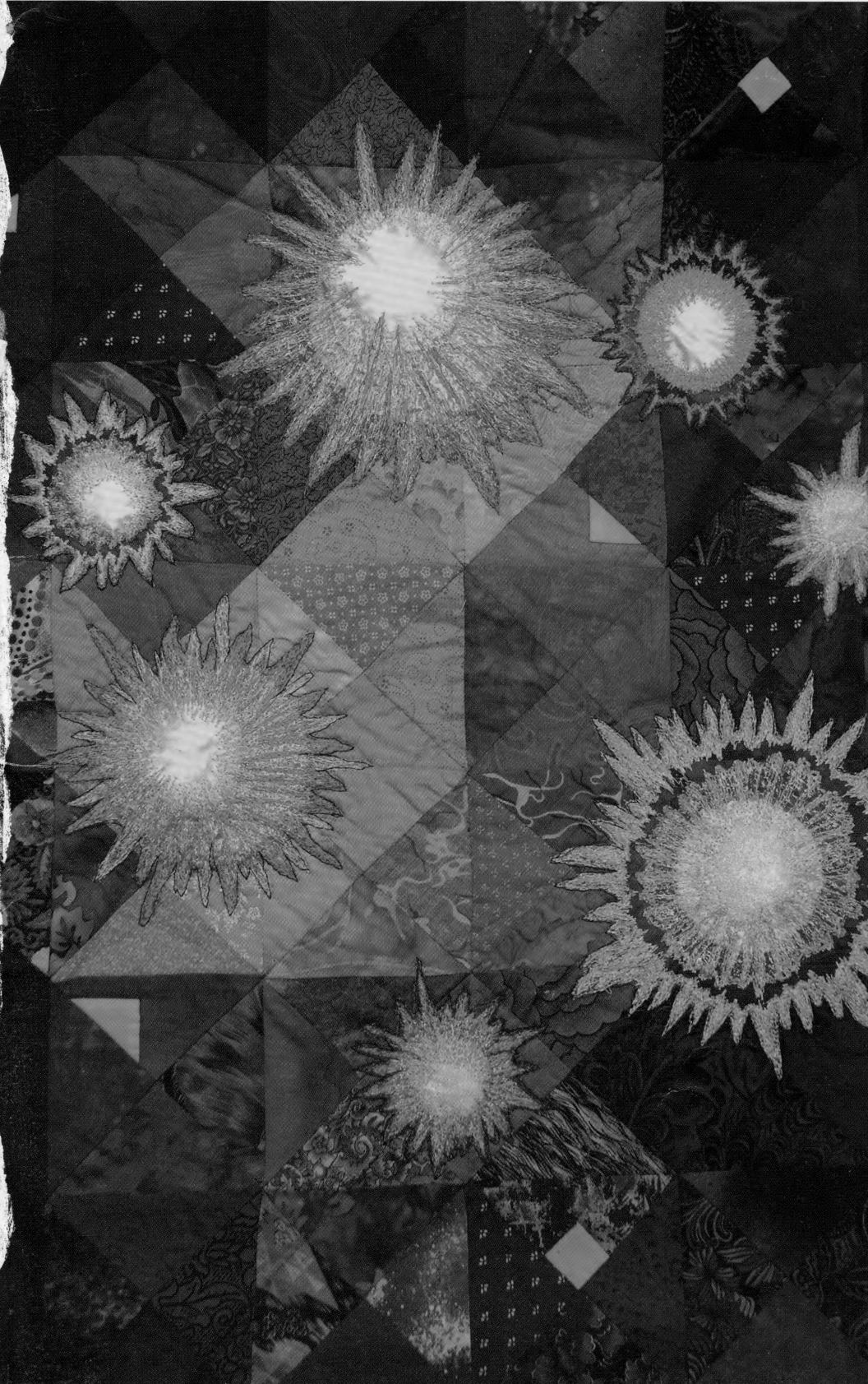


SPECTRUM

The Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums • Fall 2005 • Volume No. 33, Issue No. 4



Aslan Wept

What Hath
Disney Wrought?

No One Calls
for Justice

Growing Old
Adventist

Renewing the
Heart of Biblical
Adventism

Of the Time That
is Not Yet

Sabbath-ing
Toward Jubilee

Christ the Light of the
World: A Conversation
with Myself

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SPECTRUM

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SPECTRUM is published by the Association of Adventist Forums, a nonsubsidized, nonprofit organization for which gifts are deductible in the report of income for purposes of taxation. The publishing of SPECTRUM depends on subscriptions, gifts from individuals, and the voluntary efforts of the contributors.

SPECTRUM can be accessed on the World Wide Web at www.spectrummagazine.org

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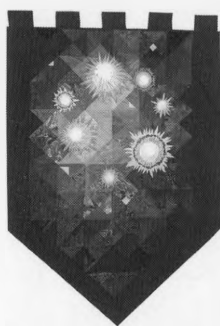
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ISSN: 0890-0264



Above: Radiant Lights Night; detail shown on cover. Scriptural sources for the banners can be found on the back cover.

The Seven Churches of Revelation (front and back covers)

Seven banners portray the seven churches of Revelation. They were first used in the fall of 1995 at Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church, Takoma Park, Maryland, to complement sermons by Pastor Arthur Torres.

Designed by Rosemary Peterson, these banners were interpreted and created in fabric by Barbara Djordjevic. Each measures thirty-four by twenty-two inches and includes commercial, hand-dyed, and hand-painted cotton, with touches of velvet and satin. The basic design is created by half-square triangles blended to give a wash of color that forms the background for appliquéd symbols. They are machine pieced, machine quilted, and embroidered in metallic threads. The back of each banner features a simplified graphic design in gold lamé making it possible to use them in processions.

On September 23, 1995, Pergamos was to be the featured church for the sermon. It was on that Sabbath that Sligo ordained Kendra Haloviak, Norma Osborn, and Penny Shell, to the gospel ministry. The initials of all the women who had served as pastors at Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church were embroidered on the face of the Pergamos banner. All seven banners also hung at the ordinations of Halcyon Wilson and Madelynn Jones Haldeman on December 2, 1995, at the La Sierra University Church, and also at the ordination of Sheryll McMillan at the Victoria Adventist Church on the same day.

The banners were photographed for *Spectrum* by Peter Erhard, professor of Visual Communication Design, Photography and Printmaking in the Department of Art at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

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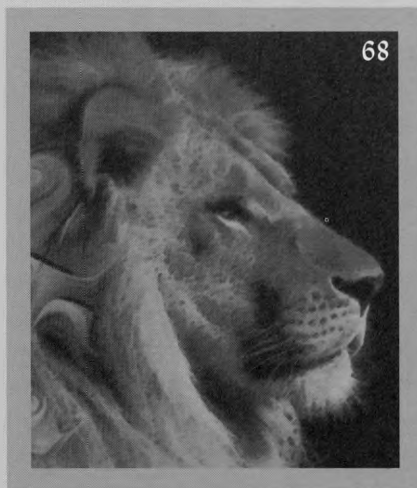
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Aha!

Multicultural Conversation Expands Adventist Thought

The concept originated in conversations with Charles Sandefur, president of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. He was newly back from world journeys to various ADRA projects and the visits had made the diversity within the Church come alive. For him, experiences of visiting refugee camps—of being greeted at an African church by a young woman who told of her battle with AIDS, of meeting many Adventists who could not read—were a long way from the church life he knew as a fourth-generation North American Adventist.

His travels confirmed what he had read in Philip Jenkins' book, *The Next Christendom*, about the population center of Christianity moving to the Southern Hemisphere. He challenged *Spectrum* and the Association of Adventist Forums to come up with a way of generating a conversation that would somehow include the many kinds of diversity within the Church—by geography, age, and gender, and among new and lifelong Adventists alike—and find common ground.

So with the assistance of a grant from the Versacare Foundation, *Spectrum* and the Association of Adventist Forums planned a conversation for October 2005 at the time of and close to the site of the Annual Council of Seventh-day Adventists so that people from the General Conference could listen and participate as they chose.

In this issue, we share presentations from that conference (pages 10–52). With conversation being the main point of the experience, small group discussions were held at the end of each session. The exchange between presenters and attendees began tentatively, but by the end of the weekend there was a bond among us. When Lamin Sanneh, our guest speaker from Yale University, responded to the presentations on Sabbath with an observation that those who attended were on the fringe of the fringe of Christianity, we were exhilarated and challenged with a conclusion of his that followed—which is that no one leads from the center.

During the weeks since the conference, it seems to me that the experience at that conference has helped move my thinking about Adventism in creative ways. I came away convinced (particularly by Herold Weiss's presentation) that multicultural Bible study would be an invigorating way to make Sabbath School come alive. Perhaps instead of only one person writing the lesson study guide, there could be a couple people from different parts of the world who could coauthor each quarter's lessons. Such a guide would affirm a variety of responses to Scripture, just as there is a variety of writers and witnesses within the Bible.

I also began to hear echoes of what had been discussed in other presentations. When Kendra Haloviak preached in La Sierra two weeks after the conference about the Sabbath as a day of equality and justice, there was an echo of the Sabbath Jubilee that Heather Isaacs had talked about at the conference. With both presentations, my appreciation of the Sabbath expanded. You can hear echoes of that appreciation in Chuck Scriven's editorial at the end of this issue, too.

The multicultural discussion of Adventism refreshed my understanding of church just as Charles Sandefur's travels did. Viva la diversity! Viva conversation!

Bonnie Dwyer
Editor

NOTEWORTHY



A Report on the Annual Council

By Larry R. Evans

Well over two hundred delegates attended this year's Annual Council. Of special interest was the sharp increase in the number of women who attended—from twenty-four during the past quinquennium to forty-two the next. An intentional effort was made to add young professionals of both genders. Six were added to the section to which the General Conference could have direct input.

Some of the most significant issues, in my opinion, include the following:

Tell the World

The Annual Council opened with an emphasis on mission and the "vision" (not program) as to how we will share the gospel from 2005 to 2010. Specific goals include measurable objectives in areas such as: Spiritual Growth (a growing emphasis on the personal spiritual experience of our members); Community Involvement (members becoming more involved in community service); Personal Witness (encouraging five million members to bring at least one person to Christ and into fellowship of the Church); City Outreach (new congregations in more than twenty-seven large cities); Church Planting (plant and nurture twenty thousand new congregations in unentered areas); Evangelistic Programming (four hun-

dred thousand evangelistic outreach and discipleship programs, including one hundred thousand youth evangelistic series); Media Ministry (creative use of technology and communications to reach every person).

Commission on Ministries, Services, and Structures

In the previous quinquennium, a commission was established to look primarily at the effectiveness of departments at the General Conference. This new commission, though new in composition, with some members carried over from the previous one, will have a much broader scope. A serious look will be taken at "structures," which include the various constituency levels of the Church's governance. There is no particular bias other than the need to take a good look at ministries and structures and see if there is a better way to do it in conferences, unions, and divisions. A bit of humor emerged when one delegate suggested, "There must be a better way of doing Church, but turkeys don't vote for Christmas." The work of the commission will span the next five years.

Use of Tithes Study Commission

This commission will review and analyze current practices and policies on the use of the tithe. Biblical and Spirit of Prophecy documents will be reviewed. Questions have been raised over the years and these questions will be reviewed in light of the biblical and Spirit of Prophecy principles.

Annual Leave Provisions

For decades, missionaries were granted furloughs and optional leaves. Times have changed but not the desire to meet the need of our missionaries, who often serve in hardship areas and at long distances away from immediate family members. Long eight-week furloughs often present difficulties for the missionaries and their employers. A more flexible annual leave program was voted, with a phase-in period over the next two years. Annual leave provides a more flexible approach—hopefully with less red tape—to provide vacation time for our missionaries.

Organization and Administration

An essential element of this action has to do with church structures, such as local and union conferences. Previously, when local and union missions progressed to conference status they did it for keeps. However, now it is possible for local and union conferences to revert back to mission status. One significant difference between a conference and a mission (among others) is that the leadership of a mission is appointed by the next higher organization. This measure is not meant to be punitive, but to assist both the local field and the work of the Church in general.

Filling Committees and Leadership Positions

The General Conference has well over one hundred standing commit-

tees. During Annual Council, the nominating committee filled positions not filled at the General Conference Session and appointed committees that cannot be filled by ADCOM (the Administrative Committee). Some rearrangements with committees were made. For example, the Faith and Science Council was created to replace BRISCOE. This committee will continue to explore the interrelation between the biblical understanding of creation and scientific discoveries and theories that have an impact on the topic of origins. It is composed primarily of international biblical scholars and scientists, with a small number of General Conference administrators.

Final Report from the Commission on Higher Education

The lengthy report outlined numerous strengths of our world educational program. Our schools are making a difference. There are specific areas of concern that need to be addressed, such as compliance with existing educational policies; the large percentage of non-Adventist teachers and students in some institutions/schools; and the large number of Adventist youth not attending Adventist schools and the impact this will have on the Church in the future.

There was a good spirit throughout the council and multiple testimonies by various international world leaders regarding the vision and mission of the Church. The council observed a time of silence for those who have suffered or lost their lives in recent catastrophes around the world.

Larry R. Evans is undersecretary for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

New Ministerial Credentials in Northern California

By Edward Fergusson

Beginning the third week of June, Jim Pedersen, executive secretary of the Northern California Conference, began to distribute new credential cards for ministerial personnel in the Northern California Conference. The new card differs from predecessors in three ways. First, it is the conference's first all-color credential. Secondly, it is the first to include employees' photographs. Most importantly, it is the first gender nonspecific credential for the conference.

The story of this development began at the last constituency session, which was held on May 16, 2004, when a discussion on gender equity occurred on the floor. Although no specific action was taken at that session, administrators of the conference pledged to have ongoing dialogue with the Executive Committee on this issue. Part of that discussion involved gender inclusive credentials similar to those issued in the Southeastern California Conference.

Since all credentials are generated from the office of the executive secretary, Pedersen led out the process to determine what a new credential should include. He and other officers consulted with administrators in the Southeastern California Conference, the Pacific Union, and the North American Division. They also studied the policies of the General Conference and North American Division. Finally, the Administrative Council of the Northern California Conference examined the proposed wording.

At a gathering on February 16, the conference's Executive Committee took action to "approve the wording of the Northern California Conference Ministerial Credential and License

Cards to include the wording *ordained/commissioned together*." That action was the final element needed to produce new credential cards. The conference delivered them to its pastors at their summer meetings.

There has been little reaction to changes in the cards. Many pastors have expressed appreciation, but lay members—most of whom have never seen a credential card—have not reacted. Issuance of the new cards is a small, mostly symbolic move, but it means that male and female pastors in the Northern California Conference now carry identical credential cards.

Edward Fergusson is an assistant to the president of the Northern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, headquartered in Pleasant Hill, California.

Report on Southern Africa Union Conference Action

By Eric Webster

A momentous decision was made at the Southern Africa Union Conference session held in Bloemfontein, South Africa, over the weekend of November 18–20, 2005. The decision was made to amalgamate two separate conferences in the south and two in the north of South Africa: the Cape Conference and the Southern Hope Conference in the south, and the Transvaal Conference and the Trans-Orange Conference in the north. The motion passed by a vote of 163 to 28.

Historically, the Cape and the Transvaal Conferences have been "white" and have resisted suggested mergers with their fellow "black" conferences. However, let it be understood that for the past fifteen or twenty years these two conferences have had an open

racial policy that allows anyone to join. Many black members have joined white churches, and a number of black congregations exist in these so-called white conferences.

Transvaal Conference not only has an open policy toward black members, it also incorporates all the "colored" (mixed race) and Indian churches within its territory. In the south, the Southern Hope Conference caters to black and colored members in its area. At the same time, the Cape Conference has many individual black and colored members, and a few black congregations.

However, in South Africa, where segregation and later apartheid held sway for so long, many have continued to look upon the Cape and the Transvaal Conferences as remnants of apartheid. This is largely because their conference administration is predominantly white, as are their ministers (except that the Transvaal Conference has colored and Indian ministers, who care for some churches and districts).

During the past few years, the Cape and the Transvaal Conferences have consistently voted against merging with the black conferences. In the most recent conference sessions held in October 2005, the Cape Conference voted in favor of merging by 56 to 46 percent. Although this was a majority, the vote to merge needed to win with at least 66 percent. In the Transvaal Conference, delegates voted against merging by 56 to 44 percent. Here the merge was clearly voted down.

The Southern Africa Union administration has advocated and encouraged these mergers for a long time. This has been with the blessing of the division and the strong encouragement of the General Conference and the world church.

Perhaps in desperation and out of frustration with these two conferences, the union turned to General Conference Working Policy B 65 05 to imple-

ment its desired goal. This was presented as a basis for suggesting one new amalgamated conference in the south and one in the north, although the actual policy was not made available to the delegates.

The relevant policy reads as follows:

B 65 05 Territorial Adjustments or Resizing of Territories.

1. If it is proposed to make territorial adjustments between local fields or between unions, or to resize the territorial units, the proposal shall be considered by the executive committee of the next higher administrative organization, at a time when a full representation of the territories and organizations involved is present.

2. If the proposal is approved by the executive committee of the next higher level of church organization, the proposal shall then be routed to the executive committee of the division, in the case of local fields, and of the General Conference, in the case of union territories, where, in each case, the final decision shall be made.

3. If the territory of a conference or union conference is involved, the administration of the next higher organization

shall use its discretion to examine constitutions and legal requirements to determine whether a constituency meeting should be called and, if so, at what point(s) in the procedure.

There are those who question whether this policy is applicable in this case. The policy speaks about "territorial adjustments between local fields," and those who question it feel that this recent action has made no "territorial adjustments."

The tussle might well be between the legitimacy of the conference constitutions, which require a 66 percent vote to disband, and this action of the higher organization, which is based on policy B 65 05.

After the vote at the union session there was a feeling of euphoria and a sense that God had led. It was quite remarkable that a white administrator from the Cape Conference had been voted in as the new union president.

It remains to be seen how the almost 50 percent of the membership of the Cape and Transvaal Conferences will react to this decision. Very few were delegates to the union session. Will they accept the action graciously or will there be pockets of resistance?



After two special sessions on March 19 and March 26, when these two new conferences are supposed to come into existence, we will know how many churches might choose to remain outside the conference fold.

Eric Webster is editor of *Signs of the Times* in South Africa.

Following the Money in the Lake Region Conference

By Bonnie Dwyer

Now comes Plaintiff Lake Region Conference Association of Seventh-day Adventists, by and through its counsel, Barclay and Dixon, P.C. and Hooks Law Offices, P.C., and hereby complains against Defendants Norman K. Miles, Hugo Gambetta, and Greg C. Baker." So begins a suit filed in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois, on October 4, 2005.

Given the positions of Miles, Gambetta, and Baker as former administrative officers of the Lake Region Conference, the suit is an unusual move by a church entity seeking to put its financial house in order. However, most conferences are not faced with officers accused of selling R-1 visas and using conference funds for personal expenses—as the suit alleges.

The conference seeks a full and complete accounting for each of the defendants' bank accounts, then asks for a return of any money they improperly gained, plus the costs and expenses incurred by the Lake Region Conference. It also requests that the defendants be ordered to forfeit and return to the Lake Region Conference all income and salary that the conference has paid to them since 2002, plus damages of fifty thousand dollars apiece. Exactly how much the confer-

ence would gain altogether is unknown—or whether it would be able to collect. But whatever money it recovers will be helpful.

In November, Jerome Davis, the new conference president, informed his constituents that the conference "treasury department has encountered significant challenges that have impacted the conference's financial ability to operate."

Rather than file for bankruptcy, the new treasurer, Theodore Brown, and his staff put together a recovery plan that called for mortgaging the conference office building and camp in exchange for a loan from the Lake Union Conference in excess of two million dollars. Both the conference and union Executive Committees approved the plan, "with the understanding that it should be brought before...the members of the Lake Region, for [their] approval as well," Davis told the constituents on November 30.

Four town hall meetings were scheduled in December to present the plan. Some members wondered if the constituents should have been given a chance to vote formally on the plan earlier in the process.

Meanwhile, the North American Division announced that Normal Miles would be the new pastor at the Trenton, New Jersey, Seventh-day Adventist Church, in the Alleghany East Conference.

Hugo Gambetta, whom the conference terminated on August 21, 2005, had his ordination revoked. He appealed the action, and on November 16, the Lake Union Executive Committee voted unanimously to void his ordination. A letter went out from union conference president Walter Wright to union and conference presidents and Hispanic coordinators in five world divisions saying that Gambetta is no longer recognized as a minister in the Adventist Church and that he is not eligible for invitation to any other field of service.

Eduardo Allen accepted the conference's invitation to replace Gambetta in the position of vice president of Multilingual Ministries. Presently, Allen is the evangelist and Hispanic ministries coordinator for the Upper Columbia Conference in the state of Washington.

Allen's election refills the positions in the executive team vacated during the purge that followed the financial review ordered by the Lake Union Conference in April 2005.

Banners of Hope for Adventist Girls

By Bonnie Dwyer

Come October 22, Adventist history of the Great Disappointment in 1844 is likely to be the topic of discussion in Adventist churches and on Adventist campuses. It is a day to remember from whence we came. In 2005, it was the date of "Women and the Word," the regularly sponsored conference by La Sierra University's Women's Resource Center.

Biblical preaching by women has always been the hallmark of the conference, and 2005 was no different, but there was more, too. This time, the program covered all the elements of Advent hope-remembrance of things past, imagination of newness, and intention to transform the world. (see page 26)

The remembrance of things past came in several forms. Bert Haloviak, archivist for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, reported on his study of documents dealing with Ellen White and Australasian ministers, 1893 to 1901, "The history of the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the nineteenth century and Ellen White's perception of it in the early twentieth

century illustrates that, indeed, women served as priests and ministers of the Lord in her day," he said.

There was also much remembering of the ordinations of women that took place in 1995 at the Sligo, La Sierra, and Victoria Churches. A panel of fifteen of the participants shared their memories of those events.

On Sabbath morning, it was time for hope and transformation as a parade of young girls, dressed in their Sabbath best, carried banners of the seven churches of Revelation down the aisle of the La Sierra Seventh-day

Adventist Church (see covers). The banners had been used in all of the ordination services of the women in 1995, and one carried the initials of all the women pastors at Sligo Church, where the banners were created and first used. Many an eye shed a tear as the young girls walked proudly to the front, and took their places. The imagined newness of the church as represented by the girls brought applause that lingered. And in the sermons of the weekend there was hope for the girls.

"Can God trust you to bless others? Can He count on you to leave

blessings in your path so that those who come behind you will be able to pick them up?" Pastor Andrea Trusty King asked in her sermon on Naomi.

The newly commissioned/ordained pastor of the Marantha Adventist Church in San Diego said she had heard Kamala Harris, the first (and only) female African-American district attorney, recount the wisdom her mother shared with her. "She said, 'You might be the first to do a lot of things, but just make sure you are not the last.' We need to make it a habit, to pave the way for those who will follow. We need to



Growing Old Adventist

By Richard Rice

Getting old is never easy, but for Seventh-day Adventists it brings special challenges. One is the fact that since we are living so much longer than everyone else (see the latest *National Geographic*, for example), we are getting older longer than everyone else. Like others, I suppose, getting old came as quite a surprise to me. Don't get me wrong: I always expected to live this long. But I never thought I would be this old.

I was born just ahead of the baby boomers. My father went into medical school instead of the army, so I didn't have to wait until he got back to be born. So, as a pre-boomer, I get to contemplate the passing of the years before the great rush.

Actually, I'm in the sandwich generation. Just as my wife Gail and I reached the point where our kids

were getting launched in life, we found ourselves having to look after our parents. In fact, I've heard that Americans can now expect to spend more years caring for their parents than they did raising their children. And it is amazing how much alike these two jobs are. A few years ago, our kids complained that we were meddling in their lives. Last week, my folks complained that we were meddling in their lives.

Of course, some people live a lot longer than others. Take my wife, for example. She's just getting started. Two years ago, we sold our house after twenty-nine years and moved into a larger place so we could live with Gail's parents. Gail said she wanted to enjoy her parents' company during her last years. But the real reason is that she wants somebody to keep her company after I'm gone.

At the rate they are going, they'll easily outlive me. They are certainly expecting to live forever. Gail's father is ninety-one; her

mother just turned ninety. Last year, I bought her mother a Golden Retriever puppy and gave her a book on the breed. The next day she said, "Rick, I'm concerned. This book said these dogs live only about ten years. I want to have him a lot longer than that."

With parents in their nineties and grandparents who lived into their nineties, Gail calculates that her life expectancy is 105. She tells me she's keeping in shape for me, but I know that's not true. She is keeping in shape for husband numbers two, and three, and four.

We did get some news from our financial planner the other day. He said we have plenty of money to retire at sixty-five and maintain our current lifestyle...provided we die at seventy. By then, all the money will be gone. So next time, Gail's going for money.

Gail and her parents aren't the only Seventh-day Adventists with extended life plans. Adventists are living so long it's creating problems

make it a habit to help those who can not help themselves, a habit to help those who can not pay us back, because when you do, God says, if they cannot pay you then I'll pay you. And I don't mind being on God's payroll."

Kendra Haloviak took the pulpit on Sabbath morning, after the parade of the banners, and preached on Sabbath justice and equality. Using the Sabbath commandment from Deuteronomy and the story of Jesus healing the bent-over woman on Sabbath as told in Luke, she concluded, "If Seventh-day Adventists are Sabbath-keepers: we must embrace Sabbath justice, we must embrace equality, and freedom from all that oppresses.

We must embrace economic restoration, we must help bent-over women and men and children stand up straight, we must hear their voices. If Seventh-day Adventists are Sabbath keepers: we must embrace Sabbath justice now," she said.

Her stirring words on justice included thoughts about ordination, "During the last decade, I have occasionally heard people say: 'I'm so tired of the debate over women's ordination. I'm just tired of hearing about it.' But, the debate will continue until the church we love is true to itself," she said. "As long as we have policies of inequality, we will be in conflict with ourselves, with our own convictions as Adventists, because the ordina-

tion of women issue is a Sabbath issue. Will we be Sabbath-keepers? Or will we continue to have policies of inequality? Policies that keep women bent-over, bound on Sabbath and every other day? Will we be Sabbath-keepers or not?"

With seven young girls carrying the banners of the seven churches, the answer sounded like a trumpet: "If Seventh-day Adventists are Sabbath keepers we must embrace Sabbath justice now—even as we anticipate the eternal Sabbath, global Jubilee. If Seventh-day Adventists are Sabbath keepers, we must embrace Sabbath justice."

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum*.

for the Church's retirement program. I know a family whose members all worked for the Church and all of them lived into their nineties. Some of them are almost one hundred today. You have heard about decades of service? Well, they gave centuries of service. With all that time in retirement, they pretty much bankrupted sustentation. Now they are threatening Social Security.

If you ask me, the cause of the problem is health reform. It's not only been amazingly effective, it's been too effective. Seventh-day Adventists are living longer than the Church ever expected them to. Not that we are the only ones doing that. I saw a cartoon not long ago that showed two old people sitting in rockers. One says, "In my day, people died."

You want to live long enough to see your grandchildren, of course. That's reasonable. But not long enough to see their grandchildren. That's ridiculous. But someone I know has a solution to this problem. Don't worry, it's not as drastic as you think. He's not suggesting we send all our retirees to



Oregon. What he proposes is this: term limits on health reform. That's right, let's think of health reform as a temporary measure. It's good for a while, but it's not meant to last forever. So, here are his revisions.

When you reach sixty years, eat anything you want. Meat, desserts, whatever. Enough with dietary restrictions. Six decades of vegetarianism are enough. You've paid your debt to the animal kingdom.

Then, when you turn seventy, drink anything you want. You grew

up hearing familiar verses about drinking: "Wine is a mocker. Strong drink is raging." But now it's time to read the other verses about wine, like "don't drink water only. Take a little wine for your stomach's sake."

OK, at sixty eat anything you want. At seventy, drink anything you want. At eighty, the big change: smoke anything you want. That's right, why not go out in a blaze of glory...or exit on a high note, so to speak.

My friend believes he has denominational support for these suggestions. George Knight is an influential Seventh-day Adventist author, and his most helpful book for our concern is titled, *I Used to Be Perfect*. That's the spirit, George. There's a motto for our retirees: "I Used to Be Perfect." So, you spend the first sixty years of your life moving toward perfection, and then the rest of your life moving away from it.

Why have too much of a good thing?

Richard Rice teaches in the Faculty of Religion at Loma Linda University.

ILLUSTRATION BY MAX SEABAUGH



BIBLE

HEART

RENEWING

THE

BIBLICAL

OF

ADVENTISM

Introduction to a Discussion

By Charles Scriven

To Euro-American eyes, Christianity may appear to be losing ground, but it is actually growing. Faith in Christ is surging in Africa and Asia, and continuing to flourish in Central and South America. This means that *Euro-American* Christianity is losing ground, or at least losing its monopoly on the gospel: Western interpretations of Christ no longer have—or at least cannot continue to have—the dominant place.

What complicates matters further is this: In the West, at least, the postmodern sensibility, with its critique of arrogance, is casting doubt on every claim to final truth. As this sensibility gains strength, people who think they know it all, or exhibit certitude about the things that matter most, seem not only ignorant but also dangerous.

How, then, shall we understand the assertion—made, according to Acts, by Peter—that there is salvation “in no one else” but the risen Jesus? Christians have echoed this assertion down the years. In leading the theological resistance to Hitler, Karl Barth, the most influential theologian of the twentieth century, wrote that the church could acknowledge no source of its proclamation “apart from and besides”
Continued next page...

SALVATION

THROUGH

JESUS

CHRIST

Christ the Light of
the World

Jesus Christ, Salvation, and
the New Diversity

The Meaning of Salvation
in African Context

*These articles are from presentations
made at the 2005 AAF Conference, in
Silver Spring, Maryland.*

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Jesus Christ, the "one Word of God."

If you consider all this to be true, what does it mean? And who, among the widening variety of Christian interpreters, has the authority to say?

Once Adventists could quote the Gospel Commission—"Go...and make disciples of all nations"—without fretting about anything but logistics. Now, amid the new diversity, we must ask what sense this makes. What, today, does our passion for worldwide witness actually mean?

From day one, as Matthew 28 says, "some doubted." To the ones who first heard the Gospel Commission, the questions were difficult; from the start the difficulty was acknowledged. We may perhaps infer, then, a blessing upon those who now read such passages as Matthew 28:16–20, Acts 4:10–12, and Romans 10:9–17, and feel hesitant or insecure.

How, indeed, shall we interpret Christ in light of the new diversity? How shall we proclaim the gospel amid the sheer tumult of variety around us—variety of hair and skin and gender, to be sure, but also of politics, culture, and religion?

Consider these facts: In New Testament perspective, Jesus is pivotal for salvation; consciousness of religious pluralism—pluralism as a reality and pluralism as an attitude of respect for others—is growing; post-modern doubt is undermining claims to universally valid moral or religious truth. Consider, too, that Western authority over the interpretation of Christian texts is on the wane.

Now ask: Do Christian assertions regarding salvation through Christ still hold, and if so why? If Christ remains the key, how shall we meet postmodern objections to religious certitude? And if we succeed in that, how, amid diverse expressions of Christian faith, shall we assure the authenticity of the Church's thought and practice? Furthermore, what is the relevance and validity, if any, of "contextualization" in witness? If the Gospel Commission holds for today, in other words, may the Church's message be shaped to accommodate cultural differences? If so, how can that gospel's authenticity be preserved?

Salvation through Christ belongs to the heart of Adventism. Those are the questions, or some of them, that the new diversity poses to us all.

Charles Scriven chairs the board of the Association of Adventist Forums. He is also president of Kettering College of Medical Arts in Kettering, Ohio.

Discussed: pomo evangelists, scary stuff, Buddhist understanding, Ellen White, exorcising demons, heresies, Holy Ghost, pluralism

Christ the Light of the World: A Conversation with Myself

By *Julius Nam*

Why is this article given in question-and-answer format?

Because I couldn't find a good lead-in to the paper that I've been wanting to write for the last two weeks.

Isn't this a messier way to start? And isn't the question-and-answer format too risky?

Could very well be. I don't know. I've never done this before.

Has anyone else conducted a self-interview at a conference like this?

I don't know. I actually got this idea from Frederica Mathewes-Green who wrote her essay in question-and-answer format in the *Church in Emerging Culture*.

Which culture?

Today's postmodern culture. It's a book written by five "pomo"-friendly evangelicals about what today's church should look like and what the focus of its message ought to be.

Isn't postmodernism (or pomo, as you say) averse to pontificating on how anything should or ought to be?

Let's get to the main question. Our listeners don't think we're funny anymore.



What is the main question?

How Adventists can communicate the message of salvation through Christ effectively and meaningfully to various cultures of the world (including the secular postmodern) without compromising the heart of that message.

That's assuming a lot of things.

Like what?

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Well, that bit about “salvation through Christ.” What does that really mean? Do all Adventists agree on its meaning?

That’s exactly where I wanted to begin. You seem to be reading my mind.

I am.

Stop interrupting me.

OK, let’s get on with it.

Scripture does make some sweeping claims about salvation coming from Christ and Christ alone. To deny this would be to rip the heart out of Christianity. Christ *is* the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to God except through Christ (John 14:6). Salvation is found in no one else’s name but that of Jesus (Acts 4:12).

My question, though, is that while we affirm the centrality of the supreme revelation of God in the incarnate Christ, couldn’t we also affirm the scriptural claim that the same Christ is the true light that gives light to everyone?

Could you unpack that last point?

The apostle John opens his Gospel by juxtaposing the metaphors of the Word and Light in reference to the incarnation of Jesus. John then states that this Light that gives light to everyone became flesh and lived among us (John 1:9, 14).

What this tells me is that Christ as the Eternal God had been engaged in the work of enlightening all of humanity with divine wisdom throughout history until the time of incarnation (and presumably has since been engaged in the same work).

My heresy detector has started to beep.

I know; I can hear it, too. This is a scary idea because it seems to open the way to the kind of pluralism that Christians and certainly Adventists have tended to abhor. But Adventists who hold the Bible as their creed—not anything else—neither the Twenty-Eight Fundamental Beliefs, the writings of Ellen White, nor any other authority in our tradition—ought to take seriously the whole witness of Scripture, which I do not believe supports some of the traditional exclusivist claims of Western Christianity.

Let’s have it. What is it that you want to say?

We must not only be open to the possibility of Christ at work in every culture and religion, but we must also

actively seek out and learn from diverse manifestations of the Word of Christ in the world today. Just to give you one example: Christians have much to learn from the self-renouncing devotion of Buddhism.

We’re too much into filling up and enriching ourselves—even in spirituality (say, being “filled with the Holy Ghost”)—that we’ve all but lost the spirit of self-emptying that Christ has exemplified for us. Not only do we need to learn about self-renunciation as an abstraction, we also need to practice it as a holistic life endeavor.

Could the Buddhist understanding and commitment to *kenosis* be a manifestation of Christ’s revelation? I think it’s definitely worth exploring.

So you’re some sort of a relativist or a pluralist, or even a syncretist?

Be nice. I’ll admit to being some sort of a pluralist, but not the way you call it. Let’s please not get into pigeonholing each other by calling each other some kind of an “-ist,” and be satisfied that we have each other figured out and crossed out in our minds. That’s no way to treat a brother. That just ain’t right.

Sorry, man. Seems like I hit a raw nerve. But you can’t say that an average Seventh-day Adventist won’t be disturbed by what you’re saying.

Like I said before, this is scary stuff. It’s not easy, either. But like I said, I see so much openness toward the global work of Christ in Scripture. There are too many instances of God giving revelation to those who are outside the mainstream of Israel and Christianity.

Consider Melchizedek. Where did he come from? What about Balaam? Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus. What about the magi from the East? Ellen White calls them pagan philosophers. What did it mean for them to see the light and adore our Savior? What exactly did God reveal to them? What can they teach us?

If, as Paul tells us, God’s invisible attributes have been clearly seen by the people of the world from the creation of the world, so that they are without excuse (which must be clearer than the sophistry of Christian theology that we often engage in), shouldn’t we seek to learn from what God has revealed to them?

What does this all mean?

Well, consider these prophetic words of Ellen White:



Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God. (*Desire of Ages*, 638)

Wait! I just thought of another intriguing example. Remember the time when the disciples were so upset that someone other than the twelve was exorcising demons in Christ's name that they stopped the man, "because he was not one of us"?

Jesus responded by saying, "Do not stop him." What do you think we're supposed to get out of this little exchange?

I've always thought the episode only applied to intra-Christian differences.

Me too. But could it also apply to non-Christians who

are under the influence of Christ's light? Whose religion is Christianity anyway? Isn't it Christ's?

And isn't responding to Christ and being a follower of Christ more important than being a Christian? In light of the concept of the progressive understanding of the truth—which Christians in general and Adventists in particular (coupled with our view of the "present truth") accept, couldn't we embrace the possibility that the work of Christ is in progress right now in various cultures *and* religions of the world?

I wonder if the success of Christian missionary outreach in some parts of the world hasn't actually rolled back Christ's work among the local people. I wonder sometimes if the Christian missionary agenda is really one and the same with Christ's agenda for the people of the world.

What are you proposing here? Stop evangelizing? Call back all missionaries? I don't see how a Seventh-day Adventist who takes the remnant calling as well as the Gospel Commission seriously can defend what you're insinuating.

You're right. Probably not everything I'm suggesting is defensible. I don't presume to have all the theological

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loose ends tied up. In fact, my theology is probably more like a loose ball of yarn than a tightly knit cardigan.

I'll say this, though. What I'm proposing, to be frank with you, is a fundamental shift in the way we view evangelism. Fulfillment of the Gospel Commission and our worldwide evangelism should be more about sharing Christ than making people Adventists.

I've deliberately used the word *share* to suggest interactivity and mutuality. Missionary and evangelistic efforts should never be a one-way affair, but a two-way dialogue—sharing what Christ the Light has revealed in each of our lives, teaching one another of the revelations of the Eternal, and growing together in obedience to the shared revelations.

As Brian McLaren suggests in *A New Kind of Christian*, the object of evangelism, then, becomes conversation, not conversion. This is not to say that conversions could not or should not happen. Conversions will occur when Christ leads individuals to new communities.

I'm sorry to bring this up again, but this all sounds really too pluralistic for me.

I understand, and I do wonder how much pluralism and diversity we can take and live with—both internally with diverse expressions of Adventism and externally with other denominations and religions.

Like I said, I'll admit to being a pluralist, but only in this sense: As Adventists, we need to constantly affirm how God has raised up our church and continues to lead it in a special way. I do believe that God has given our church a remnant calling to herald to the world special truths for our time. At the same time, we can be open to the presence and work of God in the faith and life of individuals and communities in other denominations and religions.

We ought to be sensitive to other possible revelations of God and do our best to understand and embrace God's truth found everywhere, even while actively sharing and persuading the world of what God has entrusted to us. It ought to be possible to be deeply convicted of the gospel as we understand it and have experienced it, without negating other expressions of faith or devaluing other traditions.

We need to be as orthodox as we can be, while being as generous as we possibly can be toward others. So, as for this "p"-word that you've been throwing at me, I think Lamin Sanneh has put it well: "For all of us pluralism can be a rock of stumbling, but for God it is

the cornerstone of the universal design" (*Translating the Message*, 29).

Are you sure you're not creating an elaborate theological scheme to justify your personal discomfort, or even embarrassment, with traditional evangelism?

Hmmm, actually, you may be on to something. I *am* deeply embarrassed and highly uncomfortable with what evangelism has become. To put it crassly, our message has been: "You believe like us, you behave like us, then we'll let you belong to our church."

It seems to me that, with a nod to Richard Rice's book *Believing, Behaving, Belonging*, the process should really happen the other way around. First, "we accept you and embrace you just as you are (belonging)." Second, "we want to serve you and be served by you so that we may increase the quality of our lives and find healing in our lives (behaving)." Finally, "we desire to share with you what God has taught us, as we desire to learn from your experience with God (believing)."

I think our time is almost up. Do you think the question-and-answer format worked?

I may never get invited to this conference again.

How strongly do you stand by the heresies you have expressed today?

As you and I know, the word *heresy* means a "faction" or "portion." Paul's words come to mind at this juncture: "For we know in part and we prophesy in part" (1 Cor. 13:9). Our incomplete understanding makes all of us heretics, really.

Early Adventism, in retrospect, was a cult and a heretical movement, wasn't it? Remember the shut door doctrine and the anti-Trinitarianism of almost all our pioneers? Come to think of it, the Good Samaritan, too, was a "heretic."

I have a nagging feeling that God doesn't mind heretics too much. God can still use them for the cause of the gospel in reaching the lost. I'd like to be one of them.

Julius Nam is assistant professor of religion at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California. He hasn't stopped talking to himself. (It's mostly useless solipsistic chatter, though.)

Discussed: Advent, new origins, triumphalist claims, money vs. members, specific relativity, laws of physics, paradigm shifts, Scripture, immortality

Jesus Christ, Salvation, and the New Diversity

By John Webster

If renewing the heart of Adventism is our quest, then it is quite appropriate that we start by asking what this heart is.

I venture that Adventism, at heart, is about the Advent or Coming of God (that is, the whole series of events—past, present, and future—that constitute God's own self-disclosure as "God with us"). If this is correct, then it should be clear that the event of Jesus Christ ("Emmanuel," a specific event that embodies the whole) must be at the very heart of Adventism if it is to be true to itself. The Advent ("God with us") is itself the gospel.

At its best, Adventism is nothing else than a movement of advent hope that seeks to share this good news with the world. It exists then, not for its own sake, but simply as a witness to the message of the gospel

both proclaimed by, and accomplished in, Jesus Christ.

But what exactly is this message? And who authoritatively decides what it is, and what it means? This is the problem posed by the New Diversity, which we seek here to both celebrate and explore. The plethora of new voices and notions within Christendom itself makes it hard to sort out what constitutes proper belief in and about Christ, let alone make sense of claims to absolute truth.

Furthermore, many find it increasingly difficult, given post-modern sensibilities, to continue to make triumphalist claims about Christianity in a world so thor-

oughly pluralistic in politics, culture, and religion.

Faced with these problems, I wish to offer a rather modest suggestion that might help us clarify some issues. Here's my thesis: I think that our witness has become blurred, because our understanding of the gospel has become overburdened with excess baggage. We need to *disentangle* the jumbled threads that have become knotted together in our religious discourse if we want to find a way forward with regard to the problems raised by diversity.

When we face the problem of internal diversity, two common strategies present themselves. On the one hand,

I think our witness has become blurred, because our understanding of the gospel has become overburdened with excess baggage.

we may be tempted to directly or indirectly induce or force others to our point of view. We all know this beast when we see it. The other strategy is to try to determine what the core is and what is merely peripheral and then call for unity on the core, and allow diversity at the periphery.

Of course, the problem here is getting agreement over what the core is and what is not! To paraphrase the well-known saying: "One person's core is another's periphery." Particularly in the context of the New Diversity, the real issue is who has the power to call the shots—the old Northern Church with its money, or the new Southern Church with its numbers?

What I want to suggest is that there is an alternative that has the decided advantage of being seen at work in the Bible itself. In fact, I believe it is a key element of Paul's revolutionary understanding of the Christ-event, and we can also see it at work as Jews encounter Gentiles in Luke's account of the early church in Acts (see Acts 10, 11, 15). This is not a distinction between core and periphery, which is an attempt to weight various beliefs and practices with respect to each other, but rather a distinction between a *gift* and a resulting state of *giftedness*.

A genuine gift comes to one from another unconditionally and often unexpectedly; it is a simple act of unilateral favor. Giftedness is the state that results from having been gifted; the putting of the gift to good use. In the New Testament, it is the Advent itself that is regarded as a gracious gift to the whole world, a gift that can only be acknowledged and shared (the good news); and

everything else is to be regarded as an attempt at articulation and application of the implications of this gift to each and every aspect of life by those thus gifted.

New Testament scholar J. Christiaan Beker makes the same thrust in his distinction between coherence and contingency in Paul's writings: "[B]y coherence, I mean the abiding normative dimension of the text; by contingency, its historical and situational dimension that addresses the particular historical time of the text."¹

Perhaps we could call this approach a biblical hermeneutic of specific relativity (with obvious apologies

to Albert Einstein). In Einstein's special theory of relativity, all motion is shown to be relative to a single constant—the speed of light. Given that the laws of physics are the same everywhere, this means that our definitions of physical phenomena (for example, momentum and energy) and quantities (for instance, length and time) must change from one observer to another.

What results is not an "anything goes" kind of relativism, but rather an essential distinction between what is constant, and everything else that is relative to that constant and thus in intrarelational flux.

It seems to me that Paul does something very similar in the New Testament. He makes a fundamental distinction between the gospel (the advent: the event of the revelation of God's righteousness, that is, God's actual self-disclosure in human history as "God with us") and everything else—politics, culture, morality, religion, and so forth (which is, at best, our response to the gospel).

Thus, in one place Paul can say, "should anyone, even I myself or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel other than the gospel I preached to you, let him be banned!" Not that there is, in fact, "another gospel," there are only some who unsettle your minds by trying to distort the gospel of Christ. For Paul assures us that "the gospel you heard me preach is not of human origin.... I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1:8, 7, 11–12). Here is Paul's constant.

Now, compare what he says in another place (in



answer to questions concerning sex, marriage, and divorce): "I say this by way of concession, not command. I should like everyone to be as I myself am; but each person has the gift God has granted him, one this gift and another that....I say this as my own word, not as the Lord's....About the unmarried, I have no instruction from the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is fit to be trusted" (1 Cor. 7: 6-7, 12, 25).

These are Paul's variables. They are not unimportant—but they are not fixed (if they were, we should all be celibate!). Moral injunction (such as this), religious practice (for example, circumcision), legal prohibition (for instance, eating food offered to idols), and practical advice (like the deportment and role of women in the church) are always to be kept in relation to the gospel, but they will inevitably change with time and place.

Thus, Paul can say in Romans 14: "Accept anyone who is weak in faith without debate about his misgivings....Who are you to pass judgment on someone else's servant? Whether he stands or falls is his own Master's business....Everyone must act on his own convictions....Let us therefore cease judging one another" (verses 1, 4, and 3).

Here we have the constant (the gospel itself) and the variables (its application to life); gift ("God with us") and giftedness (witness to the advent and its implica-

tions for all aspects of our lives); coherence (the Advent of God), and contingency (the human witness to the coming of God).

I believe that the only way to state this precisely is that Paul believes that the gospel relativizes (orders, relates, subordinates) everything else, morality and religion included.

Now the problem we have is that awareness of this biblical ordering has all too frequently faded away. The distinction has been lost. Everything has been flattened onto the same level. One can understand how it happens. We live integrated lives. We are not in the habit of making distinctions between the actual acts of God in history and our witness or language about them, or about our application of this good news (which we receive as a gift) to the spiritual, ethical, religious, and cultural dimensions of our lives. All these dimensions have become enmeshed.

Words such as *gospel* or *truth*, or phrases such as *the truth as it is in Jesus* have become merely placeholders for everything we believe and practice. In actuality, "accepting the gospel" has come to stand for a package deal that includes everything from dress standards to eschatology. Jumbled together are significant theological beliefs, profound spiritual insights, important moral convictions, meaningful religious practices, and inherited cultural norms.

If we wish to cope with the challenges of growing diversity within Christendom in general, and Adventism in particular, I suggest we will need to learn to disentangle this logjam.

What follows will have to remain an all-too-cryptic hint at what a renewed Adventism that followed this path might look like. I believe that Adventist theology could make a crucial contribution to the general discussion of the problem of diversity and religious pluralism if it would only rediscover the significance of its own central theme—the Advent of God. This event itself is the Christian gospel; all else is only interpretation, articulation, and correlation—in short, religion. This insight calls for four distinct but related paradigm shifts.

1. The *gospel* is not just another name for Christian doctrine, worldview, and moral teachings. It is news (God

with us). It is not something we could have told ourselves; for it is not the product of philosophical inquiry, the result of a journey toward enlightenment, or a fact unearthed by discovery. It is not another name for a structural feature of the world.

It is a purported contingent happening, or it is nothing. The news of this event can be doubted; it can be disbelieved; but it can never properly be claimed as a profound contribution of any wisdom tradition, least of all Christianity. It comes strictly as *prevenient grace* (unmerited favor).

2. Religion is not just a synonym for the gospel. It is what we do with our finitude. It is a response to perceptions that there is something or someone greater than ourselves. In light of the Advent of God, religion is simultaneously unmasked, ordained, and enlisted in the service of God's cause in the world. Although there can be no absolutely "True" human religion, religion can discover, interpret, and contribute to our understanding of truth. And God can (and clearly has) worked through some, all, or no religion to further the cause of God's love in the world.

3. Scripture is not itself the revelation of God (that is, the Advent). It is a witness to that revelation, which is the actual coming of God into human time, space, and consciousness in the single (yet complex) sequence of events we call the Advent of God. Its authority as our

into line with the direction marked out by the recorded traces of the coming of God.

Adventism is a movement within and for the wider Christian world. The Advent movement sees its task in catalyzing a remnant of resistance to Babylon (the triumphalistic amalgam of a self-confident Christendom that lays claim to theological and ethical certainty, with the temporal power of a militant, globalized, Western world).

What these paradigm shifts mean, when taken together, is a move toward a more open, more humble Adventist Christianity that gives up an arrogant vision of Christian triumphalism (that is, the "finality of Christ," which equates with a claim to its own religious superiority) for the "singularity of Christ" (that is, the radical and startling news of God's adoption of humanity to share in God's very mode of Being, through the incarnation and resurrection of Christ). It thus means learning to read John 14:6d more carefully than is typically the case.

"No one comes to the Father but by me" in its immediate context is *not* a claim that no one else has a knowledge of God, nor is it stating that salvation is impossible apart from the name of Jesus. What it says is simply that there is no other way to participation in the Divine

Scripture is not itself the revelation of God...It is a witness to that revelation.

"only rule of faith and practice" lies not in its mode of production but in its irreplaceable uniqueness as the collation of primary witnesses to the developing consciousness of God's presence with us.

It is not to be thought of as a fixed, infallible deposit of absolute truths, all sufficient (if accepted and practiced) for salvation and right living. Rather it should be viewed, in keeping with its own self-understanding, as providing "treasure in earthen vessels."

4. The Mission of the Church is not so much to take a fixed body of "truth" to the world for the purpose of saving lost souls, as it is simply to witness to the gospel. This is nothing more or less than sharing the good news of the Advent of the God of Peace—God's self-disclosure as God with us. God has already saved the world.

When invited, we will gladly share what we have learned (both from our successes and our failures) in attempting to bring all aspects of our lives and world

nature (immortality) but by means of God's own adoption of humanity onto Godself in the incarnation, and the transformation of mortality to immortality in the resurrection.

If it is ontology (a matter of being) we are talking about (and it is) there simply could be no other way. For there is no way from us to God, but only from God to us.

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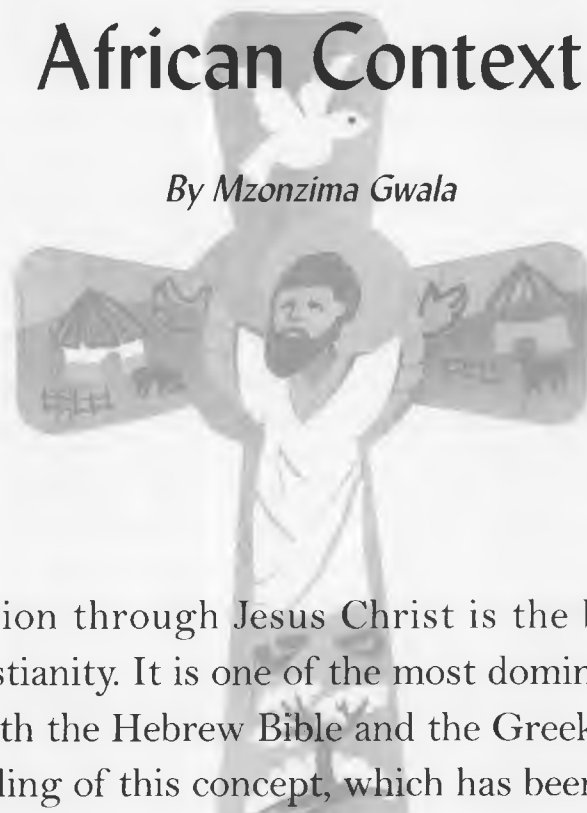
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Discussed: ransom, atonement, propitiation, Greek words, names, kings, global tasks,
culture, personal witness

The Meaning of Salvation in African Context

By Mzonzima Gwala



Salvation through Jesus Christ is the basis of Christianity. It is one of the most dominant themes in both the Hebrew Bible and the Greek text. A clear understanding of this concept, which has been conveyed in a variety of biblical models, may enhance the witness of Adventists worldwide. When these models are correctly understood and implemented, they will point people to Christ. Said Jesus, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32). Unfortunately, these models have not been fully implemented in Africa, which suggests a need for reevaluation if they are to be used in a continuing dialogue that will make sense to Africans.

Models of Salvation

According to McIntyre (1992), models of salvation current among today's Christians are comprised of a mixture of biblical terms such as the Son of Man, Son of God, Jesus, and the Lamb of God, as well as certain metaphysical terms like *hypostasis* and *physis* that originated in Greek thought and were enshrined in Christian traditions through the Chalcedonian Creed.¹ As a result, associated imagery, figures, concepts, and metaphors associated with these models are not entirely biblical in character or origin.

Here are some major models of Christian salvation.

- **RANSOM** (Matt. 20:28, Mark 10:45). In this model, the term *ransom* should not be understood in political, transactional, or commercial terms, as if someone is bought off. Instead, exposition of this term requires the central soteriological notions of sacrifice and expiation. And from whom or what are sinners ransomed? It appears that they are bought from the power of sin and death rather than from the Devil.
- **REDEMPTION** (Eph. 1:7, 14; Col. 1:14). This model of salvation is generally understood as offering the best interpretation of what the death of Christ accomplished. According to McIntyre (1992:32), there is very little linguistic justification to draw a distinction between the Greek words translated as redemption (*lutrosis* and *apolutrosis*), on the one hand, and the word translated as ransom (*lutron*), on the other.
- **SALVATION** (Acts 4:12) and the related words *save* (Heb. 5:5) and *savior* (2 Pet. 1:11). All three of these terms apply to Christ and deal with the question, From what? In Pauline terms, we are saved from the wrath (of God) (Rom 5:9). This model also carries the message that Christ's death saves us from sin, death, and the law, and that it also yields forgiveness, life everlasting, and a new range of wholesome relationships that especially involve God (McIntyre 1992:33). From the Greek term for salvation comes the branch of theology called soteriology.
- **SACRIFICE** (Heb. 5–10). According to Hebrews chapters 5–10, many of the purposes of sacrifice apply to the death of Christ: to cleanse the worshipper from unrighteousness, to seal a covenant, and to give an offering to God. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews juxtaposes the sacrificial system of the old covenant, according to which the priests offered a recurring and incomplete sacrifice, with the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ, who offered himself.²

- **PROPIATION** (1 John 2:2). The word *propitiation* has dropped out of almost all modern translations of the Bible, probably because it originally had harsh overtones. The term could be taken to suggest that God's wrath needed to be placated before he could overlook the wrongdoings of sinners, and that innocent blood needed to be shed to achieve this goal.³
- **EXPIATION** (Rom. 3:25 and 1 John 2:2–4). This word does not appear in classical New Testament soteriological texts except in the King James and Revised Standard Versions. There it appears as a replacement for the word *propitiation*. This model points toward humans, suggests reparation, and implies retrospection in regard to things done wrong or sins committed, with the result that guilt is extinguished and forgiveness secured.⁴
- **ATONEMENT** (Rom. 5:11). The word *atonement* does not appear in any modern translations of the New Testament, nor does the New Testament use this term to describe Christ's death. Most modern translations use the word *reconciliation* instead. In the King James Version, *atonement* appears only in Romans 5:11. In Greek, the root word for this concept is *katallage*, whereas the Hebrew counterpart from the Old Testament is *Kippur*.
- **RECONCILIATION** (Rom. 5:10). Reconciliation of sinners with God through the death of Christ was previously one of the incontestable convictions of the Christian



faith. Nowhere in the New Testament do we read that God needs to be reconciled with us, but Romans 5:8 tells us that we are to be reconciled with him.

Contextualization

How can these models be contextualized and presented? Consider Matthew 28:18–19: “And Jesus came and said to them: ‘Authority given in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all

many Adventists. Adventists need to develop these concepts in ways that resonate with Africans, taking into account differences in culture, language usage, historical background, and geographical features.

In the text of Matthew 28:18–19, a cluster of main words should be noted: authority, name, go, baptize, and teach. Jesus has authority in heaven and on earth, just as the king in African communities has authority over his people. In the African mind, Christ’s authority will have meaning when Christ is seen as a king.

Furthermore, one’s name itself has meaning in the

The word *atonement* does not appear in any modern translation of the New Testament.

nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (NRSV). This text deals with global or worldwide witnessing. How can the gospel be made relevant to the people in Africa or other southern parts of the world?

Let’s look at the concepts of royalty and kingdoms. Despite growing interest among Africans in the modern idea of liberation theology, they tend to be very well acquainted with the more ancient concepts of *kings* and *kingdoms*. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about

African mind. A name is given to project onto its recipient the wishes of the name giver; a name is always connected with an event or an experience; a name represents one’s character.

For instance, my name is Mzonzima, which in my language can be translated as “respectable home.” When I was born, my parents wanted their family’s home to be respectable. In Africa, one’s name characterizes the experiences one will go through in pursuit of parents’ wishes.

Adventists in Africa need to be aware of such correlations as they witness to their communities. This applies not only to pastors, who have received formal theological training, but also to every member. Furthermore, before one goes forth, a member should have found meaning in life through Christ, the savior of the world. All of us are to go, baptize, and teach.

Witnessing in the Adventist Church is a global task that includes every member. The authenticity of what Christians do or say encompasses their conceptual ideology of salvation through Christ, as well as the experience of walking with him in their life. Regardless of how they shape their words, the most important part of their mission will be their own personal witness.

Notes and References

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Introduction to a Discussion

By Roy Branson

The Seventh-day Adventist Church emerged out of a Great Disappointment. The Little Flock first “wept and wept until the day dawned.” Only afterward did its members regain hope and become the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A question that faces a twenty-first-century Adventism seeking renewal is whether vibrant, highly motivating hope can only come after great disappointment. Must crucifixion always precede resurrection? Does hope depend on prior despair? Can upwardly mobile children of upwardly mobile Adventist parents all over the world continue to be drawn to the Great Advent Hope?

The disappointed Millerites of mid-nineteenth-century America regained their hope—their “expectation of something desired,” as the Oxford English Dictionary defines hope—by first gaining a sense of being in the presence of God.

To a community shocked on October 22, 1844, by God’s absence, Ellen White’s visions reassured it of God’s presence. Her vivid reports of a sanctuary vibrating with the sounds of silver trumpets and harps of gold, a city of light, full of the weight of God’s glory, revived hope in the disappointed. The Little Flock’s hope also grew as its members experienced Sabbath worship; their hope soared as they felt their New England chapels suffused with the light and music of the heavenly sanctuary.

ADVENT

HOPE

Adventism’s
Apocalyptic Hope

Of the Time
that Is Not Yet

Death and
the Blessed Hope


*These articles are from presentations
made at the 2005 AAF Conference, in
Silver Spring, Maryland.*



Discussed: Serbian forces, New Guinea students, flowers, imagination, hard work,
the Rapture, justice, literary traditions, remembering

Adventism's Apocalyptic Hope

By Kendra Haloviak



Ten years ago, on July 9, 1995, Serbian forces went into the Bosnian city of Srebrenica, rounded up more than seven thousand Muslim men and boys, and killed them. One of the men who died that day was the husband of Camila Omanovic. Camila called him “my beloved Ahmet.” Facing rape, torture, and death, Camila tried to hang herself. However, two boys discovered her, quickly got help, and saved her life. After all these years, Camila has decided to return to her town. She now works in the same building where she tried to hang herself.

An article in the *New York Times* recounting this part of Camila’s story called her “a woman transformed.” Many and complex emotions and realities brought Camila back to her town, including a job offer as bookkeeper at the memorial for Srebrenica’s dead. In the article she is quoted as saying: “I would like the town to be like it used to be.”

Living on a street of mostly abandoned houses, Camila and eight other Muslim widows have begun planting flowers. The article says: “The women have restarted a competition from before the war that honors Srebrenica’s most beautiful garden. Amid the abandoned houses of the dead, pockets of carefully nurtured red roses, white lilies

and yellow carnations bloom.”

Camila Omanovic’s story highlights several aspects of hope I will explore in this article. First, hope imagines newness. Camila imagines her town of the future teeming with children, and laughter, and all the stuff of daily life, even garden competitions.

Second, hope remembers. Camila’s work at the memorial shows a deep value of memory. Although hers is a focus on the future, she also remembers. She remembers the violence and the horrible loss. She remembers her “beloved Ahmet.”

Adventism’s Second Advent Hope imagines newness, remembers the past, and moves us to transform the world.

Third, hope moves people to begin the hard work of transformation. Camila’s hope for the future and honesty about the past motivate her to rebuild a life and plant beautiful gardens, places where red roses, white lilies, and yellow carnations bloom.

The best of Adventism’s Second Advent Hope contains these same characteristics of hope on a global scale. Our Second Advent Hope imagines newness: nations at peace; cities that are safe; a new earth without global warming, hurricanes, and tsunamis; a new earth rich with plenty for all; new, strong bodies in place of old, tired ones; wounds of all kinds healed.

Our Second Advent Hope also remembers the stories and songs of long ago; remembers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel; remembers Amos’s call to establish justice at the gate, and Luke’s blessing to the world’s poor: yours is the kingdom of God; remembers slavery and exile; and remembers freedom and homecoming.

Our Second Advent Hope also moves us to transform the world: to send missionaries around the globe; to provide whole communities with health care; to establish a worldwide educational system; to change public policies; to challenge unjust systems.

Adventism’s Second Advent Hope imagines newness, remembers the past, and moves us to transform the world.

Adventism has long found its Second Advent Hope message in the pages of the Bible’s apocalyptic works—the book of Daniel, whose second half is apocalyptic, and the book of Revelation, the Christian canon’s only book-length apocalypse.

This article invites us to notice these aspects of the Second Advent Hope through the experiences of worship in the book of Revelation. As worship, Revelation imagines newness, remembers the past, and moves us to transform our world.

Apocalyptic Hope Imagines Newness

Hope is a vision of what can be, the ability to imagine something new, to imagine a better future.

Henri Nouwen, in his work *Creative Ministry*, says

that hope is *not* a form of wish-fulfillment, a “waiting for a Santa Claus whose task it is to satisfy very specific needs and desires, [and] if possible, immediately” (79). Neither is hope optimism. To reduce hope to positive thinking is to misunderstand hope.

Recently, I read the work the *Anatomy of Hope* by Jerome Groopman, a hematologist-oncologist. Groopman is currently a professor at Harvard Medical School. Groopman studies hope in people struggling with very serious health problems. He suggests that hope is the ability of a patient to imagine a better future; to realize that there exists an openness to life...an uncertainty that allows for possibility, newness, hope. Groopman states: “Because nothing is absolutely determined, there is not only reason to fear but also reason to hope” (210–11).

Biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann would emphasize that life contains this aspect of hope, that is, the possibility of newness because of the character of God. Yahweh is a God of possibility and newness. Yahweh is unpredictable! Surprising! Mysterious! Free! Uncontrollable! To use Brueggemann’s phrase, Yahweh is an “alternative-generating God.” Israel could hope, could imagine a better future, because of the character of Yahweh as complex, holy, surprising, new.

This is one of the reasons some current popular views of biblical apocalyptic have it all wrong, and Adventism must not slide into such theology. I am



speaking of fundamentalist Christian interpretations of Revelation like the popular *Left Behind* series, whose theology influences some of the leaders of the United States at the highest levels of government.

Most Adventists are not seduced by the concept of the Rapture. However, do Adventist preachers and Revelation seminar evangelists buy into a similar view of God and the future? Have we reduced a biblical view of the God of possibilities and newness to a God of predictions? Are we approaching the texts in a cut-and-paste way, piecing together a puzzle or code that tells us how to escape tribulation (we prefer, Time of Trouble), which is the violence God sends upon those who disagree with God? Or, do we hold the texts, in all their complexity, as glimpses into God's grandeur? As poems of praise?

And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb:

Great and amazing are your deeds,
Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are your ways,
King of the nations!
Lord, who will not fear
and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy. (Rev. 15:2-4a)

The Rapture is about escaping from this world, a place that will only get more violent as the Advent of God nears. Have Adventists embraced a similar view? Or do we read Revelation as engagement with the world, imagining a better future on earth, ultimately ushered in by a nonviolent God who refuses to leave people behind, but instead comes to dwell with them?!

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 God's people,
and God himself will be with them. (Rev 21:3)

Will Jerusalem be a place of war and violence, as predicted in the approach to Revelation as a blueprint of human history? Or is "Jerusalem" a place of

welcoming and healing; where the gates of the city are left open; where there is no temple, for God is there; where the leaves of the Tree of Life are for the healing of the nations? In short, are our readings of Revelation experiences of horrifying imagination or hopeful imagination?

Adventists often pity our Christian brothers and sisters who embrace the Rapture. But have many of us reduced the God of Scripture, the God of unlimited possibilities, to a God whose hands are tied until all prophecies are fulfilled? States Barbara Rossing in her book, *The Rapture Exposed*: "God does not follow a script!" (90). The narrative of the book of Revelation contains a God who will not be limited, predictable, or even confined to any one time!

In Revelation, God is present and anticipated, past and future. God is sender of letters and resurrected Lord, on a throne in the heavens and with humanity on earth. God is slaughtered and standing, attentive to slaughtered people and furious at the violence that killed them. God is protective of people and eager to receive praise from them. God gives insight and holds back information. God reigns now and eternally. God warns and pleads and promises and demands. God destroys and restores. Far from predictable, this complex God is especially revealed in the hymns found in Revelation's many worship scenes.

The hymns contain elements of prophetic literature—where God is depicted as agonizing with Israel, pleading for people to turn from their evil ways and embrace a future of justice and peace. The hymns are also included within an apocalyptic text—where, typically, God is portrayed as far removed from the human experience, holy, separate. And the hymns reflect the Christian liturgical tradition—where the incarnate God of Jesus remains with humanity through the Spirit in the context of worship.

The various genres or literary traditions found in Revelation remain in conversation with each other; one does not dominate or take over. And there is no resolution of the tension. Instead, God remains portrayed as one who simultaneously agonizes, is holy, and is present with people.

Thus, the hymns of Revelation underscore the complexity of the One seated on the Throne. Humanity praises a God who has come before; a God of the present, and of the future. This is a God who cannot be confined in space or time. Revelation's portrait is of a God of newness, of possibilities: a God of hope.

We can imagine a better future, we can hope, because of a God of possibilities and newness.

The One who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new." (Rev. 21:5a)

Apocalyptic Hope Remembers

For me, Groopman's best insight into the relationship between hope and health is that authentic hope imagines a better future without ignoring the struggles, that is, without denial of the past, without memory loss. In fact, he explores how both denial and memory loss destroy hope. States Groopman:

Hope is the elevating feeling we experience when we see—in the mind's eye—a path to a better future. Hope acknowledges the significant obstacles and deep pitfalls along the path. True hope has no room for delusion. Clear-eyed, hope gives us the courage to confront our circumstances and the capacity to surmount them. (xiv)

Groopman is clear: ignorance is not bliss. False hope is not hope at all. It is an illusion. Instead, the truth about our physical situation must be stated. Then, and only then, is hope possible. Hope means that we do not forget the horrors of Srebrenica, and Rwanda, and Auschwitz. Hope means that we look them squarely in the eye, we speak the truth about the horrors. Such honest remembering sets the stage for hope.

The Greek word *apocalypse* translated into English as revelation means "revealing" or "unveiling," a pulling back to make it possible to see things as they really are. Like Groopman's insights, apocalyptic hope also proclaims "away with illusions!" No more deception! To be serious about hope is to tell the truth.

Revelation tells the truth. It is honest about the problems in the world. In fact, at times, it is brutally honest in its language, to the point of causing some readers to turn the page quickly, or to return to the Gospel accounts. Even Paul is better than this!

We must admit that such scenes of terror and destruction are present in this work and other works of Scripture. What do we do with them? How do we understand the scenes of judgment and destruction? How do we interpret these passages for today, in our present contexts?

I love the introduction to Phyllis Tribble's book,

Texts of Terror. An Old Testament scholar, Tribble talks about her struggle with biblical passages that involve violence against women. In her introduction, Tribble talks about her journey with these texts as similar to Jacob's experience of wrestling with the angel. Like Jacob, Tribble refuses to let them go until they bless her, even if it means leaving with a limp.

If we are serious about the Apocalypse, neglecting certain sections will not do. Neither will simple answers to our questions of violence and destruction. We must wrestle until we are blessed, even if we leave with a limp.

Hope remembers Egypt—the place of slavery, and Babylon—the place of exile. Hope remembers wilderness experiences, and moments when we cry out: "How long, O Lord?" The book of Revelation remembers, and in doing so, reveals both the ways of God and the ways of evil.

Satan's kingdom, beast powers, Babylon, whichever image we want to use, is brutally violent, oppressive, coercive, and...defeated. It is crumbling as we speak, imploding, self-destructing. It is portrayed as a system that ultimately turns against its own adherents. It uses the Harlot, sleeps with her, uses her to make money, then devours her flesh and burns her alive. It oppresses people, placing goods of gold and silver and even types of wood, above human lives. It forces allegiance and worship, loyalty through threatened starvation.

Revelation reveals the ways of evil. It doesn't hide the painful from our sight. It doesn't hold back the horror, but exposes evil. And then it lets us choose.

Another insight from Groopman's study is that hope that is honest in its remembering tempers fear. Bruce Springsteen's recently released album, *Devils and Dust*, contains his hit song of that same title. As I understand the song, Springsteen incorporates images from the point of view of American soldiers in Iraq.

We've got God on our side
We're just trying to survive
What if what you do to survive
kills the things you love
Fear's a powerful thing

Fear is a powerful and dangerous thing. It causes us to kill the very things we love. Consider so many of



the United States' decisions since 9/11. But hope that is honest in its remembering "tempers fear" (199). Hope imagines a better future, even while it recognizes risks and threats. Hope "brings reality into sharp focus" (198) and has the fortitude to resist fear, to imagine alternatives to bombs and guns.

In August, I was in Australia, in the midst of a speaking tour that concluded in Papua New Guinea. After hearing a variety of people tell me about the dangers of New Guinea, I was really afraid. In fact, I can't remember being more afraid of something I was planning to do (unlike our quick moments of fear that are quickly resolved).

As I wrestled with the decision of whether or not I should follow through with my plans, I kept thinking over and over again of the generations of Adventist missionaries whose embrace of the Blessed Hope moved them to do amazingly courageous acts in places that, for them, were strange and often unwelcoming.

I found that same spirit among the missionaries of New Guinea. Their lack of fear in the face of so many things was astounding. It was surpassed only by the courage of the students and staff from New Guinea who enthusiastically give their lives to sharing the gospel in a place where such commitment is not always appreciated by family and village.

All week I listened to the students' stories. I spent my last Sabbath afternoon there listening to theology majors share their experiences in ministry and evangelism during their recent term break. They had gone in groups of four or five all over the country to share the Good News with people.

That evening, as some of the theology majors—about fifteen men and two women—gathered for a short meeting in the sanctuary, I heard myself expressing gratitude for their testimonies and for the hope that they gave me for the Church. I had not thought of saying it. I did not need to say it. I was not being asked to talk with them. I did not realize I was emotional until I began the sentence, then I could hardly finish it. "You give me hope for the future of my church," I said with tears in my eyes.

As I reflect on that experience with the help of Groopman and Brueggemann and the book of Revelation, I realize that the students at Pacific Adventist University give me hope because they helped me imagine/see a future for our church that is better than the present. These are women and men studying and serv-

ing together, improving people's lives. The students also give me hope because they deeply value memory. They value their own stories, the stories of Scripture, and the stories we share as Adventist believers.

Hope looks in two directions: forward to a better future and back to one's heritage, to the resources of one's faith.

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out with a loud voice, saying:

"Salvation belongs to our God
who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!"
(Rev. 7:9–10)

Apocalyptic Hope Moves Us to Transform the World

The third aspect of hope to be considered is its ability to motivate humans to begin the hard work of transformation. Apocalyptic hope is not content with the transformation of an individual or a village. Apocalyptic hope is about transforming the world!

Apocalyptic hope thinks big. It motivates the work of transformation on a grand scale, of the entire cosmos! Apocalyptic hope claims that even dead people will be transformed into living people. Nations will be transformed into communities at peace. Nature will be transformed into places of prosperity and plenty. The entire world will be made new!

Biblical apocalyptic hope is newness in a big way. Such a vision moves those who enter its worship scenes to transform the world!

I am a fan of the television show *The West Wing*. One of the reasons is its hopefulness. The writers of the show believe it is possible for government to make people's lives better. It is honest about huge obstacles: challenges to good government, necessary maneuvering behind the scenes, the ugly sides of politics, endless negotiations and compromises and defeats. But the conviction or hope is that, despite these obstacles, government can transform the whole of American society in positive ways. The lives of millions of people can be improved!

In the conclusion of *Apocalyptic Imagination*, John J. Collins's book on the characteristics of apocalyptic writings, he states:

The apocalyptic revolution is a revolution of the imagination. It entails a challenge to view the world in a way that is radically different from the common perception. The revolutionary potential of such imagination should not be underestimated, as it can foster dissatisfaction with the present and generate visions of what might be. (283)

The symbolic language of the book of Revelation creates just such a revolution in the imaginations of its readers. Its many worship scenes draw contemporary readers into the narrative. In *A Theology of the Book of Revelation*, Richard Bauckham observes that the images of Revelation “create a symbolic world which readers can enter so fully that it affects them and changes their perception of the world” (10).

As readers, we join our voices to the songs of celebration. To enter this narrative is to see with new eyes, to imagine new possibilities. To enter this narrative is to remember the old, old story, and to live it in brand new ways.

Conclusion

In March 2004, CBS News did a piece about three brothers—Sean, Brendan, and Devin Touhy—who wondered how their love of basketball might make a difference in the world. They combined their vision for world peace with their skills and resources to create an organization they call Playing for Peace.

They go into towns in Northern Ireland and in South Africa, where children who have never played together learn the skills of basketball while getting to know each other. In the last few years, seventy-five hundred Northern Irish children—Catholic and Protestant—have participated, and more than one hundred thousand children in South Africa.

Two months before the story aired on CBS, Sean Touhy and his team of volunteers were in South Africa. States Touhy:

we brought a black school, a white school, an Indian school and a colored school out to a township school for a match. All the buses pulled up to the township school. The kids got off. And you could hear a pin drop. I mean everyone was nervous. And [then] these little kids started singing this song. Three young girls in the township school started singing...and the heavens opened up that day. And

one of the township coaches who works for us was surprised they were singing that song.

And I asked, “Well, what [are] they singing?”

He [responded]...“This is the most like [a] ritualized apartheid song.” [He continued...they are singing:] ‘We’re surrounded in darkness. Everywhere is darkness. But now I see a light.’”

The scenes of singing in the book of Revelation stir our hopeful imaginations. As readers/hearers we enter into the scenes, into the holy space. We join the cosmic choirs. We experience the presence of God. We have apocalyptic hope: a hope that imagines newness; a hope that remembers; a hope that moves us to transform the world!

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!

Amen.

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Discussed: maps, Hitler, the Internet, birth pangs, tsunamis, prophets, angels, doubts, seals, trumpets, bowls

Of the Time that Is Not Yet

By Sigve Tonstad

HOPE DEFERRED

Concern for the Christian hope does not veer far off the mark if it begins by considering Jesus' great exposition of the end time. This remarkable disclosure, unjustly thought beneath the dignity of Jesus by many theologians, begins with a question from the disciples.¹ "When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, 'Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?'" (Mark 13:3-4).

In the course of the centuries since this exchange, many people have listened to Jesus' answer. His answer has been interpreted as something approaching a map of the future, and that map has been studied in minute detail. Again and again, by generation after generation, lines have been drawn from the map sketched on the Mount of Olives to specific historical events. Again and again, too, it has been

necessary to erase the lines, to replace them with new ones, and sometimes to repeat the exercise all over again.

The eschatological map has been near and dear to Seventh-day Adventists. Hearing Jesus' words that earthquakes will occur in many places (Mark 13:8), we have asked, as was done after the great Lisbon earthquake in 1755, Was this the earthquake of Jesus' prophecy? Noting

DETAIL, THE SEVENTH SEAL, THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN, THE DIVINE, CHAPTER 8, VERSES 6-7, TREASURY OF BIBLE ILLUSTRATIONS, JULIUS SCHNOOR VON CARLSFELD, DOVER PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1989

Jesus' warning of tribulations (Mark 13:19), we have asked, Is what we see happening now the last tribulation, or at least the warm-up to the last tribulation?

Assuming chronological precision in Jesus' teaching, we have seen that darkening of the sun and the moon will follow tribulation and have asked, Does this point to the Dark Day on May 19, 1780? As for the falling of the stars, we ask whether the meteoric showers seen in New England on November 13, 1833, answer the specification given on the Mount of Olives (Mark 13:24-25).

At least one thing is obvious as we look back on these texts and concrete fulfillments proposed through the centuries: Those who early on saw 1755, 1780, and 1833 as important fulfillments of Jesus' teaching did not imagine room for so much history between those events and the Second Coming.²

Expecting Jesus' coming imminent, they did not imagine that another century and a half would transpire or that the earth's population would increase from 500 million in 1850 to 6.1 billion in 2000. They did not foresee Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, the Holocaust, and the atom bomb. They did not imagine that people would set foot on the moon, or that an American vice president would invent the Internet.

Yet another thing is likely, if not quite so obvious: Those who initially heard Jesus' most comprehensive exposition of the believer's hope and those of us who study these words today have not paid equal attention to all of what Jesus said. We may have been more interested in mapping out the lines between predictions and fulfillment than of the caveat, the pointed reservation, that Jesus offered.

Note this, too, right here in Mark: "When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come" (Mark 13:7). Perhaps the New King James Version reflects the Greek slightly better: "But the end is not yet."

Mark is not done. "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs" (Mark 13:8).

We are no doubt ready to grant leeway to the original listeners. Of course they should have known better. Of course they should have grasped that the end is not yet, not in their time, not by any means, not at all.

The more difficult question is to assess how we should read these reservations in our time. To what extent must we, too, hear these words spoken to us as

we survey the tsunamis, the hurricanes, and the crumbling buildings of the world? To what degree are Jesus' words directed at us, as well?

If we, too, hear him say, "The end is not yet," to what extent do we put the heart of Adventism at risk? Will we then lose sense of the imminence of Jesus' return? Will we become prophets of an indefinite delay? How do we respond to a reality that in our eyes, too, has become a hope deferred?

Hope Affirmed

Voices outside our own community have spotted a weakness in emphasis on the imminence of Jesus' coming, specifically emphasis that tinkers freely with links between prophecy and specific historical events. I take this to be Jürgen Moltmann's concern when he writes, "the experience of two thousand years of delayed parousia makes eschatology impossible today."³

C. Marvin Pate deals even less kindly with the historicist approach, the hallmark of the Adventist understanding of prophecy. According to him,

[W]hile the historicist approach once was widespread, today, for all practical purposes, it has passed from the scene. Its failed attempts to locate the fulfillment of Revelation in the course of the circumstances of history has doomed it to continual revision as time passed and, ultimately, to obscurity...⁴

Whether or not these criticisms are too broadly brushed, as I believe they are, they assume a credibility crisis for those who base Christian hope on a foundation of chronological progression. Yet Christian hope has not been dismissed. On the contrary, we have witnessed an upsurge of interest in the apocalyptic undercurrent of the New Testament, a reappraisal of the sources and a striking realignment that brings the point of gravity in contemporary theology closer to the traditional Seventh-day Adventist preoccupation.

"From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue," writes Moltmann, "Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the



present.”⁵ Another statement by Moltmann’s compatriot, Ernst Käsemann, now a classic, is just as sweeping: “Apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology.”⁶ As this reappraisal gained traction forty years ago, Klaus Koch joined in, asking “whether Christian theology can ever survive in any legitimate form without this [apocalyptic] theme.”⁷

The reappraisal also encompasses the apostle Paul, now seen as a thoroughly apocalyptic thinker. “Resurrection language is end-time language and unintelligible apart from the apocalyptic thought to which resurrection

the Lamb takes the sealed scroll and proceeds to break the seals, one after the other (Rev. 6:1–17). There is an intermission, or an intercalation between the sixth and the seventh seal, a moment of sustained suspense (Rev. 7:1–17). Then comes the climax as the narrator tells the dramatic story: “When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour” (Rev. 8:1).

The narrative has forward movement, from the white horse, to the red horse, to the black horse, to the emaciated ashen horse. The seventh seal is the last.

If we, too, hear him say, “The End is not yet,” to what extent do we put the heart of Adventism at risk?

language belongs,” says J. Christiaan Beker. “Resurrection language properly belongs to the domain of the new age to come and is an inherent part of the transformation and the recreation of all reality in the apocalyptic age.”⁸ It is all about apocalyptic here, and biblical apocalyptic is all about hope.

While we have been busy in our little corner, students of the Bible outside have wrought wonders with the book of Revelation, restoring a measure of prestige to this disparaged book. They have demonstrated its unity and sophisticated composition, drawing out theological themes that on some points may surpass Adventist efforts.

Richard J. Bauckham, a champion of the transformed outlook, describes Revelation as “a work of immense learning, astonishingly meticulous literary artistry, remarkable creative imagination, radical political critique, and profound theology.”⁹

Although hope has been deferred in unsettling ways because our timing was wrong, Christian hope is being affirmed down to the bedrock of the original sources. But what is the character of this hope if chronology is not at its center?

Hope Reconstituted

Let us go back to the Bible to regain our bearings, this time to the book of Revelation. In this book, perhaps the most distinctive structural feature is recurring cycles of seven. These cycles of seals, trumpets, and bowls are especially intriguing in the present context.

In the charged atmosphere of the heavenly council,

I, the reader, cannot be faulted for thinking on the breaking of the seventh seal, It is over; this must be the end. But here, too, as in Mark, the end is not yet; the story continues.

The trumpet cycle begins (Rev. 8:2–9:21). Again, an intermission comes, this time between the sixth and seventh items in the sequence, another period of charged suspense (Rev. 10:1–11). During this intermission, a mighty angel proclaims to the awestruck John, “There will be no more delay, but in the days when the seventh angel is to blow his trumpet, the mystery of God will be fulfilled, as he announced to his servants the prophets” (Rev. 10:6–7).

We eagerly wait for this moment in the narrative, and it finally arrives. “Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15). Reading this, I cannot be faulted for thinking, Now this is it; this, at least, must be the end. But the story continues.

Yet another cycle begins, the bowl cycle, which heralds plagues billed as the seven last plagues (Rev. 15:1–16:21). One after another the angels come, pouring out their bowls. Finally comes the seventh bowl, of the seven plagues, “which are the last” (Rev 15:1). “The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’” (Rev 16:17).¹⁰

Now, I think, beyond the shadow of a doubt the end has come. And yes, indeed, this time the end comes, in a way, although the story continues with

such unexpected convolutions that R. H. Charles, probably the most learned expositor of Revelation of all time, became convinced that an unintelligent disciple of John had tampered with the text.¹¹

The end is not yet in Mark. The end is not yet in the cosmic narrative of Revelation. The end is not yet for those of us waiting for the end, affirming it, and proclaiming it. The end is coming; it will come, but it is not yet.

There is an end, but not only an end to the Christian hope presented in this remarkable manner. There is an end, a purpose—a *telos*—to the hope that seems to us oddly and needlessly deferred. To restive and reviled believers, Second Peter explains that the apparent deferral has a redemptive purpose (3:9). But the purpose of the apparent delay is also revelatory. Indeed, this aspect is more strikingly projected on the apocalyptic canvas than anything else.

If the end is not yet, it follows that the interim—the time between—is not without a purpose. In the sweeping apocalyptic narrative beneath the entire New Testament, the implicit but underexposed premise is the story of the cosmic conflict. The one who took the lead in maligning God, accusing the Creator of being a capricious despot, finds his own scheme exposed for what it truly is. The qualities in God that this persona took the lead in denying become manifest, in what we might call the mother of all shock-and-awe experiences (Isa. 52:14, 15).

Notice, for instance, the hush that falls on the heavenly council when the Lamb appears in the middle, looking manhandled and violently abused (Rev. 5:6).¹² In this revelatory unfolding, we learn that God does not use force; God's rule is a rule of freedom. Indeed, the opponent in this great conflict falls by the logic of freedom, precisely the quality in God that he claimed was missing.¹³

The time between matters, too. For "this must take place" Jesus says of this time in Mark 3:7. Paul affirms the revelatory character of this time in his corrective to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2:1–12). We breathe a sigh of relief as Satan is seized and bound in Revelation (20:1–2), but what becomes of our relief when, at the end of the thousand years, we are told that Satan "must be let out for a little while?" (Rev. 20:3).

Hope is affirmed in these passages, but it is also reconstituted. Those who place their trust in the reconstituted hope should not be dismayed to discover that they find common ground with other voices in our time

that also affirm hope. Even if Moltmann goes too far in exchanging the imminence of the Christian hope for its immanence, he is on to something when he writes,

[T]hose who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it. Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present.¹⁴

Although this reconstituted hope is a scriptural construct, it does not lose its luster if it finds itself agreeing with Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Revelation is not comprehended completely in the beginning, but at the end of the revealing history."¹⁵ This hope loses nothing if it affirms with Richard Bauckham that the eschatological hope has its foundation "in the belief in the Creator's faithfulness to his creation."¹⁶

Nor should we see ourselves upstaged if we find ourselves in agreement with Marilyn McCord Adams: "The goodness of creation will be secured when God has finished God's labors. My claim is that *so long as horrors and vulnerability to horrors persist, God's work is not yet done.*"¹⁷

If our reconstituted hope emphasizes chronology less than values, events less than the character of God, we may have done no more than reconstitute the Seventh-day Adventist version of the Christian hope according to raw material lying there all along, in the densely written scroll of prophecy waiting to be eaten (Rev. 10:9–11).

Hope deferred. Hope affirmed. Hope reconstituted. I submit that this hope is still more than ever the Blessed Hope (Titus 2:13). Those who hold this hope dear will no less than before affirm the words of Jesus, "Behold, I am coming soon" (Rev. 22:20).

Notes and References

1. For a review of the scholarly debate, see G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days: The Interpretation of the Olivet Discourse* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1993).

2. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press), 304–8.

Continued on page 66...



Death and the Blessed Hope

By Matupit Dairus

As I looked through the glass door of the Intensive Care Unit, I noticed that the curtains were closed around the four-year-old girl I had visited earlier that day. When I opened the door, I heard wailing within. As I drew the curtains aside and entered, I saw a nurse removing the life-support machines that had been hooked to the girl.

The mother and the father, both in their late twenties, were wailing beside the lifeless body of the little girl. I put my right arm on the shoulder of the father and listened to him and his wife as they expressed grief over their loss. She was the second of two daughters.

In the typical Papua New Guinea style of wailing, they were talking to their daughter as if she could hear them.

The father said, "Why? Lisa, why did you leave us. I had never refused you anything. I have always given you everything you had asked for. Why, why did you go? You fell ill on Thursday and now you are gone. O, Lisa, I had big plans for you. Why did you leave us?"

By then, the distraught mother was sitting on the bed, cuddling the lifeless

little girl as if to nurse her back to life. "Come back baby. Please, come back baby. My beautiful baby please come back."

I wept with them.

The nurse returned to the room and advised the parents that the body would be taken away. I whispered to the father that I wanted to pray with them before they removed it. So we prayed.

We reminded ourselves of the power of Jesus to heal and save, but I don't know whether they believed it then, especially when the lifeless form of their beloved was lying before them. We also reminded ourselves of our hope that we will see Lisa at the resurrection.

As soon as we ended our prayer, the mother started wailing again. "Lisa, my Lisa, so many good people had gone on

the path you're taking. It's OK, but why didn't you say goodbye to me. This hurts me most, my Lisa."

There on the bed was the lifeless body of Lisa. The color of her body hadn't changed. She looked normal, as if taking a short nap. Three days earlier, she was normal when she had awakened in morning. Her father told me that he had taken her to the hospital later that day because her hands were stiff. In the hospital, she suffered from shortness of breath. She died that Saturday evening.

As I looked at the body, I reminded myself that it was the symbol of Satan's control in our planet. The parents' loud wailing was their way of protesting against death's control over their small family. But their protest amounted to nothing. It was powerless against the cold clutches of death. Their loud wailing could not bring Lisa back to life.

I come from a different culture. I am not familiar with the way you express your grief and sorrow at the death of loved ones. Allow me to share a bit more about our way of grieving in Papua New Guinea before I discuss the blessed hope.

You see, those who are not suffering—those who have everything—don't care about the return of Jesus. The return of Jesus is good news only to those not satisfied with this life. The return of Jesus is the blessed hope only to those who are hurting. They want something radically different from what this life offers.

In my culture, men and women grieve openly. Often, the body of the deceased will stay at home overnight before it is buried. Relatives will come from miles around and sleep in the house. Tarpaulins are usually put up to accommodate those who can't fit into the house. It is our way of saying farewell to the deceased.

During burial, people wail as if they had never seen death before. They openly wail and mourn as if death is a new horror. They grieve in a way that shows their hopelessness and helplessness in the face of death.

Because of sin, death has become a natural part of our six thousand years of human existence. We can't run away from it. It overshadows us from birth until we take our last breath. This situation is ironic. Even though death is a natural part of our human existence, somehow our whole being has not accepted it. Our wailing is our natural way of protesting.

Death is a horror that none of the world's cultures has conquered. All have come up with elaborate practices and rituals to cushion its blow, but

none has been able to solve it.

If we live for another million years, we will never accept death because it was never a part of God's plan. We were created to live forever in happiness with our Creator. Somehow, something somewhere deep within all humans—regardless of cultural background—protests that death is not part of our existence. Something within us longs for something better.

In some parts of my country, it is common to see older men and women with missing or mutilated fingers. These are tallies of death. When a child dies, parents in their grief will knock off a finger by hitting it with a stone against a rock. The number of missing or mutilated fingers indicates the number of children lost. It is a painful way of showing grief.

Death is a painful thing. Some weeks ago, I was talking to a friend who had a mutilated finger. He told me that his mother chopped it off to prevent him from dying. He said that his older brother had died in infancy, so when he was born his mother cut off his little finger with a sharp knife. That was her way of trying to prevent death.

The way people deal with death in my culture has taught me one truth. It has taught me that humans are protesting separation from their Creator and source of life. We don't realize it. But the way we deal with death is a loud and clear message to our Creator and to the entire universe that we are helpless and hopeless under the rule of Satan.

Heathens may turn their backs on God and deliberately worship Satan and his demons. They may offer him elaborate sacrifices, including their lives, but when death comes around, they bitterly wail. By their wailing, they unwittingly admit that they are not happy with things. They are, in effect, calling upon God to act quickly to eradicate sin and death.

In 1994, two volcanoes erupted in my hometown. The eruption destroyed the town and the surrounding villages so the people had to live in care centers further inland. My people are coastal people. They grew up with the sound of waves and seagulls, with the smell of dried seaweed and drift-



wood. They were restless away from home.

They yearned to return to their villages along the coast. They yearned to hear the sound of the waves, the cry of the sea gulls. They longed for the smell of the sea.

I worked in that area a short period at that time. During that period, I conducted and attended more funerals than I ever had before. The displaced people could not cope with the situation.

There are so many displaced people in the world today. There are thousands in Asia displaced by the

ous body." We long for the day when we will have new bodies immune to death, diseases, old age, and degeneration. We long to see Jesus, who will change our lowly bodies so that they will no longer respond to sin and evil.

But unfortunately, some of us are getting too comfortable in our land of exile, just as Jews in Babylon did who had no plans of going back to Jerusalem. The return of Jesus is not a blessed hope for such people. They see his return as an unwelcome disruption of their happiness and way of life.

**“Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself,
just as he is pure” (1 John 3:3).**

tsunami of December 2004. There are thousands in Afghanistan, the Middle East, Africa, and South America displaced by political conflict and economic crisis. There are people from New Orleans displaced by the storm in September. These people yearn to return to their homes.

The apostle Paul tells us that we have all been displaced. We do not even belong to the place we call home.

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies, so that they will be like his glorious body. (Phil. 3:20–21)

Our hearts ache. We tremble at death and are uneasy about life because we do not belong here. We were made for intimate relationship with God. So, with the rest of creation, we “have been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time...[W]e groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom. 8:22–23).

We cry at death because we have been displaced by sin. We are restless and want the day to come soon when we will be reunited with our Creator. Many of us have learned from experience that the promise of the return of Jesus is sweeter when death takes away a spouse, a child, or a close friend.

We long for the day when Jesus “will transform our lowly bodies, so that they will be like his glori-



Like Lot's wife, they have become comfortable even though they live in a neighborhood of rape, perverted morality, and degradation. They do not want to leave modern Sodom and Gomorrah, and they are prepared to burn with it.

If we inwardly wish that Jesus will delay his coming, we are in danger of becoming like Lot's wife. We need to reexamine our relationship with Jesus. What is it that makes you to wish for Jesus to delay his coming?

If you have a problem with someone, you will not feel comfortable when that person is around. You will avoid contact. Or if you cannot avoid that person, you will avoid all eye contact. So why are we silently wish-

ing that Jesus will delay his return? What is hindering our relationship with him?

Some years ago, I attended a seminar organized by a government body. One of the presenters was a young woman. While we were having lunch, she muttered; "I wish Christmas would come quickly." The next day, I heard her say the same thing several times.

I was curious, so I asked why she felt that the days weren't moving fast enough. With a big smile she said; "I am getting married at Christmas and I can't wait to be with my future husband."

Anyone who is in love with Jesus can't help but anticipate his return. That person will truly see the return of Jesus as the blessed hope. They will be actively involved in preparing himself or herself to meet Jesus. As the apostle John puts it; "Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

That is what Adventism is all about. When the spiritual ancestors of our faith heard that Jesus was returning in 1844, they took it very seriously. They preached it in such a way that it changed the hearts of listeners. The sermons exhorted people to repent and prepare to meet God in 1844.

Often during sermons, people would leave and seek out others they had wronged. They confessed their sins in genuine repentance and sought forgiveness of those they had wronged. They struggled long hours in prayer for forgiveness. They wanted to be right with God; they didn't want to be ashamed when Jesus arrived. They wanted to be able to say, "This is our God we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isa. 25:9).

May the hope of the return continue to challenge and spur us on to attempt greater things for Jesus. May our eyes continue to focus on that grand event. And may our expectation for that event radically change our lives.

Matupet Dairus is a Seventh-day Adventist pastor in Papua, New Guinea.

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Introduction to a Discussion

By *Bonnie Dwyer*

Welcome to the Cathedral in time enshrined by God at Creation.
Welcome this blest Sabbath day.
The day of rest and gladness.
The day of ceasing, resting, embracing, feasting.
Welcome, welcome ever welcome, blessed Sabbath day.

What is your response when you meet another Sabbath keeper? Spot an article on Sabbath in the paper? Find a Sabbath book on display at Borders? Is there an immediate interest, a bonding? I've met several of my favorite authors through their love of Sabbath: Abraham Joshua Heschel, Marva Dawn, Lauren Winner, and Wendell Berry—the poet of Sabbath.

I met another prophet that way: Mannilaq, the Eskimo prophet of the arctic in the 1840s. He rested every seventh day because that was the day the great Grandfather in the sky spoke to him. When I read that on the book jacket, I was hooked; I had to know more about him, had to buy the book.

From all these people, I've found a special fellowship, learned to love Sabbath in new ways, discovered new Sabbath truth.

The fellowship of the Sabbath stretches back in time, as well as forward to new people. Within the Jewish community, there is the concept that Sabbath has kept the community together. Certainly it has done that for Adventists. It has also provided Adventists with a major talking point with other Christians. Our forefathers in particular loved debating Sabbath versus Sunday as God's holy day.

But talking and reading about Sabbath are not the same as doing Sabbath.

In this section, we will learn about Sabbath in ways that I hope help you discover new Sabbath truth. We will meet Sabbath in the politics of hunger and homelessness, in the Bible, and in Africa. As Adventists we also do Sabbath—sing, praise God, read Scripture, pray, break bread, and tell stories.

In the metaphorically rich life of theology and religion
Sabbath is concrete and specific
Sabbath is now, not someday
God comes to us, not just at the end of time, but on a weekly basis.
God not only wants to save us, he wants to talk to us—today.
Can we listen as well as we talk?
Can we hear him now?



SABBATH

**Sabbath-ing
Toward Jubilee**

New Testament Sabbaths

**Ethiopia Shall
Soon Stretch Out Her
Hands Unto God**

*These articles are from presentations
made at the 2005 AAF Conference, in
Silver Spring, Maryland.*

Discussed: healing, liberation, consumer culture, values, violence, creative talents,
political order, ethical mandate

Sabbath-ing Toward Jubilee

By Heather Isaacs

The fourth chapter of Luke begins with the Spirit leading a newly baptized Jesus into the wilderness. While there, he is tempted by the Devil three times: first, to make bread from stones to ease his hunger; second, to take power in exchange for worship of power; and third, to replace faith in God with control over God.

Though the temptations suggest the possibility of creating a world many of us would like to live in—a world without hunger or need *now*; a world that we can move and order according to our will *now*; a world where we never have to ask “Where is God *now*?”—Jesus rejects this world of possibility and, by doing so, reveals what his mission is not about.

From this experience in the wilderness, Jesus returns to Galilee. Full of the Spirit, he begins teaching in the countryside and making his way to Nazareth. On the Sabbath, Jesus goes into the synagogue there and proclaims, through the words of the prophet Isaiah, the *true* purpose of his mission: “The Spirit of the

Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Then Jesus rolls up the scroll, gives it back to the attendant, and sits down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue are fastened on him, and he goes on by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:18–21 NIV). Many scholars agree that the Isaiah tradition to which this passage belongs is taken from the Jubilee mandate in Leviticus 25—and it is deliberately intended by the phrase “the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Jubilee was the year of reinstating debt slaves to their freedom. It was inaugurated every fiftieth year, on the Day of Atonement—the Day of Atonement—when the balance among the individual, community, land, and God was restored. Leviticus 25:10, says, “Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.” Liberty, in this context, meant economic freedom as well as personal freedom—being restored to one’s community in mind, body, and spirit.

Jubilee, as a radical extension of the Sabbath years, was defined by the broad remission of debts and restoration of debt slaves to their property. The Sabbath years included a number of rest mandates for the land and the people who worked the land. Exodus 23:10–11 reads:

For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest your crops, but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

As my favorite summation of Jubilee states in Leviticus 25:19: “Do not take advantage of one another, but fear your God.”

Though it is debated how often Jubilee was practiced—if at all—the promise of liberation that it provided continues to feed the religious imagination of those willing to sincerely consider God’s design for social and economic relationships.

What can we learn from the Sabbath year and Jubilee practices of letting the poor glean from untended fields and of canceling debts within the community on a regular schedule? What does it mean for us as individuals and as a corporate body to find at-onement? How do our practical needs, cultural ideals, and religious expectations shape our responses to the Jubilee mandate? What holds us back from proclaiming that *this* is the year of the Lord’s favor?

As Christian practitioners of Sabbath, Seventh-day Adventists should have a readily accessible theology of Jubilee. Publication of Roy Branson’s edited volume, *Festival of the Sabbath*, by the Association of Adventist Forums in 1985 suggests that at least a handful of Adventist scholars are apparently sensitive to this need, but their awareness has not fil-

tered out widely among rank-and-file members. The writers of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* dismiss the significance of the annual Sabbaths and omit the concept of Jubilee altogether. They write:

While the weekly Sabbath was ordained at the close of Creation week for all mankind, the annual sabbaths were an integral part of the Jewish system of rites and ceremonies instituted at Mount Sinai...which pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah, and the observance of which terminated with His death on the cross. (252–53)

Assuming that this supersessionist claim were true and the Jewish system of rites and ceremonies did, in fact, terminate with the death of Jesus on the cross, we are left to grapple with Jesus’ own life and ministry—as represented here in Luke—as an embodiment of Jubilee that cannot be terminated.

In their book, *The Biblical Jubilee and the Struggle for Life*, Ross and Gloria Kinsler write, “the acceptable year of the Lord’ or the ‘year of the Lord’s favor’ that Jesus proclaimed as the coming of God’s reign was no longer strictly one year in seven or one year in fifty but a new age of perpetual liberty for all God’s people from every kind of oppression” (104–5). If this is true, then Jesus did not terminate the practice of the annual Sabbaths; he radicalized them into an ethic of daily living.

Currently, Seventh-day Adventism proclaims Sabbath in its narrow form—as a specific weekly occurrence. Knowing which day is Sabbath and how the Sabbath day should be kept has been central to Adventist identity and theology for the greater part of the Church’s history. Our eschatology gives special importance to the role the seventh-day Sabbath will play at the end of time. And a lot of ink has been spilled defending Saturday as the only true Sabbath.

So the traditional Adventist view of Sabbath needs broadening if we are to embrace the Sabbath/Jubilee mandate. As we are daily and tragically reminded, the Sabbath the world needs is not one day off in seven. Our world can’t take a day off from its poverty, from its wars, from its AIDS. Our communities can’t take a day off from their overcrowded prisons, struggling families, and drug abuse. Our land cannot take a day off from its ecological crises and unsustainable development. In order to meet the world’s pressing and deep needs, we must Sabbath in a new way, and for a different time.

Yet our commitment to keeping the Fourth Commandment may still be a resource for us as we consider a Sabbath/Jubilee theology. Fundamental Belief 19 begins with the statement:

The beneficent Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath.

Being a commandment-keeping people is part of the identity of being Adventist. Yet the meaning of the "fourth commandment" here is found in Exodus 20, where Sabbath keeping is linked to the six-day creation week. But Deuteronomy 5's version of the same commandment, which connects the Sabbath to a history of God's liberating action, is excluded.

If Adventists were to emphasize keeping the "Fourth Commandments," how would our current orientation toward God's good creation—which we celebrate and remember weekly—be challenged by a commandment to remember God's commitment to liberate that same creation each week? How would our relationship to the Sabbath change?

Living out Sabbath/Jubilee is not easy. Perhaps that is why it has been practiced so little. It runs against many of our assumptions about what is fair, what is comfortable, what is right. It's much easier to keep the Sabbath day—with all its unambiguous do's and don'ts—than to live out the radical Sabbath that Jesus himself lived: a Sabbath of healing, liberation, restoration, and justice.

The same temptations that Jesus encountered in the desert meet us on the streets, in our homes, in our churches. David Walsh, author of *Selling Out America's Children: How America Puts Profits before Values and What Parents Can Do*, identifies "six key values that dominate mass media: 1) Happiness is found in having things, 2) Get all you can for yourself, 3) Get it all as quickly as you can, 4) Win at all costs, 5) Violence is entertaining, 6) Always seek pleasure and avoid boredom."

Rejecting these values for those of Jubilee is the practice of Sabbath. Sabbath-ing in this way means



that rather than finding happiness in things, we refrain from the impulses of consumer culture and with more awareness of how our consumer habits can, in the language of Jubilee, cause us to "take advantage of each other." Rather than getting all that you can for yourself—because the world is a dog-eat-dog kind of place and that's just the way it is—we advocate for fair labor practices and living wages for workers in our local and global communities.

Refusing to get it all as quickly as we can, we view rest as a much-needed gift from God and not as a sign of indolence. Instead of winning at all costs, we work for the victories yet to be had in the liberation of humans from spiritual *and* physical slavery. It means that rather than finding violence entertaining or becoming numb to the images on the nightly news, we feel heartbreak for the world and that we speak the best truth we can about the sources of violence found in our own religious traditions and cultural communities.

Rather than always seeking pleasure and avoiding boredom, we find our pleasure in the sometimes difficult pursuits of being still, nurturing our personal relationships, expressing our creative talents, and valuing the earth as God's alone and not ours to do with as we please.



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

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Admittedly, this path of Sabbath-ing toward Jubilee is difficult for any person, family, or organization to navigate in this world. You cannot preach the good news to the poor, proclaim freedom to the prisoners, or release the oppressed without inviting political attention and ire. On the day Jesus spoke in Nazareth, he was rejected by his home congregation.

The Gospel of Luke elaborates further, adding details of a physically violent opposition. Throughout the New Testament, the values of the Kingdom of God that Jesus taught threatened not only the religious establishment of his day but also the political order. It would be his commitment to these values that would eventually send him, and many of his followers, the way of the cross.

Seventh-day Adventists have never had a problem opening themselves up to the idea of persecution—in some ways, our theology invites it as a way of justifying what we believe. During the time of trouble, for example, the true Sabbath keepers will be persecuted—and justified—for their right belief in the right Sabbath day. But for more than 150 years this "time of trouble" has been our theological bogeyman—forever lurking just around the corner but always out of sight.

In light of the biblical vision of Jubilee, which extends from the Hebrew prophets to the early Christian communities, this kind of Sabbath-day theology seems irrelevant and irresponsible. We are living in a time of trouble now—not as Seventh-day Adventists, but as humans. Yet when we preach that Jesus Christ is coming soon to save us, when we believe that justice and redemption are out there, on some distant horizon waiting for Jesus to bring them down with him in the clouds—when we believe all this, we have little to no ethical mandate to change this world for the better now.

But—as it turns out—we do have such a mandate in the Sabbath/Jubilee. How we choose to respond to that mandate determines whether we can truly call ourselves Sabbath keepers.

A recent graduate of San Francisco Theological Seminary, Heather Isaacs has started a year-long clinical pastoral education residency at the Veterans Administration hospital in Palo Alto, California.

New Testament Sabbaths

By Herold Weiss

When Martin Luther found himself defending his understanding of the gospel before the ecclesiastical authorities of his day, part of the problem was that the two sides were working with diametrically different views of the nature of the Scriptures.

According to the traditionalists, the Scriptures are by nature opaque, and therefore difficult to read. It is easy for the laity to go astray in its interpretation. It is necessary, therefore, for the church to guide the laity in the reading of the Scriptures in order to prevent the rise of misguided and flatly erroneous interpretations.

Luther, to the contrary, maintained that the Scriptures are diaphanous, and therefore easy to read. Their meaning is not hidden. The Bible is transparent, and any lay person inspired by the Spirit that inspired the authors of the Scriptures may, without any ecclesiastical guidance, attain to the true understanding of the gospel.

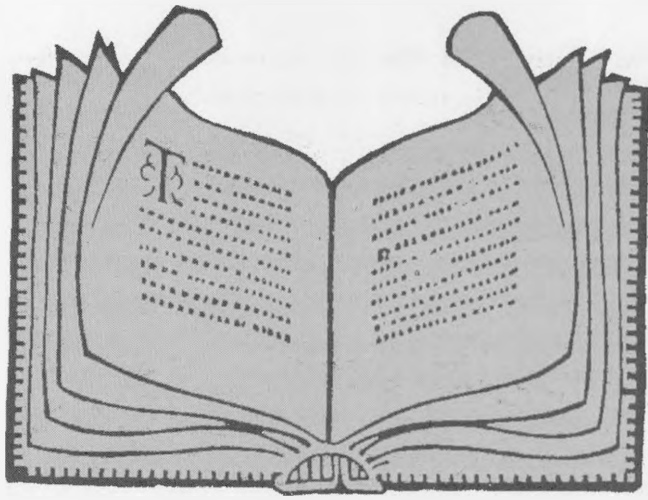
Five hundred years after Luther, some

of us are convinced that declaring the Bible a transparent document from which one may obtain proof texts is more likely to lead to the proliferation of denominations than to a serious wrestling with the meaning of the Scriptures and the message of the gospel. We have come to terms with the indispensable agency of the authors of the Bible.

To pretend that the gospel arrived in a pristine, perfectly sanitized, pure form, untouched by any human agency is to negate the evidence. Each social unit makes sense of its life within the confines of its own symbolic universe. Its cultural artifacts lack transcendence.

It is not irrelevant to debate whether translations of the Bible for the Eskimos





should render "Lamb of God" as "Seal of God." The Eskimos have no word for lamb since the species is not part of their world. The role of lambs in the Near East is played by seals in the Eskimo's world.

What is to be given priority, the need to make the gospel accessible to the Eskimos, or the need to be faithful to the letter of the text? For some, to make seals carry the burden of meaning accorded to sheep in the text is to detract authority from the text and to open the door to relativism, the deadliest of all theological sins.

Well, the fact is that we live in a sinful world and relativity, as Einstein taught us, is in its very structure. Those who claim to escape relativity pretend not to have their feet on planet earth. But, of course, they do. Whether we like it or not, we live in the postmodern world, and its cultural trademark is to have looked relativity in the face.

Some react in panic and fight it, much to their own discomfort. Others of us see in it something that needs to be taken into account. To recognize that the biblical authors wore colored glasses that imprinted particular tonalities to their accounts is not to minimize their authority or to set ourselves as superior to them.

Rather, it is to prevent a short circuit in the hermeneutical circle. It is to recognize the roles played by the writers of Scripture and the symbolic universes within which they lived. To leave them out of the picture is a trick played by those who wish to usurp for themselves the power of the text.

The gospel in its first expression was presented in a distinctive cultural dress. Within the culture in which it was written, a text may very well have been transparent, but it was not pristine. It was delivered by human agents who could only understand the gospel within their own symbolic universe.

Knowledge is possible only within the cultural context of the social group that determines the mean-

ing of the language. Language is a cultural tool. Within a given culture, the symbolic universe integrates the cultural signs into a coherent system of meanings. Therefore, the study of the Scriptures calls for a cross-cultural reading.

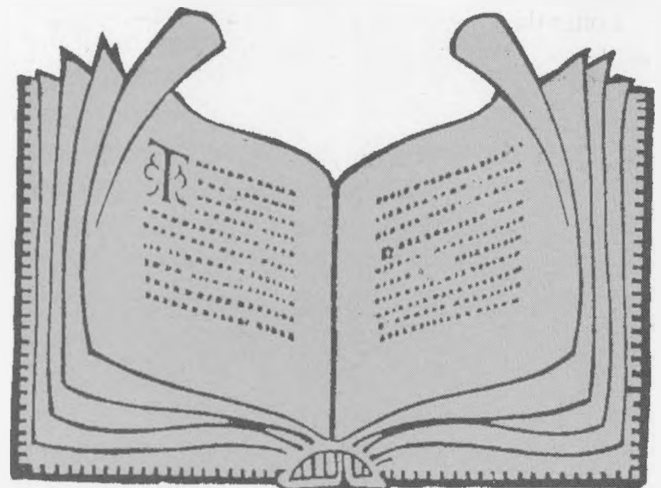
The first Christian disciples who experienced the Risen Christ as a living Lord gave expression to their experience and testified to their faith within their own particular symbolic universe. The New Testament does not witness to the gospel in a homogenized, sterilized, transparent vacuum, but in the language of Christians who lived in different symbolic universes that remain rather opaque to us.

This means that from the very beginning the way in which they began to make sense of the presence of a Living Jesus among them was different, conditioned by the symbolic universe that enabled them to make sense of their daily living. Thus, these days we are again involved in a debate as to whether the Scriptures are transparent or opaque.

At issue now is not the role of the Church in determining the meaning of Scripture, but the role of the culture in which the Scriptures were written.

Early Christian views on the Sabbath illustrate the argument made above. Working with an apocalyptic symbolic universe, some Christians saw in the Sabbath a barometer of piety. Other Christians, working with a Hellenistic symbolic universe, saw the Sabbath as the tangible manifestation of their hope.

When we look at the references to the Sabbath in the Synoptic Gospels we see that they involve controversies about what can lawfully be done on the Sabbath. In them, we find Jesus being accused of having done something that according to the reli-



gious authorities of the day was not permissible.

In these stories everyone agrees that the observance of the Sabbath commandment is essential. Those who wish to observe it, however, still have to decide *how* to observe it. The commandment says, "In it thou shall not do any work." But the Law does not specify what "work" is.

The Jews were at the time actively involved in defining what work is and, therefore, what is not permissible. Many Christians also got caught in the task of defining work in order to observe the Sabbath properly. This way of being concerned with the Sabbath considers it a commandment that forbids work.

If one is an apocalypticist who expects the final judgment to take place any time soon, one would be particularly concerned with being able to stand at the judgment. Within an apocalyptic outlook, the Law plays a prominent role.

Thus, the nearness of the judgment only serves to intensify the demands of the Law. The Synoptic Gospels, which explicitly connect the Parousia to the destruction of the Temple, are very concerned to show that Jesus exemplified Sabbath observance for those who will enjoy life in the Kingdom.

The most important saying of Jesus in these Gospels is the statement found only in Mark 1:27: "The Sabbath was made for human beings, not human beings for the Sabbath." Traditionally, this statement has been interpreted to argue that Jesus is liberalizing Sabbath observance by pointing out that keeping the Sabbath should not be burdensome. The focus is on the welfare of human beings.

Another reading of the text is also probable. The Sabbath is not a peculiar blessing for the Jews, as most Jews at the time claimed. Here Jesus is saying that the Sabbath has been given to all humanity, not just the Jews. All those who wish to stand approved at the Judgment, including Gentiles, must observe the Sabbath.

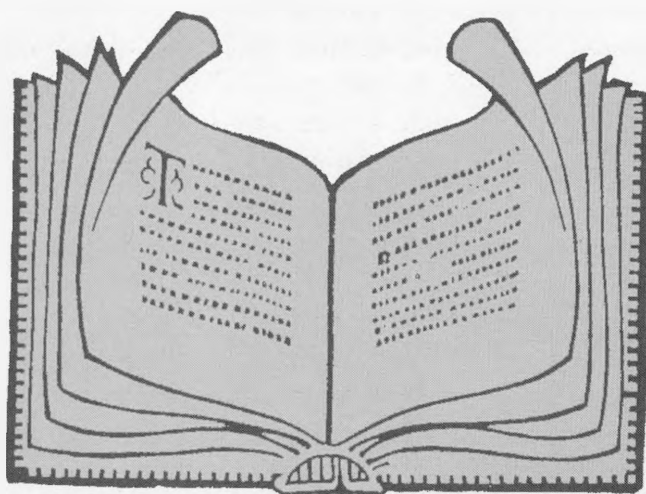
I offer this other reading not as a superior alternative, but as complimentary. Apocalypticism has a universalistic outlook and highlights the necessity of obedience. Thus, in the Synoptic Gospels, which are highly apocalyptic, the proper observance of the Sabbath by all human beings is demonstrated by Jesus' words and example.

It is somewhat disconcerting that in the epistles of the New Testament, the word *Sabbath* appears only in the epistle to the Colossians. Clearly, the reference is polemical. The author of the epistle is engaged in defending Sabbath observance against other Christians who consider it unnecessary.

The passage says, "Therefore, let no one judge

you on account of what you eat or drink, or in reference to festivals, new moons or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to be, but let them judge the body of Christ [on account of what you eat or drink, or in reference to festivals, new moons or Sabbaths]" (2:17). Here the disagreement is not about which activities are permissible on the Sabbath, but whether it should be kept at all.

The letter makes clear, however, that all the participants in the debate are concerned with perfection. It is, therefore, surprising to find no references to the Law. This tells us that we are in a different symbolic universe. The author of the letter carefully points out



that the Sabbath is not a law from the past but a prophetic anticipation of the future. The Sabbath proclaims the reality of something that is not being experienced.

While using the traditional calendric string "festivals, new moons and Sabbaths," the author of Colossians is giving to the observance of the Jewish festal calendar a new Christian point of reference. These festal days are shadows of things to be. Of course, the whole letter to the Colossians is permeated with references to the future manifestation of the saints in glory, and the core of the gospel is defined as "Christ in you the hope of glory" (1:27).

The author is preserving the traditional piety of Judaism by giving it a new point of reference. The Sabbath is a foretaste of future glory. The symbolic universe of the letter to the Colossians, it must be noted, is one that also universalizes salvation, but sees



the Risen Christ as the bodily fullness of divinity. As the "first born of the dead," he has brought peace to the universe and integrated all things into a whole.

At the cross, the cosmic body of Christ was made perfect, just as circumcision perfects the body of human males. In his body, creation has been reconstituted. There is a new world order where peace and love reign, and where in the future the saints will live in glory. The Sabbath is the present shadow visible on this earth of the cosmic reality that will be manifested soon. The author says: "your life is now hid with

which Christ is to be understood, and the Law plays no role in this debate. Rather than seeing the significance of Christ in the words and example he gave while on earth, at Colossae Christ is recognized as the One whose risen body integrates the whole universe bringing peace.

In other words, the cosmic conflict between good and evil is over. The principalities, powers, thrones, and dominions of the air have been reconciled in him (1:20). He is already the head of all rule and authority (2:10).

The dualistic cosmos of apocalypticism does not belong here. Those living on this earth should not be

The Bible is not transparent. It is essential to identify the cultural matrix in which the different books were written if one is to make sense.

Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (3:3b-4).

Here the Sabbath is seen within a symbolic universe where the cross of Christ has already achieved peace. All the principalities, powers, lords, and dominions of the cosmos have been integrated into the body of the Crucified and Risen Christ. He is the Head of the cosmic Pleroma and, at the same time, the totality of all things in the universe.

In anticipation of the appearance of this Divine Head, the Firstborn of the Dead, Christians keep the Sabbath as an affirmation that their salvation has been accomplished. Their perfection does not take place by means of law observance, but by their participation in the perfected body of the crucified.

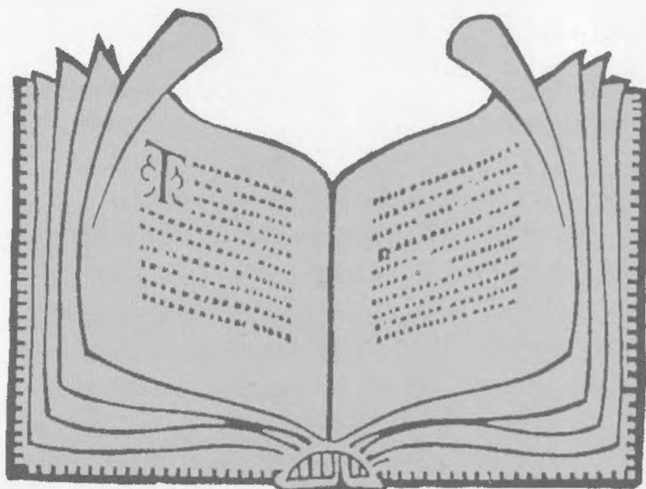
The arguments for and against Sabbath observance among the Christians at Colossae resonate within a symbolic universe primarily concerned with the way in

spending their energies in ascetic practices. Rather, they must make sure they are mystically integrated into the cosmic body of the crucified and risen Christ. Observance of the Sabbath anticipates the glory of the life to come just as a shadow anticipates the arrival of the body that projects it (2:17).

By means of these two rather sketchy outlines of understandings of the Sabbath among the early Christians I wish to make two points. One is that early Christianity was not a unified movement where everyone agreed on how to understand the significance of "the things that had been accomplished among them," to paraphrase the author of Luke-Acts.

The other point is that the Bible is not transparent. It is essential to identify the cultural matrix in which the different books were written if one is to make sense. Early Christianity was not made of one piece of cloth woven in heaven. The New Testament witnesses to significant variations in the way early Christians made sense of the Christ event.

These variations testify to the power and the limits of cultural artifacts, and argue for the legitimacy of our own efforts to find ways to foster cross-cultural dialogues with the Gospel. We may learn from the witnesses in the New Testament that there is more than one way to significantly observe the Sabbath within our own culturally conditioned symbolic universes.



Herold Weiss, a frequent contributor to *Spectrum*, is professor emeritus of religion at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana. He is the author of *A Day of Gladness: The Sabbath among Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (Columbia, S.C.: South Carolina Press, 2003).

Ethopia Shall Soon Stretch Out Her Hands Unto God

By Charles Bradford

Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. (Ps. 68:31)

The Importance of Africa

Arising chorus of theologians and historians of religion is reporting on the dramatic growth of Christianity on the African continent. “While the story of Christianity’s spread in Africa is nothing less than awesome, it is also nothing more than the work of God,” says Ogbu Kalu.¹

Philip Jenkins is one of the leading spokesmen of this new awareness. “We are living through one of the transforming moments in the history of religion worldwide...” he writes. “The number of Christians [on the African continent] increased staggeringly, from 10 million in 1900 to 360 million by 2000.”²

Observes Andrew Walls:

It is now clearly the case that Christianity has become so much a part of the fabric of sub-Saharan African life that scholars in a wide variety of disciplines who want to undertake serious study of Africa need to know something about Christianity. The converse is equally true; anyone who wishes to undertake serious study of Christianity these days needs to know something about Africa.³

In biblical terms, Cush/Ethiopia refers to what we today call Africa. Zephaniah, himself a son of Cush, speaks of the inhabitants of the lands “beyond the rivers of Ethiopia” (Zeph. 3:10), who bring gifts to Yahweh. The prophecy of Psalms 68 describes a people thought of as estranged, far away from God, who turn to him en masse.

This is happening in our time. I call it the New Reality. Observers speak of the dramatic suddenness of this turn to Christianity in terms that echo the language of Psalms 68. Some have called the twentieth century the Century of African Christianity.

The message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are part of this reality. Membership in sub-Sahara Africa grew from 53,101 in 1945 to 3,611,255 in 2000, a growth rate of 680 percent! Seventh-day Adventist world



president Jan Paulson calls this growth “explosive.”

On the African continent, there are three divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist world church. The membership of these divisions totals about four million members. Five to seven million people attend worship services across Africa on any given Sabbath. The continent also has a large number of Sabbath keepers who are not Seventh-day Adventists.

Adventists, Africa, and the Sabbath

The connections among Adventists, Africa, and the Sabbath reach far back in time. In 1860, Ellen G. White urged J. N. Andrews, Adventism’s leading scholar of that day, to write a book on the Sabbath in history. The first edition of the resulting book, *History of the Sabbath*, published in 1862, informed all subsequent Adventist writing on this subject.

Ellen White used Andrews’s work extensively while producing *The Great Controversy*: “The history of the churches of Ethiopia and Abyssinia is especially significant,” she wrote (577).

In lands beyond the jurisdiction of Rome there existed for many centuries bodies of Christians who remained almost wholly free from papal corruption.... These Christians believed in the perpetuity of the law of God and observed the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Churches that held to this faith and practice existed in Central Africa and among the Armenians of Asia. (63)

The world lost sight of Central Africa’s Christians during the Middle Ages, according to *The Great Controversy*, but they enjoyed freedom to exercise their faith. Eventually, the emperor of Abyssinia acknowledged the pope as vicar of Christ and they lost their freedom. *The Great Controversy* continues:

An edict was issued forbidding the observance of the Sabbath under the severest penalties.... After a terrible struggle the Romanists were banished from [Abyssinian] dominions, and the ancient faith was restored. The churches rejoiced in their freedom. (577)

The Sabbath in Africa Project

In 1991, I established the Sabbath in Africa Project. According to its statement of purpose, the project exists “to investigate and document historical and con-

temporary expressions of Sabbath consciousness on the African continent.” One result is my recent book, *Sabbath Roots: The African Connection*, which explores Africa’s ancient Sabbath keepers.

As the book explains, the Sabbath message being proclaimed throughout the world today owes much to Africa. This broader message, writes historian Douglas Morgan in a review of the book, “calls into being a community made up of every ‘race, tribe, language, and nation,’ united in worshiping ‘the maker of heaven and earth’ (Rev. 14: 6–7), living together in love and justice. What truth could be more for the present than that?” asks Morgan.*

But the project’s interests extend beyond history. The project also points to the fulfillment of prophecy. “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth,” reads Isaiah, “it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (55:11).

The Sabbath in Africa Project has become part of an important response to increasing fascination with African religion. In addition, it represents widespread multid denominational interest in the biblical Sabbath. In these ways, *Sabbath Roots* has become a powerful witness.

Ethiopia/Cush is important only as a service instrument to the world. Its value is not determined by its antiquity, or its wisdom, or its scientific genius and cultural achievements, but by Yahweh’s decree. The Sovereign Lord, with whom word and deed are the same, says, “Ethiopia/Cush shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.”

Once again, African Christians are directing the world’s attention to the God of the Sabbath.

Notes and References

1. *Christian History Magazine* 70 (spring 2003): 7.
2. Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1, 5.
3. Andrew F. Walls, “Consultation of Global Christian Historiography,” forthcoming.
4. Douglas Morgan, “Restoring the True Sabbath in the Ancient Kingdoms,” *Spectrum* 31.1 (winter 2003): 74.

In 1990, Charles Bradford retired from the presidency of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists. The Ministerial Association of the General Conference published his book *Sabbath Roots: The African Connection* in 1999.

Discussed: frontiers, marginality, moral decisions, status quo, heritage,
law, kingdom, leadership role

Christianity at the Frontiers

*Lamin Sanneh's Response
at the AAF Conference, October 8, 2005*

I've been asked to respond to what I've heard and what I've learned since I arrived at this conference. I've learned a great deal. Yesterday was quite a feast. It was like a banquet; we had a veritable cornucopia of riches. There is time now only to nibble at some of the crumbs that I have been able to take away with me.

I've never met Seventh-day Adventists before; this was my first exposure. But I was struck by several things from yesterday and today. Seventh-day Adventists—at least this particular group—come to the tradition with many, many caveats and many disclaimers that struck me.

On the one hand, you can say there is evidence of self-criticism going on within the community itself. You don't take yourself for granted, and you don't take your teachings for granted. But when I listened to the lectures and the emphasis on salvation, hope, mission, and Sabbath, and tried to process the caveats and disclaimers that I heard, I'm constrained to

think that one could reposition Seventh-day Adventism not in a spectrum, like the title of your journal, but on what I would like to call "the frontier."

This is what I mean. There are three ways to look at the history of religion and the history of Christianity. Those three ways we can group under one rubric: the idea of marginality. I heard a lot about how Seventh-day Adventists really are marginal, a small group within the broad spectrum of Christianity. I gather that you do not claim to represent the spectrum of Christianity. That's why I mention the frontier. Because you don't represent the spectrum, in a sense, your mission is very



much on the margin. That means that you bring to the idea of marginality a theological component.

In American culture, we are busy about integrating people who have been marginalized, whose rights have been denied and who have been discriminated against. We are bringing them into the mainstream. In that sense, we are busy in America mainstreaming people. That kind of marginality is what I call "imposed marginality." The displaced, the oppressed person, the woman whose voice has been silenced, those who have been excluded, have been excluded against their will, a kind of imposed marginality.

From the point of view of religion they don't have much agency. Nobody listens to them; their voices do not count. Nobody sees them because of the color of their skin. Nobody reflects on what they say because they are not capable of abstract thought. They are not organized; they are not rich. They are marginalized in a sociological-economic sense. In an economic sense, they are denied the rights available to the majority. That kind of economic marginality, of economic deprivation, is something that we all want to overcome.

There is a second kind of marginality that you might call "functional marginality." It is the marginality that comes from the fact that you and I are mobile. We move, take jobs in different cultures, in different cities. I have students that come to me in New England from different parts of America. For many of them, it is a cultural shock to be in New England.

This kind of marginality is functional. It is a result of choices we make to go to school, to get a job, to get married. We move and find ourselves a minority in that community where we happen to be. But that is different from the first kind of marginality. This is the marginality to equip oneself, to get married, to get a job to find a new center in life. It is not deprivation.

But there is a third kind of marginality, which is the marginality of those who have reflected on mainstream values and find the status quo unacceptable. So they make a decision, a kind of moral decision. To explain this moral decision, let me use the metaphor of the academy. I have my professional degree, my publications, I am offered tenure, I have a chair, but when I reflect on the condition of the world, I'm not sure that is what I want to give my life to. So I opt out, I check out. And this checking out is a form of moral scrutiny that I want to bring the world to.

Martin Luther King is a good example of this. There are many, many others—Gandhi, Mother

Theresa, people like that—who could do very well in the world as it is, but who decide no, no, no, we have a different calling, a different vocation. This kind of marginality is by choice. It is not against your will, and it is not accidental; it is not a function of the geography of mobility.

I suggest to you that this kind of marginality—moral marginality, ecological marginality, whatever—is absolutely crucial to the religious life. What it represents is a challenge to the status quo, a challenge to people settling for the way we do things. This form of marginality challenges the system. It is not a ghetto marginality, which says I will eschew the world, the world is evil, I will not be contaminated. That kind of marginality is permanent, and it makes you a historical fossil, irrelevant to the mainstream and to the culture.

The moral marginality that I am talking about is the marginality that is willing to take everything and challenge it—the mainstream and status quo values—in order to transform it. This is the marginality that takes religious vocation and sets it on the path of pilgrimage, for here we have no abiding place. It is a marginality that looks forward to the consummation of truth and right. I have a suspicion that Seventh-day Adventists belong to this critical edge, critical margin.

The idea that I get from some of the remarks is that somehow you should become a bourgeois organization in the business of mainstreaming everybody else to partake of the good things of this life. I think that would be a fatal betrayal of your own heritage, insights, and the peculiar role that you can play in the history of the world. There is no time more auspicious to talk about the Sabbath—as we heard from Herold Weiss—as obedience to the law or the fulfillment, looking forward to the kingdom.

It seems to me that you have been peculiarly placed at this juncture in the history of Christianity to study the dynamics of other movements. You are particularly placed to take a leadership role in the consummation of Christianity from the hinterlands, from the frontier.

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Seventh-day Adventist Higher Educational System

World Summary of Tertiary Schools, Teachers, and Students

December 31, 2004

Source: Education Department, General Conference of SDAs

Division	Schools	Teachers	Students
East Central Africa Division	6	283	3,883
Euro-Africa Division	7	125	842
Euro-Asia Division	3	29	349
Inter-America Division	13	1,016	12,391
North American Division	15	2,469	23,318
Northern Asia-Pacific Division	6	263	7,494
South American Division	12	1,267	16,871
South Pacific Division	4	151	1,917
South Africa-Indian Ocean Division	4	74	3,108
Southern Asia Division	6	293	2,039
Southern Asia Pacific Division	14	724	13,813
Trans-European Division	8	219	2,078
Western Africa Division	3	230	4,451
Totals	101	7,143	92,554



Point/Counterpoint in the Discussion of Adventist Higher Education

By Steve Pawluk and Don Williams

The wind blows where it wills, but you can't see it. (John 3:8)

Critical challenges remain to Seventh-day Adventist higher education that, if ignored, will compromise the core reason for our education ministry. Among these are the following:

- The risk of institutions sliding into secularism, due particularly to rapidly changing institutional demographics (increased percentages of non-SDA faculty and students) and perceived financial exigency
- The lack of awareness and/or ownership of the philosophy of SDA education by some administrators and faculty
- The lack of defined mission-focused paradigms for non-traditional SDA higher education institutions, such as those with a specific evangelistic or community thrust.¹

So begins the report accepted by Annual Council on Wednesday, October 12, 2005. This *Final Report* created by the General Conference Commission on Higher Education was the third version of the committee's work and did not sound as dismissive as its predecessors. But our experiences on two Seventh-day Adventist campuses that are very different in organization and mission lead us to suggest that the future of Adventist higher education may be much more optimistic than indicated in the General Conference reports.

The first such General Conference report, in 2003, did not fully address some of the initial terms of reference voted by the Annual Council when the commission was created in 2000, according to Andrea Luxton, General Conference associate director of education. That first report did not adequately enable denominational leaders, especially some of those outside of North America, to regulate institutions or programs in ways that ensured their Adventist mission focus or that supported quality educational offerings.

A second draft was produced in 2004 that provided increased leverage, but it did not sufficiently recognize the complexity of the higher education context in areas of the world where Adventist institutions of higher education have developed significant autonomy and have strong external accreditation mechanisms.

The 2005 *Final Report* attempted to speak to higher education in the world church, providing direction and options for regulation through institutional accreditation by the Adventist Accrediting Agency (and for theological programs by the International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education [IBMTE]). These bodies would play a broader role for nascent and non-accredited institutions and a more mission-focused role with accredited and well-established institutions.

In a meeting with the chief academic officers of North American Adventist colleges and universities in November, Luxton made a point of saying that the *Final Report* "is not policy," but that it makes recommendations to division leaders with the goal of stimulating increased discussion between higher education institutions and division and union leaders.

It is important, she stated, for church leaders to understand how they can support the mission of higher education, and equally important for colleges and universities to understand the mission and goals of the divisions, as well as the concerns of denominational leaders.

Within the North American academic community there have been many concerns about precisely what denominational leaders were proposing in the various versions of the report and with the creation of the IBMTE. A reading of the various versions of the General Conference commission reports shows that the writings of Robert Benne, James T. Burtchaell, and George Marsden on the secularization of religious education were influential.² Those authors identified a number of significant factors purported to lead to institutional secularization:

- Increasing numbers of students from other denominations/faith persuasions.
- Diminishing emphasis on education for ministry.
- Gradual disappearance of other expressions of the initial religious vision.
- A growing percentage of faculty from other religious backgrounds.
- Increasing numbers of board members not connected to the sponsoring church/denomination.
- Diminishing financial contributions to the institution by the founding denomination.
- Poorly trained board members who do not take their institutional leadership seriously.

We are very concerned that constituents and at least some denominational leaders have appeared to accept this model uncritically. There also appears to be a serious lack of opportunity for educators from Adventist colleges and universities to engage with church leadership in the formation of these documents.

These factors make us wonder if an underlying assumption that unity of mission in Adventist education should be apparent in uniformity of approach "encouraged" by church oversight has been a driving force behind these reports.

We believe that more conversation is needed about the apparent readiness to believe that students in Adventist colleges are becoming increasingly secular. We need to have a Bible-based discussion of what it means to be spiritual in today's world. There should be an open exchange of ideas about models of Christian education that might serve our constituents well. These are especially timely topics for consideration by all who are interested in the mission of our church and in Christian higher education.

With the future of our educational institutions under consideration, and in view of the important service that Adventist higher education provides to students, the Church, and society, what is needed is vastly more conversation, more seeking of varied viewpoints from an increasingly diverse population of church members, and increased opportunity for informed public comment.



The View from Two Schools

Experiences at our own institutions, Southern Adventist University, near Chattanooga, Tennessee, and Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences, in Orlando, Florida, compel us to wonder why allegations of secularization at our Adventist colleges and universities seem to be so believable. The students and faculty with whom we interact have actually provided us much cause for encouragement regarding the Church's present and future.

Although these two institutions of higher learning have approached Adventist education from very different directions, they both foster serious commitment to spiritual development on their campuses. The student populations of the two schools also differ from each other in a number of other ways, including the percentages of students affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Yet students from both institutions have demonstrated a very different reality from the allegedly increasing secularization of students about which we hear.

For example:

- Our undergraduate students are required to enroll in religion and Bible courses taught by Seventh-day Adventist professors who are dedicated to Jesus Christ and to the Seventh-day Adventist mission.
- Assessments by external tests and internal measurements indicate that the overwhelming majority of freshmen chose to attend Southern Adventist University precisely because of its spiritual emphasis. In fact, spiritual growth is consistently the primary reason given for attending the university.
- Similarly, in a survey of fall 2003 enrollees, the most frequent reason given (58 percent) for attending Florida Hospital College was its Christian orientation. On the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory[®], students gave faculty a score of 5.63 on a 7-point Likert scale in response to the item, "The faculty show concern for the spiritual development of the student."
- We witness undergraduates participating in both required service learning and in voluntary civic engagement. Our students repeatedly indicate that they want to be actively engaged by their church, not merely entertained. Student response to the recent hurricane devastation has been high and sustained. Students at Southern are involved in our annual

Martin Luther King Day of Service activities. Others teach English as a Second Language in the community; some are helping plant a church; and others volunteer at various community-based agencies. At Florida Hospital College, students participate in a prison ministry and are engaged in a Big Brother/Big Sister program at Orlando Junior Academy.

- Eighty-nine Southern students served as student missionaries or task force volunteers in twenty-six countries during the 2003–2004 academic year. Last year, Florida Hospital College sponsored two mission trips, one to Russia during Christmas break, and one to Honduras during spring break. Southern students engaged in similar projects during Thanksgiving and spring breaks.
- Students at both institutions form and engage in small groups for study and prayer.
- At Southern, administrators have had students walk into their offices, either spontaneously or by appointment, to say hello and pray for them as they provide leadership for the university.
- At Florida Hospital College, a voluntary Friday evening vespers regularly attracts 100–120 students.

We wish that those concerned about the future of our denomination would have an opportunity to meet and work with some of our students. Not only do our students cause us to consider the future with optimism, but they also motivate us to wonder whether there are multiple models of Adventist higher education that can stimulate and encourage spiritual and academic growth among our young people.

Some Questions

- Is the concern regarding allegedly declining spirituality at our colleges and universities perhaps based on too narrow a definition of spirituality? In other words, are orthodoxy and cultural compliance both accurate and sufficient proxies for spirituality?
- Given the mission of our education system, might the benefits of enrolling non-Adventist students in our schools actually outweigh the feared risks, as long as the full-time faculty and the administration are committed Christians and Seventh-day Adventists?
- Is there room—or even a welcoming attitude—within the denomination for more than one paradigm for Adventist higher education?

We do not believe that we can fully answer even one of these questions in this one article, nor are we attempting to disparage the work of the commission. However, we would like to broaden the conversation and approach the question of the spiritual mission of our colleges and universities from a slightly different angle.

The Construct: Spirituality

There are many ways to define and measure spirituality. The most convenient way is to do so in behavioral terms. In the research literature, it is typically termed “religiosity.” This construct involves assessing those measures that are most accessible or most easily quantified, such as attendance at religious meetings or the number of times one prays or studies the Bible during a week.

It is our conviction that traditional ways of defining and measuring spirituality may not be the best, or at least only, way to capture or encourage the spiritual experience of today’s college-age students.

We recognize that an increasing number of students appears to be less than enchanted with some institutional requirements intended to foster spirituality. Many students are less apt to accept uncritically a theological or doctrinal explanation from their pastors or professors than did their counterparts in previous generations. Students appear increasingly to question traditional *applications* of biblical teachings, and some may be less captivated by traditional *methods* of expressing devotion.

A review of the newly published *Valuegenesis—Ten Years Later* would seem to support this observation.³ But didn’t Jesus foretell a time when, instead of debating the correct location or format of spiritual expression, “true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23, 24)?

Our general sense is that the students at Florida Hospital College and Southern Adventist University are, in fact, as spiritual, and perhaps even more so, than their predecessors. They have simply found different ways to develop and express their spiritual journey. We have found our students to be very intentional and thoughtful about their spiritual and theological development, and we imagine that our colleagues at other Adventist institutions of higher education could offer similar testimony.

Our students’ preferences for expression and experience may, in some cases, be quite different from those

of previous generations, and this sometimes makes it difficult for prior generations to see the substance behind their expression. We may be evaluating the religiosity on the outside of the cup while missing the genuine cleansing taking place on the inside (Matt. 23).

High interest in spiritual matters among our students, especially those that focus on relationships and social justice, also aligns with the recent study of student spirituality being done by UCLA.⁴ To us, this finding seems to align well with the mission statement expressed by Jesus in Luke 4:18, 19.

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

The initial results of the UCLA study indicate that students in the United States are less religious in the traditional sense, but increasingly interested in meaningful spiritual matters.

It may be helpful, therefore, for educational and denominational leaders to consider carefully what is meant by the term *spiritual* so we don’t inadvertently miss an important opportunity to encourage our students in their walks with God.

There are two biblical passages that might help us in that regard. The first is Luke 4:18, 19, as noted above. Spirit-filled students (as well as faculty, administrators, and alumni) would presumably participate in the same mission mentioned in Luke 4. Although this text takes a religiosity perspective of the Christian life, it very significantly moves the expression of spirituality from an inward focus to a community-oriented focus, very much as Jesus did in Matthew 23 and 25.

Rather than measuring how well one engages in religious activities and programs for personal improvement, this text suggests that spirituality consists of helping others grow and prosper. It speaks of providing hope to the oppressed in our communities, bringing good news to the poor, and proclaiming the good news of God’s grace.

Religious freedom, physical and spiritual sight, and freedom from oppressive circumstances are identified as

part of the proclamation of the Lord's favor. Spirituality is measured less by worship attendance than by giving people of our communities a glimpse of the Kingdom of God and its positive impact on their lives.

The second passage that might inform our definition of spirituality is Galatians 5:22, 23. The apostle Paul recommends that we judge spirituality by more internal measures, that is, by looking for evidence of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in our personal being.

Although some may place more emphasis on the behavioral aspects of self-control and question the development of our youth in that regard, it might be more helpful to evaluate spirituality on our campuses on the basis of the presence of the full array of the fruits of the Spirit evidenced in the relationships on our campuses.

Perhaps it is time to recognize the spiritual renewal that is currently taking place on our campuses and work to support and encourage our young people as they seek to live the life of the Spirit in their relationships and social engagement.

More than One Blueprint?

The commission's preliminary report indicated that the "analyses and the rating of institutions done by the schools and by the division consultations" indicate that "the increasing ratio of non-Seventh-day Adventists students is impacting some schools unfavorably" (3). It is worth noting that the New Testament reports that the established church appears to have reached quite the same conclusion regarding Jesus' ministry. Perhaps it is important to review our mission and identify the absolutely core components of a Seventh-day Adventist educational system.

An examination of the history of higher education within the Adventist Church reveals both an evolution and resultant diversity in the types of education offered. The evolution has included a move beyond offering majors only in careers needed primarily for denominational employment toward a wider slate of options that allows graduates not only to serve the Lord by working in the Church, but also to promote the gospel of grace by infiltrating many career paths and job options in their communities.

This trend has come in response not only to the

market forces that we encounter as we recruit students, but also to our call to be leaven, salt, or light, depending on which simile one might choose to apply.

The diversity of educational frameworks now includes the mission school concept. A number of educational institutions outside the North American Division open their doors (and are able to keep them open) to a wide variety of students, including some who do not come from an Adventist or even Christian background. Fewer than 5 percent of the students come from Adventist homes.

In many countries, the Adventist educational program may be the most effective evangelistic tool available to the Church. One simply needs to visit Ekamai in Thailand or the Adventist school system in New Guinea to realize the importance of nontraditional Adventist education.

Within the North American Division, Florida Hospital College also illustrates how the gospel can be successfully promoted by a Seventh-day Adventist institution of higher education with a non-Adventist student enrollment, which comprises 65 percent of the total student body.

A large number of non-Adventist students may not provide the same environment as a school where the ratio is reversed. However, which of those students would the Church not want exposed to the Bible classes and Christian environment that this type of education offers? When Ellen White proposed that Adventist education be evangelistic, was her proposal only to be applied to the salvation of our own children, who might not be in as great a need of a physician?

More importantly, is there not room in the Adventist educational system for more than one blueprint or more than one evaluation of institutional effectiveness? Should not the Church offer both the traditional campus milieu and the mission school concept? There may as well be other models yet to be devised, so that students and parents can have choices and so that the work of educational evangelism can benefit the greatest number and variety of people.

Just as Peter was called to witness to the Jews and Paul was called to the Gentiles—although both seemed at least somewhat effective in evangelizing both groups—might there not be significant benefit in encouraging Adventist institutions of higher education to exercise a significant amount of free-

dom in selecting their students and deciding how they encourage faith development?

It may be worth empirically investigating the following issues in this regard:

- How does the ratio of Adventist and non-Adventist students enrolled in our institutions of higher education affect our mission when the faculty members are clearly committed Christians and Seventh-day Adventists?
- How does the ratio of Adventist and non-Adventist full-time faculty members employed by our colleges and universities affect our mission when the curriculum is clearly and intentionally Christian and Seventh-day Adventist?
- Might there be a variety of supporting missions for Adventist institutions that take different approaches to meeting the primary mission of proclaiming the gospel and introducing students to Jesus Christ so that his Spirit can effectively do his work among a diversity of communities and people?
- What are the absolutely necessary observable identifiers of a curriculum that is both Christian and Seventh-day Adventist?

Conclusion

The ideas proposed in this article do not overlook the concerns expressed in the commission's report. The Church should be concerned if a particular educational institution has lost its mission and/or vision and steps should be taken to assist that institution based on core Adventist values and the needs of the community in which the institution is located.

However, it would be distressing to fail to recognize the positive impact of our institutions of higher education and to overlook—or fail to recognize and support—the wonderful work of the Spirit in our student's lives in Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities in the United States and around the globe, just because their experiences do not fit a particular construct or follow the trajectory of our own experience or expectations.

The institutions represented by the two authors of this article represent two successful and legitimate—yet quite different—paradigms in Adventist education. Our experience with our students leads us to concur with Trans-European Division president Bertil

Wiklander, who, according to the online *Review* report of the 2004 *Preliminary Report*, “pleaded for recognition of ‘varieties of experience’ around the world.”

Certainly, a broader interchange of ideas among church administrators and the faculty and staff of institutions of higher education will enrich and expand the directions that we might ultimately choose. This, in turn, will enable us to serve more effectively *all* seekers of truth.

Notes and References

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Excerpt from the Final Report of the General Conference Commission on Higher Education October 2005

Conclusions

Seventh-day Adventist higher education continues to play a positive and crucial role in the Church. Its future is potentially bright, yet there are complex issues the Church needs to be proactive in resolving.

The terms of reference for the Commission on Higher Education, along with the findings resulting from the surveys and studies of the commission, cluster around three main areas: mission effectiveness, the basis of all church education; structure and planning, which enables the development and implementation of vision; and policy and compliance, the natural follow-through on vision and planning. These will serve as the basis for the final summary contexts and recommendations of the report.

1. Mission Effectiveness (Terms of Reference 2):

The Context:

The majority of Seventh-day Adventist higher education institutions have clearly stated missions and objectives, and administrators and staff make significant efforts to live out those missions in the daily life of the institutions, both in traditional and less-traditional Adventist higher education contexts. However, critical challenges remain to Seventh-day Adventist higher education that if ignored will compromise the core reason for our education ministry. Among these are the following:

The risk of institutions sliding into secularism, due particularly to rapidly changing institutional demographics (increased percentages of non-SDA faculty and students) and perceived financial exigency. The lack of awareness and/or ownership of the philosophy of SDA education by some administrators and faculty. The lack of defined mission-focused paradigms for non-traditional SDA higher education institutions, such as those with a specific evangelistic or community thrust.

The Commission therefore recommends:

That the Church strengthen mission effectiveness throughout higher education by

a) Requiring in-service training of teachers, especially in the area of the Adventist philosophy of education, and particularly for those teachers without strong Seventh-day Adventist education backgrounds

b) Taking proactive steps to attract, retain, and increase the pool of qualified Adventist faculty and expecting divisions to establish thresholds to measure improvements in SDA faculty percentages

c) Developing marketing and financial incentive strategies to increase the number of Adventist students in Adventist schools

d) Expanding the service to Adventist students not attending Church higher education institutions and being more deliberate about identifying our ethos to non-Adventist students attending our schools

e) Developing and implementing additional strategies to give meaning to all students of the reality of a personal God—Designer, Creator and Sustainer

f) Exploring different educational models to more effectively carry out the mission of the church within specific education contexts (e.g., “mission” colleges, “community” colleges)

2. Structure and Planning (Terms of Reference 1, 5):

Higher education institutions operate within a church structure that by its nature limits the church's ability to resolve some long-term threats to the stability and effective operation of those institutions. This is particularly evidenced in areas such as finance, duplication of programs and insufficient qualified SDA faculty. The church needs to decide if changes in structure, including financial structure, would favorably impact its mission through higher education, and if so, if it has the will to make those changes. It also needs to consider developing a pro-active approach to development of strategy that casts a strong vision for the church, but is also enabling and consultative. The particular challenges in these areas include:

- Institutions and their sponsoring/administering church organizations tend to act in the best interest of the local institution, not the wider church
- Higher church organizations without the financial base to “encourage” compliance to church policy
- The wide range of institutional needs and situations that obviate against too detailed centralized strategy

The Commission therefore recommends:

That the Church review the operational structures that impact higher education and develop a planning process that is comprehensive and inclusive at all church levels by

a) Exploring how church structural changes might better enable higher education to fulfill the church's mission. (For example, in such aspects as more centralized funding for schools; a pool of funds administered by divisions would help to enable them to give oversight or initiate/coordinate changes in the education "system" where needed).

b) Empowering the IBE to be proactive in development of major strategic initiatives for higher education.

c) Divisions assuming leading roles in the development of division specific higher education strategies, in consultation with the General Conference and educational institutions.

d) Encompassing the major recommendations of this report in the global education strategic initiatives for 2005–2010.

3. Policy and Compliance (Terms of Reference 3, 4, 6): Context:

While the church education program relies strongly on good-will and positive influence to achieve its goals, policy development and policy compliance remain essential to its success. However, compliance to education policies in some key areas, such as introduction of new programs, remains variable. The church needs to determine how best to increase general knowledge of church education policies and how to sharpen its responses to lack of compliance to better effect church mission. The particular challenges include:

- Lack of overt support for the Adventist Accrediting Association (AAA) and International Board of Education (IBE) actions by governing boards and sponsoring church organizations (union, divisions)
- Adventist accreditation being perceived as less important than local accreditation
- Rapid changeover of church and institutional administrators resulting in lack of policy awareness
- Church structure militates against enforcement of AAA regulations/policies

The Commission therefore recommends:

That the church ensure broad awareness of, and greater compliance with, the higher education poli-

cies of the church through the following means:

a) Increasing the level of knowledge of education policies through seminars and printed materials to church and institutional administrators, and governing boards.

b) Divisions requiring more strict adherence to Church policies and developing procedures that will complement and support AAA and IBE processes. (Such procedures may include financial and administrative control over non-complying institutions.)

c) Governing boards of institutions and division education committees taking a more active role in responding to the recommendations of IBE and AAA.

d) AAA/IBE becoming more public in providing information on the accreditation status of institutions, such as publishing the status of institutions on the GC Education Department web site and/or reporting AAA results in GC/union papers.

e) Expecting a report of progress on these recommendations to the Annual Council each year of the 2005–2010 quinquennium.

Final Notes

The question remains as to whether a "system" of higher education really exists in the Adventist Church or whether institutions work mostly as independent and periodically interdependent units, and in only rare instances function as a system. A system is one where units function, plan, work together, and support one another as cohesive units to accomplish the Church's mission. It is the opinion of the Commission that in order for the Church's program of education to develop into an accountable "system," major changes need to occur in the thinking, will, and actions of the Church at large. This may involve a need for changes in the overall structure of the Church.

It is also the opinion of the Commission that the Church leadership would do well to periodically provide a forum for discussion on some of the topics considered by the Commission. This will allow the Church in general to become more knowledgeable about the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that face our institutions of higher learning, and encourage church members to become more actively engaged in discussing ways and means to strengthen higher education.

Source: *Adventist Review* online edition, on the Web at www.adventistreview.org/site/1/2005-1541/CHEFinal10.7.pdf

And Then What: The Views of Three Adventist Students in Graduate School

Eric Guttschuss, Lauralea Banks, and Kristel Tonstad

No One Calls for Justice

By Eric Guttschuss



I am told that in a few short months I will be a lawyer. As such, I take pause to consider what

this somewhat daunting reality means for a professed follower of Christ in the global community of faith that we call Adventism. In theory, the answer should be clear. I need only read Isaiah and the Prophets to encounter a wealth of prose familiar to the ears of any law student: "Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow."

Yet when it comes to issues of social justice, my own community of faith remains largely silent. Are we able to say that we seek justice for the destitute? How are we an encouragement to victims of human rights abuses? Do we defend the cause of the child sold into prostitution? Are we pleading the case of the widow seeking asylum? Oppression and injustice still undeniably encompass our world today. All too often, though, it would seem that the prophet

Isaiah is right: "No one calls for justice."

There are legitimate reasons why not to call for justice. Our well-founded belief in the separa-

Quite simply,
Christ's death has
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with what Martin
Luther King, Jr.
terms "dangerous
unselfishness."

tion of church and state leads us to be wary of mixing religion and politics. As a result, we respond to suffering by focusing our efforts instead on caring for the sick or providing aid to the poor. The words of Christ, however, must

still give us pause: "You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former."

History also tells us that confronting injustice can often only be done at great personal cost. The life expectancy of the prophets, to be sure, was abysmal at best. Isaiah ended up stuffed inside a hollow log and brutally "sawn asunder." But as followers of Christ, we profess that Christ died for humanity to free us from sin and death so that we might have life everlasting. If in fact we have this assurance, then we need no longer fear death or live lives of risk aversion.

Quite simply, Christ's death has now freed us to live with what Martin Luther King, Jr. termed "dangerous unselfishness." As he poignantly observed, the question in the face of oppression and injustice cannot be: "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" Rather, the gospel of Christ necessarily compels me to ask: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?"

I cannot say whether as a lawyer I will take this path of dangerous unselfishness, or whether as Christ forewarned "life's worries, riches and pleasures" will lead me to rather choose silence in the face of injustice. I can only throw myself on the mercy of a loving God and pray that I choose the former.

Eric Guttchuss is a law student at UCLA School of Law. He spent his summers during law school working for a human rights lawyer in Zimbabwe and at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

Adventist Josephs

By *Lauralea Banks*



There is a moment in every Adventist's life where they have to decide how to interact with the world. To me, the fact that there are so many burgeoning Adventist metropolises that surround various Adventist institutions indicates that a good number of Adventists choose to isolate themselves from the world.

At the other extreme, an increasing number of people aren't just going into the world, they are leaving Adventism altogether in favor of the world. And of course there are many people between.

As I'm beginning my graduate study at an Ivy League institution, I face the tension of deciding where in the spectrum of Adventists I want to fall. And I'm finding a whole new level of spirituality that is breaking down all definitions and stereotypes I ever had.

I am discovering that I can find my place in the world the easy way or the hard way. The easy way is defined by the extremes, where

everything is either black or white. Either you exist in your little Adventist ghetto, "disciplining" yourself by avoiding contact with "those sinners," or you go out and throw discipline out the window along with your religious heritage.

Both of these options, in my experience, are connected by one fatal spiritual flaw: blind acceptance of norms in the environment. Blind acceptance of our environment is nice—it's comfortable. We don't need to contradict people we encounter; answers are defined for us. We feel warm and fuzzy and think we're changing the world somehow with our well-defined answers to life. In reality, both options lack discipline—that's why this is the easy way.

We tend to hate those places that make us feel uncomfortable—where we must question our definitions or evaluate a given situation

To be truly a spiritual person you have to exist in an ambiguous place, to find your place in the world the hard way.

to decide how a principle might fluctuate to accommodate certain anomalies. Those are the places where we discipline ourselves by questioning our assumptions, falling down a time or two, and

finally figuring out what the underlying issue really is. Here we're extended beyond ourselves and we are frightened because we might end up looking like a fool because we don't have all the answers worked out.

I want to argue that to be truly a spiritual person you have to exist in an ambiguous place, to find your place in the world the hard way. Look at the Bible's empirical data: God's greatest servants weren't living in any Adventist ghetto. In fact, most of them (Joseph, Esther, Moses, and so forth) only achieved their greatness by moving outside their ghettos.

Isn't that one of the major points of Christ's ministry, making the point that the status quo is flexible and malleable while at the same time indispensable? But notice that with each of the great Bible characters, not one of them went out and bought into the system of the world. They went out and struggled to understand the deeper principles that allowed them to be godly people, but not "holier-than-thou" in attitude or deed.

The major issue for these people wasn't the Twenty-Eight Fundamental Beliefs; it was their relationship with God. And that relationship with God meant questioning all of their assumptions, definitions, and norms.

So where are the Adventist Josephs? Clearly people like Ben Carson immediately come into mind. But if you think about it, there really are too few of them. And that frightens me. It frightens me because it means we've stopped growing. We've stopped struggling with God to understand the gray areas of his principles and the real meaning behind ideas such as this one in 1 Corinthians 9:27: "disci-

plin[ing] my body and mak[ing] it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified."

For some people, discipline may mean not judging other people's weaknesses. For others, it may be struggling with how malleable they will be when they must network with bigwig drunks—finding the right balance to make them feel comfortable without buying into their habits.

We're too content to sit in our mental armchairs and pretend we're doing what God has led us to do, but we feel no tension—no discomfort or inquisitiveness—about the principles we've built our lives around. We've stopped moving, and once we stop moving or testing the boundaries, God calls us lukewarm and spits us out.

Does lack of Adventist Josephs relate in any way to loss of members in the Church? I think the answer is a resounding Yes! Because if God is spitting us out, why would people embrace what is clearly our lack of interest in getting to know them and the problems they have—to struggle with them as we discipline ourselves? Doing such a thing would mean we have to get out of our mental armchairs.

Here's another thing about our mental armchairs: They're constructed of little definitions that fit neatly into a stereotype box. But the truth, as always, never fits inside those boxes. There is only one box that everything does fit into, and that is the one labeled, "I don't have the answers." The rest of the world has figured out we don't have the answer, and until we admit it we're not going to reach anybody.

It is through not having the

answer that God can truly turn us into his likeness. And it is by not having the answer that we can truly see people for who they are and what they need, because suddenly we see ourselves as equally fallible. There's no more black and white, just changing shades of gray so that God can mold each of us into a life that adds up to more than the sum of its faulty parts.

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A Place to Call Home

By Kristel Tonstad



Graduate school bustles with newness, challenge, and inspiration every day and in virtually every way. I find these qualities in my classes, where we discuss everything from racial disparities in poverty in the

United States to the future of the human rights movement.

I find them in seminars and forums, where political leaders talk about the prosecution of war criminals in Serbia and efforts to curb nuclear power internationally. Most of all, I find these qualities in the people I meet—classmates who have lived on all continents, speak an average of eight languages apiece—including dolphinese—and have work experiences that could fill a *Guinness Book of World Records*.

The discussions do not address far-removed theoretical concepts: We talk about headline news. The concerns are human and global: What is wrong with the world, and what should we do to change it? We examine our intentions and values. I am assured that my paradigm and beliefs will be questioned on a daily basis. The entire atmosphere of graduate school is charged with curiosity, questioning, relevance, and passion.

Seemingly worlds apart, I find my faith community. Hot topics on our agenda include the Twenty-Eighth Fundamental Belief and how Adventists should relate to the world “out there.” That, indeed, has become a central question for me over the past months: How does my faith community relate to the “outside world,” where I currently find myself? What, if anything, does one world have to do with the other?

On one hand, I find myself thinking that the Church has much to learn from the world. We lag behind in terms of openness, accountability, and active involvement against injustice in our world. The Church often frames the world as full of self-centered, unfriendly, materialistic people. But, so far, I

have found the exact opposite to be true. People care more about others than themselves.

Non-Christians in graduate school want to alleviate poverty, criticize unjust government policies, and are friendly to outsiders. Whereas churchgoers are often inclusive only around people with

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whom they attended academy, the warmth and welcome in graduate school is all-embracing.

On the other hand, however, in spite of my feelings that we have a long way to go in terms of what we should be thinking and doing as a church, I also find myself appreciating many aspects of my Adventist heritage. I value the sense of transcendence and higher purpose in my faith community. I am grateful for the values and views that shaped my upbringing. I am happy to know peo-

ple with whom I share a history and an outlook.

Most of all, I am glad to have a place to call home. That, I think, is the best image for my faith community: Home is the place where I know how things work and where I am known. Home is the place where there are strains and challenges, but I know I belong there. When my classmates talk about building contacts, I also think of my faith community as a network, which cares not about knowing the “right people,” but also about knowing the One.

So instead of saying that church should be more like the world, I find myself appreciating both spheres. I love the people, ideas, and growth I am encountering in graduate school. I also delight in the fellowship and shared commitments I find in the Adventist community.

Perhaps the Church lacks openness and willingness to challenge. Perhaps graduate school needs more transcendence and humility. But for now, I am quite happy to call my faith community home base, and every other place and experience an extension of that base.

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Continued from page 35...

3. Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans. James W. Leitch (London: SCM, 1967), 39.

4. C. Marvin Pate, ed., *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1998), 18.

5. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 21.

6. Ernst Käsemann, "The Beginnings of Christian Theology," in *New Testament Questions for Today*, trans. W. J. Montague (London: SCM, 1969), 102. Käsemann's groundbreaking essay initially appeared under the title, "Die Anfänge christlicher Theologie," *ZTK* 57 (1960), 162-85.

7. Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1972), 77.

8. J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle. The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 152.

9. Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy. Studies in the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1993), ix.

10. Bauckham (ibid., 204), noting the allusion to the Sinai theophany that accompanies and climaxes each of the cycles, writes: "[A]t each point John uses the allusion to Sinai to suggest that the End has been reached, though not yet exhaustively described."

11. R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John* (Edinburgh: T.

and T. Clark, 1920), 2:147.

12. See Loren L. Johns, "The Lamb in the Rhetorical Program of the Apocalypse of John," *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* 37 (1998), 2:762-84; idem., *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John* WUNT 2.167 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

13. I have tried to substantiate this point to some extent in my dissertation, which is titled, "Saving God's Reputation: The Theological Function of Pistis Iesou in the Cosmic Narratives of Revelation" (Ph.D. diss., University of St. Andrews, 2005).

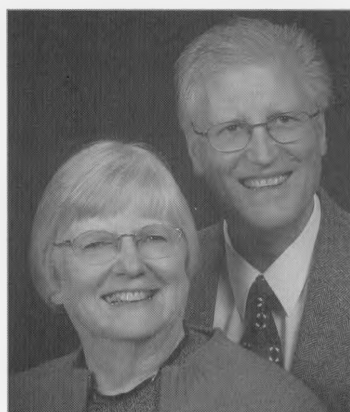
14. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 21.

15. Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Dogmatic Theses on the Doctrine of Revelation," in *Revelation As History*, ed. Wolfhart Pannenberg, trans. David Granskou (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 133.

16. Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 51.

17. Marilyn McCord Adams, "Horrors in Theological Context," *SJT* 55 (2002), 473; idem., *Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999).

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NARNIA





From Ireland to Hollywood Interview with Douglas Gresham, co-producer of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*

*Douglas Gresham is the author of
Lenten Lands: My Childhood with Joy Davidman and C. S. Lewis
and a co-producer of the film, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe.*

*Lisa Beardsley is a co-host for
Loma Linda Broadcasting Network's program "Faith at Work."*

LISA BEARDSLEY. *I have an image of you from last summer. We were on the Sea Cloud II. We had sailed all night from Dublin to Wales.*

DOUGLAS GRESHAM. **That's a lovely ship.**

BEARDSLEY. *It is a beautiful ship. And that morning, Sunday morning, we were anchored off Solva, anchored into Saint David's.*

GRESHAM. **Right, where I spent a lot of time as a child.**

BEARDSLEY. *I have an image of you standing on the banisters. You weren't aware of any of us in the tender going off, but you were leaning against the varnished rail and you were looking at the cliffs by the harbor there at Solva. I hadn't read your book yet, Lenten Lands.*

GRESHAM. **Now you know why I was looking.**

BEARDSLEY. *Now I know. The wind was blowing in your face and you were oblivious to everybody else. I don't think you were even aware that you were standing on the ship.*

GRESHAM. The ghost of my childhood still orbits those cliffs at Solva.

BEARDSLEY. *What were you thinking when you were looking out there?*

GRESHAM. Just reminiscing, I guess, just loving the place. It's one of my favorite places in the world—not to live, but to visit—those cliffs along the Pembrokeshire Coast. The things that you get really astonished and fascinated by when you were a child never really leave you.

So I was standing on the deck of the ship looking at the places I'd climbed along those cliffs years and years ago. I wouldn't have the courage today, of course.

BEARDSLEY. *It was in that area where you had the last holiday in which all of your family was together—C. S. Lewis, your mother, yourself.*

GRESHAM. Yes. Indeed.

BEARDSLEY. *In rereading and looking through The Chronicles of Narnia, I saw something I had never noticed before. One of the books, The Horse and His Boy, was actually dedicated to you and your brother.*

GRESHAM. That's true. Indeed it was.

BEARDSLEY. *Was it about you in any way?*

GRESHAM. I'm not going to answer that question. [Laughter] Because you might ask me which character it was. But I don't really think so.

BEARDSLEY. *What has it been like for you to be a co-producer of The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe?*

GRESHAM. It's been amazing. First of all, it's the realization of a lifelong dream of mine. My children have told me that they were amazed because all their lives they have heard me dreaming and scheming and planning and talking about making this movie eventually, and now it's really happening.

But not only that. It's been an astonishing experience. All the fabulous people I've met working on this project, right down to simple people like the cleaners and the caterers, the people like that on

the sets in New Zealand—they're all wonderful people.

It was one of those unusual occasions when there must have been six hundred people, and I didn't meet one I didn't like. I never heard a cross word spoken on the entire set or any of the location shootings. It was a wonderful experience because the people were so fine.

We found four new actors, the children who play the lead roles. Not only are they great little actors, they are—superb actors, every one of them—but they're also wonderfully nice people. Their parents are wonderfully nice people. Everybody associated with this production has seemingly been infused by the magic of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* itself.

BEARDSLEY. *I seem to recall that some one thousand children were auditioned for these roles.*

GRESHAM. No, I think our casting director in England went through about four thousand auditions to find the children we needed.

BEARDSLEY. *What was it like for you to be on the set to actually see the book come to life before the camera?*

GRESHAM. It's very moving to see one of your lifelong dreams suddenly coming into existence, and not only coming into existence but exceeding all of your own expectations. And the team we've got working on this movie has such wonderfully gifted artists.

Roger Ford, the set designer, for example, is a superb artist and creative man. We've got Andrew Adamson directing. All of those people are just tremendous individuals to work with and very, very skilled. The film itself is coming together in a way that I could not have anticipated. It's better than I could ever have dreamed of.

BEARDSLEY. *What role did you have in creating or contributing to the creative artistry of what's been done here with the creatures of Narnia?*

GRESHAM. I consult to all aspects of the movie. We did some videoconferencing across to Weta [Workshop, a



visual effects facility] in New Zealand from London. When you have someone as good as [special effects supervisor] Richard Taylor and his team working on a movie, you don't have to tell them much.

They got the idea from the book and they got the idea from what we talked about. They just went with it. These guys are so good, they're amazing.

BEARDSLEY. *One of your passions has been to stay true to the integrity of the book. Why are you so passionate about that?*

GRESHAM. My stepfather was a man whom I grew to love very deeply. And he cared passionately about the books. He cared deeply about the essential values, messages they contained, and therefore I've inherited a kind of moral and emotional responsibility to follow suit on that.

He was a man I not only loved deeply, but also respected enormously, so if I can follow suit with his aims and his ideas and try to promote his works in the way he would want them promoted, I'll continue to do so.

BEARDSLEY. *Douglas, the numbers in this movie are just overwhelming: the numbers of creatures in here, the numbers of animations, the number of dollars. One hundred fifty million dollars is what I read from reports, is that right?*

GRESHAM. Well, you'll read a variety of reports, some of them are more correct than others.

BEARDSLEY. *Why does a film like this cost so much to make?*

GRESHAM. I think one of the things you have to realize is that we have a combination of effects. For example the Minotaur has an animatronics head—his nostrils flare, his eyes move, his ears move, his mouth moves, lips sync, and so forth—that's con-

trolled by three puppeteers with radio control units.

Inside is a real actor in a prosthetic costume from the neck to the waist, which means he moves with his own musculature. From the waist down, he's a CGI, a computer generated image. So when you start combining all of these disciplines into one movie and sometimes into one character, things get expensive. And of course there were so many different species Weta had to create.

Incidentally, one of the things about this movie that has just struck me is that when you get all these guys together in one place, you're surrounded by some of these super geniuses of the film world, and yet it's a little bit like an old Inklings meeting, the society of writing friends that Jack had around him...

BEARDSLEY. *...that first helped contribute to the writing...*

GRESHAM. ...because we had such a lot of fun when we all got together. We were doing a very serious job, serious movie, a large budget movie, and yet there's an awful lot of fun to be had doing it. We've enjoyed every minute of it.

BEARDSLEY. *The team scoured the world for the right locations.*

GRESHAM. Location reconnaissance is desperately important if you're going to do a film about a place like Narnia. As Andrew points out, it has to exceed people's imaginations. All of us who've read the books have conjured up pictures in our own minds of what Narnia should look like. We can't just present our own thoughts; otherwise everyone else's gets lost.

What we have to do is try in a creative sense to exceed the expectations of all the audience. So you have to look to the very finest places in the world to find the finest locations. And Andrew's reconnaissance team did just that.

BEARDSLEY. *Douglas, you've been flying back and forth between County Carlow and Hollywood. What are you actually doing when you're in Hollywood now?*

GRESHAM. I consult to everyone who's doing a valiant job designing and constructing merchandise. We're doing a very large and intensive computer game program on several different platforms simultaneously.



Past *Chronicles of Narnia* book covers (from left to right) 1988, 1989, and 2005, and a recent BBC video version.

BEARDSLEY. *You've seen more of the post-production material, what do you think?*

GRESHAM. The more I see the better it gets. We're getting to the stage now where the computer-generated imagery is being added into the rough cut of the film bit-by-bit. We're seeing scenes that didn't exist before, characters that didn't exist, which are now appearing on screen, and it's looking fabulous.

BEARDSLEY. *What I hear is that we can expect to see more—hopefully all seven of The Chronicles of Narnia coming up. Is that true?*

GRESHAM. It's my ambition to live long enough to see all seven made into first-class films, and if they're at the standard of this one, I'll be very, very happy in my old age. But I can tell you that we are seriously considering moving into the second one already.

BEARDSLEY. *Which one will be second, or is that a secret still?*

GRESHAM. I don't know if it's a secret, but I don't know if I should talk about it, either. If you think about it, I think you'll be able to figure it out.

BEARDSLEY. *After a long and circuitous journey—living in Tasmania for a while, spending much of your career in radio and the television industry, farming and moving to Ireland—you came to know Christ as your own Savior. In the midst of this kaleidoscope of activity, how do you stay centered?*

GRESHAM. Well, it's very simple. I believe very firmly in the fact that the first thing one should do in the ministry of Jesus Christ, any ministry of Jesus Christ, is to discern the difference between what you want to do for Jesus, and what he actually wants you to do for him, and then do the latter. And I think the first step in that is simply to make oneself available. You don't have to come up with good ideas; you just have to say, "Lord here I am." He does the rest. It's as simple as that.

BEARDSLEY. *Even if it means going over on the other side of the world to do it.*

GRESHAM. Absolutely. You might find yourself



Some of the many Narnia books now being marketed.

making movies, who knows? Whatever the Lord chooses for you to do in life, do it, because it's the only really successful way to run a human life.

BEARDSLEY. *I have just one quick question about The Narnia Cookbook. Is it going to be available some time?*

GRESHAM. We are discussing the possibilities of re-releasing it at the moment. It's become an extraordinarily sought-after collector's item. I have no idea why, but it has. In fact I was offered a copy signed by the author a while ago for \$650.

BEARDSLEY. *Now, the author would be you, right?*

GRESHAM. Exactly! I wasn't going to pay that much even if I had signed it. [Laughter] I think it might be re-released. I hope so.

BEARDSLEY. *We wish you the best.*

GRESHAM. Go see it five or six times. It's going to be great!



What Hath Disney Wrought? *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*

By Scott Moncrieff

I entered Narnia late in life, as a master's student at Andrews University looking for new Sabbath afternoon reading. Each bite-sized chronicle took two or three hours to devour and didn't have the bad aftereffects of Turkish delight, so I read through them a number of times in the next twenty years, by myself mostly, but also aloud with our firstborn and with a C. S. Lewis class.

Although Narnia doesn't compare with Tolkien's Middle Earth as a fully realized imaginative world, the books are very entertaining, well written, good company, fun on the lighter side. One doesn't want to be always plodding toward Mordor. I also appreciated the spiritual insights in Lewis's series, as in Eustace Scrub's dragon phase in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, and the redemption story via Aslan's sacrifice for

Edmund in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

So, having reread the book, I eagerly headed off to Chicago for a preview of the new Disney/Walden Media production of *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. After all, if there are going to be seven years of this series, I want to know if the cows are fat or lean.

The book begins quietly, with the four Pevensie children—Peter, Susan, Edmund, and



Lucy—heading off to Professor Kirke’s house in the country to avoid the air raids in World War II London. The film, in contrast, opens to high drama, in the cockpit of a German bomber dropping its load as the children and their mother race for a backyard underground shelter. With crisp cutting and bombs detonating in surround sound, the filmmakers reassure us we are here for spectacle, not some piddly old BBC production.

Additional invented back story shows elder brother Peter tussling with Edmund, who has dashed back into the house to retrieve a picture of his father (away fighting the war). Edmund’s retrieval of the picture nicely sets up the brothers’ competitive relationship, which eventually contributes to Edmund’s betrayal of his siblings.

There’s also a clever match between the cracked picture frame that holds the photo of Mr. Pevensie and a later shot of Mr. Tumnus’s father’s portrait, after Tumnus’s house has been ransacked by the queen’s secret police.

In short, the opening sequence does some of the good things a cinematic adaptation can do. Although staying true to the tenor of the book, it rewrites and adapts to develop the characters and to make things more visual, more cinematic. Even a mundane ride over a dirt road in a horse-drawn cart can create goose bumps, when filmed in the right lighting from a dolly with a rising crane.

There are a number of other good things about the film. The casting of and acting by the children is excellent, particularly with Lucy (Georgie Henley) and Edmund (Skandar Keynes). Lucy is very sweet without being conventionally pretty or sentimentalized; has an engaging smile without Hollywood teeth; effectively expresses wonder, delight, disappointment; and even gets off some decent comic lines. Edmund is quite con-

vincing in his consecutive roles as sneaking little traitor and born-again hero.

The outdoor landscape shots are breathtaking, which could be expected when you can take your pick of locations from New Zealand to Czech Republic. There are lots of nice tracking, crane, and aerial shots—you can compare how this film handles the train-carrying-main-characters-passes-through-lovely-countryside sequence to the same sequence in fifty other films and see that *Narnia* does it pretty well.

And of course the sets, the CGI creatures, the wardrobe (the costumes and accessories as well as the title piece of furniture) are excellent, almost up to the high standards set by the *Lord of the Rings* series.

Douglas Gresham, Lewis’s stepson, was a consultant on the film, and even has a bit part as a radio announcer in the opening sequence, giving the film an authentic Lewis tie. The film is also quite faithful to the book, although one little sequence jumped out as a possible exception.

After Aslan’s secret deal with the witch to exchange his life for Edmund’s, Lucy approaches the solitary lion. In response to a question from Lucy, Aslan says something like “there is a magic more powerful that rules over all of us,” which could imply that he is not a supreme being, merely another—albeit especially powerful—creature. However, it can be taken as just showing that “God” plays by the same rules as his creatures.

Even though *Narnia* is a well-made movie, in following *The Lord of the Rings* I think it suffers by comparison. I say this as one who is at least as much a fan of Lewis’s writings as of Tolkein’s. Tolkein’s created world (in the books and on film) has more depth and consistency, much higher gravitas. Each *Rings* movie is longer than a football game.



Scenes from the movie (left to right): Aslan and the children; the battle; Lantern Waste, and the witch’s castle.



I was amused to hear of a colleague who had a *Rings* party last year, at which guests watched the whole series in one sitting, about twelve hours. That was too much of a good thing for me, but this length is well used by Peter Jackson and company, with more space devoted to character development, while not omitting spectacle. *Narnia* is not short—at two hours and fifteen minutes—but it doesn't develop its characters in the way that *Rings* does.

Narnia (movie and book) has an odd menagerie of animals, freely mixing those from our world with mythical creatures, leading to anomalies like polar bears (in springtime) drawing the witch's chariot into battle alongside minotaurs and ogres, and on the good side centaurs and unicorns teamed up with cheetahs and rhinoceri. I'm not quite sure whether to expect Aslan or Marlin Perkins around the next corner

Middle Earth sticks with woodland and Northern European mythic creatures, which go together, and the incongruities of *Narnia* are more jarring on screen than in print.

A few more words are in order about the difference between book and movie experience. Lewis names a number of the species that surround Aslan on the Stone Table, and refers to "other creatures whom I won't describe because if I did the grown-ups would probably not let you read this book."

The chummy relationship between narrator and reader doesn't translate to film, nor does the book's ability to stimulate the reader's imagination. Film literalizes. Every creature must be created, down to the last bone and muscle, and no matter how well Weta Workshop does the job, some of us still like to imagine.

Lewis himself, in his essay "On Stories," says "nothing can be more disastrous than the view that the cinema can and should replace popular fiction," because "there is death [to the imagination] in the camera." Whereas in books, the author's and reader's imaginations work in partnership, in film the viewer sees the representation of the imagination of another.

Furthermore, although film can operate at both the subtle and spectacular level—some fine close-ups of Lucy's changing expressions illustrate the former—spectacle causes a more immediate reaction, seems to sell more tickets. Why else does every movie ad on TV seem to have the same scenes of door-opening-to-blazing gun, car-or-body-crashing-through-large-window, and woman-starting-to-slip-out-of-sweater? Personally, my nerve receptors shut down when these clichés

appear, but the people who promote and make movies are still way too attached to fireworks.

In the movie, for instance, there's an invented scene (not in the book) where the children cross a river. The ice is breaking up and they have a dramatic confrontation with the wolf pack. The wolves are snarling, the ice is cracking, Peter is waving his sword around, the frozen waterfall shatters and the burst of water hurtles everyone downstream.

Technically it's an interesting scene, but emotionally it left me cold, just so much machinery calculated to push my anxiety buttons. Danger-on-the-ice-floes was really gripping back in *Way Down East* (1920)—partly because it climaxed two hours of really slow action, but also because a lot of groundwork had been done to make the viewer care greatly about the two characters out on the ice floes.

But this is not just a film to discuss in its aesthetic and technical aspects. It's being reviewed in this magazine primarily because of its spiritual angle. "Is this a film," you ask, "to which to take my unchurched son/neighbor/dentist?" Let's not place limitations on the Holy Spirit, but humanly speaking, *Narnia* does not portray a moving religious experience on the order of, say, *Places in the Heart*, *Babette's Feast*, *A Man for All Seasons*, or even *It's a Wonderful Life*.

There's something about thundering hooves in surround sound that is inimical to the contemplative setting often conducive to authentic religious experience. In that respect, Lewis's original story far outstrips the movie. One can follow the impulse to lay down the book and think about Aslan's sacrifice on the stone table, rather than being dragged across the sky and back into battle.

It's interesting to compare the small part graphic description of the battle takes in the book to its expanded role in the movie. *Narnia*, I think, works better as a pretty well-made entertainment film than as something to applaud for profundity or spiritual insight.

"So, bottom line, are the cows fat or lean?" you ask. You should know by now that the one creature not living in Narnia is a cow!

Scott Moncrieff is a professor of English at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, and a regular contributor to *Spectrum* online.

Aslan Wept: C. S. Lewis and Today's Students

By Nancy Lecourt

These books tell the story of the Great Controversy, without ever mentioning God!" Gary Bradley, my sophomore biology teacher at San Gabriel Academy, held up C. S. Lewis's space trilogy—*Out of the Silent Planet*, *Perelandra*, and *That Hideous Strength*. Since he was one of my favorite teachers, I got the books and started reading.

That same year, 1967, my English teacher, Carolyn Stevens, was taking her devotionals from another book by Lewis, *The Great Divorce*. I soon had my own copy, and I was fascinated by the idea of damned souls as tourists, taking a bus from the grimy suburbs of hell to the grassy meadows of Paradise.

After this, I read everything I could by Lewis: *Mere Christianity*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *Surprised by Joy*, *Miracles*, *The World's Last Night*, *The Problem of Pain*, and so on. I literally had every book he had written, so far as I knew.

Lewis got me through the spiritual crises of my adolescence: he made it possible for me to be both a Christian and a thinking person, to remain an Adventist, but still feel connected to the rest of the Christian world.

Adventism had not been presented to me as logical, or even as part of a grand tradi-

tion—only as The Truth. I was eager for what I found in Lewis, a door into what felt like a larger, airier space: Mere Christendom.

As I look back, it seems odd that I didn't hear of the Narnia books until almost ten years later, at a Bicentennial party. I suspect that they were not shelved with the other Lewis books, and because they were for children, not considered interesting or even respectable, perhaps, in the same way as the other books.¹

Yet I do not regret this—what a delicious treat it was to find these seven glorious fantasies, now considered Lewis's best work by many, when I thought I had read it all—like suddenly discovering I had an extra week of summer vacation, or another layer of chocolates in what had looked like an empty box.

These days, Adventist students usually begin with Narnia: *The Lion, the Witch, and the*



Wardrobe is often read to them in elementary school. Unfortunately, many stop there.² For years, I have made it a practice to include at least one Lewis book when I teach Great Books, our general education literature class at Pacific Union College. I always ask students what other Lewis books they have read, and find that many have read none, never even heard of Lewis before—though always a few have read several.

Finally, this spring I was able to teach an entire course in C. S. Lewis, the most enjoyable class of my thirty years of teaching (yes, I began as a very small child...). As I pre-

Students seemed particularly taken by the concept of the “weight of glory,” Lewis’s term for the approval of God that will eventually rest upon those who are saved. More importantly, because each of us will one day be either a saint or a lost soul, we need to recognize the weight of our neighbor’s glory—that we are surrounded by potentially immortal creatures, and we are daily pushing them toward one destination or the other.

Another English major, Lindsay Bautista, wrote a story about a little girl whom Aslan calls on to bear the weight of her brother and father’s glory—even

The students...seemed...struck by how personal [Lewis] is—how he puts his finger on the very sin we want to avoid talking about.

pared to teach, I wondered if today’s students would love Lewis as I did when I was their age, more than thirty years ago. Would they appreciate his clarity, logic, and wit? Or would something else catch their attention?

As I planned the syllabus, I thought about how important conversation was to Lewis, how he thrived on the weekly meetings in his rooms at Magdalen College, Oxford, or at the Bird and Baby pub, where he and his friends talked and argued and critiqued each other’s manuscripts over their pints (and smokes).

So I felt that the central organizing principle for our class should be conversation: We would sit around a seminar table, drink tea, and talk. I went to the local Dorcas and bought a lot of mismatched mugs, plugged in the teakettle, and we were ready.

We met in a room with westward facing windows every Wednesday evening, and the setting sun came through the trees and onto the faces of sixteen students, thirteen of them young women. Each evening we read both fiction and nonfiction. Gradually we got to know each other, and Lewis.

Themes began to emerge. Pleasure, for example. As English major Cecily Allen wrote, “Often as Adventists it seems like we are being told what we should not take pleasure in, never what we can take pleasure in. But pleasures are those things that bring us in contact with God, that turn our eyes toward heaven....”

Although the students certainly appreciated Lewis’s famously clear and logical prose, they seemed more struck by how personal he is—how he puts his finger on the very sin we want to avoid talking about. We shared our own personal failings as we read the *Screwtape Letters*, confessing that we often recognized ourselves in his characters.

though her brother is a bully, and her father abusive.

Rachel Reeves, a history major, wrote on her final exam: “The person next to me is very much more important than the task at hand: the class I’m studying for will end; the car I’m buying will break; the civilization I’m shaping will fall; but my sister will be around forever. I guess I can take the time to listen to her talk about her day.”

Another theme, which was inevitable, I suppose, turned out to be discomfort with Lewis’s attitudes toward girls and women. In *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Lucy is told that she must not go to war because “battles are ugly when women fight.”

In *Mere Christianity* we read that husbands are the heads of their wives because—well, what real woman would WANT to boss her man around, I mean, honestly? It’s not natural. And what would the neighbors think? (This is, of course, a rough paraphrase—but not very rough.)

The young women in the class loved Lewis, and yet they felt the sting of these small insults. We noted them, tried to imagine that Lewis did better after his marriage, and forgave him for being, like us, a product of time and place.

We talked about dancing. Lewis uses dance as a metaphor frequently; not just in the Narnia books, but also in his nonfiction, and in the grand finale of *Perelandra*, the “great dance,” which represents the entire universe as organized and powered by God’s will.

Dance in Lewis figures delight, celebration, and order within apparent disorder. Dance is even used to explain the Trinity, the *pas de trois* that is Love itself.

Social studies major Audrey Grube wrote her final paper on dancing, and concluded with this sweet pic-

ture of Lewis: “I like to imagine him covertly dancing around Oxford, or along a forest path—perhaps even watching, longingly, a young couple at a festival on a summer night. I imagine him this way for I, too, am a dancer, but only at heart....”

Indeed, the theme of dance helped us resolve some of our problems with gender hierarchy. Although Lewis is clear in his rejection of “mere” equality—his concept of an ideal ruler is clearly a king, and the ideal government a monarchy—this only applies, it would seem, to our fallen state.

Dance in Lewis figures delight, celebration, and order within apparent disorder.

The Great Dance at the end of *Perelandra* feels almost feminist in its insistence that the great design is neither linear nor hierarchical, but circular: “In the plan of the Great Dance...each is equally at the centre...there seems no centre because it is all centre. Blessed be He!”

Finally, another, darker theme emerged: the death of the mother. Lewis lost his own mother on his eighth birthday, and the memory of this first, early sorrow never left him. We felt the sharp pain of Digory in *The Magicians’ Nephew*—written more than thirty years later—whose mother is dying

In a wonderful moment of wish fulfillment, Lewis allows his character to do what he could not: heal his mother with fruit from the Narnian Tree of Life:

There she lay, as he had seen her lie so many other times, propped up on the pillow, and a wan, pale face that would make you cry to look at it....

The brightness of the Apple threw strange lights on the ceiling...And the smell of the Apple of Youth was as if there was a window in the room that opened on Heaven.

“Oh, darling, how lovely,” said Digory’s mother...And no sooner had she finished it than she smiled and her head sank back on the pillow and she was asleep: a real, natural, gentle sleep, without any of those nasty drugs, which was, as Digory knew, the thing in the whole world that she wanted most.

Near the end of the quarter, one of the young men in the class had to leave us—his own mother was dying of cancer. And we had no Apple to give him. At the final exam, I told the remaining students what had happened,

why he wasn’t with us. A student who had recently become a Christian made an impromptu card for the others to sign. On the front she drew Aslan, weeping.

Notes and References

1. I may be wrong about this. In 1979, Peter Schakel could write that ten million copies of the Narnia books had been sold (in *Reading with the Heart: The Way into Narnia*).

2. In pre-Harry Potter days, this book was often banned from Adventist elementary schools because it dealt with magic and

witches. Now, it is extolled because the witches are evil, as opposed to both good and bad witches in the Rowling books. Apparently the presence of both good and bad magic in the Narnia books is somehow overlooked. But I begin to rant....

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Grace and Glory

This is in response to the letter from Abimael Acosta in the summer 2005 issue, which states: “If both Paul and John saw Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father, how could he have first entered the most holy place in 1844?”

This issue is best understood in relation to the “kingdom of grace” and the “kingdom of glory” (see Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, 347). The kingdom of grace was promised beforehand but not inaugurated until Christ’s blood was shed (Heb. 9:11–28). We come boldly before the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16), where we see Jesus seated at the right hand of the Father. Jesus speaks about the kingdom of glory in Matthew 25:31, 32, in reference to the final judgment and his second coming.

It appears that Jesus does not sit on his throne until later. For now, he sits at the right hand of the Father. Daniel 7 pictures him coming before the Father to receive the kingdom. This is the kingdom of glory, and the judgment pictured is the transition from the kingdom of grace to the kingdom of glory. The figures of the holy place and the most holy place have more to do with the work accomplished in reference to them than in how he is positioned (Stephen sees him “standing at the right hand of the Father” rather than seated, as in Acts 7:56).

Using the sanctuary model, at

Jesus’ ascension the first function of his blood would have been to inaugurate the whole sanctuary (see Heb. 9:19–23) to establish the kingdom of grace. Then his blood would make effective his intercession on our behalf under the kingdom of grace, where our sins are covered (Heb. 7:25). Finally, the blood he shed once for all would make the final transition to the kingdom of glory possible, where our sins are blotted out (Heb. 9:28).

*Dennis Blomberg
Redlands, Calif.*

Leaving, but Still Loving

Monte Sahlin’s article on Seventh-day Adventist dropouts (summer 2005) quoted six reasons Mark Finley has given for people leaving the Church. My own reason for leaving is not included in that list. I left at age forty-five after a lifetime of faithful membership and love for Jesus. I had no problems with the pastor or any member.

I left because I no longer agreed with many of the fundamental Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. In particular, I came to believe that the Bible is the only authoritative source of truth. Yet according to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I am an apostate—one who has left the faith—even though my love for Jesus and my devotion to his church, which is much larger than Adventism, is as strong as ever.

In my new church, I don’t always agree with long-held denominational views, but no one feels compelled to change my way of thinking. Diverse views encourage deeper Bible study. Jesus wants his church to be united—but that doesn’t mean everyone has to think and worship the same way.

We should respect and love each other and avoid labeling Christian believers as apostates when their views differ from our own.

Name withheld by request

Bearing Witness

I appreciated Lawrence Geraty’s article, “Seventh-day Adventist Church Gets New Fundamental Belief: The First in a Quarter Century” (summer 2005).

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

As it has turned out, that is exactly how the Fundamental Beliefs have been used. Desmond Ford and I can bear witness to that.

*Rick Kuykendall
Auburn, Calif.*

Why Should Our Kids Be Adventist?

Not long ago, I heard my son say at a memorial service that his grandmother had once offended her Adventist teachers by showing up with her hair cut...*short!*

Perhaps only octogenarians know why this was ever an issue. No one today, surely, would say that God frets over how short we wear our hair, or how long. Short, long, shaved off—what does it matter?

So...when I meet my Maker, what is the quiz going to be about? If my “look” isn’t the big thing, what is? And does being Adventist even matter?

These questions ask whether it’s important to hit the bull’s eye—get things right—when it comes to living life and living it well. Educated people, including you and me, aren’t as sure about the answers as in the past. With today’s diversity and today’s uncertainty about what human beings can know for sure, many despair of even finding the bull’s eye, let alone hitting it. A final truth for how to live just seems elusive. And so Adventists themselves sometimes wonder why their own children, or even they themselves, should remain Adventist.

Sabbath and the Second Coming are still, I believe, two good reasons. But the parable of Judgment Day in Matthew 25 offers perspective no one should miss. Here Jesus says that “just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” By the time his Judgment picture is complete, it’s clear that how I treat others determines my eternal destiny.

It seems, then, that the last quiz question is about compassion—about whether you’ve helped people, especially underdogs, to flourish. And just as the last quiz question is not about hair, it’s not about what you eat or how you dress or whether you comprehend the enigmas of prophecy and doctrine. It’s just: Were you kind? Did you, or did you not, make life better for others?

Compassion—loving others; helping them flourish—is the bull’s eye.

In a skeptical age some would demur and give reasons. Many would go on scheming for advantage over others without either thought or empathy. Despite all this doubt and indifference, however, I expect that if you’re reading this magazine you think Jesus had it right. He knew the final truth for how to live.

But if compassion is the point, and the subject of the last quiz question, how does being Adventist make a difference? Well, let me throw out a conversation starter.

Consider the Sabbath. It came in long before Sunday, but went out (for most Christians) as the Servant Church was turning, ignominiously, into the Imperial Church—the church embarrassed by its Jewish roots and enthralled with Roman power.

In recovering the Sabbath, Adventists connect with Jesus’ own Sabbath-keeping
Continued on next page...

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experience, and so stay in touch not only with both versions (Exod. 20, Deut. 5) of the Fourth Commandment, but also with the Genesis creation story. We thus receive regular reminders both of the *goodness* of earth and flesh, and also of the divine-human *partnership* for their care and keeping.

When we absorb these reminders, we know our job is to make *life on earth* a joy for all: *everyone* should flourish. So when you take in the Sabbath's meaning, you can't obsess about escaping to the next life, or forget the calling that sets you apart—and asks you to collude with Christ instead of Caesar. In this light, Sunday, with its imperial bloodline and lack of a rich biblical significance, seems a meager substitute.

So how does the Second Coming make a difference?

A Second Coming frame of mind is the conviction that Jesus is the world's final leader. And that's not only a basis for hope but also a stimulant to creative energy. If I think the world is headed somewhere good, I can get off my duff. What is more, if I believe Jesus is the world's final leader, I have a defense against the blandishments of those who would displace

him and give another account of how to live. If the commercial interests, political authorities, and entertainment moguls tell whopping lies, I'll know it if Jesus is on my mind. And if they try to steal my loyalty, I'll resist.

I won't have these advantages, of course, if I think Jesus' Coming is a pipe dream, or I assign it to a future so distant I feel no need to be ready.

Compassion—loving others; helping them flourish—is the final truth, and the subject of the last quiz question. We may be distracted from it, as when a young girl gets in trouble for her hair. But distractions happen when we haven't been Adventist *enough*.

If we see and embrace their deep meaning, the Sabbath and the Second Coming are, like fire against the cold, a huge advantage. They point us—and point our children—right to the thing that matters most.

Charles Scriven

AAF Board Chairman

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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.

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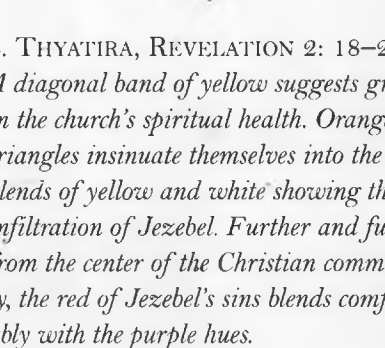
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5. On front cover



Illustrating the Seven Churches of Revelation

By artist Rosemary Peterson

1. EPHEBUS, REVELATION 2:1-7
The pilgrimage of a Christian progresses from an initial ardor for Christ and His sacrifice on the cross to a more patient, enduring love. The broken cross focuses attention on Christ's painful gift of true love for the human race.

2. SMYRNA, REVELATION 2:8-11
Suffering should not be feared by those faithful to the Christian beliefs. The luminous brightness of joy is intensified by the surrounding gloom.

3. PERGAMOS, REVELATION 2:12-17
A halo of light emanates from the two-edged sword of God's truth. The cleansing light of the sword crowds out the apostate teaching represented by the purples and blues.

4. THYATIRA, REVELATION 2: 18-29
A diagonal band of yellow suggests growth in the church's spiritual health. Orange-red triangles insinuate themselves into the blends of yellow and white showing the infiltration of Jezebel. Further and further from the center of the Christian community, the red of Jezebel's sins blends comfortably with the purple hues.

5. SARDIS, REVELATION 3:1-6
(On front cover) Seven points of light pierce the darkness of a dying congregation. These seven stars remind us He who holds them in His hands will prevail; truth and faithfulness will overcome the darkness.

6. PHILADELPHIA, REVELATION 3:7-13
The ever open door awaits those who keep His name. Life's journey is seen as a dark road illuminated by the glory shining from God's eternal presence.

7. LAODICEA, REVELATION 3: 14-22
God, as represented in the completion of a circle without beginning or end, will spew out those uncommitted to Him. The swirling theme originating close to the yellow circle represents the fate of those uncommitted. Pale colors describe their lukewarm state, while the yellow circle, without beginning or end, is the Holy One, the Judge of the living and the dead.