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SPECTRUM

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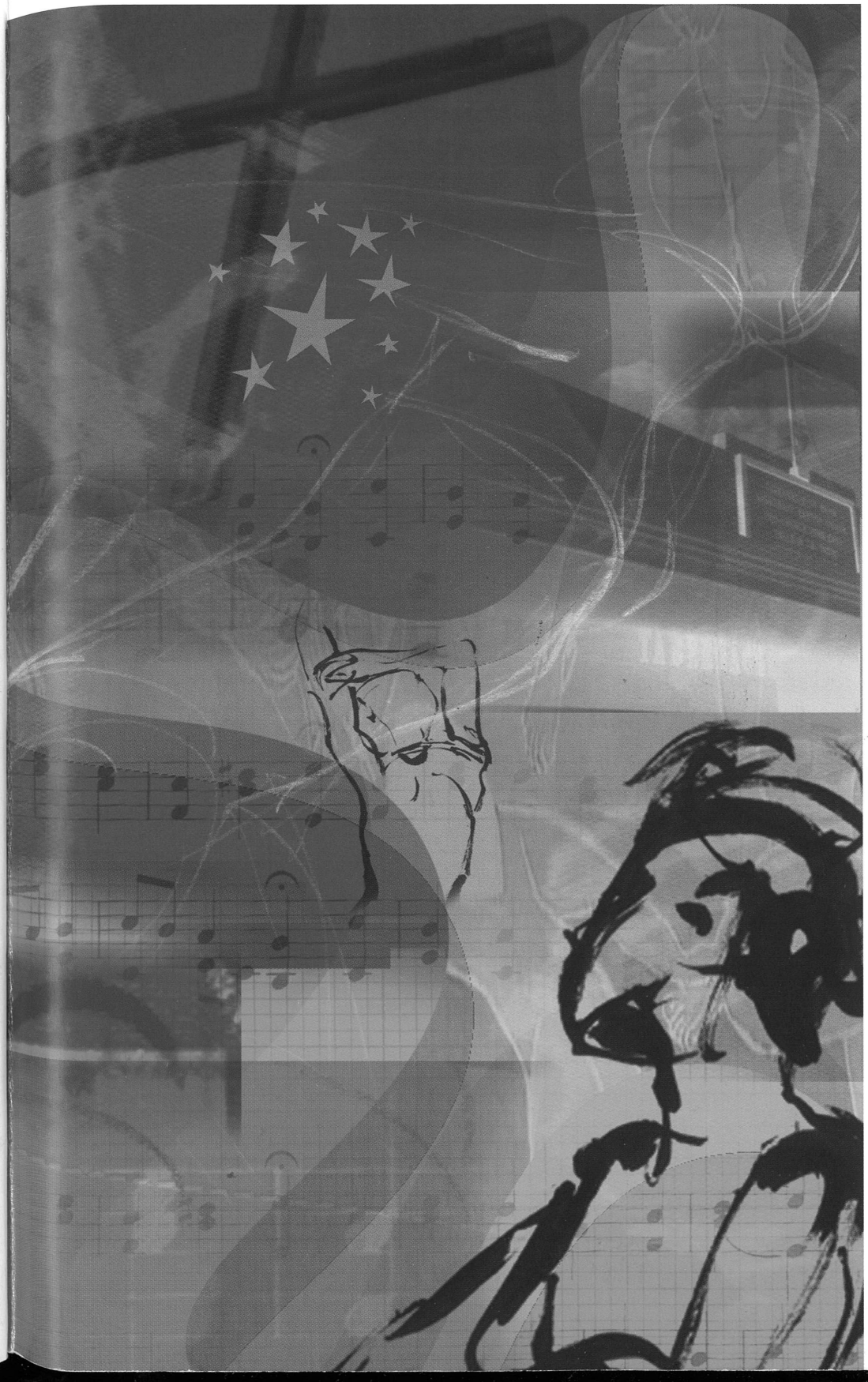

Interview with Herbert Blomstedt

God as Artist

A Time to Mourn, a Time to Grand March

Burnout: Paying the Cost for Compassion

The Openness of God: A New Level of Discussion

SPECTRUM

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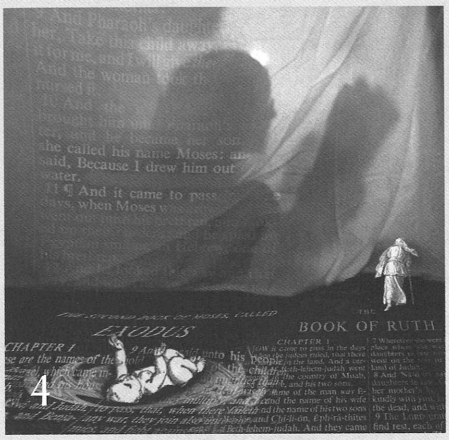

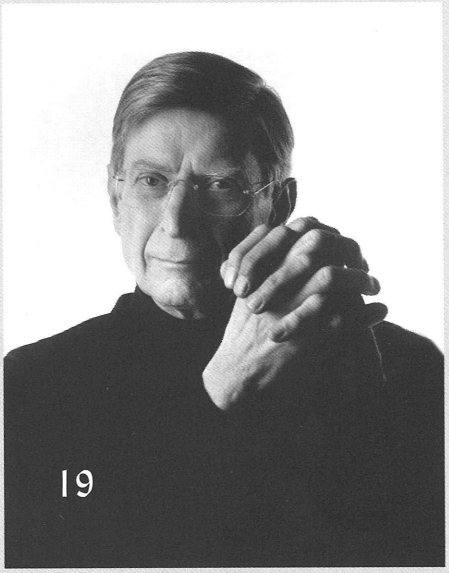

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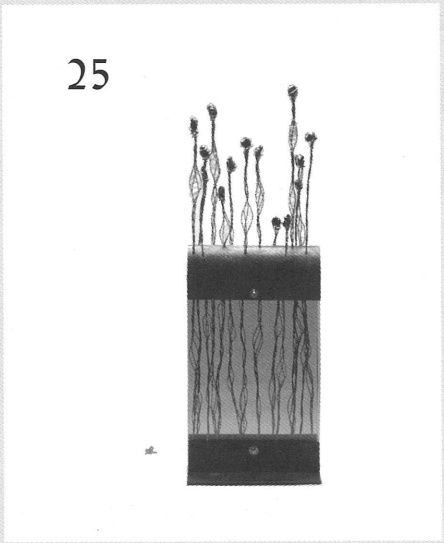

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Truth Calvin Klein and Beauty

Now that Calvin Klein has bottled the fragrance of Truth in a tall square bottle that literally leans slightly to the right, I spray myself with it liberally every morning. It makes me feel soooo righteous. Now that Nordstrom has a Narrative Department, I feel that I can simply change my clothes and be someone else in the story of my life. Perhaps this week I'll see if I can still be a teenager in a tank top and orange paisley pants.

The marketplace has stolen some of my favorite spiritual words. When I see two-page advertising spreads for Aventis, I always do a double take and look for a church. So to say that this is the health and beauty issue of *Spectrum* is an effort to reclaim those words with old meanings—not those of the marketplace. What's health got to do with Sabbath keeping? James Londis has an answer, particularly for health care workers.

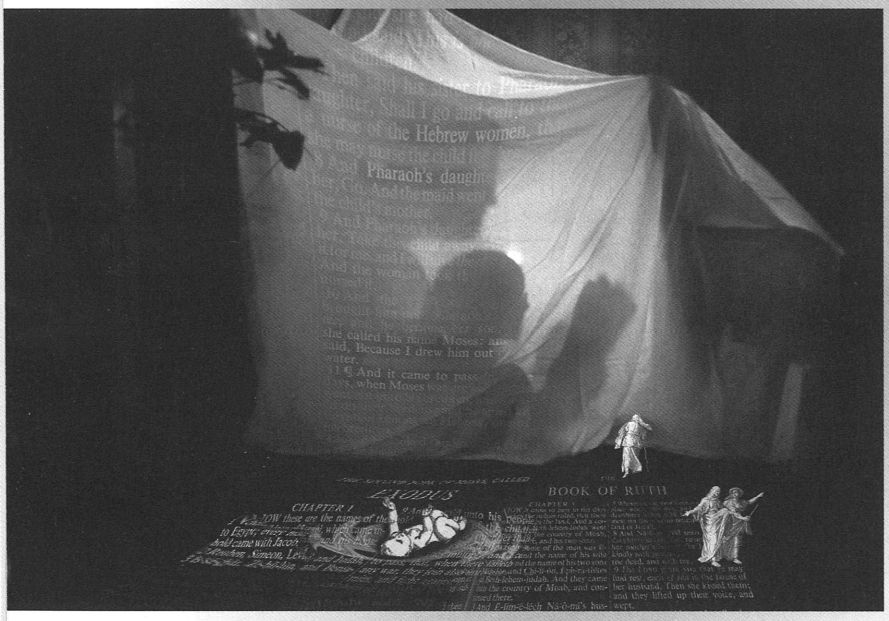
Charles Scriven shows us the holiness of beauty. Other definitions and metaphors lace the issue. Chris Blake makes us rethink dancing. Glenn Greenwalt paints a picture of God as an artist, and Richard Rice reminds us that truly understanding God as a God of love has far-reaching implications as he reviews the history of the openness of God movement.

This issue also sparkles with personalities that would make *Vanity Fair* or *Talk* proud. Our interview with Maestro Herbert Blomstedt reveals the theologian in the musician. We find another theologian lurking in singer Patty Cabrera, who implores us to enjoy God.

My hope is that reading this issue will help you enjoy God in provocative new ways. To paraphrase a Czechoslovakian composer, truth is the object of this issue, beauty is the bait.

Bonnie Dwyer
Editor

The Bible and *Imagination*



The Tent and the Missionary: Reading Scripture as an Adventist

By Kendra Haloviak

I first learned to read the stories of Scripture under a Sabbath tent. After my dad had spent a long week going to classes during the day and working nights, he spent Friday evenings with his preschool daughter. We shared an exciting routine. As the Sabbath drew near, Dad and I made the living room of our apartment into a huge tent. We took blankets and held down the edges with large coffee table books. Then we took broom and mop handles and raised the middle of each blanket to form a huge tent that would have brought pride to any pastoral team that has worked camp pitch for summer camp meeting.

Dad and I crawled under the tent and read Bible stories until one or both of us fell asleep. We read about Esther, Joseph, Jesus, the little maid who helped Namaan, and my favorite of all Bible stories back then, baby Moses.

I wonder how those earliest readings shaped what I read . . .

—dim lights under the blankets . . . how did they color what I saw?
—that connection of Scripture with Friday evenings/the beginning of Sabbath . . . and
—a time set aside for kids and building tents and reading Bible stories
—how did that setting select where I read . . . my questions? My answers?

Back in those years "reading the Bible" and "keeping the Sabbath holy" was a blast . . . an adventure that invited participation. . . .

Under the Sabbath tent, we were traveling with the children of Israel as they set up their tents in the wilderness! (With carpet, air conditioning, heating, indoor plumbing. . . .)

We joined Jacob and Joseph, Rachel and Ruth. . . .

Reading the Bible was safe, cozy, reassuring. . . .

Eventually the stories mingled with my dreams. . . .

I was carried off to bed and the tent was put away, the coffee table books properly arranged again. . . .

I wonder how the Seventh-day Adventism of those early readings influenced/shaped my readings . . . what I saw . . . how I read (past tense) . . . how I read (present tense). . . .

The next morning I headed off to Sabbath School, where yet more adventures awaited. . . .

My friends and I always checked whether the person who had come to give the mission story brought a bag. Most did. These were the best stories.

We knew that at some point in the story of far away lands and strange children–who were really just like us, who loved to hear stories about Jesus–the missionary pulled out a spear, or mask, or tribal wear . . . something that we could see . . . and sometimes touch. And this thing–from so far away–connected us to another child . . . a little boy or girl who needed our prayers and our pennies . . . a little boy or girl who didn't have a Bible or picture books or felts, but who would do anything to learn about the stories of Scripture. We listened carefully, we gave our money gladly, we sang enthusiastically, we prayed earnestly.

I wonder how those mission stories shaped my earliest readings of Scripture . . .

—the urgency of the Second Advent
—the dedication of the missionaries
—the needs of children around the globe
—the songs about Jesus coming again.

Is it possible to talk about "Adventist Imagination" and the reading of Scripture? What does—what might—that mean? How does our Adventist Heritage affect the ways we read?

—where we choose to read . . . canon within the canon
—the questions we bring to the text . . .
—the contributions we make to biblical interpretation. . . .

To use language in Fritz Guy's *Thinking Theologically*, in his discussion of "Adventist Heritage," how does an appreciation for sacred time shape our readings? How does a hope in the ultimate triumph of God's love?

Ruth gleaning in the fields of Boaz.

A focus on the continuing ministry of Christ?
A concern for health and wholeness?
A commitment to truth?

Recently, in my "Jesus and the Gospels" class, we did a close reading of the story in Luke 13:10-17 of the bent-over woman. I'm always fascinated by what students see as they study a passage. They bring their close-reading essays, and we discuss those together. Of course, I prepare to share insights from various sources that aid my own understanding of the particular text and the Gospel in which it is found.

In the case of Luke 13, I am particularly grateful for insights from Joel B. Green, Leon Morris, contributions to InterVarsity Press's *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, and contributors to *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, Jerome Neyrey, editor.

In class, we discussed and noted that . . .

This is the last time in Luke's Gospel that Jesus is recorded as teaching in a synagogue, or even being in one. In his journey to Jerusalem there is more and more tension with the Jewish leaders. Toward the end of Luke's travel narrative, as Jesus restores another person, this time a "son of Abraham" whose name is recorded as Zacchaeus, the conflict and tension will not turn to rejoicing, as in this story, but the crowd will be silent.

Sickness in the passage—the sickness that has crippled this woman for eighteen years—is attributed first to a spirit, then to Satan. There is a demonic, even cosmic dimension to her illness. Satan keeps her bound. Therefore, the healing that takes place emphasizes a deliverance from Satan's grip: a messianic deliverance. The battle between Jesus and Satan plays

out in these few verses, in this short narrative, in the life of this bent-over woman. The story ends with the woman able to stand up straight!

The phrase "daughter of Abraham" is used only this one time in the Greek Bible. The crippled woman is restored to membership in the community. The Sabbath is the day of restoring Abraham's children! This Sabbath is a foretaste of the Kingdom of God!

From Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*: "It is in the sanctuary and on the Sabbath . . . that he [Jesus] commonly meets his people and gives them the joys of his salvation" (89).

The phrase "it is necessary" shows up in Luke's Gospel eighteen times (2:49; 4:43; 9:22; 11:42; 12:12; 13:14, 16, 33; 15:32; 17:25; 18:1; 19:5; 21:9; 22:7, 3; 24:7, 26, 44), and ten more times in Acts! Although the synagogue leader is trying to keep the congregation faithful to the Torah, Jesus suggests that precisely in order to keep the Sabbath "it is necessary" to release the woman from her illness. This is the whole point of the Sabbath! She must be made whole today, for it is the perfect day to be released from bondage. It is on the Sabbath that the whole world will be released from bondage and rest in God's finished work of salvation.

In class, we discussed these and other ideas. Then I collected the students' typed essays, eager to see the insights from those too shy to talk in class.

Joel Schander is a senior computer science and journalism major. Born and raised an SDA Christian, he has recently reaffirmed his commitment to Adventism.

In his paper, Joel shared an insight that was new to me. Joel expanded the boundaries of our periscope to include the parable just before the story of the bent-over woman.

According to his essay, Joel thinks that Luke purposely tells about a barren tree right before the bent-over woman passage. Luke does this because that is how society saw her—useless, unable to produce, taking up limited ground and resources. For Joel, the owner of the vineyard and fig tree is like the synagogue leader—both first ignore the barren one, then work against its restoration within the garden.

It is only when the gardener/Jesus intervenes that the barren one has the possibility of a future . . . and all this takes place on the Sabbath!

I was so blessed to read Joel's paper. Could Joel have made these connections without being a Seventh-day Adventist? Of course. But did his Adventism move him closer to this interpretation?

Did Joel see the gardener as Jesus because of an understanding of Jesus as intercessor? Was Joel more open to the Sabbath as restoration because he has been a Sabbath keeper most of his life?

Or is it possible that certain ways of experiencing Sabbath as a Sabbath keeper could make one less likely to see Sabbath as restoration, as with the synagogue leader, for example.

In addition to closing off certain readings, does our Seventh-day Adventism make others possible?

In *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke*, Joel B. Green sees the woman, previously excluded by the shame of her illness, "now restored to the community of God's people" (97). As mentioned in Jesus' inaugural sermon in Luke 4, here is "release" for those who are captive. Here is pardon, forgiveness. The bent-over woman is set free from her bondage.

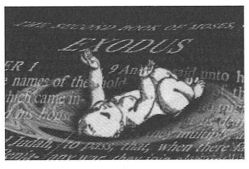
When God overcomes/releases what Satan binds, it is the embodiment of the Second Advent!

This Sabbath in Luke 13 is a preview of the Second Advent . . .

—when slaves, whose lot in life is to work all the time, cease from their labors like everybody else

—when women who have only looked down, are straight again and can see Jesus and everyone else face-to-face.

As I read Luke 13:10-17, and, thanks to Joel, Luke 13:6-9, I see the very descriptions of our "Adventist Heritage" expressed by Fritz Guy . . .



There have been moments...when I have pondered the meaninglessness of my life and the apparent absence of God from it.

—an appreciation for sacred time
—a hope in the ultimate triumph of God's love
—a focus on the continuing ministry of Christ
—a concern for health and wholeness
—a commitment to truth.

Ah, you say, but of course you see your convictions in this text. And I say . . . thank you to the Sabbath tent and the missionaries . . . teachers, textbooks, classes, conversations . . . and to students like Joel, who shaped and continue to shape the way I read Scripture as an Adventist.

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Kendra Haloviak is associate professor of religion at Columbia Union College. She presented this article as a devotional at a meeting of the Adventist Society of Religious Studies, November 17, 2000.

Reading Scripture Imaginatively

Proverbs vs. Ecclesiastes

By Casey Butterfield

Of all Bible books, I have appreciated Proverbs the most. I have loved its bits of wisdom. They have seemed like quick fixes for spiritual hunger. Flipping open the Bible to Proverbs, I could immediately find something I could apply today.

However, since I have read Ecclesiastes, I think we might have a new winner. I love the pessimistic side of Ecclesiastes. It gives us such a bleak view of life. The writers must have been bitter. They probably had a good excuse to be that way. They were in exile, living rough, dismal lives. God was not making his presence obvious, so the authors of Ecclesiastes had a good excuse to question God's involvement in everyday life.

Both Ecclesiastes and Proverbs take the stance that wisdom is the key to a successful life. In Ecclesiastes 7:25, this insight is placed in a short blurb that contrasts wisdom and foolishness. In this respect, as well, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs are similar. Ecclesiastes 9:13-10:20, is another section about the wise and the foolish.

But the books are not alike in their views of the balance between actions and consequences. Whereas Proverbs sees that evil is punished and good rewarded, Ecclesiastes takes the stance that righteousness is not always rewarded and that sin isn't always punished.

In this respect, Ecclesiastes applies to today's culture. I like the facts not only that I can relate to its take on life and wisdom, but also that I can apply it today. In today's world, good is not always the winner. Sometimes good people lose. There are many cases in today's world where the bad guy wins. Today, evil is often rewarded.

This is why I appreciate the approach to life taken

David being made King of Judah.

in the book of Ecclesiastes. There have been moments in my life when I have pondered the meaninglessness of my life and the apparent absence of God from it. No matter how hard or how frequent I tried to pray for help, no answer ever came.

We pray for justice. We want justice. But today, justice is rare, even for the innocent. Given today's sociohistorical context, Ecclesiastes speaks to me. I am naturally a pessimistic person. I always plan for the worst. I realize that punishment and justice do not always come to those who deserve them. And justice is not always given to the righteous.

I love the ideal in Ecclesiastes of not worrying about things, but rather accepting them for what they are (5:8-6:12). For everything there is a season. For everything there is a reason. This simple truth can save us much stress and heartache. Acceptance is the key to surviving hard times.

Finally, there is a core truth behind all: Everything is meaningless. At first, this declaration may sound extreme. But the author makes a valid point. Isn't it true that God above is what's important? What about faith? Why care about the wisdom and pleasure of the world? What can these things gain a person?

Because of these insightful statements and ideas, I must say that I now prefer Ecclesiastes.

Casey Butterfield wrote this paper as a senior communication major at Columbia Union College. He lives in Silver Spring, Maryland, and is now working on a short film

A Play on the Word *House*

2 Samuel 7:1-17

By Rosezanne DaKanay

It is a wonder how a Bible author comes up with a theme for a Bible passage. It is indeed only through the wonder of the Spirit. Such is an example found in the book of 2 Samuel. In 2 Samuel 7:1-17, the author plays with the word *house*, which carries different meanings in different parts of the passage—from being a palace, to being a temple, to being a dynasty.

In this passage, King David is enjoying the fruits of his labor and wishes that the ark of the covenant be given a permanent home. The ark has been carried from one place to another. King David feels it isn't right for him to live in a "house of cedar" while the "ark of God stays in a tent" (verse 2).

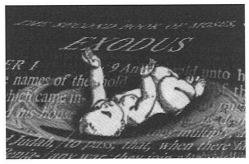
If I were in David's position, I would certainly wonder about where the ark of the covenant should be placed. I would feel, no doubt, a sense of duty—as he did—to the ark of the covenant, a powerful symbol of the presence of God.

Being in a close relationship with God, as David was, God was able to converse with him. In verse 8, God gives David an answer: "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel." God tells David directly that he has made it possible for David to be king. It was God's doing that made it possible for him to live in a house of cedar. God puts David in his place.

In verse 5, God questions David about his desire to build a house for the ark of the covenant. "Are you the one to build me a house to live in?" seems like a sarcastic question from God. David is climbing the ladder of success. God questions David effectively and reminds him of the fact that it is God who establishes and destroys kingdoms.

It is within this context that the author wonderfully interweaves plays on the word *house*. In the first two verses of the chapter, the word represents a palace. In verses 5, 6, 7, 9, and 13, *house* is a temple. In verses 11 and 16, the word refers to a dynasty.

It is important to remember that, upon the establishment of a kingdom, the ruling party naturally wants it to last. David equates the lasting of his kingdom with the presence of God. So long as God is in the midst of the kingdom, the kingdom that he has allowed to come into existence will continue. The author is trying to stress a significant thought by playing with the word *house*. To a king, it is important



to know that he has established a kingdom that will last. Ultimately, though, it is God who has the final say. He cannot be subjected to dwell in a house/temple because he is God.

Although it can be confusing to a modern person to understand different meanings of the word *house*, the word can be easily understood as a symbol of power. David felt it was his duty to look over the ark. This is a noble thought. However, it is God who establishes kingdoms and destroys them. After all, he is God, and God can take care of himself.

Rosezanne DaKanay was a freshman nursing major at Columbia Union College when she wrote this paper for a religion class taught by Kendra Haloviak. She lives in Ft. Washington, Maryland.

Falling Gods

1 Samuel 5:1-6:18

By Ryan Dingman

I was holding back laughter as I read 1 Samuel 5:1-6:18. I smiled to myself from the very beginning of this passage, when the Philistines captured the ark and Dagon was on the floor. I was still laughing as the Philistines failed to realize God's power even as they moved the ark to three different cities and only then realized that God was punishing them. Sometimes God shows us his will in no uncertain terms, yet we fail to recognize these most obvious signs.

The first incident was entertaining to me because Dagon was on the floor the morning after the Philistines captured the ark. The Philistines had no idea why this was so. I was thinking that Dagon had probably never fallen off its pedestal before. Also, I was thinking that this idol was a large one. It couldn't simply fall on its own. Yet the Philistines still did not make the connection. To prove his point, God acted again, and the next morning Dagon was on the ground once more, only this time his head and hands were cut off. It seems that God had to go the extra mile for the Philistines to show the fall was his doing.

I find it interesting that the word *cut* instead of *broken* is used to explain why Dagon's hands and head were on the ground. These two words imply completely opposite intentions. For something to be cut off suggests that someone intervened intentionally. However, when something breaks off it is not necessarily due to interference, but instead due to a fall or some other accident. It seems that it took a lot of convincing before the Philistines figured out that God was the force behind these events.

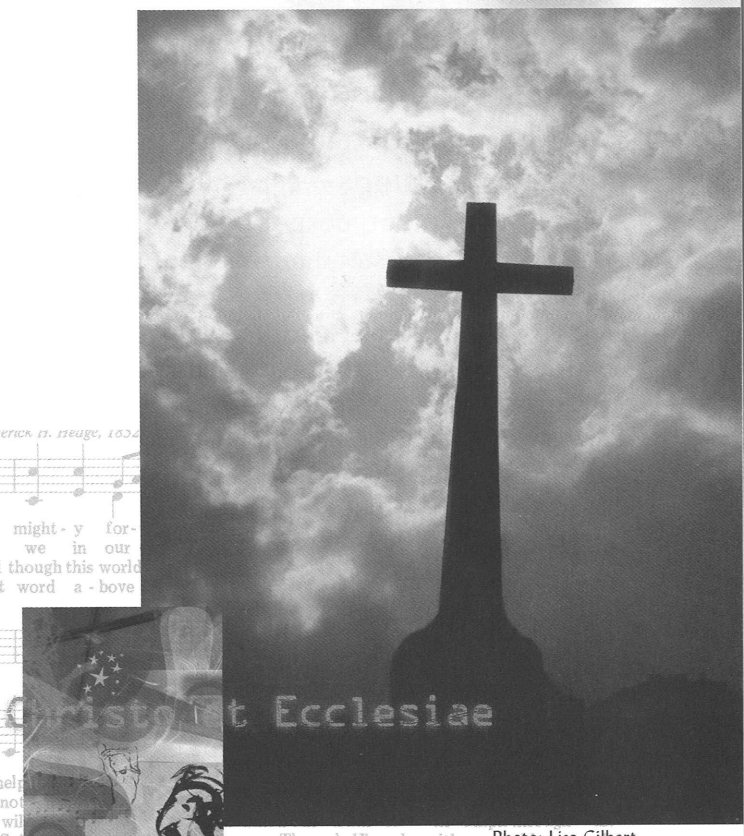
Next, God had to bring tumors on the people in the city of Ashdod, where Dagon dwelled, in order for them to fear him. The lords of the Philistines got together and decided that the ark of God would not affect the people in Gath, so the lords sent it there. As soon as the ark reached Gath people there were also struck with terrible tumors. It did not take the people of Gath long to fear God and rid themselves of the ark. They sent it straight to Ekron, where the people cried out before it even got there. They demanded that the lords get rid of the ark as soon as possible. The lords of the Philistines were so persistent and so sure that they could outsmart God that they did not see they could not have peace until the ark was out of their possession.

The Philistines were so horrified that they sent a guilt offering with the ark to make sure that the agony would leave them. I find it interesting that they were so terrified of the ark that they sent it back unaccompanied. My guess is that they couldn't find anyone who wanted to take it back. This could be a reason they decided to return it and not to hide it: They were afraid that if the ark was in their control the horrors they were experiencing would not diminish until they returned the ark to its rightful protectors.

This story reminds me of wanting something much, but when you finally get it, it often turns out to be different from what you had imagined. I believe this is how the Philistines viewed the ark. They thought that if they could only steal the ark they would have the power of God with them. How wrong they were.

Ryan Dingman, a senior accounting major at Columbia Union College when he composed this paper, graduated and got married the same day in April 2001. He lives in Ooltewah, Tennessee.

Truth, Beauty, and Dance



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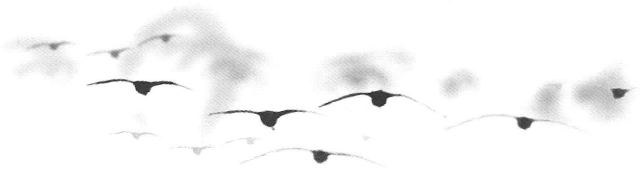

Thinking of God as an Artist

By Glen Greenwalt

Western theology is dominated by images of God as a divine sovereign. God is conceived as king, judge, returning conqueror. Not surprisingly, the theology that emerges from this tradition is constructed around images drawn from throne rooms, law courts, and military campaigns—especially those of a totalitarian society. God is an absolute, though benevolent, despot who works his will through a descending order of institutions and underlings. As a result, human institutions appear to mirror the divine order. Doctrine is formulated as a codex of laws, and church leadership is almost inevitably hierarchical. The troubling consequence of this logic is that it overlooks how thoroughly human is this way—as are all ways—of thinking about God. Thus, the political structures of the Church amazingly resemble those of tribal or medieval monarchies.

The idea that God may be more like an artist than a feudal lord has been in the back of my mind for some time. A career shift has brought this idea to front and center. After teaching theology on a college campus for over twenty years, I recently began working as a junior graphic artist in a prospering design company. Literally overnight, the rules of my universe were turned on their head. For the last six years of my teaching, church administrators had come to view our department as a threat to the Church. At the apex of the struggle, with considerable anger in their voices, they enumerated both real and fallacious complaints. At the heart of all these complaints was the charge that the Church possessed the truth; therefore, our job "was not to teach students how to think or imagine new things, but to 'indoctrinate' students in the truth we possess. Other people may search for the Truth, but we have the Truth." In this environment, novelty in and of itself was viewed as a threat to the existing order—which, as a matter of fact, is the way matters are in all totalitarian states.

When I began work as a graphic designer, I discovered a whole new set of rules. The work of graphic design is extremely precise. Mistakes are measured in the width of a human hair. However, my experience in this new work environment was not unlike the one that many Russians from the cold war era reported after first coming to the United States. The openness and freedom were almost overwhelming. Suddenly, in my new job as graphic artist, I was being told that I was too cautious. My new boss told me that the first rule of the company was to "have fun." With every new assignment I was told things like, "look over what we have done and come up with something better"; "we can't survive if we keep repeating ourselves"; "break the rules if you have to, but come up with something new"; "the only limits around here are those of your imagination"; "here are some suggestions, but you are the designer, it's up to you."

Suddenly, I had to rethink my own identity, as well as my understanding of the Church. My own indoctrination both as a farm boy of German ancestry and as a conservative believer did not prepare me to think highly of artists, much less to think of God as an artist. I appreciated the beauty artists brought to the world. My problem was with the artists themselves, who sat around drawing and painting when they could have been working. Furthermore, I feared that artistic freedom led to the kind of bohemian lifestyle decried by the Church. Even though my dad is very artistic—and I myself felt the power of art—I limited my exposure to art to looking at art books, wandering through galleries, and sketching in church, where I was not wasting time, I might be working, and my surroundings were wholesome.

What if God is first and foremost an artist, however? On closer reflection, the idea is not as peculiar as it first seems. In fact, it seems logically necessary. God is, after all, Creator, before God is Lord, or certainly Redeemer or Judge. We view God as Lord by fact of creation. A lord requires subjects, so that apart from creatures, God is not inherently Lord. Furthermore, God is only redeemer and judge by the fact of sin. So if creation is an artistic act, then God by definition must be an artist. What effect might such an insight have on our understanding of God?

If God is an artist, then God loves beauty. This suggestion is perhaps more controversial than it seems at first. Theologians, after all, are as quick to praise the beauty of creation as are artists and poets. The difficulty of this suggestion arises in viewing beauty as a measure of value. Most often, beauty is viewed as the superficial appearance of things, rather than as something inherently valuable. We are offended, therefore, by the reported quote from a famous model who said that if she had not been beautiful she would have become a teacher. Furthermore, history is replete with examples of artists who loved beauty, but lived immoral lives. Even if we came to agree about the inherent value of beauty itself, we would likely disagree over what we found to be beautiful.

Yet most of us would agree that a life without beauty would hardly be worth living. So what is this quality we yearn for, but have such difficulty defining or agreeing upon?

Beauty has been defined in many ways. Plato thought of it as the perfect harmony of things. Aristotle conceived of beauty as a state in which everything fits. For Friedrich von Schiller, beauty is something that confers happiness on us and causes us to forget that we are limited. Rollo May, in his book *My Quest for Beauty*, suggests that beauty is what gives us a sense of joy and rightness simultaneously. "Beauty gives us not only a feeling of wonder; it imparts to us at the same moment a timelessness, a repose—which is why we speak of beauty as being eternal."[1] Along similar lines, Victor Frankl, in his memoirs from the concentration camp, portrays beauty as a refuge from emptiness, desolation, and spiritual poverty produced by the horrific conditions of the camps.

> As the inner life of the prisoner tended to become more intense, he also experienced the beauty of art and nature as never before. Under their influence he sometimes even forgot his own frightful circumstances. If someone had seen our faces on the journey from Auschwitz to a Bavarian camp as we beheld the mountains of Salzburg with their summits glowing in the sunset, through the little barred windows of the prison carriage, he would never have believed that those were the faces of men who given up all hope of life and liberty. Despite that factor—or maybe because of it—we were carried away by nature's beauty, which we had missed for so long.[2]

Beauty, then, seems to be a state in which things are as they should be, not in a legal sense of meeting certain predetermined regulations, but in the sense that all of the elements come together in a satisfying way. As the chief designer at my firm says of things he is designing, "I think it just wants to be this way," as if the elements of the work call out to be arranged in a certain way. What interests me about this sense of right, in contrast to legal notions of right, is that one can never predetermine what will be beautiful, except in the most general fashion. Colors, textures, shapes, lines all change from one piece of art to another, but when they come together in something that is right, it is beautiful.

If God is an artist, then God must appreciate the infinite varieties of the beautiful. As we look closely at nature this seems to be the case. From very simple elements nature everywhere replicates itself into an infinite variety of shapes, forms, and living things.

Looking at nature, it appears that God did not foreordain a particular order for the universe, but rather imbued nature itself with the artistic capacity to shape and form itself in ever-new creations. This is perhaps what Ellen White speaks of when she describes the final restoration of the universe as one where one beat of harmony sounds throughout the universe.[3] It is not that God seeks peace in the universe governed by dint of arms, but that God envisions a world where all things move and find their place like streams seek the sea, or like flocks of blackbirds swirl and turn in flight. Beauty is located in the harmony created out of the interplay of diverse and often disparate elements. As C. S. Lewis somewhere remarks, in the perfection of heaven we do not become more alike, but unlike, in the way that no two blades of grass or two snowflakes are alike.

If God is an artist, then God enjoys the novel and the new. This suggestion is not the assumed posture of most religious faiths. Most portray a high need for continuity and conformity. As a result, as Rollo May points out, almost every religious institution harbors a timeless fear of its artists, poets, and saints, for they are the ones who threaten the status quo, which each community is devoted to protect. Forever unsatisfied with the mundane, the apathetic, and the conventional, artists, poets, and saints push always onto new worlds.[4] Yet the postulate that God as artist loves novelty seems to arise necessarily from our first postulate.

In the Church, we emphasize texts that say God is the same yesterday, today, and forever to imply that faith never changes, yet we overlook texts such as Isaiah 43:18, 19, which say that God is going to do new things, greater things than he has done before. Richard Rice and Fritz Guy have helped us think of ways in which God's character is constant but the dynamics of his love and activity are constantly changing. The metaphor of God as artist may help us give shape and form to this conception of God's dynamism. If God really is an artist with the considerable skill and talent that belongs properly to one of God's stature and being, then God cannot be someone who simply paints by numbers or continually repeats himself.

One of the designers where I work is a very intelligent man who entered the graphic design business by way of engineering. This man has had virtually no contact with the Christian faith, which leads to interesting comments—often laced with explicatives—as he tries to make sense of the numerous religious bulletins, brochures, and advertisements the firm helps design. Never before had I realized how much of the language of the church—such as love offerings and efforts—is totally unintelligible or even morally troubling or ridiculous when taken at its everyday street value. The very language that is coveted for its ring of piety within the church is silly or problematic to those who were not indoctrinated within the church.

As Jesus repeatedly pointed out, the businessmen and women of the world appear to be wiser than the saints of the church. No business could survive by holding onto its same language and logos. Businesses pay billions of dollars a year to design companies to help them make their products more attractive to customers. How can the church thrive with fossilized language and concepts? Maybe Ellen White was pointing us in the direction of the need for novelty and change when she spoke of "present truth."[5] Truth and novelty are not inherently contradictory terms. The logos of companies such as Texaco have undergone a great deal of change through the years, yet we recognize a Texaco sign when we see it. The church need not give up its values; it must find ever-new ways of understanding and expressing them.

If God is an artist, then he loves balance—particularly if the balance evokes movement and change. Most religious traditions love the language of balance and harmony. But when they speak of balance and harmony what they usually have in mind are stabilized structures. As a pastor, I once heard someone comment that if God had placed a fence around us for our protection, then he would have wanted us to be as

God envisions a world where all things move and find their place like streams seek the sea, or like flocks of blackbirds swirl and turn in flight.

close to the center of the field as possible, and not at the edges. Yet there could be no field without edges. As a matter of fact, boundaries are extremely important in art. A picture not yet framed never looks as good as it does with a fitting frame. However, good art is seldom centered in the middle of the frame. As a matter if fact, one of the first lessons a beginning art student must master is that of filling up the entire space within the frame. Not only is it inevitable that there will always be people and ideas at the boundaries of the Christian community and the Adventist Church, it is a fact that most of the growth of the Church—as in a plant or any living thing—takes place along its boundaries.

This is not to overlook the fact that nature is replete with centered, symmetrical features—eyes, ears, nostrils, hands, feet, fingers, and toes are perhaps the most self-evident. We seldom see things, however, in their symmetrical pose. The Egyptians painted human beings with their right eye directly forward, the face and thighs profiled, the torso facing the observer, and the feet with right-sided toes. They produced the idealized features of the human being, but in so doing they terribly distorted how human beings actually look in everyday life. They missed the thing itself for their idealization of it.

Again, one of the things a beginning art student must learn is that one can never produce "realistic" images of a person until one gives up trying to draw "eyes," "noses," "ears," and the like. This lesson is important because we never see a body from a stereotypical perspective. Look closely at someone in the room and you will notice that you probably don't really see his or her eyes, let alone the "whites of their eyes," but only a dark shadow of an odd shape—and the same holds for the rest of the nameable parts. Fingers are only partially there, and most likely only three show, legs are not of equal lengths like the legs of a table, and so on.

Rollo May suggests that perhaps the biblical prohibition against idols is particularly directed toward the human penchant to create static visions of God. "The creative artist and poet and saint must fight the actual (as contrasted to the ideal) gods of our society—the god for conformism as well as the gods of apathy, material success, and expletive powers. These are the 'idols' of our society that are worshiped by multitudes of people."[6] Thomas More somewhere makes the same point more poetically, when he says that in walking into a natural forest, one can't go first to a card catalog or find the tress and plants arranged alphabetically or have enough light to see everything with the same degree of detail.

Not even the Bible was composed as a book of law or an encyclopedia of facts, but as a scrapbook of stories, parables, sermons, letters, and even fables. If God wanted everyone to agree to a particular number of belief statements, would not God have written a formal statement of beliefs? The closest God ever came to giving us a creed was in writing out the Ten Commandments. However, the Ten Commandments are hardly a creed. Instead, they are a set of principles that evoke the creation of rules and standards under ever-changing situations. Still, the human penchant to write creedal statements goes unabated even in churches such as the Seventh-day Adventist and Baptist, both of which have historically rejected them.

Some in Adventism are dissatisfied even with the twenty-seven fundamentals of Seventh-day Adventist belief because they are open to wide interpretations. At the college where I taught, we were asked to sign a statement of narrowly defined propositions that looked amazingly like the creedal statement of the Adventist Theological Society—a society of self-policing Adventist conservatives. Our refusal to sign was seen as evidence of our disloyalty to the Church—even though the Church never voted on this document! Such actions arise from an understanding of God as feudal lord, not as the Creator of the Universe.

Balance in nature is not predicated on uniformity.

In our attempt to decipher all of the symbols of the Apocalypse of Revelation into time slots on a prophetic calendar we overlook the artistic implications of the Great Controversy theme: namely, that controversy can only exist in the universe because God risks it.

As a matter of fact, where any living population loses its diversity its survival is threatened. This example should give us room for pause as we observe the push for uniformity that now marks certain segments of the Church. Such behavior, rather than bringing vitality and health to the Church, deprives it of the cross-fertilization of ideas it needs for survival, in much the same way that inbreeding in zoos and clear-cutting of forests ultimately deprives species of the diversity needed for survival. If God creates and speaks as an artist, then theologians and church administrators may need to take a second look at how they go about their business if their goal is to be godlike.

If God is an artist, then the meaning of the parts must be discovered in their relationship to the whole. This idea is often lost sight of in religious faith, although it does appear in heresies. A heresy in faith is usually not so much a matter of getting something wrong as it is of treating something important as if it were all-important.

Artists seldom create by simply isolating a particular feature, or by following a step-by-step outline. Watching a professional artist work, one discovers that the artist will dab a little paint here, and then a little paint there, and perhaps then even cover over the first paint that was laid down, with a different color or image. The reason for this is not that the artist is disorganized. The artist works rather by discovering through the process of painting the relationship called for by the various elements of the painting.

Everywhere in nature we see this same shifting and transformation as various elements such as weather, living populations, and chance occurrences come together. Interestingly enough, our very word for ecology is derived from Eco, an abbreviated form for the Greek *oikos*, which means home—either a human home, a temple, the home of the gods, or even the astrological "house" or domicile of a planet. An ecological system is a place where things are at home with each other.

This concept suggests again that the language of throne rooms, courts, and warfare may not be the first language of divinity. The first language of the universe is home. As seen from space, the earth is a single, beautiful place. It is home to all of life, as we know it. We are creatures of the earth. It is our home. Unfortunately, we lose sight of the encompassing view of life in our territorial interests and conflicts. Even in Adventism, which so prides itself on being a single worldwide family, our doctrines are often co-opted by the language of law, courts, and military conflict. For example, the sanctuary doctrine is often depicted as the setting for a criminal court, rather than as a place where God comes to dwell with us, which turns it into a refuge from our adversaries. To think of God as artist is to restore the language of sanctuary as the place of refuge. More importantly, if God as artist dwells in the sanctuary, then the sanctuary is a place of worship and wonderment. Awe of God is not something that must be demanded, as by an earthly despot, but something that overcomes a person in the face of the magnificent.

Finally, (in art, of course there are no real "finally's," but in writing there must be) if God is an artist, then God is so committed to creativity that God is willing to chance chaos and even destruction for the sake of freedom. This claim is perhaps the most contentious one that arises from seeing God as an artist, for it leaves open the possibility that God risked not only death, but also murder, rape, and pillage in creation for the sake of freedom.

Inherent in the Adventist vision is the picture of the Great Controversy between God and evil. Unfortunately, in our attempt to decipher all of the symbols of the Apocalypse of Revelation into time slots on a prophetic calendar we overlook the artistic implications of the Great Controversy theme: namely, that controversy can only exist in the universe because God risks it.

Unlike most CEOs, God prefers risks to orchestrated outcomes. One of the real liabilities to the long-term growth and health of the Church is the present climate of suspicion and control. If church leaders are incapable of thinking like artists, they should at least

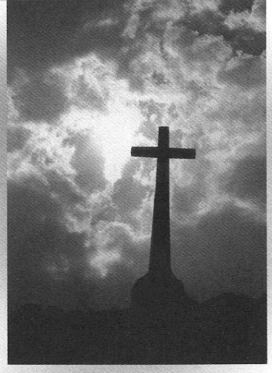

Photo: Lisa Gilbert

have the good business sense that one cannot secure resources by burying them, but that business must be done in the open marketplace of people and ideas. We talk and pray about the Spirit, but we organize and structure our Church by carefully insuring that no new idea or concept can come along and take us by surprise. We govern surprise out of the life of the Church.

An artist can execute a detailed and precise sculpture or painting, but the completed work emerges from countless preliminary observations, sketches, drawings, color studies, and the like. Artistic endeavors emerge upward out of life. They are not dictated downward. Most great artistic movements arise out of the creative interface of a number of artists, poets, art collectors, and others who meet and share ideas in their homes and studios, or in cafes and taverns. Art is a cumulative enterprise. It is seldom done well in isolation or in official academies. It grows out of the free exchange of ideas and perspectives, most of which end in failure. Yet it is precisely out of this uncontrolled, at times chaotic environment that great art emerges.

It is hardly surprising, then, that art is viewed by many as a threat to the establishment of order. As Rollo May has noted, "whenever there is a breakthrough of a significant idea in science or a significant new form in art, the new idea will destroy what a lot of people believe is essential to the survival for their intellectual and spiritual world. This is the source of guilt in genuinely creative work. As Picasso remarked, 'Every act of creation is first of all an act of destruction.'"[7] Admittedly, the destructive side of creativity threatens the security and peace we seek in joining the Church in the first place. Yet perhaps even our desire for security is outside the bounds of the faith Jesus promised, for he said he came not to bring peace but a sword.

Even this promise of Jesus has been co-opted by the language of law and military campaigns into the language of ecclesiastical courts and even crusades, whereas Jesus was talking about the inevitable rejection experienced by seers, saints, and other harbingers of the new. In other words, Jesus moved the language of rejection and suffering from the arena of victimhood that seeks only the end of conflict, to that of the challenge of being a creator of the new. Creative people, as May sees them, "are distinguished by the fact that they can live with anxiety, even though a high price may be paid in terms of insecurity, sensitivity, and defenselessness for the gift of the 'divine madness,' to borrow the term used by the classical Greeks."[8] In other words, rather than reading the Great Controversy story as the story of victims, in the way that Nietzsche read the Christian story, the Great Controversy is the inevitable consequence of a world in which people have the will to freedom—as a gift of God!

In the end, those who are condemned in the judgment are not those marginalized by society, but those who marginalize others. The Kingdom of God is described as a party where all are invited. It is the kind of place where there is laughing, singing, dancing, feasting, and celebrating. It sounds, that is to say, very much like the kind of place where artists, poets, musicians, writers have always hung out together.

Notes and References

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3. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1950), 678.
4. May, *Courage to Create* (New York: Norton, 1975), 27, 32.
5. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1. (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948), 88-89.
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The Song is a Sermon

An Interview with Herbert Blomstedt

By Roy Branson

On Sabbath, March 31, 2001, members of the Spectrum Advisory Council worshiped with Herbert Blomstedt in San Francisco. The following article is based on a presentation by him and on an interview with Roy Branson, both of which took place during the service.

Your father was a minister, and you have an older brother—Norman—who went into medicine. Those are two tracks that we are familiar with in the Adventist Church. But you ended up being a musician. That must have been somewhat traumatic within the family, even in your own soul. Did it seem at some points that becoming a musician was a frivolous thing that you were going to do, as compared to your father or your older brother? They pursued truth and mercy—and you were going to pursue beauty?

HB I never thought of music as frivolous (laughter), not the kind of music that I make. I often find frivolous music in church, but that's another story. Going into music was not an easy decision. But I had a big help. My mother was a musician. She became crippled by arthritis, but she still played the piano even when her hands were affected. She helped us boys to develop as musicians.

My father wanted me to be a preacher—just as he was—and I could imagine that as a possibility. But I eventually had my moment of triumph. Years later, when I was conducting the Danish Radio Symphony in Copenhagen, one Sabbath I was invited to visit the widow of a Dr. Erikson. She showed me the class book of the Broadview College class of 1921, the year my father graduated from this college for Scandinavian Adventists. There was a chart there for the graduating class of six or seven people. "What is your favorite expression?" "What is your aim in life?" And so on. My father was at the top—because you start with B, you know.

What caught my attention was his aim in life. He was graduating with a B.A. in theology, but his aim in life, it said, was to be a singer. He was really musical, my father. I'm sure that was one of the reasons he admired my mother so much, because she was a musician. Of course, when he said singer, I'm sure he didn't mean an opera singer; he meant singing evangelist. He was a very, very fervent Bible student, and he was a wonderful preacher, but to be a singing evangelist, that was perhaps his ultimate goal. He said to me, "Son, you are choosing the second best thing." When I read his aim in that class book, I thought, "Well, he wanted to be a musician, but he didn't make it!"

I was, of course, convinced that the audience in the concert hall was in many ways an ideal audience to preach to. The message of music can be very powerful. I knew many Adventist preachers in Sweden, where I grew up, and they were all my friends. Preachers seem even more musical than other people.

Did they encourage you to go into music as a profession?

HB They were older than me, and I had enough to do to manage my father and mother. I always took part in their services. I played the piano or the violin together with my brother and mother. We played trios and tried to embellish the evangelistic services. I remember one pastor of the Stockholm church had a wonderful tenor voice, a really beautiful voice, but his taste was still undeveloped. Once he even came to one of my concerts on a Friday evening—that was quite revolutionary at the time—and when we met at church the following day, he said, "I think you had more people at your services than I had at mine." So he got the idea.

How early did you have to make a decision in the school system in Sweden that you were going to be a musician?

HB In the late high school years and junior college I was crazy about playing. I practiced three, four hours every day, in addition to schoolwork. I had a wonderful violin teacher who was a concertmaster of the Gothenburg Symphony, and he told me, "You have to finish college. Otherwise you will not be a complete musician." That was what I did.

I am very grateful to him for that kind of advice. It is one thing to train your fingers and your musicianship, and another thing to develop as a complete person. In the long run, that defines what you can do with the music. I think all important musicians I know are deeply cultivated and spiritual persons. It's not enough to know all the symphonies and string quartets and operas, or whatever. You have to know also about the painting and literature of the period, and so on, to make possible a more complete view.

Did spiritual nurture during this time come from the Adventist community—your father, mother, and brother? Or were you also being nurtured by the religious tradition of Sweden because you were performing with different groups in the state church that were putting on large musical works?

HB In my early years, the state church played very little part. But later on when I entered the conservatory in Stockholm, of course, it was more and more prominent. Many of my teachers were church musicians. They were organists in the great churches in Stockholm and wonderful people.

There's a long and wonderful tradition of church music in Sweden, and it's even more remarkable today. You can hear in the Stockholm Protestant churches amateur choirs that sound better than many professional ones. Of course as a student, I earned a little money by singing in these church choruses, where my teachers were conducting on Sunday. And in studying musicology, you also study church music. Of course, that's not possible to do in our church because church music practically doesn't exist in it.

Was it a struggle or was it very easy for you to understand yourself as being your father's son, a participating Adventist, but also in some way a part of the Church of Sweden? I mean were you synthesizing all along, or were

Herbert Blomstedt

Herbert Blomstedt is conductor laureate of the San Francisco Symphony (SFS) and music director of the Gewandhaus Orchestra of Leipzig. In his decade at the helm of the SFS (1985-95), he led the symphony to worldwide recognition. Its recordings have received some of the world's most important awards, including France's Grand Prix du Disque for Nielsen's Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, Britain's Gramophone Award for Nielsen's Second and Third Symphonies, Japan's Record Academy Award for Grieg's *Peer Geyhnt*, and Grammys for Orff's *Carmina Burana* and Brahms's *German Requium*. In 1996, he assumed the post of chief conductor for Hamburg's NDR Symphony Orchestra. In 1998, he became music director to the Gewandhaus Orchestra, one of the world's most revered ensembles.

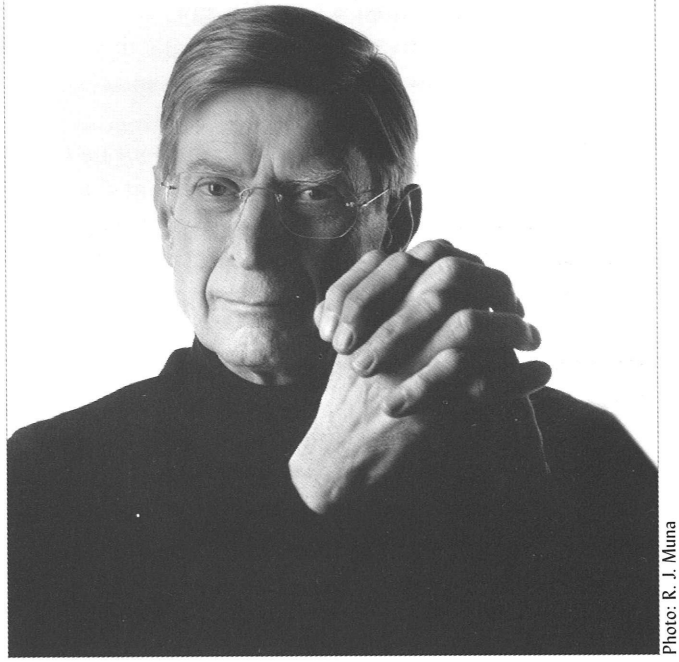

Photo: R. J. Muna

you feeling you were leading a bifurcated life?

HB I had no conflict. The conflict was at best artificial, and the conflict was with other people, not with me.

In Chaim Potok's book, The Promise, *which is about a boy from a Hasidic sect who breaks a lot of ties because he feels an obligation to a talent, the thing I remember thinking was that I had never felt that feeling of necessity. I was brought up to decide what to do on the basis of service, but here's somebody who was deciding on the basis of talent. I was wondering, during this period as you were deciding your identity, did you have a feeling that you had an obligation to a kind of God-given talent or set of talents, and did that embolden you to do whatever was needed to develop it for the Lord?*

HB Yes, very much so. But it was more-or-less unconscious, I might say, and here I had the complete support of my parents. There were never any discussions about me going to an Adventist school. For my parents, it was much better for me to stay at home—that's the best influence I could have had, in our home—and then I could go to the best public schools around.

There was always friction of course about being a Christian boy in a public school, especially at that time, when Saturday was a regular school day. I always had to go to the principal of the school and present my case. "You see, I am a Seventh-day Adventist and I want to keep the Sabbath. I cannot go to school on Sabbath." I did that for the first time when I was twelve or thirteen.

Before that, my father did it, but then I had to grow up. Do it yourself! That was very good for me. It helped me many times in future years—a kind of schooling, just as the cubs of animals get used to fighting to develop their muscles and hunting instincts, so I had to get used to frictions with the so-called world, and that was very good for me. I always had to stand alone anyhow. And then I had this unusual interest in music, practicing all the time. Strange fellow! I never really had any problem with my comrades, but I always felt I was kind of a loner, and I think that developed some spiritual muscles.

Why is that good?

HB Because you learn to stand by yourself, to decide for yourself, not do what everybody else does.

Have you gone through life feeling that you are an alien from a lot of different groups that you have to be with? The life of a conductor going around the world, has it ever been really lonely?

HB Not lonely in the negative sense. I enjoy being alone, but I enjoy people also when I choose to see them. I enjoy them very much, and then I cannot get enough of them. But the work is so big and the amount of study necessary so enormous that you never really get through. You always leave your work not fully done. That's why many musicians continue until they drop dead. There is always more to learn. We hope to do still better.

I think everybody has to be alone in order to develop. Otherwise, you will just copy other people, and that's not what I want. I admire other people very much; I don't think I'm very special in that way. But I need time for myself with my text, and my text is the score. Also, I need time with the Bible. This is the source, not the writings of pastor so-and-so, as much as I enjoy them and they sometimes stimulate me. But the source is the most important, and I can be very close to the source only when I am alone.

I know from past conversations that if you hadn't been a musician you might very well have become a theologian. I also know that you have bought the works of different theologians. Could you share with us the names of those who are in your canon of theologians, those who have spoken to you the most, and in what way?

HB There are many, many. Of course, I hunted in my father's library as a young boy and found many wonderful things. Two of the first books I remember reading were ones by J. N. Loughborough and W. A. Spicer about the providence of God, *The Hand that Intervenes.* They gave me great inspiration. How these two men tested God in the mission fields and with few means achieved big results!

These books were for me a sort of prolongation of Bible stories that fascinated me most: Joseph and Daniel. These were people who were alone and who fought for their ideals amidst a more-or-less hostile environment. I was receptive to that kind of spirit. These two Bible stories have continued to be models for me. There are many similar ones, of course, in our Bible.

When I got more independent in my thinking as a young boy, I had some severe arguments with my father. I did not really understand the doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary—that was a big question mark, to put it mildly. When he sensed that, of course, he was

very afraid that his son was going to the . . . what do you call it?

The dogs

HB Going to the dogs. Wonderful. One of my father's students, Pastor Eric Erenius, who was without question the best evangelist in Sweden in my young years and at whose meetings I often played, made a strange request of me late in life. We had summer houses close to each other. He asked me to visit him, and he said, "I want to ask you to write my obituary when I die, and I want to tell you something about my life." He then told me some amazing things that he never would have discussed in public.

He confided in me that he never believed in the story about the heavenly sanctuary. And that was never a problem for him. I thought that his admission was good to hear; perhaps I was not alone. The heavenly sanctuary was not a point of conflict for him. He just kept quiet. He loved his church and did not want to sow dissension or strife. His church was not ready for that discussion.

So there were theological questions like that. But they never estranged me from Adventist Christianity. They were never problems because I make mistakes as a musician. Why can't a theologian make mistakes? It's just normal—you develop. What is frightening is just to say no, I don't want to develop. And that, at the very least, is neither sincere nor artistic.

You still haven't told us what theologians were important for you.

HB I tend to paint a broad picture. It's good that you push me a little bit. Very early, I started to like Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher. I bought his complete works—twenty-three volumes. I discovered that half of them were sermons that he never preached, because he was not a clergyman. He studied theology, but he stopped when he saw that the Danish state church was not doing things right. The clergy were just officials of the state. They used God as a commodity to earn their living. They were not personal Christians.

Kierkegaard was a very radical Christian, as indicated even in the title of his first book—*Either/Or*. The book is especially interesting reading for us Adventists because it was published in 1843—what a date!—and his reaction to the Danish state church was more-or-less the same reaction that the young Adventist movement had to the established churches of its time. "They don't have the complete light. We must look for more." So this book is a wonderful compliment to the Adventist movement, this awakening of consciousness to ask what Christianity really requires of me.

> It is one thing to train your fingers and your musicianship, and another thing to develop as a complete person. In the long run that defines what you can do with the music.

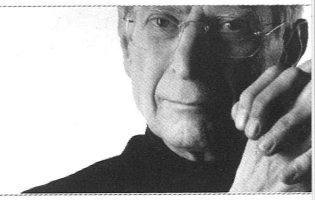

Photo: R. J. Muna

Kierkegaard also had a wonderful sense of art. One of his first stories was about Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. *Either/Or* starts with about thirty pages of aphorisms, short thoughts, stories, ten lines or less. Kierkegaard said, "Today I was sitting in my room, studying, writing, and I heard music, and someone was playing out in the street, and it was the Minuetto from *Don Giovanni*." He had to leave what he was writing, went to the window, and looked down. There were two teenaged musicians clad in rags. It was cold outside. To protect themselves from the cold, they had gloves on their hands, with openings only for their red fingers. They were both blind, and there was a little girl leading them, collecting some money. Little by little a small crowd assembled: a mailman, a street worker, all came to listen. And Kirkegaard said, "You poor young artists, you don't know that you carry in your hands the glory of the whole world."

Were there other theologians who influenced you?

HB The Swedish university system requires one main subject and two ancillary subjects. I wanted to take church history, but that was not possible because church history was taught only in the theological

faculty. I was in the humanity faculty with musicology, so I could not choose church history. The closest I could come was the history of religion. That was in the humanity faculty, strangely enough. I studied about Islam and about old Persian religion and cults from the time of Christ, and so on. And that set me even more afire.

My favorite reading since then has been by Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth, and Rudolf Bultmann—even if Bultmann was a great adversary of Barth. To read their correspondence, by the way, is extremely revealing. Another favorite has been David Friedrich Straus, who was at the beginning of the biblical criticism movement, also in the 1840s!

Which books within Scripture do you find you are most attuned to?

HB The Bible is so incredibly rich—there's nothing like it in literature. I never tire of it. This is not just a shallow statement that anybody can make—and would make—when asked a similar question. I'm constantly reading it; I constantly think of it. It molds my thinking. If I must choose one book, I might choose the Psalms. Perhaps, also, out of protest—that's a little bit in my nature. You already heard a little bit of my biography—out of protest, I had to be different—and I have to defend my position here.

We had a Sabbath School study some years ago, a whole quarter about the Psalms. Do you remember? As usual, I was traveling around—in a new church almost every Sabbath. Everywhere—whether in Japan or Switzerland or Germany or America—there was so much misunderstanding about the Psalms. The studies didn't understand the poetical language. The Sabbath School lessons even tried to make dogmatics out of it.

I especially remember Psalm 22 being so important because it was understood to be about Christ on the cross, when he said "God, God, why hast Thou forsaken me." Was that a fulfillment of prophecy? No, it rather means that Jesus lived in the atmosphere of the Psalms. When he wanted to express his utmost agony, he found no better words than what the Psalmist already had found. That was Christ's book, the Psalms. There's no book he quoted more often in his teaching than the Psalms. He quoted much less from the law and the prophets than the Psalms, probably because more than any other book the Psalms tell about the unfathomable nature of God.

Anyway, you cannot know about God, you can only experience him. You can only develop an image of him, try to find him, to experience his greatness, and you cannot do that in factual words or in computer language.

I just thought the other day how unthinkable it would be for Jesus to live today on earth. What would we do? The TV stations of the world would compete in giving him prime time, and there would be the super, super talk show with Jesus Christ. Impossible thought! Everything he would write—if he wrote something—would be headlined, "Jesus said today!" Horrible thought. He was absolutely right when he said, "It's good that I go away from you. It's good for you that I leave you." Because otherwise they would have worshiped him as a star. He would have been an idol, and that would have been the worst of all.

The Psalms are also very musical. We haven't talked yet about music, and I am particularly interested in your thoughts on church music.

HB Music is really a mirror of life. It's a parable. Bad music is a parable of bad life—bad thoughts. I hope I'm not going to offend anyone by saying that. Most people listen almost solely to bad music. It's all over, all over. It's in the homes, in the streets, in the elevators, in the shopping centers. Even in churches, there's poor music all the time. There's some good music, too—thank God—but bad music is everywhere. People don't pay attention, that's part of life, that's our daily bread.

It need not be so. The hymn "If You But Trust in God to Guide You" is an example of really good music and a strong text. The same author wrote both music and text, and that makes for a very strong impression. If you look at the song in the hymnal, notice that the two last lines are the ones where the music goes up high and gets exuberant. (Sings) "For those who trust God's changeless love." This music coincides with the high point of the text; it comes from the same convincing emotion. We can trust that it is really so.

Why is this such a good hymn? You'll notice the progression is note-by-note. It starts with a simple and free skip, but then goes note-by-note. There are no big jumps; it is made for a congregation to sing. But many other hymns are quite jumpy and sound awful.

This is a song in a minor key, but it is not sad. If you count the harmonies in the minor and major key of this hymn, you'll notice the following: The two first notes are in the minor key, but the next one is already in the major. It's a mixture, as in real life. At the end, there are practically only majors. What an elation! Suddenly the hymn goes up high and gets bright. All brightness. Then it sinks down—not in desperation,

but in trust.

This is like a picture of life. Life is not only sweetness; there's variety. The life of a Christian is not just—you know—"sweet Jesus." It's also strength; God leads and you can trust in him. You need to feel that tension also in the music, and that tension is wonderfully present in this hymn. Just begin your song going up with a swing, especially the last line. It's so exuberant.

This is a marvelous hymn. Neumark, the composer, was the court poet in a small German court during the Thirty Years War, which was a religious war, as you know, between Protestants and Catholics. That was a difficult time—it was horrible. On both sides there was much killing and burning. Armies that were successful burned down the cities of the other side, tore down its castles, and then moved on to the next city and tore it down—and people had to live during those times. There was, of course, lots of sickness and pestilence, and Neumark was in the middle of all that.

People who lived at that time knew what it meant to need somebody to trust. They had difficult lives. Their music mirrored their lives. Look at the third stanza; we sing, "Doubt not, your inmost wants are known." Those wants are known, you can be sure, so that's where the melody goes high. As for the last stanza, "God never will forsake in need," God will never, absolutely never forsake—you can be sure. This is wonderful music; it just moves me so much because the text and the music really coincide. That is why the music is there: to emphasize and elaborate the text.

Of course, if the text is banal, then there is nothing to emphasize, and that happens very often. Sometimes, though, the text is very good, and the music doesn't cover it. We should be sensitive to that.

Can you give us an example?

HB One of the great dangers of our time in the religious music field is sentimentality. An illustration of this is "How Great Thou Art."

Why is this so sentimental? Can it be described? Well, it is possible, though I don't want to be too technical. One of the tests is the role of the "third." The most "sweet" harmony is passed on the interval of the third. If the melody constantly rests on the third, as in this song, the sweetness gets excessive and we become passive. "It is not good to eat much honey"! (Prov. 25:27). In hymns from the olden era of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, the melody is more the root or the dominant of the harmony, not the third. But during the Romantic Era, composers liked the third very much in revival music like this; they emphasized the third.

This arrangement is like resting your head on a cushion. It has no action. It does not give you the idea that you must do something. You love Jesus, and he is here, and you lean on him. You put your head on his lap and it feels good. There's nothing wrong with this—Jesus is certainly our comforter. We need somebody to lean on—that's absolutely legitimate. But to do it every time, all the time, cripples you; you never stand up, you never grow up.

Our spiritual lives...are being trivialized by everyday commonplace things.

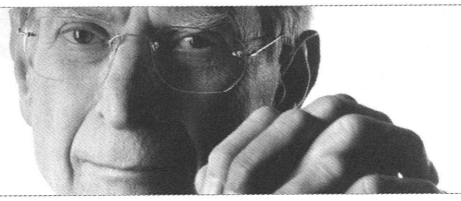

Photo: R. J. Muna

But what about the refrain? At last, the melody gets exuberant; it gets to high points. You could say, "Well, the composer meant to have a more neutral beginning just to prepare a background for the joy he will describe when he goes up high." But the problem is, what does the text say when it goes up high? "Then sings my soul." My soul is singing—it's me! My feelings are important. "Then sings my soul how great thou art." You're singing about God, then keep low, almost murmuring: "how great thou art." He does not sound great here.

But to top it off, the worst is at the end. There's a fermata here. (Sings) "How G-R-E-A-T thou art." The text says that God is great, but the person who really sounds great is the singer. He can sing high, he can sing loud, he can hold the note long. That's completely the opposite of being Christ centered. And people don't notice it—how sad! The text is not bad. You remember it: "Oh Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds thy hands have made. I

see the stars, lofty mountains, the cross. When Christ shall come with acclamation. He bled and died." Wonderful—the whole story of Jesus Christ is there. But it's all described in this low key, murmuring, and only when my own feelings come, then the hymn goes up high. It should be the opposite. Our hymns should elevate God. My own feelings are secondary; God is great.

Again, music is a parable, a parable on life. It has a beginning; it has an end. It starts off with a theme, and develops a theme. There is some conflict; there are some resting points; there are some high points and low points. It comes to an end. It is born, and it dies. It's a perfect mirror of life. It's a parable. That's why you can preach with music. It's as good a parable as many other parables because it can be understood regardless of what language you speak. It can speak to you regardless of your musical capacity or experience. You don't have to be a musician. You don't have to know the difference between major and minor to experience it. You don't have to know anything. Just let the music speak to you. Good music can speak to you on so many levels. It will do you no harm to know more, but if you know less, that's perfectly all right.

Our image of God, I think, is getting too small. He's getting trivial. That's the parable set in the Nielsen symphony you heard yesterday. The drum playing—lop, ta da la da tte, lop ta da la da tte ta—is not just a disturbance. It's more than that. This little phrase by the drum is utterly trivial. A most commonplace march rhythm. Neutral. It can be used in any march. It's a good element for a march, but it's trivial, it's commonplace, it's banal. First it is soft, sneaks into foreign territory, then grows. At the end, it kills us. It gets loud; it gets to the main thing. The score says that the drummer should play as loud as possible, as if he absolutely wanted to kill the whole orchestra.

And so it is with our spiritual lives; they are being trivialized by everyday commonplace things, by banal things. I think this is what Jesus meant when he said, "Let first things be first. Seek first God's kingdom." All these small everyday things—the clothing, eating, and so on—are secondary. They'll take care of themselves. But these things in our society are increasingly getting to be the main things. We buy bigger cars, bigger homes. There's nothing wrong with that per se, but if they become the main things, they kill the spirit, the really important thing. So it is with music in church. If you indulge this very sweet kind of sentimental hmmmm music, it makes you passive. It has no ethical push to it, and that, I think, is dangerous. The awesome grandeur of God is painfully absent.

Is there a hymn that does God justice, in your opinion?

HB One of my favorites is Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress," You'll notice that the name of the Mighty Fortress, which is our God, is mentioned only once, and what an effect it makes then. "Christ Jesus it is he." You speak about him in powerful metaphors, and then you identify him. This is his name. Unforgettable! Compare that with songs where you say Jesus' name twelve times, twenty times. That, for me, is to break the Third Commandment.

My brother told me about a sermon in which the pastor had everyone stand up and say twelve times, "I love Jesus, I love Jesus, I love Jesus, I love Jesus." Unbelievable! Naming a name many times often blots out that name. Have you read the memoirs of Joseph Brodsky? He tells of being in a Russian concentration camp. During his interrogation, the most painful thing he had to do was to say his own name, as long as he was conscious. So he would say "Joseph Brodsky, Joseph Brodsky, Joseph Brodsky," until he fell apart. That's the most effective way to blot out the personality of the person. A name means nothing when you repeat it too many times.

You don't elevate God when you name his name twelve times or, better, twenty or twenty-five. Or, if you love him more, fifty times. Completely the opposite. Name him once with meaning and it's unforgettable. The song is a sermon. In fact, when "A Mighty Fortress" was first published, all the related Bible texts were printed in the margin so readers could look them up. They said that Luther won more converts through his songs than through his sermons. His hymns were powerful, full of art, so to speak, but the art was concealed, never for its own sake. They made everybody in the whole congregation artists. That is how it should be. That is true art.

Let us work toward selecting our words—whether in song or sermon—to convey the message that we have a great God. He's infinitely great. He's my Creator. That is the message; that is the gospel. That is the gospel of the first angel. The eternal gospel is not that Jesus died for our sins, however true that is also. According to Revelation 14, the eternal gospel is "Fear God, because he is your Creator." This means "Bow down for him in humility. Stand up for him in bold action. Trust in him."

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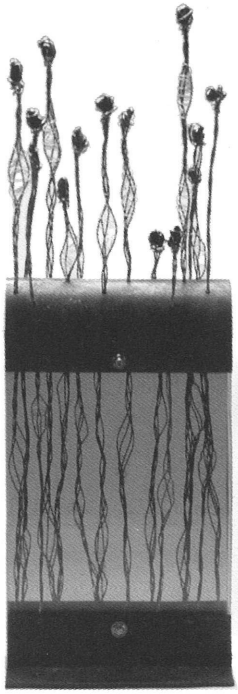
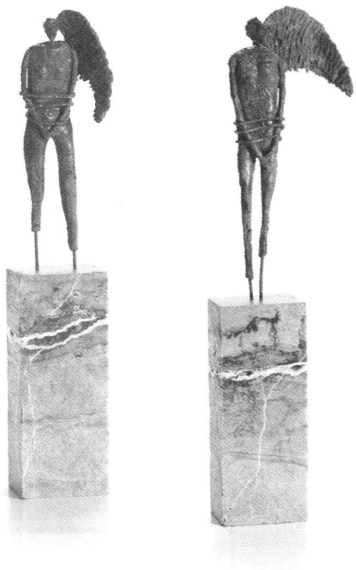


Surfacing; glass/copper/stones, from the Collection of Shell Canada

Looking for Visual Truth:

At Play with the Aural and Visual in Adventism

Sculpture and Words by John N. McDowell



Angel Required to Watch (female and male), cast bronze/corl travertine red jasper/copper wire, Randal and Deanna Wisbey Collection

View of the Bay, coral travertine, copper, brass, Claire C. K. Harris Collection.

If truth is that which lasts, then art has proved truer than any other human endeavour. What is certain is that pictures and poetry and music are not only marks in time but marks through time, of their own time and ours, not antique or historical, but living as they ever did, exuberantly, untired.

–Jeanette Winterson, *Art Objects.*[1]

Adventism, if nothing else, wants to be about truth. Not just any truth, but The Truth. Adventist understanding of truth, its very identity, theology, lifestyle, and worship, is bound up and intimately connected with understanding and communicating The Word, for we understand that the Word is Truth. Who we are, what we believe, how we live are tied to issues of language, of interpretation, of speaking, singing, living, and spreading the Word. Spreading the Truth and the Word are synonymous. We are a people of the book: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Almost all of our worship time is filled with listening to forms of the spoken word or to music. Sabbath mornings are occupied with two or more hours of listening, singing, and speaking. This, for most, constitutes worship.

As Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart point out in *Seeking A Sanctuary*:

> The emphasis on sound is also particularly appropriate to Adventism, because it presupposes . . . a social context. The spoken word becomes audible only when there is shared language. Where worship is constituted through an exchange of sounds . . . a community of speakers and listeners is assumed. In contrast, those forms of Christianity in which visual or tactile expression is more important lend themselves more easily to individual spirituality.[2]

It is no accident that Adventists, from cradle roll on, are encouraged to acquire rhetorical skills—memory verses to sermons. Speaking, in the form of sermons, talks, and lesson studies is the most direct and least ambiguous art form. Music and musicianship is a close

second in Adventism. Music is a highly regarded form of expression. Silence, especially as part of corporate experience, soon makes us uncomfortable. As Adventists, we do not tolerate silence well. When no one is speaking we fill the gap with music.

Where we are known outside of the Church in the arts, it is almost exclusively in music—Herbert Blomstedt, the former conductor of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, being perhaps the most notable. Larry Knopp, principal trumpet of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, is a raising star in classical music circles. Our schools emphasize choir and band participation far more than any other form of artistic expression. The New England Youth Ensemble is another well-known Adventist musical group.

Bull and Lockhart go on to point out that Adventists emphasize aural forms of expression not only because they are fond of a social community, but also because aural forms reflect their theology. Time is wound into Adventist thinking in all sorts of ways. Music and speech happen and function in time, not space:

> The Adventist preference for sound as a means of expression is indicative of [a] particular sensitivity to the modalities of time, to beginnings and endings, speeds and rhythms. . . . Adventist theology is primarily concerned with time—with the time of the end, the correct timing of the Sabbath, the prophetic interpretations of time. To be an Adventist is to have an acute awareness of location in time.[3]

We mark our differences from other Christian groups in our understanding of time. We have a perception of history as a "sequence of prophetically bounded time packages." Adventists "use time as the dimension of expression, for it is also their primary dimension of experience."[4]

Visual art occupies space, not time. Given the concern with time, there is a significant thread in Adventism that tends to "disregard the significance of all that is extended in space. As the world is soon to perish, all that it contains is an irrelevance; only that which will travel through time to eternity is important."[5] Art occupies space, a place for the eye to engage in a visual dialogue. Where Adventists are entirely comfortable with visual art is where it serves the text—preferably a biblical text. From Harry Anderson and the illustrated *Bible Stories* to the sculpture of the Good Samaritan at Loma Linda University, the art understood and appreciated by most Adventists is art that is clearly illustrative: illustrative of a known and accepted narrative. Which takes us back to the primacy of rhetoric.

Angel Required to Watch
cast bronze/corl travertine red jasper/copper wire
Randal and Deanna Wisbey Collection

Although we may sing with fervor and conviction, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through," the fact remains that we are

in the world, and we need to reach the world. Much in the forms of Adventist worship and belief coalesced in the time prior to and during the period when radio and printed text were the dominant cultural mediums—forms that fit well with the Adventist message. The Voice of Prophecy and the emphasis on publishing large quantities of text are examples of Adventist achievements that used (and still use) these forms of media.

The world has changed. Over the last forty years, with the emergence and then dominance of television, there has been a shift—the emphasis has shifted from the ear to the eye. Although radio and text publishing still have currency, the dominate cultural modes have changed from aural to visual presentation. Consider the huge popularity of TV (proliferation of channels), MTV, video, DVD, and movies. Computer software and the Internet are moving rapidly to greater reliance on visual images as the way of instruction and communication. The visual imagery of all these various forms of media is slick, sophisticated, and seductive. Text, where it is present, is often highly graphic, discontinuous, fragmented, and given in short "bites." Even popular print magazines are now far more geared to the visual than they were ten, twenty years ago.

If what I have said is true about the character of the Adventist aesthetic, then we have some challenges. How are young people—geared to and raised on a visual diet and less adept at following long, sustained passages of oral discourse—going to relate to traditional forms of Adventist worship? How do the dynamic visual forms shape concepts of time and a traditional presentation of the Adventist message? How should our worship and teaching adapt? Should we not be teaching and preaching in ways that educate the visual cortex so that young people are able to deal with their world of visual information in critical and constructive ways? Can we, as Adventists, even come to an appreciation of what Jeanette Winterson means when she says that "art has proved truer than any other human endeavour"? Although there may not be full agreement, I think it is worth the effort to probe the possibilities for the enrichment and re-valuing of Adventist identity, theology, lifestyle, and worship.

I have no claim to be able to answer all these questions with definitive, text-based answers. I am also mindful of what the literary critic, Northrop Frye, writes in *The Great Code:* "To answer a question . . . is to consolidate the mental level on which the question is asked. Unless something is kept in reserve, suggesting the possibility of better and fuller questions, the student's advance is blocked."[6] It is also, however, too easy a cop-out not to suggest some pathways to follow enroute to better and fuller questions and to help one see that truth about who we are has a visual as well as a verbal reality.

Angel Required to Watch, cast bronze/corl travertine red jasper/copper wire , Randal and Deanna Wisbey Collection

The first, and obvious place to begin is by actually looking at art or the many other forms of visual images that one encounters and then to begin to dialogue about what one sees. Connected with this text, *Spectrum* has also published a number of images of various works of art—as it happens, my own art. This allows me the liberty to make some comments, which I hope will be helpful.

If what I have said about the character of the Adventist aesthetic is close to being on target, then these images may present a problem.

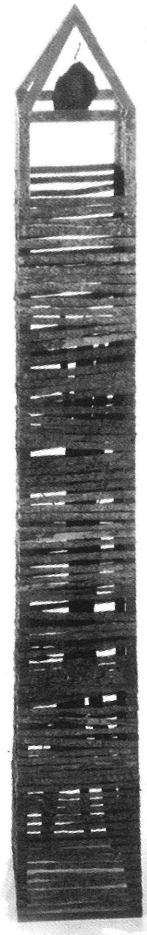
Although they have some recognizable form, they are not illustrative of a particular, known narrative. They do not appear to be in service of a text. There may then be a desire for the artist—in this case myself—to "explain" the works and to elucidate their illustrative nature. To say, as I would say, that I am unable to explain the pieces in terms of what they "mean" in the form of master narrative is not, you may well feel, particularly helpful. To go to the other extreme and say that the art "means whatever I want it to mean" does not really get one much further. You may assume that I am "playing games." I assure you I am not. If one

The relationship of the creative act to the Creator is one that needs to be fully explored.

can get past the cliché that artists—particularly "modern" artists—are suspect because of their love of ambiguity, then we can begin.

When one looks at art, my first suggestion is not to be afraid of the unfamiliar and to understand that art and other visual images can have a kind of power. In the March 25, 2001, edition of the *Washington Post*, David Freedberg in commentating on the Taliban's destruction of art, in particular the two huge Buddhas in Bamian, Afganistan, speaks of the power of art, and hence the fear that many, particularly religious groups, have of art. Iconoclasm is a response to the power and resulting discomfort elicited by images. There is the impulse to avoid, deny, or even destroy visual images because they can and do have power. For many, art, particularly images of Christ or God, gets one too close to idolatry. In defence of art, the argument is made that the creative artist is inspired and creates as God creates. Freedberg notes that "the notion that an artist can create like God is at bottom a dangerous one" for it can create the kind of hubris for which Satan was cast out of heaven.[7] There is the belief—or at least suspicion—for some that a connection exists between a being and the image of that being. Freedberg goes on to note that:

> It was no accident that during the Roman Empire it was asserted that "where the image is, there, too, is the emperor.". . . By the light of this interpretation, it is no wonder that Byzantine iconoclasts felt that images of the emperor, at least, had to be destroyed. If you could destroy or damage his image, you somehow also impugned and mitigated his power. We see this same thinking in other instances where those who have a grudge against the representatives of a regime assault their images—whether of Lenin, or the Shah of Iran, or even Princess Diana, whose portrait in London's National Gallery was slashed by an IRA sympathizer in 1981.[8]



Obelisk One
steel/copper/wood/jasper/gold leaf

To speak of iconoclasts is, perhaps, extreme. Still, the relationship of the creative act to the Creator is one that needs to be fully explored.[9] The point is that it should not come as a surprise to experience discomfort or unease when one views art, particularly new art. How one deals

with that discomfort or unease of not knowing quite what to make of what one is viewing is the next step.

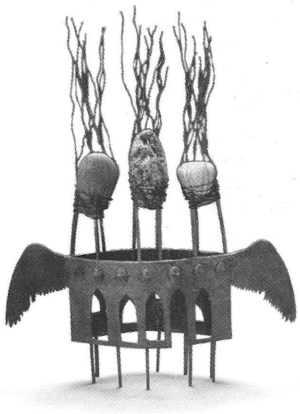
What is one to make of the image of the angel, for example, who is bound and has only one wing? (page 27). This breaks with the norm of typical, comfortable images or ideas of angels. Why is there only one wing? Is it to show, as the Italian poet, Luciano De Crescenzo wrote, "We are all Angels with only one wing/We can only fly while embracing each other"? Why is the angel bound? Is this an evil angel, cast out of heaven? Is the angel perhaps weighted with human concern? Is this an angel of the holocaust, witness to the frailties and weakness of humankind? Why does the angel have no feet? Does this suggest that angels hover and do not touch the ground? Does this angel present you with a disturbing image? Or is it a strangely comforting image—as some have found? I, clearly, cannot answer these questions for the viewer. Asking the questions, however, can open up paths for exploration.

Jeanette Winterson provides some helpful advice as she discusses her own struggle to come to appreciate art. She writes that looking at art is "equivalent to being dropped into a foreign city, where gradually, out of desire and despair, a few key words, then a little syntax make a clearing in the silence. Art, all art, not just painting, is a foreign city, and we deceive ourselves when we think it familiar. . . . We have to recognize that the language of art, all art, is not our mother-tongue."[10] It takes a while to get orientated. The virtue of patience will be rewarded.

The next step is to realize, as Winterson explains, that the "subtext of so much of our looking" at art or anything visual is really "admire me." She goes on to say that this is "the demand put on art that it should reflect the reality of the viewer."[11] True art resists this demand. What should one do now?

I return to the value of asking one's self about what one views. Like, I suspect, most other artists, I want my art to reward viewers on repeated viewing. For me, art that is understood and comprehended in a glance only gets a glance. Also for me, what a work means is a result of what the piece and the viewer bring to the relationship. For one show I had, I put it this way in my Artist Statement:

> Art occupies space where something happens. What happens here is prayer. Not prayers of words, but prayers in the visual language of shape, volume, texture and color. The prayers are only completed, however, when the sculptures are viewed. Only when an object is viewed can there be communication and meaning. The interplay between the eye and the object provides "what happens." I try to leave enough room in the work for the viewer to create his or her own relationship with the piece. I want the pieces to be suggestive, not declarative: a thought or two for the soul—a prayer.



Mission Story, cast bronze/stones/copper wire, Lynn McDowell Private Collection

Taking this approach, how might this piece—which sort of looks like a church—with the title, *Mission Story*, be a prayer? What is going on here with a building with wings? What do the stones represent? Is that incense going up from the altar, or are they rocks of judgement coming down on the church? What do the faces suggest—

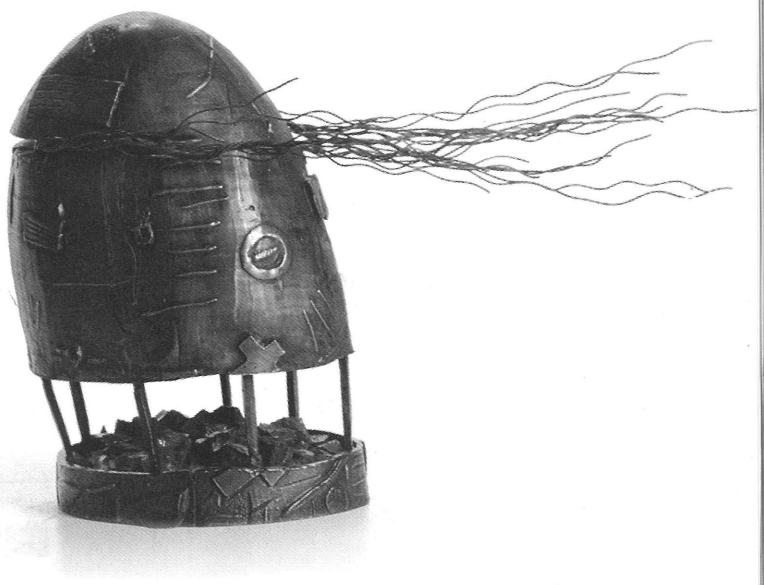
masks, emblems? Is this not just another form of the angel sculpture? What would change if the title of this piece were *First Church of the Angel of the Apocalypse*?

What about the helmet-like piece? Is this ancient or modern? Is it aggressive, as the angel is passive? What if you had a background in archaeology and could explain that this piece suggests a Miocene-looking helmet and that the round base with the stones is fire, and that the hearth is a central image in Miocene art and culture, that the hearth was important to defend for it was the heart of the home, civility, and

Art that is understood and comprehended in a glance only gets a glance.

culture? What if I told you that the title for the piece is *Stealth*? What images does that create? What is with all the wheels—wagon wheels?—on this thing? What if I told you that the artist was somehow thinking of Kosovo and the war in the Balkans—an ancient land with ancient conflicts? What if it was mentioned that the artist had an image of the red roofs of burning buildings from the TV images of the war?

What about the other images? Could *Obelisk One* and *Surfacing* be different types of prayers?(pages 25 and 29). For me, the creative act is an act of worship. I am mindful here of the earlier charge of hubris. The creative process for me—whether writing a poem or creating a sculpture—involves the following: belief, courage, play, doubt, and ambiguity or mystery. All of these can also be understood as part of the experience of worship. If I do not believe that I can create; I can't and won't. Belief is basic to the creative process. The belief also has to be open. I have to believe that I can start and that I can write the poem, create the sculpture. I must also believe with openness that the result may be vastly different from what I conceived at the beginning of the process. Belief gives way to faith in the process of working with the materials, a trust in the spark of inspiration that started the process and in the materials and one's ability. The sculptures pictured with this article are all, in part, about belief.



Stealth
glass/copper/stones
Shell Canada Collection

Rollo May wrote the book *Courage to Create* in his belief that courage is the primary requirement for living a creative life.[12] Creating art involves trusting inspiration or intuition and plunging into the unknown with no guarantee of success. Failure is likely with every creative act. Living creatively—as with profound worship—often takes one out of one's "safety zone." Courage is needed. The bronze helmet, perhaps, in part, speaks to the idea of courage.

A sense of play, an openness to possibilities, not taking one's self too seriously, allowing for alternatives, cultivating curiosity—all are needed

to make connections and imaginative leaps. Play feeds; it keeps the imagination vibrant. Maybe our worship could use more play. Do any of the images in this issue of *Spectrum* suggest a sense of play or delight?

Along with play, I have also come to understand the value of doubt in the creative process, as well as in my spiritual life. Doubt keeps the eyes of belief watchful and alert. Doubt is a generator of questions that, when explored with belief, opens the door to insight. Belief without doubt opens the valve that balloons the ego to arrogance. Art becomes a statement of pride and fails. Doubt without belief opens the heart to depression and art dies. The bound angel may be, in part, about doubt.

In the end, art needs to have some ambiguity. There needs, I feel, to be some mystery, something unresolved that entices the viewer to return. There needs to be a space for the viewer to enter and create meaning from his or her interaction with the work of art. For art to have real power, the poem, the painting, the sculpture, the piece of music must be able to move from the orbit of the creator to the orbit of the viewer. There must be a room for the viewer to claim a dialogue, and in that sense own the work of art.

The art critic John Berger writes in his book *The Sense of Sight* that "Art is an organized response to what nature allows us to glimpse occasionally. Art sets out to transform the potential recognition into an unceasing one. It proclaims man in the hope of receiving a surer reply. . . . The transcendental face of art is always a form of prayer."[13] This way of creating art is, for me, an act of worship. The pleasure and value of art is part of what I understand John 10:10 to be about when Christ says that we "may have life and have it abundantly." This is good news. This is the truth we can experience. Enjoy art: it lasts.

Notes and References

1. Jeanette Winterson, *Art Objects: Essays on Ecstasy and Effrontery* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1996), front piece.
2. Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1989), 154-55.
3. Ibid., 155.
4. Ibid., 156.
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7. David Freedberg, "The Power of Wood and Stone: The Taliban Is Not the First to Fear the Mysterious Lure of Art," *Washington Post*, Mar. 25, 2001, B2.
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9. Dorothy L. Sayers, an acquaintance of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien and a writer of detective fiction, explores this issue in *The Mind of the Maker* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1941), where she makes the case that the pattern of human creative action is akin to divine creative action and that this is what is meant by being created in the image of God.
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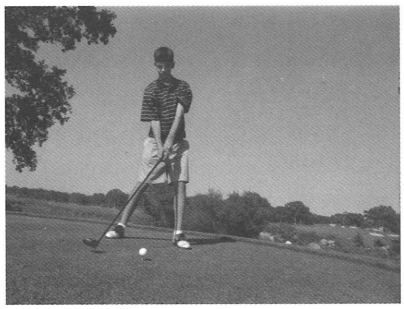
Living the Beautiful Life

By Charles Scriven



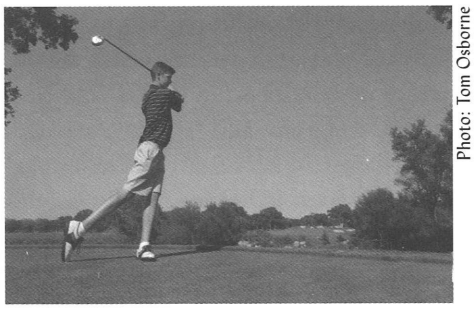


Photo: Tom Osborne

The day my seventeen-year-old son, Jeremy, blew his tee shot at the par-three fifteenth hole, I saw a thing of beauty. His ball soared high and sharply left, then skidded down a hill to a spot some twenty yards below the green. When Jeremy got there for his second shot, he couldn't even see the flag. From our vantage points, neither I nor our playing partner, Nate, could see Jeremy. I was lining up my second shot when Nate cried out: "Look at that!" My eyes twitched upward in time to see the end of a high shot that had landed softly and was now curving toward the hole. It dropped in with a plop. If the tee shot was ugly, this one was—beautiful. Jeremy heard our shouts. When his head appeared, he saw for himself that he had birdied the hole, and he broke into a grin.

That same week my eighty-six-year-old father arrived in town for our daughter Christina's wedding, and I imagined how he would have talked if he had seen that shot. "The beauty of it was," he'd have started, just like when I was a boy, and he would have gone on about how some new gizmo had worked, or "worked like a charm," another of his expressions.

A thing of beauty is something agreeable and pleasing, something that sparks delight—or even joy—in the beholder. Brides, by the way, are themselves fine examples of the beautiful. Scripture lovingly compares "the holy city, the New Jerusalem," to a "bride adorned for her husband."[1]

Of course there is much more. The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, in his famous hymn to the beauty in God's world, voiced his delight in "rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim," in "pieced and plotted" landscapes, in "gear and tackle and trim" used in the various trades. Of the one who "fathers-forth" this vast array, he said simply: "Praise Him."[2]

Once I looked out my study window and saw beauty of another kind. My sons—one in his late teens then, the other only five or six–were in the yard wearing baseball gloves and bouncing a tennis ball off the back of our house. The younger, Jeremy, was imitating Jonathan, although for a little boy to cover the ten or twelve yards to the wall on the fly he had to wind up and heave the ball as high and hard as he could. To me the sight—the green grass, the rhythm of grounders bouncing off brick, the "chemistry" between the two boys—was a wonder. Not for a minute did Jeremy begrudge his brother the advice he gave or example he showed. Jonathan, for his part, loved the enthusiasm and growth that he saw in Jeremy.

When I first shared that experience in public, I meant to show how the obedience of faith is ideally like a child's imitation of his older brother: it is heartfelt and glad, not a burden, but a privilege. But midway into the

telling I was suddenly choking back tears. I had to stop and collect myself.

Later I would ponder why. From my vantage point, it now seems clear that I was overcome by beauty. For if golf shots, stippled trout, and plotted landscapes can evoke delight, loving human interactions can do that and more. These interactions exemplify a beauty that is not only delightful, but also, in some sense, awesome, a beauty that touches off, in addition to joy and gratitude, the deepest sort of poignancy.

A familiar hymn, which echoes Scripture, speaks of "the beauty of holiness."[3] But the word "holiness" hints of experiences that leave many feeling uneasy, if not troubled. The thought of holiness may suggest something grim and tedious, or may set off dread or even fright. What, then, provokes such high commendation? What is holiness, and why do religious poets think it beautiful? Why do they question—or better, reject—the cliché that religion is about stern heavenly potentates and their guilty, joyless subjects?

The Beauty of Holiness

Consider Moses at the burning bush. After killing an Egyptian he fled to Midian, where he married Zipporah and tended the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law. Meanwhile, the Hebrew people were still groaning under Pharaoh's slavery. One day, near Mount Horeb, Moses stopped in his tracks at the sight of the amazing bush. It blazed but was not consumed, and he watched in fascination. Suddenly he heard the voice of God. Moses was to remove his sandals, "for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Exod. 3:6).

Here the fire's beauty and watcher's fascination became a theater for holiness. The scene was awesome, and the book of Exodus says that when Moses heard the voice, he "hid his face," reticent to look. But in his fascination he did listen, and he did hear a call from God to assist with the liberation of the Hebrew people from their bondage. His heart was moved: the fire and the words spoke of a God who was wholly different from the ordinary—and wholly committed to delivering the slaves from their misery. The rest of Exodus tells the story of how Moses responded, and of what God accomplished through him.

In this story, holiness is the awesome otherness of One who is radiant and compelling, like a bush that burns but is not consumed–the awesome otherness of One who is, at the same time, caring and involved, like parents who love their children and make sacrifices on their behalf.

"Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name," says the Psalmist, "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" (Ps. 29:2 KJV). It is no wonder, for through the presence of the God of Moses, the holy is nothing short of glorious. It fascinates, pleases, and finally moves the human heart. It is a thing of beauty.

Zechariah the prophet pictures a coming Prince of Peace who rides into the stricken city of Jerusalem "humble and riding on . . . the foal of a donkey." The rider, says Zechariah, will cut off "the chariot from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem," and "will command peace to the nations," and his "dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth." By this means, the prophet goes on, the Lord God will "save" his "flock," those who once again are going to "shine on his land." Then, of this God, Zechariah declares: "For what goodness and beauty are his" (9:9, 10, 16, 17).

Centuries later, John the Evangelist described Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem along similar lines, even quoting from Zechariah. Jesus rode on a donkey, not the horse and chariot of a warlike king. Then Jesus spoke with some Greeks—to the Jews, outsiders—who wanted to see him. According to John, Jesus told them that "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (12:23, 24). Glory means radiance; it means compelling beauty. Jesus was on the verge, it seems, of his finest hour. He explained with the Parable of the Wheat Grain: a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies—and the death is a catalyst for life; new fruit, a new head of grain, grows up from what has fallen and died.

With this picture, Jesus conveyed the arresting paradox that illuminated his whole ministry: the road to a better world may run through the valley of the shadow of death. A voice from heaven, loud as thunder, assured him that he would indeed be "glorified," and Jesus declared that the "'ruler of this world'" was about to be "'driven out.'" Then these stunning words, which plainly refer to death by crucifixion, exploded from his mouth: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:31, 32).

Through John's whole description, Zechariah's poetry reverberates: recall again the nonviolent arrival of Jesus, not on a war-horse but on a donkey; the intimation of peace in Jesus' welcoming attitude to the Greeks; the suggestion of divine "goodness and beauty" in the reference to the Son's glorification at the hour of his crucifixion.

What comes through is that for God and the early Christians the cross was not only holy, it was also

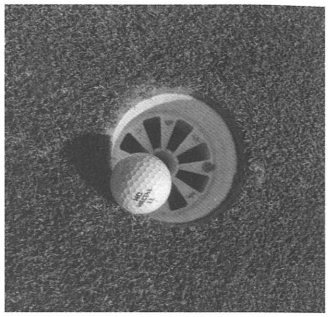


Photo: Tom Osborne

beautiful! It was somehow pleasing to the eye; it could somehow move the heart. It was a focal point—in fact, the focal point—for the beauty of holiness!

How can this be? What does it mean?

Fresh Exemplars

On August 4, 1968, a man in a business suit took lodging in a rooming house on Mulberry Street in Memphis. With his scope-sighted Remington 30.06 he was soon keeping watch over the second-floor balcony of the motel across the street, some 200 feet away. At 6:01 P.M. after the man he was looking for had come out of his room to breathe the outdoor air, the man with the gun squeezed the trigger, and his target fell to the balcony floor. Within an hour, he was dead.

The dead man was Martin Luther King Jr., the forceful, and then highly controversial, leader of the civil rights movement. He had a dream, forged on the anvil of Scripture, and it was that a divided people, drawn into renewal by "unearned suffering," would one day sit down together at the "table of brotherhood."[4]

The dream awakened hope and hate. Where there was hate, King tried, in the manner of Jesus, to strengthen hope through love. On the steps of his just-bombed home in Montgomery, Alabama, he told a mob that retaliation would never solve its problems, and he upheld the message of nonviolence enshrined in the Sermon on the Mount. Once he made his point this way: "We must love our enemies, because only by loving them can we know God and experience the beauty of his holiness."[5]

Martin Luther King Jr., no perfect man, was still an amazing witness; his life, driven by his dream and capped by martyrdom, transformed attitudes in America. In his way, he embodied the beauty of holiness himself, and by moving human hearts, drew people into new understanding and new generosity toward one another. As Ellen White said in her comments on the Parable of the Wheat Grain, he "cast" his "life . . . into the furrow of the world's need," and, in dying, brought forth much fruit.[6]

How can the cross exemplify the beauty of holiness? How, in words Paul wrote to the Corinthians, can the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God" shine forth "in the face of Jesus Christ"? (2 Cor. 4:6).

The point is that the cross is beautiful in the context of the life that leads up to it. The cross was Jesus' finest hour because the cross proved how steadfast his love was, and how steadfast his courage was. These traits, and this proof of these traits, draws people to him, much as the sheer beauty of the nonviolence associated with Martin Luther King drew America into new understanding.

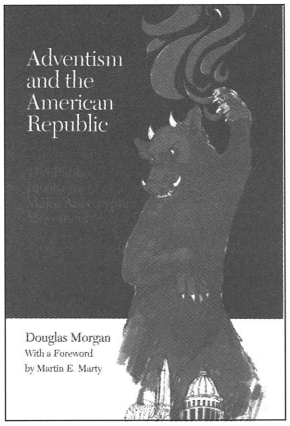
Perhaps the Christian message, like any message about what ought to be believed and lived, requires the support of what James McClendon calls "fresh exemplars," persons who today disclose anew the heart of that message and perhaps correct or enlarge it, persons who today reflect the beauty of holiness. Otherwise, the message and even the stories that undergird it may be consigned to irrelevance, to the "realm," as McClendon further says, of "mere antiquarian lore."[7]

Something Beautiful for God

If Martin Luther King is a reminder that witness is most persuasive when actual lives in actual communities please the eye and move the heart, so is Mother Teresa, that icon of Christian generosity who began her life in privilege. Born in 1910 to prosperous Albanian parents, she grew dissatisfied, and at seventeen became a nun, taking the name Teresa—she was Sister Teresa then—and setting her heart on missionary work in India. By the early 1930s, she had arrived in Calcutta to teach. After World War II, she, like Moses, heard the voice of God, and that voice sum-

New from Tennessee

Adventism and the American Republic



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Douglas Morgan

With a Foreword by Martin E. Marty

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moned her to leave her convent in order to live and work among the poorest of the poor. By 1950, after persistent and convoluted efforts to secure the support of Church authorities, she had founded the Order of the Missionaries of Charity. Soon she had begun, among other ministries, a home in Calcutta for the dying destitute.

By the 1960s, Mother Teresa was traveling the world to build support for her expanding order. A few years later, a British journalist who happened to be well known for his faithless hedonism agreed to interview her for a television program. Mother Teresa was already tiny; already her face was like a ball of crinkled paper. But the critics loved the interview, and so, it turned out, did the wider public. Malcolm Muggeridge, the journalist, remarked with prescience that her simplicity and truthfulness on TV had made her face "forever recognizable."[8]

When Muggeridge traveled to India to make a TV documentary about Mother Teresa, he found, among other things, that she wanted to pray with him before the filming. He knelt with her. Afterward he received a letter in which she said the project had "brought us all closer to God." She must have had him in mind, as well as her nuns and the other participants: in that letter she expressed hope that, in his own way, Muggeridge himself would "try to make the world conscious that it is never too late to do something beautiful for God."[9]

The phrase, "Something Beautiful for God", became the title for a book by Muggeridge. In time—quite a long time, actually—he did become a Christian. He was drawn into Christian faith by the beauty of holiness—by the sheer radiance of a tiny woman's generosity and sacrifice.

The Cross as Victory

Consider finally an exemplar from our own community of faith. In 1993, with Nelson Mandela out of jail and the first free and fair elections just around the corner in South Africa, Ginn Fourie, a Seventh-day Adventist, learned that her only daughter Lyndi was dead. A student at the University of Capetown, Lyndi had perished, along with three others, at the hands of gunmen from the Pan African Congress. The killing took place at a favorite student gathering spot. The assailants did not know their victims. At the funeral Ginn Fouri asked her pastor for permission to read a prayer she had composed—and she stunned everyone when her prayer quoted these words of Jesus: "Father forgive them for they do not know what they do."[10]

Later, circumstances threw this mother into the very presence of her daughter's killers, both at their trial and later at hearings conducted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa. Both times, she expressed her forgiveness of the killers. Still later, she saw them in prison. There she urged them to take responsibility for what they had done and expressed her forgiveness once again.

Ginn Fouri's pastor, who now teaches at La Sierra University, remembers being "moved" and "touched" by her behavior. Some time later, the Medical Research Counsel of South Africa asked her to speak about all this at an international conference on mental health. She received a standing ovation. In the name of the crucified Christ, she had defied ordinary expectation, and her story had the power to fascinate, please, and, finally, move the human heart. She herself had embodied holiness, just as the New Testament writers envisioned that Jesus' followers would do. She herself had radiated the radiance of God. In her own way, she, like Martin Luther King and Mother Teresa, had helped to sanctify the world.

At her daughter's funeral, this woman's prayer had ended on a note of hope. "I trust you with my precious Lyndi," she had said, addressing Father and Son alike. "This planet is a dangerous place to live. I know that you will come back soon to fetch us."[11] What she had believed all along is that the cross was not the end of the story, nor was her own devastation.

When John the Evangelist suggests that Jesus' execution was his finest hour—the great focal point for the beauty of holiness—he cannot mean that the bruised and blood-stained body is, in itself, a source of delight and happiness. One reason he cannot mean this is that the cross is the capstone of a life, and it is Christ's love and courage, persisting to the end, that makes it a thing of beauty. But there is another reason, and it is what Ginn Fourie believed with all her heart: the cross is not a defeat, the cross is a victory.

This mother did something beautiful for God when she prayed, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they do." What made it beautiful, in addition to the sheer generosity that comes through, is that the Lord who first spoke these words is—alive: he has cast out the ruler of this world and set off a movement whose sheer generosity will defeat both oppression and death, and in the end wipe away every tear. God cares and acts even when it is dangerous to do so. To the believer's eye, the cross is the proof. Because God is God, the care and the action overcome the powers that have make the planet dangerous.

God, then, has done something beautiful for human beings, the beneficiaries of divine holiness. That is why, as Mother Teresa would say, it is never too late for human beings to do something beautiful for God. It is never too late for the beneficiaries to become benefactors, never too late for those who enjoy the radiance of holiness to transmit that radiance themselves, and thereby transform—thereby sanctify—the human prospect.

Notes and References

1. Rev. 21:2. Unless otherwise noted, biblical quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.
2. From "Pied Beauty."
3. The hymn is "O Worship the Lord." Compare Ps. 27:1, 2, in the King James Version.
4. These phrases both appear in the "I Have a Dream" speech, given at the Lincoln Memorial in Aug. 1963.
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7. James William McClendon Jr., *Biography as Theology* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1974), 37, 38.
8. Quoted in Anne Sebba, *Mother Teresa* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 84.
9. Ibid.
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11. Ibid., 24.

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Enjoying God

By Patty Cabrera

Photo: Tom Osborne

We are sensory, finite beings and, as such, our contact with God is always mediated—by sight, sound, touch, and so forth. If we are living at our best we are never not physical and we are never not thinking. These are the only ways we can interact with another person or with creation. Because we can't relate to God in the same way, to enjoy God means to enjoy the world that God has given—to enjoy this world in relation to God. We enjoy God as we enjoy life, which is God's gift. We don't love God in addition to loving creation; rather, we love God because of creation.

We can love God because the experience of enjoying creation provides a glimpse of God. Whether we look at the stars nestled deeply in the black sky or find ourselves in love, we are experiencing God. Ellen G. White wrote, "Even the adornments of the earth, the grass of living green, the lovely flowers of every hue, the lofty and varied trees of the forest, the dancing brook, the noble river, the placid lake, testify to the tender, fatherly care of God and to His desire to make His children happy."[1]

Certainly we don't need the delicately sculpted rose to remind us that we should get more rest. We don't need the elegant mountains to remind us that we should drink more water. We don't need love to remind us to eat. We don't need love to procreate. Love and beauty are not necessary for self-preservation. It is reasonable to believe that God intended that we enjoy the fullness of our humanness as we enjoy the fullness of creation.

When I take my dog Lucy to the lake we both enjoy it. She enjoys running, jumping, and swimming, and I enjoy watching her live in the fullness of what it means to be a dog. If she didn't run, jump, or swim, it wouldn't be as much fun for either of us. I could easily stay at home and just watch her sleep. God enjoys watching us live in the fullness of what it means to be human. I believe that God is happy when we are happy. Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10 NKJV).

God gives in creation things we will never see or know how to appreciate, yet God gives with such "profligate abandon, such manic generosity," we could call it excessive.[2] God's creativity doesn't stop where our appreciation does. By way of comparison, in the music recording industry software engineers constantly seek to improve technology that creates clearer recording formats. They continue to improve the resolution and fidelity of compact discs and other recording formats even though the difference in sound is not audibly noticeable to most people.[3] They do this for the sake of art—for the beauty and integrity of it.

We are called into community with God through one another.

I believe the same is true with God. God's artistry goes far beyond practicality or functionality—it is "the work of a consummate artist."[4] God saw that it was good "just because." God's generosity in creation tells us that living is more fun than merely existing.

Trying to love God outside the context of humanness doesn't seem particularly helpful; in practice, it seems impossible. The idea of God as infinite, all powerful, and unchangeable—and thus exempt from having anything to do with creation—defines God as something completely other, and therefore meaningless to us in any practical way. God becomes nothing more than an unknowable mystery. "Such language suggests a formidable God, an exalted being whose dazzling perfection is the direct opposite of what human beings are. People hear that God is almighty but they are weak. God is holy but they are sinful. God knows everything but they are ignorant. God is spiritual but they are bodily. God is eternal but they are mortal."[5]

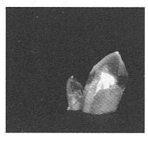
I suspect that we can react to this picture of God in a couple ways. Our first reaction might be to shrink away in humiliation and fear of God. Or we might simply become disinterested in a God so unlike us—one to whom we have no access or about whom we have no understanding. God becomes something we cannot relate to or experience in our ordinary human existence. It is as if there were rumored to be another race or life form on another planet that didn't look, act, talk, or exist in any of the ways we do. Despite its rumored existence, we have no way to know it or communicate with it—no way to share with it—which renders its existence meaningless to us in any practical way. That race becomes nothing more than a neat idea in our imagination.

If we want to know anything at all about God—anything meaningful—we must understand in the context of our humanness, in the context of what it means to be finite. Any suggestion that God can only be known or loved via some kind of mystical or supernatural means seems doubtful. The difference is finitude and infinity—our love for God cannot be directly (physically) given to God; rather, our experience with creation necessarily connects us with our experience of God. Precisely because we are finite, sensory beings, God has given us the beautiful gift of creation. "He who planted the ear, does he not hear? He who formed the eye, does he not see? . . . He who teaches us knowledge, knows our thoughts" (Ps. 94:8-11 RSV).

I am not arguing that God literally has ears and eyes, but that perhaps God has given us ears and eyes to understand God's own nature through creation. Through our ordinary experience we can better understand and enjoy God's love for us. It isn't that God is in the mountains or flowers literally, but rather that God is encountered in the experience of seeing the mountains or smelling flowers. Human experience allows for meaningful, cognitive content about God. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead" (Rom. 1:20 RSV). Humanity and the rest of creation sort of "fit" together nicely.[6]

Humanity as Relational

We are called into relationship with one another. A couple powerful reminders of this point are found in Scripture: "Love your neighbor as yourself," and "Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me" (Matt. 22:39, 25:45 NIV). Understanding what these sayings mean will, in the words of Jeremy S. Begbie, "affect the way in which we perceive human culture."[7] The idea behind Begbie's observation is that "every person is to be treated with the respect akin to that which one would show to God, and that each person should act as much as possible in the way God acts in relation to all the rest of creation."[8] This type of relational modeling based in God's love refuses "to see creation outside its relation to the divine love."[9]



We are called into community with God through one another. "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9 NKJV). God created humanity so that we can enjoy a relationship with God mediated through our relationships with one another. In the beginning, the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Gen. 1:18 NIV). Evidently, it was important that we enjoy engaging in the gift of creation and that we enjoy God within these relationships. "It was His [God's] purpose that the earth should be inhabited by beings whose existence would be a blessing to themselves and to one another, and an honor to their Creator."[10]

We don't love *enough* when we treat creation as a competitor to God because we don't put it in the context of an ultimate meaning. Ellen White's characterization of Enoch's walk with God in the details of ordinary life captures some of what I have in mind. "Enoch's walk with God was not in a trance or a vision, but in all the duties of his daily life. He did not become a hermit, shutting himself entirely from the world; for he had a work to do for God in the world. In the family and in his intercourse with men, as a husband and father, a friend, a citizen, he was the steadfast, unwavering servant of the Lord."[11]

When we are in a relationship we may not always be thinking of our lover, but we are always aware of him. Every decision we make in some way reflects that relationship. The same is true of how we experience God—the decisions we make and our experience with the world will always be influenced by our awareness of God. "God is placed, not alongside creatures but behind them, as the light which shines through a crystal and lends it whatever luster it may have. He is loved here, not apart from but through and in them."[12]

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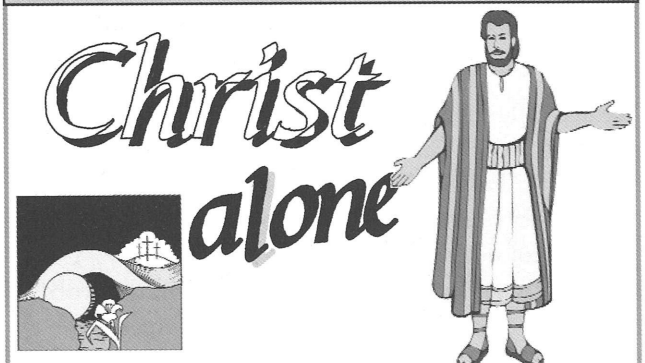

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Notes and References

1. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 8 (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948), 325-26.

2. Sara Maitland, *A Big-Enough God* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995), 122-23.

3. The standard audio compact disc has a bit depth of 16 and a sample rate of 44.1K. There are proposals to manufacture compact discs with an improved bit depth of 24 and sample rate of 96K. Compact disc formats such as DVD's (Digital Versital Disc) already have these specifications. However, for all practical purposes, the human ear cannot tell the difference between the old and new technologies, although some hard-core enthusiasts argue to the contrary.

4. John Randolph Willis, *Pleasures Forevermore: The Theology of C. S. Lewis* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1980), 24.

5. R. William Franklin and Joseph M. Shaw, *The Case For Christian Humanism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 184.

6. This statement may seem somewhat anthropological, but there is a certain "correctness" to this argument that gives strength to the notion that various aspects of human existence and experience give affirmation to the existence of God.

7. Jeremy S. Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise: Towards A Theology Of The Arts* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1991), 181.

8. Fritz Guy, *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1999), 179.

9. Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise,* 181.

10. Ellen G. White, *The Story of Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1943), 500.

11. Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1908), 48.

12. Nicholas Lash, *Easter in Ordinary: Reflections on Human Experience and the Knowledge of God* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia , 1988), 165.

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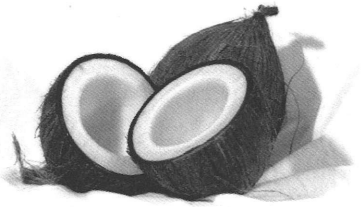
A Time to Mourn, a Time to Grand March

By Chris Blake



My friend Steve told me about meeting some extremely nutrition-conscious Adventists who, while working at a mission project on a Caribbean island, refused to drink coconut milk offered to them. Their reason was simple: "We don't drink milk."

That settled it. Of course, the principal reason they don't drink milk is that it emanates from an animal, but this premise eluded them. Milk is milk, after all. We may surmise from this rationale a similar ban enforced on milk of magnesia, mother's milk, and the Milky Way galaxy.

Words will fool us. Our resulting confusion may be amusing, but we act foolishly when we neglect to make timely distinctions. The wise Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 3, "For everything there is a season . . . a time to weep, a time to laugh, a time to mourn, a time to dance" (RSV).

It's Solomon's dance that's the sticking point, because "Adventists don't dance."[1] Yet turn on the music and watch an infant move instinctively with the tune. Little children dancing is cute because it's so harmless, so innocent, so natural. So, naturally, we shouldn't wonder why every people group on earth in some way associates movement with music.

Our prohibition against dancing is too sweeping. I'm writing to those readers who sense that Hebrew dancing, for example, or river dancing, or square dancing, is not inherently evil, but aren't certain what precisely the Church should say about it. Frankly, I'm weary of hearing how we are so susceptible and ignorant that we will be sucked into any temptation we come near. Certainly we ought to be careful—full of care—but spare me the apprehensive, antiseptic lifestyle. Jesus didn't live that way. This is why he was accused of being a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners (see Matt. 11:19). Psalm 16:11 states, "In his presence is fullness of joy," and the fullness appears in astonishing variety.

Too often we fall prey to slippery slope reasoning—a logical fallacy that suggests once a step is taken it will inevitably lead to harmful ends. However, we don't stay away from grocery stores that sell liquor even though glimpsing the fermented brews may entice us to drink, nor do we shun computers though they may lead us to pornography. We eat mushrooms, though some of them are poisonous. We distinguish.

Recently I watched some friends—a husband and wife—Irish dancing. They skipped under bridges of arms, twirled at giddy speeds, and joined hands with people of many ages and races. It was so far from seductive—it

was fun and innocent, and they finished breathless and exhilarated. I understand it's similar to the "grand marches" of olden Adventist days.

As Christians, we live redemptively. What we could truly use is an acceptable term for vegetarian dancing, an active, joyful response to music that uplifts us, builds community and vibrant health, and makes us feel good about the gifts of music and movement and laughter that God gives.[2]

Consider the names of "vegetarian meats." FriChik. Bologno. Numete. Stripples. Wham. Prosage. Prime Stakes (stakes?). Meatless Corned Beef. Do these lead to eating meat? No, they provide a meat substitute. Similarly, we can provide a redemptive substitute for harmful dancing—that stuff that exalts sensuality and demeans relationships.

What could we call it? I suppose "folk dancing" could work. Other possibilities include: (a) vegeshuffling, (b) splinkettsing, (c) Worthington waltzing, (d) Little Debbie cakewalking, (e) Jordan River dancing, (f) rhythmical aerobics, (g) knotdancing, (h) seven-stepping, (i) roller skating.

I'm having fun with these, but I'm also serious. For lack of a palatable term, some people are losing their religion over this. It's time to stop mourning over dancing.

"Milk" isn't always milk. "Dancing" isn't always dancing. Can we talk now?

Notes and References

1. As Martin Weber points out, had we begun in New Orleans instead of New England we might be a different church. As further evidence of our irrational fears on this subject, North American Division president Don Schneider's 2001 book is *One Heart Rejoicing*. The book was originally titled *One Heart Dancing*.

2. Of the twenty-seven references to "dance" in the Bible, only four occur in a negative context. Sixteen references are clearly positive.

Chris Blake teaches English and communication at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. He has never participated in a grand march, and is a woeful roller skater.
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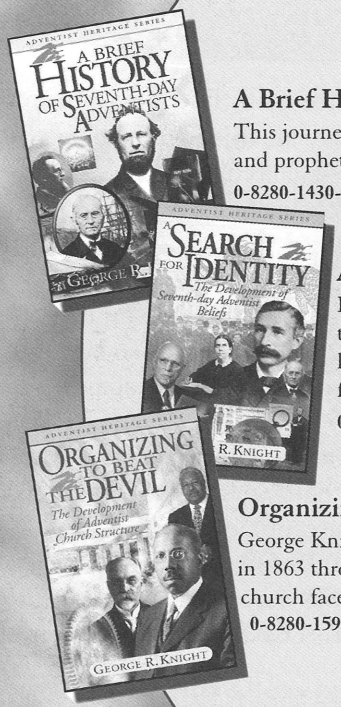

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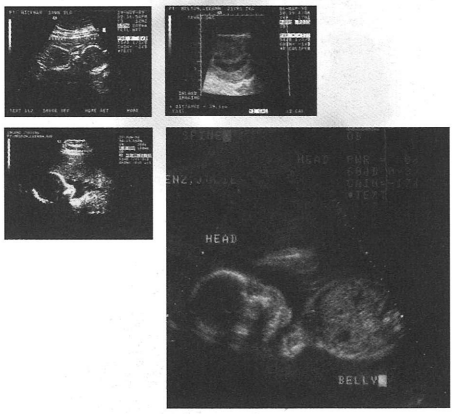
that hinge of time when you're waiting to learn
if there's cancer growing inside you or nothing at all,
the doctor's exam room window allows you this
particular moment of spring–dandelions
disseminate seeds with malignant stealth,
while dogwood blossoms raise their small fists
uncurling to palms, cupping the air.
Displayed on one wall, a poster explains
The Baby Inside You
with a headless, transparent woman,
the vessel for somebody else.
Her cross-section uterus closes around
the curl of a fetus, a comma
waiting for what happens next.
Larger womb clutching bigger babies
in later stages of growth bubble up from her belly,
their trajectory clearly away.
From the room next door
you can hear the amplified whooshing
you know is a heartbeat–
the baby inside someone else–
quickened pulse of ocean against shore.

By Pat Carson

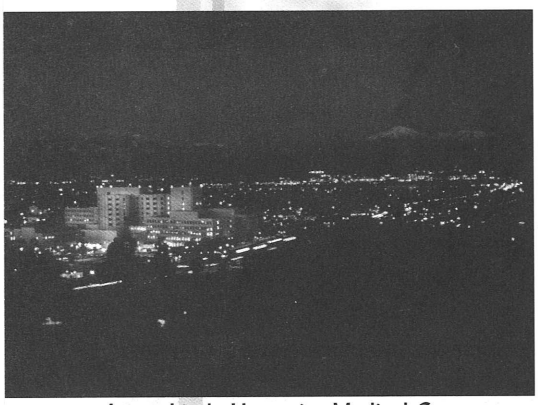


Pat Cason is an alumna of Loma Linda University School of Medicine now living in the Northwest. Her poems in this issue orginally appeared in Lancet. *pcason@pacifier.com*

The Art of Healing

Night Work in a Holy Place

By Kent A. Hansen



Loma Linda University Medical Center

The sliding security doors of Loma Linda University Medical Center open, releasing me into the freshness of a new night. A gibbous moon hangs low over the palm trees along the street. Venus shines bright to the west, the direction of my home. Faithful reminders of the world that continues outside.

The meetings are ended for the day, the contracts reviewed for now. The immediate future lies heavy in the soft-sided briefcase held in my left hand. After I put it in the back seat of my car and close the door, I turn and look back across the parking lot at the towers and ramparts of the giant institution that I serve as legal counsel. My eyes rest on the third row of lighted windows.

During the day, patients, vendors, clerks, nurses, medical residents, technicians, students, physicians, visitors, case managers, engineers, lawyers, and administrators throng the hospital in a Dickensian scene. The business of health care is being done.

At night, we moneychangers leave the temple, and the liturgy of healing commences. This is when I think the Medical Center does its best work. The tests are completed and the diagnoses made. The plans of care have been charted. The vigil of healing commences. Voices hush, nurses move from bedside to bedside in the consistent rhythms of care, in the perseverance of service.

In the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit on the third floor, seventy-two infants lie in seventy-two beds. They are very ill. The care they receive must be constant and focused, a labor of love on the precipitous perimeter between life and death. It is God's work. The stated mission of the Medical Center is "To continue the healing ministry of Jesus Christ."

These patients are almost impossibly tiny. They represent the best part of their mothers and fathers. They are dreams struggling for fulfillment, a match light cupped against the wind. Right at the start, when all should be delight and wonder, something has gone terribly wrong—a pancreas that produces too much insulin that eats away the flesh; the rampaging

cells of leukemia; hearts with holes that seep life away with every beat; intestines where lungs should be breathing free.

The wonder turns to unbearable tension; the delight turns to dread in the acidic reduction of terror. Prayers of family and loved ones grope through the darkness for handholds of hope. Into these desperate moments enter the nurses and physicians, intervenors of grace, whose exacting and holy vocation is to support the smallest and the weakest in their grasp for life.

This is heart- and soul-risking work that requires exhausting concentration. These patients cannot describe their symptoms. Every sign must

There are cathedrals that are not churches. There are ministers who are not clergy.

be read and interpreted without the communication of the patient. No tracker in the wilderness has a more difficult challenge. Standing alone in the parking lot, I look up toward the NICU and I see through the eyes of my heart these ministers of healing moving from crib to crib, lifting holy hands—caressing, adjusting, holding through the night.

It was there that I watched a mother and three-week-old daughter reach out to hold each other's hands. The baby girl rested high in a blanketed nest on a machine that warmed and circulated the blood that her own weak heart could not move adequately and that breathed the breaths her pneumonia-ravaged lungs could not breathe on their own. It was an altar of sorts, and we stood before it in a semicircle—the physicians, the nurses, and their lawyer, who is learning the ways of this place. The baby's eyes were bright and she smiled as her fingers touched her mom.

"How can it be?" I thought. Beside me stood the kind neonatalogist whose own heart seems, of necessity, enlarged for the compassion and competence it must hold in balance.

"She looks so good—how long can it go on like this?" I asked.

He whispered, "The lungs and heart are really gone. Her other organs are shutting down. It would be over now except we all see exactly what you see and we don't quit."

I moved on through the unit, pausing crib by crib, observing the care and hearing stories of successes, crises, and heartbreaks. Moms rocked babies that could be held, and watched over those who couldn't. Nurses navigated gracefully amidst a tangle of tubes and wires and blinking lights.

All the while, my beeper vibrated urgently at my waist in message and duplicate message. When I finally emerged into the hallway outside, I returned the page. "Where were you?" an administrator demanded. "We need to talk about the contract."

"I'm sorry, but I was in the NICU. I thought it was kind of irreverent to stop and return the page."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that is a sacred place. Life and death are happening in there, and I don't think it is appropriate to interrupt the staff and say, 'Do you have a phone I can use? I need to tend to some business.'"

"Do you really feel like that?" he asked.

"I really feel like that."

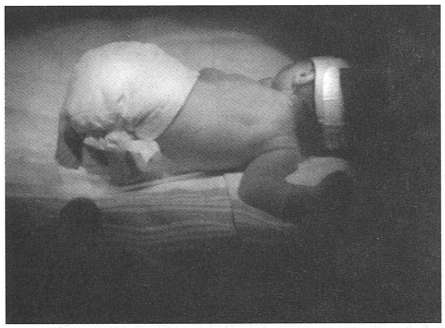
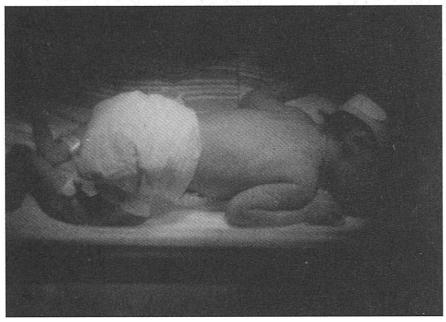


Photo: Dawn Hickman



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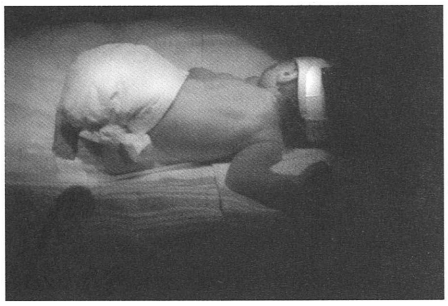
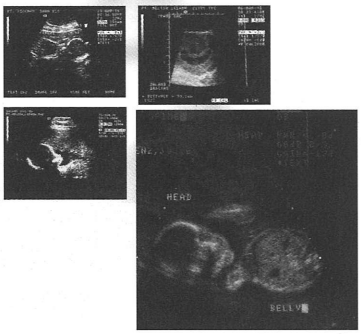


Photo: Dawn Hickman

Every night since then, when I leave the Medical Center in darkness, I pause and look up at the lights on the third floor. In the Jerusalem Temple, worship took place twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It was led by professionals, Levites who ministered prayers and praise to a God whose presence was above all and yet so near and so needed as the source of life itself. They worked in shifts. Through the night, some of them were always on duty, doing as good a job at 3:00 A.M. as the day shift did at 3:00 P.M. They sang a song of devotion as they performed their faithful service keeping the light in the darkness.

Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord,
who stand by night in the house of the Lord!
Lift up your hands to the holy place,
and bless the Lord.
May the Lord, maker of heaven and earth,
bless you from Zion.
(Ps. 134)



It is this prayer that rises in my heart in the parking lot beneath the third-floor NICU. It is this prayer that I pray for those within before I drive home. There are cathedrals that are not churches. There are ministers who are not clergy. The healing ministry of Jesus Christ continues this night, in this place. "He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:3).

Kent A. Hansen is general counsel to Loma Linda University Adventist Health Sciences Center. He writes a weekly Internet column, "A Word of Grace for Your Monday." khansen@claysonlaw.com

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Burnout: Paying the Cost for Compassion

By James Londis

There simply is not enough time. Time, the house in which one seeks to accomplish everything, is not spacious enough to satisfactorily fulfill all one's obligations. The week consists of a series of trade-offs between work and home and self. More often than not, self receives the least time because one does not feel guilty taking time away from one's self; one feels guilty taking time away from others. The virtue of self-denial easily becomes a vehicle of self-destruction.

As Parker Palmer put it in his book *The Active Life*.

> For some of us, the primary path to aliveness is the active life of work, creativity, and caring. The active life is an extraordinary blessing and curse. The blessing is obvious: . . . the active life makes it possible to discover ourselves and our world, to test and extend our powers, to connect with other beings, to co-create a common reality. . . . Take away the opportunity to work, to create, or to care . . . and you have deprived someone of the chance to feel fully human. But the active life also carries a curse. Many of us know what it is to live lives not of action but of frenzy, to go from day to day exhausted and unfulfilled by our attempts to work, create, and care. Many of us know the violence of an active life. . . . Action poses some of our deepest spiritual crises as well as some of our most heartfelt joy.[1]

Caregivers–people who choose medicine, nursing, and other caregiving professions are particularly susceptible to the virture dilemma posed by burnout. Examining their experience provides answers for major sources of stress, thus yielding an understanding of burnout and what is required to heal this chronic malady.

Why do people choose medicine, nursing, and other caregiving professions? Let me offer the following propositions:

Photo: Loma Linda University

1. The vast majority of healing professionals care deeply about people in suffering.
2. Many acquire their compassion for sick, vulnerable people from wounded childhoods.
3. Many are drawn to medicine and allied health because they are intellectually and technically challenging and deal with life-and-death matters.
4. Many are at least not put off by the promise of a comfortable lifestyle, social status, and prestige.
5. Many find that the healing arts help them cope with their own mortality issues.
6. Some are attracted to the profession because they are committed to Jesus as the "model healer."

These factors create what I call an "ethical imperative" to heal the sick. One feels one "ought" to do this, that one is "called" to this service or ministry. Consequently, responding to this imperative becomes a virtue, one that more often than not contributes to burnout.

Although working longer hours to increase one's salary can be tempting, and putting in more time may mean another peer review journal publication or research grant, the most dangerous cause of burnout may in fact be caused by one's virtues. Making less money or being less notable within one's profession does not weigh on the physicians and other caregivers I know nearly so much as their concern for their patients, a concern that impels them to work beyond what they should. How can physicians say to their patients that they need to go home at a decent hour to get their rest?

The "Supererogatory/Compassion" Temptation to Burnout

Their compassion for their patients urges caregivers to embody a supererogatory ethic, which, unlike one's professional obligations, is by definition limitless in its response to human need. Caregivers may understand and be able to perform their fiduciary duties as professionals, but how are they to be able to do all that the compassion of their vocation requires? I am not merely talking about long hours, but also about draining, depleting compassion.

Some time ago I had lunch with a physician's wife. We had been working with a palliative care group in the hospital that grew in the aftermath of Bill Moyer's "On Our Own Terms" PBS series. Herself a breast cancer survivor, she told me that she now had her husband at home since his retirement a few months earlier. Fascinated by Moyer's series, she tried to get him to watch it with her, but he would not. Finally, somewhat frustrated, she pressed him about his reluctance. Upset, he said to her: "You have no idea how hard it is to deliver bad news to patients time and time again for thirty years. I can't watch the series."

His reaction surprised her, because he had never mentioned his inner pain as a caregiver. As Naomi Remen has discovered in her retreats for physicians, even practice partners who struggle with these concerns may never talk about them with each other.[2] They may not even suspect that anyone else feels the way they do. Richard B. Steele points to the "double-sidedness" of compassion. It usually happens to us in a spontaneous and uncontrived way and is "a mark of my own vulnerability to another person's distress. Indeed, genuine compassion seems to be something that is almost torn out of us by the grievous circumstances under which someone else lives."[3]

In addition, Steele suggests, "there is a sense in which compassion is voluntary. Or at least it is a trait of character that we must intentionally cultivate and that typically grows in scope and intensity as we mature morally."[4] It is a disposition, and it cannot help but unfold in the caregiver if he or she does not consciously resist it. When one's life is dedicated to relieving the suffering of others, when the needs of others are the focus of one's daily efforts, one inevitably suffers with the suffering. One's need for balance, rest, or time with friends and family seems morally insignificant. The caregiver cannot help feeling selfish much of the time he or she is not serving the ill.

Ironically, then, the virtues and commitments that make for good caregivers may contribute to their self-destroying behavior. If they are caregivers of deep faith, they do not know how to say "yes" to their personal and private lives if that "yes" feels like a "no" to their needy patients or to God. One physician with

The most dangerous cause of burnout may in fact be caused by one's virtues.

whom I spoke struggled to control his emotions as he described this inner conflict. Even the religious imperative can become an obstacle to self-preservation. Suffering patients cause such physicians agony that they cannot easily dismiss, contain, or ignore.

The "Wounded Healer" Temptation to Burnout

I indicated earlier that a variety of factors can contribute to one's ethical imperative to pursue medicine and other types of healing, including the emotional universe of one's childhood. Mixed with the ethical imperative that can lead to burnout is the need to relieve suffering because one's history provides fuel for the ethical imperative engine.

People in the helping professions have been the subject of considerable research by psychologists and sociologists. They note that a high percentage of such professionals are "wounded healers," that is, professionals who find healing for their personal wounds by helping to heal others. Whether in ministers, physicians, nurses, or social workers, the drive to serve others to the detriment of one's self may be partially fueled by inner needs distinct from altruism. Thus, caregivers come full circle: they start as "wounded" children whose need to heal is related to those wounds, then they become wounded "healers" with the license to practice medicine, nursing, or social work, and end up as "healers wounded" because they do not take care of themselves.

I wish to make it clear that being a wounded healer should not be considered altogether bad. Henri Nouwen has observed that healing agents can come into being either in spite of or because of their own vulnerabilities, weaknesses, and anguish. One can be led to the self-denying life through personal struggle with suffering. Once again, ironically, fulfillment of one's need to serve because of one's own anguish can lead to a self-destructive commitment to patients. Feeling fulfilled or feeling that one is doing all that one must does not often happen to wounded healers unless they also feel overworked and exhausted. When the suffering world cries out, caregiver hobbies, families, and needed rest produce guilt, not refreshment.

The "Excellence" Temptation to Burnout

Caregivers, especially physicians, have another imperative that tempts them to overwork, but one no less deforming of their humanity, and that is the imperative to excel. It starts as early as high school, takes hold in the college premed program, and goes into overdrive in medical school. Average students are not accepted into quality medical schools and average students do not enter quality residency programs. The self-inflicted pressures to excel are enormous, and if they are exacerbated by the expectations of one's family, they can be overwhelming. One physician admitted to me that he had been driven to perform because his father expected so much. When he proudly told his father that he had graduated second in his class from Loma Linda University Medical School, the father, annoyed, asked: "Why weren't you number one?"

Excellence requires self-denial, and no one wants to be mediocre. If distinction in one's profession, if high quality in one's care of patients requires the sacrifice of the self, then that is the price one must pay if one is to possess any self-respect. It is difficult to think of any human endeavor that does not improve in quality because someone gives himself to it with a single-minded devotion. Nobel prize-winning medical research, superior outcomes in surgery, or more accurate diagnostics and treatments do not reward the caregiver who limits his efforts to fifty or even sixty hours a week.

Furthermore, most realms of endeavor have experienced an enormous upgrade in demands for performance in recent years. Staying on the cutting edge of one's profession requires more time than ever. It was once said: "Smith is the world's greatest physicist, but he's a boorish, tiresome nitwit. Better to be less of a physicist and get to work on the nitwit problem." But this is difficult for people who want to excel in our highly competitive culture.

Once again, an emotional need or even an ethical imperative to do one's best can conflict with the imperative to care for our relationships and our humanity. Torn between the needs of others and one's desire to be competent and caring the physician may hardly consider her own welfare. It seems like an impossible dilemma: If caring for others and pursuing excellence can be inimical to the self's need for rest and balance, not caring for others and being content with mediocrity are also inimical to the self's imperative to meet patient needs as proficiently as one can.

The "Denial of Death" Temptation to Burnout

For some time now, psychologists and philosophers have known that our passion to serve with excellence may, at the preconscious level, be a way to cope with our own mortality. Written several decades ago, psychiatrist Ernest Becker's prize-winning book, *The Denial of Death*, persuaded me that it is our repression of our mortality—not our sexuality—that breeds our anxieties and neuroses. Promiscuity, the hunger for power, wealth, notoriety, and the need to work to the point of endangering health, Becker insists, are often due to the subconscious terror that haunts us in our finitude.

Morrie Schwartz echoed this sentiment when he said to his biographer Mitch Albom: "Well, the truth is, if you really listen to that bird on your shoulder, if you accept that you can die at any time–then you might not be as ambitious as you are."[5] We humans are gifted at escape from unpleasant realities, not the least of which is the fact that we are going to die, and may die at any moment. Only when faced with death as a very real and imminent prospect do we realize that our "escapes" are useless. It is then that we must discover our true selves and learn whether external events such as work successes and failures (or other disappointments, such as losing the presidential election in a suspicious manner) define the core of who we are. Much of our obsessive activity—even for the noblest ethical reasons—is to keep us from facing this reality. As Jerome Miller has so eloquently put it in "The Way of Suffering":

> To be stricken by grief means precisely to have one's managerial control over one's life . . . incapacitated by it. The therapeutic effort to bring grief into the open, to talk about death without our old hesitancies and reluctances, has, I think, the unintended effect of transforming the experience of death so that we can . . . undergo it without being ultimately upset by it. It judges suffering from the point of view of ordinary life and so tries to deprive it of its very capacity to rupture that life irreparably. In that sense, it never sees things from the point of view of the sufferer. For the sufferer may be close to a truth that the therapeutic way of thinking never leads us to suspect—that our whole ordinary way of life, with all its evasions and avoidances, is in some profound sense unreal. Suffering has a way of turning everything upside down. And from that overturned perspective, it makes no sense to resume one's ordinary life—because one knows now the truths it was designed to keep hidden. In that sense, someone who truly encounters death can never recover; for he cannot resume the way of life that sheltered him from the very intimation of it.[6]

Burnout Exacerbated by the Health Care System

When one adds to these existential challenges the stress imposed by the efforts to contain health care costs, living out the ethical imperative becomes even more difficult and frustrating. It is no secret that deepening frustrations with paperwork, patient volume, decreasing income, and diminishing time for themselves and their families frustrate caregivers. Several physicians and nurses have told me that the primary source of their feelings of burnout was the tension between the contradictory expectations of the health care system and their patients. HMOs want less time per patient and greater efficiencies in the use of scarce resources, whereas patients want more time with their physicians and from their nurses, as well as access to any and all diagnostic procedures that might prove beneficial.

"It is not the money," one young physician commented, echoing the theme I had heard in other contexts. "If I had wanted money, I would have gotten an MBA, not an MD." Certainly, young physicians want to earn enough to support themselves and their families. But they are equally sure that they willingly make financial and personal sacrifices for their patients. They want to give their patients the time they need.

These caregivers know they have chosen a demanding, stressful profession filled with beepers, early morning phone calls, and a time-consuming reimbursement mechanism. They find much in the current system unintelligible and inimical to patient interests.

The Sabbath must provide resolution for the reasons we do not rest, most especially those that grow out of the virtue of self-denial.

Well aware they cannot do it all, several have spoken of the coping mechanisms they have developed to help them when they feel overwhelmed.[7] What they want is "more" time. However, the health care "system," added to everything else we have identified, prevents them from having more time.

Time as an Enemy, Sabbath as a Friend

What, then, is to be done? How does one achieve balance in one's life without feeling the remorse inherent in Jesus' admonition: "This you ought to have done, and not left the other undone"? (Matt. 23:23). In my experience with resident physicians, this excruciating ethical dilemma plagues them, especially women with young children.

As a Seventh-day Adventist, I have been surprised at the number of contemporary writers (most of them not worshipping within a Sabbath tradition such as Judaism or Seventh-day Adventism) who recommend a return to the notion of the Sabbath as a remedy for overly busy and stressed people. As one writer put it,

> God graces us with rest, and, as we respond with our gratitude, receiving the gift, we begin to enter into that balanced life which is our destiny as the people of a loving creator.[8]

However, if God's gift is simply an invitation to rest, that is not sufficient. The Sabbath must provide resolution for the reasons we do not rest, most especially those that grow out of the virtue of self-denial. To show how it might do that, we need to examine the nature of the Sabbath commandment. Although the Sabbath is first mentioned in the creation narrative, we will note in particular the commandment's historical roots in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. Then we will touch on its eschatological application in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The first three commandments of the Decalogue make clear that God is to be worshipped as the Creator and Lord of the world. The fourth commandment concerns the Sabbath as a symbol of God as the Creator and Lord, and contains specific instruction about work and rest. In the Sabbath we see that the ethical imperatives articulated in the last six commandments find their basis in the religious imperatives of the first four. To put it another way, the Law is structured to help us understand that the religious imperative both undergirds and transcends the ethical. In the Exodus version of the Sabbath commandment, for example, we are to keep the Sabbath holy first because God is the Creator of all, including human beings and the work that we do.

> Remember to keep the sabbath day holy. You have six days to labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; that day your shall not work, you, your son or your daughter, you slave or your slave-girl, your cattle or the alien within your gates; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and on the seventh day he rested. Therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and declared it holy. (Exod. 20:8-11 NEB)

The commandment points to God's lordship and creative power as the authority that undergirds the Sabbath rest. It locates the imperative to "rest" within divinity itself; that is, if God rested as the Creator, humans made in God's image must also rest. It is important to note that this "rest" is not cessation of activity. It is an "active" rest in the sense that one is intentional about how this time away from daily and "ordinary" work is to be spent. As a weekly event, it is to be so extraordinary that it teaches us the meaning and significance of ordinary time and labor. All creation–including animals, slaves, foreigners, and the land–is to be recreated and renewed by this rest. Refusing to rest is not an option. Doing so is tantamount to idolizing labor and defacing God's image in the creation.

In the Dueteronomic version of the commandment, a different rationale is given for the Sabbath.

> You have six days to labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; that day you shall not do any work, neither you, your son or your daughter, your slave or your slave-girl, your ox, your ass, or any of your cattle, nor the alien within your gates, so that your slaves and slave-girls may rest as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God brought you out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and for that reason the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day. (Deut. 5:13-15 NEB)

Here we learn that the Hebrew slaves who had probably never had a day off in four hundred years had a right to rest. They could not regain their full humanity after slavery without regular, guaranteed rest. What was it like to be told that Yahweh, your redeemer and deliverer, commanded you to rest because you had been slaves? Such obligatory rest would be a joy, not a burden. As one Lubavitcher Rabbi said, "The Sabbath is a burden in the same way that pushing a wheelbarrow full of diamonds is a burden."

Unlike the book of Exodus, the focus in Dueteronomy is not on God's transcendence as Creator but on God's immanent activity in the world as the Redeemer of the Hebrew people from Egyptian oppression. When slave laborers are told that they are to rest out of gratefulness to Yahweh, they understand that labor must never be an absolute, not even labor for good things. God has acted on your behalf and you are to rest as God has commanded. A religious "indicative"—what God has done for us—undergirds a religious imperative of obedience that overflows into an ethical imperative: Those over whom we exercise power, especially in a patriarchal and hierarchical society, cannot be forced to work unremittingly in disobedience to God's commandment.

The writer of Hebrews adapts the Sabbath concept to the new covenant in Christ by using it as a symbol of the eschatological rest that awaits God's people at the end of history (Heb. 4:1-6). The Creator will recreate the world, the liberator from slavery will liberate the cosmos from evil, the battle will be over and we shall all rest. If we have come from the rest of creation week and passed through the rest of liberation from both physical and spiritual slavery, and if we look forward to our ultimate rest in God, how can we not hear the importance of rest for the present?

For these reasons, physicians and other caregivers may not justify or indulge in overwork when it is their compassion that drives them to it. Nor can labor-related self-destructive behavior be defended because we have heard the "call of God" to medicine or ministry. Further, I believe that embedded in the Sabbath are resources that speak to the emotional, existential, and intellectual factors that participate in and supplement our ethical and religious reasons to overwork. The Sabbath says clearly that even the caregiver's obligations to her patients must be subordinate to the commandment.

With apologies to Kierkegaard, I am suggesting that the Sabbath reminds us that there is a "religious dimension over the ethical" that takes priority. When God commands a Sabbath rest for us—even if it is more like the command of a loving parent who absolutely insists that his adult child caregiver "rest," than it is the order of a tyrant—God is reminding caregivers that no matter how hard they work, they will not cure all disease, they will not relieve all suffering, they will not prevent the death of all their patients. To work as if they are trying to assume this responsibility is to deny their creatureliness and pretend they are the Creator. It is to behave as if they are the deliverer and not Yahweh, that they are responsible for the ultimate victory over suffering and death in the world.

In this sense, the Sabbath commandment prohibits making one's own service to others an idol. It is as if God is saying: "It is enough that you have passionately participated in the work of the kingdom or reign of God by seeking to heal the wounded, weak, and vulnerable. It is my responsibility, not yours, to ensure that what you creatures do makes an ultimate difference. It is my responsibility to cure all disease, relieve all suffering, and ensure eternal life for your patients." The Sabbath is designed to be "fixed" and uncompromising when it orders us to interrupt regularly the daily grind that depletes us.

Like Mother Teresa's fixed daily prayers, Thomas

The ethical imperatives articulated in the last six commandments find their basis in the religious imperatives of the first four.

Merton's contemplative retreats, or Billy Graham's habit of reading the Psalms every morning, the time is to be inviolate. It is meant to be a discipline, a corrective to our natural tendency to work too hard even for the noblest reasons. Because God makes this demand on me, I am allowed to feel I am not being selfish if I say "no" to the needs of others during this time. God is the Lord, not work, not even work to relieve the suffering of other people. One could probably make the case that if I worked longer hours I could help more people. That one was tried on Mother Teresa, who replied with spiritual insight that "God must take care of the world. I can only take care of those given to me."

But, you might say, this is all very well for believers who worship within a Sabbath tradition. However, the Sabbath cannot help those compassionate and ethical physicians who are not religious. The authority for the Sabbath clearly resides in God, so if one does not believe in God, what ground is there for coping with the self-destructive potential within the ethical imperative? With or without a divine reality, it seems to me that the same considerations are still valid. Reality itself suggests a Sabbath, a need for the cycle of work and rest. No caregiver can or should assume that she or he can fix the suffering and death of everyone who has need. That is a form of hubris that must be tempered by a humility before reality that gives the caregiver permission to rest and be recreated.

Saving others so that I need to be saved is the kind of "antinomy" that even Kant would appreciate. It is a form of arrogance that produces the self's enslavement to work. In this context, leisure is not frivolity, nor is it inherently narcissistic. One can only deny one's self if one rests sufficiently to have a self!

There is a paradox here. You cannot have a self if you are not self-giving. Denying my "self" is one way to establish a strong sense of my self. However, never receiving from others and never receiving rest is certain to make the "self" in self-giving short lived. With or without a religious faith, this insight seems self-evident to me (no pun intended).

One contemporary witness to this insight comes from poet Kathleen Norris, who, as an agnostic, decided to enter a monastery in order to find she knew not what. She left the world of work and entered the world of reflection and prayer. It was as if her life were telling her she needed a Sabbath.

So, for these reasons and more, the Sabbath invites us to live by a non-utilitarian thesis and beyond a duty-oriented one. Because we cannot accomplish the greatest good for the greatest number (whatever that means) or do our duty (let alone go beyond it) so diligently that we can meet the needs of all our patients, the Sabbath asks us to admit our finitude and, if we believe in God, to trust God. What we can do is respond to the needs of those who see us as their neighbor-caregiver as suggested in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The Sabbath also speaks powerfully to the other sources of our tendency to idolize work, such as the wounded healer syndrome. If God is the Creator and Redeemer who establishes the Sabbath to remind us of God's power and grace, then one of God's tasks is to transform even our most painful personal experiences into occurrences that are creative and redemptive for other people. Our vulnerabilities may make us more susceptible to overwork and burnout; they may also make us more sensitive to our patients and to other vulnerable human beings. Our spiritual work as caregivers must include confrontations of and attempts to deal with burnout as we confront pain in our patients. We must learn not to confuse taking care of others with taking care of ourselves, even though in our experience those points will often seem to coalesce. We must not become the "healer wounded," that is, the caregiver whose need to be healed through service becomes so pathological that the self is injured.

The Sabbath further addresses, I believe, how the desire for excellence in medicine and other health-related fields must be tempered with rest. When I was in college, there were few majors in premed not driven to superior grades in each class they took (most especially the sciences, of course). There is in health care a powerful demand for academic and technical

Photo: Loma Linda University

excellence. Human life is on the line–no trivial matter. People of compassion and virtue who go into health care feel not only that they must excel for their own self-respect and professional accomplishment, but also that they must do so for the sake of their patients. What does the Sabbath have to say to this issue?

Putting aside the much-challenged assumption that the biomedical and technical understanding of healing is adequate in today's culture, I would suggest that the Sabbath redefines excellence in terms of human existence as a whole by refusing to acknowledge that one-dimensional people who overwork can, in the end, effectively serve others as healers, or serve God faithfully.[8] One could conceivably argue that working seven days a week from sunup to sundown made the Hebrews the finest slaves ever conscripted and the weakest human beings ever called to be a nation. As we have all learned from a variety of endeavors, creative breakthroughs and incisive thinking come more often than not during moments of relaxation, when the mind is focused on other things. As Rollo May observed in his book on creativity, many mathematicians and physicists do their best work while walking the beach with the dog or shaving. To paraphrase John Milton, "They also excel who only stand and wait."

How does the Sabbath address our finitude and mortality? There is little doubt that one route to the sort of immortality conferred by historical significance is working hard on behalf of others, either as a moral and political leader or as a philanthropist. The scale of one's contribution is somewhat irrelevant; that is, a street named after you in your local town may memorialize you just as permanently as a president is memorialized on the mall. One's continuing in memory is limited only by the number of people who know and remember you. Especially as we age and the fact of our mortality becomes too obvious to ignore, we naturally look for our influence and memory to continue beyond our deaths. But does work to the point of self-destruction really accomplish this goal, or is such effort one of the illusions we must give up if we are to be integrated, whole selves? If we do achieve the goals we seek—even the presidency of the United States—does that really extend our lives beyond the grave?

The Sabbath reminds us that there is only one adequate solution to the problem of death: the reality of a Creator/Redeemer God. You may not believe in God, but you should not deceive yourself into thinking that you can do through effort what only God or deity can do in the future: achieve eternal life. There is no more immortality by works than there is righteousness by works; it is the gift of God.

Nonetheless, an objection may be raised to my proposal, even by caregivers sympathetic to it: namely, that the one very clear exception to the Sabbath rest commanded in Exodus and Deuteronomy is the teaching of Jesus that one should not use the fact that it is the Sabbath to refuse to heal on that day. We are not only free to lift the "ox out of the pit" and to relieve human suffering on the Sabbath, but we ought to. In Luke's Gospel, the man who for many years had suffered with the withered hand could easily have waited until sundown for his cure, but Jesus singled him out for healing in public on the Sabbath. Does not that understanding of the relationship between healing and the Sabbath reimpose the caregiver's burden? How can persons able to do the most physical healing on the Sabbath take a rest from healing those who need it?

The answer, I believe, is embedded in the Sabbath commandment itself. You will recall that after the commandment urges the Hebrews to keep the day holy, and to do no work, it also enjoins the Hebrews that no one in their families, their household staff, or their livestock should be made to work on the Sabbath. This dimension in the commandment, echoed powerfully in the notion of the Sabbath "jubilee" year, is proof that not only individuals, but also systems and entire societies are under the imperative to enter into God's rest.

This dimension suggests that the Sabbath requires that the health care system afford rest even to caregivers whose work of healing is the exception to the prohibition against work. It is a given that any physician, nurse, or therapist on any Sabbath would be morally and religiously required to "work" to heal and save life. What is not a given is that every caregiver on every Sabbath is required to do that work. Even when the caregiver does healing work on the Sabbath, it is

not to be the same as work during the week, which is to say that healing on the Sabbath is to be viewed as itself an act of worship to God that fulfills the purpose of the day.

Although one is not to work on every Sabbath for one's own sake, when one does work on Sabbath for the sake of others, it is to be seen as a holy labor, much like the labor of the priests in the temple. Such labor is within the Sabbath rest more than it is an exception to that rest. It is a fulfillment of the rest, another way of resting, rather than work. Writer Marva Dawn has said it well:

> Because God's eternity enfolds us in our Sabbath celebrations . . . we will delight in becoming agents for [God's] purpose of caring for the poor, delivering the oppressed, announcing the good news of salvation, building peace in the world—not with any false idealism that we can bring the kingdom of God to its culmination in the world, but with the sure hope that God is always at work to create peace and justice and freedom and that we can participate in his eternal purpose because of the Holy Spirit's power within and through us.[9]

In conclusion, let me say this: Physicians, nurses, and therapists called to healing by an ethical or religious imperative are easy targets for excessive self-denial, the kind that ends up in self-destruction. The invitation and command to keep the Sabbath rest is designed, in part, to provide balance for caregivers and to assure them that, even when they rest, God continues to work for their patients in ways that are mysterious and full of wonder. It is also designed to impose on the community the responsibility to design systems, policies, and procedures that provide rest for caregivers, so that they, too, can be healed even as they are healing.

Notes and References

1. Parker Palmer, *The Active Life,* quoted in *Catch Your Breath: God's Invitation to Sabbath Rest* (Grand Rapids,Mich; CRC, 1997), by Don Postema, 45.

2. See Rachel Naomi Remen's *Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories that Heal* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1994).

3. Richard B. Steele, "Unremitting Compassion: The Moral Psychology of Parenting Children with Genetic Disorders," *Theology Today* (June 2000): 162.

4. Ibid., 164.

5. Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, A Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 83.

6. Jerome A. Miller, "The Way of Suffering," unpublished award-winning essay in The Colloquium of the Basic Issues Forum, Oct. 17-18, 1986, Washington and Jefferson College, 16.

7. Because so many women are entering medicine at this stage in our history, it is important to add that studies on physician burnout have identified gender itself as a significant issue. The June 2000 *Journal of General Internal Medicine* reported that female physicians were more likely to report satisfaction with their specialty and with patient and colleague relationships, but less likely to be satisfied with autonomy, relationships with the community, pay, and resources. Compared with male colleagues, female physicians also reported treating more female patients and more patients with complex psycho-social problems, but the same number of complex, medical patients. Time pressure in ambulatory settings was greater for women, who on average reported needing 36 percent more time than allotted to provide quality care for new patients or consultations, compared with 21 percent more time needed by men. When controlling for multiple factors, mean income for women was approximately $22,000 less than that of men. Women had 1.6 times the odds of reporting burnout compared to men, with the odds of burnout by women increasing by 12 to 15 percent for each additional 5 hours worked per week over 40 hours. Lack of workplace control predicted burnout in women, but not in men. For female physicians with young children, odds of burnout were 40 percent less when support was present from colleagues, spouse, or significant other to balance work and home issues.

8. Elizabeth J. Canham, "A Rest Remaining," quoted in Postema, *Catch Your Breath,* 13.

9. See David B. Morris, "How to Speak Postmodern: Medicine, Illness and Cultural Change," *Hastings Center Report* (Nov.-Dec. 2000): 7-16.

10. Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989), 104-5.

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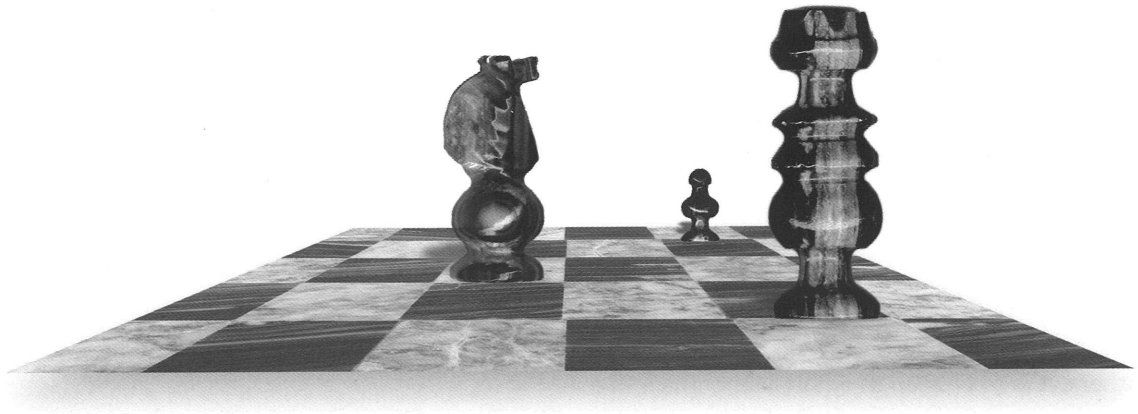


The Openness of God: A New Level of Discussion

By Richard Rice

An Openness Debate" trumpets a recent cover of *Christianity Today*, the popular Evangelical periodical.[1] Behind the title there's a list of provocative questions, each printed in a different color:

Does God change his mind?
Will God ever change his mind in response to our prayers?
Does he know your next move?
If God knows it all, are we truly free?
Does God know the future?
Was God taking a risk in making the human race?
What does God know and when does he know it?

Sound familiar? We all wonder about these issues from time to time. But lately they have been getting a lot of attention from theologians, thanks to a group of conservative Christian scholars who advocate what is now widely referred to as "open theism," "openness theology," or "the open view of God."

Their views will be the central theme of this year's meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS). The words *open* or *openness* appear in the title of more than two dozen papers scheduled for presentation this November in Denver. And in all, around forty papers will deal with this and closely related issues, like divine foreknowledge, simplicity, almightiness. and love.

Evangelical Theological Society members will also be asked to consider whether or not openness theology falls within the boundaries of Evangelical thought. The following statement appears in the current issue of the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society:*

> The Executive Committee, in response to requests from a group of charter members, and others, to address the compatibility of the view commonly referred to as "Open Theism" with biblical inerrancy, wishes to state the following: We believe the Bible clearly teaches that God has complete, accurate and infallible knowledge of all past, present and future events, including all future decisions and actions of free moral agents. However, in order to insure fairness to members of the society who differ with this view, we propose the issue of such incompatibility be taken up as part of our discussion in next year's conference "Defining Evangelicalism's Boundaries."

Just what is open theism, then? And why are people so worked up about it?

A Short History of Open Theism

The expression, "openness of God," first appeared in print as the title of a book of mine that was published by the Review and Herald Publishing Association late in 1980. In response to objections from certain quarters in the Church, the Review and Herald board voted to withdraw the book the following July, but then reversed that decision a short time later in response to other objections. When the first run of books ran out, however, the publishers elected not to reprint it.

I thought my first scholarly effort had quietly expired until I received a letter out of the blue one day in April 1984. It was from Clark Pinnock, an influential Baptist theologian who teaches at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. I recognized his name, of course, but I had no idea why he would write to me. His letter began, "This is a shot in the dark," and went on to say that he had read *The Openness of God*, liked it, and wanted to establish contact. Pinnock also said he had "a heck of a time" getting the book and wondered if the publishers had withdrawn it. When I wrote back and told him what had happened, he suggested contacting Bethany House Publishers, which I did, and the next year they reissued the book under the title *God's Foreknowledge and Man's Free Will*.

In the early 1990s Pinnock enlisted four other conservative Christian scholars to coauthor a book with him on this new understanding of God. We explored the biblical, historical, systematic, philosophical, and practical issues connected with "free will theism," as it was sometimes called. When it came time to pick a title, Pinnock said he had always liked the original title of my first book, so we called it *The Openness of God*. With the publication of this book in 1994, the perspective acquired a verbal handle, and it is now widely referred to as "the open view of God," "open theism," or "openness theology." The book set off something of a firestorm in conservative Christian circles. Since its publication, articles, monographs, symposia, and academic theses that deal with its ideas have been accumulating at a prolific rate.

Put simply, open theists believe that God interacts with the world. They believe that God not only influences the world, but also that the world has an influence on God. In other words, God is sensitive and responsive to his creatures. This concept grows out of the conviction that love is the fundamental attribute of God's character, the motive that guides all God's dealings with the world. In sovereign freedom, the loving God brought into existence a world distinct from himself and endowed some of its creatures with the capacity to appreciate and respond to his love, to accept or reject his will for their lives. Having created such a world, God commits himself to it, and henceforth shares the joys and suffers the sorrows of his creatures as he guides them toward his purposes for them.

This understanding of God has important consequences, and this is where the sticking points lie. One of them involves God's relation to time. For open theism, time is real for God. God experiences events as they happen, rather than all at once. Because God created beings with freedom of choice, and because free choices don't exist until they are made, God doesn't know ahead of time what they will be. He learns about them as they occur. God's knowledge is perfect, since he knows things exactly as they are.

Open theists believe that this perspective satisfies all the essential criteria of theological adequacy. First, it is biblically faithful. In fact, it enables us to make sense of a host of biblical passages that seem inconsistent with the more familiar view of God—passages that speak of God changing his mind, experiencing joy and disappointment, and adjusting his plans in response to human decisions and actions. Second, it is logically sound. It avoids the well-known conundrum of freedom and foreknowledge—if God knows

everything I'm going to do, how can I be free?—by developing a coherent account of freedom and divine sovereignty. I could go on, but you get the picture. Open theism revises the classical view of God in ways that make it more biblical, more coherent, and more meaningful on a personal level.

Since the mid-1990s the number of books and articles dealing with the open view of God has steadily increased. According to recent book catalogs, both sides of the debate are just warming up. The most extended theological discussion of openness ideas to date is John Sanders's book, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence*.[2] Gregory A. Boyd surveys the full range of biblical material that bears on the issue in *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God*.[3] And Clark H. Pinnock, open theism's best-known supporter, has just published *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of The Divine Openness*, which is certain to attract a great deal of attention.[4]

In recent months, the critics of open theism have been, if anything, more vocal than its supporters. The subtitles of these recent works show how shrill their objections have become: R. K. McGregor Wright, *No Place for Sovereignty: What's Wrong With Freewill Theism*; Bruce A. Ware, *God's Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism*; and Douglas Wilson, *Bound Only Once: The Failure of Open Theism*.[5]

Criticisms of Open Theism

Conservative critics maintain that the open view of God makes two major mistakes: it diminishes God's sovereignty, and it denies God's omniscience.[6] According to the most vigorous objectors, God's power is all-inclusive and all-determining. In other words, nothing occurs outside God's will. His perfect plan and overwhelming power provide the ultimate explanation for everything that is. Assert that anything happens on its own, from the movement of a mote on a sunbeam to a human decision, and you have diminished God's majesty. Unless he decides it all, he's less than the God he could and should be. This is the tack Royce Gruenler takes in an interview entitled "God at Risk," which also appeared in *Christianity Today* not long ago. Open theists, Gruenler insists, limit God to a mere percentage of power. "Does he have 20 percent and the advancing world has the other 80 percent? Is it 30/70? If that's the case, why is he worth worshiping?"[7]

The concept that God's knowledge of the world develops, or grows as it responds to ongoing experiences in the world, attracts more criticism than any other facet of openness theology. Many insist that it renders God ignorant and helpless in the face of a changing world, unaware of what lies ahead and unable to respond to it. Such a God is apparently reduced to guesswork as he contemplates the future. In a lecture he gave last fall, Millard Erickson asserted that "the God who risks," citing Sanders's title, could just as well be called "the God who guesses," or even "the God who rolls the dice."

For Norman R. Gulley, absolute divine foreknowledge is indispensable to Adventist eschatology. By definition, he insists, Seventh-day Adventists believe in eschatology—final events. "The openness of God, not knowing the future, destroys the fullness of biblical eschatology, removing assurance, certainty, and a sense of urgency. It torpedoes the unique Adventist prophetic message and mission."[8]

To support the concept of absolute foreknowledge, critics of open theism often appeal to a wide swath of biblical evidence that either asserts that God knows the future or demonstrates that he does by describing the precise fulfillment of divine prophecies. A well-known text in this regard is Isaiah 46:9-10: "I am God, and there is no other; I am God and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done." Others involve Jesus' predictions that Peter would deny him and Judas betray him, which came true in stunning detail.

Another strategy critics often employ is to characterize open theism as just another version of process philosophy, a modern philosophical movement that espouses a naturalistic view of God. According to process thought, God depends on the world, not only for certain aspects of his experience, but also for his very existence. Fernando Canale takes this approach in the new *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*.[9] "The open view of God," he states, "has developed as a direct result of Whitehead's influence on American Protestantism," and embraces "the Whiteheadian, rather

The concept that God's knowledge of the world develops, or grows as it responds to ongoing experiences in the world, attracts more criticism than any other facet of openness theology.

than biblical, view of divine knowledge." In the same vein, Norman Gulley describes the openness of God as "a modified version of process theology," and process theology as the view that "God does not know the future. God is just as much in process or continual development and knows as little about the future as we do."[10]

Open theism takes criticism from the opposite direction, too. Whereas religious conservatives dismiss it as a version of process theology, process theologians argue that it is just another variety of classical theism. David Griffin, an influential process thinker, insists on referring to the open view of God as "classical free-will theism." For Griffin, its similarities to the traditional Christian view of God are far more striking than its differences and it suffers from the same problems. First, if God has a monopoly on power—even a potential monopoly—then he could do or undo anything he wanted to, and he is therefore responsible for evil. For if he has the power to step in and prevent suffering, then why doesn't he choose to exercise it?—exactly the challenge classical theism has faced for centuries.

Second, Griffin argues, open theism gives us a God who is less than perfectly loving, in spite of its intentions. For him, classical theism (of any stripe) compromises God's love. If the very existence of the world depends on God's free decision, if God might or might not have created a world, then his love for the world does not express the essential divine nature. It is merely optional. And "if divine compassion for creatures is purely voluntary, not inherent in the very nature of who God is, we cannot say that God simply is love."[11]

Open Theists Reply

Open theists have responded to these criticisms, of course. Although there is not room here for anything like a summary of the exchange, it will be helpful to note the gist of their replies.

The open view of God diminishes God's power. It does nothing of the kind. The question is not how much power God has, but how God chooses to use his power. If God wanted to determine everything, he could, open theists agree. But they maintain that God also has the power to do something else—to create a world with beings in it who have the freedom to accept or reject his plans for them. To put it another way, God has the freedom to create a world whose future is not entirely foreknowable, and all the evidence indicates that this is the sort of world he did create. When it gets right down to it, the essential issue between open theists and their critics is not the nature of divine knowledge, but the nature of the future. The question is not whether God knows everything there is to know; the question is whether the future is entirely knowable.[12]

By the way, the idea that God's power isn't worth much unless it determines everything conflicts not only with the open view of God, but also with the basic premise of all Arminian theology, namely, that human beings have the God-given freedom to accept or reject God's offer of salvation. So it is not surprising to see books that respond to open theism such as *Still Sovereign: Contemporary Perspectives on Election, Foreknowledge, and Grace*, which affirms the full range of Calvinist commitments—total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints.[13] Many conservative Christians would reject this deterministic view of divine power, not just those who endorse open theism.[14]

God is ignorant and helpless unless he knows the future. This is a gross caricature of openness theology. First of all, no open theist holds that God is ignorant of the future. You'll never hear an open theist deny that God has foreknowledge. To the contrary, open theists maintain that God knows a great deal about the future. First, God knows everything that will happen as a direct result of what has already happened. Second, God also knows everything that could happen and everything that might happen.

That is, he knows the full range of possible events and the relative likelihood of any particular event occurring. Third, God knows what his own future actions will be, to the extent that they are not contingent on creaturely decisions. So, for all we know, God knows almost everything that will happen.

Furthermore, for open theism, God is infinitely resourceful in responding to events. No matter what happens, he has the ability to act in ways that mitigate evil and promote his beneficent purposes. As the apostle Paul exclaims, "In all things God works for good" (Rom. 8:28). Open theists believe that this sort of creative response involves a higher form of power than the ability to determine everything unilaterally. The God of open theism is anything but helpless.

The Bible teaches God's absolute foreknowledge. Actually, the Bible does no such thing. True, the Bible contains numerous divine predictions. Many of them were fulfilled, and many of them weren't (recall Jonah's message to Nineveh). As Gregory Boyd argues, we can best explain this diversity by saying that some of the future is foreknown to God and some of it isn't. As for Isaiah 46:9-10, the classic proof text for absolute foreknowledge, look carefully at the quotation below. Most people who cite this passage end with the italicized portion, and go on to assert that God has absolute foreknowledge.[15] However, notice the verses that follow. They identify the basis for God's declaration of what lies ahead. It's not his foreknowledge, it's his intention to act. These verses don't tell us what we're going to do, they tell us what God is going to do. They assure us that God will do what he promises. In fact, their theme is not God's knowledge, but his purpose and his power.

> *I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done,* saying, "My" purpose shall stand, and I will fulfill my intention,' calling a bird of prey from the east, the man for my purpose from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have planned, and I will do it. . . . I bring near my deliverance, it is not far off, and my salvation will not tarry; I will put salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory. (Isa. 46:9-13)

It is also important to notice the strong note of conditionality in biblical prophecy. Jeremiah 18:1-11 could hardly be clearer. Whether God does what he predicts he will do depends on the way people respond to his promises and warnings.[16] So the portrait of God that emerges from this passage—as from the prophetic writings in general—is one of dramatic, dynamic involvement in human history. It violates the spirit of biblical prophecy to view it as abstract, impersonal information about the future.[17]

Open theism is just another version of process theology, which makes God dependent on the world. Guilt by association. Open theists have taken pains to show that their position is quite distinct from process thought, in spite of certain similarities.[18] It is a half-truth to say that open theism makes God dependent on the world. True, God is dependent on the world in the sense that his experience is infinitely sensitive to and profoundly affected by the experiences of his creatures. But in other respects God is utterly independent of the world. God's existence does not depend on the world.[19] God can exist with or without it. Nor does God's character depend on the world. God will always be the kind of person he is no matter what happens in the world. For open theism, then, God is changeless in some respects and changing in others. God changes as he interacts with the world, but in his existence and character, God is just as absolute as any traditional theist wants him to be.[20]

Open theism makes God responsible for evil. To the contrary, open theism relieves God of responsibility for evil. It affirms the integrity of creaturely freedom. This means that God took a genuine risk when he decided to give beings the capacity to reject his love for them. But it is they, not he, who bear the responsibility for evil. At the same time, however, open theism insists that God has the resources to deal redemptively with evil. Unlike with Calvinism, evil is not part of God's inscrutable, immutable plan for the world. Also, unlike process thought, God can really do

The essential issue between open theists and their critics is not the nature of divine knowledge, but the nature of the future.

something about it. He is not limited to acting upon the world, he is also an actor within the world, working incessantly to mitigate the effects of evil and bring things to the fulfillment of his purposes.[21]

We could go on (and on), but you get the idea. The exchanges between open and traditional theists, on the one hand, and between open and process theologians, on the other, have been energetic and substantive. Now, what do they tell us about openness theology in general?

Where We Are Now

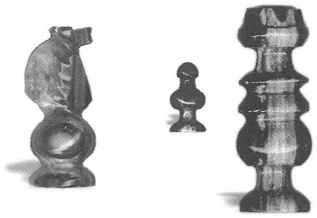
A New York Yankees fan in early childhood, I've always felt that a sports team has reached true greatness only when people somewhere love to see it lose. If that standard has a theological counterpart, open theism is coming into its own rather nicely. It has generated serious and sustained theological opposition. In addition, it has developed pertinent, thoughtful responses to its critics. Years ago, people tended to brush it aside as far-out or inconsequential, but not any more. In fact, philosophers as well as theologians are taking note of it.[22] We can expect to see a great deal more discussion in the years ahead.

What is it about openness theism that attracts such attention? Why are some of the responses to it tinged with urgency and emotion? I think it's because people sense that the open view of God has a good deal going for it. All right, as an early advocate of the position, I'm hardly an impartial judge. But one thing that supporters and critics alike accept is the fact that open theism represents a serious alternative to traditional views of God. In particular, open theism takes seriously a prominent feature in the biblical portraits of God that traditional theology blithely dismisses as "anthropomorphic." As a result, any thoughtful doctrine of God must now take seriously the biblical descriptions of God as suffering, repenting, and changing his mind. In addition, open theism also meets some major challenges to traditional theism, and it generates important implications across the spectrum of theological and practical religious concerns.

The whole debate illustrates the important influence that our basic metaphors for God exert on our thinking. I was puzzled years ago when my first book met with such heated opposition. However, as time went by I began to understand the problem. I viewed *The Openness of God* as a relatively minor modification in the way conservative Christians looked at God. I didn't realize that I was threatening the way people not only thought about, but also felt about God. No wonder they were upset, and no wonder people are upset today. As I now know, of course, our thinking about God—as about most things—is driven by basic metaphors—metaphors that lie deep within our experience. We seldom think about them because we are constantly thinking with them. And the metaphor that drives most people's view of God is that of the heavenly monarch. Open theism represents a major change in the way that generations of Christians have thought and felt about God.

Does open theism represent a paradigm shift in religious understanding? It's too early to tell, but we can say this: Open theism has earned its credentials as a distinct and important theological movement. Traditional theologians and process thinkers are miles apart, but they do agree on one thing: Open theism is not a version of their position. They are both right about this, but they are both wrong in trying to place open theology in the other's camp. Open theism is not just a variation of process thought, as Christian traditionalists like to paint it, nor just another expression of classical theism, as process thinkers like to say. The fact that people in both groups see important differences between their views and open theism is significant. Open theism may be the new kid on the block, but now it has a theological address of its own.

Finally, I'm happy that openness theology is getting the attention it deserves, but I don't think it deserves some of the attention it is getting. And I'm sorry with the tone that its critics sometimes take. A few are eager to apply pejorative labels to it, like "neo-socinianism," and associate it with positions the church



has rejected in the past.[23] Now there are some who would like to see it branded a "heresy," a move that could threaten the employment of some who embrace it.

We can all learn something from these exchanges about good and bad ways of discussing religious matters. It is important for us to represent each other's positions fairly. Because the biblical descriptions of God are broad and varied, we should avoid denouncing each other's views as "unbiblical." We should also be careful not to overdraw comparisons or overemphasize historical precedents as we characterize each other's views. Above all, we should avoid questioning each other's Christian commitment or, something that amounts to the same thing, conceding it in a condescending or patronizing way. Christian charity and common decency require us to attribute the best motives to those we disagree with, not to define the faith in ways designed to leave them out.[24]

Notes and References

1. May 21, 2001.

2. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998.

3. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2001. In two substantial books, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 1997), and *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 2001), Boyd develops the themes of open theism in connection with a "warfare worldview," which provides a "luciferous" response to the problem of evil and suffering.

4. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2001.

5. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996); (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2001); (Moscow, Idaho: Canon Press, 2001).

6. When I began discussing the openness of God with Adventist groups, most of their reservations concerned God's foreknowledge, or apparent lack of it. *After God's Foreknowledge and Man's Free Will* came out, however, I found that many conservative Christians were most concerned about the nature of divine power that the open view entails.

7. *Christianity Today*, Mar. 5, 2001, 56. Gruenler also makes the bizarre judgment that process theology requires God to travel about the universe to find out what's going on and constrains him to move at 186,000 miles per second. Six openness theologians—John Sanders, Clark Pinnock, Greg Boyd, William Hasker, Richard Rice, and David Basinger—reply to the Gruenler interview in "Truth at Risk," in the "Reader's Forum" of *Christianity Today*, Apr. 23, 2001, 103.

8. *Christ Is Coming! A Christ-Centered Approach to Last-day Events* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1998), 56 n. 21.

9. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000, 148.

10. Gulley, *Christ is Coming!* 47, 55 n. 21.

11. John B. Cobb Jr. and Clark H. Pinnock, eds., *Searching for an Adequate God: A Dialogue Between Process and Free Will Theists* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 17.

12. As Gregory A. Boyd states, this debate about God's foreknowledge "is not really about God's knowledge at all. It is rather a debate about the nature of the future. Boyd, *God of the Possible*, 15.

13. Thomas R. Schreiner and Bruce A. Ware, eds. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1995, 2000).

14. To appreciate this criticism we need to remember the Calvinist-Arminian divide that runs through Protestant Christianity. Calvinists, of course, are the spiritual heirs of John Calvin, the great Reformer, who is best known, perhaps unjustly, for his doctrine of predestination–"the eternal decree of God by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. . . . [S]ome are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation" (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III.21.5). Many of Calvin's followers apply divine decrees to the entire universe, so literally everything that happens to us is part of God's plan.

An early follower of Calvin, Jacobus Arminius, became convinced that human decisions have a role to play in receiving salvation. Human beings could resist God's grace if they chose, Arminius held, and those who once accepted salvation could later fall away. Those who take his position, like John Wesley, accord human freedom a significant role in the scheme of things. At the same time, however, most Arminians cling to the traditional notion of divine foreknowledge and accept the idea that God sees the future in its entirety. This feature of Arminianism has always given Calvinists a convenient target. For if God sees the future absolutely, Calvinists like Jonathan Edwards have argued, then everything is just as settled as if God determined it all by himself, and the assertion of human freedom doesn't amount to much.

In this connection, we could describe open theism as an attempt to develop a "consistent Arminianism." It overcomes the perennial tension between divine foreknowledge and human freedom by insisting that free decisions are not "there to be known" before they occur. Once they are there to be known, of course, God knows them in their entirety. On this note, it is odd to find an Adventist theologian like Norman Gulley endorsing Gruenler's argument that openness theology operates with a false view of human freedom. For Gruenler and other Calvinists, humans have freedom within God's will, but they do not have freedom to go against God's will. Gruenler's view of freedom thus excludes the sort of freedom that Adventists and other staunch Arminians have always affirmed, viz., freedom to accept or reject God's offer of salvation, that is, freedom to do otherwise. If Gulley rejects "the predestinating God of John Calvin," why does he accept the view of freedom that goes with it? See Gulley, *Christ Is Coming!* 51, 55.

15. See, for example, the recently published *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*.

God took a genuine risk when he decided to give human beings the capacity to reject his love for them.

16. It is not surprising that Calvinists seem to ignore this feature of biblical prophecy. For example, there is no reference to Jeremiah 18 in the scriptural index to Schreiner and Ware, *Still Sovereign.*

17. David Larson makes a helpful distinction between prophecy and prediction. As he describes matters, Jonah's mission to Nineveh was a "predictive failure" but a "prophetic success." Jonah's prediction of impending destruction proved false, but the Ninevites turned to God, which was just what God was hoping for.

18. See the contributions of William Hasker and Richard Rice to Cobb and Pinnock, *Searching for an Adequate God.*

19. This is one of the principal differences between open theism and process thought. For process philosophers, God could not exist without a world for him to experience. The world could be different, but some world or other there must be.

20. Open theists, as well as process philosophers, have made this point so clearly and persistently that it is difficult to understand how anyone could say that for process theology "God is just as much in process or continual development as the rest of us" (Gulley, *Christ is Coming!* 47). It is also significant that a biblical scholar like Terence E. Fretheim, who is neither an Evangelical nor a process thinker, makes a strong case for thinking about God in "nonmonarchical terms," "as one who has entered deeply into the human situation and made it his own," by examining the literature of the Old Testament Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), xv.

21. Appeals to history also play a prominent role in the discussion. For open theists, the traditional view is overly dependent on Greek or classical thought, which insists that ultimate reality be changeless. For their critics, openness theologians are insufficiently attentive to the long history of Christian thought that attributes immutability to God and finds biblical evidence to support it.

22. For example, see Donald Wayne Viney, "Jules Lequyer and the Openness of God," *Faith and Philosophy: The Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* (Apr. 1997). Charles Taliaferro notes the openness view of divine omniscience in his textbook, *Contemporary Philosophy of Religion* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998), 121.

23. S. M. Baugh, "The Meaning of Foreknowledge," in Schreiner and Ware, *Still Sovereign,* 197.

24. An editorial in the Feb. 7, 2000, issue of *Christianity Today* strikes a nice tone in speaking to both sides of this debate.

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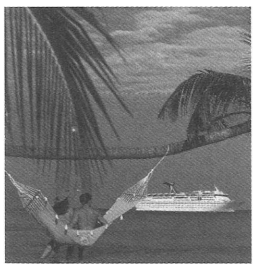

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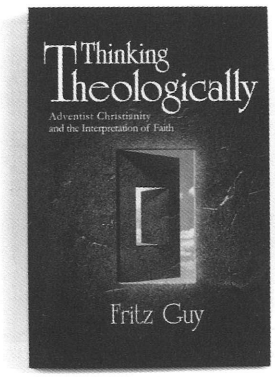
If,...Then! Theology

Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith. By Fritz Guy. Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1999.

Reviewed by Glen Greenwalt



The first time I remember hearing Fritz Guy in a discussion, I was coming down a narrow flight of steps from some hidden-away restaurant in New York City that tourists had not yet discovered. He was in an animated conversation with John Brunt and Harold Weiss, our guide on this excursion. This moment was one of epiphany for me; I have never forgotten it. I believed at that time I was seeing Socrates revivified. What has impressed me even more in subsequent years is Guy's Christ-like compassion, not only for the "Church," but also for members of the body of Christ who hold positions that often differ radically from his own. So I choose as my models to explicate Guy's theology Socrates of Athens and Jesus of Nazareth.

Guy's theological method, whether intentional or not, is Socratic. Like Socrates, Guy seeks to engage us ordinary believers in a process of thinking carefully about what we believe so that our beliefs stand still and don't move about like the statues of Delphi, or in theological language, are not blown about by every wind of doctrine.

The first step toward ordering any set of beliefs is to define the elements clearly. Socrates taught us that the exercise of giving many examples about something is not the same as defining the thing itself. Beauty is not identical with women nor is strength identical with horses, however rare homely women or weak horses might be. Likewise, Guy teaches us that theological thinking is not identical with collecting proof texts, counting votes of popular opinion, or even fostering archaeological research and doing sound biblical exegesis–which are mainstays of the theological enterprise. Rather, thinking theologically is a process of "thinking as carefully, comprehensively, and creatively as possible about the content, adequacy, and implications of one's own religious life" (4).

In the language of Socrates, theological thinking is a therapeutic of the soul. Theological thinking is not ordered—at least in the first place—toward knowing a great deal or of mastering the skills of persuading others. It is directed first and always toward aligning one's own self with what is genuine, proper, and true. As such, theological thinking is more a quest than an outcome. To care for one's soul is to ask questions about the truth, its validity, and its implications for our own personal beliefs, not to gain any sort of external reward, but so that our own lives can be whole and healthy. Far from being impractical or dangerous, then, theological thinking is essential to the life of the Church, for the Church, like the polis, is the soul writ large.

Second, Socrates encouraged his interlocutors to draw careful distinctions. The work of good thinking is akin to that of a butcher. A good thinker needs to cut clear, sharp distinctions at the natural joints of things. No one cleaves ideas better than Fritz Guy. Guy's book is worth buying just for the memorable distinctions he draws.

As we know from church history, theologians have long been associated with conflict within the church, either as agents of heresy or as the guardians called upon in time of crisis to defend what has always been believed. However, seldom has the rank and file of the church or the church's administrators appreciated the creative importance of theological thinking in transferring faith from one generation to another. It is in his role as creative thinker that Guy makes his greatest contribution to the Church.

By his insightful distinctions among "orthodoxy," "heterodoxy," and "heresy," Guy offers one of the most profound ways that I have ever read to describe the boundaries of a religious tradition. Like poetry, the sum of the power in Guy's distinctions is lost in translation, so let me quote at length just one of the truly memorable distinctions that fill Guy's book. The following passages help refine what Guy means by thinking theologically.

> It is important to note that the words "orthodoxy," "heterodoxy," and "heresy" are not very helpfully used as normative or evaluative terms; they function better as historical, descriptive, and (most importantly) relative terms. Their proper meanings are all determined by the consensus of a particular community of faith, and a community consensus is not identical with ultimate truth. In a theological struggle between orthodoxy and heresy, it is always the case that orthodoxy wins and heresy loses, for the simple reason that it is the winners who decide what is "orthodox" and what is "heretical." Performing the historical task of identifying the "orthodox" view does not accomplish the theological task of identifying truth. (24)

> As orthodoxy is essential to the theological identity of a community of faith, heterodoxy is essential to its continuing theological development. (Ibid.)

> Furthermore, the three terms [orthodoxy, heterodoxy, and heresy] . . . are properly applied to ideas or beliefs rather than persons. . . . Applied to persons, the word "heretic" is overly broad, excessively judgmental, and usually divisive, subverting the trust that is essential to the spiritual health of a community of faith. But taken together, these terms are another invitation to the whole community to participate in the activity of theology. (26)

Again, as we learn from Socrates, it is the language of health that determines the validity of a theological expression. The life and health of a community is inevitably marked by disagreements, fostered not only by error, but also by the very fact that we are human and therefore limited in our perspectives. The health of a community is measured therefore not by the absence of disagreements. Just because something has always been believed or practiced does not make it the truth. Furthermore, in a healthy community people are capable of distinguishing between ideas and people. Although the Church may reject certain ideas, it remains open and accepting of all people, even those who hold heretical ideas.

By way of Guy's profound distinctions, we are led to a third Socratic element in the pursuit of a healthy soul. Truth is eternal, whereas all human endeavors are finite. Thus, any one of us sees only a part of the truth. The logical conclusion drawn from our finitude is that the search for truth is best pursued

in conversation with others, rather than in isolation. Any time we arbitrarily cut ourselves off from others, we are in danger not only of being blinded by our own hubris, but also of being cut off from knowing the truths known uniquely to those we ostracize.

The demand for conversation is not a liberal tenant of relativism. It is a conservative demand to know and practice the truth. This is perhaps the most important point that I glean from Guy's book. On almost every page, with the passion of a Jeremiah, he appeals for genuine collegiality within the Church. This demand for collegiality is not a matter of laxness. It is rather a "caring for one another's spiritual health and theological growth, a caring expressed concretely in intercessory prayer and in encouraging, helpful words" (44).

Finally, for Guy, as was the case with Socrates, proper thinking is ultimately an act of devotion and prayer. As finite beings, we stand on the boundaries of mysteries. The artist who drew the cover for *Thinking Theologically* captured the very essence of Guy's project by depicting a window within a window that looks out on an infinite sky. As Guy rightfully warns, the chief intellectual and moral danger that faces religious believers is seeking to prove that they and their community are right, rather than standing in the face of the infinite horizon of truth that calls all of their achievements into question. The ultimate end of theology is to help us stand dumb and blind in Light that is too bright to see and too beautiful to speak.

My only criticism of Guy's book is that he does not stand longer in aw(e)ful presence of the Light. I must confess I found little that was helpful in the second half of the book, where Guy attempts to bridge the boundless divide between the Infinite and the finite, between God and the world. This is not because I am a postmodern relativist who questions all rational systems. Rather, it is because I found too many rational gaps in Guy's arguments as he seeks to move from the nature of Scripture to its authority, and from the nature, or more properly, the meaning of "God" to some sort of evidential support of God's existence.

I do not have the time or interest to explore what seem to me to be rational leaps in Guy's arguments. However profound the arguments, I believe that an infinite gap would yet remain between finite knowledge and divine truth. This is not an argument for suspending theological judgments, but an argument that the bridge-building strategy of classical theology— with its attempt to pave a road of reason into the kingdom of heaven—was doomed before it was conceived.

Here, the thought of Socrates and, especially, the thought of Jesus again impress me. Socrates and Jesus both constructed arguments by appealing to their recollection of eternal things in a preexistent life– Socrates in the migration of his soul, Jesus from his presence with the Father. Yet neither Socrates nor Jesus engaged in speculative arguments about eternal things. Rather, each in his own way engaged others in hypothetical thinking derived from his own personal experience as a finite being.

In philosophy, we know this as Socratic Ignorance. With Jesus, I would call it "If, . . . Then!" theology. What strikes me about Jesus' teaching is that he turns classical theology on its head. In classical theology, as exemplified in the second half of Guy's book, an attempt is made to show that God exists, that the revelation we have of God is sufficient, and that this revelation demonstrates God to be good and wonderful. This God then becomes the answer to human problems.

Interestingly enough, Jesus—as far as I know—never makes such a case. In classical theology we move from God, to Jesus, to the church, to the anxious and hurting. The perfect answer comes to imperfect people. Jesus, in contrast, addresses the suffering and lost immediately in the midst of their pain and confusion and asks them to think about the implications of their own questions and aspirations, without offering any guarantee of an answer from beyond. Drawing from the immediacy of his own life on the streets with children and beggars—from his strolling through marketplaces where merchants hawked their goods and searched for bargains; from his walks through hot fields where labors and farmers sweated to earn meager livings; and from his attendance at weddings and inns where people celebrated their human joys — Jesus came to know the logic of ordinary life, a logic based not on logical deductions and syllogisms, but on

associations and relationships.

Over and over in Jesus' teaching we find him asking listeners to reflect on the implications of their own lives. First Jesus describes a situation where he expects the listeners not only to recognize the situation, but also to agree on the proper response. Then Jesus asks his listeners why they should think that they, being evil, would know what is right, whereas God, who is good, would not know or be capable of doing as well as themselves—or even better. "What man of you if he has one sheep . . ." (Matt. 12:11); "If a man has a hundred sheep . . ." (Matt. 18:12); "Suppose one of you has a friend . . ." (Luke 11:5); "What father among you, if, . . ." (Luke 11:11); "If you then being evil, . . . then how much more will your father in heaven . . ." (Luke 11:13).

Notice, Jesus does not first define God or offer any sort of proof that what he says in fact originated with God. Rather, Jesus appeals to the logic that if broken human beings can perceive what is right and true, then God as the ultimate source of perfection must do as well or better. This is a theology that begins out of human brokenness, and, although it never provides proofs or final answers, does offer hope and confidence.

Nowhere is Jesus' theology of "If, . . . Then!" more powerfully illustrated than in the Gospel of John. When asked to see the Father, Jesus replies, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:8)—a statement that is dumbfounding, given that Jesus can also say of his disciples that they will do greater works than himself (14:12), and that they, too, can experience through him the same unity he has with the Father (17:21). The integrity of Jesus' claims is not made on the basis of his stature as resurrected Lord, but on the basis of his human care and kindness toward others and on the basis of his unbreakable attachment to the Father. It is in the Jesus caring for the hurting and hurting himself—the Jesus whose last words commend his spirit into the hands of one who has forsaken him—that we see God.

All theology ultimately ends in doxology, as Guy exemplifies in his book and life. However, before theology becomes doxology it is theodicy, that is to say, an attempt to explain God in the face of God's apparent absence in the midst of human suffering. Yet here is the dilemma of theology, for how can God ever be justified in the face of even one suffering creature? If the universe required the death of even one child, would not the cost of the universe be too high? This is the power of Jesus' teaching over the conventions of theology as it has been traditionally constructed. For theodicy to become doxology, it must not defend God in his absence. Rather, it must speak from the midst of suffering people and give voice to their hurt and loss. It may even cry out in complaint. That is what Jesus did. And that is why he made persuasive claims to divinity—not from proof, but from empathy and hope. If a man will lay down his life for a friend, then how much more. . . .

"Gored by Every Sharp Tongue"?

A Review by Alden Thompson

George Knight. *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs.* Hagerstown, Md: Review and Herald, 2000. 223 pp. Paper, $9.95.

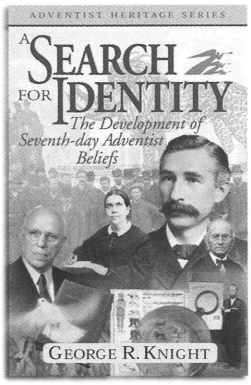
Rolf Poehler. *Continuity and Change in Christian Doctrine.* Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999. 156 pp. Paper, EURO 50 (approx. $23.00).

Rolf Poehler. *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching.* Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000. 380 pp. Paper, EURO 50 (approx. $43.00).

The translators of the King James Bible have words for George Knight and Rolf Poehler: "Whosoever attempteth anything for the public (especially if it appertain to religion . . .), the same . . . casteth himself headlong upon pikes, to be gored by every sharp tongue." If you meddle with men's religion, said the translators, even if they don't like what they have, "yet they cannot abide to hear of altering."[1]

By casting themselves headlong into the treacherous swamp of Seventh-day Adventist doctrinal development, Knight and Poehler have glimpsed the painful truth of those words from the original preface to the 1611 King James Version. They know what happens to those who advocate change and to those who resist it. They document—some of their quotes are amazing—a remarkable history of change, resistance to change, denial of change. They have done it so well that they just might escape with only minor goring from the sharp tongues.[2]

On both sides of the continuity/change ledger, their stories present good news/bad news scenarios. For the defenders of the "landmarks," the good news is the remarkable continuity between modern Adventism and the faith of our forebears; the bad news is the record of subtle but striking changes even in key doctrines. For the advocates of "present truth," the good news is the impressive documentation that Adventism can indeed change and change significantly; the bad news is that change comes slowly and against great resistance, and that "announcing" such change is next to impossible.



In spite of the hazards, however, both men are up front with their intentions. Knight actually uses the word "development" in his subtitle; Poehler's use of "change" in both his titles is even more daring. Knight's book is readable, readily available, and thrifty ($9.95). Poehler's *Continuity and Change in Christian Doctrine* (CD) is more technical, but one doesn't have to be an expert to read his *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching* (AT). In both books, he writes as if English were his mother tongue. Because they are published in Europe, however, they won't be easy to buy and they aren't cheap.

Knight's focus is slightly more evangelistic than Poehler's, but both men handle their material with care, and both are quite willing to lay out the facts and state their conclusions even when they run counter to popular perceptions of Adventist history.

In several ways, Poehler's first book (CD) is not only a helpful prologue to his second book (AT), but also to Knight because Knight focuses more narrowly on Adventism and its immediate historical antecedents.[3]

A slender volume (125 pages of text and notes), CD puts the ideas of continuity and change on the larger stage, exploring their philosophical and historical roots from the time of ancient Greece. In chapter 1, Poehler argues that the Renaissance and the Reformation, then Rationalism and the Enlightenment, opened the door to genuine historical consciousness. Only then could the ideas of "development" and "progress" become meaningful. However, this did not happen until the nineteenth century. Poehler quotes Alan Richardson as saying that "the historical revolution is of greater significance for human self-understanding than the scientific revolution itself."[4]

After the general historical survey in chapter 1, chapter 2 illustrates and analyzes the three basic models for explaining doctrinal change: static (conservative), dynamic (moderate), and revolutionary (liberal). Appendix 2 (also reproduced as appendix 2 in AT), provides a synoptic comparison of the three models. These same three "types" form the backdrop against which Poehler presents his analysis of Adventist doctrinal development.

Poehler's second volume (AT) is more substantial (255 pages of text and notes). He reminds us in the introduction that his work on Adventist teachings is selective, not exhaustive. The closing quote in the Introduction is especially striking because it comes from the Ellen G. White Estate's response to Ron Numbers's *Prophetess of Health*. It declares that the best way for the Church to "protect" its heritage is to

> deal candidly with the controversial and problematic before we are forced to do so by critics. In the long run, the scholars who have the sources, the courage, and the competence to deal with all the evidence can do most for the cause of truth and the nourishment of faith.[5]

Chapter 1 of AT (pages 19-143) analyzes the changes in Adventist doctrine. Chapter 2 (pages 145-223) assesses the ways Adventists have dealt with these changes: heavy on the static model, touches of the dynamic, a rare glimpse of the revolutionary. Chapter 3 is much shorter (pages 225-43), dealing with Ellen White's role in Adventist doctrinal development. Poehler largely skirts the issue of her own development, focusing more on her role in doctrinal discussions in the Church. I think her own development is at least as interesting.

Poehler brings his arguments together nicely in his summary, which concludes with a quote from a much-admired senior statesman in Adventism, C. E. Bradford, and with Jesus' promise of the Spirit who "will guide you into all truth" (John 16:12-13). Poehler's preferred model is a carefully nuanced dynamic one, and

What both Knight and Poehler document is the tendency of believers to soften the contrast between the strident antitrinitarianism of our forebears and modern Adventism's acceptance of the Trinity.

Bradford's quote points in that direction:

> A movement is not a settlement; a movement is not a theological point of view. A movement, in the strictest sense, is not a denomination. A movement is a pilgrimage, a people on a journey, an expedition.[6]

In addition to a substantial bibliography (pages 281-374, which Poehler modestly labels "selected") and a brief index (pages 377-80), AT includes a convenient synoptic chart of Adventism's three major statements of belief: the unofficial statement of 1872; the first official one in 1931; and the 1980 statement, the first one fully discussed and actually voted by a full General Conference in session. A careful analysis of those three documents alone would confirm many of the major conclusions presented by Poehler (and Knight).

In Knight's book, chronology plays a larger role and is linked with the three major "identity" questions he addresses as the book unfolds. After 1844, the dominant question was: "What is Adventist in Adventism?" The second question, "What is Christian in Adventism?" was triggered by the righteousness by faith General Conference of 1888. Finally, by the early 1920s, the fundamentalist debate forced Adventists to ask the third question: "What is Fundamentalist in Adventism?" Knight argues that since 1950 all three questions have impinged on Adventism with greater intensity and are still very much alive today. He is brief on current events, too brief in my view.

Like Poehler, Knight presents a host of fascinating illustrations about how Adventism has changed. But perhaps most significant of all is the question of the deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity, chapter 1.

However, before looking at that question more closely, let's note some of the more subtle aspects of Knight's strategy. Whereas Poehler concludes with a quote from a highly regarded Adventist, C. E. Bradford, Knight opens with "A Word to a Reader" from another significant Adventist, Neal C. Wilson, former General Conference president (1979-90). It is an affirming word. What I find most significant is the fact that Wilson quotes part of the all-important preamble to the 1980 statement of Fundamental Beliefs: "Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word."[7]

Wilson chaired the General Conference Session that voted to accept the 1980 statement with that preamble. Yet when the General Conference Ministerial Association published its exposition of the 1980 statement, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, the entire preamble was omitted. Not until the third printing was it restored, and then only in an obscure paragraph in the front matter rather than in its rightful place at the head of the entire statement.[8]

That omission illustrates the urgent need for books like Poehler's and Knight's. Knight, perhaps even more than Poehler, vigorously highlights the evidence for change. Here I return to the first page of chapter 1. For starters, here are Knight's opening words, which are almost inflammatory: "Most of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to agree to the denomination's '27 Fundamental Beliefs.'"[9]

The next paragraph cites the evidence, noting that several of the pioneers would not have accepted belief number two on the Trinity. Quoting Knight: "For Joseph Bates the Trinity was an unscriptural doctrine, . . . for James White it was that 'old Trinitarian absurdity,' . . . and for M. E. Cornell it was a fruit of the great apostasy, along with such false doctrines as Sunday keeping and the immortality of the soul."[10]

Standard Adventist sources typically have admitted that certain pioneers rejected the Trinity (for example, Joseph Bates, James White, and Uriah Smith). But they also tended to minimize the significance of this fact. The article on "Christology" in the most recent edition of the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, for example, notes that some non-Trinitarians retained this belief when they became Adventists:

> But not all Seventh-day Adventists held this view, and it was not an essential part of the SDA doctrine. For nearly a half century, difference of

opinion on this point persisted, but open controversy was avoided and the anti-Trinitarian view died a natural death.[11]

Both Knight and Poehler would disagree with this assessment. In a footnote, Poehler bluntly states with reference to the Trinity that early Adventists "were fully agreed—in rejecting it."[12]

Both Knight and Poehler cite the vivid anti-Trinitarian language of J. S. Washburn, a retired Adventist minister. In 1920, for example, Washburn accused W. W. Prescott of introducing the "deadly heresy" of the Trinity into Adventism.[13] As late as 1940, this same Washburn denounced the Trinity as "a cruel heathen monstrosity, . . . an impossible absurd invention, . . . a blasphemous burlesque, . . . a bungling, absurd, irreverent caricature."[14] Knight quotes Washburn from the same source as calling the Trinity a "monstrous doctrine transplanted from heathenism into the Roman Papal Church."[15]

What both Knight and Poehler document is the tendency of believers to soften the contrast between the strident anti-Trinitarianism of our forebears and modern Adventism's acceptance of the Trinity. James White's comment against that "old Trinitarian absurdity" was actually published in the *Review and Herald* in 1852.[16] However, when the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1976, 1996) quotes him, it closes the quote before "absurdity" and substitutes the word "idea," yielding the "'old trinitarian' idea," a far kinder, gentler James White than the original source would suggest.

I could multiply examples from both Poehler and Knight and add a host of my own to illustrate the painful truth that change does not come easily for human beings. I am grateful to Poehler and Knight for sharing the fruits of their research with the larger community. And I do hope that they will not be gored too seriously by every sharp tongue as a result of their willingness to share.

Notes and References:

1. Erroll F. Rhodes and Liana Lupas, eds., *The Translators to the Reader: The Original Preface of the King James Version of 1611 Revisited* (New York: American Bible Society, 1997), 29.

2. Both men have impeccable credentials. Knight, professor of church history in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, is well published and well known in Adventism. Poehler teaches systematic theology at Friedensau University, the Adventist seminary in Germany. His two books are based on his Andrews University Th.D. dissertation, written under the supervision of Raoul Dederen. He also served as the German translator for Dwight Nelson's *Net 98* TV evangelism series.

3. Copies can be obtained from the author. His e-mail address is Rolf.Poehler@ThH-Friedensau.DE.

4. Ibid., citing Alan Richardson, "History, Problem of," *Dictionary of Christian Theology*, 1969 ed., 156.

5. Poehler, *Adventist Teaching*, 18, citing A Discussion and Review of Prophetess of Health (Washington, D. C.: Ellen G. White Estate, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists], 1976), 15.

6. Poehler, AT 255, citing C. E. Bradford, "A Movement is Born," *Adventist Review*, May 10, 1979, 6.

7. Knight, *Search for Identity*, 8.

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

9. Knight, *Search for Identity*, 17.

10. Ibid.

11. "Christology," *SDA Encyclopedia*, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 10, part 1, 2d rev. ed. (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2000), 353.

12. Poehler, *Adventist Teaching*, 37. Poehler's complete footnote (number 1) is revealing: "In 1871, James White stated that the visions of his wife 'do not agree' with the creed of 'the trinitarian' ('Mutual Obligation,' *RH*, 13 June 1871, 204). Neither did she explicitly reject Trinitarianism in her writings. Thus, a century later, SDAs were prone to assume that Ellen White 'never endorsed the anti-Trinitarian view' (Don F. Neufeld, '125 Years of Advancing Light,' *RH*, Anniversary Issue, [Nov. 13 1975], 27). However, Neufeld erroneously assumed that the early Adventists 'differed' on the doctrine of the Trinity, whereas, in fact, they were fully agreed—in rejecting it."

13. Poehler, *Adventist Teaching*, 39.

14. Ibid., 40 n. 2.

15. Knight, *Search for Identity*, 154.

16. *Review and Herald*, Aug. 5, 1852, 52.

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Creation and Time

Dalton D. Baldwin's article "Creation and Time: A Biblical Reflection" (*Spectrum*, spring 2001) suggests that the Adventist Church's efforts in supporting a short chronology "have not convinced many scientifically competent Adventists," and that in a survey of college science teachers in the North American Division "less than half of the 121 teachers affirmed the traditional Adventist position" (5). Furthermore, the conclusion of the article states that the Church "has not produced results that are very convincing to most of its scientists" (14).

The author sees the creation of life occurring within six days less than 10,000 years ago as the traditional Adventist position. On the basis of the wording of the survey he cites, this definition would tend to exclude a significant number who are very close to—but not within—the author's definition of traditional Adventism. The survey was not worded to categorize those who believe that creation occurred within six days only a little beyond 10,000 years ago, and for such purposes it is inadequate. Actually, in the context of the proposed millions of years that Baldwin's article suggests for the development of life, not many Adventist science teachers would need any convincing that creation was a recent event.

It is instructive to analyze details of the survey's results. The findings of the survey, which are based on 119 responses out of 200 questionnaires, include the following:

- 43.0 percent believe that God created live organisms during six days less than 10,000 years ago.
- 19.0 percent believe that God created live organisms during six days less than 100,000 years ago.
- 6.6 percent believe that God created life over an unknown period within the last 100,000 years.
- 18.2 percent believe that God created life millions of years ago and guided its development.
- 3.3 percent believe life shown by fossils evolved for billions of years by natural means.
- 64 percent believe that most fossils result from the worldwide Bible flood.[1]

It turns out that almost two-thirds of our science teachers believe in a six-day creation, as well as the worldwide flood that reconciles the fossil record to a six-day creation. Not all of these respondents believe it happened within 10,000 years, as one might define traditional Adventism.

I know of several Adventist archaeologists and scientists—few in number—who believe that a little more than ten thousand years have elapsed since creation, but they would fit only into the broad 10,000 to 100,000 year category. These scientists do not believe that life developed over millions of years and would not support the premises of Baldwin's article. In a way, this survey indicates that only 18.2 percent of Adventist science teachers would agree with the general premises of Baldwin's article: namely, that God created in an ongoing way over millions of years.

Baldwin's article also states that "Many Adventist young people have found the scientific interpretation more convincing and some have responded by abandoning their beliefs in creation and the inspiration of the Bible" (5). It is of interest that, according to the analysis of the data from the study that Baldwin quotes, we should all be encouraged by the fact that it is not especially the young who have problems in this area. One of the "surprises" reported by Floyd Peterson, the author of the survey, is "that younger respondents—under fifty—tended to be more conservative than older ones."[2]

The problem of disbelief of the Bible in our church seems to be more acute with the older scientists than with the younger ones.

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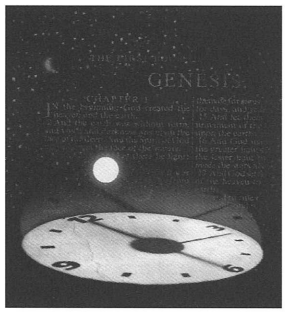
Author's Notes

1. Floyd Peterson, "Science Faculty Vary in Views on Creationism," *Adventist Today* (Nov.-Dec. 1994): 19.
2. Ibid.

Dalton D. Baldwin, "Creation and Time: A Biblical Reflection," page 11, contains the statement that "Brown has pointed out that the impact of small particles in the solar wind have eroded the oldest craters on the moon." If this statement is an indication of my effectiveness as a communicator, I am responsible for a considerable amount of misunderstanding. Subdued and smoothed lunar craters are produced by erosion from cosmic dust that falls to the sun, as well as to planets and their satellites. Some of these "dust" particles are large enough to produce faint meteors. One estimate places the annual fall of cosmic dust to planet Earth at 124,000 tons. For a comprehensive reference on this topic, see Andrew A. Snelling and David E. Rush, "Moon Dust and the Age of the Solar System," *Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal*, 7. no. 1 (1993): 2-42.



Page 14 of Baldwin's article includes an assertion that the treatment of scientific data in Seventh-day Adventist literature with the perspective of creation of organic life on planet Earth in a six-day episode less than 10,000 years ago is not "very convincing to most of [the] scientists" within the Church. My contacts within the Church do not support the implication that most SDA scientists reject the viewpoint of a completed establishment of organic life on planet earth within six consecutive sunset-to-sunset days less than 10,000 years ago. The number of SDA theologians who reject this viewpoint is of far greater concern than however many SDA scientists may reject it.

In the third paragraph of Baldwin's article, this assertion is made: According to a recent questionnaire, less than half of the science teachers in North American Division SDA colleges affirm "the traditional Adventist position" regarding a short chronology. What does the author consider to be the traditional Adventist position? What is the nature of, and the degree of, variation from this position by those who do not support it? The last questionnaire on this topic that I received did not have a designated option for response that accurately represented my position. According to the definition and/or interpretation of the questionnaire response, I could be classified as either affirming or rejecting the "traditional position. My position is fully accessible on the Worldwide Web at <www.grisda.org/resources/rb_bibch.htm>.

In the SDA understanding of the universe, physical objects depend on the exercise of God's creative ability for their origin, as much as for their continuing existence (whether direct, as was Adam; or derived, as a descendant; or continued from an initial event. See page 131 of *Education*, by Ellen G. White.) Whenever a word that designates the exercise of creative ability is used, context must determine whether the reference is to ongoing circumstances, or to a primary initiation (such as the placement of organic life on planet earth).

Baldwin's treatment of ongoing creation is an illustration of deductive reasoning from a selected viewpoint (the time data in Genesis 1-11 are symbolic, rather than literal). Inductive reasoning, on the other hand, begins with basic source material (the time data in Genesis 1-11, in this case) and seeks to determine the consequent limitations on the related viewpoint. By taking a bit of liberty with its context, the Ellen White quotation that Baldwin cites on page 12 of his article may convey a crucial insight on the deductive approach to Genesis 1-11: "learned men . . . thinking that they were making [the Bible] more plain . . . in reality . . . were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views."

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Dalton D. Baldwin is convinced that "science" has accurately described the chronology of earth and properly interpreted the fossil record, making necessary a reinterpretation of Genesis. His "science" is evidently the prevailing thought in geochronology and paleontology, disciplines that are not sciences in the sense of physics and chemistry. Rather, they are recognized as metaphysical research programs because the assumptions and paradigms used to interpret data and observations are generally not testable.[1]

Assignment of ages within the geologic column during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was based on the doctrine of uniformity: the present is the key to the past. This paradigm does not factor in catastrophic events, such as a worldwide flood, plate tectonics, or bombardment by large bodies such as

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comets or meteorites, the latter thought to account for extinction of dinosaurs. Increasing evidence for catastrophism is challenging paradigms based on uniformity.

Radiometric dating is believed to have eliminated the speculative nature of geologic reckoning of time, establishing the multibillion year age of the earth and the fossil record. However, many questionable assumptions are necessary for this method. There is only one equation that relates radioactive decay to time: $P = P_o e^{-kt}$, where k is the decay constant, e the base of the natural logarithm, P the amount of parent isotope (in numbers of atoms) present now, and (P_o) the amount present when the rocks or strata formed. Obviously P_o cannot be quantified. An equality for P_o ($P = [D-D_o]$) can be substituted, which results in the following equation: $t = 1/k\, In(D/P - D_o/P + 1)$. The time ($t$) calculated will be inversely proportional to D_o, the amount of daughter element present initially. D_o, Like P_o, is not subject to analysis.

Mass spectrometric analyses are given as ratios of P and D to a referent isotope, rather than the actual numbers of atoms, as demanded by the equation. Coupling this loss of mathematical rigor with a guess for the value of D_o yields uncertainty compounded by the need for further assumptions regarding initial distributions of referent isotopes in rocks or strata, assumptions that are as speculative as those for D_o.

Consistency of published data is believed to validate radiometric dating. But this can be attributed to common assumptions regarding D_o and distribution of referent isotopes.[2] Also, data discordant with stratigraphically assigned ages are explained away.[3]

Nor have cosmologists succeeded in fixing the age of the universe. Estimates of 12 billion years, based on current rates of recession of galaxies, do not take into account the duration and speed of inflation that immediately followed the big bang. Inflationary expansion of the universe apparently occurred at a velocity greater than the speed of light for an unknown period.[4] This would make the universe much younger than many think. The ages of stars are derived by comparing their spectra with that of the sun, which is assumed to be 4.5 billion years old.[5] The sun's age, as well as earth's, is based on the radiometric age of meteorites, which is based on the choice of D_o. This, in turn, requires the assumption that sun, planets, and meteorites all evolved synchronously from a postulated "solar nebula."[6]

Regarding textual analysis, one needs no expertise to realize that scholars have not fixed the time when

Genesis was originally written. Copyists would very likely have used the linguistic style of their day, and then edited to accommodate changes in names of places, or perceptions of nature.

Baldwin believes that humans were created millions of years after lower organisms had lived and died, which formed the fossil record. While citing Job to support his concept of ongoing creation, he misses God's description of "behemoth," who has a "tail like a cedar," a compelling argument for the contemporaneity of humanity and dinosaurs (Job 40:15-24).

Baldwin's description of ongoing creation also raises an ethical problem for me. Within the framework of the controversy between Christ and Satan, the suffering and death of animals seems pointless. If one of the objectives of the cross was to rule out the program of evil, mankind's inhumanity to fellow beings would seem to be the ultimate, critical experiment. How long should this take?

Scientifically, a short chronology for earth and our universe has not been ruled out, nor has one much greater than 4.5 billion years, depending on the choice for D_o. Also, Genesis 1 is not as inaccurate as Baldwin indicates. Light (photons) was the first particulate manifestation of the big bang before any star was formed; hence, creation of the sun after light accords with the big bang theory.[7]

Students of the Bible can afford to be skeptical of the common mind, whether in metaphysical disciplines or the physical sciences. Recall the "law" that "matter can neither be created nor destroyed," induced about 1800 from experiments on combustion. Not until the atom bomb exploded was everyone convinced that "law" was wrong on both counts—a mere forty years after Einstein's revelation concerning the equivalence of matter and energy ($E = mc^2$) had essentially ruled out that "law." What one chooses to call science should be carefully examined and re-examined.

Dick Koobs
Loma Linda, Calif.

Author's Notes

1. P. Ohorstrom, "Geochronology as a Metaphysical Research Program," *Z. Allgemeine Wissenschaftstheorie* 18 (1987): 204-14; R. Frodeman, "Geological Reasoning: Geology as an Interpretative and Historical Science," *Geological Society of America Bulletin* 107 (1965): 960-68.
2. Compare G. B. Dalrymple, *The Age of the Earth* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991).
3. Ohorstrom, "Geochronology"; P. E. Smith and R. M. Farquhar, "Direct Dating of Phanerozoic Sediments by the ^{238}U-^{206}Pb Method," *Nature* 341 (1989): 519-21; G. Faure, *Principles of Isotope Geology*, 2d ed. (N.Y.: Wiley, 1986).
4. A. Gangui, "In Support of Inflation," *Science* 291 (2001): 837-38.
5. H. R. Butcher, "Thorium in G-Dwarf Stars as a Chronometer for the Galaxy," *Nature* 328 (1987): 127-31.
6. Darymple, *Age of the Earth*, 318-21.
7. S. Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 30.

I found Dalton D. Baldwin's apology on chronology in the spring 2001 issue of *Spectrum* troublesome. Baldwin appears to diminish the importance of Genesis by incorporating a scientific theory into his faith that militates against the confidence he alleges to have in the Bible. When God descended in flames of fire upon Mount Sinai, he said in the hearing of all present that he created the earth in six days and rested on the seventh day; he commanded everyone to keep holy the seventh day because he rested on that day (Exod. 20-8-11). If we accept the idea that each day of creation is symbolic (that is, each day is many days in length), we question the veracity of statements made by God at Sinai! Baldwin argues that days and years aren't literal units of time in the early chapters of Genesis. This is scientific sophistry mocking the simplicity of God's Word.

Larry Wilson
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Baldwin Replies

I very much appreciate the careful reading of and thoughtful responses to my article on creation and time. The corrections, criticisms, and suggestions of readers will be very helpful as together we seek to understand better the relationship of creation to time.

The responses of readers deserve as thoughtful attention as those readers have given my article. Unfortunately, *Spectrum* does not have enough space in the printed journal to make this possible, but *Spectrum*'s Web site <www.spectrummagazine.org> has all the space we need. I am preparing more detailed responses for that venue.

It is disappointing that many readers seem to have paid so little attention to the biblical descriptions of ongoing creation and have experienced the article as an attack on the revealed authority of the Bible. It seems to me that by treating the biblical description of ongoing creation as authoritative, and by presenting evidence from the Bible that the six days and the 4,000 years should be treated as symbolic and metaphorical,

I have enhanced the authority of the Bible. The best support of the revealed authority of the Bible is use of the Bible as an authority.

Although this reaction is disappointing, it is understandable. Describing creation as ongoing is totally opposite a number of familiar, clear biblical statements. The way we have understood the nature of the Bible's "infallibility" leads us to believe that such contradiction does not exist in the Bible. This understanding of revelation—together with the prodigious effort we have expended rejecting careful historical study of the Bible to learn the authorship, time of writing, and historical setting of passages in the Bible—makes this reaction inevitable.

Our resistance to recognizing the biblical descriptions of ongoing creation should make us more sympathetic to the General Conference evaluation team that went to Antioch using familiar, clear biblical statements to try to get Paul to stop eating and worshiping with uncircumcised Gentiles. We need to reexamine our understanding of revelation and the proper role of careful historical study of the Bible as we seek to determine whether the Bible describes creation as ongoing. As we do so, I hope we will practice the golden rule of dialogue. If I practice that rule, I will be as open to correction from readers as I would want them to be.

Dalton Baldwin
Loma Linda, Calif.

The Nature of Time

The nature of time is of basic importance to both the physicist and the theologian. It gets very interesting when an attempt is made to combine the two. Fritz Guy, in his article "God's Time, Infinite Temporality, and the Ultimate Reality of Becoming" (*Spectrum*, winter 2001), beautifully presents the history of philosophical views on God and time, but he becomes practically oxymoronous as he reaches his own view.

Guy's personal preference is the term "infinite temporality," which he compares to other terms, such as: "relative timelessness," "divine temporality," "infinite foreknowledge," "unique temporality," and "true temporality." These terms bring to mind some similar differences, like "temporal timelessness" and "meaningless understanding." If something is difficult to understand, describing it in gibberish does not help.

Guy also gets into temporal trouble when he states in conclusion, "We—along with God and nature—are not following a path into the future; we are all blazing a trail" (27). This makes God, man, and nature remarkably alike in terms of time. What happens when the righteous remnant meet Christ at his second advent—when mortal man puts on immortality? (1 Cor. 15:53). Does man become as God, or become a god? Neither, of course, but Guy's philosophy allows for it.

It is also unfortunate that Guy includes only a single phrase that permits "the logical possibility of additional dimensions of reality" (24). Theologically led science readily points to such additional dimensions. If we accept the existence of angels, then we must accept dimensions outside our space and time, because we cannot volitionally detect an angel's existence, either with our own senses or with any known technology.

Angels probably are not limited by the speed of light, and thus by time as we know it. Yet, some people have been allowed to interact with angelic dimensions (Abraham, Daniel, and Mary—to name a few). Therefore, other dimensions must exist, perhaps an infinite number of them. Where does this place God? Certainly God is way outside any "infinite temporality," but it is very hard to describe in our words.

Jim McNeill
Pasco, Wash.

SDAs and Evangelicals

In response to David Larson's editorial, "Are Seventh-day Adventists Evangelicals?" (*Spectrum*, spring 2001), I would venture to say as a former Adventist who recently became an evangelical Christian, that they are not, at least not by the definition espoused by the National Association of Evangelicals.

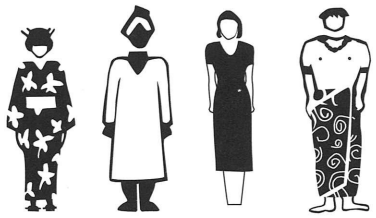
The churches that comprise the National Association of Evangelicals agree on just seven simple, yet profound points, the first of which Adventists might well pay lip service to, but not if push truly comes to shove: sola scriptura, the Reformation battle cry for the Word of God alone as the source and arbitrator of all doctrine.

This is evident by Larson's point that the doctrine of an eternal hell is just not valid based on a careful consideration of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Personally, I do not exactly warm up to the doctrine of an everlasting hell any more than anyone else, but if after a careful consideration of Scripture involving context, original language definitions, and syntax, I find that it does support such a doctrine, I

must accept it regardless of my personal feelings.

The landmark text on salvation, John 3:16, spoken by Jesus himself, says that God loved the world so much that he gave us his Son so that those who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Now, is perish annihilation or eternal conscious separation from God? If it is annihilation, I think you will admit that the unsaved have a comparatively easy way out, much like Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh, who views execution as a better alternative than spending the rest of his life in solitary confinement. At some point after judgment, the unsaved will cease to be. They will be no more conscious after their lives than they were before they were born. But if "perish" means eternal conscious separation, there is only one way out—the blood of Jesus Christ shed on Calvary.



In a sense, I am arguing that not believing in eternal hell somehow diminishes the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. If belief in him delivers us from a conscious eternal hell, a place, by the way, that God intended only for the devil and his angels, Christ's sacrifice becomes infinitely amazing and precious, because that is exactly what he risked for us, something for which we can praise him forever. You had better believe that is good news!

Incidentally, more than any other biblical personality, Christ himself referred to hell. . . . Perhaps we should study in depth what he had to say about it. . . .

Name withheld by request

Ties That Bind

I hope *Spectrum* readers won't take the multiauthor review of *Seventh-day Adventism in Crisis* as the last word on this valuable study by Laura Vance. For very different perspectives on the book, see the three reviews at Amazon.com—all of which give the top, five-star rating—and my own review in the *Christian Century* (Sept. 22-29, 1999).

Vance provides well-argued, well-supported insights, not only on gender-related issues, but also on how some of the Church's theological disputes correlate with sociological dynamics. Her treatment of the historical patterns concerning women's leadership in the Church will be indispensable reading for anyone. concerned with that issue. Even where I disagree with Vance or find her arguments not fully satisfying, I find the evidence and interpretations a rewarding stimulus to further query and understanding.

I hope readers won't accept the stunningly harsh dismissal of this book as "unenlightened, pedestrian, and irrelevant" (73) without getting a copy and deciding for themselves.

Douglas Morgan
History and Political Studies Department
Columbia Union College
Takoma Park, Md.

In the spring 2001 issue of *Spectrum*, the book review "What are the Ties That Bind?" demeans reviewer Grace Fields by lack of information concerning her education and experience.

Grace Fields was employed briefly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists after graduating from Emmanuel Missionary College. She took a masters degree in social work from New York University. She was employed as chief social worker at Blythdale Children Hospital for twenty years. There she established and supervised the Department of Social Work. She trained students of Social Work from Hunter and New York Universities.

Miss Fields was coeditor of *Health Care Magazine* and continues to serve on its board. She has taught numerous workshops and seminars for the Seventh-day Adventist denomination and the profession of social work at large.

Miss Fields is retired and lives in the New York City area.

Mary J. McConaughey, M.Ed., MSW
Boulder, Colo.

Editors' Note:
The wording of Miss Fields's identification was taken verbatim from the review's manuscript. We apologize if it demeaned her.

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New Vice President Has Vision . . .

I believe I have had a nonprophetic glimpse of the future and I am totally excited by what I saw. Please stay with me as I explain. Following an invitation by the Executive Committee of the Association of Adventist Forums to serve as its vice president, I had the pleasure of having a conversation with AAF president David Larson. In response to my inquiry about the primary mission of AAF, Dave stated without hesitation, "to provide continuing education for Seventh-day Adventists." (I really liked his answer.) Our discussion was taking place at the recent Spectrum Advisory Council weekend in San Francisco and *Spectrum* editor Bonnie Dwyer happened by and joined in. To Dave's mission statement, she added "to build community." (I really, really liked that, and decided to join the team.)

What does AAF mean to you? What role is it filling in your life?

The obvious number one membership benefit is *Spectrum* magazine. For over three decades, its honest, comprehensive, in-depth articles on contemporary issues within Adventism have provided me and many others a thread of hope for the future of our dear church. Thank you, Bonnie and former editor Roy Branson, for helping to keep the flame alive! Similarly, the books that AAF has published have made significant contributions to the personal growth of many members. What topics would you like to see covered? I urge anyone with either potential articles or even ideas for papers or books to contact Bonnie directly.

Association of Adventist Forum members fortunate enough to be located in an area close to an active chapter realize the positive contribution chapter activities can have in one's spiritual journey. My decision to relocate to the San Diego area sixteen years ago was definitely influenced by the presence of one of the most active chapters—thank you Jim Kaatz and your enthusiastic chapter board. Would you like to see an AAF chapter in your community? Please let President Larson or me know of your interests and dreams—we're here to help in any way possible!

A particularly valuable contribution to my life in the past two decades has been the AAF National Conferences—Takoma Park; Loma Linda; South Lancaster, Massachusetts; Seattle; and San Diego. In my opinion, we are now several years overdue for the next one. Do you agree? How frequently should they be scheduled? How should they be financed? Where should they be convened? What content and format would be most valuable? Please share your thoughts with me directly; this is a project on which I have agreed to work. (vp@spectrummagazine.org or toll free at 1-888-811-7284, fax 858-784-0604).

One of the most exciting developments in our thirty-three-year history is the opportunity to use the Internet to facilitate contact between "forum-types" around the world—especially those in isolated situations with little or no opportunity for face-to-face discussions with like-minded persons. We are amazed and very pleased with the rapid growth to nearly 1000 visits/day to our Web site <www.spectrummagazine.org> in its first year of existence. Thank you Leigh Johnsen for your hard work in setting it up and keeping it current! Obviously, this service is filling a real need. We welcome your comments and suggestions about this newest growth center.

I appreciate this opportunity to serve an organization that has made such a long-term, consistently positive impact on my life. I reportedly have "a reputation for getting things done," so please help me do a great job by regularly letting me know how AAF can do a better job of meeting your needs.

Gordon Rick
Vice President, AAF

New from AAF

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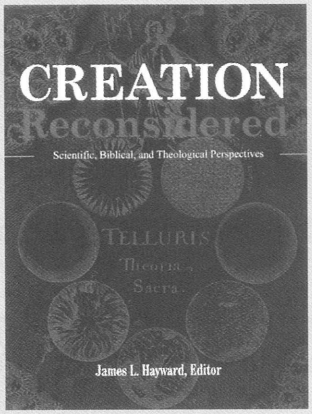

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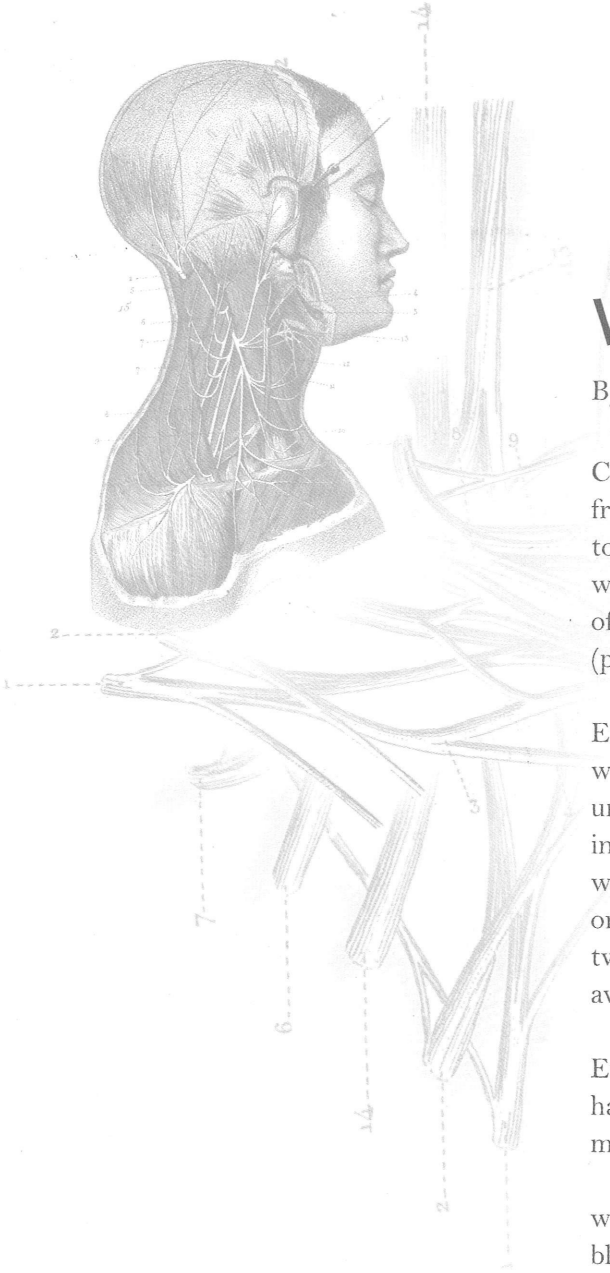

What I Learned

By Pat Cason

Cutting open cadavers in anatomy lab,
freeing the dead
to reveal their inner architecture,
we repeated the mantras
of anomalous nerve or vessel
(popliteal, peroneal, saphenous vein).

Even there, we examined parts
without knowing their wholeness;
understanding had to find us obliquely,
in X-ray views where the heart
was its own pure shadow in reverse
or in the way situs inversus
twisted what we knew to be true
away from the root of its logic.

Even in anatomy lab, what I learned
had mostly to do with the tattoo
my cadaver wore over his right bicep

where ink flowers and a heart
bloomed above the word mother.

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