



The Remnant and the Republicans

By Douglas Morgan

My membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church may not automatically make me part of “the remnant,” but it’s indisputable that I’m a Republican, duly registered in the state of Maryland. With full cognizance that I risk being challenged to a duel, I will also assert that I am at least as loyal a Republican as Zell Miller is a Democrat.

I stand on my record: I was founder and, to my knowledge, sole member of Nebraska Republicans for McGovern in 1972. I must warn that I will not submit in silence to any effort to tarnish that achievement with reports that I was not yet old enough to vote.

A vast chasm runs between my idiosyncratic Republicanism and the Republicanism of Dick Cheney and Tom DeLay. Yet it’s also true that today’s GOP bears little resemblance to the political party that grew up during the second half of the nineteenth century, contemporaneously with the Seventh-day Adventist “remnant” movement.

The Republican-remnant kinship, if unofficial, became so close that in the 1970s a scholar would describe late nineteenth-century Adventists as “conservative in theol-

ogy and overwhelmingly Republican in political sympathies.” Accurate in its denotation, the description also conveyed profoundly and insidiously misleading connotations.

By the 1970s, the word *Republican* evoked clean-shaven, suburban tameness as well as elitist privilege. Its usage had the effect of re-creating the Adventist pioneers in the semblances of Gerald Ford, Pat Boone, Billy Graham, and Richard Nixon. In fact, the Republicans with whom the Adventists of the 1860s had affinities looked and acted, in many respects, a lot more like the hirsute radicals protesting racial injustice and the war in Vietnam.

The Republican party was formed in 1855, the same year that the Adventists began setting up their headquarters in Battle Creek. The crisis over slavery was deepening and would soon culminate with the Civil War. The early Adventists’ sympathies leaned Republican because it was the party of liberty, human rights, and temperance. Always a diverse coalition, the party’s most forceful and coherent wing during its first couple of decades—the Radicals—were the foremost advocates in national politics for the powerless and oppressed.

When the Republican party fielded its first national ticket in the presidential election of 1856, the Adventists weren’t sure if they should vote

but were sure that they weren’t going to switch their energies from their fledgling remnant cause to getting out the vote for John C. Frémont. Their stance has subsequently been attributed to some mixture of premillennialist determinism, pietistic individualism, or sectarian stand-offishness. Yet it was quite similar to that of another variety of apocalyptic radicals more widely known on the national scene—William Lloyd Garrison and the American Anti-Slavery Society.

According to biographer Henry Mayer, Garrison saw the abolitionist movement as a “saving remnant” working for a “spiritual revolution accomplished by a minority liberated from conventional politics and armed only with the righteous conviction of truth.” The movement’s task was “to work on the constituencies rather than the candidates,” and thus to transform the moral conscience of society. Enmeshment in partisan politicking would undermine the power and authenticity of the reformers’ public witness.

The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 and its transformation into war against slavery in 1863 created an entirely new situation by the election of 1864. The Great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln, unwavering in his commitment to abolition after painful slowness in coming to it, stood for re-election as a Republican against the great

appeaser of the Confederacy, the popular Democratic general, George B. McClellan.

The fate of the slaves hung in the balance that fall. And because the Republican party had demonstrated both the ability and resolve to end the foul curse, Garrison believed it was now time to join the political fray, and he stumped vigorously for Lincoln.

In the *Review* that same fall, J. N. Andrews warned against any notions about the possibility of smuggling proslavery politics past divine inspection on judgment day. As their earthly sojourn prolonged, Adventists realized they had to act their part for the “Prince of Peace” until the final establishment of his reign. Questions of whether and how to vote, stated in a resolution voted at the General Conference session the following year, turned on the impact for “justice, humanity, and right,” and against “intemperance, insurrection, and slavery.”

The century following the Civil War witnessed an ongoing struggle for the soul of the Republican party. Would it be primarily the party of profit, allied with the interests of large corporations and a burgeoning military-industrial complex? Or would it be the party of principles such as liberty, equal opportunity, and honest, benevolent government?

Republican heroes of the latter emphases during the first three decades of the twentieth century (at least portions thereof) included leaders of black empowerment such as Ida B. Wells-Barnett and A. Philip Randolph, and eloquent progressives such as George Norris of Nebraska and Robert “Fighting Bob” La Follette of Wisconsin. During the second half of the twentieth century, Edward Brooke of

Massachusetts, Jacob Javits of New York, and Mark Hatfield of Oregon carried on the tradition.

This specie of Republican, however, dwindled to the verge of extinction by the end of the century. At the Republican Convention this year, the lieutenant governor of Maryland, Ronald Steele, referred to the little-noted fact that a far higher proportion of Democrats than Republicans in the Senate voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Twenty-one Democrats voted against the legislation now so universally honored, whereas only five Republicans did.

What Steele did not mention was that one of the five Republican opponents was the party’s presidential nominee later that year, Barry Goldwater. It was the beginning of a “southern strategy” that made sharply conservative white southerners the dominant force in the party.

Through these transformations, the “remnant” people deepened their de facto bonds with the GOP. But the soul of Republicanism had fundamentally changed. A facade of tradition obscured parallel shifts in the soul of Adventism.

Ellen White, of course, had labored to keep the remnant from debilitating divisions over partisan politics. Her nonpartisanship, however, was not in the service of noninvolvement or apocalyptic fatalism. Rather, it was a strategy for a kind of “movement” politics based on a distinctive identity as “subjects of Christ’s kingdom.”

From that standpoint, Adventists could make discriminating use of the political process in the name of a healing, loving God, as well as resist being co-opted for evil purposes. The direction from the voice of the Son of God, Ellen White

declared, is “ye will not give your voice or influence to any policy to enrich a few, to bring oppression and suffering to the poorer classes of humanity” (*Testimonies to Ministers*, 331–32).

Differing conclusions may well be drawn as to how all of this influences electoral choices on November 2. Yet the Adventist heritage cannot, without delusion, be invoked in support of apathy, disengagement, or policies that diminish access to health care, education, housing, and economic opportunity, while favoring unfettered accumulation for the fortunate few and military aggression intended to preserve and extend that privilege.

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What Does It Take to Be a Hero?

By Ryan Rasmuson

This year, Hollywood’s answer to this enduring question is addressed in films such as *Spiderman II*, *Van Helsing*, and *Harry Potter*. For Adventist documentary filmmaker Terry Benedict the answer is found in the story of an unlikely war hero from World War II, conscientious objector Desmond Doss.

The Conscientious Objector, Benedict’s film, chronicles the life of a soft-spoken yet firmly principled man whose heroism earned him the highest military honor in the United States, the Congressional Medal of Honor. For the project Benedict assembled cutting-edge camera



equipment that he used in innovative ways and spent countless hours interviewing Doss's fellow soldiers.

Benedict also arranged for Doss and several other veterans to return to the escarpment in Okinawa where Private Doss, the noncombatant, showed his heroism. There they detail the account of the battle and how Doss saved seventy-three lives during one night of frantic fighting. This becomes the highlight of the motion picture, and it elevates Doss to almost mythical status.

Audiences respond enthusiastically. In May, *The Conscientious Objector* took home two awards at the San Jose (California) Cinequest film festival.

Doss, however, remains humble about his accomplishments. He knows that he was saved by Christ and remains a committed Seventh-day Adventist. His faithful demeanor illuminated Christ to his fellow soldiers; his courage turned hostile officers into humble friends.

Today, Doss's schedule regularly makes him available to the public, where he is especially happy to talk with young believers. He was featured as a spiritual hero at the International Pathfinder Camporee in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, in August. Pathfinder clubs across the country will sponsor the showing of the documentary in November for Veterans Day. "Never let anyone look down on you because you are young," Doss tells Pathfinders. "And always put Christ first."

His story affects adults as well, particularly veterans. "Being in the army as a conscientious objector was never an easy thing," says Bob Sanford, a Korean War draftee turned professional educator in Carmichael, California.

It was made easier by the fact that I knew that someone else had already done it and done it well. When my superiors would tell me to take a gun or when my peers would chastise me, it allowed me an opportunity to tell them the story of Desmond Doss. I remember one soldier that this had a tremendous impact upon. When he first met me he was very antagonistic and questioned why I would choose to declare myself a C.O. But after sharing Desmond's story, he actually made a point as his vehicle was headed out, to come back, shake my hand and encourage me to stay strong in my personal beliefs.

As another veteran summarized, "Desmond succeeded where others have failed. For that, I say thank-you."

Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* has shown that there is an interest in Christian stories today. Benedict says there are plans to follow up this documentary with a feature film on the life of Desmond Doss.

In an era when Christianity is increasingly under attack, the story of Desmond T. Doss remains inspiring and provides hope for those who stand up for their beliefs.

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Church Planters Sow New Denomination?

By Alexander Carpenter

On August 7, North American Division (NAD) president Don Schneider strode into an Ohio hotel room at the close of the Adventist-

Laymen's Services and Industries (ASI) national convention. He was not happy.

Inside the room stood Ron Gladden, author of the popular handbook *The Seven Habits of Highly Ineffective Churches* (2003) and former church planting director for both the North Pacific and Mid-America Union Conferences. That encounter was his one last appeal to Ron, "asking him to build plans that can work within the Adventist Church."

But it didn't work, and on August 9, Mission Catalyst Network (MCN) was launched with Gladden as directional leader.

A former speaker during summer SEEDs church growth conferences and workers meetings around the NAD, Ron Gladden explains that the purpose of MCN, a church planting organization, is to equip local churches to accomplish the Great Commission. Although NAD leadership labels it a new denomination, MCN counters that its planted congregations will be networked together less formally, through common doctrines and its three-member support staff currently based in Vancouver, Washington.

Explaining his motivation, Gladden states that "we made this decision in March 2004 when administrators expressed their strong support for the work of the Church Planting Center, but decided to discontinue the funding." Told by his union president that he was not allowed to raise private money to support the center for fear that other forms of evangelism would suffer, Gladden was terminated and not offered any other position.

Speaking on his mobile phone while directing a field school of

evangelism in Colorado, North American Division Evangelism Institute (NADEI) director Russell C. Burrill sounds troubled. "Sure everyone agrees that there is a problem with church structure, but I've chosen to better it inside, while Ron has now chosen to go outside." Distancing himself, Burrill adds that although Ron Gladden was associated with the church plant movement in North America, Ron was "never a part of division-level church planting."

Gladden, who was director of the Adventist church assessment for the NAD and attracted attention among Adventist and non-Adventist pastors eager for congregational growth, reports that the NAD did cover \$25,000 of his salary. Responding to suggestions that he is starting a new denomination, Gladden writes:

We are not breaking away from Adventist membership. We desire to be a supporting, enabling ministry that proclaims the same message. If we compare the approved usage of tithe in 1901 with the way the denomination spends it today, it seems that the slippery slope consists of spending more and more of its resources on the higher levels of the organization, while the local church struggles to fulfill its mission.

According to the MCN leaders, they are Adventist in belief, but no longer Adventist in organizational philosophy. Their belief statement is linked to the fundamental twenty-seven beliefs listed at the Adventist Church Web site. Mission Catalyst Network also publishes a ten-point distillation, citing the official thir-

teen Seventh-day Adventist baptismal vows as evidence of acceptable doctrinal summary.

Speaking with *Spectrum*, Gladden states directly that working outside the Church has nothing to do with doctrine; rather, his concern is church structure and tithe. At MCN, the only link between the local church and headquarters will be the 10 percent of collections sent up from the membership and the organizational support sent down.

Gladden reasons in a letter sent to church leadership: "everyone knows that most Adventist ministries accept tithe;" he adds, we will "follow the lead of others with one exception. We are not pretending that we don't accept it; we believe that the tithe is for the proclamation of the Adventist message and we will use it as efficiently as we can."

In his article, "Primacy of the Local Church and Tithe Distribution" published on the MCN Web site, Terry Pooler expresses frustration with a heavily layered church structure—conferences, union conferences, world divisions, General Conference—that uses tithe for expenses and payment of support personnel, whereas the local church cannot.

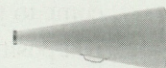
Weary of this criticism, Assistant to the NAD President for Communication Kermit Netteburg points out that in the last twenty years NAD union conferences have become smaller and leaner, with most having cut at least half their staff. He addresses complaints of a too-costly bureaucracy by suggesting that those who see church structure as overly stratified are employing "a nonexistent, pre-1980s straw man." Countering the claim that the church hierarchy absorbs too much

of the tithe, Netteburg, who was also at the August 7 meeting with MCN in Ohio, adds that the General Conference, NAD, and its union conferences use only 9 percent of collected tithe for their operating costs.

In addition to Ron Gladden, MCN management includes Dennis Pumford as assistant leader and Liz Whitworth as business administrator. By mid-October, MCN projects to have five church plants in process. The first, located in Portland, Oregon, is led by Pastor and Mrs. Steven Shomler, veterans from a SDA church plant in Minnesota. After passing through an official four-day evaluation and supplying the first \$5,000, each church planting couple receives \$15,000 from MCN to begin ministry. The first major goal of MCN is to plant congregations in roughly three hundred of the largest urban centers in the United States.

Defending the success of NAD evangelism, Russell Burrill states that 1,211 new, named congregation starts—churches, companies, and groups—now exist, due in part to NAD church planting work since 1996. Don Schneider states in an August 10 letter to conference presidents that since 1996, "we've planted about 1,000 churches, most of which are still healthy, growing parts of the denomination."

Gladden points to official church statistics kept since 1996 showing a net gain of only 318 churches, adding that, of those, a high percentage are ethnic churches. Subtracted from the total, and counting other shifts, he states that NAD non-Hispanic white church membership is almost stagnant. In response, Burrill points out that



those 318 churches exist as completely established churches with full constituency approval, which often takes many years, and that this official statistic does not reflect the many nascent church plants and growing companies.

During the August 7 meeting with Schneider, MCN asked the NAD to appoint a liaison to maintain good relations between the two organizations. In addition, MCN asked in writing for a NAD representative to be a voting member of the board. According to Netteburg, the NAD has not received an official request, and thus someone has yet to be assigned.

Gladden, who retains his Seventh-day Adventist membership, summarizes his rationale for planting outside the Church: “institutional Adventism prioritizes status quo and rewards mediocrity. Mission Catalyst Network provides a second way of proclaiming the same message with the opportunity to reinvest the lion’s share of the tithe back into the local mission.”

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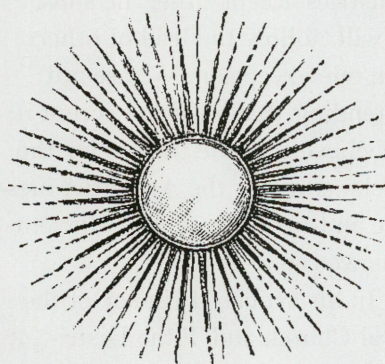
Harmony vs. Hegemony at the Faith and Science Conference

By Bonnie Dwyer

The statement that Jan Paulsen, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, made to church scientists and theologians in 2002 was simple and straightforward. The group was about to begin a three-year conversation about creation. He said, “As a church we don’t come to these discussions with a neutral position. We already have a very

defined fundamental belief in regard to creation. We believe that earth and life on it was created in six literal days and that the age of earth since then is a young one.”

Two years later, when he made a similar statement, however, the words came across differently. During the course of the faith and science meetings a movement had formed of people who felt the need to make the Church’s fundamental beliefs about creation more specific. Instead of the words of Genesis 1, which are included in the belief statement, the phrase, “a creation



week of seven literal, historical, consecutive, contiguous, 24 hour days,” became campaign-like slogan. It was repeated over and over as numerous speakers went to the microphone during discussion periods and called for official revision of the belief. As the calls for revision mounted, the harmony that had been building in the two previous years of conversations seemed to evaporate into hegemony.

So Jan Paulsen took the podium early in the 2004 conference and reminded the participants of what they had been asked to do—discuss the issues. Their report was to be descriptive. (The final document follows this report.) They had no authority as a group to vote on a change in the Fundamental Belief.

After the thousands of hours of

work and discussion represented in the meetings and papers, to have it all come down to changing a few words in the Fundamental Beliefs seemed slightly ridiculous to Ben Clausen of the Geoscience Research Institute, perhaps because he personally invested a great deal of his time in the project. As the coordinator of the Glacier View meeting in 2003, he was the one who created the Web blog that carried one of the liveliest discussions of creation issues ever in the Church, because messages were posted anonymously. His organization of the meeting at Glacier View was also given high marks by participants for its fair and balanced approach to the issues.

What impressed Clausen at the conclusion of the three-year span of discussions was the effort the Church made to bring people together for a significant discussion. He was encouraged that the scientific data had been taken seriously. He felt the meetings had shown that there were no easy answers—simply getting Christians engaged in research would not provide a solution to the controversy.

Both Clausen and Lowell Cooper, the GC vice president given the task of organizing the meetings in 2002 and 2004, talked about the need to approach the topic with humility. Clausen said, “Not nearly as many scientific answers about origins are available as desired. While working toward answers, humility is needed: paradoxical features are abundant in many areas, from the nature of Christ and predestination/free will to the wave/particle nature of light. We may just have to learn to live with them.”

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.

An Affirmation of Creation

The International Faith and Science Conferences 2002–2004 Report of the Organizing Committee to the General Conference Executive Committee through the office of the General Conference President, September 10, 2004

Introduction

The very first words of the Bible provide the foundation for all that follows. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...” Gen 1:1. Throughout Scripture the Creation is celebrated as coming from the hand of God who is praised and adored as Maker and Sustainer of all that is. “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands,” (Ps 19:1 NIV).

From this view of the world flows a series of interlocking doctrines that lie at the core of the Seventh-day Adventist message to the world: a perfect world without sin and death created not long ago; the Sabbath; the fall of our first parents; the spread of sin, decay and death to the whole creation; the coming of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, to live among us and rescue us from sin by His death and resurrection; the Second Coming of Jesus, our Creator and Redeemer; and the ultimate restoration of all that was lost by the Fall.

As Christians who take the Bible seriously and seek to live by its precepts Seventh-day Adventists have a high view of nature. We believe that even in its present fallen state nature reveals the eternal power of God (Rom 1:20), that “‘God is love’ is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass” (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p.10).

For us, all Scripture is inspired and tests all the other ways, including

nature, through which God reveals Himself. We have great respect for science, and applaud the prominence of science departments in our institutions of higher learning and healthcare. We also value the work of Seventh-day Adventist scientists and researchers not employed by the Church. We train students at our colleges and universities how to employ the scientific method rigorously. At the same time, we refuse to restrict our quest for truth to the constraints imposed by the scientific method alone.

The question of origins

For centuries, at least in the Christian world, the Bible story of creation was the standard explanation for questions about origins. During the 18th and 19th centuries the methodologies of science resulted in a growing understanding of how things worked. Today no one can deny that science has made a remarkable impact on our lives through advances in the areas of agriculture, communication, ecology, engineering, genetics, health, and space exploration.

In many areas of life knowledge derived from nature and knowledge from divine revelation in Scripture appear to be in harmony. Advances in scientific knowledge often confirm and validate the views of faith. However, in regard to the origin of the universe, of the earth, and of life and its history, we encounter contradictory world-views. Assertions based on a study of Scripture often stand in stark contrast to those arising from the scientific assumptions and methodologies used in the study of nature. This tension has a direct impact on the life of the Church, its message and witness.

We celebrate the life of faith. We advocate a life of learning. Both in the study of Scripture and in the orderly processes of nature we see indicators

of the Creator’s marvelous mind. Since its earliest days the Seventh-day Adventist Church has encouraged the development of mind and understanding through the disciplines of worship, education, and observation.

In earlier decades the discussion of theories on origins primarily occurred in academic settings. However, philosophical naturalism (wholly natural, random and undirected processes over the course of time) has gained wide acceptance in education and forms the basic assumption for much that is taught in the natural and social sciences. Seventh-day Adventist members and students encounter this view and its implications in many areas of daily life.

In its statement of fundamental beliefs the Seventh-day Adventist Church affirms a divine creation as described in the biblical narrative of Genesis 1. “God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic 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. (Gen. 1; 2; Ex. 20:8–11; Ps. 19:1–6; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 11:3.)”

Reasons for the Faith and Science Conferences

Because of the pervasive and growing influence of the theory of evolution, the

General Conference Executive Committee (Annual Council 2001) authorized a three-year series of Faith and Science conferences. These conferences were not called to modify the Church's long-held position on creation but to review the contributions and limitations that both faith and science bring to our understanding of origins.

The principal reasons that led to the convening of these conferences involved:

1. Philosophical questions: An ever-present challenge exists in defining the relationship between theology and science, between that of faith and reason. Are these two streams of knowledge in partnership or in conflict? Should they be viewed as interactive or are they independent, non-overlapping spheres of knowledge? The dominant worldview in most modern societies interprets life, physical reality, and behavior in ways that are markedly different from the Christian worldview. How should a Christian relate to these things?

2. Theological questions: How is the Bible to be interpreted? What does a plain reading of the text require of a believer? To what extent should knowledge from science inform or shape our understanding of Scripture and vice-versa?

3. Scientific questions: The same data from nature are available to all observers. What do the data say or mean? How shall we arrive at correct interpretations and conclusions? Is science a tool or a philosophy? How do we differentiate between good and bad science?

4. The issue of nurture and education for Church members: How is a Church member to deal with the vari-

ety of interpretations of the Genesis record? What does the Church have to say to those who find in their educational curriculum ideas that conflict with their faith? Maintaining silence concerning such issues sends mixed signals; it creates uncertainty and provides fertile ground for unwarranted and dogmatic views.

5. Development of living faith: Clarification and reaffirmation of a Bible-based theology of origins will equip members with a framework for dealing with challenges on this topic. The Faith and Science Conferences were not convened simply for the intellectual stimulation of attendees, but as an opportunity to provide orientation and practical guidance for Church members. The Church cannot pretend to keep its beliefs in a safe place, secure from all challenge. In doing so they will soon become relics. Church teachings must engage and connect with the issues of the day so that they remain a living faith; otherwise they will amount to nothing more than dead dogma.

Two International Faith and Science Conferences were held—in Ogden, Utah 2002, and in Denver, Colorado 2004—with widespread international representation from *The Faith and Science Conferences* theologians, scientists, and Church administrators. In addition seven¹ of the Church's thirteen divisions conducted division-wide or regional conferences dealing with the interaction of faith and science in explanations about origins. The Organizing Committee expresses appreciation to the participants at these conferences for their contributions to this report.

The Ogden conference agenda was designed to acquaint attendees with the range of ways in which both

theology and science offer explanations for the origin of the earth and life. The agendas for conferences in divisions were determined by the various organizers, although most included several of the topics dealt with in Ogden. The recent conference in Denver was the concluding conference of the three-year series. Its agenda began with summaries of the issues in theology and science, then moved on to several questions regarding faith-science issues in Church life.

These questions included:

- The on-going place of scholarship in the Church. How does the Church maintain the confessional nature of its teachings while being open to further development in its understanding of truth?
- Educational models for dealing with controversial subjects and the ethical issues involved for teachers and Church leaders. How shall we teach science courses in our schools in a way that enriches, rather than erodes, faith?
- What ethical considerations come into focus when private conviction differs from denominational teaching? How does personal freedom of belief interface with one's public role as a leader in the Church? In other words, what are the principles of personal accountability and the ethics of dissent?
- What are the administrative responsibilities and processes in dealing with variations in, or re-expressions of, doctrinal views?

Scholarly papers by theologians, scientists, and educators were presented and discussed in all the conferences. (The Geoscience Research Institute maintains a file of all papers presented at the conferences.) The Ogden and Denver conferences involved at least some representation from every divi-

sion of the world field. Well over 200 persons participated in the conferences during the three-year period. More than 130 attended the Denver meeting, most of whom had attended at least one other of the Faith and Science Conferences.

General Observations

1. We applaud the seriousness and dignity that characterized the conferences.
2. We noted the strong sense of dedication and loyalty to the Church that prevailed.
3. We experienced that even though tensions surfaced at times, cordial relations were maintained among the attendees, with fellowship transcending differences in viewpoint.
4. We witnessed in these conferences a high level of concurrence on basic understandings, especially the normative role of Scripture, buttressed by the writings of Ellen G White, and the belief by all in God as beneficent Creator.
5. We found no support for, or advocacy of, philosophical naturalism, the idea that the universe came into existence without the action of a Creator.
6. We acknowledge that the conflict between the biblical and contemporary worldviews impacts both scientists and theologians.
7. We recognize that tension between faith and understanding is an element of life with which the believer must learn to live.
8. We observe that rejecting contemporary scientific interpretations of origins in conflict with the biblical

account does not imply depreciation of either science or the scientist.

9. While we found widespread affirmation of the Church's understanding of life on earth, we recognize that some among us interpret the biblical record in ways that lead to sharply different conclusions.

10. We accept that both theology and science contribute to our understanding of reality.

Findings

1. The degree to which tension exists regarding our understanding of origins varies around the world. In those areas where science has made its greatest progress in society the questions among Church members are more widespread. With the advance of science across all societies and educational systems there will be a corresponding increase in members wondering how to reconcile Church teaching with natural theories of origin. Large numbers of Seventh-day Adventist students attend public schools where evolution is taught and promoted in the classroom without corresponding materials and arguments in favor of the biblical account of origins.

2. Reaffirmation of the Church's Fundamental Belief regarding creation is strongly supported. Seventh-day Adventist belief in a literal and historical six-day creation is theologically sound and consistent with the teaching of the whole Bible.

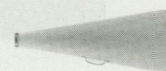
3. Creation is a foundational pillar in the entire system of Seventh-day Adventist doctrine—it bears direct relationship to many if not all other fundamental beliefs. Any alternative interpretation of the creation story needs to be examined in light of its

impact on all other beliefs. Several of the Faith and Science Conferences reviewed alternative interpretations of Genesis 1, including the idea of theistic evolution. These other interpretations lack theological coherence with the whole of Scripture and reveal areas of inconsistency with the rest of Seventh-day Adventist doctrine. They are therefore unacceptable substitutes for the biblical doctrine of creation held by the Church.

4. Concern has been expressed regarding what some see as ambiguity in the phrase "In six days" found in the Church's statement of belief on creation. It is felt that the intended meaning (that the six-day creation described in Genesis was accomplished in a literal and historical week) is unmentioned. This situation allows for uncertainty about what the Church actually believes. Further, it provides room for other explanations of creation to be accommodated in the text. There is a desire for the voice of the Church to be heard in bringing added clarity to what is really meant in Fundamental Belief #6.

5. Although some data from science can be interpreted in ways consistent with the biblical concept of creation, we also reviewed data interpreted in ways that challenge the Church's belief in a recent creation. The strength of these interpretations cannot be dismissed lightly. We respect the claims of science, study them, and hope for a resolution. This does not preclude a re-examination of Scripture to make sure it is being properly understood. However, when an interpretation harmonious with the find-

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ings of science is not possible, we do not allow science a privileged position in which it automatically determines the outcome. Rather, we recognize that it is not justifiable to hold clear teachings of Scripture hostage to current scientific interpretations of data.

6. We recognize that there are different theological interpretations among us regarding Genesis 1–11. In view of the various interpretations we sensed a high degree of concern that those involved in the Seventh-day Adventist teaching ministry conduct their work ethically and with integrity—by standards of their profession, the teachings of Scripture, and the basic understanding held by the body of believers. Since Seventh-day Adventists recognize their comprehension of truth is a growing experience, there is an ever-present need to continue the study of Scripture, theology, and science in order that the truths we hold constitute a living faith able to address the theories and philosophies of the day.

7. We appreciate and endorse the significant value of ongoing international and interdisciplinary dialog among Seventh-day Adventist theologians, scientists, educators, and administrators.

Affirmations

As a result of the two international conferences and the seven division conferences, the Organizing Committee reports the following affirmations:

1. We affirm the primacy of Scripture in the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of origins.

2. We affirm the historic Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Genesis 1 that life on earth was created in six literal days and is of recent origin.

3. We affirm the biblical account of the Fall resulting in death and evil.

4. We affirm the biblical account of a catastrophic Flood, an act of God's judgment that affected the whole planet, as an important key to understanding earth history.

5. We affirm that our limited understanding of origins calls for humility and that further exploration into these questions brings us closer to deep and wonderful mysteries.

6. We affirm the interlocking nature of the doctrine of creation with other Seventh-day Adventist doctrines.

7. We affirm that in spite of its fallenness nature is a witness to the Creator.

8. We affirm Seventh-day Adventist scientists in their endeavors to understand the Creator's handiwork through the methodologies of their disciplines.

9. We affirm Seventh-day Adventist theologians in their efforts to explore and articulate the content of revelation.

10. We affirm Seventh-day Adventist educators in their pivotal ministry to the children and youth of the Church.

11. We affirm that the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church identified in Revelation 14:6, 7 includes a call to worship God as Creator of all.

Recommendations

The Organizing Committee for the International Faith and Science Conferences recommends that:

1. In order to address what some interpret as a lack of clarity in Fundamental Belief #6 the historic Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the Genesis

narrative be affirmed more explicitly.

2. Church leaders at all levels be encouraged to assess and monitor the effectiveness with which denominational systems and programs succeed in preparing young people, including those attending non-Adventist schools, with a biblical understanding of origins and an awareness of the challenges they may face in respect to this understanding.

3. Increased opportunity be provided for interdisciplinary dialog and research, in a safe environment, among Seventh-day Adventist scholars from around the world.

Conclusion

The Bible opens with the story of creation; the Bible closes with the story of re-creation. All that was lost by the Fall of our first parents is restored. The One who made all things by the Word of His mouth at the beginning brings the long struggle with sin, evil, and death to a triumphant and glorious conclusion. He is the One who dwelt among us and died in our stead on Calvary. As the heavenly beings sang for joy at the first creation, so the redeemed from earth proclaim: "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created... Worthy is the Lamb who was slain" (Rev 4:11; 5:12 NKJV).

Notes

1. East-Central Africa Division, Euro-Africa Division, North American Division, South Pacific Division, Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, Southern Asia Division, West-Central Africa Division.

Source: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists