

## 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 "Search" box and a "Subscribe Online" link. Below the main article, there's a "REVIEWS" section with a book review titled "Reminder: The Meaning of Jesus and Jesus of Montreal Coming Up" by Doreen Akers. To the right of the reviews, there's a "SPECTRUM BLOG" section with a link to "Spectrum Wins a Design Award" by Alexander Carpenter. Below the blog section, there's a "COLLEGIATE BLOG" section with a link to "Two Kinds of Workers: The Seventh-day" by Alexander Carpenter. At the bottom of the page, there's a "RECENT COMMENTS" section with a comment by Gaylene on "True, Beautiful, Just Evangelism | A Conversation with Pastor Ryan Bell".



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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**New Spectrum Podcast | NARLA head James Standish!**  
By Alexander Carpenter

In adventism media politics religious liberty

This week we're talking with James Standish, executive director of the North American Religious Liberty Association.

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

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27 May 2008  
**Video | Adventist community at its best?**  
By Alexander Carpenter

In community theology video

Pastor Ryan Bell writes:

"Today we started a new sermon series at the Hollywood Adventist Church called *"Working for Life."* For six weeks we'll be exploring and building a

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**RECENT COMMENTS**

Carpi Lionel on "Hey, What'd You Put for No. 1?"  
Frost on Relationships Then and Now



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."

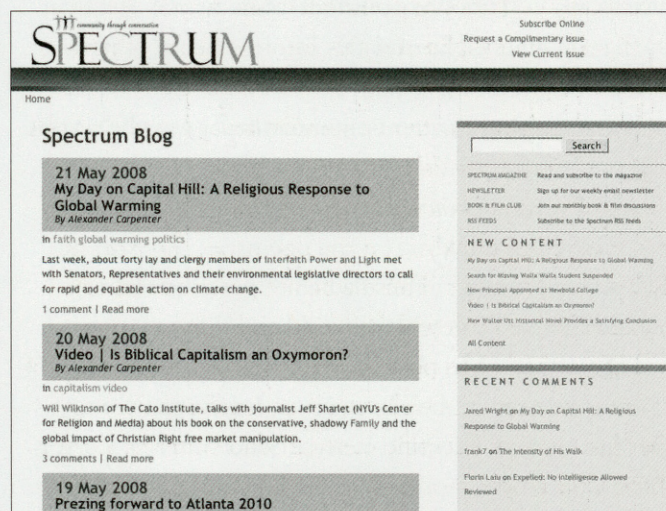
I believe both extremes are mistaken, and I'm pretty certain Dr. Paulien does also.

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



## 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...*



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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