is the voice of the unconscious that speaks through symbols calling us back toward wholeness. Siroj Sorajjakool, "Ontology and Spirituality: A Jungian Perspective," *Pastoral Psychology* 46, no. 4 (1998), 276-78.


11. Jung was the first among the pioneers of depth psychology to point out that the psyche has a religious function. This religious function aims at restoring wholeness to the self. Psyche is structured in polarities. In order to achieve wholeness, the ego must recognize and reconcile these polarities. The process of reconciliation occurs through conscious participation in symbols that emerge from the unconscious and brings together two opposing poles in a third form. This new symbol puts consciousness in a deeper level by helping one to be in touch with the rest of the psyche and therefore enhances the relationships with others and the self. The religious function therefore is the capacity of the psyche to produce symbols that have this reconciling effect and stirring presence. Religious function seeks to restore balance. For further discussion see Ann Ulanov and Barry Ulanov, *Religion and the Unconscious* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 25-42; Carl Jung, *The Transcendent Function*, *Collected Works* (New York: Pantheon, 1969), 8:67-91; Carl Jung, *Autonomy of the Unconscious*, *ibid.*, 11:5-33.

12. See popular beliefs expressed by A. Jan Marcussen, *National Sunday Law: Forces Unite Amid Stupendous Crisis* (Thompsonville, Ill: Amazing Truth), 1983, 1-22.


13. *Religion and the Unconscious*, 109-10.

14. Jungian therapy consists mainly of methods that move one toward the awareness of the unconscious process within oneself. Calvin S. Hall and Vernon J. Nordby, *A Primer of Jungian Psychology* (New York: Meridian, 1973), 83.

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Whither North America?

Division Considers Options as Regional Conferences Proceed
with Separate Retirement System



by Bonnie Dwyer

For the Adventist regional conferences of North America, December 5, 2000, marked the beginning of a new era in church work, an independence day of sorts. On that day, with cameras snapping, the presidents of all nine black conferences gathered at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, and signed papers to form an independent nonprofit organization. Its purpose is to establish a separate retirement system for regional conference workers. Their 401(a) Defined Benefit program, operated by Mutual of America, will make it possible, the black conferences said, for their workers to retire at full salary (when combined with Social Security payments).

The action of the black presidents placed the North American Division in the difficult position of having to figure out how to fund the \$10 million shortfall that will occur in the NAD system after the regional conferences withdraw from the program. In addition, the need exists to explain to workers why the NAD program pays so much less to retirees and how to respond when nine conferences vote themselves out of compliance with

church policy. How much independence is healthy as units of the Church move to address the challenges within their territory?

During the year of negotiations that led up to December 5, not all the regional conferences had agreed on the advisability of their own plan. As late as November, one conference questioned the new system just as it had questioned the NAD's Defined Contribution plan. But with the self-imposed deadline of Dec. 31, 2000, approaching, unity prevailed, and all nine presidents signed the documents.

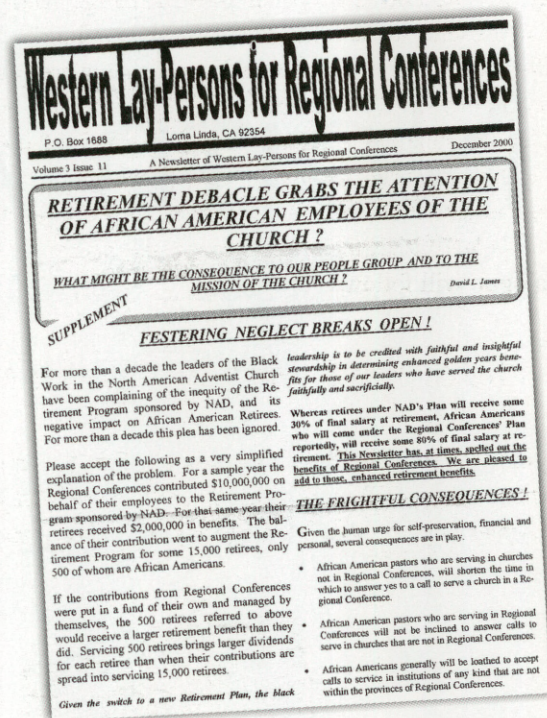
For many years the regional conferences have complained of inequities in the NAD retirement system. As small conferences with few workers, they maintained that regional conferences paid proportionally more into the retirement system than their workers got out of it. In 1999, they approached Mutual of America and requested studies of possible alternatives. When they received reports that showed the possibility of giving retired workers much higher payments with the same amount of contributions from the conferences, the presidents knew they had to act.

Reports from these studies were taken to regional conference executive committees and then to constituencies. In January 2000, eight of the nine stopped making payments to the NAD system and placed their conference-designated retirement funds in a separate escrow account until the issue could be resolved. The response from the NAD was to form the Task Force on Equity.

Chaired by Mardian Blair, former chief executive officer of Adventist Health System in Orlando, Florida, the thirteen-member task force was composed of two regional conference presidents, two retired treasurers (one from the division and one from the Pacific Union, which has no regional conferences), two conference presidents, two union conference presidents, one layperson, two union conference treasurers, and one conference treasurer. Del Johnson, administrator of the NAD retirement program, provided information as the group worked on its assigned task of finding a compromise.

The NAD materials showed that inequality did exist in amounts paid by small conferences and conferences with no institutions, both regional and nonregional, Blair said. However, the task force felt that it could not make a recommendation on how to right the inequity without an actuarial study that would examine the records of every Adventist employee and assess their retirement benefits to a specific

conference. Regional conferences maintain they had been requesting just such a study for years. With the election of Don Schneider as the division president in July, approval for the study was given. Work began at the NAD offices gathering data for the actuaries.



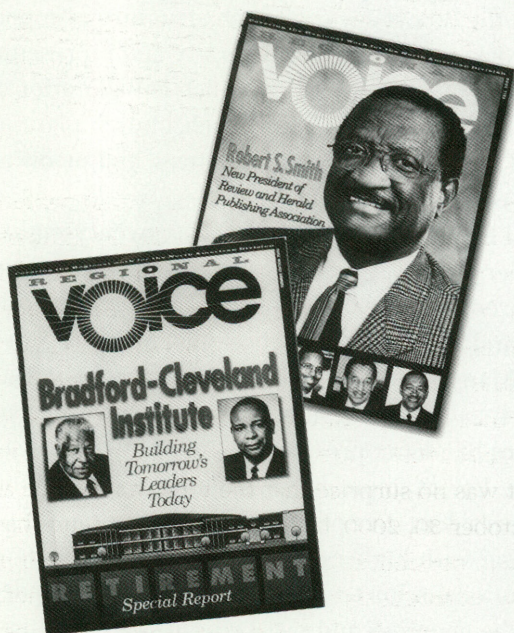
Schneider also met with the regional conference presidents to discuss the situation. By the time of the division's annual year-end meeting in late October, he said he had come to understand that the retirement system had far greater implications for the Church than he had known when he took the president's job.

Since changes in contribution percentages or retirement benefits are always voted at year-end meetings, it was no surprise that the topic was on the agenda for October 30, 2000, but this time its presence had explosive possibilities. Many delegates had been part of the vote to freeze the division's old Defined Benefit program, to which all conferences contributed the same percentage of tithe regardless of their number of eligible retirees. To replace the old program, in 2000 the division started a new Defined Contribution plan, which required each employer to contribute a percentage of the employee's salary toward a mutual fund that the employee managed. The new plan placed more responsibility and control in the hands of the employers and their employees. What would the new president do with the regional conferences' proposal to form their own Defined Benefit program?

In his first outing as chair of the division meeting, Schneider used a strategy to eliminate the possibility of a divisive vote. He scheduled the session on the retirement system on Monday afternoon, when all the delegates were sure to be present. He designated the afternoon a "Town Hall Meeting." Informational presentations were made by the regional conferences. There was discussion. There were questions. There was no report from the Task Force on Equity because the actuaries had just received the NAD data. At least six weeks would pass before details emerged from them. So no votes were taken, and repeatedly, Schneider promised the audience, "Dialogue will follow."

History of Caring for Workers

Begun in 1910, the Church's provision for "broken down" workers (Ellen White's term) has entailed a three-year supply of pooled funds generated from



payments of institutions that contribute a percentage of salaries and conferences that pay a percentage of tithe. This pay-as-you-go plan meant that the Church retirement system never ran out of money, because it continually came in.

All conferences contributed more money to the fund than required for their own personnel, because the plan also provided for academy, college, and missionary personnel. "Thus each conference had a

part in subsidizing these essential church evangelistic programs," Schneider said in the retirement system history lesson that he gave at the year-end meeting.

By the 1990s, increasing numbers of retirees had severely strained the program and it was in danger of bankruptcy despite contributions from the conferences that amounted to 10.75 percent of their tithe. So the old Defined Benefit plan was frozen and a new Defined Contribution program was voted in which funds would be set aside for each employee starting in 2000, similar to a savings account. The old frozen plan continued to fund current retirees. The new plan would cover the more recently employed workers. The percentage assigned to each conference for payment into the old retirement plan was reduced to 9 percent of tithe.

Schneider ended his presentation with a series of questions that he then answered. Among the questions and answers:

Q: Are there policies saying that a conference must turn in money to the retirement fund?

A: Yes, several church policies cover this issue, and most conference constitutions say they will follow the policies of the Church. Thus, any conference that fails to meet its obligation to the retirement fund according to policy and whose constitution states that it will follow the Church policies would be out of compliance with its own constitution.

Q: Where does this leave us?

A: Regional conference presidents have invited additional dialogue after the Task Force on Equity has given its report.

As Schneider promised, dialog did follow, both formally and informally. For attorney Gerson Perla, a Hispanic lay delegate to the NAD meeting from the Central California Conference, the regional conference retirement plan discussion came as a total surprise, in spite of his service on the NAD retirement board. So he spent several hours in discussion with black delegates after the Monday session. "Before [the NAD meeting] I had a tendency to blow off racial issues," he said. "Listening to them talk, it sounded like not a whole lot has changed since 1969 in some places."

He came away from his discussion feeling that the issue can be fixed. "They seemed willing to work it out and delighted to have discussion," said Perla. "And while there was built-up frustration with the system, there was no anger."

Mardian Blair, chair of the Task Force on Equity, requested that the regional conferences wait

the actuaries working for the task force said that they needed additional material from the NAD. The information was sent, but this delayed further the task force report. Analyzing the situation and their own time line, the regional conference presidents concluded that the task force report had nothing to do with the formation of their nonprofit organization. According to Norman Miles, president of the Lake Region Conference and chair of the regional conference presidents, information from the Task Force on Equity would be the basis for deciding the obligations of conferences for the Church's old retirement system. That discussion would need to take place with or without a new retirement program.

So the black conferences proceeded. In Schneider's view, here are some of the ramifications:

1. The other conferences, which will now need to make up for the contributions that previously came from the regional conferences, will look for places to find money and the Special Assistance Fund for small conferences might be targeted. Regional conferences make up the majority of the small conferences, but if that money is used for retirement, other (nonregional) small conferences will be hurt.

2. Black workers in the Pacific Union, which has no regional conferences, will raise retirement questions.

3. Calling workers between conferences that have different retirement plans will become an issue.

Schneider notes that the Adventist Church in Canada has trouble getting workers from the United States because Canada has a separate retirement system and salaries are affected by exchange rates. The division needs to be a broker in bringing entities together within its territory, says Schneider. For other divisions, such challenges are old hat. "There is much we can learn from other divisions," he says, noting that North America's division status is comparatively new.

The Evolving Role of the Division in Church Work

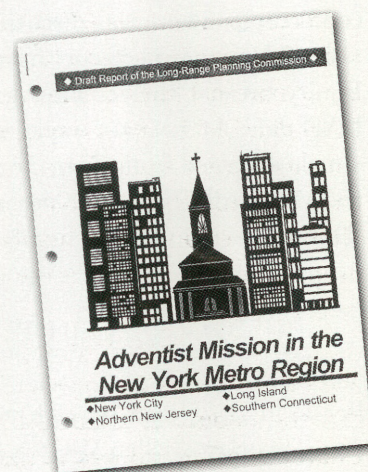
As the division looks to the future, its planning strategy also seems to suggest a new role. The division is focusing on specific initiatives rather than attempting global planning, according to Kermit Netteburg, director of communication. One such plan

was presented at the year-end meeting, when the commission on Adventist mission in the New York metro region gave its report. North American Division officers appointed the commission at the request of the presidents of the two union conferences and five local conferences that have churches in the metropolitan region. This is the largest metropolitan area in North America; it straddles two union conferences and a total of seven different kinds of denominational territory definitions. Clearly, some entity needs to coordinate activities in the area.

"Lay leaders in all ethnic groups see a need for Adventists to work together across the traditional ethnic and conference lines," the report says. "Church structure is important and works well to ensure diversity and representation, but there is another level at which collaboration and cooperation is needed in outreach, church planting, public service, specialized ministries, and media and civic relations."

The NAD brought together a twenty-eight-member commission to fill that role, and the commission produced a ten-year plan with strategic goals for 2005 and 2010, with an action plan for those goals.

Many people do not realize how roles within the Church have evolved in recent years, according to Charles Sandefur, president of the Mid-America Union. For example, he says that, as a union conference president, he spends a significant amount of time working with higher education and health care institutions in his territory. Local conferences deal with the churches and K-12 educational institutions. As union conference president, he has minimal contact with local churches. The departmental work that previously took place at the union level has been pushed to the division, which now coordinates resources for local churches to do ministry. Rather than being a hierarchical system, which many members envision, the current operation functions with well-defined spheres of influence at each level. Very little duplication of work exists from one level of the Church to another, maintains Sandefur.



Changes in the organizational structure have been underway for some time, according to Monty Sahlin. Before he left NAD to become vice president of creative ministries in the Columbia Union, Sahlin directed the 1995 NAD organizational study and strategic plan. He estimates that conference and union departmental staffing for specific ministries has been cut in half over the last twenty-five years. That work has been handed over to the division because support systems for ministry can be provided more efficiently at the national level. Sahlin says that the NAD report in 1995 called for the elimination of duplication at the various church levels. Since then, the biggest changes have been made at the union level. In the Mid-America Union, for example, the number of employees has dropped from a high of sixty-three to the current level of eighteen.

Another significant item at the NAD 2000 year-end meeting was the treasurer's report, which noted that the amount of tithe kept at each level within the Church is being reduced in the North American Division. This reduction was sent in motion by General Conference president Jon Paulsen, who on the first day of his administration in 1999 initiated a reduction in the amount of tithe sent from North America to the General Conference and replaced it

with an increased percentage of tithe from the other world divisions. Similar reductions at the North American Division and union levels followed, so that this budget year 58 million additional dollars will be available at the local conference level. "This is huge," Schneider told the audience when he presented the percentages.

The retirement system issue has served as an opportunity to consider how the church organization functions. It has posed many questions for and about the division, in particular, and answers will not be easy to find. "Growing churches are going to be messy churches," Schneider said at the year-end meeting, just after his prayer, which included the following words: "Help us now as we practice how to behave when we don't agree, but still love each other."

Bonnie Dwyer, editor of *Spectrum*, has written for the journal since 1977.

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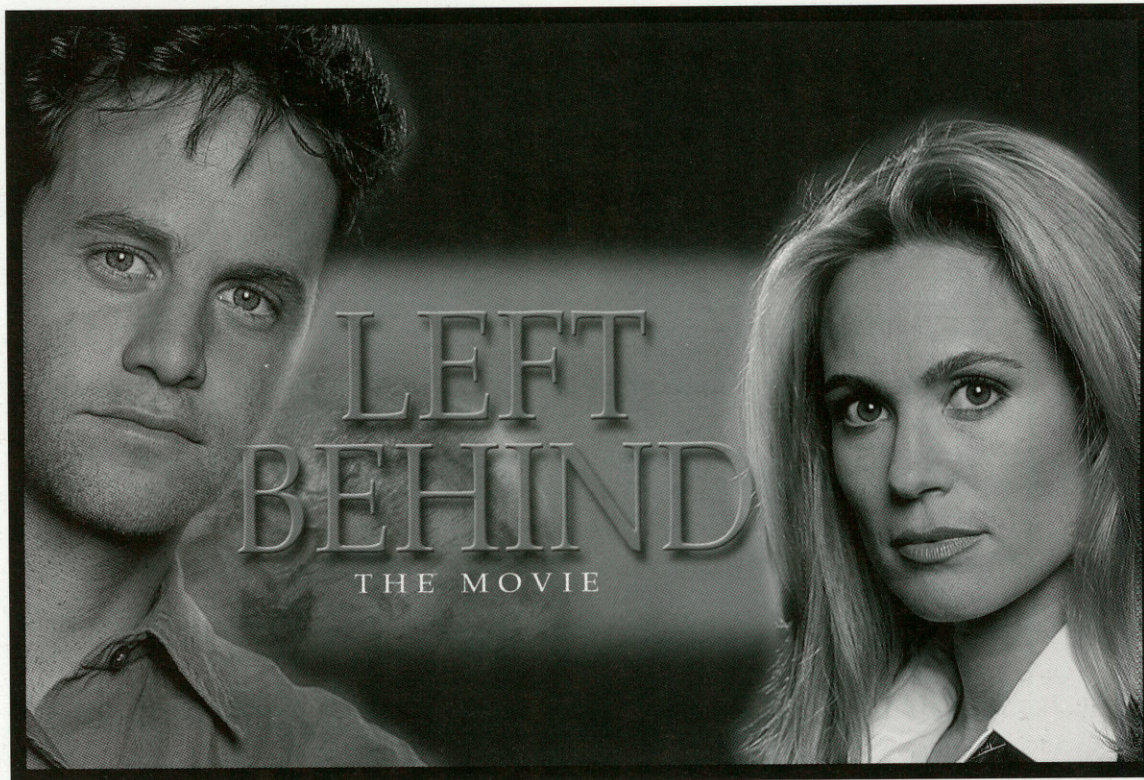


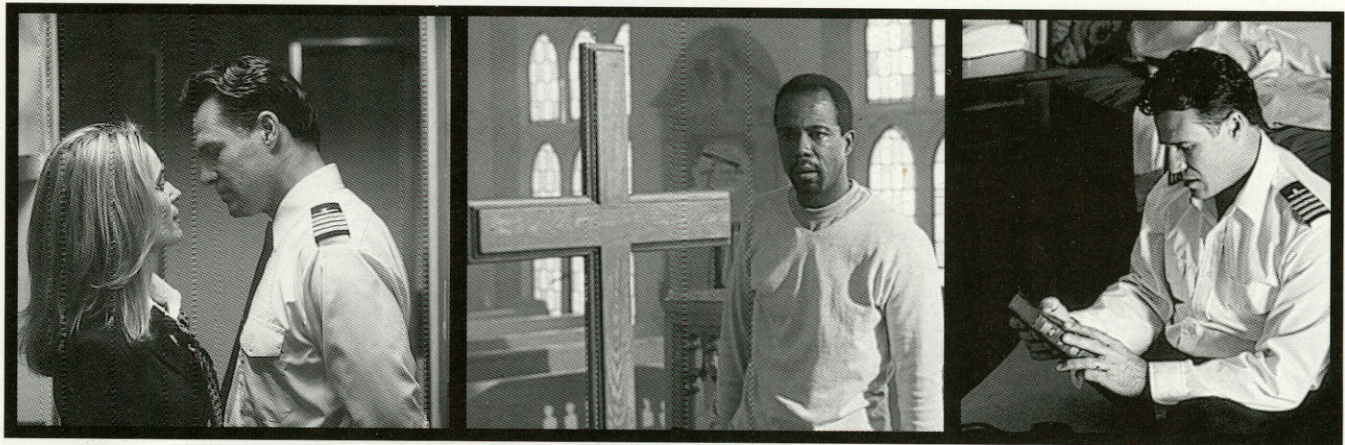
Photo: Cloud Ten Pictures

A Theological Review

by Kendra Haloviak

L*eft Behind: The Movie* exhibits the dangers of using Scripture as a crossword puzzle for last-day events. Based on the first book in the series of the same name by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, the film focuses on the notion of the rapture, which provides its theological foundation. Through a literal reading of isolated Bible texts found mostly in the book of Daniel, screen writers Allan McElroy, Paul LaLonde, and Joe Goodman, and director Vic Sarin mark the beginning of the final years of Earth's history with the global disappearance of true Christians. Those left behind must endure seven years of demonic deception and brutal persecution. The great tribulation, a type of Protestant purgatory, is a last chance to gain salvation by being faithful to God and by resisting the Antichrist. The film's portrayal of events surrounding the rapture mixes computer game graphics with images reminiscent of recent violence in Jerusalem and Gaza.

Although claiming to be based on a careful, literal reading of Scripture, this interpretation neglects the basis of New Testament faith: Jesus Christ. In the film, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus are scarcely



Photos: Cloud Ten Pictures

mentioned. Rapture theology emphasizes human actions that take place long after Calvary, without making a critical connection between the cross and the last days. The rapture and great tribulation are concerned with human actions instead of the meaning of Jesus' actions on behalf of humanity. This omission is the film's greatest failure. The omission also underscores that *Left Behind* is definitely a film for the "converted" (defined as evangelical Christians who believe in the secret rapture). An unbeliever does not stand a chance; he or she is left in quiet despair and/or disbelief. Like the film's major characters, viewers who recall Bible study lessons and sermons from childhood may turn to God in this crisis. Such viewers are told that each local and global event has been predicted in Bible prophecies (including "the abomination of desolation" which, according to an error spoken by the Rev. Barnes, is found in "Daniel 9, chapter 27"). Perhaps such viewers will become believers, suddenly understanding some of the most challenging passages in the Bible in a matter of moments. The rest of us walk away dumbfounded and depressed. This film does not contain good news.

Instead of emphasizing Christ, this film, like the book series after which it is named, is most interested in catastrophe and chaos. The intriguing characters are those taking temporary control over humanity during this time of global confusion. War on Israel by an invasion from the north is miraculously stopped, even as a Jewish scientist, Chaim Rosenzweig, discovers the answer to world hunger. He will quickly be manipulated by Nicolae Carpathia, the Antichrist figure. Supposedly humanitarian in his goals, Carpathia will end up deceiving the whole world. As air traffic controllers, pilots, and drivers of trucks and cars disappear, those left behind must face plunging airplanes and out-of-control vehicles on the world's highways. Only Carpathia offers a hopeful future. He

states: "people will follow me wherever I lead them." Before the film is over, Carpathia commits acts of brutal violence followed by a display of supernatural powers over the minds of people. Where is God? I first asked that during scenes immediately following the rapture, as people sat weeping quietly near the clothing of someone who had been taken. Other images include dogs trying to find their vanished owners, their leashes dragging behind on the ground, and parents left behind holding a child's clothing, toys, or blankets. In the words of Chloe Steele, a left-behind teenager, "what could be worse than this?" I kept thinking: What picture of God could be worse than this?

The film's interpretation of prophecy completely ignores the social contexts in which the prophecy's words were first spoken and written. Equally ignored are the meanings of symbols in early and later apocalyptic writings. Literal readings are misreadings. Numbers, creatures, and nations convey particular ideas in apocalyptic literature. By quickly transporting the symbols from the time of most apocalyptic writings (B.C.E. 200 to 200 C.E.) to contemporary contexts, interpreters miss much of the relevance initially intended.

My favorite scene in the film takes place in a small church in Chicago. The Rev. Barnes, who has been left behind, admits that "knowing and believing are two different things." He falls on his knees before the alter in the sanctuary and pleads with the Lord to use him to reach others. Walking into the sanctuary behind him is Rayford Steele, one of the main characters in the story. Rayford had previously resisted the faith of his wife and son, and has just discovered their empty clothing. As the Rev. Barnes says the words, "Lord, please use me," Rayford responds from the back of the church, "He already has." The Rev. Barnes kneeling before the alter portrays true Christianity as



Photos: Cloud Ten Pictures

humble. In contrast, most of the film professes to know all the answers. (A link from the movie's official Web site suggests, while playing the song "I'll Fly Away" and showing pictures of people flying to heaven out of the earth and sea, that here can be found true answers for anyone left behind after the secret rapture.)

I kept being grateful that my own denomination, although far too close for comfort at times to the film's theology, resists the film's premise: that humanity will experience the secret rapture prior to the great tribulation and return of Jesus Christ to Earth. Seventh-day Adventism offers alternative interpreta-

tions to the rapture. When Adventism proclaims that victory was already won at the cross, it avoids a theology that diminishes Christ. When Adventism shares a picture of a gracious God, evil forces diminish; God's victory far outweighs the power of evil. When Adventism takes Bible study seriously, the wonder of apocalyptic literature, symbolic language, and the social contexts of Revelation are explored.

Kendra Haloviak is associate professor of religion at Columbia Union College.
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A Response by Readers

by Albert and Mabel Olson

Editor's Note

When Spectrum readers Albert and Mabel Olson told us that they had picked up the "Left Behind" books and ended up reading them with their Bibles open, checking facts as they went, we thought their comments about the video would interest other Spectrum readers.

There are now eight volumes in the "Left Behind" series of books published by Tyndale House Publishers. Left Behind, the title of the series and the first book, refers to the rapture, which forms the major event in the first book. The movie is only a sketchy version of the



Photos: Cloud Ten Pictures

first book and seems to be an introduction to subsequent books in the series.

The books amply document the prophecies, though documentation obviously presented a challenge to the makers of the film. Although the story line the books follow is fictional, we believe that this work should be understood as a worthwhile attempt to place numerous biblical prophecies within the context of events that could take place during the last seven years of humanity's stay on earth.

The movie focuses on three major last-day events. The first is the bombing of Israel, thus suggesting that Israel has a role to play in last-day events. The sound crew obviously had a field day showing the attacking enemy air force dropping bombs that explode harmlessly in midair against the backdrop of the night sky, all of which leaves Israel unharmed.

Then the movie shows the main "left behind" event as it might appear in the United States. The righteous are instantaneously transported to heaven at night leaving behind whatever they happened to be wearing. That incident in itself makes an impressive scene, but the movie also uses other spectacular effects to show suffering on earth among those who remain. Imagine life proceeding at its usual pace when, all of a sudden, many people—airline pilots, truck drivers, and so forth—simply disappear. Let your imagination run wild!

The book depicts the rapture as a dramatic and catastrophic event. By contrast, the film version seems less intense. The book series uses the rapture to set up the concept of two classes of people, an important plot element in the movie. Although all the "righteous" have already gone, God continues his work and a small group of people in the movie answers his call. One unconverted assistant church pastor left behind

gets his life in order and launches an evangelistic program. A nucleus of people responds and accepts God's plan of salvation. This small group begins to carry out its work, facing increasing hostility from the larger group of the unconverted, who seek to eliminate brutally all of God's followers.

Finally, the movie depicts selection of the secretary general of the United Nations. The man chosen for this post was previously almost unknown. However, he shows a remarkably broad knowledge of international affairs and seems to be cultured and likeable. He assumes a major role in the books as the rest of the story unfolds.

We feel that the primary focus of the books and movie is evangelical. The humanizing of these prophecies in the form of a novel certainly drives one to "search the Scriptures" to see if the author's references and interpretations are correct. Many people to whom we have talked have read these books with their Bibles open, searching the texts as the story unfolds. On this basis, we feel that the books' writers have accomplished their purpose.

For the movie, an unusual distribution system has been devised that, in itself, is evangelical. The movie was first released through Christian bookstores and other retail outlets as a video to be sold, not rented. Its handlers hope that enough Christians will buy the video to watch it themselves and then become missionaries, going into the highways and byways to persuade others to show up in a theater to watch the film on a big screen.

Although we thought this was a good movie, after seeing the video and reading the book we probably will not see the theater presentation in February.

**Albert and Mabel Olson write from Hemet, California.
Albert2012@aol.com**

What Others Are Saying about *Left Behind, the Movie*

End-time Horror Stories Don't Qualify as Evangelism

"Some admirers of the *Left Behind* book series have expressed disappointment with the film adaptation. But let's place the blame squarely where it belongs: the typical Christian mistake is in treating a theatrical film primarily as an evangelistic tool, and in thinking that telling End Times horror stories qualifies as evangelism. Even the most gifted screenwriters and director would have trouble turning *Left Behind* into a blockbuster."

—Douglas LeBlanc

Christianity Today (December 4, 2000)

Passable Thriller

"Part conspiracy theory and part religious message, *Left Behind* (based on the first in a series of runaway bestsellers by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins) is a passable, occasionally compelling thriller that turns the rapture and the ascendance of the Antichrist into something resembling a Robert Ludlum espionage potboiler. Still, it's an intriguing premise that should satisfy fans of the novel and possibly pick up a few more converts along the way (be warned, though, this is a modestly budgeted film that looks more like a cable TV movie than the latest James Bond extravaganza). And, if like a fair number of the film's characters, you can't figure out that someone named 'Nicolae Carpathia' is a bad guy, then, well, you need to bone up on your evil villains."

—Mark Englehart

amazon.com

More Chaos, Please

"The one thing I don't like about *Left Behind* is that it just doesn't feel *big* enough. I mean, we're talking about the end of the world here, so the few scenes of chaos that there are, even though they're well done and even frighteningly realistic, just don't seem like enough to convey the magnitude of this world-changing event. I wanted to see entire cityscapes of chaos and destruction. Whole freeways full of car pile-ups. Commercial aircraft with no pilots which fell out of the sky and slammed into skyscrapers. Fire, riots, panicked people filling the streets. And we don't get any of that. But they had to make do with what they had, and really, this is a small gripe and does *not* take away from the story at all."

—Robin Parrish

christianmusic.about.com

Important for Christians to Support

"The danger in creating a film based on a book is that it never lives up to expectations of a reader's imaginations. For the most part, the directors and producers did a commendable job. On a personal note, I believe it's important for Christians to support good films—both in terms of quality and storyline. "Left Behind" is not only a film that fits that description, but its story is based on events in the book of Revelation. In other words, as Christians, we know these events - though not exactly as the novels portray—will happen. What a wonderful opportunity to use film as a way to minister and tell others about Christ."

—Nightingale Ngo

ebeliever.com

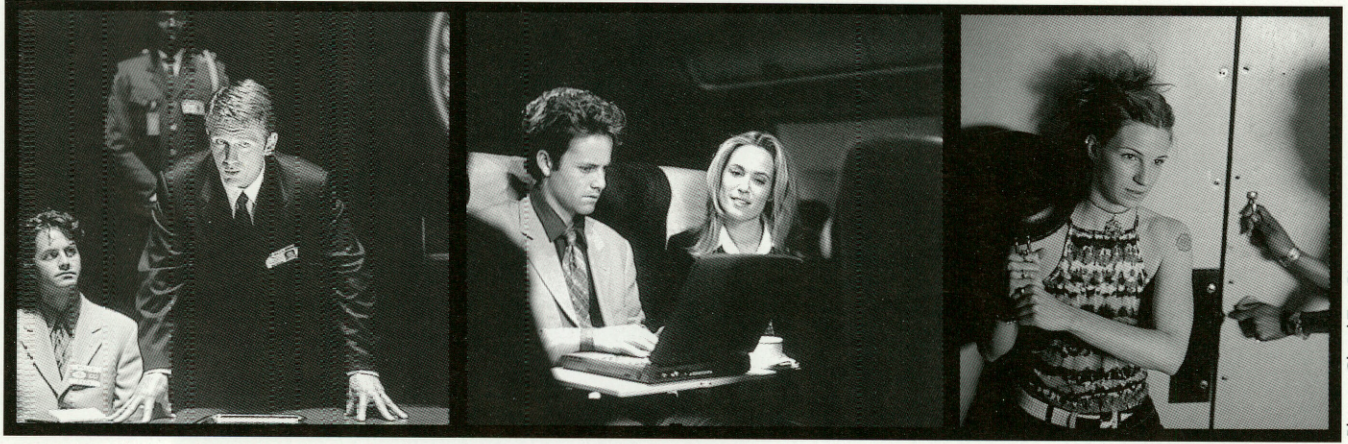
Everything You Want

"You don't have to be religious or a Christian to see this film and you will get it. It is full of action and suspense and is laced with explosions and corruption. *Left Behind* has everything you want to see in a big action film. *Left Behind* is doing something unusual and is being released on videocassette before hitting theaters."

—Eve Contreras

Los Angeles Film Magazine

lafm.com

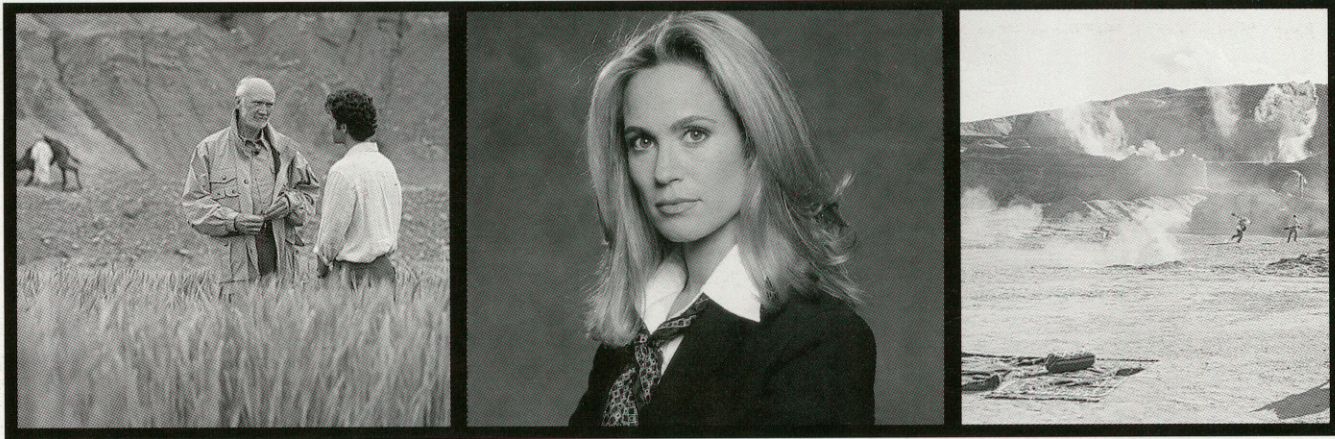


Photos: Cloud Ten Pictures

Marketing the Rapture

by Michael E. Cafferky

For Tyndale House Publishers, marketing the rapture has proved to be an enormous success. Earnings of the Christian publishing house have tripled since the “Left Behind” series of books hit the market five years ago. What started with Tim La Haye and Jerry Jenkins’s *Left Behind* book has now grown to a projected twelve-novel series, with eight on the market already. The publisher has sold over 23 million copies of “Left Behind” items, which include audio books and a children’s series.



Photos: Cloud Ten Pictures

Now Cloud Ten Pictures, which has released the film, is trying to have similar success marketing the film version of the books. In fact, Peter LaLonde, president of Cloud Ten, has set the lofty goals of achieving what no other religious film has accomplished: becoming number one at the box office in its opening week. To do so, he wants to open in every city in the United States.

To accomplish this ambitious goal, Cloud Ten has chosen an unusual marketing strategy. The film was released first on video in November and is scheduled to open in theatres the first weekend in February. Producing a direct-to-consumer video first and then trying for a theatrical release of the same film second is not unknown in the entertainment industry, but it rarely happens. Companies that lack a firm foothold in the market usually try it. Major film distribution houses don't use ancillary products such as direct-to-consumer videos to build theater attendance. The reason: videos, if released first, likely will cannibalize box office sales.

LaLonde's unusual strategy also involves utilizing evangelical Christians in his marketing efforts. To a small distribution house like Cloud Ten, getting in the door at local theaters is like climbing Mount Everest—you need to go there with someone who has been there before. Cloud Ten won't be going there with one of the big film distributors like Sony or Buena Vista.

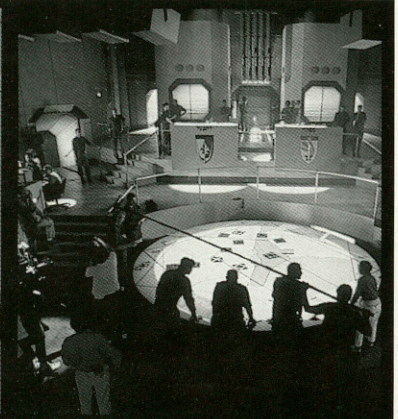
To solve the access problem, LaLonde's team has partnered with Impact Entertainment to mount a direct sales effort recruiting local churches and other organizations to put up \$3,000 apiece to sponsor the screening of the film at local cinemas. Impact Entertainment has targeted a list of about nine hundred preselected theaters across the country. When the sponsoring organization sends its money to Impact

Entertainment, Impact makes the arrangements with the local theater. In addition, Impact sends a media kit to the sponsoring organization that includes posters, fliers, press releases, radio, and television spots. Local sponsors have the option to spend additional money to make their own media buys in their local market.

This program is a form of corporate sponsorship—a tactic well known in the film world. In this case, the corporate entity is a collection of independent religious groups rather than multibillion-dollar businesses that have millions to throw at such projects. Films such as *Hoop Dreams* (sponsored by Nike) and the James Bond thriller *Goldeneye* (sponsored by BMW Z3) have successfully wooed corporations to share in the advertising costs and build audience attendance. Similarly, LaLonde will use local churches to spread the cost of distribution and use them as the primary means to advertise. Informal reviews by video watchers will take the place of formal reviews by critics.

Every local sponsor will receive discount coupons to use in generating audience support. Instead of paying seven or eight dollars for the viewing, coupon holders will pay matinee prices. Individuals who purchase the videos will receive two coupons to give others. Organized much like a massive evangelistic campaign with many locations focusing their prayer power, financial power, and word-of-mouth influence on the same date, this effort will pool the fervor of Christians trying to accomplish more than just the selling of a movie experience.

If twelve hundred people attend any given theater and pay matinee prices, that theater will generate \$6,000 dollars in gross revenue. Add a modest per person donation for the sponsorship to the five-dollar matinee price that each coupon-bearing Christian pays at the box office and you get a ticket



Photos: Cloud Ten Pictures

price about the same as what the believer would have paid to see the movie without all the prayers and hoopla. If a large enough audience attends, the sponsoring church will get its money back, thus making the whole idea a potential winner for the local theater owner, as well as the church. Pastors and church administrators win because it is unlikely that the \$3,000 dollars will be returned to individual donors. The successful program, in effect, becomes a fund-raising event for the church. Church members win by going to a movie with their pastor's blessing, and Cloud Ten wins by collecting a percentage of the box office gross receipts.

LaLonde and his team are depending on an army of enthusiastic friends and neighbors going back to the theater on a cold day in February. If word of mouth takes off from there, they will have the box office hit they desire.

Choosing One's Time Wisely

Over the past ten years very few movies (*Mr. Holland's Opus*, *Star Wars—Special Edition*, *Scream 3*) destined for success have made it into the top ten winter (mid-November through mid-February) season rankings with a late January or early February debut. And these were movies distributed by the major houses such as Fox, Buena Vista, and Miramax—distributors that had other products in the pipeline to offer theaters. Most winning movies in the winter season open around Thanksgiving or Christmas and continue running for thirty or more weeks with the potential of easily smothering smaller films that get in their way.

LaLonde needs a weekend late in the season, when most theater seats are empty. His choice for the film's release date might be good since, as a month,

February ranks eighth in the year for movie attendance in the United States. February 2 is just two weeks before the official start of the spring film season. Never mind that potential blockbusters such as *Red Planet* (Warner Bros.), *Men of Honor* (Fox), *Vertical Limit* (Sony), *What Women Want* (Paramount), *13 Days* (New Line), and *The 6th Day* (Sony) were released on massive waves of advertising and promotion at the start of the 2000-2001 winter film season. LaLonde must be banking on these films losing momentum by the time February doldrums roll around, and he is probably correct.

Also, he is acting on the belief that once the winter season gets well under way none of the big five distributors will release a new film until the start of the spring season. If LaLonde can avoid one of the big studios blasting him out of the box office in early February, releasing *Left Behind* at this time of year may prove to be an astute decision.

Meeting Financial Goals

Before it gets to number one by screening the film in major U.S. cities, Cloud Ten wants to sell more than a million videos (through selected high-volume discount retailers, Christian bookstores, and direct marketing through Promise Keepers and such rapture-friendly television shows as Jack Van Impe Ministries). If the company achieves this goal, Cloud Ten will be well on its way to meeting its financial objectives. In fact, one might argue that video sales alone will generate more than half the real money the company makes on the project, helping it recoup its \$17.4 million investment.

Adding to its business goals is Cloud Ten's hope that, with the movie's theatrical release, small religious theme studios will finally be taken seriously as



Photos: Cloud Ten Pictures

having quality products to offer in competition with major studios. The company wants to move the screening of religious films out of church auditoriums and youth centers into the local cinema and in the process contribute something to help spread the gospel. Success at the February box office will generate millions from opportunities bound to come its way in the form of bigger projects, more capital, better scripts, bigger name actors and directors, and a real shot at the big show. If Cloud Ten achieves its dreams, more independent producers will copy its tactics and we will likely see other films marketed in the same manner.

Left Behind: The Movie, like any of the five hundred new films produced each year, faces competition for screen time and trailer space. With an average of eight to ten new films coming out each week, there are just not enough screens to show all the films and all the trailers. Furthermore, only 10 to 15 percent of all films make it to the box office big time, all of which forces local theaters to be selective. Independent films must often share the screen with another film, thus reducing the availability of the independent film to the public. Large multiplex super cinema chains mainly screen proven winners. Big distributors usually have ten to fifteen more films in the pipeline and can demand that their films be shown, which often causes independent films to be overlooked. It's a cruel market out there, with theater owners often pulling the low money earners off their projectors in favor of new, more hopeful titles.

The question also remains whether *Left Behind* will generate enough discussion among the general public to launch it past the initial momentum that local believers will supposedly give it. Pleasing the conservative and sometimes critical evangelicals who want the gospel appeal to be central and overt

in ministry is another obstacle. Another risk involves convincing unchurched moviegoers that the film is not simply another piece of religious propaganda. Put another way, Cloud Ten's task is to entertain both Christians and non-Christians, especially those who might be skeptical of and offended by attempts at proselytizing. From Cloud Ten's point of view, all it really needs is a few million believers attending the show. However, movie consumers—whether on a date movie, watching an action adventure, or taking in a romantic comedy—want first of all to be entertained.

Cloud Ten might reach its goal of becoming number one at the box office if interest in holiday films flags by February 1 and enthusiasts of the rapture come out in force. If that happens, the momentum just might carry over another week or two. However, if the general public considers *Left Behind* a mediocre film or views it as a poor piece of propaganda, the momentum will be lost in the rush toward the next blockbuster.

Michael E. Cafferky is chief financial officer and chief operating officer at Quincy Valley Medical Center, in the state of Washington. He holds a Ph.D. in marketing and a Master of Divinity degree from Andrews University Theological Seminary. He is the author of the word-of-mouth marketing book *Let Your Customers Do the Talking* (Upstart). Cafferky can be reached at miccaf@bmi.net

The Adventist End-Time Books

An Interview with Céleste perrino Walker

by Julie Z. Lee

Céleste perrino Walker is a freelance writer and author of more than a dozen books. Published in nearly every Adventist magazine and journal, Céleste is one of the most prolific and well-known writers in our church.

She discovered her talent at a young age when a fifth-grade teacher assigned her class to write stories that were then read out loud. Her exciting stories catapulted her to elementary school fame when her classmates began anticipating her readings. In high school, an expository writing class brought about similar reactions. Soon Céleste and her friends formed a writing club that met regularly during study hall.

In 1986, Céleste published her first story in *Insight Magazine*. Sporadic publishing in various magazines followed, but Céleste mostly kept writing as a hobby. It wasn't until 1990, when she attended a writer's week at the *Adventist Review*, that her career officially took off. By 1994, Céleste had published her first book.

Céleste currently writes a regular column for *Vibrant Life* magazine, and is published regularly in several magazines, including *Liberty*, *Our Little Friend*, and *Guideposts for Teens*. She also has four books in the works: *Adventist Family Traditions*, a sequel to her best-selling *Prayer Warriors* and *Guardians*, a book on joy, and possibly a book on women at prayer. Of course, these "projects" take backstage to her first career as a mother, homeschooling and teaching French during her homeschool co-op day.

As the coauthor of *Eleventh Hour* and its sequel, *Midnight Hour*, two novels that focus on the end-time from an Adventist perspective, Céleste joins *Spectrum* in discussing the impact of the "Left Behind" series and its implications for the mission of the Adventist Church.

Q: How do you feel about the success of the "Left Behind" books?

A: Shocked. It's mind-boggling to think how many people are reading them. And a bit encouraging to think so many people have an interest in end-times. As well, it's like a red flag showing a need for more information, for the truth. It's great that all these readers are interested in finding the truth about what's coming next, but sad that they won't find it in the "Left Behind" books. In my opinion we, as a church, have an obligation to acknowledge this hunger for truth and offer it. We have end-time books. We need to find a way to offer them outside the Church. Adventists already know about the end-times. Now we need to find a way to get this information to the general public. I would say that the sheer success of the "Left Behind" series clearly demonstrates that they are interested.

Q: How did the idea for Eleventh Hour and Midnight Hour come about?

A: Eric Stoffle (coauthor) and I met on the Adventist Forum online. We started talking about writing and about the kinds of books we'd like to see published. We both had a strong interest in end-times books. I don't remember who suggested the idea of writing one together, but it was just for fun at first. I had an inspiration about this girl, Dani, and wrote up the first scene. I sent it to him by e-mail. He immediately added on to it and sent it back. We both liked what we had written and decided to submit it for publication. (When I speak, I say that people often ask me how I could write with a man clear across the country. I tell them it's easy. We followed two simple rules. Rule 1: The woman is always right. Rule 2: When in doubt refer to Rule 1.)

Q: How much, if any, impact did the success of the "Left Behind" series have on your books? Have you read them?

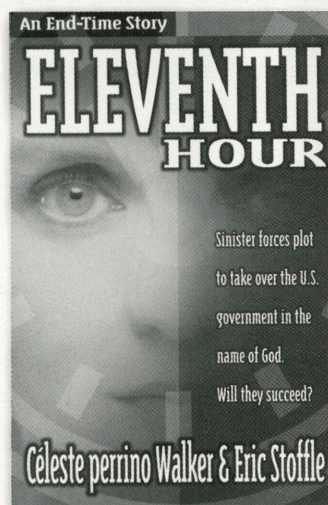
A: I couldn't say for sure, but I doubt it made any impact. Our books were marketed in the Adventist market, to people who believe the same way we do. The people in this market are probably not going to go out and buy the "Left Behind" books so they wouldn't choose that series over ours. The mainstream Christian market didn't have a choice between our books and the "Left Behind" books because ours were never marketed in the mainstream Christian market as competition for "Left Behind."

I believe our books were published before the "Left Behind" series began (at least *Eleventh Hour*), but I'm not positive when *Left Behind* came out. I highly doubt they were looking for something to compete with the "Left Behind" series. It was more like the year 2000 was coming and there was an interest in end times books.

I have not read the "Left Behind" series yet. But, at one time I was a Pentecostal and I remember seeing a series of videos about the rapture. I want to say the title was something similar to "Left Behind." Those videos scared me to death.

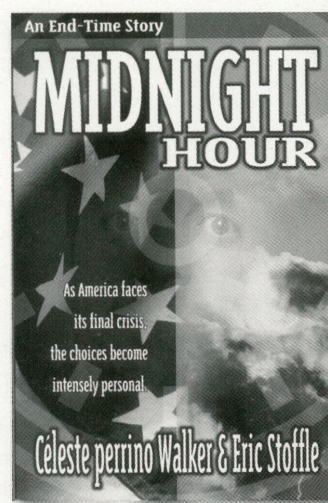
Q: How did the collaboration with Eric work?

A: It worked really well. At first we just added about ten pages each time the manuscript went back and forth. Later, we settled on our own characters and



***Eleventh Hour* by Céleste perrino Walker and Eric Stoffle. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1998.**

Worldwide confusion. Personal tragedy. International chaos. Sinister forces plot to take over the U.S. government in the name of God. (from the book cover)



***Midnight Hour* by Céleste perrino Walker and Eric Stoffle. Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1999.**

A country without a president. A world without a leader. Three men poised on the brink of supreme power. When people choose tyranny over chaos, no place on earth is safe. In the sequel to *Eleventh Hour*, America faces its final crisis. (from the book cover)

we'd add on mostly to our own characters. We consulted each other regularly about the plot line though, and we stuck with the ten pages at a time rule so neither of us could write the book out on a limb. We kept each other in check that way.

Q: How much research did you have to do for the books?

A: I didn't do much research for the books, specifically. I had read a lot on the subject. I think, being Adventists, we all "research" the end-times more or less. We have this fascination with what's going to happen at the end.

Your average Adventist has a working knowledge of what the end-times are going to hold. There are several "theories" about how exactly it's all going to come down, but for the most part the specifics are anybody's guess. The medical information was easy enough given my nursing background. Eric wrote all the political stuff, which I wouldn't have had a clue about. I did a lot of research about the virus though. I believe the book I read was called *The Hot Zone*. That was very helpful. And I had some articles about the Mary and her "works."

Eric and I didn't want to concentrate on the theories so much as on how the people would react to the events and the truth, when they learned it.

Q: How long did each take to complete?

A: It's hard to say because we were both working on other things at the time. I think *Eleventh Hour* might have taken a year (published in 1998) and *Midnight Hour* six to eight months (published in winter of 1998-99). Seems like we had to rush that one.

Q: What kinds of theological expectations did the publisher put on you and your co-writer?

A: We had to represent the Seventh-day Adventist Church in theology, but write in a non-denominational way so the book could be marketed outside the Church or given to non-Adventist friends without them thinking it was "churchy."

Q: What kind of marketing plan does your publisher have for these books, other than Adventist bookstores?

A: They've been out a couple years . . .

campmeeting is about the only marketing plan Adventist books receive. At least that I am aware of.

Q: You talked about how the publisher asked you to tone down the "Adventist" aspects so the books could be marketed to a general public. When will this be done?

A: Pacific Press created an imprint called Sycamore Tree under which they publish books that aren't specifically Adventist, for example, they don't mention Adventism specifically. They were/are hoping to market these books to the general public, but so far they don't have any avenues open . . . mainly Christian Booksellers Association (CBA). There are NO marketing attempts outside the Church that I am aware of. Yes, the general market needs to hear it the most. I think the publisher is relying on Adventists sharing the books with their friends.

Q: What has been the response to Eleventh Hour and Midnight Hour?

A: The people I have heard from have been very positive about the books. One woman wrote and said, "I just finishing reading *Eleventh Hour* and *Midnight Hour*. Whew! At first I thought they would make everyone paranoid, but now that I have nearly finished they give me great courage for what may lay ahead." We did get a lot of "criticism" for leaving *Eleventh Hour* on a cliff-hanger. The Adventist Book Center managers I met begged me not to do it again. A woman wrote to me and said, "I can't believe you left us hanging like that. Eric Stoffle must have put you up to it. You'd never do a thing like that." (Ha ha!!)

Q: How did writing the book change or affect you?

A: It helped me to focus on the relationship with God, something I had been trying to do more for years. That's what's important, after all. Not how it all comes down in the end, but how your relationship with God is. Do you have a relationship that won't be shaken? If not, now's the time to make it right.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



The Politics of Aging

In his otherwise stimulating article ("The Politics of Aging," *Spectrum*, autumn 2000) Ron Osborn mistakenly asserts that "a majority of the divisions violated the Church's working policy by failing to send the proper quota of lay members to the session." Osborn supports this claim by referring to preliminary delegation quota figures (issued two months before the session) published in the *Adventist Review* on June 30, 2000.

From a quick reading of the General Conference Constitution one might conclude that the number of laymembers and the number of pastors/teachers/nonadministrators should be equal and that the combined number will constitute 50 percent of the entire delegation. A closer look at the wording of Art. 4, Sec. 8 is warranted: "In the selection of regular delegates and delegates at large, organizations shall choose Seventh-day Adventists in regular standing, at least 50 percent of whom shall be laypersons, pastors, teachers, and nonadministrative employees, of both genders, and representing a range of age groups and nationalities. The majority of the above 50 percent shall be laypersons."

The first point to observe is that these ratios apply to delegates who are "selected." Members of the General Conference Committee, along with the associate directors of General Conference departments, are delegates-at-large by virtue of their positions. There is no process of selection involved. A further thirty-four delegates from the General Conference staff are included in the delegates-at-large category. However, it is not possible to select laypersons or administrators in this group since all are considered to be within one classification (nonadministrators in the pastors/teachers/nonadministrators group). Therefore, the number of "selected" delegates is 1,674 (2,000 minus the groups listed above).

Of the 1,674 delegates, at least 50 percent (837) should be comprised of laypersons, pastors, teachers, and nonadministrators. Further, a majority of this group (or 419) should be laypersons. The constitution does not set a maximum in these groups; instead it establishes minimums. Delegation quotas were carefully monitored in the weeks leading up to the session. All divisions were in compliance with the constitutional quotas. Two weeks prior to the session there were 483 lay delegates (including the forty-eight laypersons on the GC Committee) and 557 pastors/teachers/nonadministrators (including the twenty-six in that category from the GC Committee) in the total delegation of 1,938 at that moment. (Not all divisions sent their entire quota of delegates and unfortunately some delegates authorized to attend were unable to obtain visas.)

Osborn's observations about the unequal numbers of laypersons and pastors/teachers/nonadministrators are correct but his conclusion is somewhat faulty. The higher number of delegates in the pastors/teachers/nonadministrators group arises from the fact that these two groups, laypersons and pastors/teachers/

nonadministrators, comprised more than 50 percent of the delegation. A greater number of the second group was selected than was required in the constitution.

The Toronto session approved some revisions to this and other clauses of the constitution, which should aid the interpretation for the future.

Lowell C. Cooper
General Vice President
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Ron Osborn responds:

I appreciate Elder Cooper's letter. He calls attention to several important facts that were not reflected in my article, including the modification of delegate compositions in the weeks leading up to the session; the higher total number of nonadministrator delegates in Toronto than required by the constitution; and the difficulties some divisions underwent in sending their intended delegations.

After carefully reviewing the constitution and the updated figures Elder Cooper presents, however, I still believe that the voice of the laity was less than it should have been in relation to the rest of the regular delegates and delegates-at-large. The constitution does not state any specific number of laypersons that must be selected, but a ratio of half or more of the selected delegates. By Elder Cooper's revised figures, there were 483 lay delegates and 557 pastors/teachers/nonadministrators—still well less than half the combined total stipulated under the constitution.

In the overall context of church administration, an uneven balance between these groups will have a stifling effect on dialogue since persons employed by the Church often have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. In the context of youth representation, the results are likewise cause for concern since the majority of college and postcollegiate age Adventists are not employed by the Church and fall under the category of laity.

Application for a Christian Pen Friend

I kindly submit my request for a Christian pen friend to you. This pen friend will keep on strengthening my faith by feeding me spiritual views as we're in the time of the end. I am a male aged thirty-nine. I have a Christian family of six. I am a health worker by profession serving at the Mitandi SDA dispensary under hard circumstances of insurgency in Western Uganda. I shall be very happy to get your Christian response.

Hezrou Kasasya
Mitandi SDA Dispensary
P.O. Box 487
Fort Portal Uganda

Race Relations in the Church

Articles in the *Adventist Review* and in *Spectrum* about race relations in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and concerning forgiveness—individual and corporate—plus what I believe is the influence of the Holy Spirit, have brought me to this point of wanting to confess and ask forgiveness for what I now think is a moral wrong of more than half a century ago.

In 1946, I had the responsibility and privilege of editing the *Golden Cords* at Union College, where I was a student. In that annual the student pictures are so arranged that pictures of the minority students are placed at the end of each class group. The responsibility was not solely mine, and I heartily wish some advisor or faculty member had said, "Josephine, we can't do that!" However, that didn't happen, and I am the one feeling a conviction to apologize at this late time.

Because of difficulties with finding current addresses for all the people who may have been hurt by this segregation, and other complications, I'm taking the route of writing to these publications. If this letter is published, and if you as a reader know anyone who may be involved, please call that person's attention to this letter, or send me the person's address so that I can write to him or her personally.

I ask forgiveness not only from the students who experienced the discrimination, but also from family members, readers of the book, and any others who may have been hurt.

How thankful I am that we serve a God who is eager to forgive, and I hope that his children who have been wronged may also feel it in their hearts to extend forgiveness.

Josephine Griffin Benton

Ellen White's Ancestry

To Ronald Graybill:

I hope that your book review, "That 'Great African-American Woman,' Ellen Gould Harmon White," which appeared in *Spectrum* (Autumn, 2000) does not represent the position of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. It tends to raise questions in the mind of the readers that the Seventh-day Adventist denomination leans toward racism.

Since my book was released, the E. G. White Estate, Incorporated, whose office represents the official voice of the Church concerning matters pertaining to the prophet, after your study thirty years ago, has hired another genealogist to continue the research into the ancestry of Ellen Gould Harmon White.

My book states my findings after visiting with family members, interviewing many old-timers of the Church, and reading historical documents from state archives, visiting grave sites, and reading the tombstones of those who lived before the development of this nation.

Did those who researched the topic thirty years ago, have presence of mind to extend their search into the black/colored communities? I sought to develop a study on the contributions of African-Americans and the development of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. It began as a response to questions put by the present generation. As in the parable of Jesus concerning the lady and the lost coin, it is interesting what can be found when the house is given a thorough cleaning.

Charles E. Dudley Sr.

Issues the Church Cannot Afford to Ignore

Greetings from Denmark. Recently I shared the article by Tihomir Kukolja, "Issues the Church Cannot Afford to Ignore," (*Spectrum*, Autumn 2000), with an outstanding Anglican and a friend of the Adventists, Dr. Martin Conway. He read it with interest. Dr. Conway was made a doctor of theology by the Archbishop of Canterbury in Lambeth Palace, London, and he was a candidate for general secretary of the World Council of Churches, a few years ago. His involvement in the ecumenical movement also included long service in the Student Christian Movement in the UK, the World Council of Churches and the British Council of Churches. Currently, he is chairman of the Oxford Diocesan Board for Social Responsibility. He has given me permission to share his comments with you. He wrote:

"Thank you for the chance to see the article by Tihomir Kukolja. I was not aware of the Adventist dimensions of the incidents in the South Pacific, or in ex-Yugoslavia, although I had been very struck by the book on Rwanda by Gourevitch.

"First, welcome to the ranks of Christians and churches that are struggling with all these never-ending political, economic, and social dilemmas! What seems to European Christians to be the standard view—that the church should have nothing to do with politics—is grossly oversimplified, and only leads, as the article trenchantly demonstrates, to a "hiding the head in the sand" approach that helps no one. For better or worse, Christians are going to get involved in one way or another in political and other dilemmas and both need and deserve careful, intelligent, biblical teaching from their churches. So, all strength to those who can participate in programs through which disciples can learn how to teach in that field.

"Second, while Harry Blamires (quoted in Kukolja's article,) has been a useful and well-regarded teacher, he is by no means the only—and certainly not the most recent—writer in this field for the non-Adventist segment of Christianity. There are extensive libraries available. For example, the Roman Catholic Church has, of course, a proud history of social teaching, of which the statement "The Common Good" by the English/Welsh bishops, published in the run-up to the 1997 General Election in the United Kingdom is a particularly good example, much admired by other churches.

"Among Protestant churches in the United Kingdom Professor Duncan Forrester, who just retired from the University of Edinburgh, has directed a Centre for the Study of Public Affairs, which has produced a series of Occasional Papers that are regarded highly. His own book, *Beliefs, Values, and Policies—Conviction Politics in a Secular Age*, the Henseley Henson Lectures of 1987-1998 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) might be as good an introduction as most."

Boerge Schantz

Denmark

(A subscriber and reader of *Spectrum* from its beginning.)

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Gamaliel and the Politics of Adventism

FROM
AAF

If the history of Christianity teaches us anything, it is that church unity cannot be achieved by exercising coercive power. This approach does not work. Again and again Christians have thought they could rid the church of disunity by stifling dissent. Just as frequently their attempts to do so have caused even greater division and discord. This sad cycle has been repeated so often that it is amazing we are still tempted to try it again in the vain hope that this time it will succeed. The exercise of coercive power in church politics has never worked. It will not work now.

How much better it is to recall the wisdom of Gamaliel! Speaking of Peter and the others who had defied the authority of the religious leaders of their time by declaring that “We ought to obey God rather than men,” this astute Pharisee advised forbearance. “If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught,” he declared. “But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God” (Acts 5:29, 38-39 KJV).

Gamaliel was wise enough to know that he could learn from others even though he was “a doctor of the law.” If we could talk with him today, I suspect he would say that the only way to drive out bad ideas is to offer better ones. If an idea has merit, it will enjoy growing support no matter how many are arrested, tried, prosecuted, convicted, and punished. But if an idea is not sound, it will eventually die a natural death. What do we need in the interlude? Wisdom and patience!

Let me be specific about two current initiatives in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, one of which strikes me as helpful whereas the other does not. Although I have not yet had the opportunity to attend one, my impression from the reports of others is that the “Faith and Learning Conferences” are making a positive contribution. In these seminars, SDA teachers from around the world share the results of their research and reflection with their peers in ways that are mutually instructive and beneficial. This is exactly what we need. On the other hand, the administrative committees now being developed to certify or not certify those who teach religion in SDA colleges and universities will fail. Unlike the “Faith and Learning Conferences,” which need more funding so that more people can participate, these committees are an attempt to deal with unwelcome ideas by applying administrative and financial pressure, the procedural equivalent of trying to extinguish a fire with petroleum.

The administrative approaches now being developed in response to the “historic Adventists” are even more likely to make matters worse. These more conservative members of our community of faith experience certain grievances against our denomination that may or may not always be justified. On the other hand, as one who has sometimes been criticized by them, I know that what they say and do sometimes hurts. Nevertheless, nothing will be gained, and much will be lost, if our church makes good on its promises to “deal firmly” with these brothers and sisters of ours unless they conform. Again, as Christian Scripture and history both show, this approach will not work.

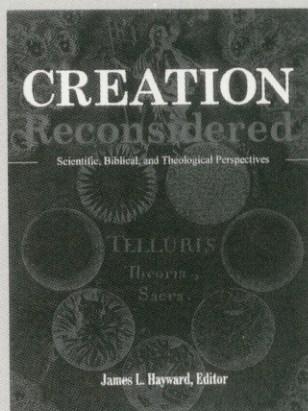
Where is Gamaliel when we need him?

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In honor of Sallie Lorenz
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Teri Zipf's first book of poetry, *Outside the School of Theology*, won the 1998 William Stafford Memorial Poetry Award. Her short stories, essays, and poetry have appeared many journals, including *Salon*, *Savoy*, *The Melic Review*, *Terrain*, *Left Bank*, *Northern Lights*, *Kinesis*, *Revisatatlanticas* (in translation). *Outside the School of Theology* is available at bookstores and online retailers. Teri@otsot.com

Outside the School of Theology

Outside the School of Theology, an article From The Sun is taped to the wall. "Adam & Eve's Skeletons Found—in Colorado!" the photo shows two

skeletons lying rib by rib. Their knees bend in the same direction. Adam's in the space behind Eve's. His right arm—humerus, radius, and ulna—stretches beneath Eve's head,

her pillow for the night, for forever. I'm glad to see Adam didn't hold a grudge about the apple. Of course, a lot has happened since then. Cast out of the Garden, they

wandered for a while, took up farming. Maybe when Cain was grown they bought a Winnebago and criss-crossed America, sent postcards to the grandkids.

"Overheated in a godforsaken desert," Adam would say. "Think I'll call it Death Valley." He was still in charge of naming. Finally one day,

they got tired. Or maybe they thought they had wandered back to Eden. I've felt that way, in Colorado. So many years had passed, they had

forgotten about the snake. Eve's days of childbirth were long gone and Adam was done scraping his living from the thin soil of Gosen.

They lay down. They looked at the stars. They were so old they no longer thought they could distinguish good from evil.

They said their nightly prayer for Abel. Eve said, "Adam, it's time to go home." And Adam said, "Alright, dear. Good night."

By Teri Zipf

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