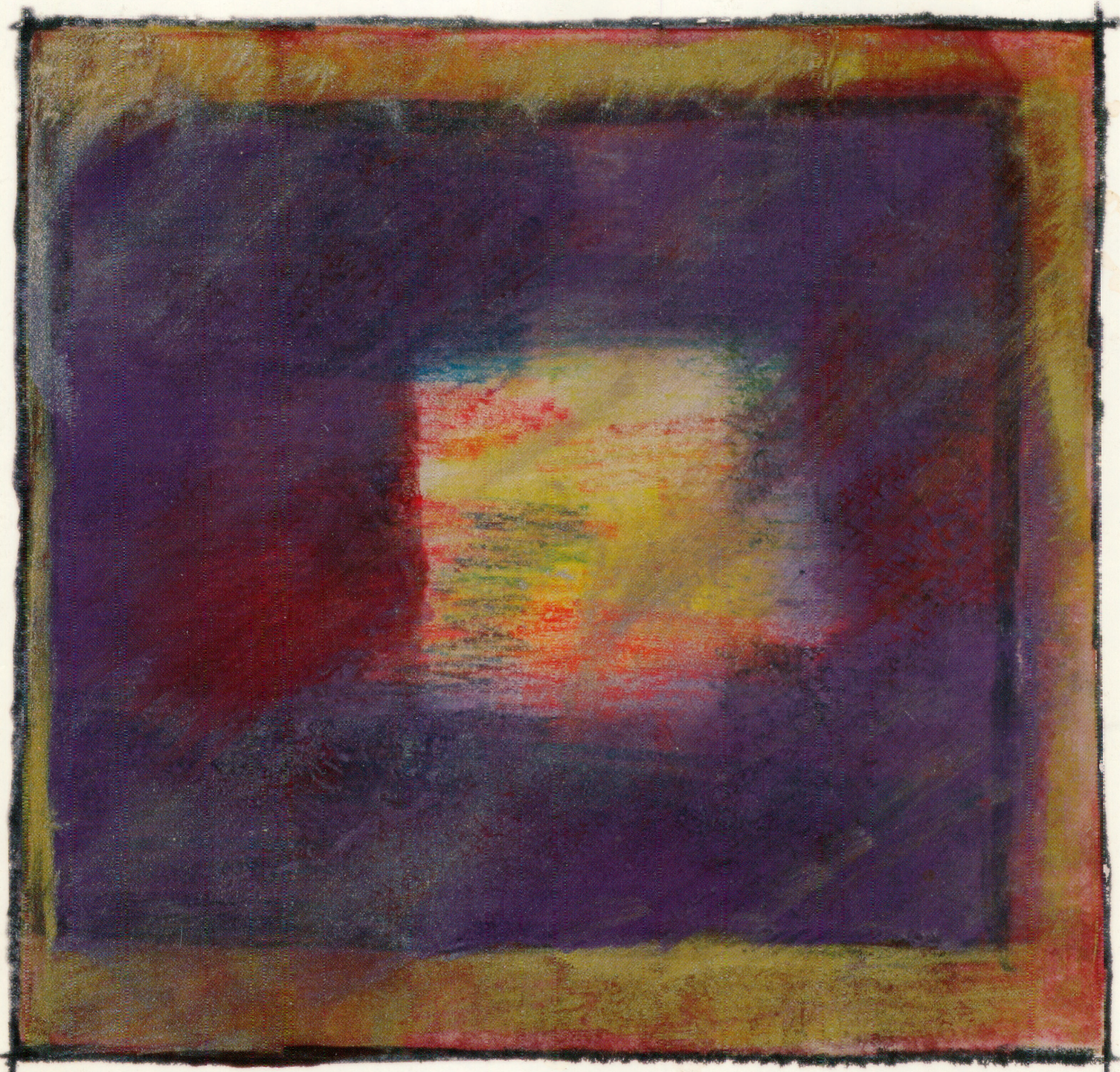




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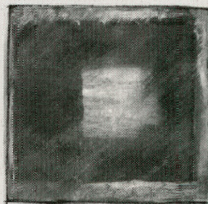
Thirsting for God ■ A Dark Day, A Starry Night ■ **Saving Ellen White**

VOLUME.35 ISSUE.2 ■ SPRING 2007

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COVER ART:
through glass darkly,
by Karen Gimbel

ABOUT THE ART:
This image exemplifies redemption—the transformation of a mono-print nearly discarded. In time, I glimpsed ways of working with it, layering subsequent prints, peering “through glass darkly.” The result to me mirrors God’s transformative grace.

FROM THE ARTIST:
Previously from Calgary, Alberta, and now living in Floyd, Virginia, Karen Gimbel considers working as an artist an ongoing fulfillment of a lifelong desire.

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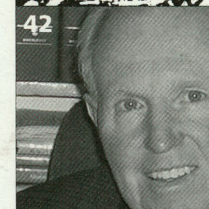
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EDITORIAL ■ *from the editor*

Out of Africa | BY BONNIE DWYER

Jules Lumbo has a dream. As the publishing director for the Eastern Central African Division, he realizes that just occupying an office with a title on the door that says publishing director does not make him a publisher. But a publisher is what he wants to be, so his dream is to cultivate Adventist African writers—African books for African people.

He first convinced his division president of the viability of his dream, and then he took the next step in Adventism to making it happen. He called a meeting and invited writers from across the division. To his delight, more than one hundred sixty people responded by showing up to participate in workshops and discussions at the division headquarters in March. Russ Holt and Nancy Van Pelt came from Pacific Press to offer workshops.

Happening upon the meeting as a visitor traveling through Nairobi was a delightful experience for me. How exciting to see all these people gathered together to support each other in the lonely work of writing. On the day I attended, Russ Holt got things off to a great start with a presentation on excellence in writing and editing.

It did not take long, however, for the challenges to Lumbo's dream to surface. Representatives from the Rwandan Union share Lumbo's dream—they want materials in native languages—but could a sufficient number of books in a given language be sold to make it a viable commercial project? "Who will publish these books?" was the question posed by a Nigerian author who has translated *Steps to Christ* into the Kikuyuian language, noting his experience of having manuscripts languish at Adventist publishing houses. Recently, he has gone to a New York publisher who has shown interest in his writings.

Listening to the discussion brought to my mind the various problems of marketing and distribution that exist within Adventist publishing, with its roots still firmly tied to the nineteenth century, when Adventist publishing had

its heyday. In this history, literature evangelists have led the distribution system for reaching the outside world, and their numbers in African Adventism remain strong. But are they strong enough—and is this method effective enough—to be the foundation for making this dream of African books for African readers a reality?

In one presentation, a long compilation of Ellen G. White quotes on the importance of writing was invoked to prompt writers to reach out and finish the work. Yet are the books published and sold within Adventism mainly just that—books bought by an Adventist audience? The disconnect between audience and message remains the strongest challenge to Adventist publishing.

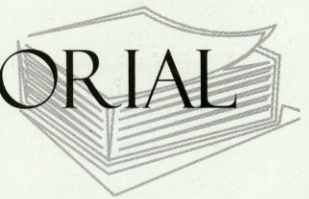
As I sat and listened, I wondered, is the "message" the same for Adventists and non-Adventists? Do we talk differently about Christ and our spiritual lives when we talk to "others"? Do we have anything to say to people inside the Church? Is conversion the only aim that a book can have? If we write only to convert, but sell to people who are converted, have we killed the industry from the start?

Jules Lumbo has a dream. At the meeting that he called, he suggested that every Adventist college and university in Africa form a chapter of local writers. "Next year," he said, "we want to bring people to your writing groups to work with them. We have to promote local writing and help members appreciate the Christian writing ministry."

So Jules Lumbo is now one of my heroes—for developing the local story and writers in Africa, and for appreciating "the writing ministry."

May he bring serious attention to the real challenges of writing and publishing in the global market of the twenty-first century. ■

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.



Is Christ Captive to Bibliolatry? | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

Can a theory of biblical authority undermine the Lordship of Christ? The question weighs on me, and seems especially pertinent now, with the focus on Scripture in the current Sabbath School Quarterly.

I've been conversing—in print, online, and by telephone—with Richard Davidson and Roy Gane, both of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary and both widely respected, on the question of how to read the Bible. Both of them understand the Bible, as a whole and in all its parts, to be, as Professor Davidson has written, the “utterly reliable word of God.”¹

In an e-mail message, Davidson suggested that Jesus' Sermon on the Mount makes no advance on the moral standard, familiar from the Pentateuch, of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.² Although Jesus appears to contrast his own vision with that of the so-called *lex talionis*, the Sermon, Davidson said, does not call us “to a higher ethical standard. The same call for *personal* love for one's enemies Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount” can be found “throughout” the Old Testament.³

Davidson wants the Bible's authority to be flat across all its bits and pieces, so he has to show that Jesus does not disagree with what you find elsewhere in the book. And it is true, certainly, that the Old Testament expresses the ideals of love for the stranger and reconciliation with the enemy. It is also true that Jesus himself was a lover of the Hebrew Bible. But the suggestion that the Old Testament gives voice “throughout” to the ideal of enemy love is, to say the least, debatable.

To take the severest counterexample, you

can find in Scripture calls to . . . *genocide*, calls as unmitigated as they are horrific.⁴ This fact is one reason why the most influential scholars agree that Jesus' reading of the Old Testament takes Jewish moral thought in a distinctive direction. Even if some disagree, the consensus on this is as wide as the sea.

Davidson and Gane both resist granting authority, over Scripture, to fashionable human reason. But when they deny, or seem to deny, that some parts of Scripture have more authority for Christian life than other parts, they take issue, I think, with Jesus himself. Despite what Holy Writ clearly contains, Jesus never called anyone to genocide, nor, for that matter, did he promise happiness to those who dash their enemies' “little ones . . . against the rock.”⁵ Instead, building on the ever-widening embrace of Hebrew prophecy, he called us to love of enemy, and embodied that call, on the cross, by asking God to forgive his own executioners (Matt. 5:38–48; Luke 23:34). What is more, he championed this vision while living under Roman brutes who flexed their muscle by dotting the roadside with crosses and the crucified who hung on them.⁶

Shocked into new perspective by the Resurrection, the New Testament writers said that this Jesus is alone the “exact imprint” of the divine being, alone the true light, the Word made flesh, the revealer of the Father's heart.⁷ They knew the Bible's variety of vision, and knew its potential to be confusing; henceforth Jesus would be, to Christians, the basis for the Bible's fundamental unity.

Davidson has said that criticism “is appro-

**In the Bible's
own testimony,
Jesus is the Word
of God—the
final criterion of
Christian truth,
the canon, as you
might say,
within the canon.**

priate for everything in the world except the Scriptures."⁸ But saying this is just the problem. Criticism is appropriate for everything in the world except... God! What Davidson says of a document that by its own account is *not* God (Isa. 55:8, 9) comes perilously close to bibliolatry.

I always wonder why this is so hard to see. In the Bible's own testimony, Jesus is the Word of God—the final criterion of Christian truth, the canon, as you might say, within the canon. And you do not bow to fashionable human reason when you say this; you acknowledge what the Bible itself declares.

In April 1933, leaders of the German ecclesiastical establishment released "guiding principles" that put God's sanction behind the Nazi obsession with "race, folk and nation." They said that Germany must protect itself "against the unfit and inferior."

They anathematized Jews as "alien blood" in the "body politic." And in defense of all this, they said that "Holy Scripture is... able to speak about a holy wrath and a refusal of love."

The few German Christians who were then resisting Hitler met in Barmen in 1934 to express both their dismay

and their conviction. The statement they jointly issued said: "Jesus, as he is testified to us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God which we are to hear, which we are to trust and obey in life and in death."

They were calling German Christians to test the church's words—the church's life—by this one Word of God, and to accept only what was consistent with that Word.⁹ The call went largely unheeded. But it was true then, and is still true.

Or so it seems to me. And that is why the question I began with won't go easily away. ■

Notes and References

1. The quote is from his "Interpreting Scripture According to the Scriptures," a relatively recent document available at <http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/documents/interp%20scripture%20davidson.pdf>; accessed April 9, 2007.

2. See Exod. 21:23, 24; Lev. 24:19, 20; Deut. 19:21. Jesus refers to these passages in Matt. 5:38ff.

3. Points made by e-mail communication, dated Mar. 21, 2007.

4. Roy Gane noted this theme in his "Israelite Genocide and Islamic Jihad," *Spectrum* 34.4 (fall 2006):61–65.

5. This from the heartbreaking, if revengeful, Ps. 137, one of the so-called Imprecatory Psalms.

6. I rely on James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001): 83.

7. See Heb. 1:1–3; the other phrases allude to John 1, and numerous New Testament passages make the same point.

8. "The Authority of Scripture: A Personal Pilgrimage," *Spectrum* 34.3 (summer 2006):42. This essay first appeared in the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 1.1 (1990):39–56.

9. The 1933 statement of the "Evangelical Church of the German Nation" may be found in Arthur C. Cochrane, *The Church's Confession Under Hitler* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), 222, 223. The Barmen Declaration is accessible on the Internet and is quoted in numerous works of church history.

Hearing It— Maybe for the Very First Time??

Recent and upcoming events at San Diego Adventist Forum

(Available on audiocassettes—usually two cassettes per session)

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Ellen White and Plagiarism: Another View through the Eyes of an Historian
- David Dennis, MBA November/06
The Theology of Tibbing
- Alden Thompson, PhD February/07
The Finances of James and Ellen White: Entrepreneurial James Liberates Cautious Ellen
- Dalton Baldwin, PhD March/07
Prophecy and Community
- Ronald Fritz, DDS April/07
Caribbean Caries: Dental Health in Tobago
- Michael Walter, MD May/07
A Medical Report from the Front Lines
- Ivan Blazen, PhD June/07 rescheduled from January
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Charles Scriven occupies the presidencies of the Kettering College of the Medical Arts and Adventist Forums.



Differences, questions, and corrections

Genocide

ROY GANE'S ARTICLE in *Spectrum's* summer 2006 issue is a good summary of genocide portrayed in the Old Testament and resonates as if justified today. Nonetheless, how is it justified by reason other than God having so instructed?

Regardless of how viewed, such action is, simply put, murder, which is forbidden by the Decalogue. Christ even accentuates the problem to the point that evil thought, as hate, is tantamount to murder. Therefore, there appears to be a conflict still not understood, and justifiably so, even in today's setting.

Neither is it clear why God uses mankind to do his dirty work, as if one is to receive a spiritual uplift from doing it. In the end, he has no qualms about destroying evil to a state of: "without form and void" (*Abussos*) (Jer.4:28; Gen.1:2), ushering in a new "replenished" (KJV) earth, which Adam and Eve were instructed to do at their beginning, to put back what once was, but failed.

GERHARD PUDEWELL
Muscatine, Iowa

I FOUND THE discussion between Charles Scriven and Roy Gane (fall 2006) regarding genocide rather interesting. However, neither touched on a

factor that has helped me at times.

We know that the Bible was written by humans and that the writings span many centuries. It appears to me that there is a development or growth in the understanding of God during this time, with the life of Jesus of Nazareth being the clearest perception of God that we have to date. The authors wrote of their interaction with God (and God's interaction with them), but their perception of God was skewed by the culture and world in which they lived.

I just finished reading about King David. He slaughtered untold thousands, including children, but is guiltless before God except in the case of Uriah, his buddy. The books of Moses mention that during the religious celebrations, when the people all traveled to "the place I choose," God promised to keep raiders away from their lands and homes (Exod. 34:24). I suspect he would have preferred doing this always if their culture hadn't been in the way. But he honored their willingness to serve him and gave them strength to destroy their neighbors

I surmise that those neighbors may have learned to serve Abraham's God if they had been approached differently.

BRUCE RAFUSE
Via the Internet

ON THE SUBJECT of genocide, your correspondent, Gordon Short ("Feedback," winter 2007), seems to have difficulty understanding not only the theologians, but—of all things—me, from the same gene pool! My point was that, in dealing with the sin problem, all the options open to God were bad.

For Abraham Lincoln, saving the Union involved the terrible option of war, with the loss of six hundred thousand young American lives. The suffering it cost him is revealed in the increasing haggardness of his face as the war progressed.

To curb the spread of demonic heathenism and the toll it took on human life, God resorted to genocide, a dreadful option contrary to his nature of love. What it cost him can be calculated in his pain at the death of a sparrow! The suffering that God-ordered, Old Testament genocide caused shows up most clearly in the agony of Father and Son at the cross, when the whole mess caused by sin enveloped them both.

Let me add that God is equally criticized for not exterminating Hitler and his gang of thugs during World War II. Whatever he does or doesn't do in dealing with the messy problem of sin, he gets blamed.

For a more lengthy treatment of

the subject, see the complete article, "God in the Mud: A Woman's View of the Dark Side of God" on my Web site <beatriceneall.com>.

BEATRICE NEALL
Ooltewah, Tenn.

No Excuses for Lawbreaking

I DISAGREE WITH Douglas Morgan's view on the Iraq war ("Why I Want to Witness for Peace," winter 2007), but he has every right to protest. However, I see his justification for breaking the law very disingenuous: "The hope is that the extraordinary spectacle of hundreds of peaceful, praying Christians being arrested will help draw attention to the urgency and magnitude of the situation we face."

Does attaching a Christian motive make breaking the law acceptable? How about a student of Morgan cheating just a little to ensure gaining access to a better theological seminary.

I'm sorry, but breaking the law is breaking the law. Let's not make excuses.

RICHARD HANSON
Nashua, N.H.

Offensive Artwork

I FOUND THE cover of your winter 2007 issue offensive. Something less "revealing" would have served your purpose just as well.

KATHY HECHT
Via the Internet

I AM CONCERNED that the recent cover of *Spectrum* will give fuel to critics who would like to continually burn *Spectrum*. I personally do not like to see a woman's body portrayed in that way on the cover of a Christian magazine, especially when that magazine is the one avenue in Adventism

through which we seek to reach other thinkers.

Publication of controversial topics gives us enough platform for criticism; but putting such artwork on the cover opens the magazine to unnecessary attack. I think someone forgot who is in the audience.

Seeing this painting in an art museum is very appropriate. Seeing it on the front cover of *Spectrum* is unbecoming.

BRONWEN F. LARSON
Loma Linda, Calif.

SPECTRUM editor, Bonnie Dwyer describes the issue as a new media, explaining that postmodernity is not a choice ("Thirty-Five and Counting...on Hope," winter 2007). She is correct, but as a Christian I have always believed we have a God-given innate ability to choose what we will partake in any age.

I am an artist and I recognize that John Hoyt is a gifted artist, but I cannot accept *Spectrum's* choice of its new postmodernity, with his front cover art displaying a nude woman. This does not seem any different from almost any other magazine in which one can see similar nude images. I cannot understand by what justification this choice appeared on the cover of a Christian magazine.

It is a fact that nude imagery influences people to abuse others, especially women and children. The average person does not comprehend what sexual exploitation does to the psyche. The poem on the back cover was incredibly true and beautiful and could have also included mention of the horror of dying inside when one is sexually abused.

This same issue stated that some

churches may condone cybersex in some instances. It also said Christians should "respond to new porn technologies not with knee-jerk judgmental outrage, but with fine moral reasoning." I unequivocally believe that Jesus would be totally outraged with any porn or cybersex.

It seems that *Spectrum* should be extremely cautious before it asks me or any other Christian to partake of or react to the evils within postmodernism.

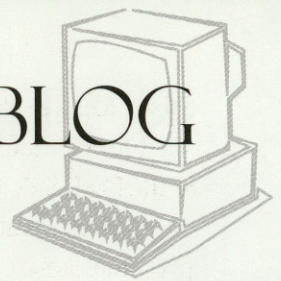
MARIE SANDBORN
Hendersonville, N.C.

Correction

In Richard M. Davidson's article, "The Authority of Scripture: A Personal Pilgrimage" (summer 2006), several lines were mistakenly omitted from what appears as the first sentence of the last paragraph on page 43. The passage should read as follows:

Of course there is an illegitimate proof-text method that takes texts from here and there, pulling them out of context and applying them to something the texts were never intended to support. But it is also true that if we believe that a divine Author superintended the work of the human authors, there must be a basic unity to Scripture.

The editors apologize for this omission. ■



Best of the *Spectrum Blog*:

Discussing Evolution | BY ALEXANDER CARPENTER

Recently, in a thread of blog conversations about religion and science and Richard Dawkins, Cliff Goldstein, asked for book references that make the case for evolution without turning believers into Seventh-day Dawkinians. Here's some of the conversation that followed. For more, go to http://spectrummagazine.typepad.com/the_spectrum_blog/2007/03/uncconcluding_sc.html.

Cliff Goldstein: Be an Adventist or be an evolutionist, but don't go around with the charade of believing you can be both.

Pastor Greg: What can I believe and still be an Adventist? Or more to the point: what can my daughter (who is majoring in biology) believe and still be an Adventist? Must she believe the world is six thousand years old, for instance—or can she stretch it to ten thousand years? A million?

Blake: This is a chilling ultimatum, Cliff. Surely you don't comprehend the repercussions of such hectoring rhetoric to the faith-development of our increasingly science-savvy youth.

Darius (statrei): The SDA Church runs the same risk the Catholic Church ran in Galileo's time when it insists on holding on to ideas that have been scientifically proven to be false. We may preserve our base (and the jobs of church leaders) but we lose credibility.

Jared Wright: So let's say for argument's sake that these evolutionary-minded posts actually ARE

contrary to what God would have us know—in parable terms, the weeds (I'm not saying that, but just proposing it for argument's sake). The way that Jesus suggested responding clearly is not about uprooting. He was quite blunt about the damage that pulling up the so-called weeds causes. And the huge number of disenfranchised former Adventists attests to the accuracy of what Jesus was saying. The guiding metaphor for God's people is one of promoting growth, not one of weeding out. Risky? Maybe. Right? Definitely.

Carmen: I recently read Dawkin's book and I felt like a lot of the nonscientific problems with religion that he highlights could also be addressed with a coherent, realistic, view of biblical inspiration.

Cliff Goldstein: What is the problem with [Intelligent] D[esign]? Or is that not sophisticated enough, or too fundamentalist, for some of the cognoscenti on here? Forget about my literal six-day creationism (Adam and Eve, the talking snake, Noah's ark), certainly most of you should be able to accept at least in theory ID?

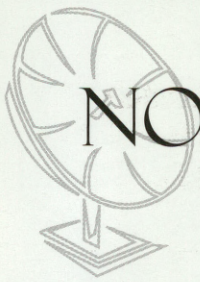
Peter: Last year, I had some interactions with Phillip Johnson, the founder of the Intelligent Design movement, and I discovered an excerpt [from a Richard] Feynman speech in an article that Johnson had written. Johnson called the Feynman excerpt "such a magnificent statement, I wish it could be set to music. Richard Feynman's kind of science has the virtue of humility at its very core. Honesty and humility." What an irony. It enabled me to put a name to just what was bothering me not only about the ID movement but about every church I've been to, especially SDA ones, and also Christian publications. Name-

ly, that Christian standards of intellectual honesty are, in practice, WAY, WAY, WAY lower than those in the scientific community.

Cliff Goldstein: the issue isn't how old the earth itself is. I lean toward it being billions of years old itself; that is, the opening verses of Genesis are ambiguous enough to allow for that. It's the incorporation of evolution in the schema that's totally preposterous and a denial of everything that we as Adventists stand for.

Alexander: To Cliff, a short chronology literalist, if you want a serious discussion of Genesis it takes integrating hermeneutics, history, science, theology, sociology, archaeology, climatology, etc. but most of all it means engaging these ideas on their own terms, not just filtered through the literalist opposition. I recommend reading Thomas L. Thompson's *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past*. He says: "The Bible is a theological interpretation of the past with its own motivations apart from the historical that need to be considered in every interpretation." To treat our Scriptures as theology and not science does not smack of atheism—in fact, I believe that's what makes great faith.

Ronald Osborn: My own view, in sum, is that we need to steer clear of both the Scylla of wooden literalism and the Charybdis of academic liberalism, with its conceit that theology is about "spiritual" things that have nothing to do with factual realities "in time and space." Time and space is where I currently reside and I see no reason to embrace a theology that tries to move me "beyond" either—not any more than one that tells me God can be pinned down beneath a microscope. ■



Peace and love

**The Iraq war
“from a Christ-
ian point of
view, is morally
wrong...It can-
not be justified
with either
the teaching of
Jesus Christ
or the criteria of
St. Augustine’s
just war.”**

—Jim Wallis

The March 16 Christian Peace Witness

BY DOUGLAS MORGAN

Unfazed by a “wintry mix” of Washington weather on March 16, 3,000 Christians dedicated to peace packed the National Cathedral for worship, and then proceeded to a 3.5 mile night-time march to Lafayette Park in front of the White House. I was able to verify the presence of fifteen Adventists in attendance; most likely more were present. Charles Sandefur, president of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, took part in the soul-stirring service. He joined with Baptist, Catholic, Episcopalian, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Quaker, Reformed, and United Church of Christ clergy in “A Prayer for Peace With Iraq.”

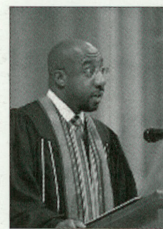
The Hollywood Vigil



Meanwhile, in balmy southern California, a group of thirty-five, including a contingent

from Adventist Women for Peace based at La Sierra University, braved busy freeways to gather for a vigil at Hollywood Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Worship



The worship was wonderful all the way around—liturgy, songs, prayers, testimonies. The

highlight, for me, though, was the preaching. Rafael Warnock, pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, issued a sober warning from the national pulpit: While we are caught up trying to figure out how not to lose the war, he said, the “real danger is that America will lose its soul.”

To the U.S. president, Rev. Warnock said: “Mr. Bush, my Christian brother, we do need a surge in troops. We need a surge in the nonviolent army of the Lord. We need a surge in conscience and a surge in activism and a surge in truth-telling.”

In his “call to action,” Jim Wallis of *Sojourners* nailed the point that the Iraq war “from a Christian point of view, is

morally wrong—and was from the very start. It cannot be justified with either the teaching of Jesus Christ or the criteria of St. Augustine’s just war. It simply doesn’t pass either test, and did not from its beginning.”

Then, Wallis got me jumping with words that rang deeply Adventist in my ears:

So as people of faith, let us say tonight to our brothers and sisters around the world, and as clearly as we can—America is not the hope of the earth and the light of the world, Jesus Christ is. And it is his way that we follow, and not the flawed path of our nation’s leaders who prosecute this war.

Why did I have to go to the National Cathedral, of all places, to hear that message?

The March



“Siyahamb’ Ekukhanyen’ Kwenkhos”—the Zulu hymn used for the recession sent us

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out singing into the night, "marching in the light of God." Wet snow was falling as we left the cathedral, for me a welcome change from the cold rain that had prevailed throughout the day, even though the latter, in the words of one of the event organizers, "reminds us of our baptismal vows." Soon the snow stopped, and it was simply cold.

Nonetheless, a celebratory spirit prevailed. A certain exhilaration comes with the sense that one is marching with the "nonviolent army of the Lord." I enjoyed stepping out of the line occasionally to marvel at how far the procession stretched in both directions. I was impressed with a very high proportion of young people who had devoted a Friday night to this kind of celebration.

After assembling at Lafayette Park, the marchers moved out to encircle the White House with light and song.

The Civil Disobedience



"You got arrested?"
Yes, I was one of the 222 CPWI participants arrested for "failure to obey a lawful order" to dis-

perse from a "no stopping zone" on the sidewalk in front of the White House.

In brief, the purpose for taking this step beyond the march in general, for which a legal permit had been obtained, was to sound an alarm. The hope is that the extraordinary spectacle of hundreds of peaceful, praying Christians being arrested will help draw attention to the urgency and magnitude of the situation we face.

Something has to be said or done to shake up any sense of normalcy or indifference regarding the nation's policies of messianic militarism that continue, day by day, to take precious

lives unnecessarily and up the cycle of violence, all the while enabled and cheered by millions who claim to be followers of Jesus. Peaceful refusal to obey a regulation for the normal flow of pedestrian traffic, while making no resistance to the officers arresting us to enforce the law, is an attempt to put our witness in bold-face type, and throw in a couple of exclamation points, so that attention might be gained and consciences stirred that otherwise would not have been.

What was it like? Susan Mark Landis, peace advocate of the Mennonite Church U.S.A. Executive Leadership, has described what I also experienced so succinctly and precisely that I will borrow her words: "Yes, I was handcuffed; no I didn't ride in a paddy wagon; yes I was thumb-printed; no, I didn't see the inside of a jail cell. I have no police record—our charge is legally similar to a parking ticket" ("Let Us Pray," *PeaceSigns*, Mar. 20, 2007).

Those arrested were placed on a bus and driven to a police station, where we remained until the paperwork was processed and we were released. I enjoyed being on the same bus as leaders such as Jim Wallis and Bob Edgar of the National Council of Churches, and probably some others I didn't recognize. I spotted Taylor Branch, the noted historian of the civil rights movement, at the cathedral and learned that he was among those arrested, as was the Rev. Marion Bascom of Baltimore, an eighty-two-year-old veteran of that struggle.

Reprinted with permission from the *Peace Messenger* <www.adventistpeace.org>. ■

Douglas Morgan is professor of history and political studies at Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.

World Church: Church Leaders "Healing Relationships" at the Heart of Retention, Reclamation

BY TAASHI ROWE/ANN

ACCEPTANCE IS AT THE heart of retaining and reclaiming members in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, church leaders agreed when they voted on a document called "Conserving Membership Gains—An Appeal." The document was born out of earlier reports at the church's Council on Evangelism and Witness (CEW) that stated that 28 percent of those who leave the Adventist church do not disagree with the church's teachings but felt an "absence of belonging and [a] lack of meaningful engagement in the local congregation and its mission."

The document, which will be circulated throughout the world church, brought attention to the fact that out of the 5 million people baptized into the church between 2000 and 2005, 1.4 million left.

In order to stop the flow of members out of the church, the document states that, "members and leaders everywhere are asked to give renewed emphasis to the matter of membership reclamation and retention. This involves understanding the reasons for membership loss in each local church and focusing on how to develop the capacity of the church to attract, reclaim, retain, and engage its members in the mission of the church."

The document also outlined some basic actions that—along with annual planning and budgeting for evangelism—church boards should implement. They include: assessing membership retention; providing repeated instructions of basic Bible teachings



Pastor Jan Paulsen, president of the Adventist world church, said reconnecting with those who have left the church is a "sacred ministry."

for all newly-baptized members; and ensuring that new members are integrated into the life of the church. This is accomplished as they form friendships, fellowship in small groups, and actively participate in witnessing. The document also urged churches to train members how to reconnect with those who have discontinued church fellowship.

One area in the document caught the attention of several attendees: "Careful attention is needed to facilitate the healing of relationships and the realization, between persons, of the reconciliation that flows from the forgiveness and acceptance received through Jesus Christ."

Pastor Jan Paulsen, president of the Adventist world church, said it is crucial that church members reconnect with friends and family that have left the church. "It's not that they need to be taught our doctrines—because they already know. They need to be brought back into a safe walk with Jesus. This is a very sacred part of ministry and we must make sure this document finds its way through all

parts of our church. The church has to be a healing community."

"We cannot ignore those who have left the church. We have to reach out to those who are hurting and bring them back into the ministry of the church," agreed Laurie Evans, president of the church's South Pacific region. "Forgiveness is important and we must be humble enough to recognize that we haven't always done things the right way."

The appeal also proposed tying in plans to stem retention while making plans for evangelism.

"I wish the answer was as simple as voting on this document," said Pastor Lowell Cooper, a vice president for the Adventist world church and CEW chair. "It's going to take more than one meeting of church leaders about this to improve retention. We invite you to consider making this part of deliberate planning for evangelism. It makes sense that, since we grow through evangelism efforts, we can through evangelism raise awareness and sensitivity to the issue of retention."

Peter Prime, an associate secretary for evangelism and church planting for the church's Ministerial Association, noted that the answer to strong retention and reclamation was included in the document. He pointed to the Bible text 1 Peter 4:8 to 10 where the apostle Peter urges "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another, without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in various forms."

"We have to love one another—not superficially, not casually," Prime said. "The key to building relationships is acceptance. The problem is

us. How far are we willing to fulfill the goal of oneness and unity?"

"The greatest discovery is that somebody loves you," said Pastor Paulsen, president of the Adventist world church. "Care and love for people in a genuine way—that is going to assist us in ministry more than anything else."

Dick Osborn, president of the church's Pacific Union College in California, commented on what he referred to as "the real problem" of young adults leaving the church primarily because following college they have no real church home.

"We do lots for children and those in high school but what about young adults?" he asked. Osborn pointed to a program called "Beyond Walla Walla" where new graduates [from Walla Walla College] are integrated into local congregations...the most important thing to them is not knowing doctrines but making new friends in the church."

While it may be difficult to reach out and chat with people you are not familiar with, Dr. Allan Handysides, director of the world church's Health Ministries Department, said reaching out is an outgrowth of a relationship with Christ.

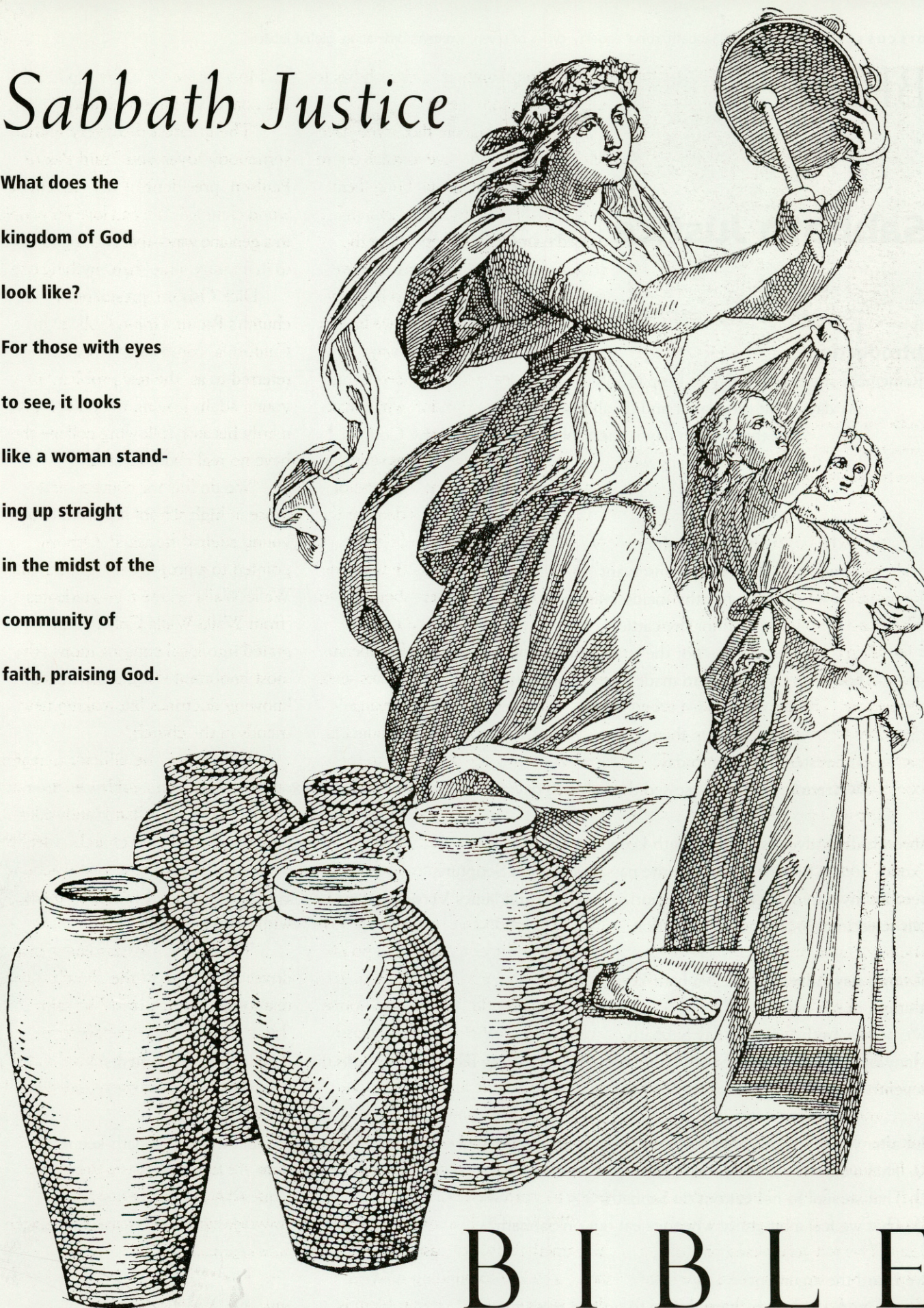
"The power—the gasoline—that drives the engine of the church is the relationship with Christ," he said. "How can you make people love Jesus? By example, by a revival in the hearts and minds of every individual and leader." ■

Note: The text of "Conserving Membership Gains—An Appeal" can be found at www.adventist.org/beliefs/other_documents/conserving-gains.html.

Source: Adventist News Network

Sabbath Justice

What does the
kingdom of God
look like?
For those with eyes
to see, it looks
like a woman stand-
ing up straight
in the midst of the
community of
faith, praising God.



B I B L E

BIBLE

Sabbath Justice | BY KENDRA HALOVIAK

Introduction

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work,
but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.

In it, thou shalt not do any work.

Thou,
nor thy son,
nor thy daughter,
(nor) thy manservant
nor thy maidservant
nor thy cattle,
nor the stranger that is within thy gates.

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth,
the sea
and all that in them is,
and rested the seventh day.

Wherefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exod. 20:8–11).

Seventh-day Adventists are Sabbath-keepers.

Exodus 20:8–11 is one of our favorite passages in all of Scripture.

Because my parents helped me memorize it in the King James Version before I could read the words, I find it very difficult to recite it in any other translation.

Seventh-day Adventists are Sabbath-keepers.

It's right in our name.

We believe in the seventh-day Sabbath.

Many of us can argue the Sabbath's ongoing validity using Bible texts in both the Old and New Testaments.

Seventh-day Adventists are Sabbath-keepers.

But after we've finished arguing the issue of the correct day of worship, *what does it mean* that we are Sabbath-keepers?

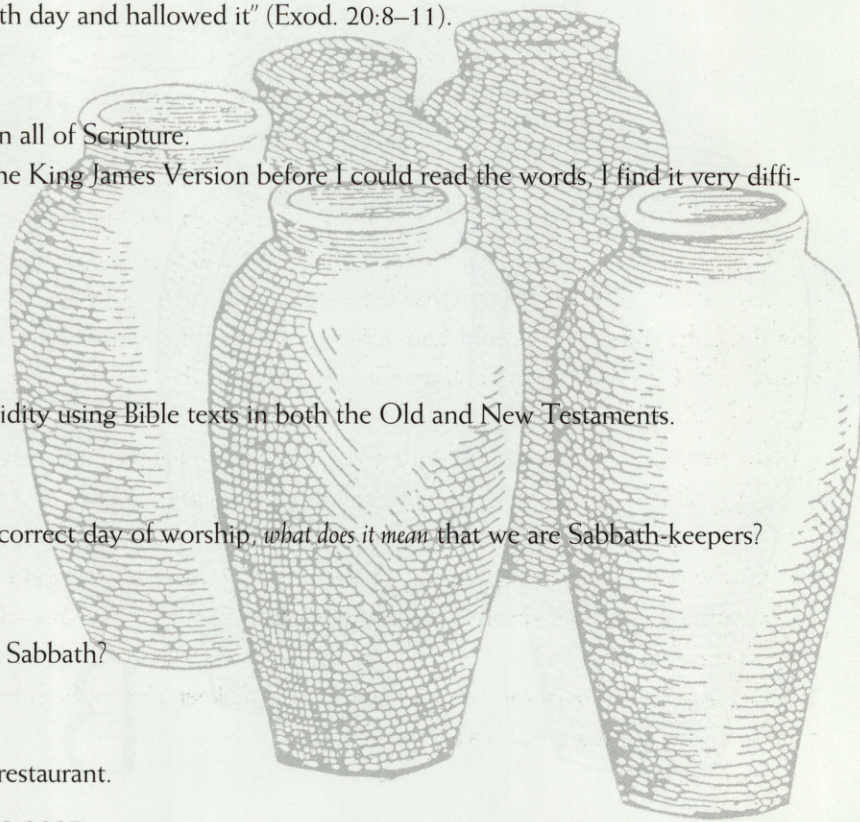
Q. That we don't eat out on Sabbath?

Q. That we *used* to not eat out on Sabbath?

Q. That we feel a bit guilty when we eat out on Sabbath?

I've heard the argument:

It is far more work to fix a meal than to go to a restaurant.



As one who has witnessed my mother make countless Sabbath meals for family and guests...the logic seems valid. However, the commandment spends much *less* time talking about work...and much *more* time talking about equality on the Sabbath by emphasizing all those who are forbidden to work:

You—your children—your slaves—strangers—even your animals.

The Sabbath hours eliminated the social distinctions created by work:

By definition, a manservant and maidservant worked on behalf of his or her master.

Sons and daughters did whatever work a parent asked.

Animals were kept, fed in order to do hard work.

Strangers in town were probably there precisely to find work and food for their families.

But...

The Sabbath commandment remembered creation...

before there were slaves in Egypt or anywhere else...

before there were strangers trying to find food...

before Adam thought he was more valuable than Eve...

before Eve believed him....

The experience of Sabbath regularly reminded Israel of creation as God intended.

When...“it was good.”

In the second giving of the Sabbath commandment, found in Deuteronomy 5, social equality is further emphasized:

“Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you.

Six days you shall labor and do all your work.

But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God;

you shall not do any work—

you,

or your son,

or your daughter,

or your male or female slave,

or your ox or your donkey,

or any of your livestock,

or the resident alien in your towns,

so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you.

Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt,

and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm;

therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day” (Deut. 5:12–15).

On the Sabbath, your slaves rest with you...as does the resident alien living in your towns...

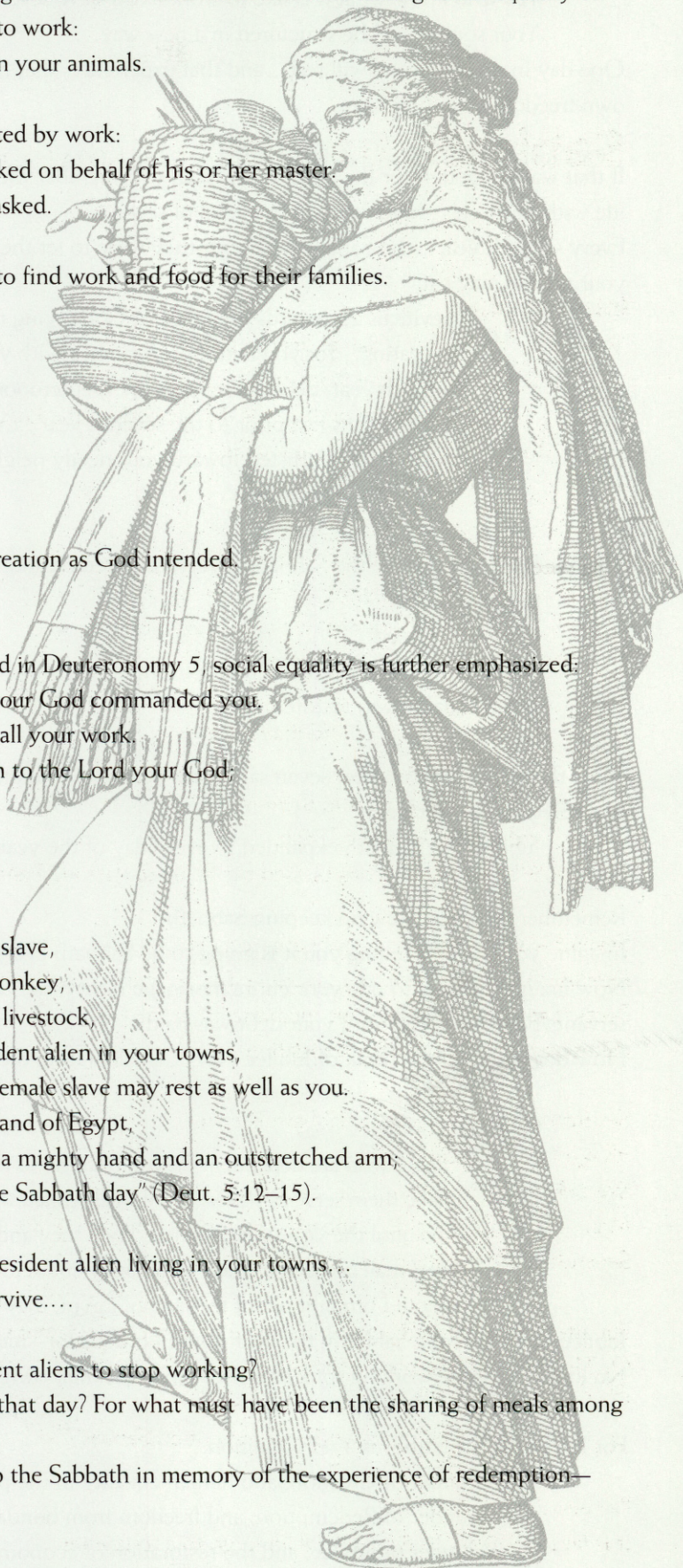
...those who must work night and day just to survive....

They, like you, rest.

Q. How would it be possible for the slaves and the resident aliens to stop working?

Q. What must this have meant for social interactions on that day? For what must have been the sharing of meals among diverse social classes?

In *Deuteronomy's* telling of the commandment, people keep the Sabbath in memory of the experience of redemption—freedom from oppression and slavery in Egypt.



The second giving of the Sabbath commandment says:

You who know what it is like to work like a slave seven days a week...

Your society will be structured in a new way...

One day in seven *everyone* will rest...and that experience, that built-in cycle to your lives...is a regular reminder of your own freedom from bondage...

If that wasn't enough for the children of Israel to remember the huge difference between life in bondage and exile and life with Yahweh...there were other cycles of seven...

Every seventh year...the Sabbatical Year...they were to let their *fields* rest...why? Exodus 23:12... "so that the poor of your people may eat."

Leviticus 25 records the voice of God saying that all the food from my land during the Sabbath year is for eating...for you and those who live with you—slaves, hired hands, bound laborers. Also, on the seventh year, debts were forgiven. Deuteronomy 15 anticipates the people's reactions to the poor who ask for loans just prior to the seventh year...Yahweh's voice repeats over and over: "do not be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward your needy neighbor...but, rather, open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land."

The weekly Sabbath, like the Sabbatical year, renewed creation...

the land rested

slaves were freed

bound laborers were able to return to their own property

social equality was restored.

Then there was Jubilee! After seven sabbatical years—the fiftieth year—was a celebration of liberty throughout the entire land! *Everyone* was set free.

Jubilee was Sabbath expanded to every day of the year!

Remember how you grew up keeping Sabbath?

Imagine your parents telling you it is going to be Sabbath every day for a year!

Now imagine having to pay your entire mortgage right now...and if you couldn't, you and your family would become servants/bound laborers until your debt was paid.

How does your family think of Jubilee year? Of celebrating the equality of the Sabbath every day?!

Scripture continues:

"If any who are dependent on you become so impoverished that they sell themselves to you, you shall not make them serve as slaves. They shall remain with you as hired or bound laborers. They shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. Then they and their children with them shall be free from your authority; they shall go back to their own family and return to their ancestral property. For they are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves are sold." (Lev. 25:39–42)

Jubilee, the year-long Sabbath, the year of the Lord's favor—meant the restoration of economic equality. Debts gone. No longer servants working someone else's land, but their own land returned to them, regardless of how it had been lost.

For Israel, the Sabbath was a rich tradition...

...a reminder of Creation, and human equality in the presence of the Creator

...a reminder of Redemption, and freedom from bondage

...a reminder of Jubilee, and the restoration of economic justice.

Generations after Israel received these commands....

It was a Sabbath day.

Jesus was in the synagogue of his hometown.

Sometimes it's strange to return to the church of your childhood after you have been away for awhile.

Seeing the kids you remember playing with, sitting there with kids of their own...

Seeing your Sabbath School teacher or Pathfinder leader from years earlier...

Noticing how some families are sitting in the same rows...

Feeling a lump in one's throat at certain now-empty seats....

It was Sabbath. Jesus was home. And he stood to read from Isaiah's scroll, chapter 42... This scene is found in Luke 4:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind,

to let the oppressed go free,

to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19)

Then, after rolling up the scroll, Jesus says:

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21).

Jesus claims that Isaiah's vision of the ultimate Jubilee Year had been fulfilled that very Sabbath!

Jesus proclaims:

Today is Sabbath—the day that celebrates life as it was created to be.

Today is Sabbath—the day that celebrates life free from oppression!

Today is Sabbath—the day that celebrates life restored from economic injustice!

"Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"!!

In Luke's Gospel, this scene is the *first* time Jesus entered a synagogue on the Sabbath....

Chapter 13 is the last time he does.

"Now [Jesus] was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are set free from your ailment.' When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God." (Luke 13:10-13)

The unnamed woman is bent over.

For eighteen years she has known only restricted movement. Able to see people only at a slant, never eye-to-eye.

Q. Did she have some disease? Something some of us can relate to—osteoporosis... or arthritis?

Q. Or, had she experienced so much backbreaking work that her body retained the scars?

Theologian Megan McKenna reflects on this woman in light of women and men she encounters in her travels:

"On my first trip to Japan, I noticed older men and women so stooped and bent that they were unable to stand up... [I]t wasn't until I traveled to the countryside that I realized these were farmers who had grown up in the rice fields, bent over and hand-sowing, weeding and reaping the rice harvest. They had spent their lives standing in wet fields raising the staple food of a densely packed nation."¹

That Sabbath, when Jesus was in the bent-over woman's synagogue, he did not ignore her... in fact, he stops teaching as soon as he sees her.

Immediately he says: "Woman, you are set free from your ailment."

She is “set free”—“released”—like her ancestors, the slaves in Egypt, she experiences freedom, restoration!

Later in the story, when the crowd witnesses these events, the people rejoice at the “wonderful things” that Jesus was doing...the word for “wonderful things” is found only here in the New Testament...a word associated with the mighty acts of God during the Exodus! (Deut. 10:21; Exod. 34:10).

Freedom. Redemption. End of oppression.

When the woman stands up straight for the first time in eighteen years...

she immediately bursts forth in praise to God.

For the first time in the story, she has a voice!

But another's voice will dominate the story for a time....

“But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the Sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the Sabbath day.” (Luke 13:14)

Wait! Says the leader of the synagogue.

Your timing is off.

The day will come for restoration and wholeness...for standing up straight and having a voice...for equality.

Be patient.

Wait until the proper time.

The Church isn't ready right now....

She *bad* waited...for eighteen years.

For eighteen years she had found ways to survive as a bent-over woman.

She even remained committed to regular attendance at her synagogue.

But then Jesus sees her...and his convictions concerning the Sabbath shout: the time is NOW!

Jesus can live no other way!

For Sabbath is the day of restoration, healing, wholeness, equality...new creation! Jubilee!

The day for everyone's voice to be heard.

Only three times in Luke will Jesus use the term “hypocrites”...this is one of them:

“But the Lord answered him and said, ‘You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the Sabbath day?’” (Luke 13:15–16)

The Sabbath day is to celebrate release from Satan's bondage!

That is precisely how one keeps the Sabbath!

Notice who has caused the bondage...Satan.

Satan is the one who binds and disfigures and diminishes people.

When we are bound up and bent over that is Satan's doing, not God's.

From the perspective of God's kingdom, it is tragic when *any* child of Abraham is kept bound on the Sabbath....

Bound and bent over because of childhood scars...

Bound and bent over because of prejudice...oppression...injustice....

From the perspective of God's kingdom, it is tragic when any child of Abraham is...

Bound from entering certain rooms or vocations...

Bound from praising God...from preaching...from using God-given gifts...

That is Satan's doing, not God's.

God's kingdom is about setting people free...and helping them stand up straight...

To be able to look others in the eye again...

To have a voice....

The bent-over woman is a daughter of Abraham...a child of the covenant promise.²

Jesus, as the fulfillment of Jubilee, keeps Sabbath the way God intended it to be kept....

Jesus was a Sabbath-keeper.

His Sabbath convictions made him act for restoration and justice when he saw a bent-over woman.

In the face of tragedy and injustice, Sabbath-keepers act.

When women in Baghdad and the Sudan are bent over holding their babies, rocking in sorrow...

Sabbath-keepers respond...sending relief and demanding justice.

When men and women in Pakistan and India and Guatemala are bent over trying to identify loved ones from the rubble that was a home, Sabbath-keepers join Doctors Without Borders and relief agencies in caring for the hurting.

When homes and hopes are washed away in floods, Sabbath-keepers rebuild homes and hopes....

When children are forced to become sex slaves in key tourist locations around our globe, Sabbath-keepers go to Capitol Hill and demand that the United States do something to stop such evil.

When a bent-over person enters our sanctuary or our counseling center or our classroom, Sabbath-keepers respond with networks of care and professional support.

Sabbath-keepers teach people to read...and hold peace conferences...and make quilts for babies with AIDS...

...because Sabbath-keepers know that all oppression, all that keeps people bound and bent over is of Satan.

But the Kingdom of God is about new creation...freedom...Jubilee....

It is about freeing bound people...helping them stand up straight and recover their voices.

One hundred sixty-one years ago, Advent believers wept because October 22 had come and gone and they were not in the presence of God.

It was a "great disappointment" not because they were wrong about a date.

It was a "great disappointment" because they longed for God's presence.

They longed to experience God's new creation....

Where every tear would be wiped away....

Death would be no more....

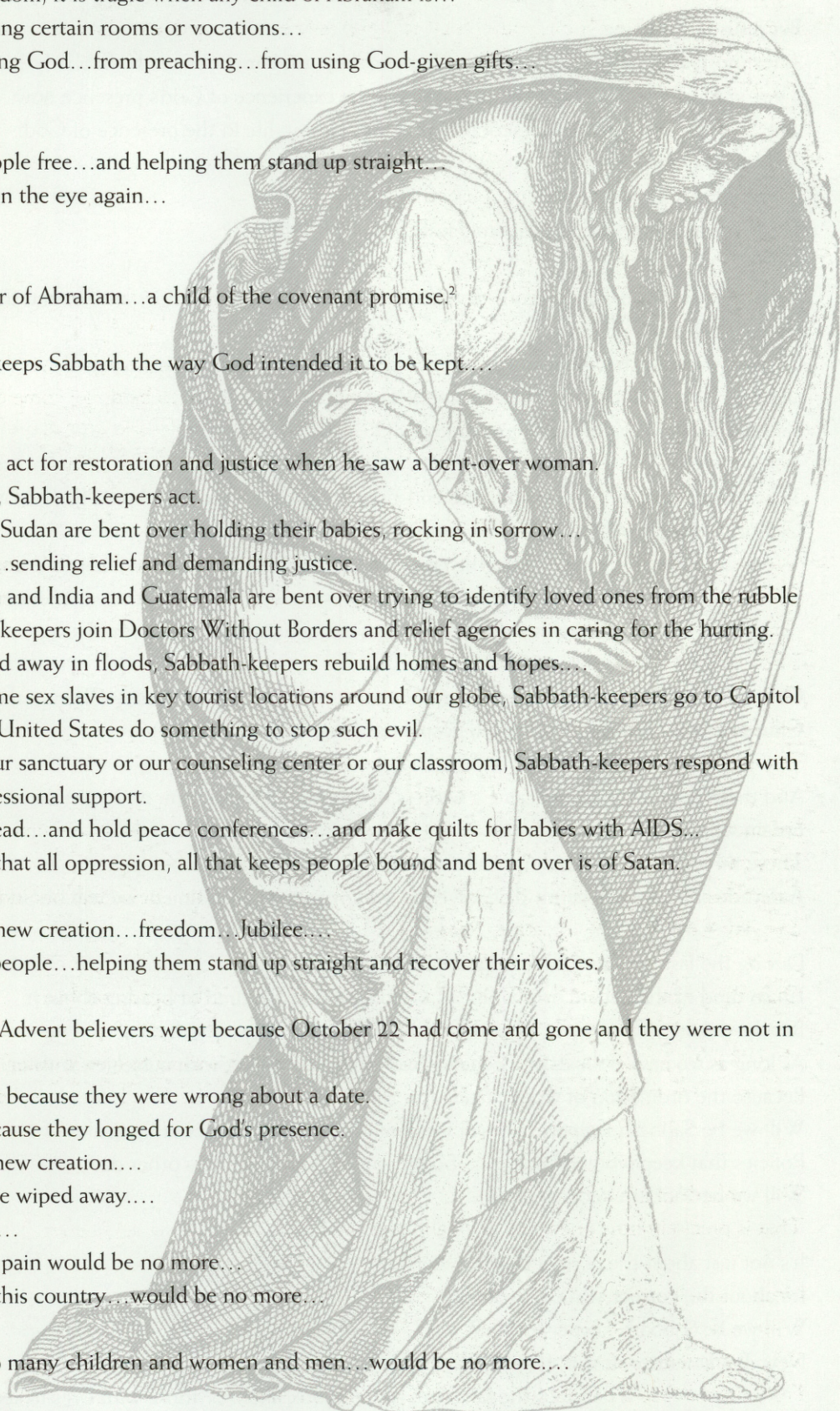
Mourning and crying and pain would be no more...

the injustice of slavery in this country...would be no more....

wars would be no more...

the sickness suffered by so many children and women and men...would be no more....

Those early Advent believers knew that God's presence would end death forever...and families would be reunited in a



new kingdom of peace and justice....

There would be a global restoration...the ultimate Jubilee.

But Jesus didn't come.

After those days of weeping at God's absence, they came to embrace the Sabbath tradition.

They gradually realized that the Sabbath was the experience of God's presence now.

The Sabbath was a weekly experience of new creation—life in the presence of God.

Day of celebration.

Day of restoration.

Day of social and economic justice.

Sabbath convictions led Seventh-day Adventists into this nation's cities and around the world as voices for bent-over men, women, and children....

For if the new earth will be a place of new creation—peace, justice, restoration....

and the Sabbath anticipated new creation! Then....

Sabbath-keepers live the new creation now!

Ten years ago, three Seventh-day Adventist congregations—one in Takoma Park, Maryland, and two in Southern California, proclaimed—in harmony with their heritage...

If we believe that the new earth will be a place of equality and justice and peace because of God's presence...

And if we believe that God is present with us now in the experience of the Sabbath...

Then *now* is the time to live as communities of equality and justice and peace before God.

On two Sabbaths in 1995, Seventh-day Adventists at La Sierra University Church, the Victoria Church, and the Sligo Church ordained women pastors to gospel ministry.

And these three churches became a witness to the rest of Adventism: no longer can it be said that Adventists don't ordain women...we *did* and we *do*.

These three local congregations call their denomination to remember its heritage.

A decade ago, three Seventh-day Adventist congregations proclaimed: we will be Sabbath-keepers!

During the last decade, I have occasionally heard people say:

I'm so tired of the debate over women's ordination. I'm just tired of hearing about it.

But the debate will continue until the church we love is true to itself.

As long as we have policies of inequality, we will be in conflict with ourselves, with our own convictions as Adventists....

Because the ordination of women issue is a Sabbath issue.

Will we be Sabbath-keepers? Or will we continue to have policies of inequality?

Policies that keep women bent-over, bound on Sabbath and every other day?

Will we be Sabbath-keepers or not?

It's not just about the correct DAY of worship....

It's about the correct WAY of worship!

Will we be Sabbath-keepers or not?

New Testament professor, Frances Taylor Gench, says:

"What does the kingdom of God look like? For those with eyes to see, it looks like a woman standing up straight in the midst of the community of faith, praising God."³

- Q. Do you see it?
 Q. Do you see the kingdom of God? The new creation breaking through?
 Q. Do your eyes see the new creation when a bent woman stands up straight?
 Q. Do you see it?
 Q. When male pastors, when Sabbath-keeping male pastors, hand in their own credentials, asking for the type of credentials carried by their female colleagues....
 Q. Do you see it?
 Q. When women are released from only serving daily meals, and serve the Lord's Supper....
 Q. Do you see it?

"What does the kingdom of God look like? For those with eyes to see, it looks like a woman standing up straight in the midst of the community of faith, praising God."

- Q. When women pastors stand in baptistries and serve the precious people they have studied Scripture with.
 Q. Do you see it?
 Q. When the Southeastern California Conference ordains pastors—men and women pastors—together... do you see it?
 Q. Do your eyes see the kingdom of God? The new creation?
 Q. When women and men study together in our School of Religion—Greek and Revelation and the Prophets and preaching and how to give Bible studies....
 Q. Do you see it?

If Seventh-day Adventist are Sabbath-keepers

- We must embrace Sabbath justice.
- We must embrace equality...
and freedom from all that oppresses....
- We must embrace economic restoration.
- We must help bent-over women and men and children stand up straight....
- We must hear their voices....

If Seventh-day Adventists are Sabbath keepers...

- We must embrace Sabbath justice now...
even as we anticipate the eternal Sabbath... global Jubilee....

If Seventh-day Adventists are Sabbath keepers...

- We must embrace Sabbath justice.

Amen.

Notes and References

1. Frances Taylor Gench, *Back to the Well: Women's Encounters with Jesus in the Gospels* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 99.
2. *Ibid.*, 89.
3. *Ibid.*, 91.

Kendra Haloviak is assistant professor of New Testament in the School of Religion at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

New Sabbath Books

by *Adventist Pastors* | NOTED BY BONNIE DWYER

In Granite or Ingrained?

What the Old and New Covenants Reveal about the Gospel, the Law, and the Sabbath

By Skip MacCarty

Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2007



When God's love is responded to with faith, it produces a new covenant experience, which results in loving obedience. But if God is responded to with legalistic obedience (or with no obedience), it results in an old covenant experience. That's the significance of the old and new covenants in summary," says MacCarty.

A book suggesting that the New Covenant did away with the Old Covenant and the need for Sabbath-keeping prompted MacCarty to undertake a study of the covenants that, he says, proved to be a challenging and rewarding study. He says it is essential to understand the covenant issues "if any confusion over the importance of faith, obedience, and God's laws, including the Sabbath, is to be resolved."

MacCarty is associate pastor for evangelism at Pioneer Memorial Church on the campus of Andrews University. He holds a Doctor of Ministry degree and is a specialist on the relationship between stress and spiritual life.

Sabbath Reflections

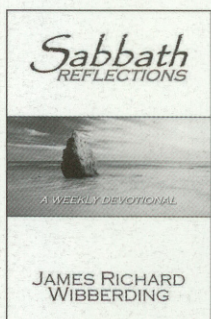
By James Richard Wibberding

Telford, Penn.: Big Fish, 2006

Those who revere Sabbath can readily make a biblical case for why they keep it but usually fall back on tradition for how they keep it," says Wibberding, who admits to doing the same. What he shares in this weekly devotional book is a log of his journey through Sabbath in Scripture. "Developing the much-needed biblical case for how to experience Sabbath as God intended is best done through experience," he adds, which is an experience guided by Scripture.

This book, published in 2006, is Wibberding's second. The first, *Learn to Preach Before Next Weekend*, caught the eye of bloggers and lay preachers for its straightforward and practical approach to putting a sermon together in memorable fashion.

Wibberding pastors the Telford, Pennsylvania, Seventh-day Adventist Church.



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SPIRITUALITY AND THE D



"STARRY NIGHT" BY VINCENT VAN GOGH; PORTRAIT OF MOTHER THERESA FROM WWW.CS.CMU.EDU/...SKETCHES

ARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

Thirsting for God:

The Spirituality of Mother Teresa | BY RACHEL DAVIES



I don't know what inspires childhood infatuations, but the day Mother Teresa died is the day one was born in my life. I was thirteen at the time, an enthusiastic eighth-grader with a penchant for the melancholy. Perhaps that explains why, when my teacher assigned a research-your-favorite-hero project in the weeks that followed their deaths, I chose Mother Teresa, whereas most of my friends picked Princess Diana.

I admit I felt somewhat on the outs when the time came for presentations. Display boards on the late princess were glamorous, full of color and life. But mine featured grey cutouts of starved babies held by a wrinkled old woman who smiled too much. I wondered what my classmates would think.

To the credit of all us kids, we were moved by Mother Teresa's story. And who wouldn't be? She was a good woman and had lived well in a world where even heroes struggle to find purpose.

Middle school research gave me the basics: Teresa (Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu) was born the youngest of three siblings in Skopje, Macedonia (former Yugoslavia), to Albanian parents. Her father died quite young, leaving the family to survive by means other than his once-steady income. Gonxha's mother was a devout Catholic, and the nun-to-be would later reflect on how her mother's good deeds shaped her own model of compassion from a very young age.

When Gonxha was nineteen, she left home and joined the Sisters of Loreto in Ireland. Having learned English and finished her novitiate in Darjeeling, she was then transferred to a Catholic

girl's school in Calcutta, where she taught geography for nineteen happy years before leaving the convent and starting her own religious order, the Missionaries of Charity, in 1948.

When I was thirteen, I didn't wonder why she did this. Perhaps the stories overwhelmed my curiosity, like the first time she washed a worm-eaten beggar on the street and said she did it because she loved him. I carried that moving life image in the back of my mind throughout high school and into college. Eighth-grade teachers, beware what you inspire.

I'm an idealist by nature. I love the world and stories where good conquers evil and truth triumphs. But growing up is full of painful lessons. Joining a large community like a college campus puts one in close touch with the experiences of others, and sometimes those experiences speak of death more than childlike hope and victory. Sometimes people lose their faith, or even their lives or the lives of people they love. Whether it touches new friends or distant acquaintances, death wounds the spirit of each of us.

Perhaps one of the most painful things death can take away is a sense of God's presence. Death, a spreading motif, fills out and makes itself at home in our thinking (at least, that's what started to happen to me). For me, the silence of God became tangible, and it threatened to swallow my once-vivid experience. I didn't like it. I didn't like the violence; I couldn't stand the heartlessness of it all. So I went back in search of my childhood hero, that woman of faith, charity, and life. Maybe she could push death back, make God speak to me again.



PHOTO FROM WWW.EXCEPTIONAL.ORG.AU

Mother Teresa visiting the Children's Hospital at Mater Health Services in Brisbane, Australia, October 1981.

I'll never forget the night of shock. "Mother Teresa," I typed into the Google search bar, waiting for a good read. Thousands of articles popped up. Most of them gave simple praise and laud to this woman who had devoted her life in service to the "poorest of the poor." Glossy, triumphalistic titles flooded my computer screen. I read half a dozen or so, but none seemed to have substance beyond the obvious. "Perhaps holy people, life-knowing people, don't have personalities," I thought fleetingly.

But then the words popped out: "Research Reveals a Dark Side of Mother Teresa." I opened the article like a child carefully thieving a cookie...my neck tingling, my heart racing. I was already aware of some popular criticisms leveled against her by journalists like Christopher Hitchens, but this article wasn't about those. This one was different. This one was terrifying to the core:

As the Roman Catholic world prepares for tomorrow's beatification of Mother Teresa, she is being revered as a missionary to India's poorest of the poor, someone whose relationship with God seemed obvious from her willingness to undergo incredible hardship... But her exterior buoyancy masked an astonishing secret-

known to a small number of clergy counselors but no other close colleagues—that was revealed only through research for her sainthood candidacy. Mother Teresa was afflicted with feelings of abandonment by God from the very start of her work among the homeless children and dying people in Calcutta's slums. From all available evidence, this experience persisted until her death five decades later, except for a brief interlude in 1958.¹

According to another article, 1958 is the year in which she wrote: "My smile is a great cloak that hides a multitude of pains."²

My faith icon had more to say in private letters to her spiritual advisors:

I am told God lives in me—and yet the reality of darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul.

I want God with all the power of my soul—and yet between us there is terrible separation.

Heaven from every side is closed.

I feel just that terrible pain of loss, of God not wanting me, of God not being God, of God not really existing.³

This was only one of the many articles I found that night. Search after search verified what I had read and more. Apparently, Mother Teresa had an average Christian experience until the time of her "call within a call" in 1946. During that year, she took a train from Calcutta, where she was teaching, to Darjeeling for her annual spiritual retreat.

It was on the train that God asked her to leave the convent and start her own religious order in the slums. She didn't want to. She had a happy life with the Loreto sisters. But according to Richard Ostling, "she said she distinctly heard [God's] voice say, 'I want to use you for my glory. Wilt thou refuse?'"

Mother Teresa answered God's call with a letter to the Vatican requesting permission to leave the convent. The process took almost two years, during which she "experienced profound union with Christ."⁴ However, according to Carol Zaleski, "soon after she left the convent and began her work among the destitute and dying on the street, the visions and locutions ceased, and she experienced a spiritual darkness that would remain with her until her death."

I was angry and confused. I had been looking for life, not more death. What about the stories? What about the sunny pictures I had seen of her smiling, praying, spreading the “love of God”? How could it be, and why would God let it be? She had given everything to him!

Though my discovery did not breathe life the way I had hoped, it did give me a temporary metaphor to express and explore death further. Mother Teresa, beacon of hope to thousands, knew silence just like me.

Six months later, I packed my bags and headed off to Calcutta. I went for many reasons, but most pressingly to “explore the presence of God and the lack thereof in the world and in individual human experience” (or so I said in my preflight blog entry). I was scared, eager, and hopeful.

To my surprise, I was only one of many volunteers at Nirmal Hriday (the infamous Home for the Destitute and Dying). Individuals from around the world were there, many on the same quest as me (though knowledge of Mother Teresa’s darkness was not widely spread—only the nuns seemed to know).

The sisters were loving, warm, and sometimes hysterically funny. “Certainly holy people have personality,” I thought. But the atmosphere of the house itself, and indeed the whole city, is what set the dominant tone of my experience in Calcutta and ultimately pointed me toward resolution.

Just as there was more to Mother Teresa than the media said, I also found Calcutta incredibly complex. No, carts didn’t come through the streets collecting dead bodies each morning (somehow I had gotten that impression from eighth grade and Monty Python). It is actually possible to live one’s entire life in Calcutta without meeting a slum or a corpse.

The Adventist church on ritzy Park Street accepted me warmly into fellowship during my time away from home, but its members seemed as little aware of what was happening down the street as most of my friends were on the other side of the globe. Lots of distant admiration—just like the superficial articles I had read.

Paradox is the word, I think. Slums and fast cars, the rich and the poor, life and death. Nirmal Hriday was a home “for the dying,” and yet 50 percent of those admitted actually lived. Journalists made a mistake in how they portrayed the home. Newspaper pictures of Nirmal Hriday are devoid of the human: deadly figures lie here and there, clasping for water, but not for touch or conversa-

tion. “How horrible,” is a true but incomplete message. I got to know and love those patients. I saw nuns laughing and playing with individuals.

Death didn’t stand alone, and there were more sides to Mother Teresa’s story. On the roof of Nirmal Hriday, in all the chapels and in all seven-hundred-plus of Mother Teresa’s homes around the world, the phrase “I Thirst” is prominently displayed. “Of all the cries of Christ from the cross, what an odd one to choose for special attention,” I thought. Why not “My God, why have you forsaken me?” or even “Father forgive them”?

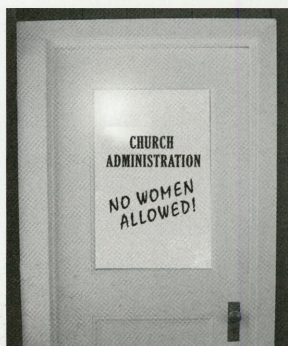
But the image is striking once you think about it. Personal letters reveal that it came from Mother Teresa’s Darjeeling train ride. She had a vision—or series of visions—in which Jesus cried “I Thirst” from the cross, and pleaded with her to go out in search of those for whom he was so thirsty: the poor, the lonely, the dying, the street children, the social outcasts.⁵ “Satisfy my thirst,” he said.

But he also warned her that she might have to share in his thirst. Indeed, it was her thirst for God that qualified her to be his agent of mercy in the first place (if it’s even possible to be “qualified” for such a task). “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me,” says Jesus in Matthew 16:24, 25 (ESV).

Our Catholic friends place great emphasis on this verse, and rightly so. It’s brutally fair. Who can honestly confront a world like ours—as Christ did—without feeling the cross of horror, shame, and despair? Answering the call of Jesus inevitably means sharing in the Passion—suffering the weight of sin along with Christ—before we can partner with him for its redemption. Only after we have acknowledged death’s presence in the world will we be able to speak with any tenaciousness about life. “For who hopes for what he already has?” (Rom. 8:24).



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.

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I see it now, and I'm not so angry. Facing our death and our need separated Jesus from the presence of the Father. He was thirsty. Mother Teresa responded in love by going to a thirsting world, a world whose pain hid God from her eyes in the same way it had from Christ's. That bitter absence, thirst for God and thirst for those he died to save, wrote Christ's heart onto hers in the end.

Christianity teaches that Jesus endured crucifixion for the sins of all people, and that he cried from the cross about God's abandonment. Similarly...for this woman who loved God above everything else, loss of the divine presence was the ultimate sacrifice that emptied her soul but mysteriously energized her mission.⁶

I didn't come away from Calcutta as a conqueror, with sunny God feelings as my souvenir from the House of the Dying. But I now see death and life in conversation, honesty and hope together. A very fragile theme of grace is emerging from the text that once seemed so cruel and so stern: "take up your cross, and follow me." Maybe Mother Teresa sensed it, too. Maybe that's what made her smile. ■

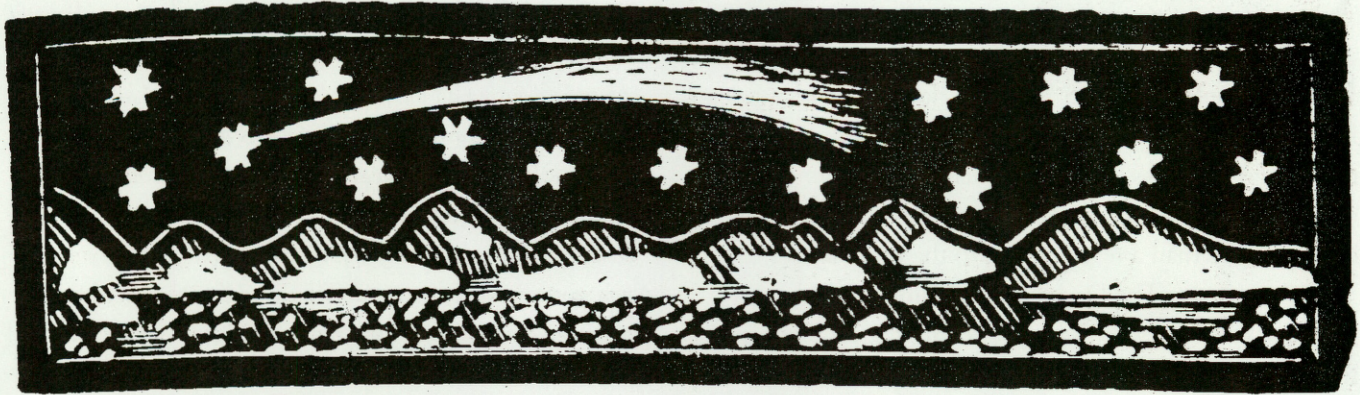
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2. Bruce Johnston and Brigid Delaney, "Does God Really Exist? The Agony of Teresa," *Sydney Morning Herald*, Nov. 30, 2002, viewed online at <www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/11/29/1038386314539.html?oneclick=true>
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A Dark Day, A Starry Night:

And Other Signs of the End (and the Beginning) in Maine | BY WINONA HOWE



Forty years ago, it seemed to me that a fairly large proportion of Sabbath sermons concerned the second advent and were based on a familiar text, Revelation 6:12–13: “And...lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind” (KJV).¹ At that time, it never occurred to me that anyone besides Adventists would be particularly interested in this text.

These events and, most certainly, their interpretation, were so important a part of our eschatology that they almost seemed to have been written for us alone. In fact, it was easy for Seventh-day Adventists to appropriate the ownership of certain historical events because of their application to their own religious history and beliefs. In particular, the Dark Day (May 19, 1780) and the Night the Stars Fell (Nov. 13, 1833) have assumed such a vital place in Adventist eschatology that we often

fail to consider what effect they may or may not have had on the rest of the world.

It is harder to appropriate similarly the Great Lisbon Earthquake (Nov. 1, 1755) for a number of reasons. First, it is more difficult to identify this event as conclusively, due to the great number of earthquakes that occur. Furthermore, it is problematic to take ownership of an event that can only be defined as a tragedy, one attended by great loss of life. A disaster of this proportion seems to belong by some inherent spiritual right to those involved: the victims, the survivors, and those who lost their loved ones. In addition, the fact that this purported Christian event, this sign of the end, did not happen in America made it less immediate to even the early days of Adventism.

Although the phenomena of the heavens were visible in other parts of the world, they were very much a part of the American experience at the time, particularly in New England. The Maine regionalist author, Charles Asbury Stephens, who writes about both the Dark Day and the Night the Stars Fell,

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explores their effect on those who witnessed them. His stories are not set in the context of Adventism, but Stephens was aware of Adventists and various facets of their reputation, as other stories of his demonstrate. The three stories that deal with these eschatological events all initially appeared in *The Youth's Companion*, a journal for which Stephens wrote extensively from the 1870s to 1929, when it ceased publication.²

Stephens's short story, "The Dark Day," recounts one young couple's experience in May 19, 1780.³ Although the story is presented as fact, the reader should remember that many of Stephens's stories fall somewhere between fact and fiction. They often borrow from Stephens's own experiences or from family history, but the information is shaped and altered until it may bear no more than a resemblance to the original.

In the case of "The Dark Day," it is impossible not to notice parallels between Lyman Morrill, the protagonist of the story, and Joseph Stevens, the paternal great-grandfather of the author.⁴ Both young men fight in the Revolutionary War, are paid in almost worthless "Continental money," decide to clear land in a relatively uninhabited part of Maine, and situate their homesteads just west of a body of water.

At this point, however, the personal history of Stevens diverges somewhat from the presentation of Morrill's experiences. Stevens locates his homestead on Lake Penneesseewassee in Oxford County (in western Maine), whereas Morrill's land is near Great Pond in Kennebec County (the county to the east of Oxford). More importantly, Stevens did not take up land until 1786, which makes his actual move too late for the Dark Day (although he had previously lived in South Paris, also located only a few miles from Lake Penneesseewassee).

In contrast, Morrill (having already built a cabin) is represented as taking his wife and young son from Reading, Massachusetts, to their new home on May 19, 1780. The Morrills may have been actual people of that name, pioneers in the Great Pond area whose story Stephens had heard, or they may have been fictional characters, suggested by the history of Stephens's own great-grandparents, who moved to what was then considered a wilderness area in the same approximate period.⁵

"There have been several 'dark days' and 'yellow days'

since the famous one of May 19, 1780, which spread such consternation and foreboding throughout New England," the narrative of "The Dark Day" begins,

but none of them have equaled it in depth of gloomy obscurity. A strange darkness came on before midday, and for sixteen hours or more the people of New England believed that the end of the world was at hand.

Among many other attempted explanations, put forth at the time and afterward, one was that a comet, passing near the earth, had brushed its "tail" through our atmosphere. One savant attributed it to a hypothetical volcanic eruption in Labrador; still another to an unprecedented rarefaction of the air over North America, causing all the suspended particles of dust and smoke to settle in a zone near the earth's surface.

Great forest fires in Canada, causing enormous volumes of smoke, were also held responsible for the darkness; and this, combined with a peculiarly light state of the air, is the explanation most commonly accepted. The recorded testimony of eye-witnesses, however, is to the effect that, although smoky days had preceded it and followed it, the obscurity of the 19th was not like that of smoke.⁶ (593)

These three paragraphs supply not only a fair amount of information quite quickly, but also a context for the story that follows (although what might perhaps seize the attention of the Adventist eschatologist is the initial thought about there having been several "dark days").⁷

Lyman Morrill (the protagonist of the story), has fought in the Revolutionary War, been both imprisoned and wounded, married a young woman who nursed him, fathered a child (quaintly named Lafayette), cleared ten acres in the Maine wilderness, and built a house. He then goes to fetch his wife and baby in Massachusetts. By May 19, they have been on the road five days, Lyman walking while Ruth rides a white mare and carries the baby in her arms.

This is the last day of their journey to their new home; only twenty miles are left to traverse, but the road is merely a deteriorating track through the forest. The narrator comments on the weather (initially calm and hazy, followed by showers and dense clouds). It is still morning when the day moves from the usual to the unexpected, becoming exceptionally dark and gloomy.

"Is night coming on, Lyme, or what is it?" Ruth exclaimed.

"Oh, no, it can't be night. It isn't noon yet," he replied.

"But all the birds have stopped singing. And the frogs have begun to peep just as they do after sunset." (593)

The young couple know they are in trouble before long. They are in a section where the path is marked only by blazes scored on the tree trunks, and it is too dark to ascertain whether or not these are present. Lyman wants to stop and camp; he is afraid that they will be irretrievably lost if they continue. Ruth, in contrast, is even

The young couple then move through a world that has suddenly become a frightening and alien place. Nothing is familiar. Not only can they no longer visually discern the path or blazes on the trees, but when Lyman runs his hands over the trunks, he finds no vestige of a mark. Indeed, Lyman's fears have been realized, as he and Ruth now understand that they are completely lost. Both adults are terrified, but they remain silent, neither wishing



more frightened than her husband. In her panic, she foolishly insists that they return to the house where they had spent the previous night (clearly an impossibility), as she would take comfort from being around others at a time when the routines of life, which we accept without thought, are suddenly altered, perhaps forever.

It occurs to Ruth that perhaps it may never be light again, and then she has another thought, which is even more disconcerting: "[P]erhaps it's the end of the world" (593). Stephens provides a narrative interjection at this point: "So constantly were the Scriptures read at that time and so literally were all passages interpreted, that throughout New England the thought of judgment day seems to have oppressed the entire population" (593).

Even though this interjection interferes with the flow of the story, it is particularly interesting. It gives insight into the religious climate of the time, demonstrating that the Seventh-day Adventist Church that would soon emerge in America was not as different and as religiously isolated from the rest of the population as we might believe today.

to infect the other with their fears. Young Lafayette, however, knows no such compunction as he wails without ceasing.

Eventually, the couple hears sounds they cannot identify. Lyman thinks it may be "cocks crowing lustily a long way off. Ruth insists it is singing; it sounds, in fact, much like 'Old Hundred'" (594). They are puzzled when the singing changes to apparent groans, but they continue to press forward, hoping for at least the comfort of other people. Indeed, when they reach a clearing, they find a group of people, but the comfort that they had expected through human contact is not immediately forthcoming. The Morrills have stumbled into an Indian encampment whose inhabitants are also extremely frightened.

In addition, the Indians view the sudden appearance of Lyman and Ruth as another of the alarming aspects of the day, and they flee the clearing in terror. Lyman recognizes one of the Indians as Squanto, who had begged salt from him while he was working on his land, and he calls out, identifying himself. Squanto

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then reassures the other members of the group and the Morrills are made welcome, a meeting that marks the beginning of a relationship with Molly, Squanto's wife, that will continue for many years. "The next morning the sun rose about as clear as usual," and the Morrills reach their new home at last (594).

This concludes Stephens's first version of the Dark Day, a story written in a style very typical of this author: presenting either information or a message in a simple narrative, couched in the personal experience of specific characters. Interest is added by the fact that the Indians fear the sudden apparition of a white woman holding a baby and riding on a white horse. Especially because of the religious overtones that the Dark Day inevitably presents, it is impossible not to think of Joseph leading Mary and the child as they leave for the unknown terrors of a foreign land, an impression only strengthened because of the many artists who have portrayed the Flight to Egypt.

The importance of this specific image is underlined, for the scene comprises one of the two illustrations of the story provided by *The Youth's Companion*. The second illustration adds another biblical touch; it is a picture of Squanto, his arms spread wide in a position readily identified as one assumed during crucifixion. The idea of Squanto as not only comforter, but also savior, is somewhat undercut, however, by the text, which explains that Squanto "now and again passed his hands before his eyes, then extended them north and south, shaking his head, to indicate to Morrill that something very ominous was occurring in the heavens" (594).

This passage suggests a degree of befuddlement, a depiction that in accounts of Native Americans in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would often be linked with the consumption of alcohol. Furthermore, the concept of Squanto as savior is even more drastically undercut by the ironic information offered that, two years later, "Squanto went to Canada and was killed in a brawl" (594).

Stephens revisited the topic in another story for *The Youth's Companion*, which was also titled "The Dark Day."⁸ Perhaps because twenty-two years had elapsed since publication of the first "Dark Day," Stephens may have felt there would be no problem appropriating his own title for another version of the same event, the Dark Day of May 19, 1780. This time, Stephens recounts the story as the personal experience of

his great-grandfather. Furthermore, he presents it as a story that, over the years, had become a family favorite:

And the fact that first piqued the fancy of us youngsters was that our then youthful great-grandfather was exploring the forest in quest of a good location for his new farm at the time of the famous Dark Day—when people everywhere believed the world was coming to an end, as foretold in the Biblical prophecy that "the sun shall be darkened and the moon refuse to give her light."

That Dark Day, as we heard it described, was indeed spectacular. It set us asking a hundred questions as to what caused it and how dark it really was. (1–2)

Again, Stephens provides descriptions of the dark conditions and offers possible explanations. Forest fires in Canada are mentioned again, along with possible fires in "the moss and peat beds of Labrador. But from all accounts, the darkness did not wholly resemble the obscurity occasioned by smoke, nor smell like it. It was a kind of velvety opaqueness," explains Stephens, "which seemed to settle over the whole country, though darkest in New England" (2).

The progression of darkness is more carefully charted in this version of "The Dark Day." The phenomenon begins at 9 a.m., darkens to prevent reading or telling time from watches by 10 a.m., and continues to grow darker for the next two hours. The darkness lessens during the afternoon, but the general condition lasts until nighttime. "Birds and animals exhibited bewilderment; barn fowls sought their roosts, cattle came home from their pastures and lowed plaintively to be yarded," writes Stephens.

"Some persons believed the darkness to be due to an eclipse of the sun, which clouds prevented from being seen; but astronomers say there was no eclipse at that time," he continues. "Others suggested that a volcano had somewhere burst forth, belching clouds of black dust into the heavens; but no such volcano was ever discovered" (2–3).

After a few more contextual comments, Stephens moves on to the story of the Old Squire's father, who, in company with his brother and three other potential settlers, travels from Massachusetts to Oxford County, Maine, where they look about, investigating soil conditions, the incidence of rocks, the availability of timber, and so forth (although not until 1786 did Stevens, at least, finally clear land and establish a permanent homestead).

On one of these trips of exploration in 1780 "the famous Dark Day overtook them" (4). The young men are con-

fused and uneasy (much as Lyman and Ruth in the earlier account). They also become lost and stumble into an Indian encampment, this time identified as a camp of Saco Abnakis. The group hardly notices them, as they mutter words that "Great-grandfather Joseph" interprets as some sort of "prayer-meeting."

But Stevens is quick to add that everyone present feels "under the influence of a singular spell, or sense of helplessness, in the presence

the religious symbolism emerging in both description and illustration. Stephens does not dwell on or even explore these topics in "The Dark Day"; he cannot be described as a psychological author.

Nevertheless, his brief descriptions are suggestive and they allow the imaginative reader to share the perceptions and emotions of his characters. The second "Dark Day" lacks these overtones. It can be described more as a cata-



of an inexplicable event" (5–6). After the darkness abates somewhat, the Indians hospitably share their food with the prospective settlers, and all feel their spirits rise with the world's return to normalcy.

Although these two stories of the same name depend on the same event for structure, they are very different. Stephens presents the latter version as part of family history. Therefore, it is far more rambling (even in the short confines of a typical Stephens story or chapter), briefly discussing or mentioning Indian agriculture, the dimensions of the narrator's great-grandfather's house, the journey of the young family to its new home, and the vicissitudes of that journey, the birth of Stephens's grandfather, and so forth.

The story is less consciously shaped, and it lacks the drama of the earlier tale: the tree blazes fading as the young couple searches feverishly to find their way, their terror quickening when they realize they are lost (a state of mind only heightened by the incessant wailing of their infant son), and

log of events related to the settlement of the author's ancestors in Oxford County, with the Dark Day being the most dramatic.

Stephens sets another story in the context of another "Adventist" event with a somewhat comic recounting of "The Night the Stars Fell."⁹ In a style typical for him, Stephens begins by recalling what the United States was like at that time. It could be termed a pioneer country then, with historic individuals like Thomas Jefferson and John Adams only recently deceased, when

the great meteoric storm... for a space of several hours beat on the continent of North America with wild, bright inclemency. [It was] the most startling phenomenon which white people had ever beheld on these shores.

Far less was then known of the nature, composition and periodicity of meteors than at present; and in many parts of the country this amazing star-shower was believed to be the portent, foretold in the Scriptures, of the immediate dissolution of the world. (185)

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After this informational introduction, Stephens moves into the actual story. Of course, the characters are different from those in "The Dark Day," but they are familiar to any Stephens reader: they are identified as the Old Squire and Grandmother Ruth, the grandparents of the narrator of the Old Farm stories, a series based on Stephens's relatives, which brought the author his greatest popularity.

The couple has taken a load of turkeys and chicken to Portland to sell for Thanksgiving. Ruth does not usually accompany Joe on a trip of this sort; she has done so this time because her mother is in Portland, visiting from her home in Connecticut. Consequently, Joe and Ruth remain a week in Portland, spending time with her mother. Ordinarily, they would conclude their business in a day and spend more time on the road than in the city.

Now it is the morning of November 13, 1833, and as they start home they are concerned because they feel they should not have been away so long, leaving the farm chores to Jonathan, one of their neighbors. In addition, they are uncertain what "those Crowes" might have been doing during their absence.

The Crowes are a local problem, one for which the Old Squire must take some responsibility, as he is the one who not only hired Consider and Amma Crowe to run his sawmill, but also provided them with two cottages on his property in which to live.

From the outset, however, the Crowes proved worthless as laborers. Three other families of the same name moved there the following year, and later still another Crowe family came, nobody quite knew when—although about thirty persons, and as idle, disorderly and thievish a crew as ever pestered a decent community.

There were six families of them, all living in these two small houses, and pigs could hardly have been more filthy. The older persons, as well as the children, went about in rags, or scarcely clothed at all. (186–87)

As Joe and Ruth drive toward home, they wonder what new tribulation they must endure from the Crowes, who are a constant thorn in their flesh on a number of levels, but, most particularly, because they themselves must be blamed for the presence of these individuals. If the Old Squire had not offered jobs to the first two men, the plague of the Crowes would never have been unleashed upon the community, although it must be said that the

Old Squire and Ruth are the members of the community who suffer most because they are such near neighbors.

Furthermore, at this point, it is unclear that anything can be done; the Crowes are entrenched in their physical location as securely as they are in their "thievish" ways. Not only are the Crowes lazy, dirty, and unprepossessing, they are also outright thieves.

They fished a little in the brook, hunted a little, whined and begged round, and stole a great deal by night from the fields of corn and potatoes.

Every week or so a sheep or a lamb would be missing from the flock in the pasture, and occasionally a veal calf. Nothing in the way of tinware, dishes, or clothing could be left out after dark. Even so unwieldy a thing as a dye-pot, full of yarn for socks, which grandmother had set outdoors overnight, disappeared mysteriously. If the bulkhead door of the cellar was left unlocked, some of the Crowes were quite likely to come poking in there before morning, in quest of pork or corned beef. (187)

Given the Crowes's propensities for illegally acquiring the possessions of others, the Old Squire and Grandmother Ruth hardly know what to expect when they return. As their neighbor has gone to the farm only to do the chores, it has been essentially open season for the Crowes for an entire week. Their only hope is that the sermons of the Methodist minister, who is currently holding revival meetings nearby, may have had a desirable effect on the Crowes:

There is no doubt that the elder preached vigorous doctrine, and held out little hope for the Crowes hereafter unless they speedily reformed. He more than hinted to them, too, that the day of the Lord might be close at hand. They were unpromising subjects for reformation; yet it is likely that the elder's exhortations produced some effect. The Old Squire and grandmother earnestly hoped so—otherwise they did not expect to find much left about the house or in the cellar when they got home from Portland! (187)

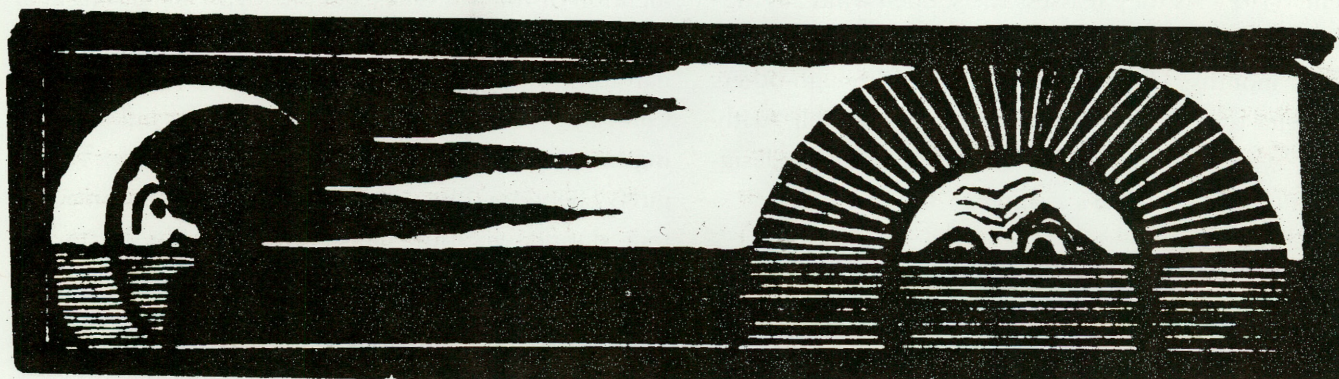
Joe and Ruth chat, but do not spend all their time discussing the Crowes. The day stretches on and the miles fly by. They make such good time, in fact, that they decide to drive into the night if, by so doing, they can sleep in their own beds instead of spending a few hours camped by the side of the road. It is a beautiful night. "So clear was the sky that the Milky Way spanned the heav-

ens in a wide arch of creamy light; and in the north the Great Dipper turned slowly to westward as the evening wore on" (188).

Ruth sees a shooting star, then another; the Old Squire discusses different theories of meteors. The shower continues, becoming almost continuous so that the countryside is lit by "the wild, uncanny illumination" (188). At this point, Grandmother Ruth introduces the idea that again demonstrates how well Stephens's writings reflect the feelings of the times:

religious, but his beliefs do not depend on the religious interpretation of others. In addition, he has a much more curious and analytical approach to life than his wife. He is interested by the facts that some fireballs appear to break apart, whereas others fade away, and in whether or not the meteorites vaporize or reach the ground (as they hear sounds like loud reports or explosions).

One brief sentence suggests that Grandmother Ruth is not alone in her fearful reaction to the falling stars as an eschatological



"Joseph," she at last exclaimed, solemnly, "do you suppose this means the end of the world? You know what the Bible says about the stars falling then."

"No, Ruth," replied the Old Squire, reassuringly, "I do not. These are not the stars, not real stars. They are meteors—small bodies that fall to the earth. They often fall. To-night there happens to be more of them than usual, that's all."

"Perhaps the Bible meant meteors, Joseph," grandmother remarked, her apprehensions far from being allayed. "They look like stars, and, oh, they are falling so fast! It may be the end, Joseph."

"I guess we shall find that the sun will rise about as usual to-morrow morning," the Old Squire said. (188–89)

This interchange illuminates the characters of the speakers. Grandmother Ruth is always emotional, strongly religious, and generally fears the worst. Clearly, she is filled with apprehension by the "falling stars," viewing the nighttime display not as announcing the coming of Christ, but rather as the end of the world.

The Old Squire, in comparison, is also deeply

event: "At one house they heard voices singing a hymn; and at another place the people seemed to be at prayer" (190). It is after their arrival at their own home, however, that they witness a most surprising (although comic) result of the phenomenon.

It is after 2 a.m., and would of course still be dark were it not for the still "continuous glare of the star-shower" (191). However, because of the unusual source of light, the Old Squire takes care of the team and Grandmother makes ginger tea, without lighting any candles or lanterns. The Old Squire even takes up a book "to show that he could read by the light of the falling stars" (191). At this point, the final phenomenon of the evening begins.

The couple notices several people moving toward the house; they appear to be carrying objects of varying sizes. One woman is crying. The group moves forward and places its burdens on the porch. It is the first wave of the Crowes, who approach bearing a dye-pot and several sheep pelts, calling up images of bringing offerings to

"I guess we shall find that the sun will rise about as usual to-morrow morning," the Old Squire said.

lay before an angry and possibly vengeful god.

Other Crowes follow, bringing articles pilfered from the Old Farm over time. These include clothes, an ax, and a hoe; "[s]everal tin pans, a brass kettle, a flail, a sap-yoke, three piggins, numerous hanks of stocking-yarn, in fact a multiplicity of things now arrived, as skulker after skulker stole into the yard" (192).

The Old Squire and Grandmother Ruth cannot help but be amused as they watch the procession. "If the last day was at hand, these wretched people plainly did not wish to be found with all that pilfered property about them!" (192). As they reassess the sudden windfall, the Old Squire and Grandmother Ruth discover items missing for months. This is the reason that, although others may refer to this night as "the night the stars fell," within the Stevens family, it is more often called by a designation of Grandmother's assigning: "the night of restitution."

It would be comforting to think that the events of this night and the Crowes' response indicate sincere repentance so that they become good neighbors who share the values of those around them and contribute to the welfare of the community. Stephens is more realistic than to provide that perhaps desired, but too-easy, ending, a fact evident in the epilogue.

"Elder Cumnor's exhortations had perhaps quickened their consciences," writes Stephens. "Repentance inspired by fright may be better than none, but the effects are not likely to be enduring," he continues, "and a strict regard for the facts compels me to say that when they found the great day had not come, the Crowes soon relapsed into their former modes of life, and had finally to be dealt with in a different way" (192). Unfortunately, no indication can be found elsewhere in Stephens's writings about how the Crowes are dealt with.

In "The Night the Stars Fell," however, they act as exemplars of all those who, on November 13, 1833, not only thought the end of the world was at hand, but were also brought to a realization of their sins, wanting to change their lives for the better quickly enough so that the end of the world would be a positive event that they could greet with gladness. For the Crowes' peace of mind, on this occasion, it was fortunate that the people they had wronged were immediately at hand, so that restitution could indeed be accomplished.

Three of Stephens's stories, then, focus on the phenomena of the Dark Day and the Night the Stars Fell, events extremely important to Seventh-day Adventist eschatology. Given Stephens's knowledge of and interest in the period, including its religious concerns, it is reasonable to assume that he must have been aware of the beginning of Adventism. The fact that he was not only aware, but had some knowledge of the reputation of the early Adventist Church is evident in four of his other stories.

The first, "White Sunday," contains a very brief mention of the Millerites, coupled with something that they were apparently notorious for at the time.¹⁰ The narrator, sometimes called Kit, has just come to the Old Farm (the home of his grandparents), and is learning from his cousins what it is like to live there. Three girls, Theodora, Ellen, and Wealthy, take him on a tour, during which the reader, as well as Kit, learns not only about the geographical features of the farm, but also about the personalities and characters of the people who live there.

They find strawberries blooming here and there. The girls mark these spots because, by the time the fruit develops, tall grass will hide the plants. They remark that their grandfather does not like them to go after strawberries because the grass is difficult to mow when trampled by people picking berries. Gram, in contrast, loves strawberries, and she specifically sends the girls strawberry picking, unless she decides to go herself. She, however, is even less careful of the grass than her granddaughters.

"And when she goes, I tell you the grass has to catch it!" exclaimed Wealthy. "She just creeps along and crushes down a whole acre of it at one time!"

"Yes, Gramp scolded a little about it one day," said Ellen. "He came in at noon and said to grandma, 'Ruth Ann, I should think that the Millerites had been creeping through my east field.' He said that to tease her, because Gram doesn't approve of the Millerites at all." (25)

This is the only mention of the Millerites in "White Sunday," but this paragraph indicates that even though the Israel Dammon trial occurred when Stephens was only a few months old, he was conversant with the "creeping" controversy.¹¹

One passage in "Immersing the Lambs" mentions a number of religions, Adventism being one of them: "The Old Squire and Gram were nominally Congregationalists, and the old meeting-house had once belonged to that sect;" writes Stephens, "but becoming reduced in numbers, and being unable to support a clergyman of that denomination during the entire year, they had allowed the Methodists, and finally the Second Adventists to hold meetings there" (102-3).¹²

thus breaking up the Congregationalist Society in that town.

"I do not take it upon me to say who is right, and who is wrong on these great religious questions," the old gentleman used to remark, when the subject came up. "But I disapprove of sowing the seeds of dissension in any church." However, he used sometimes to go to hear the Adventists' ministers. (108)

Gram responds to the Old Squire's remark



Already in this short paragraph, the chief argument against Adventists and Adventism is implicit, although it is not spelled out until a few paragraphs later. The question is, Why are the Congregationalists reduced in numbers so they must share their space with other denominations? The answer seems to follow that more aggressive soul-winning techniques have seduced Congregationalists into other denominations. As might be expected, the Old Squire is more curious about and accepts other religions more easily than his spouse, but even he is critical of Adventist tactics.

The Old Squire, indeed, was by no means a strict sectarian; he attended the Methodist service and sometimes, not often, the Adventist. Gram was more conservative and did not go, as a rule, except when there was a Congregationalist minister, although she always spoke well of the Methodists...

The Old Squire's chief objection to the Adventists was, that their preachers had come into the place uninvited, and by their zealous efforts, had caused a considerable number to withdraw from the church,

that "All Christians are good people" with the statement, "I cannot help believing that we (meaning the Congregationalists) are in the right" (108). It is not surprising, however, that the Old Squire continues to attend Adventist meetings, even if he does not totally endorse either their message or their methods. First, he is tolerant and feels that all should seek salvation in their own way. Second, given his thirst for knowledge (an aspect of his character explored in many other stories), it is hardly surprising that he would not surrender an opportunity to learn, to improve his mind and enlarge his understanding, no matter how that opportunity presents itself.

Perhaps the Old Squire's most direct involvement with the Millerites occurs at the time of the Great Disappointment. In a story titled "Old Hosannah," Stephens reports on the unusual state of mind in Oxford County, Maine, in 1844.¹³

**Repentance
inspired by
fright may be
better than
none, but the
effects are
not likely to be
enduring....**

Many of the rural people had been led to believe that the world was coming to an end immediately. A celebrated preacher named Miller had so interpreted the prophecies of Scripture, and had even announced the date. He had thousands of converts, and among them were nearly all the old Squire's neighbors. The sincerity of Miller and his followers is unquestioned. So fully did they believe that the world would be destroyed. . . that work generally ceased among them. Those who had farms sold their live stock to drovers and, although winter was at hand, allowed their crops to go unharvested." (153)

These circumstances must indeed have caused stress and disruption in the Maine countryside, where neighboring farmers who might routinely disagree on the breed of sheep most likely to thrive in the local climate or the best day for cutting hay now find themselves divided over a far more important question, one that might mark one's salvation or signal the loss of eternal life.

The Old Squire, along with Grandmother Ruth, cannot accept Miller's message, although most of the neighboring farmers have. It is typical of him, however, that, once his decision is made, he does not spend time questioning his or attempting to argue his neighbors out of theirs. Stephens always presents the Old Squire as a practical individual (with the two exceptions of buying horses and investing in questionable money-making schemes). He is immediately concerned about what will happen to these believers (even though, in his view, they are misguided) if, indeed, the Lord does not arrive, following the schedule that they have set forth for him.

"[I]f a mistake had been made, many of their neighbors would be near starvation before the winter had passed," writes Stephens. "The newly cleared land then produced great crops of potatoes. But so convinced were the people that no further food would be needed that they left their potatoes in the ground and spent the time in devotional exercises" (154).

The Old Squire's solution to the problem is a practical one. He sells a horse and yoke of oxen to obtain the money to hire men to harvest not only his own potatoes, but also those from ten surrounding farms. Clearly, he does not have the space available to store this many potatoes, so he and his men bury "over a thousand bushels" in pits they dig for storage (154).

"It proved to be a wise provision," according to Stephens. "The [date] came and passed, and the earth con-

tinued to revolve on its axis as usual.¹⁵ The people who had believed it would stop were soon in deep trouble. Snow had fallen," writes Stephens, "the ground was hard frozen; famine threatened them. Only the old Squire's free potato pits saved them from gnawing hunger" (154).

The story concludes with an account of Thanksgiving in this hungry year. A pond on the Old Farm freezes over, trapping a flock of wild geese, which the Old Squire is able to capture. Most of these are "picked and dressed"; the Old Squire and Grandmother Ruth then distribute them to the nearby farmers who had not expected to have Thanksgiving (and perhaps feel thankful) this year. "Years afterwards Grandmother Ruth used to tell us the good time she and the young old Squire had, going from house to house that snowy morning, handing out geese and potatoes to those credulous, hungry neighbors of theirs" (157).

This anecdote shows the Old Squire to be tolerant, thoughtful, practical, generous, and nonjudgmental. Although he does not agree with the Millerites, he goes out of his way to be supportive. He does not say, "I told you so." Instead, through his own initiative and hard work, he ensures that his neighbors will not starve. He is particularly pleased with the windfall of geese. His grandson remarks, "They were a fun-loving couple in those young days" (157), referring specifically to the early morning jaunt, when the Old Squire and Grandmother Ruth provided Thanksgiving geese for their hungry neighbors.

The final mention of Seventh-day Adventists that occurs in Stephens's works is again a side issue to the plot, but it casts light on an aspect of Adventism not usually featured in the Church's early history—lumbering and lumberjacks. Stephens's "The Hobgobalo-Ginkasaur" is set in Maine at a lumber camp on Lurvey's Stream.¹⁶

Lurvey had a crew of nineteen choppers, all from the Petitcodiac region in New Brunswick and all ardent Seventh-day Adventists. That was not quite so remarkable a circumstance as it may seem at first. The Seventh-day Adventists keep Saturday instead of Sunday for their Sabbath and day of rest. No lumber company would hire Seventh-day Adventists to work with others not of that belief on account of the bother and extra expense of having two Sundays in one week. "Seventh-day" workers had therefore

to band together enough to make up a full crew and all hire at one place. (153)

Again, Stephens gives more sociological context than was necessarily his aim. He intends to give the reader a little information about this new religion and move on with the story, but he also gives insight into the times. It is not just the Adventists who are unwilling to work on their "Sabbath," but others, as well. There does not

on their hands with nothing to do" (154).

"Certain lumber companies have tried to introduce services and amusements," claims Stephens, "but not much progress has been made as yet; and at the time I now refer to nothing of the kind had been even attempted. The crew was left to amuse itself in any uproarious way it chose" (154).

Clearly, Stephens is not critical, either of the Adventist loggers' beliefs or of the way



appear to be that much difference between the two groups, except for the day they feel is the true Sabbath.

Stephens gives the Adventists higher marks as a group, however, not because of their religious beliefs, but because of their consistency in following them. "The crew from Petitcodiac had come to Maine in a body and hired for the winter with old Zack Lurvey," writes Stephens. "They were conscientious workers, steady and trustworthy in their habits, which is more than can be said of all loggers. On Saturday," he continues, "they sat round the camp and read their Bibles, but they made up for it by working hard the next day" (153).

Thus, the Adventists are really more to be admired than loggers who do not devote their day of rest to religious study, but who often get into some sort of mischief instead. "Sunday is often a gala day with the loggers in the woods," Stephens begins. "Really, some proper Sunday entertainment ought to be devised for logging crews off in the woods to keep them out of mischief. They have a whole day

they elect to spend their holy day. It is their Adventism, however, that causes the group to become the objects of a practical joke, although they are not selected as victims because of their beliefs. Instead, the perpetrators think the Adventists will be especially naive because they are "lately arrived province men" (154).

Clinton Sparks, an employee of the Old Squire, has been working on a contraption to "haul logs a distance of two miles on a winter road across a swamp" (151). Sparks is a bit of an inventor; he makes a sort of tractor by mounting a wood-burning steam engine on cart wheels. This strange machine actually works, puffing its smoky way wherever Sparks steers it, while he toots the steam whistle he has added.

Sparks tests the machine by running it up to the Old Squire's logging camp (which is not far from Zack Lurvey's). It is Sunday, and Sparks is surprised to hear the crash of falling timber. He asks Cully, the prankish foreman, what is going on. "Aw, it's auld Zack Lurvey's

On Saturday...

they sat round

the camp and

read their Bibles,

but they made

up for it by

working hard

the next day.

Canadians!" Culley says. "The haythen have lost the run of the days of the wake!" (154).

Sparks and Cully decide to play a practical joke on the men from New Brunswick. They disguise the tractor, covering it with a black tarpaulin over a frame of poles. They give it a ten-foot-tall tail with a tassel. They cut holes in the tarpaulin for eyes and make a long horizontal gash for the mouth; they add a bark nose and ears. "They had no end of a good time making it all that afternoon—a nice Sunday job!—and they had it done by sunset" (155).¹⁷ They christen this contraption the hobgobalo-ginkasaur.

Cully runs to prepare "the unsuspecting provincials" (155) by rushing into their camp and warning them of the strange beast heading their way. In his Irish accent (probably almost indecipherable to his hearers), he adjures them to run, telling them that the hobgobalo-ginkasaur, which ate two of his men, is coming and that they have not a moment to lose.

The Canadians do not immediately panic, but they go outside to look and listen, wondering what Culley's hysterics can mean. "Like steady sober men of good conscience, they stood wondering and for some time wholly unafraid" (156), but that is before they see the monster advancing steadily toward them, with every apparent intention of doing them harm.

"It is an axiom among military men that no army runs like an army of brave soldiers when once it is routed!" Stephens informs his readers. "The Canadians stood their ground and stared until the hobgobalo-ginkasaur reached the stream bank and started to cross over where they were. Without word or outcry of any sort they suddenly broke and ran. And, oh, how they ran!" (156).

Needless to say, this chaotic scene has consequences. "Old man Lurvey couldn't get his crew to go back to their camp. The 'Seventh-day' men refused utterly to enter the woods again till Old Zack himself had gone up and investigated" (157). Although the lumberjacks initially refuse to talk, Lurvey finds out the truth at last.

As is evident in a number of Stephens's other stories, Lurvey and the Old Squire are often on opposite sides of disputes. On this occasion, Lurvey sues him "for damages on account of loss of time by his logging crew" (157). The Old Squire settles out of court for fifty dollars and says nothing to Sparks. Later, however, the two jokesters take responsibility by repaying the Old Squire the amount he had paid Lurvey because of their prank.

Through the stories of Charles Asbury Stephens (and, most likely, other regional authors of the time whose works may now be forgotten), it is possible to see how people around the early Seventh-day Adventists viewed them. Stephens himself gives his readers four views: the creeping Millerites satirized in the Maine newspapers; the aggressive proselytizers who cause consternation in religious circles by attracting members who belong to other congregations; the individuals who believe so strongly in Christ's return that they make no provision for themselves and their families past the date when they know he will appear; and, finally, the hard-working men steadfast in their faith and sincere in their actions, although they may possibly be a little naive.

Perhaps even more important, however, are the views Stephens gives the reader of non-Adventist Christians at the time, as events that they fear may signal the end of the world also confound them. It is obvious from stories of his set in the context of the Dark Day and the Night the Stars Fell that heeding these natural, yet unnatural events and regarding them as charged with eschatological significance was not limited to our religious forbears, but was held by many.

Stephens underlines this unifying response with a short anecdote concerning the Dark Day, which he includes in the second story titled "The Dark Day," dealing with the Connecticut Legislature:

The Legislature had gone into session, but when it grew too dark to see the face of the Speaker, many members became alarmed; and someone hastily made a motion to adjourn—as Judgment Day was probably at hand. Whereupon Mr. Davenport arose and said,

"Mr. Speaker, this is either Judgment Day or it is not. If it is, I wish to be found doing the duty which the people of Connecticut have sent me here to do. If it is not, there is no need for adjournment. I move you, sir, that candles be sent for and that we proceed with our deliberations." (3)

Davenport's response to the adjournment motion is not just a reaction to what he may view as religious hysteria. He is, instead, stating his personal credo: that each of us has our place to fill and our duty to do. The Lord can expect no more of us, except that when he comes we are doing the best job that we can in the place appointed for us.

Windows like these into the minds of contemporary non-Adventists, which Charles Asbury Stephens provided,

cause us to feel a kinship with them, as well as with the pioneers of our denomination, with all, in fact, who observe, wonder, and seek to understand the transcendent. ■

Notes and References

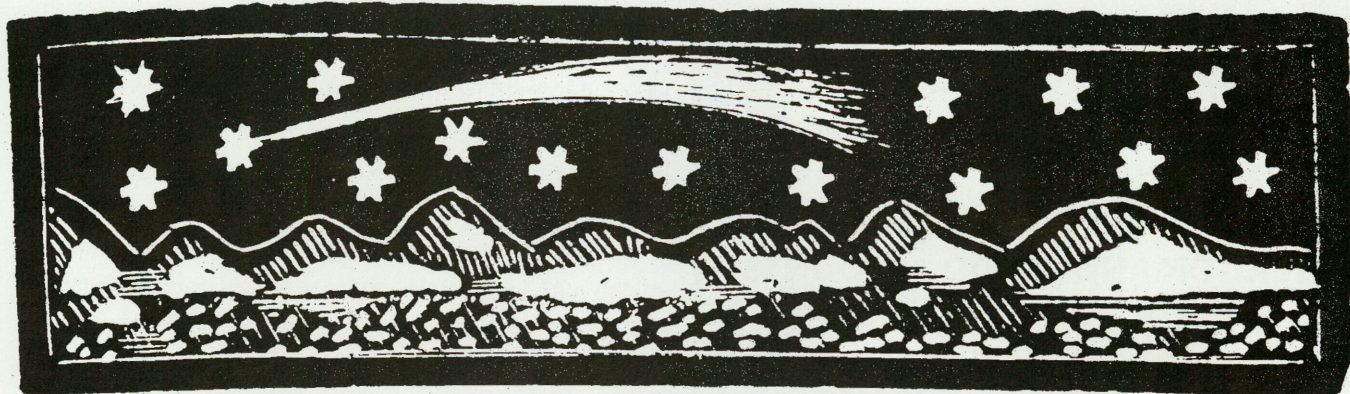
1. Other biblical references refer to the time of the end in a similar fashion, but in less specific terms: "For...there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in

the clock has stopped and it is actually evening (503).

3. "The Dark Day" was originally published in the November 22, 1906, issue of *The Youth's Companion*.

4. Stevens is the family name of the author, Charles Asbury Stephens. When Stephens began writing for publication, he was apparently afraid that his efforts might be unworthy and embarrass his family; therefore, he chose to alter the spelling of his name.

5. Stephens also mentions the name *Morrill* in his short story, "Lost in the Encyclopedia": "The fact was that the



divers places" (Matt. 24:7); "And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven" (Luke 21:11). Luke's fuller version ("fearful sights and great signs") could easily be taken to refer to the Dark Day, and so forth.

2. Another story published in *The Youth's Companion* four years before Stephens's "The Dark Day" also demonstrates the interest of readers in the subject. In this story by Bertha E. Bush, "An Unhistoric Dark Day" (Oct. 16, 1902), two children are left alone for a night and two days. On the first evening, they read to pass the time. Jimmy's book tells of a day when "[c]andles were lighted in the houses. The fowls retired to roost; the cocks were crowing all around as at the break of day; objects could not be distinguished but at very little distance; and everything bore the appearance and gloom of night." He is, of course, reading an account of May 19, 1780. The following day, the children are amazed when the day turns extremely dark just about noon. "'Why! Why-ee!' cried Jennie in astonishment. 'The chickens are going to roost. Jimmy, it's another Dark Day!'" Unlike the Morrills, Jimmy and Jennie are delighted that they are present for an event this historic. They are extremely disappointed when they discover that

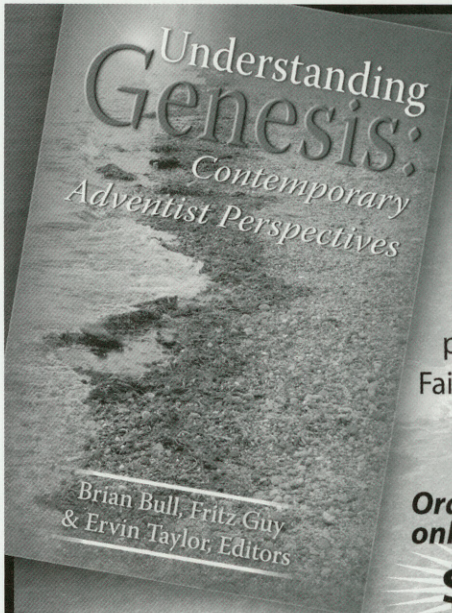
Old Squire belonged to a generation of men—the Hamlins, the Fessendens, the Morrills, the Washburns—who did honor to their native state and rose to eminence in political life. With better opportunities for education in his youth, I feel sure he would have taken his place among the best of them" (195–96).

6. Current explanations for the phenomenon are fairly evenly split between: (1) smoke from extensive forest fires; and (2) no explanation fitting the circumstances that contemporary observers reported.

7. This statement is confirmed by many contemporary accounts. However, May 19, 1780, is generally spoken of as the darkest of the dark days.

8. Stephens's second story titled "The Dark Day" was originally published in the August 1928 issue of *The Youth's Companion*. Slightly extended to provide context and continuity, and retitled "When and Why They Came," it was later included in a compilation of Stephens's stories, *My Folks in Maine*. Regaining its original title ("The Dark Day") and without the additions, it was republished in 1967 in the Stephens anthology, *Grandfather's Broadaxe and Other Stories of a Maine Farm Family*. In the interest of clarity, I distinguish between the first and second versions of "The Dark Day" in the text.

**The Lord can
expect no more
of us, except
that when
he comes we are
doing the best
job that we can
in the place
appointed for us.**



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9. "The Night the Stars Fell" was originally published in the April 18, 1907, issue of *The Youth's Companion*.

10. In *When Life Was Young at the Old Farm in Maine* (Boston: The Youth's Companion, 1912).

11. Because of newspaper coverage of the

Israel Dammon trial in March 1845 (in the *Piscataquis Farmer* among others), Maine residents would have been well aware of the group's displays of religious enthusiasm, which included hugging and kissing, shouting, testifying, and creeping. Ronald Graybill addressed the last in a roundtable discussion of four theologians and historians: "The crawling, believe it or not, had a Biblical basis. If you are going to heaven, you have to humble yourself as a little child, and [Matthew 18:1-6] was the text they used. Children crawl, and so some used that to show that they were ready for Jesus' coming..." Rennie Schoepflin, ed., "Scandal or Rite of Passage: Historians on the Dammon Trial," *Spectrum* 17.5 (Aug. 1987): 41.

12. The story appears in *When Life Was Young*. Although *Millerites* is the term we most often hear today, Second Adventists was also applied to the religious entity that would become the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The official name was adopted in the fall of 1860.

13. In *My Folks in Maine* (Norway, Me.: The Old Squire's Book Store, 1934). Because of the inclusion of religious issues in this particular story, a reader might assume that the title bears specific reference to this. If so, it is in a satirical sense, since Hosannah is a goose, so named because she takes on herself the duty of sentry for the Old Farm's flock of geese, warning of any danger she detects.

14. Stephens uncharacteristically gets an important detail wrong here, citing the date of the Great Disappointment (although he does not give the event a name) as October 21, 1843.

15. Stephens again mentions October 21 as the date of the Great Disappointment.

16. "The Hobgobalo-Ginkasaur" was originally published in the October 12, 1922, issue of *The Youth's Companion*.

17. On the previous page, Stephens had suggested that "proper Sunday entertainment" be carried out in logging camps (154). Clearly, this type of activity was not what he had in mind.

Winona Howe is professor of English at La Sierra University, Riverside, California.

ELLEN
WHITE

ELLEN WHITE

Saving Ellen White

An Interview with Graeme Bradford | BY BONNIE DWYER

Australian author Graeme Bradford has written three books about Ellen White to help people understand the controversy that has surrounded her during the past twenty years. His latest book, *More Than a Prophet*, is now available online at <www.sdanet.org>. *Prophets Are Human* appeared in 2004; *People Are Human (Look What They Did to Ellen White)* came out in 2006.

I have suggested that we make a movie of her as a young woman called by God to a challenging task.

BD When I visited Elmsbaven several years ago and learned about the many staff members that Ellen White had to assist her in the writing process, it dawned on me that so much of what we label with the name Ellen White really refers to what was done in her name. In other words, the White family and then the White Estate turned her into a brand. Along the way, Ellen White the person was totally lost.

Is that what you mean by the subtitle of your book—*Look What They Did to Ellen White*? Or are you referring to the way in which some church members have used her to judge other people and exert power over them?

GB I think it is well-acknowledged that she did have a team of assistants helping her with research for her books. How she interacted with them has been covered well by others. I do refer to the fact that W. W. Prescott was upset that the help coming from her assistants was not given enough prominence.

I also quote a letter from O. R. L. Crosier, her secretary, asking Prescott and Arthur G. Daniells for assistance over difficult areas. In addition, I refer to W. A. Spicer complaining that the bookmakers did not make enough changes

when *The Great Controversy* was revised. It would seem that the team working with her was far more involved than most thought.

However, the subtitle of the book *More Than a Prophet* primarily refers to how her authority grew after her death: I have a whole chapter titled "Building an Inerrant Ellen White."

In my book, I show how contemporaries who worked with her understood how she did her work and respected her as a prophet or messenger from God. Yet they also saw that most in the Church were giving her authority in areas she would never have claimed. They express these concerns in the meeting after the Bible Conference of 1919.

Later on, conservative forces in Adventism took away the influence of those who understood the situation correctly and began to build and claim too much for her writings. She was used as the last word on almost every subject. Today we know this concept is wrong and we are recovering the real Ellen White.

BD If all the compilations of her writings and material produced since her death were set aside, do you think the young people of today—like the character Michael in your book—would be able to relate to her in a more positive way?

GB It would no doubt help. However, it would still be difficult because the language she uses belongs to a different era. The young people I have associated with from my teaching experiences seem to find that even the books she wrote during her lifetime are hard to handle. However,

approaches if we are going to catch the attention of the next generation. We need to picture her more as a young person, not unlike them in many respects. We need not be afraid to talk about her failures and limitations.

I think members of the next generation will find the real Ellen White, who was so human and faced some issues not unlike those they face, more attractive than the picture we show of her as an older woman without a smile giving directions on how to live the Christian life.

Let's face it, she did live in a different world and knew nothing about some of the things that tempt our young people today. That's why the youth will always turn to more contemporary authors.

BD *Early in your story, the Pastor Downton character prays, "that God will give them the truth regarding the church they all love dearly... (and) that they may be helped to want to know the truth no matter what the cost to them personally..." What has learning the truth cost you personally?*

GB Learning the truth about the ministry of Ellen White has not harmed my appreciation for her ministry. After reading my books, many people have written and said they have found a renewed confidence in the ministry of Ellen White and Adventism.

Pastors have said that they would never have lost members of their congregations if this material had always been available. Some former pastors have said that if they had read this material they would never have left the ministry.

One actually said that my book, *More Than a Prophet*, was part of a battle for the very soul of Adventism. He went on to say that what I am trying to do is tried by someone every thirty years or so and no one has yet succeeded. He wished me well. So those reactions have been encouraging. However, it has also caused some to look at me with suspicion.

You will notice in my books I talk about how most Adventists want to know the truth. However, I know also that many do not want to change any of their ideas, and they will resist any different thinking. I could almost write a book on how my books have been received by some.

There certainly have been efforts to place the ideas of my books in a false light and turn people away from reading them. I would hope that I will always be open

for correction and be willing to learn and adjust my thinking. As such, I need to have people look at the material critically. That has happened and I have benefited much from the input.

However, it is hard for me to see the ideas twisted and misrepresented. This is especially true when those who do this have the means of communication at their disposal and I have no way of making a correction. It is also hard for me to take when some tell me privately how much they appreciate the books, but then attend public meetings against them or write articles against them.

There is a lot of hard work to be done in reeducating our people, and those who ought to be doing so are not. It seems to me that many are content to sit back and not do the hard work. All the while this is happening, we are losing many of our people, who walk away from Adventism as they become discouraged.

There are many Web sites dedicated to destroying the ministry of Ellen White, and we have not effectively helped our people answer the questions. One of our prominent and respected scholars told me that when he meets an issue with Ellen White he just puts the problem on the shelf with the thought the problem really could be his misunderstanding. I am not sure that approach is going to help our people.

Our people want us to be open and honest. I remember a medical doctor who was shaken by the new material on Ellen White who told me that he could forgive his church for making mistakes but that it was hard for him to accept that his church had not always been honest with him regarding these issues. I believe his thinking reflects what a lot of others think, as well.

I have been running Ellen G. White Update meetings now for some decades, and every time I feel as though I am putting my head on the chopping block. It's nice to be able to say to people, "what you have always believed is right." However, it's hard to tell them that they have been given some wrong ideas regarding Ellen White. Now that the material is out there on DVD and in books, I am hoping not to need to do it so much.

BD *You mention that you have included new material in your latest book? What is the newest information about Ellen White that you have brought to the table?*

GB For the most part, I have not developed any new ideas, historically or biblically. For the most part, I have read widely and brought together the material researched by others. That is why there are so many footnotes in my books. I have often said that what I have done is just put two and two together.

A lot of the historical material has come from Adventist historians. I was sponsored to travel throughout North America in the early 1990s by the Trans-Tasman Union, when I was ministerial director. During that time, I spoke with many former leaders and people who had lived through the early and middle part of the last century. Some of these people are now dead and I have recorded their thoughts on video and in my books. Their insights have also helped me put things together.

Even the material that many will find new is material I have gleaned from non-Adventist biblical scholars regarding how the gift of prophecy manifests itself in the Bible. I have yet to read any Adventist scholar who deals with this sort of biblical data, which is so important to a correct understanding of the ministry of Ellen White.

This material figures in the early section of the book *More Than a Prophet*. In the 1982 meetings held by the White Estate, attendees searched for answers to questions in a paper presented by Robert Olson on inerrancy in inspired writings. Now I think the answer has come from highly regarded, conservative non-Adventist biblical scholars.

I have applied this material to the writings of Ellen White, and I think it unlocks answers to many of the puzzling questions they were struggling with.

One new thought unique to me is the material contained in the chapter titled "The Multigifted Prophet." I think we have made a mistake in seeing only the prophetic gift operating in the ministry of Ellen White.

Spiritual gifts come in clusters. She did say that her work included more than a prophetic ministry. I think this needs opening up and exploring. I think in doing this we answer many questions as to how she did her work. This is why the book is called *More Than a Prophet*.

BD *In the last year, you have chosen some unusual ways of publishing your material—even putting your book online. How would you compare the response to these publishing ventures independent of the church press to your experience with the Signs Publishing House in Australia? Do you reach a different audience?*

GB In answer to this question, let me give a little background about what caused me to write these books. A few years ago, a video was produced by some former Adventists titled *The Spirit Behind the Church*. It was designed to destroy the confidence of our people in the ministry of Ellen White, along with their confidence in Adventism. It was working very effectively, since many of our people—as well as people interested in joining our church—were affected by the powerful testimonies given by former Adventists, some of whom had been in the ministry. We have examples of non-SDAs who were threatening to take their children out of our schools.

The video was shown to our South Pacific Division Biblical Research Committee (of which I was a member). As a result, I said to our president that I felt I needed to make a response, since no one else seemed to be interested. He encouraged me to do so and said that the South Pacific Division administration would back me. I was also encouraged to make a video in response.

I immediately went to work on both with a sense of urgency because something needed to be done as soon as possible. Eventually, the video was produced as a DVD, which came out under the sponsorship of the Biblical Research Committee with the title *Prophetic Inspiration*. In this DVD, I present material along with many other scholars, such as Alan Lindsay (the presenter for Keepers of the Flame) and Robert Olson (former director of the White Estate).

The manuscript for the book sat before the Biblical Research Committee for almost two years. Eventually, the chairperson told me that the members were not prepared to say whether I was right or wrong. However, the nature of the material was such that they felt they did not want to get involved. I was given encouragement to try the material out before other Adventist scholars and get some feedback.

I then decided to take some of the material from this manuscript and produce two smaller books, which would be presented in story form. Signs Publishing Company in Australia published these two books as *Prophets Are Human*, and *People Are Human—Look at What They Did to Ellen White*. These books have sold well in Australia and New Zealand. Although they are available in North America through Adventist Book Centers, they have had little impact.

Biblical Perspectives, part of the ministry of Samuel Bacchiocchi, has published the larger manuscript. It is titled *More Than a Prophet*. It is interesting to notice that this book has

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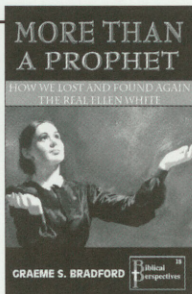
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had a larger impact in North America than in Australia, possibly because Bacchiocchi markets beyond North America.

He also got me to put the material in a condensed form on a two-hour DVD. Pastors show the DVD to congregations, and then take orders for the book. *More Than a Prophet* contains more material and goes into greater depth than the two smaller books.

I have given permission to put the book *More Than a Prophet* online to reach a wider audience. In fact, *More Than a Prophet* has now been put online and can be read by opening up www.sdanet.org/atissue.

When you open up the site, you will be able to click on *More Than a Prophet* and read the entire book. Those who have prepared the site have also added an appendix, as well as significant documents from which I have quoted.

This site gives people the opportunity to respond to the material presented. I am also able to respond and answer questions.

BD *What is the most meaningful thing (book, concept, quotation, anecdote) for you about Ellen White?*

GB While in the process of becoming an Adventist, I read the chapter on Gethsemane in the *Desire of Ages*. To read that chapter was a very moving experience for me. It gave me such an appreciation of what Christ endured for me that it revolutionized my whole Christian experience.

As have many others, I have found that the greatest evidence for Ellen White's inspiration is the way she upholds Jesus and builds Christian commitment. She was a woman whom God used mightily to build our Christian lives and increase our devotion to Jesus. ■

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.

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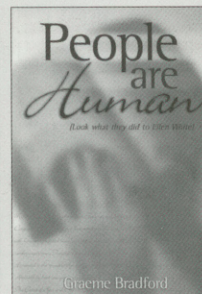
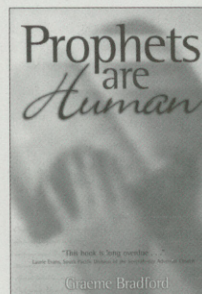
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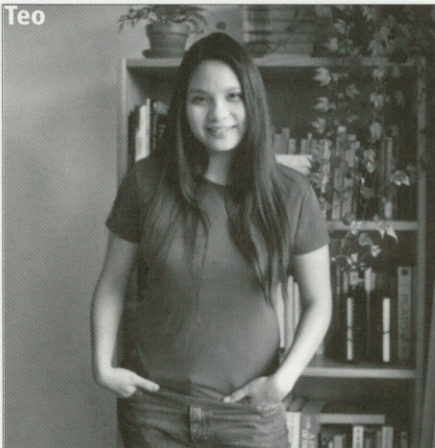
*The Red Books: Our Search for Ellen White—
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Mei Ann Teo



The play depicts
how Mrs. White,
played by
PUC student
Elisabeth Reeves,
is somber
in the portrait
Adventists
have painted of
her through
the generations,
although personal

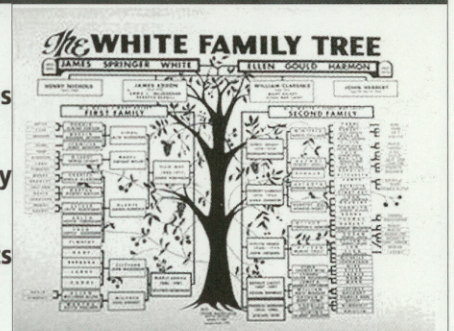
accounts reveal

a playful

and lively side.



Generations
of Seventh-day
Adventists



Writing a Prophet: *A Behind-the-Scenes Look at Red Books, a New Play about Ellen White* | BY DANEEN AKERS

A small group of people huddle together on the black stage, looking expectantly toward the sky. They inhale together, rising on the balls of their feet, hoping, praying—is that what they’re looking for? No, no it isn’t. The deep crimson of the walls seems to mock their pain, bright against their falling hopes. They’ve been here a long time. Someone finally says the unsayable, dejection in his voice: “Let’s go.”

But no, they can’t. This is it. This is where it was supposed to all end and all begin. But nothing has happened. They’ve been waiting all day. And nothing has happened. Slowly they leave one by one until only one young girl is left humming “Shall We Gather at the River?” until she collapses, sobbing. Alone.

She is Ellen White.

It’s October 22, 1844, on stage, and this is the opening scene of the new play about Ellen White, *Red Books*, researched, written, produced, and directed by Pacific Union College students and faculty.

Several years ago, my husband, Stephen, asked me to name the person who had been most influential in my life (he’s fond of such “small talk” over dinner dishes). As I struggled to specify only one person, thinking of family members and mentors in turn, he surprised me by saying he could easily name the most influential person in his life. “It’s Ellen White.”

His answer surprised me. At the time we

weren’t actively attending church and were in the midst of the somewhat typical post-college religious identity crisis. It didn’t seem like Sister Ellen would be the first on his mind.

He went on,

My entire life has been influenced by Ellen White. My grandparents were missionaries for the Adventist Church, I always went to Adventist schools; all of our friends were Adventist. I was taught that the world was ending soon so I never really even thought about what my adult life should look like because I didn’t think I’d live to see it—my entire life perspective is completely filtered through Adventist lenses. Yet, I don’t think I know very much about her except that she was hit by a rock as a child, held a big Bible for a long time while having a vision from God, and had a negative opinion of going to the movies.

I started to realize he was right. Our families were something like fourth-generation Adventist on both sides. Very little in our family traditions didn’t have some ties to Adventism (even if they were in reaction to something within Adventism). Nobody in our family (or in our parents’ families) had gone to public schools. We were Adventist through and through, yet we knew only a few details about the prophet profoundly responsible for much of the trajectory of our lives and the lives of our families.

This revelation started a revealing conversation. If Ellen White was the most influential person in our lives, why didn’t we know more about her? That afternoon—fittingly enough, a Sabbath afternoon—we spent the whole day

We knew only a few details about the prophet profoundly responsible for much of the trajectory of our lives and the lives of our families

and well into the night browsing on our laptops, calling out excitedly to each other as we came across a good Web site to share. We read everything we could find, from the White Estate to *The White Lie*.

ond generation, after the leader dies, lifts that person up onto a pedestal," she continues, "and makes that person perfect, inerrant, unique. The third generation tears the pedestal down. And so the



"The Crash," a scene from *Red Books*, depicts the implosion that took place at some Seventh-day Adventist

colleges and universities in the 1970s, when academics began dissecting the prophet.

The situation Stephen and I found ourselves in turns out to have a name—it's the "fourth generation." It was precisely the place Mei Ann Teo found herself in when she decided that the time was right for the Dramatic Arts Society at PUC to do a play about Ellen White. The idea for an Ellen White play has been percolating in her mind for more than eight years, ever since she attended a choir room Sabbath School lesson at PUC where history professor Paul McGraw presented some generational concepts he had learned from studying the Shakers that seemed applicable to Adventism.

"He found this pattern," Teo explains. "The first generation, which is still alive with the founder or leader, considers the person an enlightened leader. The sec-

ond generation is left with nothing. That's where we were. We're the fourth generation."

Teo remembers this realization shaking the choir room group. As a member of the fourth generation herself, Teo knew that the topic of Ellen White was an open wound, especially at PUC post-Desmond Ford. There were many present who remembered the aftermath of October 1979 and had seen firsthand that those who questioned the prophet didn't fare too well in the end.

"I knew there was a wound," Teo says. "But what kind of wound was it? Was it scabbed over? Or was it festering? I knew much remained unresolved and people seemed fearful to even discuss it. But where else can time and space converge to bring about a healing conversation better than in the theater?"

Fast forward eight years. Teo has now become the artist-in-residence at PUC, bringing new life and vitality to the drama program. She's spent her summers at intensive theater workshops and every moment she can getting experience directing plays around the San Francisco Bay Area. She has learned the power of ensemble acting in which the actors bring issues in their own lives to the stage, creating and making meaning as a group.

It was time to do the *Ellen White* play. "I realized that I had the skills professionally. I knew how to do this," she says. "And it felt like I had the right group of students to work with and that the school was finally ready for this conversation to begin."

She started to broach the idea with her core team of actors and past collaborators and discovered that they were all "fourth generation" Adventists as well, without any real knowledge of *Ellen White* and no real desire to get any. She found out that getting a group of college students excited about *Ellen* wasn't easy. Eryck Chairez, a co-writer and the play's director, puts it bluntly. "I'd heard from others to beware because Mei Ann had some cockamamie idea to do a play about *Ellen G. White*. I was suspicious—why would we want to do a play about *her*?"

The actual creation of the play has been, and continues to be, an intensely collaborative community effort. The actors and writers, nine in all, conducted more than two hundred interviews to collect a broad swath of perspectives about *Ellen White*. Not only did they interview fellow students, faculty, and staff, but they also talked to their parents, grandparents, cousins, and church members, as well as established theologians, *White Estate* staff members, and whoever else was willing to share their story.

"The actors really started seeing themselves and the community at large differently while writing this play," Teo says. "We aren't actors coming in from the city trying to figure out this strange religion. We are the story, too. This story is all of us."

The actors found the interviewing process difficult; they were accustomed to portraying characters on a stage, not asking difficult religious questions. "It was hard doing the interviews," said Cambria Wheeler, a senior history major. "However, it's also turning out to be the most rewarding part, although it's stressful playing people that we interviewed."

This aspect of the play, playing real people with whom the actors have real relationships, is turning out to be quite nerve-racking. The actors are keenly aware that many of the people represented in the play will one night be in the audience watching. As the play itself puts it in one of its many self-referential moments, "It's one thing to interview all of you and then go and perform you behind your backs in rehearsal. It's another thing to perform you in front of you."

After gathering a mountain of interview and research information, the three writers, Mei Ann Teo, Eryck Chairez, and Zachary Dunn, got to work. Gradually, and with much "wailing and gnashing of teeth," the structure of the play began to emerge. The play's emotional core is built around scenes that feature almost verbatim dialogue from people interviewed by the team, as well as moments when the actors play themselves, a rather unique moment in theater. Hiding inside a character isn't an option, their real fears, doubts, and hopes are also on display.

What they hope has emerged is a play about *Ellen White* as a human being, not just as a prophet who is off-limits to normal human emotions and relationships. And ultimately the play is less about *Ellen White* and more about a particular community and its members' views of their key founding figure. We all can see ourselves in the candid moments, intimate reflections, and personal stories shared onstage that all add up to the only unequivocal truth: faith isn't easy, and maybe if it was, it wouldn't be worth the bother.

This faith walk turned out to be more than

**We aren't actors
coming in from
the city trying to
figure out this
strange religion.
We are the story,
too. The story is
all of us.**

just words on a page; it's been a personal experience for the actors and writers. They discovered, to their surprise, that these core Adventist identity questions mattered to them. Chairez lays it out with his typical honesty: "A lot of people raised their eyebrows when they heard I was writing a play about Ellen White," he says. "I'm not exactly known for being the best Adventist. A lot of us aren't known for that. And I've wondered often, 'Am I spiritually worthy to write this play?'"

The process of writing about Ellen White turned out to be a profoundly spiritual process for all of the actors, especially for the ones who weren't sure if they truly considered themselves Adventist at the core any more. "Before writing this play, I wasn't sure that I was an Adventist," Chairez admits. "But now I think that maybe I really am one. I've discovered that I do care about this church."

Teo tells the story of interviewing Julius Nam, a former professor of religion at PUC and a current professor at Loma Linda University. She had known him at PUC and knew that his story and faith walk would play an integral role in the play. But when she started talking to him, things suddenly turned confessional.

She felt obligated to explain to him that she didn't consider herself Adventist anymore. "I told him that I love these people—I'm not rejecting them, but I'm not going to say that I am Adventist," she recalls.

"He told me, 'You might say you're not an Adventist, but you're sitting here, aren't you?'"

It took her a moment to realize that he was right, a part of her cared enough to be writing a play about Ellen White. "I realized that he had just caught me being Adventist!"

All of the actors found that learning more about Ellen White and exploring the big questions—even the controversial, messy, where-was-that-copied-from and how-is-she-relevant-today questions—made them feel more affinity for the Church, not less. "My views have changed about her," said Tim Widmer, a history major. "I didn't really appreciate her before. Now I've softened toward her after doing this play. I see her as human now, not just a church figure."

Chairez now sounds downright protective of her, especially for someone who only a few months ago didn't readily claim church affiliation. "We wouldn't be here without her," he says. "This woman built a church, a health care system, and an education sys-

tem—and not just here, internationally. Who of us can say we've done that?"

The one actor who is old enough to remember when the Church and especially PUC stopped talking about Ellen White is Greg Schneider, a professor of behavioral science and the patriarch of the group. He seems to feel that being involved in bringing this play to fruition can help salve some of the wounds he saw opened during the "train wreck in the early eighties" that he remembers all too well. "We just simply stopped talking about her. My generation failed her and failed these students."

He finds the play energizing and is thrilled that the students care enough to try to revive the long-dead conversation, but it's clear that he is still nervous. The fallout from 1979 happened when he was a young professor; the memory is still crystal clear. When the third generation destroyed Ellen White, it was a very messy crime scene with victims on all sides. "It's liberating to do this play, but still at the back of my mind is just a little paranoia that this could be a Prague Spring."

It's astonishing how much fear there actually is. As a fourth-generation member myself, I find it hard to imagine a time when asking questions about a founding figure had such serious implications. When I ask the group what their fears are about this play, Heather Denton, a history teacher at PUC Preparatory School, quickly replies, "You mean other than job security?"

The actors, especially the faculty, realize that they are attempting to jumpstart a conversation that many would prefer not to start again. Although they laugh, there is a palpable tension beneath the laugh. This play's honesty is a risk, and they know it. Teo remembers talking to a mentor about the play at the beginning of the process who warned her that serious fallout was quite possible. "Even though I assured him that my intention was not to mock or scorn, he told me that I needed to be ready to lose my job if I did this play," she says.

Teo sees the potential controversy as indicative of an age-old tension between the often-competing needs of scholars to search for "truth" versus the Church's



need to pastor. One side is always threatened by the other, and often for good reason. "One side says: 'You're destroying my scholarship!' While the other side says: 'You're destroying my faith.'"

some conclusions. I've found that it's just the beginning, though." She doesn't seem unhappy about this, though; rather, she seems excited to see where the conversation will take her, where it will take us all.



Left: Eryck Chairez, the director and one of the writers of *Red Books*.

What Teo hopes the play can help do is remind both sides that they need each other. In the end, it's a symbiotic balance. We can't exist without our search for historical truth or without our faith. "It's a problem when they can't co-exist. It's a problem when they try to edge each other out like in the seventies," she says. "What I hope our play can say is that both are valuable, both are needed. Without these two extremes, the center won't hold."

She and all of the actors are hoping that *Red Books* can be a conversation starter about the Church, our founding figures, prophets, labels, and most of all, faith itself. "I don't have an agenda for where the dialogue needs to end up," says Tim Wolcott. "I just want it to begin."

All the actors nod in agreement. Denton adds: "I thought doing this play would give me

The break is over and rehearsal gears up again; scene four needs more work. Chairez gives the actors some notes before they take their places. "We need to really build up the momentum here, all right? Remember in this scene the mythology is getting created, and we have to keep building, building, building—because next it gets destroyed."

"Okay then? Everyone ready? Lights." ■

Daneen Akers is an adjunct professor English at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

Above: The cast of *Red Books*.

REVIEWS

Red Books

Our Search for Ellen White | REVIEWED BY ADRIAN ZYTKOSKEE

I first heard about this play shortly before its premier performance, which was scheduled to continue for five days at the newly remodeled Alice L. Holst Theater, an intimate venue on the campus of Pacific Union College, with a capacity of fifty-five people.

But why did such a remarkably titled play on this subject appear at Pacific Union College?

My mind filled immediately with questions. Whose "search" were the producers of the play talking about? For that matter, who were the producers? Was it to be a dramatization of the iconic Ellen White? Perhaps little Ellen of stone-throwing fame? Or Ellen Harmon with early visions? Maybe Sister White, whom we know for her stern testimonies? Given the title, perhaps it was the Ellen G. White who was taxed beyond one person's capacities to provide publishable materials to a seemingly insatiable market? Could it be that the play was not really about Ellen White at all, but was some kind of a description of the way Adventists related to Ellen White in the generations that have come and gone since her death in 1915?

But why did such a remarkably titled play on this subject appear at Pacific Union College? I knew something of the tumultuous years at PUC, having been a professor there from 1975 to 1984. Was this play going to get that specific and, yes, controversial?

I got on the phone to friends at PUC and got the answers to some of my questions. The play was conceived and written by PUC students or newly minted graduates. The nine-member cast was of the same vintage except

for one professor. All participants were Seventh-day Adventists, some fourth and fifth generation. But that raised even more interesting questions. What motivated these students to choose this subject and place such a commitment of time and energy in this project? And, finally, how on earth could this play actually be interesting?

On Saturday night, March 11, my questions were answered. Seated on the front row of a packed house, I saw a stage furnished with a simple set consisting of two giant red books that could be moved, opened, slammed shut, and used as needed throughout the performance.

The producers/directors/writers, Mei Ann Teo, Eryck Chairez, and Zachary Dunn assisted by others in the cast, had interviewed more than one hundred people to get direct reports on how these interviewees related to Ellen White, controversies surrounding her, historical knowledge they may have had, and events they may have witnessed.

These interviews became a major part of the play, with spoken excerpts from the actual interviews inserted in appropriate contexts. For the most part, the interviewees were left unnamed. But Ellen White introduced herself early in the play and was played by the same actor throughout the performance. The play had two acts and nineteen scenes, which gave it continuing action and sparkle.

Most of the material about Ellen White herself was familiar, at least to a lifelong Adventist of my era. The child Ellen, the

adult Mrs. White as the stern arbiter of do's and don'ts many of which contradicted each other, the authoritative church leader, the benevolent employer. All are scenes taken from familiar material.

But there were two other dimensions to this play. One was the relation of the Church as well as ordinary Adventists to the role and authority of Ellen White. Second was the personal and sometimes agonizingly painful relation of the interviewees and of the young people in the play to Ellen White and what she stands for in the Church coupled with their relation to the Church itself. Such scenes as "The Crash," "Fear," "Firing Line," "Teaching Ellen White," and "Labels" summoned up quite recent memories.

But there were two totally unexpected aspects of the play that answered my questions and made this an unusually delightful and interesting evening. First were the production values. The play was never boring. There was an amazing amount of movement, sound, dramatic intensity, and pacing. Moreover, the writing was clear and on target. I looked forward to each scene and was seldom disappointed.

The second aspect is even more important. These young people whom I had assumed gave little, if any, thought to Ellen White made the "search" their search. They convinced me of that by their energy and enthusiasm in the performance, and they closed the deal in a third act, which followed the play as a question-and-answer session that involved the audience.

Finally, I must not fail to comment on the play as a part of an educational institution. I can think of nothing more positive from an educational perspective than the months of hard work, the sense of being a team, the gathering of heretofore unexplored knowledge, the confidence gained in expressing oneself dramatically before an audience, and the general experience of success that comes from an endeavor such as *Red Books*. ■

Adrian Zytoske, a retired educator and administrator, writes from Placerville, California.

IN GRANITE OR INGRAINED?

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Skip MacCarty

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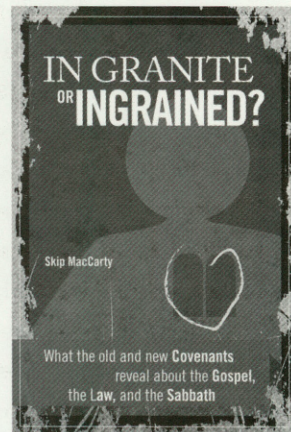
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BOOK REVIEWS

From American Export to Global Product

A review of *Seeking A Sanctuary* by Bull and Lockhart | BY HERBERT E. DOUGLASS

Seventh-day Adventism has long been one of the best-kept secrets of American religion," according to British authors Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart. In this second edition of their fast-paced tour through the history and culture of Adventism, they see the march of Adventism throughout the world paralleling the growth of the United States as a global hegemony. Furthermore, they note that the original white American constituency is diminishing as world growth of members of color outstrips that in the United States.

In their final analysis, they suggest that "of all religious groups in the United States, Adventism is perhaps closest to being a microcosm of the nation." As such, the denomination offers "a fascinating study in the way a set of beliefs and practices might be transformed from a successful American export into a truly global cultural product."

Bull and Lockhart work through their thesis in three parts: (1) the development of Adventist theology, especially since the watershed publication of *Questions on Doctrine* (QOD); (2) the organization and financial structure of the Adventist Church, with special focus on its evangelistic programs, the character of its offshoots, its attitude toward health, the state, and the world; and (3) a keen analysis of the Adventist subculture, including gender, race, ministry, medicine, education, and the self-supporting movements.

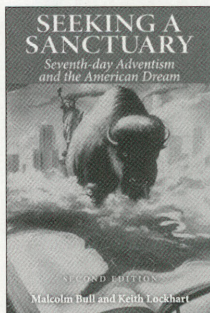
This is an enormous agenda—but the authors unfold their argument with an objecti-

ty that surpasses any other historical/theological study that I have ever read. In fact, it is impossible merely to scan these pages because their unvarnished objectivity and probing for truth kept me glued, page after page, right from the beginning in the colorful introduction on the Adventist public image (or lack thereof).

Part One: Adventist Theology

Part One's focus on Adventist theology reveals remarkable insight. The central issue lies in the tug between those who accept Ellen G. White's assertion that "God has promised to give visions in the 'last days;' not for a new rule of faith, but for the comfort of His people, and to correct those who err from Bible truth" (*Early Writings*, 78), in comparison to those who (1) emphasized that White also made clear that the Church could expect "new light"; and (2) that truth can best be discovered by empirical investigation. Bull and Lockhart observe that "reason, prophecy, and Scripture are constantly battling each other for priority."

The chapter titled "End of the World" is priceless. The authors take note of various writers and evangelists who have seen in the highs and dips of world events suggestions that "the end was near." Bull and Lockhart insightfully recognize that the clearer understanding of the delay in Christ's return commenced after the Second World War, when Ellen White's many references to the "reason for the delay" were published in *Evangelism*. This renewed emphasis on the reasons for the delay "became the church's most accepted explanation of the



Seeking A Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream.

2d ed. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2006), by Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart.

delay," that the "timing of the Second Advent is understood to be in the control of the movement called upon to await it."

In a chapter on the human condition, the authors properly highlight the 1957 book *Questions on Doctrine*, in which so much divisiveness entered the Adventist Church (as George Knight argues in an annotated edition of QOD [2003]): "To the end of the century, the atonement, the incarnation, and the nature of salvation were the subject of constant debate within the Adventist church."

Bull and Lockhart believe that Walter Martin, representing the Calvinist Evangelicals, "misjudged the measure of agreement within Adventism," and "on the Adventist side, the dialogue... was viewed as an exercise in public relations. There was little attempt to give full weight to Adventist history, still less to consult the existing membership."

The authors conclude that QOD "reinterpreted" the sanctuary doctrine, a "cosmetic change that ended up disturbing the equilibrium of the entire Adventist theological system." They saw a similar pattern in QOD's attempt to assure Walter Martin and Donald Barnhouse that Adventists believed in the incarnation "in common with all true Christians." That is, "in his human nature Christ was perfect and sinless," being "exempt from the inherited passions and pollution that corrupt the natural descendants of Adam."

Veteran Adventist theologian M. L. Andreasen objected both to the rewriting of Adventist theology of the sanctuary and the misstatements regarding traditional Adventist thinking on Christ's humanity. In contrast, QOD's focus on the cross "was taken further by Adventist theologian Edward Heppenstall. His solution to Andreasen's objections was to argue "that perfection was neither necessary nor possible."

Bull and Lockhart see that this radical response was due partly to Heppenstall's understanding of original sin, "a concept that had not been much in evidence in Adventism until this

time." Robert Brinsmead and Desmond Ford, two brilliant Australians, took up Heppenstall's position, becoming significant divisive leaders in decades to follow. Heppenstall was soon regarded as "the church's most influential theologian."

Bull and Lockhart summarize the issues well: "If the atonement was completed on the cross, then the sanctuary can only mediate its benefits to humanity. If Christ did not have a fallen human nature, then there is no precedent for the [moral] perfection of humans."

The authors drill further into these most central issues in Adventist theology. They pick up the Adventist emphasis on preparing for translation (if Jesus was to return in "our" day, who would be translated? would be a logical question). Their understanding of Christ's work in the sanctuary paralleled what he wanted to do in the believer's life. Many Ellen White statements emphasized, one way or another, that this life is "the fitting up place" for heaven, for "the character would remain unchanged at the Second Advent."

Thus, as Bull and Lockhart see Adventist beliefs, "the criteria of salvation were thus elaborated to include not just correct belief and obedience to the law but also a completely self-disciplined body and character." They continue: "This emphasis on the conscious control of every habit as a means of transforming the entire person was appropriate to the Adventist understanding of human nature as a unified whole."

How was all this to be accomplished? It involved more than human will power. The authors recognize Ellen White's contention that "spiritual perfection" would be "achieved through Jesus' presence within the believer." But they keenly observe that "this kind of perfection was less easily obtained than the behavioral perfection on which the Adventists had focused on earlier" in the nineteenth century.

Bull and Lockhart note that Ellen White's theology transcended the conventional Protestant friction between the salvific values of justification and sanctification: "White made no absolute distinction between justification and

**"To the end of
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sanctification and saw both as a part of a single process that culminated in [moral] perfection prior to translation. Her understanding was eschatological rather than ontological." Nowhere in Adventist literature has this point been made any clearer!

Bull and Lockhart opine that Heppenstall's emphasis on a theology of justification begun in the 1960s "can be viewed as a way of compensating for a decline in an imminent Second Coming" His understanding of justification enabled "believers to be made righteous immediately rather than at the end of the world."

The authors observe that "Heppenstall rarely mentioned the prospect of translation and never discussed the character of the last generation. Heppenstall broke the connection between Adventist soteriology and Adventist eschatology, and Ford abandoned the theory of Christ's heavenly sanctuary because he perceived no need for the blotting out of sins in preparation for an imminent translation."

In 1980, the new series of Twenty-Seven Fundamental Beliefs significantly reversed "the thirty-year tide in Adventist soteriology," which seemed reflected in surveys of Adventists conducted in 1991 and 1997 in which the percentage of those who believed in Christ's heavenly ministry rose from 44 to 61 percent.

After this shift back to pre-1957 views of the sanctuary, Bull and Lockhart discern the Church's "return to its pre-QOD position on Christ's human nature." But they also see how "the denomination's leading academics took opposing sides, and Adventist leaders, responding to different pressures, sent out conflicting messages on the way back." No truer analysis has ever been made!

In a chapter titled "The Development of Adventist Theology," Bull and Lockhart confront the difficulty of "finding" Adventist theology. Would it be in the ideas preached from the pulpit, published by the press, or discussed in academic halls and classrooms? They sense that new converts get more information about last-day events than is discussed in theological circles.

The authors suggest that Adventist theological history falls into at least four historical divisions. (1) Adventist radicalism from Millerism to the death of Ellen White; (2) Adventist fundamentalism, rising in the 1880s, dominant in the 1920s, surviving in some conservative camps today; (3) Adventist evangelicalism, rising to prominence in the 1950s; and (4) the revival of certain elements of funda-

mentalism in a conscious effort to "preserve Adventism's distinctiveness and unity."

The fourth stage appears to relax Adventist taboos and introduce more expressive styles of worship. Although the theological authority of Ellen White has been reaffirmed, fewer Adventists follow "her lifestyle advice." The decline of Adventist evangelicalism (not evangelism) has been due, in part, to the growing globalization of the Church and its limited enthusiasm for American-style evangelicalism—the preferred traditional Adventist orthodoxy.

Bull and Lockhart conclude that the Adventist Church at the beginning of the twenty-first century stands more or less where it stood before *Questions on Doctrine*.

Part Two: The Adventist Experience and the American Dream

Bull and Lockhart give a delightful review of the expansion of the Adventist Church from its earliest years, creeping across the United States; leaping into Europe, South Africa, and Australia; and then spreading throughout the rest of the world. They note the times of greatest growth as well as slower periods, with reasons outlined for both. They see the Ford-Rea theology controversies and the Davenport financial scandal contributing to the increase of apostasies, and they analyze various sections of the United States, comparing both the concentration of Adventists and monetary income per capita.

The authors make another analysis by comparing Adventists according to social and financial group and looking at those groups from which Adventist evangelism tends to draw. Comparing surveys, Bull and Lockhart note that those most attracted to the Adventist Church are drawn by "the truth and beauty of its teachings." They conclude that the Church's belief system obviously helps "those who want to make sense of their lives."

In a profound analysis of Adventism in relation to American society, Bull and Lockhart point out that Adventism does not define itself against individual denominations but against the mainstream of Protestant—especially in its understanding of how to relate to the American dream. The well-being of Adventism is not in a redeemed America. Just as early Americans viewed their new country as a refuge or sanctuary from the Old World, so Adventists have sought their sanctuary in heaven.

The authors see that "the Sabbath is the key to under-

standing the Adventist's relation with America." Thus, as time went on, America's sense of an earthly millennium was tied to a loyalty with the Sunday Sabbath, whereas Adventists accepted the seventh-day Sabbath as a test of their collective conscience. The Adventist way served as a live alternative to the American way.

In addition, Adventists looked at the words, "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," but didn't go in the direction of libertarian self-expression. For Adventists, the pursuit of happiness involved the "restraint of the emotions and the regulation of the appetites." According to Bull and Lockhart, Adventists devote more time to walking a "clearly marked and unbroken path that leads from earth to heaven" than enjoying "the fleeting moment."

The authors show their grasp of basic Adventist beliefs in recognizing that "Adventist [moral] perfectionism has never involved the mindless observance of a legal code: its orientation has always been toward purposive self-improvement—its objective, the re-assimilation of a remnant of the human race into the divine realm."

My only caveat here is that not all Adventists have caught the wisdom of this description—some see the

words but do not hear the music.

Thus for Adventists, in a particular way, the Church and its institutions have become the family home, and to some degree, America is a foreign land. It turns American civil religion inside out by introducing an alternative to where salvation would ultimately be found.

The authors also give a most illuminating contrast between the Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and Adventists, the most penetrating I have ever seen.

Part Three: Adventist Subculture

According to Bull and Lockhart, Adventists tend "to play caring, healing, and nurturing roles." For decades, the Church did not "see the differences in the sexes, choosing to impose a single feminine ethic on males and females alike." Dissidents arose who misused such biblical texts as the one that instructs "women [to] keep silent in church."

Before 1900, women were prominent in various denominational duties. The apparent shift came, according to Bull and Lockhart, in response to Ellen White's larger picture of the primary role of mothers and their "distinctive duties."

The authors neatly trace the role of women through



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**Adventist
college teachers
came to see
themselves as
scholars rather
than educators.**

the twentieth century, not only comparing women in denominational leadership, but also noting legal confrontations and General Conference stress over women ordination.

They also recognize the “the major difference between Adventism and American society is that there are fewer whites and more blacks than in the general population.”

Better-than-average research went into the authors’ recapitulation of how immigrants have contributed profound strength to the growth of Adventism, as well as to the slowness of the Adventist Church in some places to eliminate the color line. Bull and Lockhart see something that few Adventists generally see: “Since the 1970s black and Hispanic Adventists have proved relatively indifferent to white Anglophone attempts to liberalize the church’s beliefs.”

The authors also journey into a fascinating study of the relationship between Adventist medical personnel and its ministry, beginning with the Kellogg era. John Harvey Kellogg was one of the few people who took Ellen White’s views on health seriously, in contrast to the Church’s ministers, who did not, at that time, share Kellogg’s insights. Bull and Lockhart give an interesting recital of Kellogg’s diversion into pantheism and his social gospel, neither of which lessened this estrangement.

On the subject of education, I don’t think anyone will find anywhere a more comprehensive gestalt of the Adventist educational experience in seventeen pages. Bull and Lockhart perceive that in the twentieth century, “Adventist college teachers came to see themselves as scholars rather than educators.” This insight surely does not cover everyone, but it has sparked numerous interchanges between administrators and teachers.

Bull and Lockhart also monitor closely the issues of academic freedom, the influence of *Spectrum*, the perennial debate regarding the earth’s origin, the emergence of the Adventist Theological Society, and the development of sociology as a discipline.

As for the self-supporting movement, I was

pleasantly surprised at the interest that Bull and Lockhart devote to the parachurch entities, which imply “criticism of the church’s worldliness and thus provide a base for rigorist revivalism.” In so doing, they also provide a platform for “zealous individuals whose enthusiasm might otherwise lead them outside the church.”

Bull and Lockhart observe that the self-supporting schools and health care institutions have grown through the “initiative of laymen rather than through bureaucratic procedures...and that they are generally financed by a few rich individuals and maintained by the sacrifice of their workers.”

In a final wrap-up titled “The Revolving Door,” the authors look at Adventism as a process, accounting for its diversity, the varying socioeconomic status of individual Adventists, and the position of the Church within the American society. A big order, but neatly done.

“The Revolving Door” describes how members continuously enter and leave the Church. The author’s neat distribution of the Adventist experience into “aspirers,” “sustainers,” and “transformers” is worth the price of the book. Bull and Lockhart make the comparison between Reinhold Niebuhr’s six factors, which lead to a “reduction of tension between a sect and wider society,” and Bainbridge’s tension-maintaining factors, and make a valuable application to the Adventist experience.

The first edition of *Seeking a Sanctuary* contained remarkable insights that I rarely find in contemporary literature, particularly regarding the place of Ellen G. White in the Adventist experience, but this second edition is magisterial. Coupled with the authors’ remarkable facility to keep everything within the big picture, the sheer delight of reading words so carefully crafted is akin to listening to a Beethoven sonata.

It made me look forward to a third edition!

Herbert E. Douglass, a theologian, retired college administrator, and author of twenty-two books, lives in Lincoln, California.

BOOK REVIEWS

What Killed the Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventists? *The Branch Davidians of Waco: The History and Beliefs of an Apocalyptic Sect* | A REVIEW BY DAVID R. LARSON

Leaving dead eighty or so Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventists, gigantic flames consumed Mount Carmel near Waco, Texas, as the whole world watched in televised horror on April 19, 1993. This book is about what went wrong. Exhaustively researched, thoroughly documented, and dispassionately written, it is an overwhelmingly positive contribution. Its author, Kenneth G. C. Newport, a meticulous scholar at Liverpool Hope University in England, deserves our gratitude and congratulations. Although I have some questions about his central thesis, at least as I understand it, he certainly has mine!

I suggest that advanced Sabbath School classes around the world purchase this book and discuss one of its seventeen chapters and four appendices each week. Few things can do more to help people in such groups to gain a clearer understanding of what it means to be a Seventh-day Adventist today and what it doesn't. I receive no commission from the publisher for saying this. I had to purchase my hard copy too!

As Newport recounts it, around 9:05 a.m. on Sunday, February 28, 1993, near Waco, Texas, agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, an arm of the federal government of the United States, faced a difficult decision. Now that

For Further Reading

"Waco Revisited," by Richard Mouw, *Books and Culture*, March/April 2007. See also: "Adventism's Waco Connection Revisited: A Response to Richard Mouw," by David Larson, at <<http://progressiveadventism.com/2007/03/>>. Comments about Larson's response are at: <<http://progressiveadventism.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=58>>.

the Branch Davidians knew about their plans, should the agents continue? "Yes!" they agreed.

About forty minutes later, seventy-five or eighty of them in cattle trucks rumbled to a stop at Mount Carmel, a compound on less than one hundred acres of Texas ranchland. They carried with them three warrants relating to illegal weapons. One was to arrest David Koresh, the Branch Davidian leader; another was to search Mount Carmel; and a third was to inspect Mag Bag, a rented garage about four miles away, where the Branch Davidians earned money by fixing cars.

The armed ATF agents advanced. A gun

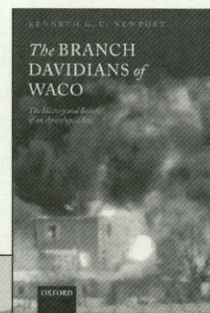


Above: Florence and Victor Houteff in 1946, and the former site of Mount Carmel in Waco, Texas.

battle erupted. When it was over a couple hours later, David Koresh was wounded, struck by spraying bullets in his groin and right wrist. Four ATF agents and six Branch Davidians were either dead or about to die. The Federal Bureau of Investigation took charge.

For fifty-one days, the FBI tried to pressure the Branch Davidians into giving up. It cut off Mount Carmel's electricity; flooded the nights with powerful lights; broadcast the sounds of bagpipes, seagulls, and sirens; and blasted the recorded noise of crying babies, howling coyotes, and

Kenneth G. C. Newport, **The Branch Davidians of Waco: The History and Beliefs of an Apocalyptic Sect.** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).



rabbits being strangled. The Branch Davidians stayed put.

About 6:00 a.m. on April 19, the FBI invaded Mount Carmel with helicopters, two Combat Engineer Vehicles ("tanks") and armed agents. "This is not an assault!" they bellowed. Its residents answered with blazing guns. About noon, fires broke out, set by the Branch Davidians themselves.

Most of the Branch Davidians who died succumbed to smoke inhalation, suffocation, or thermal burns. Gunshot wounds and blunt force trauma, which some Branch Davidians inflicted upon each other, finished off several. Someone stabbed to death a three-year-old boy. David Koresh died from a single bullet to his head, probably shot by Steven Schneider, his right-hand man. Schneider stuffed a gun into his mouth and pulled the trigger. His last known words were: "O God! Where are you?"

Exactly two years later to the day, Timothy McVeigh bombed the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, a tall structure that provided offices for many employees of the federal government. Many adults and children died. McVeigh said that he killed these innocent people in part to avenge Waco's victims.

Newport does not place primary responsibility for what went wrong at Waco upon the ATF and FBI. Neither does he pinpoint as primarily culpable David Koresh as, to use his words, either "mad" (insane) or "bad" (wicked) or both. He believes that we should focus on what the Branch Davidians believed. Once we understand their premises and principles and how they used them, we will realize that what they did made much sense on their own terms, he contends.

Newport begins his account of these beliefs with the Bible because it frequently teaches that this age will end and that dramatic events will usher in the next. For the first Christians, this hope centered upon the triumphant return of Jesus Christ. In the fifth century, Augustine of Hippo subdued its intensity by applying much of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, to the church. This was the standard interpretation until the thirteenth century, when Joachim of Fiore began to teach that Revelation covers the whole of human history: past, present, and future. This interpretation prevailed among Protestants until the middle of the nineteenth century. The Seventh-day Adventist Church inherited this view and still teaches it.

According to Newport, Seventh-day Adventism unlocked several doctrinal doors through which the Davidians and Branch Davidians subsequently rushed. One of the most important was the typological method of interpreting Scripture that was once widespread among all Christians. It saw in biblical words and deeds omens ("types") that illuminate current and future events ("antitypes). A second was the Seventh-day Adventist acceptance of Ellen G. White as a genuine messenger of God, a belief that leaves open the theoretical possibility of prophets in our time. A third was that, as God's true Remnant, Adventists would pass through a time of trouble before the end of the age. There were others as well.

Victor T. Houteff was born in 1885; he died in 1955. Over the course of his life, he emigrated from Bulgaria to the United States, became a successful business man, and married Florence Hermanson. He was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rockford, Illinois, in 1919. The Olympic Exposition Park Seventh-day Adventist Church in Los Angeles disfellowshipped him in 1930, but only after, according to his report, it tried to have him committed to an insane asylum. He published *The Shepherd's Rod*, a periodical, organized the "General Association of Davidian Seventh-Adventists," established his group's headquarters on 277 acres of land near Waco, Texas, that the group called Mount Carmel, and taught a number of things that differed from mainline Seventh-day Adventist thought.

One of these was that in the last days the ancient Kingdom of David would be restored literally in Jerusalem with a spiritual ruler (Jesus Christ) and a physical ruler (himself?). Another was that, at his invitation, as the modern Elijah and John the Baptist, a genuine Remnant of 144,000 Seventh-day Adventists, who had forsaken the denomination's apostate ways, would convene in Jerusalem and from there do God's work throughout the world. A third was that God would literally slaughter and leave in their blood all Seventh-day Adventists who did not accept his message. Yet another was that a "cleansing fire" would destroy all other wicked people and purify the Remnant. These teachings caused much tension between the Davidians and other Seventh-day Adventists.

Florence Houteff prevailed against several rivals for leadership following her husband's death. She predicted



The old gate at Mount Carmel.



Ben and Lois Roden.



David Koresh.

that on or about April 22, 1959, the date on which some anticipated the resurrection of her husband, the events leading to the establishment of the restored Kingdom of David in Jerusalem would commence. Along with her entire executive council, Florence resigned her leadership position on March 1, 1962. Further study had established that her deceased husband had been honestly mistaken, they explained in a written statement. All but 77 of Mount Carmel's 941 acres were sold.

Ben and Lois Roden were two of Houteff's followers. They had joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1940; however, they quickly became interested in Victor Houteff's teaching. In 1945, their Texas congregation disfellowshipped them. Ben angrily removed the church's doors and Lois camped for several days in the baptistery. They eventually become convinced that they should prepare for the restored Kingdom of David in Jerusalem, so they traveled back and forth between Israel and the

United States, visiting and staying at Mount Carmel when they could.

Meanwhile, Ben had begun to develop his own approach to things that he called "The Branch." On June 14, 1970, he was crowned "Vicegerent of the Most High God" at Mount Carmel, where things had not been flourishing since Florence Houteff's resignation. On February 27, 1973, Mount Carmel's remaining seventy-seven acres and buildings were sold to Benjamin Roden and Lois Roden, "Trustees for the General Association of Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventists." Ben died on October 22, 1978, and was buried at Waco.

Although she had to rebuff challenges from their son, George, Lois Roden succeeded her husband as the leader at Mount Carmel. In the summer of 1981, a man in his early twenties wandered onto Mount Carmel. Lois noticed his abilities, instructed him in Branch Davidian thought, and agreed to have a continuing sexual relationship with him,

even though he was more than forty years younger. His name was Vernon Howell. He was to be known to the world as David Koresh.

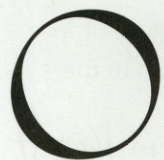
After Lois Roden's death on November 10, 1986, open conflict for Mount Carmel erupted between her son, George Roden, and her protégé, David Koresh. Her protégé outmaneuvered her son in several skirmishes. George Roden died in 1998 in a mental institution. He had run for the presidency of the United States, called on God to plague a judge with herpes, and killed a man with an ax and then shot him and cut him into pieces.

David Koresh had been born on August 17, 1959, in Houston, Texas, to Bonnie Clark when she was fourteen or fifteen years old and not married to Bobby Howell, Koresh's biological father, who was about five years older. By the time he arrived at Mount Carmel in the summer of 1981, he had fathered the first of the sixteen or seventeen or so children, depending upon the reports, he would have with almost a dozen women.

He had also twice impregnated the pastor's daughter of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Tyler, Texas, which he had joined by baptism, in harmony with his mother's and grandmother's faith, in 1979. He was disfellowshipped from the congregation in 1981; however, by then he had spent much time with the Bible, and had memorized large portions of the New Testament. He eventually developed a keen interest in the Psalms and applied many of its themes to himself.

As his first name shows, David Koresh saw himself as a ruler of the Kingdom of David that was to be restored in Jerusalem. His last name indicates that he also thought of himself as playing in our time the role of ancient Cyrus, who would destroy contemporary Babylon, which he took to be the United States. He anticipated that he and his followers would be cleansed by total immersion in literal fire, after which they would be resurrected to exercise God's wrath on the wicked.

Koresh sometimes referred to himself as the "Son of God"; however, he seems not to have totally identified himself with Jesus Christ. He was able in time to convince the Branch Davidians that God commanded that only he should have sexual relationships with their women so that even those who were married should be sexually available only to him. Koresh was sexually active with other women as well, some of whom were very young.



One theme that threads its way throughout this book is that David Koresh “differed in degree and detail more than in kind from countless millions of his fellow Americans who, the statistics indicate, have ‘no doubt’ that Jesus will one day come to earth again.” Although Newport discusses “innovations,” “differences,” “departures,” “major departures,” “different trajectories,” and “uncharted waters” along the way, I take this to be his central thesis. Here are some questions:

1. Don’t differences “in degree” often become differences “in kind”? Although water and ice differ “in degree,” they differ “in kind” when we walk across a lake that may or may not be frozen. Points on a compass that are separated by ten intervals differ “in degree.” Likewise, even if in the distant past they had started off as differences “in degree,” by 1993 had not the doctrinal dissimilarities between David Koresh and all other North Americans who believed in the return of Jesus Christ become differences “in kind”?

2. Don’t some of the departures that this book describes qualify as differences “in kind”? Consider, for example, Victor Houteff’s prophecy that God would literally slaughter and leave in their own blood all Seventh-day Adventists who did not accept his message. The idea that the Remnant would be purified by baptism in the literal fire that would consume the wicked seems like a major doctrinal innovation.

What about the idea that the Remnant, not only God, would destroy the wicked? Then there is Koresh’s “new light,” which guaranteed him sole sexual access to the Branch Davidian women. The overwhelming majority of Adventists who heard these messages did not experience them as more intricate and thorough elaborations of their own beliefs. This is probably why no more than one thousand Seventh-day Adventists ever became Davidians and Branch Davidians, a recruiting rate of less than one percent.

3. Doesn’t this book’s thesis allow its author on occasion to massage the evidence? This book correctly reports that Adventists believe at least two things about the gift of prophecy: (1) It is not necessarily a thing of the past, and (2) No one should be accepted as a true messenger of God until he or she passes certain tests that Scripture provides. It does not give these equally important Seventh-day Adventist beliefs the same emphasis, however. It pays

more attention to the first because in principle it opens Adventism’s doctrinal door to people like David Koresh.

Another book with equal justification could focus upon the second belief because in fact it closes these same doctrinal doors to people like Koresh. Neither of these interpretations is as true to the evidence as one that gives both beliefs the equal emphasis that they deserve.

4. Doesn’t this thesis tempt us to place too much emphasis upon Koresh’s beliefs? We need not be full-blown Marxists and Freudians to doubt that the best way to understand what people do is to study their beliefs. Material factors—relative differences in fame and fortune, for instance—count, too. Intense drives for sex and power also matter. Also, Koresh was a deeply wounded man psychologically, even if he was not certifiably insane. A different but related issue is that Newport would probably give the ATF and FBI a grade of “B” or better, whereas many others think that they deserve a grade of “D” or worse. Either way, these lawmen were very much a part of the problem.

5. Isn’t this book’s thesis at odds with itself? It argues that the beliefs of David Koresh and millions of other Christians who also believed in the second coming of Jesus differed “in degree” and not “in kind.” Yet these other Christians never did what he did, and there is no evidence that they ever would. This means one or the other of two things. Either in all cases the relationships between belief and behavior are not as tight as this book presumes, or in this specific case there was a difference between what Koresh and the other Christians believed that was so gigantic that we might as well call it a difference “in kind.”

I believe that lethal combinations of heresy, immorality, and insanity on both sides of the conflict killed the Branch Davidians. Koresh and his followers twisted Christian teachings about the future to their destruction; the ATF and FBI did something similar to the American ideals of liberty and justice for all. Koresh and his clan allowed his passions for power and pleasure to overcome him; the officers of the law permitted their embarrassment, impatience, and vindictiveness to cloud their better judgment. The Branch Davidians acted in ways that contradicted their own interests; so did the agents of the federal government. Things don’t get much worse. ■

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When the Tongues of Flame Are In-folded | BY T. S. ELIOT



Left: Painting done on copper with patina, tar, lead, and pieces of red jasper. The title is: "When the Tongues of Flame Are In-folded," which is a line from T. S. Eliot's poem, "Little Gidding," the last poem of *Four Quartets*.

"A book, especially a sacred text, opens the mind and heart to imagined possibilities. Both despair and hope are entwined into the human experience. I am interested in visually representing these ideas; the Eliot poem came to mind after doing the painting. I started with burning off the tar paper from the back of copper flashing and then coating the copper with a variety of chemical solutions for the patina. I then applied roofing tar and attached the red jasper stones and the lead book."

—John McDowell

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time....
Quick now, here, now, always—
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one

A selection from
Four Quartets,
which comes from
T. S. Eliot,
The Complete
Poems and Plays,
1909–1950
(New York:
Harcourt Brace,
1952).