community through conversation

SPECTRUM

Adventist Stories Bull and Lockhart
A New Edition of *Seeking a Sanctuary*

Biblical Authority: A Challenge to the Seminary

Diary of a Ministerial Intern: Where Was Jesus?

Creating in the Image of God

Touring the Adventist Blogosphere

Is Evangelism Preventing Church Growth?

VOLUME.34 ISSUE.4 ■ FALL 2006 | WWW.SPECTRUMMAGAZINE.ORG

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SPECTRUM

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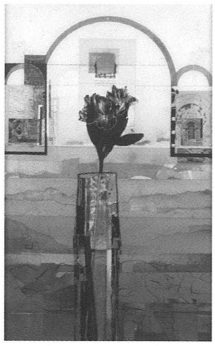

FROM THE ARTIST: The original inspiration for this piece was a memory of sitting in a church, seeing red pews in layers from the back to the front. The flowers represent an offering or gift of innocence/love; the symmetrical arches and angel add to the spiritual theme. Bits of text collaged into the piece include "the most obvious thing in the world is the most obscure," "knowing one from the other," "smolders beneath the consciousness," and "guide rail." I suppose this piece is ultimately trying to get at the question of the ability to know God/Truth. The wrestling figures suggest struggle, as the word *Peniel* in the title comes from the biblical story of Jacob wrestling with the angel.

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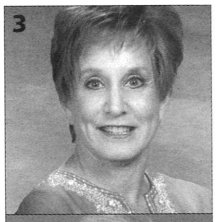

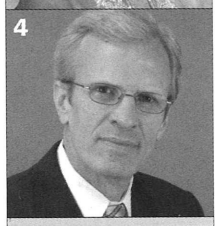

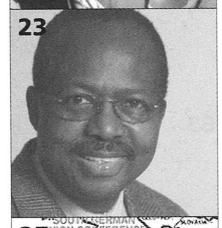

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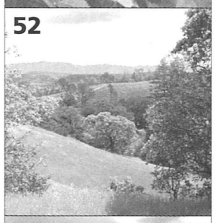

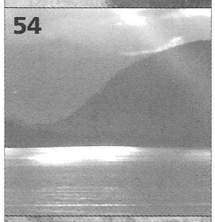

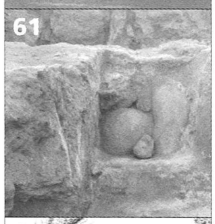

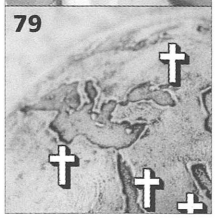

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Ongoing Conversations

A Meeting of Minds | BY BONNIE DWYER

Conversation is a meeting of minds with different memories and habits. When minds meet, they don't just exchange facts; they transform them, reshape them, draw different implications from them, engage in new trains of thought. Conversation doesn't just reshuffle the cards: it creates new cards.

—Theodore Zeldin, *Conversation*

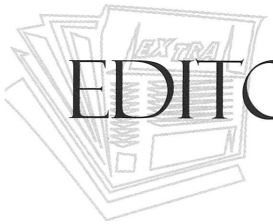
ONE OF THE ENDEARING MARKS OF friendship is an ease in picking up a conversation over years and miles as though there has never been any separation. That is where we find ourselves in this issue of *Spectrum*—picking up conversations, stories, and poems, from friends who have played significant roles in our past. And here they are again, blessing us with new thoughts and ideas.

Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart burst on the publishing scene in 1989 with a book that was heralded as a masterpiece, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*. Combining history and sociology, they told the story of more than just Adventism's Millerite roots; they added perspective on the culture. A second edition of their book is being published by Indiana University Press in December. Since it is completely updated, we get to see their creative minds take on the most recent developments in the Church. It is a particular pleasure to carry a chapter from the book in this issue, because the chapter picks up the conversation begun in our last issue about authority and the Bible.

It's been thirty years since Merikay McLeod filed suit against the Pacific Press for discrimination and opened the way for equal pay of Adventist women employees in the United States, but her case is as fresh as the daily newspaper. In October 2006, the *New York Times* carried a four-part series about faith-based profits in their business section and then followed it up with an editorial. "Where Faith Abides, Employees Have Few Rights," was the second installment of the series. Asked about the article at the Association of Adventist Women's Conference, where she was given a Woman of the Year Award, Merikay expressed frustration with the Church's learning curve when it comes to its employees. But, always the optimist, she also shared with us a poem that expresses her dream for a bright new day.

Blogging is the latest way to continue a conversation across space and time. The blog section of the *Spectrum* Web site has been a hit since its inception this past summer. For those who have not yet sampled the conversation there, we feature some of Adventism's most active bloggers in this issue. We also have the story of an evangelistic campaign told through a blog.

Community through conversation is the motto of Adventist Forum. We thank you for being the kind of friends who are ready to pick up the conversation, keep it going, and thereby make the community vibrant. ■



EDITORIAL ■ *from the forum president*

Biblical Authority

A Challenge to the Seminary | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

Read the story as a whole, and you see it as the record of a (fallen) people who, under God's Spirit, move, by fits and starts, in the direction of Christ.

Exactly how should the Bible help me write the next chapter of my life? Exactly how should it help *us* write *ours*?

The question of biblical authority is the question of how to interpret Scripture for faithfulness in Christian life. If I grant the Bible authority—allow it to influence me, to be, in some sense, the *author* of my life—what exactly does that mean for how I apply what I read?

Judging from articles by two seminary teachers in the last issue of *Spectrum*, confusion about all this persists even where clarity matters most—at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Such confusion is by no means particular to Adventism, nor even, as far as I know, widespread at the Seminary. But it may show up wherever the Bible commands attention, and failure to correct it—especially in the training of Adventist ministers—puts at risk the Church's unity and mission alike.

In the article by Richard Davidson (first published in 1990, in the inaugural issue of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*), the author lays down his criticisms of the "historical-critical method." This is the approach to Scripture associated with modernity and the procedures of secular historical science, and in substantial part, Davidson's criticisms ring true, especially now that the self-assurance of modernity has begun to seem like arrogance. Davidson's republication of this essay is, in fact, a helpful beginning point for further conversation. Still, the alternative that he himself proposes is inadequate.

Davidson argues that no one true to the spirit of the Bible may read the book the way practitioners of the historical critical method read it. The historical critics pick and choose among the Bible's parts for what has continuing validity. But human interpretation may not, Davidson insists, say that one "portion" is "authoritative" and another not: the whole Bible is inspired.

The trouble is that an adequate account of biblical authority requires a subtlety Davidson misses. And the danger in missing that subtlety is well-illustrated, just a few pages later, by Roy Gane's reflections on genocide in the Bible.

Gane makes note of several stories that say God *commanded* Israel to carry out the total annihilation of an enemy. In Deuteronomy 20, for example, God asks the children of Israel to "completely destroy" six different nations of Canaan. Numbers 33 and 1 Samuel 15 show God's readiness to punish those mandated to carry out wars of extermination. Why? For failing, as Gane says, to "shed the last drop of blood."

From all this, Gane concludes that when you believe (as he does) that the "entire Bible" is God's Word, you have no choice but to say that God "sometimes gives up on groups of people," and commissions others to commit genocide against them. Gane takes it for granted that, as a "true theocracy," Israel was acting for God—responding to "direct revelation from God"—when it engaged in genocidal violence. "When God tells you to do something, you do it," he writes; you do it even if it is "unusual and unpleasant," even if it "evokes revulsion and instant condemnation."

A theory of biblical authority that permits

these conclusions is worse than dubious: it is dangerous. To his credit, Gane himself seems uncomfortable with what he is saying, and as his essay ends, he alludes to the "truer religion" of Jesus with its ideal of "sacrificial love." Unfortunately, however, he makes no explicit case for why Jesus should trump the theocrats. Under the right conditions, God asks the faithful to annihilate whole peoples—and despite Gane's reservations, it is, even in his account, as simple as that.

What both Davidson and Gane overlook, or do not begin to say clearly, is this: In Christian Scripture, the *internal evidence* points unmistakably to a *Christ-centered* understanding of biblical authority.

The first Christians took Christ to be *the* criterion of their life and thought. Jesus—teacher and healer; the one crucified under Pilate and then resurrected—was God's human face. He was the Word made flesh, the visible image of the invisible divine, the exact imprint of God's very being (John 1; Colossians 1; Hebrews 1).

The resurrection made it so, or made it plain. Paul says the resurrection was God's declaration that Jesus is both Son of God and Lord of life (Romans 1). According to the first Gospel, the risen Christ declared: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28; compare Matthew 5).

There is no room here, none at all, for an *uncentered* view of biblical authority. But even if Gane seems uncomfortable with what an uncentered view entails, he and Davidson both say that the Bible is all authoritative, including all the bits and pieces. No "portion" (Davidson) lacks authority. Even if God issues a command that "evokes revulsion and instant condemnation" (Gane), the believer obeys. Under the right (theocratic) conditions a mandate to genocide is binding—the very Word of God.

Saying we no longer live under a theocracy, as Gane does, is no true help. For one thing, warlords, "legitimate" or otherwise, assume, all too easily, that they are God's appointed agents for another, this still leaves God and the risen Christ at odds—capable, at least in principle, of disagreeing.

Christian Scripture provides the solution: the authority of the Bible is *Christ-centered* authority. Recognizing this, and saying it clearly, is crucial—for Christian life it is as decisive as daylight. The uncentered account, after all, leaves us with a schizophrenic God, and with followers adrift and confused. With Christ effectively dethroned, the Crusades may be a Christian mission; Nazis may sing carols on Christmas and carry out their grisly work the day after; churches may fly the flag and ask no questions.

And why not? God really does sanction war, and even genocide—you can read about it in the Bible.

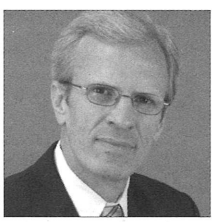
The point is not, of course, that Davidson and Gane want such confusion to happen. They do not. The point is that the uncentered view of Scriptural authority opens the door to such confusion.

On the Christ-centered view, all Scripture—the whole story—is inspired; all Scripture—the whole story—is a revelation. But now you read the story as a *whole*, and you see it as the record of a (fallen) people who, under God's Spirit, move—slowly, and by fits and starts, in the direction of Christ. Surrounded at first by polytheistic violence, they do not really *hear* all that God hopes they will one day hear. Over time, however, adumbrations of an inclusive vision begin to appear; even nonviolence comes to be seen as potentially redemptive (Isaiah 19, 53, and 56).

Then you come to Christ, whose resurrection provides, at last, the hermeneutical key to interpreting the inspired story. That key is not my authority, or some scholar's authority, or some bureaucracy's authority; it is Christ's authority, and faithful Christian life becomes a matter, unmistakably, of following...Jesus. Now genocidal references come under the judgment of Christ. Now the vision of Jesus, including the vision of the Sermon on the Mount, becomes *the* criterion.

Professors at the seminary should be leading us, all of them, to see this. Otherwise, our ministers and congregations bend under the sway of Christ-defying temptation, not least the temptation to violence, or mindless support of violence, that so routinely beguiles the wider world.

Skeptics say, usually with a sneer, that you can argue anything you want to from the Bible. It isn't so, not when the authority of the book is seen through the eyes of Christ. These skeptics need to know that. And it is even more important, no doubt, that *we* know it. ■



Charles Scriven is president of the Kettering College of the Medical Arts and is president of Adventist Forums

The Discussion about the Nature of God

(that inspired Scriven's editorial)

Screeching Tires

BY CHARLES SCRIVEN
September 6, 2006

IN THE SUMMER ISSUE of *Spectrum*, diverse perspectives on the interpretation of the Bible come across like tires screeching, and jerk you awake.

Richard Davidson and Roy Gane are of the same mind. All Scripture (Davidson) "transcends cultural backgrounds as timeless truth." The "entire Bible" (Gane) is the "Word of God." This is what I will call a "flat-line" account of scriptural authority. It's not just the Bible as a whole that defines Christian life, it's all the bits and pieces. Every book and text has equal sway.

This account leaves Gane troubled by a God who (in some Bible passages) endorses—mandates—genocide. The trouble comes because this claim about God must be seen as timeless truth. Under the correct theocratic conditions (as with Israel of old) the command to commit genocide is the very Word of God. So under the right conditions, genocide is God's truth.

Gane ends up, it is true, wishing people would embody the "truer religion" that reflects Christ's sacrificial love, but he provides no argument, certainly no biblical argument, for privileging Jesus over genocide. His account of the Bible won't let him.

In the same *Spectrum* issue Sigve Tonstad contends that, with its vision of reconciliation among Israel and its enemies, Egypt and Assyria, the book of Isaiah, in chapter 19, announces a wholly startling prospect. It is a "paradigm shift," an anticipation of Jesus' prayer on the cross for the forgiveness of his enemies (Luke 23:34).

Tonstad's view suggests an "ascending line" theory of Bible authority: understanding shifts to something different from, and sometimes better than, previous understanding. David Larson makes this "ascending line" premise explicit in his response to Gane, and quotes Hebrews 1 to say that the final measure of Christian truth is Christ. Thus, says Larson, genocide is never God's truth.

Luke reports Peter's saying that Jesus was raised up and "exalted at the right hand of God" (Acts 2:32, 33). John the Evangelist tells us not just that the "Word" is God, but also that it "became flesh" (so we can see) in Jesus (John 1:1, 14). The author of Hebrews declares that Jesus Christ, by contrast with other prophets, is the "exact imprint" of God's being; he declares further that Jesus Christ is the same "yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 1:3 and 13:8).

I do not know how Davidson and Gane read these passages, but I myself see them as support for Tonstad and Larson. What is more, my conclusion does not depend on the "historical-critical method" (which Davidson anathematizes and I myself substantially reject). It depends only on an "ascending line," as opposed to "flat-line," theory of biblical authority. It assumes that the Bible is a story tending in the direction of God's ultimate revelation. It assumes, in other words, what the first Christians assumed, what the Radical Reformers assumed, what Adventists like John Weidner in Nazi Europe and Ginn Fourie in violence-torn South Africa assumed: Bible believers really can know God's true will because God's true will is the will of the resurrected Christ to whom the New Testament bears witness.

But the issues are complex, and I know it. Let me just say that unless Adventism is a lifeless shell—too dead to hear screeching tires—this cluster of articles should get attention and comment. That attention and comment should come from laypersons and scholars alike, and certainly from seminary professors.

Is the juxtaposition of the Davidson and Gane articles the death knell for the "flat-line" theory of the biblical authority? Or does it prove that we don't know—and cannot know—how to make a biblical argument against genocide?

If the latter is the case, what moral authority can our church possibly have? And why would our neighbors want to join us, or our kids want to stay?

Instruction from the Koran

BY CHARLES SCRIVEN
September 13, 2006

PERHAPS THE KORAN can sharpen our awareness on these matters.

From Gane's account, remember, you'd think God was schizophrenic. The Bible describes episodes of God-directed genocide, yet says that Jesus, the beloved Son in whom God was well-pleased, forgave his enemies and did no violence to them.

What to do?

Well, with Gane's (and Davidson's) flat-line view of the Bible's authority, every bit and piece is God's very truth, so the tension cannot be resolved—Gane seems to say he cannot resolve it—and God ends up divided.

George Packer, in the September 11 *New Yorker*, writes about Mahmoud Muhammad Taha, a scholar of the Koran who in 1985 was executed in Sudan for sedition and apostasy.

Taha had argued that the parts of the Koran revealed to Muhammad in Mecca, at the beginning, were the "supreme expression" of Islamic religion: suffused with kindness, the sense of freedom and equality, the ideal of peaceful coexistence of all with all. The later parts, revealed in Medina where Muhammad had established Islamic rule in a city full of Jews and pagans, were inferior: bristling with threats and the need for compulsion by the sword.

Although Taha's vision is alive today, it is little heeded.

Is the problem exactly similar to the one that puzzles Gane?

Not if you pay attention to the...text. To my (very limited) knowledge, nothing in the Koran permits you to argue, on the basis of evidence internal to that book, that the final Islamic truth is the truth of Mecca, not Medina. But the internal evidence in Scripture says that God's final truth is Christ: if you have seen Jesus, says the New Testament in several ways and places, you have seen the Maker of heaven and earth.

The Word of God in Scripture thus points us, unmistakably, to God's Ultimate Word in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. And God ceases to be divided.

Why should this be hard to see? And why should anyone who has faith in Christ resist seeing it?

Is anyone better able to advance this conversation than scholars and seminary professors? Considering genocidal violence today, is any conversation more important? We can all help, of course, but we need many of those who teach our children and our pastors to help, too. Can we not at last embrace, on this matter, a true dialogue of those concerned?

Agreement, Misrepresentations, and Disagreements

BY ROY GANE
September 13, 2006

I AGREE WITH Charles Scriven that in the current issue of *Spectrum* (34.3, summer 2006), "diverse perspectives on the interpretation of the Bible come across like tires screeching." You can almost smell the rubber burning!

Scriven reacts against articles by Richard Davidson on the authority of Scripture (38–45) and myself (Roy Gane) on Israelite genocide (61–65). Scriven agrees, on the other hand, with articles in the same issue by Sigve Tonstad on Isaiah (46–53) and David Larson, who responds to my article on genocide (66–69). As Scriven acknowledges, "the issues are complex."

Although Scriven's brief essay does not attempt to deal with the complexity, he briefly identifies what he sees as main issues at stake. I welcome this frank communication as helpful in opening up further dialogue. So, accepting the challenge, here are a few of my own observations in response to both Scriven and Larson. First I will list some areas in which we agree. Then I will point out some issues that Larson and Scriven have misrepresented. Finally, I will identify what I believe to be the source of our disagreement.

AREAS OF AGREEMENT

1. I agree with Larson and Scriven that the character of God is central to the message of Scripture. In my teaching, preaching, and in several of my books (*Altar Call* [Diadem, 1999]; *Leviticus, Numbers* [NIV Application Commentary; Zondervan, 2004]; *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* [Eisenbrauns, 2005]; *Who's Afraid of the Judgment?* [Pacific Press, 2006]) I have repeatedly and emphatically emphasized that God's character of love (1 John 4:8) is the heart and basis of divinely revealed truth (compare Matt. 22:37–40).

2. I heartily agree that Christ is the paramount revelation of God's character (for example 2 Cor. 3).

3. I agree that divine revelation is progressive. God is continually leading his people to a higher standard (for example Isa.; Matt. 5). Examples could fill several volumes. As I have written in my article, God no longer mandates genocide.

4. I agree with Larson that we need to trace the trajectory of Scripture in order to follow the direction it is leading, even when this means moving beyond (but never contrary to, I would add) explicit statements of Scripture. For example, in the Bible there are no explicit divine commands prohibiting everyone from practicing all forms of slavery or polygamy under all circumstances.

However, we see in Scripture that

Give me a break, Chuck! ...If you don't get the clear message that I privilege Jesus over genocide, read my article again.

—Roy Gane

God did not initiate these institutions and did not like them. He undermined them by teaching the value of each human being, and regulated them to mitigate their worst effects in an age when completely abolishing them would have resulted in starvation for debt-servants and for rejected women. We correctly deduce that in harmony with the biblical message, Christians must never practice slavery or polygamy.

5. Larson accepts events of corporate destruction by God, such as Noah's flood, incineration of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the ultimate annihilation of the wicked as compatible with God's character (68–69). I agree because God's love includes his justice as well as his mercy.

While he doesn't want any to perish (2 Pet. 3:9) and his retributive punishments are alien to his desires (compare Isa. 28:21—God's "strange act"), he ultimately does not allow individuals or groups who refuse to live in harmony with his law of love to continue disrupting the reign of love, which is the only principle on the basis of which intelligent beings with free choice can harmoniously co-exist and not ultimately destroy each other.

6. I agree with Larson that the story of Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 22) was never intended to teach that God commands people to do evil (including human sacrifice).

MISREPRESENTATIONS

1. Larson defines "genocide" narrowly as "the extermination of entire groups with no regard for the relative guilt or innocence of individual members and no opportunity for any of them to be spared" (68). He reads this definition of genocide into my description of "genocide" carried out by ancient Israel, thereby making the question of theodicy more difficult than it really is.

But I simply use *genocide* in the normal sense of the word: "the systematic killing or extermination of a whole people or nation" (*Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*). The "-cide" ending in "genocide" simply refers to killing (compare "insecticide"), without regard for the relative guilt or innocence of those who are killed.

2. Larson's definition of "genocide" leads him to artificially and inaccurately distance what God did through the ancient Israelites from largely analogous events, such as Noah's flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the ultimate extermination of the wicked. As evidence that the latter occurrences do not count as genocide, he cites the fact that God saved Noah and Lot and their families and delays the ultimate extermination of the wicked.

If Larson were right, the divine-Israelite destruction of Jericho would not involve genocide because Rahab was saved from that city, and none of the destruction inflicted on the Canaanites by the Israelites would count as genocide because God delayed it for hundreds of years until the iniquity of the inhabitants of Canaan (earlier called "Amorites") was complete (Gen. 15:13–16).

3. Scriven writes: "Gane ends up, it is true, wishing people would embody the 'truer religion' that reflects Christ's sacrificial love, but he provides no argument, certainly no biblical argument, for privileging Jesus over genocide. His account of the Bible won't let him."

Give me a break, Chuck! Disagree if you like, but try to accurately represent what I say. You grossly distort my article, which shows that Israelite genocide was dependent on and limited to the Israelite theocracy, which no longer exists, and which cites biblical passages to the effect that we should leave vengeance to God and follow the Lord's command to love others as ourselves. If you don't get the clear message that I privilege Jesus over genocide, read my article again.

I should also point out that this article deals with a narrow, difficult topic in the context of my *NIV Application Commentary on Leviticus, Numbers*. For a full exposition of my understanding of the gospel and God's character in these biblical books, read the rest of this volume (806 pp. + indices).

SOURCE OF DISAGREEMENT

In his introduction, Larson clearly lays out the issue: "The question before us is whether we can think of God ordering ancient Israel to act so ruthlessly (Num. 21:1–35, 31:1–54; Deut. 2:1–37, 3:1–29, and 20:1–20). He answers Yes and I say No" (66). Later Larson explains: "The prac-

tice of genocide is not compatible with the character of God as embodied in Jesus Christ... As it is with slavery and some other issues, our position should be that our religious ancestors honestly believed that God commanded them to practice genocide but that now we see this differently" (68).

Really?! Larson knows biblical passages clearly stating that the Lord (including through Moses) commanded the Israelites to wipe out groups of wicked people inhabiting the Promised Land. Nevertheless, he simply does not believe that aspect of this part of the Bible because it does not accord with his view of what the character of God/Christ allows the deity to do. C. S. Lewis would say that he is trying to tame Aslan.

Larson's view is based on selective reading of another part of the Bible to arrive at a conclusion that he then imposes on the rest of Scripture. Rather than take 2 Tim. 3:16 ("All Scripture is inspired by God...") seriously to mean that the whole Bible is the Source of our knowledge of God and his character, Larson makes the biblical Source conform to his own thinking. This is called "circular reasoning," and apart from any question of faith, use of this kind of reasoning logically invalidates conclusions derived through it.

In the process of selective reading and circular reasoning that privileges part of the Bible as opposed to other parts deemed "primitive," an approach that pervades critical so-called "exegesis," Larson disregards Christ's statements regarding divine retribution and Mosaic authority. Davidson could have used this in his article as an example of imposing human reason on the Word of God.

Because I have a solid biblical canon rather than a loose canon, refusing to rewrite part of the Bible in order to deny its explicit statements that back in history God commanded something that I do not feel comfortable with, Scriven negatively characterizes my approach (and Davidson's) of scriptural authority as "flat-line": "It's not just the Bible as a whole that defines Christian life, it's all the bits and pieces. Every book and text has equal sway."

I reply: Did Christ or the apostles say that one part of the Bible is more important than another? If not, should we engage in this exercise, or would that be arrogant, or even blasphemous? I'm not interested in condemning anyone here. But I do wish to say: Wake up and see what you are doing!

Taking all of Scripture seriously as contributing to our understanding of God and his will for us by no means mandates knee-jerk, unthinking obedience to the letter of the law, which would call for reinstituting practices such as levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5–10). Gulp. Rather, 2 Tim. 2:15 says: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (NAS95).

This calls for careful exegesis that takes into account factors such as diverse genres and, within the genre of law, the difference between culturally-conditioned applications of law and the timeless principles underlying them (see in detail in my *Leviticus, Numbers*, 305–14). Yes, the "bits and pieces" matter in a variety of ways, and we have no right to sweep away their timeless elements, including factors regarded today as politically incorrect (for instance, in Leviticus God condemns the practice of homosexuality as a moral evil; see *Leviticus, Numbers*, 325–30).

Obviously we have only touched on a few complex matters that branch out in all directions. We have not even begun to dialogue regarding individual versus corporate responsibility, or another category that David Daube (*Studies in Biblical Law*) calls "ruler-punishment." Nevertheless, our discussion thus far suffices to amply demonstrate Davidson's point: The source of disagreement boils down to two different views of the Bible and its authority.

A Dilemma in Christian Ethics

BY DAVID R. LARSON
September 21, 2006

THANK YOU, everybody!

Guess what? My views are closer to those of Charles Scriven and Sigve Tonstad than they are to those of Roy Gane and Richard Davidson!

I do not clearly understand Roy Gane's clarification of the meaning of "genocide," however. It seems to me that he and I and the dictonary he cites may agree that it refers to the annihilation of entire groups of people without discriminating among them in any way.

Richard Davidson reports that his experiences color his views. My experiences color mine too.

When I was an earliteen in Northern California, my mother gathered me and my younger brother and sister to share some horrible news. The preceding weekend his mother had killed one of our young friends by using a hose to deliver automobile exhaust from the garage to the bedroom where he was sleeping.

She believed that God had told her to do this because, now that he had given his life completely to God, it would be better for him to die than to run the risk of backsliding.

Given this experience, perhaps it is not surprising that I am allergic to divine command theories of ethics whenever they claim that such imperatives can tell people in the past or present to do

things that are contrary to the character of God as revealed by Jesus Christ.

Here we encounter a dilemma in Christian ethics. On the one hand, if we do not test what we take to be the commands of God by other standards, we may make terrible mistakes. On the other hand, if we assess the commands of God by other critera, we may make these norms more ultimate than God.

God condemned and punished the Innocent One so the guilty could go free.

—Beatrice Neall

We slip through the horns of this dilemma, I believe, when we test everything that strikes us as divine commands, past and present, by what we learn from Jesus Christ. This gives us a standard other than the divine command itself which is not alien to God's own character.

Many Christian atrocities have been committed by those who believed that their situations were so unusal that "just this once" God's normal expectations did not apply. This way of making Christian ethical decisions strikes me as very dangerous.

Thankfully, we all agree that today genocide is never an option for Christians. Never!

Editor's Note: On September 6, 2006, reader and retired theology professor Beatrice Neall also contacted us via e-mail about the Gane–Larson exchange.

God in the Mud

BY BEATRICE NEALL

MANY TIMES AS WE study the Bible we don't like the picture of God we see. He seems harsh, vindictive, severe. What we don't realize is that God, in dealing with sinners, not only got his hands dirty, he also sank into mud up to his armpits. To rescue us from the mire of sin he had to plunge into the mess himself, act in ways he didn't like, and muddy his reputation.

In dealing with sin, God has had to choose from bad options. He always tries prevention, but we humans don't listen to his warnings. Initially, he tried to prevent evil by issuing a stern prohibition. At Sinai, he evoked sheer terror through blinding light, mushroom cloud, thunder, earthquake, and trumpet blast.

In the covenant blessings and cursings, God appealed to the lowest level of human motivation, reward and punishment. He enacted harsh laws with severe consequences for violation. But threats don't work unless they are carried out.

God at times used extermination—"ethnic cleansing"—an extreme method. Israel was commanded to wipe out the inhabitants of Canaan, not leaving alive "anything that breathes" (Deut. 20:16), putting to death "men and women, children and infants" (1 Sam. 15:3). Why? Israel was confronted with vile heathen cultures. The Lord feared Israel would absorb these evil practices—and they did.

God has tried patience. He has waited thousands of years before executing final judgment on this world. However, sinners take advantage of his patience.

What has God done to help us understand him better, to see through his anger to the heart of love beneath? Is there anything he has done to wash the mud off his reputation?

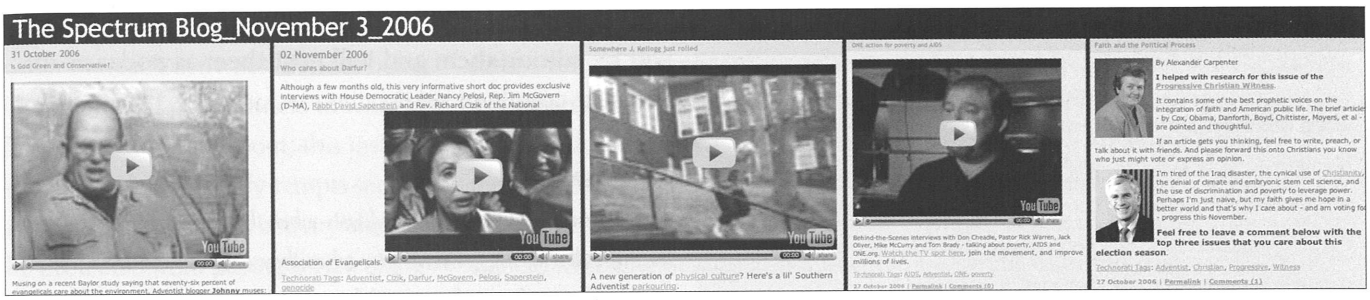
He sent Jesus into this world. In Jesus, we see the heart of God opened wide. The greatest atrocity ever committed in the history of this world was the execution of the most innocent man who ever lived. God condemned and punished the Innocent One so the guilty could go free. Yet by this double injustice God saves our race.

The cross is an amazing revelation about how God relates to his creatures, both good and evil. The cross shows that sin is deadly—so deadly that it takes extreme measures to remedy it. The cross shows that God has not left us alone to suffer the results of sin. The cross reveals to our dull senses the pain that sin has brought to the heart of God. The cross shows the vileness of human nature.

At the cross, the heart of God was torn open by a Roman soldier. Bathing the very spear that pierced it, a torrent of blood and water gushed forth—blood to wash away guilt, water to impart new life from above. From the cross flows a river of love to a skeptical world.

That river washes the mud off our understanding of God. ■

Touring the Adventist Blogosphere | BY ALEXANDER CARPENTER



BLOGOSPHERE. The word that was coined in 1999 as a joke and recoined in 2002, as the blogging community adopted it, is a collective term that encompasses all blogs as a community or social network, according to *Wikipedia*. It is an important concept for understanding blogs. "Blogs themselves are essentially just the published text of an author's thoughts, whereas the blogosphere is a social phenomenon," *Wikipedia* explains. "What differentiates blogs from webpages or forums is that blogs can be part of a shifting Internet-wide social network formed by many links between different blogs."

At the *Spectrum* Web site, the blogosphere has emerged as a new forum for graduate students and pastors, in particular, who tend to be the people within Adventism who have taken to blogging on Adventist history, contemporary culture, politics, art, and doctrine. Since spring 2006, the *Spectrum Blog* <http://spectrummagazine.typepad.com> has become a discussion among friends and a place for sharing many aspects of the Adventist experience.

"Blogs allow anyone to quickly post text and images to the Web without any technical knowledge. This opens the Web to more publishing and distribution of information," according to Andreas Ramos, a blogger who has written a history and overview of blogs. There is also a history of blogging at *Wikipedia*, which says it evolved in the late 1990s from online diaries in which people kept running accounts of their personal lives. The form took off as Web tools were developed to make it easier to update Web sites, add comments to blog entries, and create links to other pages.

At *Spectrum*, Sharon Fujimoto-Johnson, a writer and designer who lives in Sacramento, California, and I started by blogging about our interests. Sharon posts regularly on art. She has interviewed artist Thomas Morphis, whose work appears on the cover of *Spectrum* this issue; featured a woman pastor-photographer from Finland; and shared links to religiously themed art exhibits. Politics and culture are of particular interest to me, so I've posted short films by Adventist filmmakers and written about progressive politics.

It did not take us long to find other Adventist bloggers on the Web and to discover fascinating commentary, images, and information. With comments from readers, interesting discussions such as the one on the nature of God (pages 6–10) ensued. Here, then, are some of the highlights.

Nancey Murphy Blows the Adventist (Forum) Mind

BY ALEXANDER CARPENTER
October 23, 2006

NOW BACK from the *Spectrum*/Association of Adventist Forums conference in Coeur d'Alene, ID.

The theme, "Science and the Human Soul: reflections on the brain, hope, and love," featured excellent presentations by Nancey Murphy, Alden Thompson, and T. Joe Willey.

Fuller Theological Seminary professor (and GTU alum of the year!) Nancey Murphy presented three lectures on nonreductive physicalism.

Interestingly, while most Christians believe in trichotomism—humans are made of three parts (body, soul, and mind)—Adventists, while not often aware of it, are at least doctrinally physicalists. However, as Nancey illustrated, the philosophy of physicalism, while discarding the unscientific and extrabiblical idea of the soul, forces believers to reconceive how God interacts with the human mind as

Who's Who in the Adventist Blogosphere

Ryan Bell is senior pastor of the Hollywood, California, Seventh-day Adventist Church, and director of the Re-church Network. His blog's name is "intersectionslife::faith::culture::community"<http://ryanbell.typepad.com>.

Greg Brothers pastors in Lincoln City, Oregon, and uses computers in his ministry. His blog names are "Oregon Adventist Pastor"<http://oregonadventistpastor.blogspot.com> and "The Adult Sabbath School Class" <http://adultsabbathschool.blogspot.com>. Check out his blog for regular commentary on the Sabbath School lesson.

Sherman Haywood Cox II, attends Vanderbilt Divinity School and is an advocate of computers in ministry. The name of his blog is "Adventist Pulpit"<http://www.adventistpulpit.com>.

Trisha Famissran studies history, theology, and women's studies at Claremont Graduate University. She has just started a blog named "Adventist Feminists" <http://sdagenderjustice.wordpress.com>.

Hobbes is a Ph.D. student in Adventist history and a lecturer in Seventh-day Adventist and other church history at an Adventist College. The name of his blog is "Hobbes' Place: An Exploration of Adventist History and Culture" <http://hobbes.wordpress.com>.

Ron Osborn is working on a Ph.D. in political science at the University of Southern California. His blog is "deserts of vast eternity" <http://www.ronaldosborn.net>. In April, he wrote on the moral ambiguity of conscientious cooperation.

Trevan Osborn is an M.Div. student at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. The name of his blog is "Divergence" <http://trevanosborn.blogspot.com>. He has written on church growth and evangelism (see his "Diary of a Ministerial Intern" on page 69 of this issue of *Spectrum*).

Johnny Ramirez is a student at Azusa Pacific University. He writes about religion, ethics, politics, and life in his blog, "Johnny's Blog" <http://www.johram.com>.

Monte Sahlin currently chairs the board for the Center for Creative Ministry, a research organization and resource center that helps pastors, congregations, and other organizations understand new generations and how to engage with them. The name of his blog is "Faith in Context" <http://msahlin.typepad.com>. It carries commentary on religion, values, and contemporary issues.

brain. If consciousness springs from complex neural activity, what about God? And then, how are moral choices determined?

During the weekend, the *Spectrum Blog*, along with Johnny from *Johnny's Blog*, recorded Nancey as well as Alden's sermon and T. Joe's lecture on the brain. We will be editing them and will post them as podcasts in the next couple of weeks.

COMMENT

I'll be looking forward to the podcasts when they come. I never realized the difficulty most Christians face when they confront the latest findings on the brain and neurology until I spent some time on several Christian forums. I was really wishing I could have gone to this conference.

Posted by: perpetualstudent

October 23, 2006

Should the Government take Part of Your Donations?

BY MONTE SAHLIN
October 11, 2006

THE *New York Times* concludes today a four-part series of articles pressing the issue that religious organizations in America handle billions of dollars and do not pay any taxes. This is the latest in an ongoing push from several sources for religious organizations to be taxed, or to do away with the tax-exempt nonprofit category all together. The series is quite biased, in part, because it fails to make two important points:

1. Religion-based tax breaks are based in the Bill of Rights. Americans have the right to give money to religion and know that politicians are not skimming a percentage of it through taxes.

2. If those pushing for taxes to be applied to tax-exempt nonprofits get their way, it will ultimately cost Americans far more than the present arrangement. One of the reasons that taxes are higher in many European nations is because they do not have the same vigorous nonprofit sector that America has. Taxing nonprofits in America will diminish and possibly, eventually kill this sector and, either way, the government will take over the provision of the services (at higher cost, research shows) or America will become a nation with a much more primitive quality of life.

But that's not the whole story. There is a reason why religion in America is so vulnerable to this kind of attack. The

research done by the Ronsvalles documents the fact that churches in America spend 98 percent of what they are given in offerings and donations on themselves and only 2 percent on community service, evangelism, and other outreach activities. Besides being a monumental poor witness to what Christian faith is all about, this institutional selfishness clearly tempts secular people to ask why this activity should be protected from paying its fair share of the costs of police, fire, and other services which protect churches, along with the businesses and homes that pay the cost of these services.

If American churches were spending at least half of what they receive on public service activities that clearly make a contribution to community life, this issue would never have been raised. It really is our own failure as people of faith that creates this issue, which is increasingly out of control because it appeals to both liberals and conservatives.

[Note: *The New York Times* published a portion of this posting in its "Letters" section on Sunday, October 15, 2006]

The Moral Ambiguity of Conscientious Cooperation

BY RON OSBORN
April 2006

A WEEK AGO Thursday, Seventh-day Adventist and American hero Desmond Doss died in his home in Alabama at the age of 87. Doss, who like my grandfather chose to serve during World War II as an unarmed medic, is the only conscientious objector in US history to have been awarded the Medal of Honor. He earned America's highest military award for his actions in Okinawa, where he repeatedly put himself under enemy fire to rescue wounded men. During one battle, Doss carried 75 men out of a fire-swept area and lowered them by rope down a cliff to safety, returning repeatedly and without regard for his own safety onto the battlefield until there were no more men left to be saved.

The power of Doss's noncombatant stance, which he described not as conscientious objection but as "conscientious cooperation," seems to me to lie in the influence he had on his fellow soldiers. It might be that other kinds of pacifists who put their lives on the line (such as the Christian Peacemaker Teams in Iraq) would also impress some soldiers with their bravery. But a "conscientious cooperator" in uniform is uniquely and powerfully positioned to model an alternative ethic to other soldiers during violent conflicts. Terry Benedict's 2004 documentary, *The Conscientious Objector*, shows the transforming influence of Doss's life on the men in his fighting unit, with several of these soldiers—who initially had only contempt for Doss—actually weeping on camera as they recall Doss's humanity and courage in the midst of incredible brutality.

As I have reflected on Doss's story, and on the Adventist position during World War II in general, I have, however, grown increasingly uneasy with the Doss legacy. Doss, as a human being, was morally exemplary and it is right that we honor his courage. But "conscientious cooperation" is a more morally ambiguous and problematic ethic than the Adventist Church has so far grasped. The problem with the ethic is spelled out in John Yoder's book, *Nevertheless: The Varieties and Shortcomings of Religious Pacifism*. Yoder catalogs and critiques more than 20 nonviolent positions ranging from selective conscientious objection to strict pacifism. One of his chapters is devoted to what he calls "The Pacifism of Cultic Purity," and the illustration he offers is none other than the Seventh-day Adventist Church!

Yoder suggests that Adventists have sought to keep their own hands clean in wars and to protect the rights of Sabbatarians because of a legalistic preoccupation with commandment-keeping, yet have failed to develop a wholistic social ethic or coherent theology of peace. This failure to relate matters of personal morality and obedience to larger questions about structures of power produces a kind of moral schizophrenia that I think is all too apparent in many of Doss's personal statements about his devotion to "God and country." The "cultic purity" pacifist refuses to even touch a weapon on the one hand, but is eager and willing to serve the military in every other way possible, actually tending to idolize the flag and the "war effort."

Over time, the internal contradictions and incoherencies of the "conscientious cooperator" ethic lead to a moral slide or erosion of first principles. The contradictions are resolved not through a renewed commitment to nonviolence but through greater devotion to the military as an institution. We therefore find ourselves in a situation today in which thousands of Adventists, who have probably never heard of Doss, are voluntarily fighting and killing in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, not as conscientious objectors (they did volunteer after all), nor as Doss-like "conscientious

cooperators," but as conscientious combatants. This, too, seems to me to be an undeniable and tragically ironic aspect of the Doss legacy for the Seventh-day Adventist church.

COMMENT

"A coherent theology of peace"
I like that a lot.

Hyveth Williams and the Campus Hill pastors and church saw some of its members leave after she prayed a general prayer of peace and did not, to the satisfaction of the dissenters, sufficiently bless or distinguish a young congregant about to head off to Iraq as an armed combatant.

It seemed that, as you said, the internal contradictions and incoherence of the "conscientious cooperator" ethic showed themselves in that congregation.

Posted by: Johnny

The Sabbath—Celebration of Community

BY SHERMAN HAYWOOD COX II, M.S.
April 21, 2006

"THE SABBATH is about individual rest, the church has turned it into a day of corporate worship." So say many I have come in contact with. Such an individualistic understanding of the Sabbath divorces the Sabbath Keeper from one of the greatest blessings of the Sabbath, which is a celebration of community. In fact Leviticus 23:3 reminds us that a holy convocation or meeting was required of the community in the Hebrew Bible. It was to have elements that would be kept in community. In addition, the Sabbath was not just to benefit the Sabbath keeper.

Exodus 20:10 reminds us that all who are in contact with the Sabbath keeper would benefit from the rest of the Sabbath keeper by not doing work that would normally be done for the Sabbath keeper. Even the animals were to be blessed by the Sabbath. We are told in Exodus 23:9–10 that even the land was to keep a "Sabbath-year"; this would expand the blessing of the Sabbath to include even the creation itself. Thus the Sabbath is communal and affects not just the Sabbath keeper, but also all those who are involved with the Sabbath keeper. If the church will be a Sabbath-keeping church it must be a benefit to all who are in community with it.

A Sabbath-keeping church must see itself as one that makes sure that its Sabbath keeping is not an individual endeavor. It is one that must affect others. It is one that even those who are not Sabbath keepers must be blessed by. It is one that all those who are in relationship with us are affected by. The Sabbath-keeping church must throw away any totally individualistic gospel that ignores the communal aspects of that gospel because the very idea of Sabbath is communal.

COMMENTS

I agree completely. Adventism, true to its historical roots, is intractably pietistic and individualistic. What else can you expect from a church that grew up in the middle of the 1800s—the renaissance of modernity. So for us Sabbath has been more about private, internal holiness and pietistic (even sentimental) notions of religion. What it lacks is the Isaiah 58 prophetic edge, which we need to recover. I believe it starts, as you suggest, by letting go of our idolatry to individualism.

Posted by: Ryan Bell
April 21, 2006

Yes...American Individualism can totally obscure the communal aspects of religion. I believe that the Sabbath keeping church must have a commitment to the justice that the biblical vision of the Sabbath contains as well as a commitment to community in that the very idea of Sabbath assumes community....

Posted by: Sherman Cox II
April 26, 2006

You pose an interesting comment regarding a community-based day of worship. I, too, have pondered this concept in the past and believe this to be a major part of worship. I feel that our sabbath worship style, based on Calvinist/Methodist worship, needs igniting. Let's put some passion into our programs. Let's reach out to the community. Isaiah 58 is a good start to understanding what the Sabbath can/should entail. Break the mold. Reach out. Celebrate.

Posted by: Azza
April 26, 2006

Do Evangelistic Campaigns "Work"?

BY RYAN BELL
May 27, 2006

A FEW DAYS AGO I was a part of one of those unfortunate conversations about whether evangelistic campaigns or public evangelism still "work." The question always leaves me wondering, "what do we mean when we say "works"? Normally I think these conversations primarily have the pragmatic concern of church growth in view. Therefore, the question is more accurately, "does public evangelism still produce church growth?" The proponents say yes, the detractors say no. My comment: does it really matter?

I think you can demonstrate fairly accurately that done "right," public evangelism can produce church growth. At least the proponents will

produce the statistics that show this. The detractors have their own statistics, but I think both sides completely miss the bigger issue.

Whenever we speak of something in the church "working" we must realize that we have a particular view of the church in mind. We have to ask "works for what?" So, on this particular day, as I was listening to this conversation and thinking to myself, "I've been here before," I found myself consumed by this question:

What kind of assumptions must you make about the nature of the gospel in order to embrace public evangelistic campaigns as a methodology?

The more I worked on this question in my head the more I realized that it comes back to a notion of the gospel as an "it." I wrote a post on this back in January called, The Gospel is not an "it." Reading that post will help you understand what I'm saying. The evangelistic campaign, born as it was in the modern era in America, is a methodology perfectly design for transmitting a decontextualized, propositional, static, objective truth.

So, if the gospel is not an "it" then evangelistic series are not admitted. It has nothing to with whether they "work." In many ways I am so grateful that in my context they do not "work." This reality forces us to deal with the real gospel—the kind that has flesh and blood and takes shape in neighborhoods.

COMMENTS

I was interested in your statements "does public evangelism still produce church growth?" "does it work?" and your comments "does it really matter? along with "The Gospel is not an 'it.'"

I believe public evangelism works if there is a possibility of an individual becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ. "Does it matter?" Only if you believe as I do that church growth means the growth of the body of Christ, his bride, and the fullness of him who fills everything in every way is growing. I love public evangelism, private evangelism, anything, if it produces disciples of Jesus Christ.

If people see the gospel as an "it"—can they still enter the kingdom of God? Or do you have to have the right understanding of the gospel to do so? Can a person enter the kingdom by finding a treasure in a field, burying it, and not telling the owner about the treasure, raise money to buy the field and then own the treasure? Interesting methodology and motivation for entering the kingdom. I believe we can take people who join the church via a propositional approach and still make disciples.

Until I find something better I will still encourage those who are trying public evangelism and church growth. I am probably more skeptical of those in the emerging church movement who often seem to be second or so generation Christians who have a lot to say but don't seem to have many runs on the board.

I was talking to Erwin McManus of Mosaic recently and he told me about being approached by the Los Angeles Times, *I think it was, to do a story on his and other emerging churches. (Erwin doesn't seem to like calling his church an emerging church for some reason!) They then came back and said they were not doing the series as they had not found any emerging churches growing. They did a story on his church, but he was glad they hadn't called his an emerging church.*

We planted a church just north of Sydney, Australia, a few years ago to be amongst Australian pagans. Starting with three people we currently have just over two hundred attending. We have three ex-witches, ex-prostitutes, etc., becoming disciples and I am having a fantastic time. Some think the gospel is an "it," some think it is a person, while others just love the community. All are at different stages as disciples and I call it church growth and I think it matters.

Posted by: Wayne Krause
May 29, 2006

I feel "whether something works" is "on the table" and a legitimate question to ask with respect to evangelism, church growth (whether or not it is measured in numerical terms), and the gospel.

Not everything that grows and works is the gospel; but I feel, whether it is an "it" or a living, dynamic interaction of God, working through specific human beings in a specific time and place, at the end of the day (although full fruition may take years, or even a lifetime), the gospel must ultimately manifest itself in (some sort of) growth and must "work" by affecting and positively changing the lives of those touched by the gospel.

Protestations and laments about the numerical success of "cheap-grace, consumer-driven" megachurches by members and leaders of shrinking, dying, totally ineffectual churches who insist they alone have the right/true/authentic theology, methodology, and liturgy, kind of reminds me of the complaints of the English redcoats in the Revolutionary War, who insisted they were "real" and better soldiers, but blamed their losses on the American revolutionaries, who, instead of lining up in proper military rank and file on the battlefield, used guerilla tactics by moving unpredictably and randomly while firing from behind rocks and trees!

Having said all that, I am not a great fan of public evangelism, as commonly implemented today, for exactly the same reason you point out—the gospel presented as abstract, propositional truths. While the argument can be made that this is only a means to an end, and that relational and contextual truths could follow later—my obvious question is—WHY? Why teach something that will have to be unlearned later? Perhaps it is precisely the reason it is second- and later-generation SDAs who are the leading skeptics of an evangelistic system that promotes a propositional truth, since it is they who have had to live with the simplistic,

judgmental, rigid consequences; and have had to painfully relearn lessons that should have been passed down by preceding generations.

As a fourth-generation Adventist lay person, I struggle to find better ways, methodologies, and values that, I, personally, can pass on to my children that will make them evangelists of a wonderful, dynamic, progressive, relational "truth." I would hope my three sons will be part of a fifth generation of Adventists who will have better tools to promote this gospel of Jesus Christ in their time and context, rather than a mere mental assent to (an estimated?) 128 fundamental doctrines.

Posted by: Neville Salvador

May 29, 2006

This discussion connects with an idea I have been toying with under the provisional label of "anti-evangelism"—that sometimes we should measure our evangelistic "success" by how many people we don't turn off/away from Jesus. My thinking was sparked by an article in Spectrum last year by Daniel Reynaud, reflecting on Adventist TV as a poor method of evangelism because that method of communication tends to entrench people's pre-exisiting beliefs. Thus, while some people are moved toward accepting God, they are those who had an exisiting interest, while those who tend to be skeptical are confirmed in their skepticism and in a way further "innoculated" against the gospel. I guess the biblical terminology would be their hearts are hardened.

This is yet an idea-in-progress, but Matthew 18:6 suggests serious consequences for those who cause "little ones"-those of little faith-to sin and turn them away from God.

Of course, such an idea would be misunderstood by some who would use it as an excuse for non-evangelism and criticized fiercely by those who adopt the "whatever means necessary" approach to dragging one more soul into the kingdom. There will always be those who choose against the gospel, but should we be careful that by the way we present it to them we might be assisting them in stepping further away from God?

Would our assessment of whether evangelism "works" be different if we were to add up the positives but offset them with the negatives? And just how would we do that? Would five baptisms outweigh fifty people who are disgruntled, confused, or otherwise discouraged by the same evangelistic endeavor?

Posted by: Nathan Brown

May 30, 2006

The hard data on whether or not public evangelism campaigns "work" is mixed. They do not correlate to church growth. Why? Because both growing churches and declining churches are equally likely to have public evangelism. Campaigns are equally likely to produce growth or not. (If you want to see the complete data, look at Chapter 2 in my book Adventist Congregations Today.)

Don't jump to the conclusion that this is because converts who join the church through public evangelism are likely to drop out. The data on that is a very high percentage of the people who join the church through public evangelism are still going to church after one year or even several years. And, people who are born into the Adventist Church are more likely to be dropouts than are those who are adult converts.

I agree with you that the question is really irrelevant. In fact, conventional public evangelism does work with some people. It is also true that there are many groups who cannot be reached by this method. And what generates church growth is never as simple as just yes or no on public evangelism. At no point in church history has one method by itself been determinative for church growth. Church growth is a far more complex reality and always has been.

Posted by: Monte Sahlin

June 1, 2006

This is a complicated topic and I don't think I've done a good job of really saying what I intended. Monte, I think you make my original point that the traditional evangelistic series works and doesn't work. It really all depends. The point you make in your book about it not being correlated to church growth is another interesting issue that would be good to discuss but wasn't really related to what I was trying to say.

What I was trying to say was that the question of whether a methodology works is a second order question. The first order question is what it is you're doing—in this case, what the church is for. What is really at stake here is the very nature of the gospel.

I think my question still gets to the heart of what I'm trying to say.

What kind of assumptions must you make about the nature of the gospel in order to embrace public evangelistic campaigns as a methodology?

So, whether I embrace an evangelistic series as a methodology in Hollywood has very little to do with whether it works to produce church growth. The question I would rather ask is, "Does this method produce a community of disciples who by their shared life together are a sign, witness, and foretaste of God's kingdom in a place?"

My experience is that it does not. Rather (and here I will disagree with Monte at my own peril), the evangelistic series is designed to communicate abstract, decontextualized truths. Maybe it's not designed to, but that's what it amounts to. The goal at the end is mental assent to these propositions.

Now, I know many of you are doing this better than what I've described and so I do not mean to disparage what you're doing. Keep up the good work. All I'm trying to say is that the pragmatic question of church growth doesn't even begin to scratch the surface for me. In fact, my fear is that this kind of evangelism does work. Maybe I'm just stubborn.

Monte, your observation about public vs. private raises a whole other set of issues that I'll save for a separate post. For now I'll simply repent of leaving the impression that I'm opting for private over public. My suspicion is that it needs to be more public, not less.

Posted by: Ryan Bell

June 1, 2006

I think Adventist Global Evangelism, which I'm sure has done a lot of good, is very problematic for how we view the Adventist message and how we do evangelism. Their big drawing card for getting people to go on one of their evangelistic trips is that if you go, you don't have to prepare a single sermon because they are already written for you. Whether you are from Tennessee or California, whether you are going to Guatemala or Nigeria, the same sermon is going to be preached based on the same PowerPoint presentation. I think this is extremely poor methodology and does view the gospel as an "it" which is completly decontextualized.

I'm not a fan of the traditional evangelistic campaign, but I'm not going to fight against those who want to use it. My concern is the popular attitude in Adventist circles which says that if people aren't doing traditional evangelism, they aren't reaching out at all. People are framing it in a traditional evangelism or nothing false dichotomy.

This same attitude is found in the Seminary at Andrews now. As part of our graduation requirements, we have to do a field school where we help out an evangelistic series. Every semester there are several different locations around the country. However, they all are presenting the same six-week Revelation series that we've been doing for decades. There is no thought of innovative methods of evangelism but we are happy with the same old same old.

With that being said, Ryan, I think you are doing a great job of showing us how we can be authentically Adventist while using fresh and innovative approaches to impacting our communities. Thanks for sharing your journey with us because it has really helped me gain a greater vision of how I can lead a community of faith that transforms everyone it comes in contact with.

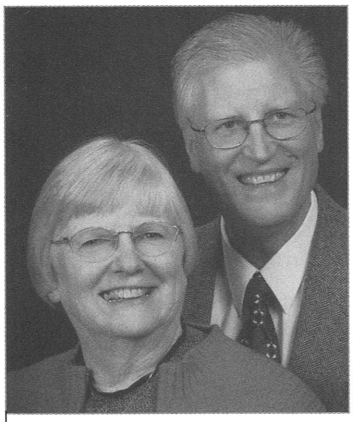
Posted by Trevan Osborn

June 2, 2006

At the *Spectrum Blog* <http://spectrummagazine.typepad.com> we have a regular potluck of blogs with related links (instead of linkettes). Join us. ■

Alexander Carpenter is a graduate student at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California.

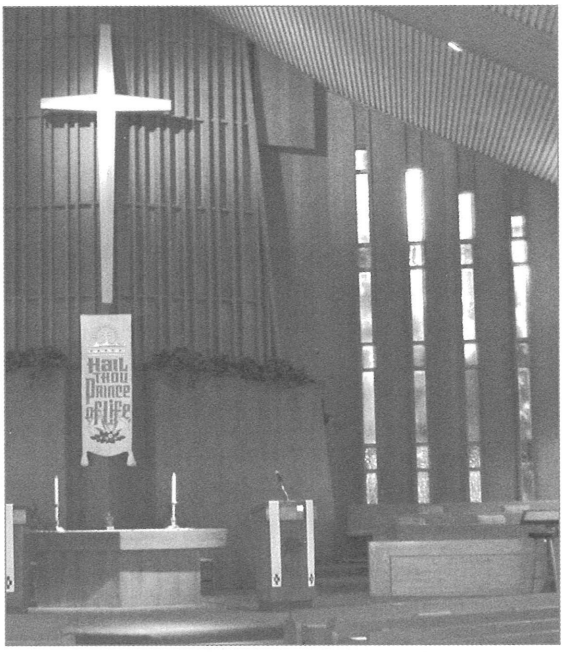
TWO CONGREGATIONS
ONE HOLY CHURCH

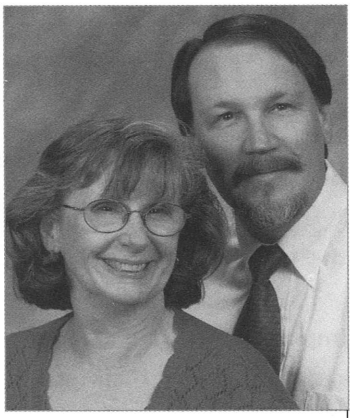


Pastor Roy &
Bennie Gee
AU '66

Auburn Gospel
Fellowship

*"A Safe Place
for God's Grace"*
10:45 A.M. Sabbath





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FEEDBACK ■ *letters, e-mails, and comments*

Relativism, Abraham and Isaac, Finding Jesus at Andrews

Can God communicate his truth across cultures so that "his people" can come to the understanding he desires, or is the latter less important than Christian community and a generalized faith?

The Danger of Relativism

IN JOHN BRUNT'S ARTICLE, "How My Mind Has Changed and Remained the Same with Regard to Biblical Interpretation" (summer 2006), I experienced the author's struggle between the opposites of "postmodern" relativism and the extreme literalism alleged to be the purview of Adventist fundamentalists. Apparently, Brunt has resolved this struggle; but he does not answer questions that remain in my mind.

True interpretation, he says, involves letting Bible text "function for us in the same way it functioned for the original hearers." Yet he also writes about sociocultural variability of interpretation and asserts that this process should evoke faith and form community.

Doesn't this train of reasoning open the possibility of another kind of relativism in the absence of discussion about truth? Can't a group's interpretation of Bible text(s) lead to "the possibility of distortion and misunderstanding," as it can in a more individualistic process?

If all interpretive processes do is evoke faith and form community, aren't all religious communions on the same footing in regard to truth? Is biblical truth relative or absolute? Can God communicate his truth across cultures so that "his people" can come to the understanding he desires, or is the latter less important than Christian community and a generalized faith?

DEAN RILEY
via the Internet

THANK YOU for the opportunity to reply to Dean Riley's thoughtful letter. I agree wholeheartedly that there is the danger of relativism here. In fact, community can be demonic if it is the wrong kind of community. The faith that is evoked must be faith in Jesus Christ, a genuine trusting response to the grace of God, which he reveals. And the community that is formed must be the body of Jesus Christ as set forth in Scripture, not just any community. We still have the responsibility to interpret and evaluate the message of the Bible to see if our faith and community are consistent with it. My point is that this happens best not just by individual effort, but through worship and community as presented within Scripture.

JOHN BRUNT
Grand Terrace, Calif.

Abraham and Isaac

THE FOLLOWING WORDS are offered in response to several essays in the summer 2006 issue of *Spectrum*. I know that others will resolve perceived conflicts between texts differently, but I find in the story of Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac evidence that God is compassionate and that he provides us with lessons from which we can learn.

The story of Abraham and Isaac has always troubled me. One of my first memories was of repulsion at the thought of anyone intentionally killing someone else. Pictures of a kind-faced gentleman in a robe standing over a bound boy on an alter didn't ease my repulsion because the apparent peacefulness of the scene was incompatible with the stress that must have existed.

When I became older, my focus turned from thinking about Abraham's attempt to

kill Isaac to thoughts about God. I wondered why God would first command people not to kill others, then tell Abraham to kill his son, for whom he had waited almost one hundred years.

The text says, "God said, 'Take your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering'" (Gen. 22:2). I wondered if it could be read in some other way than the obvious, yet the meaning seemed clear. Hebrews 11 lists three actions that demonstrated Abraham's faith, the third being his offering of Isaac. In addition, the book of James offers Abraham's experience with Isaac as evidence that faith changes a person and that change will be reflected in the actions that follow (James 2:21–24).

Abraham was called the Friend of God (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa 41:8; James 2:23), servant of God (Gen. 26:24; Ps. 10:9), and Father of Israel (Exod. 3:15; Isa. 51:2; Matt. 3:9). Abraham had a covenant relationship with the Lord; he would be the father of many nations. I also find it remarkable that the true God is identified as "the God of Abraham" (Exod. 3:6, 15, 16).

The only other incident of child sacrifice that I know being portrayed favorably in the Bible is the story of Jephthah (Judg. 11:30–40), who promised the Lord, "whatever comes out of the door of my house to meet me when I return in triumph from the Ammonites will be the Lord's, and I will sacrifice it as a burnt offering" (Judg. 11:31). When Jephthah returned home to Mizpah, who should come out to meet him but his daughter?

As in the case of Abraham and Isaac, this episode seems to have had the Lord's blessing. Samuel mentions this story in his farewell speech as an example of the Lord's deliverance of Israel from their enemies, and Hebrews 11 includes Jepthah among the people of faith.

Although God commanded the Israelites not to practice child sacrifice (Deut. 18:9), some did it anyway (2 Kings 16:3, 21:6; Jer. 7:30–33, 19:5; 32:35). The practices of the people who lived around the Israelites—not the example of Abraham—were given as the reason. Micah suggests that child sacrifices were considered acts of devotion, but he also says, "What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:6–8).

I believe that Abraham was aware of others who had offered children as sacrifices, and that Isaac was by far his most prized possession. I have also concluded that Abraham offered his son as a sacrifice either because of influences from others around him or because he thought God had asked him to do it. Either way, God didn't condemn him, but instead blessed him and provided an appropriate sacrifice—a ram.

For me, the picture of God has changed from a being whose requests might be repulsive, to someone who can bless me even when I do things contrary to his principles.

RON RITTER
via the Internet

Finding Jesus at Andrews

ALTHOUGH I WAS a student at the Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological about the same time as Richard Davidson (1968–70), my experience there was as positive as his was apparently negative (Davidson, "The Authority of Scripture: A Personal Scripture," *Spectrum* 34.3 (summer 2006):39–45).

I learned much from each of my teachers even though their approaches varied according to their differing backgrounds, personalities, and theological priorities. Several took a personal interest in me that went far beyond normal expectations. This is why I remember them with particular vividness and gratitude.

I do not recall any of my teachers at Andrews University endorsing the historical/critical method as Davidson summarizes it from the writings of others. Although I was required to know about it, I do not remember being asked to cast a vote in the debate between a "descriptive" approach to Scripture and a "confessional" one.

The legitimate point of Harvard's Krister Stendahl was that it is one thing to study what a portion of Scripture might have meant in the past and another to ponder what it might also mean in the present. Years later, I told Professor Stendahl, a tall and dignified Swede with a distressingly rigid back, that he was one of the reasons my second son's first name is "Krister." He was pleased!

Davidson depicts his theological journey as a line that moves from faith through doubt and back to faith. I think of my sojourn as a series of concentric circles that constantly increase in size and number without losing their center. This center is God's love as manifest most clearly in Jesus Christ. I am thankful that my teachers at Andrews University helped me to develop several new orbs!

DAVID R. LARSON
Loma Linda, Calif.

Women as the daughters of God

Association of Adventist Women 2006 Conference

BY CARMEN SEIBOLD

IT WAS SABBATH and the women gathered in worship sang the morning hymn. The beauty of the female voices lifted in praise filled me with an ineffable longing for God. Many similar moments amazed and touched and inspired me at the annual conference of the Association of Adventist Women (AAW). We met October 11–15, in Seattle, to honor the AAW Women of the Year for their accomplishments, which highlight this year's theme, "Globalization and the Adventist Woman."

Verla Kwiram, president of AAW, with the new director of the La Sierra University Women's Center, Heide Ford.

"Our women amazed us" (Luke 24:22), is the surprised admission of an apostle describing the women who met the resurrected Christ. And our women continue to be amazing. We celebrated thrilling ministries of Adventist women for their God, as we mourned the world's hurts that make them necessary. I was reminded of how crucial it is that Christianity hold up women as the daughters of God, who are equally called to worship, serve, and reflect the divine image.

Phetsile Dlamini, pediatrician of Swaziland, is the 2006 honoree in Distinguished Service. The child of an Adventist family, Dlamini has become an international leader in issues concerning HIV/AIDS, such as the pricing of medications, and she has given presentations at the United Nations on the plight of orphans. She has served two terms as minister for health and social welfare for the Parliament of Swaziland, facilitating crucial reforms that include state-subsidized health care. As the current ambassador to the New Partnership for Africa's Development in the Organization of African Union, Dlamini integrates health policies and programs among several nations.

This remarkable Adventist woman spearheaded her country's ratification of the 1995 Convention on the Rights of a Child, was a creator of a juvenile court system for Swaziland, and is involved in multinational projects to decrease deaths from malaria and combat tobacco use.

Eugenia Giordano, a physician originally from Argentina, is 2006 Woman of the Year for Professional Life. She established and directs with her husband, Oscar, the Adventist HIV/AIDS International Ministry Africa Office (AAIM). The Giordanos were missionaries in the developing world when HIV/AIDS began its tragic spiral into an epidemic. Alarmed by the stigmatization that was driving a majority of infected church members into hidden suffering and death, they appealed to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, which invited them to launch AIMM.

From their headquarters in Johannesburg, South Africa, the Giordanos minister to all three African divisions, which comprise some 16,000 church-

es and 4.5 million members. AIMM estimates that more than 10 percent of these Adventists have HIV/AIDS, which results in more than four thousands deaths yearly. The Giordanos travel their vast territory encouraging openness about HIV/AIDS, sensitizing church leaders, and mobilizing members to care for the needs of the affected.

Aune Greggas's, award for Church Life honors her ministry in two widely separate countries and cultures—her native Finland and the Kingdom of Nepal. She is secretary of the Finnish Adventist Temperance Association, and a key influence in the acceptance of Finnish women as pastors. In 1997, through her affiliation with the World Health Organization, Greggas became responsible for the development of Nepal's anti-tobacco education.

Greggas established the Health Education and Tobacco Intervention Program for the kingdom by means of a new consortium among the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Finnish Adventist temperance organization, and Nepal's Scheer Memorial Hospital. With the creative use of varied teaching methods, which include street dramas, the program has succeeded far beyond expectations, reaching three hundred thousand Nepalese teenagers to date. Nepal's tobacco use rates, once the highest in the world, now approximate European levels.

Paula Leen, an American missionary in Zimbabwe, is recognized for her Lifetime Achievement. Leen was sent home on permanent medical leave from her secretarial position in the East Africa Division, but the tremendous needs she had witnessed would not let her rest. She eventually returned to Zimbabwe and founded her own ministry, Zimbabwe Orphans Project (ZOP).

Seventy-two-year-old Leen donates her services as director, her Social Security checks, and gifts from supporters for the benefit of "her" people. The region's profound poverty spurs her extraordinary feats. She acquired land to grow food for the orphanage and provide employment. Needing a reliable source of water, she taught herself to construct dams, wells, and storage tanks. Now her orphanage has twenty acres of gardens, and her orchards offer the area's only employment.

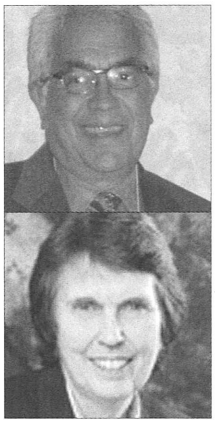
Leen's food program regularly sustains more than two thousand people, and she has given away more than one million articles of clothing. Several times a week, she transports the ill to the nearest hospital eighty miles away, using the same truck that at other times carries food, schoolchildren, and medicines, and increasingly doubles as the local hearse. She rises at three o'clock in the morning, and by flashlight embarks on the endless demands of the day.

Merikay McLeod was presented with the Award for Outstanding Achievement for her landmark lawsuit that brought equal pay for equal work to women employees of church-related businesses. In the early 1970s, McLeod was a young assistant book editor at Pacific Press when she discovered not only that she was paid significantly less than male peers, but also that women employees were ineligible for head-of-household benefits. The women's lower pay scale reduced their Social Security income in retirement as well.

Her efforts failed to correct the discrepancies through conventional channels with the press administration. For McLeod, it was a matter of justice to persevere with a complaint to the Equal Employment Opportunity Administration and a subsequent class action lawsuit on behalf of the press's women employees. Hers was the first lawsuit in the United States to apply Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to church-connected entities, and was the precedent-setting case for women in many denominations to secure

Top to bottom: Dlamini, Giordano, Greggas, Leen, McLeod, Zhu.

stories of service and devotion



Above: Torres, Trible. Center: from the AAW Web site.

equal pay for their work.

McLeod's pursuit of fairness exacted a price—the press fired her, her friends rejected her, and she is still a controversial figure for many Adventists. But she reports no regrets following her conscience and believes that God continues to bless her life. She lives in Northern California and is a national award-winning journalist.

Linda Zhu (Zhu Qing Yan) is a Chinese third-generation Adventist, and the AAW's award recipient in Community Life. After completing graduate studies in business, she became the first employee of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in her country and established the headquarters for ADRA China.

Until recently, Zhu was ADRA's director for its straw-bale buildings program, which has resulted in the culturally appropriate construction in northern China of more than six hundred houses as well as three schools. Straw-bale walls have far better insulating qualities than those built with traditional materials and are safer in earthquakes. They are ecologically superior, utilizing what was once waste rice straw, and reducing the pollution of coal fumes released while firing bricks.

The project won the Building Social Housing Foundation's World Habitat Award in 2005 at the UN Habitat Conference. Consequently, the Chinese government is adopting the building model. With this success

firmly underway, Zhu is turning her talents to HIV/AIDS prevention for ADRA.

Zhu Zhen, a lay elder of the Beijing Adventist Church, is recognized for contributions in Spiritual Leadership. Zhen was a daughter in an Adventist pastor's family and studied nursing. In 1960, shortly after her marriage, she was charged as a counter-revolutionary and sentenced as a criminal for three years, with another term to be served as a nurse in a re-education camp. She wasn't released until 1971.

Retirement from nursing meant more time for church work, and Zhen devoted herself full time as a volunteer. In 1995, she was called to preaching and to date has planted ten house churches, some of them with two hundred members. As an ordained elder, she preaches, provides pastoral care, and solemnizes communion and funeral services for her house church members.

In addition to the women's awards, **Rudy Torres** was named Champion of Justice, in appreciation for his courageous support of Adventist women in pastoral ministry.

Throughout the conference, other notable women from around the globe brought their stories of service and devotion to God. Professor **Phyllis Trible** delivered a knock-your-socks-off textual analysis of the story of Miriam and the Sabbath sermon on Naomi. **Verla Kwiram,** AAW president, is the remarkable woman who planned, organized, and saw to every detail of the conference with tireless personal warmth. (Verla, all of us who attended rise up and call you blessed.)

The Association of Adventist Women will celebrate its twenty-fifty anniversary at the 2007 conference in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Carmen Seibold, a hospice chaplain and clergy spouse, writes from Worthington, Ohio. This article first appeared in *Spectrum* online <www.spectrum-magazine.org.>

Opportunity Lost: Why Adams Should Have Been *Review* Editor

BY ANDY NASH

ONE OF THE PROBLEMS with the official church press is that, when a major meeting doesn't get reported objectively (and it often doesn't),

people are left with rumors and mistaken impressions.

One of the mistaken impressions that people might be getting from the recent Annual Council gathering of Adventist Church leadership is this: Many delegates thought Roy Adams should have been nominated editor-in-chief of the *Adventist Review* because he's black. That's simply incorrect. The delegates who made speeches weren't arguing that Adams be nominated because he's black. They were questioning why someone so well qualified *wasn't* nominated.

It's a valid question and one that I share. Having worked at this magazine, with this staff, I can provide a number of reasons why Adams should have been the clear-cut choice.

For starters, he's been the senior associate editor, and a highly effective one, since 1988. He's served the Adventist Church not only in the United States but also in Canada and the Philippines—and as an immensely gifted speaker, he travels widely. He's had his doctorate since the early eighties and has written a number of books and hundreds of articles. He's a centrist—doesn't try to cater to any party of the Church, doesn't try to block voices (or letters) that don't agree with his own. He has tremendous leadership skills, and he lives by a code. He runs an efficient meeting, his work is always excellent, and he submits it on time.

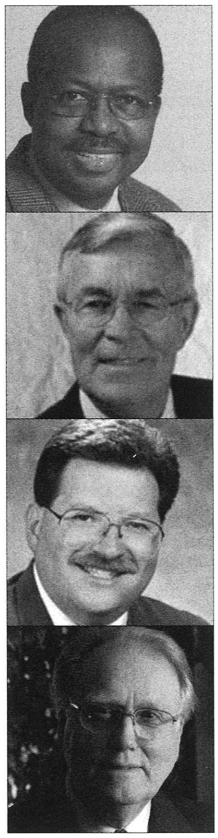
But perhaps the most important thing about Adams is the gracious way he treats people. This isn't the corporate world; this is the church—the body of Christ; it ought to matter how our leaders treat people. I can't think of anyone who treats people with more dignity than Adams does. He isn't political—isn't constantly trying to position himself, doesn't "kiss up and kick down." He treats everyone with respect, whether above him or below him. There were times when I saw an issue differently than Adams did. But I never felt demeaned by Adams, and I never saw him demean other staff members or production staff at the publishing house.

Although I personally respect President Jan Paulsen and other church leaders, it's difficult for many of us to understand the dynamics of what happened here. Even after the world church's Spring Meeting in April, when the delegation voted to send back Bill Knott's name and specifically requested that Adams be considered, Paulsen returned six months later with only one name, Knott's, and the choice of a yes-or-no vote.

The fact that Adams would have been the first black editor in the *Review's* 157-year history would have been a bonus—an important first for a church that's never been on the leading edge of racial unity.

I was proud to work in the company of Roy Adams, and I always pictured him succeeding the equally graceful William Johnsson as editor-in-chief. I know many others did as well. It's no doubt a very hard and painful experience to be passed over like this, but at least Adams can know that many others care for him, as he did for others.

Andy Nash worked as an assistant editor at the *Adventist Review* from 1996 to 1999 and is now an associate professor of journalism and communication at Southern Adventist University. The article first appeared in *Spectrum* online <www.spectrummagazine.org>.



Top to bottom: Adams, Johnsson, Knott, Paulsen.

What about the Adventists?

BY ZANE YI

"WHAT ABOUT Adventists? Aren't they like the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses?" an earnest red-headed woman in the back of class inquires.

Immediately, I am at rapt attention. What would my professor say? I am sitting in a systematic theology class at Fuller Theological Seminary. The class is comprised of about forty students from various Christian backgrounds—Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, and so forth. My professor, Marguerite Shuster, is a Presbyterian minister. As far as I can tell, and unknown to anyone else in the class, I am the only Adventist student in the room.

The reactions I've gotten from being an Adventist in a non-Adventist seminary are

"What about Adventists? Aren't they like the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses?" an earnest red-headed woman in the back of class inquires.

mixed. For most of my peers, I'm the first Adventist they've ever met. Some of them are curious about what I believe; mine is one of many denominations represented at the school. Others can't hide their surprise; they wonder what I am doing at an evangelical seminary.

In the class, we have been working our way through one of the great creeds of the church, the Nicene Creed, trying to understand what it says and why it is important. The Nicene Creed is unfamiliar to most Adventists—we do not traditionally subscribe to any creed—but many Christians recite it corporately on a regular basis, sometimes weekly.

"We believe in one God the Father Almighty," the creed begins, "Maker of heaven and earth." It continues and affirms that Jesus is, "the substance of the Father, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten not made, of the same substance with the Father...." Forged during the time of the Arian controversy, the crafters of the creed robustly affirm Jesus' divinity, explicitly pointing out that Jesus was "not made," that is, Jesus is an uncreated being, in essence sharing the "substance" of God.

In the third century, Arius, a well-intentioned church leader, wanting to protect belief in one God, taught and convinced many people that the Son was a special and exalted, but ultimately, created being. Arius's teaching survives today. Professor Shuster has just explained that this idea separates sectarian groups from orthodox Christianity. For example, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses believe in Jesus, but believe he is a created being.

This brings us back to my classmate's question: "What about the Adventists, are they Christians?" Shuster pauses and considers the question while I hold my breath.

"Adventists have always affirmed the divinity of Jesus and are Trinitarian in their theology. Therefore they should not be categorized as a sect," Shuster explains. She continues, "I'm not so sure what to make of some of their other beliefs and of their eschatology, but when it comes to their Christology they are right on and therefore are considered Christians."

"Whew!" I breathe a sigh of relief—but before I fully exhale a hand shoots up from the front of the class. It belongs to a former missionary who lives in Redlands, a small city near Loma Linda, California. She objects. She has encountered and ministered to many ex-Adventists. She explains that Adventists have a false prophet (Ellen White) and hold numerous other non-Christian views. She insists that Adventists are not Christians.

"Uh oh," I think. "What now?" I anticipate the worst. I'm terrified at the prospect of having to raise my hand and offer some weak and complicated apologetic; however, remaining silent in the face of misunderstanding seems craven and disingenuous.

Shuster smiles warmly as she responds seriously. "If we were to look in all our denominational histories, we would discover people who in the end are all too human. Things are claimed and said that later we may find embarrassing. We need to remember this and be as charitable as possible in dealing with the histories of others."

My classmate, who later becomes a friend (although I'm not sure if she ever found out I was an Adventist), isn't really satisfied with that answer, but the classroom discussion winds down and the lecture continues.

At the end of the class, I walk up to the front of the class to thank Shuster. She's talking to my suspicious classmate, who honestly thinks the professor has made some sort of mistake about Adventism. Shuster is patient, gracious, and kind. She repeats and expands on her comments from class.

When it's my turn, I tell Professor Shuster that I am an Adventist. I thank her for her charitable and respectful comments about my church. I feel she has described Adventism in the fairest terms. In fact, as a long-time member of the Church, I can't imagine doing a better job myself. She smiles

and states that some of her best students and colleagues have been Adventists.

"I never had a negative experience with Adventists and the denomination," she recounts. Occasionally, it turns out, she writes for *Ministry* magazine, a journal for pastors published by the Adventist Church. "And theologically," she adds, "when it comes to the central issues [Jesus], Adventists have got it right." Then she adds with a twinkle in her eye, "If that's the case with any church, all the peripheral issues work out in the end."

I wasn't too sure what Shuster meant with her last comment. I learned from her as the quarter progressed that one's beliefs about Christ are closely linked to one's views of salvation. When people affirm the divinity of Christ, they end up affirming that God himself took the initiative in order to save us, that he came into a fallen and helpless world proclaiming the kingdom of God, teaching its principles, and manifesting its power, and that ultimately he died on a cross.

Practically speaking, Arian views usually result in the view that humans must do something to add to what Jesus has done; the chasm between a perfect Creator and fallen creatures has yet to be bridged. In other words, it results in a legalistic mindset and makes salvation something humans earn rather than something that a gracious God gives to powerless sinners.

I learned a lot about Christian theology from Shuster that quarter. The class raised a series of interesting questions with which I am still wrestling. What is Adventism's relationship to the great Christian creeds? What is the central doctrine of Adventist theology? Should we place emphasis on the distinctive doctrines we hold or the commonalities we share with other believers? How should we relate to other Christians?

Aside from these questions and sophisticated nuances of systematic theology, I think I learned more about Christianity from Shuster's demeanor and actions than from anything she said. That morning it would have been easy for her to portray a faith tradition not her own in a less sympathetic light. Instead, her response epitomized Christian love and grace. She not only represented my beliefs accurately, she also gave them the most charitable interpretation possible.

In the end, what impressed me most was not her orthodox Christian theology, but her genuine Christian practice of gentleness and love. This approach is one that I, as an Adventist, hope to model in my dealings with others. ■

Zane Yi recently moved to New York City after finishing a master's degree at Fuller Seminary, in Pasadena, California.

First Congress of Latin American Adventists in Europe

BY R. K. NOLTZE

THE FIRST CONGRESS of Latin American Adventists was held July 26–30, 2006, in Pomezia, a city eleven miles from Rome. The Hispanic Adventist Church in Rome took the initiative for this event, which

The Euro-African Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

the Italian Union of the Seventh-day Adventist Church supported and funded. All congregations of Latin Americans in Europe were invited, regardless of whether they belonged to the Euro-African or the Trans-European Divisions.

The organizers hoped to attract two hundred delegates to the congress, but their expectations were surpassed. The delegates numbered 350, and on Sabbath about 550 visitors also attended. These numbers tested the capacity of the facilities but made the event an unforgettable spiritual feast that inspired everyone.

The delegates represented Latin American congregations in nine European countries:

All in attendance felt one common passion, expressed best in the theme of the congress: "Being like Him."

This congress was born in the minds and hearts of sisters and brothers dedicated to the cause of the gospel, and by fervent prayer and God's blessing it took shape and culminated in a spiritual event of major significance.

Germany, Belgium, Spain, France, Denmark, Italy, Holland, Sweden, and Switzerland. They reflected the multicultural diversity of twenty-two Latin American nations united by a common language, though also sprinkled with national idiosyncrasies. More importantly, all in attendance felt one common passion, expressed best in the theme of the congress: "Being like Him."

Everyone in the Hispanic Church in Rome became involved in planning the event. Pastor David Verastegui, Pastor Ignazio Barbuscia, Eduardo Nuñez, José Antonio Castillo, and Pastor José Luis Nuñez oversaw arrangements. Each of these was responsible for a different aspect. A group of sisters from the church, dressed in distinctive light blue, made sure that each delegate found her or his seat. The planning and realization of the event could not have been better. The local church that conceived and planned it had the full support of Pastor Daniele Benini, union president, and the union treasurer, Gaetano Pispisa.

The program consisted of spiritual presentations and seminars. Pastor Alejandro Bullón, the South American Division evangelist, emphasized the need for constant spiritual growth by those who follow Christ. This can only be achieved, he said, by means of three practices of equal value: diligent study of the Word of God, constancy in prayer, and efforts to lead people to Christ. The other major presenter, Pastor Juan J. Suárez, director of literature evangelists in the Greater New York Conference in the United States, reminded his audience that Jesus is still the Good Shepherd of all who are his sheep and know his voice.

The seminars were diverse. Sister Dora Bognandi led one on "Women Ministry," Pastor Lucio Altín gave another on "Parent-Children Relationships," and Pastor Ignazio Barbuscia offered one on "The Integration and the Future of the Latin American Adventist Church in Europe." The seminars made a deep impression because of their intellectual depth. Participants enjoyed them very much, as was plainly reflected in animated discussions that followed.

A special group, which consisted of assistant pastors and leaders from all congregations represented at the congress, met to consider planning for similar meetings in the future. From these deliberations came a proposal to request that the Italian Union and the Euro-African and the Trans-European Divisions foster the establishment of a Network of Latin American Adventist Churches in Europe, to facilitate communication, mutual support, interchange of procedural information, sharing of speakers, distribution of Spanish literature, and planning of biennial congresses.

To begin the new network, the group proposed and the general assembly approved formation of a coordinating committee: president, David Verastegui (Italy); vice-president, Ronald K. Noltze (Germany); secretary, Jorge Hermida-Stoll (Switzerland); and members, Ricardo Abos-Padilla (Switzerland) and Juan J. Suárez (U.S.A.). The committee suggested that the next congress be held in Switzerland.

This congress was born in the minds and hearts of sisters and brothers dedicated to the cause of the gospel, and by fervent prayer and God's blessing it took shape and culminated in a spiritual event of major significance. On the Sabbath afternoon of the congress, those gathered together witnessed the baptism of twelve new followers of Christ, thus recharging their own spiritual lives. The delegates took a new spiritual vision from Rome to their churches. We thank all who helped make the dream of a few become a reality for many.

R. K. Noltze is a physician at Krankenhause Waldfriede, a Seventh-day Adventist hospital in Berlin, Germany. Translated from Spanish by **Herold Weiss.**

South America: Church Elects Youngest Regional President

ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK STAFF

AT 38 YEARS OLD, Pastor Erton Carlos Köhler is the youngest president ever to head the South American region of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Members of the South American Division Executive Committee present when Pastor Köhler was nominated on Oct. 29 to replace Pastor Ruy Nagel, who retired, say that he reflects the youth and energy of one of the Adventist world church's largest administrative regions. The South American Division is one of 13 administrative regions of the world Adventist Church.

Köhler's nomination will be recommended to the Executive Committee of the world church, which is the body that elects division presidents.

When asked about his new role leading nearly 2.6 million Adventist church members in South America, Pastor Köhler said: "I feel extremely honored to serve the church in this function at this moment. I believe that maybe I was called to fulfill Ellen G. White's prophecy that the young people will finish God's work on earth."

Ellen G. White was one of the young founders of the Adventist church. She, along with her husband James, John Nevins Andrews, Uriah Smith and other young pioneers of the church, nurtured the small group of Adventist believers in the church's infancy. In 1844 at the start of the Adventist church, Ellen was 17, James was 23, and Andrews and Smith were in their 20s. As the youngest regional president for the world church, Pastor Köhler follows in the founding members' footsteps.

The South American Region of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

"In South America 58.8 percent of the church's membership is under 35 years old," Köhler continued. "I am 38 years old and this is a reason for me to make a final call for all the young people to come to know Christ."

"Pastor Köhler was chosen because he is young, because he is enthusiastic," said Williams Costa Jr., communication director for the church in that region.

Pastor Köhler held the position of youth ministries director for the region for three years starting in 2003. "We want him to put the same kind of enthusiasm and energy that he put into our young people into the whole [region]," Costa continued, adding that Köhler is "also very well-organized and he is very good with planning."

Köhler's election follows the retirement of Pastor Ruy Nagel, who headed that church region for 11 years and served a total of 44 years in church ministry. In his new role, Köhler is not only a leader for the church in that region, he also becomes a vice president of the 15-million member Adventist world church, which is headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland, United States. Pastor Jan Paulsen, president of the Adventist world church, participated in the proceedings.

Before becoming youth ministries director for the entire South American region, Pastor Köhler was youth leader and then secretary for the Rio Grande do Sul Conference in Brazil. He has served as a local pastor and a youth leader for the church's local conference and in the Northeast Brazil Union. Köhler graduated in 1989 with a degree in theology from the Brazil Adventist College.

A new communication director was also elected for the church in South America. Pastor Edson Rosa, former secretary for the church in Brazil, will be filling the spot vacated by Costa, who earlier this month was elected associate communication director for the Adventist world church.

I believe that maybe I was called to fulfill Ellen G. White's prophecy that the young people will finish God's work on earth.

—Pastor Köhler

Source: Adventist News Network

BIBLE

FROM *SOCIAL ACTION*, BY JEANNE PORTER. INNISFREE PRESS, 2000.

Living on Empty

An Essay on Ruth 1:19–22 | BY ANDREA TRUSTY KING

Our story took place before Israel had kings, and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. "It's your thing, do what you want to do," was the order of the day. But if you do what you want to do instead of what you are supposed to do, there are going to be some consequences.

And consequences there were. The Bible tells us that God sent a famine to the land. It was hard; it was rough; but it was deserved.

Elimelech, though, decided he would pad his punishment. Since God had sent a famine to Israel, he would move to Moab. Elimelech sold his inheritance in Bethlehem and gave up his piece of the Promised Land to go to Moab.

If you are a Bible student, you know that Moab was a wicked place. God did not want Israel to have any dealings with Moab. The Israelites were not to marry its women or have children with them.

God was clear about this, but Elimelech thought he could get around God. He figured he could outrun the punishment of God. He wanted to ignore what God had said because he did not like it.

Elimelech took his family to Moab, and the Bible says that he died there. Naomi, his wife, was left as a single mother to raise two boys. When the boys came of age, they married Moabite women, but they were infertile. The boys could not produce after ten years of marriage and they died there. So here we have these three widows, all alone.

What were they to do all by themselves? The Bible says they lifted up their voices and wept.

Naomi and her two Moabite daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, heard that God had visited his people by giving them bread, so the Bible says the women began the journey back to Bethlehem, which literally meant "house of bread." "Therefore she went out from the place where she was, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah" (Ruth 1:7a NKJV).

Naomi must be commended for going out from the place where she was. She did not belong in Moab. She did not belong outside her place of inheritance. She did not belong outside the will of God. She had tried living in Moab and had found it did not live up to its reputation.

She decided to go where she was supposed to be. She made a beeline for Judah. She did not know what awaited her there, but whatever it was she knew that the safest place in the whole wide world was in the perfect will of God.

Naomi said "Let me get up from here. I am tired of living in Moab. I need to be with the people of God." So she left the place where she was and began the journey to where she was supposed to be.

That is what some of us need to do. We need to go from where we are. We know that things are not right. We have emptiness inside and we know that only God can fill it, but in order for him to do it, we need to put ourselves in a position to be filled. We have got to move from the place where we are.

That could be a place of depression. It could be a place of grief, of bitterness, of uncertainty

Naomi understood that God had to empty her in order to fill her up

concerning why God allowed certain things to happen. In those times, it is so easy to isolate yourself from the people of God. And in some cases, you have isolated yourself from the full blessings of God. "Therefore, she went out from the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah" (Ruth 1:7 NKJV).

Judah means "the praise of the Lord." Thus, the Bible says she went from the place where she was and she got on the road to return to the land of praise. She was not there, but she finally figured out that if she was going to get there, if she was going to survive, she had to get on the path to praise.

When people come to me depressed because Moab has beaten them up, I make them find some reason to praise the Lord. Why? Because when you hurt, you are absorbed in yourself. You focus on your pain and what you are going through. Pain blinds you to the nice things, the blessings that continue to come your way.

You are stuck on the pain, stuck on the rain, so you do not see the sun peeping through the clouds. You focus on what is being done to you so much that you do not acknowledge and appreciate what is done for you. The quickest way to get from the place you are to where you want to be is to get on the path to praise.

Three times Naomi tries to get Orpah and Ruth to go back home to Moab. Twice they vow to stay, but the third time Orpah goes back home, and Ruth declares that she will stay with her. She had decided nothing anyone could say would turn her around. "Your God is going to be My God. Your People are my People." She wailed that nothing but death could keep her from Naomi.

The Bible says that they journeyed on and finally made it to Bethlehem. When they arrived, the town was abuzz. "Naomi is home. Naomi is home." Naomi could bear to hear it no longer. She demanded that they stop. Naomi means "lovely and pleasant," but for her life turned out to be far different. Her name mocked her. It glazed over all she had been through. It minimized her situation.

"Do not call me Naomi, call me Mara, not pleasant, but bitter. I am not the same woman who left here because God made me bitter. I might have been pleasant when I left, because I was full, but God has brought me back empty."

Ruth is often lauded for her loyalty, Naomi should be commended for her honesty. She was telling it like it was. She was a lot older than when she had left. In her younger days, she had been pleasant, keeping in her real feelings. But now she was old enough to have her say. Naomi was back around church folk, but she did not feel real churchy about how God had handled her. She was still on the path to praise.

Yeah, the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, and I am mad about it. I am not at the point where I can smile through the tears. I am not where I see the silver lining in the cloud. Some stuff went down that I do not understand—and I do not like—and I hold God responsible. I am not trying to be pleasant; I am not trying to be lovely. I do not have the patience or the fakeness to try to make you like me. What you see is what you get. If you want to know how I am doing, no I am not fine, I am mad, and I am bitter because I am empty.

This story is one that displays the sovereignty of God. Naomi argued with God because he was supposed to be in control. This thought that God is God and that he does what he wants, when he wants, how he wants is something to shout about as long as he wants to bless us. It is something to dance about as long as he is opening up the windows of heaven and pouring out blessings. It is good news as long as no weapons prosper against us and God takes care of all our enemies.

It gets problematic, though, when he allows other things to happen; when he does not run his plans by us to see if we like them; when he goes on acting by himself without our approval. Then we have a problem with God's goodness. We wonder what kind of God this is. We want to see his credentials.

But Job said, "Shall we accept only good from God, and not accept the bad?" Sometimes God uses adversity to get our attention. Sometimes he uses it to get the glory. And sometimes pain is the vessel through which God pours out a blessing. Yes, God had emptied Naomi but he did not leave her without hope. God had brought her back to a place where she could be filled.

Although it seemed invisible to Naomi, those of us on the outside clearly see that God's blessings never stopped coming her way. I am willing to bet that God has never stopped coming your way, either. In the midst of darkness, God always sends light. In the midst of

despair, there is always a ray of hope. Even when you are empty, God invites you to come and be filled. And that is what he did for Naomi, and what he will do for you.

God sent Naomi various rays of hope. The first ray of hope was Ruth. He sent Naomi somebody who would show her the joy of friendship. Ruth was loyal to her and obedient to her; Ruth had declared that her life would be spent caring for and comforting Naomi.

The next ray of hope followed soon after. "So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her, who returned from the country of Moab. Now they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest" (Ruth 1:22 NKJV). The first ray of hope was Ruth, the second the reaping. It showed her the joy of favor.

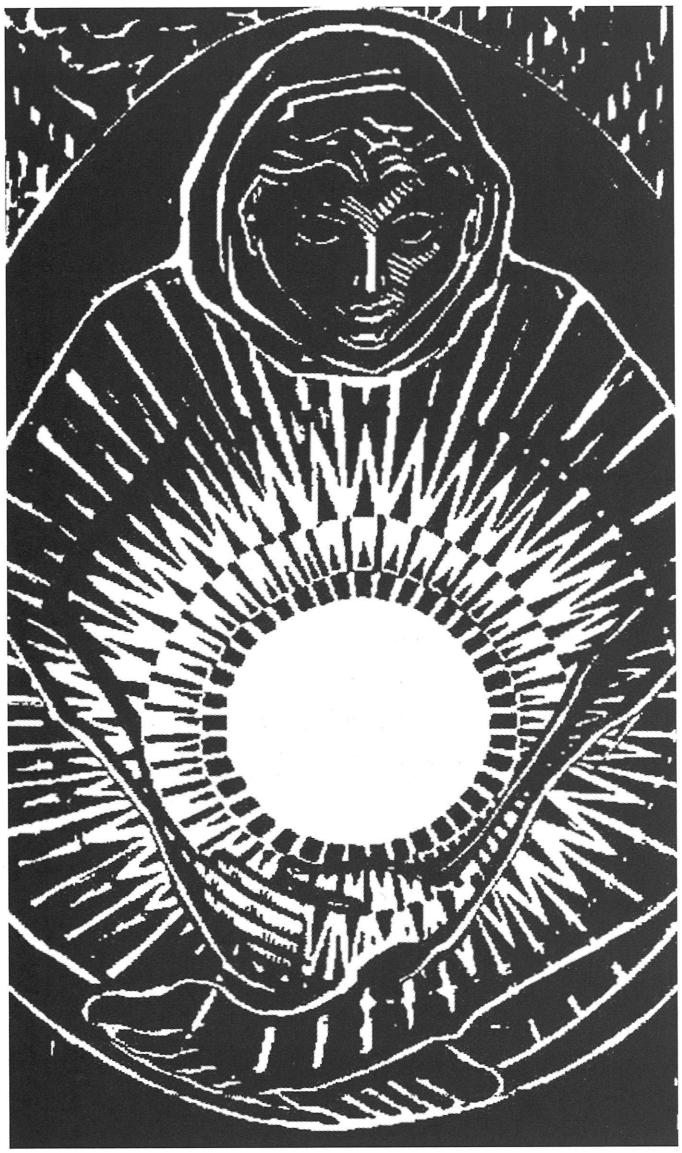
The harvest was a time of joy and rejoicing because it was a time to gather. It signaled a beginning of reaping. If there was a time of harvest, that meant the time of famine was over. It meant that those who hungered—those who were empty—would soon be filled. Even nature hinted to her that even though she might be empty now, that was a temporary situation because it was harvest time.

The only catch about harvest is that you reap what you have sown. Naomi had not sown any seed to reap, which is why she needed favor. God was about to bless her so she could reap where she had not sown.

Harvest did not mean that things had begun to bloom. It meant that they had been planted and had grown, and that all you had to do was to pluck. So this time of reaping hinted of hope. It actually screamed hope, because that meant God took the time to plant a field of blessing while Naomi was still in Moab, so that by the time she made it back to where she was supposed to be, her blessing would be ripe for the picking. The ray of reaping allowed Naomi to experience the joy of favor.

But the hope keeps coming. "There was a relative of Naomi's husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech. His name was Boaz" (Ruth 2:1 NKJV). Naomi was a poor widow in a bind, and now the Word reveals that she had a rich relative. Things begin to look up because she knew somebody; she had some kind of connection; she had a friend in high places.

But even higher than the upper echelons of society, Naomi had a God in her corner who was working in her behalf. Whether or not she chose to acknowledge it, God was hooking Naomi up. He was granting her favor, lining things up for her. If she would just hold on, if she would just keep living, she would see that her end would be better than her beginning. God had not forgotten about her or forsaken her. As a matter of fact, he finally had her right where he wanted her.



Naomi sent Ruth out to get some food. The law of God said that when you harvested you were not supposed to glean the field. To glean means to go back and get what you left, or to be so detailed in your picking that you get everything off the vine. You were supposed to leave behind something for the poor, the widows, and the orphans.

Ruth went out and randomly picked Boaz's field to glean in. When Boaz saw her out there, he told the har-

vesters to drop grain on purpose. Ruth would glean all day, and day after day she brought the grain home to Naomi so that she would be full. Boaz was a noble and compassionate man. He was the man through whom God sought to bless those two widows.

Can God trust you to bless others? Can he count on you to leave blessings in your path so that those who come behind will be able to pick them up?

I recently heard Kamala Harris, the first (and only) female African-American U.S. district attorney, recount the wisdom her mother had 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 make it a habit to help those who can not help themselves, a habit to help those who cannot 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.

There was something else special about Boaz. Not only was he rich and kind, he was also a *goel*. That meant he could be a kinsman-redeemer, another ray of hope. A *goel* was somebody related to you, someone who could bail you out when in a bind. God orchestrated a plan so that when times got hard and somebody had to sell their property—or, worse, sell themselves—their relatives were supposed to redeem them. The relatives would buy them back or buy back their property so it could stay in the family.

When a man died without any sons, these same *goels* could take his wife and have a son to allow his name to continue. Boaz was related, so he qualified for this responsibility—but he did not have to take it. If he did, he had to raise another family. He would have to use his money, time, and effort to build up another man's house. That took a lot, and few wanted such a responsibility. But Naomi needed this. She needed somebody to keep her husband's name going, and she needed somebody to buy back the property that her husband had sold when they had left for Moab.

Naomi decided to take a chance with Boaz. She concocted a plan to hook him up with Ruth. She got word that Boaz was down at the threshing floor, so she told Ruth to wash and anoint herself, and to put on some good clothes. Scholars say that Ruth was still wearing her mourning clothes. But Naomi was beginning to understand that, although she had experienced some tough times, trouble doesn't always last. The great God Jehovah is in the hope-giving business.

God had indeed been blessing them, but they continued clothed in mourning clothes. Every day they awakened they wrapped themselves in their troubles. They kept their funeral clothes on as a testament to the world of what they had been through, but Naomi was beginning to understand what Isaiah meant when he said God wants to give us the garment of praise for our spirit of heaviness. It was time for them to stop reflecting the heartache they had been through and to reflect the hope that now lit their path. Naomi was getting farther along on her path to praise.

Naomi was beginning to realize that they had mourned long enough. It was time to move on. This did not mean she did not love, miss, or cherish the memory of her husband and her sons, but if she did not get herself together and act quickly, she would have only memories because no one would carry on her husband's line.

Naomi said, "Take off your mourning clothes and put on your good clothes and go down to where Boaz is. Wait until after he is finished eating and drinking. When he lies down to go to sleep, quietly uncover his feet and lay at them." This was a risky venture, because through this gesture she was proposing marriage to him. It was yet to be seen how he would react, but Ruth did as she was told.

Boaz noticed Ruth lying at his feet around midnight. "Who are you?" he asked.

"It is I Ruth. Take me under your wing for you are our *goel*, our kinsmen-redeemer," she requested.

Boaz was flattered and felt blessed by the invitation. There was a closer relative who should have the opportunity first, but if the other did not take it Boaz promised that he would. Before Ruth went home, Boaz gave her six *ephahs* of barley because he did not want Ruth to go home to Naomi empty-handed. God continued to fill Naomi with blessings.

Boaz worked it out and he and Ruth were married. The Lord opened up Ruth's womb and she bore a son, and they called his name Obed. Then those same women praised God. "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without a *goel*, a kinsman-redeemer. May he be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law,

who loves you, is better to you than seven sons, and she has borne him."

"Naomi has a son," they cried. And this time Naomi did not have any objections to their song because she had been on the way of praise long enough to know that God was good, that her life was in his hands, and that he cared for her. She learned that if she just kept living, her bad days would eventually give way to good days. Her storms would give way to sunshine, and her winters would give way to spring.

Naomi and Boaz now had a son, and they called his name Obed. Do you know what Obed means? It means worshiper.

That's exciting because you just figured out—just as Naomi did—that the reason you are going through bad times is because God is trying to birth a worshiper in you. God has got an Obed in you, trying to come out. God stopped up your womb before because the situation was not right, the setting was not right, Ruth was not ready for her Obed. She had some living to do, some growing to do, some climbing to do, some hoping to do.

She had to get out of Moab, and get on that path to praise. She had to come to the point where she declared to Naomi, "Your God, the God of heaven, the one that I have seen blessing you all this time, even though you complain about him, I know that he is with you, and he is the God I want to serve for the rest of my life."

Little did she know that by getting on the path to praise, God would fertilize that seed of worship within her. No it was not easy, it was not always fun; it hurts to be empty, but now Naomi understood that God had to empty her in order to fill her up. And fill her up, he did.

She was empty, but now she's filled
She was broken but now she's healed
She was bitter but now she's better
She was bound but God loosed the fetter
She used to have sorrow but now she can shout
She was lost in Moab but God brought her out!

Andrea Trusty King was recently ordained/commissioned with her husband, Kurt King, in the Southeastern California Conference. Together, they copastor the San Diego, California, Maranatha Church.

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ADVENTIST STORIES

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SCRIPTURE

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Authority and Identity

New edition of Seeking a Sanctuary *shows latest trends in Adventist Study* | BY MALCOLM BULL AND KEITH LOCKHART

Born in 1827, the daughter of a hatter from Gorham, Maine, Ellen Gould Harmon had an uneventful childhood. At the age of nine, however, she was accidentally hit on the head by a stone, and her injuries prevented further formal education. She first heard about the imminent end of the world at twelve, when her parents took her to a meeting that William Miller was holding in her neighborhood. She waited until she was fifteen before fully committing herself to his movement, but when she did, she was expelled from the Methodist Church, into which she had been born, along with other members of her family.[1]

Her first vision occurred when she was still only seventeen, two months after the débâcle of October 22, 1844. This was a comforting revelation in which she saw that the saints would ascend from the earth to the Holy City after all. She continued to have such visions until 1878, although the frequency declined markedly in the 1860s, and she probably did not have more than about two hundred altogether. In 1846 she married James White, formerly a minister of the Christian Connection and a fellow disappointed Millerite.[2] Together they worked for the Seventh-day Adventist denomination until James's death in 1881. After this, Willie, one of Ellen White's two surviving sons, became her closest confidant. She spent most of her life in the northeastern United States, but she visited Europe from 1885 to 1887 and lived in Australia between 1891 and 1900. On her return to America she settled near St. Helena, California, where she died in 1915. She never accepted formal office, thereby establishing a distinction between her charismatic role and the bureaucracy of the church. But throughout her long career, Ellen White wrote and spoke to Adventist audiences, who received her in the belief that she was the "spirit of prophecy" identified in the book of Revelation.[3]

In the beginning, her religious experience followed a pattern similar to that of many previous mystics. In 1842 she went through a typical "dark night of the soul" occasioned by her fear of praying in public: "I remained for three weeks with not one ray of light to pierce the thick clouds of darkness around me," White related later. "I then had two dreams which gave me a faint ray of light and hope."[4] In one of these, she ascended a stairway. At the top she was brought to Jesus. Like other female mystics, such as St. Teresa, she was immediately attracted by his beauty, but she had to be reassured before being able to experience the full joy of his presence.[5] Shortly after this dream, she uttered her first public prayer, during which she experienced an overwhelming sense of love for Jesus: "Wave after wave of glory rolled over me, until my body grew stiff."[6] Just as St. Teresa had written

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Seeking a Sanctuary, Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream

By Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart

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of her transverberation that her soul could not "be content with anything less than God," so White wrote, "I could not be satisfied till I was filled with the fullness of God."[7] This intense desire for experience of the divine presence is an aspect of White's development that is often overlooked. Her exceptional religious propensities originated, not from a search for doctrinal or ethical information, but from a simple desire to feel the love of Jesus.

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Such experiences were accompanied by striking physical manifestations, and these were fundamental to her acceptance as a source of authority within the emergent denomination. At the onset of vision, she usually uttered the words "Glory! Glory! Glory!" She would enter a trance-like state, stop breathing, and because of this apparent cessation of normal bodily functions, seem "lost to the world." This phenomenon was very important to her contemporaries, who made a concerted effort to establish her indifference to earthly things. They covered her nose and mouth, held a mirror up to her face, pinched her, felt her chest, pretended to hit her, and shone bright lights in her eyes, all in an effort to see if she would breathe, flinch, or blink.[8]

The attempt to establish that Ellen White was lost to this world was based on the implicit understanding that if she were, she would be more open to the spiritual world.[9] In her first vision, she had experienced it so directly that afterwards she wept and felt homesick for the better land she had seen.[10] This ability to see the heavenly world was vital to the early Adventists, who, after the Great Disappointment, had begun to doubt that what was visible on earth revealed eternal truth. Thus, through her revelations of heaven, Ellen White could inform the faithful of what ought to be believed on earth. The most literal example of how this worked was White's vision of the Ten Commandments written on tables of stone in the heavenly sanctuary. Reading them, she observed that God had not changed the wording of the fourth commandment in favor of Sunday, the first day of the week. Therefore, she concluded that God required the observance of Saturday, the seventh-day Sabbath, on earth.[11]

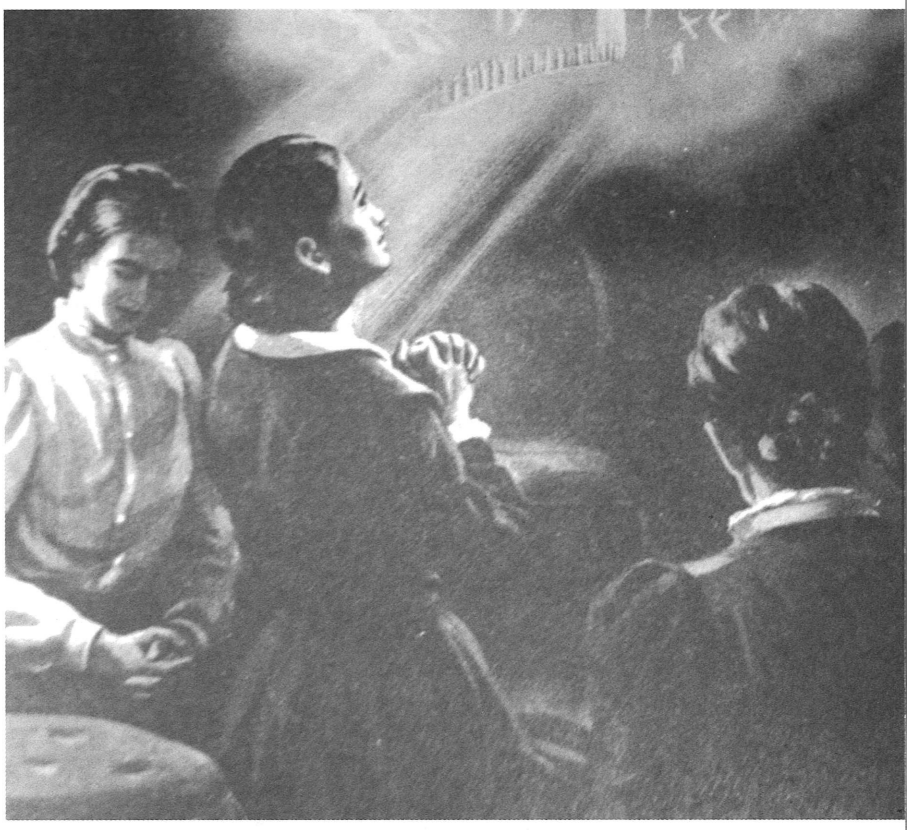
This approach attracted criticism from the church's early opponents. In 1866, in *The Visions of Mrs. White Not of God*, two disaffected Adventists, B. F. Snook and W. H. Brinkerhoff, alleged that many of the things Ellen White claimed to see in heaven were false, or not in accord with descriptions in Scripture.[12] Their critique was taken up by the Sunday-keeping Advent Christians, who, like the Adventists, were previously followers of William Miller. They pointed out that Ellen White had never had the revelation about the Ten Commandments while she was a Sunday observer herself. It was only after she received "the theory of the seventh-day Sabbath at the hand of a man," one Advent Christian wrote in 1867, that her visions came into "harmony with her new feature of theology."[13] Such objections, and the accusations of Snook and Brinkerhoff, were answered by the church writer and editor Uriah Smith in a booklet issued in the following year. He maintained that what White saw in heaven was accurate, in harmony with Scripture, and the basis of sound Adventist doctrine.[14]

Even so, it was some time before the "Testimonies," as her writings became known, led rather than followed the group to which they were addressed. For the first ten years, she tended to confirm belief rather than admonish believers. Indeed, the quantity of her output was regulated by the attitude of the community. As she herself noted in 1855: "The reasons why visions had not been more frequent of late, is, they have not been appreciated by the church."[15] In practice, the extent to which the visions could be appreciated by Adventists was dependent on the frequency of their publication. As the church expanded, its chief means of communication became the press. Ellen White's religious experience, once validated to the scientific satisfaction of her

peers, became the raw material on which a publishing industry was based. The financial and technological development of Adventist publishing may not have influenced White's experience, but it certainly determined the extent and form in which that experience could be communicated.

The nineteenth century witnessed a revolution in American publishing, and the Adventist press followed the general trend.[16] As technology improved, it became easier to produce longer books. This advance also necessitated a constant flow of copy, an example of which can be seen in the books dealing with the "great controversy" theme—White's classic exposition of the ongoing battle between good and evil. The central idea of the great controversy is a cosmic struggle between Christ and Satan, which the prophetess traced from its origins in heaven to its final resolution at the close of the millennium. The great controversy theme first appeared in the first volume of *Spiritual Gifts* in 1858. Material from the *Spiritual Gifts* series was expanded to form the four-volume *Spirit of Prophecy* series in 1870–1884. Between 1888 and 1917, this series was transformed into the *Conflict of the Ages* series that comprised five books: *Patriarchs and Prophets* and *Prophets and Kings* (accounts of Old Testament history), *The Desire of Ages* (a biography of Christ), *Acts of the Apostles* (a history of early Christianity), and *The Great Controversy* (which related the battle between Christ and Satan from the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 to the millennium at the end of time).

In the course of this process, the content and style of the books underwent significant alteration. Some idea of the stylistic changes may be gained by comparing the account of the fall of man given in volume one of *Spiritual Gifts* (1858) with the accounts found in volume one of the *Spirit of Prophecy* (1870) and in volume one of the *Conflict of the Ages* series, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890). Ellen White's writing in 1858 reveals both the deficiencies in her education and the intensity of her



experience. The narrative style is simple but compelling. The account is given in the past tense, not so much because the events described happened in the past as because the visions were in the past. By 1870 White had acquired many of the techniques of contemporary religious novelists.[17] Making much use of the vivid present, she emphasizes narrative detail and the emotional state of the characters involved. The short sentences found in *Spiritual Gifts* are filled out by abundant adjectives and adverbs and expanded by additional clauses. Thus the angels that in 1858 "gave instruction to Adam and Eve," in 1870 "graciously and lovingly gave them the information they desired."[18] While in 1858 Eve simply "offered the fruit to her husband," in 1870 "she was in a strange and unnatural excitement as she sought her husband, with her hands filled with the forbidden fruit."[19]

In 1890 a much more sophisticated writer appears, concerned not with narrative details but with moral exhortation. The vivid present is replaced by past or future tenses, depending on when the events described took place. The

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simple connectives used in 1870 give way to dependent clauses of time and purpose. Abstract nouns make an increasing appearance, along with the passive voice and impersonal constructions. The statement that "Satan assumes the form of a serpent and enters Eden" gives way to the observation that "in order to accomplish his work unperceived, Satan chose to employ as his medium the serpent—a disguise well adapted for his purpose of deception."[20] White also cuts back on the superfluous use of adverbs in favor of a richer vocabulary. So the serpent that in 1870 "commenced leisurely eating" is in 1890 "regaling itself" with the same fruit.[21]

While there is no doubt that these developments indicate an increase in the literacy of the prophetess, Ellen White's earliest work shows an intuitive awareness of the dramatic potential of narrative that is obscured by the sentimental and moralizing tone of her later books. This diminution in the power of her language is, however, partly explained by the fact that her books decreasingly represented her unique experience. As the demands on her time increased, she relied on assistants to do research and prepare copy. Moreover, the outlines of her narratives were frequently supplemented by material drawn from other writers. This is particularly true of the *Conflict of the Ages* series. *Patriarchs and Prophets* and *Prophets and Kings* owe something to Daniel March's *Night Scenes of the Bible* and to books by Alfred Edersheim. *The Desire of Ages* is indebted to both of these authors and to William Hanna's *Life of Christ*. *The Acts of the Apostles* borrows from William Conybeare and John Howson's *The Life and Epistles of the Apostle Paul*, as well as from two of White's favorite writers, John Harris and Daniel March. *The Great Controversy* contains substantial sections from the historians J. A. Wylie and Merle D'Aubigne.[22]

None of this was generally known until it was exposed by a former Adventist, Dudley M. Canright, in his *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, of 1889. Accusing White of "stealing her ideas" from other authors, Canright calculated that up to a quarter of all her writings had been plagiarized up to this point.[23] This revelation cast renewed doubt on White's claim to heavenly inspiration. But it was a question of production as well of inspiration. As one historian has noted, nineteenth-century publishers "encouraged high productivity in their authors," since they felt that "to keep up demand, the public must be constantly reminded that a particular writer existed."[24] Adventist publishing was no exception, and White's increasing use of sources enabled the press to engage in the almost continuous publication of "new" material. This, in turn, enabled the church to disseminate her somewhat diluted influence more widely. Thus, the authority accorded to White by the small circle familiar with her visions expanded to encompass a much wider audience. Since many of these people had no contact with White as an individual, her writings were the focus of their recognition of her as God's messenger.

By acknowledging Ellen White's statements as divinely inspired, the church thereby

understood God as having two authorized channels of revelation: the Bible and the Testimonies. The human intellect was not considered by most Adventists to be a reliable source of knowledge. Unsurprisingly, White was the strongest proponent of this view. She maintained that "to man's unaided reason, nature's teaching cannot but be contradictory and disappointing. Only in the light of revelation can it be read aright."[25] In taking this position, she distanced the church from the Millerites, who had placed great faith in "unaided reason" and placed "no reliance whatever upon any visions or dreams, mere impressions, or private revelations."[26]

It was, after all, William Miller's sense of obligation to the requirements of rationality that prompted his study of the Bible. He had had an emotional conversion in which he had said he felt the loveliness of a Savior. "But the question arose How can it be proved that such a being does exist?" Considering that "to believe in such a Savior without evidence would be visionary in the extreme," he turned to the Bible as the only source of information. Miller reasoned that since the Bible "must have been given for man's instruction," it "must be adapted to his understanding." And he resolved to remain a deist if he could not harmonize all the apparent contradictions.[27]

This deference to reason was not just the legacy of the Enlightenment skeptics Miller had read twelve years previously. It is better understood in the context of the Common-Sense philosophy that was becoming popular in nineteenth-century New England. The Scottish philosophy, as it was also known, was a form of realism, and its reliance on individual common sense appealed to American Protestants as a bulwark against doubt. Although the philosophy derived from the work of Thomas Reid, the seventeenth-century philosopher Francis Bacon was seen as the founder of the school. The Scottish philosophy denied that anything intervenes between the mind and its apprehension of external facts. If the systematic study of these facts was undertaken by a mind unprejudiced by theory, it was believed that knowledge of a limited certainty would be obtained. In a religious context, Baconianism became identified with the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*, or the Bible alone, and it was later influential in the dispensationalist school of prophetic interpretation that divided past and future biblical events into distinct eras.[28]

Baconianism was not alien to the Millerite world. The Disciples of Christ, who founded Bacon College in Kentucky in 1836, disseminated a popularized version of the philosophy for every level of society. Their leader, Alexander Campbell, in arguing that faith was grounded in "Experience," as opposed to skepticism that was based on "Assumption," cited Bacon as having laid "the foundation of correct reasonings."[29] Campbell, who took a close interest in the prophecies in the book of Daniel, had been introduced to Boston audiences by Miller's publisher Joshua Himes and was one of the Millerites' most sympathetic critics.[30]

This was because Miller followed the Baconian injunction "to proceed regularly and gradually from one axiom to another."[31] As he recalled, "I determined to lay aside all my prepossessions, to thoroughly compare Scripture with Scripture, and to pursue its study in a regular and methodical manner."[32] The result of this endeavor was Miller's conclusion that the Second Advent would occur around 1843. Adopting the motto, "Prove all things; hold fast to that which is good," Miller accumulated scriptural and historical facts to support his conclusion. Like the contemporary revivalist Charles Finney, Miller spoke to audiences as if to a jury, gradually building up the evidence for his case.[33] This approach appealed to exponents of the Common-Sense philosophy. As Alexander Campbell noted, Miller benefited from his critics' un-Baconian arguments, which far transcended "the oracles of reason and the canons of common sense."[34]

Despite Miller's careful methods, he was

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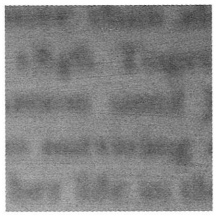

disappointed in both 1843 and 1844. For Miller, there was nothing to do but add this rather disconcerting fact to all the others and to reassess his conclusions. However, the Baconian doctrine of "restraint," which asserted that no belief should transcend observable facts, was not followed by all in the Millerite movement. Some in the radical wing could not tolerate the prospect of revising their calculations. For them, it proved easier to renounce Miller's Baconianism than to abandon the specific date for which they had suffered. The Great Disappointment was a watershed in the thinking of this group. October 22, 1844, was to have been the ultimate conclusion to which all the carefully assembled facts of Scripture and history pointed; instead, it became an unassailable premise to which all future knowledge must conform.[35]

Ellen White did not proclaim her revelation and gather a following; rather, she had a particular kind of religious experience that came to be accepted as authoritative within an existing group.

The implicit conclusion of the radicals was that since no extraordinary phenomena had been observed on October 22, observation was not the best way to monitor such events. Reassurance came in the form of direct, and often ecstatic, religious experience. When these groups, which included the future founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, held meetings, they fell on the floor, groaned, shouted, and sang. It was in this atmosphere that Ellen White rose to prominence.[36] Her ability to receive direct communications from God was of particular value because the Great Disappointment had shown more established channels—such as human reason—to be flawed.

Yet the acceptance of Ellen White's visions was also facilitated by two aspects of the Common-Sense philosophy that underlay the early Adventist view of the world. First, the realist theory of perception emphasized that the apprehension of objects was direct and not influenced by mental constructs. So it was quite possible to believe, for example, that Ellen White literally saw what was written on the Ten Commandments. Second, it was presumed that language was perspicuous, that it was the servant rather than the master of thought, and that words corresponded directly to objects. Language could be trusted. (When White had a vision of heathens and Christians gathered under their respective banners, the Christian banner bore words; the banner of the heathens, symbols.) Accordingly, when White related her visions, it was assumed that what she had seen determined the words she used. Her accounts were as authoritative as what she had experienced.[37]

Thus the process by which the mystical proclivities of a teenage girl were recognized as the revelations of an authoritative prophet was aided at every step by the underlying philosophical assumptions of the Adventist community. Unlike the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, Ellen White did not proclaim her revelation and gather a following; rather, she had a particular kind of religious experience that came to be accepted as authoritative within an existing group. The prophetic ministry of Ellen White was an aspect of Adventist social experience, not just the psychological experience of a single individual.

Throughout the process in which Miller's original emphasis on the priority of reason was overturned, the one constant was the Bible. From 1844 onward, Adventist publications are replete with statements to the effect that the Bible is God's word and is the only rule of faith and practice. Similarly, the priority of the Bible over any other revelation was reiterated in church publications on countless occasions. The statement made by the church president G. I. Butler in 1883 was typically categorical: "The Scriptures are our rule to test everything by, the visions as well as all other things. That rule, therefore, is of the highest authority; the standard is higher than the thing tested by it. If the Bible should show the visions were not in harmony with it, the Bible would stand and the visions would be given up."[38] It would be difficult to find an official statement from any period that contradicted this one.

But this undeviating line on the Bible often

concealed important shifts in the balance of authority. For Miller, the Bible had been completely perspicuous to reason. It was "a system of revealed truths so clearly and simply given that the 'wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.'"[39] For the Adventist pioneers, biblical interpretation proved a great deal more problematic. As Ellen White recalled, "Again and again these brethren came together to study the Bible, in order that they might know its meaning, and be prepared to teach it with power."[40] Although they sometimes spent the entire night searching the Scriptures, there were in 1848 "hardly two agreed. Each was strenuous for his views, declaring that they were according to the Bible." Understandably, these frustrated students came to the point where they said, "We can do nothing more."[41]

Ellen White, meanwhile, found all these discussions somewhat above her head. "During this whole time I could not understand the reasoning of the brethren. My mind was locked, as it were, and I could not comprehend the meaning of the scriptures we were studying."[42] Fortunately for her and the Adventist community, aid came from another source. She would be taken off in vision and given clear explanation of the passages under consideration. Her accompanying angel would indicate who was right and who was wrong, explaining "that these discordant views, which they claimed to be according to the Bible, were only according to their opinion of the Bible, and that their errors must be yielded."[43]

William Miller, for whom the Bible was "a feast of reason," would have found this conflict unwarranted and its supernatural resolution distasteful. Among the early Adventists, however, such guidance was obviously a practical necessity. Without it, the fledgling church would have been stranded in the disintegrating nest of Millerism. In later years, things appeared rather differently. The reason given in 1871 for the existence of the Testimonies was the neglect of the Bible rather than the inability of its

students to agree on the correct interpretation.[44] But the principle remained the same. When the church needed doctrinal or practical guidance, it could, during her lifetime, turn to Ellen White for advice specifically related to the question at issue. The Bible contained truths of eternal validity, but it was not always clear how they applied in a particular case. The Bible might set the agenda for discussion, but White usually had the last word. The reason for this was not that the Bible was deemed incomprehensible but that Adventists, as a group, were unable to reach complete agreement on its meaning. The significance of this distinction proved difficult to convey to the church's membership. As the Adventist president A. G. Daniells remembered, it was not long before some preached that "the only way we could understand the Bible was through the writings of the spirit of prophecy." Daniells denounced this view as "heathenish," although the president would not have been far from the truth if he had replaced his "could" with a "did."[45]

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By the time of her death in 1915, Ellen White functioned as the acknowledged interpreter of Scripture for the Adventist church.

She might not be considered as infallible, but most Adventists preferred to suspend judgment rather than admit her error on any specific point. The relative importance of reason, the Bible, and visionary authority was now the reverse of what it had been for the Millerites. Reason had once tested and expounded the Bible and discounted individual revelation; it was now considered unfit to test or expound either Scripture or the spirit of prophecy. The authority of White's visions, however, could define the meaning of the Bible and the status of reason. Certainly, the Bible was supposed to test the prophet, but if it could not be understood without the prophet, such an investigation was hard to initiate.

Thus, although Ellen White was never accorded theological primacy, her methodological priority made her position inviolable. Indeed, many Adventists believed that her actual words had been dictated by the Holy Spirit through the process known as "verbal inspiration." Again, the church leadership was not entirely comfortable with this idea, especially as members did not always appear to hold the biblical writers in the same esteem. At a Bible conference the church convened in 1919 to assess the legacy of White's writings, an Adventist educator, W. W. Prescott, observed that the denomination had reached the point where "if a man does not believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible, he is still in good standing; but if he says he does not believe in the verbal inspiration of the Testimonies, he is discounted right away"[46] Participants at the conference were well aware that far from being verbally inspired, many of the prophetess's words were copied from other authors. But they chose to look the other way. "Adventist leaders affirmed their belief in Ellen White's prophetic gift," Adventist historian Gary Land commented, "and placed increasing emphasis on her writings."[47]

For nearly a century the Bible had seemed securely fixed at the center of the seesaw of reason and prophecy. In the 1920s, however, events in the wider world threatened to dislodge the Scriptures from the pivotal position they had enjoyed in the worldview of most nineteenth-century Protestants. Higher criticism, which introduced a scientific approach to the study of the Bible, had been influencing academic circles since the turn of the century. But during World War I the proponents of this new method, the "modernists," became more vocal. In particular, they resented the wartime spread of the premillennialist view that Christ would soon return to inaugurate a thousand years of peace and happiness. The modernists attacked the millenarian fundamentalists for lacking both patriotism and theological sophistication. While Adventists were not directly accused, their views were similar to the ideas of those who were. Understandably, when the millenarians counterattacked in the early 1920s, Adventists, who had been divided on such questions as the verbal inspiration of the Bible, aligned themselves firmly with the fundamentalist cause.[48]

In 1924 William G. Wirth, an Adventist Bible teacher, published *The Battle of the Churches: Modernism or Fundamentalism*, a book designed to "help the reader, if he be inclined to favor Modernism, to see the weakness of its claims."[49] The same year, the popular Adventist writer Carlyle B. Haynes echoed the conservative Baptist E. Y. Mullins in the title of his pamphlet *Christianity at the Crossroads*. Its cover depicted a man faced with signs labeled "fundamentalism" and "modernism" pointing in opposite directions. The tone of the book left little doubt as to which route was considered preferable.[50] At the same time, an Adventist creationist, George McCready Price, published a series of detailed geological books refuting Darwinism that soon became required reading for anti-evolutionists beyond the denomination.[51]

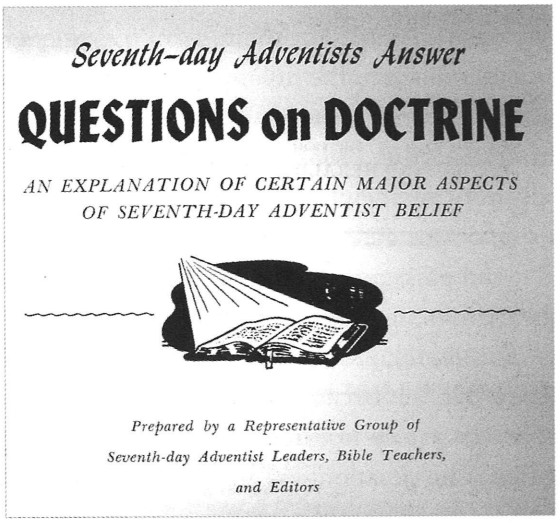
Involvement in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy had far-reaching consequences. Although the question of Ellen White's authority was not involved, the defense of the Bible resulted in greater insistence on its inspiration and inerrancy. Alongside this concentration on the Bible came a revival in the rhetoric of Baconianism. It was once again emphasized that the Bible was a collection of readily comprehensible facts. Similarly, it was argued that unless confused by the hypotheses of the liberals and evolutionists, the evidence of nature was clear. It was, as Price had written in 1913, because "the current geology has never used a trace of sound Baconian science" that it had fallen into evolutionary thinking.[52] But the Baconianism of the 1920s differed from that popular a century earlier. In the 1820s Baconianism had been directed against the skeptics who felt they could know nothing. In the 1920s it was directed against the scientists who claimed to know too much.[53] The basic thrust of the new Baconianism was anti-intellectual. It was to an audience of Seventh-day Adventists in 1924 that William Jennings Bryan, the former secretary of state and anti-evolution crusader,

proclaimed: "All the ills from which America suffers can be traced back to the teaching of evolution. It would be better to destroy every other book ever written, and save just the first three verses of Genesis."[54]

From the 1920s to the 1950s, the attitude toward authority found within Adventism was more or less static. The Bible and Ellen White existed in symbiosis. White's writings clarified and elaborated the Scriptures; the Scriptures confirmed and clarified her prophetic role. In keeping with this understanding, F. D. Nichol, the editor of the Seventh-day Adventist *Bible Commentary*, made it a policy that no interpretation given in the commentary should appear to conflict with a statement by Ellen White.[55] Also in line with this understanding was the universal adoption of the "proof-text" method, in which church members used isolated passages from the Scriptures or the spirit of prophecy to "prove" their distinctive doctrines. To Adventists there was hardly a single human experience on which some sentence from the Bible or Ellen White did not have bearing. The need to use human reason thus rarely arose.

The stability afforded by this structure of authority obviated the necessity of engaging in any major doctrinal discussions between the Bible Conference of 1919 and the church's next Bible Conference held in 1952. However, this stable era came to an end, largely because the church felt the need to impress a new configuration within America's Protestant community that was becoming known as evangelicalism. This movement was associated with the emergence of Billy Graham as a national figure in the 1940s and with Graham's friend, Donald Grey Barnhouse, editor of *Eternity* magazine. The evangelicals placed all their emphasis on the Bible but were attempting to free themselves from the negative image of fundamentalism.[56] In 1949 an Adventist administrator, T. E. Unruh, sent Barnhouse a copy of Ellen White's book *Steps to Christ*, but he was unreceptive and reported that the Adventist publication was littered with unscriptural doctrine.[57]

The 1952 conference was the first chance to correct outside impressions, but the opportunity passed, largely because the deliberations of the gathering as a whole, which were published under the rubric of *Our Firm Foundation*, amounted to a statement of Adventist thought as it had developed since the alignment with fundamentalism.[58] However, a second chance to remedy the situation occurred in 1955 when the Baptist researcher Walter Martin, in an initial attempt to classify the denomination, placed Adventism in the same category as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons, partly because of "Mrs. White's strange interpretation" of certain passages of Scripture.[59] Ac-



cording to Martin, it was again Unruh who contacted him, strongly objecting to his categorization and suggesting that they open a dialogue. Martin approached Barnhouse, who agreed to meet Unruh, Froom, and a few other trusted Adventist officials, in the hope of finally establishing whether Adventism was a Christian church or a heretical cult.[60]

In *Questions on Doctrine*, the book published as a result of these discussions, the Adventist representatives sought to restrict the scope of the prophetess's authority. They declared that she was not in the same category as the biblical writers, that the Bible, not Ellen White, was the "source of our expositions," and that her influence was limited to matters of "personal religion" and "the conduct of our denom-

In *Questions on Doctrine*... the Adventist representatives sought to restrict the scope of the prophetess's authority.... [H]er influence was limited to matters of "personal religion" and "the conduct of our denominational work."

inational work."[61] It was one of the few times in the denomination's history when the Bible was given unambiguous precedence over Ellen White, and it helped to convince Martin and Barnhouse that Adventism was indeed a part of the evangelical family.[62] But it shocked the church's older workers like M. L. Andreasen, who believed that Ellen White's purpose was to prevent the church's "departure from sound doctrine."[63] The idea that she never "initially contributed any doctrinal truth or prophetic interpretation will not be believed by her thousands and millions of readers who all have been benefited by her works," he commented bitterly, and warned that "the present attempt to lessen and destroy confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy may deceive . . . many, but the foundation upon which we have built these many years, still stands."[64]

Despite Andreasen's convictions, Ellen White's authority was further undermined in the following decade. The leader of a dissident movement in Australia, Robert Brinsmead, started to propound new ideas on the doctrine of salvation, and he produced quotations from White to support his conclusions. But as his Adventist critics also found passages from the Testimonies to confirm their conflicting views, the dispute exposed the problem of using the proof-text method with the statements of White.[65] It became obvious that an appeal to the prophetess was no longer a sure way to resolve doctrinal conflict. The situation was analogous to that of the 1840s, except that on this occasion the disputants were searching the Testimonies rather than the Bible. While in 1848 the supernatural authority of visions had settled discussion, in the 1960s there seemed to be no court of appeal. It was clear that the Bible and the Testimonies were by themselves incapable of producing answers that would satisfy more than one section of the church.

It was in this climate that two Adventist academics, Roy Branson and Herold Weiss, published an appeal to make Ellen White "a subject for Adventist scholarship."[66] The motivation for this plea was to find a means of solving the confusion generated by the indiscriminate use of the proof-text method and to "recapture Ellen White's original intentions," and "the absolute truth of what she meant."[67] So now reason, shaped by the tools of historical scholarship, was called to clarify White's pronouncements just as she had once clarified the Bible. As it turned out, the only thing that was clarified was the difficulty of using Ellen White as an authority at all. The research of the 1970s did little to establish what she meant. Rather, it confirmed that not everything she had written was of her own invention, let alone of God's direct revelation. It was evident that she changed her mind on various questions and that she held a number of beliefs about history and science with which no contemporary scholar would agree.

The key figures in establishing these facts were William S. Peterson, Donald McAdams, and Walter Rea, who between them documented the sources of the *Conflict of Ages* series; and Ronald Numbers, whose findings on the sources of White's health visions shook the denomination when they were first published in 1976.[68] Following these independent studies, the church attempted in 1980 to regain control over the information by commissioning an Adventist professor, Fred Veltman, to examine the unacknowledged references in one of the books in the *Conflict of the Ages* series, the *Desire of Ages*. However, after an extensive eight-year investigation, Veltman's study corroborated much of the work of Peterson, McAdams, and Rea. Veltman emphasized that White, rather than her assistants, selected material from other authors, and concluded that the prophetess used a minimum of twenty-three sources in compiling the *Desire of Ages*, including works of fiction.[69]

Reason was now allowed to judge the Testimonies on questions of history, but the Bible was still the only rule for judging White's theology. In the early 1980s, the work of the Adventist theologian Desmond Ford on the significance of the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844, was to reveal the potential for conflicts in this area as well.[70] In 1985, Herold Weiss looked back on fifteen years of Ellen White scholarship and concluded: "Mrs. White's formal authority—the readiness of her readers, that is, to accept what she said as true just because a prophet said it—has in fact been shattered. From now on no one should be able to end a theological dialogue by giving a quotation from Mrs. White."[71]

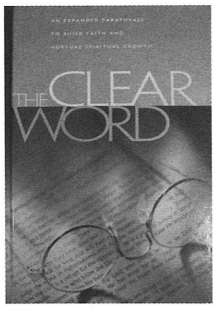
In the event, Weiss spoke too soon. Scholars, like prophets, live and think within a particular historical framework. When the framework changes, their own prophecies are not always fulfilled. The history of modern biblical scholarship is itself an example of how academic fashions can change. Higher criticism dominated the aca-

demic study of the Bible until the last quarter of the twentieth century. Its tools, like the historical-critical method, employed the analysis of forms and sources to break up the biblical text into numerous competing traditions.[72] This often undermined traditional beliefs about the date, authorship, and historicity of biblical books, which is why Adventists, like other conservative Christians, reacted defensively. Specific doctrines anchored Adventists in particular to a conservative position: the Sabbath demanded the historicity of the Pentateuch; prophetic interpretation required a sixth-century (rather than the customary second-century) date for the book of Daniel. Similarly, the habitual reliance on proof texts led Adventists to be wary of any doctrine of inspiration that suggested that the Bible was not a compendium of revealed propositions but simply an expression of its authors' encounters with God.[73] Thus in Old Testament studies, Adventist scholars traditionally concerned themselves with archaeology and chronology, and in the New Testament, with linguistic and textual criticism.[74] In neither area was it possible for them
to do substantial theological or literary work, since their conservative presuppositions were not shared by most of the academic world.

Nonetheless, in the 1960s Adventists accepted the general case for an academic approach to the Bible and began to differentiate themselves from fundamentalists on this account. In 1966, the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* complained that "fundamentalists have ignored or rejected valid findings of Biblical scholarship."[75] After this, the church's more adventurous theologians pushed things further. Weiss, for example, argued that to "equate God's word with a book is the work of a corrupted faith which sets for itself an idol."[76] The theologian Jerry Gladson suggested in 1985 that the Bible was a book of only "limited inerrancy," and in 1991 Alden Thompson, professor of biblical studies at the denomination's Walla Walla College in Washington, found in Scripture "a generous sprinkling of human 'imperfections.'"[77] Six years later another Walla Walla professor, John Brunt, spelled out the philosophy that informed these critical approaches to the Bible, which was that "without reason, there can be no understanding of Scripture."[78]

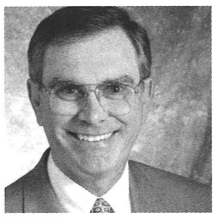
But no sooner had these attitudes gained footholds in the denomination than church leaders took steps to restore the traditional authority of the Bible in the Adventist community. In 1986, in what became known as the "Rio Document," the church formally banned the use of the historical-critical method.[79] And in 1996, the statement criticizing fundamentalists for ignoring the findings of biblical scholarship was quietly, but tellingly, dropped from the third edition of the *SDA Encyclopedia*.[80] Church scholars, too, felt they needed to do something to bridge the widening chasm between themselves and the laity. This sentiment produced the *Bible Amplifier* series, in which they endeavored to write readable commentaries on all sixty-six books of the Bible for the man or woman in the pew. They published fourteen volumes between 1994 and 1997, but the initiative was aborted due to lack of interest among Adventist members.[81]

However, there were two notably more successful efforts to return to a "plain reading" of the Bible. One was *The Clear Word Bible*, a paraphrase of the entire Scriptures by Jack J. Blanco, chair of the religion department at the denomination's Southern College, in 1994.[82] It was written in chapter and verse form, like a traditional Bible but incorporated Ellen White's interpretations in the text. It was viewed as distorted by some, and the "Bible" part of the title was dropped in subsequent editions. Nonetheless, this was a highly popular first attempt at writing an "Adventist" Bible.[83] The other initiative was made by an Adventist doctoral student, Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, who published the book *Receiving the Word* in 1996. Aimed particularly at Alden Thompson, the author argued that in "study-



Reason was now allowed to judge the Testimonies on questions of history, but the Bible was still the only rule for judging White's theology.

ing the Scriptures, reason must be humble enough to accept and obey what it finds in those sacred pages."[84] Like *The Clear Word Bible*, Pipim's book sold in large numbers. But Brunt's feeling was that the Bible did not fare well in the church in the 1990s.[85] While Pipim blamed Thompson for this state of affairs, Brunt blamed Pipim.[86]



Drawing on postmodernist literary theories ... new academic approaches to the Bible stopped trying to take the text apart and accepted it at face value.

These squabbles were soon overtaken, however, by new developments in biblical studies that came to fruition in the 1990s. Drawing on postmodernist literary theories like poststructuralism, narratology, and reader-response criticism, new academic approaches to the Bible stopped trying to take the text apart and accepted it at face value.[87] Such trends were resisted by some Adventists, such as Norman R. Gulley, who perceived a threat to the church's propositional understanding of inspiration in his mammoth *Systematic Theology*.[88] But other Adventist theologians recognized that such an approach permitted the re-colonization of biblical studies by conservative evangelicals. Fernando L. Canale *(pictured, left)*, a professor at the Adventist seminary at Andrews University, considered that postmodern criticism provided "an opportunity to show how the interpretation of the epistemological origin of theological knowledge could be attempted on the basis of faithfulness to the *sola Scriptura* principle rather than to a philosophical or scientific teaching."[89] For the first time an Adventist Old Testament scholar, Laurence Turner, was able to write a volume in a well-known academic commentary series without fearing for his job. Instead of looking for things that were "inconsistent, redundantly repetitious or contradictory," Turner approached Genesis from a "holistic final form perspective" focusing on intertextuality, plot, characterization, and ambiguity. As a consequence, he did not have to discuss the book's date or sources, and the text was "allowed to display its integrity as a cohesive composition," almost as though (as Adventists had always argued) Moses had written it himself.[90]

It was due to a similar maneuver that Ellen White started to emerge from the cloud she had been under since *Questions on Doctrine*. After Fred Veltman's exhaustive report appeared in 1988, Adventist writers on Ellen White wiped the slate clean and started again. In 1996 the historian George Knight, in the first of a four-volume series on the prophetess, began with the question "Who is Ellen White?" and proceeded to reintroduce her to the Adventist public with barely an acknowledgment of recent controversies.[91] The effect of more than three decades of Ellen White scholarship was more obvious on Herbert Douglass's *Messenger of the Lord*, published in 1998. But his conclusion, like Knight's, was that "Ellen White's writings speak pointedly to our day, and are increasingly relevant in this end-time."[92]

Nevertheless, *Messenger of the Lord* was a significant publication. Like the new generation of biblical scholars for whom sources were not an issue since all texts are "intertextual" rewritings of other texts, Douglass simultaneously accepted that Ellen White used unacknowledged sources and cleared her of all charges of plagiarism. He quoted a sympathetic investigator who argued: "The critics have missed the boat badly by focusing upon Mrs. White's writings, instead of focusing upon the messages in Mrs. White's writings. . . . where the words come from is really not that important."[93] This process of rehabilitation was completed two years later by the denomination's *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*. This work reverted to Andreasen's idea that White's purpose was to "protect from doctrinal error."[94] More liberal voices obviously disagreed with this view.[95] But by indicating that she had the final say on doctrine, the *Handbook* once more gave Ellen White methodical priority above human reason and, despite the usual caveats to the contrary, above the Bible as well. At the same time, the numbers of younger Adventists believing that Ellen White was a true prophet rose from 53 percent in 1991 to 73 percent in 1997.[96]

The structure of authority within Adventism has, from the time of William Miller, gone through numerous permutations. For Miller, reason came first; it expounded the Bible, and visions were disregarded. The Great Disappointment inverted this order; visions expounded the Bible, and reason was disregarded. The spread of Ellen White's published work then allowed this order to stabilize, with the Testimonies clarifying the Scriptures. The modernist challenge to the Bible aligned Adventism with fundamentalism and made the Bible and the Testimonies mutually explanatory. The Adventist encounter with evangelicalism, both outside and inside the denomination, created embarrassment and frustration about the way the spirit of prophecy was used. The open season on Ellen White research that followed made reason and the Bible her two judges. And after the church accepted the legitimacy of biblical scholarship, reason became the arbiter of the Scriptures as well, provoking an angry reaction from conservative Adventists. At the turn of the century, these tensions were fading, thanks to new approaches to literary texts. This also allowed White to shake off her critics, to win new support among the membership, and to reclaim her place as the church's final source of authority.

These developments were all prompted by specific historical events, but it is possible to observe several patterns. A major restructuring of authority usually takes place when existing sources of authority fail to generate clear-cut answers, as was the case in the 1840s, 1960s, and the 1990s. The rise of an alternative source of authority is usually facilitated by appeal to the one that is being disregarded. Thus, the early Adventists subjected Ellen White to empirical investigation, the scholars in the 1960s and 70s quoted White about the need for "new light" in the church, and recent commentators have used secular theory to free themselves from higher criticism.[97] This dependence of new authorities on the old builds instability into the system. If one source fails to provide the answers, it can always be undermined by the source that gave it authority in the first place.

In other words, Adventist ideology is defined by a process in which reason, prophecy, and Scripture are constantly battling each other for priority. Today it would seem that the visions of Ellen White have prevailed over the competing imperatives of the other two sources. But this is not to say that the demands of human reason or the appeals of the Bible may not become dominant once more. The church's sources of authority are always interchanging, and it is this phenomenon, as much as anything else, that allows Adventism constantly to redefine itself without undermining its own identity. ■

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The structure of authority within Adventism has, from the time of William Miller, gone through numerous permutations.

Notes

1. The chronology here is drawn from the account in the *SDA Encyclopedia*, 11:873.

2. For biographical information, see Gerald Wheeler, *James White: Innovator and Overcomer* (Hagerstown: RHPA, 2003).

3. See Rev. 19:10. There is no adequate biography of Ellen White, but for a critical review of her life, see Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: Ellen G. White and the Origins of Seventh-day Adventist Health Reform*, rev. ed., with an introduction by Jonathan M. Butler (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992). The authorized account of her career is by her grandson, Arthur L. White, in the six-volume *Ellen G. White* (Washington, D.C.: RHPA, 1981–1986).

4. EGW, EW, 12. The classic exposition of the dark night of the soul is given by St. John of the Cross, in *The Complete Works*, trans. and ed. E. Allison Peers, vol. 1 (London: Burns Oates and Washborne, Ltd., 1948), esp. p. 10. See also Ingemar Linden, *The Last Trump: An Historico-Genetical Study of Some Important Chapters in the Making and Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1978), 153–62.

5. EGW, EW, 79-81. See St. Teresa of Jesus, *The Com-*

plete Works, trans. and ed. E. Allison Peers (London: Sheed and Ward, 1946), 1:170.

6. EGW, *EW*, 12.

7. St. Teresa of Jesus, *Complete Works*, 1:193, and EGW, EW, 12.

8. See J. N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement: Its Rise and Progress* (Nashville: SPA, 1905), 203-11, for a collection of eyewitness testimonies. See also James White, *Life Incidents in Connection with the Great Advent Movement* (Battle Creek: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1868), 272-73.

9. See Ronald L. Numbers and Janet S. Numbers, "The Psychological World of Ellen G. White," *Spectrum* 14:1 (1983): 25.

10. EGW, *EW*, 20.

11. Ibid., 33.

12. For example, Snook and Brinkerhoff alleged that Ellen White saw Satan in heaven in 1844, when he had not been there since his fall; that she saw a temple in the Holy City, which contradicted Rev. 21:22; that she claimed she could not see the "Father's person" and then said that she had; and that her view of the tree of life astride the river of life was "more fanciful than true." See *The Visions of E. G. White, Not of God* (Cedar Rapids: Cedar Valley Times Book and Job Print, 1866), 5–6, 16.

13. William Sheldon, *The Visions and Theories of the Prophetess Ellen G. White in Conflict With the Bible* (Buchanan: W.A.C.P. Association, 1867), 4.

14. Significantly perhaps, Smith did not answer the Sabbath point directly, but for his general response to the idea that the revelations were merely confirmations of theories with which the prophetess was already acquainted, see *The Visions of Mrs. E. G. White: A Manifestation of Spiritual Gifts According to the Scriptures* (Battle Creek: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1868), 86. On his more specific answers to Snook and Brinkerhoff on the devil in heaven, the temple in the Holy City, the Father's person, and the tree of life, see, respectively, 47–49, 75–77, 78–79, and 79–80.

15. EGW, *1T*, 119.

16. For a description of the spread of print in mid-nineteenth century America, see Carl Bode, *The Anatomy of American Popular Culture, 1840–1861* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 109–16.

17. Ibid., 145–48.

18. EGW, *1SG*, 20, and *1SP*, 33.

19. EGW, *1SG*, 21, and *1SP*, 38.

20. EGW, *1SP*, 35, and *PP*, 53.

21. Ibid.

22. See, for example, Daniel March, *Night Scenes in the Bible* (Philadelphia: Zeigler and McCurdy, 1868–1907), and *Walks and Homes of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Publishing Committee, 1856); Alfred Edersheim, *Bible History: Old Testaments*, 4 vols. (1876–1880), repr. ed. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1949); William Hanna, *The Life of Christ* (New York: American Tract Society, 1863); John Harris, *The Great Teacher*, 17th ed. (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1870); W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of the Apostle Paul* (New York: Crowell, 1852); J. H. Merle D'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation,* vol. 4, bk. 9 (Glasgow, Scotland: Collins, 1841); J. W. Wylie, *History of the Waldenses* (London: Cassell, Pelter and Galpin, n.d.). Comparisons of these and other sources with Ellen White's writings may be found in Walter Rea, *The White Lie* (Turlock: M & R Publications, 1982). For a review of the literature on Mrs. White's borrowing, see Donald McAdams, "Shifting Views of Inspiration: Ellen White Studies in the 1970s," *Spectrum* 10:4 (1980): 27–41.

23. Dudley Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, 4th ed. (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1889), 141.

24. Ann Douglas, T*he Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 83.

25. EGW, *Ed*, 134.

26. "Address to the Public," *Midnight Cry*, 21 November 1844, 166.

27. Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller* (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1853), 66–67, 68. For an account of Miller's deist phase, see 24–26.

28. For a parallel account of Millerism and Baconianism, see Ruth Alden Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 98–102. On Scottish realism and American religion, see Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), esp. 3–31 and 132–59. See also Herbert Hovenkamp, *Science and Religion in America 1800-1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); and Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology," *Church History* 24:3 (1955): 257–72. For the importance of Baconianism to dispensationalism, see George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 55–62.

29. Robert Frederick West, *Alexander Campbell and Natural Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 91. On the Disciples and Bacon, see David Edwin Harrell Jr., *Quest for a Christian America: The Disciples of Christ and American Society to 1866* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966), 28.

30. David T. Arthur, "Joshua V. Himes and the Cause of Adventism, 1839–1845" (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1961), 12.

31. Francis Bacon, *The Great Instauration and New Atlantis*, ed. J. Weinberger (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1980), 22.

32. Bliss, *Memoirs*, 69.

33. See Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Knopf, 1963), 92–95; and David Arnold Dean, "Echoes of the Midnight Cry: The Millerite Heritage in the Apologetics of the Advent Christian Denomination, 1860–1960" (Th.D. dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1976), 171–77.

34. Alexander Campbell, *Millennial Harbinger*, 1843; quoted in Bliss, *Memoirs*, 240.

35. For a discussion of the psychological

consequences of the Great Disappointment, see Leon Festinger et al., *When Prophecy Fails* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), 12–28.

36. Ronald Graybill, "The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1983), 88–90.

37. See Hovenkamp, *Science and Religion*, 52, on the Scottish realist understanding of language; cf. EGW, *EW*, 211–12.

38. George I. Butler, *Review* supplement, 14 August 1883, 12.

39. Bliss, *Memoirs*, 70.

40. EGW, *1SM*, 206.

41. EGW, *2SG*, 97–98, and *1SM*, 206.

42. EGW, *1SM*, 207.

43. EGW, *2SG*, 98–99.

44. EGW, *2T*, 605.

45. A. G. Daniells, quoted in "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History," transcript of the 1919 Bible Conference, July 30, 1919, in *Spectrum* 10:1 (1979): 30, 31.

46. W. W. Prescott, quoted in ibid., 39.

47. See Gary Land, "Shaping the Modern Church, 1906-1930," in *Adventism in America: A History*, rev. ed., ed. Gary Land (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1998), 130.

48. See Steven G. Daily, "How Readest Thou: The Higher Criticism Debate in Prophetic America and Its Relationship to Seventh-day Adventism and the Writings of Ellen White, 1885–1925" (M.A. thesis, Loma Linda University, 1982). See also Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, esp. 141–70; and Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 233–69.

49. William G. Wirth, *The Battle of the Churches: Modernism or Fundamentalism, Which?* (Mountain View: PPPA, 1924), 5.

50. Carlyle B. Haynes, *Christianity at the Crossroads* (Nashville: SPA, 1924).

51. For example, George McCready Price, *The New Geology* (Mountain View: PPPA, 1923). For more on this, see ch. 18.

52. George McCready Price, *The Fundamentals of Geology* (Mountain View: PPPA, 1913), 240.

53. See ch. 18.

54. William Jennings Bryan, quoted in Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, 125.

55. Raymond F. Cottrell, "The Untold Story of the Bible Commentary," *Spectrum* 16:3 (1985): 44.

56. See Billy Graham's autobiography, *Just As I Am* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1998), 46, 284–94. Graham mentions his "friend" Barnhouse several times, e.g., 284. See also Mark A. Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), particularly 18–20, 44–54.

57. Donald Grey Barnhouse, "Spiritual Discernment, or How to Read Religious Books," *Eternity*, June 1950, 9, 42–44. For Unruh's account, see, "The Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences of 1955–1956," *Adventist Heritage* 4:2 (1977): 35–36.

58. *Our Firm Foundation: A Report of the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Conference held September 1–3, 1952*, was published in two volumes in 1953 by RHPA in Washington, D.C.

59. See Walter Martin, *The Rise of the Cults* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1955), 15.

60. See Walter Martin, "Currents Interview," *Adventist Currents* 1:1 (1983): 16. Unruh, however, suggests that Martin made contact with him, rather than the other way around. See Unruh, "Seventh-day Adventist Evangelical Conferences," 36–37.

61. *Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions on Doctrine: An Explanation of Certain Major Aspects of Seventh-day Adventist Belief* (Washington, D.C.: RHPA, 1957), 89–98. Quotations from 93, 92.

62. For more on this, see chapter 5.

63. See M. L. Andreasen, "Downgrading Mrs. White," *Letters to the Churches* (1959), repr. ed. (Payson: Leaves-of-Autumn Books, 1980), 44.

64. Ibid., 43, 48.

65. See, for example, the discussion in General Conference Defense Literature Committee, *The History and Teaching of Robert Brinsmead* (Washington, D.C.: RHPA, 1961). See also chapter 5.

66. Roy Branson and Herold Weiss, "Ellen White: A Subject for Adventist Scholarship," *Spectrum* 2:4 (1970): 30.

67. Ibid., 32.

68. See William S. Peterson, "A Textual and Historical Study of Ellen G. White's Account of the French Revolution," *Spectrum* 2:4 (1970): 57–68; Donald McAdams, "Ellen G. White and the Protestant Historians: The Evidence From an Unpublished Manuscript on John Huss" (circulated by the author, 1974); Rea, *White Lie*, 45–56, 66–100, 106–187; Numbers' book was originally published by Harper & Row as *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White.* See also McAdams, "Shifting Views of Inspiration," 27–41, where all of this is recounted; and Gary Land, who provides a summary of the issues in "Coping with Change, 1961–1980," in *Land, Adventism in America*, 180–81.

69. Fred Veltman, *Full Report of the Life of Christ Research Project* (n.p. 1988), 911–12, 934, 938–39.

70. Desmond Ford, "Daniel 8:14, The Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment" (unpublished manuscript, n.d.). See also chapter 5.

71. Herold Weiss, "Formative Authority, Yes; Canonization, No," *Spectrum* 16:3 (1985): 10.

72. A brief overview of the historical-critical method, its related disciplines, and its place in biblical studies can be found in J. Maxwell Miller, "Reading the Bible Historically: The Historian's Approach," in *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, rev. and exp. ed., ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Stephen R. Haynes (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999), 17–34.

73. See, for example, Raoul Dederen, "Revelation, Inspiration and Hermeneutics," in *A Symposium of Biblical Hermeneutics*,

ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, D.C.: RHPA, 1974), 4–5 and 10–11.

74. On Adventism's interest in archaeology, see, for example, Siegfried Horn, *The Spade Confirms the Book* (Washington, D.C.: RHPA 1957). On chronology, see Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings: A Reconstruction of the Chronology of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1951), which was very influential in its time and has been regularly reissued since. On linguistic criticism, see Steven Thompson, *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

75. SDA *Encyclopedia*, 1966 ed., 428–29.

76. Herold Weiss, "Revelation and the Bible Beyond Verbal Inspiration," *Spectrum* 7:3 (1975): 53.

77. Jerry Gladson, "The Bible Is Inspired," *College People* 5:2 (1985): 18–20; and Alden Thompson, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (Hagerstown: RHPA, 1991), 70.

78. John C. Brunt, "The Bible and the Church," *Spectrum* 27:1 (1999): 19. Essentially the same message was given in Richard Rice's *Reason and the Contours of Faith* (Riverside: La Sierra University Press, 1991).

79. "Methods of Bible Study," *Review*, 22 January 1987, 18.

80. See SDA *Encyclopedia*, 10:578, and compare the 1976 ed., p. 488, and the 1966 ed., pp. 428–29.

81. The series was published by PPPA. The volumes were: *Exodus* by Jon Dybdahl (1994); *Matthew* by George Knight (1994); *Timothy & Titus* by Charles Bradford (1994); *Hebrews* by William Johnsson (1994); *John* by Jon Paulien (1995); *Peter & Jude* by Robert M. Johnston (1995); *Samuel* by Alden Thompson (1995); *Daniel 1–7* and *Daniel 7–12* by William Shea (1996); *Romans* by John Brunt (1996); *Hosea-Micah* by Jon Dybdahl (1996); *James* by Pedrito U. Maynard-Reid (1996); *Ezekiel* by Robert McIver (1997); *1 Corinthians* by W. Larry Richards (1997). See also Brunt's thoughts on this enterprise and regret over its failure, in "The Bible and the Church," 18.

82. See Jack J. Blanco, *The Clear Word Bible: A Paraphrase to Nurture Faith and Growth* (Hagerstown: RHPA, 1994).

83. See Martin Weber's review, *Ministry*, December 1994, 27.

84. Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Receiving the Word: How New Approaches to the Bible Impact Our Biblical Faith and Lifestyle* (Berrien Springs: Berean Books, 1996), 177. Thompson replied to Pipim in "En Route to a 'Plain Reading' of Scripture," *Spectrum* 26:4 (1998): 50–52.

85. Brunt, "The Bible and the Church," 18.

86. Ibid.

87. For a general introduction to these approaches, see David M. Gunn, "Narrative Criticism"; Edgar V. McKnight, "Reader-Response Criticism"; and William A. Beardslee, "Poststructuralist Criticism," in *To Each Its Own Meaning*, ed. McKenzie and Haynes, 201–29, 230–52, and 253–67 respectively. Readers interested in exploring these methods in further depth can consult the Reader-Response, Structuralist and Narratological, and Poststructural criticism chapters in The Bible and Culture Collective (George Aichele et al.), *The Postmodern Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 20–148. See also two other standard works, *Mark & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Janice Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); and *Judges & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), in which some of these theories are explained using Mark and Judges as case studies.

88. Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 2003), 491.

89. Fernando L. Canale, *Back to Revelation-Inspiration: Searching for the Cognitive Foundation of Christian Theology in a Postmodern World* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2001), 11.

90. Laurence A. Turner, *Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 11, 12, 13–15, 18. The volume was part of *Readings: A New Biblical Commentary*, edited by John Jarick. Turner was head of the theology department at the denomination's Newbold College in Britain.

91. George R. Knight, *Meeting Ellen White: A Fresh Look at her Life, Writings and Major Themes* (Hagerstown: RHPA, 1996), 7. The other titles in Knight's series were: *Reading Ellen White: How to Apply Her Writings* (1997); *Ellen White's World: A Fascinating Look at the Times in Which She Lived* (1998); *Walking With Ellen White: Her Everyday Life as a Wife, Mother and Friend* (1999).

92. Herbert E. Douglass, *Messenger of the Lord: The Prophetic Ministry of Ellen G. White* (Nampa: PPPA, 1998), xvii.

93. Ibid., 459. Italics in original.

94. *SDA Handbook*, 628.

95. Fritz Guy, *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1999), 123–26.

96. Figures from the surveys in Roger L. Dudley and V. Bailey Gillespie, *Valuegenesis: Faith in the Balance* (Riverside: La Sierra University Press, 1992), 84, and Roger L. Dudley, *Why Our Teenagers Leave the Church: Personal Stories from a 10-year Study* (Hagerstown: RHPA, 2000), 39. Additional signs of returning confidence in Ellen White was another defense of her career, *Prophets Are Human*, by Graeme Bradford (Victoria: Signs Publishing Company, 2004), and a very late reply to Numbers, *The Prophet and Her Critics: A Striking New Analysis Refutes the Charges that Ellen G. White "Borrowed" the Health Message*, by Leonard Brand and Don McMahon (Nampa: PPPA, 2005).

97. Quotation from EGW, *CSW*, 34.

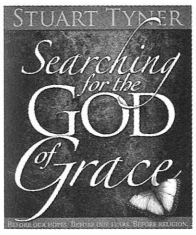
Faith Stories

At the Adventist Book Center | BY BONNIE DWYER

If you already know everything that you want to know about the Twenty-Eight Fundamental Beliefs and are not in need of another vegetarian cookbook, what is there to read at the Adventist Book Center? Here are some interesting titles to come off the press this year.

Searching for the God of Grace

By Stuart Tyner / Pacific Press



Tyner's search is all about grace. First in the Bible, from Old Testament to New, then on to the Middle Ages, the Reformation, the Council of Trent, the Great Disappointment, the California Conspiracy and the debates of 1888, through the writings of Ellen White. This is a historical tour as well as theological treatise on the significance of grace, which Tyner sees as more important than end-time events or Sabbath-keeping. Filled with questions, quotations, stories, and illustrations, Tyner's book is passionate about grace being the air that Christians breathe in order to live. Chris Blake calls it one of the best Adventist books in years.

Rainbow Over Hell

By Tsuneyuki Mohri / Translated by Sharon Fujimoto-Johnson

The layers of this conversion story make it particularly fascinating. Author Tsuneyuki Mohri, a Buddhist, describes how a man convicted of murder during the Second World War was spared the death penalty, converted to Christianity, and became an Adventist pastor. The book also tells the experience of the Buddhist filmmaker who traveled with the pastor back to Saipan to make a film about the pastor. Not only is the pastor's story riveting, so are the people who tell it. Translator Sharon Fujimoto-Johnson says that she has always believed in God. "What changed in my heart during translation of *Rainbow Over Hell* was that I realized God believes in us."

Shall We Gather at the Potluck: A Heartwarming Look at the Church I Love

By Mike Mennard / Review and Herald

Mike Mennard is a charming storyteller. In this book, he tackles questions about church life that admittedly aren't deeply theological or focused on church doctrine, but they are the kind of things that can be a real challenge to life within a local congregation. In so doing, Mennard gets around to talking about how we love one another—which is not always an easy assignment.

Dinosaurs: Where Did They Come from and Where Did They Go?

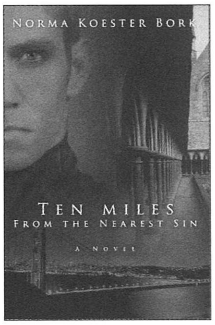
By Elaine Graham-Kennedy / Pacific Press

A children's book with a section for grown-ups, this book is richly illustrated with photographs of skeletons and dig sites. The author, who until very recently was on the staff of the Geoscience Research Institute, admits to being a dinosaur lover since childhood. She takes readers on a hunt for facts about dinosaurs and then leaves the conclusion up to the reader. She believes God created the dinosaurs. What happened to them? She says that many Christians believe the worldwide flood destroyed the dinosaurs. "There are good facts to support this idea," she says, "but we cannot prove it."

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.

Ten Miles from the Nearest Sin

Deceit, duplicity, despair, and denial | REVIEWED BY MARGIE SCHUTTE



Ten Miles from the Nearest Sin (Enumclaw, Wash.: Winepress, 2006), by Norma Koester Bork

This book contains deceit, duplicity, despair, and denial—all ingredients of a scandal-filled novel, albeit set in a conservative Christian organization—the End Time Church.

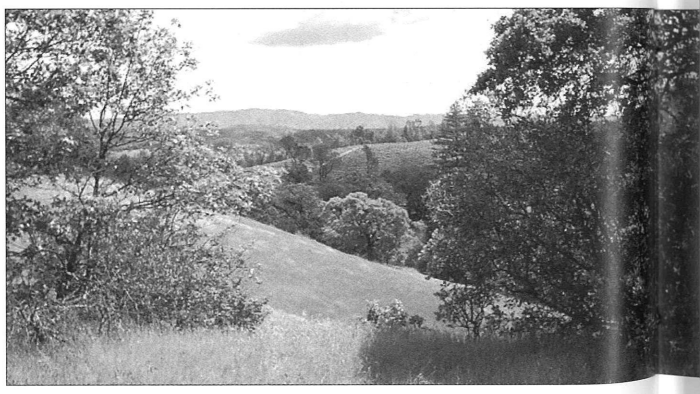
Norma Bork's story begins in Silver Spring, Maryland, with ten-year-old Jack, son of a high End Time Christian Church official, being sexually abused in secret by a friendly military neighbor. Set in the decades between the 1930s and1960s, the book traces the lifelong devastation not only to Jack and his parents but also to his many female contacts through the years.

When teenage Jack's internal rage causes him to violently assault a fifteen-year-old female and fellow church member, he avoids the police by lying about his age and joining the army. His father's well-meaning but misguided efforts to help his son put Jack under the control of the abusive general and his escape to the war becomes another nightmare.

After his discharge, Jack is unable to meet the entrance requirements of a secular college. His father again pulls strings to get Jack accepted at the End Time Missionary College outside Washington, D.C.

On a date with Kathryn, a dormitory student at Halcyon Hall, he persuades her to walk down to Sligo Creek. There he forces himself on her and violently batters and rapes her, leaving her lying alone near the creek bed. A doctor from nearby End Time Sanitarium and Hospital finds her and takes her there for treatment. The college dean of women advises her to return home with her parents for it would be out of the question for her to remain at the school, according to the customs of that time.

After receiving a few phone calls from Jack's father in defense of his son and after placing blame on Kathryn, the college's executive committee decides Jack has received punishment enough by missing classes for three days. Jack's plea for leniency so that this incident will not jeopardize his chances to go into the "Lord's work" is honored. In order to protect their reputations, neither the college nor the hospital report this crime to the authorities for fear it will get into the press.



Miles from Angwin, California?

Meanwhile, Kathryn returns home with her parents only to find herself pregnant. Her parents, hoping to protect her from perceived shame, arrange a loveless marriage to an older fellow believer.

Seven years later, the scene shifts to California, where, ironically, Kathryn and her daughter, Karis, have a surprise encounter with Jack at a school conference, where he is

educational supervisor for the End Time elementary schools in central California.

Fast forward to 1968—Saint Helena, California—End Time College, where Jack's father manages to pull a few more strings to get his son a position as academic dean. The story continues with the trials and temptations of faculty and students, where, unknown to each other, Jack and Karis (a premed student) cross paths again.

Bork expertly mixes prayer sessions, teaching Sabbath School lessons, and incidents of raw sex and violence as the controversy between good and evil is played out to its dramatic conclusion. It may take some readers by surprise that this occurs on a Christian campus. The law of consequences and ultimate redemption are realistically portrayed.

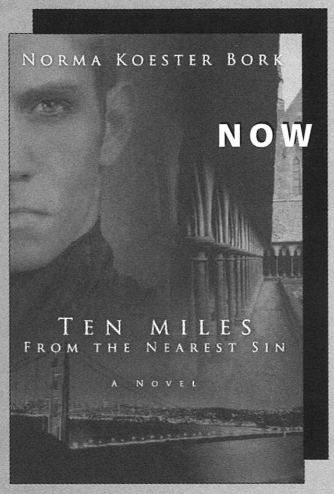
It was well into the book that I understood the meaning of the title. A comment by a nonbelieving sheriff who investigated an attempted rape near the Saint Helena campus said about the End Time Christians, "They like to think they're ten miles from the nearest sin, but they're not." He angrily accuses the End Time Church officials of "denying and covering up anything that goes wrong."

Although the author states the book is "completely fiction," one wonders why she chose to have the geographic settings and customs of the End Time Christian Church so closely resemble the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The location of the church headquarters, the General "Assembly," the colleges, the Sanitarium and Hospital, Sligo Creek, Loma Linda, Saint Helena, Halcyon Hall all are familiar names to most informed Adventists.

Bork has courageously scripted the lifelong and far-reaching devastating effects of childhood sexual abuse that exist within a conservative Christian church. She accurately notes the reluctance of the Christian community to acknowledge this evil within its midst. She is to be commended for bringing to light a very serious cancer within the church that has the potential for destroying not only the victims but the organization itself.

Although the book is set several decades ago, unfortunately the abuse and the manner in which it is handled, in many cases, is not that different today, which makes this story a relevant and compelling read. ■

Margie Sabah Schutte is a nurse and counselor with a dedicated interest in helping victims of childhood sexual abuse by church officials. She and her pediatrician husband live in Weaverville, North Carolina.



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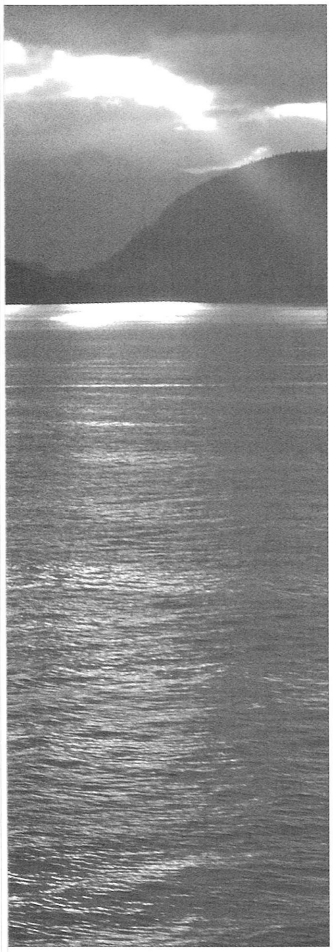
ADVENTIST STORIES ■ *an original short story*

Two Baptisms | BY GARY E. GILBERT

Editor's Note: The following story is true to the author's recollection, but its characters' names have been changed.



My first impulse for baptism, in the fall of 1967, may have been competitive. I wanted baptism when Linda got it, in the same way that I wanted the same bedtime and permission to watch the same television programs. I didn't deliberately imitate Linda, but I didn't like her to get ahead. I made fun of her long chain of chewing gum wrappers, her posters of the Beatles and the Monkeys, and her obsession with keeping me out of her bedroom.

Linda was eighteen months older, in the eighth grade, whereas I was in the seventh. She was ahead of me in making friends, ahead in collecting records of rock-and-roll bands, ahead of me with invitations to parties. Linda generally showed scorn for me, particularly when her girlfriends were around. "This is my fat brother," she would introduce me, not bothering to provide my name. I would mumble and look away.

Linda was also ahead of me in wickedness. She rolled her skirt up at the waist as soon as she was out of sight of our house and had smoked cigarettes on the way home from school. She watched television after sundown on Friday night when our parents were away. I peeked around the corner to see what show was on, and she scorned me because I wouldn't actually sit down and watch with her.

Linda played "love-in" in the bow of our trailered boat, where she and Pam had invited several guys. The guy would lie in the middle of the bunk with the girls on either side, taking turns kissing. I was not allowed to join the invited boys, even when another girl substituted for Linda on the far side of the bunk.

Linda was angry that I wanted to be baptized at the same time. "Gary can be baptized later," she said. "Why does he have to do everything that I do?"

I overheard only a little of my parents' conversation, forced whispering, coming from their bedroom. I was old enough, my mother said. I had demonstrated maturity. She had been only nine years old when baptized.

Dad countered that it was important for Linda to be able to enjoy some things on her own, not competing with her younger brother....

Mom mentioned that Linda had smoked and skipped school.

"Linda is past that now," Dad said.

"But Gary didn't do it. He knew better," Mom countered. "I think he is more mature."

Mom prevailed. I was enrolled in the baptismal class, together with Linda and two other girls at church.

In addition to maintaining a competitive posture at home, I hoped that baptism would make me feel like I belonged in our church. The former railway station in Santa Fe, New Mexico, boasted a membership of seventy, with typical attendance of thirty-five.

When I was younger, I had hurried to the front of the church potluck line to hustle one of Maria Hernandez's enchiladas. Afterward, I played "wild stallions" with Ronnie and Judy

and Joe in the tumbleweed lot behind the church. I was happy then, and the church was where I belonged.

In the past year, it had come to seem difficult to talk to the kids and even the adults at church. "You're really growing, Gary," a woman might say to me. I couldn't think of a reply. The three girls near my age seemed to have become shy, at least toward me. I didn't know what to say to them and there were no boys my age.

I was conscious for the first time that there were differences between our families that might be important. They spoke Spanish at home and their fathers worked as painters and builders in Santa Fe. We drove to church from Los Alamos and my father was a physicist, working to complete his Ph.D. The church members, most of whom had who had not completed college, had a sense of awe about physics and a Ph.D.

Pueblo Junior High School, in Los Alamos, was no more comfortable for me than the Santa Fe church. I don't remember the names of any friends I made that year. I do remember that we took the first national physical fitness test and that I couldn't do a single pull-up. I recall watching in self-conscious envy as the athletes easily pulled themselves to the bar again and again.

My parents yielded to my begging that year and permitted me to play football, on the second string seventh-grade team (with no games or practices on Friday night). A kid threw my helmet in the girls' locker room after practice and I grew angry. We fought in the doorway to the girls' locker room, surrounded by a circle of guys in football pads. I walked home quivering with fear, jubilant that I had bloodied his nose but disturbed by the angry words, the flying fists, and the circle of teammates.

My father taught the baptismal class for Marilyn, Becky, Linda, and me. The Junior–Earliteen class, which he regularly taught, sat in a pew sitting sideways at the front of the sanctuary. For a couple of months, the Junior–Earliteen class became the baptismal class. We could see the baptistery behind the pulpit, with the low glass barrier in front of the drapes. The pastor was also studying with an adult man in the church office, but we kids didn't know his name.

I think we learned fourteen essential Adventist beliefs. They were familiar and seemed self-evident. Affirming that God created the world, ex nihilo, within the past few thousand years seemed a fact, not a contentious idea. Should the earth's roundness be another doctrine?

Mom was enthralled with the prospect of our baptisms. During the thirty-five mile drive from Los Alamos to the Santa Fe church, she would slip into a reverie.

"I remember the day I was baptized," she told Linda and me. She looked backward over the front seat as Dad drove. "It was the happiest day of my life." She had been only nine years old, baptized by her father, the evangelist. "Afterward, I always knew that I belonged to the Church, that I belonged in the Truth." The joy she described seemed too big for an ordinary Sabbath afternoon in our little church, with the rubber mat up the center and the wooden floors gritty with sand tracked in from the front stair.

Another Sabbath morning she said, "I have been thinking. After you are baptized, you may not want to go to dances anymore." Linda and I had both attended the Pueblo Junior High School dance.

It was in the afternoon on a weekday in the school gym. I stood alone, amazed at the loudness of the music from the amplifiers and by the guys near my age who sang and played on stage. I ventured out twice to move awkwardly with a shy girl from my home room. I was amazed by the scattered couples that clung to each other, moving slowly and easily when the band played the occasional quiet, slow dances. Afterward, I walked home alone. Linda came later, with her friends.

On another Sabbath morning, Mom said, "When you have your first communion service, I think you will feel differently about church. I know I did. Church meant so more to me when I had accepted the beliefs and the responsibilities as my own."

After Christmas, as the baptism approached, I realized that Mom's vision of the baptism had enveloped me. I could imagine myself emerging from the baptistery consumed with longing for what was right and energy to undertake worthy tasks. I could even imagine a peace, an orientation toward eternal things, no longer caring if I didn't have friends to talk to, couldn't attend a dance, couldn't play at "love-in," and shouldn't watch some television shows. I had almost forgotten about keeping pace with Linda, almost forgotten that I felt awkward in our church. I began, tentatively, to read passages from my Bible in private.

If Mom's hope for the transforming power of our

baptisms affected Linda, she didn't let it show. Linda wanted a new dress for her baptism. An odd request, I thought, typical of a girl. My parents argued again, forced whispers coming from behind the bedroom door. Linda was smiling before the door opened. I knew she had been listening and would have her new dress.

The day of the baptism was cold and overcast, making the snow patches gray rather than white. There was a potluck dinner after church and we baptismal candidates were taken aside before the meal was over. The three girls would change clothes in the ladies' room, the pastor and the man who was to be baptized would change in the pastor's study. I was to change in the Kindergarten/Primary classroom, donning a blue robe over my underwear.

The gray February light that came through the windows made me self-conscious as I undressed. I was cold under the robe. The hardwood floor was gritty on my bare feet as I walked cautiously back and forth in the classroom that I had recently graduated from.

I heard splashing, Pastor Smith talking, more splashing, then singing. It was repeated three times, with different intervals of singing. Then the singing continued for several songs. When would my turn come? My feet were cold and I had goose bumps on my arms. I was too self-conscious in the robe to open the door and ask when they would be ready for me.

The door finally opened and Mrs. Roberts said, "See! Gary is here. He's waiting to be baptized." The pastor, no longer in his baptismal robe, looked in the door. He had his shirt buttoned to the neck and was knotting his tie. He mumbled something about being late and needing to go to another church. Mrs. Roberts spoke clearly about me waiting to be baptized. Pastor Smith asked if they had a dry robe. No. He grumbled as he put on a cold, wet one.

While Pastor Smith grumbled, I realized he had forgotten that I was to be baptized. He thought he had finished for the day and was ready to hurry to his afternoon meeting. Except for my parents and Mrs. Roberts, the congregation thought that the baptisms were completed. Now I was slowing the pastor down, forcing him to put on a soggy, cold robe. I was beginning to feel like I did when Linda introduced me as "my fat brother."

The water in the baptistery had been draining when the pastor and Mrs. Roberts discovered me. They quickly replaced the drain plug, leaving water that reached just above my knees. It was uncomfortably cool and a yellow-brown color. Pastor Smith whispered that I would have to stand up after he baptized me. He wouldn't be able to lift me up from shallow water.

When the curtains opened, I saw Linda, Becky, and Marilyn, and the man who had been baptized standing at the front of the church, their backs to the baptistery. I recognized Linda's new dress. A line of people hugged and talked to them and it took several minutes for them to sit down. I had begun to shiver.

Pastor Smith raised his hand above my head, put a cloth over my face, and lowered me a long way into the cool water. I pulled my feet and hands under myself and stood up. The baptistery curtains closed while we stood in the shallow water. Pastor Smith hurried away toward the study and Mrs. Roberts met me with a dry towel.

While I dressed, I wondered if this was the time I should feel wonderful. What I felt was anxiety, afraid that everyone would be gone before I had finished dressing. When I went into the sanctuary, Pastor Smith had disappeared and the church had emptied. Mrs. Roberts gave me a hug and shook my hand. Mom and Dad hugged me, but both looked disturbed and neither talked very much. Mom said, "I should have said something sooner. I was afraid they might be forgetting you." I was still cold and didn't feel like talking.

Linda and I rode in the back seat of our Plymouth station wagon. "I'm sorry they forgot you, Gary," she said. I didn't reply. Mom and Dad whispered in the front seat. I leaned against the car door and felt the cold handle, transmitting my body heat through the door to the February evening. I let the cold seep into my flank as we crossed the bridge over the Rio Grande. The cold felt right to me even though I was still shivering from the baptism. I didn't want to talk.

During the next week, I felt empty, sad. I didn't feel a new longing for goodness or rightness, only a desire to forget about how cold and small I had felt during the baptism. I hadn't even kept pace with Linda. She had stood, radiant in her new dress, while the church sang songs and people came to hug her.

I did feel that I had made a good commitment. Those fourteen doctrines I had learned were surely true

and I felt an abstract commitment to the Church. But I associated my commitment with being painfully, embarrassingly alone. The next Sabbath no one mentioned the baptismal service or the fact that my particular baptism had been forgotten until the last minute. It reminded me of the time I had played a trumpet solo for church and floundered badly. No one ever mentioned the obvious blunders. I am sure they were polite, but their silence left me feeling alone.

As the spring winds blew up over the Pajarito Plateau, the snow patches that remained in Los Alamos melted and seeped into the porous dust. The baptism experience seemed more a part of the melting snow than the warming wind and the translucent green leaves on the aspen trees. I rarely thought of it.

I slipped past Linda in height, looking down on her for the first time in our lives. I found the discarded instructions from her Tampax package. After carefully considering the diagram and instructions, I realized that I now understood a mystery about women, men, and babies.

My father's weight management program for me reached fruition before school let out for summer. For two years, I had collected a nickel every day that I weighed less than 110 pounds and paid a nickel each day I weighed more. I had a can with seven dollars in nickels and now weighed slightly less than Linda. With my new height, I was no longer chubby, even by my sister's harsh criteria.

At communion service, I awkwardly splashed water over my father's feet, and he washed mine. I sipped the grape juice carefully so I didn't cough. Linda wore her new dress for communion Sabbath. I felt strangely close to my father, but still found nothing to say to Marilyn, Becky, or Donna.

With summer came junior camp and a sense that life was different. At the end of summer, Linda would leave home for boarding academy. We went to Glacier View Camp, even though it was more than four hundred miles from home. Dad remembered helping to construct surplus military barracks on the hill above the lake when he was a college student.

Linda would attend teen camp, for the first time, and I would attend earliteen camp the following week. Linda went without her girlfriend and she actually talked to me as we drove to Colorado. She talked about what she wanted to do at camp, about the school year, and particularly about boys.

When we picked Linda up the following week, she and I talked in the back seat of the station wagon while our parents talked with friends. Linda was gushing about a guy named Steve who attended Mile High Academy and played in a rock band. They were going to write letters to each other.

Then she whispered, "On Saturday night we walked around the lake. We lit candles and were supposed to walk all by ourselves. Steve walked right behind me. When we went behind a big rock he blew out his candle. He caught up with me and put his arm around me. No one could see that we were together because it was dark and we shared one candle. We walked around the lake that way. It was really cool."

I listened, wide-eyed, not certain I understood and surprised that Linda was telling me this secret.

I took sailing that week, maneuvering home-built sailboards over the shallow, cold lake. As a learning exercise, we capsized the sailboards in the middle of the lake, deliberately submerging ourselves and coming up with moss strewn across arms and shoulders. The lake was so shallow that I planted my feet on the bottom even though I had capsized toward the middle of the lake. I righted the sailboard, pulled myself on, and sailed to shore. I hurried, shivering to dry off and dress.

A dark-eyed girl from Durango smiled at me. During morning assembly, I looked across the aisle at Barbara. She wasn't looking at me but two of her friends were. They smiled at me, then looked at Barbara. On Sabbath, I walked with Barbara to the cafeteria after church. We talked for more than thirty minutes on Sabbath afternoon before being ushered to our cabins for the intrusive "quiet time."

At the campfire program on Saturday night, Elder Ross admonished us to think about our lives and about eternity. He asked us how many were baptized. I felt proud when I raised my hand and noticed that Barbara raised hers too. Elder Ross told us that he wanted us to walk around the lake, in silence, in the darkness and beauty of the mountain camp and reflect upon our lives

and eternity. We would each carry a candle.

This sounded like the situation in which the kid from Denver, named Steve, had blown out his candle and then put his arm around my sister. My heart began to thump.

Elder Ross instructed us that we would be on our honor. We were being treated as adults and we should act like adults, worthy of the trust. At the far side of the campfire bowl, staff members dispensed six-inch white candles, each with a paper skirt to catch dripping wax. I pushed my way toward the edge, watching where Barbara would line up.

The boys and girls were alternating, one from each line. I counted how many girls were in front of Barbara and got into the boy's line. My heart sank when I realized that I had gone too far forward. Two of Barbara's friends saw me, though, and quickly moved Barbara in front of them. She took her candle and started walking, then I took mine and followed her. About fifty yards from the campfire bowl, the trail passed behind a large boulder. I paused for a second, blew out my candle, and hurried forward in the darkness.

"Hi," I whispered. Barbara looked surprised to see me beside her but she smiled. "My candle went out...maybe it wasn't completely an accident." Barbara giggled quietly.

I slipped my right arm around her shoulder and waited nervously. She leaned slightly against me. She smiled at me again, appearing shy in the candlelight.

Barbara's arm was warm under my hand. I could feel her hip brush lightly against mine as we walked. When she whispered, her breath was warm on my cheek. We held the burning candle together, my left hand over Barbara's. We stumbled on a root, then on a rock, but we walked together and it felt good and easy.

I thought about the beauty of the lake, with more than a hundred candles blinking between trees, up and down, the light skipping on water ripples. The pine smell was fresh, the air cool, and Barbara's shoulder was warm against my chest. A few stars blinked between tree branches. The night seemed so big, connected to the universe, connected to God and to truth.

The naughtiness of violating Elder Ross's trust hovered, like a light-seeking moth, at the periphery of my thoughts. But I felt a thrill in having trespassed. I had slipped into a new secret place, a place where Barbara whispered, smiled, and brushed against me.

It was a place where Elder Ross's admonitions to contemplate my life and eternity came to me clearly. It felt right to consider my life at the same time I contemplated Barbara's softness and the way candlelight dramatized her smile. I belonged in this church with flickering candles across the lake, with Barbara's hair brushing my cheek.

For twenty minutes, we walked along the dark trail, following a silhouetted figure ahead, keeping away from the dark figure that carried a candle behind us. Finally, floodlight showed through the trees as we approached the open grassy center of the camp. I squeezed Barbara and let her go. She walked ahead, carrying her candle and I followed in the darkness, my heart thumping. Two counselors stood near the edge of the trees, preoccupied with their conversation. Barbara was dropping her extinguished candle into a box when I threw mine in beside hers.

Barbara and I walked together toward the auditorium, self-conscious in the light. We laughed softly about our secret and found ourselves talking with hushed voices. Later, I lay awake for a long time noticing the cotton of my sleeping bag against my chest, listening to the breathing from other bunks, remembering dancing candles across the lake water, the tickle of Barbara's hair on my cheek, and the glow I had felt when sensing eternity stretching out unbroken from the footpath around the lake.

At breakfast the following morning, I kept glancing at Barbara, who was eating at another table with the girls from her cabin. She waited for me on the porch of the cafeteria. There were already a few cars in the parking lot, and parents strolled to the cabins to collect their kids. Barbara and I exchanged addresses and promised to write. She smiled and then walked toward her cabin on the opposite side of the camp.

I gushed when Mom asked about my week at camp. I told her about the sailboards, the horses, and even about dark-eyed Barbara. I was impatient to leave camp, though, eager for the moment when the car would be on the highway. Linda and I would sit in the back seat, our conversations covered by the road noise. It would be my turn to share a story about an adventure at camp.

I collected a stack of letters on pastel stationary during the next year. Some of the letters were scented with perfume. Linda collected letters from Steve but soon was writing letters to me, from Thunderbird Academy, that featured another boy.

The letters from Barbara arrived less frequently as the months passed and stopped altogether during the

following summer. When I next saw Barbara, four years later, I wasn't sure that I recognized her. By that time, I had kissed Gail in the piano practice room at Sandia View Academy, and, later, Susie behind the curtains on the stage of the gym at Campion Academy.

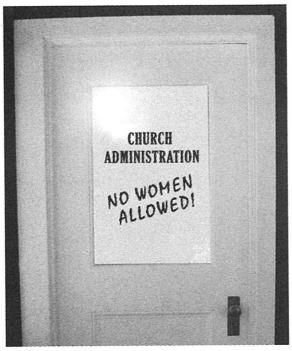
I forgot the details of my baptism for many years. I easily remembered the baptismal class with my father as instructor and the pretty, but shy girls of the Santa Fe church. When my own sons began to contemplate baptism I started to piece together the memory fragments. I remembered with surprise the cold feeling of my bare legs, the muttering of Pastor Smith as he put on the cold, wet robe, and the sensation of the cool door handle in my flank as we drove across the bridge over the Rio Grande. Even now, the memories make me feel cool, unattached, unimportant.

Recently, I heard my mother recount the joy and glory of her baptism to one of my sons. She told of the happiest day of her life, and the deep joy that she felt afterward. I realized that my thread of joy leads more clearly to the week at Glacier View Camp than to my official baptism. The immersion that I recall with joy was in the cold, green, mossy lake water. The happiness that I recall is entangled with the shy smiles of Barbara and my quiet approach to her in the darkness behind the bolder. I felt bold and original even as I imitated Steve's action in my sister's story of her week at camp.

I remember that Barbara and I, very conscious of being baptized Adventists, walked around the lake, clasping one candle in two hands. For twenty minutes, we scuffed our feet on roots and rocks of the dirt trail that seemed to lead into eternity. That walk was my adolescent immersion into the warmth of belonging with other Adventists and my introduction to the strange calculus of bartering the trust of an elder for closeness with someone my own age. It was the first time I recall the heart-thumping thrill of having trespassed a rule, gaining the forbidden pleasure of intimacy, and simultaneously gaining a sense of peace as Barbara and I pondered our lives and eternity. ■

Gary E. Gilbert is assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and deputy ACOS for research and development, Veterans Administration Boston Healthcare System.

Some doors are still closed to women...



because Adventist women still can't serve as ordained ministers. And that's too bad. For them and for us.

When we deny people's spiritual gifts, a terrible thing happens. We cripple the body of Christ.

Men's Club?

Doesn't the church need the gifts of ordained men *and* women?

Isn't it time to open this door?

Contact TEAM.

TEAM

TIME FOR EQUALITY IN ADVENTIST MINISTRY
P.O.Box 7816
Langley Park, MD 20787
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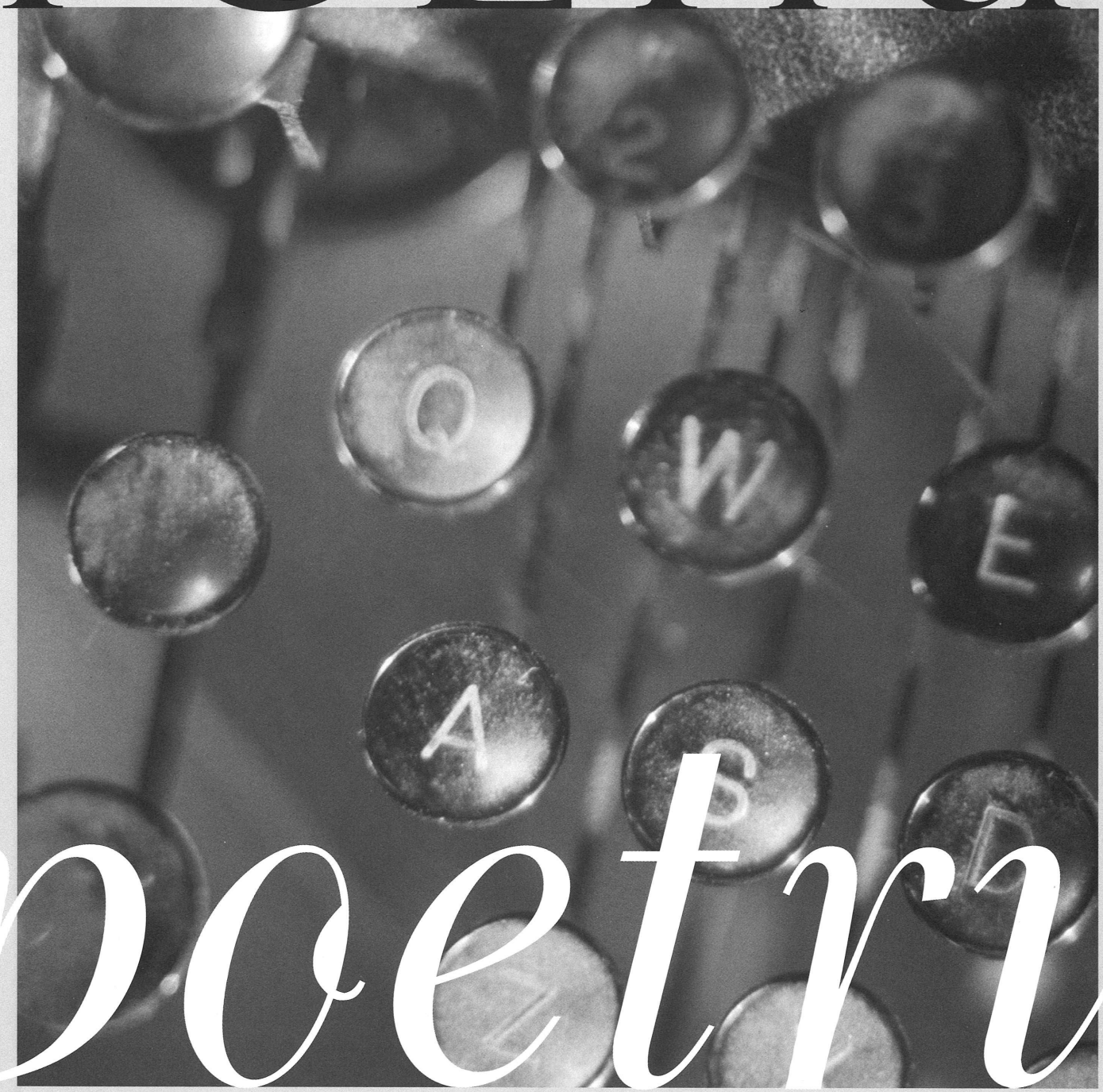
POETRY



poetry

Creating in the Image of God:

Poetry, Spirituality, and Survival | BY JOHN MCDOWELL

I am going to present some propositions: propositions on poetry and spirituality. The propositions are not comprehensive. They are just small windows on what I believe about the interconnectedness of art (in this case, poetry) and spirituality. This is personal. I take as a starting line that the creative act is (at least in part) a reflection and manifestation of the image of God. The propositions flow from that assumption. These remarks are followed by some poems. It is to the poems that I wish to direct the reader's attention.

One of my mentors in the appreciation of poetry is Ottilie Stafford. One thing she taught me is that W. B. Yeats—at least in matters of poetry—is a good place to start, so I begin with Yeats. This is from one of his last poems, "The Circus Animals' Desertion," where he writes about his life as a poet: He begins with these lines:

> *I sought a theme and sought for it in vain,*
> *I sought it daily for six weeks or so.*
> *Maybe at last, being but a broken man,*
> *I must be satisfied with my heart...*

And it ends with these:

> *Those masterful images because complete*
> *Grew in pure mind but out of what began?*
> *A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,*
> *Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,*
> *Old iron, old bones, old rages, that raving slut*
> *Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder's gone*
> *I must lie down where all the ladders start*
> *In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart.*[1]

With my own poems, when I see them in print or read them in public and realize that they are my "circus animals on display," I confess that Yeats is right—that I need to go where all ladders start: "In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart."

The creative act is (at least in part) a reflection and manifestation of the image of God.

Proposition One: Place

The sacred has almost always been associated with an object—a stone standing upright anointed with oil. We come thus to the story of Jacob at Bethel, where he dreamed of a ladder ascending to Heaven and realized that he was in a holy place. A sacred object and a sacred place become one and the same.

In Jordan a few summers ago, as part of the Madaba Plains archeological project at Tall al 'Umaryi, the team I was with uncovered some standing stones embedded in a votive niche. This niche contained five stones with what were clearly some sacred vessels. This niche was part of a large room that was probably a temple. The find dates from the Late Bronze age—about thirty-five hundred years ago—about the time of Moses. But however crude and simple the edi-

fice, it is clear that this was a sacred space with sacred objects. Today, there is still the sense of an object or a place being sacred or holy.

We still have the need to find holy ground, to find a burning bush that will startle us out of the mundane of our own humanity.

Many ancient sites are still viewed as holy by many people, from Aztec pyramids to the Western or Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. However, when I prayed at the Wailing Wall, I did not particularly feel, as many do, a special sense of holiness. (This may be because of me and not because of the place!) Still, many find places all over the world compelling and holy. There are even modern holy places: we dedicate churches and chapels as part of our desire for the divine to inhabit a space we can enter. We still have the need to find holy ground, to find a burning bush that will startle us out of the mundane of our own humanity. We wait for the command to take off our shoes for where we stand is holy ground. We want to find a ladder.

Adventists and others who emphasize the Sabbath also think about time as sacred. We agree with Abraham Heschel, who writes, "on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to *holiness in time*."[2] This is more difficult. Physical objects and places can be seen, touched, heard (bells), tasted (emblems), and even, on occasion, smelled. They give the imagination something to work with, to interact with. Time cannot really be touched, tasted, smelled, heard, or seen.

Yes, we do make use of physical markers—the setting of the sun—as a way of helping with the experience of time, particularly sacred time. Time as sacred requires concentration and a full exercise of the imagination. For the most part, we use music and prose text (sermons) to help in the experience of sacred time.

Poems open the imagination in a way that can create a space we might not otherwise visit or inhabit. Poetic language exercises the imagination in a way that gives one the sense of a new territory being explored. With the God Poems presented here, I explore the space we call "God" as a way of finding unknown rooms.

The late Nobel laureate, Czelaw Milosz, writes,

> *The purpose of poetry is to remind us*
> *how difficult it is to remain just one person,*
> *for our house is open, there are no keys in the doors,*
> *and invisible guests come in and out at will.*[3]

Think of poems as a place: a place to take off your shoes, a place that becomes, if you are patient, *you*. A place with time where the vicissitudes of being human can interact with the divine guest.

Proposition Two: Spirit

Poetry is about the art of breathing: in and out. In and out. In and out. The spirit and air. The image of God as breath.

Proposition Three: Prayer

Art critic John Berger writes in *The Sense of Sight* that, "art"—and I take that to mean poetry also—"is an organized response to what nature allows us to glimpse occasionally. Art sets out to transform the potential recognition into an unceasing one. It proclaims man in the hope of receiving a surer reply....The transcendental face of art is always a form of prayer."[4]

I do not fully understand what this means, but it always somehow validates the feeling that I have long felt that the poem, whatever its "subject," is somehow also a prayer.

Proposition Four: The Bones of Process

I hold that there is a similarity, a correspondence, between the life of faith and the creative process. The following are aspects of that correspondence:

Belief If I do not believe that I can create, I can't and I won't. Belief that you can is basic. The belief is also open. What I mean is this: I have to believe that I can start and that I can write, and if I can write, I can write a poem. I have come to understand that I must believe with openness. I must be open to the realization that the poem

I end up with may well be vastly different from what I thought it would be when I started. Belief gives way to faith in the process of working with language.

COURAGE Rollo May wrote *Courage to Create* about his belief that courage is the primary requirement for living a creative life. He writes, the "chief characteristic of this courage is that it requires a centeredness within our own being."[5] Courage is also needed, I submit, in living the spiritual life. Writing poetry involves trusting inspiration or intuition (whatever you want to call it) and plunging into the unknown with no guarantee of success.

Dedication to and the discipline of craft is needed. Failure is likely. Spending time "writing poetry" (which may sometimes involve a great deal of staring out the window) is not always viewed as practical. There are always more "important matters" at the ready to claim one's time and attention. Courage is needed.

PLAY A sense of play—openness to possibilities, not taking one's self too seriously, is necessary. Allowing for alternatives, cultivating curiosity—all are needed to make connections and imaginative leaps. Play feeds, keeps the imagination (and the spiritual life) vibrant.

DOUBT Perhaps it is surprising, but I have come to appreciate the value of doubt in the creative act. (I also believe that it is a valuable part of the spiritual life.) Doubt keeps the eyes of belief watchful and alert. Doubt is a generator of questions that, when explored with belief, open the door to insight. Belief without doubt opens the valve that balloons ego to arrogance. Art becomes propaganda. Doubt without belief opens the heart to depression. The poetic force withers and the poem becomes impossible to write.

AMBIGUITY Poetry uses ambiguity as an ally. Ambiguity allows the reader to enter and construct meaning from his or her interaction with the poem. The poem must be able to move from the orbit of the poet to the reader's realm. There must be room for the reader to claim a dialogue. Lewis Thomas, in *The Lives of a Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher*, writes:

> *Perhaps it is in this respect that language differs most sharply from other biologic systems for communication. Ambiguity seems to be an essential, indispensable element for the transfer of information from one place to another by words, where matters of real importance are concerned. It is often necessary, for meaning to come through, that there be an almost vague sense of strangeness and askewness. Speechless animals and cells cannot do this. The specifically locked-on antigen at the surface of a lymphocyte does not send the cell off in search of something totally different; when a bee is tracking sugar by polarized light, observing the sun as though consulting his watch, he does not veer away to discover an unimaginable marvel of a flower. Only the human mind is designed to work in this way, programmed to drift away in the presence of locked-on information, straying from each point in a hunt for a better, different point.*
>
> *If it were not for the capacity for ambiguity, for the sensing of strangeness that words in all languages provide, we would have no way of recognizing the layers of counterpoint in meaning, and we might be spending all our time sitting on stone fences, staring into the sun. . . . The great thing about language [in particular, poetry]* is that it prevents us from sticking to the matter at hand.[6] *(Emphasis supplied)*

Part of the spiritual journey, as with the creative one, is to come to realize that "the matter at hand"—that which we happen to think is the most important concern of the moment—is not always what should have our attention.

I have come to appreciate the value of doubt in the creative act. (I also believe that it is a valuable part of the spiritual life.)

Proposition Five: Survival

Poet Gregory Orr notes that "simply to be a human self as a body in time is to know a number of significant jeopardies," and that crises bring religion forward "to offer its consolations and explanations."[7] We have all heard the phrase that "it"—it being whatever the tragedy or crisis at hand is—"is a part of God's plan." I remember

little of my mother's funeral sermon except the alienation I felt with that kind of proffered sympathy. But religion does, as Orr notes, provide "an alternate, ordered world beyond death, which complements and compensates for this world's suffering and confusion."[8]

Part of the spiritual journey, as with the creative one, is to come to realize that "the matter at hand"—that which we happen to think is the most concern of the moment—is not always what should have our attention.

If the crisis is existential, "philosophy steps forward also with its own ways of making sense of things," notes Orr.[9] He is referring to the idea in Western philosophy that reason can triumph over confusion and emotion. We have the sense that if we can find the reason for the event—cancer, the killing, the emotional scarring—then things will be better. If we can only find the logic and rationality of the event, we will be able to deal with it and move beyond the emotion of the moment. Such reasons are seldom forthcoming—at least in ways that we would like.

Finally, Orr notes, lyric poetry can also step forward. I quote an extended passage because Orr writes so well:

> *The personal lyric steps forward and says: "Bring me your disorder. Turn your confused world into words and I, in turn, will step forward with my primordial ordering principles of story, symbol, and incantation. Together we will meet in the white space of the blank page of the clearing in a forest where someone might stand and sing quietly. And out of your personal, human confusion and the possibility of linguistic ordering we will make a poem. That poem will be a true picture of your grief or joy—an expression of your experience of disorder and your need for order.... Rather than transcendence and abstraction counseled by philosophy and religion, the personal lyric urges the self to translate its whole being into language where it can dramatize and re-stabilize itself in the patterned language of a poem.*[10]

Orr's position is born out of his long experience as a poet and out of the fact that as a child he accidentally killed his brother. I have felt the truth of this myself with the death of my mother by cancer. I have felt it to be true with the death of others I have known.

A Final Proposition before You Enter the Poems Themselves

I give you the words of Jeanette Winterson: "Art is large and it enlarges you and me. To a shrunk-up world its vistas are shocking. Art is the burning bush that both shelters and makes visible our profounder longings."[11] Let us now take off our shoes. We are about to step on holy ground. The ladder of poems now awaits.

Notes and References

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2. *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), 10.

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4. *Sense of Sight* (New York: Vintage, 1985), 9.

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John McDowell is a professor of English at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

Dreaming

By Merikay McLeod

Martin Luther King had a dream, remember?
It came to him on a mountain top.
Like Moses, he saw a promise on the far horizon.
A promise that slaves would be free.

Those whose labor built the nation
would be free.
Those who birthed the laborers
and raised the children of the rich,
would be free.
Those who harvested the goods,
and packaged them for transport,
who gathered crops—picked asparagus
and tomatoes
under scorching sun so that
others could eat in ease, who
bore the fist and lash of masters
would be free.

I, too, have a dream.
It begins not on the sun drenched heights
but in the basement
of a church.
In the kindergarten room
the junior room
the youth room.
In the church office, crowded with files
and phone lines and
boxes of baptismal certificates.

In every room
of every church basement
where the sisters of the congregation
plant love
and hope
in youngsters' hearts,
lead the singing
serve
as teachers and
comforters
and surrogate mothers.

My dream takes shape
in every church school classroom
where a teacher gives her life
for her students,
spending her own meagre income on classroom supplies,
arranging for special speakers
and special field trips
on her own time,
praying for the future of her students
while knowing her own future
will duplicate
the limits of her past.

My dream takes place in church kitchens
and family kitchens,
efficiency apartment kitchens,
mobile home kitchens,
all the kitchens where women
plan Bible School programs,
and church programs,
where they write sermons
for their minister-husbands,
and edit reports
for their bosses
to present at church conferences
and religious tribunals.
All the kitchens
where they bake pies
or casseroles
for church socials,
or church school bake sales.
All the kitchens
where women count out their
widow's mites
for the offering plate.

In my dream,
all the women
in all the churches
stop
their work.

They stop answering the phones
in all the offices.
They stop typing
and teaching

and taking care of all the details.
They stop organizing the programs,
and producing the reports,
and cleaning up after
all the political/ideological/theological battles.
They stop cooking for
and organizing bake sales.
They stop managing hospital departments
and retirement centers
and all the offices in colleges
and seminaries.

Like slaves
set free
they stop all their work.

They put their money
back in their purses,
and walk out.

Walk up the stairs
from all the basement rooms
and out the towering front doors
into the sun-drenched
world of freedom.

Up the stairs
up out of darkness
to the daylight
where Isaiah's words
echoed by the youthful Jesus
pierce the silence like sunlight
after the storm:

> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me
> because he has anointed me;
> he has sent me to announce good news
> to the poor,
> to proclaim release
> to the prisoners,
> and recovery of sight for the blind;
> to let the broken victims
> go free."

Up out of the darkness
into the light
they walk.

While the church,
clutching its authority
to proclaim
pronounce and
prohibit,
while the church
clutching its authority
clutching its authority about itself
like a pharaoh's robe
stands dark
and empty
in the background
in the receding background.

(In 1975 all the women in Iceland stopped their work—both paid and unpaid labor—for one day and gathered to discuss women's rights. The nationwide day off brought the wheels of society to a screeching halt, and, in the words of one observer, "no on questioned the value of women's work again.")

Merikay McLeod, a journalist, lives in northern California.

American Greek Teacher

BY RONALD JOLIFFE

When I head west, to Ithaca I think, from Medford
through Jacksonville, where President Rutherford
B. Hayes was first to guest the U.S. Hotel, Hwy 238 tails
Poorman's Creek to Milepost 29 and passes the trailer
where Mom lives with God and Danny Shelton on
3ABN without ceasing, while Dad lives in Salem with golf
and Bena.

At the Applegate the road forks like a double flute;
right, 238 meanders west, mimes the lower river's reach
for the Rogue. I hazard left, a tertiary route,
and climb south against the upper stream's search
for wolves in the Siskiyous, border mountains where
for me, maenads rhyme the aulos with the western air.

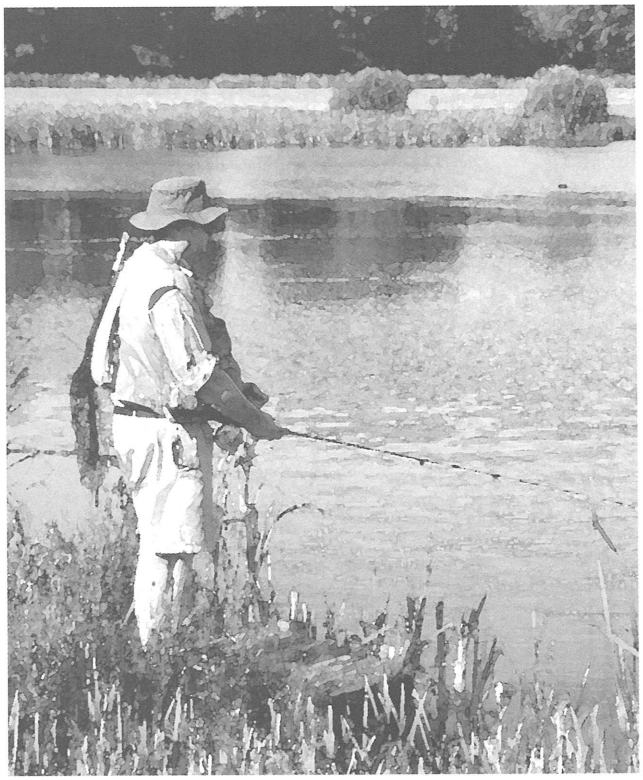
Closed to motor traffic, the wooden roof-sheltered
McKee Bridge sits where the narrowed road climbs
above nymph's pools. I park, descend past boulders,
Peloponnese-hard. The gravel I grind in my palms,
slipsliding down the scree from the road-bed,
burnburning until I wash it out at the river edge.

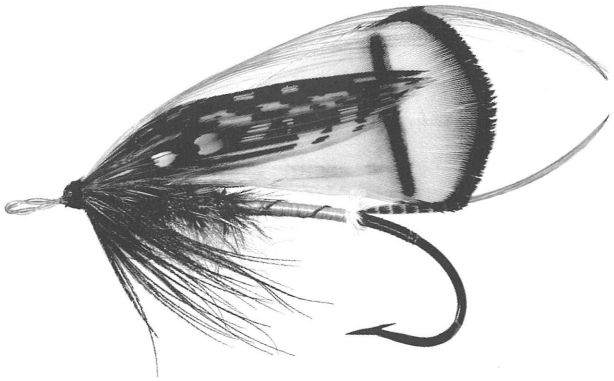
Opening my tackle box I sit on the same river clay
a bent-over god from a rib reworked a woman.
I work to undo the pebble-dressed abdomen
of a caddis-fly larva—the very best trout bait.
Below the dam, I cast knowing the flood control
promises there will never be another wild rainbow.

When the steelhead ran in the Smith River's rush
to the sea, Dad took his boys, Dan and me, for "real fish"
and I love my father though he never deigned to lay
a line in the Applegate whose fish to this very day
are as miraculous taken with loaves as any yet drawn
from the Smith by rod and green-meshed landing net.

Bible maps mark the Holy Land and Rome and I find
Corinth and Athens, but not Mt. Olympus or Delphí
where the Oracle bids me Know myself first, not her.
I trust my corner of earth here to be as holy as there,
and the heroine-christened star-glint from Andromeda
as kind to me as to Greeks, though I fish in America.

Ronald Jolliffe is professor of English at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.





God the Architect

BY JOHN MCDOWELL

—for Alex

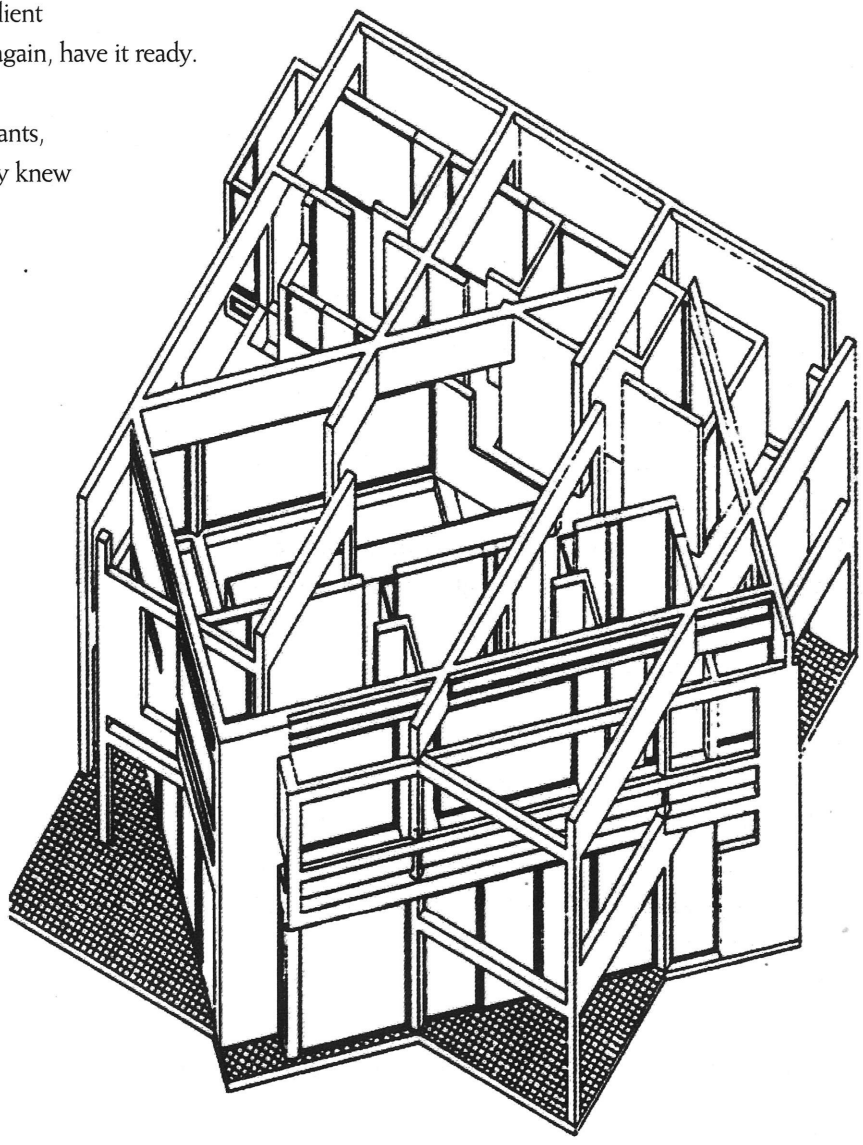
You would think that theologians are closest
to the heart of God. No, actually God sees theologians
and all other professional God mongers as busy hucksters
at the county fair selling raffle tickets to win a new Cadillac,
or selling juicers, or miracle fiber cloths that promise
to wipe away any mess with just one swipe, or selling
Genu knives guaranteed to never
need sharpening through all eternity.

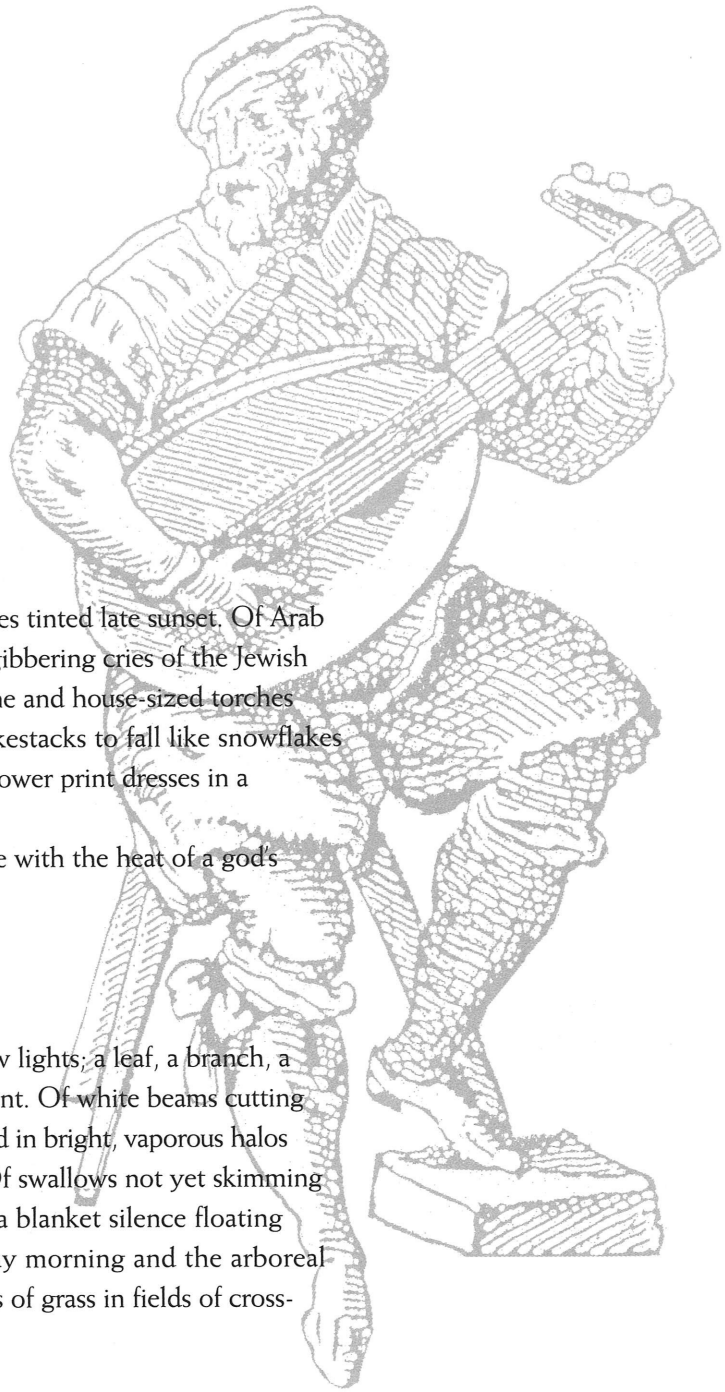
As with everything else about God, what you expect
is not really what He believes at all.
Hang around long enough however, and you will come
to understand that it's architecture that he loves—
be it temples in the wilderness or palaces—especially homes.
He loves the way space can curve time into stone, wood
and glass so that when you get up in the morning
and look out your kitchen window and you see
how the world flows from you to the oak and madrone
then the break for the cabernet vineyard
and the earth heaves easily, naturally to the valley
that you can indeed breathe in the breath of life.

But no, most of his clients are too impatient,
they know what they want, they're spending the money
and if siding will do, siding it is. He no longer keeps count
of the times he's changed the drawings, moved that wall
or window or counter, well, because, that's what they want.
They've seen something in a magazine, or been to France
and they want it to look Mediterranean, or something Spanish
or again, its something else: the garage needs to go in front, and
by God, He's been known to redraw a foot path
to a Gazebo fourteen different times only to discover
in the end that they talked to the contractor and changed it all.
To hell with the building codes.

Then again, most people do not care for architects at all.
Any contractor has a fist full of Cape Cod or Texas Ranch Style designs.
They're happy, even if they are wealthy, with those taupe colored
massive stucco mansions cheek to jowl in gated, planned communities
with names like Rancho Riviera. He's lucky with what work he can get.

Even with public commissions, a bank, a school or a church
at the ribbon cutting or dedication it's the owners and donors
who get all the attention, and when noted in passing
and God gets told how beautiful and wonderful it all is,
He smiles and thanks them and knows what it could have been
if only they had let him alone. And that's God's problem.
He's much too patient, much too obliging—everyone on any project
jabbering their two cents and God listens to it all. Listens
more than he talks, but knows that one can't see and talk
at the same time and when he's at his table alone
re-drawing some gable he longs for that rare client
who says, I am going away and when I come again, have it ready.
And sure enough, (and this is always true)
the house is ready—exactly what the clients wants,
what they have always wanted and never really knew
until God opens their eyes and God speaks,
"I have a house prepared for you
from before you were born."
And they always reply, "Yes, Lord.
The eyes or our eyes are opened.
We are home at last."





To The Bard

By Alan Schneider

In the name of The Father...

Sing for me the Question: of cross-shaped hilts and blades tinted late sunset. Of Arab legends of crimson rivers in the streets of Jerusalem. Of the gibbering cries of the Jewish bride-that-was — on her back while the righteous stand in line and house-sized torches light the night skies of Nemirov. Of ash pouring from smokestacks to fall like snowflakes over Berlin. Of daisies' stems running through the fabric of flower print dresses in a Rwandan church.

Sing for me the two steel titans standing lofty and aflame with the heat of a god's cause and mortals, hands clasped, taking to the air.

...and of The Son...

Sing for me the Silence: Of shadows cast by weak yellow lights; a leaf, a branch, a tree; cast down flat over dry grass and onto cracking pavement. Of white beams cutting through gaps in branches. Of lamps in the distance surrounded in bright, vaporous halos and the rusted sculpture of a surfer silhouetted in the mist. Of swallows not yet skimming the grass. Of crickets and frogs sleeping in dead weight of a blanket silence floating in droplets. Of a musty scented church on a cold week-day morning and the arboreal autumn explosions in encircling the glistening dew on blades of grass in fields of cross-shaped granite.

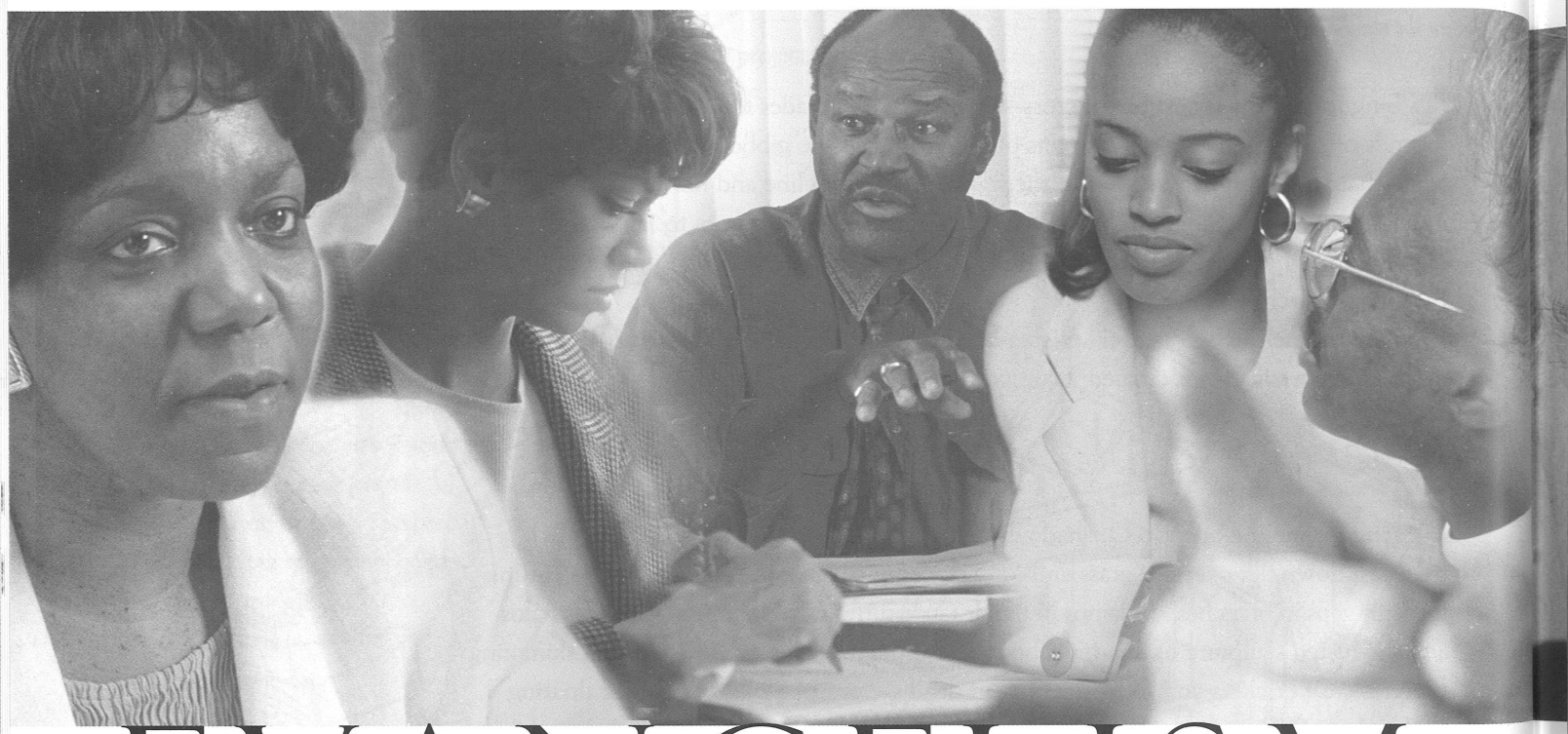
Sing for me the holiness of Silence.

...and of The Holy Spirit

Sing for me the Fury: of the surviving Jewish and Tutsi mothers. Of a widow's tears and broken strands of hair mingling on the floor. Of upraised hands of children fed on catechism. Of those who saw the titans and made the sign of the cross. Of the hawk that harries the eagle and the tide that tears recklessly the cliff. Of the silver-blue bolt that rakes the heavens with its claw.

Sing...

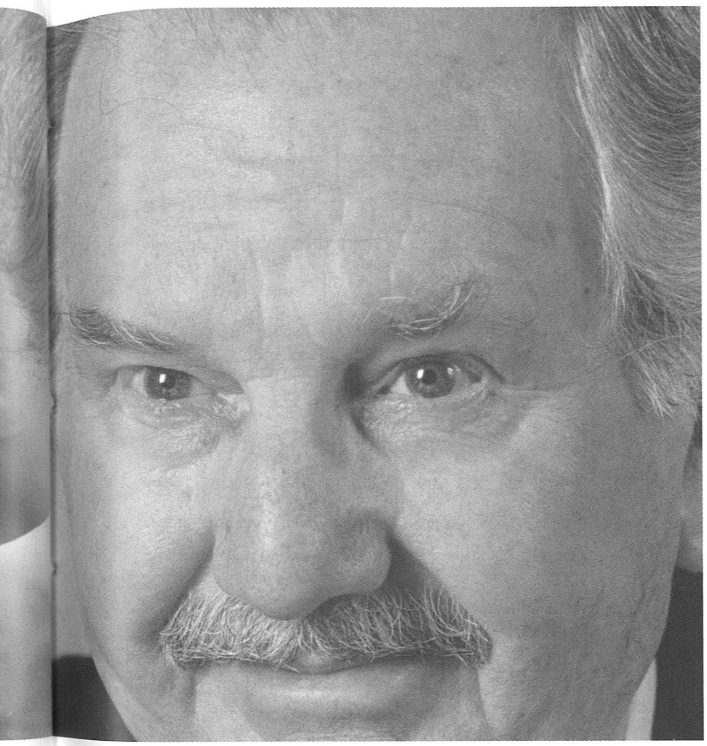
Alan Schneider is a senior English Major at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.



EVANGELISM

Diary of a Ministerial Intern

Where was Jesus? | BY TREVAN OSBORN



THURSDAY 9/7

I'm filled with anticipation and nervousness at the thought of trying to evangelize an unknown territory. Hunter's Point is where we will be working. It is the roughest part of San Francisco, which makes the task ahead more challenging. A police report details four murders in the area just two Sunday's ago and reveals an area infested with gang violence. One of the bright spots in the community is the YMCA, which is undergoing an expansive renovation, including a new gym in which our meetings will be held.

A lot of work has been done in preparation for the meetings. Bible workers have been making contacts and doing Bible studies, and all the logistics of meeting in the YMCA have been worked out. I arrive today and help with the final setup to make sure everything is in order for tomorrow night's opening meeting. As we get things prepared, I wonder if the traditional Adventist prophetic messages will have any relevance for a community filled with crime, premature death, and poverty.

FRIDAY, 9/8

Opening night jitters are in the air as we wait for people to trickle in. I hate playing the numbers game, but it's virtually impossible to avoid. By the end of the night, there are about one hundred in attendance, with approximately forty visitors. The meeting is lively due, in part, to a large contingent of Adventists emitting energy and commitment. We have some of the best musicians in the area playing piano, organ, and drums, and it is clear the music will provide an excellent atmosphere of worship throughout the series.

The police chief gives an inspiring talk based on Hebrews 11 about the need to have faith that the community will get better. We also have special music by a men's group from the local Catholic Church. Huh? I am as surprised as you probably are but I'm glad they are here tonight and not when we talk about the Mark of the Beast.

The evangelist is a friendly guy from the South. He was a pimp and ended up in jail for robbing banks and was given a forty-year jail sentence. However, after four years he was miraculously released and has since become an evangelist who feels called to spread the gospel because of what God did for him. It's clear from the opening night that his testimony is going to

People came for prayer and got judgment and condemnation instead.

play a key role in connecting with the people.

We are using the Amazing Facts PowerPoint sermons and Bible Study lessons. The opening night we discuss the Second Coming and what happens to the "wicked" and "righteous." An extended time is also spent on debunking the rapture theory. I quickly realize that we are definitely not targeting the unchurched but are trying to convert Christians to Adventism.

SABBATH, 9/9

The congregation that is sponsoring the series is a small Adventist church whose membership is older and largely female. Some new life has recently come into the church in the form of three young adult members—of which two are new converts—who provide hope for the future of the church. The members have been solid supporters for the meetings and spirits are high.

The evening meeting has the same attendance with a large group of returning visitors but also a batch of first-time visitors. The topic for the evening is the Great Controversy and focuses mostly on the origin of the Devil and what he is doing in the world. I leave with the realization that after two nights, the people have learned more about the Devil than God.

SUNDAY, 9/10

Tonight we learn about a powerful attendance-raising technique. On opening night the evangelist offered one hundred dollars to the first person to bring ten people, and tonight the evangelist is one hundred dollars poorer. One of the visitors brought ten people along with him, so he wins the prize. We also have a couple computers that we will give away later to the person who has brought the most people throughout the series. I'm not comfortable with this technique, but at least people are coming.

Our attendance has lacked teens and young adults for the most part, but tonight is different: there are five teenage girls in the audience. Throughout the service, the teens are less than engaged in the subject of the Trinity (strange subject to cover on day three since it is such a difficult doctrine). Towards the end, however, the evangelist focuses on the girls in particular. He talks about his experiences and tries to relate to them. I can sense that the testimony is what connects with everyone, not just the teens, and the Amazing Facts material seems almost to get in the way.

MONDAY, 9/11

There are no meetings on Monday and Thursday nights, which will be a lifesaver. Our meetings are lasting two hours every night with hour and a half sermons every night. I'm worried that we are forgetting this is a marathon, not a sprint. We need to pace ourselves and respect people's time and ability to sit, listen, and retain the amount of information we are giving them.

WEDNESDAY, 9/13

Last night's meeting dealt with salvation. I wonder why this was not the first topic, but I am glad it got in there now. Tonight, we have decided to hit the streets before the meeting in hopes of driving up attendance. People are courteous and promise to check out the meetings, which is the common response, but very few actually come. I learn that people have their own stories and just want someone to listen. I wonder if there is truth to be learned from their stories but we are missing it because we are too busy talking.

It is also sad to see how many teens are just hanging out in the streets. We realize that what we offer will not meet their needs so we just walk by them. These are the people we need to be reaching out to. They need hope more than anyone else. Their lives need change, but it will take drastically different methods than we are used to, so we will leave them here on the street to perish.

In spite of our efforts, attendance drops to around forty for tonight's state-of-the-dead sermon.

SABBATH, 9/16

This weekend is our first opportunity to share about the Sabbath. Friday night was on the need to keep the Commandments and hinted at the Sabbath, but tonight we are devoting entirely to the Sabbath. The presentation has the typical Sabbath versus Sunday arguments with little information on what the Sabbath is supposed to be about. It seems that much of this series is about exposing what is wrong instead of uplifting and rejoicing in what is right. The evangelist is adamant against churches and pastors who do not keep the Sabbath and informs the congregation that any pastor who has told them not to worship on Sabbath is "not of God."

WEDNESDAY, 9/20

This morning, we call a meeting in which we decide to refocus the meetings by making some changes. The atten-

dance numbers have settled at around forty people a night with a solid group of ten returning visitors and a few new visitors each night. The declining numbers reveal that there is a need that is not being met. We all feel like prayer should be playing a larger role in the meetings. In order to achieve this, we agree that sermons should be cut short and followed by seasons of prayer to end the meetings.

Tonight, the evangelist is preaching on the twenty-three hundred days and it is clear people are not following him. I think he notices this because towards the beginning of the explanation, he completely switches gears and speaks from his heart. He then has people come forward for prayer on different topics and we pray over each person. There is a wonderful spirit and attitude of prayer and worship that we had missed out on previously. We all feel God moving us in a new direction that is going to change people's lives.

FRIDAY, 9/22

Wednesday night went so well that we cannot wait for tonight's meeting. This weekend, we want to pray over specific concerns at the end of each meeting; tonight it is healing. The topic is the judgment and, unfortunately, I heard a lot about judgment and little about grace. The Sabbath continues to play a key role and seems to be the only issue deciding the judgment. The evangelist even states that he hopes he's right with God when his name is called in the pre-Advent judgment, which is theology I thought we had moved past. In his passionate warning, he preaches too long, making it impossible to take the proper time for prayer. Our powerful prayer and anointing service is reduced to a couple people standing for a short, generic prayer of healing.

The whole night feels like a waste. After the meeting, one visitor says, "I felt so condemned." We promised something that we did not deliver. People came for prayer and got judgment and condemnation instead.

SABBATH, 9/23

This is the first Sabbath since our Sabbath message, so we are expecting some new worshipers with us. About ten people made a stand for the Sabbath during the week and about half are here today. We had a vibrant church service, which included an interpretive dance done by Gina, the teenage daughter of one of the regular visitors. It is so good that we asked her to come back and do it for the evening meeting.

Gina brings four of her friends to see her perform. Since the last five teenage girls have never returned, the evangelist welcomes them and during prayer asks God that he might speak in a way that reaches the youth. The topic for the night is health and the first words out of his mouth after prayer are, "How many of you want to look younger?" This is not really what teens care about. At the end of his message, the evangelist asks the girls to come forward and prays for each of them. He then assigns the seminarians to support them during the time we are here. After prayer we decide to hang out with the youth on Thursday nights.

THURSDAY, 9/28

Over the last few days, we have covered the Mark of the Beast, speaking in tongues, and the remnant; the tough topics continue to roll in. It has been more of the same, condemning other denominations and uplifting the need to keep the Commandments, the Sabbath especially.

Gina has been coming to the meetings every night, but the other teens have come sporadically. The meetings end at nine o'clock each night, making it increasingly difficult for families to come out since they have children that need to do homework and get to bed early to be ready for school. Tonight, however, we get to hang out with the teens.

One of the younger members of the church decides to open up his house. We eat pizza and have a lively discussion where we talk about their concerns. It's clear that they don't care about the topics we discuss in the meetings and have drastically different questions and needs. We do our best to bring all their concerns to Christ, and we encourage them to not give up.

FRIDAY, 9/29

At tonight's meeting, Gina brings around fifteen teens and pre-teens to the meeting. The evangelist is so impressed he gives her one of the computers tonight. Again he addresses the teens. He goes on an extended and graphic description of jail rapes, and assures the teens that prison is worse than Hollywood has ever painted it. It almost feels like he is implying that they want to go to jail and he is trying to stop them. Whenever he talks to them, it's always about drugs, gangs, and jail, but these are good kids who aren't wrapped up in that and are clearly just trying to live better lives.

The subject for the evening is baptism, and after the baptismal appeal there are three adults and six pre-teens interested in being baptized. The pre-teens are Gina's

friends and first-time comers. The three adults are baptized that night, and although there is some pressure to baptize the kids tonight, we decide it is wiser for them to take a baptismal class. I am relieved by that decision because one of the kids who "wanted" to be baptized asked me later what the "pool" was for.

WEDNESDAY 10/4

This is the last week of the series and attendance has remained at a disappointing thirty-five to forty per night. The last few nights we have covered jewelry, stewardship, and righteousness by faith, but somehow it all kept on coming back to keeping the Sabbath and being aware that angels are marking your every move.

Tonight, the topic is the "Scarlet Woman of Revelation," which serves as one of the final calls to come out of "Babylon." The evangelist doesn't hold back any punches. He tells people that all denominations can't be right, and although people get upset about having to keep the entire Ten Commandments, they are what will take us to heaven. I am ominously reminded of the Jews Paul has to confront in Romans about their zeal for the law.

Noah's ark has often been used in this series as an example of how very few people will be saved in this world of wickedness. Only a few want to hear the harsh truth that the evangelist says he can preach in no other way but "with the sword." Personally, I think it is just an excuse to explain our poor attendance. If our attendance were high we would be talking about how this is like the Day of Pentecost.

FRIDAY 10/6

The sermon on the Three Angels Message is uneventful. However, things begin to heat up after the sermon. The evangelist starts talking to Gina and encourages her to use her gifts for God. Then, without her asking, he has her come to the front and anoints her. He then gives her a baptismal bag (which we give to all baptismal candidates to put their clothes in) in faith that she will take the plunge the next morning.

He then goes on to pressure all visitors in the audience who have not made a baptismal decision. First, he turns to the organist, who has played for the church for fourteen years but is Baptist. The evangelist tells him that now he plays on Sabbath but worships on Sunday and he needs to switch that around. He then asks if he could give him a baptismal bag by faith. The organist tells him he will pray about it and does not accept the bag. One by one he goes through the group. Some accept the bags, although others don't.

Eventually he comes to another teen who is Adventist. He asks her if she has been baptized and she says Yes. He then asks her if she wants to rededicate her life to God through rebaptism. She responds that she will pray about it, which by now is the accepted way of declining the offer. I watch in shock as he basically forces the bag on her, informing her that the only reason she is saying that is because she has heard others say it.

I am disgusted and disappointed. Two teens and other visitors have been manipulated into baptism for the sake of union papers and camp meeting reports. Are these people really getting baptized because the Spirit is leading them, or have they just been manipulated and pressured into it?

SABBATH, 10/7

This morning, we are having a "Sabbath Celebration" in the church. It does not feel much like it though, since the sermon is on the unpardonable sin.

After the sermon, we have the final baptismal service. There are about twenty people who will be baptized, of whom five are young people. Gina is baptized today for the fifth time. Yes, she's been baptized that many times at the bidding of her mother. In looking over the group, it seems that about eight people are baptized as a direct result of coming to the evening meetings. The rest are people who have not come regularly, if at all, but have studied with Bible workers during our time here.

REFLECTION

The abrupt end to my diary is a direct reflection of how I feel about the series. I guess I should be rejoicing over all the baptisms, but I find that hard to do. I'm not convinced everyone was baptized through a freewill decision and a true acceptance of Christ. I also worry about the view of God and faith they have been provided and wonder if they are destined to a life where they fear God.

That month was one of the most difficult periods of my life. The worst part was being taken away from my wife for a month without the comfort and rest of my home. I can't stand the thought of sitting through another sermon, no matter how short it is. I've had my fill of church for a long time and I find myself feeling as far away from the Adventist Church as I've ever been.

I know there are many people who feel the same way I do, several of whom went through the series with me. Yet, I still find myself discouraged at the picture of Adventism that was presented. Although every evangelist has their own style and unique content, we were right in line with the typical topics used for traditional evangelism. I left the series with several reservations and questions about our evangelistic paradigm.

1. Is converting a Baptist to Adventism really evangelism?
Traditional evangelistic series are mostly effective at reaching other Christians. The topics and content assume a Christian worldview in which the Bible is the authority for their lives. Many of the topics attempt to discredit other denominations and seek to call people out of "Babylon." Our evangelism is targeted at church growth—not kingdom growth—with the unchurched largely untouched by our evangelistic efforts.

2. Have we lost Christ in focusing on what makes Adventism unique?
At our series the answer was clearly Yes. There were no messages solely on Jesus and what he has done for us. Throughout the series, he was largely absent. In the early days of Adventism, the Church focused on its distinctiveness because everyone was a Christian and its job was to get Christians to become Adventist.

In today's society, the message of Jesus is largely missing and misunderstood, but it should be our focus. I believe that Adventism has accepted the idea that the rest of the Christian world has Jesus but we have more than that and this is what we need to focus on. I would argue that taking the message and ministry of Jesus' life and death for us seriously can be the unique contribution we provide to the world in an age where religion has gone awry.

3. Are we answering the questions people are asking?
The Adventist evangelistic series attempts to answer the question, "How will the world end?" I believe this has been the definitive question of Christianity throughout the existence of the Adventist Church. However, I believe a new question has begun to emerge and people are beginning to ask, "How can true life begin?" The life expectancy of a male born in Hunter's Point is nineteen years. Factors such as a high infant mortality rate and gang violence have led to this unbelievable statistic.

In our series, we didn't even attempt to address any of the issues the community is facing. The community needed messages about drugs, violence, relationships, and money management. Instead, we tried to preach about the twenty-three hundred days and the millennium. Does Adventism have a social message to offer, or do we just tell people to hang on until Jesus comes?

4. Is there a future for Adventism?
The interaction we had with the teens from the community revealed a huge disconnect between the messages and what the young people are facing. They speak an entirely different language and have vastly different concerns. Serious efforts need to be made to think about how to reach teens and young adults with the gospel. The issues Adventists care about are not even on the radar screen of young people today. The future of the Church is in jeopardy unless we learn how to speak their language.

5. Are we willing to do the hard work of contextualization?
It seems as though we've gotten lazy with our evangelistic efforts. We use Amazing Facts and Share Him material everywhere we go where everything has already been prepackaged for us. Instead, we need to start incarnational ministries that are relevant and contextualized for the needs and wants of the unique communities we minister in. New evangelistic paradigms and approaches need to be created that will not necessarily have wide application, but instead be extremely relevant for the local community they are used in.

6. Should we throw out traditional Adventist evangelism?
Although I have many reservations, I still believe that traditional Adventist evangelism is effective at reaching certain groups of people. There isn't a need to completely throw away what Adventism has been doing for decades. However, I believe that we are seeing that new approaches and methods are desperately needed for the cities and emerging generations in North America. As Ellen White has challenged us, "New methods must be introduced. God's people must awake to the necessities of the time in which they are living" (*Evangelism*, 70). ■

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Is Evangelism Preventing Church Growth?

BY WILLIAM F. NOEL

It is ultimately ironic that the tool that brings the most new members into the Seventh-day Adventist Church is also the very thing that prevents the Church from growing faster.

Say the word *evangelism* and the concept that comes into almost every Adventist's mind is public meetings with dynamic orators who expound about Bible prophecies and proof texts in the hope of baptisms within a few weeks. Indeed, we have adopted this concept so exclusively that any other effort aimed at sharing God's love is regarded as mere ministry to be scorned.

Describing our evangelistic efforts as "effective" is giving new definition to absurdity.

So how effective is evangelism at bringing people into the Church? We often take comfort in the fact that the Church in North America is growing at about the same percentage rate as the population. Still, when you compare real numbers you get a very different picture. Each time one person joins the Church in North America, the combined populations of the United States and Canada grow by forty-six![1]

So it should be no surprise that surveys done every few years measuring the public's awareness about the Seventh-day Adventist Church show the public's knowledge about us shrinking. We used to be known as Bible-believing vegetarians who helped people quit smoking. Today, we're so unknown that we're somewhere beyond socially obscure and racing toward totally irrelevant. So describing our evangelistic efforts as "effective" is giving new definition to absurdity.

Why is the Church not growing faster? Because of the misconceptions we've developed about soul winning and evangelism, in particular.

Let's give "evangelism" a Bible-based definition. Only one person in the New Testament, Philip in Caesarea, is described as being an evangelist (Acts 21:7). Only one, Timothy, is told to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:5).

Our best model of an evangelist is the Apostle Paul. Trace his missionary journeys in Acts and you have a travelogue through the countries around the Eastern Mediterranean basin. Along the way, he proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, baptized new believers, and raised up churches. When Paul established a church, he taught the members to discover and use their spiritual gifts to build up the church and to depend on the Holy Spirit to guide it. Sometimes he came back to visit and work. He also wrote letters to them, fourteen of which we have preserved as books in the New Testament.

How our concepts of evangelism and how the Church is to function have changed! Here are some of our more popular misconceptions and explanations of how they contrast with Scripture.

Preaching is the only way to share the gospel. Romans 12:14 asks, "how shall they hear without a preacher?" We interpret this passage as asking how anyone can hear the gospel unless they are told in powerful oratory laced with proof texts from someone who has been to the seminary and employed by the conference! Contrast that with the root Greek word *kairuso*, which means to proclaim, announce, or

tell. Preaching is nothing more than using your own words to tell someone else what God has done for you.

Powerful oratory and proof texts may convince someone that what they have been shown is correct. Still, it is the least persuasive tool for making believers for Jesus. Many times, I've had someone finish a Bible study or come out of an evangelistic meeting and say, "Yes, I see what the Bible teaches. But that's not what my family believes, so I don't believe it, either."

Far more persuasive than sermons or proof texts is the simple testimony of a person who says, "This is what God has done for me." There is so much power in testimony that Revelation 12:11 describes those who overcome the dragon as doing it "by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony." That's because hearing what God has done for you builds hope in my heart that God will do the same for me. Then when I see God act, I believe and want to tell someone else what God has done for me.

It was to create belief that Jesus performed so many miracles and why he promised his followers that they would do even greater things than he did (John 14:12).

Public meetings are the only method God wants us to use to win souls. Jesus never preached what we would call a formal sermon. His famous Sermon on the Mount followed none of our traditional preaching models. Instead, he was an interactive teacher. People were drawn to his teaching because of the power in the miracles he performed and because he taught with authority (Matt. 7:29) that sprang from knowing both Scripture and the Heavenly Father.

The crowd that heard Peter in the Temple courtyard the day after Pentecost was not there because he had mass-mailed handbills covered with prophetic beasts to every home in and around Jerusalem. Peter was there because he was a faithful Jew and his words were a testimony from his own experience with Jesus. Thousands believed because of the power that accompanied his testimony.

Jesus compared his followers to salt (Matt. 4:13) and said that they would be his witnesses in the farthest parts of the planet (Acts 1:8). This means that we are to go out, mix with the world, and let the Holy Spirit use our testimony about Jesus to change those who hear us. So it makes no sense that our primary evangelistic tool should rely on people coming to us.

The most dangerous thing about the idea that all of us should use the same method for winning souls is that it is a gross declaration of disbelief in Jesus' promise to send the Holy Spirit to empower us for ministry, each in our own way as he sees fit.

Evangelists work only with the local church. Paul's missionary journeys were spent making new believers and raising up churches where neither had existed before. In contrast, today we depend on evangelists as much to revive dying churches as to bring new members into those congregations. If the Apostle Paul were here today he might occasionally visit an established church—if it was one he started in what we once called a "dark" area.

Only evangelists are gifted by the Holy Spirit to bring people into the Church. How many of us have thrilled to witness the baptisms at the end of a crusade and wished we were the ones who had led people to Jesus and brought them into the Church? If you've felt that, you've felt the calling of the Holy Spirit to get involved in soul-winning activities.

Still, if you're like most believers, you soon discovered you were not gifted to be an evangelist. Misconceptions about evangelism prevented you from discovering your spiritual giftedness and the ministry God designed to become the joy-filled center of your religious experience.

Evangelistic crusades take a terrible toll on gift-based ministries because the entire church becomes focused on supporting the crusade above all else. Anything not seen directly supporting the crusade is discouraged, if not halted. Worst of all, members are taught to depend on the Holy Spirit to work through the evangelist instead of through them.

We shouldn't waste our time with ministries that don't produce baptisms within a few weeks. Jesus spent the majority of his time healing the sick, feeding the hungry, comforting the sorrowing, and doing other things we call "ministries." These ministries were supremely effective at creating trust that led to interest in his teaching, which led hearers to believe in him as their savior. Missing from the Bible account is any record of Jesus baptizing or counting baptisms. So if Jesus didn't count baptisms as the measure of his ministry, why should we?

Furthermore, Jesus told his disciples to "go and make

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disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Baptism is merely a milestone on the path to discipleship. Our greater emphasis should not be on counting how many people we have baptized, but on how many of those we have baptized become disciples who actively create new believers in Jesus.

We have a choice. We can keep doing the same old evangelism the same old way and idling in the illusion of success while getting just enough results to prevent us from experiencing total failure. Or we can step out in faith and discover the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to help us minister in ways that bring greater numbers into the Church than we have ever imagined. If this is to happen, we must get back to the biblical models for evangelism and Holy Spirit-driven ministries that involve every believer. To do this, I propose the following:

1. *Evangelism must be refocused exclusively on making new believers and raising up churches in places that have none. Evangelists should be prohibited from working with any established church unless it is one they established or with the purpose of helping that congregation plant a new congregation.*

2. *The central purpose, focus, and function of the local church must be helping all members discover the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit has placed in each of them and then supporting the ministries of these members.*

How can we expect to be truly effective spreading the gospel any other way? ■

Notes and References

1. Calculated by comparing official Seventh-day Adventist Church membership statistics for the North American Division with official census reports for Canada and the United States.

William F. Noel is a project manager for the U.S. government and a lifelong Seventh-day Adventist with more than twenty-five years writing experience as a freelancer and staff reporter/editor. He is the author of two spiritual novels, *Broken River, Shattered Sky*, and *Fatal Secrets*, released by Review and Herald Publishing Association.

World Church:

Small Groups Are Focus of Evangelism and Witness Council | BY MARK A. KELLNER/TAASHI ROWE/ANN

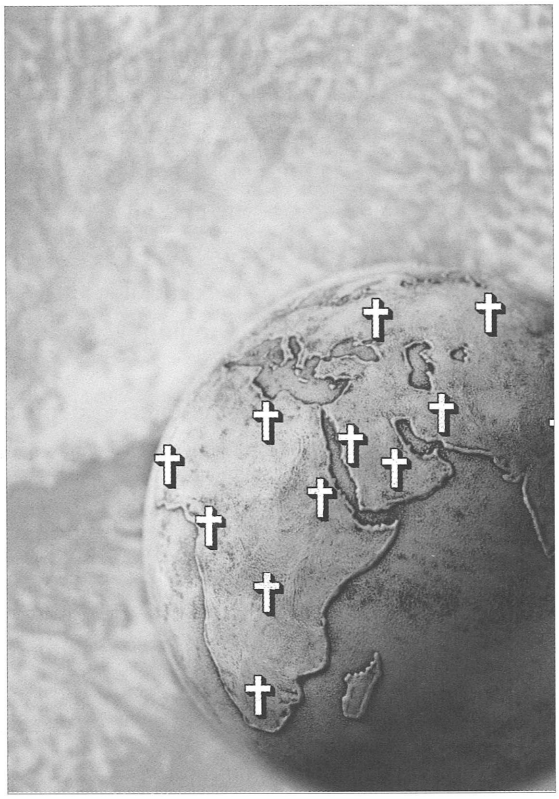
The days of mass evangelism aren't over, Seventh-day Adventist church experts say, but it is small Bible study groups that are gaining importance in bringing people to Christ, leaders were told at the Oct. 1 meeting of the church's Council on Evangelism and Witness, or CEW.

The group was established in 2000 to keep the church focused on its primary mission of evangelism and discipleship. Regional church leaders affirmed that small groups—in which new members are trained and established believers are encouraged—now form the heart of outreach.

"The shepherd can never produce a sheep, but only sheep can give birth to a sheep," declared Pastor Artur Stele, president of the church's Euro-Asia region. "Assignment of the pastor has changed, [it is now] to train lay members and small group leaders," he added.

Small groups are the underpinning of successful public campaigns, said Adventist evangelist and pastor Mark Finley and a general vice president of the world church with responsibility for global evangelism.

"Small groups are part of an integrated approach to the mission of the church," said Finley, who co-chaired the CEW session with fellow vice president Pastor Lowell Cooper. "They provide fellowship, prayer and Bible study as part of the total evangelistic effort."



Cooper added, "I believe small groups allow the beliefs of the church to be expressed in human interactions at the deepest level of relationship. A small group culture can be perhaps the most effective way of transferring belief into action and influencing other lives."

Small group culture can be perhaps the most effective way of transferring belief into action and influencing other lives.

—Lowell Cooper

Source: Adventist News Network

small groups...now form the heart of outreach

The results of building churches with small groups are impressive: over the past six years, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Peru has seen an average of 16.5 percent membership growth each year, which has translated to 327,623 new members during the period, said Pastor Melchor Ferreyra, who until recently was the president of the church there; he is now executive secretary for the church's South American region.

What's more, Ferreyra adds, the rate of apostasy has declined from 80 percent to 17 percent thanks to discipleship through small groups.

Such numbers are important, world church executive secretary Pastor Matthew Bediako noted, because while the Seventh-day Adventist church added 1,000,000 members in the last 12 months, it also lost about 500,000.

In the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean region, according to regional president Pastor Paul Ratsara, the church surpassed the 2,000,000-member mark in large part due to small group evangelism. He noted, "92 percent of the people won through small groups are now winning others to Christ."

Small group ministry is also playing a role in the Inter-American church region, said Pastor Israel Leito, area president. He expects this rapidly growing territory to achieve 3,000,000 members by next March.

In some places, such as predominantly Buddhist countries, small groups where people can study together and make discoveries, become even more vital, said Pastor Scott Griswold, director of the church's Global Center for Buddhist Studies in Thailand. There, a lack of familiarity with Christianity is also hampered by Western cultural depictions of morality in movies, leading Buddhists to not want to "lower themselves" to what they believe are "Christian" standards, he said.

"If you're talking one-to-one with a person and ask them to make a decision for Christ, it's probably going to go against their culture. The small group allows you to discuss, call people to decisions in a gentle way. It is a special place to deal with both of those and answer the question they have in their heart," Griswold said.

India is another place where the predominant religion, Hinduism, makes it difficult for many to make the decision to follow Christ. However, an Adventist pastor and his church formed small prayer groups that have led many to Christ. In 1998, Johnson Swamidass became pastor of a small church in Chennai—India's fourth-largest city and the capital of the state of Tamil Nadu. The city of 10 million people had about only 10,000 Adventist members, even though the church had been present there since 1893.

Members of the Kodambakkam Adventist church started prayer groups in their homes and in their workplaces. A few months later small group leaders encouraged their prayer partners to attend church.

Soon Pastor Johnson held evangelism meetings and started baptizing many members. But instead of focusing on bringing members only to the Kodambakkam location, church members started planting small churches in different parts of the city. These churches were easier for people to travel to and because they were smaller it was easier to keep people engaged in the church, said Pastor Johnson.

The Kodambakkam church has given rise to 16 church plants and seen nearly 2,000 people baptized into the Adventist church, a result he attributes to small group ministry.

Another presentation to the Council spoke of students at Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities as a major untapped evangelism resource. This is according to Ron Clouzet, dean of the School of Religion at Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee. Clouzet shared with church leaders how systematic changes in the curriculum at Southern Adventist University allowed the college and its students to reach out to communities near and far.

One development included extending a one-week course in personal evangelism to a two-semester course. One week was not enough time to each students the intricacies of personal evangelism, Clouzet said. But with more time to explore the course a lot of change occurred in students. That was ten years ago, Clouzet said, now many are able to spend time doing Bible studies that, in some cases, led to baptisms.

The school also developed the Robert H. Pierson Institute of Evangelism and World Missions. One of the programs that came out of the Institute is a summer field school program that allowed theology students hands-on experience learning about evangelism but also speaking at evangelism meetings. ■

Mark A. Kellner and Taashi Rowe are assistant editor for news and editorial coordinator, respectively, for the Adventist News Network.

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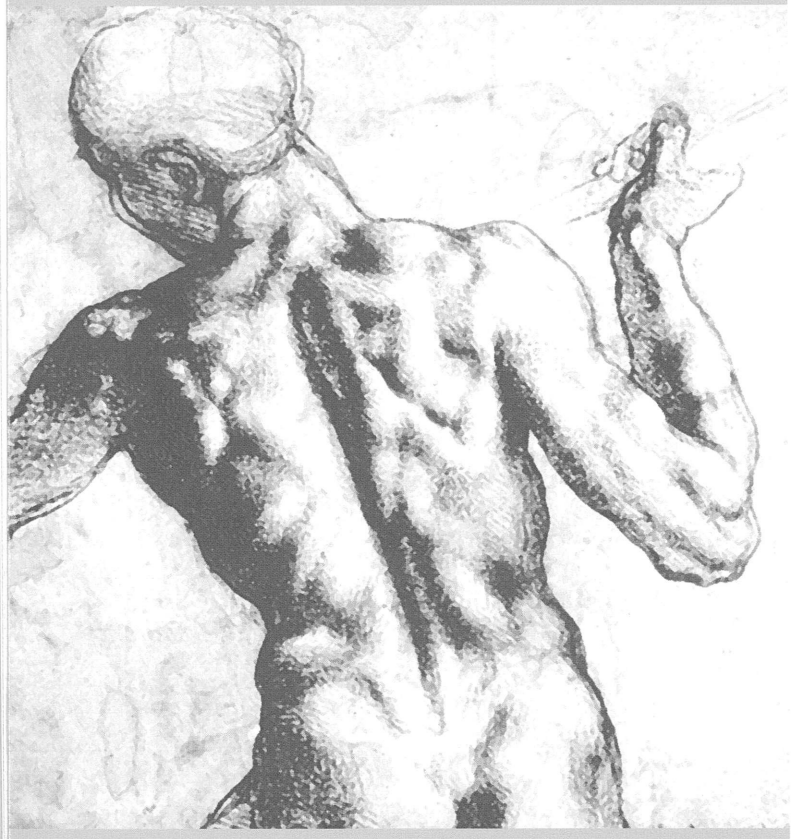
God and Exercise | BY JOHN MCDOWELL



God has given up exercise as a religion.
I find this out while we're watching a Sunday
afternoon NFL game: Saints vs. the Cardinals.
But before the game starts, being
who he is and all, he tells me (with a sly smile)
the final score (Cardinals over the Saints
by a field goal) then prevents me from making a call
just because I want to make a few bucks on a sure thing.
Anyhow, the suspense gone, we fall
to talking.

During a commercial for Nordic Track
I ask which is better, aerobic or anaerobic exercise?
But as usual, he does not answer a direct question,
launches instead into a story about his once-upon-a-time
dedication to bodybuilding: the daily regime
of dips, bench-presses, curls, squats, and chin-ups,
the low-fat, high-protein-and-carbohydrate diet
the use of different anabolic steroids and diuretics.
How he began to enter competitions, joined the parade
of muscles shrink-wrapped in taut
oiled skin (body fat closing in on that elusive 4 percent)
gleaming under klieg lights and the judges' eyes.
All this work, the years of training, the mastery of poses:
quads, delts, traps, pecs, bi's and tri's—
for endorsements, money, fame, and perhaps even a movie
career that comes with winning titles:
The Schwarzenegger Classic, Mr. America,
Mr. Universe, and (the ultimate) Mr. Olympia.

"I began to wonder," He says, "I remember,
Zeus doesn't take kindly to being challenged.
You know about Prometheus, his gut eaten out each night,
and poor Hercules had one hell of a life."
"But he was made an immortal. And Arnold won
Olympia seven times," I reply.
"Then you see my point."

Instead I notice that it is the last ten seconds of the game.
The score is 23–20, favoring the Cardinals.
The Saints, however, are fourth down
(no more time outs) on the one-yard line,
receivers all to the left, the snap, and the fake
works. The quarterback runs it in for a touchdown.
"But, you said. . . !" I yell in disbelief.
"I know." God smiles and adds,
"I saved you a lot of money, besides
when you know the score,
it's best to run."