

SPECTRUM

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Special Thanks

The summer of 2002 has been financially challenging for *Spectrum*. A number of individuals and Association of Adventist Forums chapters have been instrumental in helping us meet the crisis. The San Diego chapter paid for printing the summer issue. Though no longer meeting regularly, the Angwin, California, chapter took its remaining funds and gave them to the magazine. Special, generous donations also came from several of our regular supporters: Gerhard Svrcek-Seiler, Bruce and Betty Branson, Thomas Dwyer, Craig and Tracy Reynolds, and Yung and Carmen Lau. Among our Advisory Council members, some made annual contributions early. In addition, Lee and Gary Blount organized a very special fund-raising event in Minneapolis on October 23. Many of our members also added donations when they paid membership dues. To all who have so generously helped to keep this community conversation going, we offer our heartfelt thanks. You give us hope.

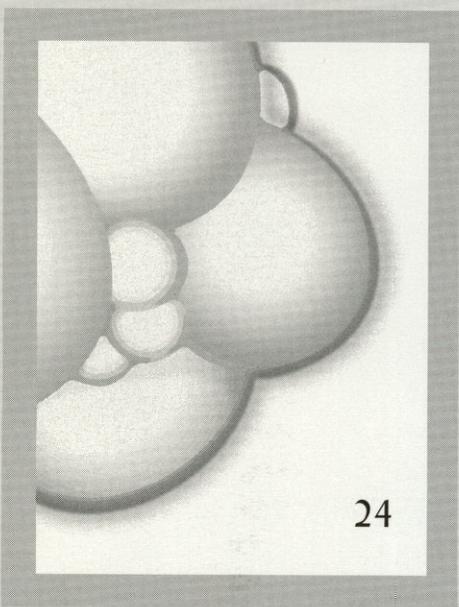
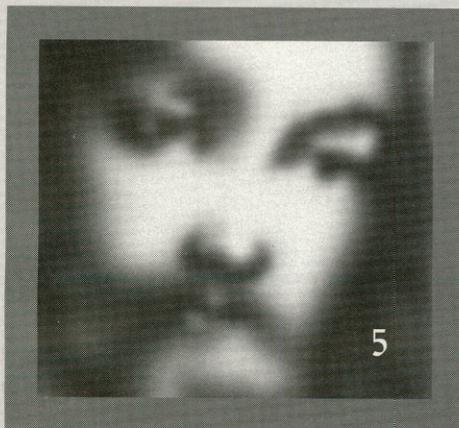
Contents

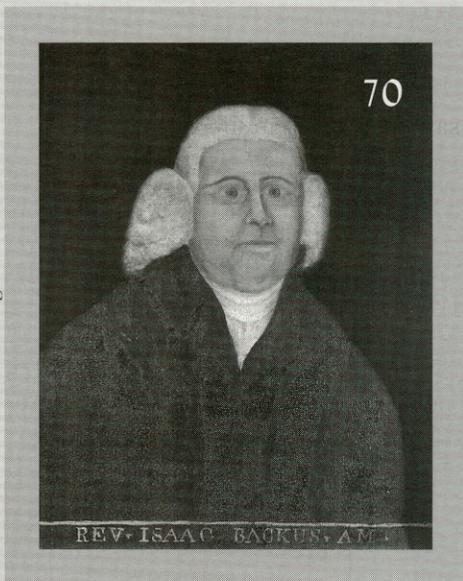
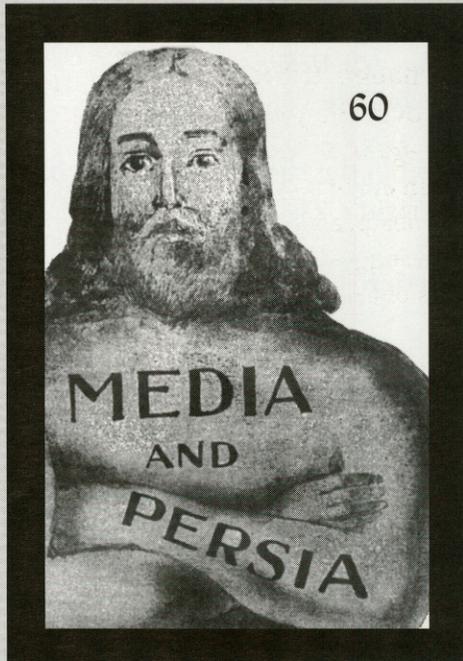
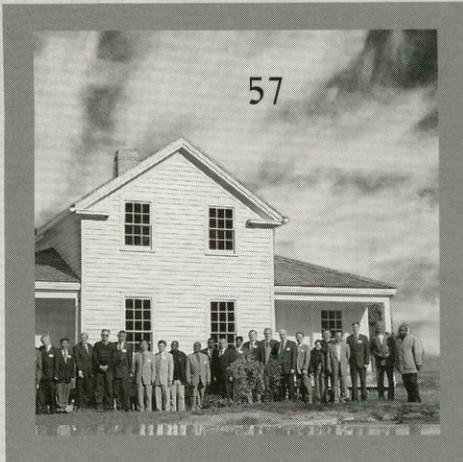
The Bible

- 5 **The Perennial Quest for the Word of Life: Seventh-day Adventists and the Synoptic Problem**
By Bert Haloviak
 Finding inspiration in the reconstruction of the synoptists.
- 11 **The Need for a Jesus-Centered Faith**
The Essential Jesus: The Man, His Message, His Mission
Reviewed by Ronald L. Jolliffe
- 14 **A Gracious Exchange within the Historical Jesus Debate**
 Marcus Borg and N. T. Wright's *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*
Reviewed by Gary Chartier
- 21 **God's Story in a Different Key**
 Jack Miles's *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God*
Reviewed by James Walters

Faith and Science

- 25 **Current Creation Questions: The Test of Human Cloning**
By Anthony J. Zuccarelli and Gerald Winslow
 God said something significant about himself when he shared the creative function of biological reproduction.
- 41 **They Said, We Said: Denominational Statements on Human Cloning**
By John Brunt
 Adventists got it right on cloning.
- 44 **Adventist Statement on Ethical Considerations Regarding Human Cloning**
- 47 **2002 International Faith and Science Conference: A Family Affair**
By Edwin A. Karlow
 A new creation dialog begins among theologians, scientists, and church administrators.





Source: Andover Newton Theological School

- 52 **A Work in Progress ... Reflections on the International Faith and Science Conference**
By Richard J. Bottomley
 Addressing the many fears that factor into the faith-science discussion held in the presence of church officials.

American History and Adventism

- 57 **A New Era of Ellen G. White Studies?**
By Douglas Morgan
 In the 175th year since Ellen G. White's birth, scholars gather to talk about her online presence, her critics, and her future.
- 60 **From Antifederalism to Seventh-day Adventism**
By Keith Lockhart
 What voluntary Sabbatarian associations and Sunday mail have to do with the Great Controversy.
- 70 **Conscience, Taxes, Coercion: Isaac Backus and the Adventist Tradition of Separation between Church and State**
By Leigh Johnsen
 A Bible-based argument from the past against tax-funded religion.

Editorials

- 3 **What Does One Do with Personal Beliefs?**
By Bonnie Dwyer
- 79 **Are Just Wars Just Wars?**
By David R. Larson

Poetry

- Back Cover **Beginning with Green**
By Pat Cason

What Does One Do with Personal Beliefs?

Please find a pencil and a piece of paper before you begin reading this issue of *Spectrum*. I have an assignment for you.

At the top of the paper write the words “Me” and “Jesus” and begin to think about them. Write down your reflections on Jesus at different times in your own life. What is your earliest memory of him, how did that change in adolescence and into adulthood? Look at what has happened to your image of Jesus over the years.

This is an exercise that Marcus Borg talks about in his book *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, and one that I found particularly valuable right after September 11, 2001, when every news story began by discussing how that event had changed our world. Surely Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection were similar. How have those events changed my worldview? Could I do as he suggested, love my enemies and think of ways to do good to those who would hurt me. How does one overcome evil with good rather than with force?

With those thoughts in mind, dig into this rich issue of *Spectrum*. We begin with a discussion of Jesus and the Synoptic Gospels, along with several book reviews. From there we move into the topics of science, faith, and history that have been focuses of attention during several meetings of the Adventist Church this year. We end with historical lessons of conscience.

Then when you finish reading this issue, find the paper again, and jot down any new thoughts about Jesus. As Ron Jolliffe says in his review of *The Essential Jesus*, knowing him should make a difference in how we live after we walk out the door on Sabbath morning. Does it? Does reading about him affect your expectations of yourself?

These are questions of new importance within the Adventist Church. Results of a recent survey of church members around the world (presented at the October Annual Council) showed that although 90 percent of respondents indicated a firm commitment to Adventist teachings, less than 50 percent pray and read the Bible daily, less than 40 percent are active in Christian witnessing, and less than 30 percent participate in community service. In other words, we believe, but we don’t act on our beliefs.

Borg can relate to those findings. He says that “Until my late thirties, I saw the Christian life as being primarily about believing.” The journey that he describes led him beyond belief, doubt, and disbelief “to an understanding of the Christian life as a relationship to the Spirit of God—a relationship that involves one in a journey of transformation.”

“World Church Survey Sounds ‘Wake-Up Call,’” the Adventist News Network reported on October 9, which led the Church’s Executive Committee to recommend that a task force be established to deal with specific areas of concern. What recommendations the Church task force proposes to address at Spring Council 2003 will be interesting to see. Borg says that it was several mystical experiences that fundamentally changed his understanding of God, Jesus, religion, and Christianity.

What will it be for you?

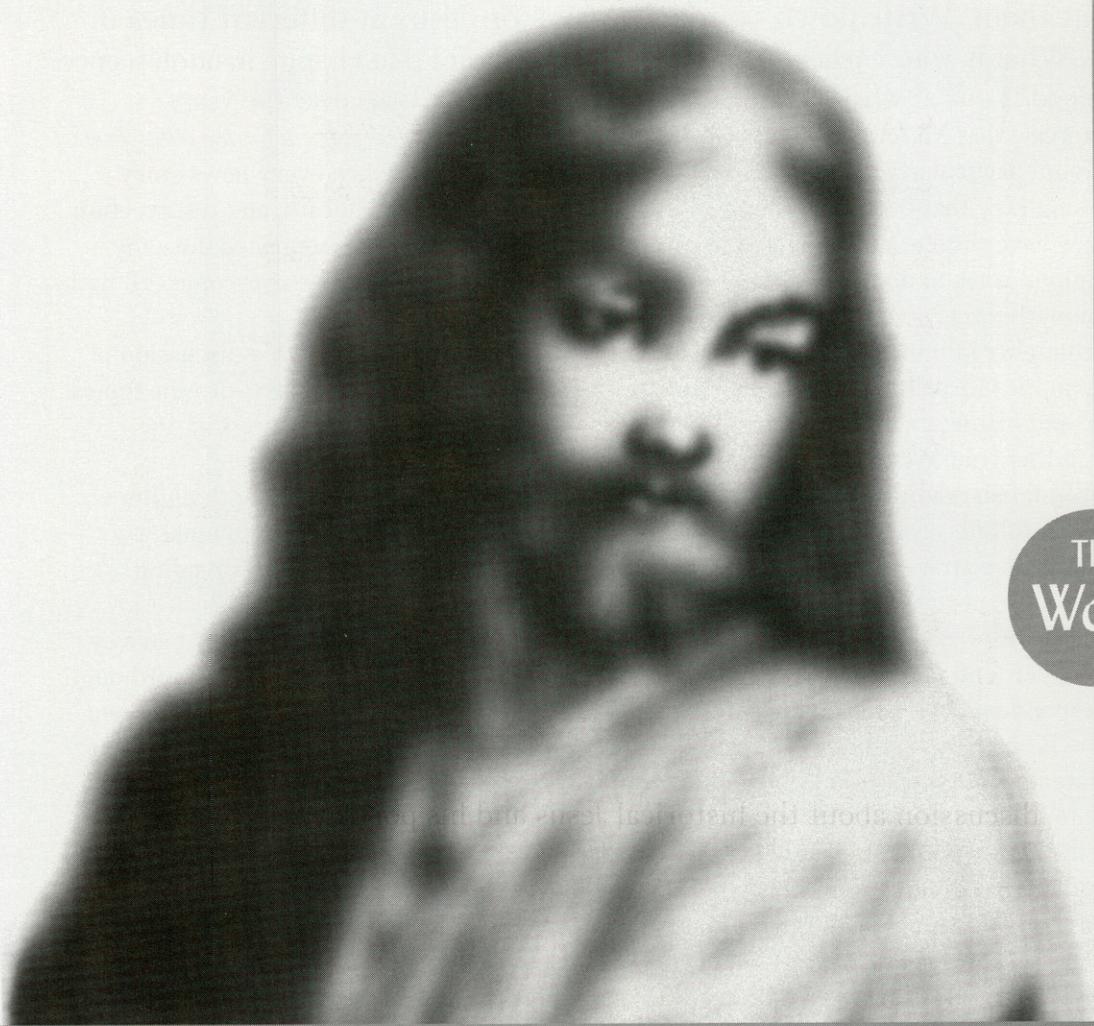
Bonnie Dwyer
Editor

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

Matthew

Mark

Luke



The
Word



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

The Perennial Quest for the Word of Life

Seventh-day Adventists and the Synoptic Problem

By Bert Haloviak

In reconstructing the historical Jesus, a few historical presuppositions are important. . . . Here is one presupposition: the Gospel of Mark was used by the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. It was one of their major sources. That is where I begin. If that is wrong, everything will have to be redone. And, of course, it could be proved wrong.

—John Dominic Crossan

With publication of *The Essential Jesus* by Pacific Press and Signs Publishing Company (see pages 11-14, below), Seventh-day Adventists appear to be entering the discussion about the historical Jesus and his portrayal in the first three Gospels that has stood at the center of academic debate and scholarly activity for over a century. This latest entry marks another twist in the winding road that Adventism has followed in its discussion of appropriate biblical scholarship. Because the synoptic problem has been called the “cornerstone” of historical critical scholarship of the Gospels, Adventism’s latest entry is sure to raise questions.¹

Should Adventists become more actively involved in the synoptic problem? Does the traditional “harmonizing” methodology allow Adventists a voice within a scholarly community that has accepted the literary interrelationship of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) for more than 200 years?

"No other enterprise in the history of ideas has been subjected to anywhere near the same degree of scholarly scrutiny," writes Hans-Herbert Stoldt. Adventist involvement would be applauded by Bruce Corley. "Rather than stand in the distance and rail against the excesses of criticism," writes Corley, "it is the better part of academic responsibility, not to say Christian stewardship, to do constructive shaping of the discipline." According to Gregory Boyd, the issue "requires evangelicals to pay attention and prepare themselves to intelligently respond," in order "to be intellectually viable in our age."²

What Is the Synoptic Problem?

The first synoptic comparison of the Gospels was done by J. J. Griesbach in 1774, when he published his *Synopse* and used the word *synoptic* ("to see together"). "The work printed the three Gospels parallel to each other and showed the agreements and disagreements among them," writes Michael G. Steinhauser.³ "Thus, it allowed the reader to observe a threefold fact:"

1. Virtually all the material in Mark appears in Matthew and/or Luke. Of the 661 verses in Mark, over 600 of them are substantially found in Matthew and over 300 in Luke. Furthermore, apart from that material they share with Mark, Matthew and Luke also share in common about 240 verses not found in Mark. These verses consist almost exclusively of sayings of Jesus and discourses.
2. A close comparison of the three synoptic Gospels reveals a high degree of similarity in vocabulary, in word order and sentence structure, as well as in the particularities of style.
3. The sequence of the narrative units (or pericopes) is similar in each of the three synoptic Gospels. It is unlikely that three different authors working entirely independently would have followed narrative sequences so strikingly alike.

The question of the literary relationship of the first three Gospels or, more specifically, the question of how the agreements and disagreements in wording and content, and the order of events, are

to be explained became a central question in New Testament scholarship and remains an important question to this day. This issue constitutes the synoptic problem.⁴

The Two-Source Hypothesis (2SH) and Markan Priority

Most current writers of synoptic commentaries, as well as others within the last generation, proceed on the assumption that Matthew and Luke used Mark as their primary source. In addition, they supposedly accessed a source known as "Q." Material unique to Matthew has been labeled "M," and that unique to Luke "L." Thus, although other hypotheses about literary sources have vigorously challenged the 2- or 4SH since the 1960s, this one still seems to dominate understandings about how the synoptic evangelists utilized their sources as they wrote their Gospels.

Not all New Testament scholars agree to either Markan priority or the necessity of Q.

In 1964 William R. Farmer reopened the synoptic problem by rejecting the priority of the Gospel of Mark and the whole idea of the use of the hypothetical source "Q" by the authors of Matthew and Luke and called for a return to the hypothesis of Johann Griesbach that Matthew is the first of the synoptic Gospels, that Luke copied his Markan and non-Markan parallels from Matthew, and that Mark put together his Gospel as a conflation of Matthew and Luke.⁵

The Hypothetical Source "Q"

The discovery of the Gospel of Thomas at Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945 suggests that something like Q did, in fact, exist.⁶ Some writers have transcended the hypothetical nature of Q and consider it an embedded "Gospel" within Matthew and Luke. "Those two authors also use Mark as a regular source," claims John Dominic Crossan, "so Q is discernible wherever they agree with one another but lack a Markan parallel. Since, like Mark, that document has its own generic integrity and theological consistency apart from its use as a *Quelle* or source for

Matthew Mark Luke Matthew Mark Luke Matthew Mark

others, I refer to it . . . as the *Q Gospel*.”⁷

James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg have attempted the ultimate effort in *Q* research. These three men co-chair the International *Q* Project and have worked with some forty other scholars over a period of a decade to reconstruct *Q* word-for-word in Greek. In 2000, the team published a one-volume critical edition of *Q*. Altogether, it has so far published seven volumes of the “*Documenta Q* Project,” a summary of historically relevant scholarly opinions from French, German, and English scholars on various *Q* topics such as the Lord’s Prayer, the temptations of Jesus, and so forth.⁸

Two-Source Hypothesis and Redaction Criticism

Another form of criticism that has entered into the synoptic discussion is redaction criticism. According to G. R. Osborne, this is “a historical and literary discipline which studies both the ways the redactors/editors/authors changed their sources and the seams or transitions they utilized to link those traditions into a unified whole.”⁹

“The purpose of this approach,” continues Osborne, “is to recover the author’s theology and setting. . . . Redaction criticism must build upon the results of source criticism, for the final results are determined in part by one’s choice of Markan or Matthean priority.”¹⁰

Osborne suggests that any study of the Gospels will be enhanced by redaction-critical techniques: “A true understanding of the doctrine of inspiration demands it. . . . God gave the synoptists freedom to omit, expand and highlight these traditions in order to bring out individual nuances peculiar to their own Gospel.” With that view of how inspiration worked in the Gospels, concludes Osborne, “there is no necessity to theorize wholesale creation of stories, nor to assert that these nuances were not in keeping with the original Gospels.”¹¹

Seventh-day Adventists and Synoptic Research

According to Raymond Cottrell, an associate editor of the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, which was

published between 1953 and 1957, the open theological climate within Adventism in the 1950s to mid-1960s offered an “honest way” for the editors “in their dedication first to the Bible and then to the church” to address the issue of interpretation of the Scriptures.¹²

“We realized that some church members, used to the dogmatic, proof-text approach,” he has recalled, “would feel uncomfortable and threatened by the openness of the *Commentary*, but we believed that in time the church would come to appreciate the virtues of openness and that our endeavor to be faithful to the text of Scripture would have a corrective effect.”¹³

This climate of openness allowed a Seventh-day Adventist, apparently for the first time, to address the question of the synoptic problem in print. Earle Hilgert, professor of New Testament at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary (then in Takoma Park, Maryland), wrote the 230-page article “‘Lower’ and ‘Higher’ Biblical Criticism” that appeared in Volume 5 of the *Commentary*. After a brief history of scholarly approaches to the “literary similarities that exist between the Synoptic Gospels,” Hilgert listed proposed solutions, among them 2SH and an analysis that B. H. Streeter had offered in 1924.¹⁴

Hilgert had offered some “tentative suggestions,” essentially embracing what today is known as the 2SH. Hilgert’s major points were that the Holy Spirit led the synoptic evangelists to “use previously written documents in the preparation of their Gospels”; Mark was “probably” the first Gospel to be written; Mark was “evidently one of the written sources upon which Matthew and Luke drew in composing their accounts of Jesus”; and “similarities in the material common to Matthew and Luke, but not found in Mark, indicate that they drew upon another common source, or sources, besides Mark.”¹⁵

In the end, Hilgert decided that, “Although the exact content and place of origin of this source cannot be determined, the term *Q* may be considered a working label for purposes of identification.”¹⁶

A clearly different atmosphere toward theological openness prevailed during the 1980s. In its approval of the report of the Methods of Bible Study Committee, the 1986 Annual Council of the General Conference accepted the following statement:

uke Matthew Mark Luke Matthew Mark Luke M

In recent decades the most prominent method in biblical studies has been known as the historical-critical method. Scholars who use this method, as classically formulated, operate on the basis of presuppositions which, prior to studying the biblical text, reject the reliability of accounts of miracles and other supernatural events narrated in the Bible. Even a modified use of this method that retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason is unacceptable to Adventists.¹⁷

The committee rejected comparative analysis of sources that synoptic evangelists used. Instead, in cases of apparent "discrepancy or contradiction," readers were urged to "look for the underlying harmony" and to "keep in mind that dissimilarities may be due to minor errors of copyists or may be the result of differing emphases and choice of materials of various authors who wrote under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit for different audiences under different circumstances."¹⁸

Some denominational theologians urged the Church to take a decisive stand against the historical-critical method. "The historical-critical method has emptied churches in Europe," claimed one, "it has taught man to live autonomously relative to God's Word. As a church we must take a decisive stand before we find ourselves in similar circumstances. We must recognize where we are and treat the causes of the disease before the results are fatal."¹⁹

Another wrote that "Rejection of the historical-critical method cannot be done partially. Who keeps a little of it, keeps it entirely. . . . I entirely reject any humanistic scientific-critical method for studying the Scriptures."²⁰

The major theological voice against approaches to the synoptic problem that stress literary dependence was Gerhard Hasel, professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. In two major works on hermeneutics, Hasel urged against focusing on "a supposedly preliterate stage or its reconstructed setting in life." Instead, he called for a focus solely upon the final text of the Scripture "as it is available to us."²¹

Hasel exhibited wide familiarity with the literature of source, form, and redaction criticism, yet he concluded, "We believe that the historical-critical method is not an adequate method of Bible study for a person who accepts the Bible as the Word of God."²²

In 1982, John Brunt offered the most compelling Adventist argument in favor of 2SH in synoptic research and the value of the historical-critical method. He made his point in "A Parable of Jesus as a Clue to Biblical Interpretation," which *Spectrum* published in December 1982.²³

Brunt analyzed the parable of the wicked tenants and discussed how each of the synoptic writers used the parable differently. "When the synoptic gospels are carefully compared," noted Brunt, "it is evident that the evangelists have modified material they received" (41).

Brunt embraced the usefulness of redaction critical exegesis. "This modification is purposeful," he wrote. "While in no way contradictory, the Gospels do use the parable with different theological emphases, and the modifications contribute to these emphases. . . . Differences in detail are not merely a matter of faulty memory, but rather of conscious modification in order to communicate a message" (41-42).

Brunt called for Adventists to reap the benefits from studying each synoptists' redaction. "By analyzing the editing of this parable by each gospel writer," he claimed, "Bible students have three texts from which to learn, instead of one" (42).

To Brunt, study of the way each Gospel writer used "both traditional material and his own contributions to form a new literary creation" can provide deep insight into the purpose of the inspired writer and provide insight into relevance of the writing for our time. (37).

Conclusion

Adventists can benefit from a comparative analysis of the sources used in writing the synoptic Gospels.²⁴ These benefits arise partly from the intensity with which the synoptists' words and phrases are examined, thus demanding a close look at the Scriptures.

At present, practitioners of source and redaction criticism no longer view the synoptic evangelists as

Matthew Mark Luke Matthew Mark Luke Matthew Mark

mere purveyors or “scissors and paste” accumulators, but rather as inspired theologians who, although bound to their sources, felt called to organize and adapt their materials within their own contexts.

Regardless of their approach, it seems erroneous for one group of theologians to place practitioners of the 2SH beyond the pale of orthodoxy. Wrote George Eldon Ladd, himself a conservative evangelical scholar, “Most evangelical New Testament scholars have recognized the validity of the ‘documentary hypothesis,’ viz., that Matthew and Luke made use of Mark and Q; and . . . this critical solution is in no way hostile to an evangelical faith.”²⁵

As they have done in other contexts, perhaps Seventh-day Adventists can learn to see Jesus within

the correct text of the Gospels, and the correct way to interpret the Gospels, is a vital aspect of the Church’s perennial quest for the Word of Life.²⁸

Notes and References

1. The epigraph is taken from John Dominic Crossan, in Paul Copan, ed., *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? A Debate between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1998): 33-34. For the synoptic problem in general, see Stephen C. Carlson, “The Synoptic Problem FAQ” <www.mindspring.com/~scarlson/synopt/faq.htm>. There are a number of Web listings useful to study of the Synoptic Gospels. The most useful are Carlson’s, Mahlon Smith, Mark Goodacre, Brian E. Wilson, Thomas R. W. Longstaff.
2. Hans-Herbert Stoldt, *History and Criticism of the Marcan Hypothesis* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1980), 1; Bruce

Not only has this study of the literature led me to appreciate more fully the inspired reconstruction of the synoptists, . . . it has also enhanced my understanding of a more thoroughly contextual approach to studying the Adventist historical interpretation of Scripture.

a later New Testament setting. “The historic figure of Jesus of Nazareth was of such overwhelming importance that even when men were thinking of Jesus primarily as the heavenly Lord,” writes C. K. Barrett, “they chose to interpret, to vary, to modify, to supplement the tradition rather than to abandon it altogether in the interests of a purely supernatural figure; hence the fact . . . that the Gospel account of Jesus belongs to two separate and distinguishable contexts, that of his ministry, and that of the Church after the resurrection.”²⁶

Study of this issue has led me to agree with David Dungan. “At one level, the Synoptic Problem is not really a ‘problem’ at all,” he claims.²⁷

At its deepest level, the Synoptic Problem is not a scientific “problem” but part of the Church’s never-ending conversation with the God of Jesus Christ. At its deepest level, the quest for the correct solution to the Synoptic Problem, like the Church’s quest for the correct canon of the Gospels, and

- Corley, ed., *Colloquy on New Testament Studies: A Time for Reappraisal and Fresh Approaches* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1983), 8;
- Gregory Boyd, *Cynic Sage or Son of God? Recovering the Real Jesus in an Age of Revisionist Replies* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1995), 11, 19.
3. “The Sayings Gospel Q,” in John S. Kloppenborg et al., *Q Thomas Reader* (Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge Press, 1990), 8.
4. Ibid.
5. Arthur J. Bellinzoni Jr., ed., *The Two-Source Hypothesis: A Critical Appraisal* ([Macon, Ga.]: Mercer University Press, 1985), 9.
6. Robert H. Stein, *The Synoptic Problem: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1987), 109.
7. John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (New York, N.Y.: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994): x-xi.
8. James M. Robinson, “The Real Jesus of the Sayings ‘Q’ Gospel” <www.religion-online.org>.
9. G. R. Osborne, “Redaction Criticism,” in Joel B. Green, and Scot McKnight, eds., *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992), 662-63.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Raymond F. Cottrell, “The Untold Story of the Bible Commentary,” *Spectrum* 16.3 (Aug. 1985): 45-46.
13. Ibid., 47.
14. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1956), 5:175-79.
15. Ibid.

Luke Matthew Mark Luke Matthew Mark Luke M

16. Ibid.

17. General Conference of SDAs, "Methods of Bible Study Committee Report," *1986 Annual Council/Booklet*, 17-23. It seems apparent that a basic tenet of the 2SH and of redaction criticism is inadvertently accepted within the phrase "different audiences under different circumstances." Indeed, the document, no doubt unknowingly, accepts many of the basic assumptions that have traditionally been accepted by what is known as the historical-critical method.

18. Ibid., 22.

19. E. Edward Zinke, "Historical Criticism," 5. <biblicalresearch.gc.adventist.org/documents/historicalcriticism.htm>

20. Mario Veloso, "Modern Scientific-Critical Method—A Testimony," *Adventist Perspectives* 6.2 (1992): 35.

21. Gerhard Hasel, *Understanding the Living Word of God* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1980), 158.

22. Gerhard Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today: An Analysis of Modern Methods of Biblical Interpretation and Proposals for the Interpretation of the Bible as the Word of God* (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Research Institute, 1985), 98. Some major SDA works (listing not intended to be exhaustive) addressing the synoptic problem that disagree with Hasel's position are George E. Rice, *Luke, a Plagiarist?* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1983); Tom Shepherd, *Markan Sandwich Stories: Narration, Definition, and Function* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1993) (both of these works emphasize an oral transmission hypothesis as a suggestion toward explaining the synoptic problem); Alden Thompson, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (Hagerstown,

Md.: Review and Herald, 1991); John McVay, "The Synoptic Problem: Conference Study Paper" (1997) <www.andrews.edu/~jmcvay>; Robert K. McIver, *The Four Faces of Jesus: Four Gospel Writers, Four Unique Perspectives, Four Personal Encounters, One Complete Picture* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2000); Ernest Bursley, "Texts and Trivia: The Denials of Peter" *Spectrum* 30.2 (spring 2002).

23. Pages 35-43.

24. Not only has this study of the literature led me to appreciate more fully the inspired reconstruction of the synoptists as they related to their own time, it has also enhanced my understanding of a more thoroughly contextual approach to studying the Adventist historical interpretation of Scripture. For example, the Parable of the Ten Virgins is not, nor should it be, interpreted today as during the "shut door" period.

25. *The New Testament and Criticism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1967), 148.

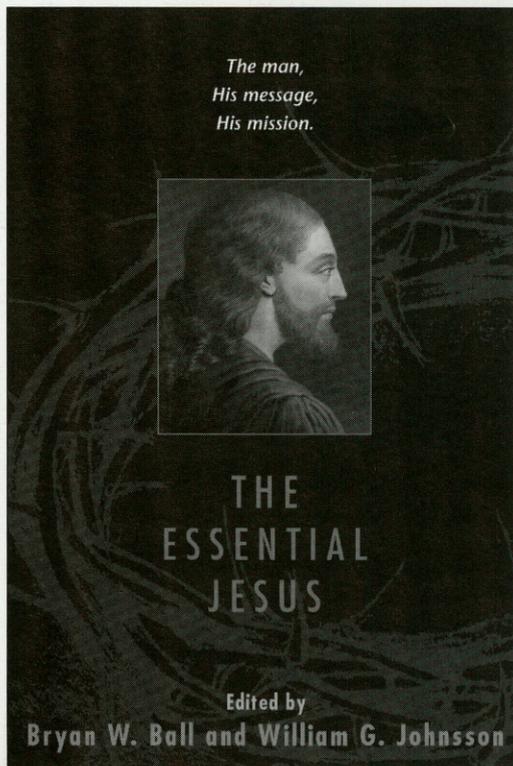
26. *Jesus and the Gospel Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 16.

27. *A History of the Synoptic Problem* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 394.

28. Ibid.

Bert Haloviak is director of the Office of Archives and Statistics at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

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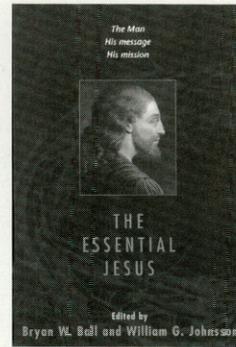


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The Need for a Jesus-Centered Faith

A Review of *The Essential Jesus: The Man, His Message, His Mission*, edited by Bryan W. Ball and William G. Johnsson. Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2002.

By Ronald L. Jolliffe



I was delighted to hear that the denomination was publishing *The Essential Jesus: The Man, His Message, His Mission*. Just released, it contains thirteen chapters written by twelve contributors, all of whom hold doctoral-level degrees. The authors are Adventist editors, scholars, educators, and administrators.

I wanted to love this book, and there are sections well worth reading. For example, Roy Adams's chapter on the compassion of Jesus encourages readers to replicate—rather than just affirm—the compassion of Jesus. Adams asks how one is softened by the compassion of Jesus when continuously bombarded by images of evil in the media. He begins a response with practical questions about Jesus.

Adams wonders what Jesus did for bedding, bathing, toilet needs, cleansing of hair and teeth, breakfast, clean clothes, laundry. He writes that, though it may be inappropriate to accept Jesus' lack of these necessities as a model for us today, nevertheless Jesus' example "certainly points up the obscenity of our natural and inordinate reach for the most comfortable and prestigious roles in the kingdom" (199). Adams urges replication of Jesus' life, which, in addition to its clearly spiritual concerns, was also committed to serving the social and physical needs of people, not only individually, but also in groups. In short, Adams calls for social action in the political order.

A Book about Christ, Not about Jesus

I wanted all of this book to be about Jesus' teachings, for I believe concentrated attention upon them is an urgent need in current Adventist living. But the majority of this book is not about Jesus. Most chapters in this book deal with Christology (even if every chapter names Jesus in the title).

There is a distinction in scholarship between "Jesus" and "Christ" that can be explained by Peter's confession. When Jesus asked Peter, "Whom do you say I am?" Peter did not reply with the statement, "You are Jesus." That would be a fact, the kind of thing recorded in the census records in Bethlehem, knowable to all who cared to learn, regardless of their level of acquaintance with Jesus. But Peter's reply, "You are the Christ," was commended by Jesus as something that flesh and blood had not revealed to Peter: it was a belief statement.

This book would have provided a service to its readers had it explained this important distinction

between two scholarly disciplines. The first, Christology, considers doctrines about Christ, his pre-existence as the *Logos*, his virgin birth, his role as Savior, Mediator, returning Lord. These topics focus on what the Church teaches about who Christ is, what he did for people, and how to have a relationship with him.

The second discipline, Jesus Studies, focuses on Jesus' own words and deeds while he walked the earth, his parables, riddles, healings, and so forth, and the nature of the documents in the New Testament that speak about Jesus, especially the Gospels. As a Jesus scholar who works for a church that seems primarily interested in doctrinal concerns, I had hoped from the title that this book would make "Jesus" its focal point. But because the book primarily examines doctrines about Christ, it should have been titled *The Essential Christ*, especially when there is already a thoughtful book with the title *The Essential Jesus*, a book that takes Jesus' words so seriously that at times fewer than five or six of his words stand as the only words on an entire page.¹

I am currently on sabbatical researching a reference work in Jesus scholarship during the day and reading this book in the evenings. I have been embarrassed that too many sections of the book seem eager to condemn Jesus

scholarship. Curiously, the chapters most vocal in their attacks on historical Jesus studies are the chapters devoted to Christological issues. Chapters on Christology should interact with the scholarly literature in Christology.

The Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith

Although the book mentions the “Jesus of history” and the “Christ of faith,” it could do more to explain why this distinction is essential for Adventists to understand and even apply in their own witness. The need for this distinction is described in the Introduction: “The Jesus of our own imagination frequently rises to replace the Jesus of the Bible. How easy it is to create a Jesus to our liking!” (15). Jesus scholarship attempts to separate “faith” statements from “fact” statements in order to provide some controls on the creative imagination of faith, yet this book’s relentless attacks on scholarship seem willingly ignorant of what scholarship is.

Scholarship is a method, not a religion. Scholarship requires a neutral stance that allows no special privilege and brooks no special pleading.² Scholarship is not about the condemnation of faith, it is about the establishment of fact. It should be irrelevant whether a person, *when working as a scholar*, is or is not a believer. The scholar, for example, is not free to say, “I will carefully and objectively analyze the reliability of the factual history of the Koran, the holy book of Islam, but I will change my methods of research when I turn to the Bible and will accept every statement as true because I believe it is inspired by God.”

There is an excellent demonstration of a scholar at work on pages 44–47. In these pages, Nancy

Vyhmeister capably and clearly demonstrates the need for and use of the historical-critical method in her treatment of Josephus’s passages that make reference to Jesus. In her work she (rightly) removes every statement from this first-century historian about his faith in Jesus. She does her work as historian well.

Her critical work convincingly demonstrates that Josephus did not believe in Jesus, even though in the scribally emended text as it exists today Josephus has strong statements of belief in Jesus as the Christ. Her scholarly work does not make her an unbeliever or the enemy of faith. She is working as a scholar—not as a believer—in this analysis of a historical passage in a book. This kind of careful thinking is essential to all scholarship and needed by all denominations, but is not always evident in *The Essential Jesus*.

For example, at one point the book proclaims the “factual” nature of the virgin birth (87–88, 90) and states, “On the evidence of eyewitnesses and his own investigations, Luke tells us that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, Mary” (94). These are belief statements, impossible to document as fact even if something good could come from doing so. There were no eyewitnesses to Mary’s conception (not even Mary herself), and Luke, decades later, had no way to make a personal investigation. What would he have looked for? I suppose that in an attempt to emphasize the importance of the virgin birth the author fell into the error of equating fact with truth.

Facts and Truths

Facts are just facts; they require no belief stance. It is a fact that there was an actual city of Jerusalem in

Jesus’ own day. It is a fact that a person named Jesus died just outside the city of Jerusalem. Facts may be interesting, and even accurate, but one doesn’t stake one’s life on them. It is a fact that Jesus died on a cross. Muslims, Buddhists, and atheists know this fact. It is a truth that Jesus died on a cross to save the world.

Bryan Ball, one author in this book, makes this distinction nicely at one point when he says, “The incarnation is . . . one of the central truths of the Christian faith and a great mystery. It is no less true, no less significant, no less essential, because it is a mystery that transcends the limits of human understanding, commending itself to faith as well as to argument” (87).³

When scholarship concludes that something is not a historical fact, it does not necessarily argue that the event did not happen, but merely says that the event does not meet the criteria of historicity and therefore can only be accepted on faith. The term “historical Jesus” is a technical term that does not refer to “who Jesus actually was.” “Historical” specifically and distinctly refers to what can be demonstrated as certain without requiring one to first believe. A “historical” fact does not require a faith stance to be accepted. Jesus, as he actually was in the past, was much richer and far more complex than can ever be known by historical studies. A faithful stance toward Christ will always move far beyond what history can verify about Jesus, but it ought not be in direct violation of what can be demonstrated as historical.

Scholarship is a protective mechanism to help avoid the flights of fancy that are too frequently confused with faith.⁴ Without the controls that the historical Jesus provides, there can be no method to

assess the validity of any claim about Jesus. Scholarship is the friend of faith and the enemy only of falsehood and deceit. It is not truth, it is a midwife of truth.

In places, this book attacks scholars and then proceeds to do what it attacked scholarship for doing. For example, the beginning of the chapter on “The Work and Words of Jesus” says,

For a long time students of Jesus have attempted to add to or subtract from the information about Jesus contained in these Gospels, . . . to get “behind” the New Testament to find the Historical Jesus.

What follows is based on my understanding that one cannot get “behind” the four Gospels, that they preserve Jesus as He existed in the memories of His closest followers, and that these memories give us the best access to the mighty work and words of Jesus. (124)

Later in the same chapter the same author says, “Jesus always used *Abba* in addressing God (sixteen times in the Gospels, see for example Mark 14:36).” However, a quick look in a concordance makes clear that in the Greek New Testament *Abba* (a transliterated Aramaic word for “father”) only appears once in the Gospels (at Mark 14:36) and twice more in Paul (Rom. 8:15 and Gal. 4:6). For the other references in the “sixteen” the author had to count something else, probably the Greek word for father (*pater*).

In other words, in the New Testament, Jesus called God *Abba* once, and the author believes it is possible to get “behind” the text and say the Greek word *pater* camouflages the other references. The author is getting “behind” the

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that make a difference

in how you live

when you walk out

of church on a

Sabbath morning.

text to know more about Jesus than the text actually states.

My complaint is not with what the author does, but with his condemnation of others who try to get “behind” the text. Scholars must do all they can to get “behind” the text, otherwise the Scriptures become an endless list of puzzles. Why do women have to have their heads covered because of the angels (1 Cor. 11:10)? Are followers of Jesus really supposed to do everything the scribes and Pharisees teach (Matt. 23:1-3)? Did Jesus really declare “all foods clean” (Mark 7:19)? Should one always eat whatever food is provided (Luke 10:7; 1 Cor. 10:25)? Scholars must use all the information available from antiquity, epigraphic and material, and do everything possible to understand the text.⁵

One disappointing aspect of this book is that it rarely addresses the teachings of Jesus that most directly challenge contemporary North American Adventist viewpoints. Where are Jesus’ words that undermine the preeminence of

consumerism, or the need to advocate the justice that might make the need for gated communities obsolete? Where are the warnings of how honoring of dead prophets can be used abusively (Matt. 23:27-32)?

Where are warnings against the troublesome issues of hierarchy, in which some are considered to hold more authority simply because of office or position (Matt. 23:8-12)? Where are the words of Jesus that point out the confusion that comes from considering correct belief as more important than selfless living? What would it mean for Adventism to take seriously the statement of Jesus that practicing justice is even more important than tithing?

The reason I had hoped for a book about Jesus—instead of another book about Christ—is articulated by Harold Bloom, who has argued that American religion is gnostic, representing a complete dualistic division between the body and the soul. He claims that American religion assumes that what one “believes” in one’s head is the important thing about being religious, no matter how one lives. According to him, American religion equates a personal relationship with God with true religion.⁶

Much of this book could be used to prove that Bloom’s hypothesis is essentially accurate in describing popular Adventism. For a book about *The Essential Jesus*, there is too little interest in the practical teachings of Jesus that make a difference when one walks out of the church door on a Sabbath morning. However well the book is written, too much is devoted to stuff one only thinks about while sitting in church: Old Testament texts that predict the coming Messiah, the virgin birth, the mystery of the incarnation, the judgment and its heavenly account-

ing procedures, the applications of blood in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly temple, and so forth.

These are churchly doctrines about Christ—Christology—to be distinguished from the teachings of Jesus. Jesus taught things that make a difference in how you live when you walk out of the church on a Sabbath morning: “Feed the hungry”; “Call no person your spiritual authority”; “Watch the grass grow”; “Keep your prayers short”; “Love people who despise you.”

Notes and References

1. See the book by John Dominic Crossan with the same main title, *The Essential Jesus: What Jesus Really Taught* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994).

2. An example of special pleading in this book gives one of the proofs of Jesus’ divinity as the number martyrs who have

died for the faith. Although it is true that an inconsequential Jew could not have aroused the devotion of so many Christians, one must also recognize how many Palestinians—and how many Al Qaeda fighters—have been willing to die for their own causes. My argument is not to diminish the role of Jesus, but to help readers hear the special pleading that makes Christian witness sound duplicitous when it allows for itself what it does not allow for others.

3. The difference between “fact” and “faith” becomes clear when used on a different religion. To which category does the statement, “Mohammed lived in the sixth and seventh centuries of the Christian era” belong? Now try, “Mohammed is God’s Prophet.” The first is a statement of fact; the second is a statement of faith. These statements illustrate the difference between the “historical Mohammed” and the “Mohammed of faith.”

4. Careful Jesus scholarship is urgently needed in the interconnected world of the third millennium, when religion is such a divisive force in a heavily armed world. Christians need to be willing to apply to their own documents and traditions the same critical scholarship that they apply to the

religions of others. For example, Islam teaches that the Koran is verbally inspired and is exactly the same in today’s published text as it was when delivered to Mohammed. However, Koranic scholars disagree with this doctrine and can demonstrate that early manuscripts differ from the published versions. Islamic scholarship shows that the Islamic doctrine is not supported by the historical data. Christians face analogous issues.

5. The author should have depended not only on Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, rev. ed. (London: SCM Press, 1973): 1:62-63; and Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1998), 5 (as noted on page 149), but also on the persuasive rebuttal to Jeremias by James Barr, “Abba Isn’t Daddy,” *JTS* 39 (1988): 28-47.

6. *The American Religion* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992).

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A Gracious Exchange within the Historical Jesus Debate

Marcus J. Borg and N. T. Wright. *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*. San Francisco: Harper, 1999.

Reviewed by Gary Chartier

The *Meaning of Jesus* is a dialogue between two New Testament scholars that focuses primarily, though not exclusively, on the historical figure of Jesus. The authors irenically articulate and defend their respective accounts of who Jesus was, what he did, how he understood himself, how he was born, why he died, what became of him after his death, what we can expect from him in the future, and what he means to us today. They also explain

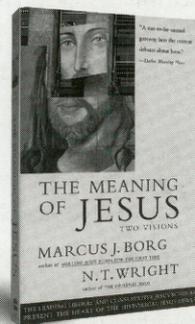
how they believe we should reach historical conclusions about him. The book is a well-written and engaging introduction to the contemporary historical study

of Jesus by scholars who are both friends and fellow Christians.

To understand *The Meaning of Jesus* and its context, it may be useful to begin with an overview

of the development of modern Christian thinking about Jesus as a figure of history.

It is a commonplace that Jewish faith and Christian faith are historical, not only in the sense that they have developed over time, but also in the sense that they concern themselves with historical events. Jews and Christians have characteristically believed that God does things in history, that divine action changes both our understanding of the human situation and the human situation itself.



For Jews, God's paradigmatic historical action is Israel's exodus from slavery in Egypt. Whatever her precise understanding of this exodus, a traditionally minded Jew will see God's will behind the liberation of Israel and the consequent creation of a new nation. Because of what God has done, history is different, importantly different.

In the same way, Christians have traditionally seen the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus as God's decisive, definitive actions in human history. They continue to disagree about just what God accomplished in and through these events. Some Christians see them primarily as media of divine self-disclosure; others interpret them as the means by which a substitutionary atonement was effected; still others understand them as unleashing a powerful dynamic that has transformed human social, cultural, and political history. The majority Christian view has been, in any case, that they matter profoundly.

Christian belief in the centrality of these events for human history has come under increasing attack since the eighteenth century. It has seemed incredible to many people that a set of events that occurred over the course of a few years in Palestine two millennia ago could be the prime instance of God's activity in human affairs. Not unreasonably, critics have asked: Why there? Why then? What about the rest of the world?

Some theologians and philosophers have asked whether history could bear the weight Christianity seemed to place on it. Faith seemed to require absolute, unswerving commitment. But historical reconstruction was always tentative, probabilistic. Historical claims could always be falsified and were

never, in any case, certain. How could Christians rely on the Gospels as they made firm commitments to Jesus if their knowledge of him was always provisional?

Also problematic from the standpoint of many historians and philosophers has been the idea that we could be confident that the sorts of wondrous events reported in the Gospels actually occurred. David Hume famously argued that a miracle, understood as a violation of physical law is a priori improbable—so improbable that it will always be more likely that evidence purporting to establish that it occurred should be discounted than that it did, in fact, take place.

Related to this epistemological challenge has been a metaphysical one. If the world operates in accordance with orderly natural laws, what room is there—critics in an era increasingly dominated by a mechanistic worldview that reflected popular understandings of Newtonian physics asked—for acts that seem so clearly to violate these laws? Given our understanding of the world, are the accounts offered in the Gospels genuinely believable?

A clear implication of this challenge was that the Gospels themselves were to be studied like other ancient historical documents. Though so-called “historical-critical” study of the Gospels is as old as the patristic period (consider, for instance, the careful work of Theodore of Mopsuestia), it took off in earnest in the nineteenth century.

Scholars focused on the textual prehistories of the Gospels, their relationships with each other and with other biblical books, parallels between them and various nonbiblical sources, the role of archaeology and ancient history in confirming or disconfirming the portraits of Jesus they offered, and

so forth. In addition, they sought increasingly to offer comprehensive portraits—biographies—of Jesus.

They often sought to depict Jesus in terms that might appear winsome to nineteenth-century liberal readers. They also attempted, regularly enough, to explain away the strange and the miraculous. Jesus didn't rise from the dead; he swooned and revived in the tomb. He didn't feed the five thousand with miraculously multiplied loaves and fishes; he encouraged his hearers to share their food with each other.

The story of their efforts has famously been told in Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. Schweitzer noted the domestication of Jesus in the work of his contemporaries, who had failed, he believed, to take the measure of Jesus' essential *strangeness*.

Understood in historical context, Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet who incorrectly anticipated—and sought to precipitate—the end of the world. Powerfully moved by the spirit of Jesus, Schweitzer devoted his life to medical missionary work in Africa. But before his academic career in Germany had ended, he had effectively lowered the curtain on the first act in the drama of modern study of the “historical Jesus.”

Writing during the same period as Schweitzer, Martin Kähler argued—in *The So-Called Historical Jesus and the Authentic Biblical Christ*—that it was ultimately the Christ encountered in Scripture and the preaching of the church who was the real Christ, not the Christ reconstructed by secular historical method. Kähler sought to leapfrog over the difficult or impossible task of ascertaining what Jesus was really like by suggesting that what mattered was the experience of

Christ mediated to us in the Bible.

Approaches that resembled Kähler's were dominant during the first half of the twentieth century. Rudolf Bultmann maintained that the sheer fact—the “that”—of Jesus' existence mattered for faith. But he sought to insulate faith from the corrosive acids of historical skepticism by declaring everything else about the historical figure of Jesus irrelevant to the Christian life.

Bultmann was quite prepared to engage in serious historical inquiry into Jesus' ministry and message, but he maintained that what mattered for contemporary Christians was nothing but the transformation effected by the grace of God encountered in the church's preaching about Jesus. Whatever the results of historical research, Bultmann said, it was the preached Christ who changed lives, who was ultimately important.

Karl Barth was much more prepared than Bultmann to affirm the historicity of the broad outlines of the Gospel narrative of Jesus. For Bultmann, it was necessary, for instance, to say only that Jesus was “risen in the *kerygma*”—that Christians should be concerned with the life-changing power of the story of the resurrection rather than with the question, What happened on the Sunday after Jesus was crucified?

Barth wanted to say much more, to affirm with other orthodox Christians that Jesus was truly made alive by God in exalted but embodied form after his death on the cross. But he wanted to do so in a way that rendered Christian historical claims immune to historical challenge. By placing key Christian claims off-limits to historical verification or falsification, he fed the unwarranted suspicion of some evangelical critics that he did not believe the Gospels' central events had really happened.

Many other scholars found themselves increasingly uneasy with the abandonment of critical history as a resource for Christian faith, which the work of each had, in different ways, encouraged. Comforting as it might be to protect the gospel from the potentially negative consequences of historical scrutiny, it seemed nonetheless as if safety from historical refutation were being purchased at the price of abandoning the central Christian conviction that God made a difference in and for history.

Thus, Bultmann's student, Ernst Käsemann, argued that Christians needed to demonstrate the existence of at least some meaningful continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ proclaimed by the church. Käsemann's brief for this position is often seen as the charter for a second quest—the so-called “New Quest” for the historical Jesus.

Chastened by the failure of the original quest, the New Questers opted for a relatively minimalist approach. They sought, not to construct elaborate biographies of Jesus that focused on his inner life and the minute details of his career, as they understood their predecessors as having done, but to spell out what they believed could be affirmed with confidence about him on the basis of sober historical research.

Based on their understanding of the origins of the Gospels and the history of the early church—often mutually reinforcing and developed in tandem—they offered careful reconstructions of Jesus' sayings and actions. Some articulated criteria designed to help them distinguish authentic words of Jesus from ones created by the early church. And they began to publish a flood of books and articles.

The results of their inquiries were

mixed. Some believed that historical reconstruction provided a firm basis for the confident affirmation of the church's historic convictions. Some were satisfied with showing the existence of minimal continuity between the Jesus of history and the Jesus proclaimed by the church. Some wondered if even this was possible.

Whereas the New Questers had concerned themselves primarily with the Gospels and had seen their task as, at root, theological, those who undertook the so-called Third Quest, beginning in the 1970s, adopted a somewhat broader focus and, often enough, a different self-understanding. They attempted to situate Jesus within the context of the ancient Mediterranean world, seeking in particular to learn about him by studying the history, culture, and texts of his Jewish contemporaries.

Many of them saw themselves less as theologians than as historians, intent on bracketing religious concerns professionally, if not personally. Their work proved fruitful and instructive. It offered richer portraits of Jesus that began to make increasing sense of his behavior in light of the dynamics of life in Israel under Roman occupation during what we now call the first century.

The scholars who have undertaken the Third Quest have included Jewish historians, like Geza Vermes, as well as Christians, including A. E. Harvey, Ben F. Meyer, E. P. Sanders, Marcus Borg, and Tom Wright. Although today's Jesus scholars find themselves speaking with confidence about some matters, they also disagree dramatically about others. Some of their disagreements are narrowly historical; others are simultaneously historical and theological. *The Meaning of Jesus* highlights both.

This book is hardly “the definitive

debate on the historical Jesus," as the promotional copy on its back cover proclaims. It is a gracious exchange between two moderate scholars with a good deal in common. Both are Anglicans—Borg an American, Wright an Englishman. Both studied under G. B. Caird at Oxford. Both are skeptical of the reductive, materialistic, scientific cast of mind that has dominated post-Enlightenment intellectual life in the West. Both are representatives of the Third Quest (a term Wright coined), committed to understanding Jesus in the context of first-century Judaism. And both believe that faith in Jesus can and should play a key role in Christian life today.

It is certainly true that Borg is (again, per the jacket copy) a "leading liberal . . . Jesus scholar"; but his liberalism is of an overtly pious variety, rather different from that of, say, Sanders, John Dominic Crossan, or Burton Mack. And although Wright is certainly a conservative, he is no fundamentalist. He is wedded neither to an inerrantist view of the Gospels (215), nor (witness his understanding of eschatological language in the New Testament) to traditional doctrinal formulations.

Borg and Wright certainly belong on anyone's short list of candidates for inclusion in a debate about the historical Jesus, but in "the definitive debate," other voices need to be heard as well: the voices of other scholars—including those I've mentioned and, doubtless, others as well, including Jewish voices, women's voices.

Despite their similarities, Borg and Wright differ on a variety of important and interesting issues, and their gracious exchanges make *The Meaning of Jesus* a useful starting point for the reader interested in formulating an

**Borg and Wright certainly belong on anyone's
short list of candidates for inclusion in a debate
about the historical Jesus.**

adequate personal understanding of the Jesus of history. Several issues about which they disagree are particularly significant.

Both believe that we can and should use the tools of modern historiography to construct a reasonably accurate portrait of Jesus. But they differ on the question of how these tools should be employed. Borg seems to believe that we can be relatively confident in the validity of the dominant consensus regarding the prehistory and development of the Gospels.

According to this consensus, Mark and the hypothetical sayings source, Q, are our principal bases for historical judgments about Jesus. It's unlikely that the other Gospels add a great deal to our understanding of Jesus; rather, they should be viewed as often theologically motivated elaborations on the material found in Mark and Q. Borg also emphasizes the importance of cross-cultural anthropological insights for our understanding of Jesus.

By contrast, Wright leaves open the possibility that all of the traditions found in the Gospels might be able to contribute to our picture of Jesus; he is not prepared to rule out the historicity of a given narrative or saying on the basis of

a hypothetical reconstruction of the prehistory of the Gospels. Wright emphasizes the importance of using distinctively Jewish categories to understand Jesus' mission and message, fearing that cross-cultural analyses run the risk of obscuring Jesus' particularity and his responsiveness to specific concerns present in his immediate social, political, and religious world.

Borg and Wright both see Jesus as actively involved in confronting the social and political realities of first-century Judaism. For both, Jesus saw Jewish opposition to Rome, and the boundary-consciousness that opposition expressed, as self-destructive.

According to Wright, "Jesus' clash with the Pharisees came about . . . because his kingdom agenda for Israel demanded that Israel leave off its frantic and paranoid self-defense, reinforced as it now was by the ancestral codes, and embrace instead the vocation to be the light of the world, the salt of the earth" (43-44). Jesus called his followers to a way of life marked by the renunciation of "xenophobia toward those outside Israel" (39). Similarly, Borg focuses on Jesus' negative assessment of first-century Jewish purity rules (73), also clearly

How important is it that what we believe
now is rooted in what Jesus and the early
Christians saw and did and experienced?

concerned with boundaries. Both see Jesus as vocally opposed to social injustice (44, 71-73). But they differ sharply over the question of whether Jesus thought or spoke of himself as Israel's Messiah. Where Borg sees the retrojection of later Christian conclusions—conclusions he maintains are correct in light of Jesus' resurrection—Wright sees Jesus' own words and deeds.

Borg and Wright disagree, not surprisingly, regarding the historicity of Jesus' virginal conception. Wright believes the best explanation for the appearance of the story of the virginal conception in Matthew and Luke is that Jesus was, in fact, conceived when Mary was a virgin. Borg argues that the stories are theologically meaningful but lack historical warrant. But Borg concedes that "[t]he birth narratives have no impact on . . . [his] reconstruction of Jesus' public agendas and his mind-set as he went to the cross" (172). "If," he says, "the first two chapters of Matthew and the first two of Luke had never existed, I do not suppose that my own Christian faith, or that of the church to which I belong, would have been very different" (178).

Borg says he does "not see the story of the virginal conception as

a marvel of biology that, if true, proves that Jesus *really* was the Son of God" (186). But neither does Wright, and neither does the Christian Church. (Aquinas was doubtless not the first to acknowledge that incarnation does not entail virginal conception.)

For Borg, the notion that Jesus deliberately sought out death and that he understood his death as salvific is problematic. He is also doubtful that Jesus' followers had any firsthand information about his trial, so he doesn't think we can be certain about the value of any of the trial accounts in the Gospels.

Borg suggests that the view that Jesus was crucified because he claimed to be the Messiah seems to track later Christian beliefs so closely that it's likely to be a *post-hoc* creation; it's most likely that Jesus was actually crucified because he was "a social prophet who challenged the domination system in the name of God" (91). That doesn't mean he is unwilling to credit any of the passion narratives in the Gospels. Borg is confident that Jesus and his disciples shared a meal immediately before his arrest and execution, that Jesus was betrayed by Judas, that Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane, that Jesus was crucified, that his

crucifixion resulted "from collaboration between the . . . Roman governor and a small circle of Jewish temple authorities" (90).

Wright sees the passion narratives as much more reliable. News travels fast in traditional societies, he suggests; for instance, then, if "scholars argue . . . that because Jesus' hearings before Caiaphas and Pilate were in secret nobody would have known what happened, they are living in a make-believe world" (95). Jesus thought of himself as Israel's Messiah and, in line with the convictions of many of his contemporaries and predecessors, believed his messianic vocation would be accomplished through his own suffering and death. If Israel challenged Rome, as it seemed increasingly poised to do, Rome would retaliate brutally; and Rome "would be the unwitting but effective agent of the wrath of Israel's own God" (98).

Jesus, says Wright, "seems to have construed his vocation in terms familiar in the stories of the martyrs. He would go ahead of the nation to take upon himself the judgment of which he had warned, the wrath of Rome against rebel subjects" (98). Jesus did not seek death; but "he went to Jerusalem determined to announce his particular kingdom message in word and (particularly) in symbolic action, knowing what the inevitable reaction would be, and believing that this reaction would itself be the means of God's will being done" (99).

For Wright, the resurrection validated "Jesus as messiah" (125); Borg suggests that their resurrection experiences rightly led the early Christians to confess Jesus as Lord. But when the early Christians spoke of resurrection, Wright suggests, they had a relatively clear meaning in mind; they weren't talking about

a vague "spiritual presence" or about the immortality of the soul. The best explanation, he maintains, of the early church's belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus is thus precisely that Jesus' tomb was empty and that his disciples encountered him, embodied but exalted—"neither resuscitated nor left to decay in the tomb but . . . rather *transformed* into a new mode of physicality"—after his death (122). Borg sees the empty tomb stories as irrelevant; Jesus can be alive and exalted no matter what happened to his body. What matters is that "the followers of Jesus . . . continued to experience Jesus as a living reality after his death" (135).

Borg regularly differentiates between the pre-Easter and post-Easter Jesus. But he is not concerned, like many liberals, to see the post-Easter Jesus as simply a creation of the church's faith. He affirms, in light of the resurrection, that "Jesus lives, and Jesus is Lord" (129). But he wishes to underscore the difference between Jesus as proclaimed after the resurrection and Jesus as he might reasonably have been characterized—or as he spoke about (or, likely, understood) himself during his lifetime.

Borg denies that "Jesus thought of himself as divine" or knew "more than his contemporaries . . . because . . . he had a divine mind" (145; I take it that by "mind," Borg means "consciousness"). However, he is equally clear that the post-Easter Jesus is a "divine reality" and "one with God" and that the pre-Easter Jesus was "the embodiment or incarnation of God" (146).

When Borg says that he believes the historical Jesus was the embodiment or incarnation of God, he apparently intends to defend a view of incarnation in accordance with which being God incarnate is a matter of being supremely inspired

by God; for Borg, Jesus was "open to the presence of God" in a way that made it possible for him to "be filled with the Spirit" (147-48).

Borg would not, I think, be comfortable with a more traditional incarnational view of Jesus that held that the will of God and the will of Jesus were numerically identical, that God was the personal subject of the life of Jesus. But it is important to emphasize that, even if he held such a traditional view, he could still quite consistently maintain that Jesus lacked the knowledge he says he believes Jesus didn't possess. A "high Christology," like the one articulated in the so-called Nicene Creed, has no particular implications regarding the extent of Jesus' knowledge. It is perfectly consistent to claim both that Jesus was God incarnate and that he did not know he was.

Toward the end of *The Meaning of Jesus*, Borg and Wright move increasingly away from narrowly historical questions, focusing instead on Christian hope and the dynamics of Christian living. Both look to an eternal future with God, but neither quite shares the views of many conservative Christians regarding the end of history.

Borg argues tentatively that belief in Jesus' second coming is a product of the early Church, prompted by Jesus' resurrection and his exalted status as Lord. He can, he says, conceive of an end to the world and a final judgment, but not a "return of Christ." "If we try to imagine that, we have to imagine him returning to *some place*. To be very elementary, we who know the earth to be round cannot imagine Jesus returning to the whole earth at once. And the notion of a localized second coming boggles the imagination" (195). But he wishes to retain the language of the second

coming as an affirmation of Jesus' present and future lordship.

For Wright, too, the language of biblical apocalyptic is metaphorical. He understands Jesus' language about judgment in light of his conviction that Jesus' focus was quite directly on contemporary events. Whereas other scholars have seen "the so-called Little Apocalypse of Mark 13 and its parallels" as concerned with the end of the world (41), Wright suggests that Jesus' real focus was on the impending fall of Jerusalem:

Many have traditionally read Jesus' sayings about judgment either in terms of the postmortem condemnation of unbelievers or of the eventual destruction of the space-time world. The first-century context of the language in question, however, indicates otherwise. Jesus was warning his contemporaries that if they did not follow his way, the way of peace and forgiveness, the way of the cross, the way of being the light of the world, and if they persisted in their determination to fight a desperate holy war against Rome, then Rome would destroy them, city, temple, at all, and that this would be, not an unhappy accident showing that YHWH had simply forgotten to defend them, but the sign and the means of YHWH's judgment against his rebellious people. (41)

Wright emphasizes that Christian hope for the future doesn't depend on a particular reading of the apocalyptic passages in the Gospels. Thus, Wright urges us to look for hope for God's creatures beyond death and for a transformed and renewed world, and for "Jesus' royal presence within God's new creation" (202).

The genteel debate between

Borg and Wright in the *The Meaning of Jesus* will introduce the reader to a variety of issues in the historical study of Jesus. It will not, of course, resolve them. Their book will encourage the reader to think clearly about the Jewish background to Jesus' ministry, about

the social and political significance of what Jesus said and did, and about the importance of thinking outside the confines of the currently popular scientific, materialistic worldview. But it will leave numerous questions on the table.

Perhaps the single most pervasive

disagreement between Borg and Wright concerns the relevance of history for faith. How important is it that what we believe now is rooted in what Jesus and the early Christians saw and did and experienced? May we think of Jesus as Lord if he didn't think of himself this way? May we think of Jesus as risen whether or not his tomb was empty? And these are not, of course, historical questions in the narrow sense; they are theological and philosophical ones.

Neither Borg nor Wright is trained primarily in philosophy or Christian doctrine, though each has obviously studied both. Those who want their theology straight may wish to consult any or all of the recent good books on Christology, including Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus: God and Man*; John B. Cobb Jr., *Christ in a Pluralistic Age*; David Brown, *The Divine Trinity*; Hans Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ*; William C. Placher, *Jesus the Savior*; and John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* and *Christology Revisited*.

Serious theological and philosophical reflection will help us make effective use of historical insights. It will aid us in understanding just what significance a given historical conclusion might have for our beliefs. It is important, therefore, to read contemporary historical Jesus scholarship in tandem with serious doctrinal analysis. But our theology cannot proceed in abstraction from serious history. If we are to construct an adequate Christology for the twenty-first century, we will need to take work like that of Borg and Wright into account.

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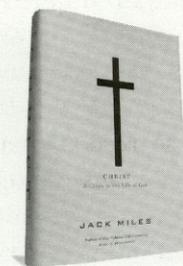
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God's Story in a Different Key

Jack Miles. *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001.

Reviewed By James Walters



Consider the beautiful stained glass window in the church down the street. Jack Miles sees the Bible as such a window. It is to be looked *at* as religious art and appreciated for what it is, not peered *through* in an attempt to decipher the historical events that lay behind it. Miles's artistic or literary intent sets his book apart from most other contemporary scholarly writing on Jesus Christ. Even if key elements in the Bible lack historical validity, it stands as an authentic witness to God that should continue to guide the Christian Church.

However, that rational deduction belies the rich story that makes such a conclusion possible. Like Ellen White's *The Great Controversy*, Miles's *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God* takes a bird's-eye view—from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. Another similarity is that both authors take the story literally, not as a mere residue of certain historical and cultural curiosities. Also, Miles, like the Bible itself, has God as the protagonist in the grand story. However, a pivotal difference is that Miles, contra White, sees the founding epic of Judeo-Christianity as a thoroughly human witness.

In Miles's story, God created humankind as the apex of his creation—in his own image. But because Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, God cursed the human race with suffering and death. Miles implies that God is ever afterward a bit guilty because of this overreaction. Regardless, God chose the Hebrew people, and instituting a sacred covenant of reward/punishment, led them into nationhood. The originally calm and sure Creator then became an angry and anxious

warrior who led his people in near-genocidal warfare in Canaan.

Several centuries later, God punished Israel for unfaithfulness by using Babylon and Assyria to punish—yes, conquer—the Hebrews. However, an enfeebled but faithful remnant returned from Babylon to Jerusalem and built a modest new temple. However, says Miles, “the divine giant never came striding forth from the mountains of the south, shaking the earth and terrifying the sky as he had said he would” (106).

God repeatedly promised Israel that he would wreak spectacular havoc on their new enemies as he had against their original enemy, Egypt. Israel would again bask in Davidic glory, and God would be vindicated as his promise was fulfilled. But “somehow, mysteriously, when the time came, he couldn't go through with it. His mind had changed.” God saw the “deeper consequences of his own inaugural violence” (244). Further divine military victories would be an unending punishment for the world and a silent indictment of himself. Thus, God “broke his

promise” to Israel. (244)

A pervasive theme in Miles's depiction of God's life—a historical novel, really—is *change* in God. God goes from calm creator to provincial warrior to universal lover. Adam and Eve never called themselves God's children, or he their father. That came later. God had to grow into “bridegroom of the universe and husband of the human race” (245). Most importantly, he had to learn to win by losing. The Lamb of God would win the “only victory that really matters. The Good News of the Gospel is the news of how he did it” (245).

God doesn't baldly declare that he can't defeat his enemies; he declares that he has no enemies, that there's no distinction between friend and foe. However, it's one thing for God in his heaven to change, it's another to ask mere humans to love enemies. It's different unless God becomes a human and suffers the consequences of his own new covenant of love. Thus, we begin to see how Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection are vital. “Israel will be slaughtered like sheep, but God has become a lamb. He has made virtue of necessity, yes, but the virtue is real virtue. It is the heroic ideal of universal love” (109).

Jesus, God Incarnate, announces that God loves all people indiscriminately—just as the sun shines on all. Jesus teaches a new covenant, one whose law is love and acceptance. God had become a lord of universal

love; he couldn't continue to keep the old covenant's terms. On the verge of a new national catastrophe for Israel—the destruction of the Third Temple (A.D. 66-70) and accompanying human slaughter—he decided not to pretend otherwise.

The “crisis in the life of God” was his inability to fulfill his singular promise—to restore Israel to Solomonic splendor. Christ majestically resolved the crisis by instituting a new, grander promise that enveloped the older one by expanding it to all peoples of the world. Furthermore, it promised not a temporal kingdom for a few within the cycle of birth and death, but claimed the defeat of death itself. In the new chapter of God's life, “[h]uman hope and divine honor will have been redeemed together at a single transcendent stroke” (224).

Divine Self-Martyrdom

Miles's story of God's life doesn't take up the issue that continues to reverberate in Adventist circles: Was it theologically necessary that Jesus actually died to save us from final death? It is enough for Miles that God chose to die. Furthermore, Miles underscores the point that Jesus' death was a “divine suicide” (164).

Given that Jesus was God Incarnate, it follows that no one could take God's life against his will. Thus, Miles concludes, “His suicide is, in this regard, as deeply built into the Christian story as the doctrine of the Incarnation” (169). No karma or cosmic law decreed Jesus' death. Put bluntly, God killed God.

The issue of death is central to Miles's story of God (his first sentence is, “All mankind is forgiven, but the Lord must die”), and it is central to the Gospel of John, the primary source of Miles's work.

God Incarnate was planning “divine self-martyrdom,” says Miles.

The word *martyr* comes from the Greek word meaning to witness or testify. The human martyr witnesses to others his faithfulness to God. But when God sacrifices his own life, to whom is he faithful? How does divine martyrdom help others? Why not rescue others, rather than kill oneself? “A martyr proves, after all, not just his devotion but also his trust that the divine power for which he dies will ultimately prevail. What is to be made of a martyrdom in which divinity seems to demonstrate only its weakness?” (163).

Thus, in the Good Shepherd story, Jesus introduces pacifism, a core trait of God's new identity. Precisely because of God's new indiscriminate love—and its corollary of pacifism—Jesus died on the cross. God Incarnate refused to use force, so central to his earlier identity, to contend for even his own legitimate rights.

Miles contends that the most illuminating incident in the Gospels is Jesus' illustration of Moses uplifting a serpent for Israel's healing.

As Moses lifted up the snake in the desert,
so must the Son of Man be lifted up
so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.
(John 3:14, 15)

Moses lifted up the snake so that Israel could be cured of fatal snakebites. Christ would be lifted up “so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life” (49). It's a shocking equation. For no more than complaining of bad food, God sent killer snakes. Yes, a look at the snake cured them, but it also reminded them of why they

had to fear their god.

As Miles points out, the snakes were not the cause of their dying. God himself sent the plague. What then does Jesus intend people to think when they see him lifted up on the cross?

How can we avoid saying that they will look upon the cause as well as the cure of their distress? To the objection that this comparison is far-fetched, I would reply that it is Jesus himself who has fetched the comparison from afar. The bronze serpent is a detail from an obscure episode in Israelite history. The comparison is so arcane, so *recherché*, that it can only be fully, provocatively intended. (50)

This illustration powerfully juxtaposes God's punitive and loving natures, and points to their resolution. By viewing the graven snake, Israelites could gain a few more years of life; but by accepting God's death and resurrection, the world gains eternal life. Everybody wins. God acknowledges his complicity in human death, and he as God Incarnate suffers that death in demonstration of his new nature: pacifistic love.

Method

Just as John Milton retold key elements of the Bible story three centuries ago in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, so Miles has artfully told the story again for a sophisticated, contemporary audience. In an appendix he explains his method and appeals for greater openness to new methods of studying the Bible.

Miles laments that for the last two hundred years the most serious biblical scholars have been obsessed

with history. Far beyond the ways that Shakespeare scholars study the English master's work, biblical scholars endlessly search for the scantiest evidence to confirm—or disconfirm—an event or reference.

Why can't we treat the Bible more like admirers of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, or devotees of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling? The value of a piece of art is realized by viewing the work as a whole, not in dissecting its parts or history, as valid as these activities are. Thus reasons Miles, who views the Bible as an imaginative work that points beyond itself—to God.

Miles is not critical of historical study of the Bible; indeed, he has benefited from it. But he does criticize our modern penchant to be hung up on external correspondences, with scant attention to internal correspondences that make the Bible such rich artistry. Again, his appeal is to look *at* the rose window, not just *through* it.

Miles claims that in regard to ultimate truth, historical fact has no necessary priority over imagined truth. All discrete facts are meaningful only as they are viewed within a larger secular or religious context. Accordingly, religious art is that art produced in service to a received collective vision. Secular art is produced in service to some artist's individual vision—or whim. Secular history is not a mere neutral recording of "facts" without any idea of how they fit together; inevitably, it is interpretative.

Reflection

Adventists are increasingly open to new movements that attempt to make sense of faith and science: intelligent design of the universe, process theology's panentheism, divine/human co-creation. Miles's

The value of a piece

of art is realized by

viewing the work as

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dissecting its parts

or history, as valid

as these activities are.

ten-year project—his work on the Pulitzer Prize-winning *God: A Biography* (1995) and now the present book—is a similar attempt to reconcile ancient faith and contemporary knowledge.

Miles, a former Jesuit with a Harvard doctorate in Near Eastern languages, personifies today's modern, or postmodern, Christian grappling with personal faith. Is Miles's view of God's life the "correct" view? It is no more "right" than Michelangelo's portrayal of God creating Adam. Indeed, this sort of question not only misses the point, it also obscures the issue. The most basic value of a piece of imaginative literature is its appeal to us, individual by individual.

Of course, in a historically based book of imaginative literature—such as the Bible—there must be a general adherence to verified history. However, when the topic is

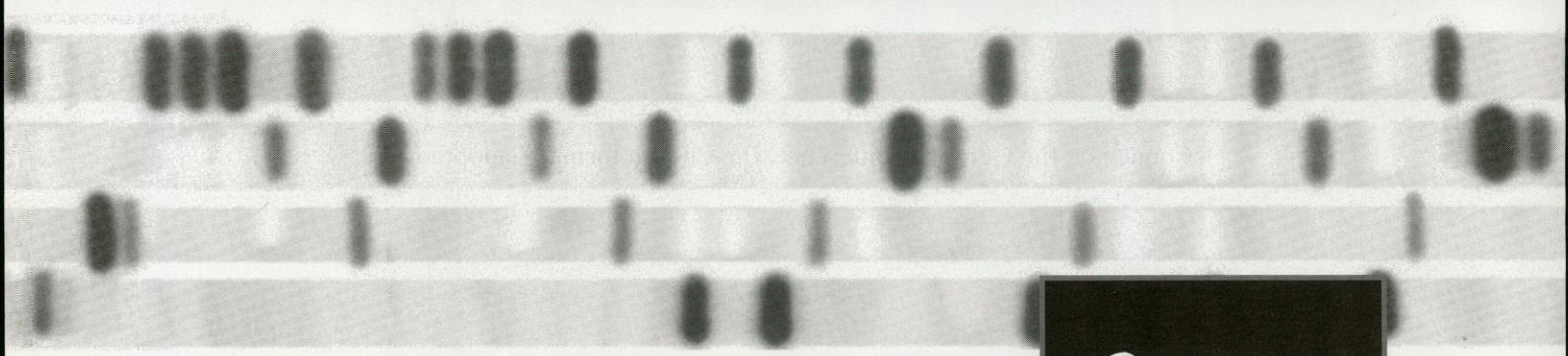
God, a certain freedom of expression must be given to the writer. Similarly, freedom is appropriately given to a literary scholar like Jack Miles, who looks at the Bible (formed over hundreds of years by scores of original authors and artistic editors) as a whole and holy religious gem.

Personally, I am fascinated by Miles's insight that the God of the New Testament died because of his pacifistic, "indiscriminate love" (108)—a reversal from his earlier warrior persona (though biblical studies show this stark contrast as artistic hyperbole). But this motive for Jesus' death makes more sense than other theories, such as satisfaction of cosmic justice or mere moral influence.

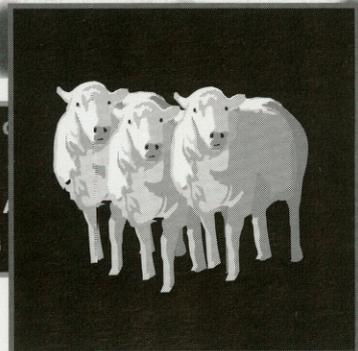
The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is larger than any theory, and God is not captured in any story. Through God's grace, every honest grappling with the divine is a vector that points toward the Holy Other.

James Walters is professor of religion and specializes in bioethics at Loma Linda University's School of Religion. His new book, *Martin Buber and Feminist Ethics*, will be published by Syracuse University Press in 2003.

Faith
and
Science



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Current Creation Questions

The Test of Human Cloning

By Anthony J. Zuccarelli and Gerald Winslow

Introduction

California Rebels about Stem-Cell Research,” an *Economist* headline said in September 2002. The story reported on a bill signed into law by California’s governor, Gray Davis, that expanded stem cell research by providing state funding despite federal limits set by President George W. Bush in an executive order signed in 2001.

Although other issues have presently overshadowed debates about biotechnology, the discovery of new techniques for manipulating the basic building blocks of human biology has launched a field of accelerating research. These discoveries have aroused soaring hopes and deepening concerns about what humans can do with human life. No area of human biology has more clearly revealed the rift between these hopes and fears than the prospect of cloning.

It may come as a surprise to some that the Seventh-day Adventist Church gave serious attention to the ethics of human cloning years before the debate reached its recent, national crescendo. In 1998, at the Annual Council of the General Conference, the Church formally adopted a “Statement of Ethical Considerations Regarding Human Cloning.”¹ That statement, nearly four years ahead of the recent report of President George W. Bush’s Council on Bioethics on the same topic, has served our church well. However, as with all attempts to address ethical issues in quickly changing fields, our church’s statement needs to be revisited regularly in light of new developments and in view of our settled principles. In the statement’s own words, “The rapid pace of progress in this field will require periodic review.”²

As two who were responsible for the initial drafting of the Church’s 1998 statement, we feel a responsibility to continue the discussion of what

it means to live responsibly and faithfully in a time when both the promises and the threats of the new genetic biology are so powerful. We do not offer here an analysis or proposal for revisions of the 1998 statement, which is reprinted on pages 44-46, below. We wish rather to extend the discussion by pointing to further ethical considerations in view of recent developments in human cloning.

We begin with reproductive human cloning. Then we turn to what has been called "therapeutic human cloning." Throughout, we offer our reflections of the meaning of Christian responsibility, and we seek to present reasons why Christians should respond in a principled manner rather than simply reacting in conventional ways. We conclude with a plea for the Church to return to the practice of fostering careful study and offering balanced moral guidance in a timely and systematic way. The prospect of human cloning provides an instructive test of our faith for the purpose of shared moral reflection.

Reproductive Human Cloning

At its root, the word *clone* means a replica. "Cloning" has been applied to diverse biological manipulations, so it is helpful to distinguish among them. Gene cloning—isolating and making multiple copies of particular DNA segments—has been a scientific reality since the early 1970s. Embryo cloning, through blastomere separation, has been used by animal breeders for decades. This is accomplished by artificially splitting an early embryo and coaxing the separated clumps to become multiple, fully formed offspring. It was first used on a human embryo in 1993.

Reproductive cloning is a form of asexual reproduction. We have been accomplishing the same result for millennia with plants. An example is the rooting of cuttings from prized rose bushes in order to create new plants. Asexual reproduction is also the means of propagation used by many microorganisms, and it occurs occasionally among invertebrates. Therapeutic cloning is the newest addition to the family. By exchanging the genetic material in a mammalian egg, it generates tissues that are the source of embryonic stem cells.

The birth of Dolly, the first cloned sheep, focused public attention on reproductive cloning, more precisely, somatic cell nuclear transplantation. This process creates a genetic replica of a living animal by reprogramming the nucleus from an adult cell to behave like a fertilized egg. In current practice it involves introducing the nucleus from an adult donor cell into an egg from which

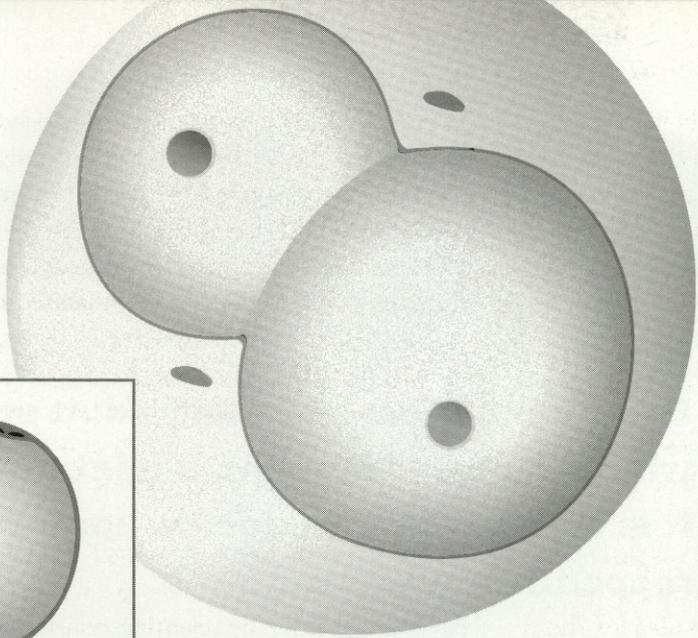
the original egg DNA was previously removed. Under ideal circumstances, the egg with its new nucleus divides and becomes an early embryo. When implanted into the uterus of a hormonally prepared female animal, the embryo may continue its development into a normal offspring. Our world is now inhabited by hundreds of cloned animals: sheep, mice, pigs, goats, cattle, one domestic cat, a guar (Asian ox) and a mouflon (wild sheep). All of them have three biological "parents"—a nuclear donor, an egg mother, and a birth mother.

The possibility of using nuclear transfer to make genetic duplicates of living humans has challenged public sensibilities. The response to Dolly's birth announcement in 1997 was intense, almost panicked. Countless pages have been written by scientific, political, religious, and social commentators concerning the application of the technique to human beings. Now the President's Council on Bioethics has added to the heft of this literature.

Though the public reaction to Dolly suggested that the world was unprepared for asexual human reproduction, it was not the first time that society had confronted purposeful interventions in our reproductive processes. In the 1960's, there was vigorous discussion of the religious, social, and moral consequences of using birth control pills to control reproduction. In 1978, there was a wide-ranging discourse after the birth of Baby Louise Brown, the first child conceived by in vitro fertilization rather than intercourse, and commonly referred to as a "test tube baby." (Since then, tens of thousands of children have been born using similar methods.)

In His Image, a book published the same year, falsely purported to describe the first human cloning.³ It fueled the debate and provoked a detailed examination of human "clonal reproduction." In 1993, the first human embryo was artificially divided with the potential to generate twins. That event stimulated another discussion of the religious principles and philosophical traditions regarding the meaning of personhood, individuality, wholeness, and the sanctity of human life.

The science that created Dolly is a technology that emerged without precedents or antecedents. Nuclear transplantation had a long history dating back to experiments with frogs in the late 1950s. The methods improved steadily through the years. Ian Wilmut's contribution, in cloning Dolly, was technically modest. Indeed, there is a legal challenge to the Roslin Institute's original patent that protected the method of Dolly's creation, filed by another company that also generated live animals using nuclei from embryonic cells. Nevertheless, Dolly established, for the first time, that nuclear transfer from adult cells could be used to create



Day 1.5-2
Pre-embryo development
of a fertilized egg at the
two-cell stage

Day 1

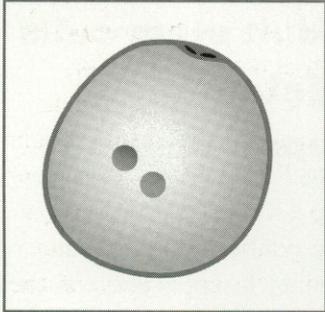


Illustration: Jennie Auman

We should notice that the creation texts answer one existential question only to raise others.

genetically identical animals.

If neither the concept nor the technology were new, why were we so surprised? One possibility is that before the event, the prospect of human clones was still deniable—a technique not applicable to mammals, sequestered harmlessly in laboratories, a subject for science fiction and abstract debates. The birth of Dolly—with her indelicate name—put the matter right under our noses, and the odor awakened dark fears.

Christian Views

How should people of faith respond to the prospect of human cloning? Some Christians consider creation a completed act, a chapter of earth’s history that was closed on the “seventh day” of Genesis 1. They regard God’s original ordering of nature the perfect fulfillment of a divine design. Human intervention, in this view, could only be irreverent, disruptive, undiluted hubris.

Other Christians see their role in creation as one of cooperation with God in an ongoing process of creativity and caring for the earth. Though the creation story of Genesis 1:26-28 makes clear that we are dependent creatures, the Scriptures also indicate that in some respects we resemble the Creator. Much has been written about our God-image. For the present discussion, it is sufficient to notice that God’s image in humans is

multifaceted. When one observes that a child resembles its parents, one does not usually mean only the child’s nose or other physical characteristic, or some mannerism or personality trait, but all of those taken together.

Creation in the image of God is fundamental in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions. There is wide agreement that God’s image is not about anatomy or physiology, but encompasses human intellect, moral agency, individuality, creativity, the capacity for altruistic love, the

capacity to will, to apprehend God, and to find fulfillment in relationships. It may have even broader meanings within the framework of the cosmic conflict, as understood in Adventism. In the well-known words of Ellen White: “Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and to do.”⁴

But we should notice that the creation texts answer one existential question only to raise others. God made the first humans, but why? Did the Master of the Universe have a specific purpose? Does humanity have a role distinctive from that of God’s earlier creations? Why make a new order of beings in a universe that already had many others?

The setting of creation points to at least one divine purpose (without suggesting that it was God’s only one). God stepped back from a cosmic conflict to design a ball of life in a small corner of the universe. He said something significant about himself when he shared the creative function of biological reproduction. “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves



on the ground”⁵ (Gen: 1:28 NIV).

Exercising creative power through the reproductive process appears to be an important part of God’s plan for humanity. The evidence suggests that humans were made to exercise this power to expand the Garden, to care for the earth and to improve it. Reproduction extends creation. It should reflect God’s creative activity and be as consciously controlled as painting a landscape, composing a symphony, or building a bridge. It entails the sustained effort of nurturing and educating—replicating eternal values in new beings.

Some wonder if producing biological offspring is essential to the health and wholeness of the human psyche. Continuing the family bloodline through childbearing no longer carries the weighty significance it did in Old Testament cultures. Many now enjoy rich, satisfying lives without children. We all know couples or individuals who are content with occupations and creative avocations to the extent that they willingly forego childbearing. In cases of infertility, some find joy in the adoption of children.

Nevertheless, some who experience reproductive failure in the twenty-first century consider it a heart-wrenching disability, as painful as a Michelangelo losing his sight or a Beethoven his hearing. The “womb ache of loneliness” was evident in an essay written by a forty-two-year-old woman who had spent five years trying to produce a child with her husband using “every high-tech and low-tech procedure then available.”⁵ The anguish of her “baby-longing” was real.

Just as surely as people have the right to pursue their spiritual and material longings, they have a claim to reproductive fulfillment. The concept of careful human reproduction as an extension of creation, when added to the injunction to multiply, invests human reproduction with moral value and provides ethical justification for the techniques of assisted reproduction, when such means are in harmony with Christian principles.⁶ But the application of this line of thought to human cloning raises a number of additional considerations, of which we mention the following five:

1. **Safety.** The time-honored directive of health care’s ethical tradition is *primum non nocere*—“First of all, do not harm.” Nuclear transfer cloning is associated with a high rate of spontaneous abortion and newborn death.⁷ Dolly was the only animal that survived to birth from 277 treated oocytes transferred to surrogate mothers—a success rate of about 0.4 percent. A modified

technique called pronuclear microinjection produced Cumulina, the first cloned mouse, and raised the success rate to about 3 percent—30 embryos died for each live birth.⁸

Subsequently, transplanting nuclei from adult cells in cattle produced long-lived offspring at rates exceeding

Embryonic stem cells and adult stem cells will likely provide complementary tools; it is far too early to decide upon their respective benefits.

4 percent.⁹ But there were heavy losses at every stage of embryonic and fetal development. Every laboratory reported high rates of late term death, still birth, and serious congenital malformations in the rare survivors. Newborns suffered from lung abnormalities, cardiovascular defects, impaired immunity and high rates of perinatal death.¹⁰ The late gestational losses represent a significant health threat to the birth-mother.¹¹ Some reproductive experts surmise that all cloned animals have physiological defects, obvious or subtle.¹² Even Dolly, the “poster child” for cloning, suffers from midlife arthritis and morbid obesity.¹³

Though there seems to be a trend of increasing efficiency, take note of the fact that the numbers are from different mammalian species and that repeated attempts to transfer nuclei from the adult cells of nonhuman primates have been uniformly unsuccessful.¹⁴ These facts account for the inhospitable receptions given several unconventional proponents who have declared their intent to clone human beings.¹⁵

Representative Vernon Ehlers from Michigan expressed the concerns of many observers: “What if in the cloning process you produce someone with two heads and three arms? Are you simply going to euthanize and dispose of that person?”¹⁶ The National Research Council and earlier, the National Bioethics Advisory Commission, rejected human cloning specifically because it would expose the fetus, the developing child, and the birth-mother to unacceptable risks.¹⁷ From the Christian perspective, Scripture is clear in its call to protect human life, especially the lives of the most vulnerable.¹⁸ At present, somatic cell nuclear transfer fails to meet minimum standards of safety for an elective medical procedure. Cloning is morally precarious because it is medically hazardous.

If safety were the only significant moral consider-

ation in human reproductive cloning, the discussion could end here. For the time being, human cloning would be banned as too dangerous. But nuclear transfer cloning is under intensive development. Since Dolly, the success rate in animals appears to have improved more than ten-fold. Another five-fold improvement might yield newborn clones at rates comparable to that of in vitro fertilization. Should the ban be lifted at that point, or are there other persuasive reasons to avoid human cloning?

2. Individual uniqueness. In its recent report, the President's Council on Bioethics opined that "Cloned children may experience serious problems of identity both because each will be genetically virtually identical to a human being who has already lived and because the expectations for their lives may be shadowed by constant comparisons to the life of the 'original.'"¹⁹ Such a reaction suggests that cloning challenges pervasive beliefs about personal identity.

But this response may not be entirely rational. Several commentators have pointed out that the public understanding of what it means for a person to be a clone may be fanciful nonsense. In an attempt to explain the words *cloning* and *clone*, Lee Silver, a professor molecular biology and public affairs at Yale University, proposed that there were already millions of human clones walking around—we typically call them identical twins.

On the occasion of a public lecture to the well-educated residents of Princeton, New Jersey, Silver described a variety of techniques that are used to aid the infertile. Then he outlined a hypothetical situation of a man with severe infertility, unable to produce sperm or its precursors. The protocol under consideration was to obtain a small amount of testicular tissue by biopsy. The cells in this tissue would contain the full diploid complement of the man's chromosomes, rather than the haploid number found in mature sperm (or eggs).

The proposal was to inject one of the man's testicular nuclei into an egg cell from his wife from which the egg nucleus had been previously removed. If all went well, the egg would develop into an embryo that would be implanted in the wife's uterus. With continued luck, a healthy baby boy would be born nine months later. As he grew, the boy would probably look a lot like old pictures of his father at the same age. He might even have some of his dad's mannerisms or personality traits. Since this is not uncommon in children born without reproductive aids, unless they were told people would never suspect that the boy had been conceived through advanced reproductive technology. Then, Silver asked his audience a simple question: "Would you

consider this boy to be a clone of his father?" Two-thirds of the group raised their hands to say "No."²⁰

Scientists and the public may be using the same word for different concepts. Apparently, in the popular conception, a clone is an exact or near-exact replica of an individual that not only looks like the original, but also has the personality, memories, and even thoughts of the original. That is how clones are portrayed in the cinema and in fiction. In the entertainment media, a clone represents a second version of a person, usually having diminished spiritual and moral capacities, or none at all. Clearly, this conception has no basis in reality, but it seems to explain the revulsion some experience when they contemplate cloning.

We intuitively expect individuals to look different and we instinctively feel that physical distinctness is required for personhood. There is a related notion that every individual must have unique genetic material. This idea may stem, in part, from the belief that the genes determine the total physical and psychic nature of a human being. The European Parliament reflected the same belief in its 1997 resolution on cloning, claiming, in part, that "each individual has a right to his or her own genetic identity."²¹

As powerful as these convictions may seem, they have no factual basis. Monozygous twins are clearly individuals, even if we sometimes perpetuate myths about them. Natural twins develop distinct personalities and temperaments as a consequence of their independent experiences, environments, and choices. In spite of their identical genes and similar appearance, twins become fully individual "souls." Genetic uniqueness is not an essential component of personhood.

Unlike a twin, a clone would have a different birth mother, would grow up in a different family, and would live at different times from those of its nuclear donor. Even physical resemblances would be obscured by the different ages of the clone and the donor. At the genetic level, there would likely be differences in mitochondrial DNA. For these reasons, cloned persons would mature into individuals who would be distinct from their nuclear donors and as free to make their way in the world as any other person. Clones of Albert Einstein or Michael Jordan would be just as likely to become accountants and shoe salesmen as theoreticians and basketball superstars.

Some popular conceptions about the requirement of genetic uniqueness might be attributed, in part, to



successes in molecular genetics. We hear almost daily reports of new human genes that, according to the lay press, control traits as different as reading disabilities, schizophrenia, obsessive-compulsive disorders, addictive behaviors, and criminality. There was even a report that hyped a gene for musical talent.

The constant barrage has fostered a “Genes-R-Us” mentality—the belief that our faults lie, not in our stars or our choices, but in our DNA. This misunderstanding is exacerbated by a few evolutionary scientists who, like Richard Dawkins, deliberately broadcast the message of genetic determinism. Edward O. Wilson reduced it to absurdity with his aphorism, “An organism is DNA’s way of making more DNA.”²² Overwhelming evidence, however, indicates that genotype accounts for no more than half of the variability between individuals. The rest of human distinctness comes from other sources—be they nurture, chance, or choice. Erik Parens of the Hasting Center summarized the matter eloquently. “As everyone in this room knows,” he said, “you can’t clone a self, because a self is a function of infinitely more than one’s genetic material.”²³

3. **Autonomy.** Some express concern that there may be attempts to limit the freedom and choices of cloned persons. The time-worn caution of C. S. Lewis regarding human domination of nature is still

apt: “What we call Man’s power over Nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over other men with Nature as its instrument.”²⁴ There might be a temptation to use clones expediently, assigning their value primarily on the basis of their utility in some predetermined role. As a specific example, some have suggested that clones might be used as sources of transplantable tissues.

These are reasonable fears that deserve examination. The spare-body-parts scenario, however, can be dismissed, since no one has yet proposed that essential organs be taken from a newborn to patch up its nuclear donor. That would be a horror that is already prohibited by law. The more likely use of renewable or dispensable tissues, such as bone marrow or cord blood obtained from clones, does call for appropriate ethical cautions.

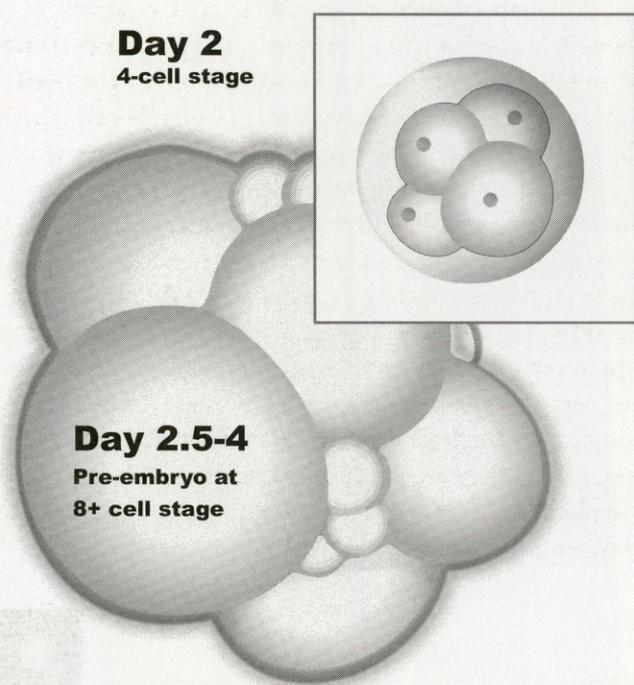
However, a reality check makes it clear that this practice already occurs without cloning. Andrew Kimbrell, author of *The Human Body Shop*, claims that

There is wide agreement that God’s image is not about anatomy or physiology, but encompasses human intellect, moral agency, individuality, creativity, the capacity for altruistic love, the capacity to will, to apprehend God, and to find fulfillment in relationships.

50 to 100 couples produced babies by conventional means to supply tissues for an older child in the few years preceding the publication of his book.²⁵ It is difficult to condemn such decisions categorically. Much would depend upon the situation into which the child would be born, including evidence that she or he would be nurtured, cherished, and loved.

There is another concern that clones might be produced to gratify the vanity of their “originals.” Egotists might be inclined to duplicate themselves in more than just physical resemblance. The effects could be oppressive. “To aspire to genius is laudable,” observed one commentator. “To be a child of genius can be difficult,” he continues. “But to be expected to develop into a genius because you are its identical twin, could be crushing.”

This problem, however, predates cloning. We already know that people sometimes have children by natural means for the wrong reasons, or for no reasons at all. How many youngsters have been driven into particular



pursuits by controlling parents? Zealous fathers admit to enrolling toddlers into particular nursery schools to put them on the fast track to an Ivy League college. Clearly, one does not have to be a clone to be an unfortunate extension of someone else's ego. The negative take-home lessons in this human foible are not intrinsic to cloning.

Another common hypothetical application of cloning is that of an infertile couple at the point of losing their only child. They want, literally, to replace a child.²⁶ At a time when childbearing in the United States has declined to 2.13 offspring per woman and when more than 98 percent of children survive to their twenty-fifth birthday, the death of a young person is both unexpected and devastating. In such situations, nuclear transplantation could serve as an advanced form of assisted reproduction.²⁷

However, such proposals should comport with our best reflections on the will of God for human procreation. God's plan is for children to be nurtured within the context of a loving family with the presence, participation, and support of both parents. If nuclear transplantation is used to achieve human reproduction when other methods are ineffective, such attempts should be within the setting of a faithful marriage and in support of a stable family. Furthermore, we would be wise to avoid the moral complications that arise when a third party acts either as the gestational surrogate or the source of the genetic material.²⁸

4. **Eugenics.** Many have expressed fear that the practice of reproductive cloning would undermine important social values by opening the door to a form of eugenics. The fear is that individuals free of disabling genetic defects and possessing subjectively valued skills would be selected preferentially for cloning, in an attempt to produce a superior cohort of human beings.

There is already ample evidence that people often find the goals of eugenics attractive. Walter Anderson provides an interesting example—an attempt to prevent deleterious genes from being expressed in the next generation—in the story of a genetic testing program in an Orthodox Jewish community.²⁹ The goal was simple: to reduce the occurrence of Tay-Sachs and cystic fibrosis, two devastating diseases common in their ethnic group. Tay-Sachs is fatal; it blinds, paralyzes, and kills in the first few years of life. Cystic fibrosis causes chronic lung infections, breathing problems, digestive insufficiency, and premature death due to lung failure. Among Ashkenazi Jews, the carrier frequency for each disease is one in twenty-five. When two carriers marry, there is a one-in-four chance that a pregnancy

will produce an affected child.

The program offered genetic testing to students in Orthodox Jewish high schools with the results filed by identification number in a central office. When a boy and a girl seemed likely prospects for marriage, the matchmaker called the office hotline with their identification numbers. The office responded either that the pair was compatible or that they both carried the same recessive defect. (Clearly, bioinformatics had overtaken the venerable tradition of matchmaking!) This “life-guard at the gene pool” approach produced remarkable results. New cases of Tay-Sachs were virtually eliminated, and the program was expanded to include other diseases. Similarly, a fetal screening program in Brittany, France, where the incidence of cystic fibrosis is higher than in the United States, has produced a marked reduction in new cases.³⁰

This is obviously eugenics. And eugenics has often been considered the equivalent of a four-letter word in bioethics. There are important, historical reasons for such antipathy. Eugenics was proposed by Francis Galton, Charles Darwin's cousin, as a practical application of Darwin's new theory of evolution. By 1900, eugenics was wildly popular in Britain on both ends of the political spectrum. Then it flowered in the United States, where it bred compulsory sterilization programs, restrictions on immigration, and laws to prevent interracial marriages. Later, in most horrific ways, it was attempted by the Nazis. So the association between the word *eugenics* and the worst kinds of injustice, all the way to genocide, should not surprise us. This association is so powerful in contemporary thought that it sometimes inhibits rational consideration of important reproductive issues. We may even need to invent a new expression that is not burdened with the weight of the Holocaust. We could try *progenics*.

With the increasing availability of genetic information more people will make progenic decisions. Whenever prospective parents use genetic tests to make reproductive choices, whenever a family decides to end a pregnancy because of a severe fetal abnormality, whenever a fertility clinic selects an embryo that does not carry a catastrophic familial disease, whenever a couple that has borne a disabled child seeks genetic counseling, they are practicing progenics. A decision to use cloning under appropriate circumstances would be another example of personal reproductive choice.



Progenics is short-term and small-scale. It is a personal choice based on full disclosure of the best available information. Progenic decisions are made by individuals with the intent to avoid real suffering—conception of children with severe diseases in their own families. These are not the public breeding programs envisioned by Galton or implemented by the Third Reich.

Honest observation tells us that selective human procreation of one sort or another has been happening for a very long time, though it often had the satisfying innocence of chance about it. If progenics is about attempting to protect the genetic heritage of the unborn, we may be doing more of it today than when eugenics was public policy. The best safeguards against the failures of the past are to avoid coercive genetic policies, reject attempts to eliminate vaguely defined conditions, and forbid national programs to breed super humans, geniuses, or warriors. When genetic screening is done, it should be for clearly recognized diseases. Genetic test results should be reported through nondirective counseling, conforming to the concept that medical professionals have no license to control reproductive decisions. All of this remains true whether or not nuclear transfer is contemplated.

5. **Aesthetics and the "Natural."** The initial public response to Dolly's birth announcement was overwhelmingly negative. Polls performed in 1997 reported that three out of four Americans believed that human cloning should not be done. Justifying their judgments, some held that it was "playing God" or "unnatural," but many described their reaction as loathing, a revulsion. It violated an emotional boundary. Ethicists have observed such visceral reactions before, and some have even given them a name—the "yuck factor." The vital question is, how reliable is the "yuck factor" as a guide in making moral decisions? Is everything that makes people feel squeamish wrong or unethical? An essay by ethicist Leon Kass of the University of Chicago, now chair of the President's Council on Bioethics, argues that a gut response "is the emotional expression of deep wisdom" representing our intuitive ethical sensitivity and that it should be trusted.³¹

It is difficult to make a logical argument against this position since it is based on intuition, emotion, or aesthetic sensibilities. It can be balanced by the observation that society has reacted negatively to many major medical advances—immunizations, blood transfusions, x-rays, antibiotics, organ transplants, even fluoridated water—innovations that helped to

contribute to increasing life expectancy from fifty to eighty years. And we may notice that not many feel deep repugnance to such measures today.

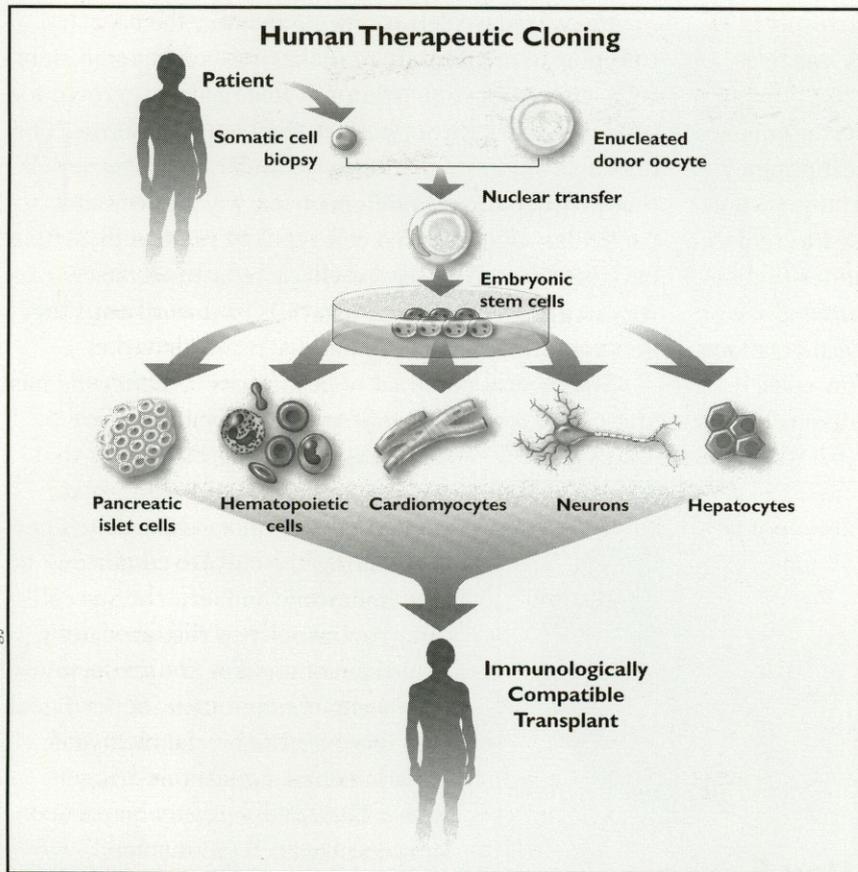
Related to concerns about what is natural for human beings is an uneasiness about overstepping our appointed bounds. Theologian Stanley Hauerwas has questioned the motives for cloning. Yes, it would be promoted because of its usefulness as an advanced technique in assisted reproduction and as a means for avoiding genetic disease. But he sees a "drive behind this to force us to be our own creators."³² Others express the view that reproductive cloning would be "playing God," violating our standing as creatures.

These charges take us back to the theme of humanity's purpose. Is creation a finished product that will bear no further modification? Do advances in knowledge and power demean the sanctity of human life? Is the value of life eroded by an increased understanding of the processes of life? Are we better off not knowing and not using answers to fundamental biological questions? These are hard questions that individuals may answer differently based upon their foundational beliefs about mankind's role in the world. And we should not forget another caution given by C. S. Lewis: "Each new power won *by* man is a power *over* man as well."³³ Without the guidance of secure moral convictions, all new technologies are dangerous and have the potential to diminish the meaning and quality of human life.

However, we should also be cautious about allowing traditional but unfounded limitations to be placed on human creativity in cooperation with the divine will. "Even within religious communities," wrote the National Bioethics Advisory Commission, "the warning against 'playing God' is too indiscriminate to provide ethical guidance." Furthermore, "it overlooks moral invitations to play God."³⁴ Even if the image of God in humans has been tarnished and deformed by abuse or disuse, we still exhibit a measure of the curiosity and creativity that is part of God's nature. As no other creatures on earth, we persist in probing and questioning creation, attempting to understand it and make it accountable. It is a divinely intended heritage.

In sum, reproductive cloning raises a host of ethical issues. It forces us to balance competing values—a child's rights to safety, individuality, and dignity against the donors' rights to procreate and to have children free of genetic disease. Humanity's God-given stewardship of planetary life should take into account both the risks of genetic bondage and commodification of human life.





With respect to potential losses of uniqueness and the possibility that cloned individuals might be objectified rather than respected as persons, there is justification for serious caution.

But such risks are not unprecedented, nor are they refractory to carefully drawn principles, based on faith in the Creator. At present, the inability of nuclear transplantation technology to meet reasonable standards of safety and unanswered ethical questions lead to the simple conclusion: "Not yet." Some, possibly most, will want to add, "And not ever." But we urge caution about setting absolute limits on future possibilities for cooperating creatively with the divine will.

Therapeutic Cloning

A discussion of what has come to be called "therapeutic cloning" must begin with at least a minimal understanding of stem cell biology, a subject that has stimulated its own considerable debate. First, a review of some basic biology and terminology.

Our bodies are primarily composed of "differentiated" cells that can perform only the limited functions required for specific tissues. Cytologists have identified several hundred differentiated cell types—myocytes (muscle cells), neurons (nerve cells), erythrocytes (red blood

cells), and so on. Highly specialized cell types, like those just mentioned, cannot divide to make more of their kind. Other cell types may divide a prescribed number of times, after which they enter a nondividing, senescent state. In either case, differentiated cells cannot transform themselves into other types. A neuron, for example, cannot become a myocyte. Under natural conditions, differentiation is usually a one-way street.

Fortunately, most tissues contain a few undifferentiated stem cells.

Whether they are isolated from a fetus, newborn, or adult, such cells are called "adult stem cells." They are the energetic, but raw recruits of the body. They have not yet been "trained" to perform specific tasks. The training process is called "differentiation," an orderly program that turns on specific genes while switching off others. Some adult stem cells may remain unspecialized for the life of the organism. Furthermore, they can divide repeatedly to make more stem cells, a property called "self-renewal."

Multipotency. Adult stem cells from a particular tissue have the ability to differentiate into the various cell types found in that tissue. In contrast to the fixed fates of differentiated cells, adult stem cells are "multipotent." This means they can become any of several differentiated cell types. Hematopoietic stem cells from bone marrow, for instance, can mature into more than a dozen cell types found in the blood and immune systems. Neural stem cells can develop into neurons, glial cells, and oligodendrocytes—all cell types found in nerve tissue. This flexibility accounts for their alternative name, "multipotent stem cells." The normal role of adult stem cells is to generate



replacements for body cells that die as the result of damage, infection, or aging. Without them our lives would be short.

The enormous interest in stem cells is a consequence of their two distinctive characteristics: multipotency and self-renewal. If they could be isolated and grown in the laboratory, adult stem cells might be used to replace damaged human tissues. Two obstacles hinder that achievement. First, adult stem cells are scarce. Bone marrow, a well-known source of adult stem cells, contains about one stem cell per 10,000 bone marrow cells.

Other tissues may contain more adult stem cells, but never exceed one per several hundred body cells. The low numbers mean that one must have a large mass of normal tissue to obtain enough adult stem cells for most purposes. Such large quantities of human tissue are not commonly available. Furthermore, separating adult stem cells from the numerous differentiated body cells is not a simple matter.

The second limitation of adult stem cells rests on the fact that their multipotency is restricted. Typically, an adult stem cell may become one of the cell types found in the tissue from which it came. For example, a nerve stem cell may become a neuron, a glial cell, or an oligodendrocyte. But it cannot become a pancreatic cell or a bone cell. Recent results have shown that multipotency sometimes exceeds expectations. Adult stem cells from one tissue have been observed to develop into cell types characteristic of other tissues.

For example, neural stem cells mature into mature neurons, but they can also become muscle cells, certain kidney cells, or cells lining the digestive tract. One research group found that stem cells isolated from fat—a slurry obtained by liposuction—could generate cartilage, bone, and muscle cells, as well as new fat cells. Nevertheless, there is no evidence for an adult stem cell that can produce all the various specialized cell types. Adult stem cells have limited flexibility.

Embryonic Stem Cells. The small numbers and circumscribed capabilities of adult stem cells have led to the enormous interest in human embryonic stem cells, first isolated in 1998.³⁵ In contrast to their more mature cousins, embryonic stem cells are “pluripotent”—they have unlimited flexibility; they can become *any* cell type. (Significantly, they are not “totipotent,” because they cannot recreate a viable embryo.)

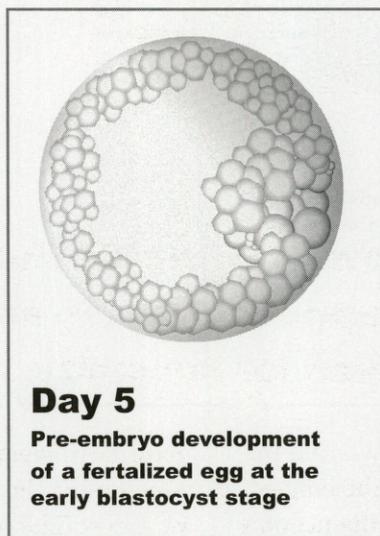
They are also self-renewing, having the capacity to replicate indefinitely to make more embryonic stem cells. One embryonic stem cell line has been grown for over two years through more than 300 doublings. The first trait suggests that once we understand the signals that provoke them to differentiate, we can recreate particular differentiated cell types to replace those that have been lost. The second characteristic promises that we can grow embryonic stem cells in culture until they generate a mass large enough for transplantation.

The clinical potential of both types of stem cells has stimulated a whirlwind of research. Scientists are searching for external features that will help them identify and isolate adult stem cells more efficiently. They are refining the culture conditions so that embryonic and adult stem cells can grow happily in the laboratory, while remaining free from infectious agents and contaminants. A third goal is to discover the biochemical and environmental signals that trigger stem cells to differentiate into particular specialized cell types.

Some observers have tended to overstate the usefulness of adult stem cells at the expense of embryonic stem cells in order to accommodate their belief in the personhood of preimplantation embryos. However, most scientists working in the field agree that, in light of their therapeutic potential, too little is known to limit research to one or the other. Embryonic stem cells and adult stem cells will likely provide complementary tools; it is far too early to decide upon their respective benefits.

About sixty embryonic stem cell lines derived before President Bush’s August 9, 2001, address are now available for study with federal support. (His decision was an obvious political compromise because there is no meaningful ethical difference between the act of obtaining cells from early embryos, which is now prohibited if federal funds are used, and the act of studying those cells.) Though less than a dozen of those cell lines may be usable, the ball is now in the court of the research community to produce evidence that there is actual—as opposed to theoretical—benefit to be derived from embryonic stem cell research. That evidence will be the most persuasive argument for continuing the development and use of embryonic stem cells.

The move from knowledge about stem cells to useful medical treatments is likely to be long and difficult.

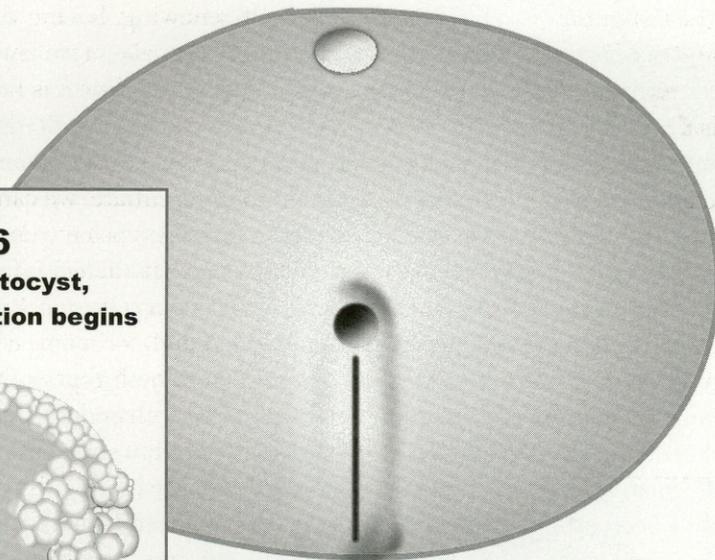
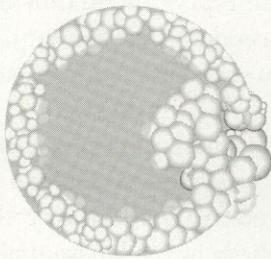


Day 5
Pre-embryo development
of a fertilized egg at the
early blastocyst stage

Illustration: Jennie Auman

Illustration: Jennie Auman

Day 5-6 **Late blastocyst,** **implantation begins**



Day 13-14

Pre-embryo development at the gastrulation, chorionic villi formation stage, with primitive streak

distinctive surface features that make them potentially incompatible with the immune systems of some prospective recipients. The only means currently available for avoiding rejection of stem cell implants is lifelong treatment with immune suppressing drugs. Such drugs have multiple disadvantages, including increasing the patients' susceptibility to infections. But immune suppression would be essential after stem cell transplants until other options become available.

Exercising creative power through the reproductive process appears to be an important part of God's plan for humanity.

Novel stem cell therapies that go beyond the long-standing use of bone marrow and its constituents may be decades in the future. Nevertheless, the list of potential medical applications is impressive. Any condition that causes the death or depletion of a specific cell population may benefit from stem cell therapy.

A few promising targets include type I diabetes (loss of pancreatic islet cells), Parkinson's disease (loss of dopamine-producing neurons), Alzheimer's disease (loss of cerebral neurons), rheumatoid arthritis (destruction of cartilage and chondrocytes), multiple sclerosis (loss of myelin and myelin-producing cells), macular degeneration (loss of retinal visual receptors), hepatitis and cirrhosis (loss of liver cells), osteoporosis (loss of bone and bone-forming cells), heart attacks (loss of myocytes), spinal cord injuries (loss of spinal neurons), leukemia (cancer of blood cells), and many other cancer types. By some estimates, more than 100 million Americans have conditions that might some day be treated with stem cells.

Stem Cells and Cloning. Biologists admit that if they had a diverse collection of embryonic stem cell lines and the knowledge to convert them into differentiated cells, there would still be a crippling barrier to using them. All stem cells are marked with

Cloning has been linked to embryonic stem cells because it offers the hope of overcoming the persistent problem of transplant rejection. The proposed alternative to immune suppression is to create patient-specific embryonic stem cells by a process alternatively called "nuclear transfer" or "therapeutic cloning." In this procedure the nucleus from a patient's cell would be transplanted into an enucleated egg. The resulting embryo would be used to generate embryonic stem cells. Tissue transplants derived from such stem cells would be perfectly compatible with the patient who provided the nucleus. The concept has already been tested successfully in cows. Much of the recent commotion was due to the report of Advanced Cell Technology, a for-profit company, indicating that it had succeeded in creating human embryos using this method.³⁶

However, therapeutic cloning is not even close to a reality, and it may never become a practical remedy for transplant rejection, even after the technical difficulties are overcome. At present, the procedure requires an unrealistically high number of eggs. In a recent series



of experiments with mice, for example, investigators used 202 mouse eggs transplanted with skin cell nuclei to create one embryo for stem cell production.³⁷ The price of scores of human eggs (currently about \$4,000 each) would represent only a fraction of the total cost. The time and technical effort required to derive individual embryonic stem cell lines for patients suffering from various targeted diseases would be outrageously expensive and cumbersome. Furthermore, for those who attribute personhood to zygotes, therapeutic cloning would be subject to the same ethical prohibitions as reproductive cloning.

Beginning of Human Life. The value of stem cell therapy is not debated. Bone marrow and hematopoietic stem cells isolated from bone marrow have been used to treat blood disorders and leukemia for thirty years. Rather, the current debate converges on the source of embryonic stem cells—very early embryos. After a human egg is fertilized, the resulting zygote divides repeatedly. As development continues, the cluster typically arrives at the blastocyst stage on the fifth day. At this point, it consists of 100 to 200 cells that form a hollow, fluid-filled sphere, smaller than a pinhead. Stuck to the inner surface of the sphere is a cluster of about thirty cells called the “inner cell mass.” All existing embryonic stem cell lines were derived from the inner cell mass of such embryos.

The debates that swirl around stem cell therapy typically focus on the moral status of preimplantation embryos. The five-day old embryo, known as a blastocyst, is a tiny sphere of cells with no human features, no nerve cells, no organs, indeed, no differentiated tissues of any kind. It is, at this point, an undifferentiated cluster. Under natural conditions, a human embryo might implant in the uterine wall about eight or nine days after fertilization. The blastocysts used to establish stem cell lines have not yet reached this stage.

It is generally agreed that it is neither necessary nor desirable to make embryos specifically for stem cell derivation since embryos are available from other sources. In vitro fertilization is used in about 360 U.S. clinics as an aid to couples that are unable to conceive by natural methods. In 1998, for example, about 28,000 babies were born in the United States as the result of in vitro fertilization.³⁸ Doctors fertilize six to fourteen eggs from each woman. Perhaps two or three are implanted in the patient’s uterus to achieve a reasonable probability of a single pregnancy. The healthiest of those that remain may be frozen—some women may not become pregnant in the first attempt, and couples may later elect to use additional embryos to

have more children. If we accept in vitro fertilization as a treatment for infertility, then excess embryos will exist.

By various estimates, 100,000 to 200,000 embryos are currently stored frozen in the United States.³⁹ When patients decide not to implant certain embryos, they may offer them to other couples, they may require that they be destroyed, or they may allow them to be used for research as long development is halted before a specified stage. Outside a uterus, an embryo cannot long survive. The isolated embryo can never become a person.⁴⁰ Nearly all of the existing embryonic stem cell lines, including those approved by President Bush for continued research, were derived from such “extra” embryos.⁴¹

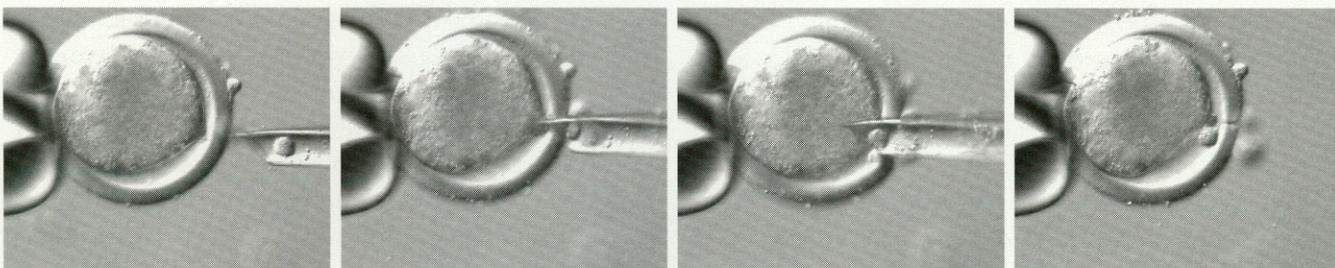
Is such research ethically justified? Many find it difficult to argue that it would be better for embryos to be discarded as waste than to be used to save the lives of others. For some, the matter is decided by the fact that a five-day-old embryo lacks an essential quality required for personhood. Until the fourteenth day of development, it is possible for an embryo to split into two or more monozygotic offspring (an event that occurs naturally about once in 370 pregnancies), and for those to recombine again into a single embryo. Consequently, before day fourteen, the embryo does not correspond to one and only one individual. Since the embryo might still split or merge, its individual identity has not yet been established, and there can be no individuality or personhood without identity.

Others have noted that natural reproduction is quite ruthless in its destruction of embryos. The union of sperm and egg in natural conception fails more often than it succeeds in producing a new being. Between 50 and 75 percent of embryos formed by sexual intercourse do not survive long enough to produce a baby. This fact has prompted some to argue that it is paradoxical to attribute great moral value to an entity with such a high likelihood of failure under natural circumstances.⁴²

However, the fact that, given the proper circumstances, embryos might become human beings requires careful thought about their moral status. The degree of protection they deserve is the crux of the debate. Are the many thousands of frozen human embryos, currently stored in infertility clinics, in need of rescue? If they are no longer needed for infertility treatment, must they be stored indefinitely? May they be adopted? May they be used for purposes as mundane as testing of laundry detergents and kitchen cleaners? Or must preimplantation embryos be assigned full human status with the full array of human rights? Is it evident that the product of the nucleus of a skin cell, taken from the arm of a

patient, transferred to an ovum, and cultured in a petri dish, should be accorded the rights of a citizen?

The obvious and knotty question is, of course, the same one that has been central to the debates about the morality of abortion: When does human life begin? Or better put, when does morally relevant personhood begin? Some Christians, basing their views on the creation story, believe that human life begins at birth. The text says that God “breathed into [Adam’s]



A cell containing the genetic material from the donor is placed inside the Zona Pelluca. Source: Advanced Cell Technology

nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being” (Gen 2:7 NIV). Other Christians believe that a new and unique person comes into existence at the moment of conception. They point to passages that describe Jeremiah’s prenatal call and the Psalmist’s wonder at being “knit together in [his] mother’s womb” as evidence that the biblical writers were aware of and valued prenatal life. (Jer. 1:5; Ps. 139:13 NIV) This view generally leads to the conclusion that no benefit to others can justify the purposeful destruction of preimplantation embryos.

Still other principled Christians hold that moral value of prenatal life develops gradually through many important stages, in a crescendo building to birth. On this view, implantation is of crucial importance because progress toward birth is impossible if an embryo does not become implanted in a uterus. Another important time, in the developmental view, is the onset of organized neurological activity, or brain waves.

How could we accept the notion of “brain death,” after which a human body is considered a corpse, even though its heart continues to beat, if we do not also accept the idea of “brain birth”? The time of quickening, when fetal movement is first detected, and viability, when the fetus is capable of sustained life outside the womb, are other significant steps in the crescendo of prenatal development. This view may include the belief that early embryos have human potential and possess symbolic moral value that is worthy of respect.⁴³ However, it may also allow embryo research after having taken into account both the stage of

embryo development and the objective of the research.

The “Guidelines on Abortion” and their accompanying “Principles for a Christian View of Life” summarize important principles for respecting prenatal life and the personal conscience of believers.⁴⁴ Notable in these statements is a deliberate openness regarding the precise “moment” when protectable human life begins. In an important footnote, the “Guidelines on Abortions,” state: “Abortion, as understood in these

guidelines, is defined as any action aimed at the termination of a pregnancy already established. This is distinguished from contraception, which is intended to prevent a pregnancy.”⁴⁵

The reason for this distinction is important. Acknowledging honest differences among Adventists about the beginning of human life, the drafters of the “Guidelines” were able to achieve consensus that once implantation has occurred and gestation has begun, only the weightiest moral reasons could possibly justify ending prenatal life. At the same time it was recognized that some of the most widely used birth control measures, including birth control pills, probably do not prevent conception but rather implantation and gestation.

Because Adventists do not subscribe to the concept of the soul as an immaterial entity that takes up temporary residence in a physical body, there is, for Adventists, no precise moment of ensoulment. Rather, the soul represents the entire human being, the whole person energized by life. For this reason, the instant of fertilization, though an essential step in the developmental process that will eventually produce a person, cannot be equated with ensoulment. In some respects, the argument that a human soul begins with the new genotype that is formed during the process of conception is similar to the traditional doctrine of



ensoulment. Instead of the infusion of an immaterial soul, there is the constitution of a new genotype.

But, as we already pointed out, a new genotype is not the same as a new person. The very possibility of twinning proves this. No one argues that monozygotic twins share one soul. They are clearly two different persons, even though they began as one embryo. Because Adventists believe that the soul is the whole person, and because the person arrives through multiple stages, there are good Adventist reasons to view the establishment of human life developmentally. This deprives us of the neatness of some traditional views. But the gains in terms of honesty about the biblical texts and the biological facts make the developmental view, with all its complexity, the preferable position.

There are other reasons for Adventists to be carefully interested in what might otherwise seem arcane matters of genetic medicine. A central principle of Christianity is the obligation to alleviate suffering and to preserve life. The Christian doctrine of salvation is much more than "heaven in the sky bye-and-bye." It encompasses healing the whole person, body, mind, spirit, and even social relationships, here and now. The Scriptures portray God as endlessly concerned with the moral and physical restoration of his creatures. "And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick" (Luke 9:22 KJV). Christ gave explicit instructions to continue his healing ministry.

Adventists, in particular, appreciate the ministry of healing as part of God's work on earth. The duty of beneficence requires that Christian medical professionals provide those in need with the means for healing that they would seek if they were themselves in need. To the extent that we can help to prevent disease and restore health, and do so ethically, we are obliged to investigate the potential of genetic therapies that may become some of the most effective tools for doctors of the future.

Conclusion

God endowed human beings with intelligence and creativity, and gave us responsibility to cooperate with him in the care of the planet and all its creatures. He intends for us to grow in our understanding of the principles of life, including the function of our bodies. Ethical research and examination can only increase our appreciation of God's wisdom and goodness.

Within the medical realm, we are powerfully driven to control disease—conditions that disrupt the order and harmony that God intended. We are invited to use the knowledge he gives us. Consequently, gene

therapy need not be an expression of human pride or arrogance. As long as the aim is to alleviate suffering, and we use our creativity with purpose, courage, caution, contingency, and compassion, keeping in mind the protection of the defenseless and helpless, genetic medicine has the same moral justification as traditional medicine. On the other hand, an attempt to redesign ourselves into creatures with new and superlative powers would be perilous. A balanced view of our God-likeness should remind us that we tamper with fundamental human attributes at great risk.

Many caution that the use of genetic medicine puts us on a slippery slope, potentially blurring the value of personhood and undermining human uniqueness. In rebuttal, we do not prohibit every endeavor that, if pursued without restraint, might lead to undesirable consequences. Everything we attempt carries risk that we attempt to balance against the benefits of measured action. That is the domain of ethics. Our deliberation implies that we can prescribe limits for our behavior. The reflection of God's image that remains invites us to that responsible action.

In this essay, we have not tried to resolve all of the ethical questions associated with cloning. If we had tried, we would have failed. The questions are still emerging, with new developments almost daily. We are only two members of a faith community that we seek to serve and whose help we also need. It is our conviction that Seventh-day Adventists should return to the practice of gathering members with appropriate expertise in an attempt to address issues of vital interest to the Church at regular intervals.

The documents produced by the General Conference's Christian View of Human Life Committee during the 1990s have continued to serve our church, and they have elicited positive comments from many outside our church. But such statements typically do not have an endless shelf life. They can easily become stale as new discoveries are made both in science and in biblical understanding. Since 2000, when the decision was made not to continue the work of the Christian View of Human Life Committee, no comparable work has emerged. Thus, statements that once provided careful guidance to church members and institutions now run the risk of appearing quaint or even misinformed. This is no insignificant matter for a church that operates hundreds of health care institutions, educates thousands of health care professionals and scientists, and seeks to conduct innovative and path-breaking medical research.

We believe that we, as Adventists, have been given

the necessary inspired resources and the motivation to pursue the best medical science in an ethical manner. But doing so will continue to require our best efforts to engage each other in honest, vigorous discourse about the practical implications of our faith. In this regard, the ethical questions of cloning will, we predict, continue to test us.

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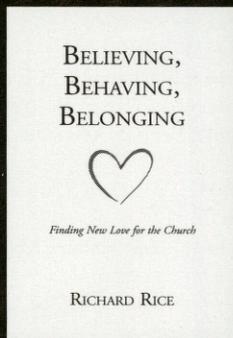
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They Said, We Said

Denominational Statements on Human Cloning

By John Brunt



It seems that every day I receive some missive in the mail from either the left or the right that rails against the Church for all it does wrong. In this article I want to commend the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its leadership for something that I believe it has done correctly.

The subject of human cloning and issues that arise from it have prompted several Christian denominations, including the Seventh-day Adventist Church, to comment on this topic. In this article I will examine some other denominational statements and then see how that of the Seventh-day Adventists compares.

These statements may be divided into three categories. First are statements that oppose human cloning as inherently wrong. Second are those that permanently oppose human cloning on pragmatic grounds. Finally, some oppose human cloning at present, but are open to its legitimacy at a time in the future when the procedure might be more safe.

Categorical rejection of human cloning can be seen in statements by the Southern Baptists, Roman Catholic bishops, and the Church of Scotland.¹ The Southern Baptist statement makes reference to Genesis and argues, "Seeking to clone human beings signifies a spiritual and technological hubris on the part of man which aims to usurp God's prerogatives as Creator." The statement then concludes that there "are no morally acceptable reasons for cloning human beings."²

The Southern Baptist statement does open the possibility that in the future individual organs might be cloned for transplant, as long as no entire human person is ever cloned. In addition to this statement, the trustees of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention voted another on March 6, 1997, that concludes, "Be it further resolved that we call for all nations of the world to make efforts to prevent the cloning of any human being."³

In "Remarks in Response to News Reports on the Cloning of Mammals," issued by the secretariat for Pro-Life activities of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the secretariat argued that children are to have real parents and not to be products we can manufacture. Children must be the fruit of parents' love. The report says, "Catholic teaching rejects the cloning of human beings, because this is not a worthy way to bring a human being into the world."⁴

On May 22, 1997, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland voted to reaffirm "belief in the basic dignity and uniqueness of each human being under God," and to "express the strongest possible opposition to the cloning of human beings and urge Her Majesty's Government to press for a comprehensive international treaty to ban it worldwide."⁵

In a supplementary report to this vote from the Society, Religion, and Technology Project of the Board of National Mission we read that "to clone human beings would be ethically unacceptable as a matter of principle. On principle, to replicate any human technologically is a violation of the basic dignity and uniqueness of each human being made in God's image, of what God has given to that individual and to no one else."⁶

Although some of the reasons given differ, all three of these statements oppose human cloning in principle. None recognizes any instances where cloning might be utilized legitimately either now or in the future. Cloning is wrong, period.

By contrast, the statement prepared by the United Church of Christ attempts to affirm the work of scientists and recognizes that there might be situations, as in the case of infertile married couples, where cloning could be beneficial. In the end, however, the statement rejects cloning for three reasons.

At present the procedure in humans is not safe; a "child produced by cloning would suffer from an overwhelming burden of expectations"; and it is beneficial for children to have the genetic resources of two adults.⁷ Thus, this statement, in contrast with the three above, rejects cloning for several pragmatic reasons, but does not oppose it in principle as inherently wrong.

Finally, there are two denominational statements that allow for the possibility of legitimate human cloning in the future, although the first of these, from the United Methodists Genetic Science Task force, is problematic in an interesting way.⁸

This task force was commissioned by the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society. Its statement, issued in May 1997, also affirms the benefits of science and technology. It opposes cloning at present, but affirms that if humans are ever cloned the clones should be treated as fully human with all the dignity and civil rights accorded to any other human.

The statement also urges "widespread discussion of issues related to cloning in public forums including churches," and pleads that research move slowly while these discussions sort out the important issues involved.⁹

Thus, the door is left open for the possibility of human cloning in the future, although nothing is spelled out about the nature of issues that would finally be resolved in order to open this door in actual practice.

The preface of the statement includes a caveat that the Task Force cannot speak for the United Methodist Church as a whole. Only the Methodist General Conference can do that. At the General Conference in May of 2000 in Cleveland, Ohio, it became obvious that the Task Force truly did not speak for the Church. By a vote of 809 to 15, the Methodist General Conference called "on all nations to ban human cloning and to identify appropriate government agencies to enforce the ban."¹⁰

Reasons given include the wasting of human embryos, use or abuse of people, exploitation of women, tearing the fabric of the family, compromising human distinctiveness, lessening genetic diversity, exploitation for corporate profit and/or personal gain, and invasion of privacy. Nevertheless, the Methodist General Conference did call for continued discussion.

When taken as a whole, however, this statement puts the United Methodist Church with the churches that oppose cloning on pragmatic grounds.

Only one statement leaves the door open to some possible uses of cloning in the future and spells out the principles that would have to be met in order for cloning to be legitimate. This statement is "On Ethical Considerations Regarding Human Cloning," voted by the Seventh-day Adventist Annual Council in Brazil in October of 1998. (see pages 44-46, below.)

The statement lists ethical concerns and argues that, "At present, concern about physical harm to developing human lives is sufficient to rule out the use of this technology." Other concerns include the dignity and uniqueness of the cloned person, the undermining of family relationships, the danger of treating clones in a dehumanizing, utilitarian way, and the financial costs of such a procedure.

After listing the concerns, however, the statement adds this caveat, "Still, it is important that concerns about the abuses of a technology not blind us to the possibilities of using it to meet genuine human needs."

The statement then goes on to list seven ethical principles that should be considered if this technology is ever applied to human beings. They are protection of vulnerable human life, protection of human dignity, alleviating human suffering, family support, stewardship, truthfulness, and understanding creation.

On the basis of these principles the statement would allow human cloning in some instances within the

context of a marriage relationship as long as it can be done in a way consistent with these principles and does not involve third parties, such as surrogates.

An additional statement voted by the Executive Committee of the General Conference in Brazil suggests that situations such as a married couple suffering from a genetic disease or infertility where no other means of reproduction would be possible might be legitimate contexts for human cloning in the future.

I believe that this statement offers the best example of the kind of theological and ethical reasoning that should guide our Christian reflections on this topic. On the one hand, it avoids the dogmatic prohibitions that offer no reasons. On the other, it provides positive principles that might guide us in knowing how to decide the matter thoughtfully. In addition, it is the only statement that applies biblical principles to the issue of human cloning.

If I am correct, how is it that Adventists have been so fortunate as to have produced the best example of ethical and theological reflection on the topic of human cloning? It is not an accident. Church leadership had the foresight to involve theologians, ethicists, attorneys, and medical personnel, along with administrators, pastors, and other church leaders, in an interdisciplinary committee that met for over a decade and discussed ethical questions that involve human life.

The committee was called the Christian View of Human Life Committee, and it met from 1989 to 2000. For an account of the first two years of this committee's work you can read an article in the August 1991, *Spectrum*, by attorney Margaret McFarland, who was a member.

There were several ground rules that helped this group do its work so well. One was that every side of every issue would be given a hearing. Discussion was open and civil. One member of the committee with whom I spoke gave much of the credit for this to Albert Whiting, a physician and director of the Medical Department of the General Conference.

Another feature of the committee was that a majority of its members were women. It also tended to have experts in the field write the drafts that were then considered and revised by the group as a whole. For instance, the draft of the statement on cloning was written by two individuals from Loma Linda University, Gerald Winslow, a theologian and ethicist, and Anthony Zuccarelli, a researcher in genetics in the School of Medicine.

This methodology of relying on shared, interdisciplinary wisdom has produced a whole series of statements on bioethical topics that should serve as a model for the

positive results of open theological and biblical reflection.

For this, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to be commended.

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Adventist Statement on Ethical Considerations Regarding Human Cloning

For a number of decades, the prospect that new members of the human family might be produced by cloning was considered far-fetched. Recent advances in genetic and reproductive biology, however, indicate that techniques for cloning humans may soon be developed. With this prospect comes the Christian responsibility to address profound ethical issues associated with human cloning. As Christians, with firm belief in God's creative and redemptive power, Seventh-day Adventists accept the responsibility to enunciate ethical principles that emerge from their faith commitments.

Cloning includes all those processes by which living plants or animals are replicated by asexual means—methods that do not involve the fusion of egg and sperm. Many natural processes are forms of cloning. For example, microorganisms, like common yeast, reproduce by splitting into two daughter cells that are clones of the parent cell and each other. Cutting a twig from a rose bush or grapevine and propagating it into a complete plant also creates a clone of the original plant. Similarly, many simple animals, such as starfish, can regenerate complete organisms from small parts of a predecessor. Thus the biological principle of cloning is not new.

The new technique is known as somatic cell nuclear transfer. The essence of this method is to take a cell from an existing individual and manipulate it so that it behaves like an embryonic cell. Given the proper conditions, an embryonic cell can proliferate and generate a complete individual. At present, this cellular reprogramming is accomplished by putting a complete adult cell inside a larger egg cell whose nucleus has been removed. The egg that is used in this process serves the role of an incubator, providing an essential environment to reactivate genes of the adult cell. The egg contributes to the offspring only the small amount of genetic material associated with its cytoplasm, not its nuclear genetic material, as occurs in sexual reproduction. The altered egg must then be implanted in an adult female for gestation.

Biologists have developed this technique as a tool

for animal husbandry. By this means, they hope to create a herd of valued animals that are genetically identical to a selected individual. The potential benefits from this technology, including the expectation of products for treating human diseases, are of great interest to researchers and to the biotechnology industry. However, the same technological capacity could be used for human reproduction and thus raises serious ethical concerns.

First among these concerns is medical safety. If the current technique of somatic cell nuclear transfer were to be used in humans, ova would need to be obtained from donors. Most of these would perish because of cellular manipulations during early embryonic growth in the laboratory. Others would be lost after implantation, spontaneously aborted at various stages of fetal development. In this respect, sensitivity to the value of embryonic and fetal life would be similar to the development of other methods of assisted reproduction, such as in vitro fertilization. There would likely be an increased risk of birth defects in children brought to term. At present, concern about physical harm to developing human lives is sufficient to rule out the use of this technology.

However, even if the success rates of cloning were to improve and the medical risks were diminished, a number of major concerns would remain. For example, is there anything intrinsically problematic with creating an individual who is not produced through fertilization of an egg by a sperm? Further study is needed to resolve questions regarding the essential nature of procreation in God's design.

Another of the most often expressed concerns is that the dignity and uniqueness of a cloned person may be jeopardized. This risk includes the psychological harm that might be experienced by an individual who would be what some have called the "delayed identical twin" of the individual who provided the initial cell. Do existing persons have the right to exercise such a level of control over the genetic destiny of a new individual?

Concern also exists that human cloning might undermine family relationships. Commitments to both



the unitive and the procreative functions of human sexual relationships might be diminished. For example, the questionable practice of using a gestational surrogate may, at times, be considered. The use of a donor cell from an individual other than the married couple may introduce problems of relationships and responsibilities.

An additional major risk is that cloning could lead to expedient uses of those who are cloned, with their value assigned primarily on the basis of their utility. For example, there could be a temptation to clone individuals to serve as sources of transplantable organs. Others have worried about the deliberate creation of subservient individuals whose autonomy would be violated. Egotistical or narcissistic individuals might be inclined to use the technology in order to "duplicate" themselves.

Finally, the financial costs of cloning would likely be considerable even after significant technological improvements. If human cloning were commercialized, conflicting interests might add to the risk of abuse.

While this is only a partial list of potential risks and misuses of human cloning, it should be sufficient to give pause to Christians who wish to apply the moral principles of their faith to the matter of human cloning. Still, it is important that concerns about the abuses of a technology not blind us to the possibilities of using it to meet genuine human needs.¹ The possibility of human cloning, even if remote, motivates this statement of relevant Christian principles.

The following ethical principles are intended to apply to somatic cell nuclear transfer if that technology is ever applied to human beings. The rapid pace of progress in this field will require periodic review of these principles in light of new developments.

1. Protection of vulnerable human life. Scripture is clear in its call to protect human life, especially those lives that are most vulnerable (Deut 10:17-19; Isa 1:16, 17; Matt 25:31-46). The biological technology of cloning is ethically unacceptable whenever it poses disproportionate risk of harm to human life.

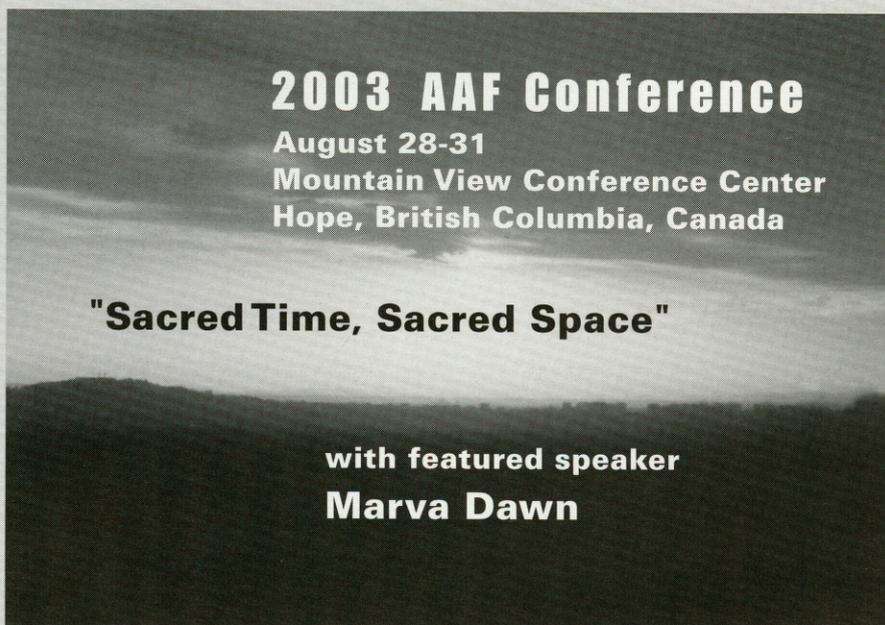
2. Protection of human dignity. Human beings were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26, 27) and were thus endowed with personal dignity that calls for respect and

protection (Gen 9:6). Cloning may threaten human dignity in a number of ways and must thus be approached with resolute moral vigilance. Any use of this technology that undermines or diminishes the personal dignity or autonomy of human beings must be rejected. This moral prohibition applies to all human cloning that would value human life primarily for its utilitarian function or commercial value.

3. Alleviating human suffering. It is a Christian responsibility to prevent suffering and to preserve the quality of human life (Acts 10:38; Luke 9:2). If it is possible to prevent genetic disease through the use of somatic cell nuclear transfer, the use of this technology may be in keeping with the goal of preventing avoidable suffering.

4. Family support. God's ideal plan is for children to develop in the context of a loving family with the presence, participation, and support of both mother and father (Prov 22:6; Ps 128:1-3; Eph 6:4; 1 Tim 5:8). Any use of somatic cell nuclear transfer as a means of assisting human reproduction should thus be within the context of the fidelity of marriage and support of stable family life. As with other forms of assisted reproduction, the involvement of third parties, such as surrogates, introduces moral problems that are best avoided.

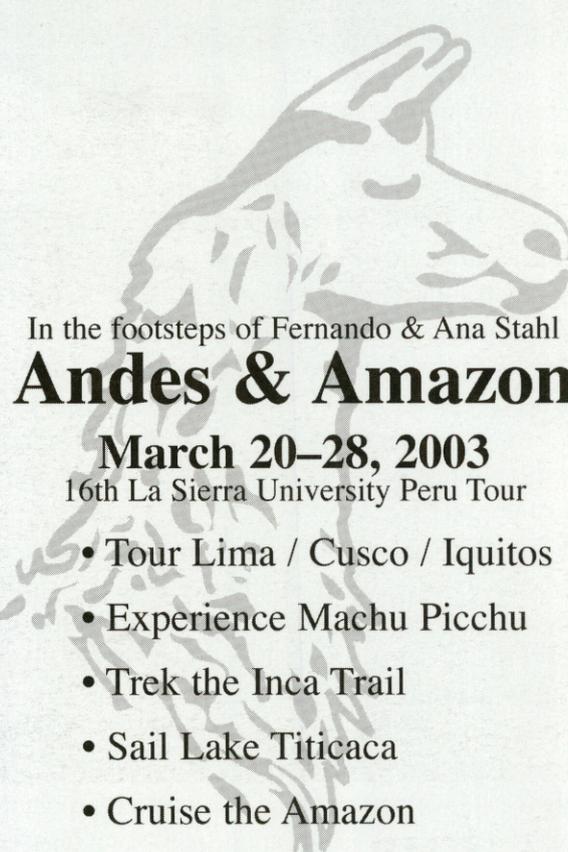
5. Stewardship. The principles of Christian stewardship (Luke 14:28; Prov 3:9) are important for all types of assisted human reproduction including the possibility of somatic cell nuclear transfer, which is likely to be very costly. Married couples seeking such



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assistance should consider the expenses involved in terms of their exercise of faithful stewardship.

6. Truthfulness. Honest communication is one of Scripture's mandates (Prov 12:22; Eph 4:15, 25). Any proposed use of cloning should be informed by the most accurate information available, including the nature of the procedure, its potential risks, and its costs.

7. Understanding God's creation. God intends for human beings to grow in their appreciation and understanding of His creation, which includes knowledge regarding the human body (Matt 6:26-29; Ps 8:3-9; 139:1-6; 13-16). For this reason, efforts to understand the biological structures of life through ethical research should be encouraged.

Given our present state of knowledge and the current refinement of somatic cell nuclear transfer, the use of this technique for human cloning is deemed unacceptable by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Given our responsibility to alleviate disease and to enhance the quality of human life, continued appropriate research with animals is deemed acceptable.

1. There may be future situations in which human cloning could be considered beneficial and morally acceptable. It is possible, for example, to imagine circumstances in which cloning may be contemplated within the context of marriage as the only available means of reproduction for a couple who cannot participate in normal procreation. In other cases, potential parents may be carriers of defective genetic alleles, and they may wish to avoid the risk of giving birth to a child with a genetic disease. The use of somatic cell nuclear transfer might assist such parents in having a child who would be free of genetic disorder. Of course, many of the concerns about personal identity and dignity would still remain even in the context of family fidelity. As with other forms of assisted human reproduction, potential blessings of somatic cell nuclear transfer must be weighed against the risks.

This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Sunday, September 27, 1998, in Iguacu Falls, Brazil.

2002 International Faith and Science Conference



Ron Carter
addresses the
2002 International
Faith and Science
Conference.

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A Family Affair

By Edwin A. Karlow

It was my privilege to participate in the International Faith and Science Conference (IFSC) in Ogden, Utah, August 23-29, 2002. Convened by the General Conference at a total cost of \$55,000, the event drew 84 participants from over 20 countries. All of the Church's world divisions were represented.

Included were twenty church administrators, four pastors, eighteen theologians, thirty-five scientists, and seven invitees from the General Conference, including the editors of *Ministry*, *Adult Bible Study Guides*, *Adventist Review* and *Signs of the Times*. In addition, six lay members attended. Regrettably, the list of attendees included only two women. The employing organizations of the attendees covered their cost of travel and housing.

Organizers intend the meeting to be the first of a series, including regional meetings throughout the world in 2003, and culminating with another international conference in 2004 to summarize the dialogue regarding the Church's understanding and explanation of Genesis 1-11.

Motivation for this series of meetings came from an action of the Geoscience Research Institute board. In 1998, the board had recommended to the General Conference president "that consideration be given to appointment of

an ad hoc study committee for the purpose of exploring the theological and scientific implications of various views of Genesis 1-11, and developing a more explicit Adventist theology of origins.”

The board's action included the suggestion that the study committee be limited to ten to fifteen members. The IFSC organizing committee wisely disregarded that limitation, and sought to assemble a much larger, more diverse, and more representative group of participants.

In his introduction to the conference, Lowell Cooper, chair of the organizing committee, reminded us “this conference is intended as a dialogue. It is not charged with the obligation of defining or redefining Seventh-day Adventist doctrinal beliefs. . . . The first objective is to broaden our understanding of the questions and issues involved. Accordingly, greater emphasis will be given to awareness than to advocacy of ideas.”

To that end, the conference did not vote a final statement of its accomplishments, nor was a statement or set of recommendations prepared in advance. Conferencees were instead reminded throughout the conference that their task was to identify issues, not solve problems.

However, in his Friday night address General Conference president Jan Paulsen affirmed that the Church already has a clearly defined belief with regard to creation. “We believe that this earth and life on it was created in six literal days and that the age of the earth since then is a young one.” Recognizing that some “come from a perspective which is not where I am,” he stated, “you are a necessary partner to the conversations we are having.”

Paulsen urged attendees to “carry on this conversation without being divided into camps.” He encouraged them to “sense the things that also bind us together in the family,” in hopes “that the common love that we have for the Church will be predominant and will be perceived in what we are doing together. God will bless us.”

Finally, he made clear that we cannot shrink from this difficult task. “Not to engage in this conversation is simply to pretend and not face the realities as they are.”

Talking Points

Organizers for this conference assigned topics, and they asked some presenters to review several competing viewpoints.

The papers began with one by Richard M. Davidson that examined the textual evidence for a literal understanding of the story of origins as recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. Although stoutly defending a literal creation week of seven days, he chose the “passive gap” interpretation

of texts from Genesis 1:1, 2 to Genesis 1:3, which allows for the possibility of much older (“millions of years”) pre-fossil rocks.

Randall Younker followed with a paper that explored the evidence for cultural influence upon the writer and hearers of Genesis, and concluded that Genesis 1 and 2 “portray a God who steps into and interacts with human history.” Younker asserted that the texts are historical and accurate, though not to be taken as “science” in today's terms.

After Younker, Fritz Guy argued for reading the Genesis accounts as primarily theological in nature. He reminded attendees that reading the text “literalistically” is itself an interpretation, and that “no interpretation has a preferred status.”

The next presenter was Gerhard Pfandl, who showed that in almost every instance Ellen White wrote about the age of the earth she did so without intending to measure time since creation. Surprisingly, no one contested Pfandl's conclusion.

Another high point at the beginning of the conference was a presentation by John T. Baldwin, who reviewed concordist approaches to the relationship between faith and science. Baldwin argued for a link between the parallel phrases in Exodus 20:11 and Revelation 14:7, which refer to the Lord having made the heavens, earth, and seas. According to Baldwin, by implication, the phrase “in six days” found in Exodus must also apply in Revelation. Although some conferencees liked a conclusion that linked the great controversy story with creation, others did not find it persuasive.

After this theological introduction, scientists were invited to join in. H. Thomas Goodwin and Kevin E. Nick provided a brief but illustrative treatment of the evidences for evolutionary theory. Their presentation included an overview of the geologic column and an analysis of how the paradigm of long ages (millions of years) successfully unifies many disciplines dependent upon data from the column, whereas a shorter chronology does not.

Lee Spencer then made a case for the taxonomic similarity of fossil hominids, which carries the strong suggestion of evolutionary development. The discussion of evolution continued with Ron Carter, who suggested that although evolution as a worldview cannot be tested, hypotheses of how evolution might have occurred can be. Thus, evolutionary hypothesizing can be placed squarely in the camp of legitimate science.

Hearing that Adventists do not hold to “fixity of species” was new to many in the audience, and learning that there is little distinction between micro- and macroevolu-

tion seemed to remove one more “safe” expression from the lexicon of creation/evolution debates.

To some in the audience, these ideas were unfamiliar; they sounded strange coming from fellow Adventist colleagues. Many left that particular session feeling uneasy, fearful they were being sold a line of evolutionary thinking. However, the conference planners had deliberately scheduled presentations that way, and Goodwin and Nick returned the next day to present a distinctly Adventist perspective.

Goodwin and Nick returned to tell how, motivated by belief in a short chronology, they had built models that adequately interpret some aspects of geological and paleontological data. In contrast to traditional evolutionary modes, which assume slow rates of depositions over time, theirs assumes rapid burial of fossilized remains and the associated sediments and gives credence to flood scenarios.

Goodwin and Nick cited the Cambrian explosion as an example of the sudden appearance of new life forms without precursor in the geologic column, thus suggesting some form of creative activity.

However, they also pointed out that none of the creatures alive today that can be traced to ancestors found in the Cambrian bear any resemblance to those creatures whatsoever. This fact augurs for some kind of evolutionary change since the Cambrian explosion, claimed Goodwin.

Two other scientific papers also offered strategies for approaching the study of the natural world with biblical motivations. Leonard Brand illustrated how hypothesis development and testing in science find parallels in religion. Affirming a framework of a recent seven-day creation event and a global flood, Brand uses biblical insight to form hypotheses and encourage research.

James Gibson, the second of this pair, reminded attendees that extra-biblical teaching can creep in when the text of the Bible is ambiguous. For instance, antibiblical writers in the nineteenth century promulgated the flat earth myth on the basis of wording in the

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Bible that refers to the four corners of the earth. In other places, the Bible refers to the circle of the earth. Gibson invited listeners not to see the Bible in conflict with itself, but to understand that science has clarified points left indeterminate in the Bible.

However, Gibson was not optimistic about harmonizing biblical and scientific views of the natural world. As practiced today, modern science is independent of any explanation that involves God, thus placing it in a category that Ellen White called “false science . . . something independent of God” (*Messages to Young People*, 190). According to Gibson, “we cannot legitimately apply Ellen White’s statements of expected harmony to the current practice of science.”

Gibson quoted Ellen White: “I have been warned that henceforth we shall have a constant contest. Science, so-called, and religion will be placed in opposition to each other, because finite men do not comprehend the power and greatness of God” (*Evangelism*, 593).

During the final full day of the conference attendees returned to considerations of theological

implications for alternate models and the problem of living with uncertainty where science and theology seem to be irreconcilable. In relation to this line of thought, Richard Rice evaluated the problem of evil, saying that it is pervasive, and, even without the entanglements of evolution, challenges our concepts of a good and loving God.

Rice also pointed out that, for a number of Christian thinkers, “evolution not only reveals God’s power and intelligence: it also reveals God’s love and goodness.” The kenosis, or emptying, attributed to Jesus in the hymn of Philippians 2:5-11 finds its parallel in “the costly course of evolution thus expressing the self-giving and self-restraint that characterize all of God’s dealings with his creatures.”



Soon after Rice's presentation, Marco Terreros tackled the topic of death before sin. In his view, thinking about the possibility of death before the fall could offer an attractive way out of the problems of ancient fossils in the geologic column and evidence for ancient humans.

Terreros suggested that the death of bacteria and vegetable composts should not be included in the curse of death that resulted from the fall. However, if such death is only a natural problem, it could have a natural solution and need no supernatural intervention, such as God's entry into human history through the Incarnation. Terreros suggested that we recognize discontinuity between creation and Providence. "The present conditions of a world fallen into sin must not be made the measure of the so-called natural conditions of an unfallen creation," he concluded.

Another major theological issue in relation to creation is the Sabbath, which Norman Gulley examined. Gulley looked at the issue of whether the Sabbath made sense linked to Christ as Lord of the Sabbath rather than as the climax of a literal creation week. He reviewed the perspectives of several Adventist writers who seemed to distance themselves from the literal meanings of the Genesis story.

Gulley suggested that in each case they had abandoned the Church's historic position on the Sabbath as a memorial of creation. "Any question about the literal, historical, six-day week with a seventh-day Sabbath in the creation record jettisons the foundational biblical record for the Sabbath," he concluded.

John Brunt gave one of the last papers, which discussed how the Church can deal with uncertainty and pluralism. Brunt's presentation used a musical metaphor. If we acknowledge that all of our interpretations of Scripture are imperfect, he suggested, then we should at least expect these various voices to sing in harmony rather than cacophony.

To continue the metaphor, producing harmony requires agreement on at least the key signature and meter. We all agree that God is Creator and that the universe came into existence at his command. But we find it difficult to make a harmonious chord of our various understandings of how and when that creation was effected.

In a related presentation, Frank Hasel asserted that we seek integration of faith and science, not separation or segregation. "Integration is possible only on the basis of some higher authority that can be appealed to and that provides the basis and parameter for a harmonious integration. For Adventists this integrating authority is the Bible."

To Hasel, integration does not combine two equal partners, but must be understood as the integration of reason into faith, which implies that faith has priority. Thus, science can never interpret Scripture; it must always be the other way around.

Hasel's respondents found his position problematic, however. They claimed that it derives its motivations from the legitimately tentative and incomplete nature of science, but that it also assumes faith and doctrine derived from Scripture have an absolute, unchanging nature. Furthermore, they faulted Hasel's line of reasoning for failing to acknowledge that science and theology are both human activities.

Identifying Issues

As the conference ended, many of the nonscientists expressed a desire to hear more about topics like radioactive dating and why arguments for long ages and evolutionary development seem so compelling. The overall balance of the presentations and breakout discussions had been toward the theological/philosophical side, and attendees realized they needed to hear more "hard evidence" from science.

In what was the most personal—but also the most speculative—paper of the conference, Brian Bull traced his own journey in faith and science. He offered a tentative "long ages" synthesis of his "two incommensurate worlds"—the world of science encountered during his work week, and, "by faith," the world of Genesis he encountered on Sabbath.

Bull's presentation indicates that he longs for a decisive experiment to settle the question of long versus short ages for earth history. However, he admitted that if the long chronology is really true, then "the world that lies at the center of my spiritual understanding drifts away from my outstretched fingers and I am left with a dark and featureless void."

These words prompted one theologian to confess that he had "finally heard the angst of the scientists" who struggle with these issues.

Perplexing Conversation

As the week progressed, I became increasingly perplexed as to what the "family conversation" to which President Paulsen referred in his opening and closing comments could amount to.

On one hand, the interpretation of Scripture that several theologians presented appeared so tight that it seemed nothing external to the biblical text could

have any bearing upon the understanding of that text. The preeminence of Scripture seemed to preclude contact with God's other book—the natural world.

On the other hand, many of the scientists admitted that the vocabulary of evolution, as well as creation, is useful in their descriptions of the natural world.

The scientists urged attendees to separate questions of origins from questions of change through time. On this point, there seemed to be a scant possibility that the textual evidence for Genesis 1:1 in reference to creation of the universe as a whole, separate from the creation of the earth in the succeeding verses, allows for this distinction. As one participant summarized matters, the rocks are old, but life is new.

This was a pebble-sized consolation in a field of boulder-sized problems! But perhaps it symbolizes the incremental progress we must accept while trying to keep the lines of communication open among the members of our church family.

Still, the question remains: What kind of conversation can we have? If our Scriptural understandings are exempt from the influences of contemporary science, and if science must rely on a worldview that lacks the dynamic vocabulary of change, there seems to be little hope for meaningful dialogue.

Both theology and science are human enterprises. The presuppositions we bring to the table do not belong to either. Can we, with impunity, elevate one over the other? It is one thing to claim Scripture as preeminent, but another to claim an interpretation of Scripture as preeminent. Science has no claim on ultimate reality. However, neither should its findings, however tentative, be discarded as irrelevant to understand that reality.

As the conference ended, I wrestled with the gnawing feeling that attendees had talked past each other, speaking, as it were, on different levels and in different directions. Perhaps this was inevitable. This conference was a first, bringing together fellow believers with widely differing viewpoints about creation.

Like an estranged family, attendees struggled to hear past the words and decipher their intended meaning. I wondered if we could ever find common ground beyond our mutual commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord, Creator, and Redeemer.

Fortunately, the conference ended on an upbeat note. Conferees left the door of dialogue wide open. Indeed, there is no other choice.

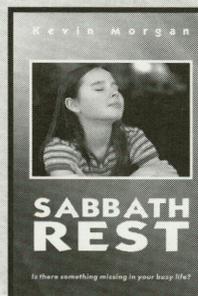
I look forward to the regional meetings next year.

Edwin A. Karlow is chair and professor of physics at La Sierra University. He has been a member of the Geoscience Research Institute board since 1991.

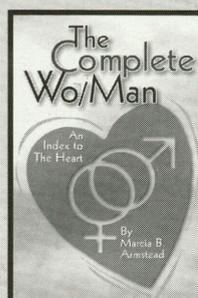
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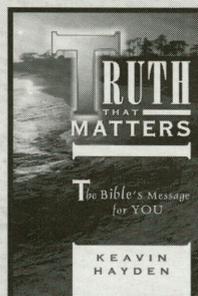
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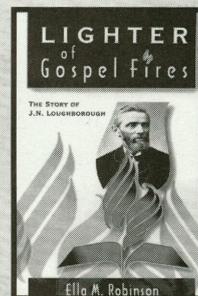
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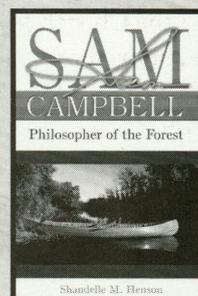
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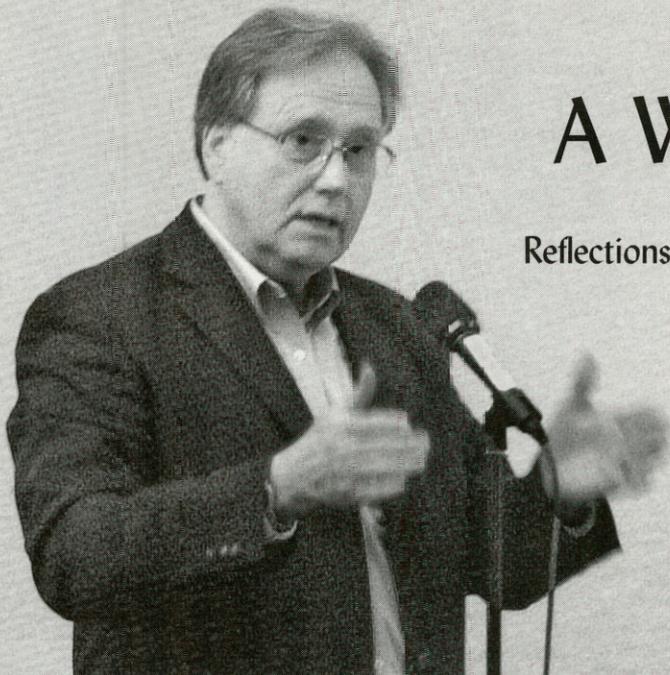
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A Work in Progress . . .

Reflections on the International Faith and Science Conference

By Richard J. Bottomley

Jan Paulsen speaking at the 2002 International Faith and Science Conference in Ogden, Utah.

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Most Seventh-day Adventists are aware of the apparent conflict between the findings of science and our traditional view of origins. To many Adventists, it is a simple case of scientists, who, under Satan's influence, deny the plain facts of the flood and young earth all around us. It is easy to form this impression from reading our church literature. But to those who have looked at this issue more deeply, it is apparent that there is a much greater problem that defies such a simple-minded characterization. So, although all Adventists are creationists, there is a variety of views about the method and timing of God's creation.

To address this problem in a responsible way, the Church convened The International Faith and Science Conference in Ogden, Utah, late in August. Since this is a sensitive issue and the Church didn't want to signal any movement on this issue, the conference was limited to a small group, mostly church employees, and closed to most outside observers. Participants were counseled to be careful in discussing the content of the conference after its conclusion. Readers can see the official press release on the General Conference Web site at <www.adventist.org/news/data/2002/08/index.htm/en>. This conference is to be followed by further conferences next year, probably on a division level, as well as a final wrap-up meeting in 2004.

At this conference, points of view were presented, but there was limited formal and informal discussion of the issues. Since the flood was specifically left off the agenda, there was no attempt at synthesis. Metaphorically, the conference set the table, introduced the dinner guests to each other, and increased awareness of their special menu needs, but the meal, which remains to be served, promises to be long.

In retrospect, three distinct groups seemed to be represented at the conference, each with its own set of concerns and questions.

The Administrators

How does one administer a church that may have a plurality of views on divisive issues such as abortion rights in America, polygamy in Africa, and the age of the earth? The Church has used a variety of approaches. It decides that some issues—like abortion—are best left to individual believers. Some issues, like polygamy, are division-level concerns, but most members would see issues such as creation and a worldwide flood as cornerstones of our basic identity as a denomination.

Must the Church speak with one voice on such an issue, or is it possible to have more than one model of creation within the church community? How would we do this? Should we purge? Punish? Accommodate? Compromise? Is politics or truth the best policy when seeking to administer a large worldwide church? What happens when administrators please one group but infuriate another? Is the Church standing firm or firmly rejecting progressive truth? Can the Church survive if it abandons progressive truth?

Practical concerns such as these are the bane of effective administration.

The Theologians

This was the largest group at the conference because it included many of the scientists in attendance, who follow the lead of the officially sanctioned theologians. It is clear from recent publications of the Church that many of its theologians believe in the need for a literal reading of the first chapters of Genesis, not only because of the text itself, but also because Jesus and Paul appear to endorse or quote the Genesis accounts.

Many theologians believe that if Genesis is interpreted in a nonliteral way the truth of the Ten Commandments, the Bible, and the ministry of Christ himself are compromised and faith becomes impossible. Like a row of dominoes, if one loses faith in the literal historicity of Genesis, every spiritual guidepost will fall until nothing is left except unbelief. In this view, it becomes spiritual suicide to see Genesis as a parable. Add to this the importance of accepting the Great Controversy as literal in every respect and the case seems open and shut.

To understand why many scientists are included in this group, we must look at the interaction of the rational processes of science and the spiritual nature of belief. Some Christian scientists assert that they believe in a six-day creation and the flood and offer scientific evidence to support themselves. On the other

hand, other Christian scientists claim that there is no evidence for a young earth or a universal flood.

Why does such a gap exist if both groups include scientists? First, one has to ascertain whether the scientist in question speaks after considering all the pertinent evidence or whether he holds an a priori assumption that the official theologians are correct. This assumption then requires the “loyal” scientist to disregard the preponderance of evidence for no reason other than his unwavering faith in traditional beliefs. This type of scientist will then focus only on the anomalies of the data or prudently avoid the intellectual minefield of the larger picture.

On the other hand, another Adventist scientist may believe he must face the variant evidence squarely as an ongoing revelation of God’s working in nature and assume that, through this evidence, God is saying something significant about how he created.

The Scientists

For clarity, the scientists I have included in this group accept the legitimacy of applying the methods of science to the study of origins. Members of this group do not let their faith statement override the scientific method in these matters. Several theologians at the Ogden conference could also be considered members of this group because they understand scientific evidence in the same way as the scientists.

Scientists seem to be causing all the problems. If they quietly went away, the questions of the other two groups would evaporate. However, unless you are a scientist—or are friends of one—it is difficult to see the depth of the problem scientists face. They clearly see the working of God through the laws of nature and understand that the same laws apply to the study of earth’s history. Why should the methods of science have worked well going back to 2000 B.C., and then suddenly have gone haywire?

Scientists clearly see data indicating that God created over a long period of time and that the death of living organisms preceded the Edenic event, some 6,000 years ago. Most of these scientists have learned to integrate such discoveries with their own belief in





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Richard Davidson asking questions at the 2002 International Faith and Science Conference in Ogden, Utah.

God and their Adventist heritage. But this causes friction with other believers who take the traditional position. Should scientists be allowed to discuss these issues openly? Should they be allowed to teach in Adventist schools? Should they even be allowed to remain as church members?

It is difficult to understand the angst and pain of these scientists, who live and worship in “two incommensurate worlds,” as one speaker aptly stated matters. They in no way want to cause problems for their church, but they know they must follow the call to truth that God has placed in their hearts.

Continuing the Conference Process

The fears of each group keep them from having a fruitful dialogue with each other. Members of each must answer serious questions among themselves if they hope to be taken seriously in discussion. The issue at hand will not be resolved logically or scientifically until these underlying fears are addressed openly.

What basic questions must be addressed for the Church to move forward and resolve this dilemma? In general, each group must engage in serious introspection, including consideration of the possibility that the group itself may be wrong on some issues. In addition, each has its own set of issues.

Administration. Can we administer a church with a two-model system? Has it been done successfully elsewhere? Would the overseas divisions accept this approach if it became the norm in North America? In setting policy

on difficult issues, should we listen only to theologians and scientists who give us answers with which we are already comfortable?

Theologians. Can we accept in good faith that two people can read the same passage of Scripture and come away with different understandings? Are we reading the Genesis text using only the exegesis of Ellen White? Why don't other denominations give up Christ and Christianity even though they view Genesis as a parable? What about hints

in Genesis that the animals didn't have eternal life in the first place? What is the relationship between sin and physical (not spiritual) death?

Scientists. Because it is the scientists who are asking for change, their questions are the most difficult. Can we restate the essentials of our Adventist heritage knowing that the death of plants and animals preceded human sin? Can we retain the essentials of the Great Controversy model—with its idea of a remnant church—yet integrate it with a more realistic understanding of origins? What have other Adventists and Christians thought about these issues? Is there any reasonable doubt about the validity of the scientific evidence speaking to the creation and flood traditions?

Sustaining the Conversation

It is unlikely that the Church can resolve these questions about origins in any definitive way on any reasonable timescale. Given the difficulty of the issue for most church members, scientists would probably favor having the Church adopt a two-model approach to Genesis. The first would be a traditional interpretation that assumes the literality of the Genesis account. There would be no need to buttress this account with pseudoscience because the people who held this model would understand it is justified by the Genesis text alone.

The second model would be an honest attempt to integrate the Genesis account with good science, while still upholding the important spiritual truths of the Genesis account. Although each group would hold

The call of God's Spirit

different models, the same fundamental theology of Genesis 1-2 would unite them. This theology would include beliefs in one God, the goodness of his creation, and the Sabbath as a memorial of creation. Each model would affirm belief in the Creator, but each would agree to disagree on the Creator's methods.

Because this is such a complex issue, a sustained process of honest communication is needed on this topic. Could the General Conference set up an effective study group made up of scientists and theologians who are flexible enough to work through these questions together? Could we charge this group with coming up with a new, realistic statement of

Adventist fundamentals consistent with the findings of science to see if it can be done? The work of this group could then be considered by a larger body, possibly another Ogden-type meeting. Can we restore the idea of progressive truth, which was such a powerful part of our early heritage but has seldom been seen on the Adventist landscape in recent years?

Could the Adventist Church recognize that the Christian life is one of growth in understanding of God and his ways, not just growth in spiritual piety alone? Can the Church feed people at the appropriate level? Children often eat simpler food than adults. Is that not also true in religious life? Could we recognize that there are already many Adventists in good standing who would appreciate good counsel, writings, and discussion on these issues at a much deeper level than is now available? The Church needs to appeal to the best and brightest of Adventist minds. It must cherish and honor them as full brothers and sisters in faith.

Several Points to Remember

As it was in the times of Copernicus and Galileo, the Church through the ages has often believed that accepting the results of science will weaken or destroy faith. Yet history shows repeatedly that the Christian Church has always survived with its vital message

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intact. The call of God's Spirit on the soul of man is independent of discoveries about God's creative acts in nature. It is entirely possible that the new insights God grants us through the study of nature will help us gain new insights into problems such as why Christ's Second Coming has been delayed.

A study of American scientists in 1916 showed that about 40 percent were believers. It was predicted that as time went on this proportion would decrease and that faith would gradually die out among scientists as education and knowledge increased. Yet a repeat of this survey published in *Nature* in 1997 showed that the proportion

had actually remained the same. Faith was not destroyed by the findings of modern science during the twentieth century despite the worst fears of church members.

However, what can destroy faith is a church that does not answer in an intelligent manner a person's sincere questions.

This observation tells us something we already know deep in our hearts: God's great church is real to every age, and it reinvents its outward form to enable it to witness effectively the truth of the gospel to each succeeding generation.

I believe the meeting at Ogden is an outward sign of the vitality of this process at work in the heart of the great Advent movement. May the dialogue continue.

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A New Era of Ellen G. White Studies?

By Douglas Morgan

The First International Conference on Ellen G. White and SDA History may well serve to mark an era in the ongoing history of the role of Ellen G. White and her writings. However, it will require the clarity of hindsight or someone with greater insight on current developments than this observer has to characterize that era concisely and to summarize clearly just how the conference reflected it.

If one were to ask, Was the conference . . . (a) based on conservative assumptions about Ellen G. White's role and authority; (b) conducted in an irenic and open spirit; (c) oriented more toward building faith than debating divisive historical and theological issues; (d) devoted more to the practical and pastoral concerns involved in the participants' professional responsibilities than to theoretical questions; or, (e) marked by advances in scholarship; the answer would have to be . . . all of the above

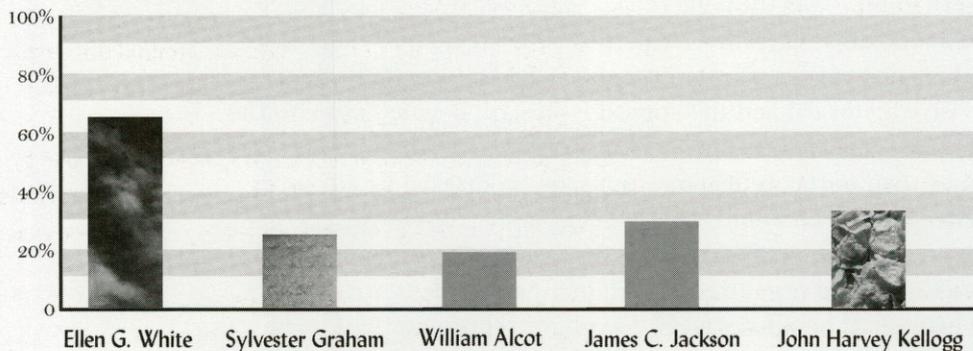
The event, funded by the General Conference on the recommendation of the White Estate and organized in conjunction with Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary faculty, brought representatives from around the world to the Historic Adventist Village in Battle Creek, Michigan, May 15-19, 2002. It was not a typical scholarly conference, though a number of scholars did attend and present papers. It did not focus on a particular theme or issue, though some topics stood out for frequent recurrence. It was not mainly organized to defend the authority of Ellen G. White from some great challenge, though considerable attention was given to concerns about authority and countering misinformation from antagonists.

Nor was it precisely a conference for an identifiable profession, but that may be the most nearly accurate description because it was intended mainly for those who hold church positions specifically concerned with passing on the heritage of Ellen G. White: college teachers of Adventist history and "prophetic guidance," personnel from the several branch research centers of the White Estate, and "spirit of prophecy" coordinators from various world divisions.

Denis Fortin, associate dean of the Seminary, who coordinated the conference along with fellow seminary professor Jerry Moon, and James Nix, director of the White Estate, described four objectives for the gathering: (a) to “strengthen faith in Ellen White’s spiritual gift and understanding of her role” in the church; (b) to “facilitate networking” among the participants; (c) to “create a forum for discussion of difficult issues;” and (d) to discuss how to “present Ellen White to young people” most effectively.

Of the 65 participants, 40 percent came from outside North America. The General Conference funded the participation of one college educator and one additional representative appointed from each world division. For North America, expenses were also paid for one teacher from each college and university.

Health and Medical Statement Accuracy



The number of women participants—I counted six—seemed sparse, especially for a conference focused on a female prophet.

The speakers and themes that marked the plenary session pointed toward a conservative general framework for the conference. The setting itself, a replica of the meetinghouse constructed by the Adventist pioneers in 1857, evoked an aura of sacred history, augmented by inspirational stories and testimonials.

In his plenary address on May 16, Alberto Timm issued a trenchant, programmatic call for defending the authority of Ellen G. White against current threats. Director of the Brazilian Ellen G. White Research Center, Timm characterized the current era of challenges to Ellen G. White’s role as a “globalization of

criticism” in which attacks from the past led by Dudley M. Canright and later from Adventist academic circles in the 1970s and 1980s have been repackaged and made easily accessible throughout the world on antagonistic Web sites. Additionally, dissidents in the independent ministries on the right have in some instances jumped ahead of the Church in spreading unauthorized translations and publications in various regions.

All of this comes at a time when the Church is rapidly adding millions of new members, often with minimal indoctrination, who are particularly susceptible to distorted information on Ellen G. White. Timm urged that the Church meet this challenge head on, calling for effective evaluation of “the overall profile and commitment to Ellen G. White’s writings of the professors of the theological seminaries and schools of

pastoral training.” In addition, he recommended adoption of “more effective strategies for building the faith of thousands of new converts who are added daily,” such as subsidizing low-cost translations to impoverished, developing countries and better utilization of technology.

Other plenary session speakers included Herbert E. Douglass, author of the recently published *Messenger of the Lord*, and Don Schneider, president of the North American Division. Douglass, whose book has been acclaimed for its comprehensiveness and high standard of scholarship, passionately contended for Ellen G. White as a normative theologian. The “great controversy theme,” Douglass argued, integrates Mrs. White’s writings into the most credible and satisfying system of Christian theology ever produced, in which “the doctrinal divisions that have troubled the Church for forty years dissolve like Jell-O on a hot July day.”

During the Sabbath morning worship hour, Schneider exhorted Adventist educators that their highest priority should be their students’ relationship

with Jesus. "The Seventh-day Adventist Church has not a dime to spend on a teacher who isn't leading students to Jesus," declared the North American Division president. It was a fitting capstone to a conference in which participants devoted a major portion of their energies to seeking ways to build faith in the ministry of Ellen G. White and the Adventist Church as means to spiritual health and salvation.

If the conference took traditional affirmations concerning Ellen G. White's role and authority as essentially fixed foundations and placed emphasis on strategies for building commitment to those affirmations, it also welcomed diverse viewpoints and advances in understanding based on fair-minded critical scholarship. Alden Thompson of Walla Walla College, not generally perceived as a bulwark of conservatism, took a prominent role. In addition to giving the Friday morning devotional talk, "My Pilgrimage with Ellen G. White," Thompson utilized his models of inspiration in a presentation on "Taking the Fear Out of Ellen White Studies," given in one of the four "breakout" sections from which participants could choose in morning and afternoon sessions.

Two of the more noteworthy examples of research findings came during those breakout sessions. Australian physician Don McMahon reported on his in-depth analysis of the assertions of nineteenth-century health reformers, including Ellen G. White, measured in terms of their congruity with current consensus on medical knowledge. No one seemed unduly perturbed by McMahon's conclusion that only 66 percent of Ellen G. White's health and medical statements in her book *Ministry of Healing* would be deemed accurate by modern standards (considerable slippage from the 100 percent PAQ—"prophetic accuracy quotient"—touted some 25 years ago by Rene Noorbergen in *Prophet of Destiny*). The relative serenity can probably be attributed in large measure to the fact that other and more famous health reformers of the era fared far worse—Sylvester Graham (29 percent), William Alcott (27 percent), James C. Jackson (34 percent), and John Harvey Kellogg (37 percent).

Craig Newborn of the Oakwood College branch office of the White Estate addressed the racial identity of Ellen G. White's ancestors—a topic that has generated considerable discussion in the past few

Alberto Timm issued a trenchant, programmatic call for defending the authority of Ellen G. White against current threats.



years. Newborn presented a fascinating close-up look at almost a century of investigation and interchange on this issue, and then concluded with late-breaking news. Only a week prior to the conference, the White Estate had received a report it had commissioned from an impressively credentialed genealogist that appears to establish decisively that there is no connection between the Gould family of Ellen's maternal ancestry and the Goulds of mixed racial heritage who settled in Gouldtown, New Jersey.

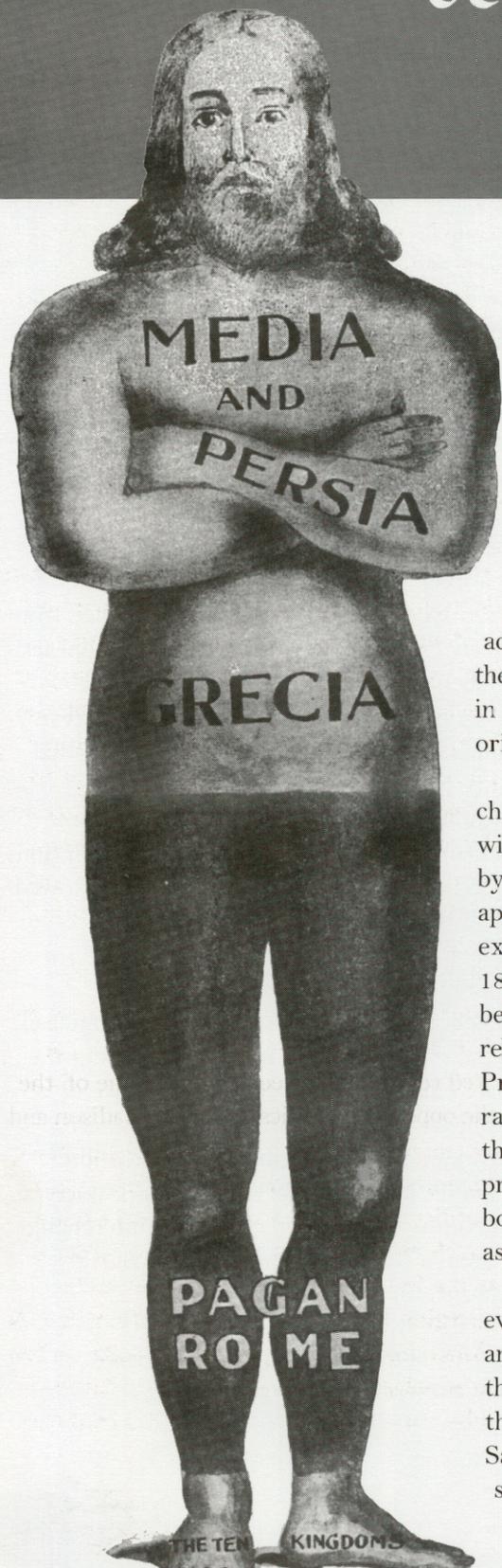
On the whole, though, concerns about how best to communicate and nurture faith in received conceptions of Ellen G. White's prophetic ministry overshadowed efforts to push the boundaries of historical understanding of her career and conceptualization of the role and function of her prophetic gift.

In a nutshell, this conference gave greater emphasis, for example, to exploration of methods for using the Internet more effectively than to the substance of what should be posted on the Internet. Even here, time was only sufficient to begin the conversation. Most participants, I think it safe to say, would welcome further opportunity for the kind of fruitful interchange on a broad agenda that was initiated at the Battle Creek Conference of 2002.

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From Antifederalism to Seventh-day Adventism

By Keith Lockhart



Among the religious groups that emerged in the early Republic, Seventh-day Adventism was the only one to assign the United States a negative prophetic role. Adventists argued that the government of the United States was to be the final enemy of God's people and that, in alliance with the Papacy, it would impose a national Sunday law and persecute those like themselves who worshiped on Saturday. Theories as to how and why this doctrine came to be adopted will differ. But there is some evidence to suggest that it was not the innovation it appeared, but the culmination of a dissenting tradition in America that went all the way back to the Antifederalists and their original objections to the existence of the Republic.¹

The biblical locus of Adventist beliefs about America is the thirteenth chapter of Revelation, which describes a beast that rises from the earth with two horns "like a lamb" and speaks "as a dragon." It is distinguished by the fact that it imitates or "makes an image" to the first beast that appears in Revelation 13, a beast that comes out of the sea. A full explanation of these creatures was first given by J. N. Andrews in 1851. The beast from the sea was the Papacy, but the two-horned beast was America—its respective horns denoting "the civil and religious power of this nation—its Republican civil power, and its Protestant ecclesiastical power." Its rise from the earth signified the rapid expansion of the United States in the nineteenth century, and the "lamb-like character" of its republican horn was typified by the proclamation in the Declaration of Independence that "All men are born free and equal, and endowed with certain inalienable rights, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."²

Although this beast was in appearance "the mildest power that ever arose," Andrews argued that its capacity to speak "as a dragon" and govern tyrannically was revealed by the existence of slavery and by the expulsion of Millerites from their churches that had taken place in the 1840s.³ The mark of the beast was the observance of Sunday as a Sabbath, and its number, 666, was perhaps the "six hundred three score and six" Protestant sects (a view that had been in circulation among Saturday-worshipping Adventists since the mid-1840s).⁴

Andrews's interpretation quickly gained ground, and in an

article published in 1854 J. N. Loughborough supplied some of the evidence needed to sustain it. Statistics were supplied to show that the United States really was “coming up” and becoming a major power in the world, and a long and passionate denunciation of slavery’s incompatibility with the Declaration of Independence emphasized the discrepancy between the beast’s lamb-like appearance and dragon-like voice. As for the number of the beast, Loughborough argued that it applied to the “Anti-Christian church,” which was united until broken up by Luther and Calvin, and then divided and subdivided “until, according to the Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, they now number about six hundred three score and six.”⁵

Loughborough acknowledged that some would “doubtless start at the idea” that the United States had the number of the beast and would persecute the saints. William Miller had held the common Protestant view that the two-horned beast was another manifestation of papal power, and other former Millerites, if they still looked to contemporary political developments for signs of the fulfillment of prophecy, focused on the great powers of Europe.⁶ However, the Seventh-day Adventist theory did not emerge fully formed. The monster was initially identified as a quasi-Catholic beast with papal and Protestant horns whose number was its 666 sects.⁷ Analysis of the articles that preceded Andrews indicates that its papal horn was then changed into a republican one before he re-identified it as the United States of America.⁸ This interpretation endured, and even survived the eventual abandonment of the theory that the number of the beast was the number of recognized sects.⁹

With its Protestant and republican horns and dragon voice, it was immediately apparent that the two-horned beast conveyed some sort of dark warning about the union of church and state in America. It may have been expressed more epigrammatically than was usual, but it was a fear that had been voiced by other dissenting groups ever since calls for closer cooperation between church and state were suggested when the Constitution was unveiled after the Philadelphia convention of 1787. The arch-Federalist John Jay saw in the new plan the opportunity, among other things, to unite “a people . . . professing the same religion.”¹⁰ Quoting Queen Anne, he made clear that the purpose of the union then being formed was, like that of the union between England and Scotland in 1707, to secure the people’s “religion, liberty and property.”¹¹

After the Constitution was ratified and the Federalists formed the Republic’s first government in 1789,

partnership between religion and politics was further encouraged. President George Washington proclaimed national religious thanksgiving days in 1789 and 1795, and his successor, John Adams, introduced humiliation and fast days in 1798 and 1799.¹² The first Congress reenacted in 1789 the Northwest Ordinance, a preexisting statute for incorporating new states. Clause three stated: “religion, morality and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind . . . shall forever be encouraged.”¹³ Washington in his farewell address of 1796 declared that “Of all the dispositions and habits that lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports.”¹⁴ The effect of the decade of Federalist government was, as many authors have noted, to embed the notion of civil religion deeply within the culture of the early Republic.¹⁵

The Antifederalists were the first group to react against this national consensus. They argued that the greatest enemies to the liberties of the people were “those who have covered their ambitious designs under the garb of a fiery zeal for religious orthodoxy” and worried that the Federalist habit of mixing religion and politics made it quite likely that the tyranny that had “happened in other countries and in other ages may . . . happen in our own country.”¹⁶ Their preferred way of forestalling such a catastrophe was the rejection of the new centralizing Constitution altogether. But failing that they campaigned for a Bill of Rights in order to establish that “no authority can or ought to be vested in, or assumed by any power whatever, that shall in any case interfere with, or in any manner controul, the right of conscience in the free exercise of religious worship.”¹⁷

Although the Antifederalists lost the overall constitutional debate and were in a minority in the inaugural Congress of 1789, they secured nationwide commitment to a Bill of Rights. Their suspicion of state-sponsored religion also reemerged as one of the elements in the opposition politics of James Madison and Thomas Jefferson. Madison took charge of the drafting of the amendments that comprised the Bill of Rights. These were ratified in 1791 and perhaps ought to be seen not so much as the last act of the constitutional settlement as the first statement of principles of Jefferson’s emerging Republican party. The first clauses of the First Amendment—“Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”—directly contradicted the



When the Virginian became president he carried out changes in the governance of the country that, for the time being, removed the reasons for any further association of the two-horned beast with America.

sentiments of clause three of the Northwest Ordinance. Jefferson himself allowed his own anticlerical views to be articulated by the Republican mouthpiece, the *Philadelphia National Gazette*, edited by Madison's friend, the poet Philip Freneau. In one editorial, the paper satirized the nation's clergy for their support for "one common religion."¹⁸

The Republican critique of the Federalists, however, also took on an apocalyptic tone. For it was during the administrations of Washington and Adams that the first connections between the infant republic and the two-horned beast were made. These began with Isaac Backus, who opposed the influence of Federalist clergy in his native New England, where the church was still established. In 1791, in commenting on the second beast in Revelation 13, he said it "hath carried blood and slavery around the world . . . as far as the first beast ever did. . . . Yet the *spiritual tyranny*, which came from Rome and England, is continued in several of the United States of America."¹⁹ In 1793, in the *Testimony of the Two Witnesses*, he expanded the thought: "The two horns are the officers of church and state, uniting their influence in schemes of power and gain, under the name of religion and government."²⁰ Backus's interpretation was then applied nationally by another anti-Federalist campaigner, John Bacon. In his *Conjectures on the Prophecies* written in 1799, he defined the beast's dragon voice as the Protestant intolerance he believed was taking hold in America: "With the 'Horns of a Lamb', do not some of them who call themselves *Protestants*, already begin to 'speak as the Dragon?'—to court his favor?— . . . to advocate with vehemence the cause of civil despotism, and to thunder out anathemas against all who oppose."²¹

Both Backus and Bacon had been Antifederalists who opposed the federal Constitution (although Backus eventually voted for it) and both were Jeffersonians who opposed Federalist rule throughout the 1790s. Backus was a prominent Baptist minister whose *Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty* set out the need for the separation of church and state as early as 1773. Bacon was by turns a Presbyterian and Congregationalist minister, a judge and politician. He was described by

one opponent "as bitter an enemy, at heart, to the federal government and its measures, as any man in existence."²² He vehemently opposed the draconian Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, and may well have had these in mind when, in the following year, he claimed to hear Protestants in the land speaking "as the Dragon."²³

Prophetic interpretation might have developed further along these lines if Jefferson had not assumed power in 1800. But when the Virginian became president he carried out changes in the governance of the country that, for the time being, removed the reasons for any further association of the two-horned beast with America. He put the clergy in their place, built further upon the Antifederalist legacy by erecting his famous "wall of separation" between church and state, and dispensed with the religious practices of his predecessors.²⁴ Elias Smith, one of the founders of the Christian Connection, proclaimed in 1805 that "As the government of this country is loved, so *king* and *priest* religion, under the name of Federalism dies away."²⁵ As a consequence of this general feeling, Bacon in 1803 transferred the two-horned beast from America to France.²⁶

Although Jefferson came close to banishing the fear of church-state despotism in America altogether, that hope foundered on several developments that occurred after he left office. The first of these was the creation of a plethora of voluntary Sabbatarian associations that were set up by Federalist clergymen such as Lyman Beecher. They included the American Bible Society (1816), the American Sunday School Union (1824), the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810), the General Union for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath (1828), the American Home Missionary Society (1826), the American Tract Society (1814), and the American Temperance Society (1826). Whatever the primary objective of these associations, they all shared the aim of reversing the supposed desecration of Sunday in the early Republic, as their campaigning literature showed.

For instance, the American Bible Society came into being after an anonymous correspondent in *The Panoplist and Missionary Magazine* argued that the "neglect

of the Sabbath,” among other vices, necessitated the formation of a nationwide Bible association.²⁷ The American Sunday School Union was organized “to strengthen the hands of the friends of pious instruction on the Lord’s day.”²⁸ The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, whose self-styled task was the “mission to the heathen,” announced itself to the public by conjuring up a nightmarish future for “this favored land” should the Sabbath “become extinct.”²⁹

The General Union for the Promotion of the Christian Sabbath was even starker in its inaugural address to American citizens. “The liberties of your country, the welfare of the world, are at stake,” it declared. “If this nation fails in her vast experiment, the world’s last hope expires—and without the moral energies of the Sabbath it will fail.”³⁰ The Sabbatarian motif of the American Home Missionary Society was soon evident from the emphasis it placed on the network of “Sabbath Schools” it started running from its second year of operation.³¹ The American Tract Society specialized in publishing titles such as *Remember the Sabbath Day to Keep it Holy*, and the American Temperance Society’s publicizing of an 1825 study that showed that abstinence made men “more attentive at public worship on the Sabbath” indicated its Sabbatarian bias from the beginning.³²

With the Federalist party approaching final disintegration, these institutions were also planned to act as a focus of opposition to the Republicans who Beecher and others held primarily responsible for the abuse of the Lord’s Day. As the Unitarian William Ellery Channing said at the time, this “artful multiplication of societies, devoted apparently to different objects,” are “all swayed by the same leaders,” and are “all intended to bear against a hated party.”³³ Channing, though, thought they represented a new kind of “despotism” and in language reminiscent of the Antifederalists he said: “the associations for promoting the observance of the Sabbath, propose several objects,” which “are not susceptible of precise definition or regulation, and which, therefore, ought to be left, where Christianity has left them, to the consciences of individuals.”³⁴

The second event that took place after Jefferson’s retirement was the long campaign to halt the Sunday mail. This was sparked by the passage of the Act Regulating the Post Office Establishment in 1810. The key ninth section required postmasters on every day of the week, including Sundays, to deliver “any letter, paper or packet, to the person entitled to or authorized to receive the same.”³⁵ The law was designed so that communications in the rapidly expanding country could pass without hindrance. But on January 4, 1811,

the Presbyterian Synod of Pittsburg, fearing for the spiritual future of the nation, presented a memorial to Congress, “praying” that post offices be kept shut on Sundays.³⁶ There then followed an unprecedented petitioning effort that resulted in 150 such memorials being deposited at Congress by 1814, and 300 by 1817.³⁷

Masterminded again by the ubiquitous Beecher, the postal campaign drew support from a wide cross section of people that included the Boston lawyer Jeremiah Evarts and, from the business community, the brothers Lewis and Arthur Tappan. At heart, the crusade was an attempt to override the First Amendment clauses that kept the church out of the state. These Antifederalist addendums to the Constitution had never really been accepted by the Federalists, as one of their ministers, Thomas Robbins, admitted at the height of the postal dispute. “The great evil of our country,” he said “has been, that we have attempted to strike out a new path to national prosperity . . . without any national religion,” and as far as he was concerned that was the cause of all the nation’s ills. “When a people are generally remiss with regard to the duties of religion” and “when the holy sabbath is disregarded . . . God is forsaken, and those who forsake him are ripe for his judgements.”³⁸ The central government, still under the sway of Jeffersonianism, was immune to the argument, however. Different Postmasters General rebuffed the Sunday lobbyists in 1811, 1815, and 1817, as did House and Senate Committees on Post Offices and Post Roads in 1812 and 1815.³⁹ Indeed, when the postal regulations were overhauled in 1825, the offending clause was reinstated in full, provoking 467 further petitions to Congress by 1829.⁴⁰

The Sunday mail campaign aroused a more widespread fear of religious tyranny than perhaps at any time since the Constitution was first made public. A countermemorial sent to Congress accused the Sabbatarians of trying “to enslave the consciences of the free citizens of this great republic.”⁴¹ In 1828, a judge declared that the mail petitioners planned an “ecclesiastical hierarchy” as “oppressive and dangerous” as the Papacy, and in 1830 an engraver likened the Sabbatarians to the reactionary “Holy Alliance” that controlled much of Europe.⁴² The Jacksonians, fresh from their electoral triumph in 1828, were equally alarmed. Two reports by Richard Johnson, who was successively Democratic chairman of the Senate Committee on Post Office and Post Roads and chairman of



the House Committee on Post Office and Post Roads, demonstrated that they were just as fearful of the mail petitioners as their Jeffersonian forebears had been.

The first report, issued in 1829, which was to resonate later with the Seventh-day Adventists, claimed that the object of government was “not to determine for any whether they shall esteem one day above another.”⁴³ The second, published in 1830, effectively brought the argument back to where it began:

Congress acts under a Constitution of delegated and limited powers. The committee look in vain to that instrument for a delegation of power authorising this body to inquire and determine what part of time, or whether any, has been set apart by the Almighty for religious exercises. On the contrary, among the few prohibitions which it contains is the one . . . that declares that Congress shall pass no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.⁴⁴

The Johnson reports were hailed by some as “a supplement to our Bill of Rights.”⁴⁵ Certainly they were the clearest statement of the separation of church and state since the case made out by the Antifederalists.

There the issue might have rested were it not for a third development—the advent of the Whigs as a party of government. In contrast to the Jacksonians, the Whigs believed in a theocracy. Their creed was best summed by an anonymous article that appeared in the *American Review*. The state “must recognize those great truths of Christianity,” the author said. “It must recognize the Almighty God who holds in his hands the destinies of nations,” and “acknowledge an eternal, immutable, and religious morality.” The state must also “recognize that doctrine of penal sanctions and of a true retributive justice, both in divine and human law, without which government has no real foundation,” and it must have “its supernatural revelation . . . by means of an acknowledged written standard.” Lastly,

“it must have its *holy time*, set apart, not simply for rest or worship, but for the religious and moral instruction of the people.” It was these things, the author contended that “constitute a nation’s true life,” and not the “paper constitutions” of the kind, the reader was left in no doubt, that had been embodied in the First Amendment religion clauses.⁴⁶

With this philosophy of government, the Whigs won power in 1840. To no one’s surprise the Whig Postmaster General, Charles Wickliffe, promptly halted Sunday service on numerous postal routes, which caused new Sabbatarian associations like the American and Foreign Sabbath Union to rejoice.⁴⁷ In addition, Wickliffe started the United States City Despatch Post, which began initially in New York. The regulations, in keeping with the new administration’s reverence for the Christian Sabbath, ensured the network’s offices were open “every day except Sundays.”⁴⁸ The Whigs governed in this vein until they lost the presidential election of 1844. However, they returned to the White House in 1848 after running once more as the “Christian party.”⁴⁹

It was during this second Whig term that Andrews wrote his article on the two-horned beast. With his declaration that the two horns “denote the civil and religious power of this nation—its Republican civil power, and its Protestant ecclesiastical power,” he was essentially offering an opposition view of a “church and state” government, precisely as Backus and Bacon had done in the 1790s. Andrews’s uncle, Charles Andrews, whom he had once planned to follow into politics, had entered the House of Representatives as a Democrat two months before he wrote the piece, so the article may have reflected the family line on the Whig administration.⁵⁰ Andrews’s claim that the mark of the beast was Sunday observance seemed particularly aimed at the Whigs who had asserted the state’s need for “holy time” and had acted to curtail the Sunday mail. The same could even be said about the number of the beast—the 666 corrupt Protestant

The American Bible Society came into being after an anonymous correspondent in the *The Panoplist and Missionary Magazine* argued that the “neglect of the Sabbath” . . . necessitated the formation of a nationwide Bible association.

groups that presumably made up (or were about to make up) the Whig religious coalition—although in fact many denominations supported the Democrats.⁵¹

Andrews's overall purpose, however, was to dramatize the dangers of the union of church and state in Whig America. He considered the two-horned beast to be actually "a church clothed with civil power and authority" that would, like the Papacy's elimination of dissenters, inevitably "put the saints of God to death."⁵² A lot of this had to do with the Adventists' own fear of persecution and their attempt to substitute the Saturday Sabbath for its Sunday counterpart. However, in identifying the two-horned beast with America at a time when it had a Whig executive, Andrews was following the exact example of church-state separatists in the Federalist period. This was the only previous time, significantly, when the United States had a theocratic government, and the only other time when the two-horned beast was applied to the Republic.

John Loughborough's article, published three years later, was equally wedded to the principles of the First Amendment. However, Loughborough singled out the campaign to end the Sunday mail as the chief example of the tyranny that lay just below America's surface. He thought the massive petitionary campaign organized by Beecher and his friends demonstrated the ease with which the United States could be coerced into a union of church and state: "If a memorial should be sent into congress with 1,000,000 names signed to it, declaring their rights were infringed upon, and praying them to pass a solemn enactment that the first day should not be profaned by labor, how soon the result would be a law upon the point."⁵³ Loughborough also sided with the Jacksonians by quoting approvingly from Richard Johnson's congressional reports.⁵⁴ It is possible that Loughborough concentrated on this issue because he was writing at a time when the Democrats were back in the White House and, unlike Andrews, did not actually have a church and state administration to rail against. But he considered his approach equally valid. That America matched the description of the two-horned beast, he said, would not surprise the "observer of the movements of the United States for a few years past."⁵⁵

Loughborough was probably not only referring to the mail campaign. He may also have been thinking about the development of the voluntary associations, even though they often pursued activities Adventists themselves promoted. The American Temperance Society's prohibitionist crusade, for example, was totally in keeping with Adventist principles, as was, in these early days, the Board of Commissioners'

campaign for Native American rights.⁵⁶ But Adventists shunned both organizations because of their overt Sabbatarianism. Adventist support for abolitionism was similarly tempered by the fact that parts of the antislavery movement were linked to the Sunday mail campaign. The American Anti-Slavery Society, for example, was founded in 1833 by Lewis and Arthur Tappan, who were veterans of Beecher's petitioning operation and ex-officers of the General Union for the Promotion of the Christian Sabbath.⁵⁷

One of the pieces of evidence another Adventist pioneer, Merritt Cornell, adduced to show that Protestantism and republicanism were together making an image to the beast in the United States was that they "are united in measures and action in their anti-slavery, temperance and Sunday-keeping reform movements."⁵⁸ Adventists took their cue here from William Ellery Channing, who believed that "all associations aiming or tending to establish sway by numbers, ought to be opposed. They create tyrants as effectively as standing armies . . . whether the opinions which they intend to put down be true or false."⁵⁹ But it was the mail campaign on which Adventists remained fixed, in the belief it would be "the principal agent" that would bring about America's final descent into tyranny.⁶⁰

In their suspicion of theocratic governments and their antipathy to the Sabbatarian associations and Sunday mail campaigners, the Adventists revealed themselves to be fairly orthodox defenders of the separation of church and state. But their similarity to the original Antifederalists in this respect was perhaps even better illustrated by their claim that slavery was the real manifestation of the beast's dragon voice. The argument they put forward was that slavery contravened the principles of the Declaration of Independence. It was this that exposed the hypocrisy of "the boasted land of liberty."⁶¹

This theory, too, began with the Antifederalists and their opposition to the Constitution. On their analysis, the document of 1787 contained at least four clauses that gave immoral support to slavery.⁶² These were dealt with in the key Antifederalist text, the "Genuine Information" by the Maryland lawyer, Luther Martin, who concluded that America had taken an historic wrong turn. The Constitution should have provided for "the *gradual abolition of slavery*." Instead it propped up an institution that was "*inconsistent with the genius of republicanism*," and



that "habituates us to *tyranny* and *oppression*."⁶³ Martin believed the new Constitution ended the common rights philosophy that had motivated American legislators in the revolutionary period. The Continental Congress had produced the Declaration of Independence. By contrast, the delegates at Philadelphia had, as another outraged Antifederalist put it, reduced "the impious principle of slavery to a constitutional system."⁶⁴

The Antifederalist view that the Constitution was a proslavery document that breached the ethos of the Declaration of Independence was later picked up by the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. First signs of this came with the birth of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833. Though largely the child of the Tappan brothers, Garrison authored the association's address to the public where he pointed out that "Congress, *under the present national compact*, has no right to interfere with any of the slave states."⁶⁵ Soon, this national compact turned into Garrison's "covenant with death" and "agreement with hell."⁶⁶ He urged the North to secede from a union "founded in unrighteousness" and "cemented with blood," and his allies advised abolitionists, North and South, to withdraw from politics completely since "no-one can take office, or throw a vote for another to hold office under the United States Constitution, without violating his anti-slavery principles."⁶⁷

Garrison's contempt for the Constitution caused him to stand outside the idea of the Christian republic so favored by the old Federalist churchmen. "*My hope of the millennium begins where Dr. Beecher's expires*," he declared, "AT THE OVERTHROW OF THIS NATION."⁶⁸ In 1848, he organized an anti-Sunday convention where, in the year the Whigs reentered the White House on a program of religious reform, he attacked the nation's theocrats.⁶⁹ Garrison presented the United States as a doomed alliance of ecclesiastical, political, and slaveholding interests. In fact, just as the Adventist interpretation of the two-horned beast later did, he construed America as "a union of church and state in support of slavery."⁷⁰

The idea that the Constitution was a proslavery instrument was heavily contested and in 1844 the Garrisonians buttressed their arguments by publishing a book of the original Antifederalist writings on the subject, including a lengthy extract from Luther Martin's "Genuine Information" that emphasized the discontinuity between the revolutionary and constitutional phases in American history.⁷¹ The Adventist interpretation of the two-horned beast reflected this view. The animal's lamb-like horns in effect represented the country's revolutionary phase that had produced the egalitarian

Declaration of Independence. However, this lamb-like appearance was contradicted by the nation's constitutional voice, which had given authority to the "national executive body," as Loughborough put it, to "pass laws by which 3,500,000 slaves can be held in bondage."⁷² The law uppermost in Loughborough's mind was the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, for he attacked that infamous statute at length.⁷³

The Andrews and Loughborough articles established Adventists in the same dynastic line as the Antifederalists and Garrisonians as far as their attitudes to slavery and American politics were concerned. Merritt Cornell quoted the passage in Luther Martin's "Genuine Information" commenting on the inconsistency of slavery "with the genius of republicanism."⁷⁴ Adventists adopted a Garrisonian posture toward elections, refusing to use their "votes and influence" in the abolitionist cause because they were certain "things will not be bettered."⁷⁵ Their hope of the millennium, too, began with the overthrow of America, in their case by the establishment of the "eternal kingdom of the King of kings."⁷⁶ Interestingly, passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, which finally abolished slavery, and whose necessity perhaps indicated there was indeed something defective about the Constitution, persuaded Garrison that America was redeemable after all.⁷⁷ But even though they had lost a key part of the evidence, Adventists continued to hold out: America was as doomed as ever.⁷⁸

Seventh-day Adventist apocalyptic developed from a distinct political tradition that provided the Church with the ingredients to put together its view of the United States. The Antifederalists provided the basic framework with their claim that the Constitution threatened the achievements of the Revolution and had opened the way for a tyrannical, slaveholding theocracy in America. The Republicans of the 1790s supplied the apocalyptic symbol, the two-horned beast, which, with its lamb-like horns and dragon voice, perfectly described a nation whose slogans of liberty disguised its actual tyranny. The opponents of the voluntary associations and mail petitioners originated the idea that the campaigns to establish Sunday as a national day of rest were acts of religious oppression. This provided Adventists with the basis for their argument that Sunday observance was the beast's mark and Sunday legislation would be the decisive issue in the final stages of human history. Garrisonianism, with its utter detestation of the Republic, established the notion that America would be overthrown at the arrival of the millennium.

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The Adventist two-horned beast is of historical importance because it is possible to read in its symbolism a synthesis of all the fears that had been raised about America during the period of the early Republic. It came right at the end of a well-worn path that led back to the Antifederalist critique of the Constitution. It is worth noting that it was also very similar to the Slave Power hypothesis that was being advanced more or less at the same time by the abolitionist Theodore Parker and others. The Slave Power was not identical to the United States, as the two-horned beast was, but was considered to be a diabolical third-party force that had taken control of America.⁷⁹ The advocates of the Slave Power thesis were also not Garrisonians in that they tended to believe the Constitution was an antislavery document that had been misused and misrepresented by the Slave Power.⁸⁰

But as David Brion Davis noted, the language used to describe the Slave Power was also apocalyptic: Parker called it an "Apocalyptic Dragon," and abolitionists of similar ilk referred to it as the "Angel of Death," a "Nebuchadnezzar," an "unclean spirit that must be cast out from the hearts of the people before they can be saved."⁸¹ According to Davis, such apocalyptic utterances are the keys to understanding the religious character of many of the dissenting movements of the period. "Only by arousing people to the menace of an absolute despotism," he observed, "could the inner sanctuary of individuality be breached and a cohesive community created."⁸² Davis did not have Adventists in mind, but his formulation may be applicable to the emergence of the Church. The two-horned beast alerted Adventists to the peril of an absolute despotism, and successfully forged a new community out of the individualism of the time.

Notes and References

1. The most recent general study of this theme is Saul Cornell's *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism and the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788-1828* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1999), which has refocused attention on the influence of the Antifederalists.

2. Quotations from J. N. Andrews, "Thoughts on Revelation

XIII and XIV," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (hereafter cited as *Review*), May 19, 1851, 83.

3. *Ibid.*, 84.

4. *Ibid.*, 85. The interpretation was probably derived from Theophilus R. Gates, *Truth Advocated, or the Apocalyptic Beast and Mystic Babylon Clearly Delineated* (Philadelphia, 1818), 249. Gates's work was being read by a correspondent to the *Review* as late as 1859. See Edwin C. Stiles, letter, *Review*, Mar. 3, 1859, 114.

5. J. N. Loughborough, "The Two-Horned Beast," *Review*, Mar. 21 and 28, 1854, 79; Loughborough is here quoting from an earlier article by J. M. Stephenson, "The Number of the Beast," *Review*, Nov. 29, 1853, 166.

6. William Miller, *Remarks on Revelations Thirteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth* (Boston, 1844), 10-11; P. Alling, *An exposition of the thirteenth ch. of Revelation, showing particularly what is meant by the beast and his image* (Cleveland, 1848), 38-40.

7. LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1946-54), 4:1071-74.

8. See George W. Holt, letter, *ibid.*, Mar. 1850, 64, Hiram S. Case, letter dated Sept 15, 1850, *Present Truth*, Nov. 1850, 85, and Hiram Edson "An Appeal to the Laodecian Church," *Review*, Extra, Sept. 1850, 9.

9. The view that 666 was the number of sects seems to have been almost universal among the early Adventists in the 1850s, but the need to establish regular church organization and a legal name for the growing group, which would have added the Seventh-day Adventists themselves to the list of sects and thus to the number of the beast, prompted a reassessment. See James White, "Making Us A Name," *Review*, Apr. 26, 1860, 180-82. The abandonment of this position occasioned accusations that the group, and its prophetess, had changed their minds on an important aspect of prophetic interpretation, see Uriah Smith, *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White* (Battle Creek, Mich., 1868), 100-102.

10. John Jay, "Federalist No. 2," in Clinton Rossiter, ed., *The Federalist Papers* (New York, 1961), 38.

11. Jay, "Federalist No. 5," in Rossiter, *Federalist Papers*, 50.

12. See the Congressional Information Service collection of *Presidential Executive Orders and Proclamations 1789-20-1, 1795-PR-6, 1798-PR-8, and 1799-20-1*.

13. Article 3, "An Ordinance for the Government of the Territory of the United States, Northwest of the River Ohio," *Journals of the United States in Congress Assembled*, July 13, 1787, 12:90; cf., "An Act to provide for the Government of the Territory Northwest of the River Ohio," *Annals of the Congress of the United States*, Aug. 7, 1789, 1st Cong., 1st Sess., 2:2215.

14. *Washington's Farewell Address*, facsimile ed. (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library, 1972), 18.

15. On this period the most useful study is still Nathan O. Hatch, *The Sacred Cause of Liberty* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).



16. An Old Whig V, *Philadelphia Independent Gazetteer*, Nov. 1, 1787, in Merrill Jensen, John P. Kaminski, Gaspare J. Saladino, eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1976), 13:540.
17. Centinel II, *Philadelphia Freeman's Journal*, n.d., in Herbert J. Storing, ed., *The Complete Anti-Federalist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 2:152. Despite its archaic language, this was clearly one of the forerunners of the First Amendment religion clause. See also Storing, *Complete Anti-Federalist*, 1:121, where the main Antifederalist discussions of the First Amendment have been helpfully cross-referenced. The Constitution did prohibit a religious test for holding public office (Article 6), but this was considered inadequate.
18. Encore, "Mad dogs! mad dogs! mad dogs! Enemies to the government! Mad dogs! mad dogs! mad dogs!" *Philadelphia National Gazette*, May 10, 1792, 223.
19. Isaac Backus, *The Infinite Importance of the Obedience of Faith, and of Separation from the World*, 2d ed. (Boston, 1791), 26. (Italics in original).
20. Isaac Backus, *The Testimony of the Two Witnesses*, 2d ed. (Boston, 1793), 22.
21. John Bacon, *Conjectures on the prophecies; written in the fore part of the year 1799* (Boston, 1805), 26. (Italics in original).
22. Loring Andrews to Theodore Sedgwick, quoted in the entry on John Bacon in John Sibley, *Harvard Graduates* (Cambridge, Mass.: C. W. Sever, 1873-1968), 16:124. Further biographical and bibliographical information on Bacon can be found in J. A. Garraty and M. C. Carnes, eds., *American National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1:847-48.
23. Garraty and Carnes, *American National Biography*, 1:848.
24. For "wall of separation" reference see letter to Messrs. Nehemiah Dodge, Ephraim Robbins, and Stephen S. Nelson, of the Committee of the Danbury Baptist Association in the State of Connecticut, Jan. 1, 1802, in Saul K. Padover, *The Complete Jefferson* (New York: Duel, Sloan and Pearce, 1943), 519.
25. Elias Smith, *The Whole World Governed by a Jew; or The Government of the Second Adam, as King and Priest; Described from the Scriptures* (Exeter, N.H., 1805), 57. (Italics in original).
26. Bacon, *Conjectures*, 27n. Bacon did not actually mention the country by name in this long footnote, but there was no doubt that France under Napoleon was the nation he was describing.
27. "General Bible Society," *The Panoplist and Missionary Magazine* 10.3 (1814):119; and W. P. Strickland, *History of the American Bible Society: From its Organisation to the Present Time* (New York, 1849), 24.
28. Preamble to the constitution of the American Sunday School Union in *The American Sunday School Magazine* 1.1 (1824): 28.
29. "Minutes to the First Annual Meeting," Sept. 5, 1810, and "Address to the Christian Public," Nov. 1811, in *First Ten Annual Reports of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions* (Boston, 1834), 2 and 28.
30. "Address of the General Union to the people of the United States," in *Proceedings in Relation to the Formation of the Auxiliary Union of the City of Boston for Promoting the Observance of the Christian Sabbath* (Boston, 1828), 14.
31. See the table illustrating the progress, from 1827, of the American Home Missionary Society's Sabbath Schools, in the association's *Forty-Sixth Annual Report* (New York, 1872), 60.
32. See the list of tracts published at the inaugural meeting, in *First Ten Years of the American Tract Society, Instituted at Boston, 1814* (Boston, 1824), 24, and *Fourth Annual Report of the American Temperance Society* (Boston, 1831), 8.
33. William E. Channing, "Remarks on Associations," n.d., in *The Works of William E. Channing, D. D.*, 6th ed. (Boston, 1846), 1:306.
34. *Ibid.*, 324.
35. *The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America*, April 30, 1810, 11th Cong., 2d Sess., 2:595.
36. *Annals of Congress*, Jan. 4, 1811, 11th Cong., 3d Sess., 22:487.
37. Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 173. See also his "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously: The Postal System, The Sabbath, and the Transformation of American Political Culture," in the *Journal of the Early Republic* 10 (1990): 517-67.
38. Thomas Robbins, *A Sermon preached at East-Windsor at the National Fast, January 12, 1815* (Middletown, 1815), 15-16, 18.
39. See Gideon Granger, Postmaster General, to House of Representatives, Jan. 31, 1811, 11th Cong., 3d Sess.; Return J. Meigs Jr., Postmaster General, to House of Representatives, Jan. 16, 1815, 13th Cong., 3d Sess.; Meigs to House Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads, Feb. 20, 1817, 14th Cong., 2d Sess.; John Rhea, Chairman, House Committee on Post Office and Post Roads, to House of Representatives, Jan. 3, 1812, 12th Cong., 1st Sess.; Rhea to House of Representatives, Jan. 20, 1815, 13th Cong., 3d Sess.; David Daggett, Chairman, Senate Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads, to Senate, Jan. 27, 1815, 13th Cong., 3d Sess. All in *American State Papers: Post Office Department*, Class 7, 44-45, 46, 358, 45, 46, 47, respectively.
40. See Section 11 of "An Act to Reduce into One the Several Acts Establishing and Regulating the Post Office Department," *Statutes at Large*, Mar. 3, 1825, 18th Cong., 2d Sess., IV, 105 and John, *Spreading the News*, 186.
41. "The Memorial of the Subscribers, residing in Philadelphia county, Pennsylvania," *American State Papers*, 239.
42. References in John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 554, 553. (Italics in original).
43. Richard Johnson, Chairman, Senate Committee on Post Office and Post Roads, to Senate, Jan. 19, 1829, 20th Cong., 2d Sess., *American State Papers*, 211.
44. Richard Johnson, Chairman, House Committee on Post Office and Post Roads, to House of Representatives, March 4 and 5, 1830, 21st Cong., 1st Sess., *American State Papers: Post Office Department*, 229.
45. Quoted in John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 560.
46. "Has the State a Religion?" *The American Review: A Whig Journal of Politics, Literature, Art and Science* 3.3 (1846): 288. (Italics in original). Although the author is not named, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., in his *Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little Brown, 1946), 353, attributes the article to the Greek professor, Tayler Lewis.
47. See C. A. Wickliffe, "Report of the Postmaster General," Dec. 3, 1842, 27th Cong., 3d Sess., House Document 2, I, 729, and S. R. Hobbie, First Assistant Postmaster General, to C. A. Wickliffe, Nov. 24, 1842, in the same report, 736. See also John's commentary in "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 562. Response of the American and Foreign Sabbath Union is also in John, "Taking Sabbatarianism Seriously," 562.
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49. Quoted in Richard J. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 96.
50. See the entry on Charles Andrews in the *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971* (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1971), 518; and Froom, *Prophetic Faith*, 4:1093-94.
51. Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics*, 96.
52. Andrews, "Thoughts on Revelation," 84, 85-86.
53. Loughborough, "Two-Horned Beast," 75.
54. *Ibid.*, 67. Loughborough's source on Johnson was the Seventh Day Baptists. In 1846, they published "An Appeal to the Friends of Equal Rights and Religious Freedom in the United States." It was reprinted in the *Review* of Oct. 10, 1854, 65-67.

Loughborough copied large sections of it, including the passages from the Johnson reports.

55. Loughborough, "Two-Horned Beast," 74.

56. On the Board of Commissioners' pioneering work among the American Indians see "Eighth Annual Report," 1817, in *First Ten Annual Reports*, 153–58. Jeremiah Evarts, the board's treasurer, was an outspoken defender of the Native-American cause. See his *Essays on the Present Crisis in the Condition of the American Indians* (Boston, 1829). On the Adventists' sympathy for the Indians, less well known than their involvement with temperance, see, for example, the comments on the "Red Man," in "You Will Vote at our Spring Election, Won't You?" *Review*, April 23, 1857, 198.

57. On this, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Prelude to Abolitionism: Sabbatarian Politics and the Rise of the Second Party System," *Journal of American History* 58 (1971): 338–39.

58. Merritt Cornell, *Facts for the Times* (Battle Creek, Mich., 1858), 68.

59. Channing, "Remarks on Associations," 306.

60. See "Sunday Mail," *Review*, Sept. 11, 1856, 151. Adventists held onto this view until well into the twentieth century. A. T. Jones cited it in *Civil Government and Religion, or, Christianity and the American Constitution* (Battle Creek, Mich., 1894), 152–56. The mail campaign featured prominently in the 1891, 1911, and 1943 editions of the church's collection of *American State Papers Bearing on Sunday Legislation*, edited by William Addison Blakely. When the Sunday lobby finally persuaded Congress in 1912 to end Sunday service completely, the Church made its disquiet known. See "Sunday Closing of Post-Offices," *Review*, Aug. 22, 1912, 20–21; and "Sunday in the Post-Offices," *Review*, Sept. 5, 1912, 18.

61. Loughborough, "Two-Horned Beast," 75.

62. These were the provision that allowed the Southern states to count three-fifths of their slaves toward their representation in the national legislature (Art. 1, Sect. 2); the power given to Congress to suppress insurrections (Art. 1, Sect. 8); the legitimization of the slave trade until 1808 (Art. 1, Sect. 9); and the guarantee that the states would receive federal protection against domestic violence (Art. 4, Sect. 4). Cross-references to the Antifederalist examination of these clauses can be found in Storing, *Complete Anti-Federalist*, 1:110, 114, 119, respectively.

63. Luther Martin, "The Genuine Information Delivered to the Legislature of the State of Maryland Relative to the Proceedings of the General Convention Lately Held at Philadelphia," 1788, in Storing, *Complete Anti-Federalist*, 2:62. (Italics in original).

64. Republicus, *Lexington Kentucky Gazette*, Mar. 1, 1788, in Storing, *Complete Anti-Federalist*, 5:170.

65. *Constitution and Declaration of Sentiments of the American Anti-Slavery Society, Adopted at the Formation of Said Society, in Philadelphia, on the 4th Day of December, 1833* (Philadelphia, n.d.), 5. (Italics in original).

66. These famous phrases were borrowed from Isaiah 28:18. See "Repeal of the Union," *The Liberator*, May 6, 1842, 71.

67. "Repeal of the Union," 71, and the resolution of the American Anti-Slavery Society, May 1844, cited in Wendell Phillips, *Can Abolitionists Vote or Take Office Under the United States Constitution?* (New York, 1845), 3.

68. "Fourth of July in Providence," *The Liberator*, July 28, 1837, 123. (Italics and emphasis in original). John L. Thomas in *The Liberator William Lloyd Garrison: A Biography* (Boston, 1963), 231, shows that this statement was taken from Garrison's friend John Humphrey Noyes, later founder of the Oneida community.

69. Walter M. Merrill, *Against Wind and Tide: A Biography of Wm. Lloyd Garrison* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 243–47, and also John R. Bodo, *The Protestant Clergy and Public Issues 1812–1848* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954; Philadelphia, Porcupine Press, 1980), 43. See also Blakely, 1943 ed.,

American State Papers, 208–17.

70. "Fourth of July in Providence," 123. Interestingly, the Millerite Charles Fitch took a contrasting view. He criticized Garrison's attacks on the clergy and the Christian Sabbath. See Ronald D. Graybill, "The Abolitionist-Millerite Connection," in Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, eds., *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 141.

71. *The Constitution a Pro-Slavery Compact or Selections from the Madison Papers* (New York, 1844), 35–38. Opposition to this idea came mainly from other anti-slavery groups such as the Liberty Party, the Free Soilers, and the Tappans. For their arguments, see respectively, *Address of the Southern and Western Liberty Convention, held at Cincinnati, June 11 and 12, 1845 to the People of the United States, with Notes by a Citizen of Pennsylvania* (n.p., n.d.), 3; Oliver Cromwell Gardiner, *The Great Issue: Or The Three Presidential Candidates: Being a Brief Historical Sketch of the Free Soil Question in the United States, from the Congresses of 1774 and '87 to the Present Time* (New York, 1848), particularly 36; *Lewis Tappan, Address to the Non-Slaveholders of the South on the Social and Political Evils of Slavery* (New York, n.d.), 35–38. The issue has also divided historians. A summary of the debate can be found in Earl M. Maltz, "The Idea of the Proslavery Constitution," *Journal of the Early Republic* 17 (1997): 37–38, n. 1 and 2.

72. Loughborough, "Two-Horned Beast," 66.

73. *Ibid.*

74. Cornell, *Facts for the Times*, 33.

75. "Politics," *Review*, Sept. 11, 1856, 152.

76. *Ibid.*

77. See "Freedom Triumphant! Grand Jubilee Meeting in the Music Hall: To Rejoice over the Amendment prohibiting Human Slavery in the United States forever," *The Liberator*, Feb. 10, 1865, 22.

78. On the problems caused to Adventists by emancipation, see the discussion in Uriah Smith, *The United States in Prophecy* (Battle Creek, 1874), 83.

79. For definitions, see Theodore Parker, "Speech in Boston, May 29, 1850, on Slave Power in America" [also titled "Speech at New England Anti-Slavery Society Convention in Boston, May 29, 1850"], in *The Collected Works of Theodore Parker* (London, 1863), 5:103–33, and John Gorham Palfrey, *Five Years Progress of the Slave Power* (Boston, 1852), 3.

80. Theodore Parker, "A Sermon of the Dangers which Threaten the Rights of Man in America, Preached at the Music Hall, on Sunday, July 2, 1854," *Collected Works*, 6: 133; John Gorham Palfrey, *Papers on the Slave Power* (Boston, n.d.), 3–7; Charles D. Drake, *The War of Slavery upon the Constitution, Delivered in the City of Saint Louis*, Sept. 17, 1862 (n.p., n.d.), 1.

81. References taken from David Brion Davis, *The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1969), 53, 74, 75, 83.

82. *Ibid.*, 84.

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Conscience, Taxes, Coercion

Isaac Backus and the Adventist Tradition
of Separation between Church and State

By Leigh Johnsen

Seventh-day Adventists tend to be fond of their uniqueness. Often they stress the differences between themselves and other Christians, and at times they overlook evidence that early Adventist pioneers carried beliefs and values from other churches into the new movement. From the Methodists, for example, they inherited an administrative structure marked at the top by a General Conference, and from the Seventh Day Baptists veneration for a common Sabbath. Similarly, there is evidence that Baptist influences in general played a role in the development of Adventist sensitivity over matters of church and state.

In *The Great Controversy* Ellen White pays special tribute to Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island, a Baptist at one point in his life, and an icon of American church-state relations. She describes him as “a faithful minister, a man of rare gifts, of unbending integrity and true benevolence.” To her, Williams was “an earnest seeker for truth” whose passion for protecting conscience rose out of a quest for new “light from God’s word.” Ultimately, she wrote, the founding principles of Rhode Island “became the cornerstones of the American Republic.”¹

The Great Controversy does not explain how those principles became national cornerstones, but Baptists have long known that a key figure in the process was a New England Baptist named Isaac Backus. Backus rediscovered Williams, absorbed his thought, and turned the results into centerpieces of a Baptist initiative for separation of church and state that flourished in late eighteenth-century America. In league with other political forces, the Baptist impulse culminated in ratification of the First Amendment.²

To American Adventists, the experience of Backus is important as a reminder that their legacy of religious freedom is grounded in the Gospels, was hammered out amid conflict over religious taxes, and is linked to veneration for conscience as a divine gift.

The New Light

Backus was born on January 9, 1723/24, in Norwich, Connecticut, the fourth child in a family of eleven offspring. His father was Samuel Backus, a representative on a number of occasions in Connecticut’s General Assembly, and his ancestors included an original proprietor of Windham and a justice of the peace. Backus’s mother, Elizabeth Tracy Backus, was related by blood to

Edward Winslow, an early governor of New Plymouth Colony. By marriage, the extended Backus network had links to some of New England's most noted families.

As pillars of their community, members of the Backus family were familiar with the workings of Connecticut's established religion, or Standing Order. In each of New England's colonies except Rhode Island religious establishments worked hand in glove with civil officials, enjoying special privileges intended to perpetuate the congregational system founded by Puritan forebears. Throughout most of early eighteenth-century New England civil law restricted preaching to orthodox Calvinist preachers, local parishes could hire only qualified college graduates as pastors, and only Protestants could hold office.

Most notable, perhaps, was the power of the Standing Order to levy taxes on all citizens for the support of its own ministers, regardless of the taxpayers' own religious preferences. By the time Backus came of age, Baptists, Quakers, and Anglicans could request certificates of exemption, but issuance fell to the discretion of town officials understandably reluctant to reduce tax rolls and often insensitive to taxpayers not of their own persuasion.

In 1718, two years after their marriage, Backus's mother and father publicly sealed their connection to Connecticut's established religion by becoming members of Norwich's parish church under the watchful eye of Benjamin Lord, a graduate of Yale College. They joined not as full-fledged communicants, however, but through the common and controversial arrangement of halfway membership.

Unlike full membership, which New England's Calvinist forebears considered suitable only for the elect, halfway membership offered a lesser degree of affiliation for those not certain of their own salvation. Halfway members were barred from communion and could not vote in church affairs. However, they could have their children baptized, and under this provision Backus and his siblings entered the Norwich parish church.³

Backus spent the next seventeen years under the spiritual care of Lord and his congregation, attending church on Sundays, learning the catechism, preparing for the time when he, too, would experience evidence of God's saving grace and receive assurance of his own suitability as one of the elect. Such at least was the theory. In reality, Backus's early years in the Norwich

parish church failed to trigger that certainty. Later, as an adult, Backus remembered those years as a period during which he lived "a Car[e]less and Secure life. . . . I did never think that I was Converted," he recalled, "but flattered my Self with this that I would turn by and by."⁴

Backus received the spiritual assurance he sought at the height of the First Great Awakening, shortly after renowned itinerants Benjamin Pomeroy, James Davenport, and Eleazer Wheelock passed through Norwich. Backus had recently lost his father to a measles epidemic, and his bereaved mother was languishing in the depths of depression. On August 24, 1741, while mowing in a field, seventeen-year-old Backus experienced conversion.

[I]n that Critical moment God who caused the light to Shine out of Darkness, Shined into my heart with such A discover of that glorious Righteousness

Which fully Satisfies the Law that I had Broken; and of the Infinite fullness that there Is in Christ to Satisfie the wants of just Such a helpless Creature as I was and these Blessing Were held forth So freely to my Soul—That my Whole Heart was attracted and Drawn away after God and Swallowed up with Admiration in viewing his Divine glories.⁵

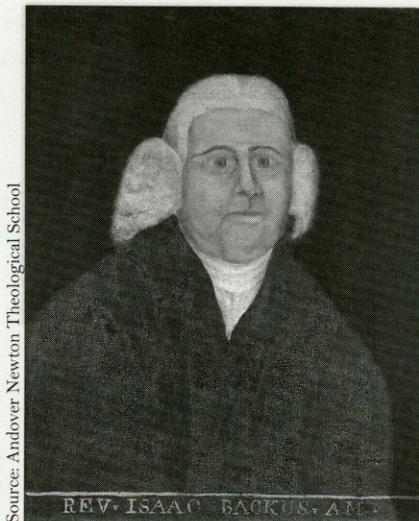
Backus's experience marked a personal turning point. Not only did it qualify him to join the Norwich parish church as a full member, which he did in July 1742, it also provided the motivation and rationale for his

rejection of New England's religious establishment.

Dissent and the Holy Spirit

Backus took his first formal step toward outright dissent on June 16, 1746, when he and his recently converted mother joined other New Lights to gather their own congregation separate from the parish church. Soon they settled in a meeting house at Bean Hill, on the outskirts of town.

Their grievances against the established parish



Source: Andover Newton Theological School



church were many: Lord and other Old Lights failed to value the workings of the Holy Spirit; they stifled displays of emotion in meetings; they were too formal in speech and dress; they exalted formal education over spiritual calling. However, the major concern of the Separates was Lord's practice of admitting into fellowship members who, according to the new converts, had not experienced God's saving grace and thus stood in violation of ideals envisioned by New England's Puritan founders.

Estrangement between Backus and the religious establishment intensified after September 1746, when the diffident young man found his tongue and the Bean Hill Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, authorized him as a preacher. Later, Backus remembered his call in terms reminiscent of his conversion experience: "The Lord gave me to See that the gifts that he had given me, did belong to the Church and that while I neglected to improve them—I robbed the Church of their Right."⁶

Backus's call did nothing to endear him to religious authorities. Not only did the Bean Hill congregation's gathering lack legitimacy, according to the authorities, its members were also apparently willing to thumb their noses at Connecticut law that required ministers to have orthodox college educations. Soon after, the Holy Spirit also led Backus to defy legislation that forbade New Light itinerancy, and the young man set out on a brief preaching tour with Jedidiah Hide, pastor of the Bean Hill Church, that took them to Preston, Stonington, and Westerly.

Backus understood that imprisonment often awaited those who preached without leave from religious authorities, but he continued. In October, he embarked on a two-month preaching tour with a New Light school teacher named John Fuller, and after briefly returning to Norwich, set out again with Jedidiah Hide. The two men traveled across Rhode Island into Massachusetts. Backus itinerated in southern and southeastern New England throughout the winter of 1746-47.

Early in December 1747, he accompanied New Light pastor Joseph Snow Jr., on a trip to southeastern Massachusetts, and on the northwest border between Bridgewater and Middleborough they visited Titicut parish, which was destined to become Backus's home for the next half century.

In 1747, Titicut was a hotbed of New Light activity, crisscrossed over and over in recent years by itinerant preachers. In 1743, residents had successfully petitioned the Massachusetts General Court for a parish and pastor of their own, and many were clearly receptive to the New Light message when Backus and Snow

arrived. To Backus, Titicut was, in fact, "a Large field all white to harvest," one in which God himself had assigned Backus a special role.⁷

Backus and Snow preached ten days and triggered a local revival. Impressed, the parish committee took the extraordinary step of considering Backus as a candidate for pastor of Titicut's established parish church. It abruptly changed heart, however, after he questioned its worthiness as an instrument of unregenerate humans to evaluate the legitimacy of his divine calling. On February 16, 1748, after another month of preaching, Backus and sixteen other New Lights followed the urgings of the Holy Spirit and the example of the Bean Hill Church to gather their own Separate congregation, again in violation of New England tradition and civil law.

The Titicut gathering, part of a mushrooming movement of Separates, or Strict Congregationalists, was the penultimate stage of Backus's journey to dissent. As with other Separates, the gathering forced Backus and his congregation to confront a system of taxation that placed them on the legal periphery and implicitly made them outsiders. Not only did their congregations lack legal standing, members could not even apply for exemption, which was restricted to Anglicans, Baptists, and Quakers. Many Titicut Separates refused to comply, only to see their property sold at auction or face imprisonment.

By the spring of 1749, Backus and other Massachusetts Separates were chafing at the injustice, and at a special conference in May they decided to appeal for relief. Backus spearheaded efforts, gathering signatures for a petition presented to the Massachusetts General Court in June, but hopes for a speedy resolution were dashed after the proposal died in the upper house.

The Titicut gathering marked another milestone, as well. Afterward, Backus joined ranks with other Separates forced to grapple with the theological implications of restricting church membership only to those who had experienced conversion experiences. What, then, of children baptized as infants, obviously before they could understand the significance of the event? Some Separates continued to support infant baptism, in accordance with New England's Puritan tradition, whereas others criticized it as an unscriptural human invention.

Further complications arose from disagreement over whether the two factions should practice communion with each other. Repeated, unsuccessful efforts to resolve these dilemmas, most notably at the Stonington Conference of 1754, ultimately doomed the fledgling Separate movement to failure. In the case of Backus, the search for solutions also gave rise to agonizing reflection that ended with outright rejection of the Standing Order.

The Bond Woman

Backus explained his decision in *The Bond Woman and the Free* (1756), a booklet based on Galatians 4:31, which focused on well-known claims by New England's founding Puritans to be the successors of Old Testament Israel, to stand in a special covenant relationship with Jehovah as God's chosen people.⁸ According to Backus, the kernel of that arrangement was a decision by God to grant humans salvation in return for obedience to the Mosaic law. Those who participated

conversion outwardly through baptism. In short, the gift of salvation gave Backus and likeminded New Lights a divine mandate to follow their own convictions individually and together, just as their reading of Scripture gave them compelling reasons to reject New England's religious establishment.

Publication of *The Bond Woman and The Free* marked a decision by Backus to join the Separate Baptists, at that time a small group distinguished from older Baptists mainly by strict adherence to Calvinist theology. In January 1756, other members of Titicut's Separate

**Each denial of exemption, every seizure, auction, and imprisonment must have been
a searing reminder that the Standing Order, by using force, had arrayed itself
in defiance of Holy Writ and the example of Christ.**

were, in effect, in "bondage" to the law, and the ritual of circumcision signified participation in the arrangement. To New England's Puritans, infant baptism served the same function: as an updated sign integral to their covenant with God.

Backus saw matters differently, however. According to *The Bond Woman and the Free*, Christ had fulfilled the requirements of the law; his crucifixion marked the end of the Old Testament covenant. Thus, not only were infant baptisms meaningless in eighteenth-century New England, in Backus's view the entire church-state system modeled on ancient Israel and still thoroughly entrenched all around was outdated and lacked divine legitimacy.

The arrangement that Backus envisioned instead dovetailed neatly with his own experience as a New Light. According to *The Bond Woman and the Free*, salvation no longer came through the agency of individuals or institutions. Instead, a sovereign God bestowed the gift of salvation directly on selected individuals through acts of grace. Those who received it understood they had been "born again," as did Backus, and could claim an array of freedoms: freedom "from the condemnation of the law," freedom "from the power of sin and Satan," freedom to approach "God through Jesus Christ," and freedom "to talk in holiness all their days" (144).

Furthermore, they had exclusive right to "the liberty of Christ's house," as shown when Titicut's saints gathered their own congregation, and the right to signify

congregation followed his lead, disbanded, and gathered again as Middleborough's First Baptist Church.

The Grievance Committee

Thanks partly to Backus, the number of Separate Baptists grew rapidly. In the southwest corner of Middleborough another Separate regathering took place in 1757, giving birth to the town's Second Baptist Church. Other New Lights to the southeast founded the Third Baptist Church in 1761. By 1770, the total number of Separate Baptist congregations in Massachusetts had swelled to thirty-two, and in Connecticut they had expanded sevenfold.⁹

Rapid growth continued into the 1780s and 1790s, when the number of Separate Baptist congregations in New England more than doubled. In 1795, the estimated number of members throughout New England had grown to 21,000, which did not include approximately 42,000 more who attended services regularly but had not sought membership in full.¹⁰

The Standing Order had reason for concern as New England's Separate Baptists expanded and matured, and friction between the two denominations intensified during the Revolutionary era. At issue was the taxation system, which often forced Separate Baptists to support a religious system not of their own choosing. In theory, colonial law gave Baptists the right to claim

exemption, but local officials often drew a fine line between Baptist congregations that existed before the Awakening and upstart Separate Baptist churches gathered afterward.

Exemption was more likely if Separate Baptists could prove affiliation with Old Baptists, but the two groups were not in fellowship and the chances for cooperation were slender. As a result, jailings, seizures of property, and auctions were common among Separate Baptists during the 1760s. In 1768, matters worsened after the Massachusetts General Court passed legislation that targeted Separate Baptists in the town of Ashfield and required all of its residents to provide financial support for the Standing Order. If other towns followed course, the slender hope of exemption among other Separate Baptists in the colony would also be threatened.

Backus's rise to prominence placed him at the center of efforts among New England's Separate Baptists to secure relief. In the fall of 1769, a newly formed coalition of Baptist congregations known as the Warren Baptist Association appointed a special committee to gather evidence of its members' grievances, petition the General Courts of Massachusetts and Connecticut for redress, and if necessary appeal to the King. Among the committee's members was Backus, who served with John Davis and Samuel Stillman, both of Boston, and Hezekiah Smith, a pastor from Haverhill, Massachusetts.

The Grievance Committee collected scores of letters and affidavits, and using this evidence petitioned the Massachusetts General Court in 1769 and 1770. The Ashfield Law remained in place, however, although the legislature eventually agreed to revise exemption laws in 1770 in ways slightly more favorable to religious dissenters. Despite the risk of annoying revolutionaries at home, Backus and his colleagues finally bypassed the Massachusetts General Court and, with help from Baptists in England, presented their grievance directly to the King, who disallowed the Ashfield Law in July 1771.

Abuses went on, however, much to the chagrin of Backus. All too often local tax collectors either ignored or mishandled certificates of exemption. Backus had recently aired his frustrations in *A Seasonable Plea for Liberty of Conscience* (1770) and *A Letter to a Gentleman in the Massachusetts General Assembly* (1771), and in 1773 he decided that relief from religious taxes would never come under existing Massachusetts law.

In May, the Grievance Committee under his chairmanship recommended shifts in tactics and strategy. The committee urged members of the Warren Baptist Association to refuse submission of certificates or

payment of taxes, to engage in demonstrations of massive civil disobedience, just as patriots throughout the colonies were defying British authorities in pursuit of political rights. The resulting cases would overburden the legal system, authorities would recognize the errors of their ways, and Separate Baptists would pressure the Standing Order to recognize their own full right to religious liberty.

An Appeal

Backus explained the rationale behind this decision in *An Appeal to the Public*, an eighteen-page booklet authorized by the Warren Baptist Association. His argument rests less on logic and political theory than on the Bible as seen through the lens of traditional Baptist views and the thinking of Roger Williams, whose writings Backus had recently started to read.¹¹

Baptists had long stressed the importance of shielding matters of the spirit from those of the government. According to Backus, God had appointed "two kinds of government, . . . distinct in their nature," which "ought never to be confounded." One "is called civil and the other ecclesiastical government" (312). Over the past thirty years Backus had become thoroughly familiar with some of the most pressing dangers caused by government interference in religious matters: unregenerate members, clergy valued more for their education than spiritual calling, and infants admitted into fellowship in violation of divine instruction. In short, comingling of church and state endangered the sanctity of the church.

Backus also noted another danger that left him particularly indignant: the potential of the state to flex its coercive power in pursuit of religious objectives. Not only was force in matters of religion grounded in the "old Jewish constitution and ordinances" (315)—an arrangement invalidated at the crucifixion—it also violated the letter and spirit of the New Covenant initiated by Christ. "'Tis well known that this glorious Head made no use of secular force in the first setting up of the Gospel-Church," Backus pointed out (315).

Instead, Christ had proclaimed the nature of his "Kingdom" as "*not of this world*," and had commanded "his servants . . . not [to] *fight* or defend him with the *sword*" (315). To Backus, each denial of exemption, every seizure, auction, and imprisonment must have been a searing reminder that the Standing Order, by using force, had arrayed itself in defiance of Holy Writ and the example of Christ.

The justification that Backus offered for confronting

the Standing Order may seem strange in a modern context shaped by the First Amendment. The issue was not simply free exercise of religion or existence of a religious establishment. *An Appeal to the Public* linked both dimensions inseparably. New England's Standing Order violated Backus's conscience by forcing him to support a religious system that lacked biblical legitimacy and the Holy Spirit's blessing—and this struck at the core of his spiritual being.

grievances. According to Backus, the Massachusetts delegates responded by denying the legitimacy of Separate Baptist complaints, accusing them of seeking martyrdom, and complaining that they sought only to avoid taxes. Not so, Backus heatedly responded: "It is absolutely a point of conscience with me; for I cannot give in the certificates they require without implicitly acknowledging that power in man which I believe belongs only to God." According to Backus,

**New England's Standing Order violated Backus's conscience
by forcing him to support a religious system that lacked biblical
legitimacy and the Holy Spirit's blessing.**

For half a century, conscience and the Holy Spirit had played prominent parts in Backus's life: prompting his conversion, calling him to the ministry, leading him to Titicut, guiding him to reject the Standing Order. For Backus, opposition to the Standing Order was not simply a theoretical exercise. Freedom of conscience was a God-given right. By presuming to coerce support of erroneous religion, the Standing Order had arrayed itself against God and threatened to interfere with the unfettered working of the Holy Spirit.

Backus had a divine obligation to oppose the Standing Order not only to protect his own conscience, but also to provide conditions conducive to the Spirit-generated awakening for which he and other New Lights constantly hoped.

Revolution

An Appeal to the People summarized some of the best Separate Baptist thinking on church-state relations at that time, but defenders of the Standing Order saw matters differently. In October 1774, Backus, James Manning, and Chileab Smith of Ashfield took their case at the request of the Warren Baptist Association to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Joining them in Carpenter's Hall on the fourteenth were a large group of local Baptist leaders, two prominent Philadelphia Quakers, and a handful of elected congressional delegates that included Thomas Cushing, Samuel and John Adams, and Robert Treat Paine, all of Massachusetts.

The conference started with Manning reading a speech, then presenting a memorial of Separate Baptist

his appeal to conscience left Cushing speechless, but it failed to sway other Massachusetts delegates and he went home emptyhanded.¹²

The Separate Baptist campaign of civil disobedience continued as war broke out between Britain and the colonies. At times, neighbors responded to Baptists with hostility, even to the point of rioting, but there was also a hint of change, a suggestion that they would not always be treated as sectarian outsiders. In April 1775, Backus responded to the Battles of Lexington and Concord by coming out publicly against the King and Parliament and in favor of independence. Other Separate Baptists followed suit, and in time they were fighting shoulder to shoulder with neighbors as comrades-in-arm, not only against Britain, but also in the struggle to reshape domestic government.

In 1778, for example, Backus and his coreligionists campaigned against a proposed constitution for Massachusetts that, among other shortcomings, would have perpetuated religious taxes. This time, however, a chorus of other critics joined in with reasons of their own, and together the opponents prevailed. Barriers seemed to weaken further in May 1779, when the Massachusetts General Assembly took the unprecedented step of inviting Separate Baptist minister Samuel Stillman to deliver its annual election sermon, which Stillman used as an opportunity to explain the Separate Baptist position on matters of church and state.

Four months later, in September 1779,



another state constitutional convention convened in Boston, and Separate Baptists ventured further into the political process. Among the convention's 293 delegates were six Baptists. Backus himself served on an official committee from Middleborough that issued instructions to its representatives, and Separate Baptists from other towns held similar positions. Backus kept tabs on the convention, lobbied its delegates, and wrote letters and newspaper articles.

At the request of Baptist delegate Noah Alden, Backus also offered a proposed bill of rights whose second article guaranteed freedom of religion and ruled out force in such matters: "As God is the only worthy object of all religious worship, and nothing can be true religion but a voluntary obedience unto his revealed will, of which each rational soul has an equal right to judge for itself; every person has an unalienable right to act in all religious affairs according to the full persuasion of his own mind."¹³

Alden chaired the committee charged with drafting clauses on ecclesiastical matters, and Backus undoubtedly hoped that his proposal would make its way into the new constitution. But Alden was the only Separate Baptist on the committee and only one of three who favored doing away with the religious establishment. Instead, by a vote of four to three, the committee recommended an alternative that threatened to deprive dissenters of any opportunity to avoid religious taxes.

According to Article Three, "every denomination of Christians demeaning themselves peaceably" was to be "equally under the protection of the law: and no subordination of any one sect or denomination to another shall ever be established by law." However, at the same time, the article also effectively abolished the possibility of exemption and authorized civil authorities to levy taxes in behalf of all denominations. In effect, Congregationalists, Anglicans, Baptists, and Quakers would all belong to the religious establishment, and all would be supported by religious taxes—despite the potential of violating individual consciences.¹⁴

In the end, Article Three won ratification during the autumn of 1780. The number of Separate Baptists was still too small, its political power too little, and the chasm between it and its critics too great. Backus and his coreligionists clearly understood the seriousness of their situation, especially after state legislators ignored another petition against religious taxes that they submitted at the end of the year. However, they were determined, as Backus explained in *Truth Is Great and Will Prevail* (1781), and they arrived at one final plan. If only they could convince the courts that Article Three's guarantee

of religious equality was inconsistent with the authority it also granted to tax citizens against their consciences, then perhaps it would be declared unconstitutional.

In March 1782, the Warren Association supported the case of Separate Baptist Elijah Balkcom, who tested the constitutionality of Article Three in a suit against assessors from his hometown of Attleborough, and he prevailed. Backus rejoiced in *A Door Opened for Equal Christian Liberty* (1783), but his celebration proved premature. In 1784, a similar case named after Gershom Cutter, another Separate Baptist plaintiff, arose in Cambridge and made its way to the Supreme Judicial Court, which upheld the constitutionality of Article Three in October 1785.

A Shared Identity

Cutter v. Frost brought a devastating conclusion to more than twenty years of agitation by Massachusetts Separate Baptists and left them with legal arrangements similar to the hated certificate system. Not until 1833—well after Backus's death—was the religious establishment in Massachusetts overthrown. Still, through their struggles the Separate Baptists had reached out to coreligionists, created an intercolonial network, and gained a measure of legitimacy, all of which also enhanced the stature of Backus.

By the late 1700s, Backus had become a senior Baptist statesman. Perhaps in acknowledgment, neighbors in Middleborough chose him in 1788 to represent them in the state convention called to vote on ratification of the federal constitution. Backus cast his ballot in favor and lobbied others to do so, as well, but by then his days of intensive political action were over. Instead, he spent most of his time during the late eighteenth century defending orthodox Calvinism, advancing Baptist education, spreading the gospel, and writing.

By far, his most notable work during these years was a three-volume history of New England's Baptists. Backus's history afforded Separate Baptists a sense of pride and went far to explain his view of church-state relations. Thanks to a developed distribution system, this and other publications of his were read widely, thus promoting a common identity grounded in separation of church and state that Baptists throughout the country shared as they embarked on the struggle to ratify the First Amendment.

Time eventually took its toll on Backus. Over the years he had gained considerable weight, and according to his diary, had experienced "a soreness and swelling" in his "private parts" since at least November 1793.¹⁵ His

condition worsened in March 1806, when he suffered a stroke. Another, more serious stroke followed at the end of April, leaving him paralyzed and speechless. Backus lived through the summer and autumn, and died at the age of eighty-one on November 20, 1806.

The Legacy

Backus has been hailed as a champion of religious freedom similar in stature to Thomas Jefferson.¹⁶ However, unlike Jefferson, who viewed such matters from a secular perspective, Backus had a thoroughly religious outlook. Thus, he carries a message of special significance to believers of all kinds—not only to American Adventists, but also to other Christians.

Separation of church and state in the United States is not the invention of modern secularists or anti-Catholic bigotry, as some have recently suggested.¹⁷ Instead, it was purchased dearly amid conflicts among Protestants dating from colonial times, is grounded in the Gospels, and was enshrined in the U.S. Constitution largely in response to a political coalition in which Christians played a prominent role. If *The Great Controversy* can be taken as an accurate guide, early Adventists placed themselves squarely in that tradition.

The experience of Backus carries another message, as well. This one calls for consistency in matters of conscience. If forced conversions, Sunday laws, and religious intolerance in the workplace threaten freedom of conscience, so, too, does tax-generated funding for religious programs. No matter how worthy the cause, money taken from citizens for religious causes under threat of prosecution unavoidably forces some to support beliefs with which they, often under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, cannot agree.

In the end, Backus leaves American Adventists with what may be a costly challenge. Whether or not they heed his messages, honor his legacy, and reclaim a birthright based in Scripture and the histories of their country and denomination remains to be seen.

Notes and References

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2. On the connection between Williams and Backus, see Edwin S. Gaustad, *Liberty of Conscience: Roger Williams in America* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 203-5. As with other modern students of Backus and the Separate Baptists, I am heavily indebted to the scholarship of William G. McLoughlin, particularly *The Diary of Isaac Backus* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1979), edited in three volumes; *Isaac Backus and the American Pietistic Tradition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967); *Isaac Backus on*

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3. Robert G. Pope, *The Half-Way Covenant: Church Membership in Puritan New England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 261-78.

4. Backus, *Diary*, 1:3.

5. Backus, "Some Particular Account," in Backus, *Diary*, 3:152-5.

6. Backus, *Diary*, 1:4.

7. *Ibid.*, 1:12-13.

8. I have relied on an edited version of this booklet in McLoughlin, *Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism*, 129-65.

9. McLoughlin, *Backus*, 100.

10. McLoughlin, *Dissent*, 1:438.

11. The version of *An Appeal* quoted below is printed in McLoughlin, *Isaac Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism*, 389-96. On Williams, see Backus, *Diary*, 3:868.

12. Backus, *Diary*, 2:914, 916-17; Backus, "A Journey to Philadelphia, 1774," Backus Papers, John Hay Library, Brown University.

13. The original of Backus's, "A declaration of the Rights, of the Inhabitants of the State of Massachusetts-bay, in New England," can be found in the Backus Collection at Andover Newton Theological School, with copies reprinted in Backus, *Diary*, 3:1605-7; and McLoughlin, *Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism*, 487-89.

14. McLoughlin, *Backus*, 145-48; McLoughlin, *Dissent*, 1:602-4.

15. Backus, *Diary*, 3:1362.

16. McLoughlin, *Backus on Church, State, and Calvinism*, 1.

17. See, most notably, the prolific writings of David Barton, and, more recently, Philip Hamburger, *Separation of Church and State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

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Leigh Johnsen is the associate editor of *Spectrum*. He holds a doctorate in the history of early American Christianity and has edited *The Papers of Isaac Backus, 1639-1806* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI, forthcoming), from which this article has been adapted.



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Are *Just Wars* Just Wars?

Jim Lewis, an Episcopalian minister in Virginia who has spent much of his life fostering nonviolence, believes that *just wars* are just *wars*. He says so in a thought-provoking collection of essays edited by Jon L. Berquist regarding recent events titled *Strike Terror No More: Theology, Ethics and the New War* (Saint Louis: Chalice Press, 2002). Because he is a pacifist, it is likely that Lewis would say the same of all wars, no matter when, why, or how they have been fought.

Peter J. Haas, who teaches Jewish Studies at Case Western Reserve University in Ohio, makes a different point in the same excellent volume. He contends that the just war doctrine is not applicable today because we no longer wage wars as people did when its standards were formulated hundreds of years ago. He believes the criteria that apply to whether we may go to war (*jus ad bellum*) are still useful in some respects but that the standards about how we should do so (*jus in bellum*) are now mostly outdated. "At the end of the day, no rules really apply any longer once we are in a state of war," he writes (242).

As an account of how recent wars have often actually been fought, this assertion is unassailable. But as a proposal as to how they should be waged in our day, it is not convincing. The claim that in war "no rules really apply any longer" asserts far too much. As it now stands, this contention allows warring armies to pillage, rape, and torture. Surely even Haas would condemn such atrocities.

His more precise position is no more persuasive, however. He holds that in our time it is impossible to honor the so-called principle of discrimination that forbids those who wage war from intentionally wounding and killing noncombatant men, women, and children. "The basic assumption of classical just war theory, namely that one can distinguish between military and civilian, is simply no longer operative," he insists (240-41).

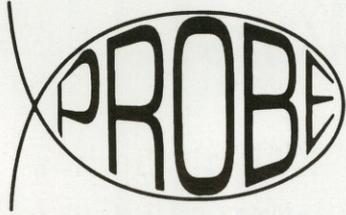
His point is not that it is no longer possible theoretically to distinguish between military and nonmilitary personnel, but that in the midst of war it is often practically very difficult to do so. Contemporary military forces are not separate portions of societies; they are the "forward edges" of entire nations, he also observes. "One of the most significant changes in warfare in the modern period has been the shift of the notion of war as a series of battles between two armies to the notion of war as a series of battles between two nations" (239).

This is precisely the change that we should strive to reverse. The idea that every man, woman, and child in every nation is for all practical purposes now part of military life goes too far. In all wars there are citizens who actively oppose their own nations' military campaigns. Also, there are important differences in the extent and voluntariness of civilian participation in military affairs. It is not morally acceptable intentionally to treat people who differ in morally pertinent ways as though they don't.

Perhaps we should exchange the distinction between "military and civilian personnel" for one between "combatant and noncombatant citizens." This would acknowledge that today not all warriors are uniformed soldiers. Yet hasn't even this always been the case to some extent?

It is often impossible wholly to avoid wounding or killing innocent bystanders in warfare. Still, we should not *intentionally* unleash these horrors and we should do our best to minimize their frequency and intensity. How dare we do any less?

David R. Larson
President, AAF



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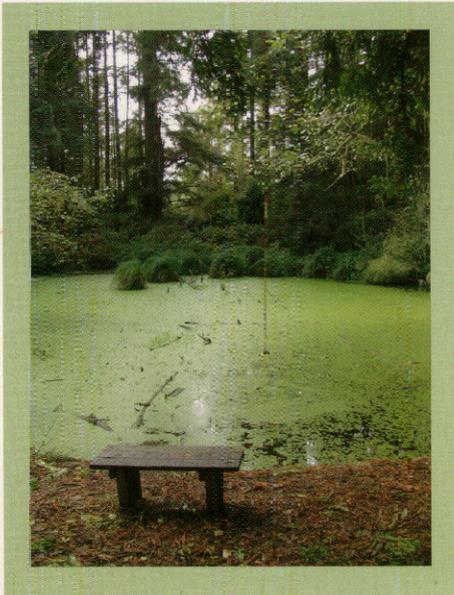
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Green Pond, 2002, Jennie Auman

Beginning with Green

By Pat Cason

Green's the name of the ten thousand things
I wake to each morning
with panes of forest around me,

lying beneath a window arranged to reveal
the sacred text of the sky,
obscured today by clouds.

They say you can't look Glory
full in the face and live, but I believe
in baptism by immersion in green—

waking surrounded by grasses and leaves,
plunging mid-day into the bottle-green
of a swimming hole so cold, I swear

it stops my heart between beats,
allowing the rapid infusion
of some foreign thing

to fill that startled muscle,
so that when I burst out of the water
I'm giddy with shock,

or with dizzied surprise,
or maybe just
with what they call a new life.

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