

# SPECTRUM

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## Adventist Media and Celebrity

### Celebs in Home Circles

Can the Church  
Learn Something  
From Oprah?

### A Print-Driven Church

Fireworks in  
the Holy of  
Holies

The Sanctuary and  
the Unbearable  
Loneliness of Being

# SPECTRUM

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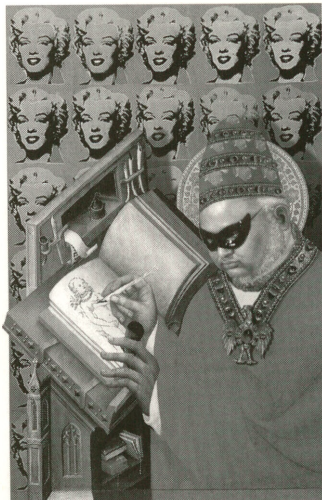
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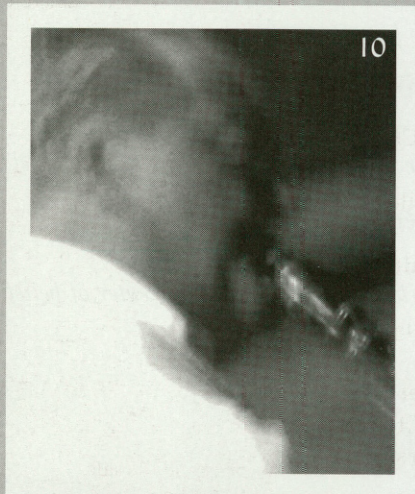
## From the Artist about the Cover

All my paintings contain "quotes" — references to the canon of Western art. Specifically, in this painting "Saint Lyle Records His Dream of the Lady Marilyn," there is an obvious reference to the work of Andy Warhol. The posture and setting of the saint, however, are based on a Czech altarpiece from the mid-1300s (and the face of "Saint Lyle" is that of a friend who appears in a number of my paintings).

As a practicing visual artist, I find that I have lamentably little sense of an artistic "community." I do know other people who paint, of course, but find that I have relatively little in common with them: their preferred subject matter, lifestyle, view of the world, and so forth tend to be quite different from my own. For this reason, I find that it is important to have a sense of my artistic roots: I am able to create a sense of "community" by identifying with artists who worked in other eras. For example, as the Saint Lyle painting suggests, I might identify with a medieval scribe working in the scriptorium of a Cistercian monastery. As I begin the morning's work of transcribing the text at hand (perhaps a passage from the Song of Solomon), I am troubled by the memory of a dream I had a few hours ago. The dream obsesses me to the point that I begin to doodle in the margins of my manuscript, and my inadvertent marginalia weaves its way into the text itself.

—Jon Hoyt

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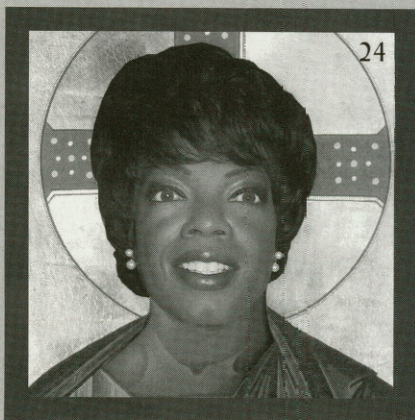


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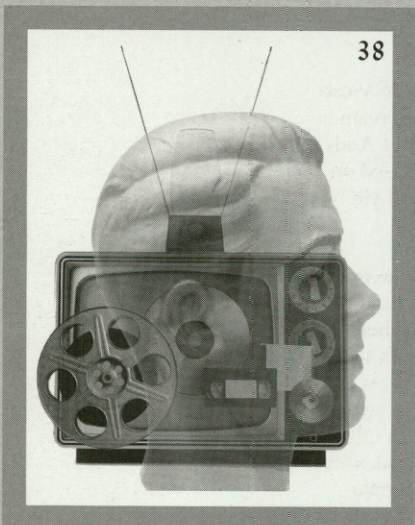
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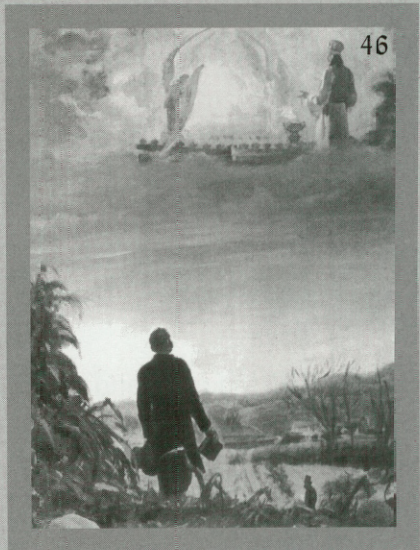
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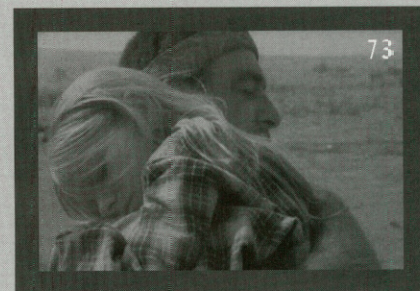
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# Dying for the Church

*"I love the Church. I would give my life for the Church."*

The comment took me by surprise. For a dedicated Christian leader to say that he would die for his faith should not surprise me, but in my mind that correlated to being willing to die for Christ.

But for the Church? The argumentative institution beset with politics, challenged by financial dearth and plenty, capable of cruelty as well as kindness; the organization we often fault for every conceivable ill—die for *that* church?

It was General Conference president Jan Paulsen who made the comment in a taped interview played to the combined meeting of the Adventist Theological Society and the Adventist Society for Religious Studies. To this group of people who have split into two organizations because of their inability to agree, the love behind the comment was significant.

Catholic writer Flannery O'Connor writes of a similar love:

I think that the Church is the only thing that is going to make the terrible world we are coming to endure; the only thing that makes the church endure is that somehow it is the body of Christ; and that on this we are fed. It seems to be a fact that you have to suffer as much from the church as for it, but if you believe in the divinity of Christ, you have to cherish the world at the same time that you struggle to endure it.

*(Spiritual Writings [1955], 75)*

During certain times in church history, that struggle to cherish and endure the Church has been particularly poignant. Such was the case twenty-five years ago when Australian theologian Desmond Ford challenged conventional Seventh-day Adventist concepts about the sanctuary. The Church's response to Ford during a specially convened meeting at

Glacier View, Colorado, seemed at the moment to be a watershed in Adventist history. Was it?

In this issue, we return to the subject of the sanctuary, not to reargue the theology, but to look at it with fresh eyes. In the minds of writers Chris Blake and David Larson, there is much for us to say about this subject. Gregory Schneider provides us with memories of the original presentation of Ford's thesis in Angwin, California. And Norm Young looks at the consensus statement that emerged out of Glacier View and restates his view of the sanctuary doctrine at the center of Adventist theology.

To suffer the slings and arrows of church gossip is the fate that Adventist celebrities endure. This is a form of dying for the Church. In our celebrity culture we expect them to do so without complaint. It can be asking a lot. We also have great expectations of our media products. They carry our hopes and dreams and we ache for them to soar.

From its beginnings, Adventism has been a media-based culture, Bruce Manners says. What has adding more media to the mix done to our character? In its media do we find a church that we would die for?

Jan Paulsen spoke kindly about the need to talk to each other and discuss difficult matters—it's the first step in our life together as the body of Christ, the place where we learn to cherish and endure.

Bonnie Dwyer  
Editor

## NOTEWORTHY



### An Army of One (Thousand, Two Hundred, and Twenty-Nine Possible Evangelists)

By Alexander Carpenter

*I've been to more potlucks, picnics, and get-togethers organized around the idea that we're all going to die than I care to count. Not that I'm trivializing the Apocalypse; I'm sure the end of the world will involve a lot of wailing and gnashing of teeth. But in my experience, talking about the end of the world is a proven way to make friends.*

—Sarah Vowell in  
*Take the Cannoli* (2000)

The other weekend, the General Youth Conference (GYC) arrived at the corporate heart of Sacramento, California. Kicking it off with the opening address on Wednesday night, twenty-four-year-old GYC president Israel Ramos pointed out that “although we’ve been living in the time of the end for awhile now, we are getting closer and closer to the end of time.”

Near the middle of the industrial gray convention hall sat twenty-one-year-old Andrew, sporting a crew cut, a tan Carhart coat, and paint-flecked pants. When a later speaker asked everyone to pull out their Bibles, Andrew—an Adventist since age three—pulled out his Palm Pilot

and began to read along. Working in the house-siding business in Spirit Lake, Idaho, Andrew and a buddy had driven down to GYC to listen, he said, and learn more about God and to see some friends.

The conference had just over one thousand, two hundred, and twenty-nine registrants, with weekend attendance near sixteen hundred, so the chances were good that one could see a few friends under the age of thirty. Attendees and speakers flew in from Austria, Norway, Singapore, Australia, Iceland, Canada, Thailand, and the United Kingdom. Sponsored by Michigan Conference Public Campus Ministries and ASI Missions, the GYC worked like the amalgamated offspring of an ASI convention and a General Conference session, with 3ABN broadcasting the evening and Sabbath meetings. This was the third annual General Youth Conference, and this year’s theme was “Carry the Light” and almost everything tied to evangelism. And the underlying message of that evangelism was to save the world in order to hasten its end.

The conference featured sermons by Doug Batchelor and Mark Finley and workshops—“A Way to Reach Out and Still Maintain Our Uniqueness,” “Relationship Evangelism,” “Health Evangelism,” “How to Share Your Faith,” and “How to Give a Bible Study.”

Witnessing was the chosen expression of faith. The conference combined theory and praxis, as the weekend culminated in hundreds of attendees spending Sabbath afternoon canvassing Sacramento for Bible study contacts.

General Conference president Jan Paulsen flew in on Thursday for a quick question-and-answer period and to deliver a noon speech. Questions ranged from queries about his favorite veggie food (whatever his wife cooks), to what to do about segregated conferences (nothing, as they give more people leadership opportunities). Many in the audience “amened” during his answer to the question regarding “professors at our institutions who don’t uphold the distinctive doctrines of our church.” Paulsen pointed out that this is the price we pay for freedom. He asked, if you don’t like what is being presented, why don’t you go somewhere else?

The seventeen-member GYC board is a mix of recent graduates from the University of Washington, Princeton, Brandeis University, and the University of Michigan, as well as staff at Weimar Institute and Ouachita Hills Academy and College, a few pastors, an Andrews University professor, and a conference president, among others. Four of the seven members of the Executive Committee have attended

self-supporting schools either in academy or in college.

In a break-out session on Christian leadership, Justin McNeilus, a Southern Adventist University student and budding evangelist, paraded several good-looking fellow students before a room packed with sixty-eight attendees. As each one told his or her story of preaching on Adventist doctrine, Justin told them to look around the room. "Is there anyone here you see, who couldn't preach an evangelistic series," he asked. Each one said "no."

In another session, Eugene, an instructor at Ouachita Hills College, logically answered questions from attendees on Revelation and the Spirit of Prophecy. He explained that many Adventists misunderstand the Ellen White statement where she refers to her writings as a lesser light. Citing the passage from memory, he asked rhetorically, "Can inspiration be less? It either is or is not." He assured the audience that he had read through all the Web sites attacking Ellen White and had never found a valid claim against her.

Among the thirty-six or so promotional booths, a dental student from Loma Linda University advertised Restoration, a ministry to call existing Adventists to a higher standard. At another, a recent convert from the World Wide Church of God handed out brochures for "Total Onslaught: A Revelation Series." Nearby, Fred, whose ministry advertises itself as "ASI's first born," shared that every problem point in Christianity comes from Jews. Although stating that he is not personally anti-Semitic, he pointed out that he sees problems with Judaism's proto-socialism. He then recom-

mended a book by Charles Colson. At the Uchee Pines Institute booth (less than \$3 thousand to become a Lifestyle Educator or a Lifestyle Counselor), a younger Calvin



explained in light southern drawl that if Adventism had stayed true to the health message we probably would have cured cancer by now.

On Sabbath, everyone seemed to be going somewhere, except for the in-house Starbucks *baristas*. The Adventist young people were tobacco and cuss-word free, carrying Bibles and cell phones, dressed in suits or baggy pants or hoodies, and displaying more jean jumpers than could be seen at a Texas quilting bee. Incredibly diverse rows of young Asian-American youth groups and newly married couples were ubiquitous. Onstage, the odds were that the younger the speaker, the less white he (no women gave sermons) would be.

Stephanie, one of three students studying at C.A.M.P.U.S. (Center for Adventist Ministry to Public University Students) said that she finally feels she has found purpose that was previously missing in her life. After studying English at Andrews University, Newbold College, and then Eastern Michigan University, she is taking a year off to learn the tools of witnessing and to evangelize students around Ann Arbor.

Over and over, the speakers suggested that this evangelism had

a purpose: to bring the end of the world faster so that Jesus would come. During his Sabbath sermon, Doug Batchelor screened the newest offering of Amazing Facts, a digitally affected, Jerry Bruckheimeresque DVD about the end of the world, *Final Events*. This, he noted, can be used for evangelism.

In for a quick but popular visit on Thursday, President Paulsen pointed out that being an Adventist is a voluntary thing; that ours is a community made up of individuals. Pausing, he leaned nearer to this young throng: "Remember you are dealing with people, not just technical deliverers of information," he said. "As you carry the light, make sure that you're not only right, but that you deliver the compassionate concern of Christ."

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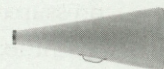
Alexander Carpenter handles special projects for *Spectrum* and the Association of Adventist Forums.

## Twenty-Five Years after Glacier View and Who Cares?

By Gregory Schneider

October 27, 2004, was the twenty-fifth anniversary of Desmond Ford's address to the Association of Adventist Forums chapter at Pacific Union College, the event that led to "Glacier View," shorthand for a process of heresy hunting and scapegoating in which Ford's gifts as pastor and teacher were lost to the Church.

More was lost than Ford's gifts.

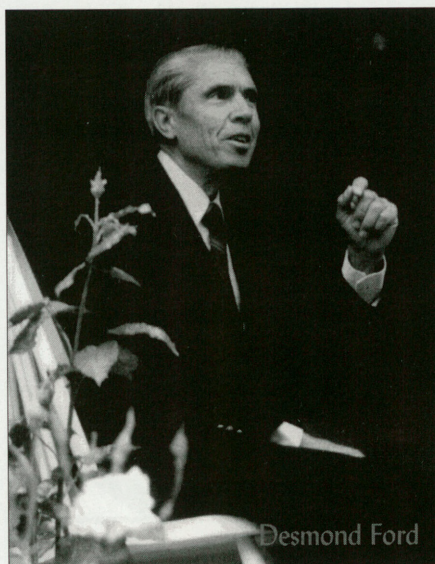


The purge mentality of the times, however, prevented those of us who were around back then from dealing with the full depth of the losses. That sense of unfinished business was why, perhaps, some colleagues urged me and other veterans of those days to do something in commemoration. In the end, I was recruited to lead an hour-long discussion on the topic for PUC's Choir Room Sabbath School on October 30, 2004.

The room was full that morning, and some people were sitting on the floor. My mentor and first boss, Adrian Zytoskee, now retired after finishing his career as a senior vice president in the Adventist health care system, came late, and he sat up front in one of the extra chairs that someone foraged to accommodate the overflow. Adrian, with characteristic dry wit, reminded us that he, not Ford, was the author of the title of the address: "The Investigative Judgment: Theological Milestone or Historical Necessity."

Zytoskee had feared that few people would come hear a talk framed in a less provocative way. He and Wayne Judd, a religion professor at that time, had been drafted by administrators and colleagues on campus to lead the new local chapter of the Forum, and they were laboring to build interest in the local Forum's activities. When close to one thousand people showed up in Irwin Hall chapel, it had seemed to them that their labors were succeeding beyond their imaginings.

Almost completely unimaginable, however, was the aftermath, when fury and outrage among segments of the Seventh-day Adventist subculture pressured college administrators to assent to the disastrous plan to place



Ford on a "study leave," in order to get him off our campus and let him "prepare" for Glacier View. Zytoskee's judgment was the same at our Sabbath School as it had been twenty-five years earlier: allowing the study leave, as well as other strategic errors, helped create and exacerbate the crisis of those times. The mess was avoidable, not inevitable.

The room was full of middle-aged and older folk who had known the mess firsthand or had friends who had kept them informed. We feasted on Zytoskee's story as both reminiscence and catharsis. As the energy in the room expanded—and a torrent of inquiry, anecdote, and analysis began to flow—Pastor John Hughson observed that there was not time enough to do all the discussion people might want to do. Would I meet him there in the Choir Room at 3:00 p.m. for a more leisurely forum? he asked. It was a clear crisp autumn day in Angwin. I could not imagine people giving up the afternoon to yet another theological talkfest, but I also could not say No.

As I drove back in the afternoon, I pictured myself meeting only the

pastor and maybe his wife, and saying, as Desmond Ford almost always did when one-on-one theologizing was in order, "Let's go for a walk!" I did get in a good walk that afternoon, but alone, and not until just before dark. There were twenty or twenty-five people in the room who were good for another hour and a half or so of talking it all over.

In age and experience and outlook they were much like the larger crowd of the morning: Most were middle-aged and older, most remembered the perfectionist theology that had been Desmond Ford's nemesis, and none voiced affirmation or support for it.

Many remarked on the paradox that the Church twenty-five years later had come to agree with the heart of the "heretic's" message: assurance of salvation through faith in an "alien" forensic righteousness. They felt that perfectionist gospels had largely disappeared. Others reminded us that there were a lot of congregations outside our comfortable little college-and-hospital enclave where Adventist perfectionism was very much alive and well.

Now, some time after the discussion, I am wondering if one of the main differences between twenty-five years ago and present times is that the disputing factions have found it expedient, for now, to leave each other alone. We have, perhaps, a de facto, if uneasy, Adventist theological pluralism. And then there is the generational pluralism.

The three or four college students who had braved our crowd of oldsters in the morning clearly had had enough and did not return. They, more than any of the points of theology or church politics our group discussed, remain on my



mind as I write. They are on my mind not only because the students have been in my classes or in my home, but also because they had, and have, almost no idea what my age cohorts and I were talking about.

These are bright, thoughtful, inquisitive young adults, active in campus ministries and clubs, the kind of people we invest our hopes in when we think of the future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America and beyond. Two of them sat on the floor in the back through the whole of the morning session and then came to me to ask who and what we were all talking about and why.

They had entered the room just as things were starting and walked right past the handouts I provided, one of which was designed to inform people who knew little or nothing about Desmond Ford, his message, or his opponents. They somewhat sheepishly observed that, yeah, college students typically do miss the handouts. Nevertheless, I have talked with them since they read my handout, and I have talked with some of their peers about this event a quarter century ago that can still so deeply engage my age mates and me.

The young people's lack of comprehension or interest is about more than just the "normal" American gap between generations. These are young people who do not quite know what Seventh-day Adventism has to do with who they are discovering themselves to be. They know about Ellen White and know that their church believes they ought to feel something about her, but they do not know what they ought to feel or why she or their allegiance to her or the movement she founded ought to be so important to them.

Some of them are rather deeply

annoyed at the combination of so much vague "ought" with so little clear "why." Words and phrases like *sanctuary* and *investigative judgment*, moreover, elicit just plain blank stares. At an even deeper level, the theological conflict of twenty-five years ago is something virtually incapable of engaging these students' minds and hearts—on either side of the divide that seemed so momentous to us then.

The "harvest principle" perfectionism that sees Christ waiting for his character to be perfectly reflected in his people before coming again makes little sense to these young people. Their experience, even when raised Seventh-day Adventist from infancy through elementary, secondary, and higher education, gives them few grounds to identify so strongly with an Advent remnant. They see no need to "perfect" their characters or to feel cosmically ashamed when they fall short.

They know they are preparing for careers, and they hope that maybe the Seventh-day Adventist Church will help them along with the career project, but the community of surveillance implied by this kind of perfectionism—if they have feelings about it at all—is something they want no part of.

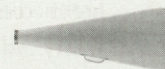
At the same time, the structure of guilt and forgiveness built into Desmond Ford's message of salvation by the forensic and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ finds few echoes in the consciousness of the young people I know. There is little quest for assurance of salvation, and virtually no sense of fear, godly or otherwise, in the face of a sovereign, transcendent God justly offended at the violation of his holy and perfect law.

They do know that they ought to have a "relationship" with God

and/or Jesus, but they are often as vague in their minds about what that means as they are about anything in their lives. They are deeply certain, however, that all these are intensely personal matters over which each individual is absolutely sovereign. Hence the conviction, widespread and growing year by year, that required religious service attendance of any kind at our college is not just an annoyance, but a deeply repugnant violation of a sacred space, the sanctuary of their hearts and minds.

I cannot but conclude that the long-term outcome of the controversy twenty-five years ago was to push us as a people irreversibly along this path of a highly individualized and subjectivized religiosity, and without benefit of the sufficiently plausible theological resources we might have had. When we scapegoated Desmond Ford, we sent an isolating, suffocating message to wide segments of our people that conversations among the priesthood of all the believers must avoid anything so unsettling.

We also suppressed the issues about the nature of inspiration that were raised not only by Ford's work, but also by the scholarship that contextualized the writings of Ellen White and demonstrated how profoundly human her theological constructions were. To face unsettling truths can lead to a loss of some meanings, but also, for people of faith, hope, and love, to the retrieval and reconstruction of meanings more plausible and durable for having been tested. The testing ground ought to have been an earnest set of conversations in which a trusting



community of believers allows us to be mutually priests to one another.

And so on Sabbath afternoon, October 30, 2004, when a long-time colleague asked me to interpret to the group what the young people I knew were thinking and feeling about the faith, since it was not the issues that had so galvanized us twenty-five years ago, I stammered and groped for an answer. And when a student the next Monday in my afternoon seminar asked me how the Sabbath School had gone, I stammered and groped again.

But I told the truth as best I knew it, and I confessed that my generation and I had not really done the work that would have provided them with more and better meanings whereby to find themselves and construct careers and callings as Christians and Seventh-day Adventists. They were and continue to be very gracious in allowing that, although my confession may not be enough, it is something.

---

Gregory Schneider teaches at Pacific Union College, where he is a professor of religion and behavioral science.

## Leaving

By Ezrela Cheah

While recently visiting with friends I found our conversation drifting toward religion. One friend's church was nearing the end of an evangelism series. She observed that many attendees had Adventism in their background and that many once-upon-a-time Adventists seemed to live in the region.

Being beyond the fringe of traditional Adventism myself, I merely listened to my friends discuss—as so many Adventists love to—the whys

and hows of the departing faithless.

“Perhaps it's our hedonistic culture,” some pondered.

These were not baby boomers fretting over the exodus of youth from the Church. These were peers of mine who may have sampled the dark side but had hurried back when the birth of children or world events spurred personal soul searching.

“Maybe they have only known the head knowledge but not a heart experience,” another friend proposed.

I was tempted to muster up past fervor of my own and raise questions that I currently have.

A Presbyterian-turned Catholic in the room interjected a different perspective. People vary; needs vary. Her whole family, on an individual basis, found itself embracing a different denomination. What drew members in? The mysticism, the reverence, the meditation, the tradition. Would these same factors repel some people? Probably.

All of this set me thinking about the concept of leaving. Jesus talked about leaving, notably about a runaway boy. What do I know about runaways? Not much, to be sure, but here's what I've recently learned.

During the past month, I began volunteering at an agency that reaches out to homeless youths. The agency has impressed me with the comprehensive nature of its services and the complete acceptance it expresses throughout its program, not just in policies, but also in everyday practice, in the little things.

Here is what I have learned: 90 percent of homeless youth report violence in their homes, and 30 percent are sexual minorities (gay, lesbian, bi- or transsexual, or questioning). It should be noted that these youths most likely experience exclusion among peers at school,

and rejection by society and family. Thirty-six percent of homeless girls report sexual abuse. Not all homeless youth leave home by choice; some are forced to do so by family, left behind, or raised homeless. Is it any wonder that so many choose to leave?

The history of Christianity has had bright spots and dark spots, and so has Adventism. Perhaps those who leave the Church have lived in the dark spots. Or perhaps, as with me, their understandings have changed.

For example, when growing up I took the word *liberal* to be an unkind adjective used to describe certain differing religious views. Now I consider myself liberal by many standards. Observe that with the change of two letters the word *liberal* becomes *liberty*. Jesus was a liberal who brought liberty, a social reformist of his day, and certainly a runaway from the local religious mainstream.

Some of my friends who discuss religious runaways will no doubt take classes on how to combine convincing scriptural arguments. Others will seek to improve the tone of local church politics by becoming actively involved in it. Given these differences, I'm sure the conversation that started me thinking about runaways will continue.

As it does, my friends will still be my friends, though we will continue to see the same picture differently. And I will continue to wonder: Do people leave the Church or does the Church leave people?

---

Ezrela Cheah graduated from Southwestern Adventist University in May 2000 with a bachelor's degree in education and currently practices therapeutic massage in Portland, Oregon.

## The Other Side of Paradise

By Herbert Ford

Pitcairn Island, a two-square-mile volcanic dot in the South Pacific Ocean, made headlines around the world last fall because of a trial in which six of seven men who were accused were found guilty of rape and indecent assault on young girls—acts said to have been committed over some thirty-five years, though none had occurred in the past six years. An additional six Pitcairn men who no longer live on the island are slated to stand trial on similar charges early this year.

Although commonly called an “Adventist island” by many, Pitcairn has never been an all-Adventist island. Today only a small fraction of its population of about fifty belongs to the faith.

Seventh-day Adventists first became associated with Pitcairn in 1876, when a package of Adventist literature sent by Adventist pioneers James White and J. N. Loughborough arrived by ship from San Francisco. A decade later, Adventist layman John I. Tay taught the islanders the principles of the Adventist faith. In 1890, the majority but not the whole of the adult population was baptized upon the arrival of the Church’s missionary schooner, the *Pitcairn*.

Pitcairn is the smallest and most remote of several British-controlled “overseas territories.” The island is governed from Wellington, New Zealand, some 3,500 miles away, although the Pitcairn Island Council is the on-island governing body.

Events leading to the recent Pitcairn trials got their start in 1999 from an act of consensual sex between a New Zealand man and a fifteen-year-old Pitcairn girl. A Pitcairn trial was

held and the New Zealander found guilty of sex with a minor. During a tour of duty on Pitcairn shortly after that trial, Gail Cox, a London policewoman, learned in kitchen table conversations with Pitcairn women of the general practice of early-age sexual activity on the island. Policewoman Cox relayed her information to her superiors in London. They, in turn, informed government officials, who ordered the investigations that have led to the trials.

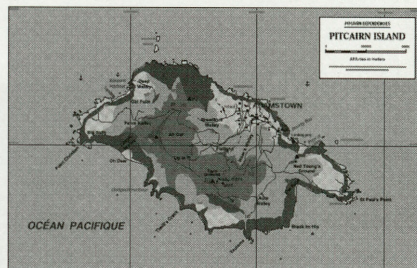
The islanders say the trials could have been handled by the island’s own British-sanctioned laws without the huge cost of importing all the paraphernalia of downtown London justice to Pitcairn. Pitcairn law, they point out, has seen hundreds of trials held successfully on the island during the past century.

As the investigations progressed, a former Adventist pastor on the island publicly reported to the Church’s South Pacific Division headquarters that there had been widespread sexual abuse on Pitcairn; his intimation was that other pastors had turned a blind eye to the goings-on. Other former pastors denied knowing of such abuse and said they did not feel their pastoral duties included unrequested investigative activity into the private lives of the islanders.

Early in 2004, the island’s governor decided that Lyle Burgoyne, who was serving as both Pitcairn’s Adventist pastor and as its medical officer (he being a trained nurse), should no longer be the island medical officer. His departure following the end of his term of service left Pitcairn without a pastor at a time of growing island tension.

An offer was made by Religion Department faculty of Pacific Union College to solicit for a well-grounded, unplaced theology graduate from a

U.S. Adventist college or university to be oriented and sent to Pitcairn. The offer was turned down. Not until the trials actually began in October,



months after Burgoyne’s departure, did a representative from the South Pacific Division headquarters arrive on the island, along with the large cadre of judges and defense and prosecution lawyers, come to conduct the trials. He left Pitcairn after three weeks to be replaced shortly thereafter by a pastor who is expected to complete a regular two-year pastorate.

The international legal, logistical, and social complexity surrounding the Pitcairn trials defies explanation short of a book. Until the year 2000, a difference relating to the age of consensual sex existed between Pitcairn law, which dates back to 1838, and British law, under which those recently found guilty were tried. The convicted Pitcairners feel they have been found guilty by a law that did not govern their lives at the time the acts of which they are accused were committed.

Additionally, many of the islanders felt betrayed by their governor’s decision to invite news reporters to the island to cover the October trials. This move, they believe, held all Pitcairners—the innocent along with those found guilty—up to worldwide public hate, ridicule, and contempt.

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# THE BIBLE



# God Plays the Trumpet

By John N. McDowell

—Revelation 8:6–13, 9, 11:15–19

I

God no longer plays rock and roll,  
he became disenchanted with MTV videos  
and those laser and smoke  
stadium shows that try to outdo the Apocalypse.  
He now understands that from the King onward  
they are all just trying to steal his thunder.  
He first had doubts when, although he'd liked  
Abbey Road and Sergeant Pepper, there was the claim  
that they were more popular than his son.  
In this business, God slowly realized, popularity  
was what mattered. Nashville providing in the end  
all the proof needed. When he saw  
the pilgrimages to Graceland, he understood  
why his calls to Capital and EMI were never returned,  
and he turned business and promotion over to his son.





## II

So seven years ago, Dad takes us out  
on the road to play his brand of acid blues  
in clubs with names like Rafters and Junkyard.  
all with the same sour smell of spilled beer—  
Chicago and east down the coast to Miami,  
He is known, of course, for his trumpet playing.  
We're a last supper tableau with five-alarm chili for the fare,  
James on guitar, John electric bass, Peter on drums,  
I'm on keyboards. We know we're the firewall to his genius.  
When we get cooking, we've learnt  
how to hold on and ride the croc's tail  
as he, with tongue and lips, pistol-whips notes  
through the froth of sound, and the high Cs  
hold and sting like bees,  
yet look out when he comes down, his horn  
growling, hot as a tigress in heat, but before  
you can blink an eye you're caressed with the cool  
lick of a crocus spring, and you believe  
this lion can indeed lie down with the lamb.

This is the miracle that keeps us together  
night after night, through Comfort Inns and women  
who smell too heavily of cigarettes and Charlie.  
The master's sound leaves us amazed and dizzy.  
After each set he hardly speaks at all  
(plays with his eyes closed). One of us almost always  
announces the names of tunes, and thanks  
the folk for coming out.

Last summer our break came,  
we're invited to Montreal and the Flying Fish  
label signs us up. We had gigs  
in Chicago, Boston, New York, New Orleans at the House of Blues  
and now here we are in the City of Angels—last stop on the tour.

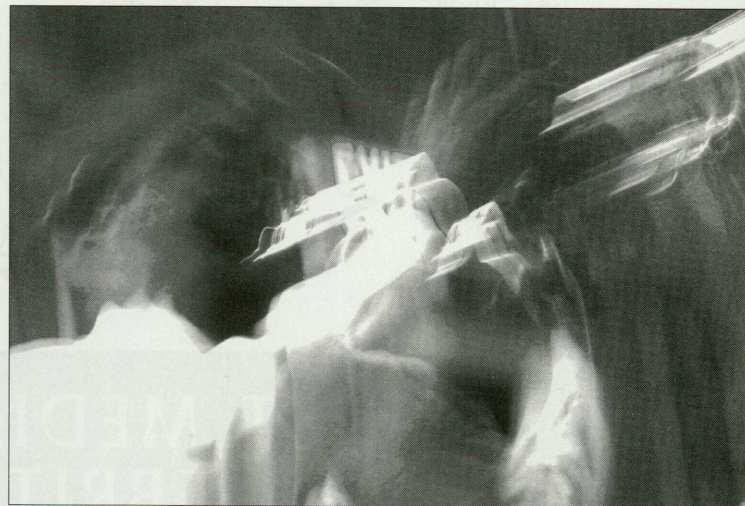
Tonight at the end of the last set he takes us by surprise.  
In the blink of any eye he's into a piece we've only practiced  
once or twice before. But this time  
it is clear we're going for more than we've ever done before.  
He begins low and quiet, a baby-cradled spiritual  
builds the sound in spirals louder and louder until a thunderhead  
cracks open the smoke-slick air.

Peter sweats the high-hat cymbals like never before,  
while James flicks lightning through cord changes, yet  
he's motionless, he's the dead eye  
we chase with everything we've got as the hurricane  
swamps and drenches us—all afraid of drowning,  
afraid to exhale—Hail Mary hang on to the glory  
blistering from that gold horn  
desperate to reach the hallelujah shore: his lips  
bloody and thick as beefsteaks.

It brings the audience to its feet shouting,  
stomping, clapping, whooping in the gift of breath  
so that no one hears his whisper to the mike,  
“Thank you. That's The Apocalypse  
Good night to you all.”

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of English and directs the Honors Program.





# ADVENTIST MEDIA AND CELEBRITY



Discussed: Desmond Ford, Robert Folkenberg, magic lanterns, Jehovah's Witnesses, Adventist News Network, *Australian Sentinel* and *Herald of Liberty*, *Adventist Review*, *Sow 1 Billion*, *Spectrum*

# A Print-Driven Church

By Bruce Manners

From its beginnings the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been a print-driven church. Sociologist Bryan Wilson sees Adventism as the “sect with the largest and most diversified literary output.”<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Butler suggests that “the history of Adventism had been a matter of ‘publish or perish,’” and that as far as church organization and “ecclesiastical bureaucracy was concerned, in the beginning was the word.”<sup>2</sup>

Butler's tongue-in-cheek comment articulates a truth that print has been a primary strategy the Church has used not only to expand and establish a presence around the globe, but also to inform and educate its own members. Print has served the Church well and been its major communication media, at least until recent times, when use of the electronic media has gained a foothold.

Print still plays a significant role, particularly in informing and educating members. The Sabbath School *Bible Study Guides* remain the most widespread teach-

ing aid the Church has, and the *Adventist Review* in its various languages and forms remains “a prime source for both the history and thought of Adventism.”<sup>3</sup>

## Millerite Beginnings

The Seventh-day Adventist Church grew out of an apocalyptic revival of the 1830s and 1840s in the United States, often named after its most prominent advocate, William Miller. Simply stated, the Millerite movement predicted that Jesus would return about 1843 or 1844, before it set-



tled on the specific date of October 22, 1844.

Without the use of print media, the Millerites would have had limited impact. Fortuitously—providentially, some would say—the movement coincided with the growth and popularity of print. New York dailies were first published in 1832, and with the introduction of penny papers New York City, which had a population of some 300 thousand in 1836, newspaper circulations in the city totaled 70 thousand.<sup>4</sup>

Religious publications were popular. One clergyman noted in 1839 that “a well-conducted religious periodical is like a thousand preachers, flying in almost as many directions, by means of horses, mail-stages, steam boats, railroad cars, ships, etc., etc.”<sup>5</sup> An 1850 New York state census found that religious periodicals exceeded a quarter of the total newspaper circulation.<sup>6</sup>

Without print, the Millerite movement would not have had the impact it did, and print was used to its fullest extent. “Probably no other religious movement or denomination ever produced so vast a quantity of printed matter at that period in so short a time.”<sup>7</sup>

It was Miller’s partnership with Joshua Himes in 1840 that took a local success and turned it into a national movement.<sup>8</sup> Himes, “well versed in the art of promoting an idea,” immediately “embraced the nineteenth century technology available to him in an effort to tell the world about Miller’s parousia.”<sup>9</sup> The first Millerite periodical, *Signs of the Times*, became the movement’s leading publication. Adventist historian LeRoy Froom charts forty-four known Millerite periodicals, their distribution area, and circulation, some with a second life under a new name. He suggests that by May 1844, five million copies of them had been distributed in the United States, a nation of seventeen million at that time.<sup>10</sup>

The Millerites aimed to send their publications to “every reachable Christian community on earth.”<sup>11</sup> There is evidence that Miller’s work was studied in England before he achieved more than a local reputation in the United States. England was targeted later—Miller and Himes are believed to have spent almost one thousand dollars supplying literature to inquirers and Millerite preachers working there.<sup>12</sup> However, with the uneventful passing of October 22, 1844, “the presses were silent. There was no *Advent Herald*, no *Midnight Cry*. There were no meetings to attend. In their loneliness few desired to speak, for they were still in the world.”<sup>13</sup>

## Adventists Continue to Emphasize Print

Enthusiasm for print was transferred to the founding group that became the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Several “ephemeral publications” appeared between 1846 and 1849, and a vision of Ellen White in November 1848 gave direction to the publishing program.<sup>14</sup> She instructed husband James to print a “little paper.... From this small beginning it was shown to me to be like streams of light that went clear around the world.”<sup>15</sup>

In July the following year, James White and the *Present Truth* became “the voice of Sabbatarian Adventism.”<sup>16</sup> *Present Truth* and *Advent Herald* were combined in November the following year to become the *Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. For many years the *Review* was “the church,” with most Sabbatarians scattered about, lacking church buildings or regular preachers. The *Review* helped members gain “a sense of belonging.”<sup>17</sup> Some readers prized *Review* next to the Bible because it nurtured their spiritual lives.<sup>18</sup>

Ellen White was a print enthusiast and had a global vision linked with her interest in health and education: “In all parts of the earth they [God’s qualified people] are to establish sanitariums, schools, publishing houses, and kindred facilities for the accomplishing of His work,” she wrote.<sup>19</sup> As the Church spread around the globe, it established publishing houses on every continent. The *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* lists fifty-five. These are autonomous, linked under the umbrella of the Church, but expected to produce their own literature.

This stands in marked contrast with the Jehovah’s Witnesses, probably the premier religious organization to use the printed page, whose publishing is centralized and controlled from its Brooklyn, New York, headquarters. David A. Reed, a critic and former Jehovah’s Witness, describes those headquarters as a “mini Vatican of thirty-odd buildings,” with a Writing Committee that determines the content of publications. More than a billion pieces of literature come from the Brooklyn plant each year.<sup>20</sup>

One Witness publication, *The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life*, has had a circulation of 115 million. Each printing of the *Watchtower* runs in excess of ten million, which must make it one of the most widely circulated magazines.<sup>21</sup> James M. Penton argues that because of the way the *Watchtower* is distributed, vast quantities are never read, although Witnesses are each expected to read some three thousand pages of their literature each year. The Jehovah’s Witnesses have

almost one hundred branch offices around the world, many with small printing shops, but they are centrally controlled.<sup>22</sup>

The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the United States during its formative years depended on literature distribution. A Tract and Mission Society, begun in 1870 under Stephen Haskell, expanded quickly with the placement of books and literature. By the mid-1870s there were reports of Sabbath-keepers in various European nations, the southern

and periodicals,” he wrote.<sup>26</sup> Adventists landed in Sydney, Australia, on June 6, but based themselves in Melbourne, one reason being that the city had one of the largest libraries in the world.<sup>27</sup> There Adventists established the Bible Echo Publishing House, and by late 1885 a trial issue of *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times* rolled off the press. In January 1886, the first regular issue was published.

Along with a small number of workers, print was a major emphasis of the Church’s early initiative into the

**“Publications upon present truth are called for by individuals in almost every nation under heaven where civilization exists.”**

**—S.N. Haskell**

United States, Mexico, and Australia, with calls for literature from Scotland, Ireland, China, and New Zealand. The society sent publications to every mission station on the coast of Africa.<sup>23</sup> “[P]ublications upon present truth are called for by individuals in almost every nation under heaven where civilization exists,” reported Haskell.<sup>24</sup>

### Print as Mass-Media Tool

Print was the tool of choice as the early Adventist Church embarked on its mission to reach the world. It was a choice made out of necessity—it could be where Adventist members did not exist; and it could go where they could not. Print was the mass-media tool of the nineteenth century, and the Church used it extensively.

This use of print was well illustrated when Adventism first entered Australia and the South Pacific. Ellen White targeted Australia when she spoke of a January 3, 1875, vision at the Battle Creek church, Michigan. She told about printing presses in many foreign countries, and mentioned them printing periodicals, tracts, and books. When asked if she could name the countries, she said she had only been given the name of one, Australia.<sup>25</sup> Among the first Adventist missionaries to Australia ten years later were a printer and a literature evangelist.

The missionaries’ interest in print was shown when the group’s leader, Stephen Haskell, noted a discovery during a four-hour stopover in Auckland, New Zealand (June 1, 1885), that five hundred libraries existed in New Zealand. “We have reason to believe that every one of these would take our publications

Pacific. “It seems the part of wisdom to make use of the printing press as far as possible,” wrote E. H. Gates in October 1906.<sup>28</sup> These workers were among those described as “travelling salesmen. Their line consisted of tracts and books published by the Seventh-day Adventist publishing houses.”<sup>29</sup> Haskell soon persuaded newsagents to stock the *Bible Echo*. This outlet, the publication of pamphlets, and itinerant Adventist literature evangelists in New Zealand had one critic complain in 1892 that Adventist literature had achieved almost blanket coverage of the north island.<sup>30</sup>

A supplement to the September 18, 1899, *Bible Echo* reported book sales up, with sales of forty-one thousand for the year. The star performer, *A Friend in the Kitchen*, was a best seller, with more copies than any other book on the market (seventeen thousand) in the twelve months that led up to June 30, 1899.<sup>31</sup>

Print became the tool of choice in the 1890s, when Sunday-keeping legislation became an issue, but grew more extensively when Australia began to draft its constitution. The *Australian Sentinel and Herald of Liberty* (later the *Southern Sentinel*) was distributed widely to people of influence since they were presumed to be “watchdog[s] over the religious portions of the Australian Constitution.”<sup>32</sup>

Although few in number, members of the Adventist Church became the “organisational pivot of the anti- ‘recognition’ campaign” (the recognition of God in the Constitution), which found allies among secular-



ists who feared sectarian conflict.<sup>33</sup> Although the allies failed to prevent a recognition clause in the Constitution's preamble, they did claim "some direct influence" on its final shape with insertion of Section 116, which forbade the federal government from prohibiting free exercise of religion.<sup>34</sup>

## The Maturing of Adventist Print

The official Adventist print media supports and defends the Adventist Church and its mission and ethos, but there is recent evidence of its increased willingness to share information and to grapple with problems within the Church. The difference between reporting the dismissal of Desmond Ford and the resignation of Robert Folkenberg shows this shift and demonstrates the Church's recently enhanced understanding of public relations and communication theory and practice.

An Australian theology lecturer, Ford in 1980 was head of the theology faculty at Avondale College, Australia, but was serving at Pacific Union College, in California. While there, he was granted a leave of absence to research and prepare a statement on the "sanctuary and related issues," subjects of considerable

controversy.<sup>35</sup> Matters evolved and came to a head at Glacier View, Colorado, later that year, when a committee of 115 church leaders was invited to consider Ford's position. As a result, the Church dismissed Ford from the ministry and terminated him from church employ.

As could be expected, the reaction in the Church's official press supported the decision. In *Record*, the South Pacific Division's weekly church paper, the September 8, 1980, issue titled an article, "Ford document on sanctuary studied: variant views rejected." An eight-page insert told of the conference's deep spirituality and Ford's "Christian spirit" in his apology for inconveniencing the Church.<sup>36</sup> A reprint from the *Adventist Review* (Dec. 8) detected "remarkable" unity among those at Glacier View.<sup>37</sup>

Author Laura Vance notes a different reaction, with Ford's dismissal causing divisiveness and protests from pastors, academics, and laity.<sup>38</sup> Many members turned to unofficial Adventist sources for information—to *Spectrum*, for instance. In the United States, *Evangelica* was established to promote Ford's views, and in Australia an underground network of information sharing became a cottage industry.<sup>39</sup> A sense of unfairness and uncertainty led people outside the Church's media

## Chapters in the Story of Adventist Publications



The *Advent Review* predates the official organization of the Adventist church. Ellen White described the products of Adventist presses as streams of light circling the globe. Today books and magazines are printed for people of all ages.

to gain information. The Church's print communication failed to handle this kind of crisis effectively.

In contrast, Folkenberg's resignation from the General Conference presidency demonstrated more maturity. In January 1999, an ad hoc committee of nineteen members learned from a General Conference attorney about "information that raised significant ecclesiastical concerns about Pastor Folkenberg's dealings with [a plaintiff named] Mr. Moore" in a pending lawsuit.<sup>40</sup> As a result, a special General Conference Executive Committee was set for March 1 to consider the situation. On February 8, Folkenberg resigned, stating that the controversy was "detracting from God's work." "[T]o avoid pain and conflict to my family and the church I love, I am removing myself from the controversy," he declared.<sup>41</sup>

The Church claimed a strong desire to provide information "before any reports began to appear in the press ... that there would be no attempt at cover-up."<sup>42</sup> The Adventist News Network (ANN), the General Conference e-mail and Web site news provider, became a major player. Folkenberg was given a voice and complained that news releases from church sources and in the public press left the impression that he had personally gained

from his dealings with Moore, which he denied.<sup>43</sup>

At the same time, legal confidentiality limited access to information concerning the causes of Folkenberg's resignation, but a five-page document that listed the concerns backed up reassurances that "the concerns raised were real." "This is not a confidential document," said South Pacific Division president Laurie Evans, who offered it to church members on request, "but out of a pastoral concern for Pastor Folkenberg and his family we don't plan to publish it."<sup>44</sup>

Unofficial Adventist publications did not have these same pastoral concerns. *Spectrum* published details of a convoluted and disastrous association Folkenberg and other church entities had with Moore over land dealings in California.<sup>45</sup> *Adventist Today* was less inhibited, maintaining that "stories of [Folkenberg's] questionable business deals abound."<sup>46</sup> Although official sources provided some evidence for action against Folkenberg, those who wanted specific details had to go elsewhere.

The lack of specific details—for "pastoral" reasons—within the Church's official news sources was perhaps expected. Church members may have appreciated the fact that not too much "dirty laundry" was aired. Indeed; after the report in *Adventist Today*, one reader suggested renaming it the *Adventist Enquirer*.<sup>47</sup> Importantly, enough information came through official channels to allow members a sense of the action's appropriateness.

However, the Church proved that it could move at speed in a crisis, and that speed was reflected in getting information out quickly to church members through official channels. The crisis helped demonstrate a new array of communication media developed over the previous few years, and the commitment of the Adventist Church to communication. The Internet became the main source of regularly updated news through ANN e-mail and postings on the General Conference Web site.<sup>48</sup> This crisis established ANN as an important news source within the Church.<sup>49</sup>

Useful comparisons can be made from these two cases, but it is important to note first the most significant difference. Ford was perceived as challenging foundational beliefs of the Church, and in that sense the Church itself. For Folkenberg, the suspicion of mismanagement had little long-term impact on the Church due to his resignation and replacement—



and the perceived danger was smaller.

To gain further information during both crises church members could go outside official church sources. In Ford's case, it became a growth industry. For the Folkenberg case, the complexities of legal agreements and confidentiality clauses made it difficult reading. The response to Ford was print driven; to Folkenberg it was multimedia, featuring the latest technology. Significantly, Ford had no voice in official church sources after Glacier View, whereas Folkenberg

the 1920s, and "Faith for Today" and "It Is Written," produced for television in the 1950s.

Dispersing Adventist Media Centers around the world in nine countries encouraged continuation in media usage. The first evangelistic Net programs covered more countries than ever attempted by any organization. To illustrate their programs, public evangelists moved from the use of printed charts to magic lanterns to slide and movie presentations, and from there to hi-tech, computer-controlled, multimedia pro-

**The lesson from print is that, although proclamation of the gospel may lead the Church into the use of a variety of media to reach those outside its community, in the long term it tends to be used more for the nurture and education of those within.**

not only had a voice, but also a voice of protest.

The twenty-year period between these two events had seen dramatic growth in the availability of different media that could share information quickly. There is a sense that in 1999 it was felt imperative that these be used to get the Church's viewpoint out before others did. By 1999, the Communication Department of the General Conference had been strengthened and expanded and those working in it had a good understanding of communications and ready access to church leaders.

In its print, the Church showed a dramatic difference in its approach to the two crises. The first was handled with minimal and unsatisfying levels of information. The Church handled the second with more openness and enough information for the decision to be accepted. Twenty years had made a difference, but the real test would have been another Ford-type situation that would have brought a far greater sense of danger to the Church than the Folkenberg crisis did.

## Adventist Fascination with Media

Having accepted the commission to carry "the everlasting Good News ... to every nation, tribe, language, and people" (Rev. 14:6 NLT), the Adventists' *raison d'être*, the Church naturally developed fascination with new communication methods as they became available.<sup>50</sup> Most of those who experimented with the new media were individuals or groups within the Church rather than church leaders operating on an official level. Among such initiatives were the radio program the "Voice of Prophecy," well under way by the end of

grams and satellite downlinks.

The lesson from print is that, although proclamation of the gospel may lead the Church into the use of a variety of media to reach those outside its community, in the long term it tends to be used more for the nurture and education of those within. Even a cursory look at current English-language Adventist print around the world shows that the vast majority of printed products are aimed at an Adventist audience.

Gaining the support of members is a valid and worthy aim for any media use within an organization. In the Adventist Church, though, it tends to demonstrate a shift from the original enthusiasm and purpose. It would be interesting to do an analysis of the two worldwide Adventist television broadcasters—the unofficial 3ABN and the official Hope TV—to discover if this is already their destiny. Such orientation is measured better by who watches rather than what is broadcast.

In contrast, the Church has officially used the Internet mainly for informing members, ANN being a prime example even if its releases are also available as a secular news resource. Although Adventist Web sites tend to have a section for biblical and church teachings, their main role is to inform and nurture.

Unofficially, the Internet has been used by individuals and organizations in the Church for evangelism. Currently the Discover Bible Schools for the "Voice of Prophecy" receive 1.5 million hits a month and support 140 Bible schools in 80 languages. "It Is Written," which recently added BibleInfo.com under its umbrella, dreams "of the day when we get 3 million visitors a year, with 5,000 to 10,000 lay members serving as Bible instructors online."<sup>51</sup>

It is no surprise, then, that a Global Internet Evangelism Forum met at the General Conference offices in October 2004, to consider reaching the so-called iGeneration—"a new generation of seekers, one that may not be easily challenged by a book or tract." According to Timothy Korson of Southern Adventist University, the Church needs to move beyond the tactical use of technology to "achieve strategic advantage."<sup>52</sup>

## The Centralization of Media Production

Perhaps the greatest shift in Adventist media in the past couple decades has been the growing centralization of media production. This is understandable given the need for efficiency in both cost and production, and to have one voice, but inherent dangers must be addressed if the Church continues to adopt the "Jehovah's Witness model" of centralized production as opposed to the "Ellen White model."

Using print as an illustration, a new *Adventist Review* publication, *Adventist World*, is planned for introduction at the end of 2005. Announcing this publication, General Conference president Jan Paulsen said, "We think it is critical to the church, to the church's witness, to the unity of the church that we have a voice that can speak to the whole world church, with the same message to all."

*Adventist Review* editor William G. Johnsson said that *Adventist World* was designed to "foster the unity of the world Adventist family." The aim is to build faith and understanding of church doctrine and mission with regular articles covering doctrinal topics. Importantly, and recognizing one of the problems of a centralized production, he said contributors would largely be drawn from outside North America.<sup>53</sup>

Despite this precaution, it is difficult to produce any media product where "one size fits all." The world and the Seventh-day Adventist Church are too diverse in a cultural sense, particularly with existing ethnic differences and with tribalism on the increase. Use of a common language will not overcome these differences. The Church may have the same "message to all," but the voice that currently speaks to its members through centralized media tends to have an American accent, without cultural roots in the many places it is received.

The exception to this caution may be with the Internet, where "people are more tolerant and open; there are no border lines."<sup>54</sup>

## A Future for Print?

Adventist print is currently in trouble. In 2004, Pacific Press halved its annual production of books from sixty to thirty. At the same time, Review and Herald laid off forty employees. Literature evangelism is struggling in most English-language areas, and sales of Sabbath School *Bible Study Guides* have dropped, in some cases dramatically.<sup>55</sup> *The Adventist Review* has for several years struggled to reach fifty thousand subscribers in its regular English-language editions.

Print cannot compete with the speed of the Internet or with other electronic media. This is obvious. Furthermore, production costs can be significantly lower with Internet products. However, print is not dead in the Adventist Church. The 2004 Sow 1 Billion project saw a billion invitations for Bible studies printed, which proved a boon for correspondence schools and online Bible schools. The 2004 Annual Council announced a plan to distribute two million Ellen White books over a five-year period, with an intermedia approach that involves study guides, CD-ROMS, and the Internet. The proposed *Adventist World* shows that the Church maintains its interest in print.

Each of these initiatives will keep the presses turning, but they are driven and financially supported by the corporate church body. Church member support, in purchasing Adventist print products, has lessened. Perhaps the way of the future, cross-media products, is already upon us with the best-selling Adventist books being written by evangelists who have achieved celebrity status through television programs.<sup>56</sup>

The Adventist Church, as an organization with a message to proclaim, has a history of taking the latest media forms to assist with this proclamation. The electronic media may surpass the impact of print, but it is difficult to imagine the Adventist Church without print as part of its armory.

Print maintains several advantages. It has a reputation as a reliable tool for information—unlike the Internet. Print tends to be a better way to deliver information that reaches the intellect, whereas the audio and visual media are more useful for producing an emotive response. Perhaps the most significant advantage is the user friendliness of print—no



technology is needed to read it, one need not add batteries, and it is so portable that a person can easily take it to bed.

The fact that print still has a place can be seen on college campuses in the United States, the most wired places on our planet, where printed versions of school newspapers are far more popular than online editions.<sup>57</sup> Besides, newsagents continue to stock a plethora of magazines, with more being regularly published. The demand for print remains.

Print has been a part of the Adventist Church since its beginnings. Print has a future in the Church, but most likely in partnership with other media, and, to be successful—particularly for evangelism, it may look different from anything the Church has published in the past.<sup>58</sup>

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our audiences and among the external media."

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51. "'iGeneration' Evangelism Requires New Focus, Leaders Say," ANN, Oct. 5, 2004.

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49. That is a claim that Ray Dabrowski, the communication director for the General Conference (in private correspondence), denies. He believes ANN had been well established by then to be the "primary carrier of news during that time. Our 'openness' approach from the outset has built interest in its viability among

53. Ray Dabrowski, Mark A. Kellner, ANN Staff, "Annual Council: Mission Initiatives Dominate Meeting; Mission Statement Revision, New Values Statement Voted," ANN, Oct. 10, 2004.

54. Miroslav Pujic, "'iGeneration' Evangelism Requires New Focus, Leaders Say," ANN, Oct. 5, 2004.

55. An exception is in Australia and New Zealand, where a restructured program has brought growth in book sales by literature evangelists. The increase has averaged 10 percent per year over the past ten years and has breathed new life into something that was dying.

56. The October 7, 2004, appearance of Dwight Nelson, senior pastor of Pioneer Memorial Church, on a two-hour Trinity Broadcasting Network program with the potential of several million viewers was an "important milestone," said Dale Galusha, vice president for sales at Pacific Press. Nelson's book *Outrageous Grace*, published by Pacific, was offered.

57. Marcin Skomial, "Wired Students Prefer Campus News on Paper," *New York Times*, Apr. 19, 2002 <<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/19/technology/19PAPE.html?todaysh headlines>>.

58. *Life.Info* is a brave attempt at soft evangelism by the Church in England, an excellent example of what could be attempted. Unfortunately, its greatest strengths in its modern (make that postmodern) look and popular appeal will not gain support from those who prefer traditional forms of evangelism in whatever media. This means it is in danger of being lost if its funding is demanded for "real" evangelism.

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COLLAGE ILLUSTRATION BY LAURA LAMAR, BASED ON AN ICON BY FATHER GREGORY

Discussed: Adventist producers, souls, \$285 tickets, Ray Dabrowski, women, "The Anti-Christ Chronicles," 24/7 channels, spiritual influence, Oprah Winfrey, aesthetics, Peter Parker, 3ABN, entertainment, the Hope Channel

# Can Adventist Television Learn Anything from Oprah?

By Daneen Akers

She walks onto the television set, looking like a million dollars, arguably one of the most powerful women in history. She can tell us to buy a book and we buy millions of copies. She can tell us a new designer is absolutely fabulous, and we begin dreaming of his handbags. She can tell us how to take care of ourselves, and we follow her advice.

Other talk show hosts can similarly entertain us with fun fashion, free advice, and celebrity gossip, but there is one topic where she holds a unique position of power: she can talk to us about belief and God and eternity, and we listen. We listen closely.

She is Oprah Winfrey, and she has changed the rules for television. Since her television show first began syndication, "The Oprah Winfrey Show" has evolved from chit-chat fare with a down-home style to a show unabashedly dedicated to changing lives and making a difference through positive television.

Not only does she entertain, she has also managed to find the sweet spot between entertainment and inspiration that her audiences crave, making her

show a powerful forum for her brand of spirituality. According to *Vanity Fair*, "Oprah Winfrey arguably has more influence on the culture than any university president, politician, or religious leader, except perhaps the Pope."

Although Oprah doesn't cast herself as a religious leader, there's no doubt that she wields enormous spiritual influence. Acknowledging her rising status as a religious figure, *Christianity Today* ran an article about her in 2002 titled, "The Church of O," which examined whether her message was inherently Christian and noted that she had made spirituality a priority for her audience.

Eric Deggans, a reporter for the *St. Petersburg Times*, covered Oprah's "Live Your Best Life" tour in Tampa,



Florida. There he met Chris Giblin, who had donated one of her \$285 tickets to a homeless woman, feeling that the chance to meet Oprah could potentially change that woman's life for the good. "Giblin's gift spoke of a faith in the transformative power of Winfrey's message—a belief that just seeing the talk show star can lead to the kind of inspiration that changes lives," Deggans writes. "Once upon a time, this kind of devotion was reserved mostly for the likes of Mohammed and the Virgin Mary."

From her humble beginnings as a child of unwed parents raised in poverty in Mississippi, Oprah has become indisputably the most powerful person on television. *Time Magazine* recently named her one of the "100 Most Influential People in the World," and she has won so many awards that she has removed herself from consideration for future Emmys. Her show is now seen in 109 countries by an estimated 25 million to 30 million viewers every week.

An enthusiastic nod from Oprah successfully launches products, events, causes, and even careers (just ask Dr. Phil). As someone with more than a passing interest in television and film, I look at Oprah's enormous success to see how we can learn from her. Like many, I agree that television is a powerful influence in society that Christians can use to reach the 98.2 percent of households in the United States that own at least one television (most own at least two).

Although the Christian book publishing and music recording industry has exploded, Christian television—and certainly Adventist television—often still struggles to find an audience. Although there are a few exceptions, the majority of Adventist television productions have to pay for airtime, or buy their own satellite time—and we don't produce content that "normal" distributors think an audience wants to see.

I would love for that to change, but in order to do that, I think we need to learn some lessons, and turning to the most successful women on television seems to be a good start.

Although it might seem like a strange comparison on the surface, when you dig a bit deeper, The "Oprah Winfrey Show" actually can teach us a great deal about how to do good television, and Oprah's mission is more similar to ours than we might suspect. Oprah continues to defy convention and redefine the rules of television by bringing spirituality—even religion at times—to the forefront.

There are those who think Oprah is not a good role model. Oprah's detractors, many of whom call her

"Pope-rah," claim that her brand of spirituality is popular because it doesn't deal with real moral issues—she stays warm and fuzzy.

As a subscriber to her magazine and viewer of her show, I regularly find her promoting Christian values, such as forgiveness and the value of each individual life. She frequently exhorts her audience to live up to their moral obligations.

Oprah doesn't focus on the Christian buzz issues like gay marriage, but instead emphasizes more of the "feed my sheep" and "love your neighbor" aspects of the gospel, such as caring for women suffering abuses in the Congo, Sudanese refugees, children forced into war in Columbia, AIDS victims, and other issues she views as moral imperatives. (She even takes offerings, albeit through her Angel Network.)

Although I'm not holding Oprah up as an example of perfection, I do think we miss a great opportunity—and an opportunity to understand the millions of people who watch her—when we dismiss her so quickly.

**A**lthough Adventist involvement in television is nothing new—"Faith for Today" began production fifty-four years ago—recently Adventist television got a new outlet and a new philosophy. The Adventist Television Network (ATN) launched the Hope Channel with the stated purpose of producing positive programming aimed at "spiritually receptive" individuals in a target audience broader than more traditional satellite evangelism.

Previously ATN had bought satellite time primarily to broadcast evangelistic series, but now the focus has shifted to an in-home channel model. According to Gary Gibbs, associate director of ATN, satellite prices have dropped enough so that a dedicated channel can be purchased for about the same amount of money that individual time slots had cost. The opportunity presented itself, so a new 24/7 channel was born in the hopes of reaching non-Adventists in their homes.

As a member of the "younger" crowd that only watched 3ABN at my grandparent's house, I was excited to hear that the Church would produce and encourage the production of programming that my postmodern, non-Adventist, and even non-Christian colleagues would consider watching.

In April, I attended an Adventist producers' advisory meeting in Las Vegas for the Hope Channel. A group of about seventy people gathered with Brad and Kandus

Thorpe, Gary Gibbs, and other Hope Channel leaders to discuss its needs. New programming with good production value was sought. The leaders placed emphasis on producing programming free of Adventist clichés and insider language that would confuse viewers.

Instead, they envisioned programming aimed at an audience seeking spiritual guidance. They wanted shows other than church-hosted preaching. They encouraged independent producers like me and my husband to submit proposals and treatments.

The only drawback? Nobody talked about where they expected to get funding for programming. Finally, on day three, when the murmurings among the participants reached an audible crescendo, I raised the question: Is there any money to fund new productions or commission content creation? Kermit Netteberg, at that time director of communications for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists and the discussion moderator, laughed sympathetically and said, "Well, I'm afraid at this point the concept is more of a potluck. We're providing the table but you have to bring your own food."

Suddenly my optimism started to fade. How did we expect to successfully launch a channel by funding only the airtime and not the content? When I returned home, I began to watch the Hope Channel on the Internet. As luck would have it, I seemed always to pick the time when "The Anti-Christ Chronicles" show was airing—a show so decidedly full of insider language that I could never imagine myself (much less my peers) watching. I guess that's the problem when you provide only the table and rely on the guests to bring food; you can't be a picky eater.

As someone who knows how much of a budget it takes to produce television programming, even lower-budget programming, I kept asking myself if money spent on Adventist television was money well spent. Was anyone watching? Are we fooling ourselves into thinking we have any influence outside of already solidly Christian viewers?

If we want to reach the broad consumer marketplace our programs must be aired on "normal" television. People in the general television audience won't buy a \$200-plus satellite dish just to pick up our channels. To reach the majority of consumers, we need to produce programming that distributors seek so we don't have to pay for it to be aired in less-than-desirable time slots. (I had to tune in at 5 a.m. to watch an episode that I helped write for "Lifestyle Magazine" several years ago.)

With the new opportunity that the Hope Channel presents, Adventist television could become what its

visionaries and proponents have dreamed of for decades: a powerful force for good in the broader cultural context. However, I think we can learn from Peter Parker's Uncle Ben (in *Spiderman 2*) when he cautions, "With great power comes great responsibility."

If we are going to use this opportunity to the fullest and reach an audience bigger than the traditional 3ABN crowd, we need to learn how to do good television. There are several lessons that Oprah can teach us as a demonstrated master of television and someone who has proven that millions of women want to be spiritually nurtured through their television.

## Lesson One: Understand the Medium

If we're going to examine how to do successful television, we need to define what we mean by "television." Technically, 3ABN is available in virtually all of the inhabited world, but does that mean we are succeeding at good television? "The answer is No," says Ray Dabrowski, the General Conference communication director. "We cannot define success where our target audience is primarily those who donate to keep us running."

Dabrowski agrees that the Church isn't truly doing television and using the medium to its potential until its programming is available without special dishes and is picked up by existing distribution channels. "There is nothing wrong with broadcasting worship or doctrinal evangelistic programs and such, but we can't pretend that it is reaching more than a particular slice of the population."

Although various Adventist entities produce programs that get shown on television, the vast majority of programs on Adventist television are based on sermon-style preaching. People do not generally watch television to be preached to. If they do, they likely fall into the solidly Christian demographic. If we want to reach a broader market, we need to understand how television is used in the home. "Generally speaking, the nature of television is entertainment," Dabrowski said. "And Adventists have a problem with the notion and appropriateness of entertainment."

Dabrowski feels that our struggle with entertainment stems from our difficulty to decide what is appropriate. "It's our Achilles' heel," he said. He feels that we often lack an appreciation for the aesthetics of culture because we feel everything has to be defined as either



sacred or secular, and that is limiting. "Christ also charges us to be kind, generous, and proponents of grace. These are values that do not have to be defined exclusively by a spiritual point of view," Dabrowski said.

Traditionally, Adventists have viewed themselves as apart from the rest of society. Our ideology as a remnant movement tends to keep us apart from mainstream culture, which can lead to insularity. Rik Swartzwelder, a filmmaker who has experienced great success with his short film, *The Least of These*, in film festivals around the United States sees that the key to reaching people through media is in actually knowing others outside of Adventism and the Christian market. "If we want to tell stories that people will listen to, we have to know people," Swartzwelder said.

Dabrowski echoes Swartzwelder's sentiments. "The issue of belonging is a prominent issue in today's society. We are in need of befriending someone, laughing with them, crying with them, and defining ourselves as being members of the human race first."

Oprah understands the medium of television and where it touches her audiences, which is why she uses television successfully to convey spiritual content, whereas the Church's programming puts up a warning flag because often the language and context are not appropriate for television. "Oprah does not need to use big religious words and say, 'Jesus loves you' in order for people to say, 'wow, maybe I really do need to take stock of my life,'" Dabrowski said.

Additionally, her shows aren't just inspiring, they're downright fun—not a claim you'll often hear about religious programming. One recent show I watched, devoted to "The Next Big Thing," mixed in fashion, film, and church. Oprah featured actor Jamie Foxx and designer Michael Kors, but her last segment featured a gospel singer, who, she said, "Brought my mama's church down. I mean, the church was brought down!"

Another show that started with gossip about Tom Cruise and handbags ended with the most powerful woman on television clapping her hands, swaying to the music and singing along to the lyrics, "And I thank you Lord, Oh yes, I thank you Lord."

If we want to engage our viewers with relevant programming, we truly need to look at what they watch and where we can fill gaps. Oprah knows how to entertain while inspiring, and unless we embrace that formula we will not create programming appropriate for the television medium.

## Lesson Two: Have a Clear Vision

Oprah's first decade in television proved her popularity, but her influence in matters of the spirit became apparent only in 1994, when she began to focus on more edifying content. Four years later, she began "Change Your Life TV," with entire shows dedicated to spiritual topics and guests who shared insights from a variety of religious backgrounds. (About this time those suspicious of her intentions began to call her "Pope-rah.")

When Oprah changed her format and started to incorporate blatantly spiritual topics, her ratings took a bit of a beating. Many detractors questioned her venture into topics previously considered off-limits for popular television hosts. But Oprah wasn't phased; she continued steadily implementing her vision and eventually her ratings jumped back up to the top. Her openness and candor about the need for spiritual nurture is one reason why the general public accepts spiritual programming from other outlets.

If the Church plans to reach a wide audience, it must have a clear and distinct vision. At the moment, a plethora of entities produce programs—3ABN, Faith For Today, Amazing Facts, ATN, ACN, AdSat, and Loma Linda Broadcasting, to name a few. There are even strains of annoyance regarding turf and redundancy.

I talked to a variety of Adventist professionals in the television and film world while preparing this article. It's obvious that a clear vision is lacking. "You need to have a vision," said Jon Wood, a former 3ABN producer and currently a media professor at Pacific Union College. "There are a bunch of ministries but there needs to be a consortium to facilitate ideas, channel funding, and help define a common vision."

Without a clear vision, it is impossible to gauge success. One first rule for any business endeavor is to define how you know when you're doing your job right. With a mission-oriented church, the goal is saved souls, which is difficult to measure even by generous standards. The impact of media is often understated and difficult to discern.

Dave Brillhart, a producer and filmmaker extensively involved in various church media productions, feels that we too often have strings attached to our programming and try to measure success by baptisms. "Good programming is subtle and hard to measure. I wish we would do more just strictly out of an altruistic spirit without measuring dividends," Brillhart said.

Although the traditional vision of the Church is to evangelize, this can present a problem for a 24/7 channel. On television you try to reach a consistent audience, on a daily or weekly basis. This presents a problem for an “all evangelism, all the time” approach, even if you define evangelism to include forms other than preaching shows. If we are only evangelizing, what do we do once we reach our audience? We have the problem of appearing interested in people only for a

care about convincing them of “the truth.” I’m reminded of one of the only times Jesus preached to a large crowd—evangelizing if you will. He still focused on his audience’s needs, making sure they were fed (in this case literally) through a miracle that provided loaves and fishes for everyone.

Another lesson to take from Oprah’s success is that women listen to other women. Pop culture commentators note that Oprah transformed the talk show

## Oprah transformed the talk show format into the back-and-forth rapport of female conversation.

short time, yet we have a channel constantly available.

Before we spend large amounts of money to acquire broadcast rights, satellite time, and the latest cameras, we need to know why we are involved in television and what our goal is, otherwise we’ll never know if we are successful. Although Adventists have always been eager to use the newest technology, we lack a shared, comprehensive vision about media, specifically television media. We need a unifying vision of how to use television appropriately before we can hope to reach a broader audience.

### Lesson Three: Know Your Audience

Oprah knows who watches her show and reads her magazine—women like me from affluent countries with middle-income concerns. (One important caveat to this article: I’m focusing on the North American television audience since that is the audience I know and understand.) Oprah doesn’t try to use the same product to reach a New Yorker and an African villager. We need to know what demographics we intend to target, and target that demographic specifically.

Oprah puts the needs of her audience first because she runs a commercial enterprise and recognizes the importance of meeting her customer’s needs. In Adventist television, we often have the problem of seeming to focus on us. We are doing our part to fulfill the Gospel Commission. We sometimes sound even a bit callous; we are presenting the truth, now it’s up to the viewer to decide what to do, since we did our job.

When those attitudes creep in we have a difficult time convincing viewers that we genuinely care about their needs and their life circumstances more than we

format into the back-and-forth rapport of female conversation. Given the importance placed on Ellen White in the Adventist Church, sometimes I am surprised how infrequently women occupy spheres of influence. Television programming is one area we’ll need to fix if we expect to reach and keep female viewers.

In the debate about reaching an audience, one of the criticisms frequently aimed at church television productions such as *Amazing Facts* and *3ABN* is that they “preach to the choir.” I happen to be a believer in preaching to the choir. I’m a member of the choir, maybe not the section of the choir that watches *3ABN*, but the choir’s needs are valid, too.

However, I don’t expect my needs to be met with the same content that meets those of a new believer or particularly a nonbeliever. A program that is outreach oriented will have a different focus than an inreach-oriented show, and rightly so. Sometimes the two will overlap, but that is probably more often the exception than the rule.

Dabrowski agrees on the imperative to explicitly target a demographic for each show. “I think Adventist television ought to include all audiences, but specific programs should target a very specific audience,” Dabrowski said. “It’s fine to broadcast a church event, but we have to realize that it is targeted to a religious audience that already knows what its Bible looks like. If we don’t define our audience, we won’t know if or when we reach them.”

One attendee at the producers’ advisory meeting in Las Vegas told of a deacon in Africa that projected



the Hope Channel on the outside of the church wall at night. Almost the entire village showed up to watch. That kind of incident wouldn't happen in San Francisco, but we still don't have programming primarily aimed at those who live in the city.

Although I would like to define an easy target demographic as *spiritually receptive individuals*, in reality that term is far too broad to help make real programming decisions—it doesn't tell me when to say No. Oprah frequently repeats the line, "You have to name it if you want to claim it." This is especially true for demographics. We have to know exactly who we want to reach with each show to have a hope of making a lasting impact.

## Lesson Four: Funding

Basically, everyone I interviewed for this article had a great deal to say about funding. Everybody knows that media is money intensive, but I'm not sure we're truly willing to invest what it takes to produce high-quality media. Admittedly, competing for viewers with someone like Oprah, who has virtually unlimited access to funds, is difficult, but she has arrived at that position because she has earned a loyal following.

"If you provide a service, people respond," Oprah said in an interview with *Television Week*. Her advice is remarkably similar to that of Danny Shelton, president of 3ABN, who told me that the secret to 3ABN's continuing financial success is knowing, "People pay when they're fed."

Historically, the Adventist Church has been willing to pay for hardware such as satellites, cameras, computers, and editing systems, but much less willing to invest in "software," such as the creative talent required to produce content. Wood sees this issue as an ongoing trend. "We're much more willing to pay for hardware than people. The Hope Channel is an example of that. We'll pay for bandwidth but not the data to put down it," Wood said.

Dabrowski sees a long history of emphasis on spending money to acquire technology rather than content. He feels we need to recognize that technology is available outside the Church and that we don't need to own everything ourselves. Rather, those who are responsible for the Church's media productions should place greater emphasis on software and the professionals who know media because that is where we can make a unique offering.

"We need to focus on investing in the content," Dabrowski said. "Corporate structures often tend to think in administrative terms only... [T]here is a lot of accountability in areas such as the treasury, but little accountability in the area of content."

Without adequate funding, quality control is difficult, at best. "The Anti-Christ Chronicles" no longer plays on the Hope Channel, but a new program by the same producer, "Israel in Prophecy," does, along with other shows that only Adventists—or at least only Christians—would find appealing. These include "Winsome Witnessing," "Adventist Classics," "Sabbath School University," "Adventist Review Unwrapped," "Adventist Worship Hour," and "Pathfinder Camporee."

A few shows are produced with the goal of appealing to non-Adventist and even non-Christian viewers. These include "The Evidence," "Escape," and the long-running "Lifestyle Magazine," but it is a large task to fill twenty-four hours each day with such programming, particularly when you have to rely on other entities to fund and produce it.

In Wood's opinion, the problem starts when the Church desires to compete in the media world and focuses simply on quantity, rather than quality. As a result, we end up with more programs that look somewhat the same, namely, sermons in studios. "There are more and more talking heads. It's very expensive to produce a news or magazine style show and even much more to produce drama," Wood said. "Talking heads are relatively cheap in comparison, but we run the risk of ending up with a duplication of 3ABN."

Brillhart agrees that funding is a major problem and points out that it might not be feasible to have a corporate church channel. "I don't honestly know if the Church can afford to have its own channel," Brillhart said, "The financial implications are enormous."

Recently, Paul Kim, an Adventist Communications Network employee who holds degrees in theology and digital media, was asked to produce a twelve-part reality-style television show aimed at the eighteen-year-old crowd for \$20 thousand in six weeks. Kim, who has traveled internationally making documentaries on a shoestring, was stumped. "Our church is notorious for trying to do everything without the funding," Kim said. "If anybody is up for crazy productions with no real money, it's me, but this even has me worried."

It isn't only unreasonable, it's also irresponsible to attempt to produce programming on such an unrealistic budget. We'll just end up wasting the \$20 thousand



that we have. I realize that “The Apprentice” is the highest-end of reality programming, but the producers spend \$2 million an episode. Even “The Evidence,” the award-winning new show from “Faith For Today,” costs \$20 thousand per episode, and that comes after a year of streamlining production.

We’re asking Kim to produce a show that appeals to a media-saturated market for a little over sixte hundred dollars per episode from pre- to post-production. I agree that at some point we must step out in faith, but God expects us to do our part as well.

Although the vision is primarily still a gleam in the eye, all of the producers I spoke to agree that a foundation needs to be established to fund quality programming. “We need a well-funded endowment to promote quality programming,” Wood said. “It would be a clearinghouse where producers could apply for grants and donors would know that there will be accountability and oversight.”

Brillhart agrees, adding that the funds should be open for programming beyond only church-related channels. “My goal is to produce content that isn’t specifically evangelistic in nature but demonstrates the principles of Christ, such as justice, love, concern for the homeless, widow, and orphan,” Brillhart said.

Gibbs and Thorpe agree that funding for programming continues to be crucial. “The funding picture still isn’t what we’d like it to be,” Gibbs said. He added that he feels it is important to step out in faith, though; otherwise nothing will get accomplished. “When we started the Net 95 program, there were a lot of naysayers who didn’t think it was a good investment,” Gibbs said. “Now there are over one million people who have been brought to the Church through satellite evangelism. Ask one of those million whether it was a good investment.”

Our budget expectations are still based on the Net evangelism experiences. However, the Net series and other live events were intended to be shown in churches, with church members inviting friends. The television content was simply a tool to foster relationships among churches, members, and their communities. By switching to an in-home viewing model, we have significantly raised our content requirements because we are competing with every other well-funded channel on television, without a friendly church member standing by to help explain things.

High-quality media requires a significant financial investment, and we must be willing to commit fully in

order to be effective. We need to ask ourselves honestly if we can and should afford this level of investment. Possibly we should focus primarily on producing content distributed by existing channels, instead of trying to fund an entire network.

At a minimum, we need to recognize who members of our audience will be if they must buy a special dish to pick up our programs. The old adage, “If it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing right,” applies, or I’m afraid we’ll turn off potential viewers before we ever get a chance to share our truly inspirational message of hope.

## Lesson Five: Be Authentic

As I surveyed friends, coworkers, and others who watch Oprah, one theme surfaced repeatedly: women love Oprah because she feels like a trusted girlfriend. Shana Tehrani, who watches Oprah religiously, agrees. “The thing with Oprah is you feel like she’s a real person. You know she’s been through the things she talks to you about.” (Oprah is surprisingly open with her guests about her past and current struggles, such as with her weight.)

Traditionally, our churches and church programming have focused on individuals who are shining examples of healthy, satisfied Christians. Often this comes across as an ad campaign without the grittiness of real struggle. Women trust Oprah to tell them spiritual truths because they feel she genuinely understands their life challenges. If we want to reach people through television, we must give authenticity more than mere lip service.

Ray Mitchell, chaplain at Yuma Regional Medical Center, feels that the Church often fails to be authentic. “We do a great PR job, everybody comes dressed nicely and looking great, but we tend to only tell the stories of success. People who are overwhelmed in life don’t feel welcome. People turn to Oprah to see real people. If we’re going to be effective, we have to deal with real sin, real life.”

Kim agrees that audiences must feel honesty from a program in order to respond. He emphasizes that we have to be willing to show that we don’t always have all the answers. “Who has all the answers?” he asks. “Look at the book of Job. Now there’s an honest man talking about real life issues.”



## All in All

Television and film are clearly enormously influential parts of our society. Everyone I interviewed mentioned Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* as a turning point in attitudes. He proved that Jesus can sell movie tickets. This is both good and bad. On one hand, brace yourself for a lot of shallow copycats searching for the same wallet. On the other hand, mainstream acceptance of Christian media has never been so positive.

Stu Harty, director of production for "Faith For Today" recounted a comment that a *Variety* editor told one of the program's board members. "He felt that the future of television is in faith-based programming," Harty said. "It's a great opportunity for us. This church has always used the latest technologies of the day and we must continue to do so in order to remain relevant."

The possibilities are truly vast and potentially very exciting. As Gibbs said, "TV isn't going away. I just hope people will catch the vision."

In order for that vision to be caught and the potential to be fulfilled, we need to hold a frank and honest discussion about how we can effectively do

good television. I am not pretending to know the answers, but I do know that core assumptions need to be challenged and difficult questions need to be discussed in an open and honest format.

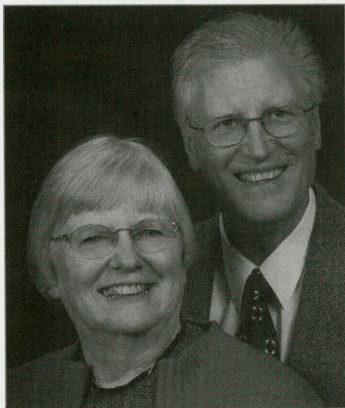
Great promise lies in the motivation and inspiration of ideas such as the Hope Channel, but it's time to take it to the next level, and that requires careful soul searching about why we want to be in television, what we want to achieve, who we want to reach, and if we have the means to accomplish our goals.

Oprah has proven that millions welcome spiritually thoughtful programs from television; the opportunity beckons. Her success demonstrates that the improbable happens to those who dream big and, yes, step out in faith. However, the hard questions must be addressed or the dream will remain just that, a dream.

It would be a shame to spend so much money on new technology just to have a viewer repeat the lament so commonly heard about television, "There are so many channels, but still nothing good is on."

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Daneen Akers is a freelance writer in San Francisco, California.



Pastor Roy &  
Bennie Gee

AU '66

Auburn Gospel  
Fellowship

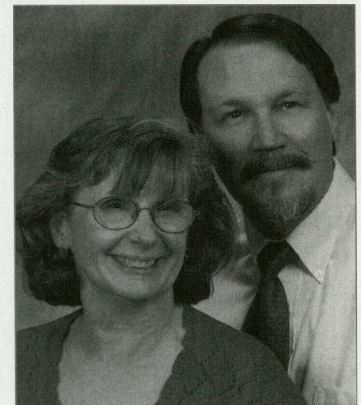
"A SAFE PLACE  
FOR GOD'S GRACE"  
10:45 A.M. Sabbath

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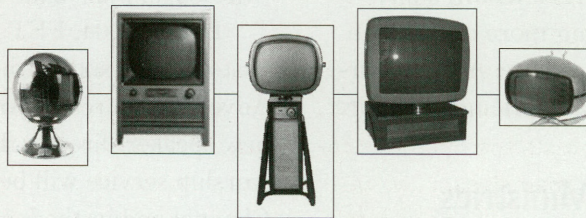
Pastor Rick &  
Nancy Kuykendall

AU '80

First Congregational  
Church of Auburn

"STRIVING TO BE  
AN ENLIGHTENED  
CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY"  
10:00 A.M. Sunday

Discussed: formidable force, *Adventist Girl*, drama, news, West Point College of Evangelism, Hope Channel, conflicts, collaboration, donkeys and prophets



# Adventist Television Today

By Becky Wang Cheng

**B**ack in 1950, when William Fagal preached his first sermon in front of a television camera in New York City, he had no idea that he was pioneering the most widely used evangelistic method of the twenty-first century. Few could have predicted two decades ago that 3ABN, located in an obscure southern Illinois cornfield, would become the most powerful media force within Adventism, with millions of viewers.

Producing quality TV is a very expensive venture. The state of Adventist media today raises many issues and clear answers are few. Do we already have more media ministries than we need? Do studios and satellite channels foster creativity or competition? Let's begin our overview of Adventist television at the denomination's first official media center.

## Adventist Media Center

Formed in the 1970s by the Church to provide consolidated services that would save money, the Adventist Media Center (AMC) was originally located in Thousand Oaks, California. In 1995, the original AMC campus was sold and the center moved to Simi Valley.

Because the new property's buildings

required extensive remodeling to convert them into studio space and to make them earthquakeproof, AMC incurred a financial loss over the move. After the move to Simi Valley, Marshall Chase was chosen to direct the AMC, which is operated by the North American Division.

Currently, the Adventist Media Center houses "Faith For Today," "Voice of Prophecy," "It Is Written," and "Breath of Life." Each ministry has its own staff, and they do not share personnel, although some employees have migrated from one ministry to the other for various reasons. In addition to the ministries, the center is also home to Adventist Media Productions (AMP), headed by Warren Judd.

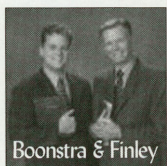
Adventist Media Production is the tech-



nical production resource for all Seventh-day Adventist Church ministries. As computer technology has evolved, making it easier to do video editing, the need for AMP services has changed. As a result, many of the ministries are also shooting more on location rather than in the studio. Furthermore, AMP is currently reevaluating its services and pricing structure.

## Programs and Ministries

### It Is Written



Boonstra & Finley

Succeeding George Vandeman in the late 1980s, Mark Finley, the former speaker of "It is Written" (IIW) is seen by many insiders to be the most formidable force in Adventist media. Shawn

Boonstra officially became the new speaker/director after Finley became global director of evangelism for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in January 2005.

A personable, energetic, baby-faced man who looks much younger than his thirty-five years, Boonstra resembles and sounds a bit like Sean Hannity of Fox News. Reared in the Christian Reformed faith, he attended an IIW Revelation Seminar while in college and he and his wife Jean became Adventists eleven years ago. Political science degree in hand, he was soon assistant pastor of the church in which he was baptized and then pastor of three small churches in northern British Columbia.

Boonstra eventually took some theological training at the Andrews Theological "Cemetery" (his term, spoken with a chuckle) to get up to speed with Adventist doctrine. Boonstra caught the attention of Henry Feyerabend, IIW Canada speaker, who asked him to become associate speaker. In 2001, he became the speaker, and in 2004 Finley tapped him to join him in the United States.

The mother of their two preschool daughters, Jean Boonstra has authored the *Adventist Girl* book series, which documents the history of the Millerite movement through the eyes of a young girl.

### Faith For Today



Mike Tucker

Faith For Today (FFT) has produced the greatest variety of programming within the Church. Beginning with "Westbrook Hospital" in the 1960s, which

starred William Fagel as a hospital chaplain, it has utilized drama, talk show, and magazine formats. Its shows include "Christian Lifestyle Magazine," "Lifestyle Magazine," "McDougal MD," and "The Evidence."

In late 2004, FFT announced that Mike Tucker, pastor of the sixteen-hundred-member Seventh-day Adventist church in Arlington, Texas, would be its new speaker-director. His grace-based contemporary worship service will be broadcast on the Church's Hope Channel and in the local Dallas/Fort Worth area.

According to people who have met Mike Tucker, he seems to grasp the quality and spectrum of programming needed to reach a sophisticated, but unchurched audience. Tucker has an M.A. in counseling and is a bright, personable individual who "doesn't have an ego," says someone who has worked with him. His congregation has grown well in a relatively short period.

Despite the quality and appeal of the FFT shows, the ministry is struggling for lack of financial support. It has never attracted a broad base of supporters who want to see the pure evangelistic gospel preached.

### The Voice of Prophecy



The Melashenkos

The oldest of Seventh-day Adventist media ministries, the Voice of Prophecy conducted several "Seventy-Five-Year Diamond Jubilee" celebrations throughout 2004. H. M. S. Richards senior started the "Voice of Prophecy" as a radio program, and its current

director, Lonnie Melashenko, is adding a television program called "Exploring the Word."

The new show debuted on the Hope Channel in 2004. After shooting the first twenty-six episodes, Melashenko is excited about "Exploring the Word," which is designed as a pastor's class for seekers/new believers. He believes this is a better, natural format for him, since he is more gifted as a teacher than as an evangelist.

Steven Mosley, a freelance author who has written for all Adventist Media Center ministries, creates scripts, directs, and produces "Exploring the Word." He describes one segment in the program as "Reality TV meets Bible Study group." It features lively interaction between four young adult Christians who struggle to relate their questions and life challenges to biblical principles.

The show is clearly geared to reach a younger audience. Mosley deliberately chose people who are attractive, witty, and dynamic. Although he admits that he had to

make adjustments so that 3ABN would carry the series, he was willing to do so. "In TV, there is no such thing as bad coverage; the more the better," says Mosley.

### Breath of Life



Charles Brooks, the powerhouse of Seventh-day Adventist preaching, was the first speaker of "Breath of Life." When Brooks retired, Walter Pearson became the speaker/director. "Breath of Life" is bicoastal. All of its data entry and mail are handled at the AMC, but it has its offices at the General Conference. "Breath of Life" does most of its recording on the road, since preaching in churches is its format, but it uses AMC personnel for its on-the-road taping.

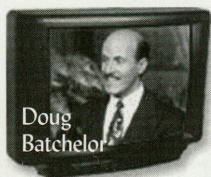
"Breath of Life" has been carefully watching its budget the last few years and is financially sound. It is beginning to buy additional airtime and expand its viewership. Judging from the responses that have come in, the program appeals to a wide variety of ethnic groups.

### La Voz de la Esperanza

"La Voz de la Esperanza" began as a subsidiary of VOP and still has a working relationship with it, but it is currently a separate ministry. Frank Gonzalez is the third speaker/director, after founder Braulio Perez-Marcio and Milton Peverini, who now appears on some of the IIW Spanish programs. Jeff Wood, who just finished producing the first TV series for "La Voz," describes Gonzalez as an incredible person, honest and nonpolitical.

Because the Spanish Adventist church in the United States is growing faster than any other segment of the Church, "La Voz" is in the process of purchasing airtime and hopes to be on the air in the next few months for the first time after being on the radio for more than fifty years. "La Voz" records its radio show in the Adventist Media Production studios but its TV show, like "Breath of Life," is taped on the road in many parts of the world.

### Amazing Facts



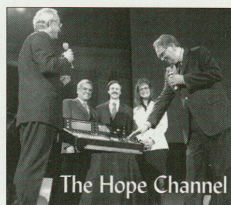
Doug Batchelor became speaker/director of "Amazing Facts" after the death of founder Joe Crews in 1994. His productions are a staple of 3ABN programming. Now based in Rocklin, California, "Amazing Facts" is a \$10-million-a-year evangelistic group that oversees a Bible

college, a TV ministry and sales of books and videos.

Batchelor is also pastor of the Sacramento Central Seventh-day Adventist Church. Recently, he created a controversy within the Northern California Conference by suggesting that the Central Church building be sold and the congregation moved out of the city into the suburbs. At the end of 2004, the Northern California Conference voted eleven to seven to approve his plan to sell the current church building and use the proceeds to relocate the congregation. The new site will include buildings for his College of Evangelism. The conference stipulated that one million dollars be paid to the conference from the sale of the current site.

## The Satellites and Channels

### Adventist Television Network and Hope Channel



The Hope Channel was launched in 2003 under the aegis of the General Conference as part of the Adventist Television Network (ATN). Adventist Communication Network (ACN), which developed the satellite links for Net 95, is the progenitor of the Adventist Television Network.

Brad Thorp, director of ATN and the Hope Channel, is trying to create programming that looks professional and cultured, and, most importantly, will attract non-Adventists. A former minister with no background in broadcasting or commercial TV, Thorp spent a considerable amount of time in his ministry as an evangelist, working fifteen years with secular cultures, nine of them in Europe. This experience has helped him recognize the importance and implications of satellite programming after the worldwide Net evangelistic series in 1995.

Before joining ATN as associate director in 2003, Gary Gibbs worked for Amazing Facts for thirteen years and started its College of Evangelism. He is excited about the challenge of making Christian programming appealing, and says non-Adventist Christians also share this concern.

According to Mark Dreistadt, chair of the National Religious Broadcasters Television Committee, "Christian television is very 'thin' because of its tendency toward nar-



rowly focused programming. Christian television often fails to engage the hearts and minds of mainstream viewers.”

Gibbs believes that we can responsibly portray the Seventh-day Adventist message in multiple ways and that there are “lots of creative producers out there with great ideas who need the money to finance their production.” At forty-three years of age, Gibbs is one of the older guys on his staff. He notes that four of the seven people working with him are under the age of thirty.

In April 2004, ATN sponsored a gathering of 175 people interested in Adventist broadcasting to discuss how to develop culturally relevant material and best utilize the new Hope Channel. ATN’s intended audience is spiritually sensitive seekers of any age.

The Hope Channel currently has five active channels: English and Spanish for North America, Spanish and Portuguese for South America, and an English international channel. Soon it will add a European channel using the Hotbird satellite, which has a potential to reach 110 million subscribers in Europe and the Middle East. The General Conference pays for basic expenses, such as salaries, office space, and satellite time, but finances are tight with new program development.

An unfortunate byproduct of this financial situation is the drastic reduction in the budget for the newscast. News is expensive, and the ATN committee would have liked it to continue, but it needed to spread funding devoted to a weekly program to develop other programs for 24/7 broadcasting. According to an informed source familiar with News Line, as this program is called, it received a tremendous response when shown in Asia, Africa, and Australia.

Liliana Henao, a gifted, young, Spanish-speaking woman, took a large pay cut to go to ATN to become its evening anchor for the half-hour news program. When the news was shortened to a fifteen-minute spot, she left and was immediately hired by Telemundo.

At ATN, Gibbs points out that almost the entire budget was going into the news programming, a segment that lasted only thirty minutes each week. “We just couldn’t justify the expenditure,” he states.

Hope Channel has 24/7 programming, although currently much of it is repetitious. Gibbs credits God’s leading for accomplishing so much so quickly. “What we’ve done in a year would take others much longer.” An Adventist Classics series, hosted by Connie Vandeman Jeffery, will feature the preaching of deceased greats, like George Vandeman, Charles Brooks, Joe Crews, and William Fagal.

Hope Channel offers its thirty-six-inch dish and

open digital receiver in the United States for about two hundred dollars. People who already own 3ABN’s dish can simply add the frequencies for the Adventist Television Network channels.

## Three Angels Broadcasting Network



When Danny Shelton recounts the story of 3ABN’s miraculous beginning, he sounds as if it happened yesterday. “In 1984, when I was a carpenter and part-time gospel singer, I had a dream to build a TV station. Even though I didn’t have the money, I vowed never to borrow or beg for money, and I haven’t to this day,” he emphatically asserts.

In 1985, he stood up and told a group of Adventist media personnel: “The Lord has impressed me to build a TV station with a twenty-four-hour channel that will reach the world.” He says that the host made him look like a laughing stock by asking him several questions: Are you an engineer? Are you wealthy? What will it cost—five million? Do you have a prospectus?

To the last questions, he replied with his hint-of-a southern twang, “I guess I don’t, because if I had one I would know what it was.”

Danny recalls that the host, who was the only one who wasn’t supportive, went on to remind him that the Adventist financial pie is only so big. “Every time someone like you comes along, each slice gets smaller, because the funds are diverted.”

To which Shelton replied, “If you look in the refrigerator, I believe God has a lot more pies.”

3ABN may indeed have the last laugh because in the twenty years since Shelton’s dream, the network has amassed money, buildings, and state-of-the-art production equipment. “Our critics don’t think people will watch religious programming, but when I get a letter from a heroin addict who’s shooting up at 2 a.m. and then he hears John Carter say ‘you can turn to Jesus,’ and it changes his life, then I know better.”

Clearly, Shelton is still confident that the 3ABN ministry is succeeding beyond his wildest dreams, in spite of recent criticisms and his divorce from Linda Shelton. Walter Thompson, the original benefactor of “Lifestyle Magazine,” who only recently retired from a full-time medical practice, currently chairs the board at 3ABN.

“Contrary to what people might have expected after Linda’s abrupt leaving, God has blessed, and donations have actually increased since her departure. Linda has left a big hole, but this crisis gave us a chance to reeval-

uate and focus our vision," says Thompson.

Thompson remains strongly committed to health ministry and feels that "health is taking the program around the world." 3ABN has several health programs in conjunction with Lifestyle Centers of America in Oklahoma and Don McIntosh, a health educator, and it hopes to work with Loma Linda University School of Public Health to produce more in the future.

3ABN has intentionally expanded its international audience and now has a potential of a quarter billion viewers in India. It has also secured time on cable

## Collaborators or Competitors?

Brad Thorp and Gary Gibbs of Hope Channel stress that they work with all the supporting ministries in a complementary fashion. Shelton contends that there is sometimes more friction than collaboration. "We shot a Doug Batchelor 2004 revival a few months ago and let Hope Channel show it. Then they turned around and told us that we would have to tape and delay Net 2004."

Gary Gibbs says that Hope Channel now has a protocol that gives 3ABN and others the opportunity

**"The devil may say 'stop,' but the Lord Jesus says 'go.'"**

**—Danny Shelton**

stations in Thailand and the Philippines. According to Thompson, a wealthy benefactor recently donated money for 3ABN to purchase a studio in France for broadcasting to the Muslim world.

### Conflicts with 3ABN over Standards

3ABN has very conservative standards that reflect its donor base. As a result, it doesn't air some programming produced by the Adventist Media Center. Dress was an issue with the "Let's Talk" program, which features Jan Paulson, president of the General Conference, in a question-and-answer session with college students.

When told there was too much cleavage, Reger Smith Jr., associate director of communication for the General Conference, says he was baffled. "We had to review the tape carefully until we spotted one coed with a V-neck sweater, which is kind of the norm these days in that age group.

"Even the Net evangelistic series, which 3ABN has always carried, was censored in 2004. They deleted the music and only aired Walter Pearson's preaching because of 'drums and swaying,'" Smith continues.

Shelton says that some called him racist for doing that, but other viewers supported him, saying that it wasn't a cultural decision, but about upholding standards. "I like happy music, up-tempo music," he says, "but we don't want to make music a divisive issue."

Because of Faith for Today's nontraditional approach, repeated conflicts with 3ABN have arisen over the past fifteen years. In fact, 3ABN does not presently carry any of Faith for Today's four shows. Shelton insists that he's still willing to work with FFT, "If they produce something for our audience."

to have a live feed for the Net meetings and other broadcasts if they identify Hope Channel as the source. Brad Thorp is supportive of 3ABN and invited Danny to Hope Channel's advisory council.

Shelton's memories of having the 3ABN truck banned at the last General Conference session are still vivid. By his account, Neal Wilson and Jan Paulson intervened two days before the session started and 3ABN was allowed to proceed.

There appears to be an entirely different attitude this time around. According to Shelton, "3ABN has influential backers who fight for us...[T]he Devil may say 'stop,' but the Lord Jesus says 'go.'"

Walter Thompson sees Brad Thorp as a devout man who feels a genuine responsibility to meet the Church's media needs, but he feels that Hope Channel duplicates what 3ABN is already doing. "3ABN is already everywhere!" exclaims Thompson.

In contrast, Thompson believes that some competition could be good to stimulate improvement in both organizations. "3ABN is not the voice of the Church and should not be," he says.

When I asked Gibbs how much program duplication there is between Hope Channel and 3ABN, he replied that he hasn't done a side-by-side comparison, but believes that "ideally we would have unique, separate programs to appeal to different audiences."

Gibbs still believes there is more than enough room. "We could have several Adventist channels—we need saturation." What about the money required? "God owns the

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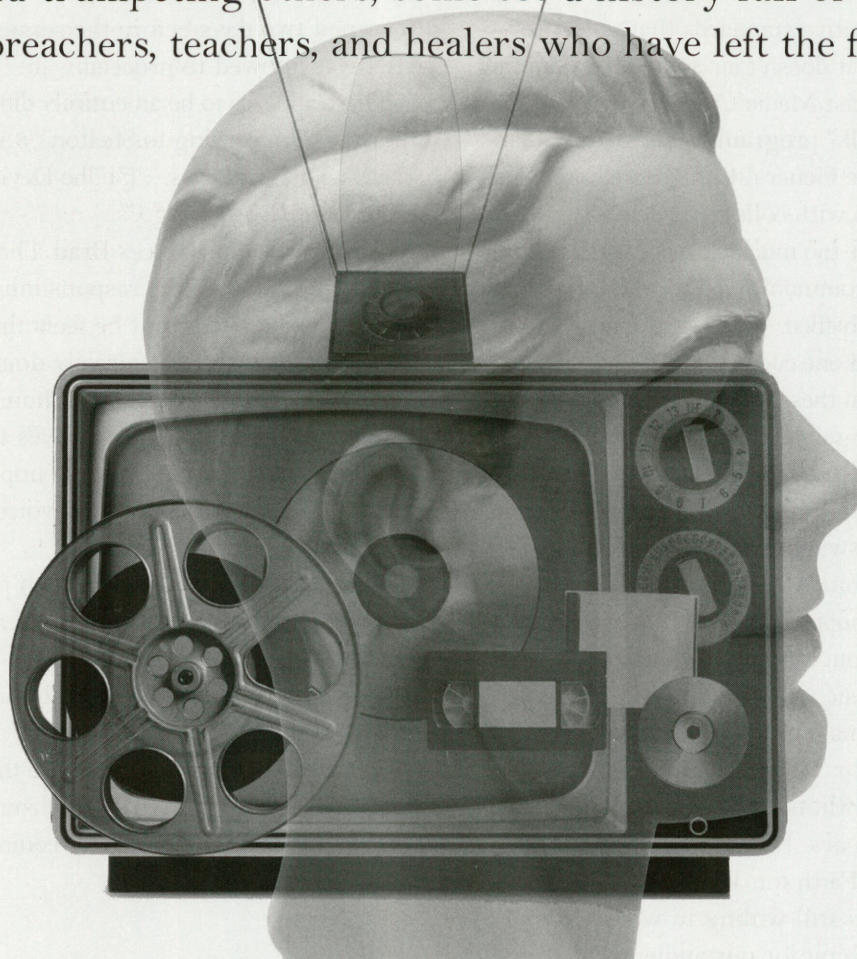
Discussed: Ben Carson, Ozzy Osbourne, Linda Shelton, "Gilmore Girls," H. M. S. Richards Senior, principles, Leonard Bailey, *The Road to Wellville*, self-esteem, Cliff Davis, Del Delker, Paul Theroux, Doug Batchelor, hair

# Celebs in Home Circles

A Few Adventists Who Are Known for Being Known—  
and Why We Care

*By Alexander Carpenter*

**T**raditionally, Adventists avoided the appearance of celebrity. Not only did the faithful eschew looking and dressing like the worldly and made-up famous, but even prominence within the Church worried those who saw evidence of a too-human focus. Supporting this fear of lifting up and trumpeting others, some see a history full of star preachers, teachers, and healers who have left the fold.





Comprised of mere pilgrims in this world—and educated to prepare for the next—the Seventh-day Adventist Church doesn't attract famous adherents, as does the Church of Scientology. Nor have we grown as many as the Latter-day Saints, with their singing Osmonds, the habitual Covey, and "Jeopardy" know-it-all Ken Jennings. When an Andrews University graduate appeared on "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" a few years ago, it was Adventist news just because host Regis said he had heard of the school. But then he had attended university only twenty minutes away at Notre Dame.

There are a few certified celebrities who grew up Adventist, such as Little Richard, Prince, Art Buchwald, and Joan Lunden. And, for the record, that rumor about Ozzy Osbourne and pals polishing their Black Sabbath metal in the halls of Monterey Bay Academy is false.

Actor Cliff Davis, the Chamberlains, and good-hearted Leonard Bailey garnered media attention during the eighties. More recently, in the developing world, Adventists have led a revolution in Fiji, aided genocide in Rwanda, and headed the government of Uganda.

Although relatively slim on stars, Adventism itself makes a shady appearance in *A Cry in the Dark* (1988) and stars in the fascinating Australian film *The Nostalgia Kid* (1992). At least one Seventh-day Adventist dies administering hydrotherapy at the Battle Creek Sanitarium in the 1994 film *The Road to Wellville*—with Anthony Hopkins as a bucktoothed John Harvey Kellogg. Korean Adventism is mentioned on the Warner Brother's "Gilmore Girls" and in the novels of Paul Theroux, who calls Adventists "Sevies," and writer David James Duncan references Adventist culture.

Celebrity carries the often-correct stigma of chasing the spotlight to generate publicity. The celebrities in the Adventist community, although well-known, are recognized because of how they use media to accomplish their personal calling. In his interview with *Spectrum*, Doug Batchelor pointed out that "people identify with people. It's one thing to read a series of doctrinal beliefs, but that can leave you dry without marrying the principles to real people. When you can associate a person with the teaching it makes it authentic."

Matching a good-looking face with religion makes it more interesting. All those 1960s housewives didn't watch George Vandeman just to hear another text. Twenty-five hundred television and radio stations tap into the eighty-million-member world of evangelical Christianity. Twice a year the largest of these media outlets, Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), holds "Praise-a-thons," which

garner about ninety-million dollars each. And that apparently helps out its four-billion-dollar ministry.

Of course, there is an obvious difference between the glitz and explicit money collecting of TBN and the simple talk of eighteen-year-old Three Angels Broadcasting Network (3ABN). But there is a common gospel that is preached, sung about, and prayed for at both: that accepting its message will change each person's life. Both solicit prayer requests, both advertise products created by its personalities, and both ask for money to share Jesus with others. In fact, 3ABN calls itself the "Mending Broken People Network."

With the marital breakup of Danny and Linda Shelton, the co-owners of 3ABN, the second largest Christian network in North America (in regard to number of UHF stations owned and operated) mimicked too closely that common rite of fame—the celebrity breakup, albeit over "spiritual adultery."

Del Delker, who has been singing around Adventism since 1947, reports that the public eye is not always fun. As an unmarried woman, Del says that sometimes people would write "poison pen" letters when they thought they saw a telling wink between her and members of the King's Heralds quartet.

Christian media can be a messy mix of money, mass religion, and larger-than-life personalities. Attract fans and soon the critics show up. Drawing disciples and then anti-disciples is as common now as with Jonathan Edwards, medieval popes, and the Corinthian followers of Paul or Apollos or Cephas.

Why do we care about famous Adventists? Perhaps for the same reason that we enjoy finding friends in common with Adventists we've just met. It's a revelation of identity. Just like classical heroes and religious saints, we pay attention because often their story helps us understand ours. There is a cultural connection that runs through the Church; we share beliefs, hopes, guilt, and fears. And just as families are proud of their good scions and whisper about their black sheep, so goes the Church.

But wait, why is celebrity important? *Spectrum* decided to ask a few Adventists who are famous as mixers of medium and message. Of course, none of the four thought of themselves as celebrity material, but let's face it, they are known for being known. And media—books, music, television, Web sites—have contributed to their recognition.





## Linda Shelton

Linda Shelton shaped much of the programming at 3ABN during her eighteen years with the organization. Her writing and singing, chats with guests, and natural good looks exemplified the womanly ideal of many viewers. In addition to cohosting "3ABN Presents" she has recorded at least five albums of gospel music.

**On the benefit of charismatic media personalities:** Statistically, we find that with Christian networks it is those who have distinguishable leaders that thrive and survive in an age where there are a lot of options for TV viewing. Just as the people demanded a king back in the days of Saul, people want a leader, a visionary, and "a place where the back stops." Obviously with leaders there are risks and potential hazards, but the fact still remains that TV ministries that have them grow at a much faster pace than those that don't.

**On being famous:**

Of course at times there were the photographs and autographs. At first, I was extremely uncomfortable with these requests because I felt that perhaps they looked at me as an icon. Later I decided it was unfair

for me to think this way because so many expressed that they just felt I was a part of their family. There are so many lonely people who have been forsaken by their family members! Christian television fills the void in so many people's lives.

I have sweet memories of people coming up and telling me about their Aunt Bessie or Uncle George (as if I knew them), simply because they felt that since I was "in their living rooms" each evening I knew all about their lives. I also have some incredible memories of people coming up and relating how they met Jesus through the programs they saw on their television sets. It was genuine ... you could see it in their eyes and in the expressions on their faces! These experiences made the blood, sweat, and tears worth every minute of it.

**On being famous for hair:**

On one occasion we were at Atlantic Union College on a Sabbath afternoon. The auditorium was full to capacity with about fourteen hundred people. Afterwards we were shaking hands and an older man came up to me and said, "I cut a piece of your hair to keep as a souvenir." I laughed because I thought he was joking. Later, when some women were observing the back of my hair, they discovered the man was telling the truth. Still ... I'd rather have a hair cut than a razor taken to my reputation!

**The effect of media on the Adventist Church:**

The statistics prove that television, the Internet, and radio are the most effective, inexpensive vehicles to reach the masses with the message of Jesus Christ for this age. In light of the fact that the world's population is growing at a much faster rate than Christianity, I believe that God has provided these tools to multiply the efforts of a few people to reach the masses and finish the Gospel Commission. There are good and bad points to consider in any evangelistic venture, but when it comes to the media, the good outweighs the bad.

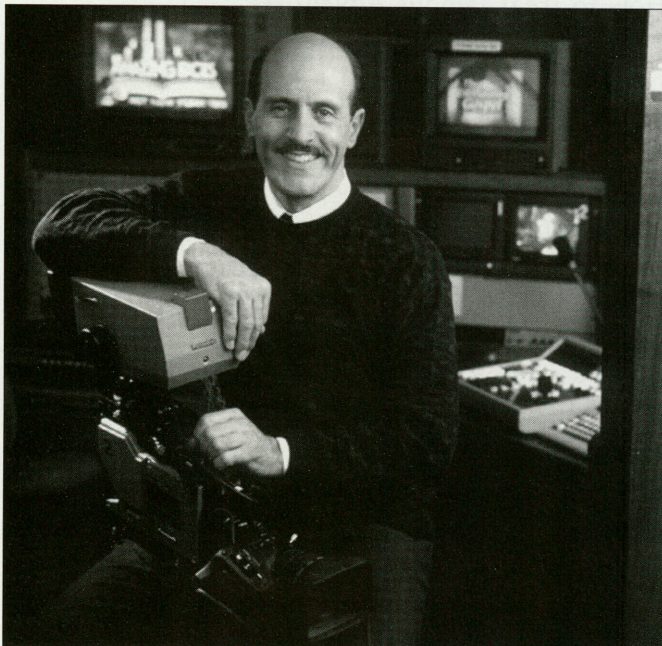
**On filming with dogs:**

I'll never forget on one particular day I was sharing a devotional thought on camera with Fluffy and Sheltie (my dogs) beside me. Normally they were quite well behaved on the set, but on this particular day Sheltie was pawing and biting at Fluffy. Just at the moment when I was speaking about the importance of peace and tranquility as a part of our characters, Fluffy

snapped at Sheltie, baring her teeth viciously at him. The camera operators came “unglued” and nearly ended up rolling on the floor. Needless to say, we did the segment all over again.

#### **Differences in gender treatment:**

I have rubbed elbows with the most well-known personalities in the Adventist Church, and from my perspective, I did not see a profound difference in how the Adventist public treats men and women personalities.



## **Doug Batchelor**

Doug Batchelor is director/speaker of Amazing Facts, a ten-million-dollar-a-year media production and training ministry. His riches-to-rags story, accessible preaching style, and Sabbath morning ubiquity have made him the most famous name in Adventist television. In addition, he is senior pastor of the Sacramento Central Seventh-day Adventist church.

#### **On having a public persona:**

I grew up with a mom who was in movies and on national television five days a week so I saw early on that the bigger-than-life aura that the cameras can create is really an illusion. I honestly forget that our programs are on around the world until a stranger approaches me. I still enjoy the wide-eyed wonder of kids who recognize us from our programs.

Some encounters are humbling. One time a cashier at a Costco discount store said, “I know you, you’re that annoying preacher I see on TV late at night.”

#### **The effect of media on Adventist ministry:**

The tools of modern media provide a profound opportunity to multiply the messages presented before a small group or even a single camera. In addition, it is mind boggling to me that our church services are streamed live and can be seen virtually around the world on a computer within seconds. Jesus said: “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matt. 24:14). The media makes this prophecy an imminent reality.

#### **Preaching on camera:**

During a live taping, a sleep-deprived cameraman drifted into a deep slumber while I was preaching before a large audience and slid off of his stool, falling to the floor, and making a tremendous clatter. He quickly sat back down and continued with his job like nothing had happened, but people teased me for putting him into such a deep sleep.

#### **On why people enjoy the story of the time he spent living as a “caveman” during his youth:**

I can only speculate it is because they find aspects in the testimony they can relate to. People seem to resonate with the questions, doubts, and searching, as I did in my youth. Most of us are driven by the same fears and longings.





## Del Delker

Del Delker joined the “Voice of Prophecy,” the flagship of Adventist media, in 1947. She has participated in ninety recordings, including forty-five solo albums in English, six in Spanish, and two in Portuguese. Her fifty-five years of music ministry have allowed her to travel around the world, appearing on radio and TV hundreds of times.

### **On the early days of Adventist media:**

Media is a powerful force for people to meet God. What H. M. S. [Richards] Senior did was really show how the gospel could be spread by employing brand new tools. Media really is a powerful tool and extends the Church's influence. It reaches millions of people, and there is no better way for God to meet them.

### **On H. M. S. Richards Senior:**

In 1947, people were still giving H. M. S. Senior fits about his radio ministry. They didn't think it was a good use of money. But he just dealt with it by not responding. He was really good at getting along with everyone. Over the years I have sung with twelve quartets and all of them would have laid on railroad tracks for him. He always commanded respect, but he never demanded it. We young employees would crowd into the uncomfortable seats in the “Voice of Prophecy” limousine just to be closer to the “Chief.”

### **How to treat famous Adventists:**

Affirm them, don't slobber over them. Too much attention is not good for people.

### **A funny occurrence:**

While in Brazil, I was to sing for a television broadcast. Often in poorer countries it is cheaper to tape the program and then play it later. I was lip-syncing the song and I felt that something was wrong so I signaled for them to cut the music so we could restart. It didn't work so I started waving my arms wildly and making the cut-throat signal. Everyone looked horrified and then someone mouthed to me that it was a live broadcast. I tried to finish, but realizing that I had acted like an idiot I burst into tears, humiliated.

### **On early success:**

When I first sang in front of a large audience my head almost popped with pride. But I felt the peace that I knew was from God leave me. So I rushed into a vineyard—this was in Lodi, California—and prayed to God to take my voice away if I couldn't get that peace back. The danger with having a high profile is that it can go to a person's head.

### **How Adventists treat their famous women:**

Adventist men currently treat Adventist women better than they used to. I've certainly suffered from male chauvinism. But now sometimes I am asked to speak during the eleven o'clock service. Even at the “Voice of Prophecy,” there were some who thought that they shouldn't have a women around, especially since they thought I wasn't qualified, since I can't read music.

It has been interesting over the years. Sometimes there has been a lot to put up with. Originally all I wanted to do was go to Andrews University and marry a fella who was going to be minister. I wouldn't have done all this if I hadn't been called into it.

# Ben Carson

Ben Carson's use of books to broadcast his educational philosophy has made him the most famous Adventist today. In addition to leading pediatric neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins Children's Center, he serves on the board of Kellogg Company, Costco, and the Yale Corporation, and operates, with his wife, the Carson Scholars Fund, which rewards students in grades 4–12 for superior academic achievement.



## On being famous:

When I walk down the hallway in the hospital people call out, "It's Dr. Carson, oh my god. Can you take a picture with me?" There are good things. Back in the days before I always flew first class the attendant would recognize me and give me a free upgrade. There is no question that you get different treatment. I bought a car once and they said that they would give

me an incredible discount and then they also donated money to my foundation. You get different treatment; there is no question about that. Even from the police.

## On celebrities:

When you see somebody often through media there is adulation. And I think that a lot of that comes from not having proper perspective. I love everybody. Christ died for everybody, but I do not get excited about people. I'll do anything for the janitor or for the president because they are all God's children. You know, you look at England—the queen, the prince—they put their pants on just like everyone else. And how we treat them is the height of absurdity, quite frankly. Why do people want to hear what a celebrity has to say? They don't know anything. It is so artificial.

By starting the Carson Scholars Fund I am trying to help people see that there is a different perspective and we are making progress. I just came back to my office and my office manager told me, to my great surprise, that I've been selected for an award that I cannot mention now because it hasn't been announced. But I am receiving \$250,000 for the charity of my choice, which of course, is my scholarship fund. There are so many wonderful things that I fully recognize as the Lord's doing.

## On his story:

A lot of people feel that they can identify with me because I came from a situation where I had low self-esteem, things weren't going well. A lot of poverty, a broken family, terrible temper, something just about everyone can identify with. I make it clear to those people that I am no genius. I say: "You do your best and God will do the rest."

## On seeing children who remind him of himself:

I meet them all the time. And I sometimes tell them that they are just like me. And that seems to help some of them. I hear amazing stories of transitions in children who have read the books, or seen an interview on



television, or heard one of my speeches. And that is actually more important to me than my primary job as a surgeon, because only one person at a time is in the operating room. But through the platform that the Lord has provided I can touch thousands—if not millions—of lives. Not for one moment do I feel that I am smart enough or good enough to have done all these things. It is very clear to me who is really behind it.

#### **On a Christian public persona:**

I do a lot of public speaking, including at secular universities. I never give a speech without people knowing that I am a Christian. And that is what drives me. I make it very clear to people that if it's not their bag, that's fine, but I want to talk about what drives me. If they are Buddhist, that doesn't offend me, and my Christianity shouldn't offend them.

If you are "successful," the thing that is behind you becomes interesting to people. They want to know: How did this guy get there? What drives him? And I believe that that is an effective way to lift up God's name.

#### **On speaking to kids and bankers:**

If I am speaking to a group of poor, innocent kids, I will choose different aspects of my story than if I am talking to a bankers' convention. In the first group, I spend a lot of time talking about how I felt when I was known as a dummy, why I lashed out, and how that was injurious to me.

When I'm talking to a group of bankers, I will emphasize the part of the story that shows the potential that could be wasted if opportunities weren't granted. I point out to them: to whom much is given, much is expected. I know many "successful" people, and the ones who are happy and fulfilled are not necessarily billionaires, but are the ones making a difference.

#### **The thinking behind the Carson Scholars Fund:**

We'd go into schools and see trophies for all-state sports, and the quarterback was the big man on campus. But the academic superstar was a nerd or a geek. That is the reason we are doing so poorly vis-à-vis other nations, particularly in science and math. And so Candy [his wife] and I started giving thousand-dollar scholarships out of our own pocket to students with incredible academic achievement and who demonstrated care for other people.

The money would go into a trust fund developed

by our financial people and the student gets a trophy every bit as impressive as any sports trophy you have seen. They get a medal, they go to a banquet, they get local press attention. We put them on the same pedestal as the athletic superstar.

The concept being: we're saying that what will keep us on the forefront is not the ability to shoot a twenty-five-foot jump shot but the ability to solve a quadratic equation. So we have to emphasize that. We were encouraged because we could see the effects, not just on the honored students, but also on those around them. And some teachers have told us that the grade point average in their classrooms has gone up a whole point for the next year because everybody was trying so much harder.

The Delaware legislature unanimously—all the Democrats and Republicans—allocated \$500 thousand for our scholarship fund to be matched by the private sector, and they are going to give another \$500 thousand for this next year so that they can endow all their schools with the program. We are in eight states already and we are moving into several more this year. And God willing, by the time I die, every fourth and fifth grader will see that they can get the same kind of attention for superior academic performance and humanitarian qualities as they can for athletic prowess.

#### **Currently reading:**

I probably get three books a week that people send to me. I just got one today, what was it called? Oh yeah, it's title is something like being rich without guilt. I am kind of anxious to read it. Actually, the book I am currently reading right now is the *Desire of Ages*, for the umpteenth time. I am getting ready to write another book shortly. It'll be about taking risks.

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Alexander Carpenter handles special projects for *Spectrum* and the Association of Adventist Forums.

# SANCTUARY

PERSON, PLACE, OR THING?

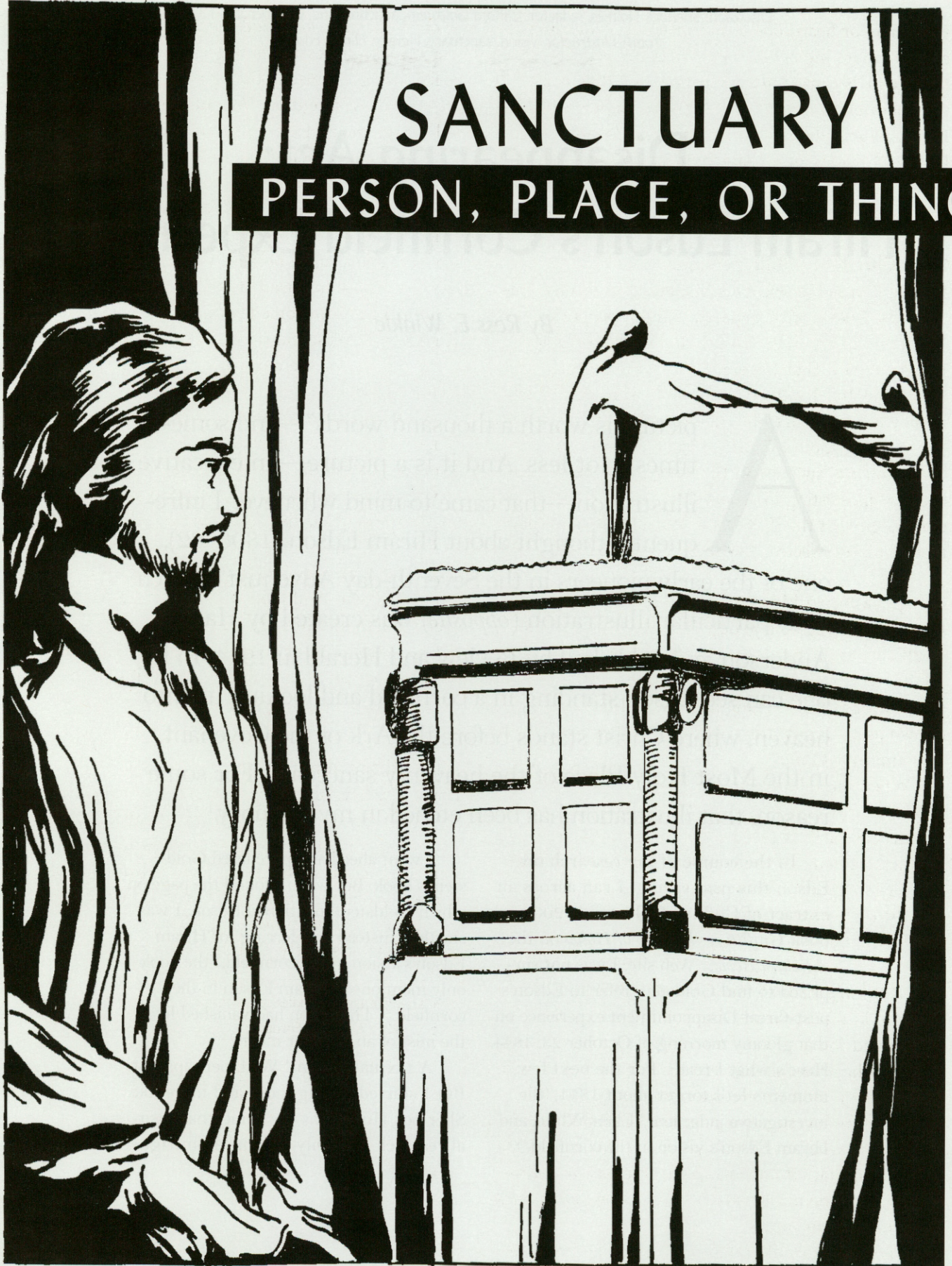


ILLUSTRATION BY MARK DWYER

# Disappearing Act: Hiram Edson's Cornfield Experience

By Ross E. Winkle

A picture is worth a thousand words”—and sometimes a lot less. And it is a picture—an evocative illustration—that came to mind whenever I infrequently thought about Hiram Edson (1806–82), one of the early pioneers in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This particular illustration (*opposite*) was created by Harry Anderson and published by *Review and Herald* in 1944. In it, one can see Edson standing in a cornfield and looking up into heaven, where Christ stands before the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. For some reason, that illustration has been etched in my memory.<sup>1</sup>

In the course of my research on Edson this past spring, I ran across an extract of Clifford Goldstein's 2003 book *Graffiti in the Holy of Holies* on the *Adventist Review* Web site. I was not surprised to find Goldstein refer to Edson's post-Great Disappointment experience on that gloomy morning of October 23, 1844. Here's what I read: "For the next few moments let's forget about 1844, 'the investigative judgment,' Ellen White, and Hiram Edson's vision in the cornfield."<sup>2</sup>

I went ahead and purchased Goldstein's book. But when I found the page on which Goldstein mentioned Edson, I was startled. Instead of referring to "Hiram Edson's vision in the cornfield," the book only mentioned "Hiram Edson in the cornfield."<sup>3</sup> The vision had vanished like the mist of an October morn.

A textual variant! Well, perhaps not. But I started feeling more and more like Sherlock Holmes as my somewhat casual research suddenly become an intriguing



ing redaction-critical mystery. Why did the Web extract differ from the published book at this point?

I decided to contact some of the parties potentially involved in this mystery. Goldstein quickly replied to my inquiry, but after trying to reconstruct what might have happened, he concluded he was just guessing. But he then asked me whether I thought Edson had had a “vision” like Ellen White or had rather seen something “as in his mind’s eye.”<sup>4</sup> To me, this raised the question of whether he was the one who had used the word *vision*.

I then inquired at Pacific Press, Goldstein’s publisher, and received a response back from Russ Holt, vice president for product development. He also mentioned that he was not sure how the change took place, but thought it was what would have normally taken place during the editorial process. He thought that the *Adventist Review* had used an earlier copy that was then later revised into what one finds in the published book.

Holt then said that the decision to take the word *vision* out of the earlier draft did not affirm or deny that what Edson experienced was “a ‘vision’ or merely an insight on Edson’s part.” According to Holt, there was no attempt to minimize Edson’s experience, and he cautioned me not to read too much into the change in wording.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, I wrote several times to the *Adventist Review* to see whether there might be light from that corner of the publishing triangle. On July 1, I sent virtually the same communication I had previously sent to Goldstein and Holt to Carlos Medley via e-mail; I received no reply. On July 29, I sent the same basic communication to the “letters” e-mail address at the *Review*; again, I received no reply. Finally, I wrote a letter on September 28 to William Johnsson, the editor. I have not received a response.

The primary account of Edson’s experience comes from Edson himself, written sometime before his death in 1882. A key part of his manuscript, of which only a fragment remains, describes what happened on the morning of October 23, 1844.<sup>6</sup>

After breakfast I said to one of my brethren, “Let us go and see, and encourage some of our brn [*sic*].” We started, and while passing through a large field I was

stopped about midway of the field. Heaven seemed open to my view, and I saw distinctly, and clearly, that instead of our High Priest coming out of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300 days, that he for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary; and that he had a work to perform in the Most Holy before coming to this earth.<sup>7</sup>



Although this autobiographical portion of Edson’s manuscript was written by hand before his death in 1882, there is no extant, published record of its existence before 1910, when A. W. Spalding adapted it for an article in the *Youth’s Instructor*.<sup>8</sup> The manuscript was given to H. M. Kelley when he visited with Edson’s daughter, and a portion of it was printed in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* in 1921. Kelley stated that Edson had written it “immediately after the disappointment in 1844.”<sup>9</sup>



However, there is no extant, contemporary evidence that corroborates Edson's autobiographical account. When Edson died in 1882, his obituary in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* simply mentioned that Edson had had "a rich experience in connection with the movement of 1843-44." There were no other published references to his experience for more than forty-five years after 1844.<sup>10</sup>

The interpretation of Edson's cornfield experience has had a checkered history.<sup>11</sup> The first published account of the experience was written by J. N. Loughborough in 1892, a decade after Edson's death. Edson sometimes traveled from church to church with Loughborough, and they had much time to talk and share stories.<sup>12</sup> Loughborough himself stated in his earliest published account of the story that Edson "told me" the story of the experience:

[A]s he was praying behind the shocks of corn in a field, the Spirit of God came upon him in such a powerful manner that he was almost smitten to the earth, and with it came an impression, "The sanctuary to be cleansed is in heaven." [Edson] communicated this thought to O. R. L. Crosier, and they together carefully investigated the subject.<sup>13</sup>

Loughborough's two identical accounts were apparently the only published accounts of Edson's experience until the first decade of the twentieth century, yet there are at least five accounts of the story by him, and one finds discrepancies among them in some of the details.<sup>14</sup> Besides that, they do not agree in details with Edson's account.

Writers have utilized a number of terms to describe what happened to Edson in the cornfield—without stating that he saw a vision. For example, Edson had: a conviction; a discovery; a flash (of conviction, discovery, insight, light, truth, understanding, and so forth); an illumination; an impression; an insight; a perception; and/or a realization.<sup>15</sup> Some writers explained that an idea or new thought "struck" Edson. Some wrote about apparent supernatural events associated with his experience, while avoiding mention of any vision.<sup>16</sup>

Several writers have either explicitly or implicitly questioned whether or not Edson's experience was a vision. Don F. Neufeld, for example, referred to an understanding that flashed into Edson's mind but questioned the visionary nature of his experience. But he was not consistent, and just weeks later he described Ellen White's early vision in February of 1845 as com-

prised of representations flashing into her mind.<sup>17</sup>

At least one other account indicated that Edson's experience was close to being a vision, but apparently not the real thing. And another starkly concluded, regarding Edson's account of his experience, that it "should be relegated to the level of apocryphal literature to which, without doubt, it belongs."<sup>18</sup>

But there are a few who have stated that what Edson experienced really was a vision. F. W. Bartle, manager of the New York Food Company, in writing of Edson's October 23 experience in a 1935 letter to W. A. Spicer, not only expressed his belief that it was a vision but also asserted that "Elder Hiram Edson had visions before Sr. White did."<sup>19</sup>

More recently, in 1994 Glen Greenwalt underscored his belief that Edson's experience was not only "truly visionary," but was, in fact, a vision. Greenwalt found parallels with the phenomena of biblical visions, and to him they indicated a similar pattern of God reminding his people that he had not abandoned them. He moreover identified Edson "with the prophetic, heavenly vision, and Ellen White with the practical, down-to-earth vision," recognizing that this might confuse those Adventists who "recognize Ellen White, and not Hiram Edson, as the prophetic messenger to the remnant church."<sup>20</sup>

A few months later Desmond Ford, although showing appreciation for Greenwalt's overall article, nevertheless maintained that Edson's experience was neither accurate nor inspired, basing his conclusions on his interpretation of Daniel 8. Furthermore, he emphatically stated: "There was no such vision."<sup>21</sup>

Although there are apparently some historical discrepancies in the extant portion of Edson's manuscript, and although it appears that he wrote later understandings back into his experience of October 23, could his experience have still been a vision from God? The language of his account and its wider literary, historical, and theological context appears to support such a conclusion.<sup>22</sup>

First, Edson's statement that "I was stopped" is exactly the same as what one finds earlier in his account. On passing a house, he noted: "I was stopped in the road opposite the house, by some unseen power, and could not make progress. I know not what was the cause. . . ." He then described a "shadowy form in human shape" standing before him and concluded that the "Lord's angel" was accompanying and leading him.<sup>23</sup> The use of identical language here indicates that both references should thus be seen to be understood by him as supernatural in nature.

Second, Edson not only describes other charismatic

phenomena in his manuscript, but we know that he was also involved in charismatic phenomena in 1849—five years later. In a letter he then wrote to James White, the editor of the *Present Truth*, he mentioned the Spirit being poured out “so that the place was awful, and glorious”; the Spirit being poured out again (with Ellen White receiving a vision); two occasions of speaking in tongues and the interpretation of tongues by another person; two dreams of his (one in which Ellen White was symbolically shown initially opposing his efforts to reclaim “Bro. Rhodes”); and one by another person; and a number of “impressions” he had had.<sup>24</sup>

In the same issue, editor James White defended Edson’s description of charismatic experiences, particularly underscoring the biblical support for “such special revelations” as visions and dreams, as well as impressions.<sup>25</sup>

Third, although Edson does not explicitly say that he had a vision, his experience does mirror details in some biblical visionary accounts. Edson states that “heaven seemed open to my view.” In Ezekiel 1:1, the prophet Ezekiel stated that while he was on the banks of the Chebar River, “the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.” Visionary accounts of the heavens opening occur in several other biblical texts.

Luke’s account of Stephen’s martyrdom in Acts 7:55–56, where Stephen saw the heavens opened and Christ standing at the right hand of God, is particularly illuminating in comparison to Edson’s experience. Although Luke does not describe this as a vision, some Seventh-day Adventists insist not only that it was a vision, but also that Stephen was consequently a prophet.

And finally, Edson’s repeated use of words like “that,” followed by information about what was seen, has been seen by a few as undermining the visionary nature of his experience. But a similar literary style was not unknown in accounts of Ellen White’s visions.<sup>26</sup>

Did Edson create his October 23 experience wholesale? This appears unlikely. Other aspects of the historical portion of his account have rarely—if ever—been questioned; in fact, historian George R. Knight states that the poignant description of the disappointed Adventists (“we wept, and wept, till the day dawn”) is one of the most frequently quoted portions of his account.<sup>27</sup> But perhaps pathos is more attractive and easier to deal with than ecstasy.

In any case, other questions rise to the surface. Did Edson come to believe only later in life that he had really had a vision? Did he anachronistically utilize visionary language in telling his account? Or, could it be that Edson’s experience in the cornfield really was a vision?

Perhaps we will never know.

If his experience were a vision, it is interesting to note that the autobiographical portion of Edson’s manuscript suggests it was not the first vision or visionary experience he had. Edson wrote about an earlier prayer meeting experience this way:

Before the close of the meeting, our preacher very hesitatingly gave a faint invitation, that, if there were any in the congregation who felt like seeking the Lord, and desired prayer for them, if they would make it manifest by rising on their feet we would engage in prayer for them; when some eighty at once arose, without being urged. And thus I saw literally fulfilled, what was presented before me the night before, when in prayer before the manger.<sup>28</sup>

Edson’s reference to “what was presented before me” is exactly the same language Ellen White used on a number of occasions in describing the content of her visions.<sup>29</sup>

Edson has become famous in Seventh-day Adventism because of his remarkable experience in the cornfield on October 23, 1844. There has been reticence, however, to describe his cornfield experience as a vision. This is striking in light of the experience having been described as being as “revolutionary” as what happened on the day Jesus rose from the dead and “among the most dramatic moments in religious history.”<sup>30</sup>

Among possible factors for this state of affairs, one should consider the following: (a) Edson never explicitly described it as a vision; (b) there was a strong sentiment against visions and dreams among the early Adventists after October 22; (c) Adventist understanding of the phenomena, nomenclature, and taxonomy of visions developed over time; (d) Edson’s manuscript contained speculative interpretations of biblical prophecies, which may have tainted the whole account in the minds of some; (e) Edson was apparently not held in high regard when he died; and (f) there has been a repeated emphasis on underscoring the biblical—rather than visionary—origin of and basis for Seventh-day Adventist beliefs.<sup>31</sup>

The view that Edson’s experience was visionary came into prominence for a while in the twentieth century.



ry after his autobiographical account was rediscovered, largely due to Spalding's earlier writings on the subject. But since then, the nature of Edson's experience in the cornfield on that dreary October morning in 1844 has become contentious, and it has become, in a number of ways, a "disappearing act" within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It has sometimes been handled with kid gloves, masked in more acceptable language, downgraded in significance, and marginalized.

In some cases reference to Edson's experience is mysteriously missing from where one would expect it. For instance, when the White Estate commissioned Elfred Lee in 1989 to paint the mural entitled "The Christ of the Narrow Way," based on Ellen White's first vision, it and the artist carefully chose to include 144 individuals who had made special contributions in making the Seventh-day Adventist Church what it is today.

The mural was unveiled on October 22, 1991. Intriguingly, although Lee portrayed beams of light falling to the earth from Christ, the High Priest in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary, those beams were falling not on Hiram Edson, but on Joseph Bates. In fact, Hiram Edson is nowhere to be found among the 144 individuals.<sup>32</sup>

Recently, I spent a number of weeks reading from several collections of the best stories from *Guide* magazine's fifty-plus years to my nine-year-old son, Tristan.<sup>33</sup> Virtually every story was a fascinating and gripping account of how God had revealed not only his power but also his care for those who trusted in him. And almost every time, at the end the story, I would say to Tristan, "What do you think about *that*?!" or, "Can you believe *that*?!" (and sometimes I had a hard time believing).

Tristan would frequently respond with something like "Wow!" or "That's a neat story!" and we would sometimes have the opportunity to talk further about God's miraculous activity in the lives of his people.

What would Tristan say if I read him the story of Hiram Edson? Which version of the story would I read? Would he see Edson's experience as a divine encounter with God? As a mighty act? As a vision? Perhaps; perhaps not. Maybe Edson's experience was "only" a conviction, an impression, an insight. Such responses and experiences, however, can be powerful and life changing. Although not appearing as "mighty" as the Exodus from Egypt, they can turn out to be as revolutionary as the thoughts that coursed through the disciples on that dreary and bitter

Sunday after they encountered the risen Christ.

But I tend to think Edson's experience entailed more than that.

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# The Sanctuary and the Unbearable Loneliness of Being

By David R. Larson

If you have never been lonely, it will be difficult for you to appreciate the doctrine of the sanctuary. You may understand it theoretically; however, its practical value will probably bypass you. As Paul Tillich emphasized more than any other theologian in Christian history, a correlation prevails between particular Christian doctrines, on the one hand, and specific types of human experience, on the other. Loneliness is the experiential correlate of the doctrine of the sanctuary. *This* doctrine connects with *this* experience.

The loneliness of which we speak is historical, existential, and theological. When it is directly related to a negative event—a particular loss, disappointment, or disaster—it is historical. Finding out that for years your best friend has been committing adultery with your spouse and that you are the last to know is the sort of thing that can trigger this type of loneliness. The more general and vague feeling that we humans are bounded beings, that we can never wholly connect with others, that we achieve our unique and valuable identities

in part by cutting ourselves apart from our friends and relatives is what we mean by the term *existential loneliness*.

Even when we are not fully conscious of it, this kind of loneliness is always with us. To be, to exist as a human being, is to be lonely in this way. Theological loneliness strikes us when we deeply feel the absence of God. This happens to individuals; it also happens to classes of people or entire cultures. Although they outwardly react as differently as the morose Friedrich Nietzsche and the sunny Carl Sagan, today this form of loneli-



ness is deep and wide among those in educated circles.

There is no need to worry if you have not yet consciously experienced loneliness in any of these three forms. You will. No one who is mentally sound gets through this life without being very much aware of at least one of them. Even Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" When the unbearable loneliness of being comes your way, you will be in a better position to appreciate what the doctrine of the sanctuary offers.

**W**he Seventh-day Adventists expound the doctrine of the sanctuary in three primary ways. For some of us, it is a vivid reminder that, because our bodies are the temples, or sanctuaries, of the Holy Spirit, increasingly our lives should be ethically pure. For others of us, the doctrine of the sanctuary depicts how the earthly and heavenly ministry of Jesus the Christ removes our guilt as sinners. For still others, it is a powerful reminder that we are never alone, that no matter what happens and no matter how we feel, the Father is always present.

All three approaches talk about all three things. Also, because we worship one God, each appeals to all three members of the one Trinity. They differ in their points of departure, organization of thought, and relative emphasis, however.

Unfortunately, those who emphasize the Holy Spirit and pure living and those who emphasize Jesus Christ and the removal of our guilt often disagree sharply. Too many of their exchanges are both arcane and acrimo-

nious. Much needless suffering and loss of talent is the sad result, more so in some parts of the Adventist world than in others. This is not as it should be. The doctrine of the sanctuary should draw us together, not drive us apart.

Because it is the most prominent in Scripture, and because it is the most needed today when the absence of God is felt so keenly and widely, we should increasingly emphasize the Father in the doctrine of the sanctuary. From this angle of vision, this doctrine is not primarily about how the Holy Spirit empowers righteous living. In the first instance, it is not about how the Son removes our guilt, either. Although these themes are also important, first and foremost the doctrine of the sanctuary is about how the unending presence of the Father soothes the unbearable loneliness of being.

We can summarize this emphasis in one word: *Immanuel*, which means "God with us." As illustrated by the following passages, this emphasis upon the unending presence of God threads its way through each of the six major portions of Scripture.

**PENTATEUCH:** "And have them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them." (Exod. 25:8 NRSV)

**WRITINGS:** "O God, you are my God, I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your



power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on your name." (Ps. 63:1-4 NRSV)

**PROPHETS:** "I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them; and I will bless them and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary among them forevermore. My dwelling place shall be with them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations shall know that I the LORD sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary is among them forevermore." (Ezek. 37:26-28 NRSV)

**GOSPELS:** "And the Word became flesh and lived [sanctuaried] among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14 NRSV)

**LETTERS:** "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach one another or say to each other, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest." (Heb. 8:10, 11 NRSV)

**APOCALYPSE:** "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.'" (Rev. 21:3, 4 NRSV)

As illustrated by the lives of those who passed through the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844, the good news that God's presence is constant and comprehensive corresponds to the experience of historical and existential loneliness by addressing theological loneliness first.

Probably more than any other idea, the doctrine of the sanctuary comforted those who were heartbroken that the Second Coming of Jesus did not occur on that date, as they had anticipated from their study of Scripture. Hiram Edson's proposal that the "cleansing of the sanctuary" refers to events in heaven and not on earth assured him and his colleagues that, contrary to their feelings of intense sorrow, perplexity, and embarrassment, they had not been

abandoned by God. They were not alone.

Some today debate whether Hiram Edson and the others who were comforted by their revised doctrine of the sanctuary following the Great Disappointment understood every detail correctly. These exchanges sometimes miss the main point, however. Even if they did err in this or that detail of scriptural interpretation, the earliest Seventh-day Adventists correctly discerned the overall message of the sanctuary doctrine: we are not alone, God is still with us, life is still worth living, and someday we will laugh again because our joy will be full. This message was good news. It always is!

Getting the big picture but making some mistakes on some of the details is a fairly common thing in the history of Christian life. When Martin Luther declared that "the just shall live by faith," he communicated an important and much-needed truth even though virtually no specialist today believes that his historical reconstructions of the relevant passages of Scripture were precisely on target in every regard.

Debates continue as to whether something like this happened among those who established the Seventh-day Adventist Church after passing through the Great Disappointment. These exchanges should continue until we achieve consensus about what actually happened in the nineteenth century. The value of the doctrine of the sanctuary back then, and its worth to us today, do not depend on the outcome of these debates, however.

As contemporary scholarship in all fields increasingly recognizes, it is not always possible or even necessary exactly to recover what ancient texts meant to those who first wrote them. All authors send their texts on long journeys without the ability wholly to control the twists and turns in meaning that they will prompt along the way.

To be sure, we cannot make any text say whatever we want it to say and we shouldn't even try; nevertheless, if we get a text's overall message, and if this theme is reinforced by several other passages in the work as a whole, we can relax about the details. We can keep studying them without hanging too much on the outcomes of our research. How much worse it is to get all the little things right but to miss the big picture! This is another application of the advice of Jesus not to strain gnats and swallow camels. Sadly, sometimes this still happens.

When exploring such matters we do well to assess



the assumptions we bring to our discussions. For example, Ross Winkle, a church historian at Andrews University, has written a delightful and informative study about how we Seventh-day Adventists describe what Hiram Edson experienced regarding the sanctuary doctrine when walking across a field of corn shortly after the Great Disappointment. Sometimes we say that he experienced a "supernatural vision." On other occasions we insist that he experienced a "natural insight." Sometimes we even vacillate between these two views!

Our assumption seems to be that if Hiram Edson had a "supernatural vision" he got everything right, but that if he experienced a "natural insight" he may have been mistaken, either in whole or in part. As even the most superficial glance at Scripture confirms, this assumption, like many others that often accompany it, is false. In cases like this, the difference between "natural" and "supernatural" is not clear and distinct. Those who have unusual experiences do not always understand them correctly or communicate their meaning effectively.

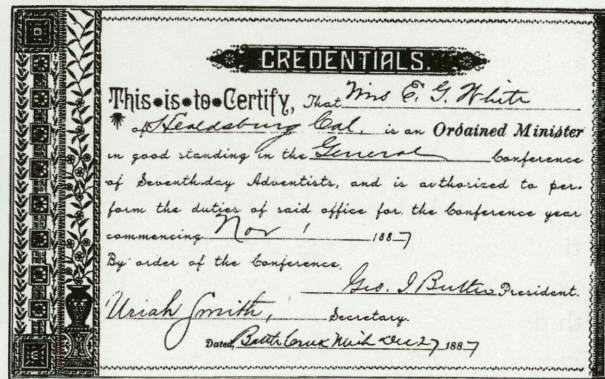
Even if they succeed, their interpretations do not constitute for all time everything that can and should be said on the subject. Most importantly, we cannot establish the truth of an idea by appealing to nothing but how it came into awareness. We are to judge ideas by what they assert and not by how they come about. In and of themselves, although they may be fun to observe or experience, unusual occurrences prove nothing.

In *Desire of Ages*, Ellen White and her collaborators commented on the doctrine of the sanctuary in ways that still seem helpful. They wrote that God "abode in the sanctuary, in the midst of His people. Through all their weary wandering in the desert, the symbol of His presence was with them. So Christ set up His tabernacle in the midst of our human encampment. He pitched His tent by the side of the tents of men, that He might dwell among us, and make us familiar with His divine character and life" (23, 24).

Please don't accept or reject this just because Ellen White and those who helped her wrote it. Examine it, test it, and see if it makes sense, all things considered. If it does, allow yourself to be encouraged by the thought that no matter what happens God is present to comfort and to guide. If it doesn't add up, keep searching for something that does!

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Discussed: Glacier View Ranch, infidels, Giraffe Society, The Cynic's Sanctuary, lynching, devouring, the human brain, Tuskegee Institute, activism, the Kingdom of God, creation, Roger Sperry, growth, you



# The Other Sanctuary Doctrine

By Chris Blake

*There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. . . .<sup>1</sup>*

It was 1980, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church was in upheaval. Appearing on the apocalyptic stage alongside Daniel and Revelation were Desmond, David, Walter, and revelations. Ford, Davenport, and Rea—"FDR"—brought their new deals, and the resulting furor led thousands to depart Adventism.

One of the most controversial stances was Desmond Ford's questioning of the doctrine of the heavenly sanctuary and the investigative judgment, challenging whether there are two literal rooms in heaven, a holy place and a most holy place, where Jesus now ministers for us.<sup>2</sup> For years after the eruption many applicants for positions in church employment were asked, as evidence of their orthodoxy, whether they believed in a literal sanctuary in heaven.

A friend of mine, interviewing for a youth pastor assignment, was asked, "Do

you believe there are two rooms in the heavenly sanctuary?"

"In my Father's house are many rooms," he replied.

The interviewers laughed. "Fair enough," they concluded. He got the job.

Others weren't so fortunate. In August 1980, 111 chief Adventist scholars and administrators convened at Glacier View Ranch in Colorado to decide whether Ford's dissonant views were legitimate, and determined that the traditional Adventist doctrine of the sanctuary should remain.

Scores of pastors, including Ford, eventually lost their ministerial credentials.

This sanctuary doctrine has distinguished Seventh-day Adventism from almost every belief system on earth. However, the basis for this doctrine appeared well before 1980 or 1844. Scripture devotes thousands of words to the sanctuary, beginning with Exodus 25:8: "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst" (RSV).

Over the next six chapters we read intricate descriptions of God's designs for the sanctuary, or tabernacle, in the wilderness, including astonishingly precise measurements and materials for the ark ("Then you shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two cubits and a half shall be its length" [25:17]), the table ("You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold" [25:28]), the lampstand ("The base and the shaft of the lampstand shall be made of hammered work, its cups, its capitals, and its flowers shall be of one piece with it" [25:31]), the curtains, veil, altar, court of the tabernacle, oil for the lamp, garments for the priesthood, ordination ritual, sin offering, burnt offering, sacrifice of ordination, altar of burnt offering, altar of incense, offerings for the tabernacle, bronze laver, anointing oil, incense, and appointment of the workers.

The sanctuary has been a big deal to God for a long, long time. The heavenly sanctuary fulfills one transaction. But another sanctuary would accomplish an equally important enterprise.

## Searching for Sanctuary

A Google mouse hunt for "sanctuary" today produces an astonishing yield. Following the Sanctuary Records Group (with artists Lynyrd Skynyrd and The Tubes), I encounter sanctuary sites for tigers, farm animals, elephants, donkeys ("over 11,000 rescued in the UK and Ireland"), koalas, fish, seals, bats, seabirds, and (to amen choruses from porcine-pure Adventists) potbellied pigs-replete with recipes for "compassionate cuisine."

I also find through Google a different brood: Stalking Victims' Sanctuary, Borderline Personality Disorder Sanctuary, and The Cynic's Sanctuary, which boasts in its hall of fame Aesop, Voltaire, Mark Twain, Dorothy Parker, and Jesus of Nazareth.

Then I chance upon *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*, and my search ends.<sup>3</sup> The book's photos fill me with horror. Almost 150 photos depict an incomprehensibly gruesome legacy. In a

righteous, festive atmosphere, crowds pose next to their quarry as though they just landed a prized catfish. Adding to the stark, shocking truth, many of the photos were transformed into postcards complete with a "Place Stamp Here" print on the reverse side, suitable for handling by the United States Postal Service.

In his online review of the book, Joe Lockard laments, "At least the German civilians forcibly escorted through the death scenes of extermination camps in 1945 had the decency to weep and protest unconvincingly that they did not know. Americans photographed these horrors of tortured, mutilated and burned bodies as an advertisement for white supremacism and popular 'justice.'"<sup>4</sup>

Between 1882 and 1950, the Tuskegee Institute reports, 3,436 lynchings took place throughout the United States, with likely a greater number unrecorded.<sup>5</sup> When these lashing storms of mindless rage, fear, and pride blew humanity apart, no harbors of justice and mercy appeared. Without sanctuary, the "good old days" weren't good for anybody.

## The Other Sanctuary Doctrine

Something wonderful happened. Jesus arrived, bringing with him a new interpretation to the sanctuary. He announces, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). Paul picks up this thought in 1 Corinthians 3:16: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?" (Apparently the Corinthians did not.) He continues, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (6:19, 20).

Paul reinforces this doctrine in his next letter to the Corinthians: "For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people'" (2 Cor. 6:16).

Hebrews 8 describes the new covenant of God, one enacted on "better promises" (v. 6). God declares, "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (v. 10). The succeeding two chapters outline the



eternal heavenly sacrifice of Christ (vs. 11–14), and the superiority and finality of Christ's sacrifice and the new covenant, concluding with "I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds" (10:16).

In the light of this new sanctuary doctrine we can see Jesus' desires for us more clearly. The Sermon on the Mount, for example, is a sanctuary sermon: Create a safe space in your minds and bodies for God and for his creation, including your enemies.

The typically termed "Lord's prayer" is a sanctuary prayer. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Is heaven a safe place? God wills his kingdom on earth to be a safe place.

The promise of the Holy Spirit is a sanctuary promise, as Jesus plainly states at the Last Supper: "And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you" (John 14:16, 17). "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23).

The mystery of the ages is a sanctuary mystery. It is "the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:26, 27).

A sanctuary is a holy place—a safe haven. We are each of us called to be a sanctuary, a refuge for God and his creation. Breathing, laughing, singing, running, walking, talking sanctuaries.

What makes us safe? The same thing that makes the heavenly sanctuary safe, the same attribute that makes Jesus safe: grace. The kingdom of God is within us when we lead gracious lives—forgiving, accepting, and sharing lives based on the better promises of graceful love.

## Applications for Adventists

My thirty-year-old musician friend doesn't go to church much anymore. We sit over curry and rice at The Oven while I ask him what would make church more attractive.

He reflects a moment. "Instead of 'Where have you been?' I'd like people to say 'Glad to see you.' And there ought to be more choices in the middle. I mean,

you're either a Pathfinder leader or . . ."

"An infidel?" I suggest.

He breaks into raucous laughter. "Right. Is there anything between Pathfinder leader and infidel?"

I assume a thoughtful expression. "A conference president, perhaps. . . ."

**Without human sanctuaries, the remnant becomes an exclusive club instead of an inclusive gathering.**

To many people, Adventist institutions have mouthed mercy and goodness, fairness and love while treating their employees as disposable information carriers—easily ignored, crushed, or discarded. The stories are legion. Countless former members have bolted because they felt belittled and betrayed.

Will Campbell could have been describing Adventist institutional blindness (or hypermetropia: farsightedness) when he quipped, "Jesus talked about a cup of cold water. But right off, we have to be about installing a global sprinkler system."

In our haste to spread the gospel "into all the world" we neglect our own family. As Dag Hammarskjöld concluded, "It is more noble to give yourself completely to one individual than to labor diligently for the salvation of the masses."

**Without human sanctuaries, those who cry out to "finish the work" ironically may be doing just that.**

Adventist schools and churches become converted into safe houses when they care more about kindness and acceptance than they do about behavioral purity and being right. When the bullies, gossips, and truth squads are allowed to attack virtually unchecked, education becomes grotesquely and fearfully stunted.

Long ago when I taught at an Adventist junior academy, I had a standard opening for my homeroom each first day of school.

"Class, you may drink alcohol, smoke tobacco, cheat, wear inappropriate clothing, and curse a blue streak, and I will not be angry. Disappointed, yes. I expect better of you. And you will be disciplined according to school policy. But you are basically hurting yourself.

"However, if you are mean to another student—oh, *watch out*. Nothing else will bring my wrath quicker. This classroom will be a sanctuary for each of you. When you cross that threshold, you can leave your outside troubles behind, whatever they are. This is a safe place, and we will treat each other *always* with respect and dignity. You can know that I will do my very best to ensure it."

What does it mean for the Church to be a safe

place? It means our church sanctuaries are actually sanctuaries, and the human sanctuaries that comprise the Church are free to wonder and probe without fear, generous in interpreting others' aims, open to consider different views, steadfast in defending and nurturing freedom, secure in the knowledge of agape love. So it is in heaven and shall be on the New Earth.

**Without human sanctuaries, we grow afraid to risk true learning; our truncated education makes us wise as doves and gentle as serpents.**

The African-American female quintet Sweet Honey in the Rock sings "Would You Harbor Me?" about diverse peoples—Koreans, Jews, heretics, AIDS sufferers—particularly those who are on society's edges.

Adventists have created harbors for people groups. For example, the Association of Adventist Women was developed to provide a sanctuary for Adventist women. Adventist Peace Fellowship nurtures an asylum for believers in the historic Adventist stance of noncombatancy.<sup>6</sup> At Faith and Science Conferences theologians and scientists enjoy a safe forum for discussing creation issues.

**Without human sanctuaries, truth and freedom cannot flourish.**

The Giraffe Society, based at Andrews University, is a grassroots service network that pledges in its mission statement to "risk standing up and sticking our necks out against any form of negligence or mistreatment of Seventh-day Adventist youth or young adults, including inadequate financial support, guarded self-interest, and worst of all, non-involvement." Even in board meetings and nomination committees, giraffes provide healthy sanctuaries for youth and young adults.

In March 2003, two weeks before the invasion of Iraq, the Union College Humanities Division sponsored a "learn-in," titled "Between Iraq and a Hard Place," where students, faculty, and staff could listen civilly to others' opinions. One-fourth of the student body (230) voluntarily showed up to give and hear 52 speeches on topics ranging from "Is a just war plausible?" to "What are the alternatives?"

**Without human sanctuaries, the young may be devoured.**

Finally, as is the case in the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries, within each human sanctuary comes a ministry of intercession. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matt. 5:9). Peacemaking, like love, is an active venture. "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has

come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5:17–20). If Adventists do not enter this world with dependable, discerning, courageous, liberating action, it doesn't matter if we are "declared righteous."

First Service at La Sierra University Church concludes its Friday night worship service each week by encouraging attendees to sign up at the tables in the foyer for Christian activism. Helping people obtain financial assistance, proper housing, and adequate health care moves pro-life beyond pre-birth.<sup>7</sup> To care for the environment, to speak out against racism and the moneyed interests of tobacco, to guard the rights and lift the hopes of the downtrodden is to be a temple for the living God.

**Without human sanctuaries, reconciliation and peace are rarely achieved, and spiritual pronouncements seldom meet practical concerns.**

## Place to Place

Through the transforming power of God's gracious love our bodies become incarnational tabernacles with two compartments. We move from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place, from our metaphorical heart to our metaphysical mind, from propositional truth to relational healing, from desire to application. We move from "the true tabernacle which the Lord set up and not man" to the true tabernacle that the Lord set up within man, from outer space where "Christ ministers on our behalf" to inner space where we minister on Christ's behalf.

As trustworthy sanctuaries for God and his creation, we become gilded inside with pure gold, our acacia wood overlaid with gold, with the lampstand's cups, capitals, and flowers hammered into one piece (integrity). He has engraved his laws of love upon the holy ark of our brains.

Nobel laureate Roger Sperry observes that in the brain "there are forces within forces within forces, as in



# Selected Happenings

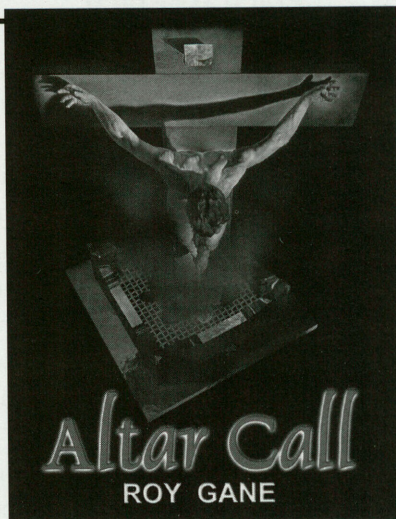
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## Sanctuary Doctrine

by author of NIV  
Application Commentary on  
*Leviticus, Numbers*

ABC or [www.adventistbookcenter.com](http://www.adventistbookcenter.com)

no other cubic half foot in the universe that we know." Dr. Paul Brand adds, "I have been inside a human brain on maybe a half-dozen occasions. Each time I have felt humble and inadequate, a trespasser entering where no man was meant to. Who am I to invade the holy place where a person resides?"<sup>8</sup>

Without this sanctuary doctrine the seed of the heavenly sanctuary encounters no soil, finds no purchase, germinates no growth.<sup>9</sup> Unless the Seventh-day Adventist Church prioritizes and practices this doctrine, the remaining doctrines never materialize. Without sanctuaries here forming bridges, creating safe space, and making intercession we are forever wandering, incessantly seeking shelter, eternally expecting and fearing the physical, emotional, and spiritual lynchings that will inevitably descend.

Jesus, Prince of Peace, brings the most radical spiritual assertion. The sanctuary—the Kingdom of God—is within you. Is among you. Is you.

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1. Fundamental Belief 23, in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1988), 312.
2. See Heb. 9.
3. James Allen, et al., *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe, N.M.: Twin Palms, 2000). Two weeks after I accessed this site it was shut down, likely because of perceived abuses in distribution of the material—a sad commentary on our times, as well.
4. Joe Lockard, "Bad Subjects: *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*," <[eserver.org/bs/reviews/2000-4-7-7.53PM.html](http://eserver.org/bs/reviews/2000-4-7-7.53PM.html)>, Aug. 15, 2004.
5. Twin Palms Twelvetees Press, "Without Sanctuary," <[www.twinpalms.com/Pages/forthcoming/lynch.html](http://www.twinpalms.com/Pages/forthcoming/lynch.html)>, Aug. 15, 2004.
6. In God's eyes, the Temple would have been desecrated by David's violence (see 1 Chron. 22:8–10).
7. As the late U.S. senator Paul Wellstone frequently pointed out, those are "family values."
8. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, *In His Image* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1984), 129.
9. The question of which sanctuary is more important may be compared to the classic conundrum: Which is more important, getting married or staying married?

Chris Blake chairs the English Department at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Discussed: blood—aspersion, atonement, architecture, veils, dates, conditions, judgment, cross,  
little horn intercession, accuser, sanctuary

# The Sanctuary: The Essence of Adventism

By Norman H. Young

**T**he Seventh-day Adventist Church often treats moral lapses more tolerantly than a sincere doubt expressed about our exposition of the 2,300-day teaching in Daniel 8:14. Why is this so? Undoubtedly because “the scripture which above all others had been the foundation and the central pillar of the advent faith was the declaration” of Daniel 8:14.<sup>1</sup> As Arnold Wallenkampf notes, “Christ’s present-day ministry in the heavenly sanctuary” is one of the only “jewel[s] of truth” not gathered from other churches.<sup>2</sup>

The sanctuary, then, is nominated as our only unique belief. To question this belief is seen as questioning the validity of our origins, and as doubting the genuineness of the experience of the Lord’s leading in our past. But what is the essence of this teaching? To address that question, I wish first to say what the essence of the sanctuary teaching is not.

## What the Essence Is Not

### The Atonement

The sanctuary teaching is related to the atonement, but it is not the atonement proper. That honored status belongs exclusively to the single event of Calvary’s cross in the

first century. No heavenly process that commenced in the nineteenth century must usurp Calvary’s supreme position within the Christian faith. Paul sets the agenda for all our preaching and teaching: “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2).

In the previous chapter, Paul asserts that he had been sent to proclaim the gospel, and that he did so in simple diction “so, that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power” (1 Cor. 1: 17). Note that Paul here equates proclaiming the gospel with preaching the cross of Christ. No wonder he declared, “May I never boast of anything except



the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14).

All the redemptive words of the New Testament are attached to the death of Christ on the cross. Neither his sinless life nor even his resurrection, and certainly not his heavenly intercession, are ever related to the redemptive terms of the New Testament in the way the cross is.

### Architecture

Nor does the essence of the heavenly sanctuary deal with celestial architecture. "No mortal mind can penetrate the secrecy in which the Mighty One dwells and works," writes Ellen White.<sup>3</sup>

There is little doubt that most of our pioneers thought of the heavenly sanctuary as consisting of two physical rooms, and that in 1844 Jesus literally moved from the outer room into the inner one. But such an understanding is surely not the essence of the sanctuary teaching. If a shift from one room to another by the exalted Christ is our unique "jewel of truth," to use Wallenkampf's term, then it is a rather cheap bauble

### Old Testament Types

The essence of the heavenly sanctuary is not defined by Old Testament types, except as they are interpreted by the New Testament. Hebrews asserts that Christ sat down or entered the heavenly sanctuary "after he had made purification for sins" (1:3) and "after he had obtained eternal redemption" (9:12). Christ entered into the presence of God at his ascension not to complete the atonement, but having completed it.

The cross, and not some heavenly offering, fulfills the Old Testament blood-aspersion types. The New Testament, and not the Old Testament types, is definitive in interpreting the cross of Christ. This is why the Consensus Document states that "He [Jesus] is the reality symbolized by the Day of Atonement sacrifices, as by all the ancient services."<sup>6</sup>

### Precise Dates

Finally, the essence of the heavenly sanctuary is not precise dates. The Consensus Document conceded that

## Does any Adventist live his or her Christian life focused on a date?

and gives us a very trite last-day message.

For this reason the Consensus Document that emerged from the Glacier View Conference of 1980 speaks only of a first phase of heavenly ministry in which "Jesus continually applies the benefits of His sacrifice for us," and of a final phase in which "judgment, vindication and cleansing" take place.<sup>4</sup> There is no reference in the document of moving from one apartment to another.

### Veils

The essence of the heavenly sanctuary is not about veils, either. Does the heavenly sanctuary have two veils, one veil, or no veils? Did Jesus go through the outer veil at his ascension and the inner one in 1844? That's what our pioneers taught. Or did Jesus penetrate beyond both veils at his ascension? Or does the issue deal more with theological meanings than physical numbers or positions?

According to the Consensus Document, "the symbolic language of the Most Holy Place, 'within the veil,' is used to assure us of our full direct, and free access to God ([Heb.] 6:19-20; 9:24-28; 10:1-4)."<sup>5</sup> If this is true, then Hebrews should not be interpreted as providing the details of celestial architecture, but rather the means for clarifying the benefits that result from Christ's death.

although the idea of taking a day in prophecy for a year could be biblically supported, it was "not explicitly identified [in Scripture] as a principle of prophetic interpretation."<sup>7</sup> And that's a major concession.

In practice few Adventists give any thought to the year 1844. Does any Adventist live his or her Christian life focused on a date? Indeed, I know of no creed or any other denomination (unless it is the Jehovah's Witnesses') in the whole of Christian history that makes a date the test of orthodoxy. The New Testament does not spend any time attempting to calculate the time sequences of Daniel; not the times, times and half a time of chapter 7; not the seventy sevens of chapter 9; not the 2,300 evenings and mornings of chapter 8, and not the 1,290 and 1,335 days of chapter 12.<sup>8</sup>

Calvary is not about a date. Gospel accounts of the crucifixion date the event of Christ's death while Pontius Pilate was prefect of Judea (26-36 C.E.). That is as exact as the New Testament gets. Just as the importance of Calvary is not the date of its occurrence but its meaning, so the essence of the sanctuary teaching is not an exact date but its meaning.

Despite what many Adventists have often mistak-



enly thought, the essence of the sanctuary teaching is not a heavenly atonement, not apartments, not veils, not Old Testament types, and not dates. If that is the case, what, then, is the essence?

## The Essence of the Sanctuary Teaching

### Conditionality of Salvation

Our pioneers felt that if one accepted that the atonement was finished at the cross, then either the elect alone had their sins forgiven (Calvinism) or everyone did (Universalism). By restricting the atonement to the first and second apartments they thought they had found a middle ground: the first apartment was an atonement universally available and the second apartment was an atonement limitedly applied to those “who have confessed and forsaken their sins.”<sup>9</sup> There is a valuable insight here, but it needs to be restated so as not to downgrade the cross-event.

According to the Bible, the atonement in some sublime way neutralized the disruptive power of sin and allowed humans to be reconciled to God. God reconciled the world unto himself through the death of Christ (2 Cor. 5:19), but each individual is now urged to be reconciled to God (v. 20). Through the death of his Son, God bore within himself the cost of his forgiveness, but that forgiveness is not simply a mechanical cover of our sins; it is an invitation to fellowship again with God.

The offer of forgiveness is universal, but the experience of the resultant fellowship is personal. Just as the purpose of sin is to destroy relationships, especially our relationship with God, so the objective of grace is to restore our fellowship with God and with each other. We cannot have the forgiveness and reject the forgiver. Forgiveness unites us again to God. It is impossible to have the divine forgiveness and refuse the offer of fellowship with God (“and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” [1 John 1:3]).

The Adventist sanctuary teaching reminds us that Christian assurance is not equivalent to carnal security. Like any relationship, our relationship with God is a pure gift, but also like any relationship, demands appropriate behavior. And this is not some optional extra; it is an absolute necessity. What we do within our fellowship with Christ is just as vital as our receiving the gift of that relationship in the first place.

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in

him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving” (Col. 2:6–7). “If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true” (1 John 1:6).

The sanctuary teaching, then, protects us from misconstruing the gospel as merely a mechanism for removing our guilt or sin without in any way challenging, changing, or conditioning our lives. Christian assurance unlike carnal security accepts the conditional sentences of the gospel message. Note the following:

Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness toward you, provided [ean] you continue in his kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. (Rom. 11:22)

[T]through which [gospel] also you are being saved, if [ei] you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. (1 Cor. 15:2)

[He] has now reconciled [you] in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him provided [eige] that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard. (Col. 1:22)

Christ, however, was faithful over God’s house as a son, and we are his house if [ei] we hold firm the confidence and the pride that belong to hope. (Heb. 3:6)

For we have become partners of Christ, if only [eanper] we hold our first confidence firm to the end. (Heb 3:14)

Thus, the sanctuary teaching prevents us from misconstruing the cross as a device for guilt-free sinning. It reminds us that our cleansing is conditional on our faith in Christ remaining a living and continuing reality. This is well stated in the Consensus Document: “So this end-time judgment at the close of the 2300-day period reveals our relationship to Christ, disclosed



in the totality of our decisions. It indicates the out-working of grace in our lives as we have responded to His gift of salvation.”<sup>10</sup>

### Pre-Advent Judgment of Believers

Some Christians, including some Adventists, captivated by John 5:24 (“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life”) deny that believers face the prospect of future judgment. It is felt that including Christians in any future judicial decision destroys their assurance of salvation. John, of course, is speaking of condemnation in the judgment, he is not denying the possibility of future judgment, as is clear from verses 27 to 29.

Some also suggest that Daniel and Revelation focus exclusively upon the persecuting power, with vindication being the only prospect for the believer. The desire to exclude the believer from judgment is understandable, but it is contrary to Scripture. Adventists have had the humility to include not only outsiders in the judgment of God but also themselves. There are too many texts about judgment of believers to avoid this truth (for example, Rom. 14: 10; 2 Cor. 5: 10; Heb. 10:30).

Furthermore, it is difficult to exclude the people of God from the judgment texts of Daniel and Revelation. These books were not written to Babylonians or Romans, but to believers. The episodes concerning testing in Daniel chapters 1 (the king’s food), 3 (the king’s image), and 6 (the king’s edict against prayer) were written to warn believers that faith in God could require putting one’s life on the line.

The language of Daniel 12:1–3—“everyone whose name is found written in the book will be delivered,” and “some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt”—also indicates that God will separate the faithful and the unfaithful from among his people. Paul Petersen in a recent article also demonstrates that Daniel includes the people of God in the judgment.<sup>11</sup> The warning would seem to be that those who succumb to the little horn’s demands will receive the little horn’s reward.

Likewise, given the oscillation between acceptance and rejection in the counsel to the seven Christian churches in Revelation 2–3, it is hard to accept that the dire warning in 14:9–12 against worshipping the beast and his image is not relevant for the Church.

For Paul, the judgment is according to works, and

it includes the believer (Gal. 5:2 1; Rom. 2: 1–11; 1 Cor. 6:9–10; 2 Cor. 5: 10; Eph. 5:5). As we have seen, Daniel and Revelation also make it plain that God’s judgment includes the believer. “For Paul as for the authors of the synoptic Gospels judgment begins at the house of God.”<sup>12</sup> By asserting that believers are judged prior to the Second Advent, Adventists place the judgment of believers within the gospel age.

Consequently, this pre-Advent judgment occurs while the benefits of Jesus’ atonement are still available.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps we need to bring our teaching concerning the judgment of Christians back to where it belongs, just before the Advent, which is where our pioneers had it. By clinging to the precise date of 1844, we sever the judgment of most believers from the Second Advent and turn it into a protracted process instead of a climatic event.

The important point is that Christians do come into judgment, and that there is mercy in the judgment—the atonement is still efficacious. But who receives mercy in the judgment? All those whose lives demonstrate the reality of their verbal claims; it is the merciful who receive mercy in the judgment (Matt. 53; James 2:13). We cannot claim the benefits of the cross and then refuse to live by its terms. That is like wanting to be a jockey so as to dress up in colorful attire, but refusing to ride a horse.

The sanctuary language that Adventists use means that the cross, though effected in time, affects all time. Its benefits are available to every repenting sinner (one might say the first-apartment ministry), and to every persevering believer (one might say the second-apartment ministry). To maintain that believers must take the judgment seriously is not anti-gospel, but a reminder that a root without fruit means the tree is dead. It is the direction or consistency of the Christian’s life that indicates the genuineness of the profession.

None are sinless in the judgment, but those in Christ are serious about the relevance of the gospel for their treatment of others. Nothing demands my love of God and my fellow humans so powerfully as the cross: “Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all.”<sup>14</sup>

If the tenor of my life is away from the cross, then the cross condemns me. The forgiveness of a ten-thousand-talent debt requires a response more consistent with the king’s generosity than was manifested by the unforgiving servant (see Matt. 18:23–35). It is the servant’s niggardliness in stark contrast to the king’s generosity that condemns him. This is the practical value of the pre-

advent judgment. It reminds believers that the gift of the gospel must be revealed in the daily transactions of their own lives if it is to have any ultimate effect.

“Those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen” (1 John 4:20). “If the church attempts to take the fruits of salvation without assuming the responsibilities that go with them then the judgment portends loss and possible ruin.”<sup>15</sup>

The New Testament does not shy away from the verb “to do” in the context of salvation (Luke 10:28, 37; Rom. 2:10, 14; Gal. 6:9; Eph. 2:6–8; 6:8), nor is it anywhere negative about good works (Matt. 5:16; Acts 9:36; 2 Cor. 9:8; Eph. 2:10; Col. 1:10; 2 Thess. 2:17; 1 Tim. 2:10; 5:10, 25; 6:18; 2 Tim. 2:21; 3:17; Titus 1:16, 23; 3:1, 8, 14). Our deeds, of course, are indicators of faith in Christ, but they have no independent validity. The question is still the Son question: Have we continued our life of practical faith in him? An affirmative answer is based on the fruit of our lives

Of course, without Christ’s intercession, no saint, let alone sinner, could silence the accuser of the brethren in the judgment. In the end “the measure we use will be the measure we get” (Luke 6:38), “because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13). Thus, the gospel judges us; either denying us or confirming us depending on whether the direction of our deeds is consistent or inconsistent with the love and mercy of God manifested at the cross (2 Cor. 5:14–15).

The pre-Advent judgment of believers is demonstrated by a simple three-step proof:

1. There is a judgment of believers based on their deeds of grace.
2. God’s mercy is guaranteed to those who have shown mercy.
3. Therefore this judgment is pre-Advent when God’s mercy is still available.

### The Consummation of the Cross

Adventists naturally look forward to the return of Christ. They look forward to the day when sin and death, which have been abolished in the gospel (2 Tim. 1:10), will be abolished universally. Our looking to the future does not make us indifferent to the present—quite the opposite. A people that truly prays for God’s righteousness to reign will be zealous for justice now.

A people that looks for a new heaven and a new earth will not rubbish the present one. A people longing for God’s coming peace will be peacemakers, for to look for one thing and then to do another is the worst sin in the New Testament—the sin of hypocrisy.

Adventists look forward to the day when God and his Christ will dwell among the redeemed, when God wipes away every tear. Tears are the product of sin, often caused by our human disdain, indifference, or hatred toward one another. Tears will cease when sin is no more. On the Day of Atonement, after Aaron had made atonement for the most holy place, the holy place, and the incense altar (Lev. 16:20), he came out and confessed all the sins of Israel over the head of a live goat. This goat then symbolically carried these sins to the wilderness demon, Azazel.

For us, this indicates that the ultimate responsibility for sin is sheeted home to an evil supernatural being. Whatever difficulties the problem of evil may have for theism, the biblical view is that the cause of sin resides with Satan, but its cure comes from God. Adventists are thus optimists, people of hope who see God presently at work in the world, bringing it to the day of grand restoration when he makes all things new. The sanctuary symbolizes and assures us of the fulfillment of that hope of a new world in which dwells righteousness and righteousness alone.

## Conclusion

What is the way forward from here? The noted sociologist Rodney Stark concluded that “the basis for successful conversionist movements is growth through social networks, through a structure of direct and intimate interpersonal attachments.” Most new religious movements soon fail, he believes, because they become closed networks. To sustain exponential growth over a long period of time, Stark argues, a movement needs to “discover techniques for remaining open networks, able to reach out and into new adjacent social networks.”<sup>16</sup>

If we are to preach the gospel of the cross in a context that interfaces the judgment with the Second Advent and remains relevant in the twenty-first century, perhaps we need to jettison some of the nineteenth-century elements that belonged to the birth pangs of the movement.



"My reason nourishes my faith and my faith my reason."  
—Norman Cousins

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Such elements would include items such as the dark day, the falling stars, and the Lisbon earthquake. Perhaps even the pre-advent judgment itself needs to be attached more powerfully to contemporary time and released somewhat from its bonding with 1844.

Be that as it may, a growing movement must be one that knows where the essence of its message lies and therefore be open to and capable of change. If we fail to retain the reforming aspect of our origins, then Stark's observation about closed networks causing movements to fail may become true of us.

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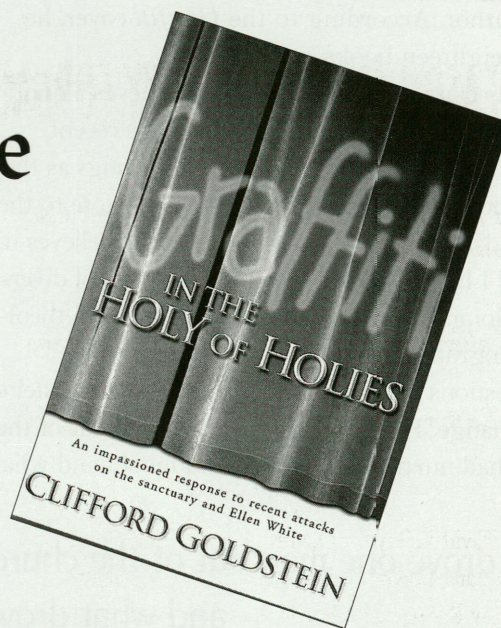
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14. Isaac Watts, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, no. 54.
15. Roetzel, *Judgment in the Community*, 178.
16. Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: Harper, 1997), 20.

New Testament scholar Norman Young recently retired as senior lecturer at Avondale College, Australia.

# Fireworks in the Holy of Holies

By Alden Thompson

A review of Clifford Goldstein,  
*Graffiti in the Holy of Holies*.  
Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2003.  
175 pp., \$12.99.



**T**he subtitle to *Graffiti in the Holy of Holies*, firmly implanted on the front cover, describes the book as an “impassioned response to recent attacks on the sanctuary and Ellen White.” Indeed.

Goldstein refers primarily to Dale Ratzlaff, a former Adventist (fourth generation) who served as a Seventh-day Adventist pastor for thirteen years, seven of them as Bible teacher at Monterey Bay Academy, in Central California, and who now maintains an active outreach ministry to former Adventists.<sup>1</sup> Goldstein is responding primarily to Ratzlaff’s *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* (1996). But *Graffiti* is also haunted by the long shadow of Desmond Ford’s declaration at the Adventist Forum session at

Pacific Union College in 1979 that it is “impossible” to prove the investigative judgment from the Bible.

Currently editor of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, Goldstein also writes a column for the *Adventist Review*—his strident “Seventh-day Darwinians” (July 24, 2003) has triggered an ongoing avalanche of agony and ecstasy within Adventism. A Jewish atheist who came into the Church through the ministry of conservative “historic” Adventists right at the time that the Ford crisis



was unfolding, Goldstein has become a prolific Adventist author. According to the *Graffiti* cover, he has written eighteen books.

All that background is crucial if one believes a quote that opens a chapter in another of Goldstein's recent books, *God, Gödel, and Grace*: "We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are."<sup>2</sup> Attributing the quote to the Talmud, Goldstein is not clear that he himself believes it. But I do, and I have tucked it into my collection of diversity quotes alongside another favorite of mine: "All theology is autobiography."

Two questions loom large as I ponder the Goldstein-Ratzlaff exchange. First, what drove one man out of the church that had nurtured him from childhood, and what

White. Goldstein did not grow up haunted by Ellen White's statement that we "are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator."<sup>4</sup> He recognizes the problem and quotes his wife—"raised in the Adventist Church"—to illustrate what he calls "folk Adventism"—popular but *false* conceptions about our doctrines. If the Adventist Church really does *teach* what he says it does, then it should *do* what he says, and ... get rid of the pre-Advent judgment, because any doctrine that goes contrary to the gospel should be abandoned."<sup>5</sup>

What Goldstein does *not* say is that the lack of assurance from which many Adventists suffer is rooted in the early experience and writings of Ellen White. For me, the idea of growth provides the solution. I find the

## What drove one man out of the church that had nurtured him from childhood, and what drove another man in?

drove another man in? Second, how effective is Goldstein's *Graffiti* in defending Adventism and responding to the issues raised by Ratzlaff?

A brief answer to the first question might note that the highly structured Adventism that Goldstein welcomed with open arms became an unbearable burden for lifelong Adventist Ratzlaff. Theological issues are involved, too, probably shaped by genetics as much as by environment. But these are difficult to assess since no two of us put the pieces together in just the same way. I suspect that the real divide between these two men is the tension between human freedom and responsibility, on the one hand, and divine sovereignty, on the other.

Illustrations of that human-divine tension are impressive, both in Scripture (Jeremiah—Ezekiel in the Old Testament; James—Paul in the New) and in Christian history (Pelagius—Augustine [400s], Arminius—Calvin [1500s], Wesley—Whitefield [1700s]). Augustine's radical version of that divide puts it in terms of grace and free will: "In trying to solve this question I made strenuous efforts on behalf of the preservation of the free choice of the human will, but the grace of God defeated me."<sup>3</sup>

Goldstein is more on the side of free will, Ratzlaff on the side of grace, but if I understand their positions, both reject the predestinarian theology for which Augustine and Calvin are famous; both affirm free will, grace, and the substitutionary atonement. Yet they stand apart.

So why is Adventism a haven for Goldstein, but a prison for Ratzlaff? The shortest answer is Ellen

evidence to be powerful, persuasive, even exhilarating. Something dramatic happened in her experience in and around 1888, bringing her great joy in the Lord.<sup>6</sup>

Goldstein has tasted the good fruit of that development: the last chapter of *Graffiti* cites thirteen beautiful Ellen White "grace" quotes. But only two of them come from before 1888, one in 1883 and one in 1886.<sup>7</sup> He has also discovered Ellen White's 1885 comments on "Joshua and the Angel," a grace-filled view of the investigative judgment based on Zechariah 3:1. I would simply note that a striking addition makes the later parallel in *Prophets and Kings* even better.<sup>8</sup>

Goldstein faults Ratzlaff for overlooking this positive side of Ellen White. But Ratzlaff is right in noting that Goldstein fails to address the earlier passages.<sup>9</sup> Ironically, even though he doesn't argue for "growth" himself, Goldstein does quote Ratzlaff on the point: "To her credit, unlike many of the 'prophets' of her day, her change in doctrine was usually toward mainstream Christianity."<sup>10</sup>

Adventists have often said that those who leave the Church simply join the ranks of the unchurched. That may still be the dominant trend. But as Adventists become part of the social and economic mainstream, many former Adventists are moving into churches that represent the two sides of the great divide.

Those of a more liberal/rationalist bent slip into churches in the free-will Methodist/Wesleyan tradition, whereas those seeking a more sovereign God, like

Ratzlaff, join churches closer to the Evangelical/Reformed (Calvinist) tradition, which emphasize grace and assurance. If Adventism intends to be a body of Christ for all people, it must find ways to preserve a healthy balance between those two impulses.

Turning to the second issue, that is, *Graffiti* as a defense of Adventism and as a response to Ratzlaff, I find myself intrigued by a number of features. Goldstein describes *Graffiti* as an expanded version of *1844 Made Simple*.<sup>11</sup> Thus the first five chapters defend the Adventist understanding of the 1844 experience, focusing primarily on the book of Daniel; chapter six addresses assurance; chapter seven deals with Ellen White.

The whole discussion provides a fascinating—and painful—commentary on issues of change and diversity in Adventism and the inner dialogue between tradition (what we've been “taught”) and present religious experience. And since neither Ratzlaff nor Goldstein is a neutral bystander, the result is a vivid blend of piety, passion, and reason.

In what follows I try to capture the essence of three key issues that shape the dialogue, ordered here according to what I see as degrees of intensity: (1) religious experience, (2) biblical interpretation, and (3) eschatological perspective.

**1. Religious Experience.** Among conservatives, those on either side of the great divide between human freedom and divine sovereignty rarely recognize the other view as legitimate. The tendency is to deny the differences between them or to label one view as true, the other false.

Within Adventism, the interplay between the perspectives is intriguing: Ford's 1979 presentation divided the crowd between those who believed they must stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator and those who knew they couldn't—and contrary to some perfectionist rhetoric, the divide is not between the careful and the careless. I suspect that Goldstein, Ford, and Ratzlaff would all agree that in a sinful world, standing before God without a mediator is not

possible. Grace is crucial for all three.

Only Goldstein, however, defends the “Adventist” doctrine of judgment, but he does so by appealing to Ellen White's later writings. Perhaps most surprising of all, however, is how the thoroughly theocentric Ford lifts a page from the free-will side of the ledger and argues for a thoroughgoing conditionalism. Ratzlaff seems indifferent to the issue; but Goldstein differs from Ford with a passion, a crucial factor in both of the next issues.

**2. Biblical Interpretation.** Goldstein, Ratzlaff, and Ford are all eager to make their points from Scripture. But none of them, it seems to me, adequately recognizes how believers synthesize “biblical” doctrines from a

cluster of biblical passages. All of them imply that doctrine can simply be demonstrated by exegesis, that is, from the contextual interpretation of a particular passage.

Ford's methodology, applied consistently, would mean that most of the book of Hebrews could not be called “biblical,” for Hebrews is highly creative in handling the Old Testament. Jesus as the true Passover lamb

would also not be “biblical.” In short, Adventists talk about the once-for-all (antitypical) Day of Atonement of Leviticus 16 in the same way that early Christians talked about Jesus as the once-for-all (antitypical) Passover lamb. Interestingly enough, Goldstein's Jewish heritage enables him to see immediately the links between Daniel and Leviticus 16.<sup>12</sup>

Ratzlaff (following Ford) rightly argues that Daniel 7 and 8 do not address issues of personal salvation. Judgment brings condemnation to the beast and the little horn. The saints are not at risk before God. But Ratzlaff ignores Daniel 8:17, the strongest argument in Goldstein's arsenal: “Understand, O mortal, that the vision is for the time of the end” (NRSV). Goldstein, however, lacking a consistent conditional-



ism, does not follow Ford's lead and allow for multiple applications. Thus he misses a marvelous opportunity to universalize the sanctuary/judgment doctrine. Instead of seeing the little horn of Daniel 7 and 8 as a type of every desecrating power, the little horn is "solely, totally, and only Rome, pagan and papal."<sup>13</sup>

Ford lays a solid biblical foundation for multiple applications, moving from Daniel's day and the sanctuary desolated by Babylon in 586 B.C.E., to the desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes in 168/167 B.C.E., to the destruction by Rome in 70 C.E. But his Augustinian bent compromises his ability to take the final step and

which appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel. But it was not explained to him as I now explain or have explained it to you" (4 Ezra 12:11-12 RSV). Virtually all commentators agree that the author of 5 Ezra saw the interpretation of the fourth kingdom shifting from Greece to Rome.

Since Daniel identifies only Babylon in chapter 2 (the image) and none of the kingdoms in chapter 7 (the beasts), and never correlates the ram and he-goat from chapter 8 with the other chapters, the door is open for multiple applications. Adventist apologists are right in noting that apocalyptic is never explicitly conditional.

## "Apocalyptic is unbeatable because its reheatable."

—Ernst Käsemann

focus on the heavenly sanctuary after 1844, the only sanctuary left after 70 C.E. And that brings us to the question of eschatology.

**3. Eschatological Perspectives.** I have suggested elsewhere that for Ratzlaff and others who share his experience, three issues, all linked with eschatology, constitute the *real* reasons for their departure: assurance, relations with other Christians, and Sabbath (experienced as test, rather than as gift).<sup>14</sup>

*Graffiti* largely ignores the Sabbath question, but takes prophecy and eschatology very seriously. And here is the crux of the matter as I see it. Because Ford linked his attack on the investigative judgment with an attack on the "historicist" approach to eschatology, many thoughtful Adventists, Goldstein included, have felt that the two must stand or fall together.<sup>15</sup> The resulting defense of a strict historicism obscures the powerful biblical evidence for multiple applications.

Goldstein defends the classic four-kingdom interpretation of Daniel, paralleling the kingdoms of Daniel 2, 7, and 8, and identifying the fourth kingdom as Rome. But what he does *not* say is that the book of Daniel itself never makes those correlations. It is an interpretation in the light of history. Indeed, only when Rome became the dominant world power could it be seen as the fourth kingdom.

The angelic interpreter makes that point explicit in explaining the "eagle vision" in 4 Ezra, a noncanonical Jewish apocalypse from the end of the first Christian century: "The eagle ... is the fourth kingdom

But they typically have *not* recognized how believers treat apocalyptic prophecies as conditional by applying them to their own day. Hence the quip by the German scholar Ernst Käsemann: "Apocalyptic is unbeatable because it's reheatable."

Is the idea of multiple applications still viable in Adventism? Tantalizing impulses point in that direction. Ellen White's comment, "We may have less to say in some lines, in regard to the Roman power and the papacy" can be added to her famous quote that "the promises and the threatenings of God are alike conditional."<sup>16</sup>

Even a staunch conservative like Mervyn Maxwell recognized that in Jesus' day the "most popular" candidate for the desolator of the sanctuary was Antiochus Epiphanes and that the disciples were likely surprised to hear Jesus put the desolation in the future. Commenting on Matthew 24:15, Maxwell says: "In other words, old interpretations are *bound to be inadequate*. Only interpretations made in relatively recent years have any chance of getting the real issues straight."<sup>17</sup>

An illustration from Scripture provides another strong argument for multiple applications: Peter takes the "dark day" of a grasshopper plague in Joel and reapplies it to the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Then, in Revelation 6:12, the dark day joins the earthquake and the falling stars as marking the Second Coming itself. Yes, Adventists have pointed to the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, the dark day of 1780, and the falling of the stars in 1833. But the symbols remain alive and powerful. I believe the same principles can apply to the prophecies of Daniel.



By way of conclusion, let me be perfectly clear about my own position: I am with Goldstein on the investigative judgment—but wish he could be more forthcoming on Ellen White’s growth and development. I am with Ford on multiple applications—but wish he could be more consistent and make peace with 1844. I am with Goldstein, Ford, and Ratzlaff on the question of grace—but wish Ratzlaff could discover joy in God’s gracious gift of the Sabbath.

Finally, a quibble about the vivid language of *Graffiti*. Actually, compared to vintage Goldstein, he is close to his best behavior in the book. He almost always refers to Ratzlaff with the prefix *Brother*, as in Brother Dale or Brother Ratzlaff. That seems to soften the blows considerably, though Ratzlaff may feel otherwise. Still, to refer to an apparently inconsistent argument with the word *hilarious* (for example) is a bit much.<sup>19</sup> I’d also like to see *debunk* disappear from Goldstein’s active vocabulary. Seventeen times in one book is about seventeen times too many.

As for Brother Dale, I must admit that we have not done a good job handling the issues that ultimately led him away from Adventism. In one of my exchanges with him he told of church administrators telling him: “Your main problem is that you are trying to be too honest.” And, “Dale, we both know that the doctrine (1844/investigative judgment) is wrong but we can’t do anything about it. Do what you can with a clear conscience and don’t make any waves.” That’s not a happy commentary on my church.

By God’s grace we can do better than we have done in the past. Will Goldstein’s book move us in that direction? I hope and pray that it will.

## Notes and References

1. Ratzlaff publishes the bimonthly *Proclamation*. His books include: *Sabbath in Crisis* (1990, 1995), revised and reissued as *Sabbath in Christ* (2003), and the *Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* (1996). All are published by <www.jeremiahfilms.com> Life Assurance Ministries, P.O. Box 11587, Glendale, Ariz. 85318. For more on Ratzlaff’s organization, visit <www.ratzlaff.com>.
2. Clifford Goldstein, *God, Gödel, and Grace: A Philosophy of Faith* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 2003), 61.
3. Cited in Henry Chadwick, *Augustine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, 1996), 117.
4. *The Great Controversy* (1888; Takoma Park, Md.: Review and Herald, 1911), 425.
5. Goldstein, *Graffiti*, 116.

6. See Alden Thompson, “From Sinai to Golgotha,” a five-part series in *Adventist Review*, December 1981, with follow-up issue, July 1, 1982; also “Even the Investigative Judgment Can Be Good News,” *Westwind* (Walla Walla College alumni journal) (winter 1982). Available online at <www.aldenthompson.com>.

7. Goldstein, *Graffiti*, 168–71. Goldstein himself dates only one of the quotations.

8. *Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1917), 589, adds to the Lord’s rebuke of the adversary: “They may have imperfections of character; they may have failed in their endeavors; but they have repented, and I have forgiven and accepted them” (compare *Testimonies for the Church* [Oakland, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1885], 5:467–76).

9. Goldstein, *Graffiti*, 171. Ratzlaff responded in *Proclamation*, 5:1.

10. Goldstein, *Graffiti*, 172, citing *Cultic Doctrine*, 351.

11. Clifford Goldstein, *1844 Made Simple* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1988).

12. Goldstein, *Graffiti*, 69.

13. *Ibid.*, 43. Compare Goldstein’s *Adventist Review* column for Dec. 27, 1999: “Solely, Totally, and Only Rome.”

14. “Conversations with the Other Side,” *Spectrum* 31.4 (fall 2003), 54–59; “Response to Dale Ratzlaff,” *Ministry*, Feb. 2004, 30–32, 38.

15. “Preterism,” which limits applications to the author’s own day and excludes the possibility of prediction, is not an option for Ratzlaff, Ford, or Goldstein. Neither is “futurism,” the popular “conservative” approach that envisions a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, though Ratzlaff’s worshipping community is closest to that perspective. Adventists are now virtually alone in arguing for “historicism,” the classic Protestant approach and the obvious reading of Daniel (though not of Revelation). The Disappointment has nudged Adventism toward conditionalism, an idea central to the understanding of “idealism” with its multiple applications.

16. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (1923; Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1944), 112 [undated quote]; *Evangelism*, 695 [Ms 4, 1883];

17. Mervyn Maxwell, *God Cares*, vol. 1: *The Message of Daniel for You and Your Family* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1981), 269, 270.

18. Goldstein, *Graffiti*, 125.

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## Responses to Alden Thompson's Review of *Graffiti in the Holy of Holies*.

**P**rior to publication, the author shared a copy of his review of *Graffiti* (along with an earlier longer version) with Clifford Goldstein and Dale Ratzlaff, as well as with another key participant in the Adventist sanctuary dialogue: Desmond Ford. Each responded with a brief, pointed comment. With their permission, their responses are reproduced here:

**From Clifford Goldstein, the author of *Graffiti*, to Thompson:**

"Thanks. You were fair, coming as you do from your perspective, though I find the idea of multiple fulfillments in Daniel beyond ridiculous. You have five kingdoms, four of which are mentioned by name in Daniel itself (five if you go to the New Testament for the identification of Rome) and yet somehow we are to believe that these have multiple fulfillments? On what basis can anyone establish that principle in Daniel? Daniel, by its very structure, denies the possibility of multiple fulfillments."

—Cliff

**From Dale Ratzlaff, the author reviewed by Goldstein in *Graffiti*, to Thompson:**

"Thanks. I do not understand why you would say that Hebrews was not 'biblical.' I would not agree with that statement and I do not think Ford would either."

—In His joy, Dale Ratzlaff

**From Thompson back to Ratzlaff:**

"My point is that 'biblical' does not mean strict exegesis. Hebrews is very creative in

the use of the Old Testament, breaking all our rules of exegesis. Of course I accept Hebrews as 'biblical.' My point was and is that doctrine is often a synthesis, rarely simple exegesis. This was the point that I made with Des from the beginning: to use the 'context' argument against the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8 raises the specter of the same weapon being used against the book of Hebrews."

**From Ratzlaff back to Thompson:**

"And the big difference is that the writer of Hebrews was a writer of God's inspired Word. EGW was not!"

—In His joy, Dale Ratzlaff

**From Desmond Ford to Thompson:**

"Thank you for sharing your article with me. I enjoyed it very much. I would have trouble with Hebrews if it were not inspired. But the Holy Spirit is the author of *sensus plenior* and I am very happy with all that implies. As for 1844, surely Acts 1:7 forbids it. Again, thank you and may God richly bless you and yours in every way."

—Des



# Lights, Camera, Acts of the Apostles

By Moriah Flahaut

A Review of *Angel In Chains*. Collegedale, Tenn.: Southern Adventist University Film School, 2004.

Southern Adventist University's newly created film school is currently celebrating the success of its recent release, *Angel In Chains*. The film, directed by Nathan Huber, is based on the true story of Arizona rancher Penny Porter and is, to my knowledge, the first Adventist film to achieve commercial viability. Huber and the film school deserve credit. They wring what they can out of the small, mostly amateur crew and create a technically sound, finished product.

Beginning with the opening scene, the screen is filled (quite literally) by bad boy Rip Lebeau (Don Pearson) and his hirsute motorcycle gang. LeBeau and company are on a highway to hell, which is made clear by the rock-and-roll track that blares each time the opening sequence cuts to show Rip and the gang cruising across the desert Easy Rider style.

When the clutch on Rip's Harley motorcycle suddenly gives out in the hinterlands of Arizona, he and the other members of the gang seek succor at the fortuitously positioned ranch of Penny Porter (Tana Lee Bristow). While

waiting for the bike to be repaired, Rip's hard exterior is softened by the friendship and love of Penny's young daughter, and he begins to rethink where his life is headed.

In a touching montage that illustrates the power of Christian innocence over tattooed cynicism, we watch Rip and the other bikers take on an avuncular role as they are warmed by the no-questions-asked friendship of Becky Porter (Chelsea Jo Claxton). Rip may have tattoos and an earring, but he also shows a side both contemplative and kind. The chemistry between Becky and Rip is undeniable

PHOTOS FROM SOUTHERN ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY ANGEL IN CHAINS WEB SITE



and, thankfully, they interact often with gusto. Sadly, however, the supporting cast does little to support.

Pete (Michael Mercurio) scowls throughout and manages to resist Becky's friendship, but in doing so he comes across as one dimensional. Pete smokes constantly and wears a skull-covered bandana around his head. Every time the camera catches him brooding, the score turns scary.

The character of Pete was added to the original story in order bring a dramatic element to the movie; however, the foreshadowing is so thorough that the viewer feels manhandled. Long before it actually happens, the nature of the main dramatic event is clear to everyone. When Pete finally attempts to rape Penny, it comes as no surprise to the viewers, or for that matter the other bikers.

Similarly, Penny has the potential to light up the film—after all, she is pretty and blonde—but she never does. Not only does she deliver lines that sound forced, one can't help but wonder why she doesn't worry more that her daughter continually leaves her sight to frolic with a stranger who also happens to be a two-hundred-pound drug dealer.

In the end, it is the naïve but thoughtful acting of

Chelsea Jo Claxton that saves the film. Her character, little Becky Porter, succeeds in being both cute and believable. Indeed, the high point of the movie comes at lunch, when Becky chastises Rip and the other hungry bikers for digging in without first saying grace. "Bow your heads," she orders, and then leads the entire picnic table of drug-running toughs in a prayer as honest and heartfelt as they come.

*Angel In Chains* joins the myriad films on the shelf espousing generic Christian values, but it is not uniquely Adventist. For example, Penny wears a necklace in the film—an accessory specifically prohibited by the Southern Adventist University Student Handbook. I, for one, await a film not only made by Adventists, but also about Adventists. Now that Southern has a flourishing film program, the wait shouldn't be long.

*Angel In Chains* retails for \$14.95 (DVD) or \$9.95 (VHS) and is available at Adventist Book Centers throughout the United States.

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## HOW TO START AN AAF CHAPTER

Members of the Association of Adventist Forums are invited to form local chapters by following three steps:

1. Convene at least five AAF members and plan some activities. These may be as simple as meeting now and then in homes to discuss a thought-provoking video, article, or book, and they may be as complex as organizing major conferences.
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.

## ADVENTIST TELEVISION TODAY

*Continued from page 37...*

cattle on a thousand hills. Our health work didn't have the money to buy Loma Linda, and look where we are now."

In addition to the international satellite channel and networks, there are regionally based channels and networks. Arkansas-based Safe TV is on the hospital channels of Adventist Health. Blue Mountain Television is a non-profit private station based at Walla Walla, Washington. Loma Linda Broadcasting Network was started initially just to broadcast the University SDA church service; it continues to develop and add more of its own programming.

### The Future of SDA TV

Roger Smith Jr. thinks that the Adventist Church tends to take something that works well and formalizes it. "Eventually we get into a rut and don't realize that God is working in dynamic ways that are different from what worked thirty years ago. We take a model like the Net series, and we keep pushing it over and over until it stops being effective, not realizing that God wants to do something new for the current generation."

Smith cites as an example the Adventist Global Communication Network. With all the downlinks for the Net series, it was the largest business satellite broadcaster in the world. Now home satellite dishes have made it obsolete in less than a decade.

Writer Steven Mosley does not believe that our religious programs have enough appeal for commercial TV, for the secular person. "We can't have better drama than ABC or better news than CNN. If we try to compete, we'll just end up making a more mediocre version. But faith-based TV shows can do something that no one else can—create intense, spiritual stories that portray God in a very vivid way in people's lives. Look at how some shows can make deer hunting look compelling. Surely we can show people what a difference having God in your life makes."

When asked about the current state of Adventist TV, writer Jeff Wood focuses on the intended audience. "There are two distinct sides to the issue: do we reach non-SDAs, or is our goal to nurture only SDA members?"

He is currently enthused about several projects he's working on. Along with his brother, writer Jim Wood, he is completing a script for the *Seventh Day*, a series of five documentaries that traces the history of the Sabbath. Hal Holbrook is the narrator and Pat Arrabito of LLT Productions is the producer. Shot on location in several countries, this series will eventual-

ly be translated into eleven languages. In addition, Jeff Wood and Don Davenport are currently writing another script for the Hallmark Channel.

## Conclusions

### 1. We Need News

The Church needs to lead out in communications 24/7 rather than just once a year in a Net series. News is an extremely crucial bond to keep this rapidly growing denomination together. More than 90 percent of our membership is outside North America and cannot afford subscriptions to the *Adventist Review* and does not have computer access to *Adventist Newslines*.

The slashing of the news budget should be reconsidered. Yes, news is old after a few days and cannot be recycled over and over like preaching, but it informs the members and draws us into what's happening around the world. Seeing is believing, and perhaps donations for missions would increase if the needs are clearly seen.

### 2. We Need a Variety of Approaches

There is room for traditional preaching, culturally diverse worship styles (high and low, organ and drums), talk shows, kids' shows, health classes, Bible study formats, drama, reality shows, and something innovative yet to be discovered.

Although older Adventists have depended on 3ABN to bring them worship services and encouragement with old-time gospel music, their grandchildren are leaving the Church while spending hours in front of computer, movie, and TV screens. The gutsy cutting-edge young writers and thinkers are out there. Let's find them and pay them.

If we speak with one voice, it can become monotonous. Liberal, conservative, boomers, and busters, we need each other to find our center, our common ground; otherwise it's too easy to be pulled off track. Dissension helps keep us accountable. The Lord speaks in silence and storm, through donkeys and prophets, children, women, and men.

Cooperation of the best and brightest could create a mighty fourth angel that would unify a global denomination to spread the gospel more effectively and rapidly.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Differing Conclusions

In the fall 2004 issue of *Spectrum*, history professor Douglas Morgan wrote “The Remnant and the Republicans.” The article made the following statement, which includes a quotation from Ellen White:

“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).

Context is often everything. It is interesting to note that the historical context of this statement may actually be just the opposite of what the populist agenda of that day and ours would like us to believe. What was the context?

Democratic presidential candidate William J. Bryan had recently come out against the gold standard as a monetary basis, and instead favored “fixed silver bimetallism.” In 1896, he addressed the Democratic national convention thus: “having behind us the producing masses of this nation and the world ... commercial interest ... the laboring interest ... toilers everywhere, ... you shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify

mankind upon a cross of Gold!”

Many Adventists at that time supported Bryan, some from the pulpit. But Ellen White reportedly opposed him. According to her, Bryan’s populist position would have brought “oppression and suffering to the poorer classes of humanity.” Please notice that she foresaw results for the poor and laboring classes opposite to those that the populists and Bryan expected.

I believe this should bring us a moment of reflection and humility. Legislation, which is often based on faulty concepts, does not always lead to the results it is expected to achieve. Has the war on poverty, enacted by the U.S. Congress in the 1960s, succeeded? How much poverty existed then, and how much now?

That said, I agree that as individual Christian citizens we should not withdraw from the political process, from decision making and legislation. But how we view the problem of sin and its results may cause many of us to arrive at different conclusions about how to deal with problems in civil society that sin has created.

I think that all people of good will desire to help the less fortunate. The difference lies in the methods we support. Furthermore, there are notable differences between the parameters of the terms *justice* and *compassionate social responsibility*. The latter involves the sensed responsibility and voluntary goodwill of a prosperous society toward the less fortunate.

The former implies an inherent right enforceable by law.

Lacking scriptural absolutes, we may often disagree on solutions. With this awareness, I encourage everyone to give as much to the church or the state for social purposes as their conscience dictates.

We must continually be reminded that, within our limited perspectives, reality in sociopolitical economics and governance may not always be what it appears to be or render the results we might expect!

I believe history demonstrates that there is great potential for apostasy when the church minimizes the uniqueness of Christ and the gospel message and settles for social agendas that make society and the church equal partners with the same priorities (Matt. 6:31–33).

Such a partnership was, in part, the modus operandi for the ultimate church-state union to which the German Christians fell prey some seventy years ago in their vision to solve socioeconomic problems in their nation. Various forms of liberation theology and social gospel movements may likewise be subject to such false hopes. In their zeal they may often bring class conflict and other human suffering. You who have wisdom, dwell on that.

It is of primary importance to me that we keep divisive political talk out of our pulpits and primary religious publications. There are other nonofficial, nonrepresentative church

publications, such as *Spectrum*, that enable various sociopolitical views and agendas to be aired. To me, the primary function of official church policy should focus on bringing lost souls to Christ and into the kingdom of God, not creating sociopolitical economic division.

May the grace of God, which brings our salvation, also instruct us with wisdom in all things related to our foreign sojourn in these difficult times.

*Pat Travis*  
*Orlando, Fla.*

## Questions and Choices

I read with deep interest the articles on Adventists and their political vote in the fall issue of *Spectrum*. It is clear from the surveys and other articles presented that the Republican Party benefits from the majority of Adventists voters who were surveyed.

There is a question that is not adequately addressed: How do Christian Republicans accept an economic policy that has been shown to favor the economically privileged at the expense of the deprived? In other words, how do they justify their support for an economic policy that produces a few more millionaires at the expense of a vast number of paupers? Would someone care to enlighten me with an answer?

I am a third-generation Adventist, and a registered independent, as I find aspects of the two major parties unacceptable. The Republican Party has been effectively taken over by the religious right, whereas the Democratic Party is engulfed by the gay left.

What a choice!

*E. Theo Agard*  
*Apopka, Fla.*

## Concerns of the People About Belief No. 6

Thank you for your coverage of the 2004 International Faith Science Conference (IFSC) at Denver, Colorado, and its report. I appreciate your neutral characterization of some of the voices at Denver. Thank you for not stereotypically labeling these individuals pejoratively as “activist conservatives,” “right wingers,” or “nonprogressives,” but simply as “people” forming a movement.

As I understand it, these persons were deeply interested in reaffirming the historic intended meaning of the Church’s understanding of origins present either by implication or by assumption in Fundamental Belief No. 6, but which are not mentioned in that belief. As you correctly indicate, General Conference president Jan Paulsen articulated this intended meaning the previous year in Ogden, Utah.

Specifically, as the official “Response” by the Annual Council makes clear, three important descriptive terms that were affirmed by the council regarding the creation week, but which do not currently appear in Belief No. 6, are: “literal,” “historical,” and “recent.” It seems to me that the latter two terms carry huge consequences for our theology and scientific research to the level of articulating a single worldview in place of all others.

In my view, these were the basic concerns and terms that the people, about whom you write, were seeking to reaffirm as part of the theological and cosmogonic harvest of three years of extremely beneficial, in-depth reports of academic and scientific research, and collegial dialogue among Adventist colleagues. It is my understanding that

these individuals were not seeking to change Belief No. 6 by a vote in Denver, which was not the prerogative of the 2004 IFSC, but were endeavoring simply to recommend to the Church that such action be considered at the 2005 or 2010 General Conference Sessions.

*John T. Baldwin*  
*Seventh-day Adventist*  
*Theological Seminary*  
*Andrews University*

## Theological Diversity Negated

It seems to me that the authors of “An Affirmation of Creation” (fall 2004) are working with implicit definitions of both “Adventist faith” and “science” that make a genuine conversation between the two fields difficult, if not impossible. The only thing close to a definition of “science” in the article is a statement regarding “philosophical naturalism, the idea that the universe came into existence without the action of a Creator.”

I would argue that such philosophical naturalism is part of the positivist science of the Enlightenment, but that it has been challenged by the post-positivist philosophy, science, and theology of such thinkers as Michael Polanyi, Michael Behe, Arthur Peacocke, Ian Barbour, and John Polkinghorne. A post-positivist understanding of science makes a dialogue with Adventist faith much more profitable.

My real concern is the implicit definition of the Adventist faith in the article. In affirmation number 2, the authors state: “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.” Under “Findings,” statement 6

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reads: "we recognize that there are different theological interpretations among us regarding Genesis 1–11."

However, such alternative interpretations are "unacceptable substitutes" for the historic Adventist position, a position that is equated with the "biblical doctrine of creation." In this way, the theological diversity of the Adventist faith is negated by an appeal to a dogmatic, fideistic understanding of Fundamental Belief No. 6, which deals with creation.

I fail to see how this type of thinking honors the Adventist conviction that our understanding of truth is progressive and the corollary concept of "present truth." I would further argue that equating the Adventist statement of belief with the biblical doctrine of creation in effect places the tradition above the authority of the Bible and functions to both limit and control the interpretation of Genesis 1.

The authors acknowledge as much when they state, "we affirm the primacy of Scripture in the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of origins." My understanding of our Reformation heritage tells me that the statement should read, "We affirm the primacy of Scripture over," rather than "in." The statement as it reads makes the "Seventh-day understanding of origins," rather than the text of Genesis 1, the locus of the divine revelation.

What is the point of ongoing dialogue if the Adventist understanding is the absolute expression of the divine revelation of Genesis 1? Another possibility is that the "primacy of Scripture in the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of origins" means that although Scripture is primary it is not the exclusive source of our understanding of origins. What are the secondary sources? And why would they matter if the biblical norm were already embodied in the Fundamental Beliefs of the Church?

The existence of such secondary sources on the Adventist understanding of origins arouses my suspicions. How can we be so sure that those secondary sources are not influencing our interpretation of the primary source? I think this is where genuine dialogue becomes possible between faith and science. It is the critical space between our Adventist understanding of the doctrine of origins and the biblical text itself that propels us to seek diverse and interdisciplinary dialogue partners.

It is my hope that the Adventist faith will move beyond the dogmatic conceptions of faith and science contained in "An Affirmation of Creation" so that our church can enter into a genuinely transformative dialogue with other fields of knowledge. In this way, the Adventist faith can continue its dynamic and progressive existence in a world of intellectual imperialisms!

*Paul Fisher*  
*Indian Trail, N.C.*



# Best (and Worst) Voices

“...and before our world goes over the brink,  
teach the believers how to think.”

So writes the poet Philip Appleman, whose wry prayer suits the age as a tear suits grief.<sup>1</sup> The worst, and even the mediocre, religious voices seem these days loud as roosters, and no more comprehending.

When you know the heritage of Abraham and Jesus, you know, however, that the best religious voices break the stranglehold of evil and turn the world toward peace. The best voices give rise to compassion as ecumenical as dawn; they invite outsiders to be insiders, argue with the high and mighty, set forth a vision of well-being and prosperity for all.

Think of the prophets and of Jesus. Think of Saint Francis, of the Anabaptist martyrs, and of Martin Luther King. Think of Ginn Fourie, the South African Adventist woman who prayed for, and befriended, her daughter's killers, and bears repeated public witness as to why.

These voices—these *witnesses*—have, with a long line of others, helped make generosity a near-universal standard. The standard is honored more in the breach than the observance, it is true, but now, at least, greed, tyranny, and violence evoke not only human cries but also moral censure.

In every case, the best voices belong to those who *think*. The best voices belong to those who make the long and patient effort of refining how they see so they can change the way they act.

The board of the Association of Adventist Forums has now embraced new statements of mission and vision. The mission is to “create community through conversation.” The vision is to be Adventism's “leading champion of serious Christian conversation,” and to grow the number who participate in that conversation.

Both of these assume that thinking is a *communal* activity. Both remind me, therefore, of Watson and

Crick, who, it is said, “always preferred conversation to reading learned journals...”<sup>2</sup> Reading journals no doubt extended the knowledge they brought to the table. Breakthroughs came through long-running dialogue that was winsome and electric.

AAF wants Adventist conversation to flourish. The reason is that breakthroughs in religious understanding correlate with the breakdown of swaggering arrogance. They correlate, too, with the flourishing of better—that is, more generous, more creative, and more courageous—human lives.

In this light, the association is going to take an interest, not only in building formal chapters, but also in supporting better Sabbath School classes. You will hear more.

For now, consider this:

Only Adventists who think together and apply what they learn together will help nudge the world away from brink. Only such Adventists will help redirect it toward the universal blessing that from the time of Abraham (Gen. 12:1–4) has been the point of it all.

## Notes and References

1. The poem is anthologized in Garrison Keillor, *Good Poems* (New York: Penguin, 2002), 12.
2. Theodore Zeldin, *Conversation: How Talk Can Change Our Lives* (Mahwah, N.J.: Hidden Spring Books, 2000), 56.

Charles Scriven  
AAF Board Chairman

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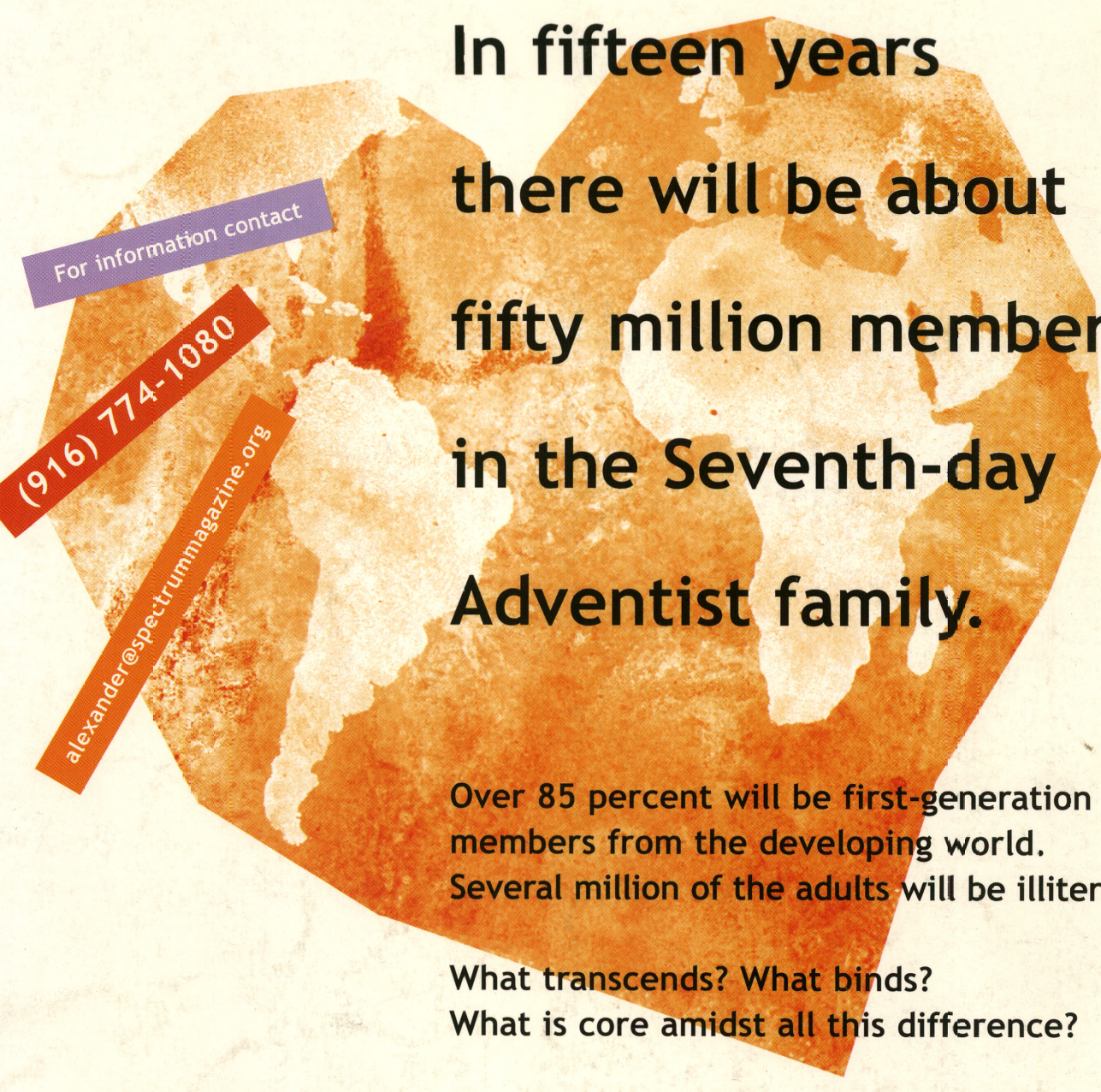
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