

SPECTRUM

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**Adventist
Missions:
Rescued or
Kidnapped?**

Marriage in 2004

*God's Will
for the Wealthy
and the Poor*

**Hope in the Land
of Dried Corn
and Salted Coffee**

**On the
Necessity of
Evil**

**The Great Controversy
Over You-Know-Who**

*Good Religion, Bad
Religion:
How to Tell the
Difference*

SPECTRUM

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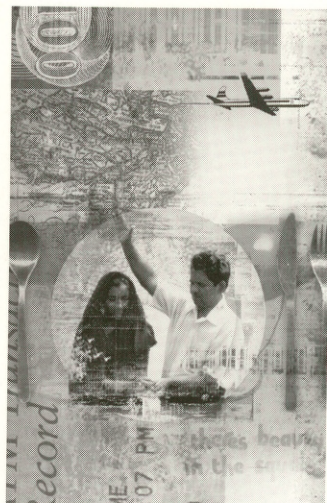
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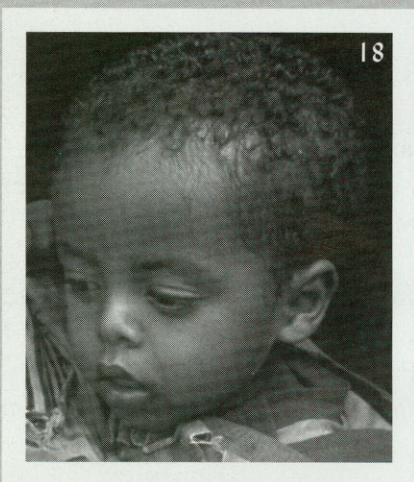
The cover image is a digital collage of artwork, objects, and photographs that were scanned, altered, and layered in Adobe Photoshop. The final image represents the dual nature in which the artist views the purpose of missions and wealth at home and abroad.

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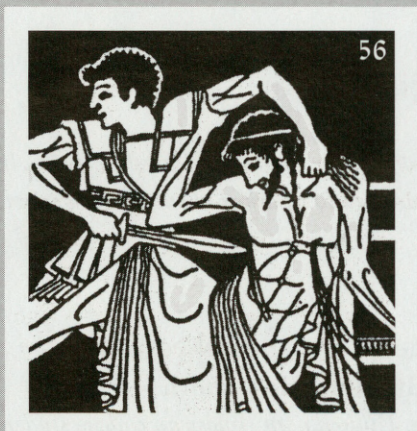
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The Next Adventism

As the twenty-first century unfolds before us subtle shifts are under way. The era of North American Adventism has passed within our lifetimes, and the day of Global Adventism has begun. This can be a difficult concept for North Americans to internalize given that the United States was the birthplace of the Church and continues to be its major financial support.

With our history and expertise we expect deference; with our dollars we want control. We think our definition of Adventism is the way it should be. Aren't we the ones to be sending missionaries to foreign lands to share the gospel? Would we ever send the call to Africa to come over to North America to help us?

Yet African Christianity predates the European model and certainly existed before William Miller, Ellen White, Joseph Bates, and John Nevins Andrews began to put Adventism on the map. The early Ethiopian Church even kept the Sabbath.

In his book, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Philip Jenkins traces the history of Christianity, including the Eastern churches, and discusses "The Myth of Western Christianity." Then he moves through the numbers and makes the case that the center of Christianity is moving to the Southern Hemisphere—Africa, South America, and Asia.

"Considering Christianity as a global reality can make us see the whole religion in a radically new perspective, which is startling and often uncomfortable," he writes. "In this encounter, we are forced to see the religion not just for what it is, but what it was in its origins and what it is going to be in future. To take one example of these startling

rediscoveries, Christianity is deeply associated with poverty" (215).

Jenkins also suggests that "Looking at Christianity as a planetary phenomenon, not merely a Western one, makes it impossible to read the New Testament in quite the same way ever again. The Christianity we see through this exercise looks like a very exotic beast indeed, intriguing, exciting, and a little frightening" (220).

In this issue we begin a discussion of the issues involved with global Adventism that will continue in a variety of forms over the next year. We are pleased to announce that **Philip Jenkins will address the AAF Conference on the Next Adventism the weekend of October 22–24, 2004**, at the Hueston Woods Retreat Center, near Dayton, Ohio. We invite you to consider joining us for a significant conversation about Global Christianity and Adventism.

To help provide us with a fresh perspective in this issue, we are pleased to welcome new voices to our pages: Gifford Rhamie of Newbold College; Gordon R. Doss from Andrews University; and Kim Osborn, a student at Pacific Union College. And so our adventure with the Next Adventism begins.

Bonnie Dwyer
Editor

NOTEWORTHY



Marriage in 2004

By Gary Chartier

In 2004, the Bush administration intends to invest significantly in programs designed to highlight its commitment to supporting “traditional” marriage. Intimate relationships in our society are under threat from a variety of sources, especially our workplaces, which place increasing demands on all of us. It is important, therefore, to know that our intimate partnerships matter to public officials.

It would be unfortunate, however, if, because of a focus on conventional different-sex marriages, both nontraditional different-sex relationships and same-sex relationships of various kinds received insufficient attention and support—or even proved to be objects of orchestrated campaigns of public hostility. Our intimate bonds are already too vulnerable, subject to too many threats and pressures.

The legal recognition of same-sex marriage, in particular, has proven to be a lightning rod. Politicians eager for a hot-button social issue they can use to distract voters from pressing economic and foreign policy concerns have zeroed in on same-sex marriage, claiming dubiously that it poses a profound threat to different-sex marriage.

It is ironic that conservative politicians, who profess to value personal virtue and communal stability, have so reflexively opposed the legal recognition of same-sex marriage. In fact, I believe, there is good

reason for people on both the right and the left of the political spectrum to believe that committed same-sex relationships deserve legal acknowledgment. In this essay, excerpted from a longer article, I attempt to show why.

The article originally appeared in print in 2001. Fortunately and unfortunately, it is, if anything, more relevant today.

We afford legal recognition for various sorts of marriages—civil, ecclesial, common law—for a variety of reasons. We want to provide orderly means of disposing of property in case of divorce. We want to encourage the stability of families in order to foster the healthy development of children. We want to regularize the intergenerational transmission of property. Marriage serves important civic functions.

Marriage also serves to signify the community’s endorsement of a particular kind of relationship: in contemporary America heterosexual and dyadic. It does so directly as a symbol, but also through the conferral of various legal privileges. Proponents and opponents of same-sex marriage rightly see the unavailability of marriage to same-sex couples as a sign that their relationships are communally disfavored. Proponents argue for same-sex marriage as a sign of inclusion in the cultural mainstream for same-sex couples. Opponents argue

against it to preserve the moral integrity of the community, to discourage those who might be inclined to enter same-sex relationships from doing so, and to avoid encouraging those already involved in such relationships to persist in them.

If the social functions of marriage were only utilitarian and symbolic, those unconvinced by my moral arguments might be warranted in continuing to oppose legal recognition for same-sex marriage. There is however a third publicly important function of marriage: the cultivation of virtue. It is precisely because of their concern that the state promote public virtue that many people oppose same-sex marriage. However to say that marriage is a school for virtue means that marriage offers the partners distinctive opportunities to develop morally, to foster in each other moral growth and to learn and practice a responsibility that extends beyond their relationship and into the wider public world. Taking seriously the capacity of marriage to further the development of virtue thus means making marriage available to same-sex couples.

While marriage may embody as clearly as any social institution the transition from status to contract as the basis for social interactions, it nonetheless remains a status relationship. We are not at liberty to define

the terms of the marriage contract however we wish. To marry is to accept—and putatively to endorse—a range of pre-existing societal expectations. Those expectations include permanence and exclusivity.

Permanence and exclusivity both serve the ends of love. But that does not make them consistently easy. Societal expectations help us to take them seriously. Permanence

other than oneself, acknowledging the independent reality and worth of her or his perspectives and needs. Fidelity to another means being prepared at least sometimes to disregard one's own advantage. Commitment and love require learning that one is not at the center of the universe. To learn this contraction of the self in faithful and marital love is to acquire a habit one can and likely will carry into the

can serve as especially important alternatives to more traditional communities in an era when previously common patterns of authority and connections have lost considerable appeal.... Their own shared life can exert a ripple effect on the varied communities they touch. Civil society depends on an array of intertwined communities. Marriages are among the most important of these commu-

There is however a third publicly important function of marriage: the cultivation of virtue.

and exclusivity offer great gifts to marriage partners: security, self-confidence, freedom from alienating isolation. Active societal encouragement of marriage thus means active encouragement of the provisions of these gifts. A society that cares about its members will wish them to enjoy the liberating and empowering experience of marital love. It will also recognize that persons thus liberated and empowered will be more fulfilled, more capable, and so better equipped to contribute in a variety of ways to the lives of others outside their families.

Taken seriously, habits of constancy, trust, honesty, fairness, and compassion will be evident outside the doors of people's homes. A relationship that affects a person as profoundly as marriage is likely to have ramifications that extend well beyond the domestic, not only because those who know themselves loved may be better neighbors and citizens, but because those who learn to love faithfully in marriage will find it more difficult to be untrustworthy and undependable persons in general.

Loving another person means attending to that person as truly

wider world. A moral relationship with a partner fosters moral relationship with other members of one's community.

Marriage provides each partner a sense of dignity and value. Empowered and inspired by the awareness of her or his own worth, a person can contribute more effectively to public life. And the unconditional care and love of another can be, as J. Philip Wogaman puts it, "deeply humanizing." It can thus offer a kind of grace that can equip a person to play a meaningful role in the life of her or his community. The intimate community of a couple is a good in its own right. Fostering mutual giving of marriage partners to each other not only empowers them for public service but also furthers their own well being.

Marriage also contributes to the maintenance of civil society. Stable couples contribute to stable social networks. They are more likely to set down roots in local communities and to invest time and energy in making those communities thrive. Similarly, they are more likely to help anchor small communities of friends, which

nities. Strong marital relationships contribute to the growth and flourishing of healthy communities. And this is true whether the marriages unite same-sex or opposite sex couples.

The public recognition of a marriage through legal acknowledgement and celebratory ritual serves to strengthen a couple's ties with each other. Publicly married couples are clearly identified in the minds of friends, family members and the general public as couples. Who they are is different because they are married. At the same time, it also reminds them that their love for each other appropriately issues in a public vocation, a responsibility to contribute to the polis out of the largesse that love confers on them.

By contrast, as long as lesbians and gays are marginalized, their unions will suffer from pressures to which the marriages and dating relationships of straight couples are never subjected. Being legally and publicly married will increase the opportunity for lesbians and gays to give to their



various communities. By fostering the stability of lesbian and gay couples and integrating them more fully into the public world, same sex marriage will make our communities stronger. Marriages foster virtue in partners and enable them to grow morally, to contribute to each other's humanization, to foster the development of their society. Marriage is not morally neutral; it is morally crucial.

Gary Chartier is an assistant professor of business law and ethics at La Sierra University, Riverside, California. This article is taken from "Natural Law, Same Sex Marriage, and the Politics of Virtue," *UCLA Law Review* 48.6 (Aug. 2001): 1593-1632.

The International Adventist Grapevine

When Pastor Ruimar DePaiva, his wife, Margareth DePaiva, and their eleven-year old son, Larrison, were killed in Palau in December, the international Adventist grapevine began buzzing.

The sensational story of an intruder murdering a missionary family sent shock waves around the world because the family involved had touched the lives of people in at least three different divisions of the Church. The missionaries were originally from Brazil, had attended Andrews University in Michigan, and the father of the murdered pastor is the new field president for Sudan in the Middle East Union.

As chronicled by John P. Rutledge, legal counsel to Koror state government in Palau, another wave of e-mail messages went around the world after the family's funeral with an incredible story of forgiveness. At the Pioneer Memorial Church in Berrien Springs, Michigan, Pastor Dwight Nelson read the story.

From there it went many directions, including to the people of the Middle East Union. By the time it arrived in e-mail boxes in the United States, the story seemed to have circled the globe, proving that there is nothing like a story of forgiveness to bring people together, and nothing like the Adventist grapevine to share it.

Rutledge told of a long, remarkable ceremony. After four hours of speeches and remarks, Ruimar's mom took the microphone. During the week she spent in Palau, she met with the man—Justin Hirosi—who had murdered her son, daughter-in-law, and only grandson. She prayed with him. And she let him know that she had already forgiven him. He cried.

"Then, having just learned that Justin's mother was at the service, she asked Ms. Hirosi to join her. Ruimar's mom hugged her so warmly that the casual observer might have believed the two were long-lost friends. Together, they stepped to the microphone and Ms. DePalva announced that they are 'both mothers grieving for lost sons.' You could have heard a pin drop. Absolute silence. And then the tears started.

"Ms. DePaiva went on. She implored the Palauan community to remove any shroud of blame that might otherwise cover Justin's family. She declared that the DePaivas do not blame Justin's family for the tragedy (and that no one else should either). 'We raise our children; we educate them,' Ms. DePaiva said (paraphrasing, of course). 'We teach them right from wrong. That is all we as mothers can do.'

"Next, the high chief of the island where the tragedy occurred came to the microphone. He announced that, 'If we follow Palauan tradition to its fullest extent, Melissa (the lone sur-

vivor of the tragedy) is now a daughter to Ms. Hirosi. And Ms. DePaiva is a mother to Justin.' He expressed shame, regret and sorrow on behalf of Justin's family, his clan and his entire tribe; after which, Justin's uncle the most senior male member of the family, stepped forward.

"The High Chief explained that Justin's family and clan, though of meager means, had sold many of their belongings and now desired to deliver \$10,000 in cash to Melissa for her college education. Frankly, I've never seen anything like it. And I've never been as emotionally moved. I wailed like a baby," Rutledge wrote.

"I've always lived my life by the doctrine 'Forgive, but don't forget.' Those days are done. I'm now a proud member of the DePaiva clan, and we do things a little differently. Love and forgiveness, that's what it's about."

Drive for Regional Conference Continues in Pacific Union

Although the Pacific Union Conference Executive Committee turned down a proposal to create a regional conference within its geographic borders in November, a group of twelve black churches has formed a federation and continues to work for the creation of such a conference.

At a membership meeting in December, the Regional Fellowship elected seven officers. The group chose as its director Anthony Pascal, pastor of the Sixteenth Street Church in San Bernardino, California, and held another meeting in January to begin development of an operations manual.

Calling their organization a federation of churches totally supportive of the Church and its structure, the

group plans to go to the North American Division to request status as a conference attached to the division, according to Charlie Jo Morgan, the spokeswoman for the group at the Pacific Union Executive Committee meeting.

After the proposal for the regional conference was presented to the Pacific Union Conference Executive Committee in November, Major C. White, retired Pacific Union secretary, responded with a list of reasons not to create such a conference. Forty-five minutes of questions and answers between the committee and the presenters followed these presentations.

According to the report of the session in the *Pacific Union Recorder*, "After the presenters left the room, the committee discussed the issue for about an hour and then voted by secret ballot. Eight-nine percent voted against the proposal."

The Union Committee also voted a statement on regional ministry giving four reasons for its denial of the proposal:

1. We are stronger as we address multicultural issues together. We are convinced that a multicultural expression of God's gift to the Church is the best way to achieve our mission to bring the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue and people; and

2. The work of the Church would suffer loss if deprived of the best each group brings to the organization as a whole; and

3. Characteristically, Regional Conferences were formed where there were primarily two cultural groups, whereas the Pacific Union is multiculturally diverse; and

4. The North American Division policy B 07 10 requires a favorable response of the Union Executive Committee to the proposal to organize a new conference.

Adventism in Africa

In 2003, the division infrastructure of church work in Africa was reorganized.

East-Central Africa Division

Churches – 8,082

Membership – 2,012,030

Population – 242,881,000

Unions – 8

Conferences – 41

Health Care Institutions – 159

Higher Education Institutions

Adventist University at Lukanga, Democratic Republic of Congo

Adventist University of Central Africa, Rwanda

Maxwell Adventist Academy, Kenya

University of Eastern Africa, Kenya

Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division

Churches – 5,638

Membership – 1,569,033

Population – 135,849,000

Unions – 9

Conferences – 37

Health Care Institutions – 65

Higher Education Institutions

Adventist University, Zurcher, Madagascar

Solusi University, Zimbabwe

Western Africa Division

Churches – 2,567

Membership – 640,851

Population – 281,230,000

Unions – 5

Conferences – 37

Health Care Institutions – 51

Higher Education Institutions

Adventist University, Cosendai, Cameroon

Babcock University, Nigeria

Valley View University, Ghana

Trans-Mediterranean Territories

In addition, the countries of Morocco, Algeria, Libya, and the Western Sahara are part of the Trans-Mediterranean Territories in the Euro-African Division. Afghanistan, Tunisia, and Turkey are also part of this "Attached Field."

Churches – 5

Membership – 176

Population – 237,025,000

Source: 2003 SDA Yearbook

THE BIBLE



ILLUSTRATION BY MAX SEABAUGH

Encountering the Ethiopian Eunuch

The Place of the Ethiopian Eunuch in the Book of Acts (8:26–40)
and its Ethical Implications for Missions

By Gifford Rhamie

With the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts chapter 8, Africans can authentically trace their Christian roots back to the apostolic age. This is just one of many fascinating aspects to this story that takes the reader into a world of a very powerful international figure who accepts the gospel of Jesus Christ along his travels.

At face value, Luke's narrative reads as a beautiful conversion story, especially when set against the preceding story of Simon Magus (8:4–25). Yet it has been suggested that this narrative has scant connection with the rest of Acts and adds little to the development of Luke's narrative and theology, never mind his missiology.

In fact, the vast majority of commentaries focus on the eunuch's conversion, and in particular the baptismal formula mentioned in verse 37, as an indicator of early set procedures and practices of baptism in the early Christian church.¹ But few comment on the Ethiopian eunuch's status, especially in light of Luke's rhetorical strategy of chapter 8, and even less on the narrative's strategy for missions in view of 1:8.²

This lack of comment has had the

unwitting effect of perpetuating the invisibility of the Ethiopian on the world scene of interpreters, even though Luke-Acts goes some way, whether directly or indirectly, to reflect the inclusive need of people of color to be seen as part of God's new kingdom.³

Thus, there is a tendency to ignore basic questions such as:

What is an Ethiopian eunuch doing worshipping in Jerusalem during the Passover?

Who is he?

How is he able to read the Septuagint and why is he reading Isaiah 53?

Where is the Ethiopian going? Why Gaza?

Does his question to Philip for an explanation of the text reveal something of the acceptance of its authority, and a familiarity with Old Testament Hebrew tradition?



Such questions are important because, as will be shown, the strategic place of the text of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–40) not only provides the missiological link to the early Christian Church in Africa but also has ethical implications for understanding missions today. In this way, the eunuch's conversion foreshadows the inauguration of the Gentile mission and its ultimate geographical and cultural scope symbolic of including all peoples.⁴

The Story of the Eunuch

Let us recount the story with some annotated comments. According to Luke's narrative, the eunuch had gone up to Jerusalem to worship (8:27). The time was probably the season following Pentecost of Acts 2. Pentecost was apparently quite an international affair with nationals from provinces of the Roman as well as Parthian empires (Acts 2:9–11).

The eunuch might have been in Jerusalem from even the time of the Passover, as it is unlikely that he would have traveled so far (several weeks journey) to worship and miss the most important event of the Jewish calendar. He was returning home via Gaza, a coastal town on the western tip of Palestine that would have provided transportation either by a coastal road or by sea to the Nile, where he would travel southward toward the capital city, Meroë, between the fifth and sixth cataracts of the Nile.⁵

The fact that he came from Ethiopia, which was deemed by Luke as "the ends of the earth" (Luke 11:31),⁶ and purposefully to worship indicates that he was most likely a Jew, if not a Gentile God-fearer, or, but not necessarily the least likely, a full-fledged proselyte.⁷ My preference for a Jewish identity comes out of the burgeoning data of the historical records of Ethiopia. (Ethiopia is the popular appellation for Nubia, which covered the then-vast parts of the sub-Saharan desert of Africa during ancient Israel and Second Temple Judaism.)⁸

Oral tradition and DNA analysis convincingly accounts for the settlement of Jews in Ethiopia from the time of King Solomon due to his alleged dalliance with the Queen of Sheba.⁹ It should not come as a huge surprise that Jews from Africa regularly attended the festivals in Jerusalem, even if the Jews might not have fully accepted them.¹⁰

The fact that he was an Ethiopian eunuch could pose a double whammy to a modern reader. His "Ethiopian-ness" conjures up the many stereotypes of deprived, poor, marginalized, dispossessed, malnourished, under-

developed Africans. His eunuch status, on the other hand, raises questions of virility or, for that matter, sterility and of a complicated gender, not least dubious sexuality.¹¹ Hence, he was a marginal of the marginalized.

To Luke's readers, however, the Ethiopian might have represented a prestigious, powerful figure if partially in terms of his ethnicity, then most certainly in terms of his social status because he was a key member of the government of Queen Candice, the traditional title of the dynasty of queens, rather like that of pharaoh.

The suggestion of his ethnicity presenting a physical force to be reckoned with comes from the way in which the ancients viewed Africans. From the time of Homer, the Greeks and later the Romans would normally measure people of color against, for example, the blackness of the Ethiopian skin.¹² Their internationality was often acclaimed for their inclusive education, their bravery on the seas, and the wealth of resources that would accompany them for commerce.¹³

The Ethiopian eunuch was not merely an object of exotic curiosity, but an influential, imposing figure of power, wealth, and prestige. Even his identity as a eunuch, although rendering him marginalized in Jerusalem, could have conceivably been viewed with admiration on the part of fellow Africans.¹⁴ He was both marginal and elite at the same time.

In short, the Ethiopian eunuch stood paradoxically for Luke as a premier prototype, symbolic of including all peoples, representative of the ultimate geographical, cultural, and gender scope of the spread of the gospel.

Rather than triggering cognitive dissonance in his readers, Luke's inclusion of this story could have added credibility, honor, and status to a fledgling Christianity for converting not merely a remote figure, in terms of his origins in the outer regions of the then-known world, but a wealthy, educated, and aristocratic figure—someone the likes of Theophilus (1:1–4) might have welcomed.¹⁵

Now, I do not wish to dilute and thereby deny any dissonance the prominence given to an Ethiopian in Luke might have caused in later readers, for it is well known that later rabbinic tradition held very negative views of blacks in antiquity.¹⁶ The point here is, though, that he stood with all his inconsistencies and inherent contradictions as a suitable candidate to embody the *raison d'être* of 1:8c.

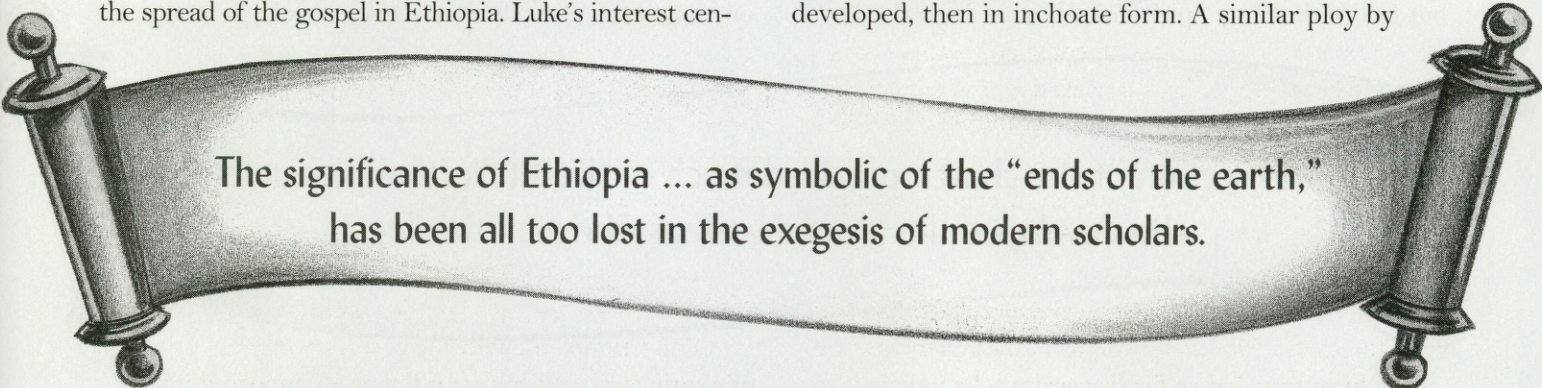
The significance of Ethiopia as a fulfillment of 1:8, as symbolic of the "ends of the earth," has been all too lost in the exegesis of modern scholars. Few seem

to have noticed that in the context of culture this baptized and now fully fledged member of the new Christian family, indeed this Ethiopian, is returning to his home with a mission. In support of this, the Western MSS longer variant reading of the Holy Spirit falling upon the eunuch before sending him on his way rejoicing (8:39) is undoubtedly efficacious of a departing with intent, missiological intent.¹⁷

There is a clear reason for Luke not pursuing this trajectory of missions, for not processing his readers through the spread of the gospel in Ethiopia. Luke's interest cen-

The emphasis of the quote is clearly to project the humiliation-exaltation experience of Jesus Christ, a pattern that is a feature of Luke's writing (Luke 1:52; 3:5-6; 5:12-26; 14:11; 18:9-14, 24:25-27).²² This language of reversal of fortunes could well have had rhetorical impact on the eunuch given how he might have been generally received in Jerusalem.

The explication of the text, Isaiah 53:7-8, by Philip was most likely a recapitulation of an early evangelistic strategy of apologetics for converting Jews, if not fully developed, then in inchoate form. A similar ploy by



The significance of Ethiopia ... as symbolic of the "ends of the earth," has been all too lost in the exegesis of modern scholars.

tered around the activities of the apostles, especially Paul, "the apostle to the Gentiles" (see Acts 13:46, 47). Consequently, Luke colludes with a cultural ideology that focuses on Rome as the center of the Mediterranean world, with the outer regions of Spain to be eventually explored, with Ethiopia not even in the running.¹⁸

Hence, by shifting the center from Jerusalem, if only ideologically, the case for Christianity being for all people is emphatically made. Paul's focus becomes Luke's focus, which in turn becomes the reader's focus. This has the unwitting effect of making "the darker races outside the Roman orbit ... circumstantially marginalised by NT authors."¹⁹

Consequently, the sociopolitical realities of the text could deny the modern reader of new possibilities of a vision of racial inclusiveness and universalism. One has only to examine maps of the New Testament world, for example, and see the paucity of information on Africa. Africa is not there; only the northern region of the Nile—Egypt.²⁰

Notice that the eunuch was reading aloud. It was uncommon for one in antiquity to read silently to oneself. Everyone read aloud. But the eunuch was reading the Isaiah scroll, in particular the Suffering Servant passage of chapter 53, which is projected in literary terms as "the structural pivot of the entire eunuch story."²¹ Luke does not have the eunuch read the entire passage, but it is substantial enough to warrant due study by him.

Jesus himself with the two men on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) could be invoked here. Thus, the Isaiah text probably emerged in early Christianity as a foundational chatechistic (or even prophetic) text, proving the martyrdom of the Messiah.²³

Given this evangelistic platform, it is very likely that the text was being read and talked about in Jerusalem in the aftermath of the witness of Jesus' death and resurrection, where the phenomenon of speaking in tongues must have caused quite a stir. This must have played on the mind of the eunuch as he traveled, and as is evident from the text, the Holy Spirit seized the opportunity.

After receiving satisfactory guidance, where the topic of baptism must have arisen along the way, the eunuch is foregrounded in the story and given prominence. He exerts his authority and almost demands to be baptized at once (36-38). Philip acquiesces. Then they both emerge out of the water with the Holy Spirit falling upon the eunuch and the angel of the Lord snatching Philip away.

All of this took place before Saul's conversion. The Suffering Servant text of Isaiah (Chap. 53) no doubt became the eunuch's catechism. Charles E. Bradford calls him, "the first missionary with a national con-

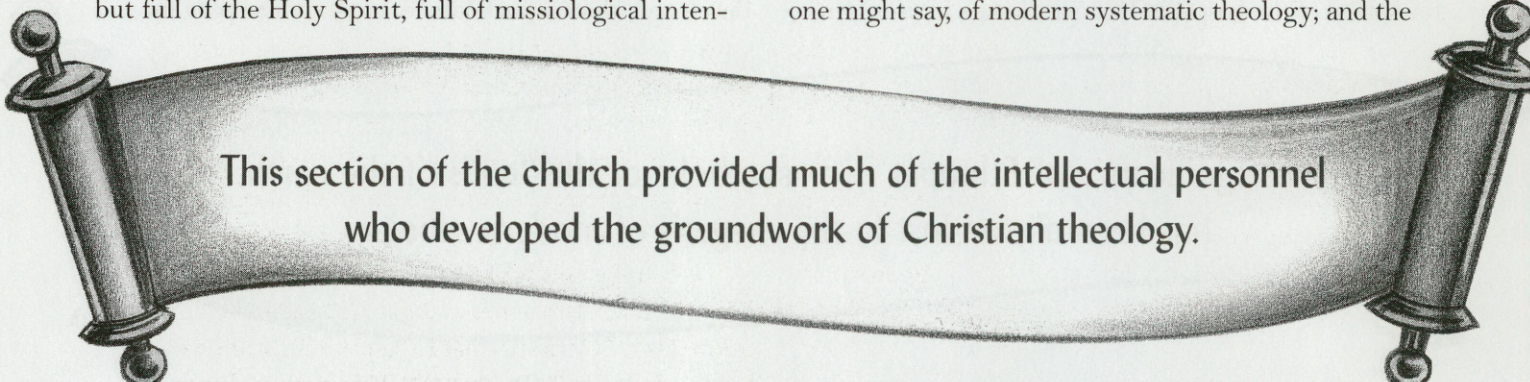


stituency.”²⁴ Luke’s strategic employment of the text undoubtedly provides a clue to the spiritual mandate for such a sociopolitically, commanding man.

Moreover, the longer plausible MSS reading of Acts 8:39 posits the Holy Spirit as falling upon the Ethiopian as a result of the baptism which is not only an allusion to but also a fulfillment of 1:8, whereupon receiving the Holy Spirit the disciples were bound by power to evangelize. The Ethiopian went “on his way rejoicing,” not merely with an emotional, holy dance, but full of the Holy Spirit, full of missiological inten-

notable record of suffering under persecution. We have records of this primarily because the provinces were part of “representative” Christianity, meaning that North Africa constituted the southern region of the Roman Empire and thus formed part of the locus of Christian activity.

It was a time when martyrdom was the test of Christianity. This section of the church provided much of the intellectual personnel who developed the groundwork of Christian theology. For example, Origen the founder, one might say, of modern systematic theology; and the



This section of the church provided much of the intellectual personnel who developed the groundwork of Christian theology.

tion. Herein lies the subtext of missiological intent.

The Ethiopian eunuch was to reach an entire nation, rather on the scale of Paul’s mission to the European-dominated Gentile world, and his was a first in the Christian era.

If one sees the European trajectory of church growth emanating from 1:8 with its territorial expansionism across Asia and Europe as the central concern of Luke (since he is eventually following Paul’s story), then surely the Ethiopian eunuch’s story ought to be relegated to a footnote. The problem, however, is the prominence that Luke gives to the story. It is too significant to Luke to be footnoted.

The story has to be construed in light of the fuller plot of 1:8, not merely territorially but ethnically. Only then will the Ethiopian story be seen for what it is: a symbol of the conversion of all nations, and of the fulfillment of 1:8c as mission “to the end of the earth.”²⁵ So although Luke eventually follows Paul’s work, he pauses for a significant while on the incursions made into the ends of the world, Africa.²⁶

The Church in Africa

By the second century C.E. churches were already established in Africa.²⁷ Between Egypt and the stretch of North Africa, which the Romans incidentally referred to as “Africa” even though they were both provinces of the Roman Empire, churches had a

three African lawyers, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, who laid the foundations of Western theology.

This was so because the North African church pioneered the vernacular use of Latin. It was working with the fashionable Latin (the soon-to-become ecclesiological language), whereas the church in Rome was still working in Greek. Interestingly, Victor, the first bishop of Rome, wrote his letters in Latin and was from Africa.

In the meantime, the gospel was taking root in Ethiopia. This surfaces in fourth century literature. Rufinus, for example, cites the story of Frumentius and Aedesius, two Syrian Christians, who were shipwrecked off the coast of what is now Eritrea (Horn of Africa) and taken to the capital, Axum, where because of the kind show of hospitality they settled.²⁸

Since the Ethiopians were accustomed to hosting foreigners, the new settlers noticed how tolerant the people were in matters of religion, as, indeed, Africans tend to be. They were amazed at the evidence of Christianity and Hebraism so freely practiced among the indigenous even though the emperor at the time, Ella Amida, practiced paganism.²⁹ This has much to commend for pluralism, with its inherent characteristics of tolerance and respect for the other’s set of values.

After the death of the emperor, King Ezana, who was a monotheist anyway, joined Christianity and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was instituted in 331 C.E. as the national church. In the same year Emperor

Constantine was converted to Christianity, which implies that the Christian Church in Ethiopia enjoyed the status of national provenance before the Church in Rome.

However, it must be noted that Christianity was Ethiopianized (indigenized) more than Ethiopia was Christianized. In other words, the religion was incarnated into the culture of the day, and thereby owned by the indigenous. Hence, it was comfortable with itself and confident with its identity. This, it must be emphasized, was without getting territorial in the “Christendom,” or expansionist, sense of the word, as was already the practice in Western Christianity.

Thus, cultural as well as ecumenical diversity was built into the psyche of the early Ethiopian church.³⁰ It was at this time and in this context that the church in Ethiopia forged close lasting ties with the church in Alexandria, the then-capital of Egypt, during the time of Patriarch Athanasius, while maintaining its distinct form of Christianity.

Cross-Cultural Diffusion

It would appear that the motive over the centuries for maintaining ties with Christians so far away was that they saw Christianity as one organic whole. This sense of an umbilical cord linking the isolated Ethiopia with the outside world over the years, yea centuries, is a witness to Christian universality. Yet this universality did not negate the unique interpretations and practices of Christianity. This might have something to say about a phenomenon of Christianity that Andrew Walls calls “cross-cultural diffusion.”³¹

By this, Walls refers to the way centers of Christianity have adapted to the impact of a new culture—religious or social—without compromising its core beliefs. This could be seen in Acts 15, for example, in the way Jewish Christians soon accepted the legitimacy of a Gentile expression of Christian religion exclusive of circumcision and, say, separatism.

The church had to be vulnerable, if fragile. In this case, the Jewish form of Christianity with the “old-style” believers retaining the Torah-keeping way of devotion to the Messiah, characteristic of the Jerusalem church, soon gave way to the vibrant innovative Gentile church, with the death of James the Elder probably prompting the former’s demise.

Here the center of gravity shifted from Jewish Christianity to Hellenistic Christianity. At different times, different peoples and different places have

become the church’s center. Then the “baton,” to use Walls’s metaphor, is passed on to another.³²

This is what we witnessed in the early Ethiopian church. Cultural diversity was built into its origins in that it embraced an ecumenical partnership with a distinctly different community in Alexandria, Egypt. Over the centuries, however, Ethiopia hosted a Christian “empire,” whereas Alexandria was swallowed up in an Islamic one.

Today, we are witnessing a resurgence of Christianity in Africa. What is noteworthy is its deep sense of belonging to its Ethiopian-Christian past.

Walls cites an example. More than a century ago, different groups of African Christians independent of each other, dotted all over the continent, and frustrated by missionary control, established churches free of Western missionaries.

When they did so, some took on the title, “Ethiopian,” to assert their Africanness, adopting the famous text beloved by all Africans, that Ethiopia will “stretch forth her hands to God” (Ps. 68:31).³³ This instinct driven by a keen consciousness ought to be taken seriously.

Thus, Africans can authentically trace their Christian roots not only to Africa but virtually back to the apostolic age. This has serious implications for the way mission is understood in Christianity today.

Christianity in Africa cannot be treated as colonial crumbs from the European master’s table. Christian origins, discourse, and the history of Christian missions need to recover the place of Africa from the margins.

Although Greco-Roman categories have influenced African Christianity, it owes most of its formation to Hebraistic influences. It has more in common with Hebrew thinking and practice than with the Greco-Roman worldview.

African Christianity was not launched with an impoverished beginning at the gratuitous mercy of foreign missionaries, but, as has been shown exegetically, enjoyed a rich indigenous historical beginning most likely at the hands of the Ethiopian eunuch. Indeed, Luke meant for his readership to understand that the eunuch once empowered by the Holy Spirit left with missiological intent.

Although Christianity was born in an eclectic



context within African life that resonated with much of the culture of Old Testament Scripture, its birth was probably not as syncretistic as the religious context of its counterpoint in the West, especially in the outer region of the Roman Empire toward the Barbarian (Greco-Roman language) countries of Central and Northern Europe.

Just as the Ethiopian eunuch came to symbolize for Luke the fulfillment of the plot of 1:8c ("And you will be my witness ... in the ends of the earth"), so African Christianity ought to be seen as the embodiment of all peoples, even with their inherent inconsistencies and contradictions. In this way, the example of indigenized Christianity could serve as a template for a Christianity in the West that is attempting to reinvent itself.

The African religious reality is pluralistic. Traditional religions, Islam, and Christianity, existed and still exist side by side in many varieties, and "that's OK," to use a colloquialism.³⁴ Because of this, the cultural diversity that was built into its origins predisposed it for collaborative work with other religions.

The history of Christianity from the Apostolic Age is incomplete and one-sided when the African data is not given. This has serious pedagogical implications.

Does the standard Adventist prophetic interpretation of, say, Daniel 2 with respect to the feet of "iron and clay" and ten toes need revising in light of the African story?

Indeed, given Western preoccupation with the Middle East, Europe, and America, where is Africa in eschatology?

Perhaps, then, in light of the above and as a show of solidarity with the rest of Christianity we could adopt a missionary song composed by the nineteenth-century Lovedale Mission Press, as did the new South Africa for its National Anthem:

Nkosi sikelel' I Afrika : God bless Africa
Makube njalo. : May it be so for ever.³⁵

Notes and References

1. Interestingly, the Church Fathers of the second-fifth centuries centered their arguments around questions about the use or nature of baptism. See William Frank Lawrence, "The History of the Interpretation of Acts 8:26-40 by the Church Fathers Prior to the Fall of Rome" (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, 1984). The narrative does give historical clues to approaches of the witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus in league with other citations in Luke-Acts (Luke 1:1-4; 24:48; Acts 1:21-22; 4:3; 10:39-41;

22:14-15). Still, many refer to the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing about the conversion of the Ethiopian through preaching and evangelism (8:29, 39) and against the broader backdrop of Luke-Acts (Luke 4:18; 24:44; Acts 1:8; 4:8-10; 7:55; 10:11-12; 13:4-10; 16:6-7).

2. "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (1:8). Many see this as the keynote or programmatic focus of the narrative of Acts. James Scott, for one, makes an interesting case for seeing 1:8 as programmatic for "three missions, according to the three sons of Noah who constitute the Table of Nations: Shem (Acts 2:1-8:25), Ham (8:26-40), and Japheth (9:1-28:31)," in "Luke's Geographical Horizon," in *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting*, eds. David W. J. Gill and Conrad Gempf, vol. 2 of *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, ed. B. Winter (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 531. Scott makes this point by comparing the League of Nations table of Genesis 10 with Acts 2 and suggests that the ethos is the same in terms of its "geographic orientation" (530).

3. Luke-Acts appears to pay particular attention to people of color, e.g. Simon of Cyrene, Simeon Niger and Lucius of Cyrene, if, of course, geography is an indicant.

4. This is, in essence, Clarice Martin's point in "A Chamberlain's Journey and the Challenge of Interpretation for Liberation," *Semeia* 47 (1989): 105-35.

5. Traveling by road seems a likely option given the mention of chariot in 8:28, 29. The only other place in the Bible it is mentioned is Revelation 9:9 (in a war context). It was probably a horse-drawn carriage that accommodated the transportation of goods.

6. Clarice Martin argues quite scrupulously and convincingly for the geographic significance of the provenance of Ethiopia from Greco-Roman sources such as Homer (*Iliad*, 23.205-7), Herodotus (3.114-15) and Strabo (*Geography of Strabo*, 1.2.27) where Ethiopia lies on the edge of the "Ocean" at the southernmost limit of the world. Furthermore, if, as Bauckham posits in light of the league of nations in Acts 2, Jerusalem is at the center of Luke's geographic world, then the other three corners of the boundaries of the world would be India, Scythia, and Spain, since ancient authors often identified the physical boundaries with these locations. See Richard Bauckham, "James and the Jerusalem Church," in *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting*, ed. Richard Bauckham, vol. 4 of *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, ed. B. Winter (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 422. Bauckham acknowledges that although the reference to "the ends of the earth" in Acts 13:47 might have had Spain in mind it is only one instance of the gospel reaching the ends of the earth: "Acts 1:8 surely has a more universal reference" (*ibid.*, 422, n. 19). Indeed, early Christian writers appear to have placed Spain at the outer limits of the West, since it was part of the outer reaches of the Roman Empire. See, for example, 1 Clem.5:7, "the limits of the west," and Ernst Kasemann's commentary on Romans 15:28, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1980), 402. Interestingly, Bauckham also cites later traditions as taking the gospel to the other "corners" of the world: Thomas (*Acts of Thomas*) or Bartholomew (Rufinus, *Hist. Eccl.* 1:9-10)—India; Andrew (Origen, *ap. Eusebius, Hist. Eccl.* 3.1; *Acts of Andrew and*

Matthias)—Scythia; and even Matthew (Rufinus, *Hist. Eccl.* 1.9–10)—Ethiopia (Bauckham, *Acts*, 4:422, n. 19). How much these are attempts to rewrite history, however, is open to question.

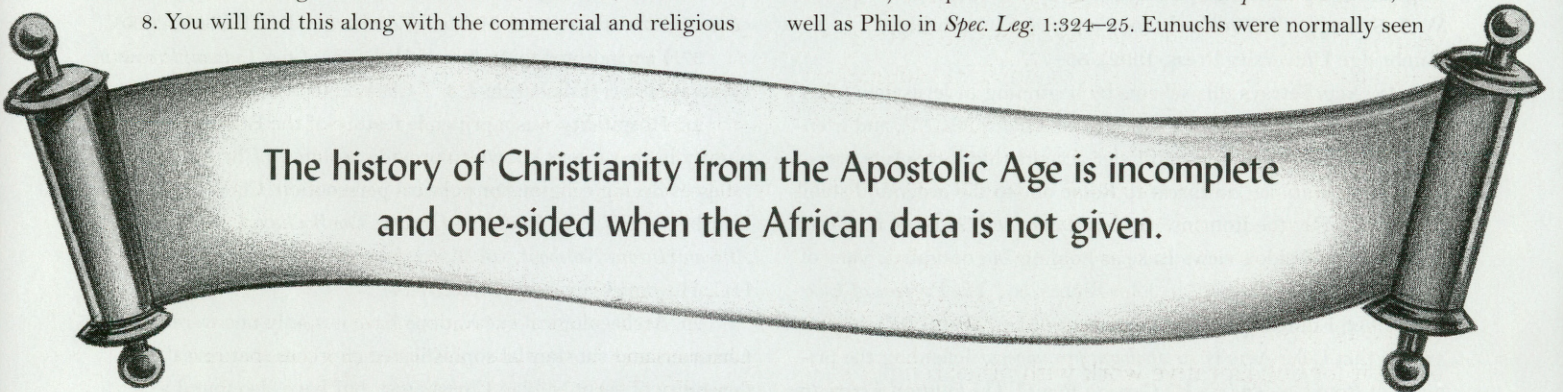
7. Although virtually all commentators argue that the eunuch was either a Gentile God-fearer or a proselyte—see F. Scott Spencer, *The Portrait of Philip in Acts: A Study of Roles and Relations* (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1992), 160–73, for an argument in favor of God-fearer—they all signally ignore the trail of data linking Judaism to Ethiopia through the Queen of Sheba. This latter could account for Luke's uncharacteristic failure to label the religious status of the eunuch. Indeed it could have formed part of the cultural knowledge of Luke's readers or, not least, himself.

8. You will find this along with the commercial and religious

than 50 percent of the members of the Lemba's hereditary priestly clan have it, indicating that they, too, are *cohanim*.

10. Rebecca Denova in *The Things Accomplished Among Us: Prophetic Tradition in the Structural Pattern of Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 173, sees the Pentecost scene of the League of Nations as a fulfillment of Jewish eschatological prophecy where the exiles will eventually be ingathered. This accords with data from the pseudopigrapha.

11. Leviticus 21:20; 22:24; and Deuteronomy 14:1 state that the eunuch was banned from worship in the inner temple. The Mishna also enforces the Deuteronomic ban against eunuchs (m. Yeb. 8:1–2). Josephus corroborates this in *Antiquities* 4:290–91, as well as Philo in *Spec. Leg.* 1:324–25. Eunuchs were normally seen



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and one-sided when the African data is not given.

acumen of blacks (Nubians) in texts and traditions associated with the wisdom of the Queen of Sheba. See *KEBRA NAGAST or The Queen of Sheba and Her Only Son Menyelek* (I), trans. E. A. Wallis Budge (London: Humphrey Milford, 1932); C. E. Bradford, *Sabbath Roots: The African Connection* (Washington, D.C.: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of SDAs, 1999), 91. There is a wealth of material in Greco-Roman literature from as early as Homer, Herodotus, and Seneca that links Ethiopians to Mediterranean society and culture. For a survey, see Clarice Martin, "A Chamberlain's Journey," 111–16.

9. For example, DNA analysis has been used to identify as genuine Jews the Lemba, a tribe of black, Bantu-speaking, non-pork-eating, circumcision-practicing, Sabbath-observing people living in southern Africa who have for centuries claimed that they were Jews. Oral traditions reported that they were Jews living in Senna, Ethiopia, and were forced to leave due to a flood that destroyed their homes. Since rumors about the "Lost Tribes of Israel" abounded, these Lemba traditions were dismissed as mythical. However, archaeological excavations actually uncovered the site specifically mentioned, which was destroyed by a flood about a thousand years ago. "Beta Israel Studies Toward the Year 2000," in Steven Kaplan, Tudor Parfitt, and Emanula Trevisan Semi, eds., *Between Africa and Zion* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 1995), 9–20; T. Parfitt and E. Trevisan Semi, eds., *The Beta Israel in Ethiopia and Israel Studies on the Ethiopian Jews* (London: Curzon Press, 1999), 304.

The DNA analysis pinpointed a characteristic genetic signature found only in the DNA sequences of 50 percent of Jewish men claiming to be *cohanim*—members of the priestly class descended from Aaron. K. Skorecki, et al., "Y chromosomes of Jewish priests," *Nature* 385 (1997): 32; M. G. Thomas, et al., "Origins of Old Testament Priests," *Nature* 394 (1998): 138–140. Moreover, more

as disfigured victims of violence, the famililess, the sexually ambiguous, the socially downtrodden slaves, the childless, the publicly maligned, and culturally impure.

12. See Frank M Snowden, Jr., *Blacks in Antiquity: Ethiopians in the Greco-Roman Experience* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1970), 2–7, for a close and detailed demonstration of this point.

13. Feldman, Louis H., *Jews and Gentiles in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 137.

14. Even if he were a Jew back home in Africa, at best he was a God-fearer in Jerusalem, not being allowed to enter the inner courts of the temple and inner courts of Jewish circles. Cf. P. F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 154–63.

15. He was traveling in style—a chariot, probably escorted by an entourage—and he had purchased an expensive Isaiah scroll. Cf. K. Bornhauser, *Studien zur Apostelgeschichte* (Gutersloh: Bertelsmann, 1934), 96, cited in Spencer, *Portrait of Philip in Acts*, 159.

It is generally gathering acceptance that Luke's audience was a learned one. For example, in this verse 31 of the passage Luke has the Ethiopian speaking eloquent Greek and employing the unusual optative mood. J. H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek. I. Prolegomena*, 3d ed. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1908), 197–99, when he asks, "How can I, unless someone guides me?"

16. For example, some rabbis believed that blackness of the skin was the result of a direct curse of God. "Our rabbis taught: Three copulated in the ark, and they were all punished—the dog,



the raven and Ham. The dog was doomed to be tied, the raven expectorates (his seed into his mate's mouth), and Ham was smitten in his skin." Isadore Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud: Hebrew-English Edition*, rev. ed., Jacob Schacter and H. Freeman, trans. (London: Socino Press, 1969), 108B. Also, "Moreover because you twisted your head around to see my nakedness, your grandchildren's hair shall be twisted into kinks, and their eyes red: again because your lips jested at my misfortune, theirs shall swell; and because you neglected my nakedness, they shall go naked ... Men of this race are called Negroes."

17. W. A. Strange argues meticulously for the longer reading. This is in spite of a huge problem with its textual originality—W. A. Strange, *The Problem of the Text of Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 65–77.

18. Acts betrays this scheme by beginning in Jerusalem (ch. 2) before moving from Antioch (ch. 12), to Athens (ch. 17), and eventually to Rome (ch. 28). Philip Esler accepts that Luke-Acts presents Christianity as "no threat to Rome nor to the order and stability so prized by the Romans," in *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts*, 218. Robert Maddox views Luke as holding "an optimistic view of the imperial government," in John Riches, ed., *The Purpose of Luke-Acts* (1982; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1985), 97. Paul Walaskay argues that Luke-Acts is an *apologia pro imperio* defending the primacy of Rome in "And So We Came to Rome": *The Political Perspective on St. Luke*, Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series 49 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 64–67.

Peculiarly, J. J. Gunther suggests that Luke ignores the origins of Egyptian Christianity because its catechesis was deemed flawed. Gunther, "The Association of Mark and Barnabus with Egyptian Christianity (Part 1)," *Evangelical Quarterly* 54 (1982): 220–21.

19. Cain Felder, "Racial Ambiguities in the Biblical Narratives," in *The Church and Racism*, eds. Gregory Baum and John Coleman (New York: Seabury, 1982), 22.

20. These maps tend to go as far south as Thebes and Hierakonpolis. In fact, to find Africa one has to peruse Old Testament maps. See Martin, "A Chamberlain's Journey," 121, where she refers to this phenomenon as a "politics of omission."

21. Spencer, *Portrait of Philip in Acts*, 174. Spencer demonstrates this through mapping an intricate chiasmic pattern of the pericope (131–32).

22. See *ibid.*, 179, for a further development of this theme.

23. See C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Substructure of the New Testament Theology* (London: Nisbet Press, 1952), 132; and Barnabus Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 77.

24. C. E. Bradford, *Sabbath Roots: The African Connection* (Washington, D.C.: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of SDA's, 1999), 94. Long before, Irenaeus (120–202 C.E.) declared that the Ethiopian became a missionary "to the regions of Ethiopia" (*Adv. haer.* 4.23.2; cf. 3.23.20), and Epiphanius (315–403 C.E.) after him.

25. This tradition of the symbolism of universalism goes as far back as Augustine in his comments on Psalm 69:31—"Under the name of Egypt or of Ethiopia he hath signified the faith of all nations ... he hath signified the nations of the whole world." Philip Schaff, ed., *Saint Augustine: Expositions on the Book of Psalms. A Select*

Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 8:298. Athanasius does the same, see Jean Marie Courtès, "The Theme of 'Ethiopia' and 'Ethiopians' in Patristic Literature," in *The Image of the Black in Western Art: From the Early Christian Church to the Age of Discovery*, vol. 1, pt. 1, ed., Ladislav Bugner (New York: William Morrow, 1979), 9–32.

26. Hans-Josef Klauck agrees that if it is held that the universal mission of the Church could not begin before Paul, then the place of the pericope would be problematic. He therefore concludes, "thus it is here—and nowhere else—that the final programmatic point from Acts 1:8 ... is genuinely fulfilled, in an act of prophetic anticipation." Klauck, *Magic and Paganism in Early Christianity: The World of the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Brian McMeil (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000).

27. I am indebted to Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2002), 87, for this section.

28. Hospitality was a principle feature of the Ethiopian community in that it was known to provide asylum to Christian refugees fleeing religious or political persecution. Cf. William Leo Hansberry, *Pillars in Ethiopian History: The William Leo Hansberry African History Notebook*, vol. 1., ed. Joseph E. Harris (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974).

29. Archaeological excavations have not only uncovered numerous and substantial sophisticated churches that reveal the durability of early Nubian Christianity, but have also found a schema that still persists today. Many of the churches, particularly in the countryside, are circular with three concentric rings. The innermost ring is the sanctuary (Makdas) and contains the Holy of Holies with a replica ark of the covenant. The second is the Holy Place. Only the priests and deacons may enter the innermost sanctuary. See Bekele Heye, "The Sabbath in Ethiopia" (M.A. thesis. Andrews University, 1968). For accounts on King Ezana, see also E. Ullendorf, *Ethiopia and the Bible* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); cf. Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270–1527* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972).

30. This could well be one of the secrets to its survival against Islamic campaigns.

31. Walls, *Cross-Cultural Process*, 67.

32. *Ibid.*, 66.

33. *Ibid.*, 91. The Order of Ethiopia in South Africa, for example, is a robust indigenous movement within the Anglican Church. Ethiopian "consciousness" can also be seen in less orthodox movements such as the Jamaican-origin Rastafarian movement, which identifies Ras Tafari, its Messiah of hope, with Halle Sellasie, the last emperor of Ethiopia, who was able to trace his lineage all the way back to King David.

34. Kwame Bediako, *Jesus in Africa: The Christian Gospel in African History and Experience* (Yaounde, Cameroun: Regnum Africa and Paternoster, 2000), x–xi.

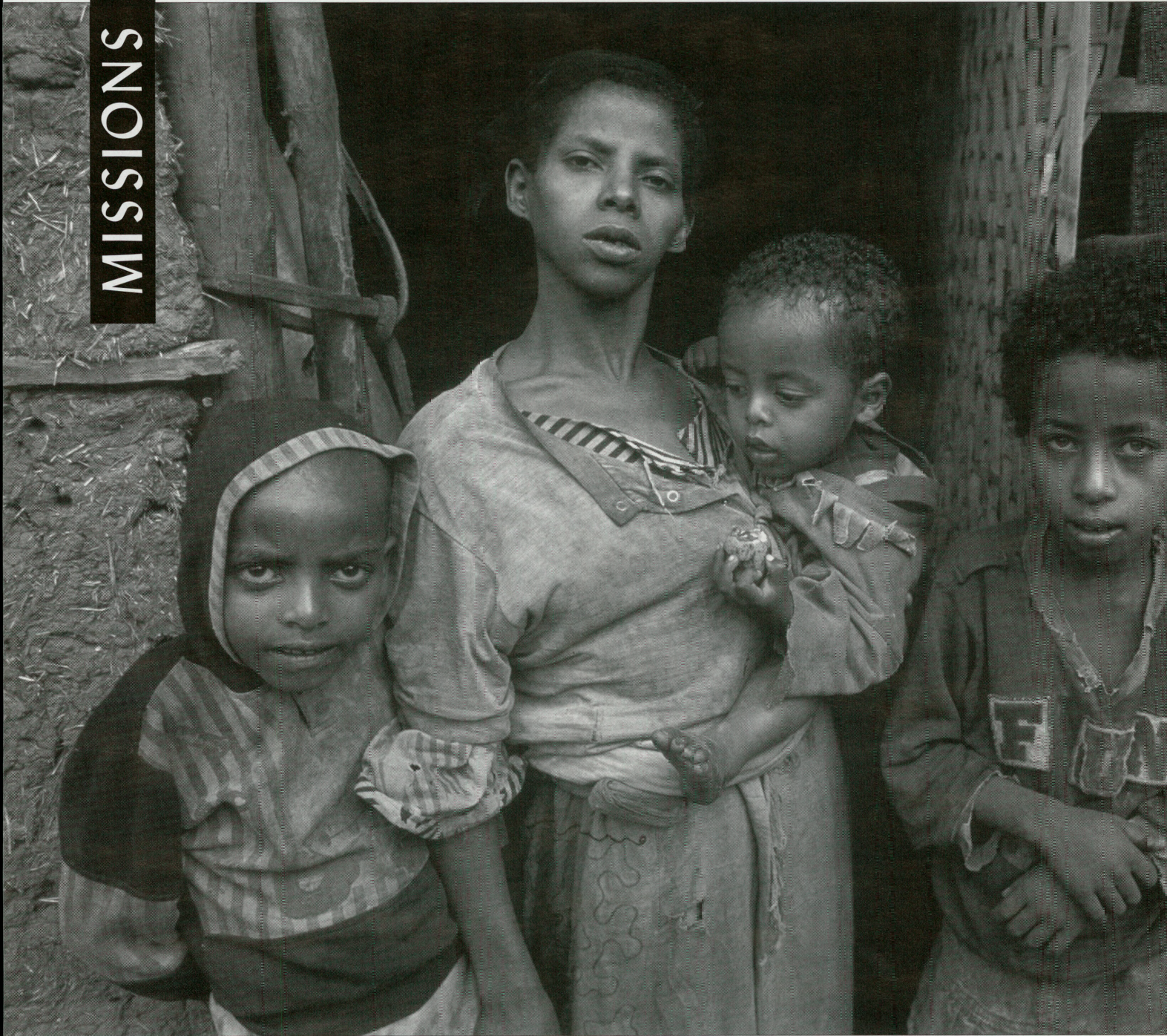
35. Walls, *Cross-Cultural Process*, 115.


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MISSIONS



MISSIONS





Hope in the Land of Dried Corn and Salted Coffee

Text and Photographs By Kimberly Osborn

Without fully comprehending my task, I took it upon myself as a college intern to visit and interview four hundred homes in the town of Gimbie, Ethiopia. My plan was to photograph and survey the living conditions of the community and then to hand this information over to the organization that had sponsored me, Adventist Health International.

Yes, I got my information: the number of children living in each home; who had an education; what they ate in the course of a day; how many animals they owned; where they got their water; and whether or not they shared an outhouse with their neighbors. I have a drawer full of surveys and interviews ready to be entered into what looms before me as a nightmarish database.

Four hundred homes later and several months back into school, the first family I interviewed floats easily to the surface of my memory, as oil on water. How could it not? That home was the beginning ...

"It was our many years' plan to improve our daily life, such as to have enough daily food, clothes, shelter. But we couldn't because

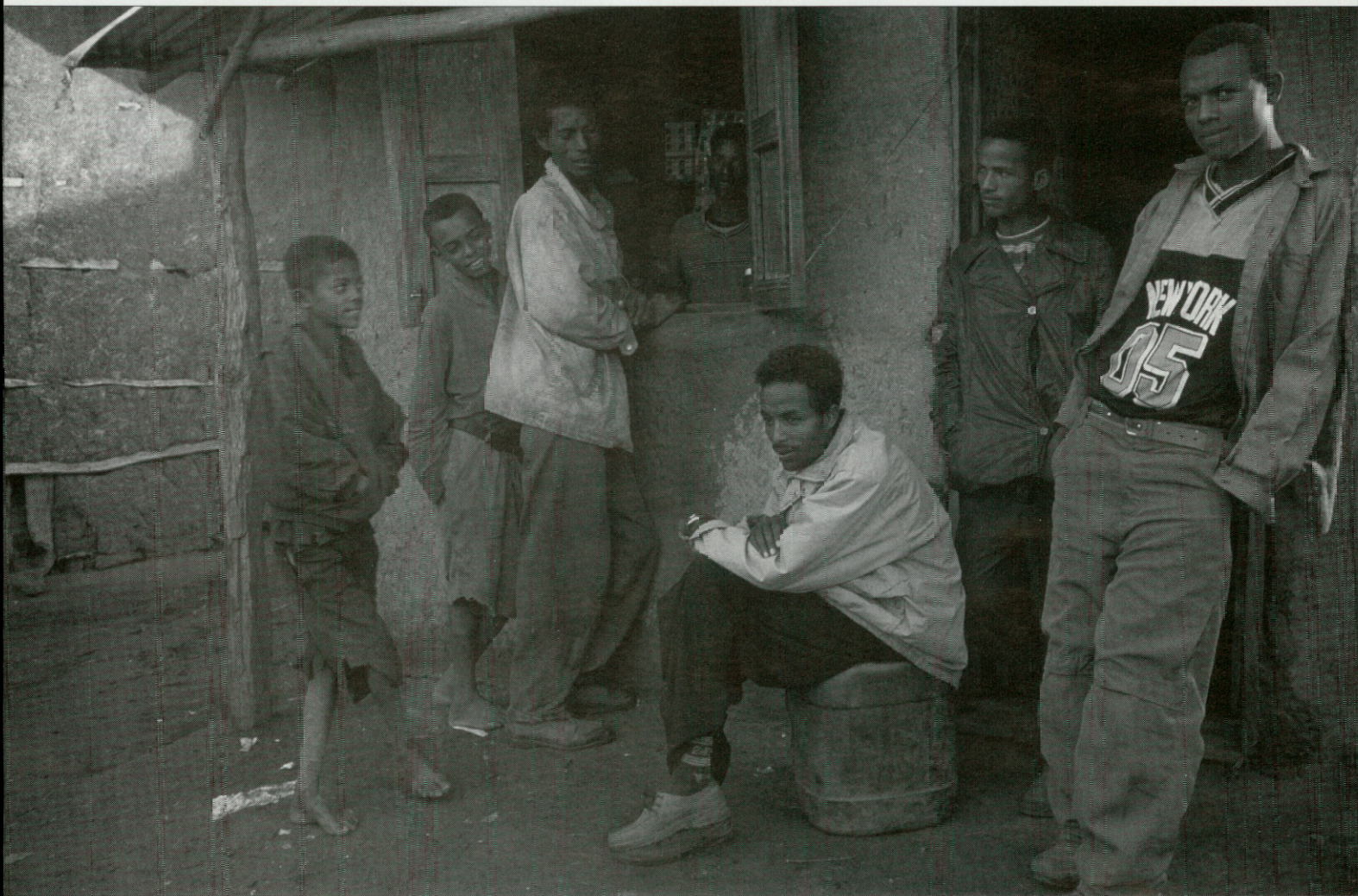
of financial income problems." These were the translated words of a twenty-nine-year-old mother living in a shack, attempting to sustain her three children.

I looked at Jiregne, my translator, for help. "Ask her what they usually eat."

The exchange in Oromifa was brief before he turned to me. "She says, 'what you see is what we eat.'" There had been three pieces of corn roasting over a fire of smoldering coals, but not any longer. Scanning the shack, I saw they had been scattered across the dirt floor, work of Addisu, the two-year-old baby of the family who looked half that age.

While wondering whether or not there was more corn elsewhere, I saw another





child pick up one of the grimy discarded pieces and begin chewing it. My eyes desperately searched the shack for further proof of food, only to see Addisu, now sitting with a long stick of sugarcane, sucking away contentedly.

“What you see is what we eat.”

What I saw was not enough. My next question was, “Have you ever gone without food?”

“Sometimes.”

“How long?”

“Two days ... at the most.”

Not only was the family malnourished, none of its members had shoes, their roof leaked, and the eldest daughter, age nine, had tuberculosis.

That home was the beginning. Originally my plan had been to interview several families. I wanted to visit one home from each economic level in the community. I asked my translator to find the poorest home he could. He did, a ten-

minute walk from Gimbe Adventist Hospital.

I remember the shock: the tin roof that leaked; the bare feet of the family; those three pieces of corn. I remember trudging under the rain and through the thick mud of Ethiopia, wondering how many other families in Gimbe lived in equally painful conditions.

Thus the great survey was born. What started out as four interviews turned into four hundred. My quest was to discover the physical challenges of living—surviving—in Gimbe.

But there is something else I got when I visited the homes, something I was not prepared for. Everyone in Gimbe has a story; and along with giving me the small everyday details asked in my survey, they gave me the history of their existence. They entrusted me with the task of chronicling their lives.

In each home I visited I found a detail, unique to each house, that helped jar my memory later in the week when I went over the interviews. This home had climbing pink roses around the window. On the porch sat two teenage

girls braiding each other's hair, the little sister watching from the dark doorway. Inside were chickens, a clothesline piled with tattered worn clothes, a crude wooden table and chair, a rusted bed frame in the corner. On the wall was a poorly developed photograph of a handsome young man, the oldest son. A year ago he was to be married, but the morning of the wedding he committed suicide.

What must it have been like for the prospective bride. She rented the frilly Western-style gown that all the girls in town rented for their weddings—she even bought new shoes. Yesterday she went to the beauty parlor to have her hair braided and curled, and today she is in her home, nails being painted by her mother, sisters in the room giggling.

One of her brothers runs in, breathless, sweating, the red dirt of Ethiopia smattered across his trousers. He tells her there will be no wedding. Her groom has shot himself.

There I sat, in *his* family's home. The members were poor farmers—very poor. For breakfast they ate dried corn and drank salted coffee. For lunch they had roasted corned and salted coffee. For dinner they ate flat bread (made from corn), topped with a sauce from ground peas. And they drank salted coffee.

I was there for lunch. Out came a bowl of dried corn kernels to munch on, along with broken pieces of roasted corn on the cob. I asked my translator if Ethiopians eat corn with butter. I told him that's how many Americans eat it—boiled, buttered, and salted. The father wanted to know what we were talking about and my translator told him. Ten minutes later the mother came out with one of the children, huge smiles on their faces. Before me she placed a dirty bowl lined with banana leaves that cradled fresh corn smothered in Ethiopian butter and salt.

No, I didn't want this; I was only trying to make small talk. You must understand; Ethiopian butter is expensive—a small luxury—and water must be hauled from the river, a forty-five minute walk away. No, this is not what I meant; I don't even like Ethiopian butter.

A massive lump formed in my throat as I swallowed each bite of boiled buttered corn. For the sake of their pride and dignity, I did not give my tears free reign. How can I explain the significance of that corn? Every family I had visited *wanted* something from me. All this family wanted was to *give* me something.

As my translator, Jiregne, and I walked back to the hospital, I asked him why the son had committed suicide. Jiregne could not give any concrete reason, other than that he had lost hope.



Hope. It is a small word, but one that plagued my entire summer. When news got out in town that a foreigner was visiting and interviewing, people began to approach me on the streets, asking, begging—*demanding*—that I visit their homes. They were hopeful that I had something tangible to give. Every day I did interviews, requests were laid out before me:

“Can you sponsor my children so they will have an education?”

“Can you pay for my heart medicine?”

“Can you find me a new camera?”

“Will you marry me so I can get a visa to your country?”

“Can you give me some clothes so I will be warm at night?”

“Can you help us buy a new roof?”

“Will you help us buy a house?”

“Can you help me find a job?”

“Can you help me? I’m fourteen, crippled, and have no family.”

“Can you help *us*?”

Jiregne would patiently explain that I didn’t have anything to give, but he would then tack on the explanation, “there is a plan for the future! There is hope.” This hope is a nutrition education rehabilitation village (NERV) that Richard Hart, head of AHI, wants to build in Gimbie. The vision of NERV is to build a model village where families spend four to six weeks learning about sanitation, hygiene, nutritional cooking, and farming methods, as well as how to raise and care for livestock.

After the family “graduates” it will return to its own community prepared to share its newfound knowledge with neighbors and family. There is also a plan to use NERV as a means for AIDS/HIV education, a problem that has engulfed sub-Saharan Africa in the last several years and is rapidly spreading.

Rather than giving a handout that dies when consumed, Hart is giving people a chance to take initiative, to develop their own resources. He is giving them a hope for the future of the community, a hope that AHI has been feeding for the last five years with its



takeover of Gimbie Adventist Hospital (GAH).

Originally built in 1947, GAH had deteriorated to the point that the government of Ethiopia threatened to shut it down in 1997. The Church was given a twelve-month period of grace, in which the conditions of the old hospital were either to be improved or a new building was to be raised. AHI stepped in, taking full responsibility for improving the old hospital, and in the spring of 1998 it broke ground for a new building. After a little more than five years of construction and negotiations, the new hospital was finally completed this past year. In December 2003, its doors officially opened to the public.

Gimbie's hospital is not the only one that AHI has resurrected. The organization has hospitals in Cameroon, Rwanda, Tchad, Zambia, Guyana, and Haiti. Most recently, it has been given ten hospitals in India, and hopes to support hospitals in Southeast Asia.

It is a staggering task to reconstruct a hospital. Numerous challenges need to be taken into consideration. Hart told me that it takes approximately five years for AHI to turn around a struggling hospital: "One has not only to upgrade the buildings and replace the equipment, but more importantly to change the culture of the place with staff morale, procedures, external relations, and so forth.... Be assured there were many years of struggles before we got to the place where people believed in GAH again."

It is easy to be intimidated by the large numbers, to be overwhelmed by the vast task ahead. It is easy to get lost in the bigger picture, to boil the existences of so many down to a statistic, a tax refund for a donation. It is easy to read numbers, but it is impossible to forget the pain in the eyes of a mother desperate to feed her child. Lest we forget, the daunting task of AHI is for the individuals, for the families, the children of a community.

Approximately two hundred homes into my survey, I began to burn out. Home after home seemed more precariously perched on the edge of existence than the last. So often I would think, "it can't get worse than this." Then the next home *would* be worse. In Gimbie, the face of poverty is not just ugly, it is demonically grotesque. I began to question what right I had to visit homes, giving people hope, knowing full well that my pictures and interviews might help someone else, but not them.

One day I found myself in one of the worst parts of town. It was a community of people living with physical handicaps, most of them beggars. A German nongovern-



ment organization had built the rows of small dirt homes approximately forty years ago. Just as forty years is the mortality rate for Ethiopians, so it is for their houses. The roofs looked like kitchen sieves; the walls inside were black from smoke, and the community outhouse had become a mere hole in the ground.

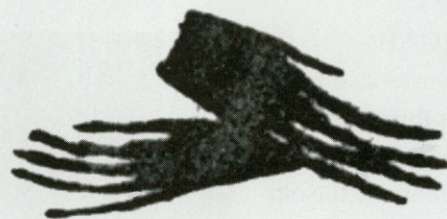
As I stood inside the room of an old crippled beggar, my conscience broke. I told Jiregne to tell the man that whatever I did was for the future; it would most likely not affect him directly. Unlike most people I interviewed, who looked away when they spoke, this man looked me directly in the eye. I heard Jiregne next to me relay the message: "The man, he says 'It's all right. *Hope* is good for these people.'"

Hope is good. That man knew what I had failed to see: in order for a community to survive there must be hope. Even if individual needs are not met, there must still be a desire for the community, a selfless desire. That old crippled beggar was giving what he had to help those around him—his hope for their children. This is the hope that AHI is reaching out to address.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "... plans to give you *hope* and a future" (Jer. 29:11).

Kimberly Osborn is a senior English/photography major at Pacific Union College. In the summer of 2003, she spent two months in Gimbie, Ethiopia, as an intern for Adventist Health International.





God's Will for the Wealthy and the Poor

by Gordon R. Doss

As the twenty-first century commences, the way the Adventist Church engages the world for Christ is strongly influenced by the relative wealth and poverty of its membership. About 85 percent of Adventism's 13 million members live in the poorer regions of the world, which is where membership growth is most rapid.¹ The North American Division, birthplace of the Church, accounts for only 8 percent of the membership but about two-thirds of its total income. One-third of the membership is in Central and South America and another third is in Africa.

How can the smaller group of richer Adventists and the larger group of poorer Adventists come together for unified action? Part of the answer to this question is found in really listening to each other—especially on issues of wealth and poverty.

I am a "missionary kid" who grew up and then worked in Malawi, Africa. In 2002, I returned to Lunjika Secondary School to conduct an ethnographic field research project titled, "Theology of Wealth and Poverty Among a Group of Malawian Seventh-day Adventists." This article briefly discusses some of its major findings.

Malawi is one of the ten poorest nations and forty-nine least developed countries in the world.² The HIV/AIDS epidemic is devastating the nation's already weak economy. The Lunjika area is beset by multiple factors of poverty that are interlinked and persistent. The area is isolated from public transportation and has few employment opportunities. Most local people depend on subsistence farming but the population has outgrown the available farmland and the soil is overcultivated. Expensive commercial fertilizer must be used to produce any

crops at all. Recent corn crops have been so poor that many people have suffered extended periods of hunger and malnutrition.

All the people I interviewed for my research project were in relative poverty, in which the resources to fulfill family aspirations or work expectations were inadequate even if life's necessities of food and shelter were present. Several were in extreme poverty, where daily life was a struggle just to find life's necessities and survive.

What I found in my interviews with these people is that they understand wealth and poverty differently from *typical* Americans. (There are Americans who agree with Malawians.) For instance, this group believes that God decides who will be wealthy or poor. Humans can cooperate with God through hard, intelligent work within the boundaries he sets. Some whom God wills to be wealthy may live in poverty through sin and sloth. Others whom God wills to be poor may become prosperous temporarily through evil means but eventually will return to poverty. The unavoidable conclusion is that God has decided that Africa will be poor, whereas America and other nations will be wealthy.

This finding raises a number of questions. Why do supposedly free-will, Wesleyan-Arminian Adventists subscribe to predestination of wealth and poverty? Does this view extend to soteriology—their understanding of salvation? Is there a gap in our theological education? If we deny that God wills Africa to live in perpetual poverty, what causes it and what responsibility do affluent Adventists have to alleviate Africa's pain and suffering?

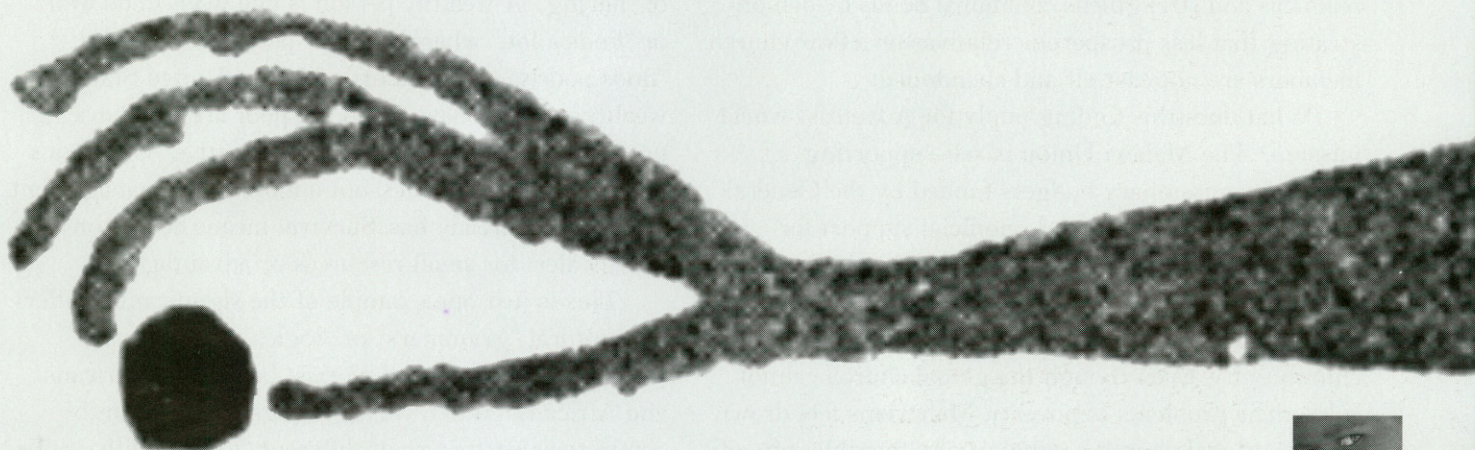
Past failures in development aid to Africa lead some Americans to say that we should withhold aid because poverty is the Africans' own fault or not to

worry about it because we can't solve the problem. Although the role of official corruption in perpetuating poverty needs to be acknowledged and addressed in the manner aid is given, abandoning Africa is neither ethically nor missiologically sound.

The Spectrum of Christian Wealth and Poverty Theories

Around the world, Christians look at wealth and poverty in many different ways. David T. Williams, a South African, has constructed a typology of these theories. Briefly, Williams identifies seven types:³

1. *Wealth to Be Restructured: Liberation Theology* is the view of the Christian "far left," where the "preferential option for the poor" and concern for addressing the structures of poverty are emphasized.
2. *Wealth to Be Created: Reconstructionism* is a Christian "far right" perspective. Capitalism is seen as closely reflecting God's will for the world as shown in the Bible. Poverty is seen as caused by disbelief, laziness, and heathenism. Aid to poor countries merely perpetuates poverty.
3. *Wealth to Be Claimed: Prosperity Teaching* is the "health and wealth Gospel." True piety and faith, obedience to God's commands, returning a faithful tithe, and claiming God's promises are sure pathways to prosperity. "ASK—Ask, Seek, Knock and ye shall be wealthy."
4. *Wealth to Be Ignored: Contentment* is a response to feeling overwhelmed by the scope and magnitude of poverty and the apparent futility of all attempts to eliminate it. Christians should opt out by simply ignoring poverty.



5. *Wealth to Be Denied: Self-Limitation.* Either through asceticism or simplicity, one's consumption of material resources (which are seen as good but limited in supply) should be limited for the sake of others.
6. *Wealth to Be Given: Charity.* Charity is making a material gift to an individual or organization without the expectation of reciprocity. Charity is usually not seen as a total solution to poverty but "doing my part" for those less fortunate.
7. *Wealth to Be Shared: Christian Community.* More ideological Christians seek to implement a variation of socialism in communal living. Less ideological Christians affirm and practice spontaneous sharing within warm Christian fellowship.

Among the people I interviewed I discovered an intriguing theological blend of two of Williams's types: "Wealth to be given: charity" and "Wealth to be shared: Christian community." First, Christians should always give something, however small, to those needing help. In recent times of dire hunger more prosperous members of the group had sometimes received multiple daily requests from people in surrounding villages who were near starvation. They always gave something, even if only a handful of corn.

Second, Christians should give special attention to the needs of both their biological and church families. Extended family obligations are traditionally taken seriously in Africa, but recent experiences with extreme poverty have sharpened the demand that every family member contribute responsibly. The group did not want to withhold charity from non-SDAs but rather to extend special help to needy people within the community of faith. People who suffer deprivation tend to feel cut off and inferior. Giving and sharing reaffirms and strengthens communal bonds by demonstrating that less prosperous relatives or fellow church members are not cast off and abandoned.

What does this finding imply for Adventist world mission? The Malawi Union is self-supporting except for missionary budgets funded by the General Conference and official and unofficial support for special projects, like church building. Continuing GC support of missionaries and project giving from outside of Malawi is a visible, tangible expression of global church unity. Even though the global church cannot solve their problems of poverty, Malawians feel drawn into the global church community by tangible gifts of love and compassion.



Thus, the global unity of the Church, which we see as vital to our mission, is enhanced by support from more affluent Adventists. The research group regretted the trend toward having fewer SDA missionaries in Malawi, while at the same time affirming the value of having indigenous leadership.

"Finding" versus "Having" Wealth

Cultural metaphors about wealth can be very revealing. In Malawi, the main cultural metaphor for resource management is "finding" (*kusanga* or *kupenza*). Finding stands in contrast to the dominant Western metaphor of "having." A wealthy person is one who "finds well," or "finds a lot," whereas a poor person is one who "finds poorly," or "finds little." In the United States, the wealthy are the "haves" and the poor are the "have nots." In Malawi, living involves an active, continuous searching for necessities, not a more static management of what one already has. Survival means being constantly alert for small resources or advantages.

This is just one example of the significantly differing cultural "grammars" or "logics" for material resource management that exist between Americans and Africans.⁴ When we serve together on church committees we bring our different "logics" with us. To understand how we think and act as we work together

will require a deeper mutual understanding of our cultural perspectives. African Adventists, with their personal experience of poverty, have a lot to teach the rest of us, and their input is a potential asset in making decisions that shape global mission.

Another cultural difference is the role and expression of envy as a general response to the relative wealth of other people. "Envy occurs when the superior qualities, achievements or possessions of another are perceived to reflect badly on self and are experienced as feelings of inferiority, longing, or ill will toward another."⁵ Helmut Schoeck and others discuss envy as a universal human emotion that is difficult to face because it elicits feelings of shame and guilt.⁶

Western capitalist societies ignore envy or act as if it does not matter. In poorer societies fear and control of envy are often dominant social themes. Malawi's national anthem includes the words, "O God bless our land of Malawi, ... Put down each and every enemy, Hunger, disease, *envy* (*nsanje*)..." The research group said that gossip is used extensively against wealthy people, who are seen stereotypically as being evil.

Prosperous people are often assumed to have excelled through evil means—notably, through the use of witchcraft. Extreme envy may lead to destruction of property or even murder. To avoid being envied, a person must be seen to prosper through intelligence and hard work, his prosperity must develop gradually, and he must be generous with his community. People work hard to avoid being objects of envy.

The factor of envy highlights a challenge to both the relatively poor majority and relatively wealthy minority of SDAs. Global mission will be hindered from both sides if mutual understanding is not achieved. Jonathon Bonk has suggested that prosperous Christians need to explore deeply the meaning and implications of "righteous wealth."⁷ His suggestion implies the need to be "righteously poor" as well. Both the wealthy and the poor experience a diminished personal spirituality that hinders their shared mission if wealth and poverty are handled unrighteously.

Available Wealth, Aspiration, and Christian Authenticity

The available supply of wealth in the area was seen as adequate for all to live well, if factors causing poverty were addressed. Participants did not clearly support either the theory of limited wealth (the "piggy bank"

theory) common in traditional societies or the theory of unlimited wealth (the "faucet" theory) of Western capitalist societies. Yet the pervasive envy of the local society suggests a worldview that assumes a limited supply of wealth. Thus, the view that anyone whose prosperity markedly exceeds that of his community does so at others' expense—"your gain is inevitably my loss."

The challenge to mutual understanding is clear in this finding. From their differing worldviews, Americans would tend to blame Africans for not making their economies ("faucets") work properly, whereas Africans would blame Americans for being selfish and keeping their "piggy banks" to themselves. This two-sided blame game hinders global mission.

The participants aspired to have enough wealth to provide the necessities of life. Only one person wanted to have as much wealth as possible. The majority view is in contrast to the ever-expanding, limitless acquisi-





tiveness common in Western society and suggests valuable lessons Americans could learn from Malawians. After listening to these people I came to believe that unless American Adventists are willing to be counter-cultural by placing a ceiling on acquisitiveness and thereby rediscovering the spirit of sacrifice, we will fail to make essential material contributions to the mission of our church.

Members of the group gave evidence of having an active, vibrant faith. Through them, I saw that authentic Christian faith and human nobility flourish in a context of real suffering. Human nobility shines through deprivation. Their experience offers a key to maintaining balance between evangelization and social action in our mission to the world.

We must neither abandon Africa to poverty nor believe that Africans are somehow lesser or incomplete Christians as long as they are poor. The biblical portrait of the last days is one of increased social chaos that includes the suffering of poverty. The Adventist Church does not command sufficient material resources to alleviate global poverty but we do proclaim the everlasting gospel that brings salvation to all who accept it—rich and poor alike. While we preach we

should also share our resources generously.

Wealth and poverty are sometimes left off the theological agenda—and the eschatological agenda, in particular. Because eschatology is essentially about mission and because the fulfillment of mission includes the stewardship of material resources, developing an Adventist theology of wealth and poverty needs to be high on our agenda. Both the giving and the spending of funds for mission are highly influenced by one's theology of wealth and poverty. Varying perspectives will persist but the goal should be consensus on major points.

The ecclesiological dimension—structuring and administering the SDA Church for mission—is particularly challenging. How do the estimated 15 percent of relatively affluent and the 85 percent of relatively poor members cooperate with each other for their shared mission to the world? The poorer majority includes Adventists with the zeal and skills to be effective cross-cultural missionaries, but their church organizations often lack resources to educate, send, and support them. How can the affluent minority empower the poorer majority while remaining fully engaged in global mission themselves? These are questions we must address until the Lord returns in glory.

Notes and References

1. Statistics are from General Conference Statistical Reports. The 15 percent/85 percent estimate is made by adding the North American Division's 8 percent to an estimated 7 percent that have a similar standard of living. There is, of course, a broad range between the wealthier and poorer groups of SDAs.
2. From United Nations Web site:
<http://r0.unctad.org/en/pub/ps11dc02.en.htm>.
3. David T. Williams, *Christian Approaches to Poverty* (San Jose, Calif.: Authors Choice, 2001), 79–348.
4. See David Maranz, *African Friends and Money Matters* (Dallas, Texas: SIL International, 2001) for a discussion about the differences between cultures in resource management.
5. From unpublished paper by Jeff Fussner.
6. Helmut Schoeck, *Envy: A Theory of Social Behavior* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1966).
7. Jonathan Bonk, *Missions and Money* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1991), 125.

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Time, Chance, and God's Designs

Reflections on Gorden Doss's Call for a Theology of Wealth and Poverty

By A. Gregory Schneider

Gorden Doss's article has driven me back to the Preacher of Ecclesiastes, the man said to be among the wisest of all. This particular bit of wisdom, however, I was reared to reject:

I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all. (Eccles. 9:11 KJV)

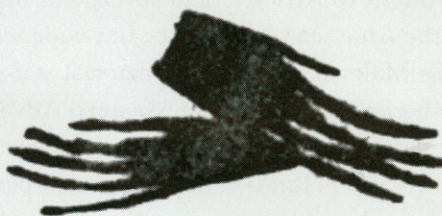
The Preacher's dark assessment of human striving underlines one of the most difficult of Doss's findings from Malawi: a fatalistic, even predestinarian folk doctrine of human wealth and poverty.

In the West, especially in the United States, we need to believe in the efficacy of our striving and in the moral power of our abilities. "If you're so smart, why aren't you rich?" is a longstanding American aphorism bespeaking our bedrock belief that riches and favor do indeed go to individuals of understanding and skill. We live

in a culture of merit, and those of us with graduate degrees, upward career trajectories, and mortgages well paid down believe in our hearts that we got it all on the strength of our talents and virtues.

Here lie the reasons for our repugnance at Malawian fatalism. If the Malawians are poor due to God's decree, the logical corollary is that we are rich for the same reason. It means we wealthy Westerners did not earn our social status and creature comforts by means of our free and energetic action.

We must repress such a realization. It robs us of a major basis for self-esteem, that indispensable, indeed, sacred, state of mind without which psychic survival in the West seems impossible. To lose the sense that I earned it, is to lose our grip on that most precious of Western feelings: feeling good about myself.



North American Adventists are likely to have a similar discomfort with Malawians' worldview of limited wealth and the culture of envy it encourages. The people envied and censured in Malawian communities—the prosperous people—are likely to be the people chosen for the board of elders in North American Adventist congregations. Our well-to-do lay elders are models to the young people of our congregations of what they may, indeed must, strive for—not object lessons of greed and ill deeds.

We Westerners, then, are likely to deny validity to the Malawian perspective on riches or poverty and ask

Malawians give to family and fellow Adventists ... because the gift is the indispensable material embodiment of the bonds of blood and of the Spirit.

only the questions that will allow us to continue to feel good about ourselves: How may we improve their health and education but avoid allowing them to become dependent on hand-outs? How may we use our mission contributions not to encourage pre-Christian African fatalism, but rather to motivate these people to better themselves? How may we teach these people the virtues of deferred gratification, of competitive self-reliance and enterprise? When will they learn that God smiles upon industry and initiative and hard work? That God helps those who help themselves?

OK, I admit to having just crossed the line that divides summary from caricature—but not by much. In truth, I believe our Western capitalist culture makes it very difficult for us truly to believe in salvation by faith, except perhaps as a psychic nostrum for attaining the “good feeling” about ourselves that we need in order to compete effectively for economic gain and social prestige. Clinging to our capitalist coping mechanisms under the guise of religious faith makes it hard to hear the African “Other” who is also our Adventist brother. Yet the Preacher of Ecclesiastes, speaking out from the Bible Western missionaries brought to Africa, sides more with the African than with the American.

That is likely due to the fact that the Malawians, as did the Preacher, come from societies where subsistence agriculture is what 90 percent or more of the population does. Such people know that wealth is limited with about the same certainty they have about their feet pressing into the earth. That earth only produces so much, and its limited bounty must be carefully hus-

banded to see family and community into the next growing season. Rain falling upon the just and unjust alike, it makes sense to believe that one who prospers well beyond his neighbors must have done something illicit to gain his advantage.

Societies faced with such scarcity in their environments develop patterns of exchange that help distribute goods over wider regions so that groups deprived of rain or other sources of fertility by time and chance might still have their needs met. Even outright giveaways make sense in the long run, because eventually the rain or the soil will fail or blight or pest will attack

and one's own group will need to receive as it gave to others in earlier seasons. Its reality is that of a fragile “piggy bank,” to use Doss's metaphor, as surely, indeed more so, as reality in the United States is that of a limitless “faucet.” More so because even a capitalist system must depend on resources that are limited, though true-believing free-market fundamentalists will attempt to deny it.

Doss appears to have such true believers in mind when, using Williams's seven-part typology of Christian positions on wealth, he urges us to resist the temptation to fall into position two, wealth can only be created/earned, or position four, poverty is too complicated a problem to be solved. Both these positions become temptations, Doss implies, when our projects for changing African Others into Us are frustrated by hard economic and cultural realities. Both positions encourage us to throw up our hands in disgust or despair and thus abandon the global poor.

But abandonment, declares Doss, is unacceptable on both ethical and missiological grounds. He seems to favor, instead, a combination of positions six, charity, and seven, sharing, like his Malawian study participants, but widened to include position five, simplicity and material self-sacrifice for the sake of others. If we Western Adventists do not buck our own cultural currents and practice self-sacrifice, he warns, we will deprive the 85 percent of Adventists in the world's poor countries of essential material resources for carrying on the Church's mission.

Just as important, I would like to suggest, is the

Malawian insight that charity and sharing have symbolic value beyond any actual material comfort they provide. Malawians give to family and fellow Adventists even when they have little more than a handful of corn to give. They do so not because they believe the gift is likely to banish poverty but because the gift is the indispensable material embodiment of the bonds of blood and of the Spirit. It is the way to demonstrate that deprivation does not cut a poor person off from the living community or condemn her to inferiority and abandonment. Among Malawians, therefore, no matter how extreme their poverty, there is likely to be no homelessness. Here is another contrast with the United States, where homelessness abounds in the midst of extreme wealth.

The extremes of wealth and poverty within the U.S. economy echo even greater extremes in the global economy and raise a fundamental question about God's designs in offering salvation to humankind. When Doss recites the Great Commission, "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14), what gospel does he have in mind? The question is not flippant, nor is an answer obvious.

There was in Rwanda, for instance, a Seventh-day Adventist gospel that led some Rwandese church members to be scrupulous about Sabbath observance even as they slaughtered their ethnic rivals. They asked their pastors whether it was good Sabbath keeping to continue the genocide on the seventh day or if they ought to rest from their labors. I was told this tale by a graduate of Maxwell Academy who was my student in a cultural anthropology course, a young man who had lost his father in the slaughter. It appears that fundamental social divisions fraught with huge moral and spiritual meanings were bypassed when the gospel was imparted to these Rwandese brothers and sisters.

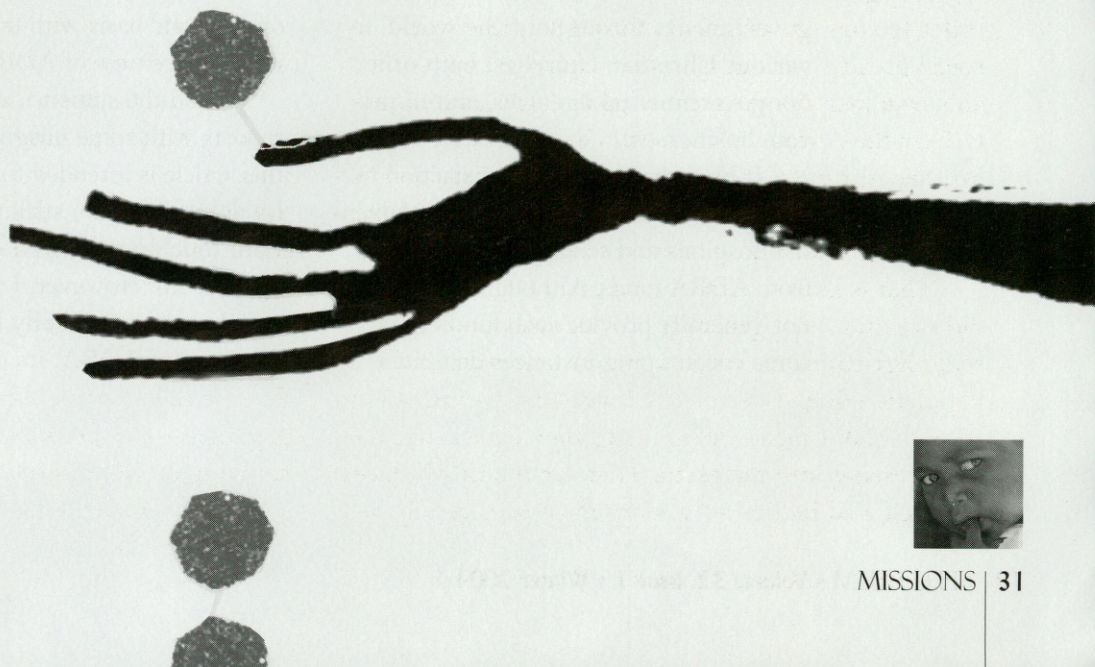
This was not the first time Seventh-day Adventists have attempted to bypass social divisions in hopes of imparting a gospel they felt existed somehow above or beyond this world's structures of injustice. American Adventists bypassed the

color line in order to preach their end-time gospel to African-Americans in the era of Jim Crow. The resulting legacy of institutional and de facto segregation and ongoing racial tension in North American Adventism, like Adventist complicity in Rwanda's genocide, raises serious questions about the wisdom and integrity of a gospel framed in bypass mode.

Thus, when Doss asks us to construct a theology of wealth and poverty for the sake of furthering our Adventist end-time mission, we must ask in rejoinder what the function of such a theology is to be. Is it to bypass the inequities of the world economy for the sake of a gospel whose essence is somehow above such inequities and neutral to them? Or is it to declare a gospel that moves us to confront, resist, and, perhaps, transform the powers that create and sustain such inequities?

This is a stark, binary posing of the question, and perhaps Doss or others who specialize in Adventist missions have in mind a third way to an answer. Long years of contemplating "bypass gospels" have convinced me, however, that any gospel that is not a *social* gospel cannot be *the* gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel of the Kingdom designed by God. In a globalizing world, such a gospel would move especially Christians in the rich countries to analyze and confront the principalities and powers that are creating and enforcing the economic inequity and social chaos that haunt Doss's writing. Confronting and transforming the powers are as much a part of God's designs as planting churches and building up his family of believers.

A. Gregory Schneider is a professor of behavioral science at Pacific Union College.



ADRA and Adventist Missions: Rescued or Kidnapped?

The Concerns of a Missiologist

By Børge Schantz

With joy and pride I read in the latest statistics from the General Conference that total aid distributed by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in 2002 amounted to almost \$220 million. ADRA helped more than 30 million people at the lowest levels of misery, poverty, hurt, shame, and dignity. Although the average amounted to only about seven dollars per person, the ministry is still impressive.¹

ADRA's employees reach out, help the disadvantaged, and break down prejudice toward Adventists whenever they meet with donors who have authority and influence at the United Nations, with governments throughout the world, in various Christian churches, with other nongovernmental agencies, and in private businesses.

It brought me special satisfaction to know that even a few Seventh-day Adventist hospitals and schools have benefited from ADRA funds. Although ADRA does not generally provide such funding, in some encouraging instances dedicated

ADRA personnel have assisted struggling Adventist churches. There are even cases where ADRA could claim to be an opening wedge for Adventists to unentered areas. However, this involvement often took place on a private basis with unbudgeted funds in the spare time of ADRA workers.

I read the statistics and other ADRA reports with some misgivings, to which this article is intended to draw attention. By doing this I am sticking my neck out—I am touching a sacred cow of modern Adventism. However, I feel that church members are generally left somewhat ignorant of ADRA, its objectives, limita-



tions, and operations. They need honest openness, explanation, and guidance.

My main apprehensions are expressed in eight questions. These questions deal with issues that, based on my feelings and experience, indicate that ADRA is not working concurrent with the objectives and fundamental values peculiar to the Advent movement in its God-given task during the last days of the world's history.

I am aware that perhaps my church needs to update its strategy, methods, and self-understanding in the twenty-first century. After all, in the 150 years since it started things have changed tremendously.

Missions Kidnapped?

Years ago, we sent out as missionaries with the solid commission to proclaim the gospel and bring people into the Church. Marching orders also included instructions to preach an end-time message. Medical, educational, and welfare programs served well as opening wedges. They were not, however, goals in themselves.

In current ADRA reports there are no accounts that

tell about people being brought into meaningful relationships with Jesus Christ and his Church.

Recently, speakers at a Sabbath church service promoted ADRA activities and the agency's achievements. One member in the audience asked whether ADRA workers had witnessed for their Christian beliefs or the uniqueness of Adventism while giving help to the needy. Such recipients are generally in a winnable state of transition, being positively disposed toward persons helping them. The answer was a clear No.

Not only did the donors, which included governments, not allow proselytizing, many of the ADRA workers could not have done so even if permitted because they were not Seventh-day Adventists.

1. Has the Seventh-day Adventist mission been kidnapped?



ADRA, A Newcomer in the Adventist Framework: An “Ecclesiolae in Ecclesia”?

ADRA holds an interesting position within the administrative framework of Adventism. It is a child of Adventist mission and loving care, though a child that followed its own untraditional path. The transition in the 1980s to ADRA from its predecessor, the Seventh-day Adventist Welfare Service (SAWS), which the Church controlled and funded, did not take place without birth pangs.

In a short time the new program became very popular. It had some excellent leaders and efficient promoters. It was incorporated independently with a separate board, and got its own administration and treasury.² In some cases, ADRA created its own salary scales a little higher than those of the Church. This inequality hurt the Church at times because good organizers and hardworking pastor/evangelists in the Third World were tempted to work for ADRA rather than the Church.

ADRA is classified as a nongovernment organization (NGO). Its objectives are expressed in terms similar to those of many other faith-based NGOs and it works under the same conditions. Funds granted by governments and other donors—even when augmented by grants from the Church—cannot be used to promote political or religious convictions, including Christian beliefs and the unique Seventh-day Adventist message. This restriction silences ADRA workers from sharing Adventist beliefs.

2. Does such an arrangement agree with the objectives outlined in Seventh-day Adventist working policies: “The purpose of the General Conference is to teach all nations the everlasting gospel of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ and the commandments of God”?

Government Support and Seventh-day Adventist Missions

The first Protestant missionaries were evangelists in the technical sense of the word. They had only one aim: to proclaim Jesus Christ as Savior. Medical and educational programs were not initially part of their mission. The few medical doctors and teachers sent out in the nineteenth century were sent to serve missionaries.

Not until the end of the nineteenth century did medical and educational staff expand beyond mission compounds and serve nationals. It was soon discovered that these services were extremely effective in drawing people to the mission churches.³

The Seventh-day Adventist mission impulse developed afterward and followed this pattern with success. The mission budget included funding for education and medical care, all financed by Sabbath School offerings and, later, Harvest Ingathering. Preaching the Advent message had primacy. But whereas other mission agencies received grants from colonial governments, SDAs adamantly opposed such assistance.

As time passed, the Church reconsidered its initial opposition to government aid. The Church reluctantly decided to accept outside funds if no strings were attached. It did not want proclamation of the gospel and proselytizing to be hindered.

However, as ADRA currently operates this condition is not honored. Although performing valuable work among the destitute, ADRA has diminished or altogether neglected the importance of preaching the everlasting gospel.

3. Has the Church sold the Gospel Commission for a “lentil stew”?

Ellen G. White and Social Involvement

Ellen G. White offered counsel along these lines on a number of occasions. “The Lord has marked out our ways of working . . .,” she wrote in 1904. “As a people we are not to imitate and fall in with Salvation Army methods.”⁴

Commenting on social-medical work she emphasized the need to maintain the priority of the gospel. In 1900, she wrote:

There may be and is danger of losing sight of the great principles of truth when doing the work for the poor that it is right to do, but we are ever to bear in mind that in carrying forward this work the spiritual necessities are to be kept prominent. . . .

Because of the ever-increasing opportunities for ministering to the temporal needs of all classes, there is the danger that this work will eclipse the message that God has given us to bear in every city—the proclamation of the soon coming of Christ, the necessity of obedience to the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. . . . It is to be proclaimed with a loud voice and go to the whole world.⁵

4. Where do such counsels fit into the development of ADRA as a Seventh-day Adventist agency?

Harvest Ingathering

Traditionally, church members raised Harvest Ingathering funds each year collecting money door to door from neighbors and friends. Funds collected were then used directly for missions in the traditional sense. Not only were they spent to help the Church keep established mission stations operating, they also helped it enter new areas with educational and medical work that served as opening wedges for the gospel.

Today, things have changed. Now, Harvest Ingathering funds are handed to ADRA, which mixes them with major donations from governments and others. Because governments and other donors often attach conditions that restrict proselytizing, the original mission purpose of Harvest Ingathering has been weakened.

Other changes have come, as well. Traditionally, pamphlets handed out during Harvest Ingathering served a domestic mission purpose through articles of a spiritual nature and advertising that promoted Bible correspondence schools. However, recent issues do not in any way reveal the Seventh-day Adventist faith. As a result, opportunities for reaching people at home—perhaps the Church's greatest opportunity for mission outreach each year—have been lost.

5. Do members on the local level who still take part in Harvest Ingathering understand how what used to be mission funds are currently handled?

6. Are they aware that only Sabbath School and World Mission offerings (which last year totaled less than \$51 million) can be used for taking the Three Angels Messages to the world?

Competing Faith-Based NGOs

NGOs are based on humanitarian concerns. They can be divided roughly into two groups: faith based and secular based. The objective common to both is to help people in need. Furthermore, both render help regardless of the recipients' race, sex, creed, or politics.

Today, a young generation of donors tends to support projects rather than agencies, regardless of the NGO's basic affiliation. Many Seventh-day Adventists have no problem occasionally donating to NGOs like World Vision, Red Cross, Save the Children, other church aid programs, and CARITAS, a Catholic relief agency. This happens especially when

donors know the limitations under which ADRA works.

ADRA has trained many good people. Some of these people have sought alternate employment with other NGOs. Interviews with some of these workers have revealed that the change has not really affected their religious devotion. Opportunities to witness are still somewhat restricted. One such worker even claimed that his new faith-based NGO is more "public about its values and beliefs" than ADRA. These recent developments raise an important question:

7. Does the Seventh-day Adventist Church have resources to duplicate programs that other Christian organizations can do just as well?

Conflicting Eschatologies

Official attempts to justify ADRA's existence turn to the same biblical references and texts that generations have used to promote traditional missions, educational work, and help for the needy. However, there is a significant difference in ADRA's publications. The call for gospel witness is scarcely touched when the Biblical Perspectives of ADRA work are listed. Words like "redeeming" and "salvation" are admittedly used, but only in a casual manner, lacking in emphasis.

Similarly, such Adventist core themes as the Decalogue, Sabbath, signs of Christ's Second Coming, and the Three Angels Messages are used creatively and interpreted in an interesting way. But they are discussed in a general way without application as part of an outreach program.

All of which raises the issue of eschatology. Traditionally, the form of Christian eschatology in which one believes has influenced not only the spiritual life of the believer, but also the level of involvement in missionary tasks, as well as the methodology followed.

A strong end-times eschatology tends to result in a proclamation that has little social involvement. At the other end of the scale are those who claim that Christians should focus on perfecting the existing social order in hopes of advancing the Kingdom of God. Those who subscribe to this view seem to be more concerned with present conditions than the kingdom to come. Between these two views are a variety of eschatologies.





At present, Adventism in general has moved way from an extreme end-time eschatology, which reflected our earlier experience. In practice, we live in what could be termed an "in-between times eschatology" in which members "work while waiting" for the "delayed" Second Coming.⁶

It seems that ADRA has moved one step further to the left and is closer to a "social gospel eschatology" position. ADRA leaves the impression that social, welfare, medical, educational, and development work is a goal in itself, not a means to evangelize the world.

8. Is the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with its unique fundamental beliefs and worldwide mission program, able to accept, live with, and operate with conflicting eschatologies guiding outreach programs?

Toward a Solution

Although the concerns expressed here are personal, they are shared with many others. I have struggled with these concerns for years, not only in my service in the home and mission fields, but also in my teaching, research, and writing. These tensions have also had a healthy and creative effect on my perspective. I have been forced to explore the relationship between gospel proclamation and social actions. I do not claim that there are easy solutions; it is hard to find a balance.

However, here is a suggestion for ADRA's leaders. There is great need for a genuine theology of action.

Such a biblical theology should be based on the Seventh-day Adventist ethos, an understanding of the Church's own commission and its perception of its role in the world, as well as of ADRA's rightful place in the Church.

This theology should not be developed by "desk theologians" alone, important as their input is. Persons with practical knowledge, who have been involved with non-Christian religions as frontline missionaries and grappled with cultural differences, should also be members of the team.

Such "task theologians" have observed and experienced the positive charges that only the gospel can bring in the many hopeless and depressing circumstances where social services are otherwise out of reach. These experienced missionaries could bring valuable insights to the process of developing an ADRA theology of action.

ADRA's outstanding work for the needy of this world must continue and be strengthened. However, social involvement should be balanced with attention to the supernatural elements of faith and traditional Christian beliefs.

Notes and References

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3. Johannes Verkuyf, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*, trans. and ed. Dale Cooper (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1978), 212-14.
4. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948), 8:185.
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6. Roy Branson, "Adventists Between the Times: The Shift in the Church's Eschatology," *Spectrum* 8.1 (Sept. 1976):15-26.

Børge Schantz has served as a pastor, evangelist, field president, division department director, and head of a theology department (Newbold College), and was founding director of the SDA Centre for Islamic Studies.

Rediscovering the Humanitarian Aspect of Mission

By Reinder Bruinsma

Speaking as a missiologist, Børge Schantz concludes that the Church should focus not on humanitarian activities, but on its core business: proclamation of its end-time message of salvation. When he asks the question: "Should

the Seventh-day Adventist Church duplicate programs that other Christian organizations are doing just as well?" he seems to be inclined to answer "No."

At the very least, Schantz would urge ADRA to combine a direct Christian witness with its social projects. I have great respect for Schantz, for his long and outstanding service for the Church, and his dedication to the mission of the Church, but this time I disagree with the overall-message he seeks to deliver.

Concerns

The fact that I want to give solid support to ADRA does not mean, however, that I have no criticisms or concerns. To some extent they coincide with concerns mentioned in Schantz's article; to some

extent they differ. My overarching concern is that ADRA continue to honor fully the Adventist element of its name and remain an Adventist agency in the full sense of the word. Whether that needs to be translated into overt evangelism as part of the package ADRA offers to those in need is another matter.

I know that an ongoing debate exists about how Adventist ADRA should be. Some argue that the ties between ADRA and the Church should be much tighter, so that the Church retains a firm grip on ADRA's humanitarian arm and does not lose contact with ADRA. Others argue just as passionately that ADRA should operate some distance from the Church, and that its work will be seriously hampered if such distance is not carefully maintained.

This is not an easy matter to resolve.



A conscious decision has been made to structure ADRA not as a church department but as a separate agency. There are many very good reasons for that decision. If ADRA asks for and receives grants from governmental and quasi-government organizations in the United States and other developed countries in the West, it must have a fully independent status.

Also, if the Church is to avoid major financial risks it needs to protect itself against ascending liability and make sure that legal claims against ADRA do not become claims against the Church. Whatever ADRA's organizational structure and legal status, the Church must, I believe, be very intentional in keeping ADRA close to it—in its ideals, *modus operandi*, ethics, policies, and culture.

One of my major concerns is that ADRA be viewed as a ministry, not primarily as a development organization, an NGO (nongovernment organization), a worldwide agency, or an industry. Of course, I understand that ADRA must, within the world in which it operates, identify itself to external audiences as an international NGO and profile itself in a somewhat secular way. But ADRA must be understood as one of the Church's key ministries when it tries to define itself within the context of the Church, when ADRA leaders try to define their ideals and goals, and when they try to position ADRA within the Church.

With Schantz, I am concerned that ADRA may at times be in danger of placing too much emphasis on large grants. ADRA may need to decline grants if it cannot guarantee that the programs or projects it funds are fully in harmony with the Adventist ethos of the organization. Also, the fact that in many countries ADRA now

uses Harvest Ingathering funds puts a special burden on ADRA. It has a responsibility with regard to church-related projects funded from these sources.

Tensions with the Church

Over the years I have had a fair amount of exposure to areas of tension between the Church and ADRA. I believe that such tensions can be resolved to a large degree. Of course, there will always be challenges in the relationship between ADRA and the Church because they have different natures and assignments. A lot of this tension can be defused if the parties are willing systematically to identify and analyze the problems and look for creative solutions.

ADRA has an image problem in some sectors of the Church that it needs to take seriously. In contrast, many church leaders need to be educated about the world in which ADRA seeks to minister, about the possibilities of which it must take advantage, and about the limitations it must face.

In some instances, better communication can eliminate misunderstanding. Church people talk a lot about ADRA among themselves; likewise, ADRA people talk about the Church. What is needed is more open and intelligent dialogue. It would be well worth the investment, I believe, to appoint an international task force of Church employees and those who work for ADRA to study relevant issues and propose a long-term strategy for dealing with them.

A Theology of Development

I agree wholeheartedly with Schantz that the work of ADRA needs to be more solidly rooted in an Adventist theology of development and relief. A Church is not a business; its strategies do not depend primarily on market forces or on maximizing opportunities for numerical growth and economic health. A Church has a mission that needs to be grounded in a solid and relevant Bible-based theology.

This is no easy undertaking. A theology for ADRA would need to answer a multitude of questions. It would need to deal with the implications of the view that each person in this world is of unique and equal value in the eyes of the Creator, and must clarify how in each man and woman the *imago Dei* can best be reflected. It would need to deal with the implications of the premise that all human beings



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must have the opportunity to develop their gifts and live meaningful lives. It would need to probe the implications of true interhuman solidarity and focus on the God-given mandate to be good stewards of this earth and its wealth.

A theology for ADRA would need to highlight the biblical concern for the poor and ask how that can be translated into the real-life conditions of the twenty-first century. It would need to ask how the biblical holistic view of man impacts the Church's ministry in terms of spiritual care, health care, Christian education, and development work, and whether there are political and economic dimensions. As Schantz correctly emphasizes, it must also have a strong eschatological component.

Numerous questions would need to be asked. For example, to what extent must an explicit proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ accompany the construction of wells, literacy courses, and food distribution if a ministry is to be truly Adventist? How does our theology inform us about projects ADRA prioritizes? Should ADRA distribute food or clothing for free and educate people how to set up small farms? Should ADRA teach people to claim their human rights? Should it help people organize cooperatives to market their product at a fair price and organize and strengthen labor unions?

The Church has an obligation to itself and its ADRA ministry to develop some initiative that will ultimately result in a firm theological basis for its humanitarian activities. Developing such a theology may have serious consequences. If this theology compels us to be far more active in the struggle against poverty and work more intensely for greater equality in the distribution of wealth, how would that affect the culture within ADRA? If it emphasizes the basic equality of all humans and calls for solidarity with those who have much less than we do, how would that affect salary policies and spending patterns?

Not only would this theology challenge ADRA and its policies, activities, and concerns, it would also challenge the Church at large. It may urge the Church to



EMILY HARDING/ADRA INTERNATIONAL

spread its own wealth more equitably between the first and developing worlds, or between some of the higher administrative levels of the Church and some of its lower levels (and in some cases vice versa), and between large urban churches and small country churches.

Such a theology may offer far-reaching insights with regard to evangelistic strategies. Could it possibly tell us to focus more on the poor and disenfranchised in our recruitment of new members? We may well come up with a theology that would demand us to ask our hospitals around the world to do more for the poor, rather than catering mostly to those who can pay hefty medical bills on their own, or at least have good insurance coverage.





I am certain that our theological study would provide us with ample justification for the existence of ADRA. The holistic view of man, which the Bible clearly teaches, stresses the need to minister to the whole man, to his soul and spirit as well as his body. Careful reflection on the ministry of Christ and his teachings will convince us that we ought to follow his example of ministering to the whole person.

I believe that such a theology will lead us to conclude that the work of ADRA truly belongs to the core business of the Church. We will be left with no doubt that the humanitarian work of ADRA is an integral aspect of preaching the gospel, in word and deed. The fact that in this line of ministry no explicit Bible teaching and "faith talk" takes place does not diminish its status as a ministry.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has rediscovered the humanitarian aspect of its mission. It was certainly present in early Adventism. Ellen White was quite vocal about the practical aspects of Christianity. One may quote passages that seem to defend a narrow focus on explicit gospel proclamation while downgrading the need for social work, but one can also find statements that stress the opposite view.

ADRA is not the only medium through which Adventist Christians can channel love for their neighbors. ADRA should not feel threatened by other

Adventist humanitarian initiatives. At the same time, it is fitting that a church that professes to have a message that affects the entire person has risen to the challenge of creating a ministry of relief and development that has become a blessing to millions of people around the world. ADRA is a Christian ministry, integral to our Adventist Christian witness.

Jesus' mandate comes to his disciples across the cen-

turies, but remains startlingly relevant. The mission of Christian relief and development is to proclaim the Good News of the kingdom and minister to the needs of the weak and the oppressed. To do so we must walk through their dusty roads, feel their pain, identify with their sorrows, and experience their powerlessness, just as Jesus did.

It was he who had no place to lay his head. It was Jesus who confronted the corrupt religio-political system of his day and was ultimately crucified by it. It was he who said that the servant is not greater than his master and that we should take up the cross and follow him. It was his disciples who were to become vulnerable and dependent in proclamation and service to the needy.¹

Notes and References

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Reinder Bruinsma, president of the Netherlands Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, has taught missiology, worked as a country director for ADRA, and chaired the board for ADRA in the Trans-European Division for a number of years.

The View from ADRA: An Interview with Charles C. Sandefur, Jr.

By Bonnie Dwyer

Being president of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency has given Charles Sandefur two lives. There is the life at the General Conference office where he is involved in both strategic planning and responses to crises that erupt worldwide. The other half of his life is helping to build up ADRA's ministry in different parts of the world. In the fall of 2003 he spoke with *Spectrum* about ADRA, and specifically about the comments by Børge Schantz and Reinder Bruinsma that appear in this issue.

BD: Both Børge Schantz and Reinder Bruinsma have talked about a need for a theology for ADRA, what do you see as the theology of ADRA?

CS: In Matthew 25, God calls us into account for how we have lived our lives, not just for what we have believed. God does not desire people to be extremely poor. He does not desire people to have AIDS. He does not desire people to be hungry. When we address those needs in the name of Christ, I believe that we are living out the mission of the Church.

When we live out that mission we are committed to acts of love, because the world needs to be transformed. It's not just a form of public relations to increase the image of the Church or to be pro-evangelistic. We do this because Jesus asked us to do it. Humanitarian acts are part of our Christian duty and that is part of the mission of the Church. ADRA seeks to be an embodiment and an expression of that.

BD: How does that message resonate here in the General Conference and with the Church at large?

CS: I have really good support from the leadership of our Church. I think a lot of Church members love the idea that the Church does some of its witnessing unconditionally. Everything isn't just, you know, we dig this well so that we can create baptismal water. We give out this food so it will become communion bread.

No, we do it because it's an expression of God's love for the world; we're imitating the life of Christ at an incarnational level.

There are people who want all of these acts of ministry to be measured by their baptismal productivity. Christ did not measure his ministry that way and I'm not sure the Church should measure all its ministry in that way.

BD: What is the current top priority project for ADRA?

CS: We have been focusing a lot of our energy on AIDS, especially in Africa. We have multiple programs, everything from educational programs working with church leaders down to the local congregational level—we have entire congregations in which AIDS is the dominate fact of life in the Church community.

BD: Does ADRA have a specialization within the international aid community?

CS: We have five areas in our portfolio, two of which are the ones for which we are best known. Those five areas are: food security, health, education, relief, and economic development. Food security and health programs are





what we are very well known for. We just have a long history of having done well-designed food distribution and agricultural programs.

It's no surprise that, as an Adventist agency, ADRA brings a lot of health experience. Most of our health programming is really more in the area of public health. We don't operate very many clinics—bricks and mortar institutions. What we do is teach mothers how to care for their babies, train birth attendants, work with immunizations. I think we have a really good reputation within the humanitarian universe in conducting those programs.

The amount of activity that ADRA is engaged in is really kind of incredible. The total gross product in U.S. dollars is between 100 and 200 million a year. We're directly touching the lives of 15 to 25 million people annually. We are identified in 125 countries, and in over half of those countries we are involved in a very substantial way. We're the most broadly based humanitarian agency in the world. No other aid agency is in as many countries as ADRA. There are many that are larger, in fact much larger, but our breadth is overwhelming. I think that is expressive of being Adventist.

BD: *Do human rights play into your mission?*

CS: Yes. ADRA is primarily an implementing agency, which means we go out and do real work. We get our fingernails and boots dirty. We do projects in villages. One of the stories that someone told me the first day I came to ADRA was that ADRA goes places where no one else will go and stays when everyone else has left. That really embodies ADRA.

We are less involved (in advocacy) than, say, Amnesty International, whose whole calling is one of advocacy. Ours is one of implementation. But the other side of implementation is standing on the side of the poor and the needy and wanting to make sure that

there is public policy, that there is funding available to address those kinds of needs.

We try to be very careful at ADRA that we work closely with the Church in whatever countries we are. When we make pronouncements or sign statements we're not doing this away from the Church, just doing our own thing. We're the only Adventist entity that has general consultative status with the United Nations.

BD: *What does that mean?*

CS: That's a level of recognition that allows us to make comment, to be involved in dialogue on items with the United Nations. From that platform, we frequently join with other agencies in signing declarations of commitment to the values that we think are expressive of ADRA's work and ministry. It ought to be a no-brainer to Seventh-day Adventists for us to speak up vigorously in defense of the poor on issues having to do with everything from AIDS to hunger, immunizations for children, clean water, literacy, and the rights of women.

One of the interesting things about ADRA's work is that the vast majority of it is with women and children. Part of that is just the result of the fact that most sustainable change works best when women are the ones addressed. That includes everything from food and agriculture, to taking care of babies, to clean water. Most of our literacy programs are actively addressed to women.

Someone taught me this little saying: If you teach a child to read, you've taught one person to read. Teach a man to read, he might forget. Teach a woman to read, and she'll teach her children to read. So there's this geometric effect of working with women. Not to mention that women have been the ones who have been most neglected.

I think about Nepal, for example. The rates of maternal deaths in delivery are just astronomically high. We're involved in some public health programs to address that. In addition, there are forms of advocacy. But we're primarily an implementing organization—not an advocacy organization.

BD: *Since you arrived at ADRA, have you changed the structure in light of how you see the mission?*

CS: ADRA's called an agency. It's not a department of the Church, and neither is it an institution. We are incor-

porated and registered in many, many countries. That leads to kind of a crazy quilt in terms of how ADRA is structured. It's not a cohesive, integrated system.

We're taking a look at that so that ADRA clearly has a definition that all Adventists will understand. We've got ADRA's that are at local church levels and ADRA's that are at country levels. We find ADRA's we didn't even know existed. There's been some concern now in a globalized society about the meaning of that, so we're forming a commission to take a look at it.

One of the interesting things about ADRA's work is that the vast majority of it is with women and children.

BD: *How does the crazy quilt structure affect your funding?*

CS: ADRA gets its funding from multiple sources. Some of our funding comes from the Church officially—probably 4 to 5 percent—most of that in the form of salaries paid in various parts of the world where ADRA operates. And then we get donations from individual Adventists, and without that ADRA could not exist. That's another 7, 8, 9 percent.

The rest of our money comes from various grants that we receive from multiple governments—20 to 25 governments around the world. (In addition, we distribute clothing, medical supplies, and medical equipment that has a cash value but doesn't provide cash flow for ADRA.)

I know that the issue of government funding is a big issue for some people. I actually like to flip it the other way. For me a more important issue is why so few Seventh-day Adventists fund ADRA. I just wish that ADRA captured the hearts and minds of even more Seventh-day Adventists so that more of our funding came from within our Church community.

The Adventist Church officially does not begin to subsidize ADRA to the extent that it does educational work, for example. We are much more similar to how health care is funded in the Adventist Church. Basically, Adventist health care in North America receives no funding from the Church. We receive some funding, but not much. Health care is over here, ADRA is here, and then over here are massive subsidies for Adventist education.

Yeah, I wish we had more private funding. We keep looking for new strategies to capture the stewardship hearts of Seventh-day Adventists.

BD: *In the discussion of funding, we're always talking about the effect of money upon an agency's loyalty—about being corrupted by government funds. What about the issues involved with the local governments where you do your work?*

CS: Those are two separate questions. One is, what is our obligation to the donor? Then, what is our obligation to the country in which ADRA is operating?

On the first one, what is our obligation to the donor? I've heard a lot about the issue of government funding, and I think people might be surprised how often ADRA

says no to government funding because we think it has too many strings attached. I'm proud of that.

We recently had an opportunity to possibly get the largest amount of funding that ADRA has ever received in the history of the organization, but we thought that there were too many strings attached. It was not going to allow ADRA to do its work the way we want to do our work, and so we said No. We just passed on the opportunity to do it.

BD: *Then the other side of that question touched upon the obligation of the agency to the host country.*

CS: In the countries where we do our work, most of our ADRA offices are registered. It's not ADRA from the United States coming and doing something. It's ADRA Bolivia, it's ADRA Ghana, it's ADRA Uganda that's doing work thanks to funding that comes from ADRA partnering members in one of these other countries. So working carefully with those governments is important to us.

It becomes more problematic in Muslim countries. Recently when I visited with the minister of justice for one of these Muslim countries, I said that ADRA is sponsored by an entity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. "We are not trying to trick you. We are honest that we care for the people of your country. We want you to know that our motive for being here arises out of our Christian conviction of love for everybody. We want you to know



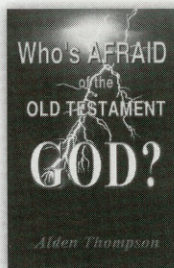
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that we are Seventh-day Adventists, but we're not just trying to use our humanitarian aid as a gimmick and as a ruse to do evangelism. We're not. We're here to provide health care for the people of your country."

And he said, "Fine. No problem. I just wish that other Christian organizations would be that transparent."

Some Christian communities have used humanitarian aid just as a ploy to be able to get inside a country. That was a big issue in Afghanistan and even Iraq in the last several months. I think ADRA has a good reputation about not abusing its privileges. We will always be clearly and candidly Seventh-day Adventists.

BD: *How does one go about staffing the work in a Muslim country? Is that done by nationals primarily? Is the staffing difficult?*

CS: Good question. All of our country directors in the 125-plus countries are Seventh-day Adventists. But we have many staff people who aren't Seventh-day Adventists. In some countries, ADRA could not do its work if it did not hire from within the community.

I know we're doing a project in a Muslim country in which we are working with villagers. Part of the project is to hire one of the women in village and to train her to be a village nurse. We find out who the leading mothers are in that little village and then recruit them sometimes as volunteers and sometimes as employees.

BD: *Back to theology and ADRA.*

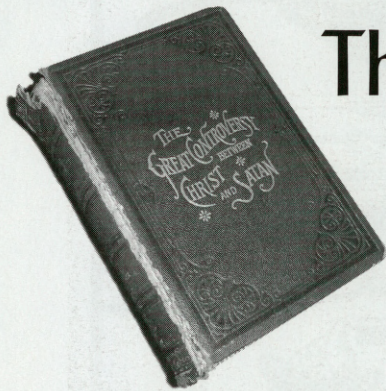
CS: I could not agree more with Børge Schantz and Reinder Bruinsma that ADRA needs to be viewed as arising out of the mission theology of the Church. I think that will enhance ADRA's work, expand it and not restrict it. But I come back to how little of ADRA's funding comes from within the Seventh-day Adventist community, and I want to find ways in which ADRA is viewed even more by the Church as a stewardship expression of Adventist witness and becomes an even clearer expression of radical discipleship.

We need a complete picture of what the Church's mission is, and we need to understand that without commitment to ministries like ADRA Adventist ministry and witness aren't accomplished. If more members could capture that in their own lives and in their support for ADRA, I think that would be a positive effect for the Church. Certainly it would be good for ADRA.

ALBRECHT DÜRER, THE APOCALYPSE: THE FOUR RIDERS OF THE APOCALYPSE, WOODCUT, 1498



THE BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD & EVIL



The Great Controversy and the Problem of Evil

By Richard Rice

Once heard someone say you could outline the history of Christian thought by tracing the various interpretations of Romans down through the years. This certainly seems true if we recall the impact of Paul's longest letter on the lives of Martin Luther, John Wesley, and Karl Barth, to mention just a few. I suspect that biblical apocalyptic has played a similar role in Adventist history.

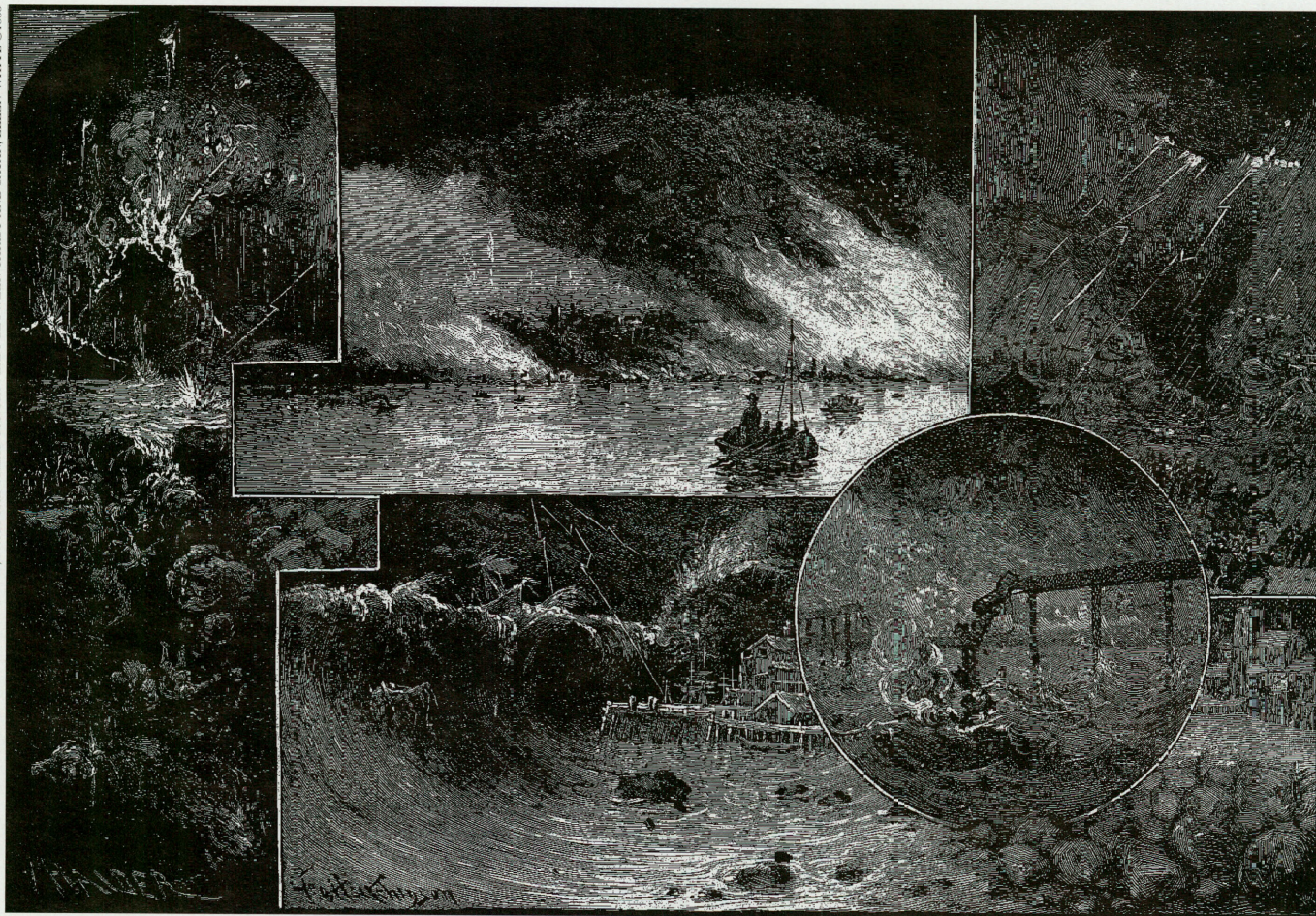
From their beginnings, as the commentaries of Uriah Smith and others show, Adventists have found in Daniel and Revelation a philosophy of history, a chronology of final events, and a mandate for our existence as a religious movement. More recently, a variety of Adventist scholars, including, among others, Roy Branson, Kendra Haloviak, John Paulien, Chuck Scriven, and Charles Teel, summon us to the ethical challenges they contain. By announcing the end of the present order, they expose the pretensions of principalities and powers, and summon us to live as citizens of God's kingdom, not the kingdoms of this world.

The cosmic struggle depicted in Revelation provided Ellen White with her most important theological concept. She employs the theme of the great controversy to interpret the essential elements of Christian faith, as well as the distinctive concerns of Adventists. She also applies it to the problem of evil.

According to the preface, one of her objectives in writing *The Great Controversy*, was to "present a satisfactory solution of the great problem of evil."¹ Our goal here is to examine the contours of Ellen White's "theodicy."² What understanding of evil does she derive from biblical apocalyptic? How does it compare to other types of theodicy? What questions does it raise?³

The Devil appears infrequently in contemporary philosophical discussions of the problem of evil. Alvin Plantinga and, following him, Stephen T. Davis, describe the figure of Satan, the fallen angel Lucifer, as a potential explanation for natural evil.⁴ (The expression *luciferous* is that of Stephen Davis.) But their descriptions of Lucifer's demonic activity are rather brief and incidental to the overall position they develop.

A recent discussion seeks to correct this lack of emphasis. In two lengthy books, *God at War* and *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, Gregory A. Boyd argues that a "warfare worldview"



overcomes the shortcomings of classical theodicies.⁵ But I know of no one who develops the idea more extensively than Ellen White.

An Overview of Ellen White's Theodicy

In brief, Ellen White interprets evil within the framework of a cosmic conflict in which the figure of Satan plays a central role. The background of the conflict is God's creative love and its ultimate resolution will be the fulfillment of God's loving purpose for creation.

Because he is infinite love, God created beings with the capacity to appreciate his character and to love him freely in return. This action involved a risk, however, because creatures who are free to love are free to withhold love and rebel against their maker. Sadly, this is what happened, and this creaturely rebellion is the cause of all suffering. The rebellion is temporary, however. Eventually, sin and sinners will be eradicated and as a result of this "terrible experiment" with evil no one will ever again question God's love and authority. The universe will be secure from all further rebellion.

The Devil plays a central role in every phase of this scenario. As Ellen White describes it, evil originated in the universe sometime before the creation of the earth with the rebellion of Lucifer, the highest created being. Lucifer was the head of the angelic host and the covering cherub who served in the very presence of God. Given his lofty position and great intelligence, he had deep insight into the nature of God.

Yet at some point in time, Lucifer mysteriously began to resent God's authority. He nursed his dissatisfaction until he was convinced that God was unfair, and then decided that he could no longer serve God. Lucifer also aroused the suspicions of his fellow angels. He portrayed God as a tyrant unworthy of their loyalty and eventually persuaded one-third of the heavenly host to join him in rejecting God's authority. When their opposition ripened into open revolt, they were cast out of heaven.

With this expulsion, the central stage in this cosmic drama shifted to this earth, where Satan sought to spread

his rebellion by getting Adam and Eve to reject God's sovereignty. God endowed humans with essentially the same freedom the angels enjoyed, forbidding them to eat from "the tree of knowledge of good and evil."⁶

Speaking through the serpent in Eden, Satan persuaded Eve—and through her, Adam—to question God's benevolence and to eat the forbidden fruit. With this act of disloyalty to God, humans lost their sovereignty over the earth to the Devil. Since then, Satan and his angels have been busy wreaking havoc on the earth.

So the Devil is ultimately responsible for everything that threatens human life and well-being. He is the original source of all suffering—from natural disasters and organic diseases to personal sin in all its manifestations, including pride, self-indulgence, cruelty, crime, and war. Beneath the veneer of human activity, the essence of history consists in the conflict between God and Satan as they pursue their contrasting objectives for the earth and each attempts to counteract and undermine the work of the other.

An obvious question is why God allowed the Devil to persist in his rebellion. Why didn't God destroy him, or at least prevent him from harming other creatures? Why was he permitted to extend his rebellion, to foment dissatisfaction among other angels, to tempt Adam and Eve and wreak havoc on the newly created earth?

This question brings us to the most important aspect Ellen White's luciferous theodicy—the idea of an onlooking universe. As she conceives it, this earth is an arena where God and the Devil are vying, not just for the souls of human beings, but for the allegiance of the entire universe. The universe contains a great number of moral beings. The unfallen angels and inhabitants of other worlds are carefully watching the conflict between good and evil in human history in order to determine whether or not God deserves their complete loyalty.

So Lucifer's rebellion had far-reaching consequences. He not only succeeded in getting many others to join his revolt, his charges against God had a powerful effect on those who did not. Though not outwardly rebellious, they harbored lingering doubts about God's character. Perhaps Lucifer was right, they wondered, and God really is a tyrant. Perhaps they were serving God only because they didn't know any better. Perhaps human misery was the result of

divine mismanagement or, worse, divine cruelty.

Even though Lucifer's direct assault on God failed, he achieved a victory of sorts anyway. His accusations put God in a bind. If God summarily destroyed him, this would confirm Lucifer's accusations. God would then appear to be just what Lucifer claimed he was, a despot who keeps his creatures submissive by concealing his true character. So instead of destroying Lucifer, God had to let him live. The only way to relieve the doubts of the onlooking universe was to allow the principles of rebellion to ripen until their self-destructive consequences were clear for all to see.

The central issue in the great controversy, then, is the character of God, or, more precisely, the creaturely perception of God. To bring the controversy to an end, God must not only eradicate evil, he must do it in a way that is clearly consistent with love. What the onlooking universe needs, then, is a vivid display of the nature of sin and the character of God.

When the host of unfallen beings finally sees that Lucifer's charges are unfounded, that God is supremely loving and worthy of worship, Satan's cause will lose all its sympathizers and God can finally destroy it. In order to provide "an eternal basis of security," God gave Satan time to develop his principles, "that they might be seen by the heavenly universe."⁷

The plan of salvation represents God's response to Satan's charges. The incarnation and the crucifixion of God's own Son clearly manifest God's love and show that Satan's charges against God are a lie. It is his dominion that rests on cruelty and tyranny. His accusations against God are but the projection of his own qualities.

For Ellen White, the cross was the turning point in the great controversy, and it benefits the entire universe. Before Christ's death, Satan's deceptions were so effective that none of the creatures fully understood the nature of his rebellion. But his hostility to Christ tore away Satan's disguise and revealed him as a murderer.

When he shed the blood of God's Son, "The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken." So, "All heaven triumphed in the Saviour's victory. Satan was defeated, and knew that his kingdom was lost." Even with this, however, the onlooking universe had things to learn, so the controversy continues. "The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the controversy."⁸ As human history runs its course, however, the nature of rebellion will be fully understood, and when that happens, God will eradicate sin forever. "Satan and all who

have joined him in rebellion will be cut off. Sin and sinners will perish, root and branch.”⁹

The concept of the great controversy thus explains the final judgment. It shows that the destruction of the wicked “is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God,” “but the inevitable result of sin.” “The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown.”¹⁰ The final judgment is not a display of divine vengeance, but the natural destiny of those who remove themselves from the source of all life.

God could not destroy Satan and his followers

One Augustinian element is the idea that evil originated in a historical fall from perfection, indeed, from the highest level of creaturely perfection.

when the controversy began without leaving doubts in the minds of the unlooking universe. But when the plan of redemption is complete, God’s character will be revealed to all created intelligences, and then “the extermination of sin will vindicate God’s love.”¹¹

We have in Ellen White, then, an emphatically luciferous theodicy.¹² The figure of the Devil is not just one feature in her response to the problem of evil, it is central to it. He instigated a conflict of cosmic proportions, and he bears final responsibility for all evil and suffering. He is to blame for all the ills we experience. At the same time, human suffering serves an important purpose: It contributes to the cosmic drama that will eventually vindicate the character of God and insure the eternal security of the universe.

What does the great controversy represent as a theodicy? How does this sweeping account of the world’s history compare to other responses to the problem of evil? To etch its contours a bit more sharply, it may be helpful to view it in relation to the familiar types of theodicy that John Hick develops.¹³

Ellen G. White’s Theodicy Compared

Ellen White’s views on evil resemble both Augustinian and Irenaean theodicies in certain ways. On the Augustinian side, she affirms the absurdity of sin and attributes its origin to the exercise of creaturely freedom. On the Irenaean side, she places great emphasis on character development and construes evil as the occasion for a valuable learning experience.

One Augustinian element is the idea that evil origi-

nated in a historical fall from perfection, indeed, from the highest level of creaturely perfection. Another is the idea that sin is inexplicable and incomprehensible. “Sin is an intruder,” she asserts, “for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable.”¹⁴

We find a third Augustinian element in the value Ellen White places on creaturely freedom. A universe containing morally free beings, she maintains, is superior to one without it. “God desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no

pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will.”¹⁵

There are also elements in Ellen White’s account that resemble John Hick’s “Irenaean” or “soul-making” theodicy. As she describes it, human beings were created sinless, but not mature. They needed a period of time to develop their characters and become everything they were meant to be. “God made [them] free moral agents, capable of appreciating ... His character and ... with full liberty to yield or to withhold obedience.... Before they could be rendered eternally secure, their loyalty must be tested.”¹⁶

For Irenaean theodicy, according to Hick, the fall was inevitable. Instead of a catastrophic catapult from perfection to perdition, the fall was more like a learning experience, an important step in growing toward maturity. As we have seen, Ellen White condemns sin as inexcusable and rejects the notion that God is in any way responsible for it. But she maintains that the fall of Adam and Eve was different from that of Lucifer. It was disastrous, but not quite as disastrous.

Lucifer enjoyed a full revelation of God’s character. He knew the full depth of God’s love and goodness, so his rebellion was irreversible. There was nothing God could do for him. But Adam and Eve did not know God in the same way. Furthermore, their picture of God was clouded by Satan’s deceptions. So for them there was hope. A fuller revelation of God’s love could win them back.¹⁷

Another Irenaean feature in Ellen White’s theodicy





is the contribution that a challenging environment can make to moral development. For her as for John Hick, character development was essential to God's design for human beings.¹⁸ Though the fall was not inevitable, it resulted in an environment that was beneficial to moral growth. When Adam and Eve yielded to temptation human nature was depraved, and they needed the discipline that only hardship could provide. Filled with sorrows as it is, this world is a "vale of soul-making."¹⁹

the universe is immune to rebellion now in a way that it was not before. The plan of redemption "vindicate[s] the character of God before the universe."²⁰ And "a tested and proved creation will never again be turned from allegiance to Him whose character has been fully manifested . . . as fathomless love and infinite wisdom."²¹

Ellen White's theodicy also differs from Irenaean versions in several important ways. For her, the fall was not inevitable, and God is in no sense responsible

Ellen White comes closest to an Irenaean theodicy with her view that evil leads to benefits that would not otherwise have been realized. And the primary benefit involves the onlooking universe. As a result of the great controversy, she maintains, God's creation achieves complete security. Once sin has been tried, and everyone can see how terrible it is, God will destroy it with everyone's approval, and no one will ever be foolish enough to try it again.

At the same time, however, she never says that evil is inevitable—that in a universe of morally free creatures, someone is bound to rebel sooner or later. Nor does she say that the net effect of evil is positive, that the gains outweigh the losses in the final analysis. It is not her view that evil is somehow "worth it," no matter how bad it is. (She consistently refers to it as a "terrible experiment.") Nor does she say that the universe could not have achieved security in any other way.

All she says is that

for sin. Moreover, not everyone will be saved. The universe will eventually be populated with beings who serve God freely. But unlike Hick's account, this is not because God finally wins everyone over. It is because he destroys all opposition. As we have seen, he can do this without arousing suspicion because he waits until the loyal followers have no sympathy left for rebellion.

Like most Christian theodicies, Ellen White's combines the notion of a fall that originates in creaturely freedom with the idea that evil contributes to the achievement of something good. What distinguishes her theodicy is the way she seems to expand the threat that evil poses to the universe while narrowing the likelihood of its occurrence.

For many theodicies it is understandable, if not excusable, for evil to arise in a universe where there is freedom. Sooner or later rebellion is bound to occur somewhere, and many people think it was part of God's plan that it do so. But the consequences of evil are "manageable." Either all evil is ultimately redeemed, or there is at least a guaranteed preponderance of good over evil.²²

For Ellen White, in contrast, universal catastrophe was a real possibility: conceivably, creation could reject God's sovereignty entirely, join in rebellion, and leave God's plans in tatters. If we ask why God would go ahead and create in the face of this possibility, the answer may be that the original likelihood of evil was very small. God created beings with a capacity to love, God knew that they could rebel, but it was never God's plan that they actually would, and God did everything he could to prevent it, short of eliminating freedom.

Ellen White and the Book of Revelation

Ellen White's luciferous theodicy raises a variety of interesting questions—biblical, historical, and philosophical. One obvious question is the relation of her apocalyptic vision to the vision of the Apocalypse itself. For both, human history is the stage for a divine-demonic conflict of cosmic proportions. The final phase of this struggle will bring human history to an end and establish God's reign on the earth forever. But Ellen White's interpretation of the conflict differs from the book of Revelation in some interesting ways.

To the original readers (hearers) of Revelation, as to the biblical communities of faith in general, God's

very sovereignty appears to be at stake. Their question was whether God has the power to overcome the evil forces that dominate human life and wreak havoc with God's people. The book's answer is a resounding Yes! God will defeat his foes in a climactic battle and utterly destroy them in a lake of fire.

A related question is why, if God has the power to destroy the wicked, he doesn't go ahead and do it. How much longer can he tolerate the persecution of his people?²³ For Ellen White, in contrast, the crucial question is not whether or when God will destroy the wicked, but why God destroys them at all. How can a God of love end the existence of any of his creatures?²⁴

From Ellen White's perspective, there is no question that God is infinitely superior to his opponents. Since God's power is the ultimate source of every creature's life, the fundamental force that upholds everything, he could end anyone's existence in an instant. For her, the fundamental issue of the great controversy is not God's power at all, but God's character, or more precisely, God's reputation.

Ellen White's reluctance to attribute judgment to God also appears in her account of human suffering at the end of time. According to Revelation 16, angels sent from God pour out their vials on an unrepentant world. But in her description of the time of trouble, Ellen White asserts that "Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble."²⁵

Ellen White's Cultural Context

It would also be interesting to explore the relation between Ellen White's concept of the great controversy and the social and religious environment in which she lived and thought. Without suggesting derivation, we note certain similarities between her concerns and those of others in her time.

In nineteenth-century America the image of a vivid, well-populated spiritual realm played a prominent role in a number of emerging religious movements. For Spiritualists, the dead survive as spirits who sometimes contact the living. For Mormons, humans exist as spirit beings before their life on earth and will continue their journey after death in other parts of the universe. For Christian Scientists, humans



are essentially spirit beings; physical existence is an illusion. Like many around her, then, Ellen White believed that spirits populate the universe.

A similar inquiry involves the contours of Ellen White's Satanology, or diabolology. There are some striking similarities between her view of the Devil and the portrait of Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In each case, the Devil is a magnificent being who, though fallen, retains a great deal of his original majesty and intelligence, and who is engaged in a long struggle to defame God's character and under-

in spite of its negligible philosophical influence, the idea deserves consideration.

Some examples of suffering are of such duration, intensity, or magnitude that they require a cause of superhuman, indeed, near-cosmic proportions to be remotely comprehensible. The Holocaust has made the idea of the Devil plausible for many in the twentieth century. For recent examples, we have only to think of the thousands who perished on September 11, ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, the massacre of millions in Rwanda and other African countries, and

If, indeed, God is love and the sufferings of this world are the consequences of abandoning God, it is hard to understand why it should take superior minds thousands of years to reach this conclusion.

mine God's authority. Just where her perspective fits in the long history of diabolical images is an inquiry for another occasion.²⁶

The Great Controversy as a Theodicy

From a philosophical perspective, the crucial questions for any proposal concern its plausibility and coherence. What happens when we apply these criteria to Ellen White's luciferous theodicy?

Does the great controversy concept make sense today? Is the universe populated with intelligent beings? Are we surrounded by invisible personalities? In the thinking of many people today the answer is Yes. Angels have grown in popularity in recent years. They have been featured in national news magazines, major motion pictures, and network television series.

Millions of people also believe in the Devil. He is a familiar character in movies and novels. He figures prominently in a wide range of religious phenomena, evoking varied responses, from fear, revulsion, and defiance to admiration and even worship. He has even made an appearance in popular psychology.²⁷

In contrast, most philosophical treatments of evil today do without the Devil. In his extensive writings on theodicy John Hick makes no use of the idea of a prehuman angelic fall or the notion that the world is in the grip of demonic powers.²⁸ Similarly, in her writings on "horrendous evils," which she calls "the deepest of religious problems," Marilyn McCord Adams does not consider the figure of the Devil.²⁹ Yet

the continuing bloodshed in the Middle East.

Coming closer to home, we can all recall instances of cruelty and violence to those we know and care about that cry out for some sort of cosmic condemnation. Certain instances of suffering are such that we cannot begin to account for them in any proximate context of meaning. Their inspiration must come from something other than human. The Devil provides a way of coming to terms with such phenomena. Indeed, given the current state of human affairs, a luciferous theodicy may be sorely needed.

A philosophical position must be coherent as well as plausible, and this is where two important questions about Ellen White's theodicy arise. The first concerns the Devil's relation to God. The idea of a being whose revolt against God engulfs the entire universe and seriously threatens God's government conflicts with traditional views of divine sovereignty.

In fact, it almost looks like a version of dualism. For orthodox Christianity, everything owes its existence to God, who alone is all-powerful and self-existent. God brought all creatures into being, and God's power sustains them moment by moment.³⁰ Ellen White accepts this concept. "All created beings live by the will and power of God," she asserts. "They are dependent recipients of the life of God."³¹

But if everything owes its existence to God, why does the Devil enjoy such enormous power in the great controversy scheme? How could any created being

become a credible rival to God? What would intelligent beings hope to gain from contesting God's supremacy if they knew that God could instantly annihilate them?

There may be an answer to this in the central issue of the great controversy, which concerns perception rather than power. The central question is not whether God will reign, but whether God deserves to reign. To be precise, it is whether the creatures perceive that God deserves to reign. This blunts the force of the dualistic objection, but it does so by placing immense emphasis on the notion of the onlooking universe—the populace of moral beings that needs to be convinced that God fully deserves to be God. And this raises some questions of its own.

One is the very possibility of distrusting God. In the great controversy scenario the Devil accuses God of tyrannical behavior. God provides evidence of his true motives over the long course of human history. God's creatures weigh the evidence and conclude that God is who he claims to be—a benevolent, loving parent who really cares for his children. With this conclusion the Devil loses his argument and the conflict is over—case closed.

But what should we make of the notion of “God on trial”? The idea of God's creatures evaluating Satan's charges in light of the evidence and concluding that God is truly benevolent after all is a difficult one. For one thing, it clearly presupposes some independent standard of goodness by which God is judged, and people will question this for a number of familiar reasons.³²

The notion that God's creatures can investigate and come to a conclusion about God's character is also problematic given God's ontological status. To conduct a reliable investigation, we must be confident that the evidence before us has not been tampered with. We must also be confident that we have the capacity to weigh the evidence impartially and reach our own conclusions. In other words, we must have confidence in the structure of reality and in our own cognitive processes.

The fact that God is creator, however, means that God is involved in every aspect of reality. There is evidence to examine only because divine power sustains it. Our minds work the way they do because God has designed them that way. As a result, every claim to know something implicitly expresses confidence in God. It rests on the presupposition that God is trustworthy. Yet this is precisely what is at stake in the great controversy. It seems, then, that we cannot determine if God is trustworthy unless we assume that God is trustworthy. We find ourselves begging the question.

Even if we grant the possibility of impartially investigating God's trustworthiness, we have to wonder just why it takes the onlooking universe so long to see that sin is self-destructive and that God deserves to be God. If, indeed, God is love and the sufferings of this world are the consequences of abandoning God, it is hard to understand why it should take superior minds thousands of years to reach this conclusion. After all, humans are supposed to make their decisions for eternity in far less time and with less intelligence.

A further question about the coherence of this luciferous theodicy concerns its concept of a morally secure universe. As Ellen White describes it, the great controversy begins in Lucifer's unwarranted self-exaltation and ends when the inhabitants of the universe are completely loyal to God. So much evidence accumulates to support the love of God and expose the absurdity of sin that no reflective creature will ever again entertain the idea of rebelling against God.

But this account seems to shift the premise of rebellion from perversity to ignorance. Sin was absurd to begin. It originated with the one person in the universe who had the least reason to rebel, one who knew God better than all other creatures. His sin was an act of sheer perversity. It defied all the evidence.

As Ellen White describes the end of the conflict, however, sin seems to be a matter of ignorance. No one will ever sin again because the accumulated evidence to support God's claims is too great. Now, if Lucifer could rebel against God with all that he knew of God's character, how can we be sure that in future ages no other being will do the same? On the other hand, if enough evidence could prevent someone from sinning, why was it Lucifer, of all creatures, who started it?

We seem, then, to face a dilemma. If sin is a matter of ignorance, we have a basis for confidence in the ultimate security of the universe, but we cannot explain Lucifer's heavenly revolt. On the other hand, if sin is essentially an act of perversity, then we can identify Lucifer's rebellion, but we have no guarantee that some other being will not make an irrational, wholly unjustified, decision to rebel against God in the future.

These questions may be nothing more than philosophical quibbles, and one could respond to them by insisting that the great controversy should be viewed



as a sweeping religious symbol whose narrative power functions on levels of experience that philosophy is ill equipped to handle. At the same time, important ideas always invite careful reflection, and the concept of the great controversy is one of the most important ideas we have. I hope that these comments support the conviction that it merits serious discussion.

The great controversy is a rich and provocative theme. It plays a central role in traditional Adventist thought, and it speaks to popular consciousness today for various reasons. Ever since 9/11 people as prominent as the president of the United States have described international terrorists as “evil.” The recent holiday season brought the final cinematic installment of J. R. R. Tolkien’s epic fantasy, *Lord of the Rings*. So the struggle between good and evil is very much on people’s minds, both as a specter that haunts us and a spectacle that entertains us.

Consequently, this may be an ideal time for Adventists to say something to the larger world on the topic. We have a lively sense of the threat that evil represents. Evil is real and evil is powerful. But we also believe that evil is temporary, and this is the most important thing we have to say: When God’s kingdom comes, the great controversy will be over and evil will come to an end.

Notes and References

1. Ellen White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1950), xii. The great controversy “vision” of 1858 provided the basis for a series of volumes entitled, *Spiritual Gifts*. It was later enlarged to form a second four-volume series, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, and ultimately expanded into the five-volume *Conflict of the Ages Series*, which Adventists widely regard as Ellen White’s magnum opus and the definitive expression of Adventist thought. *The Great Controversy* is the title of the fifth and most influential book in this series.

2. I am using the word *theodicy* rather broadly here, in contrast to other uses of the term, such as the one involved in Alvin Plantinga’s careful distinction between “theodicy” and “defense” in *God, Freedom and Evil* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 28. According to Plantinga, a theodicy seeks to establish that a particular response to evil is true; a defense, only that it is possible (*ibid.*, 58).

3. In spite of its overarching importance in Ellen White’s thought, Adventists have not given the concept of the great controversy a great deal of scrutiny. In a rare book-length study of this theme in Ellen White, Joe Battistone identifies it as her central

theological idea, the comprehensive framework in which she deals with all her important concerns (*The Great Controversy Theme in E. G. White’s Writings* [Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1978]). However, Battistone’s study is by and large a summary of her narrative from the origin of evil to the restoration of the earth. It does not offer a critical assessment of the concept. This article is a modest step toward that goal.

4. Plantinga, *God, Freedom and Evil*, 58; and Stephen T. Davis, “Free Will and Evil,” in *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, ed. Stephen T. Davis (Atlanta, Ga.: John Knox, 1981), 74–75.

5. Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible and Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997); *Satan and the Problem of Evil: Constructing a Trinitarian Warfare Theodicy* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 2001).

6. “God might have created man without the power to transgress His law ... but in that case man would have been, not a free moral agent, but a mere automaton. Without freedom of choice, his obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced.” Ellen White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets as Illustrated in the Lives of Holy Men of Old* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1958), 49.

7. Ellen White, *Desire of Ages* (Oakland, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1898), 758–61.

8. *Ibid.*, 758–61.

9. *Ibid.*, 763.

10. *Ibid.*, 764.

11. *Ibid.*, 763–64.

12. In fact, Ellen White also provides an emphatically luciferous theology. The Devil plays a major role in all the central doctrines of Christian faith, including creation, salvation, and last things. Her approach belies Jeffrey Burton Russell’s statement that “belief in the Devil’s existence is not part of the core of Christianity.” Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press), 299.

13. John Hick’s book, *Evil and the God of Love*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), is one of the most influential discussions of the evil to appear in this century. It outlines two responses to the problem: Augustinian theodicy, which is essentially the free-will defense in its various forms, and Irenaean theodicy, the perspective Hick favors, which emphasizes the contribution that suffering makes to character development, or “soul-making.”

14. White, *Great Controversy*, 492–93.

15. *Ibid.*, 493.

16. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 48.

17. White, *Desire of Ages*, 761–62.

18. “Without freedom of choice, ... [t]here could have been no development of character.” White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 49.

19. *Ibid.*, 60, 61.

20. *Ibid.*, 68.

21. White, *Great Controversy*, 504.

22. This seems to be Alvin Plantinga's view. "A world containing creatures who are significantly free (and freely perform more good than evil actions) is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all." *God, Freedom and Evil*, 30.

23. "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" Rev. 6:10.

24. I am indebted to Ernest Burse for prompting me to raise this question.

25. White, *Great Controversy*, 626.

26. Jeffrey Burton Russell's four-volume history of the concept of the Devil is probably the most complete study in recent years. The following books are available from Cornell University Press: *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil From Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (1987); *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition* (1989); *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages* (1989); *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (1990). Another noteworthy contribution to literature on the Devil is Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1995).

The relation between the love of God and the ultimate fate of the wicked was an issue that attracted considerable attention in New England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A number found the idea of hell so repulsive that they rejected the notion of divine judgment in its entirety. In the ultimate scheme of things, they believed, there will be no permanent holdouts among God's enemies. Everyone will eventually acquiesce to God's sovereignty. For Ellen White, of course, the end of the wicked is part of the eschatological future. But it will not happen until everyone, good and evil alike—the Devil himself included—acknowledges God's ultimate right to universal sovereignty. White, *Great Controversy*, 670–71. This is hardly universalism of the classic sort, but it shows that God's love ultimately overcomes all opposition.

27. See M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983).

28. Hicks, *Evil and the God of Love*, 333.

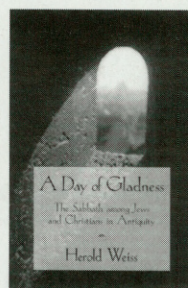
29. Marilyn McCord Adams, "Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God," in *The Problem of Evil: Oxford Readings in Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 211. The Devil is also absent from her more recent book by the same name, *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999). The index contains no references to "Devil," "Lucifer," or "Satan."

30. Paul's quotation of a pagan poet is often cited in this connection: "In him we live and move and have our being." Acts 17:28.

31. White, *Desire of Ages*, 785.

32. Is something good because God says it is, or does God say it is good because it is? If God is goodness itself, the idea of evaluating God's behavior against some other standard of goodness makes no sense.

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On the Necessity of Evil

By Marilyn Glaim

The ancient and classical Greeks (ca. 800–300 B.C.) had no sacred scripture. Rather, in epic poems, dramas, and philosophical treatises that encompass all Greek mythology they explored emergence of the gods and the meaning of good and evil. Most of the Greek population heard the myths from itinerant poets or experienced them in large, outdoor theaters as part of festivals that celebrated the gods and the agricultural seasons. From these stories they learned that it was unwise to challenge Fate and that worship of the gods and loyalty to family and community were necessary for survival.



In the following scene, Hesiod (ca. 700 B.C.) dramatizes one story of the emergence of Zeus as the most powerful god in the Greek pantheon:

The boundless sea echoed terribly, earth resounded with the great roar, wide heaven trembled and groaned, and high Olympus was shaken from its base by the onslaught of the immortals; the quakes came thick and fast and, with the dread din of the endless chase and mighty weapons, reached down to gloomy Tartarus.

Thus they hurled their deadly weapons against one another. The cries of both sides as they shouted reached up to starry heaven, for they came together with a great clamor. Then Zeus did not hold back his might any longer, but now immediately his heart was filled with strength and he showed clearly all his force. He came direct from heaven and Olympus hurling perpetual lightning and the bolts with flashes and thunder flew in succession from his stout hand with a dense whirling of holy flame. Earth, the giver of life, roared, everywhere aflame, and on all sides the vast woods crackled loudly with the fire.¹

Thus, in battle that lasts ten years Zeus not only overcomes his child-eating father, Cronus, along with the other terrible Titans, he also establishes his right to reign in power and glory on Mount Olympus, from which he controls the skies. Cronus and his cohorts are chained in Tartarus, deep in the earth, where they rumble their protests in earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

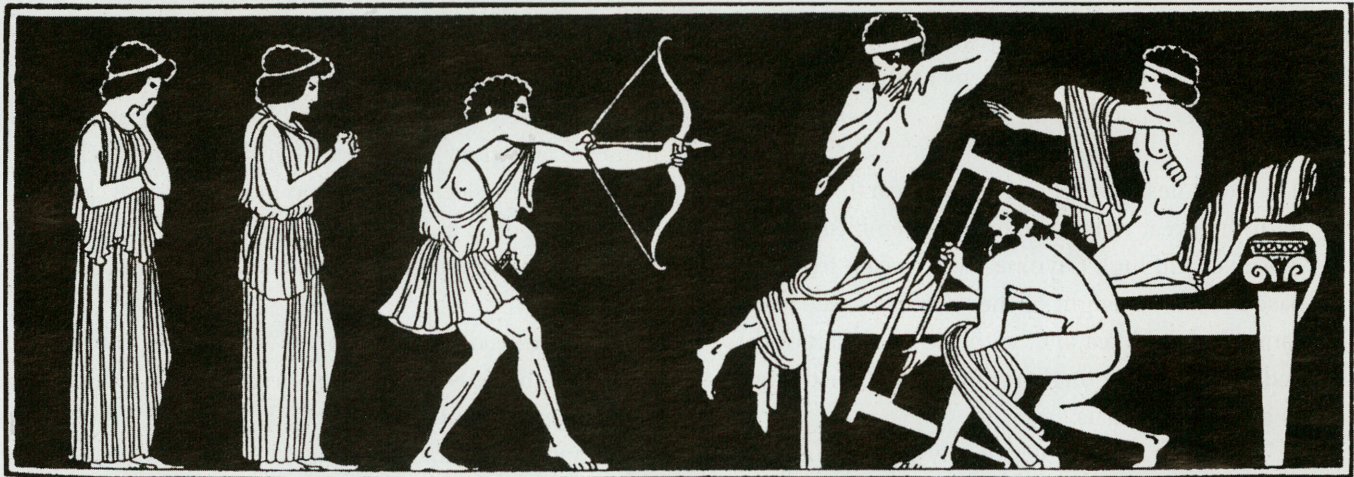
As descendants of the Judeo-Christian tradition, we find in the Zeus/Cronus story a reminder of God casting Lucifer and his unfaithful legions out of heaven, condemning them to everlasting banishment while allowing them access to the earth and its inhabitants. However, God, as absolute ruler of heaven and the universe, is infinite, all powerful, and all knowing, and therein lies one of the key differences between the Judeo-Christian God and Zeus.

Zeus is created from the earth. He is not all-powerful or all-knowing, though according to the Greeks he is immortal and more powerful than thunder and lightning. The other gods fear his power, which is greater than their own, but they use their own power both to challenge Zeus and to meddle in life on earth.

This is made especially clear in Homer's *Iliad*, in which battle outcomes are determined as much by the



ILLUSTRATION OF THE SACK OF TROY, PAINTED ON A CUP BY BRYGOS, THE BOOK HOUSE FOR CHILDREN, CHICAGO, 1949



ODYSSEUS SLAYS SUITORS/BOOK HOUSE FOR CHILDREN, CHICAGO, 1949

will of the gods as by the skill of the warriors themselves.² Zeus declares his intention to be impartial in the war against Troy. His daughter, Athena, and his wife, Hera, make no pretense of impartiality. They're mad at Troy for a perceived slight, and when it serves their purposes they cause the city's forces to lose battles.³

Further, we see that in spite of immortality and power to interfere in the lives of men, all gods—including Zeus—are under the rule of Fate, which is not personified as the gods are, but is widely recognized as the real force in the world. Hera at one point ridicules Zeus, reminding him that even if he wanted, he could not save any man that Fate wished to destroy.⁴

Just as Zeus is not the equivalent of the Old Testament God, neither is Cronus the moral equivalent of the Devil. Certainly, the eating of his own children in an effort to ensure his lasting power is an abominable act, but Cronus is not portrayed as the incarnation of evil, nor is he the cause of man's fall. In fact, Greek mythology contains no story of the Fall, nor is there a story of redemption. Man emerges from a subhuman state instead of falling.

Although eventually Zeus comes to be viewed as the ethical god and the protector of human community, according to the earliest Greek playwright, Aeschylus (525–426 B.C.), Zeus is the god who tries to keep man in a subhuman state. In his play *Prometheus Bound*, Aeschylus asserts that Prometheus, one of the Titans who has not been bound beneath the earth, takes pity on man in his subhuman condition, and, going against direct orders of Zeus, he gives man all it takes to be fully human: fire, knowledge, and community.⁵

For his disobedience Prometheus is bound to a rock with a wedge through his chest, and Zeus promises him that for all eternity an eagle will pick at his liver. Suffering but unrepentant, Prometheus hurls his own set of threats

at Zeus, telling him that he knows a secret that will cause his downfall. The end of the story is not available to us because two plays have been lost in the trilogy of which *Prometheus Unbound* is one part. However, the fact that the third play is titled *Prometheus Unbound* suggests that differences between the god and the Titan are settled.

Prometheus remains in mythology the hero who made man human, and Zeus retains his power and glory for several more centuries of Greek thought.

As these stories reveal, Greek mythology has no moral equivalent to the Great Controversy. Rather, the controversies among gods were many and ongoing. In the Christian view, it is difficult even to talk in terms of good and evil without talking about God and Satan in opposition. How then was it possible for the Greeks—having gods who connived against each other, who carried their Olympian struggles into human life, and who could behave worse than humans because they never had to pay with their lives—to develop a mature sense of right and wrong?⁶

It might seem to us, whose idea of doing right is tied closely to sin and salvation, that the ancient and classical Greeks would have had no clear conceptions of the difference between good and evil. This is wrong. Greek notions of good and evil were highly developed and endlessly explored in their stories. The worst evils include breaking the sacred trust between guest and host, murder—especially murder of family members—refusal to comply with Fate, and extreme behavior of any kind. The Greeks believed in moderation and loyalty.

Homer's first epic poem deals with the war between Greeks and Trojans and explores many forms of evil and resulting punishments. Betrayal of the courtesy a host shows his guest begins an agonizing war that forms the basis of the *Iliad*. Thus, when Paris, son of Priam, king of

Troy, betrays the trust of his generous host, Menelaus, and seduces his wife, Helen, the Greeks go to war against Troy to bring Helen home, believing that only war can correct this evil. Ten years and thousands of lives later, Troy smolders in ruins as the wayward Helen is returned to her husband. But in the Greek ideas of good and evil, right has been restored.

The restoration of right through war is nevertheless a process that involves many evils along the way. Even before the Greeks sail off to war, King Agamemnon, brother of Menelaus and leader of all the Greek forces, finds himself and his men becalmed week after long week. While there, Agamemnon embarks on a course that leads to the murder of his child, as Euripides (480–405 B.C.) tells in his tragedy, *Iphigeneia at Aulis*.⁷ Agamemnon hears that West Wind demands the sacrifice of a child—for which the Greeks were not known—his own beloved daughter, Iphigeneia. To the Greeks, this was truly horrifying. Yet Agamemnon does the deed—one made even more evil by the way he lies to his wife and tricks his daughter into coming to the place of sacrifice.

As Lance Morrow points out in his recent book *Evil: An Investigation*, “much evil arises from perceived necessity.”⁸ Agamemnon, in giving in to the “necessity” of sailing to war, commits an evil that will come back to destroy him in mind and body. The chorus (a group in Greek tragedies that reports community reaction) chants its lament for the crime Agamemnon has committed. “When the King accepted this necessity, he grew evil. Crosswinds darkened his mind, his will stopped at nothing. It pleased him to imagine the infatuation of his hard heart was daring and decision.”⁹

Agamemnon’s mind was indeed darkened. In the *Iliad*, Homer portrays him as a leader more concerned about authority than the welfare of his men. In Euripides’ *Hecuba*, we see that evil choices become easy to make. Having killed his own daughter for safe passage to Troy, Agamemnon callously allows the sacrifice of one of the few remaining children of the king of Troy.¹⁰ Aeschylus finishes the story in his trilogy of plays known as the *Oresteia*.¹¹ Indeed, Agamemnon does return home safely as a conquering hero and sits down to an elaborate banquet prepared by his wife, Queen Clytemnestra. But at its close he dies by her avenging hand.

With this murder, we are given another look at the Greek conception of evil. If an entire war could be fought to preserve the honor of the family and the Greeks, how could a wife escape death when she murders her husband, even if he murdered her daughter? It turns out that she

cannot. Her own children, Orestes and Electra, turn against her. They believe she is not avenging a daughter’s death, but only snatching the kingdom away from her husband to give it to the lover she has taken in his absence. In striking contrast to Clytemnestra is faithful Penelope, in Homer’s *Odyssey*. She waits twenty years for her wandering husband to return from Troy.¹²

As the tragedy of Agamemnon’s house continues, Orestes kills his mother, knowing gods punish those who murder parents. He is hounded out of town, chased by avenging Furies. Orestes is eventually forgiven as the Furies descend on him and turn themselves into forgiving Graces. Thus, the Greeks learned the subtle distinction between family murders committed for evil reasons and those committed to right the wrongs of evil parents. As these stories reveal, Greeks developed a sophisticated and elaborate conception of the hierarchy of evil. Murder is evil, but sometimes a necessity; therefore, punishment must fit the seriousness of the crime.

Gradations of evil are also explored in the most famous of all Greek stories, *Oedipus the King*, by Sophocles (495–405 B.C.).¹³ Here Greeks could view the consequences of a king’s refusal to submit to the fate that his son will grow up to kill him. Instead, the king arranges for the murder of his infant son, Oedipus. But in trying to arrange his own fate, the king actually ensures that Oedipus will indeed kill him. Oedipus, in turn, tries to circumvent the prophecy that he will kill his father and marry his mother, but accidentally commits both crimes. Even though the actions are not by his own will, Oedipus is condemned to spend the rest of his life in exile from his beloved city.

Why is the punishment so severe? Partly because of the Greek response to the evil of patricide and incest, and partly as a result of the effort to circumvent Fate. Man may not assert his will against Fate. As in the case of Orestes, Oedipus finally achieves forgiveness, even redemption. In the less well-known sequel to the story, *Oedipus at Colonus*, Oedipus is not only forgiven, he is also allowed a death attended by gods. In what appears to be an argument that too strict an application of the principle of accepting one’s Fate may itself be evil, Sophocles suggests that man should not be wholly blamed for attempting to prevent himself from committing terrible crimes and should not be blamed for failure to avoid the crime. Oedipus powerfully argues his innocence:





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How can my nature be evil,
when all I did was matching others' actions?
Even had I done what I did full consciously,
even so, I would not have been evil,
But the truth is, I knew nothing
when I came where I did.¹⁴

In this play, written many years after *Oedipus the King* and near the end of his life, Sophocles seems ready to assert that man has a right to make some of his own choices about Fate.

Plato, one of the most famous of Greek philosophers (429–347 B.C.), begins his extensive examination of Greek ideas of evil and finds them wanting. He challenges the writing of the poets and playwrights, asserting that their ideas are not appropriate to his plans for the ideal republic, which are detailed at length in his treatise, *Plato's Republic*.¹⁵ He sees Greek stories as too emotional, and even worse, he believes they portray the gods in a negative light.

Plato would not allow young people of his republic to read tales of death and destruction, nor would he want them to see the gods acting in conniving and spiteful ways. They must be portrayed as completely good and worthy of emulation. Plato goes so far as to say that unbelief in the gods itself is evil and should be treated as a capital crime.¹⁶ Rather than allowing literature to explore the meaning of evil, he wishes to stamp out evil by keeping young people innocent of wrongdoing. But mere avoidance of evil is not enough. Goodness must aggressively assert itself, for the mere absence of good is indeed evil.

Plato believes that stories of murder and incest merely inflame the passions. In his republic, law will

guard the morals of the young: "The force exerted by law is excellent, and one should always co-operate with it, because although 'calculation' is a noble thing, it is gentle, not violent, and its efforts need assistants, so that the gold in us may prevail over the other substances."¹⁷

Furthermore, the individual "must digest the truth about these forces that pull him, and act on it in his life; the state must get an account of it either from one of the gods or from the human expert ... and incorporate it in the form of a law to govern both its internal affairs and its relations with other states. A further result will be a clearer distinction between virtue and vice."¹⁸ Whereas storytelling fails to moderate human behavior and may even incite bad thinking and bad doing, Plato believes that righteous laws will prevail.

Today we should be grateful that Plato did not succeed in stamping out the poets and playwrights, for their work provides us with our fullest understanding of Greek beliefs about evil. These beliefs, though set in the context of Fate and the gods, focus on human relationships that were meant to be respectful of the self and others. A failure of respect was a failure of goodness. Failure of goodness defined evil. Though the Greeks lacked the Judeo-Christian framework that defines good and evil as diametrically opposed forces, through their stories of gods and humans the Greeks created a society that demanded high standards of behavior.

Notes and References

1. Mark Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), citing Hesiod's *Theogony*, on pages 77–78.
2. Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Viking, 1990).
3. Edith Hamilton, *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and*

Heroes (New York: Mentor, 1969), 27.

4. Hera and Athena lost a beauty contest to Aphrodite when Paris, a prince of Troy, chose her as the most beautiful of the three goddesses. The beauty contest had been set up by the goddess of discord, Eris, who was angry at not being invited to the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. This contest ultimately causes the Trojan War because Aphrodite's reward to Paris is Helen, who was already married but is admired as the most beautiful woman in the world. Even though the Trojans regularly sacrificed to Athena and Hera in the hope that they would help their cause, the goddesses remain determined to see Troy and Paris destroyed. This is only one of many examples that demonstrate the Greek belief that the gods cause much human strife.

5. Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound and Other Plays*, trans. Philip Vellacott (London: Penguin, 1961).

6. Edith Hamilton writes extensively about the nature of the gods and their relationship with humans. Stories abounded of Zeus impregnating human women. Hera feared him enough not to punish him directly, but she always took out her anger on the earth-bound women. As Morford and Lenardon point out, "The gods are generally depicted as human in form and character; but although they look and act like humans, very often their appearance and their actions are to some extent idealized. Their beauty is beyond that of ordinary mortals, their passions more grand and intense, their sentiments more praiseworthy and touching; and they can embody and impose the loftiest moral values in the universe. Yet these same gods can mirror the physical and spiritual weaknesses of human counterparts: they can be lame and deformed or vain, petty, and insincere; they can steal, lie, and cheat, sometimes with a finesse that is exquisitely divine." Hamilton, *Mythology*, 128.

7. Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, trans. W. S. Merwin and George E. Dimock, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

8. Lance Morrow, *Evil: An Investigation* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 222.

9. Cited in *ibid.*

10. Peter Levi, *A History of Greek Literature* (London: Viking, 1985), 216.

11. Aeschylus, *Oresteia*, trans. Christopher Collard (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

12. Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York, Viking, 1996).

13. Sophocles, *Sophocles I: Oedipus the King; Oedipus and Colonus; Antigone*, trans. David Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

14. *Ibid.*, 270.

15. Plato, *The Republic* (London: Penguin, 1974).

16. Plato, *The Laws* (London, Penguin, 1970), 444.

17. *Ibid.*, 74-75.

18. *Ibid.*

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The Great Controversy over You-Know-Who

By Nancy Lecourt

At the Adventist elementary school near my home there was quite a ruckus over the Harry Potter books a few years ago. Parents complained because some children were bringing the books to school in their backpacks, and their own children were thus getting an opportunity to read books that they had forbidden. The books were banned from the campus, and a black friend of mine spoke at a board meeting where this decision was discussed.



Fantasy or reality? The author attempts to head toward Hogwarts on Platform 9³/₄.

“I would like to call your attention to a book currently being read at this school—*The Little House in the Big Woods*. The father in this book sings a song about ‘Uncle Ned,’ who is called an ‘old darkey,’ who’s ‘gone where good darkeys go.’¹ I haven’t complained about this racist language because censorship and book-banning are so offensive to me. But if I can stand to have my daughters read about ‘darkies,’ then I think you should be able to stand to have your children watch mine read *Harry Potter* during recess.”

“I see your point,” replied another father, “but in Harry Potter we’re talking about real evil.”

The books are still banned from the campus.

How Have Adventists Reacted to Harry Potter?

In Australia, Rowling’s books have been banned from all sixty Adventist schools.² In the United States, although no official actions have been taken, it appears that the majority of SDA schools do not allow them on campus. Responding to my e-mail question, Gerald Kovalsky, vice president for education in the North American Division, replied, “I do not have a sense of how many schools have actually banned the books in terms of board or conference office of education action. My logical expectation is that no school will allow them on campus.”

In Britain, a policy not to allow books with witches

and wizards in them was put in place about ten years ago (though an exception is made for the Narnia books), and thus when the Harry Potter books appeared they were banned automatically.

Contrariwise, as Tweedledee said to Alice, children's literature classes at Adventist colleges and universities teach or at least discuss the Harry Potter books, and Adventist scholars are busy analyzing them. At the meetings of the Popular Culture Association both last

mentioned above, they were the basis of a presentation at the North American Division Teachers Convention in Dallas in August 2000.

Her *Journal of Adventist Education* article begins and ends with a statement about children learning to think for themselves, and people making their own, informed decisions. "Should Harry Potter come to your Adventist school? I leave that decision to you" (9). In between, however, Oliver describes the Potter books as promoting

... "but in Harry Potter we're talking about real evil."

spring and again next, panels discussing Harry Potter did and will feature several Adventists reading papers.³ Many Adventists—young, old, and of a certain age—are happily reading and rereading book five, whereas others are just as determinedly choosing not to read.

Clearly, we Adventists are as conflicted and divided over Harry Potter as are many other conservative Christian groups, with some, like Charles Colson and *Christianity Today*, finding the books to be stories about courage, loyalty, friendship, and love, and others, like Richard Abanes, seeing in them the Devil's latest tools for entrapping children.

Although the arguments over Harry Potter among Adventists touch on many subjects—the use of time, the representation of violence in books for children, the role of fantasy and the imagination, the duties of parents and educators in guiding children's reading, the state of the dead—at the heart of the debate seems to be a disagreement about what constitutes "real evil."

By far the longest and most widely circulated article to appear in an official Adventist publication is "Should Harry Potter Come to Adventist Schools?" by Anita Oliver, a cover story in the *Journal of Adventist Education* for February/March 2001. This article (slightly modified for a broader audience) was reprinted by the South Pacific Division *Record* in December of that year. The revision then appeared as a cover story for the *Adventist Review* in November 2002. With it were "Two Perspectives" (predictably, Yes and No) by Soraya Parish and Richard Abanes, several links from the online version, and a resultant flood of readers' letters.

Oliver is chair of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction in the School of Education at La Sierra University. Her views on Harry Potter have had wide coverage; before they were published in the three sources

revenge, and discusses their characters' use of power to control others, the books' shocking violence, and a positive attitude in them toward paganism and the occult. She then offers some guidelines, including Philippians 4:8 ("Whatever things are true") and Mathew 5:44 ("Love your enemies").

Although Oliver makes an effort to be balanced, the article's argument depends on many rhetorical questions ("Will knowing the difference between right and wrong enable us to ignore the 'bad parts' of a book? Is reading Harry Potter or similar books a matter of right and wrong or is it just good fun?" [8]), which leads the reader straight to a conclusion that no, Harry Potter should NOT come to Adventist schools.

Not surprisingly, Rowling's homeland provides the only other official Adventist article of any length about Harry Potter. Isobel Webster's "Your Teenager and the World of Harry Potter" appeared in the *British Union Messenger* in June 2001. Webster is described as a "journalist and counselor," and her article is far more negative than Oliver's.

She begins by suggesting that contemporary standards of entertainment are at an all-time low in earth's history, as evidenced by the popularity of crime and detective novels, movies, and TV series. She claims that "in past generations murder was such a shocking thing, no decent person would enjoy a story based on it for entertainment" (6). (One is tempted to wonder whether Homer, Shakespeare, and Dickens had no "decent" people in their audiences.) Unlike Oliver, she does not leave the decision to her readers. Rather, she affirms that the Harry Potter books promote "positive attitudes toward



the occult in a guise that Christians find tempting. The tempter is no fool" (7).

The only other substantive article on Harry Potter by an Adventist that I could find appeared in an unofficial publication, *Adventist Today*, in the January/February 2002 issue under the title "Frodo Good, Harry Bad." The author, Glen Greenwalt (described as "an artist and theologian") argues that "our world really is enchanted—for good and evil" (23), and (somewhat gleefully) points out that the reason "fundamentalists" don't like the Harry Potter books is that they themselves are parodied in the books.

Rowling is explicitly critical of literal-minded muggles who cannot sense the enchantment that is under their noses. If they mistake the Potter books as literal, the fanciful world of wizards and spells becomes indeed an entre [*sic*] into the world of the occult. (23)

Is it no surprise, of course, that the issue of literal versus metaphorical or "imaginative" readings appears repeatedly in this debate. Isobel Webster affirms that "Adventists claim ... to hold fast to the Word as it stands. We take it literally," (7) and applies this hermeneutic to Rowling:

Harry Potter books are full of ghosts, poltergeists, spells and curses, witches and wizards, divination, and dark powers. Whether this is suitable reading for Christians of *any* age depends on whether you believe that these things are real. If they do not exist, then perhaps Harry Potter is harmless enough. If, however, such occult powers *do* exist and are involved in the great controversy which rages around us, then being entertained by them is like offering our children a ouija board or taking them to a séance. (7)

This question of what is "real" is central to the Harry Potter debate. When Rowling's fans protest that the books are fantasy, their detractors argue that they are only fantasy *if you don't believe* in witches, wizards, and divination.

Oliver, although acknowledging that the books are fantasy, argues that "our senses tend to blur the distinction between the imaginary and the actual" (7). In response to protests that the world of Hogwarts is imaginary, she poses more rhetorical questions: "Is the occult

real, or only imaginary, as some argue? Does Satan attack us only in the garb of ugliness, or does he come with charm and enticements as well?" (7).

Richard Abanes, who presents the "No" perspective published in the *Review* along with Oliver's article, makes this same argument: "It cannot be denied that the Harry Potter books contain real-world occult practices. For example, they contain astrology, numerology, divination, mediumship, channeling, crystal gazing, necromancy."⁴

The argument on this side is that although the Potter books may be fantasy, the occult is real, and if children are exposed to the idea of these kinds of practices, they may want to learn more, will become more susceptible to real pagans and wiccans who want to "recruit" them. Here's Oliver again: "Since children have been reading the story of Harry Potter, they have become more interested in paganism and the occult than ever before" (7).

Adventists who argue on the other side reiterate that, although the occult is real, the "magic" in Harry Potter is certainly not (though Rowling did her research and uses terms and names associated historically with witchcraft). Writing to the February 20, 2003, issue of the *Adventist Review* from Courtice, Ontario, Rex Strom reminds readers that "the magic in these books is typified by flying on broomsticks, waving magic wands, and making things disappear. This is quite different from spiritualism, which is worship of the devil and evil spirits" (28).

And writing to the *Review* on January 16, 2003, from Clifton, Colorado, to cancel his subscription, Fredric Openheim asks, "Does Oliver not know that children have always invented fantasy for themselves and for others? In truth, Oliver herself lives in a fantasy world if she sees harm in the likes of Harry Potter" (3).

Finally, Connie Neal, whose August 22, 2003, article, "Guarding Your Child: 10 Ways to Protect Kids in an Occult-filled Popular Culture" at ChristianityToday.com, is linked to the *Adventist Review* Web site area on Harry Potter, writes that "our family differentiates between literary 'magic' in a fantasy world and stories in which witchcraft is used in real-life settings" (4).

Arguments about what is real pale, however, before the central issue of what constitutes evil. For Rowling's detractors, evil means the Devil and his works: paganism, occult practices. Lisa Grant writes to the *Review* of February 20, 2003, from Kissimmee, Florida: "I had a sense that I was getting too close to demonic powers. I chose not to finish the book" (28). In correspondence published in the same issue, Lee Belcher of Columbia,

Maryland, likens reading the books to visiting the witch of Endor.

Along similar lines, Richard Abanes, in an excerpt from *Harry Potter and the Bible* at adventistreview.org, spends pages detailing every allusion to alchemists, Theosophists, Greek myths, and Arthurian legends. “The allusions could easily stir a child’s curiosity about occultism—perhaps enough for that child to one day dabble in it.” The danger in the books lies in the words

great courage, to suffer terrible pain, and even to risk his own life for the sake of others, as his mother risked (and lost) her life to save him.

Indeed, her selfless love is what protects Harry from Voldemort’s murderous rage. From this point of view, the books follow the classic “high fantasy” model of both C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien: cosmic good and evil fight for human souls; the protagonist must choose, often at great peril, whether to fight for good or give in to evil.

For these people, racism is “real evil” because it diminishes human lives.

themselves, which will lead the unsuspecting reader toward a desire to learn more about “occult practices.”⁵

Readers who enjoy the Harry Potter books seem to be more concerned about evil as it plays out in relationships between people. Not “Evil” as an invisible force emanating from the Devil and anything associated with him, but evil thoughts and actions as they affect human beings. For these people, racism is “real evil” because it diminishes human lives. People, like my friend, who feel that we must fight racism and injustice, and that to do so we require courage, loyalty, intelligence, and love are happy to have their children read the Potter books because they interpret them as promoting these values.

Connie Neal “discovered [that] Rowling’s central characters are imperfect kids who aim to do good. They model self-sacrifice, courage, and kindness, while learning to identify and resist evil” (1). Rex Strom argues that the books emphasize “the power of love over evil.... When Harry and his friends have an opportunity they work to liberate the oppressed—again a major Christian theme” (28) And Glen Greenwalt describes the books as “the Christian story in outline form—tinkering a bit with words like ‘magic,’ ‘wizards,’ ‘spells,’ and the like” (22).

“Evil” for such readers is represented in the books by Lord Voldemort, a satanic figure who will do anything to attain life for himself, including torture and murder, and who rules by fear. Voldemort is evil because he and his followers hurt others to benefit themselves. They are the antithesis of love, trust, caring, loyalty; his followers are also elitist and “racist” in the sense that they despise all but “pureblooded” wizards.

Looked at in this way, magic in the books represents power, the kind of power we all have: “the power to will and to do.” This power may be used for good or ill; choosing the good often requires Harry to summon

Ironically, both types of reader see Satan in the Harry Potter books. One group identifies particular words and phrases associated with Satan in our world; the other explores the characters, plot, symbols, and other literary techniques and finds a Satan figure. To the first group, the books themselves “are” evil; to the other, the books are “about” evil—and goodness. Clearly, the twain shall never meet.

Notes and References

1. The song is on pages 99–100.
2. “Australian Schools Ban Harry Potter,” *Adventist Review*, Dec. 27, 2001, 20.
3. Organized by Winona Howe, chair of the Department of English at La Sierra University, the panels include papers by Winona Howe (“Bands of Brothers and Circles of Friends: Bolstering the Fantasy Hero”); Doug Jones of Andrews University (“Right Reading: The Religious Right Reacts to Harry Potter”); Renard Donesky of Southwestern Adventist University (“You-Know-Who”: the Naming of Names in Harry Potter”); Andrew Howe of La Sierra University (“It’s All Greek to Harry: The Classical Influence on Rowling and Lewis”); and Linda Gill of Pacific Union College (“The Snake Problems: Adolescence, Masculinity and Power in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets”), among others.
4. “Sorcery in a Stone: A Closer Look,” *Adventist Review*, online ed., Aug. 8, 2003, 11, <www.adventistreview.org/2001-1547/story5.html>.
5. *Ibid.*, 4.

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Two Views on *A Day of Gladness*

A Welcome Alternative in Sabbath Studies

Review by John Brunt

It is not easy to review the work of one's own admired professor, but it is a privilege to be reminded why his classes were always so interesting and thought provoking.

This work is a critical study of Sabbath in early Christianity and in the Judaism contemporary with it. It presents a view of the Sabbath during this period that is quite different from the theses of two major works, Willi Rordorf's *Sunday: the History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church*, and the work edited by Donald Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Investigation*.

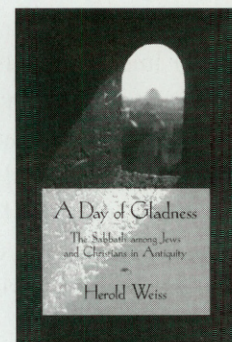
Rordorf holds that Jesus radically abolished the Sabbath law and that eventually in the Church the significance of Sabbath rest was assigned to Sunday gatherings in commemoration of the Resurrection. The authors in Carson's work hold that there was no transfer of the qualities of Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, but that Christians are liberated from Sabbath observance in favor of a rest every day of their lives. Both of these works find their way onto many of the anti-Seventh-day Adventist Web sites that have become ubiquitous.

In contrast, Weiss concludes that the New Testament does not have a polemic against the "Jewish" Sabbath (177). Rather, the New Testament shows that the Sabbath occupied a

prominent position in early Christian communities even though there were significant debates concerning the Sabbath, and even though Sabbath was understood in different ways. Weiss's work is clearly not, however, an apology for the Sabbath in early Christianity. This will probably disappoint many Adventists as they read the book.

Weiss makes it clear at the beginning that his work does not seek to get drawn into the "fruitless arguments" between those who believe that the Christian Sabbath is Sunday and those who hold Sabbath as the seventh day of the week (3). Rather than being an apology for Sabbath observance, Weiss's study is a critical study that uses critical methodologies—such as form criticism, tradition criticism, reduction criticism, and so forth—to try to understand what the texts show about the Sabbath.

A number of Adventists will also be disappointed with many of Weiss's conclusions, especially with regard to the diversity he sees in various New Testament views about Sabbath. However, Weiss has always been known for rigorous honesty in setting forth conclusions as he sees them, and that must be appreciated and commended, even where one disagrees.



Herold Weiss,
*A Day of Gladness:
The Sabbath
among Jews and
Christians in Antiquity.*
Columbia: South
Carolina University
Press, 2003.

Weiss begins by tracing a diversity of views concerning Sabbath among the early Jewish Rabbis, Philo, the Samaritans, and Josephus. The book would be well worth the price if this were all it contained. Weiss shows the diversity of views that existed among various Jewish groups, even though all were committed to the observance of Sabbath.

If in some ways this section on the Jewish material seems more convincing than the main body of work on the early Christian material, it is probably because there is much more data in the former, whereas many of the early Christian works contain only brief references to Sabbath.

What then is the diversity that Weiss sees in the New Testament with regard to Sabbath? The reader might be aided by looking at Weiss's summary on page 180 before reading the book. It is a very clear overview of his conclusions.

First, with regard to Jesus, Weiss concludes that because so much of the material in the Sabbath stories within the Gospels is traditional material, it is impossible to reconstruct Jesus' position on the Sabbath. Therefore, Weiss does not attempt to do so. He looks instead at the different writings to see the view of the Sabbath found in each one.

With regard to the Synoptic Gospels, Weiss concludes that the Christian communities they reflect took for granted the legitimacy of Sabbath rest. Although they did have debates over what kinds of activities could lawfully be done on Sabbath, they clearly assumed that Sabbath would be observed (96). The exegesis that leads Weiss to these conclusions is convincing and clear.

Weiss sees quite a different picture with regard to the Gospel of John and the Gospel of Thomas. (In the debate over whether the Gospel of Thomas is early or is a later Gnostic work, Weiss sides with the former). According to Weiss, the Johannine community had interpreted Sabbath within the framework of its realized eschatology. Its members believed that Jesus did not abolish the Sabbath, but rather established the eschatological Sabbath among them. They saw themselves as enjoying Sabbath rest while doing the work of God every day of their lives. Thus, Sabbath retained a significance for John, but was not tied to a single day of the week (104).

Because of its break with Judaism, the Johannine community had to reconstruct its symbolic universe, which changed its understanding of Sabbath. This community did not leave Sabbath behind as a relic of

the past to be repudiated; rather, it was given new significance in their lives (110).

The Gospel of Thomas presents a similar picture. Here the view is that one's whole life is lived in a perennial Sabbath, where the Sabbath has been released from the weekly chronological cycle (107-8).

For his understanding of Paul, Weiss focuses on two passages: Galatians 4 and Romans 14. He treats Colossians 2 in a separate chapter, since he does not hold that Paul wrote Colossians. According to Weiss, the difference between the weak and strong in Rome was that some continued to keep Sabbath specifically as a day of rest, whereas others were more like the Johannine community and observed all days alike.

The dispute was not over whether they should pay attention to the Sabbath, but whether the day was present to them in repeated twenty-four-hour periods within a weekly cycle, or present in all days of the week (129). According to Weiss, Paul saw both as valid ways to be obedient to the Lord (130). Paul's interest was in a new creation, and in that new creation Sabbath is no longer bound to its original calendric limits. He claims this does not take the Sabbath away, but eschatologizes it (131).

The picture in Colossians is quite different for Weiss. Colossians 2:16 has generally been interpreted to say that opponents were imposing Sabbath on the Colossians. Weiss, following the exegetical work of Troy Martin, concludes quite the opposite. Rather than imposing Sabbath, these opponents were criticizing their observance of Sabbath.

The author of Colossians is defending the legitimacy of this continued observance of Sabbath by Christians. The author sees observances such as Sabbath as anticipations of the eschatological realities in which Christians have their hope (141). This is what the author means when he says these observances are shadows of things to come. The opposing teachers wanted to do away with what they considered Jewish. The author of Colossians defends those who continue to observe Sabbath against those who would condemn them for doing so.

Finally, Weiss examines Hebrews and the letter of Barnabas, and concludes that they are similar. According to Hebrews, God entered into his rest at the beginning of creation, and when those who have faith and hope



cease from their labors they will enter God's rest. But it is an eschatological hope, not a present reality (158).

The situation is somewhat different with Barnabas, who also eschatologizes Sabbath rest, but sees that even God cannot enjoy perfect Sabbath rest now because of evil in the world (160). Weiss concludes that the authors of Hebrews and Barnabas disconnect themselves from the weekly Sabbath by eschatologizing its true nature (161). However, for both, the Sabbath is the ultimate experience to which they should aspire (162).

Weiss concludes that there is as much diversity in the New Testament as there is in Judaism with regard to Sabbath. However, rather than disregarding Sabbath, the early Christians, who found it difficult to abandon Sabbath, understood it in different ways.

How should we assess Weiss's work? First, it is a welcome alternative to the critical views presented in works such as those by Rordorff and Carson. Weiss's basic view that the New Testament does not contain an invective against the Jewish Sabbath is both welcome to Seventh-day Adventists and supported by the evidence Weiss presents.

The primary problem in Weiss's work rests in the speculative nature of some of its conclusions. I will cite the two examples.

Weiss's weakest section seems to be his discussion on Paul. He bases his conclusions on only two passages, and yet he has to admit that Sabbath observance was only "likely" involved in Galatians, but was not explicit (121). I would argue that there is even less evidence that Sabbath was involved in Romans 14.

Although Weiss surveys four different positions on the meaning of "days" in Romans 14, he dismisses three of them and concludes that the issue in Rome had to do with the Sabbath. One of the views he dismisses is that of Max Rauer, who argued that the days discussed in Romans 14 are not Sabbath days or worship days, but fast days. Weiss calls Rauer's view an argument from silence. But in fact Rauer's work is much more than that. His evidence is more persuasive than Weiss gives credit.

In fact, when Weiss expresses disappointment that Paul did not elaborate more on the question of days, as he did with the question of food (129), the answer may well be that Paul's elaboration about food is at the same time an elaboration about days, since the whole

chapter involves eating, both what to eat and when to eat. This view makes the whole flow of the argument in Romans 14 much more sensible. Therefore, when Weiss concludes on page 127 that it is clear that the debate at Rome was not whether or not to observe the Sabbath, but which day was Sabbath, he goes far beyond what the evidence warrants.

Therefore, the whole chapter on Paul is based on two questionable passages that may not have anything to do with Sabbath at all. It seems dangerous to speculate when the data are so slim. Imagine, for instance, how different our understanding of Paul's view of the Eucharist might be if we had all his letters except First Corinthians. Since we are dealing with occasional literature, topics that may have been very important to Paul may have gone unmentioned if no situation warranted discussion of the topic.

With regard to the Johannine writings, Weiss interprets the community's view of the Sabbath in light of its realized eschatology. And yet the redaction of the Gospel of John we possess includes not only a strong realized eschatology, but also a real future eschatology as well. In John 6, Jesus says, "The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him/her up on the last day." If the futuristic aspect of eschatology is included in one's understanding of the Johannine community as well, this might make a difference in the way Weiss interprets the Sabbath in that community.

In spite of these criticisms, however, Weiss's work is one that cannot and should not be ignored. His overall thesis should take its place among the other critical studies as a helpful alternative, and his exegesis of specific passages should evoke interesting and useful conversations from a variety of perspectives.

In the end, although the work is a critical study, Weiss's own regard for and appreciation of the Sabbath cannot be hidden. He ends by saying, "Even if the tragedy of 70 C.E. made it easy for Christians to separate themselves from the temple in Jerusalem, it has not been that easy for them to break away from the Jewish temple in time. Its sanctity is based on the vision of reality that transcends the material world ruled by the sun, moon and the stars. It is based in an unshakable world in which God now rests and humans hope to live."

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A Meticulous Scholarly Work

Review by Alden Thompson

I want to thank the Association of Adventist Forums for the invitation to respond to Herold Weiss's book. It is a great privilege for me to join in dialogue with one of my former teachers at the seminary, a teacher whom I much admired and who gently pushed me to challenge my own conservative inclinations.

At a time when narrative and testimony have almost driven serious analysis and exegesis from the Church and have even made significant inroads into academia, I am powerfully tempted to read even this highly technical work as autobiography. As I worked my way through it, I could not rid myself of the recurring mental pictures: Herold Weiss, with Earle Hilgert and Sakae Kubo, if I remember correctly, teaming up to teach Introduction to the New Testament to a huge crowd of unruly seminarians assembled in the chapel at Andrews University.

The lectures did not always strike home, probably because our teachers were already running with the horses and battling their way through the swelling of the Jordan, to borrow figures from Jeremiah 5, but their students were just trying to keep up with the footmen, and were already weary from simple battles in a peaceful land. We weren't ready for the Jordan yet.

It was in a class in Old Testament Theology where I saw Weiss really shine. I tackled Helmer Ringgren's *The Messiah in the Old*

Testament for a serious book review and turned it in with fear and trembling, hoping that I had understood the book. He said good things about my review, and even agreed with my assessment. I was greatly relieved. I suspect that not only his teaching, but also his positive response help to explain why I have such good memories of him.

But other pictures also crowded in upon me as I read, for the seminary was in turmoil when I was there, from 1965 to 1967. After the dust had cleared, some of the finest, god-fearing teachers on earth were gone. I don't want to know which ones left voluntarily and which ones were asked to leave. Such questions are often too painful even to discuss in private, much less in public.

Weiss went to teach in a Roman Catholic university while continuing to worship on Sabbath with his Spanish-speaking soul mates. And now he writes a meticulous scholarly work about the Sabbath, not from anger, but from love. I think I catch glimpses of that love lurk-



ing in the shadows of his carefully developed arguments.

So what of the book's strengths and weaknesses? First, it is a highly technical work, and except for the quite readable final chapter, would be challenging for anyone not trained in biblical studies. The Greek and Hebrew scripts are used instead of transliterations—one could have wished that the press had found a final Greek sigma somewhere among its fonts and that it could have at least gotten right the Hebrew word for *Sabbath*. But if theology majors are inclined to shrug at the biblical languages, what can we expect from printers?

Weiss does not reject the Sabbath. He argues persuasively that the Christians in the first century regarded it highly.

The summary itself depends on the carefully nuanced exegetical and historical arguments developed in each chapter. That means that the nontechnical reader will have to live by faith, even in the last chapter. As for usefulness to pastors, teachers, and thoughtful students of Scripture, Weiss tackles several "problem" passages, turning some into better news than we had hoped (Colossians 2, for example), and some into worse news than we had feared (Hebrews 4, for example). Interestingly enough, both Colossians and Hebrews are used by modern evangelical polemicists who argue that the Sabbath is no longer a viable option for Christians.

But Weiss does not reject the Sabbath. He argues persuasively that the Christians in the first century regarded it highly. His analysis of the Synoptic Gospels is most forceful in that respect. What he also does, however, is something that intrigues me a great deal, namely, argue for a typology of Sabbath keepers. This extends from those on the left who have moved the Sabbath into the abstract, symbolic realm, either in a present "realized" sense (John), or in a future eschatological sense (Hebrews)—in other words, they wouldn't go to "church" on a real seventh day any more. On the right side of the spectrum are those who hold to a specific seventh day (synoptic Gospels, Colossians). Paul, at least in Romans, seems to be arguing that these two communities should learn to live together in Christ.

In short, Weiss develops a model in which the "abstract" thinkers on the left move away from a concrete Sabbath tied to the calendar, whereas the "concrete" thinkers on the right defend it with some tenacity. Such a model presents us with real challenges in our modern

world, for unless one moves in the direction of nonjudgmental Myers-Briggs temperament profiles, the tendency of our modern age is to see the abstract thinkers as intelligent, the concrete thinkers as dumb, or at least not as bright.

Indeed, the 16 P. F. Test Profile that I took at Andrews in 1965 when Weiss was teaching at the seminary describes the "concrete-thinking" people as "less intelligent" with "lower scholastic mental capacity," whereas the "abstract-thinking" people are "more intelligent," "bright," with "higher scholastic mental capacity." And that language was still being used in 1981 when

I took the test again (at which point, according to the test, I had become considerably "more intelligent"!).

We all know where *Spectrum* fits on that spectrum.

Now my question is: How can a worshiping community stay together if there are no concrete markers to hold it together? The universalizing impulse represented by those who stress the symbolic nature of the Sabbath can be enriching and exciting. But when will they come together for worship and with whom? Maybe it was and is inevitable that the Luke/Acts emphasis "eventually became mainstream Christianity," to quote Weiss (181). In his chart, he describes the Luke/Acts view as follows: "Sabbath observance is an exemplary sign of liberating piety fully exhibited by Jesus and Paul" (180).

In this connection, the history of Reform Judaism is sobering. On rational grounds, the Jews who established Reform Judaism in nineteenth-century Germany moved worship to Sunday and abolished Jewish food laws. But when the community began to disintegrate, they came back to the seventh day and to Jewish food laws, on rational grounds, that is, in order to keep the community together. As a thriving worshiping community, however, Reform Judaism is not one likely to be held up by church growth people as a success story.

Let us be candid, in our modern secular world, integrating belief, worship, and critical analysis is not an easy task. C. S. Lewis commented, while arguing against extemporaneous prayer, that the attempt to carry on "a *critical* and a *devotional* activity at the same moment" is not possible, for those are "two things hardly compatible."¹

Does Albert Camus's comment about music also apply to religion? "Truly fertile Music, the only kind that will move us, that we truly appreciate, will be a Music conducive to Dream, which banishes all reason and analysis. One must not wish first to understand and then to feel. Art does not tolerate Reason."²

Why is it that Annie Dillard would write an article entitled "Singing with the Fundamentalists" and publish it in the *Yale Review*?³ And why would it be reprinted by the Theological Students Fellowship *Bulletin*, an Evangelical journal?³

Could the author of John and the author of Hebrews worship with their brothers and sisters who preserved the Synoptics?

And what should we make of the dialogue about "unthinking" Hasidic Judaism in Chaim Potok's *The Promise*, the dialogue between David and Reuven Malter, the father-son duo, both committed to scholarly analysis:

Reuven: "I wish they weren't so afraid of new ideas."

David: "You want a great deal, Reuven. The Messiah has not yet come. Will new ideas enable them to go on singing and dancing?"

Reuven: "We can't ignore the truth, abba."

David: "No..., we cannot ignore the truth. At the same time we cannot quite sing and dance as they do."⁴

My question would be: Could the author of John and the author of Hebrews worship with their brothers and sisters who preserved the Synoptics? And is Paul's vision of the nonjudgmental church, a church that brings the two segments together, still alive and possible today? I'd love to hear Weiss's comments on such matters.

Finally, I would like to offer a quote from James Williams, author of a 1991 Harper book, *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred*, one that articulates our challenge today. I don't intend this comment to be any kind of subtle critique of Weiss's excellent book. Not at all. But I do think the Williams quote is pertinent for a community today that wants to think, believe, and worship, and that finds the Sabbath a tantalizing invitation to all three, perhaps in ways analogous to those reflected in the life and experience of Philo the Jew, who, according to Weiss's analysis, could get very upset with

his fellow Jews for slipping away from Sabbath practices. Here, now is the quote from Williams:

As for biblical interpretation, there are not many institutions, outside fundamentalist and evangelical circles, where it continues to hold a preeminent place. And where biblical scholarship is still pursued, much of it is so permeated with overspecialization or intellectual faddishness that it communicates very little to lay people or even to scholars in other fields. Indeed, much of that very

little that it does communicate to the laity is perceived, rightly or wrongly, as destructive, because it appears to negate the value and significance of traditional texts, stories, symbols, and doctrines. One of the primary reasons for this perception is that in the university setting one often finds the point of view that the theologian or the teacher in religious studies is not responsible to any community or circle of people except the academy and its discourse.⁵

As members of the body of Christ, Weiss and I are responsible to a community of believers. Weiss's intriguing book can help us explore what it means to cherish a God-given "day of Gladness."

Notes and References

1. *Letters of C.S. Lewis*, ed. W. H. Lewis (New York: Harcourt Brace, Jovanovich, 1966), 239.
2. Albert Camus, "Essay on Music," 1932, cited in Robert Andrews, *The Columbia Dictionary of Quotations*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 611.
3. (May-June 1987): 4-7.
4. Chaim Potok, *The Promise* (New York: Knopf, 1969), 325.
5. James Williams, *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred* (San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1991), 2-3.

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Searching for Justice in Marriage

Review by David R. Larson

Because it criticizes marriage as customarily understood and practiced, this book will unsettle many who oppose same-sex marriage and many who favor it. This is why we should read and discuss it. If any publication can prompt all of us to reexamine our positions on this controversial issue, this is it.

Marvin M. Ellison is an ordained minister who describes himself as gay, Presbyterian, and progressive. He serves as Willard S. Bass Professor of Christian Ethics at Bangor Theological Seminary in Maine, a Congregational school for the preparation of clergy founded in 1814. He has written several other books about sexual ethics.

"As someone who was once married heterosexually," Ellison writes, "I confess that I never found marriage personally liberating or particularly user-friendly" (141). He dedicates this book to Frank Brooks, his life partner, with the observation that "loving requires work and play, but not necessarily a marriage license" (vi). He anticipates that, "if and when the marriage option becomes legally available, we will choose not to wed" (149).

This book's seven chapters fall into three clusters. The first two highlight the various forms of marriage and focus upon justice as the norm by which to judge these constantly changing arrangements. Using this standard, the middle three chapters examine and evaluate as many contemporary schools of thought: (1) opposition to same-sex marriage, (2) advocacy of same-sex marriage, and (3) criticism of marriage as an oppressive institution.

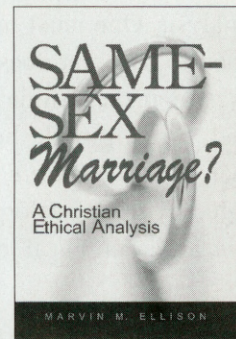
Although he is least sympathetic with the first

option, more so with the second, and most of all with the third, Ellison's summaries and judgments are evenhanded. His final two chapters outline his criticisms of the primary trends in the history of Christian sexual thought as well as his call for a paradigm shift in Christian sexual thinking. Throughout the volume, he addresses the pertinent theological and legal literature in ways that inform.

It is tempting in discussions like this to compare the best homosexual unions with the worst heterosexual ones, or vice versa. Ellison resists this temptation. Regrettably, however, the entire body of Christian sexual thought from Augustine in the fifth century through Karl Barth in the twentieth is disappointing at best and disastrous at worst.

The one exception of which I am aware is Jeremy Taylor's very brief account in seventeenth-century England of the natural benefits of marital sexual intimacy in *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living*. This sad reality justifies Ellison's call for a paradigm shift without settling what shape it should take.

I think Ellison's critique is not as telling as it might be because it tends to equate the institution of marriage with the oppression of women. Given the entire history of Christian sexual thought and practice, this proclivity makes much sense. Nevertheless,



Marvin M. Ellison,
Same-Sex Marriage?
A Christian Ethical
Analysis.
Cleveland, Ohio:
Pilgrim Press,
2004.

it underplays the attempts of many contemporary heterosexual couples, Christian and otherwise, to envision and establish egalitarian marriages. Ellison acknowledges this more recent development; however, it does not generally inform his ethical analysis.

Ellison holds that justice involves more than formal equality or fair distribution. It "is best grasped as an ongoing process of active intervention to correct injustices by reordering skewed power dynamics," he writes (49). He identifies three things he considers unjust: (1) our negative, or at least pathologically ambivalent, attitudes about almost everything sexual; (2) our identification of heterosexuality as the standard by which we judge all other forms of human sexuality; and (3) our tacit approval of sexual abuse, exploitation, and violence. His paradigm shift would reverse all three patterns.

Ellison's analysis helps us understand why the question of same-sex marriage prompts such intense feelings on all sides of the issue. "Injustice happens less from efforts to keep gay people 'in their place,'" he writes, "and more from having no place in which gayness is visible and represented as a valid way of being human" (50).

Ellison holds that legalized marriage could provide homosexual men and women who live together in committed relationships more than the tangible benefits of being married. It could also give them a respected place in society. Increasing benefits is important; enhancing status is more so. My only hesitancy about this valuable insight is that it may leave the impression that "gayness" is a singular and uniform way of life. As Ellison makes clear elsewhere, it is not.

Those who write about such things often distinguish between "thick" and "thin" theories of justice. My view is that Ellison's theoretical treatment of this important principle and virtue is very slender. He depicts justice as "an ongoing process of correcting injustices" (53). This presumes that we already know what sexual justice requires. We don't, at least not entirely. We agree that rape is unjust; however, we are of more than one mind about whether reserving legalized marriage for heterosexuals is also unjust.

Our uncertainties about these matters gave Ellison an opportunity to take advantage of the rich literature that has surfaced since John Rawls published *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), a classic. Unfortunately, probably because it is impossible to do everything in one book, this volume neither advances a comprehensive theory of justice nor adopts another. This disappoints

me. Nothing is more practical than a good theory!

My views about homosexuality differ from Ellison's in some important ways. I believe that the homosexual orientation is one of many sorry omens that we live in a flawed world, but he apparently disagrees. As I see it, the entire cycle of human life, from conception and birth to old age and death, takes place most naturally, and therefore most easily, in the context of loving and just heterosexual unions and that for this reason they should be our first choice, when we have one.

More than I do, Ellison holds that the ways we typically live and die are not natural but socially constructed in order to benefit the rich and powerful. I also believe that this is so, but not to the extent that Ellison contends.

I am persuaded that homosexual men and women suffer greatly and that their suffering is largely but not entirely caused by the irrational and immoral bigotry of others. This suffering is also an indication that our world is imperfect or "fallen" and that, for a variety of reasons, only some of which we can control, things do not always turn out as they naturally should. When such misfortunes occur, I believe that we ought to do all that we can to foster the flourishing of those who experience more than life's usual difficulties.

To use an expression John Rawls developed in his theory of justice, we should attempt to mitigate the adverse consequences of life's "natural lottery." For me, this means that our public policies should strive to make it equally convenient and beneficial for heterosexuals and homosexuals to establish loving and just unions that are egalitarian, permanent, sexually exclusive, and fruitful in the broad sense that they enhance the lives of others. This should be the case, I believe, no matter what our various religious groups require of their members.

Whether our public policies should call such stable relationships "marriages," "civil unions," "domestic partnerships," or something else is an issue about which I vacillate. What matters most of all, I believe, is that these regulations should apply equally to all of us, as though when formulating them we did not know whether we were lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, or straight. To my way of thinking, that would be true justice. I suspect that Ellison would agree!

David R. Larson is president of the Association of Adventist Forums and teaches in the Faculty of Religion at Loma Linda University.

Therapeutic Choice or Religious Liberty: Christian Science and American Culture

Review by Arthur N. Patrick

During the past two centuries the United States has hosted numerous alternatives to Western mainstream medicine. Christian Science has, since its 1866 founding, offered a daring experiment in religious healing, aptly illustrating both the potential and the perils of therapeutic alternatives that isolate themselves from the mainstream. While Christian Science has voluntarily put itself on trial within a frequently ambivalent and often hostile American culture, on many occasions the wider society has coercively put Christian Science on trial in its courtrooms.

Forty-seven court cases between 1887 and 1990 form a context for this illuminating book by Rennie B. Schoepflin, a professor of history at La Sierra University who nurtures a special interest in the history of science and medicine. His volume not only meets the criteria expected of Johns Hopkins University Press, it also climaxes a sequence of articles and book chapters that the author has published on this theme over the past two decades.

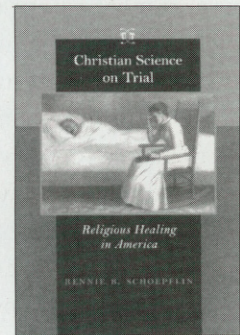
In 1976, Ronald Numbers authored a seminal study of Ellen White as a prophetess of health, endeavoring simply to understand her rather than to praise her or to blame her, as so many others had done up to that time. Now, in similar spirit, Schoepflin seeks to understand Mary Baker Eddy and her movement, avoiding the temptation to offer either praise or damnation.

Thus, Schoepflin's work stands apart from the numerous triumphalistic hagiographies written by and for true believers, while it is decidedly different from the

many censorious attacks made upon Christian Science by religious crusaders and medical critics. The book's irenic tone speaks well of the fairness of its author; its penetrating level of inquiry assures the reader of his competence and thoroughness.

The book is divided into two main sections: the world of Christian Science; then Christian Science healers and their world. Part 1 examines Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910) as long-time patient, then as healer and teacher of healing. Next it explores the processes whereby practitioners and teachers were equipped, plied their art, and were categorized as true or false.

Part 2 listens to physicians as they debate Christian Science and analyzes whether the core issue is one of therapeutic choice or religious liberty. Finally, it moves to the disputed arena of responsibility for public health, especially as this relates to the protection of children. Although for Christian Scientists the twentieth century



Rennie B. Schoepflin.
Christian Science on Trial: Religious Healing in America.
Baltimore, Md.:
The Johns Hopkins University Press,
2003.

began with considerable promise, before its close they faced significant peril as court cases of the 1980s plowed again the contested ground of seven decades earlier. In a fifteen-year period there was a 52 percent decline in the number of practitioners.

Christian Science on Trial is of particular significance for anyone interested in what H. Richard Neibuhr describes as “the double wrestle of the church with its Lord and with the cultural society with which it lives in symbiosis.”

A disputed biography circulated privately since 1947, officially released by a financially pressed board of directors in 1991, declared Eddy the equal of Jesus. But other religionists have seriously challenged the claim of the movement to be *Christian*; meanwhile its culture has asked imperiously if it is *science*.

The related questions are many. Christian Science practitioners claim to offer the answer to sin, sickness, and death. Their roots go back in a specific way to Eddy’s 1866 experience of physical recovery and her 1868 claim to “unparalleled success in the most difficult cases.” Was Eddy’s ship caught without an effective rudder by the powerful currents of nineteenth-century Restorationism? What did she offer as unique and what did she borrow in forming her system? What is the exegetical sustainability of her biblical hermeneutics? What message does the constant accommodation of her movement to its culture send to sectarianism as a mode of belief and a way of life?

How does the experience of Christian Science speak to the issues of gender equality and female financial and social viability within a complex society? What is the actual relationship between the human mind and physical wellness? How can a religious movement honor its founder yet ensure relevance by keeping abreast with the development of human knowledge?

Schoepflin identifies not only the “maelstrom of debate over the authority of Eddy,” but also the “smaller whirlpools of contention around matters of belief, practice, and organizational structure” (93). Does ontology indicate dualism or idealism? Is Christian Science *mental* healing or *metaphysical* healing? What standards should healers adopt for their personal and professional lives? How should Christian Scientists relate to their Christian churches: should they remain as reformers or withdraw to form distinct organizations? If the latter, how should they organize and formulate their mission?

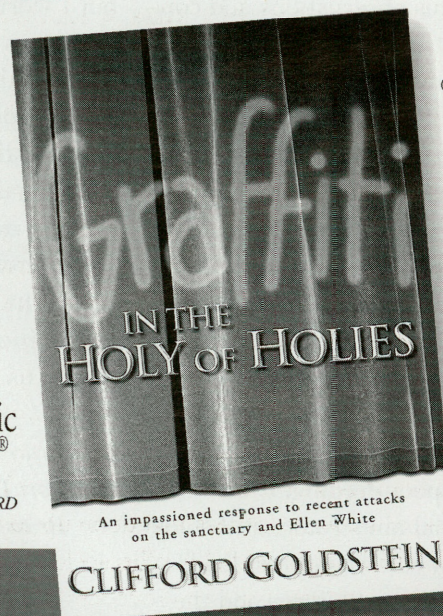
As an historian, Schoepflin has demonstrated a Sherlock Holmes capacity to discover and organize evi-

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dence. But he is also acutely aware of sociological issues, including the routinization of charisma and the tenuous process of sect legitimation in which interior impulses confront the exterior, fragmenting forces of delegitimation.

North America has proven to be fertile soil for new religious movements, as demonstrated by the effervescent experiences of Joseph Smith, Ellen White, Mary Baker Eddy, Charles Taze Russell, and others. Historians who research these founders or their subsequent faith communities help to recreate a context for understanding the origins and development of the others. Schoepflin has performed a commendable service for historians of Christianity as well as for those whose

pendant is American religion and culture.

Schoepflin's book is one of a series focused on "Medicine, Science, and Religion in Historical Context." For this researcher, the perceptive inclusiveness of the bibliographical essay alone is worth the price of the book. Bonus features are, however, many. One of them is a coherent example of how to present winsomely the intense conflicts and the multifaceted variety that characterize the history of healers and healing in American religion.

Arthur N. Patrick is a research fellow at Avondale College, Koorabong, New South Wales, Australia.



Finding Fellowship

I found the article "Whose Church Is It, Anyway" (fall 2003), by Loren Seibold, somewhat disturbing. I agree with his observations and conclusions, but I am bothered that a church committed to keeping "The Truth" is not more interested in testing and discussing ours (and others) understanding of reality.

One would think that a church that puts such value on education would try to provide a framework for interaction among those it has nurtured and educated. When we are young we need the "milk of the Word," but as we mature we need more than spoon-feeding. If our leaders and administrators still enjoy Pabulum, how can we get real food?

I really enjoy *Spectrum* and the healthy interchange it brings. I believe that although we tend as a group to focus on details individual members can be refreshingly accept-

ing. For example, as a member of a small rural church I am not only tolerated, but also accepted as part of the community. I appreciate that, but I worry about my children.

My wife and I grew up within the traditional framework, but we have encouraged our children to test and question. Now they are young adults and they are finding it more difficult to be patient with ready-made answers.

If the Church belongs primarily to traditionalists, then where can the rest of us find fellowship?

*Bruce Rafuse
Port Hardy,
British Columbia, Canada*

Natural Science vs. Religious Faith

Ariel Roth distorts truth somewhat when he asserts the following: "Science cannot find God as long as it

insists on excluding him" ("*Letters, Spectrum* 31.1 [winter 2003]: 75).

Roth knows very well that natural science has nothing to do with questions of religious faith. That is not a question natural science should consider at all. The fact that some scientists have given pronouncements on faith or atheism is something emanating from their private convictions, and such statements are not scientific. They know it, and Ariel Roth knows it.

This whole business is a rhetorical battle between different philosophies among academics, but the nonacademic public does not see the difference and is easily seduced to believe that natural science and religious faith can be mixed.

*Kristen Falch Jakobsen
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2. Forward to the *Spectrum* office in Roseville, California, the chapter's constitution. Model constitutions for local chapters are available upon request.
3. Forward to the *Spectrum* office in Roseville, California, contact information for the chapter's leaders that can be listed in the association's journal and posted on its Web site.

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Good Religion, Bad Religion: How to Tell the Difference

Religion is the most powerful force in our lives. Our desires for sex, power, and money are also powerful drives; however, because it strives to integrate everything else in the service of our ultimate meanings and values, religion is our most powerful impulse. Nothing else is even a close second.

This does not mean that religion is always a good thing, however. Religion is fire: it warms and propels; it also scars and destroys. Nothing is more helpful than good religion; nothing is more harmful than bad religion. We do the best things and the worst things in the name of religion.

In order to escape its destructive tendencies, we sometimes try to reject religion altogether. This does not work. If we take it seriously and practice it well, the rejection of religion functions in our lives just as religion does. For this reason, the best alternative to bad religion is not no religion but good religion.

Another inadequate solution is to reject religion in favor of spirituality. Spirituality is a good thing, but not the whole. Materiality is also important. As indicated by the ancient words from which the term descends, religion is the attempt to tie everything together, both spiritual and material. One without the other is not enough.

Unfortunately, we are often better at distinguishing good and bad watermelons than ripe and rotten religion. This is embarrassing. It is also dangerous. Bad religion may or may not be unpleasant. In the long run, it is always destructive. It is no exaggeration to say that life and death depend upon our ability to distinguish good and bad religion. The number of people over the centuries who have been wounded or killed because of bad religion is beyond counting.

This is why I hope many of us will read and discuss *When Religion Becomes Evil: Five Warning Signs*. Published by HarperSanFrancisco in 2002, it is clearly and evenhandedly written by Charles Kimball, a Harvard-educated Baptist minister of Jewish descent who specializes in comparative religion at Wake Forest

University. It makes excellent use of Kimball's years of scholarship as well as his extensive firsthand knowledge of religion and politics in the troubled Middle East. This book would provide an excellent basis for urgently needed discussions in homes, Sabbath School classes, book clubs, AAF chapter meetings, weekend gatherings, and religion courses.

Religion becomes evil, Kimball writes, when it claims to possess absolute truth, demands blind obedience, establishes an ideal time in the past or future to which the needs of the present are unduly sacrificed, acts as though its ends justify any means, or formally or informally declares "Holy War" on others. Any one of these is an omen of severe danger, he claims. More than one of them is a certain indication that things are going terribly wrong.

The sinister thing about bad religion is that it often persuades the unwary that one or more of these vices is actually a virtue. Bad religion often portrays blind obedience to its authority as the epitome of faith instead of the perversion that it truly is, for instance. Good religion prizes sound evidence, not capricious authority.

Many expressions of religion are neither completely good nor wholly evil but complex combinations of both. It is our responsibility to discern the difference, feed the good and starve the bad (1 Thess. 5:19-22). This is an unending effort, not something we can do once and then relax.

Let's consider what Kimball writes. Let's assess it and retain that which is true, beautiful, and good. Let's live and learn; better yet, let's learn and live!

David R. Larson
AAF President

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SOLOMON* *by Scott Moncrieff*



Scott Moncrieff chairs the English Department at Andrews University.

Perhaps the trouble started with number two,
though the other 998 lovers didn't help.

You are a pat of butter,
a solid golden square between two papers.

You look down the barrel of a french roll
stretching mile after mile into the horizon,

wondering how you'll spread from here to there
as the hot knife digs into your back. At night you

work by candlelight, calculating how to pay off
a thousand credit cards by the 15th of next month,

what to get 72 kids for their birthday this week,
your ears aching from 200 boom boxes down the hall.

You fantasize about hopping in the Ford Explorer with a full tank,
pointing the bumper toward Lebanon and not looking back.

But kings can't get away. When the border guard
sees that passport photo with the crown it's all over.

So, in the wee hours of the morning you write books:
all those wise sayings you wish you had lived by,

that love song for number thirty six,
and finally, the one that keeps saying "all is vanity."

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