

# SPECTRUM

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## Conversations

About Who Shall  
Be Saved

*About Our  
Fundamental  
Beliefs*

About Faith and  
Science

*About Music and  
Aesthetics*

About Prayer

# SPECTRUM

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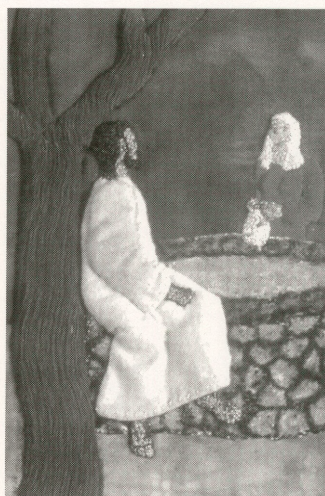
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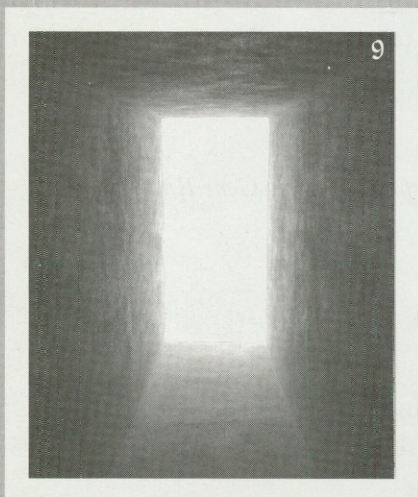
## About the Cover

The cover artwork is one in a series of six fabric art pieces entitled "Simple and Complex," which explores the two love commandments: "Love the Lord with all your heart, and love others the way you love yourself." I came upon this concept through my experiences as an Adventist woman and through the stories of other women artists of other denominations. Each piece in the series reflects on a New Testament story that describes how Jesus related to women. The two commandments are so simple, so comprehensive, and so complex. They tell me that at the core, all people are to be treated with respect and a sense of worth.

## About the Artist

Carolyn Gard Waldron is an artist in the Pacific Northwest. A graduate of the Oregon College of Arts and Crafts, she has displayed her fabric art at galleries in Oregon.

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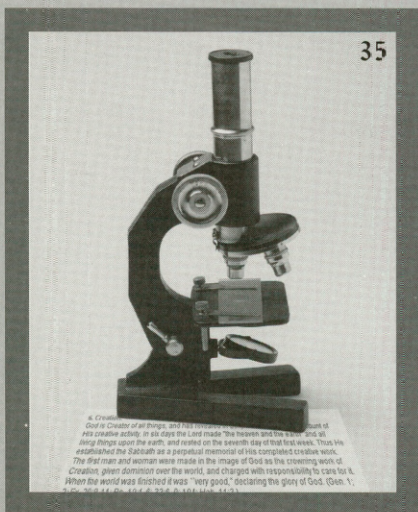
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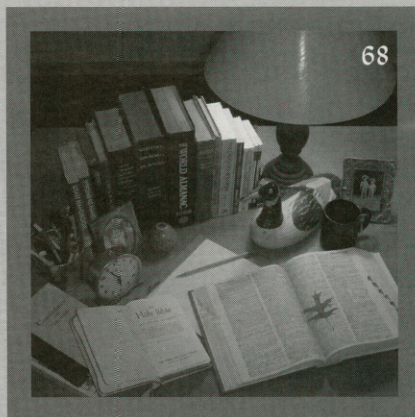
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# Rituals of Adventist Conversation

**W**ith only three hundred-some days remaining before the St. Louis General Conference (July 2005), official Seventh-day Adventist conversation has been initiated to set up the votes, statements, and beliefs that can be dated and posted as definitive Seventh-day Adventist thought. In this issue we join that conversation knowing that the process of the discussion is significant to our church family life.

Although the topics are not exactly new, much has changed about our conversation surrounding them.

Take the faith-science issue that Richard Rice and George Saxon address in our pages this time. In 1958, the Geoscience Research Institute was founded to consider whether the success of science in other areas forces us to conclude that scientific evidence for an evolutionary theory is irrefutable. The name of the institute gives a hint as to which branch of science was thought to hold the keys to answering the question.

However, today's discussion of origins is as likely to include physicists as geologists, psychologists as biologists, literary scholars as well as theologians. There are many new facets to the conversation—including the literary analysis of biblical text—which has evolved just like the science. Although we might like to reduce the debate to simple form, to do so would seem to restrict and confine our growth in understanding God.

How wonderful it is that we have kept the conversation going. Looking back through the pages of *Spectrum*, one can find in volume 8, number 2 (1977) a tentative General Conference creation statement. The seven-point document was the third draft, revised in the fall of 1976. But it is not the final statement; there is no final statement on this topic within the lists of beliefs, statements, guidelines and other documents on the Church's Web site. Perhaps there shouldn't be. We wouldn't want to limit

the dialogue that regularly occurs around this topic. (Watch the *Spectrum* Web site for postings during the Faith Science Conference, August 20–26, 2004.)

How we talk about our fundamental beliefs has also changed. Fritz Guy gives us a history of the document known as the Twenty-seven Fundamental Beliefs, and there is more history included with the text of the latest proposal for a new fundamental belief released by the General Conference at the Spring Meetings in 2004.

Music is another topic on which an official statement has been drafted for comment by the church membership. Daniel Reynaud provides us with some perspective on approaching this subject, which always seems controversial within a religious context.

Since the proposed twenty-eighth fundamental belief concerns "Growing in Christ" and includes an emphasis on the importance of prayer, we conclude by discussing prayer in two ways other than the intimate conversation between a person and his God—the prayer that one makes with one's life and public prayers. U.S. Senate Chaplain Barry Black tells us that he prays with the intention that all within his audience will be able to say with him a resounding Amen. That is the spirit in which we pray for the lively continuation of conversation within the Adventist family.

Bonnie Dwyer  
Editor



## Finding It Again, at Spicer

By Alexander Carpenter

We stepped off the train looking for a rickshaw—three American boys, each with twenty-four years of Adventist tradition. Steve, from northern Montana; George, a Michigan native; and me, a southern Californian—combined we were well traveled, with over one hundred countries between us—and now we were heading to Spicer Memorial College. Disgusted with the post-colonial rail service—six hours in a dirty, crowded, open-air coach—we were hungry and standing on the train platform in Pune, India, on a Friday afternoon.

Having recently graduated from college, George Kimmel and I had been living in Mumbai (Bombay), India, for the last five months. Together we had written and shot a short film of our own and I was filling my time with bit roles in TV commercials and writing a feature-length screenplay. George had managed to use his University of Michigan film degree and penchant for dressing well to begin working in Bollywood, the Mumbai film industry. He got one assistant directing job after chatting up an Indian model—her sister was starring in an upcoming action movie—and after a couple cups of coffee and

a discussion of *Dogme 95* filmmaking, George was on the set.

Our friend Steve Wallace had flown into India a week earlier. He was teaching business at a major university in Taiwan while getting a Ph.D. I had first met him when my academy witnessing team visited his academy. We both fancied ourselves as budding public speakers and so there was a bit of testimonial rivalry, which diffused when we marked out our religious territory: colporteur-ing for me and preaching for him. We hadn't seen each other in years. Steve and George knew each other as childhood buddies in Berrien Springs—and so, on sabbatical, Steve had decided to visit us en route to Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Now we were heading out to Spicer. What was our compulsion? We each had vague memories of Spicer from mission stories or *Spotlights* or people who had attended, and I think we missed a “Sevie” enclave—there is something about seeing the Adventist metaphors reappearing around the world.

All over exist the efficient and sharp-lined end-time architecture of compounds and church headquarters, covered on the inside with cold concrete or marble or faded linoleum. Visiting the Philippines, I remember waking up in a conference office: spanning an entire wall was a huge chalkboard that listed all

the churches, with each week's baptism numbers displayed as well as the name of the baptizing pastor. I recall the sun-soaked green grasses and wide leaves and tropical flowers of mission gardens in the Caribbean. And around the world second coming murals or pictures of pioneers appear in conference atriums and boardrooms, and always the dog-eared *Reviews* and *Signs* lie on not-yet-used-for coffee tables.

Once, traveling around Europe, a girlfriend and I arrived in Rome on an early Sabbath morning and decided to go to church. We tried reading the phonebook but failed. Then we tried a Web search—“Adventist church in Rome” can pull up some very interesting results. Arriving at the address, we found the church and ADRA compound closed. A woman walking by informed us that all the Adventist churches in Rome were meeting at a Waldensian church a few blocks away. The entire service was a mix of Italian and Romanian. We stared out the ancient stained-glass windows and enjoyed the weird confluence of prophecy, history, and convenience—the Waldensian church was the only one around that would handle all seven of the Adventist congregations in Rome.

Back at Spicer in the administrative office, the secretary offered the three of us yearbooks to peruse while we waited for the president. The

mostly male senior BBA students stared back with grainy black and white grins, ready for success to smile back at them. Tired of sitting, especially after our rickety ride, we wandered around the grounds—mostly covered in light red dust and crabgrass—and checked out the student body. Friday afternoons seem interchangeable on institutional campuses around Sevie-dom. With official business over, preparations are universally underway. At Spicer there was a lot of wet hair on the people we saw, and brightly colored saris, lungis, and shirts hung out of student hostels, like festival banners.

Back in the president's office, we played the "who you know" game. Several faculty members paraded in and out and we made connections to relatives, friends of friends, and shared alma maters.

Lead to the guesthouse, we unpacked and waited around for evening vespers. I thought about all the Adventists who might have stayed in this room—conference officials, Maranatha volunteers, donors, visiting teachers—and their stories. Once, while I was staying at the Bangladesh Union Mission compound in Dhaka, a big Adventist philanthropist arrived for a quick visit before he flew by helicopter to survey the school he was funding. He told a story about how some beneficiaries had given him a huge woven wall hanging of a Bengal tiger as a thank you present. When he looked at the financial statements he saw



that they had charged him for it. He said no more gifts.

Evening vespers at Spicer turned out to be the penultimate sermon for the week of prayer. Boys and girls were separated in the chapel, and after the song service an American conference president proceeded to preach and then give the customary Friday night hand-raising call. Later that evening we chatted with the speaker and again played the "who you know" game. Again, we made connections; he turned out to have known Steve's formerly folk-singing father pretty well.

The next morning we dressed in our church-going best. Choosing to sit closer to the girls—the mix of Adventism and Indian allure did compel—we sang the hymns, stood, kneeled, and listened to the sermon, just like we had been taught. The service concluded with the final call forward, and then the universal standing/closing-prayer call. We stood with everyone else.

That afternoon it was hot. After potluck, we packed up and walked out the compound gate. Many students were heading out as well, preparing to give Bible studies to the Muslim and Hindu poor surrounding the college compound. We could have stayed, everyone was very hospitable; but without even discussing it, we were ready to go. I guess we got whatever we came for. Like visiting relatives—knowing what words will be spoken, what food offered, what stories retold—feeling the same rituals performed; there exists a sense of rapprochement, of reconnection to a familiar molding force.

Sure, at General Conference sessions everybody parades the international nature of Adventism. But out in the "other" institutions there exists something better than the huge numbers and oh-so-colorful clothing.

Here and there in a fragmented world—on common grounds, it's something like at-one-ment.

Alexander Carpenter graduated in 2003 from Andrews University, where he majored in religion and English literature. This piece originally appeared in *Spectrum* online on June 7, 2004.



## Sudan in My Mailbox

By Bonnie Dwyer

To provide perspective on the African Seventh-day Adventist church, in our last (spring 2004) issue we carried a box with details about the church organization there. Two areas were omitted that are part of the Middle East Union in the Trans European Division: Egypt and the Sudan. Bertil Wiklander, president of the TED, brought this to our attention and helpfully put us in touch with Michael Porter, president of the Middle East Union. Thus began the saga of the Sudan in my mailbox.

Egypt, I learned has 25 churches, 921 members, 6 ordained ministers, 1 Adventist elementary school, and 1 secondary school. In the Sudan there are 25 Adventist churches, 97 companies, 8,097 members, 18 elementary



schools, 1 secondary school, and 1 worker-training school.

The good news from the Sudan is that there has been an ordination service for four men and a training session held for women involved in children's and women's ministries. The bad news—and there is much of that from Western Sudan—is that in addition to enormous displacement of people taking place, two churches in the Darfur region have been destroyed during the escalating humanitarian and security crisis there.

News of the ethnic cleansing taking place in Western Sudan motivated more than usual interest on my part in this area of the world and the Church's presence in it. So I was pleased that in addition to a collection of stories about the church in the Sudan, Porter also sent a report from the International Crisis Group: "Sudan: Now or Never in Darfur," dated May 23, 2004. This twenty-one-page document summarized and explained the conflict in great detail and included maps of the country showing where the refugee camps are located. (The report is available online at the International Crisis Group Web site: [www.ICG.org](http://www.ICG.org).)

"Since it erupted in February 2003, the conflict has claimed some 30,000 lives," the document said, "but experts warn that without a rapid international response, what UN officials have already called the worst humanitarian situation in the world today could claim an additional 350,000 in the next nine months, mainly from starvation and disease. Many more will die if the direct killing is not stopped."

The humanitarian crisis described in the report extended beyond the killings. It said 1.2 million people have been forced from their homes and now live in poorly run government controlled

Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps within Darfur, where, the report said, "they remain vulnerable to attack by the Janjaweed (militia backed by the government) and have inadequate access to relief supplies. The perhaps 200,000 of these victims who have fled across the border into Chad as refugees are not safe either. The Janjaweed have followed them, and the resulting clashes with Chad's army threaten to destabilise that country and produce a full-scale international war."

That put into new perspective for me the immense task facing the world community—and the Adventists in Sudan. Although I was pleased to learn that the Adventist Development and Relief Agency has several projects there, I also realized how important it is for the Adventist Church to be part of the larger nongovernmental agency consortium that addresses crises of this magnitude.

The latest project announced by ADRA Sudan is a distribution program providing twelve thousand internally displaced persons in Darfur with clothing, seeds, and farm equipment.

According to LoNita Fattic, country director of ADRA Sudan, approximately fourteen hundred displaced families have returned to their farms and villages in the southern part of West Darfur. In addition to clothing, ADRA is providing seeds, such as sorghum, mullet, and okra, as well as farm tools, such as hoes, shovels, mattocks, buckets, and spades to five hundred of the returnee families. The project is funded by the Swedish government through ADRA Sweden, and implemented by ADRA Sudan.

In partnership with ADRA Germany and a German consortium of nongovernment organizations, ADRA Sudan has already responded to the crisis by airlifting

thirty-five metric tons of relief items, including blankets, tarpaulins, therapeutic food, and medicine to forty-five thousand refugees and displaced persons in the region.

To put that into perspective, Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders) estimates, "To feed people in Mornay (one refugee camp) alone would require 1,200 tons of food every month. Transport alone would require 80 round-trips every month on sandy roads with trucks designed to carry 10 tons carrying 15. As the rainy season begins, the roads will be even more difficult to navigate. Meeting the food needs of all of West Darfur's 600,000 displaced persons would require 300 tons a day while only half that amount seems to arrive in West Darfur."

That information about Mornay was part of the next installment of the Sudan story in my mailbox. It came from Catherine Wiesner, a family friend, who as an employee of the International Rescue Committee has spent the last several months traveling in Darfur to support UNICEF's emergency response there. To help her convey the scale of the needs she included the press release from Medecins Sans Frontieres ([www.msf.org](http://www.msf.org)) about the refugee camp in Mornay, a place that she had just visited.

"My visit that day included stopping by to talk to MSF, the only aid agency with staff staying overnight in the camp. I stood among exhausted-looking women holding little cups of special formula to the lips of their emaciated children and thought of the many, many days of hunger and fear that must have come before their arrival to this well-run therapeutic feeding center. I talked to the doctors at the clinic about the patterns of violent injuries they see every day whereby the



younger women and girls who venture out of the camp to collect firewood and grass tend to be raped, while the older women are just beaten. And I thought with frustration about how the increasing international media attention to the issue of sexual violence didn't seem to be making much discernable difference to women and girls here. . . .

"The other image I had in my mind as we drove back from Mornay that afternoon was a photo I had seen the day before of a beautiful nine-year-old girl crouching against a tree with a very far away look in her eyes. The person who showed me the picture said the girl had been gang raped by a group of men the day before and pointed out to me the dried blood stains on her skirt. Wondering about that girl and the help that she might or might not receive, and about the impact of this experience on her future, I was also thinking about how child protection work is about so much more than delivering (also desperately needed) food and plastic sheeting."

Catherine began her e-mail to a long list of friends by saying, "Being in Darfur has been an experience that I find difficult to describe. *Utterly tragic* and *compelling* are the words I have used most often. It is such a cliché to say that seeing the immense suffering up close has made a deep impression on me, or that I will not easily forget the children of Darfur. But it is true. I continue to be inspired every day by the bravery and commitment of Sudanese colleagues. I have sat and tried to comprehend the despair of lives so brutally destroyed, and have also been totally humbled by the incredible resilience of the human spirit."

The reason for her e-mail was to answer a question that many of her friends had asked: how could they help? Her answer, "(1) speak up, (2) give



A baby named ADRA... after the workers who delivered her.

money, (3) send prayers..." She provided Web links to UNICEF ([www.unicef.usa.org](http://www.unicef.usa.org)); the International Rescue Committee ([www.theirc.org](http://www.theirc.org)); Save the Children ([www.savethechildren.org](http://www.savethechildren.org)); and Medecins Sans Frontieres ([www.msf.org](http://www.msf.org)). I would add ADRA ([www.adra.org](http://www.adra.org)).

With those words written, I thought I had my story for the issue completed. But stories don't end with printing deadlines. And there was more. The next news bulletin came from the Adventist News Network on July 9. Based on an e-mail from Paul Yithak, secretary for the Church in Sudan, the story said, "Adventists from the church in Nyala province 'have no access to help.' Around 50,000 people from Nyala have been displaced and moved to Matarik. Nearly 100 Adventists were among the thousands who spent 17 hours aboard slow-moving trains headed for this distant area, making them even less accessible."

The ANN story noted that "Recent expressions of international concern over the crisis in Darfur—including visits by United States Secretary of State Colin Powell and United Nations Secretary-General

Kofi Annan—are bearing some fruit: the Darfur region has opened up to international humanitarian agencies and human rights groups, but far more intervention is needed.

"With the sketchy information available from the Matarik Refugee Camp, the Adventist administration in Sudan have learned that there is only enough food for one month and no medication or clothing is available.

"We had initial plans to use the tents we have for evangelistic meetings, to accommodate our members on the Sabbath day for worship, however the needs are much more severe than having a place of worship. We have lost contact with our members and it is getting impossible to have direct access to the new camp that was set up. Plus we have no funds to help and assist our members in that region," says Yithak.

"The situation in the Darfur region is grim.... ADRA is hard at work distributing tents, food and medicine and will begin drilling wells in the region shortly.

"Church leaders in the region describe the conditions in Darfur as 'an extreme situation,' hoping that 'fellow Church members from around the world would extend a helping hand of support to alleviate this most difficult crisis.'"

So the story in my mailbox evolved from simply providing organizational information to giving a clearer understanding of the ties that bind the human family as well as the church family. From the news comes the call for community, for becoming engaged as part of the solution as a church and as individuals.

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Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.



**THE BIBLE**

# Who Shall Be Saved?

By *Darren Morton*

**Q**uite literally, the “gospel” means good news. It speaks hope to a wayward creation. It testifies to the passionate love our Creator has for us, despite our inadequacies. Indeed, the gospel is something to get excited about! Or is it?

I recently attended an evangelistic crusade where the message was overt: accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and you shall be saved, reject his invitation and you have made a decision for destruction.

Here is my question: what of those who will never be given the opportunity to hear the gospel? Are they lost? Global statistics indicate that only one-third of the world's six billion inhabitants belong to Christian nations. Would a passionately loving Creator write them off for not committing to something they may never be introduced to? Is salvation geographical?

And what of those born before Christ? Or those who have heard of Jesus but to whom he is portrayed in a negative light? For instance, the child who is sexually abused by a church leader—God's so-called ambassador. I struggle to believe that my God who is “not wanting anyone to perish” (2 Pet. 3:9)<sup>1</sup> would

exclude one of his children on such a basis.

Is the narrow gate really that narrow? Is space so tight in heaven that God needs to be exclusive? These are difficult questions and I know that I am not the first to be perplexed by them.

## The Criteria

While I wrestle with the concept of a loving God turning some of his creation away from heaven, the Bible makes it clear that not all will be saved. In fact, Jesus gives the impression that the road to his kingdom is but a trail in comparison to the highway that leads from it (Matt. 7:13–14). That being the case, there must be some criteria by which our eternity shall be decided. So what is it? It is difficult to pass an examination if you do not know what to study.

The speaker at the crusade I attended



was clear on the criteria for salvation: it all rests on how we respond to Jesus. In recognition of the inherent questions that arise with this proposition, as I have highlighted above, others have claimed that our salvation is determined more by the kind of person we become in our short time on earth. I would like to suggest that the simple criterion for salvation is neither of these, but at the same time incorporates both.

I have come to believe that there is but one criterion for salvation: you will be welcomed through the pearly gates if you would be happy inside. That is it, *you will be in heaven if you will be happy there*. This perspective has been

## Heaven would not be heaven to those who have willingly allowed pride to infiltrate their hearts.

liberating to me as it truly speaks *good news* to all creation. Importantly, it helps resolve some of the questions I presented above as it provides for those heirs of salvation Jesus alludes to in the parable of the sheep and goats (Matt. 25:37–40), who in their time on earth may never have known him personally. But before the debating commences let's flesh out this concept of "happy in heaven" a little.

Firstly, it could be argued that everyone would be happy in heaven. I mean who wouldn't? Well history tells us that it is indeed possible to not be happy in God's realm. Lucifer wasn't, and neither was his entourage. So why weren't they happy there? Quite simply, the Bible tells us, because they were corrupted by pride (Isa. 14:12–13).

C. S. Lewis notes in *Mere Christianity* that pride is essentially competitive. We do not become proud because of something we can do, or something we have. We become proud because we can do something *better* than others, or because we have *more* than others. Yet heaven is a place of order, a place where, unlike our realm, hierarchy and humility merge harmoniously. But pride flies in the face of "he who is least among you all—he is the greatest" (Luke 9:48). An individual who entertains pride will constantly strive to climb the hierarchy for their own purposes. That was Satan's downfall and I am certain it was the promise he used to entice those who would fall with him. That, too, is our downfall: we strive to serve ourselves rather than our Creator, who gives us meaning.

Pride is the complete anti-God state of mind and being. In this sense, pride is akin to hell for both are as far from God as one can be. Heaven would not be heaven to those who have willingly allowed pride to infiltrate their hearts. Such individuals would simply not be happy there.

So what is God's solution to the problem of pride? I believe that the traditional model of Christian salvation is a lesson in putting our pride behind us. To illustrate, consider the fruits of pride when we allow it to take hold of us.

### 1. You don't believe you have done wrong.

Pride was responsible for our fall. The thought of being "like God" (Gen. 3:5) had enormous appeal to Eve. But the result was predictable: choose a path other than the one God ordains and you invariably journey away from him. In their chosen exile it is interesting to note their response when God inevitably goes in search of Adam and Eve. The

words rolled effortlessly off Adam's tongue: *it was her fault!* Not to be outdone in the blame game, Eve palmed the responsibility for her actions onto the serpent. Perhaps they were motivated by fear, but as I recall times in my own life that mirror their experience I sense they also wanted to convey the message that it was not their fault.

As humans, we have come a long way toward perfecting the art of presenting ourselves blameless. We devalue the wrongs we do, and if backed into a corner we generate extenuating circumstances that make our actions acceptable or excusable. It is startling, and can even be comical at times, just how young we develop the ability to blind ourselves to the reality that we are sinners.

### 2. You believe you can do it on your own.

Isaiah 14 provides an interesting insight into the mind of Satan shortly prior to his expulsion from heaven. The overriding theme, mentioned five times in verses 13 and 14 alone, is "I will." Satan asserted, "*I will* make myself like the most high" (Isa. 14:14).

How often do we forget to rely on God and attempt to do it all under our own power? I prefer not to recall the number of times I have begun to feel certain of myself and instructed God to, "leave it to me," only to come crashing down. The Lord instructs us, "not by might or by power, but by My Spirit" (Zech. 4:6). So why are we so reluctant to let go and let God? Quite simply, it serves our ego to achieve under our own strength. There is no glory for the instrument, only the musician, and so time and again our pride causes us to strive to be more than "just" the high calling of an instrument in God's hands. We foolishly believe that we can do it on our own.

### 3. You believe that you are better than others.

Humans see themselves as more valuable than other humans based on color, gender, socioeconomic status, age, race, and the list goes on. How many of the world's ills are a direct result of this fruit of pride? It is clear to see why Jesus instructed us to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 19:19). If we were to practice this seemingly simple principle our world would undoubtedly be a little more like heaven.

## The Christian Solution

What is the Christian solution to dealing with our pride? Repentance, justification, and sanctification.

Obviously the process of repentance relates to recognizing and acknowledging that we are indeed sinners. We have done wrong! God has a habit of being drawn to those individuals who experience the greatest depths of repentance—or is it that they are drawn to him? Genuine repentance is the first step in dealing with our pride.

Justification implies being made right with God. How? By recognizing and acknowledging that through our own efforts there is nothing we can do to obtain salvation. Instead we must accept that which was done for us by Jesus. Only in the desperation of our deficiency does Christ become our Savior. We acknowledge that we are lost and cannot do it on our own, and in so doing turn our eyes from ourselves to God—step two in overcoming our pride. To be sure, the sacrifice of

communicate how well our pride is restrained.

Essentially, the model of Christian salvation is the perfect and complete exercise in overcoming our pride. Christianity combats the fruits of pride by forcing us to acknowledge our sin, relent that we cannot make it on our own, and crush the belief that we are better than others. Many religions address one or two of the fruits of pride, but only Christianity challenges all three. Some eastern religions, for example, espouse humility and service, but also preach that we are gods waiting to be realized. Salvation or enlightenment, they teach, can be found through introspective discovery. In other words, we can make it on our own.

This perspective of salvation offers an interesting insight into the debate of salvation by faith or works. Both save us, as both are indicators of our willingness to put away our pride. Salvation by faith acknowledges that we cannot make it on our own. Salvation by works involves loving the Lord with all our heart, mind and soul, and loving our neighbor as ourselves. Faith and works unite in demonstrating a life dead to pride.

## A Problem

The speaker at the crusade I attended climaxed by stating that those gathered had now been presented with the gospel and so were without excuse. I couldn't help asking myself the question, "If that is the case, would we not do ignorant souls a favor by not telling them about Christ?" Are "gospel" evangelists the voice

**To be sure, the sacrifice of Jesus provided the avenue for us to be redeemed back to God...but whether or not we accept the gift is a test of pride.**

Jesus provided the avenue for us to be redeemed back to God and no one comes to the Father except through Christ (Acts 4:12), but whether or not we accept the gift is a test of pride.

When we have come to a mood of true repentance and begun to grasp what Christ has done for us we cannot help but be changed. The process of sanctification begins. A difference will be witnessed in our behavior, in the way we perceive and deal with other people. In the parable of the sheep and goats it was the way in which they treated their fellow man that differentiated the two classes. Belief drives behavior and so our actions do not lie about what is on our heart. It is our actions that

of good news, or the catalyst for judgment? Viewed from another angle, if people will be saved irrespective of whether or not they have accepted Christ as their personal Savior, why bother evangelizing? In fact, this question can be asked whenever we espouse a philosophy that accommodates the entrance of non-Christians into heaven.

Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). I have come to be convicted that life on God's terms is real living. As C.



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available on audiocassettes (usually two cassettes per session)

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- Zane Price (Apr/04)  
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S. Lewis observes, when you draw close to a fire you naturally get warm, when you fall into water you naturally get wet, and when you cohabit with the source of life you cannot help but get life—and an abundant measure of it! The Christian life provides the ultimate opportunity for our well-being, happiness, and fulfillment. Hence, one reason Jesus tells us to spread the good news is for our own, everyday benefit.

The second reason we are charged to “go out” is for God’s benefit. It has been remarked, “love that remains unrevealed and unuttered is torture.” How much more must this be the case for the originator of love? As a parent seeks a relationship with their child, God eagerly desires an intimate relationship with his children. And so for his sake also he commissions us to spread the word.

## Conclusion

Who shall be saved? Those who will be *happy in heaven*, those who have willingly battled their pride as God’s global Spirit has spoken to them. How liberating to think that God does not have a complex array of tasks that we must satisfy and to realize that he will welcome us home into his kingdom if that is where we will find joy. And how comforting to know that those who will not make their eternal home with him are the same who would not have been happy there anyway. A loving God would not force an unwilling party.

I understand that the criterion I have presented for salvation is challenging and on first impressions can generate a spark of discord. But I ask what could make us as Adventist Christians uncomfortable with such a proposition? Is the view too simplistic? Often reality is simpler and yet more complex than we expect, but something being simple should never be grounds for dismissing it. Is it too inclusive? I hope not. I hope and pray that heaven’s gates are thrown even wider open than portrayed by this proposition of our salvation being determined by whether or not we will be happy in heaven. Any wish to the contrary would suggest that our own pride needs attention.

## Notes and References

1. All references are from the NIV Bible.

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Darren Morton is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Lifestyle Education at Avondale College. His specialty is sports sciences.

# Prophets as Poets

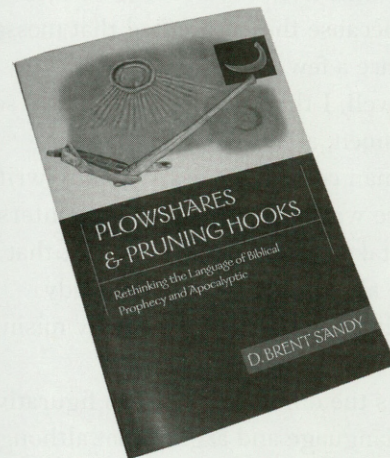
A Review by Ed Christian

So, are you interested in last-day events? Do visions of multihorned beasts dance in your head? Have you ever given or attended a Revelation Seminar? Have you memorized the traditional explanation of the Dark Day, the moon turning to blood, and the falling of the stars? Do you roll your eyes over those *Left Behind* novels or secretly read them?

Do you ever wonder how classical prophecy and apocalyptic work, *how* they mean, how they communicate messages from God? Do you wonder if God actually said in words all those things the prophets quote him as saying? Do you assume, with the futurists and many historicists, that most prophecy should be taken literally?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, you owe it to yourself to read *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*. Although it's a scholarly book, it's written for educated lay people and pastors. This is one of the most exhilarating books I've read in several years. If you read it, it will almost certainly change the way you read biblical prophecy.

Brent Sandy has a Ph.D. from Duke University, but he chairs the department of religious studies at Grace College, in



D. Brent Sandy. *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic.*

Downers Grove, IL:  
InterVarsity, 2002. 263 pp.



Winona Lake, Indiana, and has solid evangelical credentials. Although he claims to believe in biblical inerrancy, the message of his book undermines the usual definition of this, whether or not he intends it.

Sandy's approach is essentially literary. The Bible may be sacred, and it may be inspired or revealed "in various ways" (Heb. 1:1), but it is still a collection of works of literature that use literary techniques and formulaic language and structures to communicate messages and meaning. Sandy writes,

[T]he language of prophecy goes out of its way to communicate with power. How does it do it?

The short answer is, by means of the creative use of language. It is a performance.... The result is a very heavenly revelation in very earthly language. (27)

In a chapter called "How Does the Language of Prophecy Work?" Sandy identifies poetic imagery, metaphor, and hyperbole as the primary tools of the prophets. The ancient Romans identified the poet as both "maker" and "seer" (*vates*)—recognizing a prophetic role for the poet (anyone who could write good poetry must be inspired!). Is it possible that biblical prophets were identified as such not only because of their message, but also because they presented that message in poetry? (There are a few exceptions.)

We would do well, I think, to see our biblical seers as makers or craftsmen, as well, to recognize the extent of their human contributions. As Sandy writes, "The prophets were wordsmiths, master carpenters" (24). We ought to take more seriously the fact that prophecy "is above all poetic." If we don't study prophecies in this light, we almost invariably misinterpret them.

Sandy discusses the difference between figurative and nonfigurative language and argues that although prophecy is always meant to convey a message, it seldom uses literal language. Thus, those who insist on, say, the literalness of lions and lambs lying down together or children thrusting their arms into cobras' holes are probably *not* interpreting the text the way the prophet intended. Much of what we take literally was actually stock imagery, clichés used over and over both by biblical prophets and sometimes in writings found in other languages.

For example, the four horsemen of the apocalypse who kill by sword, famine, plague, and wild beasts are drawn from stock imagery. Likewise, the signs in the

sun, moon, and stars in Matthew 24—Jesus was using a cliché from the Old Testament to reveal a general truth, not speaking literally. In the moon turning to blood and [all!] the stars falling from the sky (not some amazing meteor shower, but literally an end to stars), we see not only a cliché but massive exaggeration. Such exaggeration does not mean prophets are liars. It means literal readings are often or generally wrong. The truth is discovered by reading texts as they were meant to be read, not as we *wish* they could be read.

This is not to say that prophecy is only poetry, without any heavenly message behind it. Sandy notes that there are "Degrees of literalness."

Only when we reach the point of denying that anything will happen as a result of these words have we moved completely away from literal meaning. At that point to be nonliteral would mean to be nonhistorical (nonactual). In other words, the literal or figurative interpretation of Scripture is not a simple black-or-white issue. (39)

However, correct interpretation depends on correctly gauging the degree of literalness.

In an appendix, Sandy provides a fascinating list of English metaphors that lead us astray if taken literally ("to have egg on your face"; "to have a short fuse") and a list of French figures of speech with literal translations and idiomatic English equivalents. (The French "he has a cockroach" means "he is depressed," but how would we guess that?) Sandy writes,

Even more important, examining the metaphors of an unknown language underscores an essential point: the meaning of a metaphor generally cannot be understood based on dictionary definitions. Literal translations are rarely helpful. Firsthand exposure to the culture is essential. (62)

Many of the puzzling or shocking expressions of the prophets might actually be once-common and now-lost idiomatic expressions.

To support his contention that we should read biblical prophecy according to the rules of poetry—rules that are still very much alive, though somewhat changed—Sandy provides a chapter called "How Have Prophecies Been Fulfilled?" He calls this "reading prophecy in reverse." Prophecy, he points out, was not primarily about predicting future events, even though this is the



only aspect that interests most prophecy buffs.

The prophets' primary role was prosecution and persuasion. Still, prediction was part of the prophets' message. So how did it work? Sandy examines five prophecies that biblical history shows were fulfilled (the prophecies against Eli, Solomon, the temple at Bethel, Ahab, and Sennacherib). What is the relation of the fulfillment to the prophecy?

His conclusion is that "Prophecies may... have a measure of uncertainty about fulfillment," "be inherently

impression that he should prophesy against Edom, say, then turn him loose. Isaiah draws curses from Deuteronomy, adds some details drawn from current events, couches the message in striking poetic language, and polishes it. Prophets, it seems, have permission to put words in God's mouth. We have assumed that they are God's mouthpieces, and they are, but it may be that what God "says" in the prophecies is conditioned by the culture and theology of the prophet and the prophet's time.

## We ought to take more seriously the fact that prophecy "is above all poetic."

translucent," "give incomplete or enigmatic information," "employ stereotypical language," "conceal long spans of time," and "predict something that does not happen as expected" (147). Prophetic fulfillment is best determined after the fact, and even then, many details may not fit.

Again, this does not mean that the Bible is in error, but that our interpretation of prophecy should take the Hebrew approach to writing prophecy into account. We should not expect exact fulfillment of every detail of still-unfulfilled prophecy, either. Arguing over the exact order of obscure last-day events may be futile.

How much of the prophetic message was actually revealed by God, and how much was the prophet's poetic imagination, guided in some way by the Holy Spirit (much as pastors and writers feel guided or inspired as they work)? In Chapter 4, Sandy points out that much of the prophetic language is derived from the promised covenant blessings and curses of Deuteronomy 28 and from various passages in Genesis. Little revelation would have been necessary. A helpful appendix provides several hundred examples.

Sandy identifies four major focuses of classical prophecy: (1) Deity's "grace and wrath beyond limit"; (2) "Humanity at the limits of disobedience"; (3) "Calamity"—"judgment that seems unlimited"; and (4) "Prosperity"—"peace and joy beyond limit" (20–23). Consider that almost every prophecy has one or more of these as its message. The primary variation is the person or group about whom the prophecy is given. The other variations are little more than differences in poetic imagery.

The implications for our understanding of revelation are mind expanding. God need only give Isaiah an

This is not to say that there are no specific revealed details in prophecy—there are. But it may be that prophecy is about 95 percent human perspiration, with a lot less inspiration than we have assumed. By faith, we should see these prophecies as—in a way—God's word to us, claim the promises as ours, and heed their warnings. After all, our sins are likely to be much like the sins of an earlier age. We should not, however, imagine that these prophecies are dictated by God—free of cultural conditioning—even when they claim to be God's words. Such a claim was part of what prophets said, but it perhaps should not be taken altogether literally.

Useful evidence for this, though not mentioned by Sandy, can be found by comparing a number of prophecies that talk about the same event, such as the Assyrian conquest of Israel. If God revealed all the details mentioned by the prophets, then the prophecies should agree on those details, even if they don't each include all the details. But they don't agree on the details, only on the broad view of coming punishment.

What they have in common comes closest to what was revealed. Where they differ is more likely the prophets' poetic license to make God's point in an attention-grabbing way. We should not insist that these poetic details be fulfilled, and we should bear in mind that prophecy is often conditional, much like the covenant blessings and curses, even when it doesn't say so.

Apocalyptic prophecy differs from classical



prophecy in a number of ways, but apocalyptic is still usually in poetic form or at least in a highly complex literary structure. Sandy devotes a useful chapter to apocalyptic. He accepts Daniel as predictive prophecy written in the sixth century B.C. As a key to interpretation, he looks closely at Daniel 8, the vision of the ram and the goat, representing the Medes and the Persians and Greece.

Sandy points out that the Medes were important in Daniel's day, but that by Alexander's day he was fighting the *Persian* empire. Alexander was not the first king of

Apocalyptic visions often do not yield to attempts in advance to decipher details of fulfillment. Instead of being futuristic, the function of the vision is to provide encouragement and resolve...It tends to be more allusive than precise, more impressionistic than realistic, more fantastic than literal. Consequently we will not understand the parts of the story until we have read the last page. (126, 128)

In a useful appendix, Sandy provides hundreds of examples of end-time imagery in the New Testament,

## Prophets, it seems, have permission to put words in God's mouth.

Greece, he did not conquer the Persians in one battle, and his empire did not split neatly into four parts controlled by four generals, as many interpreters have insisted, forcing history to fit prophecy read too literally.

But in so doing [trying to find, in the historical circumstances of the Hellenistic period, four kingdoms that work as referents for Daniel's vision] they misrepresent the complexity of the struggles of the successors and miss the significance of the four kingdoms. While it is possible to find a brief window of time when there were four main kingdoms, that begs the question. *Four* is not a designation for the number of Hellenistic kingdoms. Daniel's use of the number four has a better explanation. (115)

If you want to know the explanation, read the book. In his look at Revelation, Sandy explains that

Moving from the general to the specific, we become increasingly uncertain about the meaning of the details. This is not unexpected, given the allusive nature of apocalyptic visions. For much of the vision is an earthly way to think about a heavenly reality, or a present way to think about a future reality...It is also expected with the nature of apocalyptic language that some details may simply be for effect; stated another way, some details may be make-believe. (124)

Commenting on Revelation 12-13, Sandy writes,

divided by topic. A multitude of related images in a number of books by different authors helps us discover basic trends in beliefs about last-day events, even though the details may differ quite a bit.

I have a three-foot shelf in my home devoted to scholarly commentaries on Revelation, I've read the entire seven volumes of the Daniel and Revelation Committee reports, and I've published scholarly articles on chiasmic structures I've discovered in Revelation. I've written a book-length commentary on Revelation from a historicist viewpoint for use in the New Testament Literature class I teach. I used to think I understood Revelation pretty well and knew what the end times hold in store for us. In the past few years I've grown more cautious.

Scholars know vastly more about Revelation than they did a generation or two ago, but what they know for certain is limited. They have identified a couple thousand echoes of the Old Testament beyond doubt, and they know much more about the history and culture of John's time. The astonishing, complex structure of the book is being peeled away like layers of an onion. These things are proven.

But what do we know for sure about the details of last-day events? We *know* much less than evangelists would have us *believe*. We know the broad themes, the call to faithfulness and perseverance, the promises of Christ's return, the destruction of what is wicked, and the establishment of a kingdom of righteousness. But we don't know whether "a new heaven and a new earth" is literally a newly created planet, a recreation of this planet, or something less literal yet still true.

I would die for my faith in the blessed hope of Christ's return. I would not die for my faith in the identification of the ten tribes or seven churches, seals, trumpets, or plagues. We can't be sure about the details. Even when the events occur, we may find that details we thought would be important turn out not to matter.

It should be clear by now that I recommend that you read *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*. One quibble: it's a pain to have to turn to the back of the book to read the notes. Substantive notes should be at the foot of the page, not at the end. (Are you listening, InterVarsity?) My one big complaint about this book is that I was planning to write it. I was dismayed to find that Sandy had written it first—and probably better than I could.

The interpretation of prophecy has been fundamental to the development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as has the belief in the continuation of the Spirit of Prophecy in the writings of Ellen White. It would be immensely helpful to apply Sandy's ideas to her and her work.

It seems likely that in the light of how biblical prophets actually worked—using their own creativity to develop brief general revelations, rather than passing on detailed revelations received from God—we could better understand how Ellen G. White worked, what God was saying through her, and the extent to which her words reflect his thoughts.

Indeed, her message is about the same as the message of the biblical prophets: be faithful and persevere and you will be blessed and rewarded; turn away and you will be cursed and destroyed. She devoted her life to saying this a thousand different ways.

By faith we may choose to accept this as God's word to us today and act on it, but we shouldn't assume we understand the details or that her elaborations of these themes are all exactly what God wanted her to write. I don't see much evidence in the Bible for God regularly monitoring the accuracy of his prophets and correcting errors of detail, though many of us fondly imagine that he did.

That doesn't seem to be how prophecy worked. Prophets were very human products of their time and place, doing their best to understand and communicate what God seemed to be saying, but not always succeeding. We shouldn't expect a higher caliber of information from Ellen White.

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Ed Christian teaches English and biblical literature at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania. His most recent book is *Joyful Noise: A Sensible Look at Christian Music* (Review and Herald, 2003).

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Carl Wilkins: *Genocide Within, Without* (Rwanda)

Dr. Margaret Christian: *Hezekiah and Queen Elizabeth*

Dr. Erich Baumgartner: *Being at Home in a Global Church*

Dr. Faiz Khan, Muslim Imam: *Introduction to Muslim Theology*

Dr. Nancy Lecourt: *Stopping by Babylon*

Dr. Terry Anderson: *Ethics of Globalization* (series)

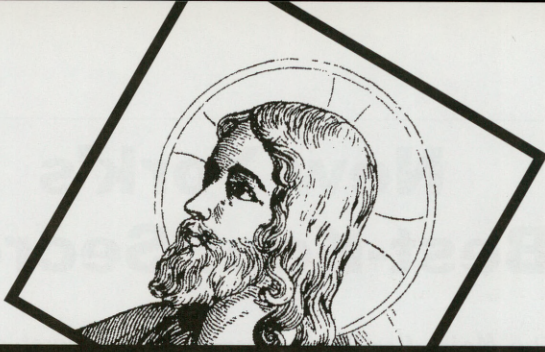
Dr. Lester Wright: *Issues from the Sabbath School Quarterly* (series)

Dr. Ron Lawson: *The Globalization of Christianity—and of Adventism*



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# SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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## Fundamental Beliefs

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Adventists Beliefs  
Fundamental Beliefs

Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of the Bible. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference Session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word.

Official Statements  
Guidelines  
Other Documents

### 1. The Holy Scriptures:

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by the inspiration through holy men who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authority of doctrine, and the trustworthy record of God's actions in the world. (2 Pet. 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; 1 Thes. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.)

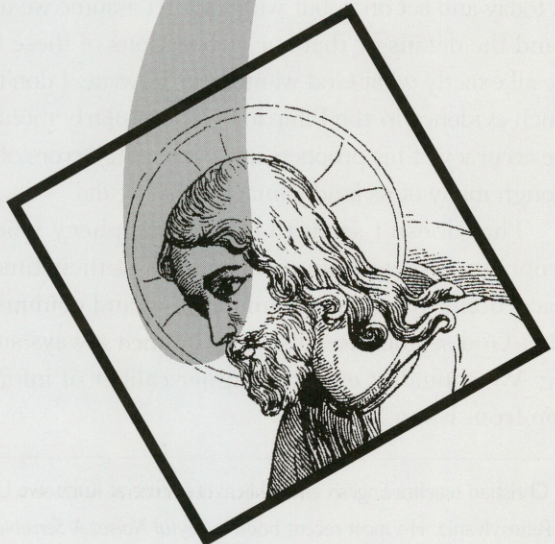
### 2. The Trinity:

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three co-eternal Persons. God is eternal, all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever present. He is infinite and cannot be comprehended by human comprehension. He is revealed through His self-revelation. He is worthy of worship, adoration, and glory by the whole creation. (Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:7.)

### 3. The Father:

God the eternal Father is the Creator, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. His attributes and powers exhibited in the Son and

# BELIEFS



# Uncovering the Origins of the Statement of Twenty-seven Fundamental Beliefs

*By Fritz Guy*

In 1861, when Seventh-day Adventist ministers in the state of Michigan gathered in Battle Creek to consider the prospect of adopting a formal organizational structure, James White introduced the idea of a “church covenant.” It would simply say, “We, the undersigned, hereby associate ourselves together, as a church, taking the name Seventh-day Adventists, covenanting to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus Christ.”<sup>1</sup> So the total content of this “covenant” would consist of the proposed denominational name and the words of a favorite verse of Scripture (Rev. 14:12). But to some in the group even this brief, innocuous statement sounded suspiciously like the beginning of a “creed,” and thus a step toward “becoming Babylon.”

John Loughborough was blunt: “The first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth is to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And fifth, to commence persecution against such.”

White responded by explaining that he, too, was opposed to forming a creed,

although he gave a different reason. “Making a creed,” he said, “is setting the stakes, and barring the way to all future advancement... The Bible is our creed. We reject everything in the form of a human creed. We take the Bible and the gifts of the Spirit; embracing the faith that thus the Lord will teach us from time to time. And in this we take a position against the formation of a creed.”<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the reasoning, the common



Adventist conviction was that formulating a creed would be dangerous to the spiritual and theological health of the fledgling community of faith. But eventually the doubters were persuaded that a “covenant” would not be a “creed,” and the proposed covenant was adopted unanimously.

The reluctance to have anything like a creed has been explained by Walter Scragg:

The early [Adventist] leaders came out of bodies that they felt had calcified their beliefs in...creedal statements, and [had] fought to defend those statements rather than embark on fresh searches for biblical understanding and truth. The Reformation remained incomplete because it was held back by creeds. They also feared that such statements might become a rival to the freedom of the Spirit that they saw operating in their midst, both in the work of Ellen G. White, and in their various study conferences at which they sought to find answers to perplexing Bible questions.<sup>3</sup>

More than a century later, some of the spiritual descendents of the early Adventists had similar misgivings about the idea of revising the official statement of Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists. One of my most respected friends called from halfway across the continent to express disappointment that I was involved in such a project. He argued that the whole endeavor was a bad idea because of its huge potential for misuse. Unintentionally echoing both White and Loughborough, he insisted that it would inhibit creative thinking and be used as a disciplinary device to keep people in line. It would, in other words, be treated like a creed.

Both in 1861 and in 1980, the skeptics were right in their predictions but wrong in their reasoning. They were right in their predictions because in spite of a very strong and consistent Adventist bias against creedalism, we find ourselves today with something that functions very much like a creed. Our present statement of Fundamental Beliefs can be, and indeed has been, misused. But neither the danger nor the actuality of abuse negates the value of having such a statement and using it properly. Like the tradition of which it is the most current authoritative expression, it can function not as a stockade to imprison our thinking, but as a platform on which to build.

In this discussion I want to do three things: first describe briefly the historical predecessors of the current statement, then describe what we might call “the saga of the twenty-seven,” and finally offer some reflections on both the process of revision and the product.

The need for some kind of declaration of Adventist belief was recognized several years before the meeting that adopted the church covenant and the denominational name, and there has been a long series of them since.

The first one usually cited was an informal statement by James White in 1853, composed in reply to a query from an official of the Seventh-day Baptist Central Association, who had been directed “to correspond with the Seventh-day Advent people, and learn of their faith.” White replied with a brief review of the gradual acceptance of the Sabbath by “that portion of the Second Advent people who observe the fourth commandment,” and then explained:

As a people we are brought together from divisions of the Advent body and from various denominations, holding different views on some subjects; yet, thank Heaven, the Sabbath is a mighty platform on which we can all stand united. And while standing here, with the aid of no other creed than the Word of God, and bound together by the bonds of love—love for the truth, love for each other, and love for a perishing world—which is stronger than death, all party feelings are lost. We are united in these great subjects: Christ’s immediate, personal second Advent, and the observance of all of the commandments of God, and the faith of his Son Jesus Christ, as necessary to a readiness for his Advent.<sup>4</sup>

Later that year, White published in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* a series of four editorials on “Gospel Order,” by which he meant church organization; but he insisted that this did not include formulating a creed: In the first editorial he said, “We want no human creed; the Bible is sufficient. The divine order of the New Testament is sufficient to organize the church of Christ. If more were needed, it would have been given by inspiration.”

In the second he reiterated his conviction

that the church of Christ...is provided with a creed that is sufficient. ‘All scripture is given by inspiration of God.’... Let the church of Christ take the Bible for their only creed, believe its plain teaching, obey its injunctions, and for them it will accomplish the very work for which it was designed... While we reject all human creeds, or platforms... we take the Bible, the perfect rule of faith and practice, given by inspiration of God. This shall be our platform on which to stand, our creed and discipline.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, in August 1854 the first issue of volume six included in its masthead a list of five “Leading Doctrines Taught by the Review,” placed immediately below the identification of James White as editor, who was presumably responsible for the list:

The Bible, and the Bible alone, the rule of faith and duty.  
The Law of God, as taught in the Old and New Testaments, unchangeable.  
The Personal Advent of Christ and the Resurrection of the Just, before the Millennium.  
The Earth restored to its Eden perfection and glory, the final Inheritance of the Saints.  
Immortality alone through Christ, to be given to the Saints of the Resurrection.<sup>6</sup>

This brief doctrinal summary continued as part of the Review masthead for seventeen subsequent issues, and then disappeared.<sup>7</sup>

A more elaborate statement, evidently the work of Uriah Smith, appeared in 1872 and was entitled “A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists.” This was published unsigned as a pamphlet and contained twenty-five propositions. The introduction read in part:

In presenting to the public this synopsis of our faith, we wish to have it distinctly understood that we have no articles of faith, creed, or discipline, aside from the Bible. We do not put forth this as having any authority with our people; nor is it designed to secure uniformity among them, as a system of faith, but is a brief statement of what is, and has been, with great unanimity, held by them.<sup>8</sup>

This statement was reprinted several times—in *Signs of the Times* in 1874 and 1875, in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* in 1874, and as a pamphlet in 1875, 1877–78, 1884, and 1888—always introduced by a statement that Adventists “have no creed but the Bible, but they hold to certain well-defined points of faith, for which they feel prepared to give a reason.” It was revised and expanded to twenty-eight sections in the 1889 denominational *Yearbook*, then disappeared for fifteen years, but was reprinted in the *Yearbook* annually from 1905 to 1914, and in the *Review and Herald* in 1912, where it was designated “Fundamental Principles” and described as “by the late Uriah Smith.” It was also reprinted in pamphlet form, with an additional, twenty-ninth section on religious liberty.<sup>9</sup>

In the meantime, in 1894 the Battle Creek Church, the most prominent Adventist congregation at the time, published a church directory that included a statement titled “Some Things Seventh-day Adventists Believe.” It contained thirty items, preceded by this explanation: “The Seventh-day Adventist people have no creed or discipline except the Bible but the following are some of the points of their faith upon which there is quite general agreement.”<sup>10</sup>

In 1931, a statement of “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists” appeared with twenty-two sections. It had been requested by the General Conference Committee and was submitted by a four-person group including C. H. Watson, president of the General Conference, and F. M. Wilcox, editor of the *Review and Herald*.<sup>11</sup> According to one version of the story, Wilcox did the actual writing, which was then accepted by the others,<sup>12</sup> but according to another account the initial drafting was done by F. D. Nichol, the thirty-four-year-old associate editor of the *Review*.<sup>13</sup>

However it originated, “realizing that the General Conference Committee—or any other church body—would never accept the document in the form in which it was written, Elder Wilcox, with full knowledge of the group, handed the Statement directly to Edson Rogers, the General Conference statistician, who published it in the 1931 edition of the [*Seventh-day Adventist*] *Yearbook*.”<sup>14</sup>

This statement, which began, “Seventh-day Adventists hold certain fundamental beliefs, the principal features of which... may be summarized as follows,” was reprinted each year in the *Yearbook*, and, beginning in 1932, in the *Church Manual* by vote of the General Conference Executive Committee. In 1946, the General Conference session in Washington, D.C., voted that the *Church Manual* could be revised only at a General Conference session—that is, not by the Executive Committee. Although the 1931 statement had thus become “official,” it was still “not, however, considered a creed.”<sup>15</sup>

All of these earlier formulations—James White’s informal statement in 1853, the five items in the *Review* masthead in 1854, the “church covenant” of 1861, Uriah Smith’s “Declaration of Fundamental Principles” in 1872, the Battle Creek congregation’s “points of faith” in 1894, and the statement of “Fundamental Beliefs” in 1931—were intended to be descriptions of an existing Adventist consensus rather than prescriptions of a theological obligation.



In 1976, two concerns converged to provide an incentive for a revision of the 1931 statement. On the one hand, some General Conference officials expressed an interest in revising the paragraph on “the Holy Scriptures” to include an explicit assertion that “they give the authentic history of the origin of the world.” At the same time, the *Church Manual* Committee felt a need for the coordination of three different statements it contained: the Fundamental Beliefs, the Doctrinal Instruction for Baptismal Candidates, and the Baptismal Vow.

The *Church Manual* Committee recommended the appointment of an ad hoc committee to consider both—namely, the coordination of the three statements and also “the preparation of an additional ‘Fundamental Belief’ statement to deal with the Doctrine of Creation.” In response, the General Conference Administrative Committee voted that its chair, F. W. Wernick, and the president of the General Conference, appoint the committee, which he did. Its chair was W. Duncan Eva and its secretary was Bernard Seton.<sup>16</sup>

At this point the story is illuminated by Seton’s detailed personal recollections of the process. Although his account does not agree completely with the official history, it throws interesting additional light on the developments and the dynamics:

In 1965 I wrote from Berne [Switzerland] to the General Conference administration and expressed my conviction that our Statement of Fundamental Beliefs needed revision from both a theological and a literary point of view. The administration’s reply revealed that no such need was felt at the General Conference, so the matter was dropped.

In 1970 I became an associate secretary of the General Conference, and I found that one of my duties was to serve as secretary of the Church Manual Committee. It became clear that the Manual needed revision. It had grown like Topsy, with additions being made in random fashion by individuals and groups as they became aware of deficiencies in the original statement. The 1967 edition revealed the patchwork nature of the volume and cried out for editorial attention. But on page 22 it was recorded, “All changes or revisions of policy made in the Manual shall be authorized by a General Conference session” [1946]. This quotation proved to be a roadblock in every effort to revise any part of the Manual.

It took several months of interpretive endeavor to convince the committee that editorial, literary

revisions in the interest of clarity and consistency were not covered by the above declaration. Then that light dawned. Many pages of editorial emendations were accepted and eventually presented to the 1975 session of the General Conference in Vienna. Because of the official reluctance to change a jot or tittle of the Manual, I had refrained from including the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs in the initial editorial suggestions.

After the 1975 session, however, the time seemed ripe for attention to the Fundamentals. They seemed surrounded with an aura of untouchability, and the secretary of the committee [that is, Elder Seton himself] seemed to be the only one convinced of the need for revision. He, therefore, produced a complete but cautious revision for presentation to the chairman of the committee and at an early date to a subcommittee that was appointed on the chairman’s initiative. With the initial one-man revision as its base, that subcommittee spent many hours producing a revision for presentation to the full Church Manual Committee.

At every step, however, it was dogged by the tradition of untouchability concerning the Fundamentals. Indeed, there appeared to be an aura of inspiration that hamstrung most suggestions for refinement and improvement of each statement. If that aura could have been laid to rest, the way would have been open for a much more effective revision. Under that mighty handicap, the subcommittee revised the original statement presented to the full committee for its reaction.

An ad hoc committee was then appointed with the specific task of preparing a document that via the Church Manual Committee would prepare a statement for presentation to the 1980 session, and that ad hoc committee was commissioned to work within the framework of minimal revisions, in deference to the idea of the sacrosanct nature of the Manual and the sensitivities of the church membership respecting any change that might appear to touch the doctrinal beliefs of the church. Once again the brakes were on, and revision had to be carried out on a very limited basis.<sup>17</sup>

The ad hoc committee did not complete its work until August 1979, when a draft was distributed to General Conference officials. In a cover letter, Eva “noted that [both] formal and substantive changes had been



made. Formally, the sequence of topics had been altered and paragraph headings had been inserted. Substantively, the sections on the Trinity had been expanded from two paragraphs to four, and sections had been added concerning angels, creation and the fall, the church, unity in the body of Christ, the Lord's Supper, Christian marriage, and the Christian home and education."

Eva "also said that before the new statement would be submitted to the full *Church Manual* Committee, it would be presented to 'certain professors at the Seminary with whom we will meet in September.' After the *Church Manual* committee gave its approval, the statement would proceed to the [General Conference] officers, the union [conference] presidents, the Annual Council, and finally to the General Conference session in Dallas [the following April]."<sup>18</sup>

Here, again, Seton's recollections are interesting:

When that further limited revision was completed I ventured to suggest that it would be wise to submit the document to our professional theologians on the basis that it would be better to have their reactions before the document went further rather than await their strictures on the session floor. There was some hesitation, but eventually the suggestion was accepted and the document went to Andrews University with the request that it be studied, that comments and emendations be referred back to the ad hoc committee. Those terms of reference did not register, for the University prepared its own set of Fundamentals."<sup>19</sup>

Scragg, who was president of the Northern European Division, later reported, "W. Duncan Eva has described to me his surprise when he received back from [the Andrews scholars] not a reworking of the material submitted but a completely rewritten document." But in spite of this surprise, the Andrews document

became the basis of the one recommended by the 1979 Annual Council to the 1980 General Conference Session... To one used to the workings of denominational machinery it is nothing less than staggering that the church could in 1980 meet the challenge of the 1946 action which put a protective mantle over the 1931 statement, and not only reconsider the statement, but actually act as if it did not exist and create new language, new articles, new scripture references, and then have the new document voted."<sup>20</sup>

Seton similarly observed,

The University's action accomplished what a timorous interpretation of *Church Manual* procedure had failed to effect. Hindsight suggests that it would have been wise if the *Church Manual* Committee had worked more closely with Andrews theologians from an early date, but the traditional reticence to touch the *Manual* would probably have made that a too revolutionary suggestion.<sup>21</sup>

What had gone on at Andrews, however, was as straightforward as it was unexpected. The university president appointed the vice president for academic administration, the dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, and eight members of the Seminary faculty to meet with Eva, with two additional faculty members added later.<sup>22</sup> However, none recalled instructions that we were to make "only comments and emendations."

On the contrary, it seemed to many of us that although on the one hand "in general the statement prepared by the *ad hoc* committee in Washington was a genuine improvement over the 1931 statement." On the other hand, it "was uneven in its organization and style... with mixed terminology, a lack of balance with regard to length of individual sections, differences in the way documentation was handled, and a general administrative concern with events and behavior rather than meaning."<sup>23</sup> Perhaps Eva's communication with the Andrews group was so gentlemanly and respectful that we failed to understand its precise intent. In any case, we decided almost immediately that what was needed was not more editing but a complete rewriting.

So we went to work, deciding what should be included and assigning various sections to different members of the committee. For example, Lawrence Geraty produced the original draft of section six, "Creation"; Ivan Blazen drafted section twenty-three, "Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary"; and I drafted sections two, "The Trinity," and three, "The Father." Of course, many minor and some major changes were made not only by the faculty group but also by later committees at the General Conference headquarters and at the General Conference session, so the final content and wording cannot properly be attributed to this initial drafting. New materials beyond the 1931 state-



ment included the sections on creation and family life.

As it finally turned out, the statement had a deliberate structure; it was not just twenty-seven beads on string. Indeed, it reflected a very traditional theological pattern:<sup>24</sup>

[Prolegomena]

Preamble

[Word of God]

1. The Holy Scriptures

[God]

2. The Trinity

3. The Father

4. The Son

5. The Holy Spirit

[Creation]

6. Creation

7. The Nature of Man

[Salvation]

8. The Great Controversy

9. The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ

10. The Experience of Salvation

[The Community of Faith]

11. The Church

12. The Remnant and Its Mission

13. Unity in the Body of Christ

14. Baptism

15. Lord's Supper

16. Spiritual Gifts and Ministries

17. The Gift of Prophecy

[Life in Christ]

18. The Law of God

19. The Sabbath

20. Stewardship

21. Christian Behavior

22. Marriage and the Family

[Consummation]

23. Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary

24. The Second Coming of Christ

25. Death and Resurrection

26. The Millennium and the End of Sin

27. The New Earth

This was merely a plausible, traditional structure, certainly not the "right," "holy," or "God-given" structure.<sup>25</sup> There are many different ways in which the theological pie can reasonably be cut.

The number twenty-seven was a fairly arbitrary initiative of mine. As secretary of the group, I was given the task of recording and organizing the results of our deliberations. Since there was no predetermined number of sections, we could have come out with twenty-six or twenty-eight; but I preferred twenty-seven. Twenty-six seemed (to me) to be a dull, uninteresting number; twenty-eight seemed better because it was four times seven, the arithmetical product of two numbers prominent in the Book of Revelation.

Twenty-seven seemed more interesting still: it was three to the third power, three times three times three. Given the importance of the Trinity (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:13 [14]), and the threefold praise of the angels, "Holy, Holy, Holy" (Isa. 6:3), the other numbers didn't have a chance: twenty-seven it would be. During the subsequent discussion at the General Conference, the number of sections was increased to twenty-eight, but subsequently reduced again to twenty-seven.<sup>26</sup> So twenty-seven it remained, and the statement is sometimes identified informally as "the twenty-seven."

Some other details may be of interest although they are not significant enough to have been included in the historical record of the project.

The group invested the most time and effort on section twenty-three, "Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary." Because exegetical and experiential questions had been publicly raised about the traditional doctrine of the sanctuary in heaven and its "cleansing," we tried to construct a cautious statement that would fairly represent what we understood to be a broad consensus of the church membership.

The group decided not to include a section on Christian education after all, on the grounds that if we thus highlighted the work of one of the church's major organizational departments, we would in fairness have to highlight others as well (Sabbath School, health care, youth ministry, and so forth), and that would make the statement too much like an organizational chart.

Section fifteen, "The Lord's Supper," evoked considerable debate over the participation of children. In spite of the Adventist tradition of open communion, some members of the group were convinced that only children who had been baptized should be permitted to participate; others were equally convinced that a child who was old

enough to know what the symbols meant should be able to participate. We reached an impasse we could not resolve, so this issue was not (and is not) mentioned in the statement.

But most important was a sense of excitement, and an awareness of the importance of the task. We were trying to be both descriptive (expressing beliefs of our community of faith) and instructive (leading the community of faith to greater perception and clarity). Had we been writing our own personal statements of belief, each of us would have written somewhat differently, reflecting our individual backgrounds, perspectives, and understandings.

Then came the wider discussion. The proposed revision went back to the General Conference, where it was modified slightly by the *Church Manual* Committee and approved in principle at the Annual Council in October 1979. It was published in the *Review* in February 1980, with a request for comments from readers around the world.<sup>27</sup>

There were many suggestions, ranging from the superficial to the extremely thoughtful; probably the most thorough examination was given by the religion faculty at Pacific Union College. Further discussions between General Conference officers and the Seminary group and subsequent major revision at the General Conference produced significant modifications.<sup>28</sup> Finally the statement was presented for consideration by the 2000 delegates to the fifty-third session of the General Conference in Dallas in April.<sup>29</sup>

The discussion in Dallas began with extensive introductory comments by President Neal C. Wilson, including the following:

For some time we have been considering a refinement of our Statement on Fundamental Beliefs... No doubt you have done both some studying and some praying.

We have heard a variety of interesting rumors. Some, it is said, understand that the church leaders want to destroy completely the foundations of the church and set the church on a course that would be un-Biblical, contrary to the tradition of the past and to historical Adventism. My fellow delegates, there is nothing that is further from the truth.

We have also heard that any time we touch the Statement on Fundamental Beliefs we would be introducing the Omega, the final confusion of theological and doctrinal positions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I suggest to you

that this is also a very unfortunate statement.

I can understand how individuals far removed from where some of these things are being studied, and who may not themselves have been asked to participate in a restudy or refinement of wording, might feel that there is something very sinister, mysterious, and secret going on that will suddenly confront us, and that it may contribute to the ultimate detriment and demise of the Seventh-day Adventist Church... I assure you that no one who has been struggling with some of these matters has any such intention.

There are others who think they know why this is being done. They believe it is being prepared as a club to batter someone over the head, to try to get people into a narrow concept of theology, not leaving any opportunity for individual interpretation of prophecy, or any individual views with respect to theology or certain areas of doctrine. This also is unfortunate, because this never has been and is not the intention of any study that has been given to the Statement on Fundamental Beliefs.

Some academicians, theologians, and others have expressed the fear that this statement was being developed so that the church could confront them with a checklist to determine whether they should be disqualified from teaching in one of our institutions of higher education. It is very, very tragic when these kinds of rumors begin to develop.

I fully recognize, and am very willing to admit, that we do need to use extreme care, including a wholesome variety of minds with training and background, to provide input on this kind of statement. However, I do not think anyone should become frightened when the wording of such a document is studied. Perhaps I should go one step further and say that the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not have a creed as such. Nothing set in concrete in terms of human words. The time never comes when any human document cannot be improved upon. We feel that every 20, 30, or 50 years it is a very good thing for us to be sure we are using the right terminology and approach... Certain terms mean today what they did not mean 50 years ago... It is extremely important that we should understand what we believe and that we should express it simply, clearly, and in the most concise way possible.<sup>30</sup>



Thus the process of discussion, further revision, and final approval of “the twenty-seven fundamentals” began.

As Geraty observed, “The process undertaken in Dallas was more helpful for those who participated in it than it was for the product.”<sup>31</sup> Recalling the aphorism that a camel looks like a horse designed by committee, anyone can recognize that a committee of nearly two thousand members is not an ideal group to revise any document.<sup>32</sup> But it was certainly good that a General Conference session, the most authoritative structure of the church, spent much of a week talking about the beliefs that give us our theological identity, not simply

the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church’s understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word.<sup>35</sup>

The last sentence encompasses Wilson’s introductory observation that “we should understand what we believe and...express it simply, clearly, and in the most concise

## Creedal inflexibility...was not only a positive evil but also denied the fact that the church had a *living* Lord who would continue to lead them into truth.

about church structures, policies, and procedures.

An example of the adjustments that occurred in Dallas is paragraph seventeen, “Ellen G. White.” Some delegates wanted to enhance the affirmation of her authority, so where the original draft read, “Her writings provide the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction,” the revision read (with a grammatically dangling modifier), “As the Lord’s messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction.” Then, lest this change be misunderstood as putting the Ellen White writings on the level of Scripture, a further clarification was added: “They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.”

Perhaps as important as the revisions that were made were the revisions that were not made. These included a number of suggestions for greater specificity regarding the days of creation week, the beginning of the Sabbath, the place(s) of Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, ways of supporting the church financially, and proscribed behaviors such as card-playing, theatergoing, and dancing.<sup>33</sup>

One extraordinarily good thing occurred at the Dallas session, even as the committee of two thousand was designing its theological camel: the addition of the preamble, the most important sentences in the whole document. Unofficially known as “the Graybill preamble” because it was initially drafted and proposed by Ronald Graybill, it reads:<sup>34</sup>

Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be

way possible,” and goes beyond it to reflect the important but too-often-overlooked emphasis of Ellen White that we have noticed previously: “Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His Word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths. This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the end.”<sup>36</sup>

Unfortunately, this preamble has also been often overlooked. The book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, published in 1988 by the General Conference Ministerial Department, ignored the preamble completely. So did a series of Sabbath School lessons devoted to the Fundamental Beliefs in the last two quarters of 1988,<sup>37</sup> as well as a similar series of articles in *Ministry* in August 1995.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps this repeated omission is understandable: the preamble is different in content and intent; it is not about the substance of the Fundamental Beliefs, but about their status. Perhaps also the authors of these various interpretations of the current statement disagreed with the preamble’s explicit relativizing of any particular formulation of belief.

Whatever the reason, however, disregarding the preamble is unfortunate, because it ignores one of the most basic elements in authentic Adventism—namely, its commitment to “present truth,” to a progressive understanding of Scripture, of God, and of ourselves in relation to God.

Fortunately, however, in his brief history of Seventh-day Adventist theology George Knight refers to the preamble as “the all-important preamble” and comments, “That remarkable statement captures the essence of what

James White and the other Adventist pioneers taught. Creedal inflexibility, as they saw it, was not only a positive evil but also denied the fact that the church had a *living* Lord who would continue to lead them into truth.... The concept of progressive change stands at the heart of Adventist theology.”<sup>39</sup>

Finally we can reflect on the process and the product. The input into the process was good, but still not ideal. For the first time, a formal statement of Adventist beliefs was not the work of a single person or a small group. There was an intentional inclusion of scholars in theology and biblical studies, and an attempt to include the church membership at large. But more could have been done, and should be done the next time.

First and foremost, there should have been far more participation by women, who comprise well over half of the Adventist membership but who were not named to any of the committees involved in the process. Their official participation was therefore limited to the discussion on the floor of the General Conference session, and the result is an essentially male statement.<sup>40</sup>

There should also have been provision for wide participation by church members who were not sufficiently fluent in English to read the draft statement published in the *Adventist Review*. This was in part the result of the draft’s relatively late publication.

The discussion at the General Conference session should have included more scholars. Blincoe was there as dean of the Seminary, and Geraty was there as the elected representative of the Seminary faculty; both were members of the editorial committee and Geraty was actively involved in the discussion. But surely Raoul Dederen, who as chair of the Seminary’s Department of Theology was arguably the Church’s most significant theologian, should have been invited, as well as Kenneth Strand, the Church’s leading church historian, and many of the Church’s other religion scholars in various parts of the world.

In spite of these and other imperfections, however, the product is a useful document and an improvement over its predecessor. Although the statement as a whole was quite well received, there were, inevitably, some negative reactions and questions.

Some, particularly in Australia, were dismayed by section twenty-three, “Christ’s Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary,” which they regarded as “watered down” and even “a sellout.”

A different sort of criticism has concerned the absence

of certain essential dimensions of spiritual life—forgiveness, for example, and prayer. The explanation, which does not satisfy everyone, is that it is intended to be a statement of Adventist *beliefs*, not a description of Adventist spirituality, any more than it is a description of the Church’s organizational structure. One can of course reply that Adventists in fact *believe* in forgiveness and prayer.

Sometimes the notion of “twenty-seven fundamental beliefs” has seemed like an oxymoron: if there are twenty-seven of them, how can they all be “fundamental”? There are two answers to this question. The first is that the word *fundamental* is relative: some things are *more* fundamental than others. Among the things Adventists believe, for example, the Sabbath is important; indeed, it is essential; but the truth that God is unconditional love, and that Jesus of Nazareth is the supreme revelation of that love, are even more important, more fundamental in Adventist theology and life.

The second answer is that, as statements of belief go, the number twenty-seven is not unusually large: in the Anglican tradition there are the famous “Thirty-nine Articles of Religion”; and in the Lutheran tradition the Augsburg Confession contains twenty-eight articles, some of which are several pages long.<sup>41</sup>

So is it a “creed” after all? In one way it certainly is: it is a formal, official, and therefore “authoritative” statement of belief. This is true in spite of the fact that the opening lines insist that “Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed,” and in spite of Wilson’s assurance to the General Conference delegates that “the Seventh-day Adventist church does not have a creed as such.” So claims that it is not a creed may seem somewhat strained.

On the other hand, however, there may be no other statement of belief in Christian history that begins with an explicit expectation that it may be changed “when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word.” Anyone who thinks of the Fundamental Beliefs statement as a “creed” must recognize that it is a very unusual one that breaks the historic mold.

Of course, like all statements of belief, this one is subject to misuse and abuse. The preamble notwithstanding, it can be regarded as absolute rather than relative, and thus stifle rather than stimulate theological thinking and conversation. It can be interpreted rigidly rather than flexibly,



and used to discourage creative thought about the meaning of Adventist faith. But church people who abuse others with a creed would probably abuse them *without* a creed.

Furthermore, in spite of their potential and actual misuse and their understandably bad press, “creeds” can be useful. A creed can be appropriately “authoritative” in the sense of representing the church family as a whole and expressing its theological consensus. A church needs to define itself theologically; this is a matter not only of identity, but also of “truth in advertising.” Persons interested in becoming part of a particular community of faith deserve to know what they are getting into; and journalists who write about such a community ought to have access to a reliable description of what its people generally believe.

Yet there is an ironic moral to this story. As a community of faith grows, the need for organization becomes increasingly obvious, and so does the need for theological self-definition. The world in which we live and serve, and to which we witness, needs to know who we are and what we believe. Oncoming generations also need to know who we are and what we believe. So it is not only legitimate but valuable to have statements of belief, especially as the community becomes more diverse—ethnically, culturally, educationally, and theologically.

But—and here is the irony—with the growing and obvious need for such statements, there also comes a growing and much less obvious danger inherent in them. As soon as we produce a statement of belief, some people will stop thinking, stop asking questions, and stop growing. And some people will use the statement to judge others, and to try to exclude from the community those who don’t measure up, and to inhibit creative thinking within the community. Loughborough may have been too pessimistic in 1861, but he wasn’t entirely wrong when he warned against developing a creed that would tell us what we must believe, making it a test of fellowship, trying members by it, and denouncing as heretics and persecuting those who do not affirm it.

To be sure, this twofold danger is not an Adventist monopoly; it occurs in every community of faith. But it is especially significant for Adventists, because the spirit, the *geist*, the *ethos* of Adventist theology is an openness to and quest for “present truth”—an openness and quest that “will continue until the end.” This is why the preamble is so important. To stop thinking, to stop asking questions, to stop “seeking a fuller understanding” is to betray our Adventist heritage. It ought to be literally *unthinkable*.

To put it positively: to the extent that a congregation is a context for “obtaining a clearer understanding of

[God’s] Word” and for “discerning new light and beauty in its sacred truths,” it will be an example of what it means to be authentically Adventist in the twenty-first century.

## Notes and References

1. “Doings of the Battle Creek Conference, Oct. 5 & 6, 1861,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Oct. 18, 1861, 148.
2. *Ibid.*
3. Walter R. L. Scragg, “Doctrinal Statements and the Life and Witness of the Church,” unpublished paper presented at workers’ meetings in Vasterang, Sweden, and Manchester, England, between Aug. 24 and Sept. 4, 1981.
4. James White, “Resolution of the Seventh-day Baptist Central Association,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Aug. 11, 1853, 52.
5. James White, “Gospel Order,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Dec. 20, 1853, 173, 180.
6. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Aug. 15, 1854, 1.
7. See *ibid.*, Dec. 26, 1854, 137, 145.
8. *A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1872), 3; quoted in *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 2d rev. ed., 2 vols. (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1996), 1:465.
9. *SDA Encyclopedia* (1996), 1:465–66.
10. *Membership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Battle Creek, Michigan, As It Stood April 16, 1894*, 12, quoted by Scragg, “Doctrinal Statements,” 9.
11. According to Lawrence Geraty, “A New Statement of Fundamental Beliefs,” *Spectrum* 11.1 (July 1980): 2, the other members of the committee were M. E. Kern, associate secretary of the General Conference, and E. R. Palmer, manager of the Review and Herald Publishing Association.
12. See *ibid.* 2–3; Scragg, “Doctrinal Statements,” 15.
13. Raymond F. Cottrell, oral statement at a meeting of the San Diego Adventist Forum, Apr. 8, 2000. The two accounts are not necessarily incompatible; it is possible that Nichol prepared an initial draft that was reviewed and perhaps reworked by Wilcox, and then submitted to the other three members of the committee.
14. Gottfried Oosterwal, “The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Mission: 1919–1979,” unpublished paper cited by Geraty, “New Statement,” 3.
15. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1976), 396. In the second revised edition, (1996), 1:465, the corresponding sentence omits the explicit rejection of the notion of a creed and reads simply, “It was considered to be a summary of the principal features of Adventist beliefs.”
16. Minutes of the President’s Administrative Committee (PREXAD), Mar. 18, 1976, and the President’s Advisory Council (PRADCO), Mar. 24, 1976. According to the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (1996), 1:465, the ad hoc committee was appointed by the chairman of the Church Manual Committee, but this is not supported by the PRADCO minutes.

Eva was a vice president and Seton an associate secretary of the General Conference. Other members of the ad hoc committee were all General Conference personnel: Willis Hackett, Richard Hammill, and Alf Lohne, vice presidents; Clyde Franz, secretary; Charles Bradford, associate secretary; Gordon Hyde, general field secretary; N. R. Dower, Ministerial Association secretary; and Arthur White, secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate.

17. Bernard Seton to Lawrence Geraty, transcribed from audio-tape recording of presentation by Geraty at meeting of San Diego Adventist Forum, Apr. 18, 2000.

18. Geraty, "New Statement," 3.

19. Seton to Geraty.

20. Scragg, "Doctrinal Statements," 21.

21. Seton to Geraty.

22. According to Geraty, "New Statement," 13, n. 5, the group named by Joseph G. Smoot included Richard Schwarz, professor of history and vice president for academic administration; Thomas Blincoe, professor of theology and dean of the Seminary; Ivan Blazen, professor of New Testament; Raoul Dederen, professor of theology; Lawrence Geraty, professor of Old Testament; Roy Graham, professor of theology and provost of the university; William Johnsson, professor of New Testament and associate dean of the seminary; Hans LaRondelle, professor of theology; Gottfried Oosterwal, professor of mission; and William Shea, professor of Old Testament. Kenneth Strand, professor of church history, and I were subsequently added, making a total of twelve. I served as secretary of the group.

23. *Ibid.*, 3-4.

24. The structure given here was essentially established by the Seminary faculty group; the terminology is that of the final version adopted by the General Conference session. See *Adventist Review*, May 1, 1980, 23-27; *SDA Encyclopedia* (1996), 1:465-70.

25. See, for example, Karl's Barth's scheme for his projected but never-finished five-part theological system, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936-58): *Word of God, God, Creation, Reconciliation, Consummation*.

26. See Geraty, "New Statement," 6, 8.

27. "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," *Adventist Review*, Feb. 21, 1980, 8-10.

28. For examples see Geraty, "New Statement," 8.

29. The discussion of the proposed statement of Fundamental Beliefs occurred April 21-25, 1980. For personal observations and interpretation of selected elements of the discussion, see Geraty, "New Statement," 8-13. For the complete official record of the discussion, which occurred April 21-15, see "Session Proceedings" in General Conference Bulletins 5-9, *Adventist Review*, Apr. 23, 1980, 8-11, 14; Apr. 24, 1980, 18-23, 28-29; Apr. 25, 1980, 16-20, 31; Apr. 27, 1980, 14-18; May 1, 1980, 17-18, 20-22.

30. "Seventh Business Meeting, Fifty-third General Conference session, April 21, 1980, 3:15 p.m.: Session Proceedings," *Adventist Review*, Apr. 23, 1980, 8-9.

31. Geraty, "New Statement," 13.

32. The document was not, however, amended directly from the floor. Wilson appointed a twelve-person editorial committee of administrators and scholars to provide wording for changes: Richard

Hammill, vice president of the General Conference (chair); Maurice Battle, associate secretary of the General Conference and secretary of the Church Manual Committee (secretary); Thomas Blincoe, dean of the Theological Seminary; Robert Brown, director of the Geoscience Research Institute; Duncan Eva, vice president of the General Conference; Lawrence Geraty, representative of the Seminary faculty; W. Richard Lesher, director of the Biblical Research Institute; James Londis, pastor of the Sligo Church in suburban Washington; Robert Olson, secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate; Jan Paulsen, president of Newbold College; G. Ralph Thompson, vice president of the General Conference and chair of the Church Manual Committee; and Mario Veloso, director of the temperance and youth department of the South American Division. See "Seventh Business Meeting," 14.

33. See Geraty, "New Statement," 10.

34. Graybill, an assistant secretary of the Ellen G. White estate, had written about the historic Adventist aversion to creedal statement under the pseudonym William Wright. See "Adventism's Historic Witness Against Creeds," *Spectrum* 8.4 (Aug. 1977): 48-56.

35. As reported in "Session Proceedings" for Apr. 24, 1980, 9:30 a.m., *Adventist Review*, Apr. 27, 1980, 13, Graybill's original wording was substantially the same as the final form. The principal difference is a slight softening of the language regarding revision. Whereas Graybill's proposal said, "These formulations can and should be revised," the final version said, "Revision of these statements may be expected."

36. Ellen G. White, "The Mysteries of the Bible a Proof of Its Inspiration," *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948), 5:706.

37. Erwin R. Gane, J. Robert Spangler, and Leo R. Van Dolson, *God Reveals His Love, Adult Sabbath School Lessons*, July-Sept. and Oct.-Dec. 1988.

38. The presented comments generally followed the order of the statement itself: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 19, 7, 25, 8, 23, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27.

39. George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: the Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, Md.: *Review and Herald*, 2000), 2002.

40. According to the official record of the discussion (see references in n. 30 above), at least 120 men and only 6 women participated in the discussion—a ratio of 20 to 1. The gender differences in the experiencing of humanness, God, selfhood, and the community of faith are indisputable grounds for the active and validated involvement of women, not only in pastoral ministry but also in the development and articulation of the Church's theology.

41. See "Articles of Religion," in *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church* (New York: Seabury, 1979), 867-76; "The Augsburg Confession," in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 27-96.

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# The Fundamental Beliefs and “Growing in Christ”:

From a Proposal for a Twenty-eighth Fundamental Doctrine  
Presented to the General Conference, Spring Meeting, 2004

The Fundamental Beliefs play a vital role in the life and mission of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. We are a rapidly growing movement with a presence in more than 200 countries, and the Fundamental Beliefs describe what Seventh-day Adventists believe. Thus, they establish our doctrinal identity and help to keep us united.





As currently stated, the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs dates from the 1980 General Conference Session held in Dallas, Texas. However, the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs voted on that occasion was not intended to necessarily be the last word on the matter. The Fundamental Beliefs are a *living* document, not a creed.

## A. The Fundamental Beliefs: A Living Document

The preamble to the 1980 Fundamental Beliefs states:

“Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church’s understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God’s Holy Word.”

This view of the *living* character of the Fundamental Beliefs really stems from the conviction of the pioneers that we are a people of “present truth” (2 Peter 1:12) who seek always to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit into deeper understanding of truth. Ellen White encouraged us to guard against the tendency to fossilize our beliefs into a creed. Among her many counsels calling upon us to be receptive to new insights, while maintaining the foundations, we find the following:

“Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths. This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the end. But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God’s word, and discourage any further investigation of Scriptures. They become conservative, and seek to avoid discussion” (*Gospel Workers*, pp. 297, 298).

“New light will ever be revealed on the word of God to him who is in living connection with the Sun of Righteousness. Let no one come to the conclusion

that there is no more truth to be revealed. The diligent, prayerful seeker for truth will find precious rays of light yet to shine forth from the word of God. Many gems are yet scattered that are to be gathered together to become the property of the remnant people of God” (*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 34).

The history of development of doctrine in the Seventh-day Adventist Church shows growth in understanding and formulation.

1. The earliest list of doctrines appeared in the masthead of the *Sabbath Review and Advent Herald* in five successive issues, August 15–December 19, 1854. The “leading doctrines” were just five: The Bible alone, the law of God, the Second Coming, the new earth, and immortality alone through Christ.
2. In 1872 Uriah Smith wrote “A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists.” The list had 25 doctrines.
3. In 1889 the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for the first time published a list of “Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists.” This list, based on Uriah Smith’s list from 1872, contained 28 articles.
4. In 1894 the 1,521-member Battle Creek Church issued its own statement of faith. It had 31 elements.
5. The statement of faith that first appeared in the 1889 *Yearbook* was also included in the yearbooks for 1905, and from 1907 to 1914. According to Leroy Edwin Froom, the statement was not included in the yearbooks 1890–1904, 1906, and 1915–1930 because of conflicting views over the Trinity and the Atonement (*Movement of Destiny*, pp. 412, 413).
6. In 1931 F. M. Wilcox prepared a statement of faith on behalf of a committee of four authorized by action of the General Conference Committee. This statement, titled “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists,” had 22 articles. Although it was never formally adopted, it appeared in the 1931 *Yearbook* and in all subsequent yearbooks. In 1932 it was printed in tract form. This was the statement that remained in place



(with slight changes) up until the new formulation in Dallas in 1980.

7. The 1941 Annual Council approved a uniform "Baptismal Vow" and "Baptismal Covenant" based on the 1931 statement.
8. The General Conference Session of 1946 voted that no revision of the Fundamental Beliefs shall be made at any time except by approval of a General Conference Session.
9. In 1980 the General Conference Session made major revisions of the Fundamental Beliefs. Completely new articles were added on: Creation; The Great Controversy; The Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ; The Church; Unity in the Body of Christ; The Lord's Supper; The Gift of Prophecy; and Marriage and the Family. Some existing articles were rephrased...

## Content of the Proposed New Fundamental Belief and the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs

The proposed new fundamental belief has two main purposes. First it explicitly addresses Christian growth in order to exclude eastern transcendental meditation as a spiritual exercise that is incompatible with the gospel of salvation through Christ. Second, it proclaims freedom through Christ from demonic powers to demonstrate that seeking help and guidance from them in our spiritual growth is not only unnecessary but totally incompatible with the work of Jesus on our behalf.

The present Statement of Fundamental Beliefs does not explicitly address those doctrinal concerns. Some of the basic theological elements presupposed in the proposed new statement are briefly touched in some of the doctrinal statements, thus providing a link between this one and the rest of the body of beliefs. We will briefly look at the fundamental beliefs in which this link is found.

### A. Statements Addressing Demonic Power

We read in Statement number 8, ("The Great Controversy"): "To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation." The new pro-

posed statement will reaffirm the content of this sentence but will go beyond it by developing its thought in the context of a call to Christian growth in freedom from the controlling power of demons.

In Statement number 9 ("The Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ") we find a sentence that comes very close to one of the main thoughts of the proposed new statement: "The resurrection of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept the atonement assures their final victory over sin and death." However, it does not clearly state the present freedom Christians enjoy from the enslaving power of demons and neither does it set God's triumph over the forces of evil within the context of a constant Christian growth in Christ.

### B. Statements Addressing Character Development

The Statement on "The Holy Spirit" establishes that, "He [the Holy Spirit] draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God." The sentence describes a fundamental biblical truth but it does not develop the thought. In any case, it is not the purpose of that specific fundamental belief to deal with the phenomenon of Christian growth but to describe in a general way the work of the Holy Spirit not only in our sanctification but also in several other areas.

Concerning the "Experience of Salvation" we read, "Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature." The sentence deals very briefly with Christian renewal and spiritual growth but it does not address the indispensable elements in that growth. That is not the primary purpose of that fundamental belief.

We read in the Statement on "Christian Behaviour," "For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives." This sentence, like the previous ones, is quite general and does not include the importance of prayer, the study of the Word, meditation, and involvement in mission as God's instruments for character development. Neither this fundamental belief nor any of the others can be edited to include the concerns of the proposed new one without distracting from their primary purpose and making them excessively large and cumbersome. Our Fundamental Beliefs are

usually short, dealing with a particular issue in a very concise form, summarizing a significant biblical teaching in a clear way. We should preserve that format.

We may need a new statement that will bring together the main ideas expressed in the statements we quoted and that at the same time will put the emphasis on a daily walk with the Lord characterized by freedom from evil powers and on a devotional life characterized by prayer, Bible study, meditation on God's Word and His providence in our lives, and participation in the gospel commission. This new statement will sharpen the Adventist understanding of the nature of a constant growth in Christ. This is indispensable at a time when some church members are more interested in theological discussion than in the spiritual impact of those doctrines in their daily lives.

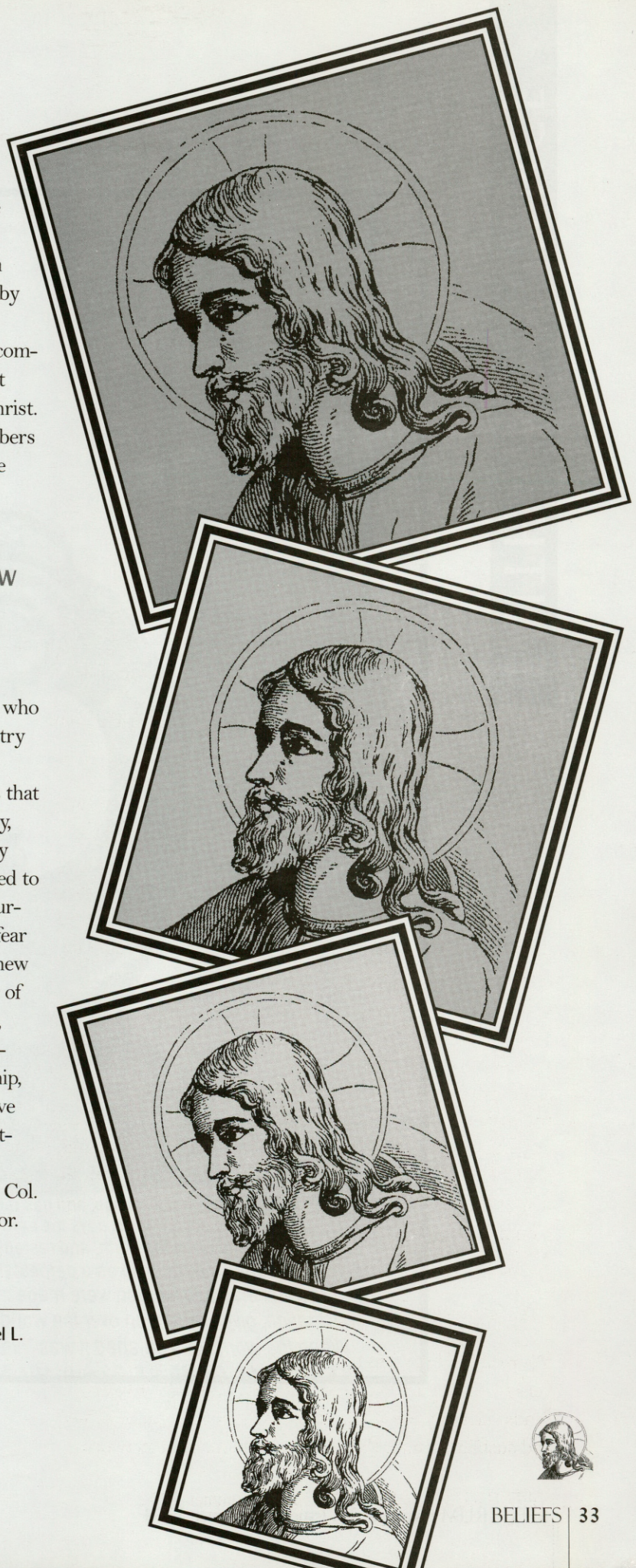
## Possible Content of the Proposed New Fundamental Belief

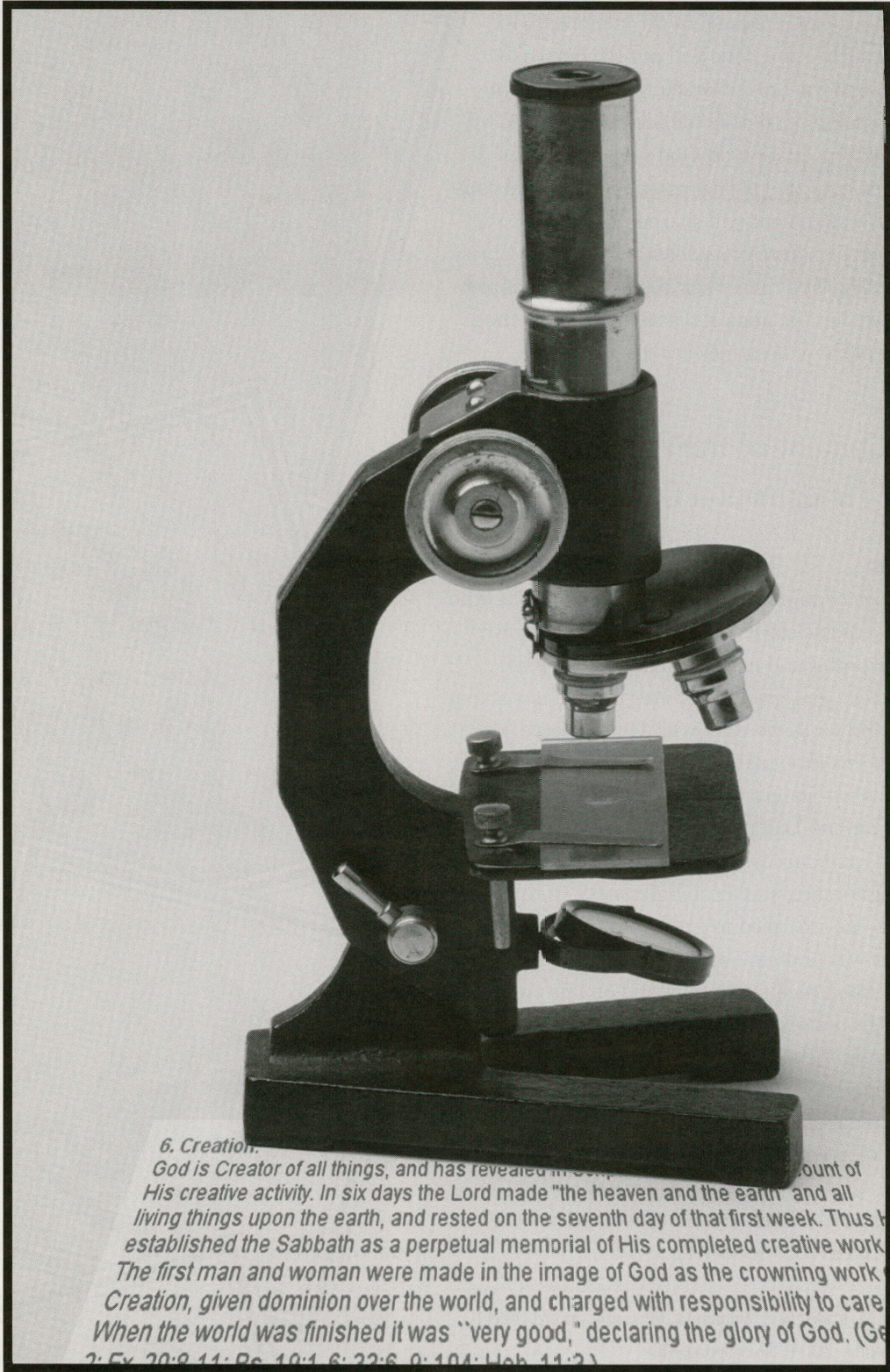
### Growing in Christ

By His cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Instead of evil forces, the Holy Spirit now dwells within us and empowers us. Committed to Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we are set free from the burden of past deeds and our former life with its darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, as we commune with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the church. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us sanctifies every moment and every task. (Ps 1:1-2; 23:4; Col. 1:13-14; 2:6, 14-15; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18, 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Phil. 3:7-14; 1 Thess. 5:16-18; Matt. 20:25-28; John 20:21; Gal. 5:22-25; 1 John 4:4).

Proposed by Angel M. Rodriguez, William G. Johnsson, and Michael L. Ryan at Spring Meeting, 2004, Silver Spring, MD.

An unedited copy of this proposal can be viewed online at [www.adventistreview.org/2004-1515/fund-beliefs.pdf](http://www.adventistreview.org/2004-1515/fund-beliefs.pdf)





*6. Creation.*  
God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made "the heaven and the earth" and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was "very good," declaring the glory of God. (Ge 1:1-5; Ex 20:8-11; Ps 104:1-6; 22:6; Job 1:6-10; 104:1-2)

# Science and Faith in Ecclesial Context

By Richard Rice

Excerpts from a presentation at the  
Glacier View Conference on Faith and Science, August 14, 2003

The question of science and religion is unavoidable for Adventists largely because of our high view of education. No religious community gives education greater emphasis than we do. For Seventh-day Adventists, education is not just a preparation for Christian service or a single facet of Christian existence, it is the very heart of the Christian life. According to Ellen White's most emphatic statement on the topic, "the work of education and the work of redemption are one."<sup>1</sup> This union indicates that education serves a "salvific" purpose and salvation has an educational goal. On this exalted view of education, the purpose of Christian mission is to promote the development of all the soul's powers throughout this life in preparation for the life to come.<sup>2</sup>

The Seventh-day Adventist vision of Christian education includes several beliefs. Because all truth is God's truth, Christian educators must encourage students to pursue knowledge across the whole spectrum of human inquiry. "Let the youth advance as fast and as far as they can in the acquisition of knowledge. Let their field of study be as broad as their power can compass."<sup>3</sup> And because they seek the development of all the soul's powers, they are concerned not

only with *what students believe*, but with *how they think*. Consequently, they encourage students not only to master information, but to do their own thinking—to learn to frame questions, weigh evidence, evaluate different points of view, and then formulate their own conclusions and defend them. The overall goal of the process, as Ellen White puts it, is to "train the youth to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thoughts."<sup>4</sup>



A careful review of the church's history reveals that searching for truth is just as important to Adventists as defending the truth. Accordingly, religion teachers must do more than understand and articulate the Church's doctrinal positions. They must constantly seek a deeper understanding of truth and more effective ways of expressing it. From time to time this will involve raising questions about time-honored positions, and this can be disturbing to some in the Church. But without this openness to truth, this willingness to reconsider past positions and make important changes, Seventh-day Adventists

## Our high concept of creation leads us to believe that God is revealed in nature as well as in Scripture.

would never have revised their understanding of the shut door, embraced the message of righteousness by faith, affirmed the full divinity of Jesus Christ, or developed a trinitarian understanding of God. In other words, Seventh-day Adventist doctrine would never have become fully Christian. As Ellen White insists, "The truth is an advancing truth, and we must walk in the increasing light."<sup>5</sup> "The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people, is not a proof that our ideas are infallible. Age will not make error into truth, and truth can afford to be fair. No true doctrine will lose anything by close investigation."<sup>6</sup>

Because all truth is God's truth and because we seek to develop all the soul's powers, the goal of Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities is a comprehensive learning experience, "an education that is as high as heaven and as broad as the universe."<sup>7</sup> Consequently, our institutions provide instruction across a wide spectrum of disciplines, including the sciences, as well as the humanities, the arts, and, of course, religion. The study of science is important to Adventists for two more specific reasons. Our high concept of creation leads us to believe that God is revealed in nature as well as in Scripture. So a knowledge of the natural world will contribute to our understanding of God. In addition, scientific knowledge has great practical benefit. It enables us to respond to human needs in concrete and helpful ways and thus to fulfill an important aspect of Christian mission.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, this appreciation for science, Adventists have long felt the sort of tensions between science and religion that Christians in general face. Perhaps we can learn from the different approaches of others ways to ease this tension in our midst.

### Response 1: Reinterpret the Faith

Among those who believe that Christians must reinterpret their faith in response to the conclusions of science the best known is probably Rudolf Bultmann. As Bultmann describes it, the purpose of the Bible is not to communicate information about the phenomenal world, but to express a certain understanding of human existence. Accordingly, the central task of theology is to demythologize the New Testament, to distinguish its outdated mythical expressions from its kerygmatic content—its permanently valid message for human beings.<sup>8</sup>

Although many Christians share Bultmann's conviction that a scientific worldview requires us to reinterpret the biblical message, few find the results of his own program acceptable. When he itemizes the elements of the New Testament that cease to have factual significance, they include the entire realm of the supernatural and the miraculous. Perhaps chief among the "untenables" to go are traditional beliefs concerning Jesus, including not only his virgin birth, but also his atoning sacrifice, his resurrection from the dead and his return to the earth. In fact, when Bultmann has finished demythologizing the New Testament, many conclude, precious little remains of the biblical message.

Among those who believe that Bultmann's revisionary interpretation of Christianity goes way too far, a good number insist that the factual accuracy of the Bible is essential to its religious value. In their view, our knowledge of God, and ultimately our salvation, depends on a Bible that is just as reliable when it speaks of history, geography, and biology as when it speaks of God and his love for us. Conversely, they maintain, if the Bible is untrustworthy anywhere, it is untrustworthy everywhere. We could have no confidence in the promises of God or the plan of salvation if the statements of Scripture came up short in the arenas of science or history. And this reliability extends to everything the Bible contains. As one person put it, "If the Bible says the whale swallowed Jonah, I believe it. If the Bible said Jonah swallowed the whale, I'd believe that, too."

Those embracing this view of Scripture believe it is important to show that the Bible's claims are accurate when they speak of natural phenomena and historical events, and not just matters of obvious religious significance. Accordingly, such developments as the appearance of the names of

the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah on the Eblah tablets and the discovery that rabbits and hares reingest fecal pellets and thus “chew the cud” as stated in Leviticus 11:6 and Deuteronomy 14:7 have theological significance.<sup>9</sup> They confirm that the Bible is reliable when it speaks of historical and natural phenomena, no less than when it speaks of the ultimate meaning of human life.

According to those in both positions just described, Bultmannians and biblical inerrantists, we face a clear-cut choice. We cannot pick and choose among the claims of the Bible. We must either commit ourselves to the proposition that Scripture is completely reliable in all its parts, or accept the notion that the biblical worldview that meets us in the Bible, and everything connected to it, is irrelevant to its message.

Whatever their formal commitments, almost no one actually adheres to one of these all-or-nothing approaches to biblical reliability. For the most thoroughgoing demythologizer, the Gospel still contains a factual core.<sup>10</sup> At least the sheer existence of Jesus is essential to Christian faith. And many inerrantists interpret the statements of the Bible in light of the rest of what we know about the world. Even Carl F. H. Henry, one of the most influential proponents of biblical inerrancy, does not construe Genesis 1 literally. He accepts the scientific evidence that supports the great age of the earth and a long succession of distinctive life-forms.

A great number of Christian thinkers occupy a position somewhere between these two views. They take the Bible seriously and hold fast to the doctrine of creation, yet they accept the conventional accounts of life history on earth. For some of them, there is no tension between these views at all. As they see it, creation and cosmology are entirely different issues. To confess faith in God as creator is not to entertain a specific theory of origins, it is to affirm confidence in God's relation to the world here and now and particularly to one's own life. Helmut Thielicke makes this point in the book *Man in God's World*, which drew from a series of lectures he delivered to people in Stuttgart, Germany, as the bombs fell during World War Two. Thielicke takes his thesis from Martin Luther's explanation of the first article of the creed, “I believe that God created me.”<sup>11</sup>

Thielicke insists that creation and cosmology are quite independent. A cosmology, he explains, is “the attempt to pull together all our scientific experience that tells us something about the structure of our world and to construct from it a total picture of the origin, structure, and nature of our world.”<sup>12</sup> It is “the sum of all the scientific knowledge which combines to give us a concept of the total structure

of the world.”<sup>13</sup> Consequently, a cosmology is dependent on the level to which science has developed at any particular point in history.

In contrast to cosmology, Thielicke maintains, the biblical doctrine of creation concerns the personal relationship between the Creator and the creature intended in God's plan.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, Christian faith in the Creator is “independent of any cosmology that happens to be current.” And “the Christian faith itself never dictates what this cosmology should be.”<sup>15</sup> This distinction between creation and cosmology is especially important when it comes to the question of human origins.

Thielicke rejects the dichotomy either creation or evolution. Evolution is concerned with the biological origins of human existence; creation is concerned with the personal relation of human beings to God. Pertaining as they do to different aspects of humanity, Thielicke argues, there is no essential conflict between them. If it makes no difference to faith in God the Creator whether we think of the earth as a disk floating on a vast ocean or as a sphere revolving around the sun,<sup>16</sup> why should it make any difference whether we think of humanity as created directly by God, as formed from the dust of the ground, or as standing at the end of a series of prehuman developmental stages?<sup>17</sup> Moreover, if knowing the physiology of conception and fetal development does not prevent us from believing that we are creatures of God on an individual level, why should the idea of human development from pre-human life forms pose any obstacle to believing that the human race as a whole is the object of God's creative activity?<sup>18</sup>

I don't know how widespread a position like Thielicke's is. But it seems representative of many Christian thinkers, including a large number who accept the miraculous and hold to a strong view of biblical inspiration. One of these is C. S. Lewis, the most influential apologist of the twentieth century, and a hero to many conservative Christians. Lewis believed that human beings originated with a divine creative act involving prehuman life-forms which had evolved within the animal kingdom. “For long centuries,” Lewis wrote in *The Problem of Pain*, “God perfected the animal form which was to become the vehicle of humanity and the image of Himself. ... Then in the fullness of time, God caused to descend upon this organism ... a new kind of consciousness.”<sup>19</sup> Clearly, many thoughtful Christians believe that the biblical account of human origins describes our relationship to God but does not



provide a literal account of our arrival on the earth.

This approach obviously raises a lot of questions. Given the demonstrated success of science in so many areas, it is hard to ignore its conclusions about the history of life on this planet. But just how much can we, should we, and do we let science influence our reading of the Bible? If biblical accounts of human origins are largely figurative, you have to wonder if the same is true when it speaks of human destiny. Then there is the problem of consistency. If we aren't supposed to pick and choose among the contents of the Bible, what permits us to pick and choose among the con-

similarities between the essential presuppositions of science and the convictions of religion.<sup>21</sup>

Besides these intrascientific critiques, other developments raise serious questions about the expansive authority that people often attribute to science. Although the fruits of scientific inquiry are truly impressive, many thinkers are convinced that the scope of scientific knowledge is clearly limited, and they point to aspects of reality with which the empirical sciences are ill-equipped to deal. Several intellectual developments in the last century express the attempt to portray with greater fidelity than science can

**Although a concern for propositional expressions of the faith will always be important, it is a mistake to make it the one essential quality of the Christian community.**

tents of science? How can someone rely on scientific inquiry to lead us to truth and then disregard its conclusions when they seem to conflict with the Bible? That would seem to call into question the value of all scientific endeavor.

### **Response 2: Expose the Limits of Science**

Another way of easing the tension between science and faith involves looking at the nature of scientific inquiry. After careful examination, many people conclude that science is not the objective authority it is cracked up to be. A number of factors require us to lower science from the vaunted position it occupies in many minds.

The best known of these is Thomas Kuhn's book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, whose publication in 1962 was a watershed event in the history of science.<sup>20</sup> Scientific theories, Kuhn argued, are not the dispassionate accounts of objective reality the positivists took them to be. Science has a history, just like every other aspect of human culture. Scientists are human beings like the rest of us, and scientific theories are human constructs. They are interpretations of the world, and like all interpretations, they reflect the perspectives and biases of their authors. As Kuhn explained, the conventional view of science as the steady accumulation of information leading to more and more accurate portrayals of reality doesn't fit the actual course of scientific advance. Instead, science proceeds by fits and starts, and a truly dramatic scientific breakthrough, a scientific revolution, occurs not as the product of conventional science, but only when conventional science breaks down.

Other philosophers, too, have shown that science is not as "scientific" as most people think it is. As it turns out, scientific thinking contains a lot of "nonscientific" elements. In this connection, Michael Polanyi notes some significant

manage the richness of concrete experience.

One is phenomenology. According to a recent introduction to the movement, the object of phenomenological reflection is "prepredicative experience," experience *before* it has been formulated in judgments and expressed in outward linguistic form—experience before it becomes packaged for explicit consciousness. Phenomenology thus interrogates the supposedly objective view of the sciences, the God's eye perspective, the view from nowhere. It holds that the traditional ideal of knowledge, the one adopted in math and the exact sciences, is an *idealization*, a special construction of the theoretical attitude, remote from everyday experience.<sup>22</sup>

Process thought represents another philosophical attempt to render more fully the richness of concrete experience. Science depends heavily on "perception in the mode of presentational immediacy," to use a slice of process jargon, perceptions that are characterized by clarity and distinctness, like vivid visual impressions. But there is another mode of perception, according to process thinkers, namely, "perception in the mode of causal efficacy." This mode of experience is vague and emotion-laden rather than clear and distinct, so it is more difficult to analyze, yet it is the most basic form of experience there is. A sense of bodily derivation, for example, and a sense of temporal passage are both permanent elements in our experience, and they are best understood as aspects of this type of perception. In the quest for a truly comprehensive view of reality, we must take into account the sort of experience that science doesn't reach.

Postmodernism provides yet another, more recent and more forthright, expression of dissatisfaction with science. As many critics now see it, modern science is the clearest



expression of the Enlightenment project, and we should be skeptical of its claims for a variety of reasons. For post-moderns, the modern world, that vision of reality produced by unqualified confidence in scientific inquiry and unqualified optimism for the fruits of technology, is a problematic abstraction. We can embrace it only ignoring the vast sweep of human experience past and present, which has always been open to ranges of meaning inaccessible to mere rational inquiry, and by overlooking the effects of our ceaseless manipulation of the environment.

Indeed, for postmodernism, the rational mind itself is an abstraction. There is no one way of looking at reality, no integrated program of intellectual operations, no “value-neutral or publicly accessible objective truth,” no “universally accessible foundation for public discourse.”<sup>23</sup> We privilege one perspective, the critique goes, only by ignoring others, specifically those outside the stream of thinkers who are Western, white, male, and straight.

Do these developments offer comfort to conservative Christians, whose inherited beliefs often conflict with accepted scientific theories? To a limited degree, perhaps. The recognition that science is a human construct and that it effectively ignores vast ranges of our experience allows us to question the validity of its conclusions, but only up to a point. Like it or not, the world delivered to us by scientific inquiry is the world in which we live and we cannot depart it by deliberate choice.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, there comes a time when certain beliefs enter the thought patterns of every thinking person, whether or not science has definitively established their truth. A good example of this is the belief that the earth rotates on its axis. The belief was controversial in the sixteenth century but came to be widely accepted in centuries following, even though incontrovertible proof did not arrive until Foucault’s pendulum swung from a church in Paris in the middle of the nineteenth century.

The point is also instructive because of the way in which Christianity accommodated this change. According to many accounts of the church’s response to early modern scientists, religious leaders resisted the idea of a heliocentric universe because it detracted from the central place this earth and its human inhabitants occupied in the great drama of salvation. Once the Copernican revolution won the day, however, Christians not only adjusted nicely to the notion that the earth revolved around the sun, they found positive theological significance in the astronomical insignificance of the earth. The fact that God was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for fallen humanity, inhabitants of a mere cosmic speck, a second-rate planet circling a third-rate star, only underscores the magnitude of God’s love.

### Response 3: Uphold the Priority of Community

As we face the thorny nest of problems connected with the expression *science and faith*, only one thing seems clear. There is no consensus among Christians as to how these issues should be resolved, nor even as to how these problems should be defined. For some the question is simply whether we will take the Bible as it reads. For others, it is whether we will accept the overwhelming evidence that supports conventional scientific views of earth history.

What concerns me is the effect of these issues on the community we all represent. In recent years, I have had a growing appreciation for the importance of the church, understood as a community of faith, hope, and love, and I’ve come to the conclusion that belonging is more crucial to the life of this community than either believing or behaving, important though these elements certainly are.<sup>25</sup>

My basic premise is that Christianity is inherently social. Although Christian faith affirms the tremendous value of the individual, it places even greater importance on the group. And although a personal relationship with God is essential to Christian existence, participation in the life of the community is just as important. To be Christians in the full, robust, biblical sense of the word, therefore, we cannot go it alone.

With this concern uppermost in mind, I have several suggestions to make for our response to the challenge of science and faith. The first is to consider carefully the role of doctrine in the life of the community. According to an influential notion, the contents of faith form a coherent network of propositions that are independently true yet logically interconnected. The believer is one who comprehends and assents to each of these propositions. The community of faith comprises those who have come to similar doctrinal conclusions through personal investigation. On this account, the religious community is very much like a scientific community. For both, the individual is the final arbiter of truth, truth is available to any thinking person, and truth can be formulated in a consistent set of propositions.

Although a concern for propositional expressions of the faith will always be important, it is a mistake to make it the one essential quality of the Christian community. Other expressions of truth are even more important and other



qualities account for its life. According to one of the most famous passages in Paul's writings, the Christian community lives by faith, hope, and love, rather than by knowledge—one of the things that “passes away.” Moreover, the life of faith is a life together, a life in which learning from, caring for, and growing with one another are essential.

Recent studies of Christian doctrine retrieve it from the sphere of intellectual abstraction and locate it squarely in the life of community. According to Ellen T. Charry, Christian doctrine has a pastoral function. The goal of “primary Christian doctrines” is to help people flourish through knowing and loving God. Theology thus has a “sapiential” purpose. As she explains it, “The norm of sapience claims that the truth to be known is for the well-being of the knower. While modern knowledge builds on a healthy dose of skepticism, sapience has trust built in from the very outset.”<sup>26</sup> Consequently, “the modern understanding of reason and truth constructed by Locke, Hume, and Kant is too narrow to be adequate for theological claims.”<sup>27</sup> If Charry is right, the role of doctrines is to upbuild and strengthen the community of faith. If we see them as a set of propositions to be proven, we could easily miss their point.

The most important issue before us as members of a community we care about is not, who's right about origins and why, but how we can affirm our collective confidence in God's sovereign love in ways that include and encourage all of us. In other words, whatever we say about creation, it should ultimately strengthen our faith, hope, and love.

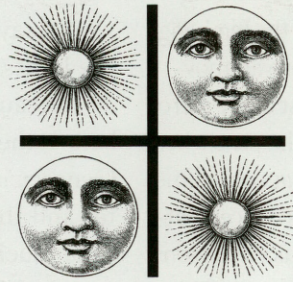
A final thought on Christian community returns us to the social nature of belief. In the great triad that defines the Christian life, love is obviously social, but so are faith and hope. A high view of Christian community will place our quest for doctrinal clarity and unity in a new light. First, it means that various minds and various attitudes are important to the community's quest for truth. Some have the gift of quiet confidence. (Perhaps this is what Paul had in mind when he lists faith as one of the gifts of the Spirit to the church [1 Cor. 12:9]). Some have the gift of vigorous questioning. Each group needs the other and both belong equally to the body of Christ. Second, it means that the most basic expression of faith is not *I believe*, but *we believe*. Those whose disposition and training inclines them to doubt and question may find it difficult to say *I believe* in isolation, but bolstered by the confidence of others, they may find the strength to say within the community of faith, hope, and love, *we believe* in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

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# Rating the Creation and the Big Bang

*By George P. Saxon*

**A**s an Adventist young person growing up, I remember the emphasis that was placed upon nature. We called nature God's second book, and studying it was exciting. I learned that the laws of physics are God's rules for the universe. I also learned that as a church we have not recognized this fact.

Because the laws of physics are God's laws, one would expect agreement between God's physical laws and God's written word. Unfortunately, there is disagreement. The difficulty in finding some agreement is really a conflict between the interpretation of what we read in the Bible and the writings of Ellen White, and the ramifications of the laws of physics. We need to look more carefully at both.

The Faith and Science Conferences held by our church are indications that our leaders take the interpretation differences seriously. This is the third year in a row that Adventist scientists, theologians, and administrators have sat together to try to examine interpretations. Will

they be able to come to a final conclusion?

In physics, physical measurements can be as precise as one chooses, but the value is never exact. For example, the value of the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter ( $\pi$ ) has been calculated to 100,000 decimal places, yet this value is still only approximate. Although not exact, a calculation to three or four places is usually good enough for most of our activities. What are the chances of coming to an interpretation of creation that can work for most of our activities—be they scientific or theological?

What follows are some of my own thoughts toward this goal.



The synthesis of many of the discoveries made during the past century has led to the concept of the big bang. Given the discovery that the galaxies were all moving away from each other and that those furthest away were moving most rapidly, there had to be a time in the past when they were all much closer together. Supposedly at some time in the distant past all matter in the universe was concentrated at a single point. There followed a tremendous explosion that was the beginning of the creation of the universe. This event supposedly occurred about fifteen billion years ago.

Most physicists now accept the idea and ramifications of the big bang. The big bang explains how the elements were created, how the galaxies came into being, the cosmic background radiation, and many more details of the universe as we see it today.

Philosophically, some physicists do not like the idea of the big bang since it suggests a creation event and by extension a Creator. The big bang concept also challenges some who hold a "young" view of the creation event. Whether or not a person accepts the idea of the big bang, the laws of physics were certainly in existence before God ever said "Let there be light." Let us examine the first three verses of Genesis 1 from the King James Version:

**1:1** In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

**1:2** And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

**1:3** And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

There was a "deep." If there was a deep, then the law of gravity existed, otherwise the water would not have been contained. Water already existed. If water existed, then the law of electromagnetism existed. The electromagnetic force is the mechanism that holds the water molecule together. The fact that matter existed means that nuclear forces existed, otherwise matter could not have existed. Notice the verse says that water—not ice—existed. If liquid water existed, the atomic mechanism for light also existed.

To give an example: the excited hydrogen atom gives off ultraviolet radiation whenever an electron falls from an excited state to the ground state. Light is given off whenever the electron falls from a higher excited state to the first excited state, and heat radiation is given off when the electron falls from a higher excited state to the second excited state. The command

"Let there be light" was similar to what any of us would say when we enter a dark room: "Let's turn on the lights."

Because matter and the laws of physics existed before the creation of the earth as described in Genesis, is it possible that the event that created matter and the laws of physics could have occurred at a time much earlier than the time given for the Genesis account? This idea has been around for many years and has been known as the gap theory. According to this theory, an indeterminate amount of time elapsed between Genesis 1 verses 1 and 2.

Interpretation of these verses is important. If you accept the gap theory, then on a scale of 1–10 (1 being false and 10 being certainty) what belief rating would you give to this interpretation? If not, what is that belief rating? I personally give the gap theory a rating of about 7 or 8, but not a 10. This is not to say that God could not have done it in exactly the manner we have traditionally interpreted these events. Could God have used the big bang to create the universe? I hesitate to put any limits on what God could have done. Does the big bang matter at all to our church and to our theology? If there is difficulty here, I fail to see it.

What is your interpretation of the flood story given in Genesis? Was the story as recorded a heavenly fax given to Moses? Or was the story an interpretation by an observer that was passed down by oral tradition for a thousand years before Moses recorded it?

A literal interpretation of the flood story entails a gross violation of the laws of physics. Since the laws of physics are God's laws, the traditional interpretation causes some concern to physicists. The first question needing explanation is: Where did the water come from and what happened to it?

If the entire earth were covered with water, there would have been no place for the water to go, no place for the water to dry up. Some have argued that the amount of water on the earth has been relatively constant, but that the mountains and continents were lower then and that God just pushed the mountains and continents down to begin the flood. Later, he pushed the mountains and continents up and let the water drain into the ocean basins.

This argument poses a question concerning the source of the sedimentary rock that can now be seen.

There is also a question about the disposition of the heat that would be generated if the mountains and continents were first flattened and then raised to their present elevation. Sedimentary rocks require erosion from some source and then deposition.

Carbonate and salt deposition pose further mechanical questions for the time frame involved. A near-surface salt dome in Hockley, Texas, contains a room created by the mining of 99.9 percent pure salt—enough to contain the Astrodome. What was the source of all of that salt and how did it get there?

As for the heat generated from mountain and continent building, an approximate, back-of-the-envelope calculation indicates that the heat generated from the mountain building as well as the continued nuclear heat sources and the sun's radiation would have raised the temperature of the earth to a temperature that would have vaporized the oceans.

For all of these reasons, I give the traditional heavenly fax interpretation only about a 4 on the belief rating scale. This is not to argue that God could not have caused the flood to occur in exactly the same manner as we have traditionally interpreted the event.

Another possible interpretation involves the flooding of the Black Sea. The idea here is that several

al interpretation that I have posed above. It could also explain the abundance of marsupials in Australia and their scarcity in the rest of the world. I would give this interpretation a belief rating of about 7.

As we look at the age of the universe, the current scientific thinking places the creation of the universe at the big bang at about 15 billion years before present (ybp). The earth is probably a remnant of an exploding star and was captured by our sun about 4.3 billion ybp. Rudimentary life forms appeared about 3.3 billion ybp, and the Cambrian life explosion occurred about 558 million ybp. Another life explosion occurred at the beginning of Carboniferous time, about 365 million ybp. A third occurred during the early Cretaceous, about 140 million ybp. Domestic animals and man first appeared during recent times, about 15,000 ybp.

Can the creation story as recorded in Genesis and interpreted literally fit into this picture? My answer is: Only with a great deal of difficulty. Several attempts have been made. One explanation is that God created this planet with built-in age so it appears to be much older than it really is. Another explanation is that the

## What are the chances of coming to an interpretation of creation that can work for most of our activities—be they scientific or theological?

thousand years ago the sea level was lower than it is now due to the buildup of glaciers on the continents. The Black Sea area contained a large fresh water lake much smaller than the present Black Sea. As glaciers melted and the sea level rose the ocean eventually broke through the barrier that separated the Black Sea from the Mediterranean Sea. This would have been a cataclysmic event. Water pouring through could very well have been described by an observer as the fountains of the deep breaking up. An observer on Noah's ark could well have described that event with words recorded in the Bible.

The Black Sea is about two-thirds the size of Texas, and it is easy for me to envision a situation where a large boat with no means of propulsion could have floated about for more than one year without its passengers seeing land. This interpretation would provide an explanation for the objections to the tradition-

laws of physics have changed over the years. Still a third explanation is that the creation event recorded in Genesis is only the latest and that God visited this planet several times in the past and created life and shaped the environment.

However we interpret the written record and the physical evidence, and regardless of absolute dates, the record of life on this planet goes back far before the first appearance of humans in the fossil record. To complicate matters, early human fossils do not resemble modern humans.

The built-in age explanation raises questions. Why would God deceive us by making the earth appear to be much older than it really is? Does he have some hidden agenda? This explanation is out of character



for God, and brings into question his love for us.

Could the laws of physics have changed over the years? By examining the light from stars that range in distance from a few light years away to those that are billions of light years distant we can say without doubt that the laws of physics have not changed.

Did God create life? I believe that God did and give this interpretation a belief rating of 10. Was all life created at the events described in Genesis 1 and 2? Were there previous creation events? Could the creation story given in Genesis have been the last of several occasions

position is lacking. Indeed, there is substantial evidence that death has occurred throughout the history of life on this planet.

Some argue that if we have multiple creations there is no basis for the Sabbath doctrine. As a church, we connect the basis of the Sabbath solely with the Fourth Commandment as given in Exodus 20, which cites the Genesis creation story. Why have we placed so little weight on the Fourth Commandment as stated in Deuteronomy 5, which gives a different reason to keep the Sabbath? Although this is not the subject of this

**By examining the light from stars that range in distance from a few light years away to those that are billions of light years distant we can say without doubt that the laws of physics have not changed.**

in which God visited the earth and created life?

There are several objections to these ideas. Special creations could certainly explain the Cambrian, Carboniferous, and Cretaceous life explosions. But from the biblical description of the most recent creation we would expect to find more physical evidence, especially had it occurred during the last forty thousand years. Further complexities arise from the fact that many species first appear in the geological column at times different from the major life explosions discussed above. Where did they come from?

Special creations lead to consideration of when death first occurred. The Adventist Church has taken the position that all death is related to sin. In Romans 5:12 and 7:23, Paul argues this point. However, we discount statements in Genesis 3:22-24 about the flaming swords, in which God stated that humans could not live forever—even in sin—by eating from the Tree of Life. Why was that tree in the Garden of Eden if Adam and Eve did not need to eat from it? Ellen White writes in *Patriarchs and Prophets* that even without sin their bodies would have deteriorated had they continued to eat from it. Her implication is that death is a natural process, and that it occurs to all who do not have access to the Tree of Life.

Some Adventists object to the idea of multiple creations. They argue that without sin there is no death, and that when Adam sinned the very nature of plants and animals changed. Physical evidence to support this

article, many good arguments can also be made for the Sabbath doctrine based upon New Testament Scripture, and I believe we should do so more often than we do.

Because I believe (10 on the belief rating scale) that God created all life, it seems reasonable to me that creation occurred at several different times in the past, with the Genesis account being the most recent. However, I cannot give the idea of multiple creations a belief value of more than 6 or 7. Perhaps additional physical or geographical evidence will be found to support this theory, to which I have already added my own interpretation of the written Word.

**C**ould my analysis be the understanding that works like a measurement of pi to the third or fourth decimal place? Perhaps, but will it satisfy everyone? In my opinion, probably not at this time.

As scientists, theologians, and administrators begin deliberations again this year, will they find common ground and definitive answers to the many questions that surround creation? Time will tell. Meanwhile, we should be thankful for their efforts, show respect for those who see these issues differently, and pray for reconciliation, which is the only viable long-term solution.

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George Saxon is now retired after working for many years as a geophysicist. He also taught college students for several years and finished his employment career as a UNIX systems manager.

# MUSIC





Can't Stop My Soul from Singing:

## A Seventh-day Adventist Philosophy of Music

From a Proposal Presented to the General Conference,  
Spring Meeting, 2003

Choose  
the best and  
above all...  
draw close to  
our Creator  
and Lord and  
glorify Him.

**B**ecause God made humans in His image, we share a love and appreciation for music with all His created beings. In fact, music can touch and move us with a power that goes beyond words or any other type of communication. At its purest and best, music lifts our beings into the very presence of God where angels and unfallen beings worship Him in song.

But sin has cast a blight over the Creation. The divine image has been marred and well-nigh obliterated; in all aspects this world and God's gifts come to us with a mingling of good and evil. Music, which may move us to the most exalted human experience, may be used by the prince of evil to debase and degrade us, to stir up lust, passion, despair, anger, and hatred.

The Lord's messenger, Ellen G. White, continually counsels us to raise our sights in music. She tells us, "Music, when not abused, is a great blessing; but when it is put to a wrong use, it is a terrible curse."—1T497

Of the power of song, she writes:

"It is one of the most effective means of impressing the heart with spiritual truth. How often to the soul hard-

pressed and ready to despair, memory recalls some word of God's,—the long-forgotten burden of a childhood song,—and temptations lose their power, life takes on new meaning and new purpose, and courage and gladness are imparted to other souls!...As a part of religious service, singing is as much an act of worship as is prayer. Indeed, many a song is prayer...As our Redeemer leads us to the threshold of the Infinite, flushed with the glory of God, we may catch the themes of praise and thanksgiving from the heavenly choir round about the throne; and as the echo of the angels' song is awakened in our earthly homes, hearts will be drawn closer to the heavenly singers. Heaven's communion begins on earth. We learn here the keynote of its praise."—Ed 168



As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe and preach that Jesus is coming again soon. In our worldwide proclamation of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6–12 we call all peoples to accept the everlasting gospel and prepare to meet our soon-returning Lord. We challenge all to choose the good and not the bad, to “say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.”—Titus 2:12, 13

We believe that the gospel impacts all areas of life. We therefore hold that, given the vast potential of music for good or ill, we cannot be indifferent to it. While realizing that tastes in music vary greatly from individual to individual, and that ultimately choices must be made individually, we believe that the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen G. White suggest principles that can inform our choices. We therefore offer the following principles as a guide—not as a manual—to the world Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## Principles to Guide the Christian

1. The over-riding principle comes from 1 Corinthians 10:31: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” This means that all music the Christian listens to, whether sacred or secular, will glorify God. Anything that cannot meet this high standard will weaken our experience with Him.
2. The second major principle follows from the first: “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is pure, whatever is right, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”—Phil 4:8 As followers of Jesus Christ who hope and expect to join the heavenly choirs, we view life on this earth as a preparation for, and foretaste of, the life to come.  
  
On these two foundations—glorifying God in all things and choosing the noblest and the best—depend the other principles listed below.
3. Christian music fosters our spiritual, psychological, and social sensitivity, and our intellectual growth. It

is characterized by quality, balance, appropriateness, and authenticity.

4. Christian music is holistic, appealing to both the intellect and the emotions and affecting the body in a positive way.
5. Christian music reveals creativity rather than monotony and repetitiveness.
6. Christian music is drawn from quality melodies, harmonies used in an interesting and artistic way, and rhythm that complements them.
7. Christian music employs lyrics that positively stimulate intellectual abilities as well as our emotions and our will power. Good lyrics are creative, rich in content, and of good composition. They focus on the positive and reflect moral values; they educate and uplift; and they correspond with sound Biblical theology.
8. In Christian music, musical and lyrical elements work together harmoniously to influence thinking and behavior in harmony with Biblical values.
9. Christian music shuns theatrics and pride in display.
10. Christian music maintains a judicious balance of spiritual, intellectual, and emotional elements, so that the lyrics are not overwhelmed by the volume of the accompanying instruments.
11. Christian music recognizes and acknowledges the contribution of different cultures in worshiping God. Musical forms and instruments vary greatly in the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist family, and music drawn from one culture may sound strange to someone from a different culture. As members of a world family, we respect the music of our brothers and sisters in every land who worship God sincerely through culturally conditioned musical idioms.
12. Christian music does not make a sharp distinction between “sacred” and “secular.” At no moment do we



cease to be God's sons and daughters who seek to glorify Him in all things and to choose only the best. Music that does not directly praise and adore God—so-called “secular” music—has a legitimate place in the life of the Christian. It comes out of our very being, expressing the human spirit's reaction to life, love, and the world in which the Lord has placed us. Most music today belongs to this arena, and this is where music has been most degraded by the ravages of sin. The Christian will choose judiciously and prayerfully the music from this arena, noting lyrics and the impact for enhancing or diminishing personal spirituality.

## Application

The Fundamental Belief #21 (Christian Behavior) sets out the broad lifestyle parameters voted by the Church. This Application section, therefore, supplies suggestions, illustrations, and examples to show how the 12 principles relating to Christian music may come to expression in the lives of members.

1. When we come together to worship the Lord, music should be rendered in the best possible way. All church members should be participants. Careful planning is essential. The pastor should take a keen interest in increasing the quality of church music. Any attempt to organize a vibrant worship service only to give pleasant feelings, be entertained, or entertain others, misses the purpose of true worship. Worship focuses on God, not on us.
2. We should plan a balance of hymns addressed to God and hymns containing petitions, appeals, teaching, testimonies, admonitions, and encouragement (as in the Psalms).
3. We encourage churches to establish a choir, quartet, or some other group of vocalists. Preference should be given to material with scriptural texts. Lyrics must correspond with sound biblical theology. If a language other than the native tongue is used, a translation should be provided.
4. The music score should correspond with the level of training of the musicians.
5. Churches may wish to form a committee that is responsible for planning regular worship services.
6. Churches should consider supporting children in their musical training in order to prepare future leaders in the field of music.
7. Personal taste and experience, habits and culture are not sufficient guides in selecting music, especially within the realm of worship. Likewise, “keeping up with the times” is not a sufficient argument. On the other hand, using only the hymns and the music of our pioneers is not sufficient since God himself calls us repeatedly for creative uses of “new songs.”—Ps 96:1
8. Musicians should personally know the God to whom they sing and make music.
9. Music should be prepared, practiced, and planned.
10. Music is important for Christian homes, with music education and appreciation beginning early in the life of children. Parents are examples and role models for their children. Parents should be encouraged to become familiar with good music and be able to distinguish between music of quality.
11. Parents should talk to their children about great music and listen together to good music. Special care should be taken when listening subconsciously to background music. A home music library of wisely selected materials can be very beneficial.
12. Adventist education in schools, churches, and homes should be open to a broad variety of good music in the classical and folk music styles. Seventh-day Adventist children and young people should be encouraged to learn how to play instruments and read music; they should sing in choirs and groups and participate in meaningful worship experiences.
13. Musical presentations in all Seventh-day Adventist educational institutions should conform to the guidelines of the Church. This applies to local talent as well as to visiting artists, groups, and officially sponsored use of media entertainment.



14. Christians will shun certain music styles and any secular music such as rock and related forms that opens the mind to impure thoughts, leads to unholy behavior, or destroys the appreciation for that which is pure and holy.
15. As Seventh-day Adventists we are challenged to be educated and to educate ourselves in the area of music and to develop a taste for good music.

## Conclusions

We live in controversial and momentous times where increasingly people and societies express religious feelings without clear Christian and biblical guidance. Music has become a major issue, requiring spiritual discernment and decision.

Consequently, we must ask these important questions while seeking to make good musical choices:

1. Does the music to which we listen, or that we perform, have moral substance and depth in it, both lyrically and instrumentally?
2. What is the intention behind the music? Does the music send out a positive or negative message?

When we listen to the music, do we find that it conforms to the criteria that Paul spells out in 1 Corinthians 10:31 and Philippians 4:8?

3. Is the intention of the music being communicated effectively? Is the musician fostering an atmosphere of reverence? Do the words say one thing while the music says something else?
4. Are we seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the choice of both secular and religious music?

Seventh-day Adventist music-making means to choose the best and above all to draw close to our Creator and Lord and glorify Him.

Music committee members: Leo Ranzolin, Sr., Robert W. Holbrook, Kelly Mowrer, Eurydice Osterman, Geri Mueller. GC Vice President Ted N. C. Wilson is responsible for gathering responses.

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## Toward an Adventist Aesthetic for the Arts

By Daniel Reynaud

We need to remember that God is the Author of beauty, and that he delights in it for its own sake.

The recent General Conference discussion paper on music (pages 46–49, above) raises an interesting issue: that of a specifically Adventist position on music. One of the greatest problems in the paper is its failure to draw a clear distinction between music as a means of evangelism and as a form of more general artistic expression. Unfortunately, the Christian tendency to view music specifically and the arts in general as mere extensions of evangelism typically clouds our understanding.

It is not just music that is so confusingly managed; the arts in general often lack a sound philosophical base in the modern Christian world. Art can be evangelistic, but that is far from defining its limits for the Christian. Music, and art in general, may be created by non-Christians, and may even embody anti-Christian values, and still be of use to the Christian, for art provides a powerful window into the heart and soul of a society.

When we define our engagement with the arts in narrow, religious, parochial terms, we run the risk of failing to understand the pains and concerns of the beating heart of this lost world that we are called to reconnect to the heart of God.

Hence, we need to step back and clearly define a sound Adventist philosophical base for the arts if we are to take an appropriate stand on any particular art form.

The association of the arts and Christianity is a long and honorable one. Christian rules and church officials patronized cathedral builders, composers, sculptors, and painters, and poetry and drama were regular features of church life through the liturgy and the cycle of mystery plays for major celebrations such as Easter and Christmas. Historically, Christianity has cultivated the arts, and rightly so.

However, evangelical Christianity in general, and Seventh-day Adventism in particular, have not usually been at ease

with the arts, even in recent times. We have often been suspicious of them, and critical of their pernicious influence. At some time or other, reform-minded Protestants have roundly condemned novels and other forms of fiction, stage drama, movies—especially when shown in theaters—television, popular rock music, and modern art. They have been variously criticized as bizarre and incomprehensible, if not licentious and corrupting.

The lack of an artistic tradition among Evangelicals is often reflected in the ugly architecture of many churches, where it has been labeled a sin to waste God's money on anything more than the strictly functional. Artistic innovation has been abandoned to secular culture, and many Christians ignore or even reject the arts.

This cultural impoverishment has come about largely due to the English-American Puritan tradition, and thus is far less evident in Protestant groups that have their origins in Continental Europe. From the time of the English Reformation in the mid-sixteenth century, Puritan groups in England were keen to rid the church of Catholic practices such as kneeling for communion and the use of candles and crosses. Attitudes soon spread to anything associated with Roman Catholicism, including church organs and singing in harmony, stained glass windows, and drama.

The English Civil War in the 1640s accentuated the problem when Puritan groups opposed King Charles I, who, despite his many faults and weaknesses as a political figure, had probably the finest artistic tastes of any English monarch. In opposing the king's political and theological policies, many Puritans also rejected his patronage of the arts, the fine musicians, painters, and architects attracted to his court.

This attitude crossed the Atlantic with the refugees from the reigns of James I, Charles I, and Charles II, and became entrenched in particular forms of American Protestantism. Typically, Puritan tradition became so occupied with theology that at best it had little time for the arts, at worst seeing them as a distraction from urgent matters at hand. Many modern Protestant churches are descended from the Puritan tradition, and although some Puritan restrictions have eased, allowing hymns and organs back into churches, the maintenance of a strong interest in theology has often been at the expense of a development of the arts.

Although the Adventist Church is a self-proclaimed champion of restoring the fullness of the gospel, an examination of our philosophy can reveal some gaps in

this fullness. Theological concerns have relegated aesthetics to the fringe. The imperative of a Second Advent and the Apocalypse can make involvement in art appear frivolous, for this world's art will be destroyed in the hell fires whereas holiness becomes the deciding issue. But this line of thinking obscures the fact that holiness includes wholeness, and that God demonstrated in creation a deep interest in aesthetics, a quality with which he has imbued humanity and that he wishes to see developed in order to fully experience life.<sup>1</sup>

The study of theology, which Protestants champion, belongs to an area that philosophers term *epistemology*, which is study of what is true and how we know that it is true. The Adventist Church has always been strong in the area of defining truth. Traditionally it is often stated in the absolute, as "The Truth." Christians like truth; it is concrete, objective, black and white, and simple. But truth is not everything. Jesus proclaimed that he was more than just truth when he said "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6).

The discipline of philosophy is made up of three major branches, of which epistemology is just one. Another branch is *metaphysics*, the study of what is real, arguably of what is "The Way." Science deals largely with this area. Again, Seventh-day Adventists are fairly comfortable here, even if historically the Church has had major conflicts with aspects of scientific theory. Although many conservative Christians argue with science's evolutionary orientation, by and large, Christianity is at peace with scientific laws and definitions of reality (and fascinatingly, most Fundamentalists find the absolutes of science more comfortable and comforting than the relatives of the literary/artistic world, even though it is science that is most responsible for shattering the Western world's faith in Christianity).

The third branch of philosophy is *axiology*, the study of what is of value, which we might equate to "The Life." This branch is divided into two parts: *ethics*, the study of what is right and wrong; and *aesthetics*, the study of what is beautiful. In ethics, again our Church has a fairly well-developed outlook, with a body of written codes and unwritten conventions and traditions that



carefully define right and wrong behavior—for example with regard to diet, Sabbath observance, and dating.

But in the area of aesthetics, the Church is unsure of itself, lacking clearly stated aesthetic principles by which to judge. Typically, when it tries to make aesthetic judgments, it does so by applying skills from its area of strength—epistemology—and turns to absolute, binary, black-and-white judgments for the arts.

We cannot do that. We cannot judge beauty by the rules for determining truth, any more than a scientist can solve a theological issue by applying the scientific

method in the whole person, not just the soul. Although various Protestant groups have rightly pressed for a more complete gospel that is also interested in people's physical, social, and material well-being, we have often failed to provide for the Christian's aesthetic needs.

A second biblical principle is that the creative element is a vital part of what makes us human. It was when God was at his most creative that he said, "let us make man in our own image" (Gen. 1:26). To reinforce the point, Genesis 2:9 emphasizes the aesthetic qualities of the trees in Eden, not just their functional

## Theology and science may point our head to God, but art points our heart to him.

method. Science can be used for many helpful purposes; it can even offer evidence in support of the existence of God, but it can never prove theology to be true. God refuses to be confined in a test tube for repeated experiments. Christian theology is dependant in part on divine revelation, a process that lies outside the proper realm of science. Now if theology requires theological processes, and science the scientific method, when it comes to judging aesthetics, we must drop theological criteria and instead use aesthetic principles to draw artistic conclusions.

The Bible outlines some aesthetic principles, but typically not in any systematic way. This is strikingly similar to its presentation of theology, which is equally unstructured. Systematic theology is the product of a more recent scientific age than that of the biblical era, and we should note that even the Bible's theology is most often presented obliquely through artistic literary devices such as narrative, poetry, and apocalyptic, further enhancing the status of an artistic perspective for the Christian.

Theologians are required to work their way through these literary expressions, distilling abstract theological principles from the mass of story and verse. We must do the same to understand the underlying aesthetic principles on which the Bible is built.

**T**he first aesthetic principle is the wholeness of humanity—mind, body, and soul. Adventism rejects the division of the person into spiritual and nonspiritual parts, and insists that God is interest-

ed in the whole person, not just the soul. Although various Protestant groups have rightly pressed for a more complete gospel that is also interested in people's physical, social, and material well-being, we have often failed to provide for the Christian's aesthetic needs.

usefulness. By logical extension then, to be in God's image is to be creative, and to exercise this gift is to experience our full humanity. This implies that we recapture God's image as much, if not more, when we write a poem, or arrange a flower bed, or present a meal that is both visually beautiful and tasty, as when we preach or "witness." It suggests that to create beauty is itself a witness to God.<sup>2</sup>

It is evident in the Bible that God sponsors a variety of art forms. Despite the Second Commandment's injunction against the creation of images, the Tabernacle and Temple were in fact full of them: cherubim over the Ark of the Covenant (which to our best knowledge were the four-headed beasts of Ezekiel 1 rather than the plump babies of Western art or the anthropomorphized angels of Adventist paintings), flowers, almond branches, woven pomegranates in blue, purple, and scarlet (which are non-naturalistic colors), oxen holding up the laver, bas-relief palm trees, and chains. A literal translation of 2 Chronicles 3:6 is, "and he [Solomon] covered the house with precious stones for beauty," a statement that indicates that elements of the Temple were purely ornamental and aesthetic.

The literary diversity of the Bible is itself a testament to the value of the arts in writing. Jesus used parable and fiction as major parts of his teaching style, with stories of the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, and Lazarus and Dives. Poetry, dance, and music are all recorded in the Bible, used both for positive and negative ends, an indication that art forms have no inherent moral status. It is only the use of them that determines their morality.

**A** look at philosophy has shown that traditionally we have made artistic judgments according to epistemological criteria and have tended to judge art purely by how effective it is as epistemology. This is an abuse of the arts, for art should have an artistic end, not necessarily a metaphysical or epistemological end. It is the function of theology to testify to God's truth, and science to the realities of his handiwork. Art exists to testify to his beauty and wonder. Theology and science may point our head to God, but art points our heart to him.

It is important to remember that the largest book of the Bible is entirely made up of poetry, and poetry is primarily an expression of the heart. Although many psalms express wonderful theology about God, there are a number that are theologically woeful. The appeal of the psalmist in Psalm 137 to dash the heads of pagan babies against a rock may be interpreted theologically as a metaphor, but in its literal sense it indicates that Bible writers were allowed to express their heartfelt sentiments even when they contravened the mercy of God. In short, God wants us to express how we feel about him, not just how we think about him, and art is one of the chief avenues for doing this.

A key limitation of certain forms of Protestantism has been the almost total devotion to cognitive religion at the expense of experiential, emotional religion. No doubt, experiential religion, divorced from the Word of God or sound theology is a great danger, even an evil. Equally evil, however, is belief divorced from feeling. Anyone who has experienced the barrenness of legalism will testify to the need for heart as well as head in matters of faith. Surely love is the essence of God (1 John 4:16), and who would dare define love without including its emotional dimensions?

Of course there may be some crossover in art. The Bible is primarily a work of spiritual significance, but it is also a moving masterpiece of literature. There is no problem with art carrying powerful statements on truth and reality—indeed often the best art does both. But it doesn't have to. Art can qualify as art purely on the achievement of its form, even if it may lack profound epistemological insight.

One common Christian criterion for judging aesthetics has been Philippians 4:8, which calls on us to dwell on those things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable. In the minds of many, this automatically excludes a lot of literature, the

media, and the art world, which portray the ugly, the evil, and the sordid. But a simplistic application of the verse would also cut out considerable sections of the Bible, including the degrading tales at the end of Judges and some of the immoral behaviors of David and other kings.

Unlike much Christian art, the Bible is not afraid to portray evil in its full horror. Good art, Christian art, will not just focus on the pure and the holy; it will also deal with the fullness of the real world, in which sin has the temporary upper hand. It will portray sin truthfully, refusing to whitewash or romanticize either good or evil. One of the greatest failings of much Christian art is its sentimental glossing, its refusal to represent the true nature of evil, and its limitation to the candy-floss world of sweetness and light.

Admittedly, this is often a reaction against popular music, literature, television and the cinema, which frequently portray violence, immorality, and greed to be free of moral consequences. Both extremes are inadequate and false. Good art shows evil to bring evil in its train, and good to result in good consequences; it will also recognize the reality that cause and effect may be separated by lengthy periods, so that the good are not always immediately rewarded, nor the bad punished.

How many psalms recognize this reality, and plead for God to correct this anomaly? The Bible robustly shows the world as it is, refusing any shortcuts in its representation of the battle between good and evil. When the arts follow suit, showing evil in the context of its ultimate evil consequences, then they are compatible with Christian values.<sup>3</sup>

We should recognize the value of artistic work, which helps us see truth, even if it is the truth about evil. George Bernard Shaw was right when he said, "you use a glass mirror to see your face; you use works of art to see your soul." The Swiss reformer John Calvin, not noted for his tolerance of things that might be tainted with evil, argued in effect that all truth was God's truth, even when revealed by a "profane" writer, and that to despise it was to despise the Spirit of God. There are many products of the so-called secular arts that can be of benefit to the Christian, because they speak the truth, even if the artist was not Christian.

One problem for Christians, particularly from a



fundamentalist tradition, is that art involves taste. Whereas other areas of Christian philosophy often can produce definitive answers, art is not absolute, which creates a problem for those who traditionally think in absolute terms about absolutely everything. It is permissible in art to have a variety of opinions, all of which can be valid.

There are two aspects to aesthetic thinking. The first is appreciation, developing an understanding and a valuing of the quality of form and content. The second is liking, finding a personal rapport with a work of art. As Adventists, we should learn to appreciate as much art as possible, but we need only like what we like. Appreciation gives us greater insight into the heart of God, the Author of all aesthetics, and the process of appreciation often increases the area of liking.

In practice, the Church has associated certain artistic forms with right and wrong, ending up by deifying a form that is simply a mode of expression. Many of the older styles of painting, architecture, and media that have all too often characterized Christian products have developed sacred connotations through long use. The culture of hymn singing made the change to contemporary music styles unnecessarily painful for many churches in the past thirty years, and some people have still not understood that there is nothing inherently more sacred about hymns with organs than praise songs with guitars. Conversely, we need to recognize that praise can inhabit old hymns just as readily as modern scripture songs.

An unfortunate tendency to separate our spiritual and secular lives has created confusion over religious and secular art.\* In the past, debate has raged over whether Christian singers should record “secular” music. It is a silly question. Do Christian builders only build churches, or Christian mechanics only repair the pastor’s car? Our confusion is in seeing Christian art as only evangelistic, in purely epistemological terms, for spreading truth. In reality, Christian artists need to talk about beauty, both religious and secular, for God is the Author of both.

In many cases a move to portray the totality of the Christian life—not just the “spiritual” parts of it—can in fact strengthen the epistemological impact of the Christian artist. When Christian singer Amy Grant toured Australia in the mid-1990s, a secular critic in a

Brisbane paper praised her artistic integrity (at a time when some Christians were accusing her of selling out to secular interests), while her move to a secular label put many of her Christian albums in secular record shops, where unchurched people could be touched by her message. Some of the finest (but not necessarily best known) Christian singers, such as Noel Paul Stookey and Bob Bennett, sing about all aspects of life—baseball, marriage, and gardening, an approach that enriches our lives.

This lesson is perhaps most needed in a Christian approach to things aesthetic. Typically we have approached the arts as either a tool of the devil, or as a God-given way of reaching the world with the gospel. Neither of these should be ruled out, but they should not be the end of our use of the arts. We need an appreciation of the artistic potential of literature, music, painting, and the newer technologies of mass communication to nourish the human soul and spirit.

Let us also not excuse aesthetic philistinism on the grounds of the quality of the message. Often, we are guilty of tolerating poor quality art simply because we admire the sentiments it expresses. We need to remember that good aesthetics can help a message, and that poor aesthetics can surely kill one. Furthermore, we need to remember that God is the Author of beauty, and that he delights in it for its own sake. He is as interested in beauty as he is in any other aspect of our lives, and he dislikes mediocrity wherever it manifests itself.

It is justifiable, then, for the Christian to use the arts for the sake of creating aesthetically satisfying works, without the compulsion to preach or teach. A testimony to God’s love of beauty is as much the responsibility of the Christian as an exposition of truth, reality, or morality.

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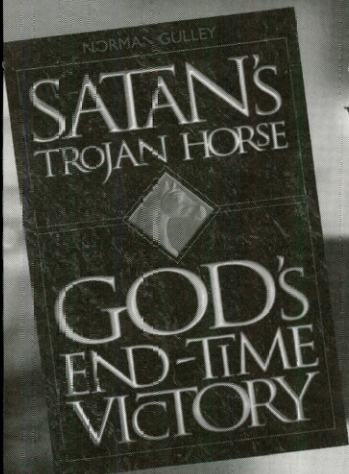
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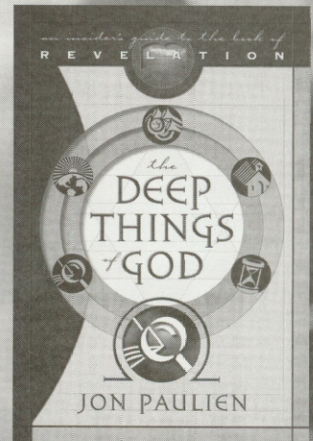
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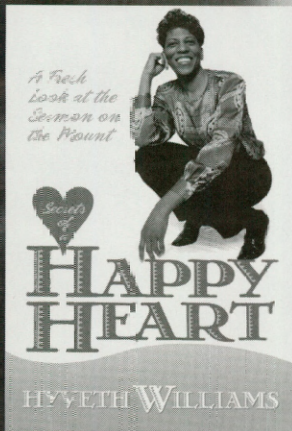
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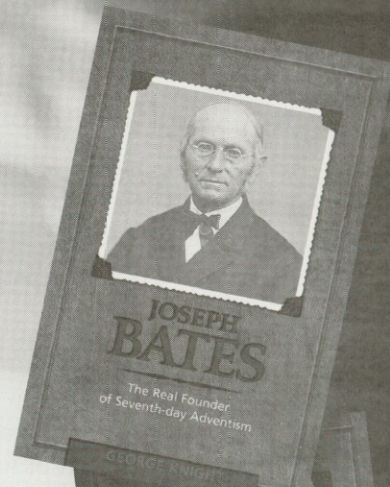
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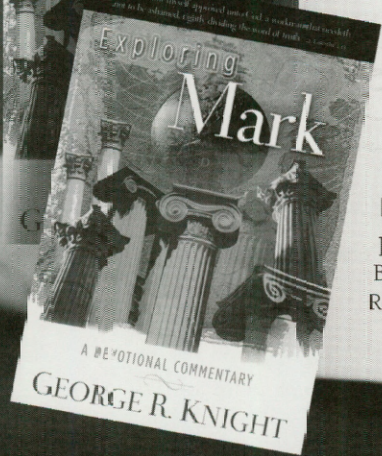
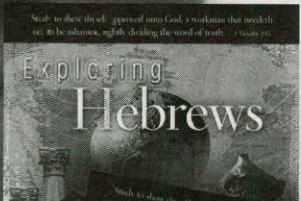
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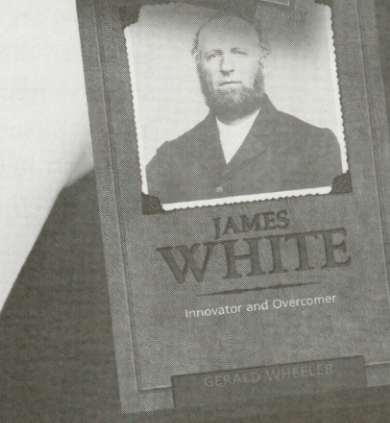


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# Sleepless

*By Alita Byrd*

**I**nevitably, it begins with a 2 a.m. phone call. The cultured, cracked voice on the other end gives no hint of apology for waking you at such an hour. Rittenhouse wants to know whether you are coming on the next tour, whether you are joining the orchestra, whether you will be a much-needed oboist in an upcoming performance. “You can sleep when you’re dead,” as one oft-repeated Rittenhouse saying goes.

Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse has always squeezed every drop of richness out of life. She doesn’t waste time sleeping, arguing, or being overly polite. In the more than thirty years she has directed the New England Youth Ensemble, Rittenhouse has demonstrated to her students and her audiences that a life lived without

fear—a life where stretching the possible to its farthest limit becomes the norm—reaps untold rewards. And behind every performance, behind every story, behind every impossible-sounding scheme Rittenhouse dreams up, stands a mission—a mission to bring people together through great music.





World premiere in Carnegie Hall on March 2, 2004, of the *Vision of the Apocalypse*, Columbia College Chorale, James Bingham (conductor), with the New England Symphonic Ensemble and Virginia Rittenhouse (narrator, pictured extreme left). Photo by Leora De Witt.



It's true that Rittenhouse hasn't bothered to sleep much in her life. In her spare time during the last thirty years—between international tours and rehearsals in Takoma Park, Maryland, and South Lancaster, Massachusetts, and the endless organization involved in managing what may be the world's most frequently touring orchestra—she wrote an oratorio called *The Vision of the Apocalypse*. On March 2 of this year her work was premiered at Carnegie Hall in New York with a massive orchestra, a full choir with a second response choir in the back of the hall, four soloists, and a narrator who was Rittenhouse herself, standing at the microphone in a glittering dress and reading powerful words from Revelation.

"It was what I had dreamed of," Rittenhouse said. "It was one of the greatest nights of my life."

Among members of the audience that night at Carnegie Hall were numbers of long-time New England Youth Ensemble players and their families who flew in just for the performance—several flying from the West Coast for the day and back for work the next morning. Many others were able to get enough time off work to rehearse and play in the oratorio. It was a reunion of hundreds of people who had worked with Rittenhouse over the years and whose lives had been touched by her dynamic personality and sense of mission.

Rittenhouse has been working on the oratorio for almost forty years. "I always put it aside because I didn't know if the music was worthy of the words," Rittenhouse told the orchestra. Each of the three angels' messages are set to music in different movements and the opening chorus is a setting of Psalm 90.

**It's true that Rittenhouse hasn't bothered to sleep much in her life. In her spare time during the past thirty years...she wrote an oratorio.**

"I can't imagine the Adventist three angels' message has ever been set to music and played in Carnegie Hall before," said Larry Kidder, who has played with the orchestra since 1973. "I'm surprised not more of the Adventist leadership was there to hear the Adventist message being proclaimed from a very secular venue."

Rittenhouse was inspired to write the opening chorus for the *Apocalypse* when she was in Japan in 1966 performing her first oratorio. Later she worked on it for four summers in France with Nadia Boulanger, who taught composers like Aaron Copland, Philip

Glass, and Virgil Thomson, and is often considered the world's greatest influence on twentieth-century music. Boulanger was "so encouraging," Rittenhouse said. "She said that it must be performed."

So Rittenhouse continued to work on the oratorio, but she had plenty of other things to take up her time and she got discouraged. "Last summer I said to myself, either do it now or put it away," Rittenhouse said. "People are going to get tired of hearing about it. So I gave it one more try and miraculously, everything came together."

The premiere of her work at Carnegie Hall is only the most recent of Rittenhouse's numerous triumphs; she organizes two major tours a year, playing for kings, queens, and presidents in some of the most famous halls and cathedrals in the world, and in a remarkable number of little Adventist churches. Tour stories, from the sublime to the ridiculous, have been told and retold through the generations of orchestra members until exaggeration and fact have merged into one glorious legend.

As Kidder put it: "How does one top the experience of being in the New England Youth Ensemble? The rest of life is downhill from there."

It's true that with Rittenhouse, whether you are playing away in the orchestra or listening quietly in the audience, you feel that you are in the presence of someone who makes things happen and who changes things for the better. Rittenhouse brings music and beauty to people around the world, while demonstrat-

ing to her orchestra the power of music to touch lives and preach the word of God. This is her mission, and the driving force behind everything she does.

One of the standard phrases Rittenhouse uses in her offering call at concerts is that music "reaches across barriers and brings people together." Her voice breaks as she tells about playing in the South African townships to "the Vendas, the Xhosas, and the Zulus who outside were killing each other, but inside the church were singing together. And they begged us to play and we played for them and they sang for us..."

When newer orchestra members have the opportunity to take a South African tour themselves and hear the glorious music in the townships, the story they can repeat word-for-word comes alive and they begin to see for themselves the deeper value of music. "As I've gotten older I can't seem to find that in society," said Patrick Bitzer, who played with the orchestra both at Atlantic Union College and Columbia Union College and has often served as Rittenhouse's tour manager and right-hand man.

To Bitzer, one of the most memorable of the tours was playing for King Hussein of Jordan's birthday party and for Leah Rabin, widow of the assassinated Israeli prime minister, in the same 1996 trip. "How music could be used to reach across political and religious lines blew me away," he said.

**W**ith an unswerving belief in "the mission" at her core, the determined character traits Rittenhouse already possesses become even more pronounced. She refuses to take no for an answer when she feels something is important, and she insists that the show must go on—no matter what. She pushes and pulls and stretches the boundaries that most of us feel are the rules of society, until what seems impossible is turned into the everyday.

On one of the early tours the orchestra was riding in a big bus up in the hills somewhere in Eastern Europe when the bus came upon a bridge with a load limit. "The driver was very hesitant about taking the bus across," said Alfred Aalstrup, who is just a few years younger than Rittenhouse and studied violin with her when she first went to AUC. "But Virginia said, 'Just drive fast.' So he did."

Though her face has more lines, her back is more bent, and she now wears a wig of reddish curls, Rittenhouse still refuses to be inhibited. Stories of missing players, music, and instruments are legendary. With only one or two players, Rittenhouse can still create a memorable concert. "We will play this concert if we have to play it with two sticks!" is a famous Rittenhouse quote.

Certainly the concerts come first, but Rittenhouse is determined about other things, too. There may only be an hour or two to take in a city like Prague or Paris, but Rittenhouse is resolute that her kids see the most important sights. "We might have only slept four hours in the last seventy-two, and someone might sug-



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTIAN STEINER

gest that instead of going to see the Queen Victoria flower garden at 6 a.m., maybe we could sleep a little longer," said Shawn Cabey, who started playing with Rittenhouse in 1975 and now takes his talented eight-year-old pianist son to solo on tours. "You can sleep when you're dead," is all the reply we get."

Of course, Rittenhouse's insistence on always doing things her own way can prove a trying experience for those around her. One of the many capable assistants who have helped in the never-ending job of managing the orchestra and its tours noted that "it didn't matter how carefully I planned a sightseeing day—it would have to be changed several times. She has a great ability to change plans five times an hour." There is also Rittenhouse's "faulty memory about what she agreed to do—or her selective memory, no one is quite sure which."

Rittenhouse subtly urges a selective memory on orchestra members, too. "She is the most genuine, authentic, and inspired spin doctor I have ever met," said one, who remembers prayers in the bus that skillfully recapped and reiterated the triumphant bits of a tour that Rittenhouse wanted remembered and made



part of the public record, leaving the more difficult moments behind.

But Rittenhouse doesn't ask anyone to do things she won't do herself. She doesn't have time to waste on trifles; nice hotels and sit-down dinners can squander time and money. She is perfectly willing to sleep on a church pew if that's where everyone else is sleeping, then share one grimy shower with forty orchestra members in the morning. And if she does it, an eighteen-year-old certainly can't grumble.

Cabey remembers traveling to Israel in 1981 and visiting the ancient fortress of Masada, overlooking the Dead Sea. "It was the middle of the desert in July," Cabey said. "The temperature was well over 100 degrees. There are two ways of getting to the top. One is by cable car and the other is the ramp that was built by the Roman soldiers when they'd finally had enough. Which do you think Dr. Rittenhouse and Harvey take? So here they are in their sixties, plunk plunk plunk up the footpath. They get to the top and they're fine. These people look like they've never seen the sun in their lives, but do they put on sunscreen? Ho ho ho, what's sunscreen? All these teenagers are just dying, and here are these two tripping along. By not acknowledging the difficulty, the difficulty does not exist."

Rittenhouse's ability to come out on top no matter what obstacles stand in her path is adopted by the orchestra members, who find their own ways of coping in tricky situations. Rittenhouse frequently announces songs or soloists no one is expecting. But soloists get up and perform difficult pieces beautifully without warming up and without any visible surprise.

to tour with the orchestra and play piano solos. "So I sat in the back of the seconds and got very good at pretending to play from age nine to fourteen," Cabey said. "I put soap on my bow so that it made no sound and I could just saw away."

Almost everyone who has come in contact with her has a story that illustrates the well-known adage that Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse will not take no for an answer. She has forced communist officials who cancelled a tour to retract. She has talked harried airport officials into putting timpani, basses, and a two-hundred-pound harp into the bottom of the plane. She has talked recalcitrant players into changing their plans—not only into coming on a weekend tour, but into changing their plans for college and often their careers.

Even world-famous composer John Rutter, one of the best-known living composers, who has conducted the New England Youth Ensemble more than sixty times in Carnegie Hall, has experienced her inability to accept refusals. He tells how Rittenhouse wanted him to conduct the orchestra on its South Africa tour in 2000.

"It was really just that she ignored me when I said no," Rutter said. "I was under a lot of time pressure and I wrote her a two or three-page fax explaining how I would love to join the tour to South Africa, but it would have to be another time. We met in New York shortly after and I was apprehensive. I knew she would have seen my long fax. So I said, 'Well, Virginia, I suppose you saw my note about the tour.' She said, 'Oh, I think I saw something, but you're coming, of course you're

## To keep themselves entertained, some of the more cheeky musicians play with the sheet music...upside down.

Once the brass started Rimsky-Korsakov's "Procession of the Nobles" in a key different from the one written and the rest of the orchestra simply adapted. Of course, there is often the complaint that the orchestra plays the same music ad nauseum; so to keep themselves entertained, some of the more cheeky musicians play with the sheet music to Handel's "Overture to the Royal Fireworks" or Sibelius's *Finlandia* upside down.

Shawn Cabey, who is a brilliant pianist, claims he was a lousy violinist but Rittenhouse said he had to learn to play an orchestra instrument if he was going

coming.' And I know when I'm beaten. That's when I realized that if she's operated that way for the last fifty years, no wonder she's gotten so much accomplished."

Rutter went on to conduct the ensemble in concerts across South Africa then and again two years later. "The tour was inspiring and uplifting," Rutter said. "We didn't just appear in prestigious venues, but in the townships, too. She didn't care whether the audience was made up of officials or poor township children. She was just as eager to demonstrate what the orchestra could do to the children as to

the gilded audiences in Capetown City Hall.”

It isn't only the lives of far-flung audiences that have come under Rittenhouse's spell. Perhaps more than anyone, she makes a great impact on the people who work closely with her.

“I've learned a lot in her presence,” Rutter said. “If I feel bored or tired or want to give up, I think of her and find a bit more strength....Some people in life have exceptional force of personality without ever having to raise their voice. She is one.”

After the last big concert on the 2000 South African

learning their instruments very long, but they all made music at a level that was wonderful to listen to and had a sense of style and ensemble which was exceptional.”

He admires Rittenhouse not only as a person with extraordinary willpower, but also as a true musician. “I have always been struck by how good the string players are at playing Baroque music,” he said. “I have realized Dr. Rittenhouse's training lies behind this, as she has taught many of the string players personally. Dr. Rittenhouse is from a generation where playing tended to be indulgent, but she never has any of that. Tempos are brisk and there

## She visualizes being at the end product...She visualizes where she wants to be, then makes commitments that make her get there.

tour, some of the students asked Rutter if he would stay to see any of the natural sites, like Victoria Falls, before heading back to London. He joked that he didn't need to, because he had already encountered a force of nature, and after Rittenhouse, what else was there?

It is a great compliment that a musician and composer like Rutter, with a towering reputation the world over, not only happily continues to conduct Rittenhouse's orchestra in Carnegie Hall, but has also toured with the orchestra, recorded a concert they played in England's Ely Cathedral, and invited the whole orchestra to his home twice for a gourmet vegetarian lunch.

Rutter first met Rittenhouse in 1987, when she requested a meeting with him to get some feedback on the score of her oratorio. They spent an afternoon at Rutter's home in England with the music spread out on a table in front of them. “I was certainly struck by her and by what she had written,” Rutter reported. “I had not yet come across the Ensemble, but fate brought us together the next year.”

MidAmerica Productions asked Rutter, who had recently begun conducting for some of their Carnegie concerts, whether he would like to try out this new orchestra they had found. “I remember being impressed by their attentiveness and attitude, as well as the dynamic presence of Dr. Rittenhouse at the front stand,” Rutter said.

After that first concert, Rutter, who is known for being ruthlessly exacting when it comes to the way music is played, agreed to work with the orchestra again. “I realized one could throw some challenges at them,” he said. “Some players were virtuosic and some had not been

is an extraordinary sense of vitality in the playing. She has jumped right into the modern ideas on interpretation, leaving lots of contemporaries far behind....This is an orchestra that listens to voices. There is a difference between playing a symphony and the Mozart requiem, but they know this. I think possibly it comes from the Adventist tradition of singing during prayers.”

Certainly an enormous amount of hard work, practice, and talent are wrapped up in Rittenhouse's musical success. But there is something more that makes her what she is. Cabey has thought for many years about Rittenhouse's dynamic presence and how it is that she has created such tremendous success in everything she does.

Cabey says that Rittenhouse's incredible talent and workaholic nature help, but that isn't what really sets her apart. “She visualizes being at the end product,” he said. “She visualizes where she wants to be, then makes commitments that make her get there. Say you are young, strong, and athletic, but you can't swim. Most of us would plan to take swimming lessons, call around for teachers, go out and buy a swimming suit—do all those rational things first. She just jumps out of the rowboat and keeps her eye on the island. She just decides what her goal is and gets there. If you take even a part of that philosophy and incorporate it into your life, it will have an enormous impact on an enormous number of people. She has taught us all a lot—a lot more than just music lessons.”



Rittenhouse's "mission" has inspired an uncountable number of students over the last half-century, who are now in turn touching the lives of others. Students who played in the New England Youth Ensemble have gone on to start string ensembles of their own, to be professional musicians, to be doctors, teachers, and missionaries. Many of the teachers who conduct music programs at Adventist schools across the United States spent years touring with Rittenhouse.

Naomi Burns Delafield, who played as concertmistress of the orchestra for many years after it moved to CUC, has started a string orchestra in Alberta, Canada, that is currently playing concerts to raise money for children in Afghanistan who have lost limbs in land mine accidents. "I was headed for either farm management or veterinary nursing in Australia, because I hated the violin," Naomi said.

Naomi first met Rittenhouse when the orchestra was touring Australia in 1988 and she was just fourteen. Like the first encounters of so many others, Naomi was urged to play for Rittenhouse and that evening she played the second movement of the Mendelssohn violin concerto with the orchestra for a concert. Rittenhouse kept in touch and, with the help of other orchestra members including violist David Delafield, convinced Naomi to come to CUC when she started college.

After graduating from CUC and working as Rittenhouse's assistant and tour manager for several years, Naomi married fellow orchestra member Delafield and moved with him to Canada. They were only the latest couple in a long line of orchestra

Many say that Rittenhouse's lack of fear and inhibition, as well as her deep sense of mission, comes from her background; she spent most of her early years in Africa as the only child of indomitable missionary parents.

"Caution is foreign to her at the deepest level," said Cabey. "She grew up as a missionary child in the 1930s, when if you got sick you died. She doesn't like taking time to analyze and accept things. Her style is just to plow forward."

"I can't listen to all the voices saying my ideas are dangerous," Rittenhouse explained. "It's very seldom I'll give up anything—once I feel a thing is valuable I'll push on beyond the possible."

Virginia-Gene Shankel was born on October 15, 1922, while her father, George Shankel, was teaching at Canadian Union College in Alberta. Three years later he accepted a call to teach history at Helderberg College near Capetown, South Africa. Rittenhouse's mother, a dramatist and musician with a background on the stage, began teaching her young daughter to play the piano and by the time she was three years old Rittenhouse was already composing her own songs, both words and music.

It is impossible to overestimate the impact Mrs. Shankel had on her daughter. "My mother was the moving spirit behind my life," Rittenhouse said. "She was my accompanist, school teacher, and closest friend. If anything was the influence of my life, it was her. The biggest compliment I could ever get is that I remind someone of my mother. She was witty, deeply spiritual and a marvelous mother and teacher."

## Many say that Rittenhouse's lack of fear and inhibition...comes from her background...as the only child of indomitable missionary parents.

couples to wed, including Naomi's brother Terry, who married another first violinist.

How many orchestra couples have gotten married over the years? "Oh my, I think the last count was twenty-five weddings of ensemble members," Rittenhouse said. But many say this count is probably outdated. There are obvious reasons for this kind of inward attraction. "If you weren't dating someone in the ensemble, you probably wouldn't see them very often," said Kidder, who married another orchestra member, as did his two sisters.

Anyone who knew Mrs. Shankel speaks of her with deep sighs of admiration. "With Mrs. Shankel you were dealing not only with incredible talent in bushels flowing out of every pore, but also dealing with someone with astonishing wisdom and quite an exceptional soul," Cabey said, who took piano lessons from Rittenhouse's mother when he was very young, as did many of the first orchestra members. "My mother literally never once disappointed me and she is my adored best friend. But I once told her I thought Mrs. Shankel was even better. That kind of sums it up."





PHOTO COURTESY OF VIRGINIA-GENE RITTENHOUSE

Backstage at Carnegie Hall: Norman Dunfee, executive director of MidAmerica, who presented the performance, congratulates Rittenhouse and her husband, Harvey Rittenhouse.

Rittenhouse certainly inherited her mother's flair for the dramatic, although people who knew Mrs. Shankel said she had an even greater talent onstage. "Her mother was captivating," Aalstrup says. "She gave programs at AUC for all the clubs and she was hilarious. Once she sat at the piano, portraying a student at his first recital. She comes to the piano chewing gum like nobody's business, pulling it out in a long string, and sticking it under the chair. She brought the house down—people couldn't get enough."

Some say Rittenhouse inherited her stubborn streak from her father, who was known as a powerful presence on whatever campus he was teaching. Aalstrup took several classes in ancient history from George Shankel at AUC. "He was highly intellectual and yet he had a sense of humor," Aalstrup said. "His classes were always jam packed because he had so much experience and exposure to world events. But he was very conservative and always absolutely proper."

When she was ten years old, Rittenhouse's parents went home on furlough and the young Virginia-Gene gave her first public performance of her own compositions, which was broadcast on American radio. When

the family returned to Africa, they met a group of professional musicians on the boat who encouraged her to play for the University of Capetown's College of Music. So at age thirteen Rittenhouse won a scholarship for piano, violin, and composition.

Rittenhouse made her debut with the Capetown Symphony Orchestra at age fourteen, playing a Beethoven piano concerto, and six months later she made her violin debut. For five years, she was a frequent soloist, incredibly playing both violin and piano. She then won the prestigious London Associated Board Overseas Award, the top music award in the country.

She still tells the story with emotion in her voice, mainly because she feels her victory was such a witness. "I wouldn't travel on Sabbath, so I had to take the old slow train to Pretoria on Saturday night, while the other contestants took the fast train to get there in enough time to rehearse. I didn't get there until shortly before I had to go on stage and just had time to dash through my piece with the accompanist. My pro-



fessors were very angry—they said I had a great chance of winning and was giving it all up for nothing. I left the moment I finished because I didn't expect to win. I'd heard there was a brilliant pianist that morning and the judges had already made up their minds. Then I got word I had won. The head of the university came to me and apologized, telling me to keep my religion because it made me what I was."

Rittenhouse earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Washington in Seattle, studied at the world-famous Juilliard School in New York, and got a master's from Boston University and a doctorate from the renowned Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore, Maryland. But despite living in the sphere of some of the greatest musicians and teachers in the world, she dedicated most of her energy to the church she loved so well.

Many people who have worked with Rittenhouse assert that she could have gone on to have a world-class career as a concert performer, but she gave that up to work with young people, training them to take the message of great music to people everywhere. "She gave up her career to give us all one," as Naomi Burns Delafield said.

Virginia-Gene Shankel met Harvey Rittenhouse at the first North American Division Youth Congress in San Francisco in 1947. "I was head of the orchestra and he was playing cello," Rittenhouse recalled. They were married in a fairytale wedding on October 22, 1950, with the bridesmaids in long dresses singing pieces composed by Rittenhouse for the occasion, with full orchestral accompaniment.

Three years later, the young couple moved to Jamaica along with the Shankels, when Rittenhouse's

The Rittenhouses spent a total of three years in Jamaica; then in 1961 they returned to Atlantic Union College in South Lancaster where they had lived in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1969, the New England Youth Ensemble was born, with "four little kids in the living room," as Rittenhouse said. The first performance was a Christmas program for the local Kiwanis club. "We thought these little kids, dressed up in cute Swiss costumes, would be amusing for the businessmen," Rittenhouse said. "But it turned out they were going out the door all choked up and so moved by these little kids playing Bach and Handel. I got my first glimpse of how inspiring young kids playing great music could be."

The first international tour was to France, England, and Scotland in 1973. The young orchestra traveled to Poland in 1974 and then back again in 1975, when they played in the presidential palace for visiting American president Gerald Ford. Thereafter, almost every year the orchestra has traveled on one major international tour and one major domestic tour, plus endless weekend tours and local performances.

They have played in some of the most prestigious cathedrals and concert halls in the world, including St. Martin-in-the-Fields and Salisbury Cathedral in England, the Sacre Coeur and Notre Dame in Paris, St. Mark's in Venice, Dom Cathedral in Salzburg, St. Patrick's in New York, the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., the Sydney Opera House in Australia, the Roman Amphitheater in Amman, Jordan, and of course at almost a hundred concerts at Carnegie Hall.

Rittenhouse always focuses on the positive. She tells

## In Jamaica, ...she put together a small ensemble called the Cockroach Orchestra, in which some of the instruments were homemade.

father was asked to be the dean of the college there. Some of Rittenhouse's funniest stories come from her time in Jamaica, as she put together a small ensemble called the Cockroach Orchestra, in which some of the instruments were homemade. But the group traveled and raised money for the hospital in Jamaica where Harvey worked as a surgeon. Rittenhouse was inspired by Jamaican music and culture and she wrote the *Jamaican Suite* for violin and piano, which she has performed a number of times, most recently in October 2003 in Carnegie's recital hall.

stories about playing on Chinese television for 1.7 billion people and about the great honor of performing for Jordan's Queen Noor. She is masterful at leaving an impression of success, spinning or overlooking the negatives to create a flawless record of triumph. But Rittenhouse has certainly had her share of heartache and sorrow.

In 1976, the orchestra took its first tour to communist Russia. George Shankel, Rittenhouse's father, drove into Boston to take care of some paperwork for the ensemble. On the way home, he experienced a head-on collision and both drivers were killed. Alfred Aalstrup, dear friend of

the Rittenhouses and Shankels, was alerted by a police officer who was trying to locate the family. Aalstrup and his wife went and sat with Mrs. Shankel all night.

But together they decided not to inform Rittenhouse in Moscow. "We felt she needed to complete the tour she had worked so hard for. There was nothing she could do anyway," Aalstrup said. Rittenhouse wasn't told about the accident until the day after returning home, because her family wanted her to have the moment of triumph in the homecoming.

That wasn't the last heartbreak Rittenhouse had to

"Because of course our home was here."

Frank Araujo, who directed music at Takoma Park church and was a friend of Rittenhouse's, suggested she come to Washington, D.C. So in 1993 she began rehearsing with a small group of students and musicians in the basement of Takoma Park church, commuting back and forth eight hours between South Lancaster and Takoma Park every week.

"That was the lowest point," Rittenhouse said. "I thought the orchestra was at its end. We were kind of a motley group that first year, starting with a few young kids,

## We thought these little kids...would be amusing...but it turned out...I got my first glimpse of how inspiring young kids playing great music could be.

get through. The following year, while on tour near Billings, Montana, the used motor home the Rittenhouses had recently purchased caught fire. Rittenhouse managed to crawl through the roof hatch, while Harvey got out through the windshield after being severely burned. He had been a wonderful cellist, but one arm became almost completely useless after the accident. The most tragic result of the accident, however, was that Mrs. Shankel, who was in her eighties, was killed. Rittenhouse was devastated. "I owe everything to her," she said.

There were difficult times with the orchestra, too. In the early 1990s, not long after the orchestra began playing in Carnegie Hall with MidAmerica Productions, Rittenhouse became embroiled in a messy political situation at AUC. She had lived near AUC for the better part of fifty years, dedicating her life to the orchestra she based on its campus. But as one musician who has worked with her for many years said: "Virginia-Gene is the kind of person who makes bureaucrats very nervous. She has always done her own thing and she is sort of out of control when it comes to institutions."

Rittenhouse was accused of racism and a terrible battle fraught with emotion ensued among students, teachers, and administrators, ending in Rittenhouse being asked not to return to the AUC campus. "The situation was out of control," one long-time orchestra member and student at AUC at the time, said. "It felt like a divorce in my family as I was good friends with and respected the administration and both sides of the music department. I went to PUC for my last two years." Other students left, too.

"It was devastating," Rittenhouse said.

but gradually more people heard about it and joined our weekly rehearsals. Columbia Union College [just down the road from the church] didn't have an orchestra, so when they asked whether I would join them, of course I said yes. Some of our greatest moments have come since then."

Rittenhouse continues to create great moments out of situations others dismiss as impossible. She inspires others with her vision and as more and more people get involved in a project, it takes on a momentum of its own and becomes inevitable. It is her gift for inspiring others that helps her ideas to become reality. Rittenhouse couldn't do it all by herself. She's had faithful people too numerous to name working with her over the years—people who stand behind her and find telephone numbers and help her pull her long black dress over her head just before walking on stage. Part of it is certainly a desire to be a part of the mission, but part of it is just Rittenhouse herself, pure and simple. The power of her personality makes people want to help her and win her approval, never mind the bigger picture.

Harvey Rittenhouse might be the most devoted of all. The word most commonly associated with him is "saint." He doesn't miss a tour. You won't hear him say much, but when he does speak you know immediately that he is an old school gentleman—the kind you just don't find anymore. He is quietly charming and helpful, limping along slightly lopsided, always with his wife's violin case in his good hand.

"Harvey is wonderful," Rittenhouse said. "He had



to give up surgery when his arm was injured, but he does all the driving, takes care of the treasury work for the orchestra, and is very much a part of it all. All the kids love him.”

“If she says get up at 6 o’clock and climb Mt. McKinley, Harvey will do it,” Aalstrup said.

Rittenhouse’s retirement has been a subject of continuing speculation over the last decade and more. But as Rittenhouse ages well into her eighties and as she becomes more stooped and bent, her unstoppable energy has only slightly abated.

Rutter recently asked whether she would be able to enjoy some peace and quiet this summer. “Well, I hope not!” Rittenhouse replied. A European tour is planned, with a visit to a summer string school in Austria. Next summer, Rittenhouse would like to take her oratorio to South Africa. And there is talk that it could be performed at the General Conference session in St. Louis in 2005.

“People did ask me for awhile whether I was going to retire, but the new story is that I can’t because they want their children to have this experience, too. I would like to quiet down a bit, but I haven’t figured out how to do that yet, so I’ll keep going while I have the strength. This has been my life—I can’t imagine life without the orchestra, really.”

Rittenhouse hopes that someday, when the time comes, the right person will agree to carry on the work she has dedicated her life to. Talk has floated around for years, maybe even before Rittenhouse left AUC, and quiet feelers have been extended to several people who might be capable of directing the orchestra when she lets it go. But everyone knows that trying to live up to her reputation and abilities is a mammoth, impossible task. And so far, Rittenhouse stubbornly hangs on to the orchestra she loves. Recently, she has agreed to help revive the orchestra at AUC and has the blessing of both colleges to spend one week at AUC, where she and Harvey still live, and the next week at CUC.

“She’s definitely getting older,” Cabey said. “She still has her vitality, but recently I’ve seen her acknowledge some physical limitations and that has never happened before.” But Cabey, who has probably played with the orchestra for more years than any other member, believes Rittenhouse has mellowed in her old age. “I knew her

when she was in her early fifties and she is a lot more fun now. You guys get away with stuff we would have been *killed* for. I think she’s gotten better with age, no question. Now seems to be her absolute best time.”

Certainly her wit, her energy, and her spirited sense of fun keep even the youngest orchestra members on their toes. Travis Losey, who played with the orchestra all through the 1990s and married violinist April Bellamy, remembers one Saturday night when the orchestra was sleeping in an Adventist community service center off the Long Island Expressway where they often stay before Carnegie performances. He woke up at 2 a.m. to the sound of shuffling around in the next room. Being a responsible soul, Losey worried that someone had broken in and was stealing from the luggage. “I snuck into the doorway,” he said, “to find Dr. Rittenhouse on her tiptoes trying to steal some leftover ice cream from the freezer without waking anyone.”

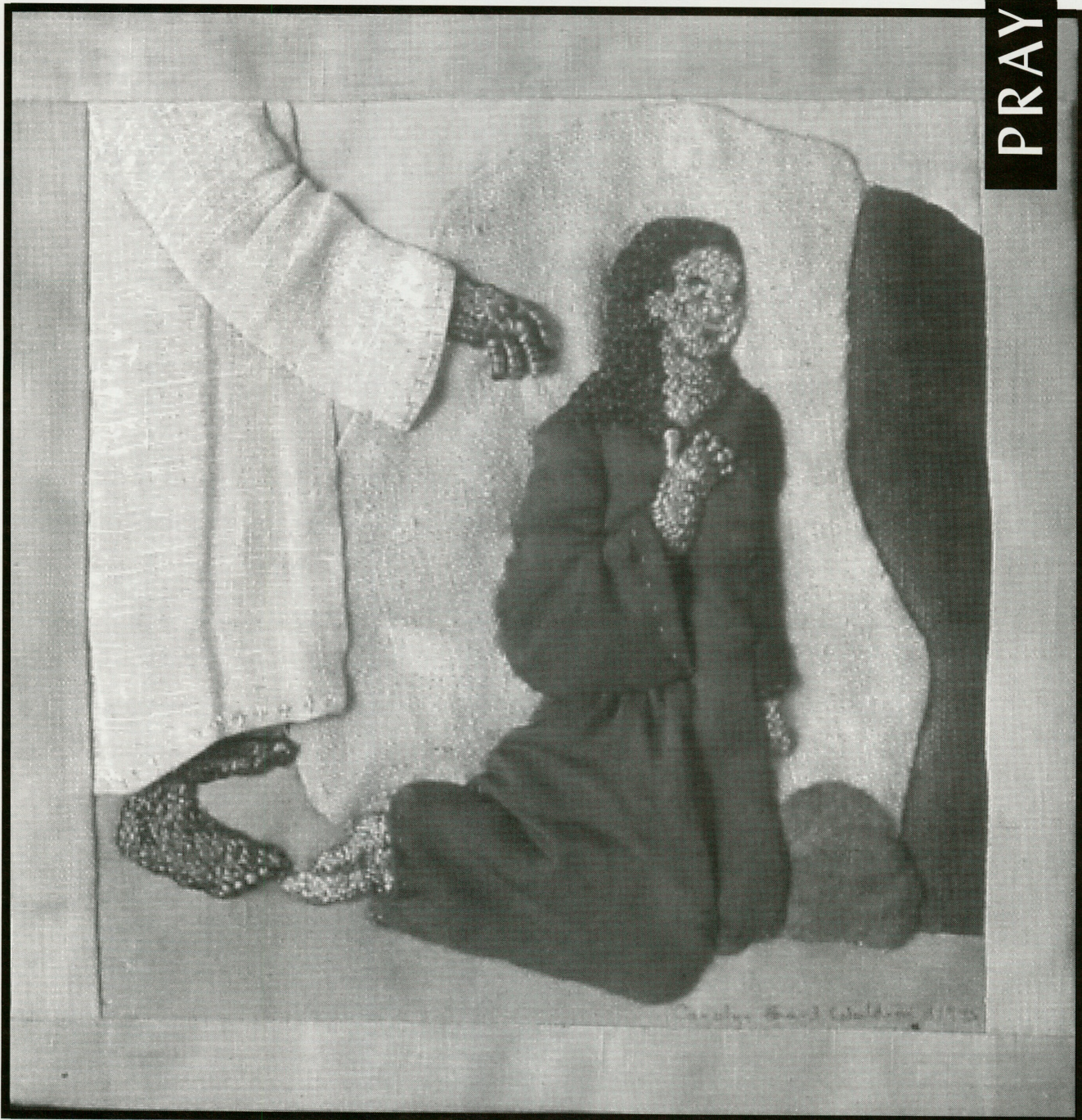
People might wonder what a woman who recently premiered her own composition at New York’s Carnegie Hall, played by her own orchestra, is doing still sleeping on the floors of community service centers. But no one who knows her can imagine Rittenhouse staying in the Ritz and ordering up room service. Rittenhouse hangs tight to her vision, with no frills attached. Her single-minded dedication to taking music to places other people would never even think to go is inspiring, and her vibrant presence works wonders in those around her. “The one or two occasions I have conducted the orchestra without [Rittenhouse], they do well but it is somehow not quite the same,” said Rutter. “I put it down to some kind of personal magic.”

Rittenhouse herself wouldn’t accept that magic is the secret of her success. She admits it helps that she can survive on four hours of sleep (this doesn’t include the short catnaps she more and more frequently indulges in, sometimes even while conducting), but she makes it clear that the real driving force behind her tireless dedication is the deep sense of mission integral to her sense of self. “I believe more deeply every day in the mission of music and what it can accomplish in young people’s lives and for the audience,” Rittenhouse said. “The mission makes me go on.”

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Alita Byrd, a freelance writer from Brussels, Belgium, has played violin with Rittenhouse’s orchestra. Her last piece for *Spectrum* was on the Rwandan genocide: “Searching for Truth in Reports on the Sabbath Massacre,” (spring 2003).

PRAYER



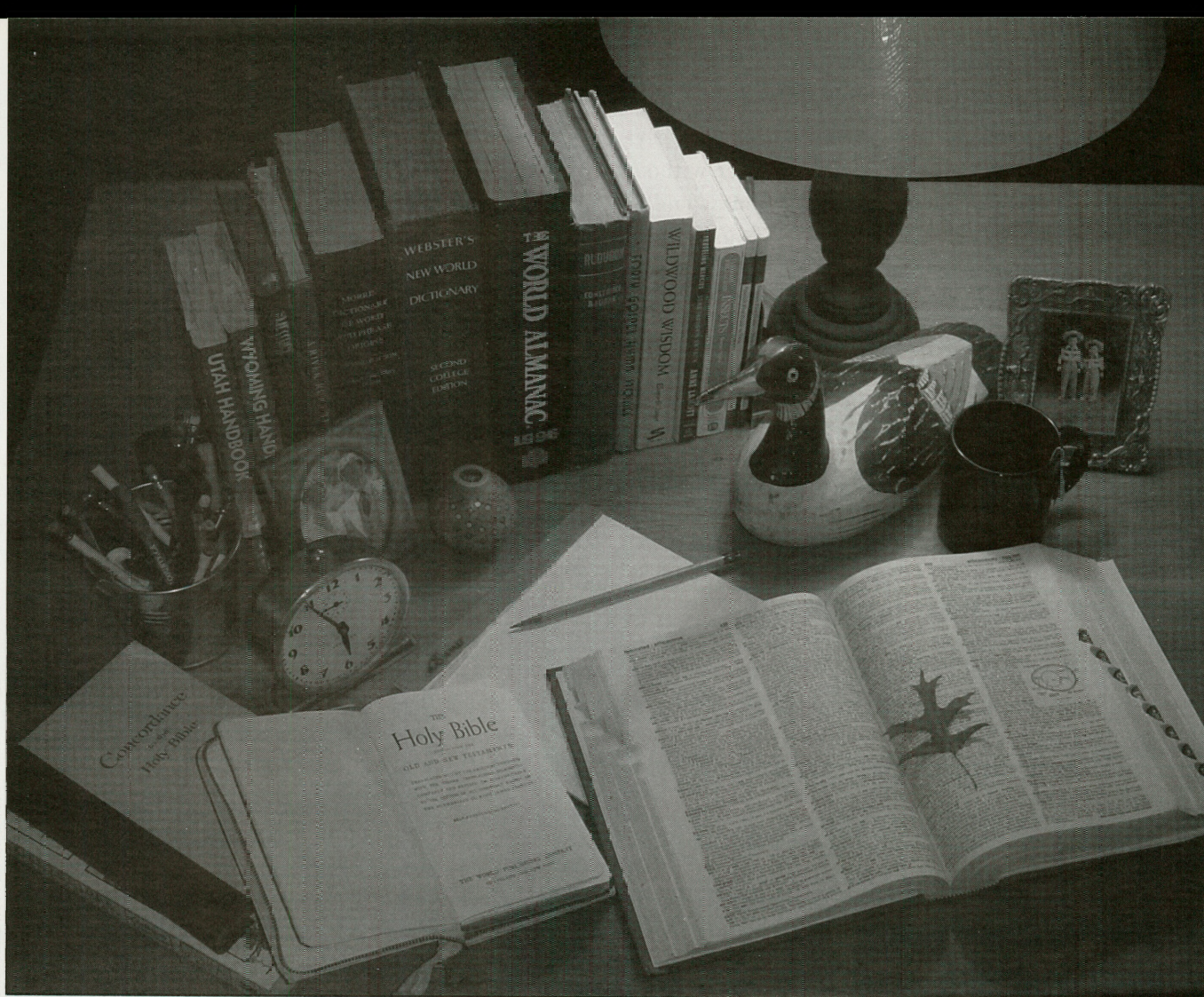
ARTWORK BY CAROLYN WALDRON



# Prayer, Piety, Passion, and Prose: One Writer's Quest for the Sacred

By Kim Barnes

I sit in my study, my icons arranged around me: a tepid cup of decaffeinated tea; three dictionaries of varying efficacy; a thesaurus, which has just allowed me to find the word *efficacy*; a mug of pens and pencils; family photographs; stacks of rough drafts; shelves of books by authors I hold most sacred—Shakespeare, Maclean, Plath, Dickey, Wrigley, Hugo, Lamott, Doty, Blew; books that might inform me—*Idaho Place Names*, *Roadside History of Idaho*, *Roadside Geology of Idaho*, worn copies of Peterson and Audubon and Craighead to guide me through the animal, vegetable, and mineral states. Hemingway commands two of the highest shelves: books by him, about him, their covers like a gallery of Hemingway lore: here, he lies naked upon his bed, reading a strategically placed edition of *The New York Times*, here, infused with Parisian ennui, he broods beneath his black beret; and, on the cover of the September 1, 1952, issue of *Life*, sleeved in plastic and hanging on my wall, he looks into the camera's lens with eyes that are animal-dark.



Sometimes, when the words won't come, I swivel my chair and let those eyes settle on me until something breaks. Who, I wonder, am I grieving for as I turn back to the page? Hemingway, whose face on that cover of *Liège* corresponds to the release of *The Old Man and the Sea*, the book that many consider the zenith of his career? My awareness of how that zenith will fall to nadir, the drinking and pain, electroshock and suicide? Or am I grieving for myself, adrift as I am on a white ocean, trying to find meaning in this ritual act of writing, trying to forge a narrative that, like Santiago's fish, will prove to me if to no one else that my calling is true and my luck still strong?

And here, across from my shrine to Hemingway, the King James Bible given to me on my twelfth birthday, a biblical concordance, a book of hymns. Some days, I am surprised to find myself deeply immersed in the plight of Job, or Moses, or David, caught up in ancient stories that I remember from my childhood but have come to understand in a new light, for all the stories, the old and the new, are the same: they detail the individual quest for meaning, identity, and salvation in its various, and often surprising, forms.

Who am I, and why? These are the questions that

define the speakers in poetry, the characters in fiction—the questions that writers of personal nonfiction must ask of themselves. As a child growing up in a patriarchal household informed by the dictates of fundamentalist religion, I understood that there was only one absolute answer: I was a child of God, and my sole purpose was to serve and glorify him.

When, at the age of eighteen, I chose to abandon my faith, the rituals of prayer, meditation, fasting, and ministering to the needs of others—the Christian traditions that had defined my life—were lost as well, replaced by an overwhelming sense of confusion and lack of direction. If I were not the good girl, the dutiful daughter, then who was I? Always, I had been taught that there were only two either/or choices and that having rejected one, I was doomed to embrace the other. No longer the “good” girl, I must, then, be the “bad.” No longer willing to serve the God my parents and the church had defined for me, I must, then, serve



Satan. So imbedded were these dichotomies in my psyche that I believed that even to attempt prayer without an attendant willingness to resubmit my soul would be sacrilege. Unable to adhere to the tenets of my faith, I could no longer claim its comforts.

Years of guilt and near-despair followed. My rituals: smoking Virginia Slim menthols, drinking Boone's farm Tickled Pink cut with 7-Up, spending hours applying makeup and curling my hair before hitting the disco, where I could dance whether the Spirit moved me or not. And one other ritual: reading. Books from the library, books from the Goodwill, books from the shelves of friends who shared my literary interests. Although literary may be a misnomer: Danielle Steele, Sidney Sheldon, Richard Bach. But also Dickens and Poe, Ellison and Roth. Long after the bars had closed and my roommates had fallen into slumber, I would lie in my bed, reading until dawn. Only then, with the book in my hands, did I feel the chaos ebb, feel the sure direction—the movement we call narrative.

I have often heard the writer Bill Kittredge say that story is how we make sense of our lives, "What we are is stories," he writes in "The Politics of Storytelling." "We do things because of what we call character, and our character is formed by the stories we learn to live in. Late in the night we listen to our own breathing in the dark, and rework our stories... reinventing reasons for our lives... We are like detectives, each of us trying to make sense and define what we take to be the right life." Kittredge goes on to quote

## What happens when the stories we tell ourselves are ones that we believe our family and community cannot accept...?

Peter Brooks, who says that story helps us to "overcome the loss of the 'sacred masterplot' that organizes and explains the world."

What neither Kittredge nor Brooks speaks to is what happens when, in the individual's quest for meaning through story, she finds herself building a narrative in direct opposition to the narrative that is her inheritance. What happens when the stories we tell ourselves are ones that we believe our family and community cannot accept, when we break the codes of conduct, the codes of silence and submission, when we risk being

cast out and stripped of membership in the tribe?

As a young woman, I began to tell myself a story of loss and isolation, I had alienated my family, my faith, my community. I was, I believed, alone. What I did not understand was how the road I was on had its own recognizable narrative, its archetypal structure: the quest.

Mainstream American culture in general is not tolerant of the quest. It takes time and lacks defined direction. It refuses to adhere to the dichotomies and emphasizes instead the individual's ability to forge for him or herself a particular story of meaning. The quest is not a quest for absolute meaning but a journey toward a narrative that can somehow contain and arrange the puzzle pieces of our lives. The quest gives birth to personal icons, to the newly sacred; it is dependent upon the eye and ear and soul of the quester, each event, each being and object encountered open to fresh and singular interpretation—and herein lies the problem: the conflict that arises when what you make of the images—the memories and experiences—that compose your narrative does not correspond to the story line superimposed by surrounding voices.

Because of this potential for discrepancy, because we collectively fear loss of order, such journeys seldom find a place of honor in a culture given to absolutism. The individual quest for meaning threatens the staid stories we are expected to revere, the laws we are made to obey—the laws themselves, the codes of conduct and silence, an intrinsic part of the "masterplot." To consider alternative possibilities to the story you have been given—to contemplate for instance, that the mythology of strength and survival your family has so carefully composed is actually a story of abuse and

repression, or to suggest that a religious community has failed in its mission to love and uphold, or sometimes to simply tell the literal truth of your own experience, to say, "This is what happened"—can be interpreted as sacrilege. You are questioning the masterplot, and even before the question or assertion has taken hold, you feel yourself risking judgment, emotional and sometimes physical banishment, and self-destruction, because that is what it is called: not destruction of the self from the outside, but suicide.

This is a metaphor, of course, for loss of narrative.



We say we have lost our way, that we are without direction, that we don't know which way is right. We can't turn the page of our own lives and find out what happens next. So it was that my time of indecision, my search for meaning, seemed less like a quest than a sure-fire road to catastrophe. Because that's what I'd been told it would be, the plot I recognized, the narrative I had been given. Out of the frying pan into the fire. Headed to hell in a handbasket. And for years, those prophecies held true. Because they were self-fulfilling. Because I had never been taught and could not imagine another way.

*redefining to demythologizing and deconstructing.* The stories we have told ourselves, though flawed, can never truly be destroyed, nor should they be. Narrative is a continuum, an infinite text—if we are lucky.

But even if we can recognize the importance of both redefining and maintaining elements of the “masterplot” in theory, where does this leave us at the level of daily living, where the icons seem less stable, the rituals less informative, the traditions obtuse? As a writer of personal nonfiction, I actively engage in destabilizing the stories that have made up my life, and

## I believe in what I am doing, and my family, schooled in conviction, recognizes that belief.

Only recently have I allowed myself to contemplate that the destruction of the “old” self may have been a necessary precursor to the creation of the “new,” though it seems quite obvious now. It has taken me even longer to let go of the old dichotomies, the absolutism that informed my life, to realize that I *can* allow ritual and tradition some place in my daily existence, and that those rituals and traditions are made up of both the old and the new, to accept that I *can* embrace a spirituality that would not be accepted by the congregation of my youth, to believe that there is a way to honor my family *and* stay true to my art.

None of these things is easy, and why should it be? In breaking down the old structures, demythologizing our personal, familial, religious, and social histories, deconstructing the cultural values that have sustained so many generations, we take enormous risks. It is not something to be undertaken blithely, and we must at all times be aware that nothing exists in a void, that for every icon we bring down, another will come in to take its place. We must consider carefully what the new icons, the new myths, should be. We must honor the quest of the individual and the community to define themselves, but we must also honor the journey that has brought us to this point.

Let us never believe that the rituals and traditions of previous generations hold no merit, that there is nothing in them we can learn from, for to do so would be an incredible act of hubris. History at every level, individual to world, is riven with failure, but as Edison said, “Failure is the opportunity to start over with more knowledge.” This is why I much prefer the term

in doing so, I risk what C. K. Williams calls “narrative dysfunction”—losing any sense of the meaning of my own existence. But, as Kittredge notes, if we “stick to [the wrong] story too long, we are likely to find ourselves in a great wreck.” But without story, he adds, you will see a society without much idea of how to proceed.” Because this is also what stories do: they tell us how to act. Kittredge believes that in order to create a better world, we must first create a better narrative, that our actions will then follow.

The role of ritual and tradition cannot be undervalued here. They keep us grounded in the familiar even as the world around us spins away. They are our constants, our Pole Stars, our touchstones. And this is why, even in the face of my own revolution, in the midst of a culture attempting to re-imagine itself, I hold to the old ways that aided the survival of my ancestors: I pray; I treasure sacred things; I gather my family at the table and share food. And something else, something new: I write story.

Nothing is more ritualized in my life than this act of writing. I don't mean that I engage in superstitious actions to woo the creative impulse, though many writers do, insisting on the same pen, the paper pointing north, the mothy cardigan draping their shoulders. What I mean is that writing has become something sacred to me, something to be honored and attended. It is a daily quest.

As a girl in the Pentecostal Church, I spent hours on my knees, hands raised to heaven, questing not for salvation, for that had been granted, but for the Spirit



to possess me, for the gift of glossolalia, speaking in tongues. I have to tell you that writing is not much different. It feels like a calling to me, something that I am simply meant to do; it hits me with a novice's modest pleasure; it requires of me submission; it brings me to my knees. And when whatever it is that happens, when the Muse makes her visit, when the Creative Impulse takes hold, it feels like nothing so much as that infusion of passion I felt at the altar.

And why should I think there would be a difference? I believe in this act of writing with a familiar conviction, and I cannot help but be grateful for having learned the elements of faith early on, for being able to recognize and adhere to the rituals of the quest: devotion, desire, humility, belief—all embodied in the mundane tasks of waiting, watching, listening for hours, days, perhaps a lifetime.

People often ask me how it is I have the courage to write so honestly about my life, how it is I can make the decision to risk alienating my family, how I find the strength to break the codes of silence, to challenge the old laws of conduct. There are any number of ways to answer these questions, none of them absolute, but what I do know is this: I believe in what I am doing, and my family, schooled in conviction, recognizes that

belief. They see me give my life over to hours upon hours at the computer; they know that sometimes those hours produce nothing more than a thin sentence on the page. They sense my fervor and my frustration. More than anything, they understand that I am on a quest, a quest that I have undertaken with great seriousness, a quest they have chosen to honor.

What advice I can offer to those of you attempting to claim authorship of your own stories is this: do it for the right reasons. Don't do it for the money. Don't do it for simple purgation or out of anger, bitterness, or a need for revenge. If you do, how can you expect to gain any blessing? Speak to your family of your passion, your desire, and use those words. Make them believe in what you are doing as much as you do. And another thing: remember to honor your family with the gift of good writing. By this I mean treat them in your writing as you would your most cherished fictional characters. Allow them complexity; understand and accept that they are flawed and sometimes blind. Make them sympathetic. Describe their actions objectively; let the audience be their judge. Remember that they, too, are searching for meaning. Ask yourself, "Who are they, and why?"

When I look to those photographs of Hemingway, I am not looking for creative stimulation or patriarchal direction from Papa: what I am looking for, what I am seeing, is some reminder of my quest for what he called the "True Geo"—some essential element of human existence, some word or image that will cut to the bone. I am seeing the turmoil, the inner conflict, the bifurcated self, the chaos of Hemingway's inability to craft for himself a narrative he could believe in.

No one defined his life and the lives of his characters by ritual more than did Hemingway; the subtleties of camp-side coffee-making; the clean, well-lighted cafe; finally, the obsessive daily counting of written words. Ritual alone is never enough, and perhaps this is what I'm asking Hemingway to remind me of. In my quest for self-definition and a new narrative of meaning, I have found ways to honor my elders; I have found a place of comfort within family, within community. As a writer, I have come to understand that what is most sacred is my relationship to the story on the page. And I have come to accept, once again, that what my faith requires of me is nothing more than my life.

---

Kim Barnes's work includes two memoirs—*In the Wilderness*, a 1997 Pulitzer Prize finalist, and *Hungry for the World*. This presentation was first made at Walla Walla College.

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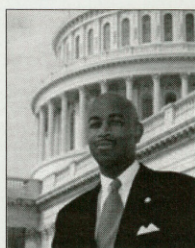
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# Praying for Peace, Praying for Presidents

*By Bonnie Dwyer*

**I**t was raining in Washington on Memorial Day weekend when Chaplain Barry Black walked to the podium to offer prayer at the dedication of the new memorial for World War II veterans. His words were brief but eloquent.

*Eternal Spirit, your faithfulness endures to all generations.*

*We thank you for the sixteen million Americans who served during World War II and the memorial to their courage.*

*Remind us that true peace is not the absence of war, but the experience of being in your presence.*

*Forgive us the selfish desires of our human family that war against the spirit and lead us to violence.*

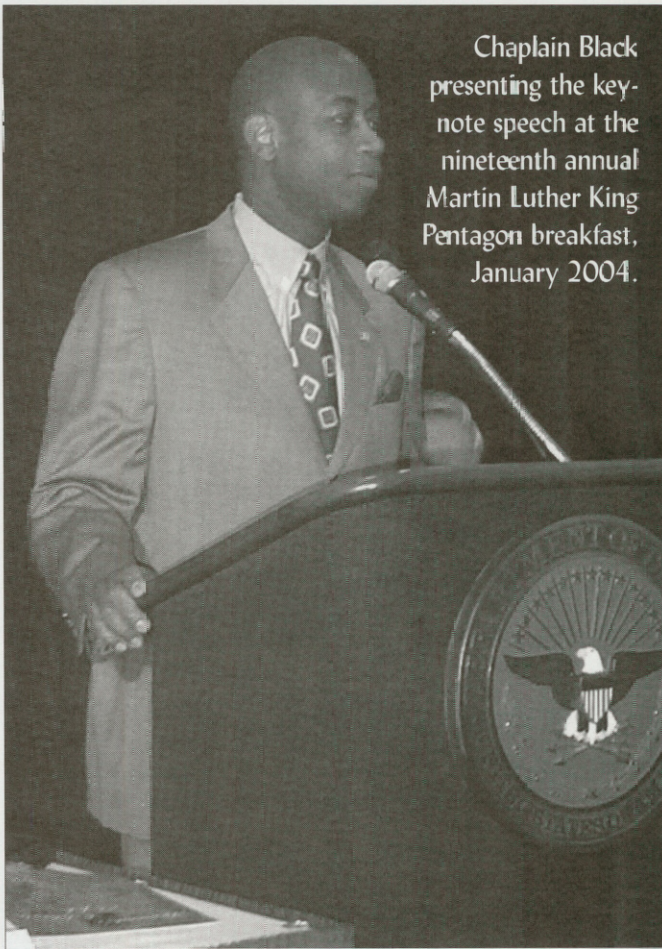
*As we live on this fragile planet, empower us to plant seeds of peace that we will bring a harvest of justice.*

*Make us pure, kind, sensible, and sincere.*

*And hasten the day when we will beat our swords into plowshares and our spears into pruning hooks and study war no more.*

*Now the God of peace be with us all. Amen.*





Chaplain Black presenting the keynote speech at the nineteenth annual Martin Luther King Pentagon breakfast, January 2004.

He speaks of peace often in his prayers that open the meetings of the United States Senate, where he became the sixty-second chaplain on June 27, 2003. He also addresses God on behalf of presidents. He offered the closing prayer at the service for former President Ronald Reagan when his body lay in state in the rotunda of the Capitol.

"Public prayer is an act of communion with God, Black says. "It is an effort to bring the people listening into an environment of worship."

When preparing to give such a prayer, he tries to visit with the people he will be representing. "A public prayer should be an expression of collective longings, not just what one person is praying. When I get a sense of the pulse of the people who I am giving the prayer for, then during my devotional period, I will begin to write the prayer. It really is an overflow of my devotional life."

He recalls the story in Scripture of Elijah being called to pray and prophesy. Elijah asked for the minstrels. When the musicians came, the muse arrived. "It is in the warm glow of worshipping God in private

devotion that I permit the overflow to produce the prayers that I pray publicly. Very often, much of the prayer is a paraphrase of the Scripture or music that I have been listening to."

The prayer for Reagan included words from the song "Day by Day." "That just came out of nowhere," he says, "To see you more clearly, to love you more dearly, day by day."

But even his casual conversation is sprinkled with poetry, lines from Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," the Psalms. He says he has always loved poetry and the music of speech. As a child he was exposed to Longfellow, Guest, Wordsworth, Shakespeare. "That has influenced the way that I write my prayers. A prayer should sing. Music and Scripture season prayer."

What other things should a public prayer include? Adoration, confession, thanksgiving, praise, supplication, and intercession are elements that he notes. "Often we major in petitions, and forget the importance of adoration and thanksgiving," he says.

The devotional life that nourishes his prayers is also at the heart of his current position. "I am chaplain of the Senate because I am and continue to be in pursuit of God, even as David was called from the meadow because of his interior life. God is seeking true worshipers. It would be easier for me to stop breathing than to stop worshipping. Devotion does not just involve a ten or fifteen minute segment of my day that I calendar.

"On his law doth he meditate both day and night.' It is a way of life. In my car, I listen to tapes of Scripture. I try to get through the word four or five times a year. That's the way I've been living for the last thirty years."

Black grew up in Baltimore, Maryland. He attended Pine Forge Academy and Oakwood College before entering the ministry. Early in his pastoral career he met some sailors who had driven miles to attend his North Carolina church. They told him there were no black chaplains at their naval base. Their comments launched a revised ministerial career for Black.

Commissioned as a Navy chaplain in 1976, his first duty station was the Fleet Religious Support Activity in Norfolk, Virginia. Subsequent assignments took him to the U.S. Naval Academy; the First Marine Aircraft Wing, Okinawa, Japan; the Naval Chaplains' School Advanced Course in Newport, Rhode Island; the Marine Aircraft Group Thirty-One, Beaufort, South Carolina;

and then the U.S. Atlantic Fleet, Norfolk, Virginia, where he served as Fleet Chaplain. He ended his distinguished career as the Chief of Navy Chaplains.

Along the way he added graduate education to his professional life. A graduate of Oakwood College, he is also an alumnus of Andrews University, North Carolina Central University, Eastern Baptist Seminary, Salve Regina University, and United States International University. He holds master of arts degrees in divinity, counseling, and management. He has received a doctorate in ministry and a doctor of philosophy in psychology.

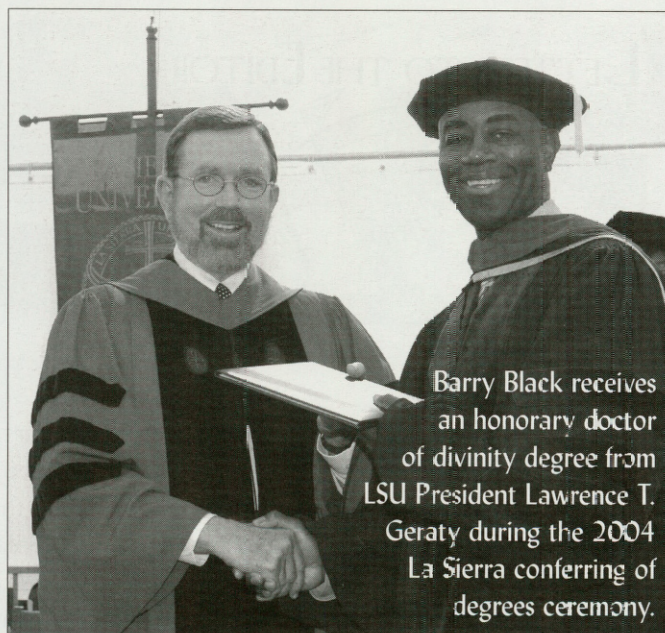
The transition from the Chief of Naval Chaplains to the Senate was seamless, he says. The chaplaincy positions are similar. The task is to advise significant national leaders. It is like Nathan—speaking the truth to power. Both places call for an inclusive ministry in a pluralistic setting where one needs to be sensitive about what is said and intentional in providing ministry to non-Christians.

“I conducted Bible studies there and here,” he notes. At the Senate, he gives five Bible studies a week, plus hosting a regular prayer breakfast. There is a plenary session for everyone who works in the Senate—from janitors and door guards to the vice president. About two hundred people attend that weekly session. There are a couple of sessions just for senators.

“There is a hunger to learn more biblical truths,” he says. But he also notes that there is a much more sophisticated understanding of the Scripture than he expected and there are far more people of faith among senators than he expected. One senator wanted a study on how to pray effectively. In addition to that study and other special requests he offers what he calls a core curriculum of foundational truths: How important it is to appreciate the power in God’s word, how to harness that power. Recently he did an eschatology series examining last day events.

The office of Senate chaplain was created in 1789 at the first Senate meeting in New York City. The Right Rev. Samuel Provost, the Episcopal Bishop of New York, was the first to hold the post. Three days later the Senate voted the Establishment Clause of the Constitution creating the separation of church and state. Reverend Provost opened that session with prayer, Chaplain Black notes. Our forefathers did not intend to eliminate prayer. They voted to separate church and state, not God and state.

Black is often invited to talk to state legislatures



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY

Barry Black receives an honorary doctor of divinity degree from LSU President Lawrence T. Geraty during the 2004 La Sierra conferring of degrees ceremony.

about prayer. He gladly obliges. “I’ve been in institutional ministry for twenty-nine years making the case for federal chaplaincy and the constitutionality of chaplaincy.”

But that is the only issue that he addresses. The radical prayer of a prophet is not the calling of a chaplain. He says the nonpartisan nature of the position must be honored.

“Most issues are sufficiently complex that it would be a bit presumptuous of me to try to make the case for stem cell research in a prayer, for instance. The venue of the opening invocation is not the place to do that. It would hurt my effectiveness. By taking a position I would automatically go against the grain of a fairly significant number of people who are listening.

“The primary intent of prayer—having communion with God—would be harmed. Public prayer is speaking to God and hopefully listening.”

His advice for those offering public prayer is to listen to the people you are going to be praying with and for. Make sure that the adoration and thanksgiving reflect the corporate utterances and not just your own. Draw those who are listening into communion with God. Acknowledge where there is a diversity of religious traditions, and praise inclusively so all those who listen can say a fervent amen.

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.





## Natural Science and the Bible

The Bible is unique in sacred literature in the manner in which its theological and ethical testimony is conveyed in a historical framework.

In the controversy over the Bible that I have observed, specifications concerning historical events have been questioned, but I know of “no one for whom a reading of the text as if it were primarily natural science is necessary.” (*Spectrum*, winter 2004, 31). There is a distinct difference between historical record and scientific text. A satisfactory scientific explanation of an event is not necessary for confidence in a record of its occurrence.

The explanation of Numbers 11:18–23, 31–34 given on pages 34–35 of your winter issue is worth more to me than the cost of my yearly subscription to *Spectrum*. It enhances confidence in the details of the narratives we have received from Moses. But the success of scientific explanation regarding the quail incident does not carry assurance that a corresponding success may be expected for each of the miraculous events recorded in the Pentateuch.

“Defaulting to the supernatural” in our explanations does not change the reliability of the record in the first eleven chapters of Genesis. There will always be need for recog-

nition that “apart from Bible history, geology [science] can prove nothing” regarding the development of organic life on planet Earth. (Ellen White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 112; see also all of chap. 9).

*R. H. Brown  
Loma Linda, Calif.*

## Sorting Out the Thoughts of the Heart

It is interesting to notice how your reviews on *The Passion* (spring 2004) demonstrate once again that you bring out what you take in to see this film. The movie has an uncanny way of sorting out “the thoughts ... of the heart,” as Hebrews 4:12 says.

*Robert M. Zamora  
Rancho Cascades, Calif.*

## Who Won?

*Re: Belief No. 28*

The purpose is presumably to explain positions to non-SDAs. The first sentence, “By His cross ...” is symbolic code language. Whatever do those words mean? Then, “... Jesus triumphed over forces of evil.” The second sentence says that we “have victory over evil.” But the third sentence says that “evil forces

still seek to control us.” Which is it? Did our team win or not??? An unchurched reader would be bewildered, as am I.

If no. 29 cannot be put into one plain simple sentence, DON'T.

*Robert Lee Marsh  
Glendale, Calif.*

## Mary and the Pope

It wasn't just Pope Gregory the Great who “declared that Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany, and the sinner in Luke 7 were all one person” (“Pastor or Prostitute?” by Kendra Haloviak, *Spectrum*, spring 2004). A careful reading of the *Desire of Ages* will show that Ellen White, too, made these three women one.

Read “The Feast at Simon's House,” and also note that there are no entries in the index for Mary Magdalene. If you note the index entry under “Mary and Martha of Bethany,” you'll also notice that Ellen White has Mary of Bethany as Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb after the resurrection.

Does Ellen White speak here as an inspired voice, or one who has fallen to tradition rather than careful study of Scripture?

*Rev. Richard E. Kuykendall  
First Congregational Church  
Auburn, Calif.*

Association of Adventist Forums

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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.

The purpose of local chapters, each of which is financially and administratively independent, is the same as the AAF and *Spectrum*: "To encourage Seventh-day Adventist participation in the discussion of contemporary issues from a Christian viewpoint." AAF officers are able and willing to assist local chapters.

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# Dear Mr. President

George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

“Make no mistake,” declared Gen. Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a letter published in *U. S. News and World Report* on June 7, 2004. He was correcting something that columnist Lou Dobbs had written about his testimony before the U. S. Congress. “The U. S. military is the best trained and most powerful in the world. *But victory in war requires more than sheer force,*” General Myers stated. (Emphasis supplied.)

How true! Although sheer military power can accomplish much, by itself it cannot prevail. General Myers rightly maintained that “Success in Iraq is dependent on more than military action by the United States and its coalition partners. For more than a year, we have been explaining that success in Iraq is focused on improvements in five areas: governance, infrastructure, economy, security, and strategic communications,” he wrote.

I take it that at least one purpose of U. S. emphasis upon improvements in these five areas is to gain the good will of the Iraqi people. This is as it should be. Without the support of a vast majority of the Iraqis, the coalition cannot win this war no matter how much military power it uses. In the long run, all rulers—not just elected ones—rule by the consent of those they rule.

Some apparently think that in war it is ethically permissible to treat detainees as some U. S. guards treated those at Abu Ghraib Prison and perhaps elsewhere. Nevertheless, even they must recognize that what took place amounted to a public relations disaster.

This would have been the result even if the media had not broadcast what occurred. As some of the detainees were released and returned to their homes with reports about how they were treated, good will toward the United States would have declined, just as it has.

What if the United States had taken an entirely different approach? What if it had done everything possible to give the detainees at Abu Ghariab Prison a positive experience? What if upon their arrival U. S. guards had informed them that for awhile they would be under the jurisdiction of the United States? What if they had informed them that this means they have certain rights? What if the officials had explained to them what these are and how to report mistreatment?

What if the guards had fed and clothed them well? What if they had informed their families that they were safe and secure and that they would be released as soon as possible? What if they had made it possible for them to spend their days doing something useful? What if they had conducted Islamic and Christian worship services for those who chose to participate? What, in short, if U. S. guards had treated them as they would want to be treated if they were their detainees?

Many will say that this entirely different approach would have been “unrealistic.” I see this differently. I think that both the quantity and the quality of information voluntarily disclosed by grateful detainees would have been far greater than what we received from the ones we frightened. Although this is not always so, the ethical and the prudential often converge. This is one of those cases.

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good,” declares Scripture. (Rom. 12:21 NRSV) Why not give its recommendations a try?

Sincerely,

David R. Larson  
AAF President

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## God Came to Poetry Class

He sits in the right corner  
in the chair that's always empty,  
with a quizzical look  
on His God-face.

He notices the orange slices  
above the door,  
the 70s pattern  
above the window,  
and the flames missing  
from the candle lights.

He sees me sitting  
my chest tight  
because I am afraid  
that what's inside is in no way  
profound,

but He looks and says,  
it's in there, alright, just  
let it seep out  
and it will

very  
very slowly  
because you can't do  
what I do—  
read your poetry  
as it beats  
from your typewriter  
heart.

Susan Orillosa

Honors student Susan Orillosa graduated from Pacific Union College in June with a major in biochemistry. She will start medical school at Loma Linda University in the fall.