



*community through conversation*

# SPECTRUM



## **How Birding Became Almost Cool**

Point of the Spear:  
Adventist Liberalism  
and the Study  
of Ellen White  
in the 1970s

## **A Young Conductor Makes Waves**

Bull and Lockhart:  
Pondering Our Pasts,  
Plotting Our Futures

## **Doblmeier Talks about Forgiveness**

Here in the Now:  
A Discussion  
of Postmodernism



community through conversation

# SPECTRUM

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## ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST

The artist for the cover, *The Surveyor: Peregrine Falcon*, is James McClelland, professor of art at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska, a birder and former colleague of James L. Hayward, whose review of *How Birding Became Almost Cool* begins on page 59.

"Artwork is meant to be shared," says McClelland. "I hope people will be inspired by the creative genius of God."

McClelland has exhibited widely throughout the United States, Bermuda, and Trinidad, and his paintings may be found in private and corporate collections around the world. He has provided illustrations for *Hummingbirds of North America*; *Press Plovers of North America*; *Trogans and Quetzels of the World*; and *Prairie Children, Prairie Dreams*. Additional examples of his work can be found on pages 58 to 64.

Many of the paintings featured in this issue are for sale. For more information, please contact him at [jamcclel@ucollege.edu](mailto:jamcclel@ucollege.edu).

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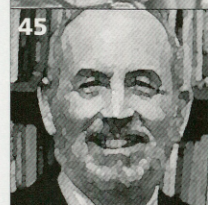
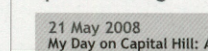
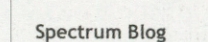
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## EDITORIAL ■ *from the editor*

### Naming Names | BY BONNIE DWYER

**A**s a child, I found the begats of Matthew 1 puzzling. Why did the Bible need this long, long list of names? Would it not have been sufficient to say Jesus was a relative of David's?

A trip with my eighty-seven-year-old father answered my question in a new way. Story Corps, the program broadcast on National Public Radio, was in Sacramento. I made an appointment to interview my dad, knowing the recent death of a cousin had left him feeling a need to tell the stories he had heard as a child in his grandparents' home many years before—stories of the Millerite woman who had convinced his grandmother's mother of the soon coming of Christ. Soon I was counting generations as dad named names.

The next day, the awareness dawned again during the Adventist name game that occurs every time one is introduced to someone new, and you discover that the degrees of separation within the Adventist family are very slight. I was charmed by the fact that not only is the story of salvation specific in the Gospels, it becomes specific again in the families and generations of Adventism.

In this issue of *Spectrum*, we find the story of Adventism in historians, musicians, scientists/birders, and artist/birders, among others. We see the story stretching back in time and forward, thanks to Keith Lockhart and Malcolm Bull.

Benjamin McArthur tells the story of one historian from the 1970s who dug into the papers of Ellen White. More stories from that era beg to be told. We look forward to the day when Ronald Numbers and Roy Branson, for instance, write their own and their family stories.

Kendra Haloviak puts the stories of our ancestors and contemporaries together to offer a new way of understanding the concept of sanctuary. As we weep with our forebears, we gain appreciation for how we arrived at this doctrine and gain new insights about how to treasure it

again in a very concrete way.

This exchange of Adventist story is also what takes place on the *Spectrum* Web site. It certainly is a unique place within Adventism, where people from around the world get to talk to each other and share stories. We regularly have exchanges between college students and retirees. Crossing generational as well as geographic lines is one of the beauties of the Internet. We have highlighted this type of conversation in the Blog excerpts in this issue. And we invite you to join the online conversation regularly at <[www.spectrummagazine.org](http://www.spectrummagazine.org)>.

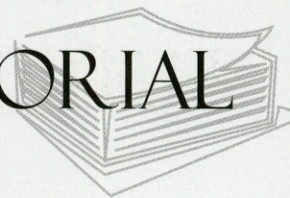
Lastly, there are resources available to you to search church documents to find information about your relatives. General Conference archivist Bert Haloviak can help guide you. His daughter, Kendra, told me about the session he led demonstrating the process to people at La Sierra University.

"Adventist Archives is word searchable," she said, "and you can plug in your relatives and find all kinds of exciting things. My dad was showing students, pastors, and community members how to do this. It was amazing. Ralph Watts was in the audience and dad found several things he didn't know about his family. Also, the Geraty family learned some things about Hazel McVicker Geraty. An obscure document that Charles Teel has been wanting was located. In another interesting moment, one of our graduate students learned that he is related to Fritz Guy!"

Well, I had to try it out. I went to <[adventistarchives.org](http://adventistarchives.org)> and searched my father's name. Up popped a story from the 1935 *Columbia Union Visitor* about students at Mt. Vernon Academy—including my dad. Amazing.

When you get to know the people story of Adventism, you can't help but be drawn in. Welcome to this "People" issue of *Spectrum*. ■





## Manifesto for a Prophetic Adventism | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

**T**wo catastrophes stand between Adventism and its prophetic mission. One is thoughtless embrace of hand-me-down platitudes. The other is critique without passion for renewal.

For members of alert and open mind, hand-me-down Adventism is now, in substantial part, discredited. When the basic question about our existence pits cold happenstance against loving purpose, fixation with the *age* of the earth and *time frame* of creation is preposterous. When the conflict between Islam and the West makes the prospect of terror more worrisome than the prospect of Sunday legislation, the conventional eschatology fails to be compelling. When poverty and environmental breakdown are more of threat than jewelry and dancing, the latter obsessions seem like the equivalent of buggy whips. And when the evidence for Ellen White's human frailty, including her weakness for appropriating the eloquence of others as if it were her own, is overwhelming, denial of this frailty is practically insane.

For as long as all this thoughtlessness goes on, Adventism will continue to flirt with irrelevance.

But it does not have to do so. We can rethink our understanding of Creation and of the Final Victory of Christ. We can rank our moral and spiritual priorities into more faithful accordance with Scripture. We can arrive at a *truthful* appreciation (and criticism) of what Ellen White has done on our behalf.

But we cannot do this without passion for renewal. Free-riders who use the church for weddings and funerals and contribute little time

or treasure to its welfare will not provide new vision. Hangars-on who entertain themselves by their endless recital of arguments, both good and dubious, for Adventism's fallibility will not provide new vision. The ones who will provide new vision are the ones who care.

Some, by the grace of God, do care, and just for that reason there is hope.

The best pastors and the best religion teachers care about new vision. In the best congregations, the best people care about it. Concern for new vision finds its way into the *Adventist Review*. It is central for *Adventist Today*. It drives organizations such as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, the Association of Adventist Women, the Adventist Peace Fellowship, and Adventist Women for Peace. It also prompts the event planners who give us, for example, the annual Innovation Conference in Ohio, or the budding Screen Film Festival, or the annual conversations organized by the various Adventist theological societies. Then there are the (visionary) bloggers, more and more of them, some with sites of their own and some joining the give-and-take that others host.

The Adventist Forum, with its magazine, interactive Web site, and annual conferences, belongs to this tiny but emerging groundswell. How can all these people and organizations well up into something big enough, and bold enough, to help renew the heart of Adventism?

First, all of us, and all of our organizations, can begin to share one point of indispensable agreement. It goes back, in its spirit, to the beginnings of Adventist history, and it

**When poverty and environmental breakdown are more of a threat than jewelry and dancing, the latter obsessions seem like the equivalent of buggy whips.**



**Finally, if  
the heart  
of Adventism  
is to be  
renewed, the  
champions of  
new vision  
must find new  
ways to  
collaborate,  
and make new  
efforts, every  
day, to find  
new partners.**

reflects (or so I would argue) the spirit of the New Testament itself. I mean agreement that *thanks to the grace and peace of Christ, we DO intend to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus; we DO intend to help one another flourish; we DO intend to serve and change the world.* Agreement here would put grace first, and it would link our thankful response with action that makes a difference—in our own lives and in the lives of others. This could be a mantra for prophetic Adventism. If we didn't agree on it, at least more or less, we wouldn't matter.

If the tiny but emerging groundswell is to count for anything, the second necessity is that we *work* at achieving new vision. Under the husk of hand-me-down platitudes is the kernel of insight. The pioneers did not know everything, but they did know that Jesus saves and hope invigorates. They did know that Christianity has veered too far from its Jewish underpinnings. They did know that state-hugging piety produces Christendom, the demonic union of church and state. What is more, they did know that where faithfulness and passion come together, a small number—a mere remnant—can make an outsized difference.

Today's devotees of prophetic Adventism can build on the acumen of these pioneers, and not least the acumen of Ellen White, in order to renew the way we see and act. It will take courage; it will take scholarship; it will take imagination and consensus building. But renewal can happen, and out of passion for hope and disdain for cynicism (that supreme weapon of cowardice), it *must* happen.

Finally, if the heart of Adventism is to be renewed, the champions of new vision must find new ways to collaborate, and make new efforts, every day, to find new partners. Prophetic Adventism is the most demanding kind, and also the most satisfying and most consequential. But it is a bare abstraction without the time and treasure—and cooperation—of human beings. It is a bare abstraction, that is, unless it is *embodied*. The Adventist Forum wants to exemplify all of this—by growing member-

ship and Web site interaction, and by looking for mission-advancing partnerships. Forum leaders believe that others of similar mindset—who write and publish and take action, who bear responsibility for organizations and events—want to move forward with similar audacity and similar openness to collaboration.

Perhaps all this is newer, less developed, than it sounds. Still, collaboration *has* begun, and it will continue.

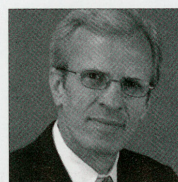
It had better. Rufus Jones, the Quaker pioneer, told his people: “[W]e can be bearers of a torch or we can carefully husband a little flame.” Prophetic Adventism will remain but a little flame—except as we who see the vision link our arms and do all we can to make the circle wider.

So let's shake our fists at the naysayers and dream-slayers, and rise up in one accord to declare, as trumpets do, that we are here. And let's say further, and say unmistakably, that we *will* cause something to happen; we *will* make a difference.

Margaret Mead, the anthropologist, said: “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” Allowing for some refinement, that sentence is an echo of what the prophets said. And it's the right spirit, today, for prophetic Adventism.

Robert Frost somewhere remarked that courage and decisiveness are “Better than all the stalemate an's and ifs.” We can wring our hands at the prospect of the two catastrophes that stand between the church and its prophetic mission—or we can muster the guts and energy to dance our way around them.

The dance is better, and the dance is more fun. ■



**Charles Scriven** chairs the Adventist Forum board of directors.





## Thoughts on Church Structure and God's Ideals for His Children

### Celebrating Progressive Steps at the GC

THE REPORT OF the Commission on Ministries, Services, and Structures adopted by the General Conference executive committee is a progressive step. I believe that Michael Cafferky's article in the winter issue of *Spectrum* could have done more to celebrate the progressive steps taken by the GC committee.

1. The recognition of diversity is unprecedented since the turn of the 20th century. The past several commissions and committees that have studied re-structuring of the denomination have all sought to discourage diversity, while this report embraces it.

2. The affirmation of the "union of churches" type of structure opens the door to reducing the size of the denominational structure in North America significantly. It allows the functions of the local and union conferences to be merged into a single entity. This could save millions of dollars in each union territory that could be returned to local ministries. It would also open the door to reducing the number of boarding academies to a level that better matches the actual need and saving further millions of dollars.

In fact, the potential for change in these actions is so far-reaching that it cannot be expected to be fully realized in short order. It will take years of studied, persistent pushing on the part of lay leaders and pastors to encourage some conference administrators and union committees to walk through the door that has been opened. Others are ready for this kind of change, but the consensus is uneven at present and will need to be built over time in order for change to be implemented. But, no one can use GC policy to block change.

MONTE SAHLIN

VIA THE WEB SITE

### God's Ideals for His Children

THE ARTICLE BY John R. Jones took almost nineteen pages to make a case in favor of homosexuality. It read to me

like the theological equivalent of Bill Clinton's argument on the definition of "is."

I don't think it takes very many words to say that homosexuality is NOT God's ideal for his children—it is falling short of that. A loving Heavenly Father's heart is broken when we experience less than the best that he intended for us.

Mitch Tyner's article that followed made some excellent points. However, there is such a thing as being an elder brother who stays home and faithfully serves—but then also joyfully joins with the father in welcoming the younger brother back home.

It feels to me that there is a strong push in the church to deny that homosexuality is living in a far country and eating with the pigs compared to what God intended for Christian marriage.

JERE WEBB

EAGLE, IDAHO

JOHN JONES'S ARTICLE takes many of us outside the old square into a rather uncomfortable place. I am impressed with the amount of thought and work he has put into the subject. It would all be so much simpler if Paul had not written Romans 1:26–27.

Although I have no settled convictions on this matter, I am still more comfortable with the position that our salvation depends solely upon the free gifts of God's forgiveness and righteousness. If we have that root, we will produce its fruit. Apart from these absolutes, everything else is religious culture, which, although it cannot save us, either enhances or diminishes our salvation.

Although Christianity, in the culture of Paul's day, was enhanced by forbidding women to speak in assembly, and by condemning all homosexual acts, those same restrictions could diminish it in our culture today. After all, the ultimate test of whether homosexual acts are right or



wrong is not religious culture, but the Ten Commandments. In that context, the seventh commandment promotes fidelity and condemns promiscuity.

RITCHIE WAY

VIA E-MAIL

## Old Testament Sexual Laws

IT IS ALWAYS PAINFUL for a hardcore Bible scholar to read a biblical study by someone of a more theological bent (John R. Jones, "Examining the Biblical Texts about Homosexuality," winter 2008). Of course, we all have to work together in the church, but we must also make sure our voices are heard, as well. So, for those willing to read on, here are some details to consider.

Leviticus 18. This chapter, along with chapter 20, are the two largest collections of sexual law in the Bible. Leviticus 18 is neatly divided into two sections: incest law (18:6–18) and other sexual laws (18:19–23). The incest laws are about family order and are defined as "uncovering the nakedness" of a near relative. But do the other sexual laws have a common factor?

The first clue is that the person addressed in the law, "you," is assumed to be male. The second clue is the presence of the molech law (18:21; 20:2–5). Sure, sacrificing children to molech is terrible, but why put it in with sexual laws? Another clue is that the ancient Greek and Syriac texts of 18:23 independently witness to the word *zera'* (seed), which apparently fell out of the Hebrew text we have today.

The word *zera'* is used for plant seeds as well as for semen. It occurs in the molech law in chapter 18, and it occurs three times in the molech law of chapter 20:2–5. Only in Leviticus 18 and 20 is *zera'* used in connection with molech worship.

To summarize—when a male has sex, semen (*zera'*) tends to be present, *zera'* occurs three times in Leviticus 18:19–23, and the term *zera'* probably explains what the molech law is doing in these collections of sexual law. Is *zera'*—semen—a controlled body fluid in the law?

In Leviticus 15:16–18, the emission of *zera'* makes a man, and anything the semen touches, unclean. In Leviticus 22:4, an emission of semen makes a priest unclean for Sanctuary duty. In Exodus 19:15 and 1 Samuel 21:4–5, men must keep themselves from women (that is, don't have sex) to be fit for the divine presence or to eat bread from the Sanctuary.

In Deuteronomy 23:9–11, even though a woman is

not present, an emission of semen makes a man unfit for battle (which may be why Uriah resisted visiting his wife, so he could return to battle—2 Sam. 11:8–11). Spread through a variety of texts, we have evidence that semen is, indeed, a controlled body fluid in biblical law.

So, in light of biblical law on *zera'*, its use in Leviticus 18:19–23, and the oddity of molech law in chapters 18 and 20, it is reasonable to conclude that *zera'* unites the non-incest laws of Leviticus 18. *Zera'* should not contact menstrual fluid, another controlled body fluid (18:19); it should not enter a woman under contract to receive another man's *zera'*—adultery (18:20); *zera'* should not be sacrificed to molech (18:21); *zera'* should not enter another *zera'* producer—male homosexuality (18:22); nor should it enter an animal (18:23), nor should an animal's semen enter a human female (also 18:23).

The mystery is solved of why female homosexuality is not addressed—no *zera'*. Verse 23 makes it clear that these laws can address women if desired, even though a male is addressed, so the absence of mentioning female homosexuality is significant.

A couple of additional points. The early church, in at least some areas, forbade the Lord's Supper to couples who were unclean because of seminal emission (Bede 1.27). This law about *zera'* did not stay confined to the Old Testament. Also, Romans 1:26 is not specific about the woman's sexual partner, or about what is "likewise" between verses 26–27.

In our culture, we assume a single category for homosexuality and understand verse 26 as homosexual. However, Clement of Alexandria (second century), Augustine (fourth to fifth century) and Anastasios all understood Romans 1:26 as heterosexual and the "likewise" to refer to the sex act. They assumed that the problem with the sex acts in Romans 1:26–27 was their infertility, something they got from Plato, whereas modern commentators are more likely to cite the abusiveness of these acts.

Very briefly, here is a small slice of what may be found with careful exegesis, using the Bible to interpret the Bible.

I have published some articles relevant to points made in this study: *Zeitschrift für de Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 119 (2007):86–89; 112 (2000):401–403; *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 90 (2000):41–53; *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65 (1997):861–66; and *Novum Testamentum* 37 (1995):1–11.

JIM MILLER

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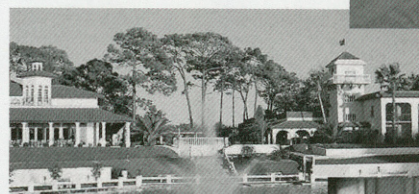
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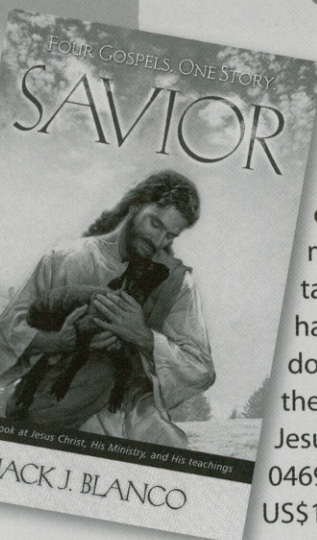
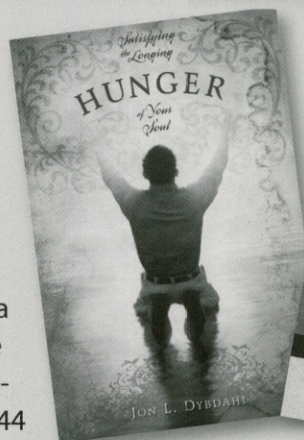
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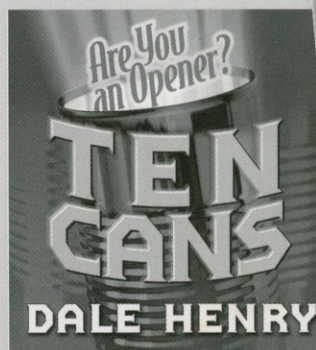
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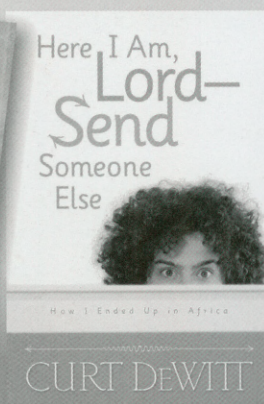
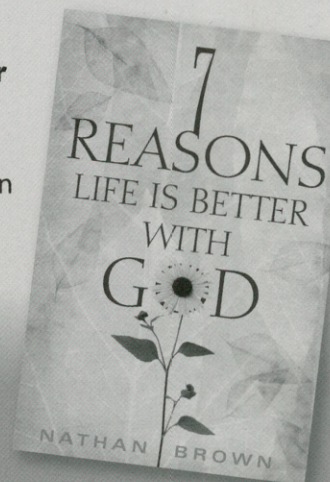


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## A Young Conductor Makes Waves

*Shi-Yeon Sung Joins the Boston Symphony Orchestra* | AN INTERVIEW BY ALITA BYRD

Last year, Shi-Yeon Sung became the first woman to be named assistant conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Working under the renowned James Levine, the thirty-two-year-old South Korean is making the most of her two-year opportunity to work with some of the world's best musicians and conductors.

In 2006, Sung won the prestigious Sir Georg Solti International Conductors' Competition in Frankfurt, Germany—the first woman to ever take home the top prize. She was given €15,000 in prize money and concerts with the Frankfurt Museum Orchestra and the Frankfurt Radio Symphony.

In February 2007, she took second prize at the Gustav Mahler Conducting Competition in Bamberg, Germany—another top honor. (None of the twelve competitors earned first prize.) A *London Times* reviewer said Sung “conducted with impressive discipline but coolness.” English conductor Jonathan Nott, who conducts the world-class symphony orchestra in Bamberg and is one of the judges in the conducting competition, said: “I hope Shi-Yeon can go on to prove that we should have given her first prize.”

Shi-Yeon Sung is certainly a rising star in the classical music world, and she has packed in an impressive array of performances and accolades since her conducting debut in 2002, when she conducted Mozart's *Magic Flute* in Berlin.

Shi-Yeon Sung is also an Adventist, and since she moved to Boston for her new job this season, she has been attending the Boston Korean

Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Sung gives God the credit for her success. “I believe that God has led me to where I am today,” she says.

“I do not know why [I was chosen for the Boston Symphony orchestra position]. But I think God has a plan for me here in Boston and I am waiting to find out what it is.”

Sung was born in an Adventist hospital in Pusan, South Korea.







When Sung was five years old, her mother became an Adventist and began taking her daughter with her to church every week. Later, while living in Germany, Sung was baptized.

Sung says it can be difficult to balance her work in the professional music world with her religion, "but I decided to conduct music to praise God," she says, so she believes the two do not conflict.

### The Beginning

Sung started taking piano lessons when she was four years old, living with her parents and older brother in Seoul, South Korea. "One day I came home after playing with some friends," Sung says. "I asked my mother to get me piano lessons. I don't remember why. I just wanted

to be a professional musician."

Sung's earliest memory of music is of Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 playing at home. "I felt really comfortable and at ease when the music surrounded the entire room," she says.

Sung practiced her piano diligently, but she also liked to go out and spend time with her friends. For a while, she tried her hand at the violin, but decided it was not for her. She enjoyed going to hear orchestras play, and watching the conductors made a deep and lasting impression.

When she was eighteen, Sung left home to study piano and music in Switzerland, and then Germany. She studied under well-known teachers in Zurich and Berlin, and in 2001 earned a master's degree in

piano performance from the Berlin University of the Arts.

Then Sung decided to take up conducting. "I wanted to try something new besides piano," she says. "I remembered watching orchestras as a little kid and I wanted to switch to conducting."

After her conducting debut in 2002, Sung worked with various German orchestras, and eventually orchestras around the world, including the Rotterdam Philharmonic, Bamberg Symphony, Heidelberg Philharmonic, Royal Opera Orchestra Stockholm, Helsingborg Symphony, Seoul Philharmonic, and many others.

Sung also won various conducting competitions, including the Solingen Conducting Competition for women.





## Questions and Answers

*Spectrum* asked Shi-Yeon Sung some questions about her work and her inspiration.

*Spectrum:* What music do you most enjoy conducting?

**Shi-Yeon Sung:** Gustav Mahler and other German classical and romantic music.

*Q:* What preparation do you do before conducting a piece of music?

**A:** First I study the background of the music, and how it came to be composed. Then I read through the score once. Then I try to play it on the piano. While I play it, I imagine what it would sound like with an orchestra performing it.

Then I rehearse with an orchestra. And I pray.

*Q:* How do you feel is the most effective way to communicate with an orchestra?

**A:** Just be yourself on the podium and be honest all the time. Instead of requesting musicians to create sound in a certain way, I try to incorporate the unique sound each member makes and react to create a harmony.

*Q:* What do you find to be the most difficult thing about being a conductor?

**A:** To be a great conductor, not only do you need good knowledge and techniques, but you also need to create a good working relationship with musicians. One of the most impor-

tant assets of a good conductor is his or her unique personality. But you are born with it and it is difficult to change who you are.

*Q:* Aren't you very young for a conductor?

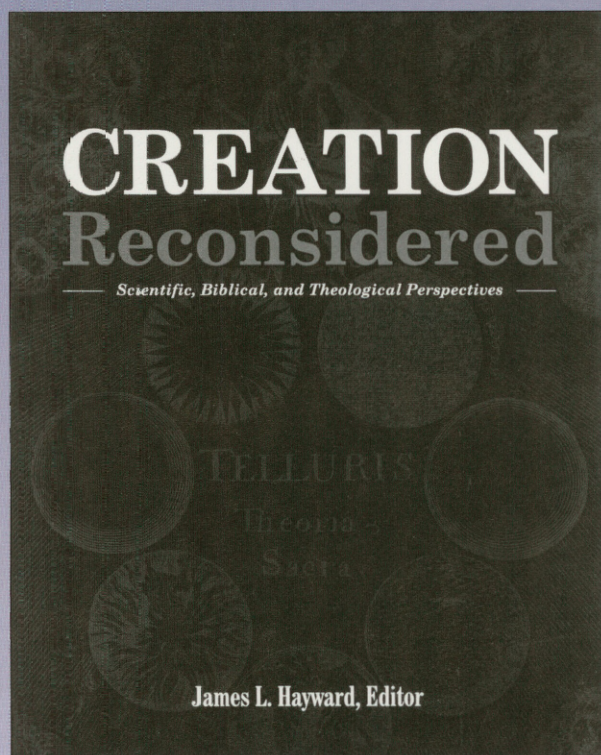
**A:** In the past, I would have been a young conductor. But today, there are lots of young conductors who have great careers in music.

*Q:* Where do you think classical music is going? How has the classical music world changed in the time you have been a part of it?

**A:** Compared to classical music performance in the past, today music has become more technical. Instead of deep interpretation, music these



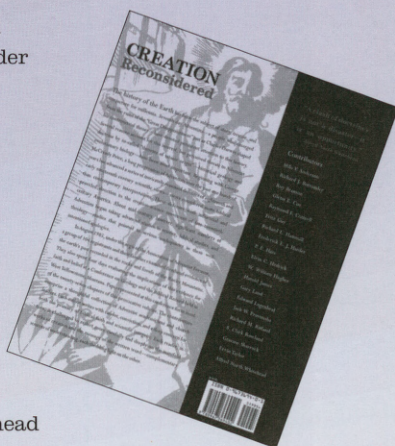
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days tends to provide instant excitement and gratification.

*Q: How does Adventism influence your career? Does your career impact your Adventism?*



**A:** I try to represent Adventists in the music world.

*Q: Where do you see your career going in the future?*

**A:** I do not know for sure at this moment. No matter how I plan it, I believe it is God who has led me till now. So I will wait and see where he will take me next.

*Q: What do you do when you are not making music?*

**A:** I exercise whenever I have free time because it is important to have good stamina. Conducting is a very demanding job. I also watch movies, read books, and spend time with my friends.

*Q: How often do you see your family? What do they think of your success?*

**A:** My family is still in South Korea. I see them once every year. They are really happy about my success. My parents pray a lot for me. They know God is the reason behind my success.

*Q: What advice would you have for young Adventists who are hoping to become professional musicians?*

**A:** Without effort, God will not grant your wish. Therefore, do your best and never give up. Continue to pray as you pursue your dream. ■

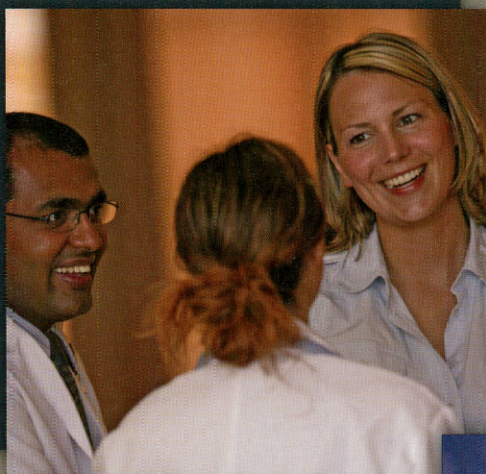
**Alita Byrd** is a member of *Spectrum's* editorial board and helps edit *Spectrum's* Web site. She writes from Dublin, Ireland. This interview was first published on *Spectrum's* Web site <[www.spectrummagazine.org](http://www.spectrummagazine.org)>.



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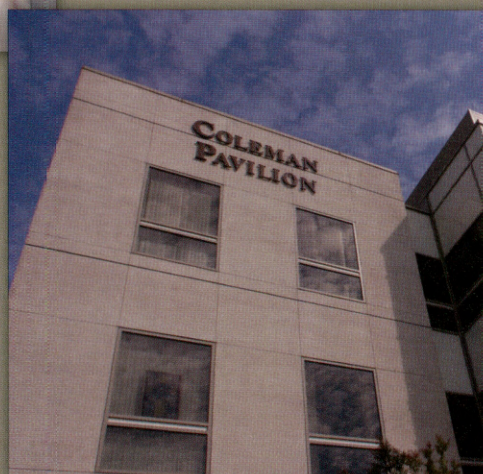
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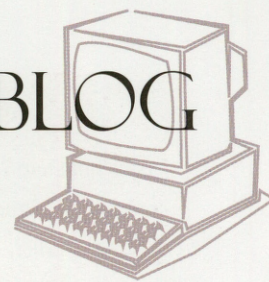
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## Here in the Now *A Discussion of Postmodernism from the Spectrum Web Site*

**Editor's Note:** Although online commentaries, articles, and blog posts may be short, they can prompt long thoughtful conversations. Such was the case recently in response to a column written by David Larson, below. <[www.spectrummagazine.org/articles/column/2008/04/15/loma\\_linda\\_university\\_school\\_religion\\_dean\\_praises\\_postmodernism](http://www.spectrummagazine.org/articles/column/2008/04/15/loma_linda_university_school_religion_dean_praises_postmodernism)>.

### Loma Linda University School of Religion Dean Praises Postmodernism

BY DAVID LARSON

Although he also pinpoints its challenges and dangers, the dean of the School of Religion at Loma Linda University has many good things to say about postmodernism. His name is Jon Paulien and Pacific Press is about to release his new book on the subject. Its title is *Everlasting Gospel/Ever Changing World*. Any day now it will be available at Adventist Book Centers and Internet retailers.

Loma Linda University's religion faculty discussed this book with its dean on Sunday evening, April 13, at the home he shares with his wife Pamela and their young-adult children. The atmosphere was hospitable, the food was great, and the discussion was spirited. None of the professors gave their dean a break just because he is their "boss." He obviously enjoyed it!

Early on in his book, Paulien writes that "In the Middle Ages (the pre-modern period) truth was thought to reside in privileged groups" such as priests, bishops, popes and nobles. Secular modernism is a child of the Enlightenment in eighteenth-century Europe. It attempted to get rid of authorities, eliminate superstition, gain power over nature with scientific knowledge,

and improve the world through human reason and education. It was the reigning mindset into the twentieth century; however, as its weaknesses became increasingly evident, more and more people came to think of themselves as postmodern. They felt betrayed by modernism's inability to deliver the peaceful, steady, and cumulative progress it promised.

At this time, "a new generation looks at the god of secular modernism and proclaims it to be a *false god*," Paulien writes. "In most Western countries," he writes, "people under the age of 35–40 tend to be postmodern." They reject meta-narratives. These are "big-picture stories that try to explain everything in the universe." The Seventh-day Adventist theme of the Great Controversy is an example. They are suspicious of most institutions, including the church. They reject Scripture because they find it "to be filled with violence, everlasting burning hell, and the subjection of women and minorities."

The screenshot shows the Spectrum Magazine website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with "SPECTRUM" and "BLOG" links. Below the navigation bar, there's a section titled "NOW WITH PODCASTS! FIRST UP: EVANGELISM" by Alexander Carpenter. To the right of this section, there's a "SPECTRUM BLOG" section with a list of articles: "Spectrum Wins a Design Award", "A Slave to Christians: A True Story of Being Illegal in America", "Now with Podcasts! First Up: Evangelism", "Video | How To Move a 100 Year Old Church", "Video | How politics sullies religion", "COLLEGIATE BLOG", and "Two Kinds of Workers: The Seventh-day".



According to Paulien,

*[T]he fundamental insight of postmodernism is that the confident claims of modernism are nothing more than a historically conditioned construct, of no more value than the narrow-minded "certainties" of pre-modern or non-Western cultures. Just as "primitive" cultures were confident of their rightness due to ignorance of the larger global picture, so modernism gained its confidence by limiting the base of evidence and the hermeneutic by which it allowed evidence to be examined.*

He identifies ten transitions individuals and societies experience as they shift from secular modernism to secular postmodernism:

- I. from confidence to suspicion
- II. from stability to disorientation
- III. from one truth to many
- IV. from individualism to identity crisis
- V. from individualism to community
- VI. from religion or no religion to spirituality
- VII. from atomistic to wholistic
- VIII. from exclusion to inclusion
- IX. from knowledge to experience
- X. from truth-telling to storytelling

"I am convinced," writes Paulien, "that God's hand is behind these changes in the world and that we are heading to a place of His choosing."

He also examines eight features of postmodernism that "have positive implications for genuine Christian faith." One of these is its sense that all is not well, that there is "a deep need for inner healing." Another is its "high premium on humility, honesty and authenticity in interper-

sonal relationships." A third is its longing "for a clear sense of personal identity." A fourth is its "strong need for genuine community." A fifth is its "refreshing inclusiveness" in its attitudes "toward everyone who is foreign, out of the ordinary or just plain different." A sixth is its greater openness "to spiritual discussions with anyone who knows God and can teach others how to know God." A seventh is its "its ability to tolerate opposites. What is truth for you might be quite different from what is truth for me." He sees this as more akin to the "Hebrew logic" in Scripture that "could often see contrasting ideas, not in terms of true and false, but in terms of a tension between two poles." His final note of appreciation for postmodernism is that it favors a narrative approach to Scripture and other things. Instead of expecting the canonical texts to provide systematic summaries of doctrines, they look for patterns, plots, and people.

Among many other good things in a book with thirteen stimulating chapters, Paulien distinguishes between the "light of the world" and the "salt of the earth" ministries to postmodern people. The first approaches them from afar and is especially intent on preserving its own Christian integrity. The second approaches them from within and emphasizes the need to be intelligible and helpful. His own call for what he calls "radical conservatism" is an appeal to recognize the validity of both approaches and to engage in an overall strategy of following Paul's example of "being all things to all people" in hopes of winning some.

My own conviction is that postmodernism's greatest threat is that it often makes room for anti-modernism. It has become altogether too fashionable these days to deride the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century in ways that play into the hands of those who have long refused to acknowledge its positive achievements. Some who have never been willing to live in secular societies use it to justify their would-be theocracies. Some who have never been willing to examine religious faith in the light of reason and public evidence use it to justify their fundamentalism. Some who have never been willing to endorse universal human rights use it to justify their tyranny. Some who have never been willing to stop proof-texting Scripture use it to justify their practice of making it say whatever they want. Some who have never been willing to concede the merits of the scientific method use it to discredit its genuine discoveries.

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By Alexander Carpenter

In adventism media politics religious liberty

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He discusses the ideas behind the Workplace Religious Freedom Act. [Click here to listen.](#)

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By Alexander Carpenter

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Carpi Lisoni on "Hey, What'd You Put for No. 1?"  
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To each and all of these we must insist on what should be obvious: no one gets to be genuinely postmodern unless he or she has first been thoroughly modern. This is a message that we Adventists need to take especially seriously.

By recommending that many of us purchase and read Paulien's book I run the risk of appearing to ingratiate myself to my dean. I'm happy to take this chance! This volume accomplishes its purpose, which is to provide the men and women in Adventist congregations all over the world who do not specialize in such things a more positive assessment of postmodernism than they often hear. Reading one chapter a week for the thirteen weeks of a quarter would make an excellent series of Sabbath School lessons. Go for it!

### Editor's Choice Comments

Here are comments the editor has chosen from the discussion about this article.

### God's Hand

ACCORDING TO *Wikipedia*,

*Postmodernism tends to refer to a cultural, intellectual, or artistic state lacking a clear central hierarchy or organizing principle and embodying extreme complexity, contradiction, ambiguity, diversity, and interconnectedness or interreferentiality.*

A viewpoint lacking clarity and embodying extreme complexity, contradiction, and ambiguity does not seem to be one worthy of adoption.

I agree with the author though.

"I am convinced," writes Paulien, "that God's hand is behind these changes in the world and that we are heading to a place of His choosing."

Michael, April 15, 2008

### "Potmodernism"

DR. PAULIEN'S TEN points are the clearest summary of postmodernism. To me, it is the most convoluted thought process known to man. It seems to me to come right out of the flower children era. I would call it potmodernism. I am glad Dr. Paulien can make sense out of it. But I think he gives it more credit than it is due. I get the feeling he is more hopeful about it than realistic. Great review nonetheless.

Tom Zwemer, April 15, 2008

### Critiquing Fundamentalism

"RADICAL CONSERVATISM" WOULD mean that Paulien sees the theological task as that of recovering the best of existing and past theologizing in ways meaningful and accessible for the present world?

It always amazes me how unaware some people are of the debilitating effect scientism and "scientistic materialism" has had on theology. Nonreligious (and also religious) postmodern thinkers could arguably be said to be most interested in countering scientistic certainty, a pursuit that was quite invested in repudiating religious belief, which explains in large part why postmodernism is seen by so many Christians as grounds for fertile reflection.

I may be moving beyond Paulien and/or Larson, but I'd wager to say that which postmodernism critiques best is fundamentalism. Not just the religious kind, but the science folk also. On that note, an article I recently enjoyed is, "I Don't Believe in Atheists," which is an interview with Chris Hedges.

Thank you both for reiterating that this work is being done not to relativize but to contextualize, to reclaim the (dis)comfort of mystery in the pursuit of a clearer understanding of the truths that matter.

*Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths. This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the end. (Ellen G. White, Laborers Together with God, 297)*

Johnny A. Ramirez, April 16, 2008

### Larson Responds

Michael, Tom, and Johnny

The information from *Wikipedia* is helpful, the reference to "postmodernism" as "potmodernism" is funny, and the interview at *Salon* of Chris Hedges about the "New Atheists" is very provocative, and, I think, helpful.

I don't yet see the connection between "New Atheists" and the "neocons"; however, I very much see it between them and the religious fundamentalists.

My thanks to all three of you for your comments!

I gather that, by definition, postmodernism is not one thing. Indeed, the minute someone says, "postmodernism IS..." we might suspect that we are in trouble.



Perhaps we should say something like, "All postmoderns reject both premodernism and modernism, but beyond that they have very little in common."

I think one distinction is between its deconstructive and reconstructive forms. Paulien describes the more deconstructive ones, as seen in its rejection of metanarratives (the big story that "explains" everything). But there are reconstructive forms of postmodernism as well.

Process philosophy and theology describe themselves in these terms. Process thinkers were among those who first started using the term *postmodern theology*, and that was way back in the 1960s!

Another way to slice the pie is to think of modernism as a method of thinking, on the one hand, and a set of beliefs, on the other. Those who are postmoderns can reject either or both with differing outcomes.

I agree that when postmoderns criticize the excesses of science they serve us well; however, insofar as they say that the modern scientific method is no better or worse than other modes of thinking, I think they go way too far. And I say that specifically as a Christian.

How many effective medicines do premodern civilizations provide? Over the centuries, they have developed many remedies and some are very effective. Nevertheless, it was not until the modern era that the average person had a decent chance of living three-score and ten years.

This makes me uneasy with sweeping rejections of science.

As you can tell, my reactions toward postmodernism are decidedly mixed, perhaps more so than Paulien's. But they are at least as mixed about modernism and premodernism.

I wonder what he means when he says that "I am convinced that God's hand is behind these changes in the world and that we are heading to a place of his choosing."

Maybe we can get him to explain!

Thank you!

David Larson, April 16, 2008

### Themes of Inclusiveness and Equality

SOUNDS LIKE A finger on the pulse. I wonder what the adopting of this reframed picture of our culture would do to our whole denominational philosophy toward and practice of evangelism.

We have traditionally made our home in metanarrative, proof texts, and neat, tidy packages of systematic doctrinal

summaries. Would we rethink our ways?

I also wonder how this would affect our church structure, if this were to be taken seriously. We have become the type of institutionalized church that arouses distrust.

And would our official position on women's ordination need to be rethought, in light of the themes of equality and inclusiveness that arch over the Scriptures...themes that this culture values, and won't give us the time of day if we don't in practice? Time to put our money where our mouth is?

Thanks....

Frank, April 16, 2008

### Becoming Aware of Cultural Matrix

IF POSTMODERNISTS COULD be persuaded to use human language, instead of Derrida's C++, when they write, I would think that most people would find it to make a lot of sense.

Postmodernism, to me, is an attempt to point out that what we know and learn about the world is filtered through the human mind. It doesn't have an opinion about right and wrong, it only wants people to become aware of the mental and cultural matrix into which we pour our knowledge of the world. It's a plea for humility when we make Truth-statements.

Postmodernism calls our fact-laden matrices *stories*. I don't object to that. Christianity has always been a story. To the Romans, it was the story of a group of Jews who could not come to terms with the fact that their leader had been executed. To the disciples, it was the story of how God's Messiah was put to death, ascended to heaven, and was waiting to return. Stories are different ways of making sense of facts.

To be aware of the fact that we work within paradigms is not a bad thing. It does not invalidate the world of facts, nor does it condemn faith statements. Nor does it say that all stories are equally good (although some have been carried away to say so. But, as one politician said: "You're entitled to your opinions but not to your own facts").

Aage Rendalen, April 16, 2008

### Deconstructing Worldviews

I RECENTLY READ David Wells book, *Above All Earthly Powers*, in which he critiqued both postmodernism and the Evangelical church's response to it. He isn't as positive as Dr.



Paulien appears to be and has some interesting observations that we might want to factor into the equation. First, he makes an argument that postmodernism resembles gnosticism and the present observable result of postmodernism is nihilism.

Whether you agree or disagree with Dr. Wells, it makes for another interesting read on a difficult target to pin down. I do agree in principle with Dr. Paulien that postmodernism isn't something that God wasn't aware of and he had a hand in it to deconstruct our absolutist worldviews.

Kevin Kuehmicel, April 16, 2008

## Realism vs. Enthusiasm

ALTHOUGH I WASN'T at the meeting, I have read the manuscript and discussed it with Dr. Paulien on numerous occasions.

My sense is not so much that he is enthusiastic about postmodernism as he is realistic. Postmodernism is out there, and quite pervasive. Debunking it won't help us reach the people who hold that point of view. So rather than focusing on what's wrong, it's my sense he has emphasized the opportunities it presents for the gospel.

As I understand the Bible, the gospel challenges every culture, modernism and postmodernism alike. Every culture is human, and imperfect. To the extent that postmodernism confronts modernism, as does the gospel, it is useful in helping modernists recognize modernism's defects. One of the problems of modernism—as it has come to be manifested in Christians and SDAs—is modernism's certainty.

We have THE TRUTH, and we will smash anything that threatens it. An example of that extreme usage can be found here: <<http://groundsforbelief.com/?p=30>>.

Certainty has become a Seventh-day Adventist addiction. We forget that "we know [only] in part; we prophecy in part," and begin to think our knowledge is absolute. It's exactly that sort of certainty that has provoked the postmodern reaction that "no one has all truth."

On the other extreme, some pastors—people I know and like—have bought into the idea that "postmodernism is the answer, the REAL road to Christianity."

I believe both extremes are mistaken, and I'm pretty certain Dr. Paulien does also.

Ed Dickerson, April 16, 2008

## Working Through the Strengths of an Era

IF THE POSTMODERN worldview brings about humility, honesty, authenticity, and inclusiveness, perhaps that is the place God has chosen to bring us. I believe God has worked through the strengths of every era to show us more of what he desires us to be.

Carrol Grady, April 16, 2008

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By Alexander Carpenter  
In faith global warming politics  
Last week, about forty lay and clergy members of Interfaith Power and Light met with Senators, Representatives and their environmental legislative directors to call for rapid and equitable action on climate change.  
1 comment | Read more
- 20 May 2008**  
**Video 1 Is Biblical Capitalism an Oxymoron?**  
By Alexander Carpenter  
In capitalism video  
Will Wilkinson of The Cato Institute, talks with Journalist Jeff Sharlet (NYU's Center for Religion and Media) about his book on the conservative, shadowy Family and the global impact of Christian Right free market manipulation.  
3 comments | Read more
- 19 May 2008**  
**Prezing forward to Atlanta 2010**

On the right side of the page, there's a "Search" box and a "NEW CONTENT" section with links to "My Day on Capital Hill: A Religious Response to Global Warming", "Search for Missing White Male: Student Sidelined", "New Protestant Apostleship at Harvard College", "Video 1 Is Biblical Capitalism an Oxymoron?", and "How Walker's Historical Novel Provides a Satisfying Conclusion". Below that is a "RECENT COMMENTS" section with links to "Jared Wright on My Day on Capital Hill: A Religious Response to Global Warming", "Track 7 on The Intensity of His Walk", and "Florida List on Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed Reviewed".

## The Problem of Doubt

POSTMODERNISM CANNOT BE escaped. It is here and in the first world countries. The problem: How is Christianity to be presented to these people who live and breathe in a postmodern world, whose thought processes are filtered through that sieve?

The old methods, still used in developing countries are totally ineffective. Ask yourself: When was the last time you decided to attend a widely advertised exposé on Bible prophecy—NOT by Seventh-day Adventists? Were you attracted from curiosity or genuine desire to know? Or, have you been contacted by Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons and listened to their beliefs? If so, why or why not?

Only in this century have people been educated as well, and part of being educated is learning to think and examine critically what you are told. That is the problem: Once the general population of a country learns to read, becomes literate, and can question for itself, no longer are pronouncements by gurus of any effect. We have become doubters; yet no faith was ever tested without doubt being there first. No longer do the ancient myths hold sway over whole populations as they once did. We no longer trust in our preachers, our politicians, our governments, or each other, without first developing that trust by personal experience.

Elaine Nelson, April 18, 2008



## Reasoning or Assumption?

JUST WONDERING IF the book's author will join this conversation, since I definitely need more help and further explanation, from him if possible, in regard to the following:

1. [T]he fundamental insight of postmodernism is that the confident claims of modernism are nothing more than a historically conditioned construct, of no more value than the narrow-minded "'certainties' of pre-modern or non-Western cultures."

What caught my attention in particular was the second half of the statement regarding non-Western cultures. Hardly a postmodern view.

2. "I am convinced," writes Paulien, "that God's hand is behind these changes in the world and that we are heading to a place of His choosing."

I'm interested in the argument or reasoning behind his conclusion, how he was able to persuade himself. Or was this purely an assumption?

3. "In most Western countries," he writes, "people under the age of 35–40 tend to be postmodern."

How about those more than forty and others, whether or not they're Westerners that breathe and inhabit the same postmodern/Western cultural environment? How can we tell if one is truly postmodern or not?

*Young adults may well name their own outlook as "postmodern." However, such a self-designation does not necessarily point to the habit, or even the capacity, for ordering one's world in a postmodern way.*  
(Maureen R. O'Brien, "Practical Theology and Postmodern Religious Education," *Religious Education* [summer 1999] <[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qa3783/is\\_199907/ai\\_n8875805](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3783/is_199907/ai_n8875805)>).

Joselito Co, April 20, 2008

## A Crippling Fear

WHAT I FIND INTERESTING in all the naming and renaming of different generations and eras, is that no matter where we come from, or where we wish to be headed, we ARE in the here and now, right now! What I continue to encounter in much that is written and published about postmodernism, both in Adventism and Christianity-at-large, is a philosophical presumption that by denouncing and proclaiming the errors and moral deficits of this age, we may thereby drag humanity (Christianity at the very least) back to the "moral, rational, and responsible" mod-

ern age. (Presumably kicking and screaming, in the case of our younger, more technologically inclined folk.)

I've had occasion to hear Dr. Paulien speak on two different occasions during the time this book was in its "gestational" phase. What I always experienced, was a profound joy in the reminder that God has, does, and will continue to work in each and every generation, despite whatever names, attributes, deficits, advantages, or challenges each time period presents. What immobilizes us is wistful residence in a time we can no longer change or effect, or else a crippling fear of the future, which is also beyond our control. Jesus appeared during a profoundly violent and morally corrupt age. Somehow, God found this timing perfect, preferable even, to the more "golden" eras of Israel's history. Might that not give us some hope and courage to live and act boldly, no matter what the title we give to these days?

Very excited the book has arrived!

Shelley, April 25, 2008

## Speaking from a Patchwork of Facts

FIRST LET ME please introduce myself and thank you each for contributing to this conversation. I am a former missionary and evangelist who has walked the steps Dr. Paulien laid out so nicely. I am blessed to have found that not all modern religions have become hopelessly self-assured, and your thread so far reminds me that the search should never stop.

I think Aage found the very center of the issue in a glib way above, reminding us of a politician who said "You're entitled to your opinions but not to your own facts." This is precisely the modern way of seeing God's Truth, and, although it sounds like a lovely homily, it fails to correct for perspective. There is a neat solution that many postmodern traditions grossly overcomplicate. It begins with the reminder that a fact is merely a piece of information, and is thus subject to all the errors of observation, bias, context, and interpretation. We know that there is only one Truth, which none of us will ever possess, and so the only solution is to accept that each of us bases his selection of facts and understanding of God on a unique perspective.

Thus it must be that everyone, including the prophets, speaks from a set of patchwork facts that are incomplete and erroneous. That is only hopeless if we are alone in the

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*Continued on page 56...*



# THE BIBLE





## Sanctuary | BY KENDRA HALOVIK

A reading from the Torah:

"...[let] them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Exod. 25:8).

A reading from the prophets:

"And [the holy one] answered: 'For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings, then the sanctuary shall be [cleansed] restored to its rightful state'" (Dan. 8:14).

A reading from the Gospel:

Then Jesus entered [into] the temple  
and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple,  
and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.  
He said to them:

'It is written, my house shall be called a house of prayer  
but you are making it a den of robbers.'

The blind and the lame came to him in the temple  
and he cured them. (Matt. 21:12-14)

A reading from the Apocalypse:

"I saw no temple in the [New Jerusalem], for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" (Rev. 21:22).

Prayer:

Holy God, for many people Adventist Forum is a sanctuary.  
We have gathered together this Sabbath day to celebrate.

Some of us have met conversation partners in person for the first time!...now we have a face to go along with the blogs  
that have blessed us, provoked us, made us think about our convictions....

Please bless our conversations today with your presence.  
Amen.

### Introduction

My family had a cabin at Glacier View Ranch during the meetings there in 1980.

Some of you here are too young to remember 1980...

But perhaps you've heard of Desmond Ford, and the Glacier View Sanctuary Review Committee.

Our family and the Fords had cabins. Ours was closer to the lake; the Fords' cabin was up the hill a bit beyond the swimming pool....

I believe, everyone else stayed in the lodge, closer to the meeting rooms and the cafeteria.

My dad was presenting a paper on A. F. Ballenger. I had no idea who Ballenger was....

My mom was Richard Hammill's secretary at the time. Elder Hammill was the vice president of the General Conference, responsible for the Glacier View Conference. Their office made all the arrangements for the meetings, duplicated and



distributed all the materials, and, when everyone arrived, my mom was the liaison between the delegates and the one phone in the camp.

My brother and I didn't really care about the meetings, we were excited over a family vacation to Colorado, the furthest West we'd ever been!

That attitude about the meetings changed during the week, when I began to see men—delegates to the meetings—walking around the lake shaking their heads, clearly upset, some even crying....

Then, one night in our cabin, my dad cried. He really cried. In fact, that evening was the first time I'd seen him cry like that.

Q. What *was* this week all about?

Thirteen at the time, it was difficult to get an answer I could understand.

At night, I tried to stay awake as my parents discussed the day's events in the safety of our cabin.

As I drifted off to sleep, I sometimes heard references to "the sanctuary"....

I knew they weren't talking about the space in which we worshiped back at our local church in Maryland.

"The sanctuary" had something to do with Adventism and being right and these meetings...and the weeping men I saw walking around the lake.

As I reflect on it now...twenty-seven years later...I think the sanctuary also has something to do with that cabin our family stayed in the week of August 10–15, 1980.

### **Historic Adventism and Sanctuary Symbols**

It's really difficult for me to imagine being an Advent believer in 1844...

To really believe that the Second Advent would take place before October was over.

Ellen White expressed it this way:

"Those who expected soon to stand face to face with their Redeemer, felt a solemn joy that was unutterable.... As they felt the witness of pardoning grace, they longed to behold Him whom their souls loved" (*Great Controversy*, 402–403).

Seven years ago, Fred and Kim Davis purchased a house within walking distance of La Sierra University. Kim had been given fifteen months to live following cancer surgery, and they decided to be as close as possible to their two college-aged daughters.

For seven years, the last two cancer free, Fred and Kim have been active members of the La Sierra community. They sing in the church choir and participate in a local Bible study group.

Almost every day, Kim gets exercise by walking the campus grounds.

She also audits several religion classes.

At the beginning of this calendar year, Kim learned that her cancer is back.

After another round of chemo this summer, things do not look good.

When I join Kim in her walks around our campus, and I listen to her deep longing for Jesus to return, and her complete confidence that He will...

I feel like I get a glimpse into the faith of those early Adventists.

Imagine October 22, 1844!

Imagine the anticipation...any minute, Jesus would return.

Imagine the children looking up into the clouds...the teenagers...the adults...

...all really believing they wouldn't sleep again before seeing God!

Those struggling with illness were convinced that their pain would soon cease and their bodies would be healed; whole again....

We call October 22 the "Great Disappointment"...but that was actually October 23...



October 22 was a day of wondrous hope!

"Those who expected soon to stand face to face with their Redeemer, felt a solemn joy that was unutterable...."

Then came the early morning hours of October 23....

Trying to express the sense of loss and absence, Mrs. White goes to the disciple Mary Magdalene, who, when she can't find Jesus' body in the tomb says to the two dressed in white:

"They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him" (John 20:13).

Hiram Edson will write: "we wept, and wept, until the day dawned...."

Faced with their experience, the Advent believers did theology....

That is, (thank you, Fritz Guy) they tried to understand God in light of their current experience...

They tried to understand God even as they experienced God's absence.

It makes sense that one of the theological insights of their wrestling would emphasize the sanctuary...

...a set of symbols used in the Hebrew Bible to depict God's presence with God's people.

Perhaps a better understanding of the "sanctuary" would make sense of an absent God.

Jesus had not come down to cleanse the earth-sanctuary

But, instead, he was going about the business of cleansing a heavenly sanctuary.

Even with this delay, Jesus was entering a new phase of ministry that moved him closer to earth...to Advent.

Whatever we think of their theology...at least they were doing theology!

They were wrestling with their understanding of God in light of their experience of God's absence.

Weeping at all that was wrong in their world, including them!...they found renewed hope as the sanctuary became a reminder of God's continued presence...as priest...as mediator.

From the book of Hebrews, a key New Testament work for those Advent believers:

*Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Heb. 10:19-25)*

The theology that emerged from the sanctuary symbols emphasized a God who was still Immanuel... "God with them" even as they "wept and wept until the day dawned..."

Q. In what ways might our current weeping be comforted by the sanctuary symbols?

Q. What might a God who *mediates* mean for people performing acts of mediation in our world today? Mediating between tribes? Family members? Nations?

Q. What might images of *cleansing* mean for a world of contaminated soil and water?

Q. If Christ's blood is somehow sufficient, how dare we let any more be spilled?

Q. What might *sanctuary* mean in a world where children are abused in the filth and darkness of brothels?

As we consider the set of symbols surrounding the sanctuary...

As we consider this aspect of Adventism in our contemporary contexts,

what might it mean to embrace a heritage that holds these sanctuary symbols close to the heartbreaking experience of disappointment and bitter weeping?



Weeping and sanctuary seem to go together....What might that mean when we do theology?

There's a story in Daniel 10 that must not be skipped over when trying to decipher the rest of this prophet's pages:

Daniel is weeping for three straight weeks. And a being in human form comes to him and helps him *up* to his "hands and knees" (how he had been)...and then, later, another being in human form renews Daniel's strength and says to him:

"Do not fear, greatly beloved, you are safe. Be strong and courageous!" (Dan. 10:19).

When we forget the weeping part...the temptation of the sanctuary symbols is to shift from the beautiful insight:

"Immanuel" "God is with us" ... to "God is with *just* us...."

Instead of "do not fear, greatly beloved, you are safe. Be strong and courageous!"

It becomes: "fear a lot, favored Adventist, you are never safe from heresy. Resist error!"

Suddenly the sanctuary shrinks....

### **Jesus "Cleanses" the Sanctuary**

Some Jews in the first century embraced this tempting perspective...

For them, the sanctuary meant "God is with *just* us..." and such theology led to horrendous acts.

Although the Gospels place the story at different times in Jesus' life, all four canonical Gospels include what has been referred to as "Jesus *cleansing* the temple."

From Matthew's account:

Then Jesus entered *the temple*

and drove out all who were selling and buying *in the temple*,

and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.

He said to them, "It is written,

'My house shall be called a house of prayer [Mark adds: for all peoples];

but you are making it a den of robbers.'

The blind and the lame came to him *in the temple*, and he cured them.

But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard the

children crying out *in the temple*,

"Hosanna to the Son of David,"

they became angry and said to him,

"Do you hear what these are saying?"

Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read,

'Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself?'" (21:12-16).

Fascinating scene. Four times in this short scene, the phrase "in" or "into the temple" is repeated...

As young children, most of us learned about this story as the time when Jesus got mad...

...when he went into his "church" and people were being noisy and disruptive. (Didn't our Sabbath School teachers first use this story to keep us in line?)

Most of us learned later in life how the temple leadership was using the sanctuary system to take advantage of the poor...by insisting that people from the surrounding areas, actually even Jerusalem, exchange their money for currency only used within the temple courts. Temple guards were present to make sure everyone went along with the system.

Also, with merchants giving the priests a kickback, priests declared animals insufficient that had been brought by peasants for sacrifice...thus forcing them to purchase new ones with the new coins....

It was a scam. Everyone knew it. And it made Jesus mad.



If that weren't enough, the location of this marketplace was the court of the Gentiles... making it impossible for Gentiles to worship.

It is no accident that Matthew, Mark, and Luke all have Jesus quoting Isaiah 56 as he addresses this awful scene.

"My house shall be called a house of prayer [for all people]."

Isaiah 56 has been called Scripture's most inclusive picture of the sanctuary.

Isaiah 56 begins with the command from God: "Maintain justice, and do what is right" (56:1), then proceeds to describe all those who will experience God's presence there:

- Eunuchs (who, according to Deuteronomy would definitely *not* be allowed into the sanctuary) are invited in!
- Outcasts are welcomed!
- The sick and the injured and the hurting are healed!
- Foreigners are mentioned repeatedly!

For Isaiah, the sanctuary is not only a place to be safe from the world...

But it is a place to *bring* the world!

In Isaiah's prophetic poetry of inclusion, all people experience the presence of God at the sanctuary!  
As Jesus enters the temple in Jerusalem, he draws on this part of his heritage and proclaims:

"Maintain justice, and do what is right..." then...

"My house shall be called a house of prayer"

Otherwise, it isn't really a sanctuary.

"God is with just us" may be tempting, but it isn't sanctuary.

It is impossible to have sanctuary if social injustice rules the courtyard.

Jesus embraces the symbols of the sanctuary and the sanctuary expands to include the entire world!

After Jesus heals the blind and the lame people, children sing songs about Jesus—

"Hosanna to the Son of David!"

The sanctuary is a place where children sing—where they know they are welcome, safe.

Rather than children terrified wondering when their name is coming up...sanctuary shrinking...

The sanctuary is a place where the children of the world sing!

When Kim Davis was twenty-two, she and three other young women were working at Saigon Adventist Hospital.

On April 4, 1975, they decided if anyone asked them to carry children onto the World Vision Flight, they would walk past the guards, carry the children onto the plane, and stay there.

They became stowaways, arriving in Seattle with only the clothes they were wearing—their nurse's uniforms.

Kim told me this week during one of our walks, how terrified the four were through the experience. Someone in the airport got them each two blankets and they shivered under them, holding onto each other.

Keith and Rosa Ross went to the airport that day thinking they were going to adopt one of the 407 children...instead, when they saw the four terrified young women huddled together, they took them home (for several days).

When word got around that four workers from Saigon Adventist Hospital were in Seattle somewhere, Tracy Teele, then vice president of Student Affairs at Loma Linda University, went looking for them. Mr. Teele took them to Southern California and to the La Sierra campus. According to one press release on the stowaways: "the women are settling in well and are less frightened."

They needed sanctuary—a safe place to deal with all they had gone through.



Several weeks after arriving in Southern California, Kim heard that the Loma Linda community had agreed to sponsor hundreds of refugees from Vietnam.

Kim was eager to help with setting up cots in Gentry Gym.

She offered to help with translation...and lend her expertise as a nurse.

Her sanctuary was expanding...

Instead of a place for her to huddle...safe from a violent world...

It was, in the words of Roy Branson, a place "from which to launch a mission...a place to welcome the world...."

In eager anticipation, she helped with the preparations.

Q. How many would get out?

Q. Would she recognize any of these precious souls?

As the gym filled with men, women, and children...

Two ways of understanding sanctuary merged:

the gym was a safe place for people who had experienced horror...

and the gym was a place where Isaiah's vision lived anew...

—a place to begin missions that transform multitudes, that save lives, that heal our world

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count,

from every nation,

from all tribes and peoples and languages,

standing before the throne and before the Lamb.... (Rev. 7:9)

Suddenly, in that multitude in Gentry Gym, Kim saw her brother, sister-in-law, niece, and nephew...

and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.

They will hunger no more,

and thirst no more;

the sun will not strike them,

nor any scorching heat;

for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd,

and he will guide them to springs of the water of life,

and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (Rev. 7:15b–17)

When weeping is no more...

When the world is renewed...

When the nations have been healed...

Sanctuary is no longer necessary.

"I saw no temple in the New Jerusalem, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb."

In the meantime, we need the safety of cabins and campuses and Forum conferences.

In the meantime, may our courtyards and gymnasiums welcome the world.

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**Kendra Haloviak** is assistant professor of New Testament Studies in the School of Religion at La Sierra University, Riverside, California. She presented this sermon on September 29, 2007, in Santa Rosa, California, at the annual weekend retreat of Adventist Forum.



# THE ADVENTIST

## Adventism in the Present Tense

*Pondering Our Pasts, Plotting Our Futures* | BY MALCOLM BULL AND KEITH LOCKHART

**Editor's note:** Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart were the keynote speakers at the 2007 Adventist Forum Conference in Santa Rosa, California. At that time many of the attendees requested copies of their remarks which were not recorded. We are happy to share the full text of their presentations below.

### Adventist Pasts 1: Comparisons

Although Seventh-day Adventists are in many ways indistinguishable from their fellow Americans, it is what is distinctive that gives Adventism its unique history and identity. On the other hand, the fact that Adventism is in some respects unique does not mean that it is incomparable, and it is possible to give some indication as to where Adventism is located on the spectrum of American religion.

This can be done theologically, historically, and sociologically. What can be said about Seventh-day Adventism

from each of these points of view? To which other groups is it similar, and to which dissimilar?

### Theology

Adventism is undeniably a Christian church, and unmistakably a Protestant body. Over the years, some of its critics have claimed that certain beliefs are somehow unChristian or unProtestant, but this is rhetoric without descriptive value. Adventism has no roots in any religious tradition except the Christian one, and no beliefs derived from any except Protestant sources.

But to what Protestant family does Adventism belong? Adventism's theological heritage is eclectic, yet it is still possible to isolate three main formative traditions.

**1) Apocalypticism** In one way or another, Adventists have always been concerned with the end of the world. This is a preoccupation with deep roots that cut across



# AGES OF ADVENTISM

denominational boundaries, but it does distinguish Adventists from the many contemporary Christians for whom the end of the world is not a pressing issue, while aligning them with the apocalyptically oriented strand within American fundamentalism—though not its dispensationalist form.

**2) Primitivism** Many of Adventism's distinctive doctrines can be explained by the desire to do away with the accumulated accretions of Christian tradition and follow the example of the primitive church of the New Testament as closely as possible. To this impulse can be attributed Adventism's adherence to adult baptism, the non-immortality of the soul, its now disregarded anti-Trinitarianism, and the doctrine of the Sabbath. Many outsiders suppose that Adventism must have roots in Judaism, but this is not the case. Adventist seventh-day Sabbatarianism is a legacy of the primitivist impulse it has shared with other descendants of Puritanism, such as the Baptists. It is this that distinguishes Adventists from all those Protestant bodies—Episcopalians, Lutherans, even Presbyterians and Methodists—for whom Christian tradition remains in varying degrees significant.

**3) Holiness** Adventism has never just been about preparing for the end and being like the earliest Christians. It has also been a search for personal salvation, and in this regard, Adventism's heritage is the Arminian, Wesleyan tradition of which Ellen White was an eloquent exponent—a tradition in which salvation is an ongoing, life-transforming process. Adventism's historic alignment with this strand in Protestantism distances it from all those groups from the Calvinist tradition, i.e. most seventeenth-century Puritans and their Congregationalist and Baptist descendents, as well as the European Reformed churches and the Presbyterians.

## History

These three theological traditions were not freely selected from across the total range of options available to Christians across history. They were live options within a particular time and place—the United States in the nineteenth century.

1. Adventism's apocalypticism is a legacy of the Millerite movement, a heritage it shares with the Advent Christian Church, the Christadelphians, and the Jehovah's Witnesses.



2. Primitivism was a characteristic feature of the Second Great Awakening, and of groups calling themselves Christians, or Disciples. It was mediated to Adventism by James White and Joseph Bates, both active in the "Christian Connection." The Christian Connection has disappeared, but other groups, the Disciples of Christ (now known as the Christian Church) and the Churches of Christ survive.
3. The Holiness tradition is rooted in Methodism, but the Second Great Awakening gave rise to a new interdenominational movement, the legacy of which includes groups such as the Church of the Nazarene, and, in the twentieth century, includes Pentecostal groups like the Assemblies of God.

### Sociology

Just as Adventism's theology is distinctive of a particular time and place, so too is its sociology. In the United States the social profile of a religious group often reflects the time when the denomination established itself in the New World, and its degree of liberalism or conservatism. Early arrivals which now have a liberal orientation like the Congregationalists or the Episcopalians have relatively high social status; middle of the road groups like the Baptists and Methodists whose success came later are rather lower, while nineteenth-century conservative newcomers like the Adventists, the Witnesses, and the Nazarenes are lower still, Adventist socio-economic status being on average above that of the Witnesses and a bit lower than that of the Nazarenes.

By looking at its theology, history, and sociology, we begin to get a synoptic view of Seventh-day Adventism. It is a nineteenth-century Protestant group, formed from the three most powerful dynamics of the period—apocalypticism, primitivism, and the Holiness revival. As such, it shares features with other nineteenth-century groups, formed under the same influences, that are now, in the United States, of a roughly similar size—notably the Witnesses (apocalypticism), the Disciples of Christ (primitivism), and the Church of the Nazarene (holiness). Even Adventism's astonishing global range is a characteristic of this formation, for its global reach is matched by only two other Protestant groups—the Witnesses and the Assemblies of God (the most internationally successful product of the Holiness revival).

The alternative trajectories available to Adventism in the past, and possibly also the future, are indicated by those of these other groups. Adventism could, like the Disciples of Christ, have embraced modernism early and become a liberal denomination, with a high socio-economic base, and, in recent decades, a sharply declining membership; it could, like the Nazarenes, have established itself as a conservative denomination, with a middling socio-economic ranking and steadily growing membership; or it could, like the Witnesses, have become a rapidly expanding international sect that attracts those with low socio-economic status. Adventism did not take the route followed by the Disciples (though it did drop one legacy of primitivism—its anti-Trinitarianism) and has instead followed a path somewhere between that of the Witnesses and the Nazarenes. It would be surprising if it diverged far from that trajectory within the foreseeable future.

### Adventist Pasts 2: *Adventism's Golden Age*

Has Adventism ever had a golden age? Golden ages are sometimes real, often imagined, and everyone has a different idea of what constitutes one. But if there was a golden age in Adventism, a time when Adventists achieved their greatest success in disseminating their ideas to the general public, we think it was during the phase we call in our book the fundamentalist era in the church's development, a period that extends from the beginning of the 1920s to the end of the 1950s.

We call it fundamentalist because it was then that Adventists identified themselves with the fundamentalists in the wider Protestant world, who for much of this period were engaged in a fierce battle for the soul of American Christianity with their modernizing brethren. However, what makes this period stand out when you look back on it is the overall certainty the church had in its own distinctive beliefs, plus the conviction with which the denomination attempted to remake the world in its own image. The Adventists of the time were audacious, bold, and ambitious, which resulted in the publication of maybe the most influential works in Adventism's entire canon. Here's a reminder of eight that span the era:





First, George McCready Price's *The New Geology*, published in 1923. Drawing upon Adventism's traditional anti-evolutionism, the book basically invented creationism in America. It was a quite remarkable effort to correlate geological data with the Genesis flood that continued to influence fundamentalists more or less right to the end of the century.

Next, *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*, by Arthur S. Maxwell. These first appeared in England in 1924, and ran annually, according to the *SDA Encyclopedia*, for forty-eight years. It might seem unlikely to include a children's series, but no books helped to spread Adventism's idea of morality better than these. If you go on the Internet today, you'll find all sorts of people, Adventists and non-Adventists alike, reminiscing about the lasting effect they had on them as children.

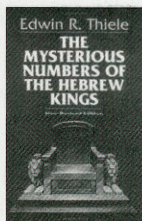


Third, *Back to Eden*, written by Jethro Kloss in 1939. This compendium of herbal medicine, natural foods, and home remedies effectively launched the health food movement as the world knows it today. The original book was published by the Madison school, so it came out of the self-supporting tradition. More than five million have been sold, and it is still selling, including in our local health food shops back in London.



Fourth is F. D. Nichol's *Midnight Cry*, published in 1944. This meticulous defense of the Millerite movement rescued Millerism from historical oblivion and ridicule and, by doing so, rescued a large part of Adventism's heritage in the process. It really is a marvel in separating myth from fact, and it altered the tenor of Millerite scholarship.

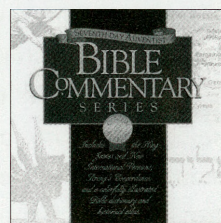
Fifth, Edwin R. Thiele's *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, published in 1951. In a way



this book did for the kings of Israel and Judah what *The New Geology* did for the Genesis flood. Based on Adventist assumptions that the Old Testament provided a literal record, the book correlated the chronology of the biblical kings with the history of contemporary civilizations like the Assyrians. It was an instant success. It is still in print after more than fifty years. It is still a required text in most seminaries in the United States.

Sixth, LeRoy Edwin Froom's *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, completed in 1954. The four massive volumes, in which Froom traced the history of Adventism's eschatology from the beginning of Christianity, remain the most astonishing piece of research undertaken by a single Adventist.

Seventh, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, published in the 1950s, another huge project, supervised by F. D.



Nichol, which put Adventist biblical interpretation on a scholarly footing.



Finally, Maxwell's second entry in this list, the ten-volume *The Bible Story*, published between 1953 and 1957, which meant that by the end of this period Adventist children, too, had their own multivolume work that went together with the adult *Bible Commentary*. Like the *Bedtime Stories*, this was also bought by millions outside Adventism.

You can't, of course, reduce this period to these eight titles alone. This was also the time when the church embraced the new media of radio and television, accredited its schools, and conducted huge evangelistic campaigns in major world cities. But it is these eight titles that define the era most of all.

These texts also helped to give rise to what conservative Adventists have since called "historic Adventism." Some conservatives often mislead themselves into thinking that historic Adventism goes all the way back to the pioneers,

**Adventism has  
never just  
been about  
preparing for  
the end  
and being like  
the earliest  
Christians.**



but this is the period to which they are really harking back.

From the perspective of today, you can criticize the wrongheadedness of some of these fundamentalist authors. McCready Price apparently worked out his laws about the geological column without ever going out to have a look at it. But the fact that he thought he could explain the geological column from his armchair says everything about his self-confidence.

A similar point can be made about Thiele. He was told by his supervisors at the University of Chicago, where he was doing his Ph.D., that since no one had solved the chronology of the biblical kings in two thousand years, he had absolutely no chance of doing so. But he thought that he could and went ahead. Adventists were never more confident than they were in this era.

What made Adventists so sure of themselves is an interesting question. The times may have had something to do with it. For much of the 1930s, America was in a depression and for the first half of the 1940s was engaged in a world war, and Adventism generally does well when the times are troubled. It was also, and this was probably the more important factor, a stable period theologically. There were stirrings of academic unrest at Pacific Union College and at Walla Walla College in the 1930s and 1940s, but they didn't amount to much. No one was arguing about the correct method for interpreting the Bible or the status of Ellen White. With no internal battles to fight, the church looked outward and embarked on nothing less than the intellectual and cultural conversion of society.

Adventists entered this period by making common cause with fundamentalists. But it is clear that as they go along they seek to draw the world on to their own ground rather than to stray onto the world's. What in the end brought this all to a halt was the publication in 1957 of the book that was both the climax of this golden age and its nemesis, *Questions on Doctrine*. The mistake the church made here perhaps was that it allowed itself to be drawn onto the world's ground instead of remaining on its own.

Thereafter, the church became less certain about its beliefs and less confident about taking them to the world. Adventists started arguing among themselves and became altogether more inward looking. As a result, Adventists never again published works that matched the ambition, breadth, depth, and global impact of those they produced in their fundamentalist period.

### Adventist Pasts 3: *Denominationalization*

If the fundamentalist era was white Adventism's golden age, it was also an age of innocence, brought to an end by the temptation of public recognition. The period that followed, roughly that from the 60s to the 90s, was more self-conscious, but did the controversies that followed *Questions on Doctrine* also effect lasting change? In particular, was this, as many claimed at the time, the moment when Adventism renounced its sectarian past and took its place amongst the mainstream American denominations?

This is not an interpretation of Adventist history that we share—not because we want to consign Adventism to perpetual marginality, but because we think the history of the church is far too complex to fit the model of a unidirectional trajectory from sect to denomination. In our view, such a model both exaggerates the extent of Adventist marginality in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and overestimates the significance of the changes that have taken place in Adventism over the past fifty years.

Since the 1980s the tide has turned against theological liberalism, both within Adventism and within the wider culture, and the official theology of the church has, over the past two decades, effectively re-established its authority. But was it ever really threatened? In retrospect it seems that it was never seriously challenged. Even in the 60s and 70s Adventism had no single liberalizing tendency. (By that we mean one that sought to reinterpret existing doctrine in a way that reduced its tensions with the wider culture). Rather, there were two contemporaneous dynamics, which were trying to pull the church in different directions.

On the one hand there was the line of thinking initiated by *Questions on Doctrine*, developed by Edward Heppenstall, and more polemically by Robert Brinsmead and Desmond Ford, which attempted to recast Adventist soteriology in what was essentially an alien mold—one that emphasized original sin and justification by faith to the virtual exclusion of the development of a sanctified life modeled on the example of Christ. There was nothing intrinsically liberalizing about this shift, and its two leading exponents in Adventism—Brinsmead and Ford—were, if anything, temperamentally conservatives. What it represented was not a



move from the margin towards the center, so much as an attempt to pull Adventism away from its roots in the Arminian, Wesleyan, and Holiness traditions and towards the Reformed tradition—the tradition represented by Adventism’s interlocutors in *Questions on Doctrine*.

At the same time, something else was happening that was entirely unrelated. Thanks to the conjunction of a fully accredited medical school in Loma Linda and the rapid expansion of the California population, Adventism created in the middle years of the twentieth century a community of West Coast health professionals, with enough money and professional self-confidence to think that Adventism might be examined and refashioned from a perspective that was both life-enhancing and scientifically respectable. This found direct expression in the development, at Loma Linda, of a philosophy of holism that seamlessly merged issues of physical and spiritual well-being. But the medical community was also heavily involved in the Association of Adventist Forums, and its journal *Spectrum*, a journal that became a platform for the informed and critical discussion of Adventism.


Although the thinking of both movements appeared in the pages of *Spectrum*, there was probably never any real prospect of a lasting alliance between them. One was a clerical movement, the other primarily a medical one. Their theologies differed as well, for the medicalized form of Adventism which equated health and holiness was implicitly based on just the sort of soteriology that Brinsmead and Ford were rejecting. And whereas Brinsmead’s point of reference was the sixteenth-century reformers, Adventism’s medical community was interested in a form of belief and practice that would appear plausible to contemporary scientists. Although both were to some degree in conflict with traditional Adventism, they were also potentially at odds with each other, and there was little prospect that their combined efforts would result in a lasting change in Adventist belief and practice.

What happened instead was that the General Conference marginalized its critics and gradually brought the church back to its traditional theological positions. This may be a source of regret to some in the Forum generation, but liberalization or denominationalization is a mixed blessing, and it would be quite wrong to imagine that the transformation from sect to denomination is necessarily a desirable progression for a religious group. If a religion is in a high degree of tension with the surrounding culture (in other words, a sect), it is also distinguished from it in ways that may be attractive to those dissatisfied with what the wider culture has to offer; whereas if tension is reduced and differences diminish, the religious group no longer functions as a meaningful alternative.

In many ways, the most desirable option for any religious tradition is to maintain what some sociologists call “optimum tension”—in other words just enough to be attractively different, not so much as to be disturbingly strange. The changes that have taken place in Adventism over the years may perhaps be best seen as an ongoing attempt to find that optimal balance. And in this regard there are some interesting comparisons to be made with the Latter Day Saints. In a book titled *The Angel and the Beehive*, Mormon sociologist Armand Mauss tracked developments in Mormon belief and practice from the 30s to the 80s. He found that whereas mid-century Mormons were more liberal in their outlook, by the 1980s they had begun to affirm more conservative positions. His findings parallel the Adventist experience from the 1960s to the present, as Adventists too have moved back towards more conservative positions, rather than continued on the trajectories initiated in the 1960s and 70s. To people who remember the promise of those days, this may seem like a retreat, and in one sense it is, but it is also perhaps a reminder that Adventism, like Mormonism, may have responded tactically to changes in its environment, in an effort to maintain the optimum level of tension needed for its continued survival and growth.

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One of the things that has contributed to that growth has been Adventism's extraordinary ability to win people from all racial backgrounds. There is no other denomination in the U.S. that has done this to quite the same extent. So any review of Adventist pasts should give some account of the history of the relations among the different ethnic groups. It's not a particularly edifying history whichever way you look at it, characterized as it has been by feelings of mutual condescension, suspicion, discrimination, prejudice, and injustice. In other words, Adventist race relations have been no different to those that you find in the wider society.

And this is evident right from the start. Adventism began as a white, Anglophone faith. But this homogeneous state of affairs was soon ended by German and Scandinavian immigrants the church started converting from about the 1860s. Some leaders didn't particularly like these entrants, however. One, G. I. Butler, watched all these strange people coming in and wrote to William White that he was getting very suspicious of these foreigners.

This sort of attitude continued after the Adventist message was accepted by African Americans, who were to become the largest minority group in the church. The existing white members, though committed to working for them, did not actually believe that blacks were equal with them. The Adventist missionary, F. R. Rogers, said so to a city newspaper when he ran into trouble with white groups when he was evangelizing blacks in the South. Ellen White said so too, after attempting and failing to persuade the church to adopt an integrationist policy at the turn of the twentieth century.

Thereafter the white and African American memberships proceeded on largely separate paths: separate churches, separate schools, separate conferences, separate places of residence, and separate experiences of America, one rural and suburban, the other urban and metropolitan.

Whenever the two worlds collided, as they did from time to time, the black constituency inevitably came off worst. Some of these episodes have entered the darker recesses of Adventist folklore. But there is one story

that never loses its capacity to surprise no matter how many times you hear it. In 1944 a black Adventist called Lucy Byard fell ill when she was visiting Washington, D.C. She was taken to the Adventist Washington Sanitarium where she was refused treatment on account of the color of her skin. She was then rushed to the nearby Howard University Hospital. But the delay was fatal, and she died before she could be properly treated. One of the ironies of the situation was that at Howard she was attended by a black Adventist doctor, who would not have been allowed to work at the Washington Sanitarium either.

But of course no one race possesses a monopoly of prejudice. In one of Monte Sahlin's surveys he asked a question to determine the extent of racist attitudes among Adventists. The question, or rather the statement was "Racism is un-Christlike and immoral" and he asked his respondents to agree or disagree with it. Just 3 percent of Hispanics disagreed with the statement, and only 5 percent of whites disagreed as well. The interesting thing was that significantly more Asian Adventists responded negatively to the statement—10 percent of them disagreed with it.

But blacks were proportionately the most negative—21 percent of them disagreed with the statement, that is to say 21 percent did not believe that racism is un-Christlike and immoral. The number of the black respondents was lower than that of the other groups which may have affected the result but it may be quite a good indication that black Adventists are more willing to assert their racial identity, and are more open about doing so, than other ethnic groups in the church.

It is also the case that as African American numbers have increased, they have clearly wanted it both ways. They have sought and still seek full integration in the church, but they also prefer to remain separate when they choose. They are proud of the Oakwood school. They are intent on keeping the regional conferences. You are, however, getting a situation in places like metropolitan New York where the members of the regional conference are mostly of Caribbean origin, and the members of the original white conference are mostly of Caribbean and Hispanic origin as well. So you do have to ask what is the point of these structures when the original separation of whites and blacks that they were



designed to facilitate has been overtaken by demographic change? But they're still here, and stand as a witness to the historic segregation of white and black Adventism.

Tensions between the church's minority groups have been equally acute. In 2001 a pastor in the South Central Regional Conference posted a message on the conference blog about the mutual hostility that existed in the black constituency between African Americans and West Indians. According to an investigation he had carried out, African Americans feel that West Indians relate to them in a condescending manner; West Indians get the sense that they are not "black enough" for their African American brethren. In another of Monte Sahlin's opinion polls, a selection of pastors reported similar tensions across the board: between blacks and other races, between African Americans and Hispanics, between Anglos and other races.

Rather than have a consistent policy to take with them around the world, Adventists have merely mirrored the gulf wherever you find racially divided societies. In South Africa, the white worker, Pieter Wessels, wrote to Ellen White that he did not want his children to grow up "to think there is no difference in society that they should finally associate and marry into coloured blood." In Nazi Germany, the church simply went along with Hitler's notions of the master race and Aryan superiority. In the U.K. in the 1970s, the white Adventist leadership apparently did not see that black members were entirely unrepresented in the hierarchy of the church, just as the white establishment in the country were largely blind to institutional racism. As Yugoslavia disintegrated in the 1990s, bitter divisions broke out between Adventist Serbs and Adventist Croats, and in the Rwandan genocide, Adventist Hutus turned on Adventist Tutsis with murderous intent.

What all this shows is that the church worked out, brilliantly, how to attract people

of all colors, but not how they should live together. An early policy on civil rights might have made a difference. Statistics published by the sociologist Wade Clark Roof show that, interestingly, Adventists are relatively liberal on civil liberty issues but relatively conservative on civil rights. This is probably because the church has long had a religious liberty organization but never a civil rights organization. That it did not set up one must be one of the great lost opportunities in its history.

### **Adventist Pasts 5: *A Religion of the Ear***

**W**hen it comes to nurturing human spirituality, religions have tended to go down one of two paths.

There are those that appeal primarily to the eye and those that cultivate mainly the ear. Buddhism, with its statues and temples, falls in the former category. So does Catholicism with its focus on imagery, although Catholicism is very good at engaging all the senses, which may have something to do with its long-term success. The rosary utilizes touch, the mass involves taste, incense rouses smell, and that disembodied voice in the confessional booth employs hearing. Judaism, on the other hand, with its traditions of rabbinic dialogue, oral law, and ritualized prayer, appeals virtually exclusively to the ear, as does Protestantism, with its emphasis on preaching and the word.

Adventism, following in the Judaeo-Protestant tradition, is also primarily a religion of the ear. The sermon is dominant—lasting half an hour or more it is one of the lengthiest in all Christendom. Discussion is important, since members of all ages are expected to exchange ideas in Sabbath School class. All meeting places resonate with the sound of improvised prayer. You don't need to acquire

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many skills to be an Adventist. But to get the most out of the experience of being one you do need to learn how to speak, and to articulate your thoughts, in public. As a result Adventists are quite good at talking. It's only when you step outside the community and discover the generally poor standard of public speaking that prevails elsewhere that you realize how well spoken, as individuals, Adventists are.

Now religions that appeal primarily to the ear are very distrustful of the eyes. The eyes deceive; they lead individuals astray; they are the source of idolatry and covetousness. In the Garden of Eden, Eve is seduced by the forbidden fruit because it is "pleasant to the eyes." When she and Adam do fall, the problem is now that their eyes are opened. The children of Israel are never allowed to see God. He himself forbids the making of graven images to distinguish his people from the visually sophisticated, idolatrous nations all around them. Samson loses his way, and eventually his sight, after he pursues a Philistine woman who is pleasing to his eyes. As God destroys Sodom and Gomorrah he tells Lot's wife not to look back; she does so and is turned into a pillar of salt. Matthew talks about false Christs appearing in the last days bewitching the world with "signs and wonders."

In the Bible, the ear, by contrast, is regarded as a reliable conduit of information and perception. The Israelites may not be able to see God but they hear the voice of God all the time. The sound of shouting and trumpets brings down the walls of Jericho. The Israelites are instructed to make a joyful noise unto the Lord. Paul says in Romans that "faith cometh by hearing." The superiority of the ear over the eye is perfectly illustrated in the description in Revelation of the symbol Adventists chose to represent America, the two-horned beast. If you just use your eyes, you will be fooled by the beast's lamblike appearance. You have to listen to its voice in order to discern the true diabolical nature of the apocalyptic monster.

Taking over this aural tradition in full, the Protestant reformers very effectively portrayed Catholicism as a false religion of the eye because of its images and ornate places of worship. Adventists have similarly avoided iconography and gaudy buildings. But for Adventists there was one additional formative event that gave them lasting cause to distrust the evidence of

their eyes. On October 22, 1844, the pioneers had expected to see Jesus return to the earth. As the text told them: "every eye shall see him." But he did not appear. They still thought something happened on that day though, and decided that sight was not the right way to recognize what it was. They then constructed an explanation that was hidden from the eyes: Christ, they said, had merely moved from one part of the heavenly sanctuary to another to begin the process of the investigative judgment. Many aspects of Adventism are intangible in this sense. There are the angels that monitor human behavior that you also cannot see. The great controversy between Christ and Satan itself is invisible. Much of what Adventism is about is located out of sight.

The concrete part of Adventism is heard not seen. The best way of appreciating the Adventist past in a way is just to listen to it. What you hear as you journey through the denomination's history is a variety of different sounds: the sound of shouting, which predominated in Adventist worship in its earliest days; the sound of debate both among Adventists and between Adventists and outsiders; the sound of the evangelist as he or she brings the Adventist message to all quarters of the globe; and the sound of music. As with other religions in which hearing predominates, music is Adventism's most developed art form. It is the same in Judaism, and the same in Protestantism. It's not by chance that someone has written that Adventism's favorite film is *The Sound of Music*.

Echoing through the popular culture of Adventism are the hymns of F. E. Belden, the harmonies of the King's Heralds, the mellow voice of Del Delker, and the sweet sounds of Wedgwood, the Heritage Singers, the Breath of Life Quartet, and others. And forming a major part of the soundtrack of the Western world is the music of Adventist and former Adventist performers like Little Richard, Prince, Shirley Verrett, Faith Esham, Busta Rhymes, Al Jarreau, Thomas Hampson, and Frederick Hibbert—singers who have left an indelible mark in genres from rock to opera to reggae.

It's interesting that the church has always tried to proscribe different styles of music, but the development of a popular musical culture within the church, and the production of a continuous line of famous musicians who sold millions of records outside it, does show the futility



of this in some respects. Those of particular talent will pursue their careers in the wider world if the church is too restrictive, while all the internal acts from the King's Heralds onwards borrowed their styles from popular groups outside Adventism and then smuggled those styles back into the denomination. Adventist ears are highly educated and those of Adventist musicians are more educated than most. To them a good sound is a good sound and they will use it wherever it comes from, whether the church approves of it or not, or whether ordinary church members are aware of it or not.

Of course Adventists have produced individuals who excel in the other arts, those who write novels and plays, and others who design, sculpt, and paint. And the way in which these creative people have interpreted the Adventist experience is fascinating. Mei Ann Teo's *Red Books* drama is the latest example of that. Then there are the visions of Ellen White. Now these do give her the means to see what others can't. Her visions, actually, function as a sort of extra-sensory pair of eyes for the whole community, making visible what would otherwise remain invisible. But like the Old Testament prophets she is the only one in Adventism who is permitted to view the heavenly world. But as no one can see what she can see, everyone else has to take on trust what she says about that world when she reports back. So the rest of the community, in the end, have to fall back on the word and to rely on their ears.

There are cultures where the ear deceives. One thinks of the siren sound in classical mythology, luring sailors onto the rocks. But that's not the case in Adventism, where the ear is the main fountain of truth. As such, it is the reason for Adventism's traditional reliance on sound instead of sight, and because sound extends through time rather than space, it also highlights the Adventist preference for time over space.

## Adventist Futures 1: *Ethnicity*

**T**he future of Adventism in the United States will, in our view, be defined primarily by the changing ethnic composition of its membership. Over the past half century Adventism in America has been transformed from a white church, with a small African American minority, into a multi-ethnic church in which whites represent only about half the membership, African Americans almost a third, Hispanics about one eighth, with Asians and Native Americans making up the rest.

This represents a fundamental and probably irreversible shift in the nature of Adventism in America, with consequences that will affect every area of Adventist life. The cause is primarily the rapid growth in immigration to the U.S. Adventism in America has always benefited from immigration, notably that of Scandinavians and Germans in the nineteenth century. But the new wave of immigrants is more noticeable and may be less easily assimilated by Adventism's white Anglophone majority.

In general, we are wary of extrapolating from trends in European Adventism, which operates within a dissimilar and in some ways more hostile cultural environment, but in this case it may give an indication of future trends across the Atlantic. In almost every European country the indigenous membership is static or declining, with growth occurring only as a result of either migration from outside Europe (notably Africa and the Caribbean) or as the result of intra-European migration from Eastern to Western Europe (notably from Romania to Italy and Spain). The result has been that membership in countries with low immigration, like those in Scandinavia, is in absolute decline, while Western European countries like the United Kingdom, France, Spain and Italy now have immigrant majorities of up to 80 percent. In most cases, immi-

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salad.**



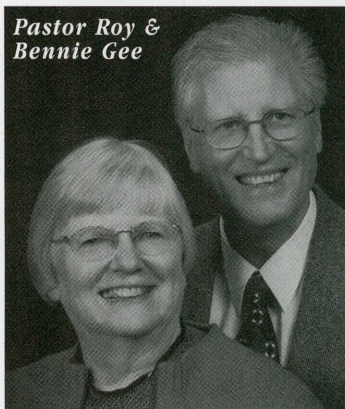
grants are dominant in metropolitan areas, while the surviving indigenous members are left clustered around Adventist institutions, with elderly people scattered in more rural areas.

A similar pattern will probably develop in North America as well; indeed, in many places it is already established. Adventism's white community is aging and has the poorest rates of retention and recruitment of any ethnic group. We would therefore expect it to continue to decline in relative and possibly also absolute terms. However, it will probably try to continue its traditional way of life, while ignoring the fact that its geographical orbit is ever more restricted. On the West Coast, we might anticipate a pattern of reverse migration where white Adventists move away from California and head back north to Adventism's traditional heartland in Oregon, eastern Washington, and Idaho. But overall, the relative importance of West Coast Adventism will continue to diminish relative to that of the Southeast, not traditionally an area of strong Adventist penetration, but now the first stop for migrants from the Caribbean and Central America.

For other ethnic communities, by contrast, the pattern is likely to be one of geographical expansion, so that they end up forming a patchwork of diasporas in which there are stronger links within dispersed ethnic groups than there are between neighboring Adventist communities of differing ethnicity. Such networks will also extend back to the place of origin, in the Caribbean, Central America, or Korea. Samuel Huntington offers three visions of a multi-ethnic United States: as a melting pot (in which a new ethnicity is created from multiple ingredients); a tomato soup (in which one ethnic group is dominant and other ingredients float within it); and a salad (a form of cultural pluralism in which each ethnic group remains distinct). On current evidence, Adventism is in the process of changing from soup to salad.

In theological terms, it has been noticeable that black and Hispanic Adventists have evinced little interest in white Adventist attempts to liberalize Adventist belief and practice. This may perhaps be attributed to different cultural styles or religious backgrounds, but we think there may be something more fundamental at

*"Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brothers to live together in unity!"*  
PSALM 133:1

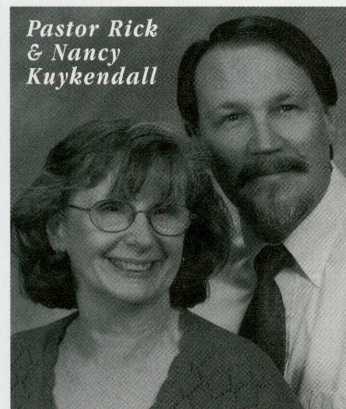


**Pastor Roy & Bennie Gee**  
**Auburn Gospel Fellowship**  
*"A Safe Place for God's Grace"*

**10:45 a.m. Sabbath**



710 Auburn Ravine Road,  
Auburn, CA 95603 | 530.885.9087



**Pastor Rick & Nancy Kuykendall**  
**First Congregational Church of Auburn**  
*"Striving to be an Enlightened Christian Community"*

**10:00 a.m. Sunday**



*Two Congregations . . . One Holy Church*



stake. Both within the United States and elsewhere there is a very close correlation between ethnicity and religion, to the extent that the latter often functions as the primary cultural expression of the former. Adventism's success in converting people from a multitude of ethnic backgrounds both within the United States and elsewhere is unusual and one of its most remarkable achievements. How has this been possible? Global missionary faiths (like global consumer brands) are characterized less by their adaptability to local conditions than their relative uniformity. It is Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, Muslims, and Adventists who share the distinction of being both ethnically mixed communities within the United States, and internationally successful all over the world.

Such inclusivity has been made possible not by having fuzzy edges but rather as a result of having clearly defined beliefs and structures. Anyone can be a Catholic, a Witness, a Muslim, or an Adventist because what you need to believe and do is heavily prescribed. In contrast, a religious group that expects people to work things out for themselves, and agree solutions with their fellow members, is liable to be implicitly reliant on shared cultural assumptions. This is one reason that, for all their self-conscious inclusivity, religious groups with very liberal theologies tend to travel badly and remain tied to their original cultural or ethnic context. Unitarian Universalism, for example, which tries to embrace all believers, and might therefore sound like a faith that everyone could share, has scarcely been able to travel beyond its place of origin in Boston, let alone spread around the world.

Martin Marty once said that ethnicity is the skeleton of American religion, by which he meant it is not something you see on the surface, but an endoskeleton that articulates the structure beneath the skin. To adapt the metaphor, you might say that Adventism has never had an ethnic endoskeleton to hold it

together, but rather an exoskeleton of doctrine that has allowed a series of minority ethnic groups to find shelter within it. If that hard outer shell started to soften, Adventism might become less rather than more hospitable to ethnic groups of every description.

## Adventist Futures 2: *Politics*

**A**dventism in America has not up till now been known for its political engagement. There are many reasons for that, which we all know. One is the church's longstanding policy on the separation of church and state. It has believed that the practice of religion and that of government are incompatible activities and this has necessarily stymied its capacity to act politically. Another factor is that with an eschatology that already places the church in opposition to America it has been reluctant to see that conflict played out in the political arena because of its belief in the shortness of time.

A further reason is that church members have historically voted Republican, and the handful of Adventists who have been elected to Congress have almost all been Republican too. As believers in small government therefore, most Adventists have taken the view that it is not the business of government to ameliorate the ills of society in any event, so they have not been inclined to urge their political leaders to try.

Anyway, for all these kinds of motives the church in America has had minimal political impact, except on issues that have coincided with its beliefs such as prohibition, or else when its interests have been threatened by impositions like Sunday laws. On all the great progressive steps forward that you can think of—the abolition of slavery, women's suffrage in the early twentieth century, civil rights in the 1960s, or women's equality in the 1970s—the church has avoided direct action, not least

**According to the latest results from the General Social Survey released in 2006, 45 percent of the membership now identify with the Democrats as opposed to 37 percent who identify with the Republicans.**



because for most of the time, it was battling against the equal rights of blacks and women within its own ranks.

Knowing this, Adventists have from time to time urged the leadership to get more involved in the political issues of the day. In the 1850s, some readers of the *Review* were outraged after the paper editorialized that it was pointless trying to do anything practical about slavery before the Second Coming. In the 1970s, articles appeared in *Spectrum* that argued that the church should be protesting about practices like the torture of political prisoners in Eastern Europe, South America, Africa, and China. And at the present time, various members, particularly those who contribute to the *Spectrum* blog and to the other blogs associated with it, are making new calls for the church to engage with the political world.

Our impression is that these calls are part of the wider reaction in the country to the uncompromising brand of neo-conservatism of the present White House, which, in turn, is partly a reaction to September 11. The other observation we would make about them is that, as they have been usually in the past, they are calls from the left. You never really get these pleas for intervention from Adventists on the right. In other words the current wish for a more politically active church is coming from Adventists who are basically sympathetic to the Democratic Party, who are of liberal mind, are concerned with social justice, and who believe in the efficacy of government in that they do think the state can and should be used to create fairer outcomes in society.

Whether today's campaigners will be any more successful than their counterparts in the past in pushing the church in a more progressive direction, we'll have to see. There is also a question mark as to whether the current interest in political activity will be sustained once Bush has gone and there is no Iraq war to protest against. But in the long term there is good cause to believe that Adventist politics are going to be more left wing, liberal, and activist than they have been hitherto. The main reason for thinking that is that Adventism is now largely a Democrat supporting church and may have been so for some time.

According to the latest results from the cumulative General Social Survey released in 2006, 45 percent of the membership now identify with the Democrats as opposed to 37 percent who identify with the Republicans. This is a historic shift, and since the GSS has been measuring party affiliation since 1972 it is possible to

see just when it occurred. Between 1972 and 1980, only 38 percent of Adventists were identifying with the Democrats and still 46 percent with the Republicans. However it was sometime between 1980 and 1990 that this situation turned round: on average 48 percent of church members now identified with the Democrats and 35 percent with the Republicans. Between 1990 and 2000 the figures were 45 percent Democrat, 35 percent Republican, and between 2000 and 2006, 43 percent Democrat and 31 percent Republican, indicating that the old Republican base may be dwindling quite sharply.

These statistics do not tally with all surveys of Adventist party affiliation, but they are not surprising given the ethnic changes that we have talked about. Black and Hispanic Adventists vote Democrat and as their numbers have grown they have pulled the membership as a whole to the left. Black Adventists in addition bring to the church a real history of political activism. To mention just one example, in 1944 a black Adventist woman called Irene Morgan refused to give up her seat on a bus in Virginia to a white couple, which resulted in the outlawing of Jim Crow segregation laws in 1946, and the very first freedom ride in 1947. It's interesting the Adventist media are now celebrating political stands like this. Irene Morgan received a glowing notice on the *Review* Web site when she died recently. Back in the 1940s the paper completely ignored the story. But the fact that it does now applaud such dissent may be another sign that the church is preparing for a more progressive future.

Adventist politics in America though are still mainly at the protest stage, coalescing around issues like peace or the environment, or around campaigns such as those for the disadvantaged. But in the normal pattern of political development individuals tend to move from merely complaining about conditions in the world to a belief that they can actually achieve more of their goals by exercising power. This transition has already been made by many Adventists in the Third World who have served as national legislators, government ministers, and even prime ministers.

At some point we expect that American Adventism will follow decisively down the same road. It will produce more representatives in the House, a senator or two perhaps, and finally, the holy grail, someone from within its ranks will run for president, and the *Review* will have to decide whether to endorse that candidate or



or she will probably have to explain to a skeptical media why they want to lead the country when they belong to a church that posits America as its ultimate eschatological enemy. But if they are as skillful as they ought to be at this stage, they should be able to answer a question like that, as Kennedy did when he was confronted by his Catholicism when he ran. No one should get too excited. Nothing like this is going to happen for several decades yet. Other minority faiths will get there first. The Mormons have already had a presidential candidate in this election. The Adventist candidate is unlikely to look anything like him though. He or she will probably be black or part black or Hispanic. If it is a male, he'll probably look a little like Barack Obama.

But there will be consequences. Political prescriptions by their very nature divide people. The same old dilemmas will still have to be faced. Is a proposed war just or unjust? Should you levy more tax or less tax? If we may quote our own recently retired Prime Minister Tony Blair, he always used to say that political leadership is about making decisions, and deciding one way or the other will inevitably alienate one section of the community or another. It will be the same if the church becomes more involved. Ellen White was right about this when she kept warning Adventists to steer clear of politics. A more politically committed church will be a more divided church. The present generation will have to decide whether that will be a price worth paying.

### **Adventist Futures 3: Demedicalization**

**I**n the earlier session, we talked about the way in which Adventism has tried, more or less successfully, to maintain an optimum degree of tension between distinctiveness and assimilation. Tension in this sense is not so much a feeling of constant anxiety, as being in a position where you have to make dif-

ficult choices between the expectations of your faith and the expectations of wider society. Such tensions exist even in Adventism's least sectarian environment, Loma Linda University medical school, and we now want to speculate about the ways in which these tensions might ultimately be resolved.

Adventists are justifiably proud of their medical school; for a minority religious group to operate a large and successful medical school has been an astonishing collective achievement. But there is an underlying tension between two of the institution's goals: the ambition to provide medical education for Adventists, and the ambition to run a medical school of the highest academic quality.

Loma Linda does not supply the data that would allow the medical school to be placed in the *US News and World Report* rankings (although it does do so for its nursing school). However, it is quite easy to calculate where LLU might come on some of the standardized measures used by *US News*. One such is the amount received in research awards from the National Institutes of Health. The NIH provide their own rankings on this every year, and over the past few years LLU has been coming in about 100th out of 125 medical schools. *US News* also calculates this figure on a per capita basis according to the number of faculty, and on this measure, LLU, which is by American standards a large school, would rank considerably lower. The other standardized ranking is provided by the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test) scores of matriculating students. These vary from year to year, and at LLU as elsewhere, they have been rising steadily over the past decade. But averaging things out over that period, we estimate it has been hovering somewhere between 80th and 100th out of 125.

This profile is much lower than that of other medical schools in California, and closer to that of smaller medical schools located in the South. In other respects as well LLU looks similar to a Southern medical school. Studies of the destinations of LLU graduates suggest that,

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may now be  
diminishing.**



as with Southern schools, fewer physicians go into research and more set up practice in rural locations. So why does Loma Linda have the sort of profile you might expect of a medical school in Alabama or West Virginia when it is actually located in an urban area of California?

The answer is that it is Adventist. It is committed to admitting Adventist students and to providing excellence in teaching within a Christian clinical environment rather than being a research leader; in keeping with Adventist tradition, its graduates are more likely to practice in rural areas than metropolitan ones. In other words, LLU has a relatively low ranking and a "Southern" profile because it has different values, values that do not perfectly coincide with the values prevailing in the research-led, city-based medical schools of California.

This situation is elective. For example, LLU will admit Adventist students with MCATs below the average for other California schools, and in some cases, with scores that might not gain them admission to medical school anywhere. At the same time, LLU receives and turns down thousands of applications from non-Adventists, some of whom are, in academic terms, better quali-

fied. (A PUC graduate is perhaps ten times as likely to gain admission to LLU than a non-Adventist.) So Loma Linda could be a more academically selective (i.e., higher ranking) institution if it wanted to be, but only at the cost of being less religiously selective.

However, despite having a clear preference for Adventist medical students, LLU has, since the late 1980s, been unable to fill more than about seventy percent of its places with Adventists. In the long run, then, it faces a difficult decision. Become a higher ranking, but basically non-denominational institution. Or struggle to maintain an Adventist intake and remain a low-ranking Adventist one. What it cannot do, unless Adventism itself changes, is square the circle and become a high-ranking Adventist institution. Being forced to make choices like this is a measure of the persisting tension between Adventism and wider society.

It is not too difficult to guess how this tension is going to be resolved. Other schools at Loma Linda and La Sierra already have a predominantly non-Adventist intake, and Adventist hospitals are all predominantly staffed by non-Adventists, so it would be very surprising

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if the medical school did not eventually go the same way. Apart from anything else, it is expanding, and is probably going to find it more, not less, difficult to recruit Adventists with the right academic qualifications, due to the changing geographical and ethnic balance in the church. LLU medical school is disproportionately white, relative to the Adventist membership and to the ethnicity of students at other California medical schools. But the white Adventist community in California that was created by and fed back into LLU is now declining, and although other ethnic groups are taking the place of whites in the church, they are not taking up their places in the medical school. Over time, therefore, the high demand for quality medical education in California and the low demand from qualified Adventists mean that LLU medical school is liable gradually to conform more to Californian than Adventist norms. In the process, it will start to move up the national rankings, at the same time as the proportion of Adventist students diminishes.

How will it all end? Will Loma Linda become the Battle Creek of the twenty-first century, an Adventist foundation but not an Adventist institution? It is impossible to say, but there can be little doubt that losing the medical school (in, perhaps, everything but name) would have a profound impact, for Loma Linda has an iconic status in world Adventism that extends far beyond its immediate clinical or educational role. Once, the medicalization of Adventism appeared to be a possible future trend. Now that phase may be moving into history and another possibility emerges—demedicalization (the declining importance of medical personnel and health-related philosophies within the life of the church).

There is some evidence of this already. In the interwar period, Adventism offered many more medical school places to its membership than were available to the rest of the population. Now, even if all the places at LLU med-

ical school were taken by Adventists, it would still mean that Adventism had a lower ratio of medical school places to population than that in the nation as a whole. Even as Loma Linda continues to expand, the importance of medicine in American Adventism may now be diminishing. If Loma Linda resolves its tensions by opting for increasing assimilation, it will, in the process, effectively leave Adventism behind. Without the medical school, it is hard to see how the medical orientation of Adventism will be sustained, and without Adventism's medical community, any counterbalance to clerical domination of the church may be lost as well.

#### **Adventist Futures 4: *Adventism in the Year 2100***

**I**n 100 years' time, if the church continues to double its membership every 11 years as it is now doing, there will be just over 1 billion Adventists worldwide. The United Nations' most reliable estimate indicates that the world population will have risen to 9.1 billion in 2100. On these projections one person in eight will be an Adventist. There will be no question then about Adventism being a global religion. No question either that it will be known and recognized as such.

A church of such size seems unimaginable, but there are today two world religions that claim a billion adherents. One is Islam, the other is Catholicism. The former has broken into competing factions, with no single head or central committee to run it. The latter is highly centralized, and still run from Rome through procedures that are recognizable from medieval times. Yet in both cases, these are faiths whose unchanging theologies act as points of reference for the diverse individuals who make up their vast communities.

If Adventist membership does indeed hit the 1 billion mark, it is not difficult to guess

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cation here or  
there, they  
won't work  
for another  
hundred?**



which of the two religions it is more likely to resemble. It won't be Islam.

Simply extrapolating from current rates of growth does not allow for slower growth in the world population as a whole, or the probability that Adventist growth rates will also decline as the church runs out of new territories to evangelize. On more realistic estimates, the church's membership will be somewhere between 100 and 250 million. What might the church be like then?

Even at the lower end of the range, Adventism would still be larger than any Protestant church in the world today. But none of the larger Protestant communions has managed to maintain doctrinal or cultural uniformity to the same degree as the Catholics. Here again, Adventism might follow one of two models: the worldwide Anglican communion, which acknowledges the primacy of Canterbury, but allows for considerable regional autonomy, and the Pentecostal movement, which is formed from a patchwork whose elements range from independent churches to global denominations. Once again, it is hard to believe that Adventism will not be closer to the more centralized Anglican model.

But even if the church remains relatively centralized, it won't be as easy to control Adventism as it now is. In terms of cultural traditions the church may not even try too hard to do so, turning a blind eye to different Adventist lifestyles in different parts of the world. The church has however set up committees to examine how present structures will cope as the membership rises during this century—one on administration, another on finance. These will make recommendations at the next General Conference session.

Our enquiries indicate that the changes won't be revolutionary. The conference layer may be scrapped in countries where there are few members (some nations like Denmark have already done this) and the departmental structure may no longer be required to be reproduced at every administrative level. On financing, the General Conference may well channel more funds to local churches. Otherwise, the church's structures look set. People grumble about them but they have worked for a hundred years. Who's to say that, with a modification here or there, they won't work for another hundred?

For similar reasons we think that Adventism will

still be recognizably an American creation, however many people are in it. The American proportion of the world membership will have dwindled almost to vanishing point in 2100. Other parts of the world will easily be able to outvote the home country on any matter. As a result there may be pressures to move the church headquarters outside America. But to do that would be like moving the Vatican from Rome. We don't think it will happen.

The church's theology will still be more or less what it is today, to provide a reference point for its members. There will still be a statement of 28 fundamental beliefs or something like it. The church will still be preaching the three angels' messages. The church may have hundreds of millions of members, but it will not be enough. New methods will still be being devised to reach the others who continue to elude the church.

On the other hand, Adventism may not be so male dominated. One global trend that has been identified by futurologists is the increase of women in pastoral roles. It is a tendency that Adventism may not be able to resist, despite the fact it is growing strongly in very patriarchal societies in the Third World, and our guess is that the constitutional change that was made at the last General Conference session that effectively barred a woman from ever leading the church will be reversed in time. The General Conference president in 2100 may be as likely to be a female as it is a male.

Predicting what the church will be like in 2100 is largely a fantasy exercise. But any accurate prediction may require a degree of fantasy. If you had asked Adventists in 1900, when the worldwide membership was 78,000, what the church would be like in the year 2000, they would have been astonished, not only that time was continuing, but by the fact that the membership had grown to 12 million. By 2100, Adventism's global progress could be just as astonishing. ■

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## Point of the Spear: *Adventist Liberalism and the Study of Ellen White in the 1970s* | BY BENJAMIN MCARTHUR

**H**as any arena of Adventist scholarship in the past forty years been more consequential—or more controversial—than the study of Ellen White’s use of literary sources? If acceptance of her literary borrowing is now a commonplace, it is only so because of some excellent research accomplished by Adventist scholars in the 1970s and 1980s. Their conclusions need no retelling here. Suffice it to say, we have learned that inspiration is more complex and more subject to human elements than our naive, earlier view held.<sup>1</sup>

We are now more than a quarter century past the appearance of Ronald Numbers’s *Prophetess of Health: Ellen G. White and the Origins of Seventh-day Adventist Health Reform* (1976) and Walter Rea’s *The White Lie* (1982), the two most controversial publications on her work.<sup>2</sup> My interest here is with an aspect of the story not previously told: the inception of Ellen White research at Andrews University and the White Estate’s response to it. This article focuses on the work of a young historian at Andrews, Donald R. McAdams (pictured above). Because he never published his research, his contributions, though widely discussed in academic circles, were less familiar to the broader Adventist public than the writings of Numbers or Rea. But McAdams’s work was an influential part of the outpouring of White scholarship in the 1970s and beyond.

On one level, my account may seem little more than a

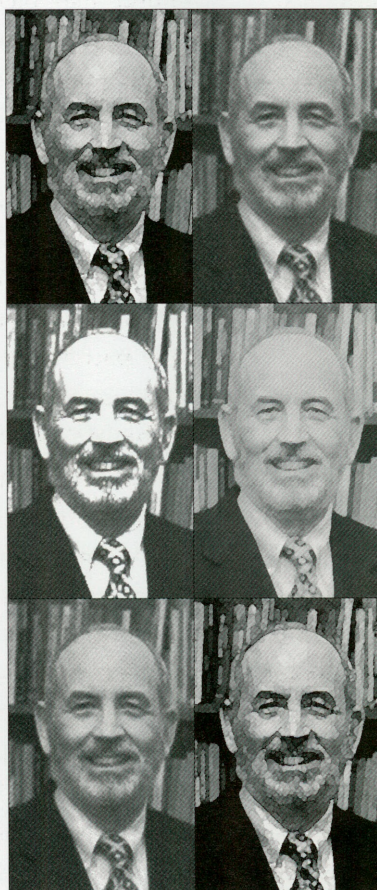
revisit of musty archives and tireless redaction criticism. But more was at work here. The story begins at a point in Adventist higher education when the promise of a

scholarship wedded to the service of the church appeared bright. The honeymoon was fleeting. It soon became apparent that a rigorous historical self-scrutiny would confront a religious tradition fearful of its conclusions.

**W**hen Donald McAdams graduated from Columbia Union College in 1963, he head-

ed south to Durham, North Carolina, to study British history at Duke University. Son of the associate publishing director at the General Conference, McAdams envisioned a career for himself within Adventist education. He didn’t imagine undertaking a groundbreaking study of his church’s prophetess, certainly not as he attended the evangelistic effort of Archer Livengood at the Durham church. But when the conference evangelist began reciting facts from the French Revolution, McAdams, then taking a course

in the subject, spotted inaccuracies. Diplomatically pointing these out after the sermon, he was invited to Livengood’s trailer, where the veteran preacher pulled off the shelf a well-worn copy of *Great Controversy* and confidently displayed the evidence for his statements. For the moment, McAdams was trumped. But he got his first hint that problems existed in our church’s “canon” and filed away a resolve to give the matter study.<sup>3</sup>





Completing his Ph.D., McAdams joined the Andrews University History Department in 1967. He arrived at an opportune moment, when, to paraphrase Wordsworth, Seventh-day Adventism was "seeming born again." North American Adventism in the 1950s and 1960s exuded self-confidence: growing in numbers, theologically unified, and still relatively untroubled by challenges of ethnic pluralism. The church was happy to accept the invitation of Donald Barnhouse to join the fraternity of Evangelicals. Eschatological beliefs notwithstanding, Adventist leaders could not help but share with other Americans the prevalent post-World War II belief in social progress and the ability of higher education to lead the way. Seventh-day Adventism felt poised to attain cultural respect such as it had never known.

Andrews University (1960) and Loma Linda University (1961) were the institutional expressions of this confidence. The desire for graduate education, in particular to prepare teachers and clergy, was the driving force behind the establishment of Andrews. With the arrival of Richard Hammill as president in 1963, the young university began making quick strides. Hammill, himself trained in Old Testament studies at the University of Chicago, had a vision of an Adventist higher education that included rigorous scholarship. Excellence would require a purposeful recruitment of faculty talent, a task Hammill pursued more energetically than previously seen in Adventist higher education. Library enhancements and the pursuit of professional accreditation for various departments followed. Andrews, though not a Berkeley or Cornell University, seemed on its way to embodying an Adventist version of the modern liberal university.<sup>4</sup>

Another indication of the church's newfound confidence in scholarship was the establishment of the Geoscience Research Institute (GRI), modestly begun in 1958, then expanded in the 1960s. Church leaders believed that the first-rate team of biologists, paleontologists, and geologists assembled at Andrews could substantiate young-earth creationism. Alas, the church's best and brightest, sporting advanced degrees from Harvard, California, Wisconsin, and Princeton, came to heterodox conclusions. After a geology field tour to the Rockies in 1968, where General Conference president Robert H. Pierson was exposed to the scientific problems of the young-earth theory, he issued a ukase stipulating that the GRI was to be concerned with apologetics, not problems. Subsequently, the

late 1960s witnessed a shaking within GRI, which would eventuate in new leadership and a move to Loma Linda.<sup>5</sup>

Another manifestation of Adventism's brief fling with liberalism—and one with a direct impact on Ellen White scholarship—came in an unlikely place: the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Like the GRI, the seminary became home to some talented and probing scholars in the 1960s. New Testament faculty, in particular, pushed the envelope in their presentation to students of contemporary biblical criticism. And the newly created Department of Christian Ethics, headed by Roy Branson, promoted a brand of social ethics that challenged students' conservative assumptions. A small minority of seminary students, themselves caught up in the zeitgeist of the sixties, found the atmosphere exhilarating and career altering. But many seminarians found the curriculum too challenging, both academically and theologically. When complaints mounted and General Conference leadership intervened, there followed the most pointed shuffling of personnel in the seminary's history: reassignments, resignations, and in at least one case, outright release.<sup>6</sup>

Even though theological backlash in the seminary was imminent by the time McAdams arrived in Berrien Springs, Andrews remained a place of amazing intellectual ferment—at least by the standards of normally quiescent Adventist campuses. The activism included a threatened nuclear option by an aroused cabal of Andrews faculty. Upset by the seminary housecleaning, they made noises about establishing a chapter of the aggressive American Association of University Professors. Andrews administrators would not, of course, entertain any thought of allowing a labor advocacy group on campus and quickly squelched the movement.<sup>7</sup>

But the atmosphere was usually more congenial than confrontational. The intellectual excitement of the place was born witness by many faculty who were there. Even a callow freshman such as myself, arriving on campus in 1969, could sense the energy. The "Andrews Project," so to speak, was confidently expressed by Donald McAdams in a centennial-year chapel talk in early 1974, seeking to persuade students of the special task of their time and place. "Andrews," McAdams insisted, "not the General Conference in Washington, Andrews is the spearpoint of change in the Adventist church."<sup>8</sup>

In the early 1970s, the nature of Ellen White's inspiration became a frequent target of the spear. This was so not



only because of McAdams's experience at Duke but also because of the frustration of some seminary professors who were confronted by student complaints that their biblical interpretations occasionally diverged from Ellen White's. In an attempt to defuse this line of argument, Roy Branson and Harold Weiss began to ask if Ellen White's writings might be usefully contextualized, as was done in biblical scholarship. Such a project would be difficult in the seminary. It was better left to the humanities departments, where the stakes appeared less high. It turned out not to be McAdams but his colleague across the hall in the English Department, William Peterson, who in the same issue of *Spectrum* as Branson and Weiss's essay undertook the first study of *Great Controversy* sources.<sup>9</sup>

Peterson, a 1961 Walla Walla graduate, began teaching at Andrews in 1962 with only a master's degree. After two years, he took a leave for graduate study at Northwestern University. He returned in 1966 with doctorate in hand and a growing sense of unease. The son of Adventist converts in the Pacific Northwest, Peterson grew up as an avid reader of White's books and a loyal, rather conservative Adventist. But a skeptical disposition nurtured at Northwestern and the intellectual ferment at Andrews opened his eyes to a troubling tendency in the church to use her writings as conversation stoppers. Thus, when discussions with McAdams turned to Ellen White (as they frequently did), Peterson found intriguing his observations about historical problems with *Great Controversy*. A visit to James White Library to examine her quoted sources on the French Revolution was eye-opening. After McAdams assured him that he didn't have time to pursue the research just then, Peterson determined to do so himself.<sup>10</sup>

The result was "A Textual and Historical Study of Ellen G. White's Account of the French Revolution." It was a short essay that threw a powerful punch. Peterson argued that the chapter depended on sources that were hopelessly biased in favor of Protestantism. Furthermore, he concluded that White used them carelessly and in a few cases with clear distortion. In sum, Peterson indicted the historical dependability of at least this portion of *Great Controversy*. Moreover, his pointed words lacked the usual caution employed in discussing Ellen White, which magnified the controversy. Over the next several issues of *Spectrum*, a spokesman for the White Estate and a young seminarian took Peterson to task, and he responded with increased bitterness.<sup>11</sup>

The ongoing published exchanges remind us that *Spectrum* magazine was birthed alongside the scholarly scrutiny of Ellen White. The Association of Adventist Forums and its journal sought to create through conversation and print a true Adventist intellectual community. Although the association would come to be stereotyped as the quintessential left wing of the church, it should be recalled that in its early years *Spectrum* published such mainstream church figures as Raoul Dederen, Richard Hammill, Edward Hopenstall, and Arthur White.

William Peterson's foray into Ellen White studies began and ended with his article and response to critics. Indeed, his association with Adventist education ended soon after. Having published one scholarly book and with another in the pipeline, he possessed credentials that made him an attractive figure in the booming academic market of the early 1970s. Furthermore, the controversy surrounding his *Spectrum* article made him, by his own account, an outcast on the Andrews campus. Some colleagues preferred not to be seen with him. Thus, drawn by scholarly ambition and driven by disillusionment, Peterson decamped for the University of Maryland in 1971, where he enjoyed a productive career in its English Department until retirement in 2004.<sup>12</sup>

But Donald McAdams was ready to continue what Peterson had begun. While preparing for a Sabbath afternoon student book club discussion of A. G. Dickens's recent study, the *English Reformation*, McAdams made a serendipitous find. Dickens, against prevailing scholarly fashion, argued for a religious rather than political interpretation of the English Reformation. Might Ellen White have been ahead of her time with her similar understanding? Intrigued, McAdams undertook an examination of *Great Controversy's* chapter fourteen, which dealt with that event. He looked at only the first five pages of the chapter, but from that short excerpt he anticipated most of the findings of his more extensive later research. The overwhelming quantity of White's words, for example, were plucked directly from Protestant historian D'Aubigné (with a few bows to John Foxe). The structure of her history followed theirs almost completely, and—not surprisingly—she understood the movement as purely a religious one.

What did McAdams conclude about all this? That Mrs.



White's history was essentially a condensation of other historians. He concluded that these historians, as Peterson had already established, were overwhelmingly anti-Catholic, which influenced her to ignore the not-uncommon Protestant persecution of Catholics. He also concluded that, notwithstanding the above problems, *Great Controversy* may still be considered an inspired work. Her inspiration, asserts McAdams, lies not in the history she summarizes but in the religious meaning she imparts to it, the contest between God and Satan. The Holy Spirit provided her the "big picture" rather than particular facts. If there had been disillusionment over the fact of her extensive literary borrowing, McAdams concluded in an accompanying paper, it was because the church failed to take her introductory disclaimer at face value.<sup>13</sup>

McAdams undertook his research with a sense of portentousness. Doubts about Adventist prophetic interpretation circulated among some Andrews faculty, and McAdams himself became convinced that without White's endorsement traditional prophetic views would be untenable. "It all rests on EGW," he recorded in his journal in 1971, "and it is not surprising that she is so much today the object of attention on the part of Adventist thinkers." McAdams's sense of professional mission was abetted by his outrage over perceived injustices being meted out to colleagues who questioned orthodoxy. "I am tired of being patient," he confided to himself.<sup>14</sup>

Yet Donald McAdams proved to be the very model of patience. He did not rush his work to *Spectrum* or any other organ. His caution rested on both practical and personal reasons. Partly it sprang from the charged atmosphere at Andrews during the 1970-71 school year, a volatile mix of spirituality and suspicion. A revival had swept campus at the beginning of fall term, one that soon spread to other Adventist campuses. The student activism of the previous few years faded, replaced by religious outreach activities. Board members and General Conference officials were delighted by developments. Still, at the constituency meeting in January to choose a new board, suspicions about faculty among some General Conference leaders were clear.

Faculty, on their part, felt the proceedings were yet another example of authoritarian leadership. McAdams, though sharing this discontent, was nonetheless pleased to hear that Robert Pierson singled him out among faculty as one who brought students closer to Christ. Later that spring, articles on theological and racial disputes within

Adventism were featured in *Newsweek* and *Christianity Today*. Church leaders bristled under the bad press, and a statement in the *Newsweek* piece claiming that many seminary faculty doubted a six-thousand-year-old earth only added to suspicions of academics.<sup>15</sup>

Not only church politics but also his being in line for an administrative post at Andrews (unrealized) gave McAdams pause. Ellen White scholarship could be poison. Better to avoid hints of theological unsoundness. The vice president for academic administration at Andrews, a mentor of McAdams from college, didn't even want to see his research. McAdams's father, now director of the General Conference Publishing Department, after reading his son's early paper advised him to show it to no one, lest his denominational future be jeopardized. Respect for his father always tempered McAdams's inclination to push ahead.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, instead of seeking publication, in mid-1971 he returned to the library for more research. This time, he examined *Great Controversy's* chapter six on John Huss and the Bohemian Reformation. In a fit of labor, McAdams completed a 105-page study by mid-December.<sup>17</sup> He was more sure than ever of his findings. It would be necessary, he felt, for the White Estate and Adventists generally to revise their belief that all *Great Controversy's* historical description came from vision. Indeed, virtually none of its history came from visions, but instead from earlier historians. The inspired passages were limited to descriptions of supernatural activities of Christ and Satan.

These conclusions, disquieting though McAdams knew they would be, were not intended to destroy faith. Rather, he was always at pains to emphasize that Mrs. White herself acknowledged indebtedness in the book's Introduction: "The great events which have marked the progress of reform in past ages are matters of history, well known and universally acknowledged by the Protestant world;" she had written, "they are facts which none can gainsay. This history I have presented briefly, in accordance with the scope of the book." McAdams understood these words to be important qualifiers to her claims about inspiration.<sup>18</sup>

His strong convictions notwithstanding, McAdams once again resisted publication. Instead, he circulated eight copies among his academic circle in the following months. At this point, he considered his work finished. He had proven to his satisfaction that Ellen White utilized historical sources extensively.<sup>19</sup>



McAdams's decision to use academic back channels meant a slower circulation of his argument. But such means were safer and held promise of being better able to effect change among Adventist thought leaders. He certainly had reason for confidence, knowing he wasn't the only one pursuing this agenda. At the 1971 convention of the American Historical Association (inconveniently held every year between Christmas and New Year's), as he, William Peterson, and Ronald Numbers gathered for lunch, talk turned enthusiastically to the White project. Numbers, then teaching at Loma Linda University Medical School, would soon begin research on what would become the blockbuster of the entire White study enterprise, *Prophetess of Health*.<sup>20</sup>

Adventist historians were interested in more than Ellen White. The early 1970s witnessed the coming of age of the Adventist historical profession (another manifestation of the growth of intellectual communities within Adventist higher education). During the 1972 AHA convention in New Orleans, the Association of Seventh-day Adventist Historians (ASDAH) was formed. The initial meeting occasioned what remains ASDAH's greatest contribution: a recommendation that the General Conference establish an archive for the preservation of church records and papers. McAdams had discovered the church's almost total lack of systematic record keeping and prepared a six-page document detailing a comprehensive records management program. His colleagues concurred, as did Arthur White (in attendance at McAdams's urging). White's concerns about uncontrolled use of materials led to some toning down of the proposal, but his support was no doubt crucial to its rapid adoption by the General Conference in spring of 1973. What this would ultimately mean for facilitating Adventist historical scholarship could scarcely be imagined.<sup>21</sup>

**D**onald McAdams's resolve to limit circulation of his study to a handful of trusted academics lasted only a year. He felt compelled to thrust his spear farther afield. By February 1973, he had sent a copy to top administrators at Andrews and the Lake Union, to the White Estate and *Review and Herald* editors. He did this in the face of warnings from his wife and from his mentor, Grady Smoot, and despite his own political caution. "I feel I had to do it,"

McAdams confided to his journal. "I have selected my jury well. If the Church cannot take this, given in the private way, then it is hardly worth my dedication. If it 'ruins' me, i.e. blocks administration, so be it."<sup>22</sup> Thus began his multi-year encounter with the "brethren of experience" (Arthur White's term), a negotiated effort to set the parameters of *Great Controversy's* originality.

Early responses were encouraging. Richard Hammill accepted his thesis (though in his cautious manner suggested McAdams deposit the paper in James White Library's Heritage Room with a five-year lock on it). Charles Hirsch and Ronald Graybill phoned their concurrence. Even traditionalist church historian Mervyn Maxwell agreed. But Arthur White took a more measured view, and, per General Conference custom, appointed a committee to examine McAdams's work. "The committee is stacked," McAdams mused, "and I know what I can expect."<sup>23</sup>

Nonetheless, his relationship with Arthur White was cordial. White was pleased that he had chosen not to share his findings beyond the brethren (though he did once chide McAdams for sending a copy to others not on the reading committee—an indication of the proprietary control White assumed over the research). Indeed, White was almost apologetic. "As I read what you have written, it became very clear to me that I had failed you, Don, and others of our history men," he wrote, "in not making available documentation which supports the viewpoint which seems very clear to us who work in the White Estate." "Let me tell you, Don, that we recognize that there are problems. We have always recognized this."

The cordiality could not disguise, however, an interpretive difference between the two men. McAdams believed that Ellen White admitted in *Great Controversy's* introduction that much of the narrative was not the product of inspiration. "The historical work that is described [by Ellen White] as being seen seems to be, in all but two, quite clearly activities of Christ and his angels or Satan and his angels." White's inspired comments, in McAdams's view, were restricted to metaphysical events. But Arthur White contended that literary borrowings were simply amplifications of things seen in vision. White was confident that statements by both Mrs. White and her son (his father) Willie would confirm this view. As for her occasional errors of fact, these he readily conceded as being of no more significance than similar factual contradictions one



finds in both Testaments (this being a point of apparent comfort to White, he appealed to it so often).<sup>24</sup>

By late spring 1973, another figure in the White Estate would become equally essential to McAdams's research. Ronald Graybill, La Sierra College graduate, trained at the seminary, author of two books on Adventist history, was at a young age becoming the scholar-in-residence at the White Estate. Capable as a speaker and writer, he was proving to be a fresh public face for the stolid organization. In a manner still unperceived by Arthur White, Graybill represented liberal Adventism's veiled and ultimately subversive presence in the sanctum. He understood that there were errors in her writings, extending even into interpretive matters. But for the moment he remained a cautious voice.

He suggested that McAdams would find a more receptive hearing among his White Estate colleagues if he shaded his argument. "Instead of saying that this evidence demonstrates that she did not see these scenes in vision," he wrote to McAdams, "could you not say: The internal evidence indicates that Ellen White would not have needed any visionary experiences to gain the historical facts and historical interpretations which she presents in these chapters." The ability to compromise, Graybill urged, would improve McAdams's ability to do further research in the White material. Graybill further encouraged McAdams to visit the White Estate's archives and spend time reassuring Arthur White about his publishing intentions. He hinted at important documents contained therein.<sup>25</sup>

That opportunity came soon. McAdams was already planning to spend the summer in Takoma Park, Maryland, beginning research on a history of the Adventist publishing work. But a trip to the White Estate indeed proved instructive. In one of those moments researchers live for, McAdams was directed by Graybill to a handwritten sixty-four sheet fragment of a draft for *Great Controversy's* half-chapter on Huss, the very section he had been vetting. If any doubts had remained regarding White's extensive use of sources, they were put to rest by the manuscript. But the rough-hewn, at times almost incoherent writing (McAdams labored over its transcription for weeks), raised other troubling questions about the degree of editing her assistants must have provided to create the 1888 edition. And why was it, McAdams wondered, that almost all of White's original material, which largely concerned the spiritual battles at work in the Reformation, were excised,

while the derivative material from Wylie came to comprise almost the entire chapter?<sup>26</sup>

By the fall of 1973, with the evidence from the Huss chapter manuscript now included, "Ellen G. White and the Protestant Historians" began to assume its final form. The White Estate had not released the newly cited material, so McAdams was not free to distribute it as he wished. He had already decided that summer against going public with it. Too many people would be hurt by the abrupt revelations. Rather, McAdams kept his faith in a scholarly trickle-down effect: persuade the reasonable folk at the higher reaches of church leadership and let hard truths flow from there. In his most candid personal moments, McAdams admitted that his work might nourish skepticism about White—even within himself. But truth must be served.<sup>27</sup>

For the moment, though, all roads ran through Arthur White. McAdams sent him a penultimate draft that fall. "I believe you will find my original thesis, which argued that Ellen White based her historical work on Wylie, reinforced. Indeed, I cannot see how else we can explain such an abundance of data." Graybill, who was also in the loop, enthused to McAdams, "A stupendous piece of work!" He advised on some tempering revisions, apparently in the belief that the entire manuscript would soon be published. Arthur White's reply in November was predictably more guarded, even defensive. He implored McAdams to avoid harsh conclusions about his grandmother's literary competence from the one manuscript. He believed it not representative of her corpus of writings. The limitations of her education must always be remembered. "I am sometimes a bit appalled," White scolded, "when men who have had the great privileges as you and others of our day have had, pass judgment on such a limited segment of materials examined. Is this par for the course on the part of historians?"<sup>28</sup>

The following spring, McAdams sent off what he deemed his final draft. "I am sick of it," he confided to Graybill. Indeed, the work had consumed him for almost three years. In an Elijah moment, he despaired that his labors had "little prospect of it ever changing anybody unless it is published," and that seemed unlikely. He was equally candid with White. "As you know it is a dangerous area for Adventists to study. This I consider a great tragedy. It seems to me that this should be one of the areas in which study is encouraged." "Per-



haps I am being a bit unfair," McAdams continued, but though my scholarship "may not hurt me, [it] has not endeared me to anybody." And what would McAdams like to see as the fruit of his labors? "The mind I would most like to change is yours," he bluntly told White. "I would also like to have the Church administration realize the complexity of the question and perhaps acknowledge historical sources at least a little."<sup>29</sup>

Even at this late date, McAdams continued to abide by the White Estate's wishes that he shield his work from other eyes (this being a condition for obtaining permission to transcribe the Huss fragment). This required him to implore Ronald Numbers not to cite his paper in his study of Ellen White and health reform, just accepted for publication that spring by Harper and Row. Numbers readily conceded to his former colleague's request. He congratulated him on recently becoming acting chair of the Andrews History Department, wryly adding that "when I get fired from LLU, you can get me a job. After all, you're partially responsible for my predicament."<sup>30</sup>

In fact, Numbers's manuscript for *Prophetess of Health* would shoulder aside McAdams's for the attention of the White Estate. For the next two years, until Numbers's book appeared in 1976, White Estate staff members would be involved in efforts to critique, forestall, or respond to his work. Numbers was the perfect foil to McAdams. Whereas the latter sought to preserve the gift of prophecy for Ellen White, the former adopted a naturalistic posture toward the prophetess. Whereas McAdams worked patiently through "the brethren," Numbers headed straight for publication. Whereas McAdams continued to aspire to academic administration, Numbers understood that his actions would banish him from Adventist academe. Thus, although McAdams's manuscript was put on the shelf until 1976, he and his work scored points with the White Estate for proper attitude and procedure. Patience and loyalty further paid off for McAdams when in 1975 he was appointed president of Southwestern Adventist College.<sup>31</sup>

In the summer of 1976, Arthur White wrote McAdams

that at last he and his colleagues were turning their eyes fully upon his manuscript. This was to be a thorough examination, asking whether McAdams's sampling was indicative of White's general corpus of work. To this end, Ronald Graybill was tasked with analyzing another recently discovered manuscript fragment of White's, a draft for her treatment of Luther. (One of the happy side effects of the White Estate's being forced into responding to McAdams's work was its own insights into how a prophetess worked. It learned, for

example, that the Huss fragment was composed in Europe in preparation of a German edition of *Great Controversy*.) In short, it would be well into 1977 before the White Estate would be prepared to give a definitive statement.<sup>32</sup>

New urgency was given to their efforts when in the spring of 1977 McAdams received an invitation to present his findings to the December meeting of the Adventist historians in Dallas. The time had come for public release, and no better audience existed for his inaugural presentation than his professional peers. Still, he needed Arthur White's permission to cite the Huss fragment. White, who repeatedly spoke of the need to assist denominational history teachers in their presentation of the *Spirit of Prophecy's* workings, could hardly refuse. But he wanted McAdams, whom he considered part of their "team," to join them at headquarters

in the fall after Annual Council to fine tune his paper.<sup>33</sup>

Correspondence with Arthur White wasn't McAdams's only insight into the shifting political landscape of Takoma Park. Ronald Graybill provided a sympathetic insider's perspective. He had finished his study of the Luther chapter and came to conclusions similar to McAdams's. "White now accepts this point," Graybill assured him, and "he is carrying the ball." Not only did Arthur White have to face up to the extensive scope of his grandmother's borrowings, he had the uncomfortable job of selling the new orthodoxy to General Conference leadership. He would first brief President Pierson privately, then send the findings to all White Estate board members. Of course, leadership





already knew quite a bit about the disturbing facts. Willis Hackett, General Conference vice president, had been quoted as saying the McAdams study is "10 times worse" than Numbers's.<sup>34</sup>

By late summer of 1977, the White Estate had produced its response to McAdams's research. It was a study of amazing thoroughness, right down to word counts (in a day before computers trivialized such tasks). It confirmed both extensive reliance on sources and factual errors. "These questions are too important to simply brush aside and sweep under the rug," wrote Robert Olson, "they must be dealt with honestly and frankly."<sup>35</sup> The study sought a confirming middle position between the verbal inspiration/infallibility model and a purely secular interpretation. "It is our understanding that all parts of the book *Great Controversy* are the products of inspiration by virtue of the fact that under inspiration they were either written by the author herself or were selected and incorporated into the book by her—a divinely inspired individual."<sup>36</sup> The burden of the study was to emphasize the human element of inspiration, a consideration often overlooked in traditional Adventism. To this end, a compilation of historical problems in the Old Testament was included, suggesting that human errors do not undermine inspiration.

Essentially a confirmation of his scholarship, the report would seem to have paved the way for a smooth final conference with McAdams in October. Yet the several editing sessions proved combative. White Estate staff sought to temper his prose, put the best possible face on problems and solutions. Graybill supported Arthur White's position in the meetings, then privately took McAdams to task for conceding too much. In fact, McAdams, who took a backseat to no one in political legerdemain, was conciliatory on most matters. He had the satisfaction of carrying his major point. And he believed that his research had started the Church down an important path toward clarity in matters of faith and inspiration. "The pragmatic administrators will like it," McAdams confided to his journal, "the conservatives will hate it but be unable to strike, the liberals will think I have sold out, but so what. To the moderates I will be a hero," he wrote. "... Politics takes precedence over belief in points not matters of conscience. My March 1973 draft is still my opinion."<sup>37</sup>

But McAdams underestimated the reach of church conservatives. Just as he was preparing to deliver his findings

to the ASDAH conference, a political bombshell exploded. The White Estate response had made its way to the seminary and, among others, into the hands of Old Testament professor Gerhard Hasel.

Hasel was incensed both by McAdams's conclusions and by what he considered the White Estate's surrender to them. He quickly proceeded to critique both papers, purporting to show sloppy errors in McAdams's scholarship and a failure by the White Estate staff to research the matters for themselves.<sup>38</sup> Hasel had influential allies in the Biblical Research Institute, particularly Gordon Hyde, plus the sympathies of Robert Pierson. Essentially, Hasel and his supporters insisted that Ellen White was both inerrant and verbally inspired. Arthur White, the man most responsible for guarding his grandmother's writings, found himself in the unaccustomed and emotionally stressful position of being accused of insufficient diligence in that task. It was probably the only time in White Estate history when it found itself advocating a revisionist interpretation of Ellen White's writings.

White Estate staff, notably Ronald Graybill, responded by a full-court press of investigation, including getting pertinent Latin and Czech sources translated. Ultimately, McAdams's scholarship would be vindicated. But for the moment, Hasel's challenge empowered those General Conference leaders unhappy with the direction of things to lean on Arthur White. White, in turn, leaned on McAdams at the eleventh hour to postpone delivering his paper to ASDAH. "He wants me to give him time to win them [Pierson and Hackett] over," McAdams noted.<sup>39</sup>

But McAdams had put off dissemination of his research long enough; he was not to be dissuaded. In truth, unauthorized earlier drafts of his study had long circulated. What was to be new here was inclusion of the Huss manuscript fragment, which the White Estate had earlier given him restricted permission to use in his presentation. White was very anxious about the meeting but reluctantly agreed that it must happen, appealing (vainly) for further revisions in McAdams's paper. The show would go on.<sup>40</sup>

Adventist historians who traveled to Dallas for the annual meeting of the American Historical Association gathered in the Dallas Central Church for an early evening session. For McAdams, this was the moment he had anticipated for years. Not only his professional peers attended but also the White Estate staff and a sprinkling of



other church officials. He read his paper in a low-key manner, maintaining the tone of moderation that had served him well throughout his negotiations.

Response was resoundingly positive. Ronald Graybill and Robert Olson gave their endorsement. The historians were, of course, supportive, but upset at the continued restrictions on the Huss fragment by the White Estate, which prevented McAdams from circulating his paper. Eric Anderson, then a young professor at Pacific Union College, covered the meeting for *Spectrum*, "No further research is necessary," he concluded, "to demonstrate that *Great Controversy* should not be taken as an independent or infallible historical source."<sup>41</sup>

Both Graybill and McAdams had always hoped that the latter's pathbreaking study would soon find publication, whether in *Spectrum* or even in a short official church publication. This never happened. The needed release of the telltale fragment by the White Estate did not come, essentially holding McAdams's paper hostage. Nonetheless, over the next couple years McAdams gave public talks to well-attended Adventist Forum meetings at the major Adventist centers from Takoma Park to Berrien Springs to Loma Linda. A kindred study by Donald Casebolt concerning Ellen White's writings on the Waldensians reinforced conclusions about borrowing and, especially, fallibility.<sup>42</sup>

Most notably, Adventist pastor Walter Rea began to make public his years of research on White's writing. The General Conference could no longer avert its eyes. A blue-ribbon panel of scholars and administrators (including McAdams) was convened in 1980 to give Rea a personal forum. It became clear that *Great Controversy* literary dependency was not unique. Rea, of course, went on to publish his provocative work, *The White Lie*. But the General Conference also determined it must sponsor its own research into the subject. Thus in 1980, Fred Veltman, religion professor at Pacific Union College, was asked to undertake a study of the sources for the *Desire of Ages*.<sup>43</sup>

The appearance of Veltman's massive eight-year study in 1988 evoked little comment. Its very size militated against a broad readership, and church leadership showed little inclination to publicize it widely. Not that this mattered greatly. We already knew what we needed to know about the construction of Ellen White's historical works.<sup>44</sup>

As the 1970s ended, America found itself discouraged by oil shortages, inflation, and humiliation by Iran. The Adventist Church plunged into a similar funk. The Desmond Ford controversy, which began in 1980, with all the internecine bitterness it entailed, ushered in an unhappy, highly contested era. In truth, the promise of Adventist liberalism had faded well before then. The Church, it seemed, was rather less interested in theological self-examination than the Andrews academic community had believed. The seminary at Andrews flourished as the training ground for ministers and educators from around the world. But the play of theological ideas was delimited, with preference for faculty with advanced degrees from evangelical institutions (and increasingly its own graduates) rather than from elite universities.

But liberal scholarship prevailed in one arena: it permanently revised our understanding of Ellen White's historical writings. For decades, a type of verbal inspiration dominated popular Adventism, shaping the church culture to a degree that today's generation of Adventist youth could hardly imagine. Within at least the educated mainstream church, that is no longer the case. Discussions proceed about historical and theological issues less encumbered by appeals to discussion-ending Red Book quotations. This matters because American Adventism now stands poised at what appears to be a new age of dialogue, driven by a sense of urgency about revitalizing the North American Church.

What does the earlier moment of Adventist liberal scholarship say about how scholars might currently support the cause of church revitalization? It suggests that there may be a place for both working within the system and going outside it. McAdams's influence with the White Estate flowed largely from his scrupulous efforts to be conciliatory. He built up a reservoir of good will that persuaded church leaders of his best intentions. Indeed, he not only thrust uncomfortable truths on the White Estate, he provided it with a plausible alternative to salvage White's status as a prophet. At the same time, without the very public no-holds-barred scholarship of Numbers and Rea it is not clear that McAdams's work alone would have gotten the official attention it did. McAdams and his work were embraced in part because they weren't Numbers's. Change, like basketball, may always need an inside-outside strategy.



The story should also remind us of the human costs that usually accompany wrenching change. Donald McAdams's journal records agonizing soul searching over his work, resulting in near spiritual exhaustion. Ronald Graybill's career at the White Estate came to an abrupt end a few years later, the victim of a dissertation that pushed interpretative freedom about Ellen White a step too far. Walter Rea, too, must be counted among the victims. And one can't disregard the pain caused to traditional believers, now shaken in their lifelong confidence in the literal words of "a prophet among us." Arthur White had to spend his final working years managing this vexed situation. Conservative fears, expressed by Gerhard Hasel, that "a position of diminished authority in one area will inevitably lead to uncertainty about authority in other areas" were not unfounded.<sup>45</sup> Necessary change, but still painful.

The North American Adventist Church in 2008 is far from the world it knew in 1970. The sense of confidence the Church shared with the nation forty years ago has largely evaporated. Growth is no longer assumed; simply holding our own is now the challenge. This suggests that a new "Adventist Project" must be generated. Once again, Adventist scholars must take it upon themselves to help reshape an Adventism that might carry meaning for contemporary America. The stakes are high, and resistance is certain. But we owe the church no less. ■

## Notes and References

1. I am indebted to a number of people who shared their recollections of Andrews University with me, including Roy Branson, Donald Rhoads, Russell Staples, Ronald Numbers, and Harold Weiss.

2. Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: Ellen G. White and the Origins of Seventh-day Adventist Health Reform* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976); Walter T. Rea, *The White Lie* (Turlock Calif.: M and R, 1982). The best overview of the decades' research is found in Donald McAdams, "Shifting Views of Inspiration: Ellen White Studies in the 1970s," *Spectrum* 10.4 (1980). An in-depth and affecting recount of Ronald Numbers's experience is given by Jonathan M. Butler, "The Historian as Heretic," introduction to *Prophetess of Health*, revised edition, University of Tennessee Press, 1992. Although much has been written about the early days of White revisionism, we have had no recent attempts to assess the impact of this scholarship on Adventist perceptions of their prophet, apart, perhaps, from the Valuegenesis surveys of youth attitudes, which show a declining acceptance of traditional attitudes of White's prophetic office. V. Bailey Gillespie with Michael J. Donohue, *Valuegenesis: Ten Years Later* (La Sierra, Calif.: Hancock Center, 2004), 158–59.

3. Donald R. McAdams, e-mail to the author, Aug. 3, 2007.

4. A detailed and fair-minded discussion of the beginnings and early years of Andrews University is provided by Richard Hammill, *Pilgrimage: Memoirs of an Adventist Administrator* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1992), especially 73–138.

5. Hammill, *Pilgrimage*, chapter six. Ronald L. Numbers details these developments in his *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 290–98.

6. Phone conversations with Roy Branson and Harold Weiss have shaped my discussion of the Seminary. Richard Hammill, in his otherwise admirably candid memoirs, avoids discussion of the Seminary upheavals completely.

7. Donald Rhoads, phone conversation, Oct. 4, 2007; Rhoads, "Notes written around 1969 or 1970," unpublished recollection, copy sent to the author.

8. Donald McAdams, "Riding on the Point of the Spear," undated typescript, in McAdams files.

9. Branson and Weiss, "Ellen White: A Subject for Adventist Scholarship," *Spectrum* (autumn 1970): 30–33; William S. Peterson, "A Textual and Historical Study of Ellen G. White's Account of the French Revolution," (autumn 1970): 57–69.

10. William Peterson, phone conversation with the author, Sept. 6, 2007.

11. The ongoing debate occurred in a series of articles over the next year: W. Paul Bradley, "Ellen G. White and Her Writings" (spring 1971): 43–64; William S. Peterson, "An Imaginary Conversation on Ellen G. White" (spring 1971): 84–91; John W. Wood, "The Bible and the French Revolution: An Answer" (autumn 1971): 55–72; William S. Peterson, "Ellen White's Literary Indebtedness" (autumn 1971): 73–84. The issue of *Spectrum* in which Peterson's original article appeared also featured three other short pieces on Ellen White, suggesting that a moment of Adventist revisionism had clearly arrived. In one, Richard Lewis, professor of English at Loma Linda University, wondered out loud if we had proper warrant to apply the biblical term *Spirit of Prophecy* to Mrs. White ("The Spirit of Prophecy," 69–72). A second, by Fred Harder, Sr., dean of graduate studies at Andrews University, sought to broaden the church's view of the nature of inspiration, hinting that we ought not to look to White for authoritative factual statements about the past ("Ellen White: A Subject for Adventist Scholarship," 30–33).

12. William Peterson, phone conversation with the author Sept. 6, 2007.

13. McAdams, e-mail to the author, Nov. 29, 2007; "Ellen G. White on the English Reformation," unpublished paper; "The Historical Writings of E. G. White: A Personal View, to be Read before Reading Mrs. White and the English Reformation," unpublished paper.

14. McAdams journal, Sept. 22, 1971.



15. Ibid., Jan, 29, 1971; Sept. 22, 1971; "The Day of the Adventists," *Newsweek*, June 7, 1971; Stanley Sturges, "The Growing Quarrel among Seventh-day Adventists," *Christianity Today*, June 18, 1971, 12–13.

16. McAdams journal, July 10, 1971.

17. "Ellen G. White and the Protestant Historians," typescript, 15–16.

18. Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy*, Introduction, (1888 edition), xiii–xiv; McAdams journal, Dec. 24, 1971.

19. McAdams journal, Dec. 24, 1971; McAdams, e-mail to the author, Dec. 8, 2007.

20. McAdams journal, Dec. 29, 1971.

21. Ibid., Dec. 29, 1972; McAdams, e-mail to the author, Dec. 8, 2007.

22. McAdams journal, Feb. 13, 1973.

23. Ibid., Mar. 2, 1973; May 11, 1973. Examples of responses to his work found in various letters: Don F. Neufeld to McAdams, Mar. 7, 1973, Willis Hackett to McAdams, Mar. 7, 1973, Mervyn Maxwell to McAdams, May 4, 1973, all in Donald R. McAdams Papers, Center for Adventist Research (CAR), Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich.

24. A. L. White to Donald McAdams, Feb. 27, 1973; Apr. 18, 1973; McAdams to White, Mar. 9, 1973, McAdams Papers, CAR. In one letter, Arthur White solicits McAdams's help in sorting out the discrepant

accounts of the Gadarene man in the Gospels, an allusion apropos nothing in their exchanges except as an indirect means of reinforcing the point that Scripture has errors just as certainly as does Mrs. White's writings—with no consequent diminishment of inspiration. White to McAdams, Apr. 8, 1973, CAR.

25. Graybill to McAdams, May 3, 1973, McAdams Papers, CAR.

26. McAdams journal, Aug. 17, 1973; McAdams to Graybill, Aug. 21, 1973; Graybill to McAdams, Aug. 23, 1973; McAdams to White, Sept. 18, 1973, all three letters in McAdams Papers, CAR.

27. McAdams journal, July 11, 1973.

28. McAdams to White, Sept. 18, 1973; Graybill to McAdams, Nov. 5, 1973; White to McAdams, Nov. 26, 1973, all in McAdams Papers, CAR.

29. McAdams to Graybill, Mar. 31, 1974; McAdams to White, Mar. 29, 1974, all in McAdams Papers, CAR.

30. McAdams to Numbers, May 4, 1974; Numbers to McAdams, May 11, 1974, all in McAdams Papers, CAR.

31. Despite McAdams's moderation and his Takoma Park pedigree, his Ellen White research was sufficiently disturbing to cause Robert Pier-son to speak to the Southwestern Adventist College board chairman in an attempt to nix his appointment as president. McAdams e-mail to the author, Jan. 22, 2008.

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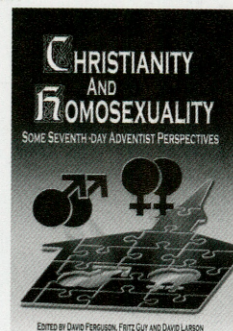
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32. White to McAdams, June 9, 1976; White to McAdams, Oct. 15, 1976; White to McAdams, Dec. 3, 1976; White to McAdams, Apr. 29, 1977. All in McAdams personal files.
33. McAdams to White, Apr. 13, 1977; White to McAdams, Apr. 29, 1977, McAdams personal files.
34. McAdams journal, Aug. 13, 1977.
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37. McAdams journal, Oct. 17, 1977.
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41. Ibid.; Anderson, "Ellen White and Reformation Historians," *Spectrum* (July 1978):26.
42. Donald Casebolt, "Ellen White, the Waldenses, and Historical Interpretation," *Spectrum* (Feb. 1981):37-43.
43. "Full Report of the Life of Christ Research Project" (Nov. 1988). The report is available online at the General Conference Archives Web site: [www.adventistarchives.org/documents.asp?CatID=13&SortBy=1&ShowDateOrder=True](http://www.adventistarchives.org/documents.asp?CatID=13&SortBy=1&ShowDateOrder=True).
44. McAdams addressed the lingering issue of White's authority in a 1985 *Spectrum* article, "The Scope of Ellen White's Authority" (Aug. 1985):1-7.
45. Hasel, "A Review of the White Estate Paper," 29.

## A Note on Sources

Donald McAdams deposited some of his correspondence in the Center for Adventist Research (CAR), Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. Letters deposited in the CAR are cited as such. Citations from other letters, unpublished manuscripts, and his personal journal remain in his possession. Journal entries were frequently made several days after the events described, so date of entry does not necessarily indicate date of event. I wish to thank McAdams for access to his journals and correspondence. All quotations are by permission.

**Benjamin McArthur** chairs the Department of History at Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.

## Spectrum Blog

*Continued from page 20...*

dark, for together we can stitch together a shoddy imitation of God's Truth that transcends any individual's capacity to know or create.

Humility transcends differences between communities who need each other to patch unique and disparate holes in our comprehension of God. There is no I in Yahweh.

Pomo Guy, May 15, 2008

## The Cognitive Revolution

DAVID BROOKS HAS an excellent op-ed article titled "The Neural Buddhists," in the May 13, 2008, issue of the *New York Times* <<http://nytimes.com/2008/05/13opinion/13brooks.html>>. In it, he makes this cogent statement:

*And yet my guess is that the atheism debate is going to be a sideshow. The cognitive revolution is not going to end up undermining faith in God, it's going to end up challenging faith in the Bible....Orthodox believers are going to have to defend particular doctrines and particular biblical teachings. They're going to have to defend the idea of a personal God, and explain why specific theologies are true guides for behavior day to day....We're in the middle of a scientific revolution. It's going to have big cultural effects.*

He also says:

*[U]nderneath the patina of different religions, people around the world have common moral intuitions....People are equipped to experience the sacred, to have moments of elevated experience when they transcend boundaries and overflow with love. God can best be conceived as the nature one experiences at those moments, the unknowable total of there is.*

People can experience the existence of the sacred, but think that particular religions are just cultural artifacts built on top of universal traits.

This is the postmodern world, where specific religions or theological beliefs no longer hold sway as they once did in modern times. Is the church up to the task?

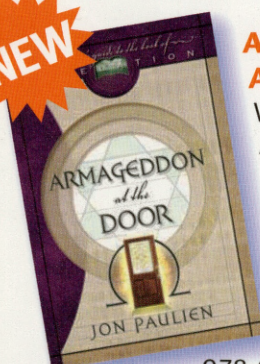
Elaine Nelson, May 15, 2008



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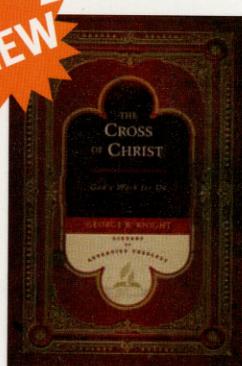


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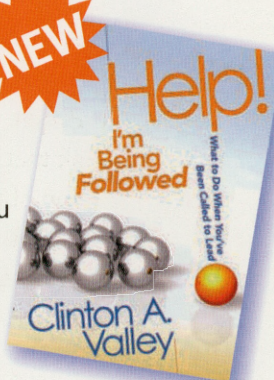
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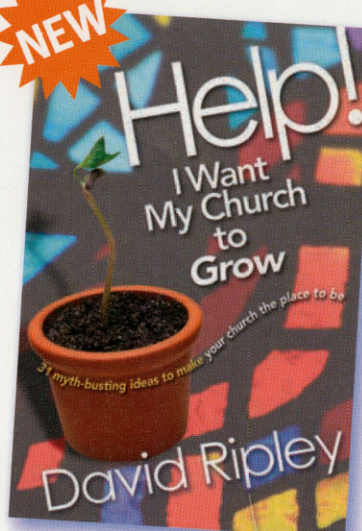
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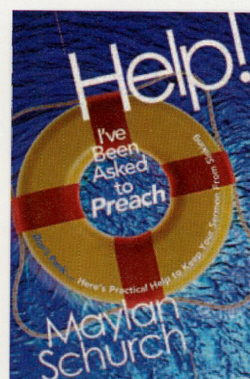


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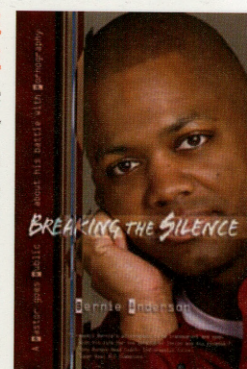
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# BIRDS, BOOKS, A



*Autumn's in the Air: Bob Whites*



# ND FILM

## How Birding Became Almost Cool

BY JAMES L. HAYWARD

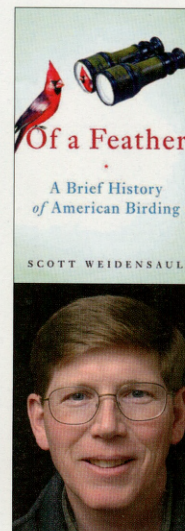
PAINTINGS BY JAMES MCCLELLAND

A review of Scott Weidensaul, *Of a Feather: A Brief History of American Birding* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, 2007).

Perhaps you fancy yourself a sophisticated person, one who wouldn't be caught dead peering through binoculars at some twittering little dicky bird. Perhaps you're one who considers birdwatchers a quirky bunch populated by the likes of Miss Jane Hathaway on *The Beverly Hillbillies*, or by chubby cartoon characters in *The Far Side*. You may not be alone in your prejudices, but you're definitely out of touch. Much has changed over the past half-century. Miss Hathaway and her ilk notwithstanding, "birding" is one of the fastest growing pastimes in North America.<sup>1</sup>

If you are a birder and find yourself ticking off a list of spring warblers at Point Pelee or fighting seasickness while tracking shearwaters and petrels off the Oregon coast, the person beside you is just as likely to be a Fortune 500 CEO as a Denny's waitress. Birding today is a great democratizer, enjoyed by the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak.<sup>2</sup> A new book by Scott Weidensaul, *Of a Feather: A Brief History of American Birding*, recounts the origins and development of this wildly popular hobby once thought to be the exclusive province of geeks and weirdos.

Weidensaul himself claims to have been "a little off center" as a kid. "I was alone in the neighborhood," he writes, "in deciding to tan (with questionable success) the hide of a road-killed woodchuck...in raising thirty monarch butterflies in my bedroom, which smelled of caterpillar droppings for weeks...[and in keeping a] ring-necked snake that lived under my bed" (228–29). However, like many another twelve-year-old, Weidensaul "hunted and fished and joined the Boy Scouts" (229)—and loathed the binocular-toting







Miss Hathaway on his favorite sitcom. But despite his aversion to Miss Hathaway, birding had him hooked.

In the first chapter, Weidensaul reviews the impressions of early explorers concerning North America's birds. John White, John Lawson, Mark Catesby, and John Bartram, among others, described and named some of these birds. A few of these names have survived until today: "blew" jay, "hooping" crane, Canada goose, laughing gull, and purple finch (27). Sadly, though, some of the avian sights they described haven't: flocks of Carolina parakeets "of a green Colour, and Orange—Colour'd half way their head," and hoards of passenger pigeon so vast as to "obstruct the Light of day" (15).

The adventures of aspiring poet and bird enthusiast Alexander Wilson, and of his better-known rival, John James Audubon, occupy the second chapter. Wilson walked enormous distances in fifteen of then-eighteen United States, "taking copious notes, shooting and stuffing birds, and grilling locals about what they know of their region's birdlife" (50). He shaped this information into a remarkably thorough work titled *Ornithology*, illustrated by Wilson himself.

Audubon, in contrast, clearly the superior artist, was,

according to Weidensaul, "self-aggrandizement personified, a master at the calculated effect" (59). When he traveled to England and Scotland in the 1820s to sell subscriptions to his magnificent *Birds of America*, Audubon "made sure to look every inch the 'American Woodsman' he proclaimed himself to be—the long, flowing hair, a hunting shirt and wolfskin jacket, a fur cap with a bushy tail" (59)—all a put-on. Today, both Wilson and Audubon are namesakes of birds, societies, and journals.

The development of North American ornithology, closely connected with westward expansion and associated military detachments, is explored in the third and fourth chapters. Many of North America's western species now bear the names of the explorers and military officers involved: Lewis Woodpecker (Meriwether Lewis), Clark's Nutcracker (William Clark), Nuttall's Woodpecker (Thomas Nuttall), Townsend's Warbler (John Townsend), Cassin's Finch (John Cassin), Harris' Sparrow (Edward Harris), Gambel's Quail (William Gambel), Bendire's Thrasher (Charles Bendire), Xantus' Murrelet (John Xantus), and Heermann's Gull (Adolphus Heermann), to name just a few.

Colorful tales attend the lives of these people. To these early ornithologists, the only way to study birds was down the barrel of a shotgun. Collecting dominated nineteenth and early twentieth century ornithology.



Charles B. Cory, president of the American Ornithologists' Union (AOU), when declining an invitation to address an Audubon Society meeting in 1902, growled "I do not protect birds. I kill them" (144).

Fortunately, the attitude of ornithologists has changed, and today the AOU is at the forefront of bird protection. This sea change was due in large part to the work of a cadre of "Angry Ladies," featured in chapter five. During the late 1800s, feathers adorned the hats of many fashionable ladies—the bigger the feather, the more fashionable the hat. Herons,

egrets, and other birds were slaughtered in frightful numbers to meet the demand for these accessories.

Although it was women who wore the hats, it was also women who brought the millinery industry to its knees. Harriet Lawrence Hemenway, a formidable New England blue blood, is credited with raising up the modern-day Audubon Society in part to counter this slaughter. Many other prominent women of the time promoted the protection and love of birds. These women included Florence Bailey, Mabel Wright, Cordelia Stanwood, Anna Comstock, Gene Stratton-Porter, Fanny Eckstorm, and Rosalie Edge.

The concept of the "bird book," the availability of a handy guide to identification, is reviewed in chapter six. "Field guides make the natural world knowable," Weidensaul notes. "[T]hey are the first entry point for most people into the diversity of life on the planet" (188). Bird guides from the early nineteenth century, however, looked more like medical reference tomes, hardly something you'd want to haul into the field.

The first truly portable bird guides were produced during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Chester Reed's little *Bird Guide*, which appeared in 1906, provides a notable and influential example. But it was Roger Tory Peterson, an art teacher from New York, who in 1934 birthed *The Field Guide to the Birds*, the first truly modern field guide.

Today, in addition to updated editions of Peterson's classic, a plethora of guides is available, including *Birds of North America* of the Golden Field Guide Series, the *National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds*, National Geographic's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*, *The Sibley Guide to Birds*, and Kenn Kaufman's *Focus Guide to Birds of North America*—not to mention hundreds of handbooks to other regions of the world.



Perfectly Plumed: Cedar Waxwings



In "Death to Miss Hathaway (How birding became almost cool)," chapter seven, the modern avocation of birding takes center stage. A most notable development in the history of this activity was the founding of the American Birding Association (ABA). In the late 1960s, Jim Tucker, an Adventist educational psychologist who had taught biology at Forest Lake Academy, was doing a postdoc at the University of Texas. Tucker was a committed conservationist, but he was frustrated by the fact that the National Audubon Society, of which he'd been a local leader, had shifted its emphasis from birds to a more environmentalist focus. Despite a growing interest at the time in birds and bird watching, no organization catered specifically to the needs of bird enthusiasts.

In December 1968, Tucker mailed a typed, eight-page, mimeographed newsletter he called *The Birdwatcher's Digest* to a handful of friends and invited them to join his new "American Birdwatcher's Association." He set the dues at three dollars per year. News of Tucker's

organization spread rapidly and people began to sign up in droves. The name was changed to the American Birding Association and the newsletter became the bimonthly magazine *Birding*. The first ABA conference featured Roger Tory Peterson as its plenary speaker. Tucker, clearly, had discovered and filled an unoccupied niche.

Today, four decades later, the ABA boasts thousands of members, the cost of membership is now forty-five dollars, and *Birding* has morphed into a slick, award-winning magazine. It also publishes a newsletter, *Winging It*, which provides tips on bird identification, as well as *North American Birds*, a continuation of the journal *American Birds* once produced by the National Audubon Society.<sup>3</sup>

Tucker, currently McKee Chair of Excellence in Learning Exceptionalities at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, has left the ABA leadership team, but his interest in birds and nature continues unabated.<sup>4</sup> He and his wife, Priscilla, have authored several nature-themed devotionals published by Review and Herald Publishing Association and by other outlets.





In the final chapter, "Beyond the List," Weidensaul makes a pitch for bird conservation. He deplores "hard-core listers who spend a small fortune tracking down a single species they need to flesh out their North American list, only to ignore it mere moments after they've seen and identified it" (282). He recalls how, during a birding trip in Central America, he was "tailed for days...by a tour member who scarcely raised his binoculars to look at the birds we found. Instead, he was forever scribbling in his notebook, asking me to spell the names of birds I'd found" (282).

But, notes Weidensaul, "Lists can be a tool, a means as well as an end, and the well-balanced birder uses them as such" (283). What begins as a competitive sport for some folk can lead to a deeper appreciation for birds and for nature in general. Kenn Kaufman, who at sixteen dropped out of high school and hitchhiked across America to "chase birds," was sent home by California authorities for roving the state as an "unsupervised minor" (291). Not one to be deterred, Kaufman worked at odd jobs and even sold his blood to raise enough money to head out once again. "[A]bout fifty dollars a month was all he needed," writes Weidensaul, "sleeping outside and eating the cheapest food (including dried cat food) the grocery stores carried" (291).

In 1973, having spent less than a thousand dollars the entire year, Kaufman succeeded in breaking the previous "Big Year" winner's record with 666 species—but just shy of the 669 species seen the same year by an equally obsessive—if less eccentric—birder, Floyd Murdoch.<sup>5</sup>

Murdoch, a son of prominent Adventist educators W. G. C. Murdoch and Ruth R. Murdoch, calls himself a "frustrated ornithologist." An expert field naturalist and charter member of the ABA, he eschews reductionist science. Unlike Kaufman, though, he stuck with school and



*The Courtier: White Peacock*

merged his love for birds with that of history, his other passion. Murdoch's "Big Year" served as a sabbatical from graduate studies at American University. Once back on campus, he cleverly melded his two loves into a single dissertation titled "For the Birds: A History of Bird Protection in the United States."<sup>6</sup>

For both Murdoch and Kaufman, writes Weidensaul, "it was the process and not the results that counted" (293). After completing his doctorate, Murdoch retained his focus nature. For four years, he served as president of the Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS). These days, he's raising funds for a million-dollar nature center at the church-owned Mt. Aetna Camp and Retreat Center in Hagarstown, Maryland. In his spare time, he leads birding trips to the tropics and is active with programs at the ANS and Smithsonian Institution.<sup>7</sup>



For his part, Kaufman has abandoned listing altogether and dedicated his life to writing, editing, and introducing novices to the joys of birding and nature. He says we need “a lot more people who had maybe seen a yellow warbler and who understood that there was a connection between this attractive bird and its need for habitat” (295).

A quick trip to Amazon.com and you’ll discover a small constellation of books by Kaufman that encourage the appreciation and identification of birds, butterflies, insects, and mammals. His recently published *Kaufman Guia de Campo a las Aves de Norteamerica* was a

labor of love jump-started with his own resources, a project undertaken on behalf of the underserved Hispanic American community.

*Of a Feather* is not about Adventists and birding, so Weidensaul understandably overlooks many other Seventh-day Adventists who have contributed significantly to bird appreciation and ornithology.<sup>8</sup> Ernest S. Booth (1915–84), an avid birder, founded the first Adventist graduate program in biology and the marine biological station at Walla Walla College. For many years he ran a business out of his home, Outdoor Pictures, which specialized in slide sets on natural history subjects, museum specimens for schools, and

nature publications. He published two bird guides and wrote a high school biology text used widely in Adventist schools.

C. Roy Smith (1926–94), who taught biology for many years at Andrews Academy, was one of Michigan’s premier birders and coauthor of the *Bird Finding Guide to Michigan*. Edgar O. Grundset (1921–99), an enthusiastic birder and long-time professor of biology at Southern Missionary College (later Southern Adventist University), inspired many young people to take up birding. Asa Thoresen (1930–2006), longtime professor of biology at Andrews University, was a recognized expert on the biology of alcids, a family of seabirds; his *Auks of the World* will soon be published posthumously.

Chris Haney, graduate of Southern College and chief scientist and vice-president at Defenders of Wildlife, has published extensively on the ecology of marine and terrestrial birds. Floyd Hayes, professor of biology at Pacific Union College and coauthor of *Birds of Trinidad and Tobago*, has published scores of technical and popular papers on Caribbean birds and other wildlife. Cheryl Trine, who earned a doctor-



Picture Perfect: Eastern Blue Jay



ate from the University of Illinois in woodland birds, edits the Ornithological Societies of North America's *Ornithological Newsletter*.


Pamela Rasmussen, assistant curator of mammalogy and ornithology at the Michigan State University Museum and a graduate of Walla Walla College and the University of Kansas, coauthored *Birds of South Asia: The Ripley Guide*; she made international news in 1997 for rediscovering the tiny forest owlet of central India, long thought to be extinct. Carl Swafford and Benton Basham inculcated a love for birds in many a young person in and around Collegedale, Tennessee. Bobby Ray Harrison, professor of art and photography at Oakwood College, earned international recognition in 2005 for helping to rediscover the Ivory-billed Woodpecker.


Bob Holbrook, Floyd Murdoch, Calvin Hill, Brad Benson, Mick Greene, and Frank Clayton administer a Web site for Adventist birders called "The Peregrine Net." Joe Galusha, professor of biology at Walla Walla University and the doctoral student of a Nobel Laureate, Niko Tinbergen, at Oxford, has studied the nesting behavior of gulls perhaps more thoroughly than any other American. Shandelle Henson and I at Andrews University, along with Galusha, lead the Seabird Ecology Team, funded by the National Science Foundation to develop mathematical models designed to predict the behavior of marine birds. There are many others. Most of us are, or have been, avid birders.


Having skinned my share of road kills and started a "life list" of birds at age seven, I, too, was "a little off center." During camp meetings, I gravitated to the nature shelf at the "Book and Bible House"—and I spent much of my time chasing orioles and digging for crinoids rather than warming a seat in the Junior tent. Not surprisingly, I found it easy to resonate with Weidensaul. His writing is bright and lively, his stories entertaining, and his passion for the natural world contagious.


"Bird study has changed over the centuries," muses Weidensaul, "from the earliest days of a few eccentric visionaries tramping through the wilderness, to the rise of stuffy academicians smelling faintly of mothballs; it grew from amateur roots to become a profession then split again into a vigorous hobby with an increasingly general appeal" (312–13). Somewhere along the line, many of us within the Adventist tradition merged with this story and our lives have never been quite the same. ■


## A Few Birding Resources for Adventists

 **Find Adventist birders** in your area or around the world, post trip reports, or just chat with fellow enthusiasts at a new Web site: The Peregrine Net—An International Web Club for Adventist Birders and Friends. Join the club at <[www.peregrinenet.org](http://www.peregrinenet.org)>.

 **Birders from all over the world** visit the bird sanctuary right on the campus of Pacific Adventist University, Papua New Guinea. For a checklist of campus birds, visit Mike Tarburton's "Bird Checklists for 468 Melanesian Islands" at <[www.birdsofmelanesia.net/](http://www.birdsofmelanesia.net/)>.

 **Take a class** at Pacific Union College's Albion Field Station on the Mendocino coast, and enjoy the birds in nearby tide pools and estuaries. For more information on this summer's art and photography classes, go to <[www.puc.edu/Albion/Albion\\_2008/](http://www.puc.edu/Albion/Albion_2008/)>.

 **The nature center** at Mt. Aetna Camp and Retreat Center, outside Hagerstown, Maryland, has a huge assortment of stuffed animals, birds, insects, and reptiles from all over the world. Drop by and you may run into Floyd Murdoch, who worked to establish and maintain the center. Visit <[www.mtaetnacamp.com](http://www.mtaetnacamp.com)> for information and reservations.

 **The World Museum of Natural History** at La Sierra University contains a Southeast Asian bird display—the largest of its kinds in the U. S. The museum also showcases collections of amphibians, reptiles, mammals, gems, minerals, and petrified wood. Find out more at <[www.lasierra.edu/centers/wmnh/](http://www.lasierra.edu/centers/wmnh/)>.

## Notes and References

1. In the updated lexicon of bird enthusiasts, the old term *bird-watcher* has been replaced by the term *birder*. Similarly, *birdwatching* has been replaced by *birding*. See pages 284 and 302.
2. Although, as Weidensaul notes, birding has yet to become popular among non-Caucasians. See pages 298–302.
3. Retrieved March 10, 2008, from <[www.americanbirding.org/index.html](http://www.americanbirding.org/index.html)>.
4. Retrieved March 10, 2008, from <[www.utc.edu/Academic/SchoolPsychology/FacultyandStaff.php](http://www.utc.edu/Academic/SchoolPsychology/FacultyandStaff.php)>.
5. The following book details Kaufman's adventures during his "Big Year": Kenn Kaufman, *Kingbird Highway: The Biggest Year in the Life of an Extreme Birder* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).
6. Gary Krause, "Floyd Murdoch: Dialogue with an Adventist Bird-watcher," *College and University Dialogue* 14.2 (2002): 18–19, 23.
7. Retrieved March 10, 2008, from <[peregrinenet.org/forum/view-topic.php?i=106](http://peregrinenet.org/forum/view-topic.php?i=106)>.
8. The following information on Adventist ornithologists and birders is based on my personal knowledge and/or information gleaned from various Internet sites.

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**James L. Hayward** is research professor of biology at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. He is an active seabird biologist but a lapsed birder. **James McClelland's** biography is on the inside front cover.



## Introducing the Online *Spectrum* Book and Film Club

### Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?

A book by Philip Yancey

(Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2006)

BY DANEEN AKERS

I've always appreciated Philip Yancey's books because he writes as a pilgrim, not as a pastor. Not that I don't appreciate pastoral perspectives, but often they seem to skip over the doubts, questions, and laments that I have. Yancey dives into thorny and complicated problems, seemingly without fear that truly mining their depths could leave him or his readers with less faith than they started with. It's his honesty and rawness that allows me to listen to his eventual conclusions (or even just continuing questions).

In *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?* Yancey addresses the big questions. Why pray if God already knows the future? Why are so many prayers seemingly unanswered? What about all of those seemingly clear promises in the Gospels about asking and then receiving? If we agree to pray, how do we go about it?

As someone who has always struggled with prayer, I appreciated exploring these questions with a fellow pilgrim, even if at the end I still have doubts. I especially enjoyed the stories Yancey shared. Somehow when faced with big theological issues, like how prayer works, I find the most meaning in the shared humanity I find in the stories of others facing struggles. A few nuggets that leaped out at me in my reading:

- Prayer in the Bible frequently "lacks serenity, to put it mildly. In prayer, God seems to encourage ritual lament" (67). Just read the Psalms to see how prayer can be filled alternately with hope and joy and the next minute despair

and sorrow. The range of human emotion and experience is appropriate—even necessary—prayer material.

- The problem of prayer is profound and great minds have explored its depths. C. S. Lewis found that the same argument against prayer (why do it if God knows best) can be made for any human activity— isn't it all meaningless if God's going to make it work out one way or another?

*God could have arranged things so that our bodies nourished themselves miraculously without food, knowledge entered our brains without studying, umbrellas magically appeared to protect us from rainstorms. God chose a different style of governing the world, a partnership which relies on human agency and choice.*

- This partnership with God means that prayer must be accompanied by action. Yancey returns to this point again and again. God works through human agency. The Good Samaritan didn't just pray for the man lying half-dead on the side of the road, he also acted. Yancey repeatedly emphasizes that we are God's hands in the world. He quotes the Catholic priest and author Ronald Rolheiser on this point:

*A theist believes in a God in heaven whereas a Christian believes in a God in heaven who is also physically present on this earth inside human beings.... God is still present, as physical and as real today as God was in the historical Jesus. God still has skin, human skin, and physically walks on this earth just as Jesus did.... To pray "God, please help my neighbor cope with her financial problems," or "God, do something about the homeless downtown" is the approach of a theist, not a Christian. God has chosen to express love and grace in the world through those of us who embody Christ. (244)*



I found this point to be the single most profound take-away from the entire book. Yancey also comes back to it when looking at Jesus' life and miracles. Why didn't Jesus miraculously cure world poverty instead of feeding five thousand? Why didn't he eradicate the polio virus instead of healing the paraplegic? Jesus touched the lives of the people in his life just as I have a responsibility to those whose lives I'm a part of—this means some of us will have wide circles, some of us small, but we are all the living embodiment of what God's love in the world looks like.

- There's something to be said for fixed prayers, especially during times of "spiritual dryness, when spontaneous prayer seems an impossible chore" (179). As someone who grew up Adventist without ever seeing something like *The Book of Common Prayer*, this especially caught my eye. Also as someone who seems to go through a lot of dry spells in the praying department, I think I'm going to experiment with this.
- In addition to fixed prayers, there's something to be said for silent, meditative prayers. Martin Luther was said to counsel that, "The fewer the words, the better the prayer" (190). I'm reminded of the portions of *Eat, Pray, Love*, where Liz Gilbert finally quiets her mind in meditation through the use of short prayers or mantras. For a verbivore like myself, being quiet doesn't come naturally, so finding something to pray about isn't my problem—rather, I need to learn the discipline of silence. Yancey reminded me that this is probably deeper prayer than my extemporaneous babblings.
- Like me, Yancey finds the miraculous stories of God saving Christians from the Twin Towers or from plane wrecks problematic. Were not the other people praying? Were they not also good people? When we throw around miracles like this, we lessen their impact, which Yancey does believe in but finds to be rare events. This is an especially sensitive topic when dealing with medical healings, and Yancey recounts stories of letters he has received from readers talking about their personal horrors—stories that made me weep—and the seemingly empty, unanswered prayers for healing.
- The great problem rests in what Yancey terms the "Sweeping Promises" of the Bible. "In a nutshell, the

main difficulty with unanswered prayers is that Jesus seemed to promise there need not be any" (234).

This was the section I personally had the most trouble with. It's one thing to read how theologians address the thorny issues of prayer, but the challenge is that the Bible is pretty explicit in some places, such as: "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours" (and many other examples). Yancey valiantly looks at many reasons why prayers go unanswered—some are trivial, some are contradictory or inconsistent (look at football games or wars), some are made without good intentions on the part of the pray-er, some are answered in bigger picture terms, and so forth. However, I wished that Yancey had delved into how we got Jesus' words (I'm sure he's aware of translation history)—maybe those verses reflect a bias of the writer. But that brings up such a complex topic that I can imagine he realized this book would turn into a series. Although Yancey does provide some conclusions, I'm still left thinking this is a big problem (and one commonly exploited by pastors who make their parishioners feel they just don't have enough faith; that's why their prayers are unanswered).

- In the end, one of the best reasons we have for praying is Jesus. Surely if anyone was privy to God's will it was him, but he still prayed—even angrily and tearfully at times. That's probably a good example for us all.

These are just a few ideas that struck me—this is actually quite a lengthy book, so I'm barely doing it justice to pick out a few nuggets, but I would love your thoughts, too. ■

To read the discussion that followed this review, go to the *Spectrum* home page, click the Reviews link, and scroll down to the May 1st post.

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**Daneen Akers** is a graduate student in creative writing at San Francisco State University and the book review editor of *Spectrum*.





The Amish rank forgiveness as one of their greatest responsibilities.

## The Power of Forgiveness

A film by Martin Doblmeier  
(Journey Films, 2008)

BY SHASTA NELSON

In 1998, there were only a handful of studies that had researched the subject of forgiveness. By 2005, that number had climbed to 950. *The Power of Forgiveness*, the latest documentary from Martin Doblmeier, traces the growing scientific interest in forgiveness during these years.

This movie ironically reflects my own journey those same years as I developed my own expertise on the subject, not so much from studying it at seminary, preaching it as a pastor, or being such a generous giver of it, as from making life decisions that made me desperately aware of how much I longed to receive it. I confess up front that my experience in needing forgiveness outweighs my experience in extending it.

*The Power of Forgiveness* weaves together stories and interviews from people who have journeyed the road of forgiveness. These stories range from personal injustices to ones that involve entire communities. The stories highlight the complexity found within the word *forgiveness*, from generational conflict in Northern Ireland and religious persecution during the days of the Holocaust to the ethnic injustices against African slaves and the losses endured by families of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

While watching the film, I found multiple themes voiced from a range of scientists, victims, mental health professionals, and theologians. Among them was the most obvious: Forgiveness is difficult. Always.

However, scientific evidence and religious teachings from all belief systems seem to agree that forgiving others is worth the pursuit. Researchers who interviewed those whose trust had been violated showed that the blood pressure of all interviewees spiked when they began to recount the wrongs done to them—whether or not they had forgiven their offenders. Data seems to agree that one can forgive, but still not forget.

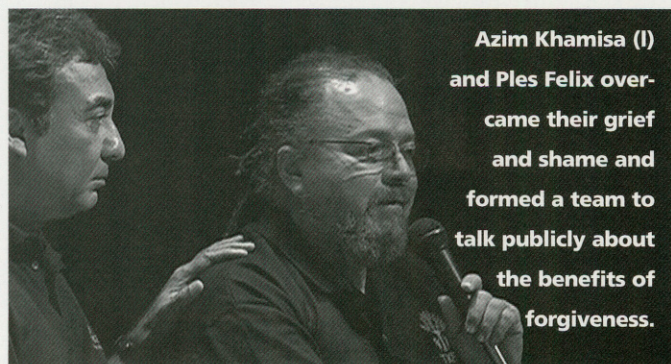
But a difference could be seen as victims continued to tell their stories. The blood pressures of those who had forgiven normalized quickly as they recalled the details. Meanwhile, the pressures of those who had not yet forgiven—regardless of how much time had passed or the size of the offense—continued not only to raise as they retold their stories, but also to leave them with resting heart rates higher than those of their forgiving peers.

Undoubtedly, the process of forgiveness seems to bring benefits, both spiritually and physically. But that doesn't necessarily seem to answer the question voiced by a mother whose son was killed when the Twin Towers collapsed, whose body now lies in a trash heap outside New York City, as she asked a question echoed throughout the interviews: Are some acts unforgivable?

Apparently a proposal has been made to create a Garden of Forgiveness at Ground Zero. Some find comfort in the idea, whereas others think it offensive for a site that commemorates enormous wrongdoing. The question lingers in many forms, but all hint at the same ache: Can you forgive someone who doesn't take responsibility for their wrongs and has not asked for forgiveness or whose atonement or punishment has not been completed? Are there occasions where forgiveness is impossible or wrong? In other words: Do some transgressions outweigh the value of forgiveness?

Those who view this film will be moved deeply. Most likely, they will ask themselves how they would answer the haunting questions of people who hurt deeply as they grapple with the issue of whether it is appropriate for all of us to pursue forgiveness. ■

**Shasta Nelson** writes from San Francisco, where she is a life coach and pastor. An earlier version of this review was first published on *Spectrum's* Web site. To read the discussion that followed, go to the *Spectrum* home page, click the Reviews link, and scroll down to the May 13th post.



Azim Khamisa (l) and Ples Felix overcame their grief and shame and formed a team to talk publicly about the benefits of forgiveness.



## Book and Film Club Selections

**The Spectrum Online Book & Film Club**

Mark Twain once said, "Good friends, good books and a sleepy conscience: this is the ideal life." While the sleepy conscience bit is a tad hedonistic for good Pathfinders, we are going to take his advice on good books and friends! As part of our continued commitment to community through conversation, we're launching the Spectrum Online Book & Film Club.

Please join us every month for our discussions!

**Book & Film Club Selections**

**April 2008** (Discussion starts May 1st & 13th)  
**Book:** *Prayer* by Philip Yancey  
**Film:** *The Power of Forgiveness*  
 Spectrum Website Review  
 Filmmaker Interview

**May 2008** (Discussion starts May 29)  
**Book:** *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* by N.T. Wright and Marcus Borg  
**Film:** (Classic Film Night) *Jesus of Montreal*

**June 2008** (Discussion starts June 26)  
**Book:** *I Don't Believe in Atheists* by Chris Hedges (Note: Also recommended as a companion volume, *God is Not Great* by Christopher Hitchens)  
**Film:** *Love and the Devil*

**May 2008** (Discussion starts May 29)

**Book:** *The Meaning of Jesus:*

*Two Visions*

by N.T. Wright and  
 Marcus Borg

**Film:** (Classic Film Night)

*Jesus of Montreal*

**June 2008**

(Discussion starts June 26)

**Book:** *I Don't Believe in Atheists*

by Chris Hedges

(Note: Also recommended as a companion volume,  
*God is Not Great*, by Christopher Hitchens)

**Film:** *Lars and the Real Girl*

**July 2008** (Discussion starts July 31)

**Book:** *Leaving Church: A Memoir of Faith*

by Barbara Brown Taylor

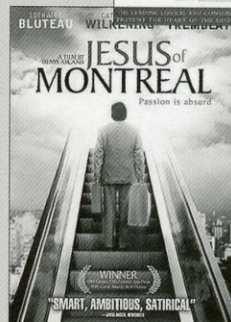
**Film:** (Classic Film Night) *Babette's Feast*

**August 2008** (Discussion starts August 28)

**Book:** *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day  
 Adventist Perspectives*

Edited by David Ferguson, Fritz Guy, and David Larson

**Film:** *For the Bible Tells Me So*



**September 2008** (Discussion starts September 25)

**Book:** *The Bible: A Biography*

by Karen Armstrong

**Film:** (Classic Film Night) *The Mission*

**October 2008** (Discussion starts October 30)

**Book:** *Finding Darwin's God*

by Kenneth Miller

**Film:** *Millions*

**November 2008** (Discussion starts November 28)

**Book:** *My Grandfather's Blessings*

by Rachel Naomi Remen

**Film:** *The Future of Food*

**December 2008** (Discussion starts December 31)

**Book:** *Searching for God Knows What*

by Donald Miller

**Film:** *Bruce Almighty*

**January 2009** (Discussion starts January 29)

**Book:** *Searching for a God to Love*

by Chris Blake

**Film :** (Classic Film Night) *Au Revoir, Les Enfants*

(Note: An individual DVD is available

to rent through Netflix and Blockbuster.)

**February 2009** (Discussion starts February 26)

**Book:** *Till We Have Faces*

by C.S. Lewis

**Film:** *Stranger Than Fiction*

**March 2009** (Discussion starts March 26)

**Book:** *Grace (Eventually)*

by Anne Lamott

**Film:** (Classic Film Night) *My Left Foot*

**April 2009** (Discussion starts April 30)

**Book:** *The Poisonwood Bible*

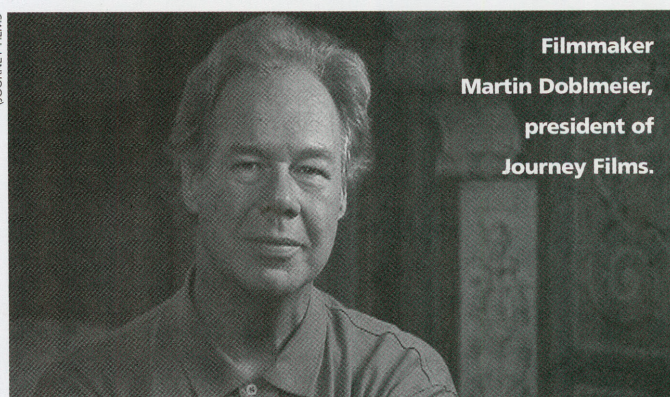
by Barbara Kingsolver

**Film:** *To End All Wars*



## Filmmaker Martin Doblmeier Talks about Forgiveness *An Award-Winning Documentary* Editor Explores a Universal Theme | AN INTERVIEW BY BONNIE DWYER

JOURNEY FILMS



Filmmaker  
Martin Doblmeier,  
president of  
Journey Films.

**D**ocumentary filmmaker Martin Doblmeier made a film last year called *The Power of Forgiveness*, which won critical acclaim—and got people talking. The film examines the role forgiveness can play in alleviating anger and grief, as well as the physical, mental, and spiritual benefits that come with forgiveness. *The Power of Forgiveness* won Best Film award at the Sun Valley Spiritual Film Festival in 2007.

Doblmeier talked to *Spectrum* about the impact of his film.

### Questions and Answers

*Spectrum:* *The Power of Forgiveness* features seven stories about forgiveness from a variety of traditions. I'm sure you considered many stories. What criteria did you use to choose the final ones and the people whom you wanted to interview?

**Doblmeier:** Several years ago, a friend invited me to attend a conference where scientists were presenting the results of groundbreaking new research on the topic of forgiveness. Science, especially the field of health science, is uncovering mounting evidence that letting go of grudges and forgiving the transgressions that happen in our lives is undeniably good for our health. It lowers blood

pressure and heart rate, and can even stem depression.

For the past twenty-five years, I have made films on topics of religion and spirituality, so I knew the value the various faith traditions afforded forgiveness. But here was a moment when the faith communities and the scientific communities were in sync around a common theme: forgiveness. For us, that was the makings of a great film.

In doing the research, we had over one hundred ideas for stories. We knew we wanted to include stories from a variety of faith traditions—Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and so forth, as well as stories from the scientific/health world.

Also, a number of the scientists turned out to be terrific stories themselves—stories we wanted to include. Once those critical decisions were made, it was almost as if the stories began to select themselves.

*Q:* For Rose Foti, the mother of a firefighter lost on 9/11, forgiveness was a very difficult concept. Her struggle with it enriched the film. What was her response to the completed film? Did viewing it affect her concept of forgiveness?

**A:** Rose Foti is one of the most open and honest people I have ever met. When I went with her on the day we filmed at the garbage dump that is now home to the remains of her son and hundreds of others who died on 9/11, I could feel the intensity of her suffering. What mother would not share that pain with the way her son's remains were treated?

Rose has been a big supporter of our film because she sees it as one more way to gain attention for the injustice that has been done to her and the other victims of 9/11. But it is difficult to say there have been a conversion and a move toward forgiveness. In many ways, she is like so many people I know who find forgiveness for a deep wound a near-impossible task.



*Q: Azim Khamisa and Ples Felix were major heroes in the film for the friendship they formed after one of their sons murdered the son of the other. I believe they spoke at Virginia Tech after the tragedy there. Can you tell us about that event?*

**A:** My family and I live in Virginia, and because of our teenage son's sports activities we know many parents of Virginia Tech students. The shootings last spring wounded our nation—but they devastated Virginia.

When I was invited to go to Virginia Tech, present the film, and speak, it was only five months after the tragedy. I was both honored and concerned. Was it too early to talk about forgiveness? Would there be a backlash at the very idea? There were a lot of anxious moments.

I asked Azim Khamisa to join me for the presentation—first, because I admire Azim for the courage he showed in forgiving the man who murdered his son. But secondly, because although I felt I had learned a great deal in making the film, I did not have the experience of losing a college-aged child to a random act of violence. Azim did.

The event was shown in the downtown movie theater that is the center for cultural activities in Blacksburg, Virginia. The house was full, and the conversation direct and frank. Later, many people, including the parents of a young girl who had been killed, came up and thanked me.

I don't believe the value of these kinds of events is in an instant conversion, but rather in the planting of a seed of hope. I felt the same way several weeks later when I was asked to present at the United Nations. Now plans are underway to include forgiveness training in UN educational materials. These are hopeful signs.

*Q: The name of your company, Journey Films, prompts a question about your journey with the concept of forgiveness through the making of this film. How was your personal view of forgiveness changed by the stories that you have told?*

**A:** One of the themes I came to during the process of making the film was the theme of self-forgiveness. Now I see how important a role self-forgiveness plays in how we relate to others in the world around us.

Later, as I started to look at the film through those eyes, I could see how the theme of self-forgiveness was there in almost every story.

It was lack of self-forgiveness that propelled the young man to go into the Amish schoolhouse and shoot those girls.

So one of the things that will stay with me from making the film is I have begun to look more seriously at self-forgiveness and recognize how it plays out not only in my own life but in the lives of others—even in the lives of nations.

*Q: What do you see as the most powerful motivator for forgiveness: moral obligation or personal benefit?*

**A:** Part of the interest in forgiveness today comes from the discovery that forgiveness is good for our health. Scientists are saying if we want to live longer, healthier lives, forgiveness may be a key—not an answer, but a key.

But while I see that as a value, I also recognize that, as a person of faith, I am called to change the world around me for the better, and that is where the concept of forgiveness as a tool for transforming the “other” is key.

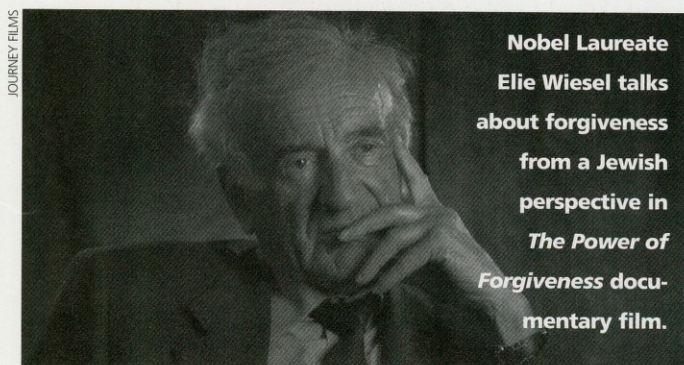
From a Christian perspective, I don't think Christ spoke about forgiveness from the cross as an act of self-help. He didn't do it to lower his blood pressure. I believe he did it as an example of how we are called to transform the world and that is the example I try to follow.

*Q: You have said that the climate for spiritual talk is very different today after 9/11, the Iraq War, and so on. What effect do you see the political campaign this year having on spiritual talk?*

**A:** Forgiveness is not a word you will hear very often during an election year. That's because forgiveness is too often considered an act of weakness. I believe it should be seen as exactly the opposite—forgiveness takes enormous strength. But the word *forgiveness*, and the spiritual talk so many of us hope will make its way into political conversation, will not begin to emerge unless the people demand it.

The great mistake is believing politicians are those in the forefront, whereas time and time again we see politicians only mirror what people call for.

If we want change, we have to demand it of our politi-



**Nobel Laureate  
Elie Wiesel talks  
about forgiveness  
from a Jewish  
perspective in  
*The Power of  
Forgiveness* documentary film.**



cians, but more importantly, as Gandhi said, we have to "be the change we want in the world."

*Q: The climate for documentary film is very different today than when you founded Journey Films twenty-five years ago. What is your assessment of the role of documentaries in today's culture?*

**A:** The documentary film world is very different today than it was twenty-five years ago, when I made my first film, *The Heart Has Its Reasons*, the story of Jean Vanier and his homes for mentally handicapped people based on the Beatitudes.

Back then, only a few people had access to the equipment needed to make a film. Today, with the advent of digital technology, the equipment is much more affordable and available.

In the 1980s, television still believed it should serve the "common good," but with deregulation, television has become a for-profit free-for-all. That is why so many programs on the air appeal to the lowest common value.

The film theaters are all becoming multiplex theaters so the chance to get a smaller "art-house" documentary into theaters is getting more difficult.

We had great success with our film *Bonhoeffer* (the story of German theologian/Nazi resister, Dietrich Bonhoeffer) but a success like that is becoming more the exception than the rule.

I am asked to speak at a number of colleges and universities—especially around the topic of faith and filmmaking. So I know there are many young people out there who see documentary filmmaking as a possible career that allows for the creative expression of their faith. I try to encourage them in every way I can, sometimes offering internships, but also I try to alert them to the changes.

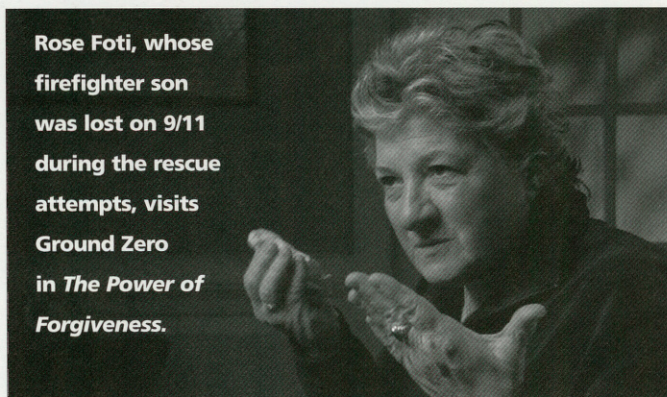
I continue to do this work because I continue to believe that good films that speak to the core values of our faith will always find an audience.

*Q: Films on spiritual subjects can often come across as preachy or sugary. How do you keep your movies from those traps?*

**A:** I consider myself less a teacher and more an explorer of ideas. I approach each film as a chance to learn, not preach about what I think I already know.

While these last twenty-five years have been an extraordinary first-person education, I continue to be criti-

**Rose Foti, whose firefighter son was lost on 9/11 during the rescue attempts, visits Ground Zero in *The Power of Forgiveness*.**



cal of my own beliefs. I try always to challenge and question. I think it makes me a more faithful person, more understanding of a God I grow more and more confident in, and ultimately I think it makes for better films.

*Q: Did anything happen during the making of this film that you felt you needed to ask forgiveness for?*

**A:** I have done forty showings/presentations of *The Power of Forgiveness*, before probably twenty thousand people, and never been asked this question.

Yes, I needed to ask forgiveness of my wife because in accepting all the invitations to present the film and speak, I was away from home too much. I have been home now for many months—things are well at home again—mostly because Jelena, my wife, is so forgiving.

*Q: I understand that you are considering making a film about the Seventh-day Adventist journey with the concept of health. What is the latest on that project?*

**A:** We have been developing a new film on the Seventh-day Adventist Church—with a particular focus on the theology of health care. We hope it will be in production by the end of the year.

I think it is a great story—truly an American faith that has so much to say to the wider nation about how to think of our bodies not as our own, but God's.

It would be nationally released to PBS stations through our partner, South Carolina ETV (as with *Bonhoeffer* and *Forgiveness*), and several Adventist hospital groups have already committed support, but we continue to raise the remaining funds. I think it could be a terrific film. ■



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## God is Not

God is not your grandfather  
who looks a little like Santa Claus,  
the white beard who never-the-less  
knows when you have been naughty or nice.

God is not an over-stuffed teddy bear  
good for hugs when you weep  
for all that your hands have broken.

Nor is he Thor, sitting on peak of your roof  
thunderbolt ready, waiting  
for you to mow your lawn on Sabbath.

Nor is he a she—an earth mother  
skipping along the road dispensing  
cabbages and oranges from her  
cornucopia over-flowing  
with all things great and small.

At least for some,  
God is none of the above,  
or any other anthropomorphized  
being carved into an image of our fancy.

For a few, the select, for those  
who are truly blessed.  
God is a cold wind  
blowing through emptiness,  
that hole in the middle of your life, that  
lone ache clawed into the center of your chest  
that has always been there, there  
when you go to sleep, there  
when you wake in the morning.  
God keeping it clean as a whistle.

—John McDowell

---

**John McDowell** is professor of English at Pacific  
Union College, Angwin, California, and director  
of the Honors Program.