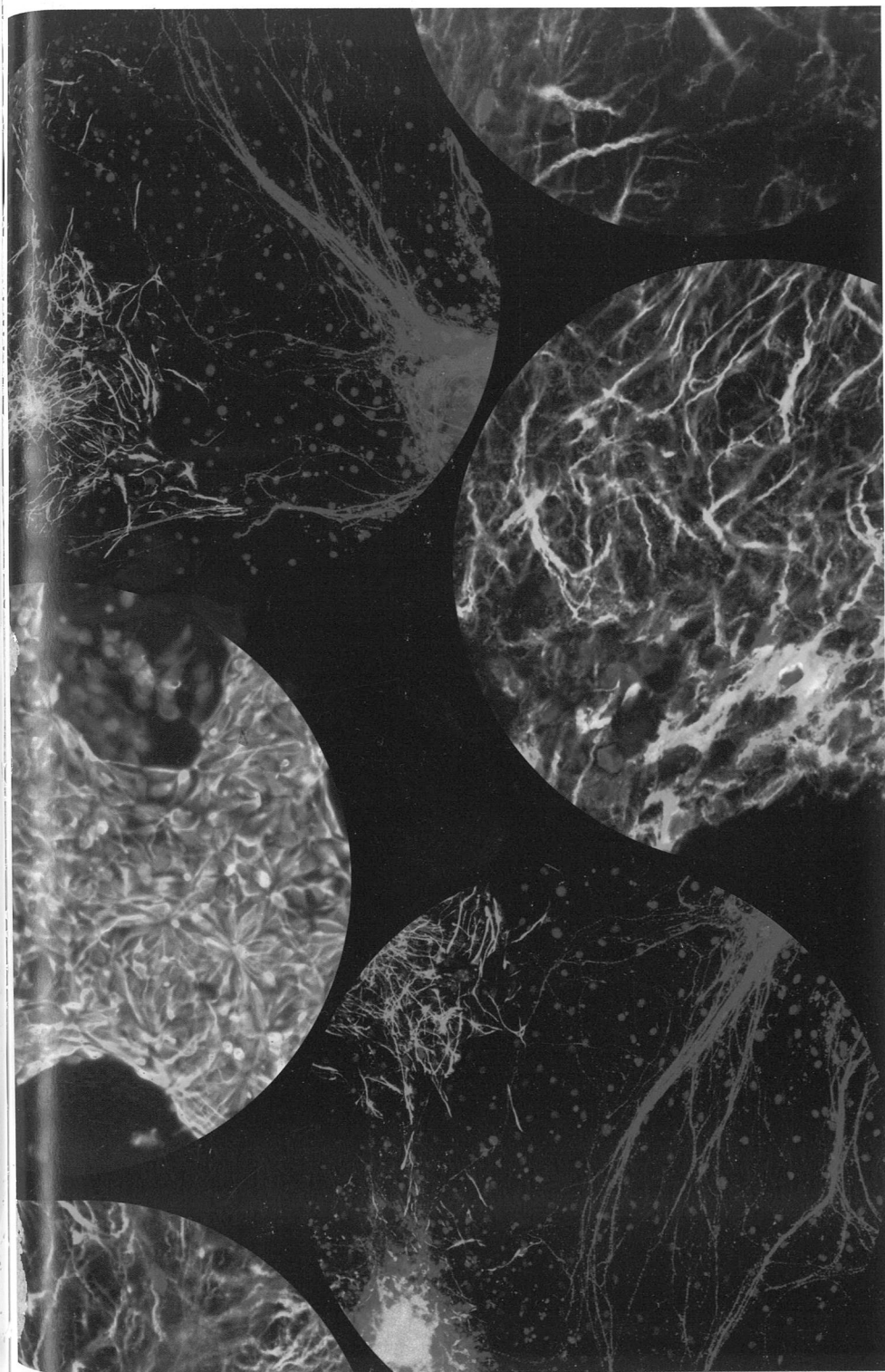


OCT 29 2008



*community through conversation*

# SPECTRUM



## **Can Moral Vision Make a Comeback?**

Ronald Numbers  
Interview

## **In the Lord's Name: The Powerful Peril of the Third Commandment**

The Promise of  
Stem Cell Research

## **Uphill, Downhill, and the Wretched of the Earth**

Reading Race

## **Answering the Call for a Sacred Conversation on Race**

Center for Adventist Research  
Andrews University  
Berrien Springs Michigan

VOLUME 36 ISSUE 3 ■ 2008

# community through conversation SPECTRUM

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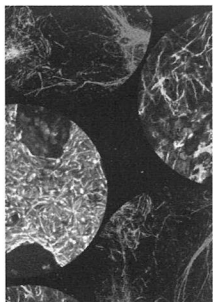
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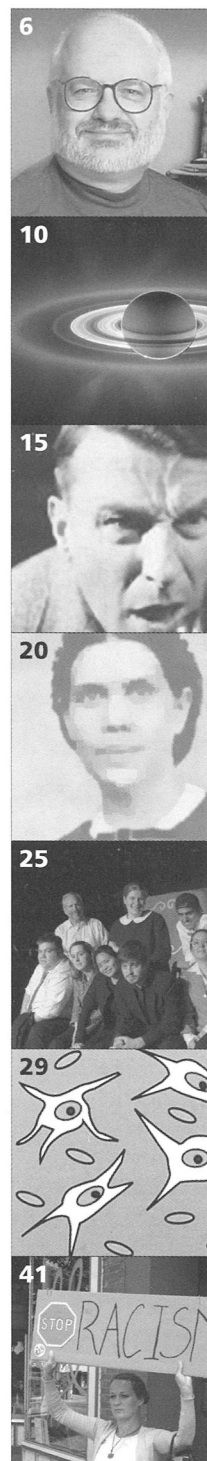
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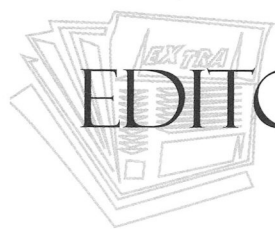
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# EDITORIAL ■ *from the editor*

## Better | BY BONNIE DWYER

To conclude his 2007 book, *Better: A Surgeon's Notes on Performance*, Atul Gawande provides a short list of five things a person can do to become a positive deviant, someone who makes things better:

1. Ask an unscripted question
2. Don't complain
3. Count something
4. Write something
5. Change—look for the opportunity to change, be an early adopter

What a great list, I thought. Could it be adapted to making a better church, too? Hmmmmm, maybe, then again, maybe not. Asking unscripted questions doesn't always go over well, particularly with people who feel they have all the right answers for life's persistent questions. Does that sound like I'm complaining, and violating the list before I even get started?

Well, in this issue of the journal, we feature people, ideas, and discussions meant to help make things better. We'll do our part. We kick things off with an interview with Ronald Numbers, someone who has been asking unscripted questions, and making people nervous as he did so, for quite sometime. Student blogger Eric Scott shares with us an ongoing discussion he and his father had about science. His biologist father understands the value of counting something. There is more science to consider in our section about stem cells, a topic that changes on a daily basis. If you have not kept up with

the latest advances in cell conversion techniques, we'll take you to a couple of the labs where research is taking place.

Loren Seibold reminds us how actions speak louder than words in his reflection on the Third Commandment.

As we reach these final days of the U.S. presidential campaign, we can acknowledge that discussion of race issues has been lively this year. Has the public discussion changed your view of racism? Have you asked yourself any unscripted questions about it? We have turned to graduate students to provide their thoughts, in hopes of helping us all change for the better.

Speaking of wanting to change things for the better, that is our desire for the legacy of Ellen White. To help us do so, Greg Schneider tells us about the experience of being in the *Red Books* play. That changed him. And David Thiele provides us with a new metaphorical way of thinking about Ellen White's writings. Perhaps with the perceptions of these writers, we all can change.

If you do find new ideas bubbling to the surface as you read this issue, please write something. Gawande concludes his book saying, "So find something new to try, something to change. Count how often you succeed and how often you fail. Write about it. Ask people what they think. See if you can keep the conversation going" (257). We agree and would add that writing something could be a short, snappy letter to the editor; one hundred words would be fine. We would love to hear from you. ■

Asking  
unscripted  
questions  
doesn't  
always go  
over well.



## The Courageous Few: Can Moral Vision

Make a Comeback? | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

I don't get it. Why would anyone banish the idea of "the remnant and its mission" to a place a stone's throw from Outer Mongolia?

Okay, I do get it. If anything could annoy an astute Adventist faster than the word *remnant*, it would have to be truly off-putting, like boiled okra, or the word *hierarchy*, another unappetizing dish.

R. Lynn Sauls, retired Adventist English and journalism professor, recently ruminated on which of Adventism's twenty-eight Fundamental Beliefs are more, and which are less, "essential." Writing in *Adventist Today*, and using the graphic aid of several concentric circles, he said that his innermost circle consists of one idea: "God is love."<sup>1</sup> Although these words do not appear in the official statement as the name of a Fundamental Belief, Sauls argues (persuasively) that God's love is the center of the biblical vision. So he makes it the basis for "ranking" the official beliefs in their order of importance.

Other ideas, such as "The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ," "Creation," and "The Law of God," fit into his "first ring" around the center circle, and have high importance. Some thirteen beliefs cluster in the second ring, indicating mid-level importance. The idea of the remnant and its mission resides in the next-to-outermost ring, where we find ourselves, I gather, in the theological hinterlands. His outermost ring, telling us what is least important, or least "essential," has just one occupant: "Christian Behavior."

Someone who is naïve might ask how God's law can have high importance and Christian behavior have low. But an insider would know that in the Adventist milieu, "behavior" suggests "standards," and "standards" refer, at least in progressive imagination, to trivialities. And it is true, certainly, that some parts of the statement on Christian behavior do evoke bad memories about majoring in minors. But the statement also expresses legitimate Christ-

ian aspiration. Having the "character" of Christ is no paltry goal, nor is caring "intelligently" for the human body. The tub holds the baby, it seems, as well as the bathwater.

Now back to the remnant. Here, too, is a locus of moral perspective, and here, too, discomfort is palpable. In Saul's construal—and everyone knows he's not alone in this—"The Remnant and Its Mission" belongs in the boondocks.

As for me, I don't think so. A long preoccupation with "acceptance" and "assurance"—I have in mind the grace-versus-legalism controversies—has diverted attention from the fact that grace is not only forgiveness, but also power. Grace is two gifts, and one of them is new life, new ability to resist the world and embody the values of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

Adventism's signature passages about this metaphor pass on the simple idea that God calls us to be a faithful minority who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

I am uncomfortable with propositional clutter in the way-too-long Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. But I have come to believe that the idea the metaphor of the remnant conveys would help us say who we are in a simpler, yet still illuminating, manner. Thus a brief summary of Adventist conviction could be this: *Thanks to the grace and peace of Christ, and for the well-being of all humanity, we join together in keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*

This might be plausible to someone as thoughtful and provocative as Sauls. But it might not be. His ranking of Adventist beliefs casts doubt upon any vision of Adventism that puts moral (or prophetic) witness at the heart of what the Church is about. When he invokes "The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ," he quotes the entire statement. It has first importance for him, after the fundamental point that God is love. But even though the Gospels say repeatedly that Jesus called his disciples to radical obedience, Sauls accepts uncritically the official statement's focus (a good thing) on forgiveness and inat-



tention (a bad thing) to discipleship.

Sauls does invoke the official statement on God's law, and that statement does hint at the idea that Christ's life is exemplary. But it nowhere acknowledges how the whole Bible story comes to its moral summit in the Sermon on the Mount and in the forgiveness prayer that Jesus uttered on the Cross.<sup>4</sup> These defining moments, with their deep debt to Isaiah's Servant Songs, expose the false glamour of violence, and show how true sinlessness confronts and absorbs human evil *without passing it on*. Here you finally see, as Hebrews 1 declares, "the exact imprint of God's very being."

This moral summit, and the discipleship that follows from it, are what the Resurrection validates.<sup>5</sup> But the word *discipleship* appears nowhere in the Church's official statement of beliefs, and this, it must be said, is a stunning oversight. Adventism's roots go back (as we now know) to the Radical Reformation, not just to state-aligned reformers such as Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli. And for Radical Reformers, Christ as final truth and discipleship as right response were both key ideas.

Another focal point for the Radical Reformers was the book of Revelation, with its vivid (or "apocalyptic") sense of the *difference* between loyalty to Christ and loyalty to what is popular or commonplace or handed down by imperial authority. These reformers knew better than Luther and the others that authentic Christian life is *distinctive*—it stands apart from ordinary.

This is where the ongoing relevance of "the remnant and its mission" comes in. It's true that to anyone who has recoiled from old-fashioned evangelism in our heritage recalls, in its use of this motif, the arrogance and self-importance that always threatens church integrity. And in this light the temptation to push the remnant motif toward Outer Mongolia is entirely understandable.

But what if, instead of pushing it away, we asked, How shall we reframe it? If we did, we'd have a chance, I think, of finding the new identity most thoughtful Adventists are now groping for.

We'd need, of course, to embed the motif inside the fundamental message—here I tip my hat to Sauls—that God is love. The first word must always be, as in the book of Revelation, the love—the grace and peace and freedom from sin—that we receive through Christ.<sup>6</sup>

We'd also need to disabuse the Church of claim-making. We'd offer, instead of prideful declarations, simple

reminders—that we are *called* to be the remnant, and that this call asks us, like any hearers of the gospel, to respond to divine goodness with discipleship. In large part, "the remnant and its mission" is an *ideal*: it's something you aspire to, not something that gives you bragging rights.

Then we'd need to show the relevance of the aspiration. Commonplace morality is too often unresponsive, or even callous, in the face of human need. It is too narrow in scope, and too easily disposed to bloodshed. The metaphor of the remnant takes us to "the faith of Jesus"—takes us, in other words, to the *Jesus story*. And this story expresses a faith—and a hope—that truly does transcend the commonplace. Against the un pitying confederacy of evil and indifference, it offers a path to healing and peace that is nothing short of revolutionary.

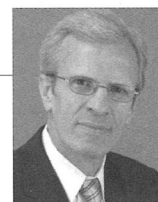
Why not renounce those timorous and conventional forms of faith that bolster self-esteem without asking us to embody the faith of Jesus? Why not resist invocations of grace that play down how it's the courageous few who make the most difference? And in order to keep the right focus, why not embrace (and rethink) the metaphor that made our pioneers into...pioneers, people who had the guts to *be* the courageous few?

The "remnant" is a metaphor that, in both Testaments, drives both hope and passion. Paying attention to it would help us see that moral urgency, and not just forgiveness, belongs to the heart of the gospel. That, in turn, would steel our nerves and hone our relevance, so that our collective witness could have the force of prophecy. ■

## Notes and References

1. R. Lynn Sauls, "Ranking the 28 Fundamental Beliefs," *Adventist Today*, May–June 2008, 18–19.
2. Consider, for example, Romans 6:1–4 and 1 Corinthians 15: 9, 10.
3. Compare Revelation 12:17; 14:6–12; and 19:10.
4. See Matthew 5 in particular, with its call to nonviolent peacemaking; for the forgiveness prayer, see Luke 23:34, and compare the companion prayer of Stephen in Acts 7:60.
5. Romans 1:1–4, where the Resurrection establishes Jesus' status as the ultimate revelation of God.
6. See Revelation 1:1–6.

**Charles Scriven** chairs Adventist Forum.





## Making Distinctions about Sex and Sects

### Sex and the Church

I APPRECIATE THE responses in the "Feedback" section of the most recent issue of *Spectrum* (spring 2008) to my article "Examining the Biblical Texts about Homosexuality" in the previous issue. Pro or con, they represent contributions to a conversation the *Spectrum* articles were meant to elicit.

Given our fixation today on homosexuality as a particular phenomenon, it is perhaps understandable that certain of our readers have seen my article as being about such a construct in toto—a misapprehension abetted by the article's title, which does not derive from me. Ritchie Way has rightly caught what the article is "about": fidelity versus promiscuity, rather than all of homosexuality versus all of heterosexuality.

Jim Miller's very cogent observations especially invite further reflection. He is on to something important in his finding that the Hebrew term *zera'* ("seed," whether designating semen, offspring, or simply the seeds of plants) provided a root metaphor around which a particular category of ancient Hebraic thought clustered itself. This, surely, is the key to the associations that hold verses 19–23 of Leviticus 18 together. Sacrificing one's offspring to Molech clearly fell under an overarching category that we might term "mis-allocation of one's seed," and was *on this basis* a profaning of the divine name. This has nothing to say about the unspeakable horror of child sacrifice and everything to say about the near-magical powers that were attributed of old to blood (especially menstrual blood) and to semen. Modern constructions of "homosexuality" as a thing-in-itself, pertinent to both sexes, projected back upon the scriptural texts, simply miss the profound cultural gap between our thought world and that of the ancient Hebrews. One of the great values of Miller's analysis is that it casts this gap into sharp relief.

The question, of course, is the extent to which such material/magical thinking is to carry forward beyond Cal-

vary and beyond the bounds of ancient Judaism. If we take recourse to Clement and other early interpreters to illustrate this mental framework's applicability to Christianity, we are then forced to give Romans 1:26 a heterosexual interpretation: the wrongness of the female conduct is in their consorting with the wrong males—thereby misappropriating their semen. (Had verse 26 referred to sexual conduct between females there would have been no wrong, in this view, simply because no semen is involved.) By prolonging the Old Testament into the New, then, such Christianity preserves a definition of homosexuality solely in male terms, predicated simply on a sacral view of male "seed."

But if, in Christ, the ritual distinctions between male and female no longer hold (Gal. 3:28), we find ourselves standing on the new ground of true morality—of which ceremonial purity laws were but a transitory foreshadow. On that genuinely moral ground, double standards based on material/magical notions give way to a deeper accountability to the Kingdom's one overarching principle of responsible love toward God and fellow humans. We learn this, in great part, from Paul himself. So if we see in Romans 1:26, 27, a vestige of the old Hebraic worldview, this simply provides further evidence that at this point in his rhetorical strategy Paul is deliberately invoking pre-Christian attitudes. He is bringing to the surface the old Jewish judgments precisely to pull the rug out from under them when Jews and Gentiles, men and women stand together at the foot of the Cross.

A couple of quick little clarifications:

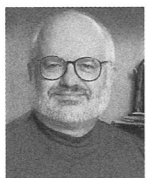
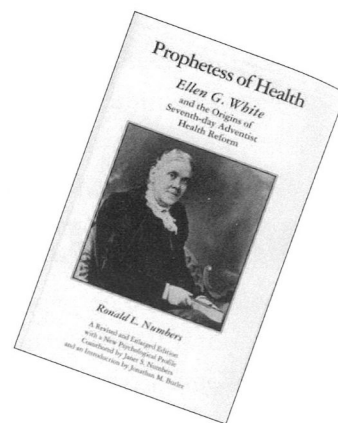
(1) I am not among those who deny that homosexual rape is intended in the stories of Genesis 19 and Judges 19. My second endnote cites D. Sherwin Bailey as an example of those who do deny this. In this essay as it was originally written as a chapter in *Christianity and Homosexuality*, that endnote continues:

*Continued on page 62...*



## Prophetess of Health Reappears

Alita Byrd Interviews Ronald L. Numbers



More than thirty years after Ronald L. Numbers, one of the “founding fathers” of the Association of Adventist Forums, published *Prophetess of Health*, his controversial history on the health message of Ellen G. White, the book is being reprinted.

This new third edition features a new preface and two key documents that shed further light on Ellen White and her work.

*Spectrum* talks to historian of science Ronald Numbers about the fuss kicked up in the Adventist Church and in his family when the book was first published, and how he thinks the new edition will be received.

### Questions and Answers

**Spectrum:** *Why is Prophetess of Health being republished after thirty-two years?*

**Numbers:** This third edition started out to be a thirtieth anniversary edition, but the publisher held it up because it is going to publish a new William Miller biography at the same time and promote the books together.

This time around, *Prophetess of Health* is being published by Eerdmans, which interestingly turned me down in the mid-1970s when I was shopping for a publisher. Now Eerdmans has a series of American religious biographies.

Two new appendices have been added to this edition: the first is transcripts of the trial of Elder Israel Dammon in 1845, and the second is an edited version of the 1919 Bible Conference—the parts that relate to Ellen White’s authority.

But back to your question, let me ask: Have you ever written a book?

You don’t want it to go out of print. Once you invest so much time, you are partial to seeing it circulate.

The book was out of print for several years, and I frequently got requests for it.

**Q:** *How many books have you written altogether? How many copies have they sold?*

**A:** Six, but if you include books I have edited, a couple of dozen.

I have no idea how many copies have been sold. My first book (which was published second) was *Creation by Natural Law*, and about two thousand copies were sold. *The Creationists* has sold well, but Random House holds the rights and gets all the reports on numbers.

I think Harper and Row published either 5,000 or 7,500 copies of *Prophetess of Health*.

*Spectrum* inherited some of the remaindered copies of that book, to be used for promotional purposes.

**Q:** *What led you to write Prophetess of Health?*

**A:** Several factors converged about the same time.

I spent my first year out of graduate school teaching at Andrews University and came to know Bill Peterson, Donald McAdams, Herold Weiss, and a few others who were interested in this stuff, which piqued my interest. My cousin Roy Branson was also there.

I went out to Loma Linda University after fifteen months at Andrews because I was asked to teach at the medical school.

I was asked to design a course for medical students on science, medicine, and Western thought from antiquity to the present. The class was two hours long.

These students had just gotten out of college, and the last thing they wanted was a remedial course on medical history. It was a disaster. Before I had even started on the first day, a student circulated a flyer to the class, petitioning to get rid of such a ridiculous requirement.

I decided that if I had to teach there for another year, I



at least had to make the subject more interesting. So I thought I would research the importance of the health message for the Adventist Church. At first, I was just going to prepare four lectures for my course.

But that was the beginning of the book.

**Q:** *There was controversy between yourself and the White Estate about the book. What was the primary conflict?*

**A:** The so-called conflict evolved over time. At first, there was no problem. The White Estate was as open with me as anybody else—not particularly open, but not hostile either.

But after I had written several chapters, somebody leaked them. The White Estate saw that what I was writing was going to be a contextual study, not an apologetic one, and that scared Arthur White and some others. After that he went out of his way to make sure I didn't get crucial material.

I was a historian—a young one, but still a historian—convinced that context was absolutely crucial, so I had a predilection to look at contemporary influences and context, instead of just saying something came straight from God. I didn't think it was appropriate for a historian to appeal to the supernatural. I didn't care whether anyone else believed or not, but it was not appropriate for me. I started out with: How much can I explain without invoking God? Of course that got me into trouble in some quarters.

Early on, I discovered some books in the Loma Linda library on health reform. Some books from John Harvey Kellogg's library were kept locked in the librarian's office and one had to get permission to inspect them.

In one of those books, I saw that Kellogg had made marginal notations in a distinctive—if not unique—handwriting. I couldn't find anyone to tell me what kind of shorthand he was using, but it had some numbers. After a while (and this is why my Andrews experience was so important), I thought: I bet these pages refer to Ellen White's writings. After a week or two of research, I found they matched an out-of-print book, I think it was called *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, from 1890. When I located the references, I found that the content of those passages from the (older) book belonging to John Harvey Kellogg and the Ellen White passages were the same.

That is called "double inspiration." I thought: No one does this just once.

I was friends with Vern Carner in Loma Linda's School

of Religion, and he is the one who talked me into writing a book. I thought the Church wouldn't publish it, and no one outside the Church would be interested, but Vern said he would "guarantee" to find me a good publisher.

He did. But he screwed me at the same time, too. He had made contact with Harper about a book called the *Roots of Adventism*—which was my idea. I suffered bitterly for a few days, but it all turned out okay, because he got the door open for my book on Ellen White.

The Church held up publication of the book for six months while the White Estate assembled a team of researchers to check everything.

They went to New York to convince Harper and Row not to publish it, but told the editor not to show me any of their criticism, because it would annoy me.

The publisher saw no sense in that, and eventually a compromise was reached where Richard Schwarz of Andrews University and Ronald Graybill came to Madison to take me through their line-by-line criticism. They were right: it did make me irritated.

The White Estate had thought they could destroy Harper's confidence in the manuscript enough so they wouldn't have to face me again.

As the three of us went through the book manuscript, I adopted a rule of thumb: If I could convince one of them that I was correct and the point was valid, I would leave it in, but if both Schwarz and Graybill disagreed with me, I would take it out.

One upsetting thing was that Schwarz had written a response to the manuscript for the White Estate based on an early draft. After we combed through the manuscript, I made a lot of changes that the White Estate was asking for. But when Schwarz reviewed the book for *Spectrum*, he based his review on the early draft. I got no credit for all the changes I made.

One interesting note: I was in Baltimore at Johns Hopkins when Graybill was studying for his Ph.D. He used to come up every week and stay with me. He spent the rest of the week working at the White Estate.

When my book came out, the White Estate sent him to camp meetings and college campuses to denounce me. The most memorable phrase he used about me was: "A wildly irresponsible historian."

The White Estate's initial response to my study was a set of looseleaf notebooks, which it then condensed into a printed document and distributed widely, including to

Harper. The publisher got his copy of this abstract just as he was going to some lecture, where he sat next to the religion editor of *Time* magazine. Bored with the talk, they started looking at the White Estate's statement. The upshot was that *Time* devoted its entire religion section to my book.

So the White Estate's response really helped. I could not have paid for that kind of publicity.

**Q:** *Your book also caused controversy after it was published. How were you viewed in the Church?*

**A:** I was disappointed with the response within the Adventist Church. I was getting pretty positive responses outside.

A reviewer for the *Journal of American History* called me and asked whether the book had been authorized by the Adventist Church. To non-Adventists, the book appeared so benign; they couldn't see why there would be any hullabaloo over it.

But Adventists by and large ran for cover, including some of my friends, which I wasn't too happy about.

I lost my job. In the late spring of 1974, the board at Loma Linda voted not to retain me. I was on leave at the time at Johns Hopkins University doing a fellowship in the history of medicine.

On July 4, the chair of the board, Neal Wilson—who was also a family friend—called and said: I guess you know you won't be back.

But eventually, a deal was negotiated: If I would write a letter of resignation, I would get a year's severance pay. Some poor historian down the road will be confused by this, I think.

For the second (paperback) edition of the book, Jonathan Butler wrote a very thoughtful historiographical introduction about the reaction to the book.

**Q:** *Your family has a long church history—your father was a minister, your uncle was an administrator in the General Conference, and your grandfather had been president of the General Conference. How divisive was your book in your family?*

**A:** One of my uncles, Roger Wilcox, was asked to head up a General Conference committee to handle me. I had fairly well-known Adventist relatives on both sides of my family.

Glenn Coon was my uncle on my father's side. He just

assumed that I had paid a publisher in order to get the book published. He offered me ten thousand dollars to co-author his next book, if I would abandon my book. He was weird, but my favorite uncle.

For several years, my father would not be seen in public with me. A few people contacted him and asked how he could be a minister in good standing if he couldn't control own family. He took early retirement—he was thoroughly embarrassed.

My father had been left in a terrible situation when my study came out. He knew that I wouldn't lie, but he knew what I was saying couldn't be true. So in traditional Adventist thinking, he believed Satan had somehow got control of my mind. It was not a warm relationship.

And then I remember *Spectrum* published a cluster of reviews. One was by my friend Fritz Guy, who ventured into psycho-biography, suggesting I had ventured into this as a reaction to the rigid religion of my father. That hurt my father. And it wasn't true. We disagreed a lot, but we always had totally open communication. My father was getting it from both the conservatives and the liberals.

My mother about that time was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, which of course some of the brethren attributed to the terrible experience of my leaving the Church, or not accepting Ellen White. But the silver lining was that the experience of caring for my mother brought the family together—we forgot Ellen White and rallied around Mother.

Then *Spectrum* saved our relationship when Molleus Couperus published transcripts of the 1919 Bible Conference that discussed the inspiration of Ellen White. I had given my father a copy of *Prophetess of Health*, but I never saw it in the house. But after the 1919 Bible Conference transcripts came out, I saw my book in the living room the next time I visited my parents' house.

My father was so disappointed that church leaders had known about the questions surrounding Ellen White in the early twentieth century but had covered them up. It was the lack of courage two generations before that had made our family suffer.

My father passed away in 1983.

**Q:** *Do you ever regret publishing the book?*

**A:** No, I have no regrets.

**Q:** *As you are a historian, what else can you tell us about your own history and relationship with the Seventh-day Adventist Church?*

**A:** I moved to Madison, Wisconsin, in the fall of 1974, after losing my job at Loma Linda. My marriage was breaking up.

I thought maybe it would be good to attend the local church. I don't know how orthodox I was then; I was largely motivated by a quest for historical continuity.

The principal of the junior academy in town had gone to my academy in Tennessee. He asked what I had been doing, and I told him I had been working on a book about Ellen White. He invited me to come and speak at the school. I said: No, I don't think you would want that. He got scared, and talked to the local conference officials, who contacted the General Conference, which sent Robert Olson out to hold a series of meetings to expose the heresy in their midst.

I decided that if my presence was that disruptive, I wouldn't have anything more to do with the Church.

**Q:** *So you do not consider yourself an Adventist?*

**A:** When Olson was here to hold the meetings, we met in the hallway. He said: Brother Numbers, do you believe that the Investigative Judgment began on October 22, 1844?

I said something flip like: I don't know, and I don't care.

He said: Then you are not really an Adventist. He said it, so I thought then I may as well not act like one.

I don't consider myself an Adventist, however, I am still a member of the Loma Linda University Adventist Church because I promised friends I would not voluntarily step down. They wanted to use me as a test case on failure to believe the Spirit of Prophecy.

It's not that I never go into an Adventist Church. My nephew is a minister, and I like to hear him speak. But when I have to identify myself, I identify myself as an agnostic.

**Q:** *What kind of reaction do you expect to get from the new edition of *Prophetess of Health*?*

**A:** I really don't know. I don't expect much reaction from Adventists.

But the subject of Ellen White has made its way into American religious history. When the second edition

(paperback) of *Prophetess of Health* came out, some people teaching American religious history used it.

Maybe some Adventist schools will use the book. I am a very bad judge of the current temperature of Adventism. Friends of mine tell me that what I said is now largely passé, but then I pick up some books that suggest nothing has happened historiographically since the 1970s. My own feeling is that among Adventist academics the book has had a fair amount of influence, but that influence has not gone very deep, to the people in the pew. Maybe this is my chance to go to camp meetings!

I do expect Eerdmans to promote *Prophetess of Health* and the William Miller book together, as they are hoping to get a little synergy out of the two biographies. I am just happy to get it in print. Authors like to see their books in print.

**Q:** *How long did it take you to write *Prophetess of Health*?*

**A:** It took fifteen months to write the book. Since my second year of teaching at Loma Linda had been reduced to just four lectures, I really had a year to write the book full-time. I have never been as consumed as I was writing that book. I will never write another book as exhilarating and life changing.

**Q:** *You have written extensively on the conflict between religion and science. Do you consider that your primary work? How does *Prophetess of Health* fit in?*

**A:** A lot of non-Adventists wouldn't even know that I "dabbled" in religious history.

I went through all the standard histories of religion in America in the period. Ellen White almost never appeared in anything. But after the mid-1970s, she became known. No one had written a scholarly book on her before my book was published. I had thought it would be hard to get published because there was no interest.

But by the time I was looking for a publisher, the fringes were becoming mainstream. People were interested in Mormons, Shakers, and Adventists more than they were interested in Episcopalians and Baptists. So it came along at a good time historiographically. For years, *Prophetess of Health* has been the only non-apologetic place

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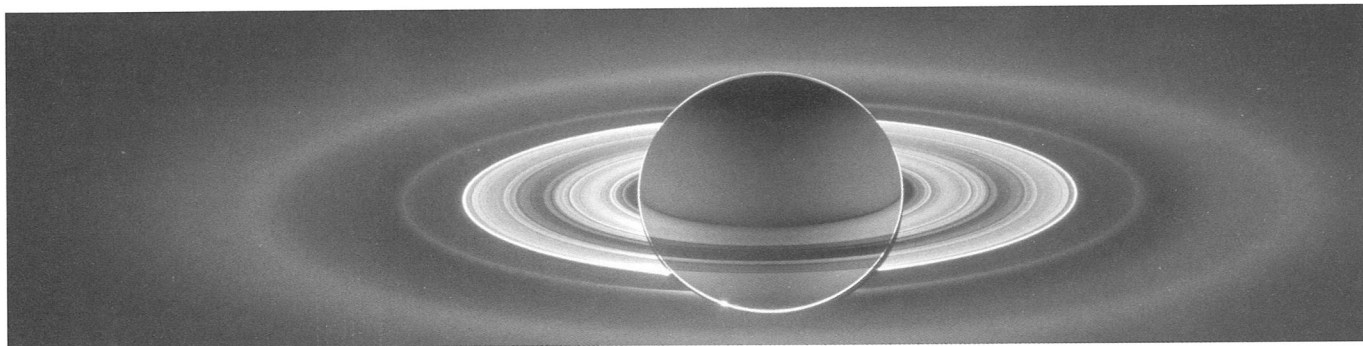
*Continued on page 64...*





## Scientific Subjectivity: *Bias, Evolution, and*

*Astrophysics* | BY ERIC SCOTT (posted 9 September 2008 in the Collegiate Blog)



My father and I had an intriguing discussion this evening. It began with a discussion of black holes, Hawking, astrophysics, and so forth. We had talked about this several months ago, when he expressed skepticism of cutting-edge “theoretical physics” by saying “they end up manipulating the observations to fit the mathematical model we have.” It’s backward from the classical scientific approach of observation first.

A few weeks before, I had written the following: “My new Bible is physics. You want absolute truth, secrets about our universe that are mysterious and transcendent and affect our daily lives? That, my friend, is physics” (Feb. 25, 2008).

Irony. So, of course, I intuitively recoiled at his blanket criticism of modern trends in science. Luckily, he did not single out general relativity or microwave background radiation—two models I have a semblance of comprehension for—and stuck with the more presumptuous and complex predictions of black holes and string theory. Still, I didn’t know quite how to handle his direct accusation of the misdirected and biased nature of the scientific community-at-large. I was quite skeptical, and feeling a bit defensive.

Then he returned to his own domain. “The bulk of my

experience with science is on the biological side,” he said. That is where our discussion ended in March. This time, however, he continued. Back in his area of expertise, his arguments suddenly became more fully featured, cogent, and arguable less reactionary. “There are eight hundred thousand known species of insects in the world,” he said. “That’s more species than there are in the animal kingdom and the plant kingdom combined.” He paused for effect. “We only know the life story of one-tenth of 1 percent of them.”

He proceeded to express frustration with the emphasis of current research being placed on reclassifying insects’ evolutionary relationships by patterns in their mitochondrial DNA: another example of seeking to fit data to a meta-narrative that is taken for granted, no longer questioned. Too little focus on the present.

“We’re so interested in the history, and yet we haven’t a clue what’s going on in the world around us,” my father said. “It happened to me again last week: A researcher commented on a photo of an introduced species of moth I’d put up on *Bug Guide* that was far away from where it’s supposed to live. He’d published a paper on it the week before on his three years of research—three years in which he could only acquire fifty specimens.”

“You know why?” he asked. “Because nobody cares about the menial task of documenting and recording. It’s

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Eric Scott is a student at Andrews University.

no longer novel, and interest has worn off. Science moved on before the task was done. There are no systems in place in our country today to detect changes or migrations in the distribution of insects—despite all the worry about global warming.”

I do not have the requisite perspective to know if this is all a straw man. I know my father is a creationist, which is heavily related to his distaste for the emphasis biology texts place on the Darwinian metanarrative. After listening for a while, however, my hesitation subsided and I began to see value in what he was saying. Of course, movements in the scientific community are trend based, self-propelling, and so forth. Yes, science is all about free thought and objectivity, but that doesn't mean things are obvious. The data can be very opaque at times.

“Science is like a religion,” he said, “when a new religion begins....There was a time when science was new, energetic, and everything was a novel exploration, as it is with everything until....” he paused to collect his thoughts.

“Until it becomes dogmatic?” I offered, drawing analogies in my mind to Christian history. He hesitated at the “d” word, but responded affirmatively. “That’s a good way of putting it.”

Later, I followed this up with the observation that, naturally, “it has to be a cultural thing. Of course, you’re influenced by what you are taught—it’s impossible to hold all the data in your mind at once. The flaws in the metanarrative are not obvious, especially when it comes to the big ideas like the big bang or evolution.”

“The limitations on the human mind put a damper on things,” Dad added.

So, in summary, am I convinced that astrophysics or biology research has a fundamental misalignment in its value system or objectivity of agenda? Not hardly. But I did come to some sort of ineffable epiphany before our conversation moved to the discussion of neural networks, telomeres, French summer school, and my new girlfriend. I may think twice next time I impose a metanarrative explanation upon a reality I do not fully understand.

Yet this puts us at odds with the likes of David Sloan Wilson, who writes disappointedly in his popular book, *Evolution for Everyone* (2007): “Rejection of evolution extends to...the constant refrain that evolution is ‘just a theory.’ To make matters worse, most people who do accept evolutionary theory don’t use it to understand the world around them (2).”

My father’s complaint is precisely the opposite: that

evolution is too accepted and permeates too deeply into scientific perspective. Wilson advocates it as a metanarrative; Dad fears it is already too dogmatic. I see value in both positions. I am perturbed enough as it is when we don’t prove a theorem in math class—if we did not examine evidence in physics before we were told to believe in relativity, I would complain to the chair (Okay...I would at least be miffed). If biology texts always presuppose evolution, rather than build up to it, then I can sympathize with his discomfort, even for my lack of doubt.

But one cannot dismiss Wilson out of hand. He makes a few very powerful statements: “Our hidden agendas need not be conscious. It’s not as if we see the world clearly and then willfully distort it to serve our purposes. The world we see clearly has already been distorted by unconscious mental processes” (13).

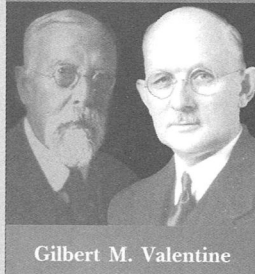
“Even the most talented and open-minded scientists in these fields are handicapped by events that took place before they were born and became the basis of their disciplinary training,” he writes. “A theory is merely a way of organizing ideas that seem to make sense of the world” (15, 16).

One’s perception of an idea—of what is true, good,

## Have You Read?

### The Struggle for the Prophetic Heritage

From the conflict for control of the White Estate, 1870–1970



Gilbert M. Valentine

Published by Institute Press  
Mission College, Thailand

**Now Available  
from Signs Publishing  
Company, Australia**

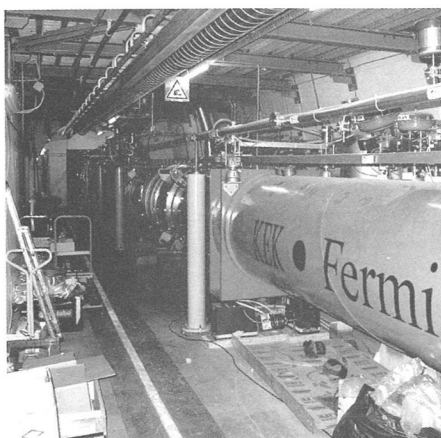
SEND ORDERS TO:  
[liz.dunstan@signspublishing.com.au](mailto:liz.dunstan@signspublishing.com.au)

Valentine is also author of  
*W. W. Prescott: Forgotten  
Giant of Adventism's  
Second Generation*  
published by *Review and Herald*.

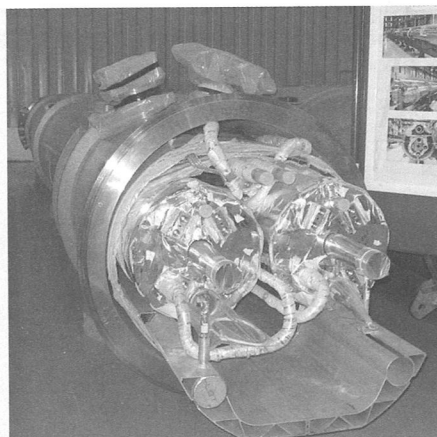
To whom did the gift of prophecy really belong? This new book explores the complex and conflicted relationship between the White Estate and church leadership. It explains how it came to be agreed that the “gift” belonged to the whole church. But it took time to resolve the power struggle within the top ranks of Adventist church leadership over the issue. Eventually the White Estate was relocated from California to the General Conference but it was a long and bumpy road from West to East.

### Reviewers say:

- “Valentine is an excellent author and this is a good book” —George Knight
- “I found Valentine’s presentation stimulating and probing as he explored the complex relationship between the White Estate and denominational leaders.” —Michael Campbell
- “Valentine is not only a superb historian, he is also a loved pastor and a wise teacher. This is a narrative of commendable empathy told with a clear understanding of the problem, the related issues and the outcomes.” —Arthur Patrick



**Large Hadron Collider quadrupole magnets for directing proton beams to interact. These superconducting quadrupole electromagnets were made in Fermilab.**  
Photo: gamsiz



**A quadrupole-magnet for the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) of the European Organization for Nuclear Research, known as CERN.**  
Photo: Julian Herzog

useful, or fashionable—is inextricably linked to one's experiences, which in turn consists largely of others' opinions. If a friend says programming in Lisp is cool, I will tend to agree with him—my independent opinion immediately eclipsed by their apparent confidence and the urge to conform.

If I'm told a teacher is poor, or a student annoying, or that smoking is disgusting, I will tend to agree. My internal objectivity is highly subjective to my social reality.

The same principles extend to academia. It takes a lot of study to gain anything resembling expertise in a given field. If I am told, as a student, that neural networks are all the rage, that nanotechnology is where the money is, or that bioinformatics has great potential, I believe it.

Just like if I'm told that a certain historical philosophy gave rise to another or was evident in contemporary art, I must be inclined to believe it at least mostly, because I haven't the experience or the resources to verify it from primary sources.

As such, the world being too vast for objectivity, most of our knowledge and picture of reality—our metanarrative—comes from secondary sources. An insoluble paradox?

## Comments

HOW IS ONE TO DISCOVER the nature of the world, except by proposing "metanarratives" and seeing which fits the data the best? Is it really a problem that physics is using relativity and quantum mechanics without much questioning (other than where they do conflict), when these ideas actually describe what is happening?

Is plate tectonics a problem, or a solution to many problems? Well, it's both, but I think that we find its primary value in its great ability to solve problems. The fact that it, like evolution, can raise new problems is

part and parcel of a genuinely explanatory theory.

Why is it that I hear about the "dangers" of meta-narrative from creationists only with respect to ideas with which creationists take issue, and not where plate tectonics is the metanarrative? Granted, they have plates moving around at highway speeds, never bothering to explain insuperable problems like where all of the heat of the magma went, but they still accept the basics of (though not much of the evidence for) plate tectonics.

Are scientists "fitting the data to Newton's metanarrative," or are they simply using a proven general conception (in the classical realm) to do science? I really do not doubt it is the latter.

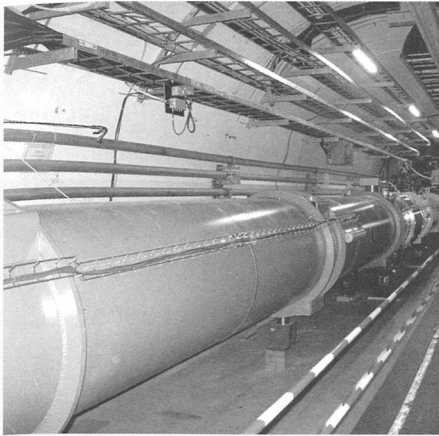
The fact is that it makes no sense to hash over well-demonstrated concepts time and again. Science would never progress if it didn't learn and then incorporate certain ideas into the written knowledge of science. Call it dogma, even, if you wish, for it is not fully unlike dogma, even though it is not sacrosanct (MOND questions aspects of Newtonian gravity that have continued to be accepted in the QM/relativity age).

The college general biology textbooks that I have seen do, indeed, give reasons for accepting evolution. My biochemistry text and cell biology text both accepted it as a known factor in biology, which of course it is. The observation that evolutionary ideas permeate biology is due to a very important fact—this being that evolutionary effects are evident in almost all aspects of biology.

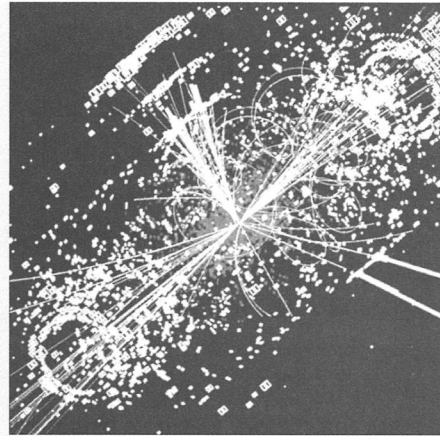
I do not think that evolution permeating biology textbooks and journals is at all unwarranted, so long as it remains the primary organizing principle in biology.

Glen Davidson, Sept. 9, 2008





**Tunnel of the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) of the European Organization for Nuclear Research, with all the magnets and instruments. Photo: Julian Herzog**



**A simulated event at the LHC of the European Particle Physics Institute, depicting the decay of a Higgs particle following a collision of two protons in the CMS experiment.**

"A THEORY IS MERELY a way of organizing ideas that seem to make sense of the world."

If all theories are based on that premise, how is the biblical creation narrative not also a theory based on its writers' attempt at making sense of their world?

What other such theories, developed long ago, are still accepted as the last word today? Have we advanced, or do we still remain in the scientific dark ages by accepting, unquestioningly, their theories of the world?

Elaine Nelson, Sept. 10, 2008

ERIC—NOT TO DO with "astrophysics"—just regular ol' particle physics: the Large Hadron Collider at CERN in Switzerland went live today. You heard about it? A couple physicists at my university are involved with that project and are pretty excited.

KM, Sept. 10, 2008

HEHE, YES, DEFINITELY AWARE of the LHC. I hung out with my friends in the Physics Department this morning and we discussed the ludicrous black hole doomsdays stuff for a while, and some freshman got detailed explanations of what it was doing. Several math professors were met in the hall with a chipper "Happy LHC day!" which confused them momentarily, much to our glee.

Glen: I agree with all you say, and although blatant creationist agendas frustrate me, too, I'd like to think that it's possible and beneficial to respect the efforts and trends in science while still remaining skeptical enough to come up with creative alternatives in one's own specialty.

Eric Scott, Sept. 10, 2008

WE ARE STILL AT THE IMPASS of "In the beginning God" or "In the beginning the Big Bang."

Every time we hear a loud noise we say either, Who did that? or What caused that? We have yet to agree.

They just completed a replication of the "big bang" over in Switzerland. It will produce another generation of Ph.D.s and little else of substance for the benefit of the hungry, tired, poor, and down trodden.

So, I'll remain with Karl Barth: "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so."

Tom Zwemer, Sept. 10, 2008

TOM, WHY SO skeptical? Science and technology produce plenty of primary, secondary, tertiary, and other benefits for "the hungry, tired, poor, and downtrodden." Knowledge filters. It may not filter "fast," but it does filter, and it has been filtering faster and faster in the last hundred years. I do not expect that to slow.

While that continues to happen, we all have our own groundwork to do, and I don't think we can afford to push it off onto other folks—even that next generation of Ph.D.s.

I have read the 1950s and 1960s complaints about space race investments. I still read complaints about military spending. I do believe we would be further along if we didn't insist on blowing each other up, but having scientists and engineers learning more of the intricate nature that God created is a very good thing for all of us. It's not all about "me" the individual. What matters most is "we" the race, and we are born knowledge seekers.

Science is part of our nature, and it will ever be.

KM, Sept. 10, 2008 ■

# THE BIBLE

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## In the Lord's Name: *The Power and Peril of the Third Commandment* | BY LOREN SEIBOLD

When I was a child, my family was on a party line. That meant that there were five or six families using the same telephone line. We knew most of them.

My grandparents lived on the next farm, and they were on it, as well as my aunt and uncle a couple of miles the other way. It worked pretty well most of the time. You listened for your own ring (a long and a short) and then picked up the receiver. Sometimes you picked up to make a call when someone else was already talking. If you were really quiet, you could listen in.

One of our party-liners was John Gomke. I never met him, but his phone conversations were legendary. He had the worst language we had ever heard. My mother prohibited us from listening to him, although sometimes we did. He was marvelously inventive in his profanity, and a Jedi master of scatology.

Having attended public school, I did not find phrases like "God damn" new, but it wasn't what I heard at home. My father got angry, but I never heard him curse, not even when he dropped a tractor battery on his toe. With the exception of my years at an Adventist boarding academy (more than a little irony there, I know), I've kept my language within respectable bounds, avoiding what Chesterton called "the use of theological terms to which [one attaches] no doctrinal significance."<sup>1</sup>

Still, I'm not sure how deeply I feel about it. If I were witness to a robbery, I hope I would have the courage to intervene. I wouldn't, though, march over to a stranger in a restaurant and tell him to watch his mouth, as I've heard sanctimonious Christians boast of doing. You may blame it on cowardice, apathy, or even a jaded dissipation, but I don't find garden-variety profanity as pressing an issue as, say, war. I'm not saying it's nice. It is crude and boorish and disrespectful. I would punish my children, had I any,

for speaking that way. It is what people like John Gomke do. (Or *did*, since John has kicked the bucket, leaving the world marginally more courteous.)

But I just can't believe that John Gomke and his brother idiots are the primary target of the Third Commandment. It is disrespectful to use God's name in a vulgar way, to be sure.<sup>2</sup> I wouldn't argue that commandment is without implications concerning the diminishment of the Divine name. But that doesn't seem to be quite enough freight for a genuine, full-fledged commandment to carry.<sup>3</sup> There's a weight in what the rest of the commandments prohibit or encourage that the third one seems to lack if it were meant only to scold drunks and fools. It's using a shotgun to kill flies.

### An Overlooked Commandment

I asked my congregation one Sabbath which of the commandments they would rate as the least understood. A Seventh-day Adventist group naturally selects the Fourth. Of course, it deserves consideration for the title. Most Christians, if they reference it at all, have discounted the *chronos* element in favor of the *kairos*: it is a time for worship that gets consideration, not *the* time. Even when they round it down to some bit of public worship once every seven days, few find value in those riders about not working and not doing your own pleasure. Still, I'm not convinced that other Christians flat out misunderstand it. They know what it means. They just don't think it's important.

The Third Commandment, however, is hardly understood at all. I'm being only slightly facetious when I say that for us Seventh-day Adventists it may be that the light that shines from the Fourth Commandment has obscured the Third Commandment.<sup>4</sup> The Third Commandment slouches there, slightly hazy, in the shadow of its more

exalted sibling. The First and Second Commandments, not to worship other gods, nor to represent God—those we get. By the time we reach the Third Commandment, though, we're hardly paying attention because our eyes are on that beacon at the peak of the law: the Sabbath, so neglected and maligned.

I suspect that the real meaning of this commandment was lost along with its context, and so its requirements devolved upon thoughtless profanity. The key understanding (the one that should alter our understanding of it) is that it is a command against intentionally abusing the *power* of the name. That application should hit us churchy people squarely between the eyes. When I look at the problems that the conservative wing of the Christian church (which here and there, now and then, includes us) has most struggled with, I begin to feel there may be something in that Third Commandment that we should be attending to.

## Name Power

We live in a time of casual name-knowing. As he gives us menus, our nineteen-year-old waiter tells us his name is Derek, and he'll be taking care of us tonight. My physician calls me by my first name, even though I have as much education as he does and senior him by ten years. Fewer and fewer call me "pastor," and if someone addressed me as "mister," I'd wonder if I were about to be arrested. I blame James Earl Carter, Jr., who in 1976 took on the Library of Congress, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the staid BBC, and several state secretaries of state preparing presidential election ballots to win the right to be denominated by the hypocorism "Jimmy." Or maybe "Jimmy" was merely a symptom of America's long pretense that we're all the same, as when a billionaire makes an affectation of good ol' boyism by introducing himself as "Bill."

In any case, it has been a long time since a name (especially a first name) was something of value, shared only by formal introduction. Derek doesn't seem at all concerned about my knowing his first name though we are utter strangers, and would unhesitatingly call me by mine if he knew it. Furthermore, English grammar makes no distinction between the respectful address and the familiar; even God has to share pronouns with the rest of us.

In earlier times, to know and use someone's name was a privilege—one carefully granted, because the resulting familiarity was a vulnerability. Even today, using another's familiar name borrows a bit of his power: if I drop your

name in conversation, people might think me a dearer confederate of yours than I actually am, making your name the passport to something I want.

Which brings us to oaths. An oath calls upon something or someone that both speaker and listeners consider sacred, as a witness that what is spoken is binding.<sup>5</sup> In a world lacking effective legal enforcement, a merchant might take an oath to firm up a deal: "I swear by the name of the Almighty God that I'll pay you back with interest within thirty days, and may God strike me dead if I don't." Matthew 5:33–37, is meant to prop up the Third Commandment against such abuses: "You have heard it said that you ought to act honorably on your oaths," Jesus says. "I'm telling you, don't make oaths at all," because you have neither ability nor consistency to act in the name of the all powerful, always consistent God. Jesus surely wouldn't like vulgar language, but here he's addressing fallible human beings taking advantage of the *authority* of the name of infallible God.

## Utility

God's name carried power in the same way that an idol did: as something representing God that a human being could employ for his own ends. In summary, the sin of the Third Commandment is in finding God's name *useful*—a tool for trade in wealth, power, or influence. The vulgar use of the name (the only interpretation we offer our children) is a footnote to this bigger understanding. (Conveniently, cursing isn't much of a temptation to us, so this interpretation has the added advantage of making the Third Commandment more or less a "gimme".)

The adjectival "God damn," as an example, evolved from an oath. A very angry person might say, "I call upon God to damn you to hell for what you've done to me." In a culture still invested in the power of sacred words, that would have been terrifying. Imagine it said by a fat, powerful priest to a superstitious peasant; the suggestion alone may have been enough to make the peasant curl up and die.

We no longer fear word formulas; rational Protestantism has freed us from the heebie jeebies. Should you damn me in God's name, I would think you a jerk, but I could still enjoy the meal Derek brings me. In general, we no longer value sacred things at the component level. Crosses and crucifixes are merely jewelry; churches are multipurpose halls; Bibles lost their dignity when they turned from leather-bound books into software; the bread



and wine are just object lessons. I'm reluctant to opine whether or not this is all just as well.

But I'm pretty sure of this: there is still such a thing as sacred power, and it is not wielded by cursing drunks. The danger of one's misusing sacred power (and therefore breaking the Third Commandment) increases with one's claims to piety. That makes it a particular danger to those of us who work in the Church. When I preach, I gain my authority from sacred power. When I ask people to give money to the Church, I do it in the name of things sacred. Counseling, board meetings, pastoral visits, organizing of church officers and volunteers—all of them depend upon the listeners' belief that the leader is in some way, even if loosely, speaking for God.

We ought to (though scarcely any of us do) wrestle this alligator at every turn of the religious life. Faith is, by its nature, a sort of posturing, an acting as if that which I affirm is God's will, too. When I pray for a patient in the hospital, my prayer assumes that God prefers the patient recover. Whether God's will lines up with the patient's and mine is quite beyond our knowing. Even if I understand that, does the patient? Yet if I qualify my prayer so thoroughly ("*Only if it is Thy will, O Lord*") that the prayee is certain of my uncertainty, then where is faith? Where is hope? And should God decide to take a pass on the opportunity I've given him to do a miracle, where is the psychological, possibly placebo, boost that my prayer might yet provide?

And so every religious transaction is a spiritual minefield. As a pastor—indeed, as a known Christian—I am called upon to speak for God, even while moment by moment on the razor's edge of misappropriating his authority. The only way to navigate such a field, it seems to me, is with more humility and tentativeness than most people like to see in a person of faith. That's probably why the worst Third Commandment offenses are by those who have largely dispensed with humility as an impediment to progress.

A televangelist says, "God has told me that if you send your money to me, he promises to give you ten times more."

A slimy investor says, "A handshake is as good as a contract between us brothers in Christ."

A priest says, "You can trust me to take your little boy camping."

It is no wonder that a public flouting of the Third Commandment was the only occasion upon which Jesus lost his cool (Matt. 21:12).

## Too Near the Edge

Not long ago, I received by mail a sort of Christian Yellow Pages, a directory of Christian-identified businesses. At first, I thought it a clever idea. Then I got to thinking about the number of deals that go bad. The number of businessmen who simply aren't honest no matter how often they go to church. The inevitable misunderstandings even when all parties are well-intentioned Christian people. The Christian business directory is a whole book of potential Third Commandment pitfalls, and I think that if I were a Christian businessman I would refuse to put my name in it.



I have seen us skirt the same line in my denomination. An elderly couple, perhaps under the influence of a convincing conference trust director, wills a substantial gift to the Church. They may just have a sincere desire to see God's work go forward. But I have met those I suspected of thinking, "God will save me more readily if I leave my money to the Church." It is impossible to know another's motives with certainty, but it is worth wondering about. Would we turn down the end-of-life gift of one who we suspected of believing he is making amends for a shaky spiritual life?

I get concerned whenever I hear Malachi 3:10, quoted over an offering.<sup>6</sup> I've met Christians who take it to mean that God is going to enrich me as I enrich the church—a sort of Reverend Ike lite.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the blessing that is poured out to you when you give money to the



church school may be the satisfaction of seeing children go to school. The blessing of paying tithe may be the satisfaction of seeing your world church thrive. Again, it is impossible to judge your motives in giving. Nor do I doubt Malachi's promise. But I hope that we representatives of the Church don't give you false expectations in God's name.

As a believer in inspiration, I don't consider it my task to say that Ellen White's statement that the General Conference is "the highest authority that God has upon the earth" is untrue.<sup>8</sup> Yet I cannot for the life of me see how it can be quoted authoritatively without trespassing on God's authority. The most likely reason for bringing it up is to convince church members to give church leaders more authority than they may feel inclined to. Who of us in church leadership could ever be sufficiently disinterested in our own authority to say it? So whether or not it is true, it isn't very serviceable if you are aware of God's eye upon you.

The president of the United States told a group of Palestinian leaders in 2003, "I'm driven with a mission from God. God would tell me, 'George, go and fight those terrorists in Afghanistan.' And I did, and then God would tell me, 'George go and end the tyranny in Iraq,' and I did."<sup>9</sup> Here he steps not only near, but off the precipice of the Third Commandment. A president may have good reasons to go to war, and I will listen to them. But to say that God has led him to it is a high-smelling hubris; this kind of thing has done more to drag God's good name in the mud than any number of greedy, horny, badly toupeed tele-evangelists.

It seems to me we can hardly be too careful about what we assert above God's signature. We Adventists have accepted the important assignment of defending God's Sabbath. But it has not been the breaking of the Sabbath that has created skeptics; it is the misuse of sacred authority that has brought too many thoughtful people to despise religion. It is the hucksterism of making dubious claims and demands in God's name. It is the kind of politics that calls upon God to witness for wars and inquisitions. It is preposterous pronouncements about what is in the mind of God by people who show little evidence of being his confidant. These are the sorts of things that led Steven Weinberg to say, "With or without [religion], you would have good people doing good things and evil

people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion."<sup>10</sup>

I only wish he weren't a little right. ■

## Notes and References

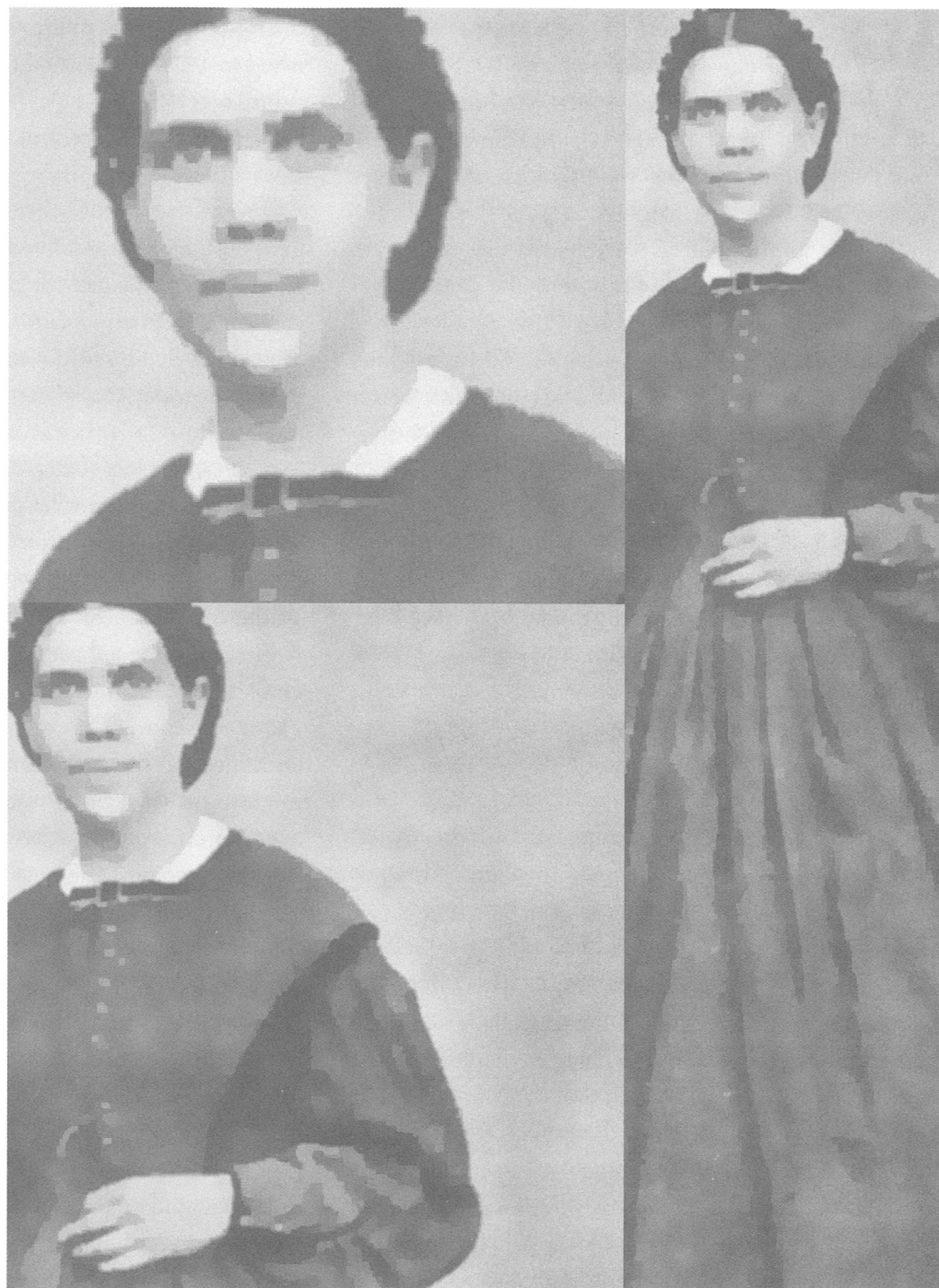
1. From G. K. Chesterton's essay, "On Running after One's Hat."
2. Though if we want to be technical about it, *god* is a Germanic word for pagan deities, not a Hebrew name for the Only Genuine Deity in the universe. The Hebrew name for the One we call God the Father was written YHWH, which we pronounce Yahweh but the Jews refused to pronounce at all.
3. Actually, not killing people and not stealing from them is fairly low bar, too. A society where people just followed those rules to the letter would not necessarily be a happy one; you can still be angry and do lots of other nasty things. That may be why Jesus appended the Sermon on the Mount to the Torah, which not only sets the bar higher, but sets it higher than any of us can reach.
4. "Jesus raised the cover of the ark, and I beheld the tables of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written. I was amazed as I saw the fourth commandment in the very center of the ten precepts, with a soft halo of light encircling it." Ellen White, *Testimonies*, vol. 1, 75.
5. In English, we've muddled this concept, too: if someone utters an oath, we assume he's cursing.
6. "'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the Lord Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.'"
7. The Right Rev. Dr. Frederick J. Eikerenkoetter II, media evangelist and advocate of the prosperity gospel, by which he himself proudly benefits. He tells his followers that sending their money to him will release them from bad habits of thinking ("thinkonomics") and allow them to become wealthy. He brags of his Rolls Royce fleet, jewelry, expensive suits, and mansions, purchased with their contributions, as evidence of God's blessing.
8. Ellen White, *Testimonies*, vol. 3, 492.
9. Former Palestinian foreign minister Nabil Shaath reported that President George W. Bush said this in a 2003 meeting that included Mahmoud Abbas, then Palestinian Authority president. It was confirmed by all present, and widely reported.
10. Steven Weinberg, *New York Times*, Apr. 20, 1999.

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# LEGACY OF

# ELLEN WHITE



## Straitjacket or Flight Suit? *Ellen White's Role* in the Adventist Theology of the Twenty-first Century | BY DAVID H. THIELE

When my article, "Who is the Seventh-day Adventist in 2006," was in the draft stages, a friend and colleague read through it.<sup>1</sup> His response? "I don't think you're right. Denying 1844 does cause Adventist theology to unravel at one point at least: Ellen White." His point is not difficult to see. Ellen White taught that the Judgment began in 1844. To deny the date means she was in error and therefore not a true prophet. Denying the prophetic gift of Ellen G. White has the potential to unravel the entire theology of the Church.

My colleague did say that this was not his own position, but he was sensitive to the fact that many people would view it exactly this way. My attendance at Sabbath School on a recent visit to my home church in rural northern Australia reminded me of how authoritative Ellen White's voice remains to many people, even when she makes incidental comments in passing. This, of course, leads to the heart of the most confronting question for contemporary Adventist theology: What role does Ellen White legitimately play in Adventist theology today?

Theology is sometimes described as "faith seeking understanding." As society changes, the nature of the questions it faces changes along with it. The adequacy of answers to questions given in early settings is reevaluated and new answers to new questions formulated. This means that every generation of the Christians *must* reformulate and recontextualize the church's theology in order to remain true to the faith of its spiritual ancestors.

The easiest way to see this in practice is to consider church standards. Ellen G. White spoke against building sanitariums out of brick rather than wood. However, today the Sydney Adventist Hospital (formally, the Sydney Sanitarium) is a stunning complex made of

brick—the original timber structure having been demolished in 1973. Similarly, Ellen White spoke out against riding bicycles. Yet today at Pacific Adventist University, the dean of the School of Theology, no less, often rides a bicycle to work.

The truth is that as the contextual factors of extravagant cost and connotative meaning of brick buildings and bicycles changed the rationale for Ellen White's caution about them evaporated. The Church as a whole moved on. Being faithful to Ellen White's counsels at this point today may mean forgoing the Ferrari and the multimillion-dollar mansion.

The same process clearly happens with other aspects of theology. It cannot be denied, for example, that the sheer passing of time after 1844 meant that the pioneers had to abandon the view enunciated by James White that marriage was "a wile of the Devil."

Similarly, the appearance of new converts and adherents to the advent message in the late 1840s and early 1850s caused the Church to re-evaluate the "shut door" doctrine, and the American Civil War brought issues to the fore that had hitherto not troubled the early Adventist Church. To what extent should Adventists support the North against the South? To what extent did conscription override an individual's responsibility before God for actions taken in war, and transfer it to the government instead?

Nor did this process end with the death of the pioneers. The youth revolution of the 1960s with its vocal opposition to the Vietnam War meant that the Church had to consider again all sorts of issues of war and peace, dissent, and authority. Today, the Church's attitude to women mirrors the fact that society as a whole has moved to address this topic. Our answers may in many cases be different from those of society as a

whole, but in order to be relevant to society and even *in* society we must address the same issues. The alternative is to become a museum of nineteenth century thought—like the Amish of popular imagination—vigorously answering questions no one is asking any longer.

**T**o be sure, some would suggest that all of this is misguided. Ellen White has spoken and no interpretation of Scripture different from hers can be valid; no question not addressed by her can be important. Ellen White is to be believed and obeyed, not interpreted, much less reinterpreted.

It is also a difficult position to maintain consistently. I well remember a layman who told me on one occasion that Ellen White's statements about still having much to learn about Daniel and Revelation must refer to Daniel 11 because she wrote so little on this chapter. On another occasion, the same man told me that Daniel 11 was obviously not important for us because Ellen White wrote so little on it!

Such a position uses Ellen White as a strait-jacket to prevent movement in Adventist theology for the fear of the damage such movement would do. But standing still is movement, too! As the world moves, those who stand still are left further and further behind. In order to remain in the same relative position we must also be moving, developing, growing.

A fitting analogy is that of the human organism itself. A baby is born and under ideal conditions is "perfect." I am here not making a theological statement about original sin. The baby has the right number of limbs and appropriate mental and physical potentials. People "ooh" and "ahh" and say "Isn't she beautiful." And so she is. But if that very same "perfect" baby does not develop and grow, the beauty fades and the sense of tragedy grows. The child who has only the same abilities as

the baby is regarded as retarded. Instead of "Isn't she beautiful?" people say "Isn't it sad?"

To insist on a rigid following of Ellen White without interpretation or reinterpretation is to demand a church with a retarded theology—a theology once "perfect" and appropriate but now underdeveloped. It is not difficult to see the development in the Church's theology in the pioneer period: the adoption of health reform, the development of a greater emphasis on the gospel in the wake of 1888, the emergence of a full Trinitarianism. But it should not be assumed that the Church's theology reached its full maturity by the time of Ellen White's death. Indeed, the publication of *Questions on Doctrine* indicates that development was still under way.

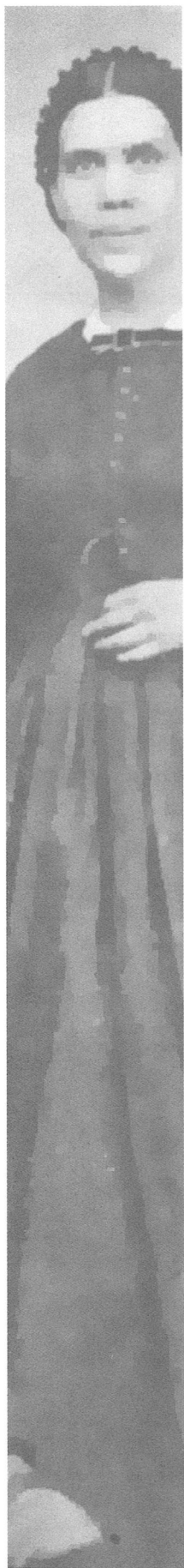
Of course, some may wish to conclude that if Ellen White is not to be obeyed unreflectively, she must consequently have no role to play at all. Is Ellen White only a historical relic of a bygone age? Can we simply discard her and go on our way without her? I believe such an approach is tragically misguided. God has given guidance through Ellen White and to neglect such guidance is foolishness of the worst kind.

There is no doubt that Ellen White's counsel guided the Church through a maze of complex issues and contributed a great deal to its development. One can point to the Church's educational and medical institutions, the organizational structure of the Church and its global evangelistic emphasis as areas where the prophetic ministry bore fruit. The Church would have been immeasurably poorer without the work of Ellen White. The same is certainly true in the sphere of the Church's theology. Ellen White was at the forefront of promoting the proclamation of righteousness by faith and the full development of the Trinity.

To reject Ellen White today as being outdated and irrelevant would be to turn our backs on this amazing source of counsel, guidance, and wisdom. The church of the second century effectively severed its roots with

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the original Jewish church of the previous century. The church was increasingly cultured and cultivated and correspondingly embarrassed by its origins in Judaism. The result was ultimately the development of medieval theology, the establishment of Platonic dualism as the dominant model of Christian anthropology, and the hideous development of systematic Christian anti-Semitism. Nothing compares with the severing of ties with the foundational church in terms of the catastrophic consequences that followed.

Would Adventism fare any better if it disconnected itself from the pioneers and especially from Ellen White? Absolutely nothing suggests that it would. Given that the expectation of the Advent is already suffering from the time lag since 1844, could the Church even survive as "Adventist" if Ellen White were rejected? It may sound far-fetched to suggest that the Church could ever move away from a premillennial eschatology, but it should not be forgotten that historically many revivals of premillennialism have petered out into amillennialism or postmillennialism.

**S**o how is Ellen White to be utilized in Adventist theology if she is not abandoned or followed slavishly? Can she serve as a flight suit, helping Adventist theology to soar in the twenty-first century? I believe she can.

In order to discern Ellen White's role it is necessary to distinguish between the *shape* and *content* of Adventist theology. The shape is the broad outline, determined by the specifics emphasized; the content is the actual assertions made in those areas. It is useful to look at the idea of the imminence of Second Coming. This is surely part of the shape of Adventist theology. The content of our teaching at this point has changed over the years, as time has gone on.

A number of years ago, while I was teaching at Sonoma Adventist College (a junior training school run by the Papua New Guinea

Union Mission), a first-year student from an extremely isolated area in the Papua New Guinea highlands wrote an essay for me on the signs of the Second Coming. Unfortunately, he chose as his main source an evangelistic paperback written by Arthur S. Maxwell in the 1920s and donated to the Sonoma Library by some kindly individual in Australia who had no further use for it.

Not one of the "amazing developments" in science, technology, and society extracted by my student from Maxwell's book as evidence of the soon coming of Christ had any contemporary force. Every one of them had been antiquated by the march of time and further developments. Maxwell's *content* has had to be abandoned (at least at this point), but the shape of his theology (imminence) remains valid.

Might this distinction also prove fruitful with Ellen White? God has given her to the Church as a gift. One of her roles has been to guide the Church in shaping its theology. Today, she remains as a guardian of that "shape." Ellen White indicates the areas that Adventist theology is to emphasize. Her siding with Waggoner and Jones at the 1888 General Conference session has meant that the Adventist Church has been obsessed with the gospel in a way few other denominations in the twentieth century were.

Unfortunately, much of that obsession has been directed to recovering the content of the 1888 Message itself, which like nineteenth-century Adventist theology generally was underdeveloped—a work in process, not a completed product. But Ellen White made it abundantly clear that the gospel was part of the sharp of Adventist theology.

Similarly, eschatology forms a crucial part of the shape of Adventist theology: premillennialism, imminence, the lack of prophetic significance of establishment of the modern state of Israel, and so forth. But here it is especially clear that we cannot simply retain the content of Ellen White's eschatology if we wish to retain its shape.



A powerful example is seen in the pioneer understanding of the signs in the sun, moon, and stars. With in living memory, the stars had fallen, the sun darkened, and the moon turned blood red. It all indicated to the pioneers that Jesus' return was imminent. When we move forward a century and a half, whatever else these events might indicate, they provide no support for the suggestion of the imminence of the Second Coming. At best, they might indicate its *delay*, but certainly not its *nearness*. If we wish to retain the shape (imminence) we must alter the content.

In exactly the same way, the pioneers saw the fact that the Judgment had begun in 1844 as a theological sign, as it were, of the end times. God had begun his last great work of judgment, surely it was earth's last hour, the last generation was living with the full expectation of never dying. Such a position is almost impossible to hold today. If the Judgment has been going on for 162 years, the world is populated by the seventh generation since 1844. If the process has taken that long, perhaps it will take another century.

This problem lies at the heart of our engagement

with the entire content of the pioneer eschatology. The pioneers saw their entire end-time scenario unfolding before them. American Adventists—the only kind there were at the time—served time in prison for breaking Sunday laws. A national Sunday law was put to Congress. The image to the Beast was forming before their eyes. How could they not see the last great wave of persecution targeting Sabbath keepers just around the corner? Things were urgent, and everywhere current events confirmed their faith.

Today, it's different. A world church puzzles over how Sunday laws could ever be brought in to force in Hindu, Buddhist, or Islamic countries, not to mention Israel. Tradition-minded Adventists console themselves with the fact that "things can change very quickly," but in truth, the evidence before our eyes does not suggest it is going to happen anytime soon. A focus on Sunday laws today means an inevitable concentration on what must still take place before the end is truly near, how distant the end is, instead of how close—as it seemed to the pioneers. These examples could be multiplied ad nauseam, but that is not necessary.

## In order to be an Adventist in 2008, do you have to put your brain on a shelf?

**You hear it all the time! The only people who remain Seventh-day Adventists are those who either refuse to think or are sadly misinformed.**

**Can we "keep the faith" and still be intellectually and spiritually honest?  
Maybe it's time to take another look.**

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**To attempt simply to repeat the content of Ellen White's theology is to turn her writings into a theological straitjacket.**



**H**ow can Ellen White function productively in the Adventist theologizing of the twenty-first century? If her writings are not to be a straitjacket cramping and restricting creative theological thought, can they serve another function? The analogy of a different piece of apparel may help: the flight suit. A flight suit does not fly a plane. It is even possible to fly a plane without wearing a flight suit. But a flight suit aids a pilot and makes the processes of flight easier.

Ellen White's writings can function in a similar way. Are they necessary for drawing the truth from Scripture accurately? She herself denies this. However, her writings—which are primarily homiletic rather than exegetical—can provide a useful tool for Bible students to use. Firstly, her writings need to be studied today with a view to the basic thrust of her message—its shape rather than its specific content. This means far greater emphasis needs to be given to the theological principles she enunci-

ated and less to the specific examples she used to illustrate them. The recent work of Don McMahon, which shows that Ellen White's health counsels are confirmed to a far greater extent by modern science than are the reasons she gives to justify her counsels, may provide a working model here.

McMahon's research suggests that God gave Ellen White genuine insight into healthful living but allowed her to promote these insights using arguments that were immediately persuasive to the audience/readers or her own day—even if they were not actually scientifically correct. Theologians use the term *accommodation* for this divine condescension in communication with humanity. This model, applied to theology, suggests that the specific arguments used by Ellen White may not be useful today but that the essential thrust of her message retains validity.

Adventist theologians ought, then, to be encouraged to reflect creatively on how to recreate the effect of her message in today's world. If part of the shape of Ellen White's theology was imminence, how can we almost a hundred years after her death recreate in a credible way that sense of imminence?

To attempt simply to repeat the content of Ellen White's theology is to turn her writings into a theological straitjacket. To jettison her theological insights altogether would be tragic and certainly signal the end of Adventism—at least in any form recognizable as being continuous with the Church of yesterday and today. But to reflect creatively on the shape of her theology would provide the Church with a flight suit equipping its theology to soar to previously unthought-of heights. ■

## Notes and References

1. *Spectrum* 34.2 (spring 2006): 72–77.

**David H. Thiele** is dean of the School of Theology at Pacific Adventist University, Papua, New Guinea.

## Inside *Red Books*:

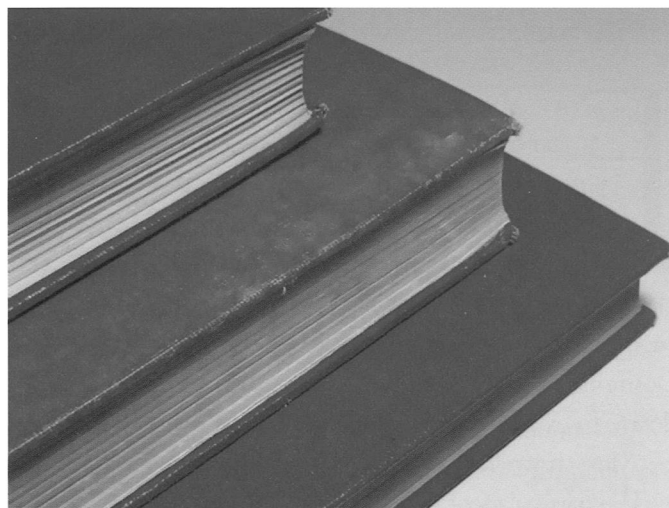
*A View of Loss and, Maybe, Recovery* | BY A. GREGORY SCHNEIDER

Back in the early 1980s, early in my career at Pacific Union College, I ducked. So did many other academics and pastors whose job it was to reflect upon and hand on the treasure-in-earthen-vessels we call Adventism. We went to ground, to use a metaphor of the hunted. People were being hounded and destroyed, at least in terms of career and personal reputation and credibility.

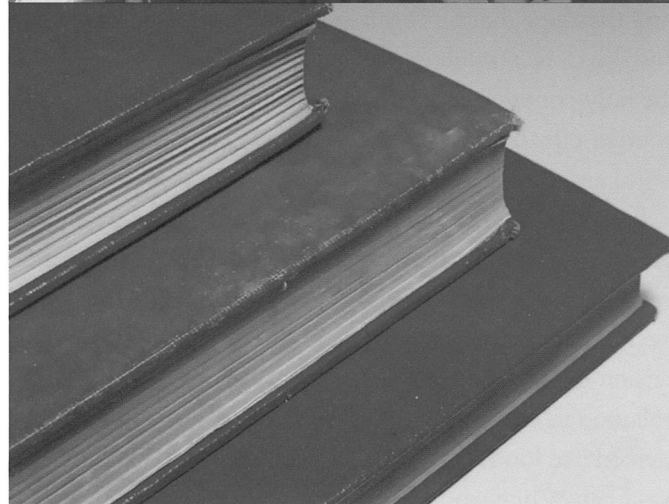
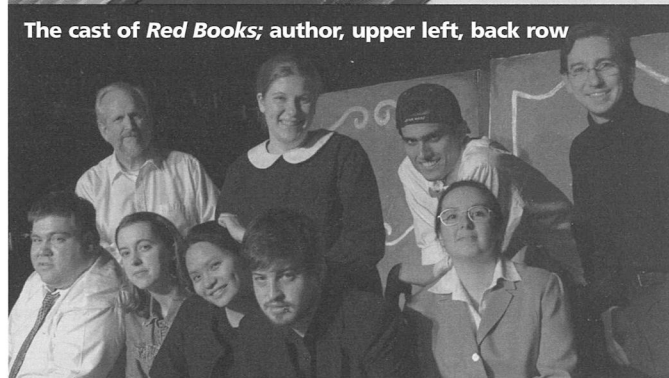
As a result of our going to ground, the conversations we ought to have had about Ellen White—her inspiration, her teachings, her character and accomplishments—did not take place. And of course, no students could be invited into non-existent conversations. In effect, we who ducked helped to suppress discourse and hence knowledge about Ellen White.

When Mei Ann Teo, Pacific Union College's artist-in-residence for drama, first tried to recruit me for the documentary theater project that became *Red Books: Our Search for Ellen White* I resisted. But it is hard to hold out against Mei Ann. She has a passion for theater that goes much deeper than ego and a professionalism that goes way beyond mere competence; she is a delight to work with. Besides, she let me know she really *needed* me. For a Singaporean Chinese woman, Mei Ann is a remarkably effective Jewish Mother.

Guilt induction aside, I quickly realized I needed the play. There is a line in Scene 14 where a character speaks of "our cowardice" and our "shame" in not coming up with an honest cultural framework within which to share Ellen White. This line echoes conversations I had been having with the person behind the character while we leaned on doorposts in the Psychology Department at Pacific Union College and realized together that there was unfinished work we need to do. I needed the play as a way to start overcoming the shame—and the pain.



The cast of *Red Books*; author, upper left, back row



In the year since the close of live performances, I have realized that the play is a gift from Mei Ann and the other “young guys” of the cast to me and people like me who suffered the wound they asked about. I have come to admit to myself that I joined the play for my own healing as much as to try to make a contribution to Seventh-day Adventist culture. This very personal as well as professional engagement with the play is the reason for the “inside *Red Books*” phrase in my title. I’m still very much inside the play, still trying to make personal and academic sense of it. So here are some reflections on a few lines from the play.

**F**irst, about the loss of Ellen White: “We were starving!” This line from Scene 7 evokes for me a memory of Sabbath Schools in 1977 and 1978, my very first years at Pacific Union College. Well before the 9:30 a.m. start time, an amphitheater classroom seating more than two hundred filled to standing room only—not every Sabbath: only the days that Desmond Ford was teaching. Some came to try pin him down, to expose him for the heretic they believed him to be. Most, however, were hungry for his message.

The particulars of that message? There is a forensic, “alien” righteousness, imputed to all humanity who have faith in Jesus Christ, who atoned for all sin once and for all on the Cross. Salvation is by faith in this Divine Person and the cosmic transaction he and his Father made in heavenly places, not by any mental disposition, or moral act, or spiritual practice that seeks to partake of the divine nature and/or transform human nature into a divine likeness.

The latter things are good and should be done and sought, but salvation is in no way contingent upon them. Any theology that hints otherwise is “perfectionism,” a mistake to be resolutely rejected because it compromises the holy confidence that God’s Advent people must have in order effectively to preach the gospel to all the fallen world and thus lead to the final coming of Christ.

It was this message, not primarily Ford’s remarks on the Sanctuary Doctrine, that aroused the extraordinarily hateful opposition that eventually succeeded in expelling him from the Adventist ministry. There was something about his version of righteousness by faith that seemed like rotten pollution to certain Adventists of the 1970s, even while it seemed like food to the starving for others. Either way, it was Ellen White who was controlling the food supply.

So I must ask, who was this particular Ellen White? It was the prophet on the pedestal, the devotional icon on the wall, the crafter of the club with which pious Seventh-day Adventists pounded themselves and each other for the sake of attaining a perfection that would make us ready for the Time of Trouble and the coming of the Lord. In the generational metaphor that helped structure *Red Books*, I am speaking of the Ellen White of the “second generation,” the generation of believers who came after those who knew Ellen White personally, when she was not dead.

Here is a list of features drawn from my own second-generation memory of this particular Ellen White:

1. A walking, talking miracle. She had little education, yet wrote huge amounts of elegantly flowing prose about an astonishingly wide range of subjects, or so we were told. Implication: only the special, miraculous prophetic gift of God could account for her literary and intellectual accomplishments.
2. A visionary medium of God’s “present truth.” She conveyed the messages he designed for this particular age, like the health message, and the “blueprint” for education. She may not have been verbally inspired exactly, in the sense of being stenographer to God’s dictation, but she was the next best thing. If there were ideas or causes she did not write about, that was conclusive evidence that God did not want us worrying about those things in these last days of Earth’s history. If she were the “lesser light leading to the greater light” of the Bible, her lesser light still determined which things were to be highlighted, and which cast in shadow.
3. A standing example of how God chooses the weak to speak truth to the mighty, hence a standing rebuke to learned men who think more highly of their own scholarship than of the direct words of God from this simple woman. Implication: Academic and professional expertise, however much valued as signs of achievement and claims to respectability, were also suspect as temptations to put oneself above the prophet and those who followed her. Items 2 and 3 taken together implied, furthermore, that all teachings must be vetted through her writings and shown to be in accord with them.
4. Exemplar of true spirituality and the way of salvation. As author of the divinely inspired *Steps to Christ* and



*Desire of Ages*, she must have known better than any other mortal in modern times what it meant to follow Christ, to do what he would do, to enter into a personal relationship with him. And if she wrote of these things, surely she also embodied these things.

5. A beacon of safety from the errors and consequent immoralities of the World. Imagine her high and lifted up, shedding around her a circle of light that encompassed the faithful, her light was marker of those who had "the Truth" in the midst of our dark world. To have Ellen G. White was to be right, to look up to her was also to claim ascendancy over those who were wrong.

That is how I remember the Ellen White of my upbringing in 1950s and 1960s Takoma Park, Maryland, Adventism. What I also remember from those days is the respectful attention that pious folk could claim in Sabbath Schools or around Sabbath afternoon dinner tables by means of Ellen White quotes. More than that, I remember the lifestyle of probity undergirded by quotes from the prophet, a way of being in the world that emphasized self-control, a control that made clear the priority of mind over body, reason over emotion, thinking over sensation, morality over beauty, duty over pleasure.

My memory of life in the 1950s Seventh-day Adventist church, home, and school resonates with that of David James Duncan in his novel, *The Brothers K*, who has his main character describe the kind of pious adults "who spent their every Sabbath if not their entire lives trying to forget the existence of things like...." Well, Duncan has a mildly crude bodily reference that I will refrain from using here because this is, after all, an Adventist audience, but I hope we all get the point.

I am persuaded that what Duncan and I were seeing was the embodiment of the nineteenth-century perfectionist ideal promulgated not only by Ellen White, but also by John Harvey Kellogg. As Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart make clear in their recent update of *Seeking a Sanctuary*, White and Kellogg created a science out of the pursuit of happiness by means of a regimen of diet, health, recreation, dress, and family life focused together to accomplish a sexual restraint that would prepare us for existence in the next world.

This sexual suppression was not the whole, but it was still at the heart of what Ellen White and theologians who

followed her meant by the perfection of character that would prepare us for translation to heaven and, furthermore, precipitate the Lord's Second Coming.

This is the Ellen White and the lifestyle she promulgated that Adventists were taking into the 1970s, the decade that ended in what *Red Books* depicts as "The Crash" in Scene 8. The Crash and its aftermath cover a lot of what I mean when I speak of the loss of Ellen White. Some things were happening in "The World," furthermore, that helped create The Crash.

I mean chiefly the 1960s equal rights and sexual revolutions, which stimulated assorted conservative Christian accommodations and reactions in the 1970s. Marabel Morgan (*The Total Woman*) and Tim and Beverly LaHaye (*The Act of Marriage*) were telling evangelicals that marital sex should be both ecstatic and innocent. Charles Wittschiede (*God Invented Sex*) was doing something similar in Seventh-day Adventist circles.

This proliferation of sex manuals for the religious answered, I believe, a growing inner pressure for openness to personal impulses for pleasure and self-expression in an increasingly sophisticated consumer society. Some of these same Evangelicals also led the culture war backlash against sexual liberalization, and against "rights" movements in general, especially women's rights. The 1970s saw *Roe v. Wade*, the Equal Rights Amendment, and the antifeminist movement that defeated the amendment. The Christian Right arose in the form of figures like Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and James Dobson.

The Seventh-day Adventist position in these trends was ambivalent, but I suspect the turmoil over sexual liberalization and the demands of various movements for equality and recognition created a general background anxiety among Adventists, a sense of a world out of control in exactly those ways that good sexually restrained Seventh-day Adventists could not allow themselves.

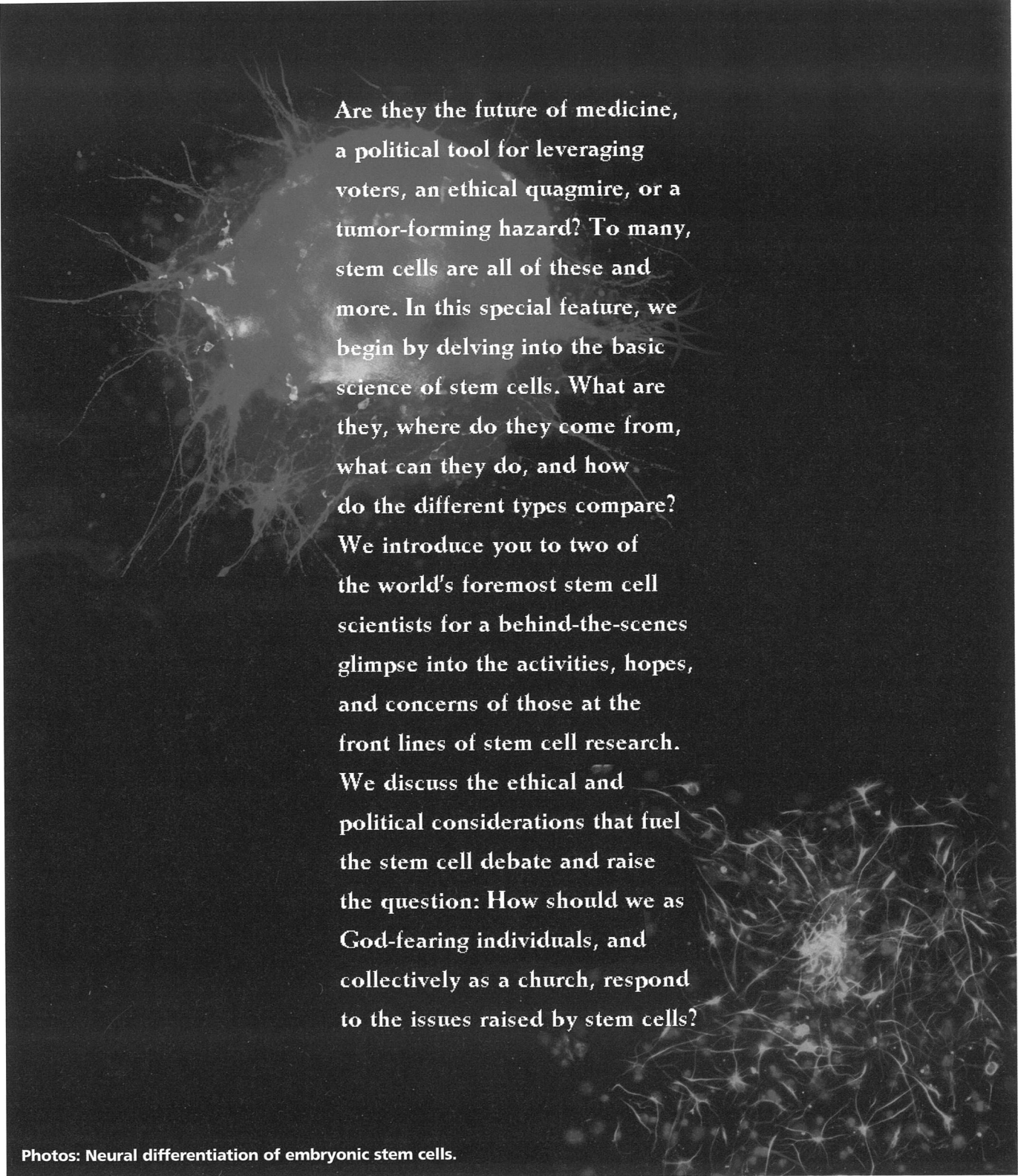
Another trend was the psychologization of faith and character. Psychology and religion have had a decades long love/hate relationship because both "provide concepts and technologies for the ordering of the interior life." Much of what we now find on the "spirituality and self-

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*Continued on page 57...*



# STEM CELLS



Are they the future of medicine, a political tool for leveraging voters, an ethical quagmire, or a tumor-forming hazard? To many, stem cells are all of these and more. In this special feature, we begin by delving into the basic science of stem cells. What are they, where do they come from, what can they do, and how do the different types compare? We introduce you to two of the world's foremost stem cell scientists for a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the activities, hopes, and concerns of those at the front lines of stem cell research. We discuss the ethical and political considerations that fuel the stem cell debate and raise the question: How should we as God-fearing individuals, and collectively as a church, respond to the issues raised by stem cells?

Photos: Neural differentiation of embryonic stem cells.

## The Promise of Stem Cell Research | BY E. ALBERT REECE

**Editor's note:** An unedited version of this presentation was delivered on January 10, 2008, as part of the Jack Provansha Lecture Series, which is sponsored by the Center for Christian Bioethics at Loma Linda University. The lecturer, E. Albert Reece, is vice-president for Medical Affairs at the University of Maryland, John R. and Akiko K. Bowers Distinguished Professor, and dean of the School of Medicine.

**T**onight I will try to address the lecture topic that was posed to me, which is human embryonic stem cell research. Can medicine live without it? Can we? I would like to cover some stem cell basics. I'm going to assume that the audience is varied and that people are here from different backgrounds and have different levels of appreciation, understanding, or expertise. So we'll do some stem cell basics, Stem Cell 101. Then I'll take an in-depth look at the human embryonic stem cell controversy, what's happening on both sides of the issues, in the press and elsewhere. I will address what the current state of the science is. Then I'll answer the issue that you've asked me to address, which is whether we can live without it. Hopefully, we'll be able to end on some common ground.

### Stem Cells 101

Let's start with stem cell lab basics. Stem cells are the primary original fundamental undifferentiated cells that eventually give rise to a host of other cells. They serve to replenish, restore, or renew other cells over time.

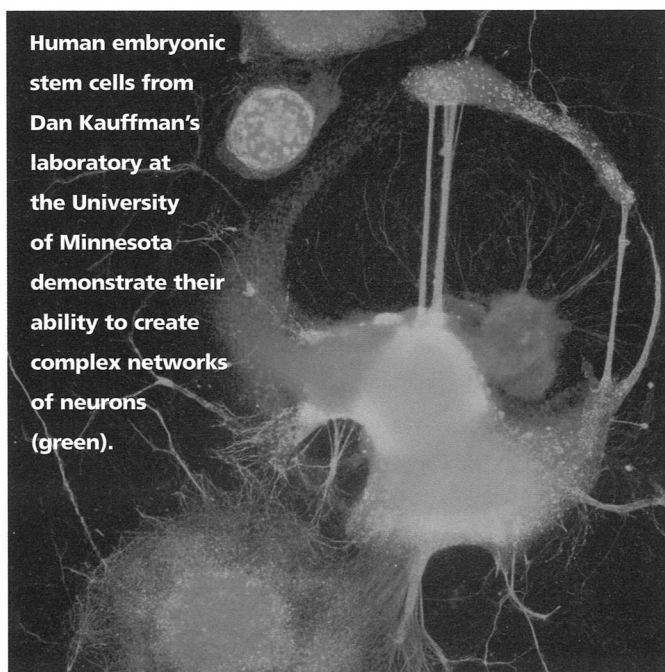
Stem cells are pluripotent; they can differentiate into a number of cell lines. As a result, bone marrow cells could be used to address leukemia, Parkinson's, or potentially Alzheimer's, or to repair heart muscle because of injury from microinfarctions. Potentially,

stem cells could also be used with pancreatic cells to address diabetes. We could even study the differentiation to prevent birth defects. These are just some of the potential applications of stem cells in terms of differentiation.

There are two main types of stem cells. One is obviously the human embryonic stem cell. This type is the one that creates a lot of controversy and discussion. The second is adult stem cells. Let's talk about the human embryonic stem cells first. These obviously are derived from human embryos, and they come primarily from leftover IVF embryos. These come into existence when couples who are infertile use reproductive technologies that result in extra embryos being created and stored.

After successful pregnancies, such couples are given three options. First, they have the option of saving the leftover embryos for use by themselves in the future.

**Human embryonic stem cells from Dan Kauffman's laboratory at the University of Minnesota demonstrate their ability to create complex networks of neurons (green).**



Second, they can store them for research purposes. Finally, they have the option of discarding them. This is the typical source for human embryonic stem cells.

The second major type of stem cell is the adult type. Cells of this kind are derived from adult tissues; they could come from the brain, heart, blood, or skin, for instance.

Now let's talk about different potential applications, their advantages and disadvantages. To begin, I have three terms to share with you, terms that we need to understand: totipotent, pluripotent, multipotent. The term *totipotent* basically describes the condition after the sperm and egg come together. This creates a zygote, which will go through two, four, or eight multiple stages of development or divisions. These cells are totipotent because after the zygote is formed and starts going through multiple divisions, it will eventually create a ball of cells—about sixteen—which is called the morula.

After several more stages, the morula starts to separate out to a ball of cells called the inner cell mass, which is separated from a rim of cells and is basically the remainder. The inner cell mass goes on to form the embryo, and the non-inner cell mass goes on to form the yolk sac or the placenta, the primitive placenta. So essentially those two sets of cells create either the embryo or the extra-embryonic component. Those are totipotent cells capable of going in either direction to form the embryo or the placenta.

The next word is *pluripotent*. Pluripotent cells are basically offspring, descendants of the totipotent cells that can differentiate into cell lines, endoderm, mesoderm, and ectoderm. The third term is *multipotent*. This is important because multipotent cells are basically progenitor cells, cells that can differentiate into other cells. Some examples include early progenitor blood cells that can differentiate into a variety of blood cells but can't differentiate into muscle cells, or early progenitor muscle cells that can differentiate into a variety of muscle cells, but can't differentiate into blood cells or anything else.

Imagine starting with a single cell that divides then forms the morula. By about day six in humans, we have the blastocyst. At that point, the inner cell mass is separated from the rim of cells. This is the stage when the embryo would be implanted in the uterine cavity. If you take the inner cell mass and put it in a Petri dish, it would expand and potentially form various cell lines.

So what are the advantages of using human embryonic

stem cells? Why don't we use adult stem cells? Here are some advantages. Not only are embryonic stem cells easy to grow in cell culture, they're also very flexible and can go into a lot of different cell lines. Also, the likelihood of them being rejected immunologically is very low because they're rather naïve in their immunogenicity.

Keep in mind that the antigens are laid down around fifteen weeks in the human embryo. Hence, the likelihood of rejection is very low. Furthermore, they can be maintained for long periods in cell culture, they are a potentially unlimited source of all types of clinically relevant cells, and they're abundant. Right now, there are probably half a billion embryos stored in freezers throughout the United States. So potentially a lot are available.

What are the disadvantages of using human embryonic stem cells? If the cells are made by IVF, there's a low potential for something called graft versus host rejection, in which the recipient and the donor have basically different antigenic profiles. This is basically a mismatch in the antigen profiles of recipient and donor. It is also difficult sometimes to control differentiation in such cells. Differentiation may occur in certain cell lines, but not in others, which requires the use of certain growth factors added to the culture medium to force differentiation in one area. For example, some may be forced to become cardiac cells instead of muscle cells. Another disadvantage is the controversy that surrounds such research.

## Controversy

In 2002, the Pew Foundation did a survey that asked the question, Do you support federal research funding being used for human embryonic stem cell research? At that time, 25 percent of the population in the United States said we should fund such research using federal dollars. About 75 percent thought we should not.

The survey also asked another question: What is more important, should we research human embryonic stem cells potentially to save lives, or should we not tamper with human embryos, despite the fact that doing so might result in helping other lives? The foundation directed this question to secular Americans, mainline Protestants, Catholics, and Evangelicals.

Well, about 25 percent of the Evangelicals said that research was more important, and the percentage has increased over time. Catholics started at 45 percent in

2002, then went up to about 65 percent, and more recently have come down a bit. Percentages for secular Americans and Mainline Protestants are also going up.

What I take from this survey is that education and exposure to more information appears to produce greater acceptance of research with human embryonic stem cells; it becomes more acceptable. However, the controversy continues in various areas—in the media, in the bioethics community, in the religious community, in the scientific community. So let's look at some controversy.

In 2001, President George W. Bush decided that the federal government should restrict federal funding for human embryonic stem cell research. He essentially said that funding could be used only for stem cells that existed at that time. These have been dubbed the so-called Presidential Lines. Essentially, this decision permits any kind of stem cell research, but only on these particular lines. Since 2001, many attempts have been made to bypass or circumvent this decision.

For example, in order for me to do stem cell research in my institution we've had to create a separate set of laboratories renovated with our own internal funds—every pipette, centrifuge, and reagent must be bought with local university funds; they cannot be bought with federal dollars. Everything and everybody needs to be totally sterile of federal dollars. It becomes very cumbersome to do that, provided one can work with non-presidential lines.

Since President Bush's edict, attempts have been made to find other sources of funding. California has led this effort, and it plans to invest three billion dollars over ten years in nonfederal funds to support stem cell research. New York has followed and plans to spend two billion dollars over ten years.

### **Current Status of the Science**

While we wait for the controversy to settle down, go away, or maybe heat up, most of the stem cell research in the United States is currently focused on adult stem cell work. The major tools that we have in our arsenals are in the newly emerging field of what we call regenerative medicine.

For those who may not be familiar with how this works, within bone marrow for example, there are the progenitor red cells that can be harvested. Progenitor red cells can go on to form multipotent, so they

become other cells in that red cell line. Then we have adult stem cells, which tend to become the same cells I mentioned before. They can be coaxed into becoming other types of cells, too. Sometimes you need to add a growth factor to have them go in the right direction. These cells typically start out and generate a series of red cells or muscle cells, as the case might be.

We can use these cells therapeutically. We harvest the stem cells and put them in a petri expander, which enables us to use them in a variety of transplants. They might be used for a transplant with a leukemia patient or with patients who have multiple myeloma, which is a bone marrow cancer. These cells then generate other cells, which are passed back into the individual. This is clearly an effective way to use adult stem cells therapeutically.

What are some of the advantages of using adult stem cells? Well, organ tissue rejection is unlikely if a patient receives their own stem cells. Also, these kinds of cells are easy to find, as with blood cells. These are partially specialized, and they require less coaxing because they are partially specialized, so they can generate their own offspring cells rather easily.

What are some of the disadvantages? Adult stem cells usually have a shorter life expectancy. Furthermore, they're difficult to isolate and extract, and sometimes there is limited flexibility in the types of cells they can produce. In addition, they may not be so common; they may become scarce as people get older. There are fewer stem cells in our bodies as we age and they are harder to harvest, which makes it difficult to generate multiple cell lines.

So here's a question: How far along are we? I don't think we're ready for you to donate two stem cells one day and use them for therapy the morning after. But we certainly are making significant progress using adult stem cells in certain cases. I think the news is actually getting better and we're almost there. Adult stem cells are already being used to cure certain illnesses.

Adult stem cells are being very effective in treating certain cancers. There are also some other future potential uses on the horizon, for example, with diabetes. In fact, at one of the stem cell meetings I recently attended, a presenter told us he was doing some work with ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease. That is very exciting because there's just no other therapy out there right now. This is new. It's not well-published or well-



researched, but we are pleased to know about folks out there who are beginning to do some work with a disease as devastating as ALS.

The most recent breakthrough, as of November last year, was news that scientists have used ordinary skin cells to take on what they describe as chameleon-like powers. These have been termed *induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells*. Essentially, this is a way for the scientists to have cells potentially return to embryonic stem cell status in the laboratory. Two separate investigators on two separate continents have corroborated this discovery.

This is exciting, though, in fact, we're not sure whether these are truly identical human embryonic stem cells. They certainly have been restored and characterized as stem cells, but whether or not they are equivalent to embryonic stem cells remains to be worked out. Nevertheless this is very exciting. It's exciting that we can now produce at least two studies indicating that use of plain old skin cells would permit us to produce embryonic stem cells and circumvent the controversy that has swirled around us.

If the work is corroborated, such an approach would have great potential. The availability, accessibility, and the noncontroversial potential is extraordinary.

But the news gets better. In December 2007, the

*Washington Times* and *Washington Post* reported that scientists can cure mice of sickle cell anemia using stem cell techniques. This is the first direct proof or report of an actual curing. This is an experimental study, but nevertheless it suggests great potential.

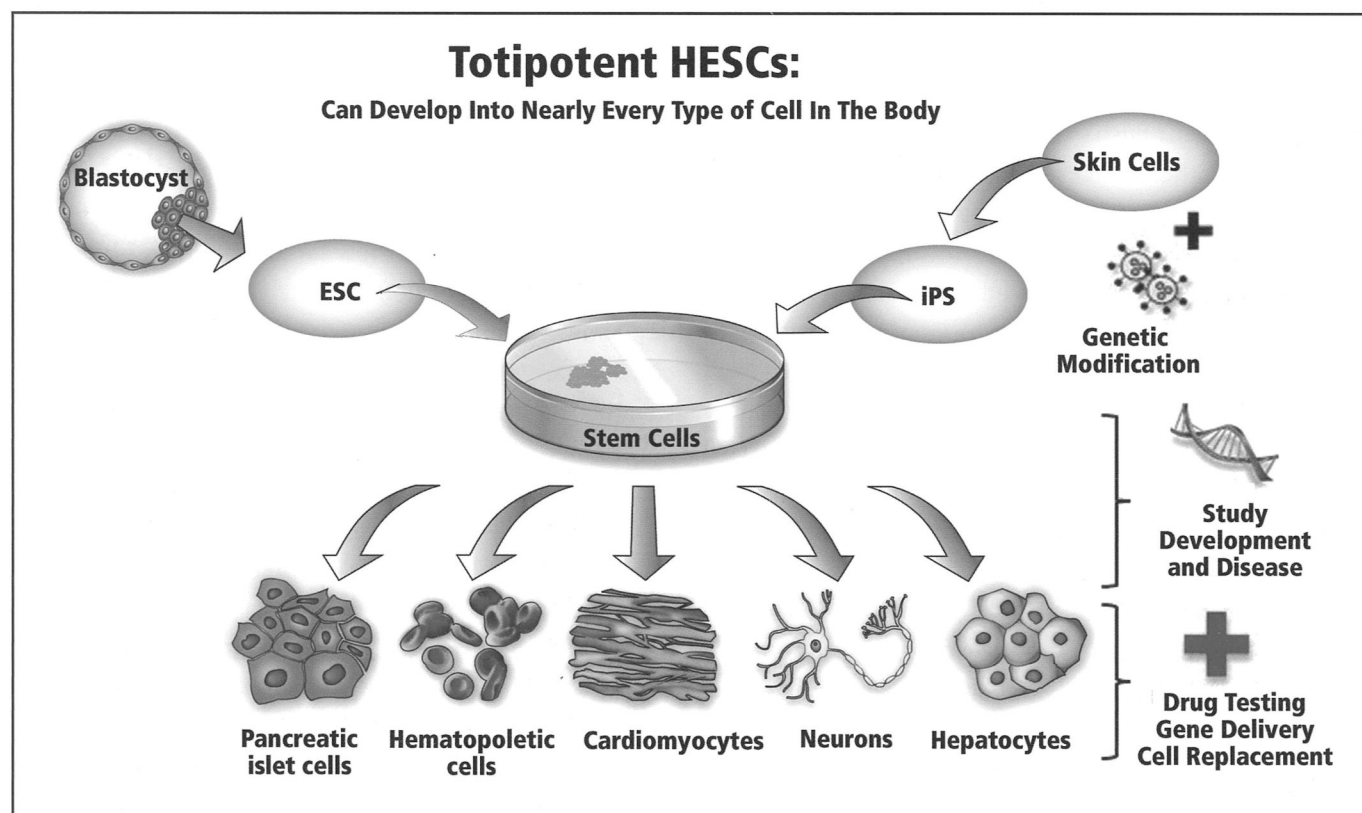
There are certain caveats you should consider before you run out and try to buy some stem cells from your own body and apply them personally. Skin cells are reprogrammed and the vectors being used are viruses. This sometimes has the potential of increasing risk of cancer.

Another consideration is that we're not certain whether these derived stem cells or stem cell lines are identical to genuine human embryonic stem cells.

However, these caveats should not dampen the excitement. Instead, it basically says that we need precise scientific definition, and we need to characterize these reprogrammed stem cells to ensure that they are not only equivalent, but also identical to the human embryonic stem cells.

## The Promise

With these thoughts in mind, I can answer the question I was originally asked to address: Can we live without human embryonic stem cell research? My



answer would be possibly, but not yet. We won't know until we understand much more about human embryonic stem cells

So why do we study human embryonic stem cells? They are the gold standard right now. We still don't understand many aspects of what makes them so unique, but they're particularly valuable for studying some diseases, they offer a good animal model, and they provide a good cell model.

Something else is also important. If we postponed doing stem cell research or decided not to do it at all, there would be opportunity costs. Some people would be sick or even die that could have been helped; there would be increased suffering for patients and their families. There would also be an economic cost for caring for sick or dying people who could have been helped.

Since this is an Adventist institution, I want to ask what the Seventh-day Adventists say about this issue. They typically pride themselves for thinking independently, I made a similar statement once at Georgetown, which is a Catholic university. Most of the people there are not Catholics, but when I enter that campus I know I'm in a Catholic university. Adventists are a bit more subtle.

On April 2 and 3, 2008, the General Conference convened an ad hoc committee in which I joined with some of my colleagues to find out what Adventists should say on the subject of stem cell research. Some important principles emerged from this meeting but they never became an official statement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and thus were never published or distributed as such.

What the ad hoc committee proposed was very reasonable—that stem cell research and stem cell evaluation should be based on seven core principles: (1) respect for the gift of human life, (2) protection of human dignity, (3) advancement in human health, (4) alleviation of human suffering, (5) truthfulness, (6) personal autonomy, and (7) justice.

We then decided to operationalize these recommendations into practical guidelines that we hoped the Church would support. We proposed first that human embryos should not be created for the express or sole purpose of human embryonic stem cell research. Second, we suggested that stem cell research is ethically justifiable if stem cells are derived without compromis-



ing the well-being of the embryo or the fetus, Thirdly, we proposed that the destruction of embryos for the sole purpose of research not be encouraged or justified.

Last, we acknowledged that there are settings in which embryonic stem cell research is being conducted in secular places all over the world. We then proposed that under those circumstances—regardless of who the scientists are—research should be conducted under the strictest ethical guidelines and with oversight provided by an embryonic stem cell oversight committee. We felt that stem cell research is ethically justifiable if the cells are derived without compromising the well-being on the embryo.

Not long ago, a paper came out in *Science* by the Laser Group, a biotech company. Laser described a pre-genetic diagnosis, in which the company basically removed one cell out of the multiple cell stage and used that cell to try to expand it and get stem cells from it. Basically, Laser showed that this could be done by

**Scientists performing research on human embryonic stem cells derived after August 9, 2001, must frequently work in segregated laboratories with separate equipment and supplies to prove that no federal money is being spent on the new cells.**

extracting one of the cells of the embryonic, the morula for example, to create a stem cell line.

Laser was criticized rather heavily because people took its work out of context. What the group tried to do was to show simply that the procedure could be done, not that it actually had been done. In any case, Laser was criticized for destroying the remainder of the cells.

The discoveries keep coming. On January 11, 2008, the *Washington Post* reported that scientists in Massachusetts have created several colonies of human embryonic

stem cells without harming the human embryos from which they had been taken. This is the latest in a series of recent advances that could spread development of stem cell based therapies for a variety of diseases. I believe that the recommendations we offered the General Conference were right on target.

## Conclusion

In summary, I hope I have shown that there clearly are benefits for human embryonic stem cells in medicine,

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# Guidelines for Stem Cell Research at Loma Linda University

## Ethical Concerns

Current discussions about embryonic stem cells focus on a fundamental question: When does human life begin?

Some Christians, basing their views on the creation story (Gen. 2:7), believe that a human life begins with the first breath after birth. On this view, a new human life begins at the time of birth. Research with embryonic stem cells can obviously be accommodated within this position.

Other Christians believe that a new and unique person comes into existence at conception. They point to biblical evidence that prenatal life is valued (Ps. 139:13). This view often leads to the conclusion that, from the "moment" of conception, an embryo deserves the protection accorded to any other human being. From this perspective, no potential benefit to other humans could justify the destruction of a human embryo.

Still other Christians hold that the moral status of prenatal life develops gradually through many important stages, in a crescendo building to birth. Scripture speaks, for example, of having been "knit together" in the womb (Ps. 139:13), thus indicating an awareness of a developmental process. And the legal status assigned to prenatal life differed from that given to established personal life (Ex. 21:22–25). According to the developmental view, implantation is of crucial importance because further progress is impossible if an embryo does not become implanted in a uterus. Another important time is the onset of organized neurological activity. Viability, when the fetus is capable of sustained life outside the womb, is still another significant step in prenatal development. While the developmental view may include the belief that early embryos have human potential and possess symbolic moral value that is worthy of respect, it may also allow embryo research after taking into account both the stage of embryo development and the purpose of the research.

## Principles

As an integral part of their distinctive mission of faith, Seventh-day Adven-

tists seek to preserve human health and wholeness. When confronted with complex ethical questions, Adventists look for guidance from the Bible.

The following ethical principles are drawn from Scripture and are intended to guide decisions regarding research involving embryonic stem cells.

1. **Respect for the gift of human life.** Our Creator is the Giver and Sustainer of human life (Gen. 1:30, 2:7; Ps. 36:9; Acts 17:24–28). The Bible prescribes protection of human beings, and God holds them accountable for taking the life of another (Gen. 9:5, 6; Ex. 20:13; Deut. 24:16; Prov. 6:16, 17; Rom. 13:8–10). Although we may disagree about the exact time when human life begins, Scripture portrays the Creator as involved in the development of human life during pregnancy (Ps. 139:13) and stipulates penalties for those who would negligently injure a developing fetus (Ex. 21:22–25).<sup>1</sup> This means that, once pregnancy has begun, the developing gift of prenatal life must be given serious moral consideration.
2. **Protection of human dignity.** Human beings were created in God's own image (Gen. 1:26, 27) and thus were given personal dignity. Care must be exercised to avoid actions that would threaten or diminish the personal dignity of human beings. With reference to embryonic stem cell research, this means that embryos should not be created for purposes of research or for commercial gain.
3. **Advancing human health.** Human beings are multidimensional units comprised of physical, mental, and spiritual components. Humans can become host to the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 3:14–19; Eph. 5:30–32) which permits them to become reflectors of God's character while remaining mortal. This indwelling follows the awareness of God and a conscious desire to yield to His influence. Independent life commences at birth, matures with aging and reaches the highest degree of wholeness when the Holy Spirit indwells the life. In light of this belief Adventists promote the health of all with the objec-



and this is extremely promising. There clearly are controversial areas both for moral and ethical reasons. I believe that we are making progress in this field and that the level of controversy will get less and less as we potentially derive stem cells from non-embryonic sources. If the report I just cited is correct, we will also be able to obtain stem cells without jeopardizing the well-being of other embryonic cells. Already, physicians are applying adult stem cell advances in treating illnesses or injury in the new field of regenerative medicine.

I believe that some day we will be able to reprogram adult cells to become pluripotent, and that these will potentially take the place of human embryonic stem cells. We also need to be realistic and acknowledge that at this time there may, in fact, be instances where research using human embryonic stem cells may be warranted so long as some of the recommendations we have made are taken seriously, adhered to, and applied appropriately. Whatever is done, it should be done under the strictest ethical guidelines and oversight. ■

tive of obtaining the highest degree of wholeness possible

- 4.1 **Preventing and alleviating human suffering.** God's plan for human beings includes a growing understanding and appreciation of the wonders of His creation (Ps. 8:3-9; 139:1-6; 13-16; Matt. 6:26-29). Efforts to understand the basic structures of life through careful research should be encouraged, especially when such investigation holds the promise of serving human health. Christians accept the responsibility to prevent suffering and preserve or restore human health whenever feasible (Luke 9:1, 2; Acts 10:38). Because it may be possible to use stem cells in the restoration of health, ethical research in this area is worthy of pursuit.
5. **Truthfulness.** Christians favor truthfulness and openness (Prov. 12:22; Eph. 4:15). Thus research with embryonic stem cells should be governed by clear presentations of the truth about the proposed research, without exaggeration of the potential benefits or research's success.
6. **Justice.** Scripture teaches that people should be treated fairly (Deut. 10:17-20; Amos; Micah 6:8; Matt. 5:43-48). If benefits result from stem cell research, these should be made available on the basis of medical needs and not on the basis of perceptions of social worth.

### Specific Provisions

Investigators contemplating embryonic stem cell research or providing support services to such research are expected to abide by the following provisions which flow from the stated principles and the current (February, 2008) state of research technology:

1. Research will not be conducted for the purpose of producing human clones.
2. Human embryos will not be created for the purpose of producing embryonic stem cells.
3. Human embryonic stem cell research will be considered when the stem cells are derived by means that do not compromise the well-being of a viable embryo or fetus.

4. While the destruction of human embryos for the purpose of research is not encouraged, research with cells derived from embryos that would otherwise be destroyed will be considered.

**Note:** Currently, the embryonic stem cell preparations available for study were derived, with informed consent, from excess embryos remaining after infertility procedures. The donors elected not to use them or to allow others to use them for reproductive purposes. Consequently, their fate would have been indefinite storage or destruction. While intentional destruction of human embryos for research is not condoned, a decision not to use these "abandoned" embryos would have been equivalent to their destruction.

Their developmental stage corresponds to that of a naturally generated embryo two or three days before implantation in the uterus. They have no differentiated structures. About half of natural embryos at that stage do not survive to term. Indeed, many contraceptives act by preventing them from implanting in the uterus.

While adult (multipotent) stem cells are now available, their potential is currently much more restricted. Until cells with equivalent properties are available, we will consider research using embryonic stem cell preparations derived elsewhere from early embryos, after all other options have been exhausted.

### Footnote

1. Seventh-day Adventists have set forth principles for the protection of prenatal life in the statement "Guidelines on Abortion" intended to provide guidance when termination of an established pregnancy is under consideration. The statement was approved at the Annual Council of the General Conference, October 12, 1992. ■

Excerpted from the LLU February 2008 Research Affairs Document Stem Cell Research.



# Conversations With Researchers

## Why We Need to Study Embryonic as Well as Adult Stem Cells

TERRY BURNS INTERVIEWS CATHERINE VERFAILLIE



Catherine Verfaillie, M.D., earned her medical degree from the Catholic University of Leuven, where she is now director of the Stem Cell Institute and one of the world's leading experts in adult stem cell research.

Previously at the University of Minnesota, she founded the nation's first stem cell institute and was respon-

sible for identifying multipotent adult progenitor cells (MAPCs), the first adult stem cell type shown to generate all major classes of tissues and cell types. Among her numerous honors, she was named by *U.S. News and World Report* as one of the Ten Innovators of 2001.

**Burns:** *As one renowned for your work with adult stem cells, have you had any personal experience in the political debate about adult and embryonic stem cells?*

**Verfaillie:** Yes, especially when I was in the United States, less so in Europe. I actually testified for the commission on stem cells put together by President George W. Bush during his first four years in office. It was a fairly conservative committee that wanted me to say essentially that I thought adult stem cells could do everything that embryonic stem

cells could do, which I refused to say.

My research on adult stem cells has been misused a lot. People put words in my mouth using my research to support their arguments against embryonic stem cells. There are huge reasons why we have to study embryonic stem cells as well as adult stem cells.

**Burns:** *What do you realistically think stem cells will or will not be able to accomplish for medicine in the future?*

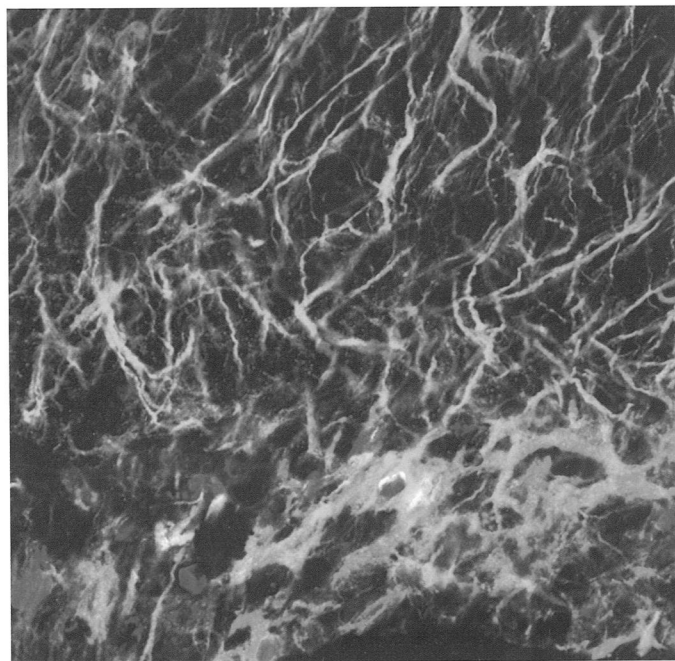
**Verfaillie:** What is in the newspapers is not exactly what I think that stem cells might or might not be able to accomplish. The newspapers never talk about using stem cells to understand human development; the newspapers never talk about stem cells to develop medications; the newspapers don't talk about using stem cells to understand disease.

Stem cells allow us to assess the toxicity of medications on various types of human cells without using animals. If you were to make stem cells from embryos or individuals with genetic diseases, you would have human models to understand disease that are not currently available. I actually think these will be some of the biggest pay-offs of stem cell research—not just taking the cells, culturing them, expanding them—making all sorts of things out of them and putting them back in.

In terms of specific diseases with which I think stem cell research may pay off within the next one to two decades, I think Type 1 diabetes is probably very high on the list—the advantage being that you don't have to integrate the cells in an organ. I know people talk about treating Alzheimer's and all kinds of diseases with stem cells, but brains are pretty complicated.

I'm aware of one recent study that came out suggesting that stem cells aided in Alzheimer's disease, but the researchers didn't actually

**Some studies have argued that adult stem cells are almost as powerful as embryonic stem cells. However, many of these studies have suffered from methodological flaws. Verfaillie's lab showed that BrdU (red), a marker used to track transplanted stem cells, can be released from transplanted cells that die. The label is then picked up by normal dividing brain cells, making them look like the transplanted cells.**



replace anything. The approach in the study was actually a way of getting growth factors into a person, which is probably going to help a number of diseases, chiefly diseases associated with hypoxia, I think. I doubt whether we are going to be able to make new kidneys, new livers, new whatever.

Can we fix hearts? Through the mechanism of growth factors, probably Yes. By replacing the eight or nine square centimeters of heart tissue lost in an infarct. I think it is going to be a while. We can't even fix an infarct yet in a mouse heart, and it isn't even ten square centimeters in size. So I think it's going to take some time.

I think there are certain diseases that stem cells could successfully address. If you think about the brain, maybe Parkinson's, but it's not all that simple to get the cells to do what you want them to do and not do what you don't want them to do. That's why I think that one or two decades from now the understanding of development and disease, and using them to develop drugs, will pay off much faster than simple cell-based therapies.

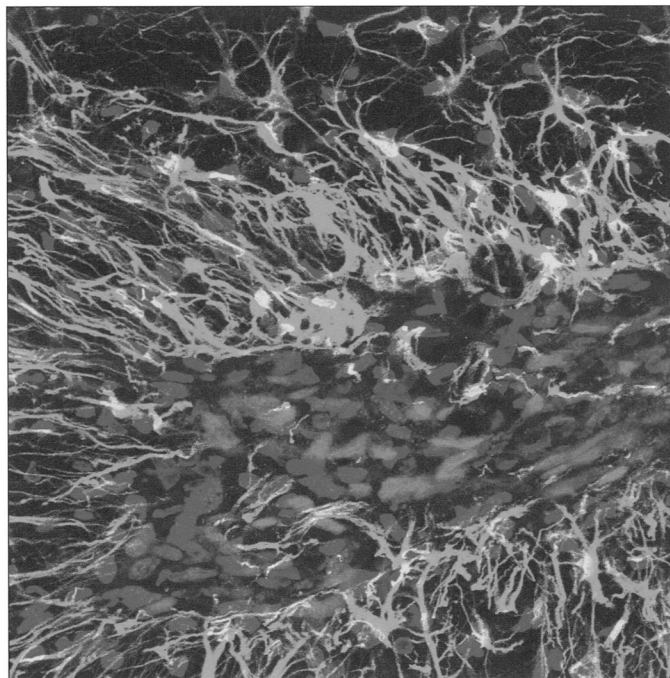
**Burns:** *What are your thoughts about reports that certain ESCs may soon go to clinical trials?*

**Verfaillie:** I think we know little about how to program a cell, little about how to fit cells back into animals or humans, even in areas where there has been an enormous amount of work. If you look at what has been accomplished in mouse models of cardiac disease for instance, it's pretty close to zero. There are a couple of groups that can now make cells survive a little bit after transplantation, but they do not connect to the other cardiac cells.

In fact, the results of using ESCs or cardiomyocytes are no better than putting some totally unrelated cell type into the heart. You get a little bit of benefit, but it's not as though the cells are functionally integrating into the diseased heart, which is ultimately what you want.

I think we might not be too far from producing pancreatic beta cells, and that might allow movement forward for diabetes treatment. One could theoretically put the cells in an encapsulated type of system under the skin. So if a

**One challenge of transplantation therapy is to ensure that cells survive after transplantation. This picture shows reactive astrocyte (green), responding to transplanted cells (blue).**



problem occurs, it could always be taken back out. The person won't die if you take the cells out because you can always put that person back on insulin.

So if you need to stratify risks, that seems to be one of the areas that actually might be less risky to start trying to figure out how dangerous it is actually to take embryonic stem cell-derived cells back in vivo.

**Burns:** *The idea of "therapeutic cloning," and more recently iPS cells and adult stem cells, have all been suggested as ways to attain patient-specific stem cell lines that will not be rejected. What are your thoughts on these approaches?*

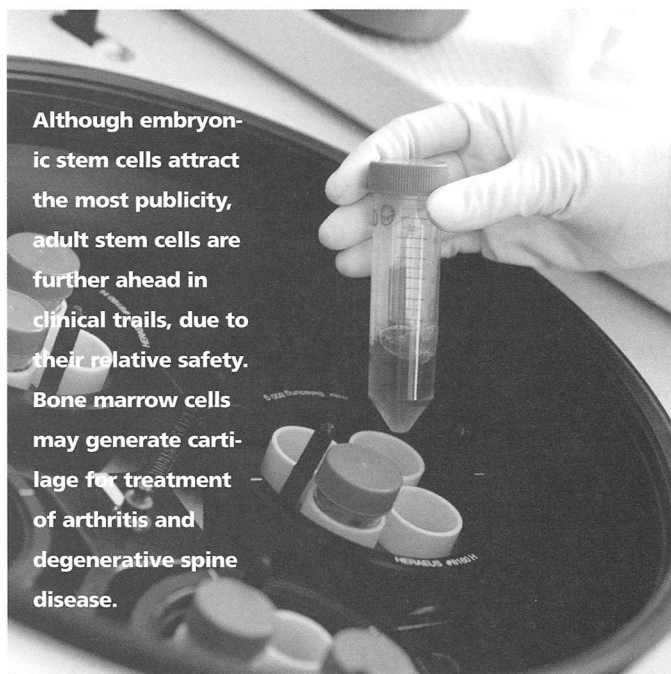
**Verfaillie:** There are two ethical problems with therapeutic cloning. Firstly, you make an embryo, the equivalent of a blastocyst, that could theoretically be used for procreation. But this is not going to happen tomorrow since it's so hard to do in mice. Secondly, you also need a huge number of unfertilized eggs, and women are not completely happy to go through hormonal stimulation just to donate eggs.

So far, it's not totally clear if human iPS cells are equivalent to human embryonic stem cells, though I don't think it's going to take all that long to prove beyond any doubt that you can make something equivalent to ESCs. Also, there are lots of different versions of adult stem cells with varying degrees of pluripotency.

From a practical standpoint, though, I ultimately don't think that stem-cell based therapies will use

patients' own cells. Let's say twenty years from now that we have figured out exactly how to put cells in the brain and how to get all of the connections correct. How many people in the world have Parkinson's? Making each of them their own cell line today costs something like 150 thousand dollars to be made at clinical grade quality. I doubt that any health insurance could actually pay for that.

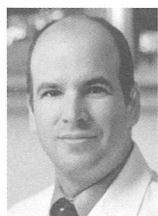
It's different if you think about diseases that strike young childhood, where I think an investment of 200 thousand dollars up front is not a major problem. For most of the diseases we are talking about, diseases of aging, I don't think you could pay for it. That doesn't get talked about often, but I still think it's a huge problem. ■



Although embryonic stem cells attract the most publicity, adult stem cells are further ahead in clinical trails, due to their relative safety. Bone marrow cells may generate cartilage for treatment of arthritis and degenerative spine disease.

## In the Stem Cell Laboratory

TERRY BURNS INTERVIEWS DAN KAUFFMAN



Dan Kaufman, earned his M.D. and Ph.D. degrees from Mayo Medical School, then completed residency and fellowship training at the University of Wisconsin. While in Wisconsin, he worked in the laboratory of Jamie Thompson, founder of research on human embryonic stem cells. A pioneer in the field of blood

cell development, Kaufman determined how to generate blood cells from human embryonic stem cells (ESCs). He is now a faculty member of the Stem Cell Institute at the University of Minnesota.

**Burns:** *Can you tell us a little about your research interests?*

**Kaufman:** First, we are interested in using embryonic stem cells to understand blood cell development. People study how organisms develop in mice, zebra fish, fruit flies, and so forth, but human ESCs provide a human system to understand how systems develop. Our interest is to understand from these cells, which can make anything, how we can use these to understand blood development. We want to know what the genes are that regulate it, the extracellular stimuli, the growth factors, the proteins, and the cell-bound factors that regulate the development of blood cells.

Second, and what attracts the most attention, are possible therapeutics. For example, we are trying to characterize the development of hematopoietic stem cells from ESCs, which can give rise to all the other blood cells. More recently, we have been working on the production of a type of lymphocyte, called natural killer cells, which are part of your immune system and are known to kill tumor cells. We are actually able to produce these NK cells from ESCs that seem as good or better than other sources of NK cells at killing tumor cells. As such, stem cells may provide therapies for cancer.

**Burns:** *What are the main challenges that we need to overcome before stem cells can realistically be used for therapy?*

**Kaufman:** It depends on the disease. For spinal cord injury, which will probably be the first human ESC-based therapy, the challenges are fewer. It's a focal lesion, it's a limited number of cells, and if you regain even a small amount of function you can make a big difference to patients. You don't really have to make a home run. They have methods to make the neurons or oligodendrocytes do this, and issues like scale up are not quite so much of an issue.

If you think about diabetes or blood diseases or things like that, where you need perhaps millions or even billions of cells, you need to learn not how to make the cells, which is still a challenge, at least in an efficient manner, but how also to scale up to treat not only a mouse, which we can do now, but a whole person. In terms of tumor risk, it's a risk-benefit analysis, where the risk is very low and the benefit is very great, but it's a problem that we can deal with.

**Burns:** *What is it like trying to do embryonic stem cell research in a political environment that is not always supportive?*

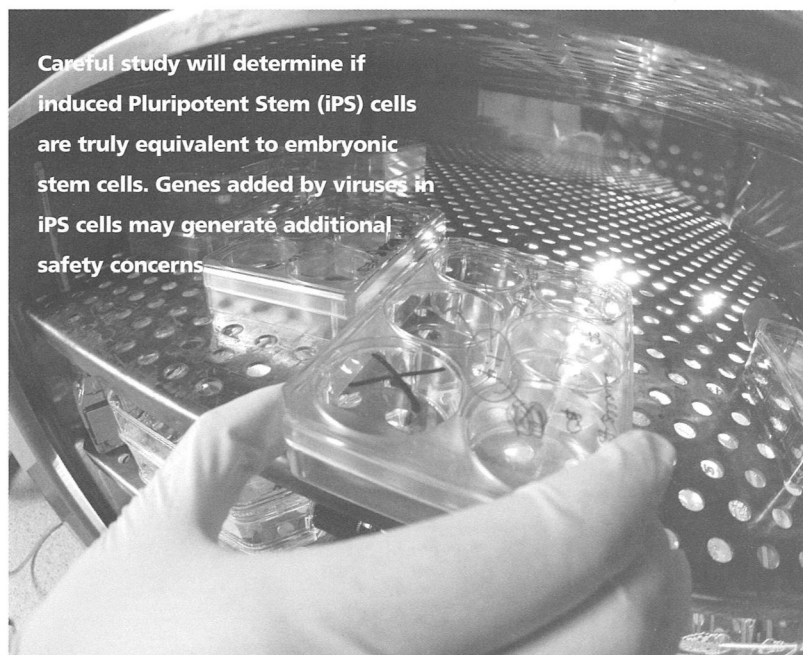
**Kaufman:** Well, there's a lot of confusion about what is permitted and what is not. The National Institutes of Health does fund human embryonic stem cells. George W. Bush supports human embryonic stem cells in the sense that he allows federal funding for such work with the caveat that we use only those lines derived before August 9, 2001. There's a lot we can do with these so-called "existing" federally approved cell lines.

There's a lot that we'd also like to do using newer cell lines that might be important for eventual therapeutic applications and developing disease models, but we are restricted. I guess I've done this long enough that I've become accustomed to the restrictions and understand that we just do what we can even though there's a lot that we can't.

Hopefully things will change—one way or another; we'll either get private funding for more research or it will be approved at the federal level. This is an interesting area to be in—it's cutting edge stuff. If you're doing research, this is where you want to be

**Burns:** *How would you answer someone who likes the idea of embryonic stem cell research but is concerned about the idea of destroying an embryo.*

**Kaufman:** The important thing to recognize is that all of these embryos come from IVF / fertility clinics. I explain to people that these embryos were created for



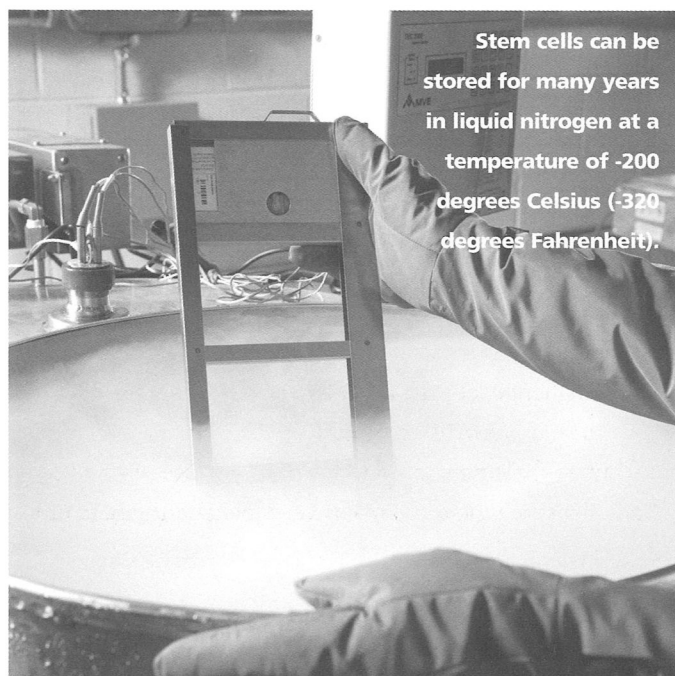
Careful study will determine if induced Pluripotent Stem (iPS) cells are truly equivalent to embryonic stem cells. Genes added by viruses in iPS cells may generate additional safety concerns

people who can't have children. This is a routine procedure. There are more than one million children who have been conceived through the process of IVF. It works and people don't complain about it, but during the process of IVF technicians always fertilize additional eggs and freeze them. If the couple wants more kids, they can go back to the freezer. But eventually, they have to figure out what to do with the extra embryos they haven't used.

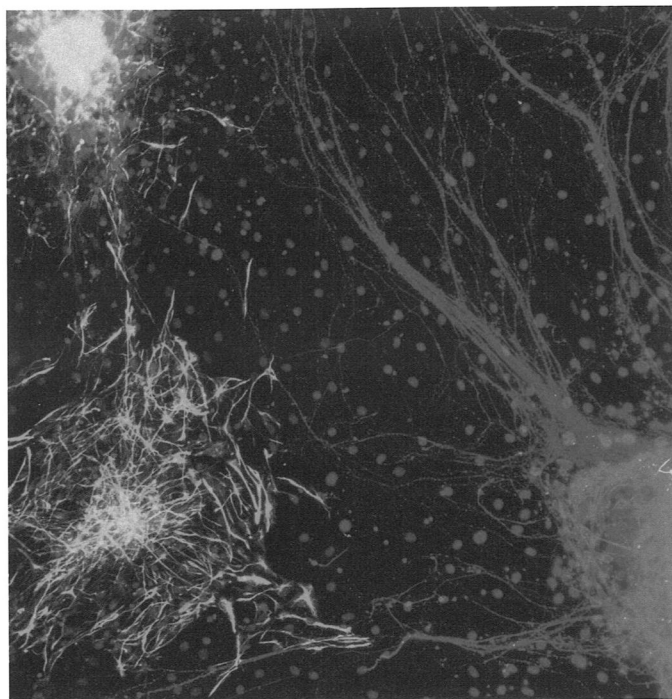
Usually, they will be discarded. However, instead of discarding the embryos, they could be used for stem cell research—for studying blood cell, nerve cell, liver, and pancreas development. The important thing to recognize is that if none of this human embryonic stem cell research went on the number of human embryos saved would be zero. They would all be destroyed anyway. So if you're not going to save anything, why not go ahead and use the embryos to come up with potential therapies and understand developmental processes?

**Burns:** *Why do you think there is such opposition to embryonic stem cell research?*

**Kaufman:** It's politics. People want to stay in power, so they confuse others and use fear to retain their power. It is amazing how this happens. Most people who take the time to learn about embryonic stem cell research understand what is happening and are very supportive. If you look at the national surveys, more than 60 to 70







percent of the U.S. population supports stem cell research. I usually tell people that if you put them in a room with me for five minutes, that number goes up to about 95 percent.

Once I tell them what I just told you, people say "Oh, so what's the problem?" There really isn't a problem—it's just a matter of using confusion to gain votes. And it's not just stem cell research that's being used to do this. I just heard a discussion on National Public Radio this morning about global warming. Certain people are opposed to doing something about global warming because they think there's something wrong with the science. Well, the jury's not out; the scientists all agree. But for political reasons, some people want to make this a divisive issue.

There's really no one scientifically opposed to human embryonic stem cell research—it's all politics. I think that even the ethical arguments are pretty weak, unless you want to shut down the IVF clinics. I find it entirely consistent if people

**Left: Embryonic stem cells are very powerful, but can be difficult to control. Here identical embryonic stem cells generated completely different types of cells side-by-side in a dish. Below: Although embryonic stem cells can make functional neurons in a dish (red), it may take many more years before scientists will understand enough to help transplanted neurons recreate normal brain circuitry after stroke or other brain injury.**

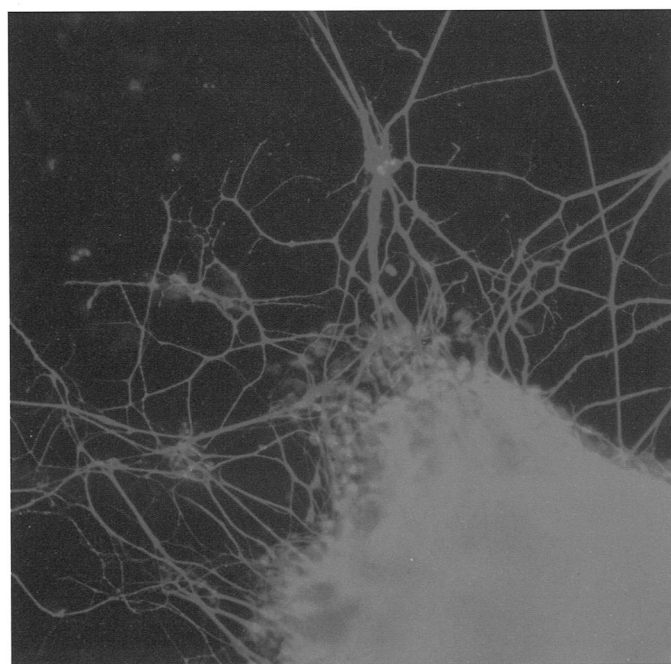
want to shut down the IVF clinics and prohibit hESC research. That's fine. But IVF works, and you're not going to deny that to people. I think that once the hESC therapies start working and we don't run into problems this research will be a great boon.

**Burns:** *What are your thoughts on induced Pluripotent Stem (iPS) cells?*

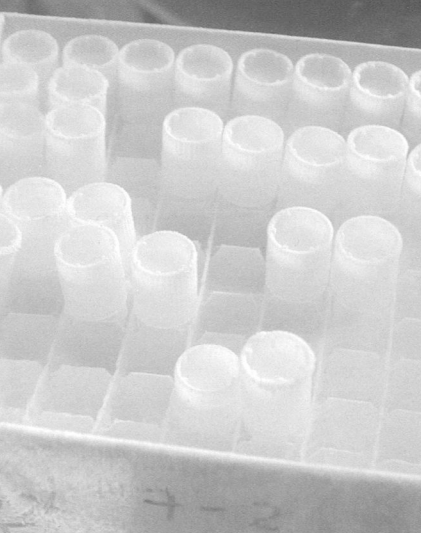
**Kaufman:** This involves turning fibroblast cells into ESCs using only four genes. This was done with mice in 2006 and is possible now with human cells. This is very interesting and I think of potentially great importance. The key issue now is to compare these cells head to head with hESCs. Embryonic stem cells really remain the gold standard.

People have been studying mouse ESC cells now for almost thirty years. We have been studying and comparing human ES to mouse ESCs since 1998, so human ESCs are now very well-accepted. Hundreds of labs around the world use them. I think there will be a lot of refinements to iPS cells in the next year or two. This is very interesting.

A lot of the people who were opposed to hES cells now say that research with iPS cells is acceptable. But you need to realize that the people who did the work were actually using hESCs to develop iPS cells. So without the hESCs we could not have arrived where we are. ■



Although stored embryonic stem cells remain available from prior to President Bush's 2001 cut-off date for funding, derivation methods have since improved. Recent techniques eliminate exposure to animal products making newer cells safer for clinical use.



## Stem Cells: The Road Forward

BY TERRY BURNS

Stem cells have experienced a tumultuous debut into public life. They have been acclaimed as the future of medicine and the solution for incurable disease, but denigrated for the murder of embryos, and funded to the tune of multiple billions of dollars by individual states. Yet President George W. Bush has twice vetoed federal funding on their research. They have proven simultaneously to be the poster child and the black sheep of regenerative medicine.

Such popularity and scrutiny have provoked a proliferation of speculation regarding their future utility. Some people have promised that, if supported, stem cells will allow paraplegics to walk again. Others have shown the striking image of beating heart cells in a dish and forecast a cure for heart attacks. Beyond the media hype, the glossy publicity images, and polarized debates, however, is a fledgling technology: a potential but unproven future leader, as yet in its formative years.

What does the future hold for these celebrated, yet microscopic icons of hope? What challenges must be faced, what hurdles overcome before the fruits of labor and sacrifice can be realized?

First, the public face of stem cells will predictably undergo continual change. Already, we have seen embryonic stem cells make everything from blood in a dish to neurons in rodent spinal cords, yet their embryonic origins remain a point of contention. We have seen adult stem cells catapulted from humble capabili-

ties to seemingly unlimited potential, only to be largely re-humbled again by exposure of flaws in experimental methodology. We have seen therapeutic cloning celebrated as a way to generate personalized stem cells, then crushed fraudulent claims unveiled in a setting of lingering ethical concerns.

Most recently, we have seen skin cells reprogrammed into the equivalent of embryonic stem cells (iPS cells). Perhaps tomorrow we will hear about the miraculous mobilization of innate, endogenous stem cells. After their brief moment of glory, each will most likely settle into the ever-expanding toolbox of scientists as they seek the most appropriate means to understand and treat a myriad of diseases.

Second, the fireworks of publicity will most likely decline to a sputtering fizzle. Maintaining sufficient interest to fund the maturing, yet less newsworthy technology may become the major challenge as stem cells from less ethically controversial sources are used more frequently and an increasingly educated and supportive public demand that even political opponents revise their agendas.

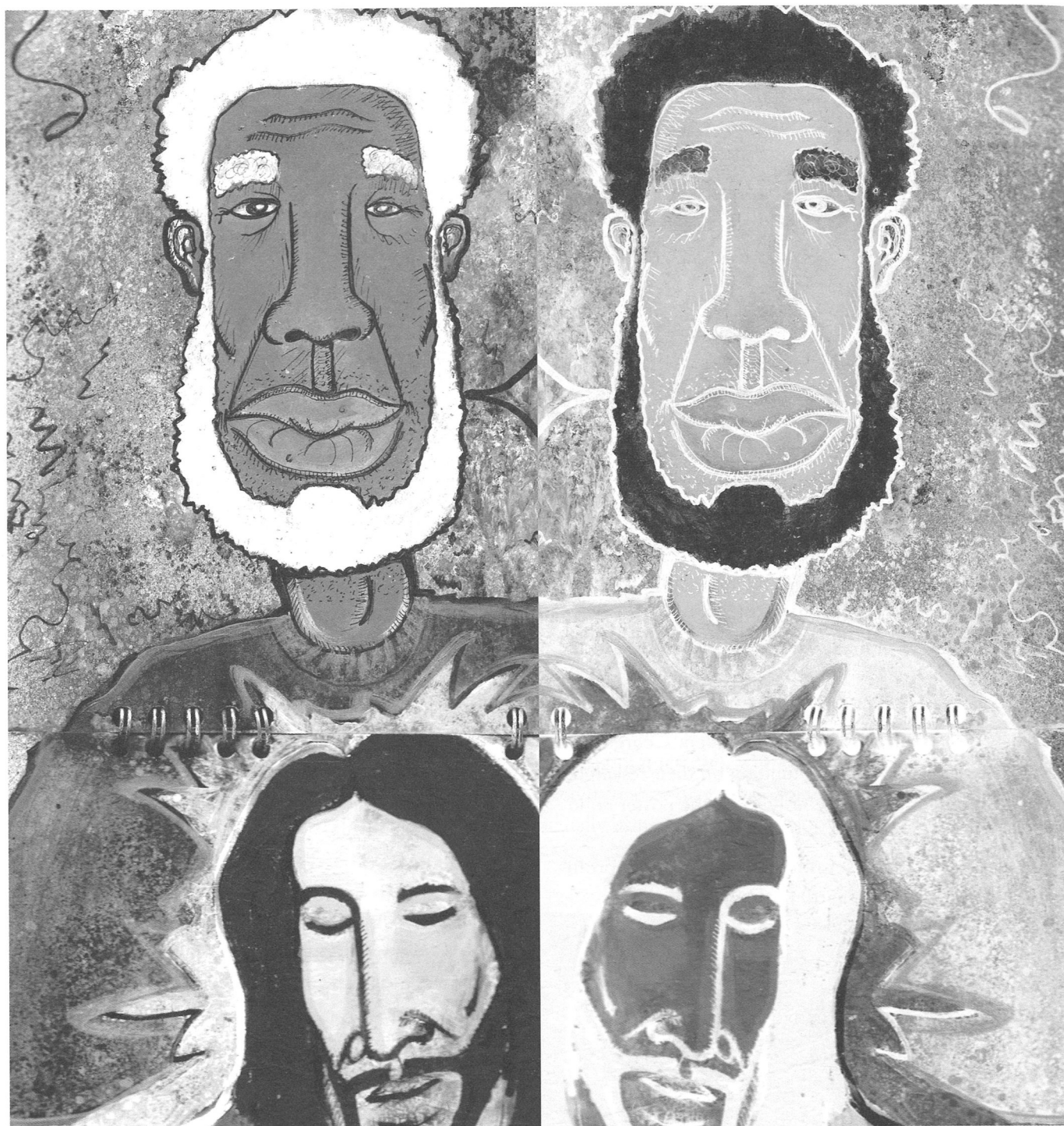
Third, after passing from the ethical spotlight, stem cells must maintain a good reputation. Pluripotent stem cells are defined by their capacity to form tumors called teratomas. As techniques evolve to make stem cells of all types more powerful, the risk of tumor formation will demand innovation, discipline, and rigor. Thus premature clinical trials without due precautions could have deadly consequences, both for patients and for the field.

Finally, stem cells will increasingly serve more functions than simple cell replacement. In addition to value as models to understand development, disease, and drug function, stem cells may carry therapeutic genes to regions of injury, secrete protective molecules, regulate endogenous regeneration, modulate the immunologic response, and provide targets for cancer.

Although the precise road ahead remains to be charted, stem cells will predictably represent a unique and exciting chapter in the history of medicine. ■

**Terry Burns**, Ph.D., is an M.D./Ph.D. student at the University of Minnesota. His research involves the study of stem cell behavior in animal models of stroke. Next year, he will begin a residency in neurosurgery.





# RACISM



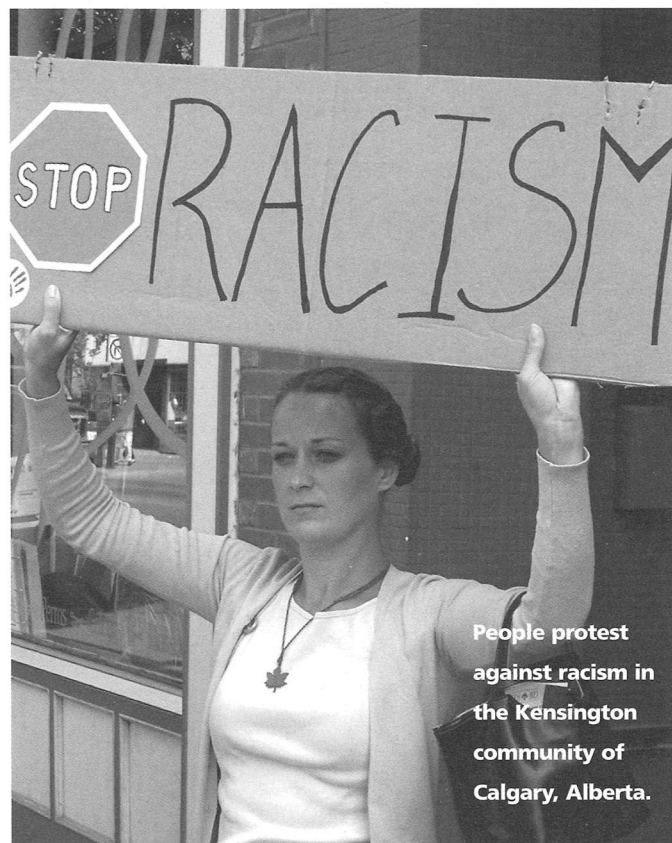
## Answering the Call for a Sacred Conversation on Race | BY MAURY JACKSON

**P**reachers and politicians: this is the undertone to the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign. Whether the pastor is Rick Warren, John Hagee, or Jeremiah Wright, people are tuning in to how much the present voice of the Christian pulpit influences the future voice of the bully pulpit. Somehow, in all this sound and fury the problem of race relations found a central voice. As a result of the dustup between one of the United Church of Christ's respected clergymen and Senator Barack Obama, one of its respected members, the denomination has called for an ongoing sacred conversation on race.

*On May 18, UCC pastors across the nation offered sermons on race as an important first step toward beginning a longer-term "sacred conversation on race" that will take place over the coming weeks and months in our churches and communities. Congregations are now encouraged to develop processes that will lead to productive dialogue and action. It's impossible for a sacred conversation on race to be a single-day event.'*

There have been many conversations on race but too few are designated "sacred." In the spirit of the United Church of Christ's audacious call, this essay seeks to help spark a similar conversation within Adventism. I write as a Christian clergyman whose religious heritage is shaped by the impulse toward justice rooted in both slave religion and the social action of the early Advent movement, as well as the ideas of Critical Race Theory developed in recent years. It is important to acknowledge this impulse. It gives readers permission to challenge my presuppositions as well as their own as we seek solutions to race problems.

This need became clear to me in a church history class I took in my undergraduate studies at La Sierra University



People protest against racism in the Kensington community of Calgary, Alberta.

ROBERT THIVIERGE FROM CALGARY, CANADACREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION SHAREALIKE

in the 1990s. Taught by Ronald Graybill, the class was considering issues of race when he told us about a year-end North American Division meeting where pastors and laity lamented that certain conferences of the Church, the regional conferences, were separated from white conferences on the basis of race. At that time, the North American Division president was Charles Bradford, the first African-American elected to the office.

As disapproval for this legacy was expressed, some committee members grew excited about the possibility of finding agreement. Graybill said that a group of white committee members assumed there was unanimous agreement on a solution and they suggested that the regional





A protest against racial discrimination in the 2008 Olympics, at the CNN Center in Beijing, China.

conferences join the other conferences in pursuit of unity. Bradford agreed that the separate conferences were embarrassments to the body of Christ and the mission of the Church. However, he proposed that the white conferences close down and join the regional conferences.

This story illustrates how, even in our attempts to have sacred conversations on race, we must be open to having our presuppositions challenged. Not everyone, even in church life, can have such a conversation.

### On the Race Part of the Conversation

As I join the race part of the sacred conversation on race, I acknowledge that black Americans are not the only ones who fall victim to the harms of social injustice. Nonetheless, racial discrimination remains a pressing moral issue for black Americans. I am convinced the "original sin" in the founding of the American Republic was imperial expansion via racial subjugation. As Cornel West puts it:

*The contingent origins of American democracy and the ignoble beginnings of imperial America go hand in hand. This dynamic and complex intertwining of racial subjugation and democratic*

*flourishing, of imperial resistance (against the British) and imperial expansion (against Amerindians)—driven primarily by market forces, to satisfy expanding populations and greedy profiteers—sets the stage for the uneven development of the best and worst of American history.<sup>2</sup>*

The issue of race has been a topic of conversation since the earliest written records, with authors pointing in many different directions to explain the categories we often call "races." For instance, West believes that the modern concept of race began in 1684 with Francois Bernier, a French physician, who classified races by skin complexion.<sup>3</sup> Martin Bernal suggests as the originator David Hume, whose polygenetic view offered during the 1700s suggested supposed genetic differences among races.<sup>4</sup> However, if race describes the differences in culture and phenotype due to the influence of environment, the beginning may be found in Plato.<sup>5</sup>

These examples show how hypotheses on the nature of human differences through racial taxonomies are fluid. Another particularly noticeable history of racial origins and legislation is found in the Judeo-Christian Holy Scrip-

tures. But before considering the stories of the Generations of Noah and the Tower of Babel recorded in Genesis, let's examine the biology of race. This brings us to the recent discipline of Critical Studies, which questions all attempts to determine racial categories.<sup>6</sup>

In an article titled, "The Social Construction of Race," Ian Haney Lopez writes about the genetic myth of race origins:

*There are no genetic characteristics possessed by all Blacks but not by non-Blacks; similarly, there is no gene or cluster of genes common to all Whites but not to non-Whites. One's race is not determined by a single gene or gene cluster.... Nor are races marked by important differences in gene frequencies.... The data compiled by various scientists demonstrate, contrary to popular opinion, that intra-group differences exceed inter-group differences. This finding refutes the supposition that racial divisions reflect fundamental genetic differences.<sup>7</sup>*

This verdict from biological scientific research begs the question: "from whence originated the races, if not from genetic coding?" Haney Lopez continues shattering the myth of race and the attempts to justify the concept based on phenotype:

*[T]he notion that humankind can be divided along White, Black, and Yellow lines reveals the social rather than the scientific origin of race.... Along the way, various minds tried to fashion practical human typologies along the following physical axes: skin color, hair texture, facial angle, jaw size, cranial capacity, brain mass, frontal lobe mass, brain surface fissures and convolutions, and even body lice. As one scholar notes, "[t]he nineteenth century was a period of exhaustive and—as it turned out—futile search for criteria to define and describe race differences."<sup>8</sup>*

Although I agree with Haney Lopez that race is a social construction, I also find it important to note that its roots go back as far as the Hamite myth of Genesis. In this ancient story, Noah's three sons, Shem, Ham, and

Japheth, were understood to be the patriarchs of the racial groups from Asian, African, and European peoples. The biblical social construction of race, it can be argued, is based upon the typology that comes from the myth of color.<sup>9</sup> Once again, Haney Lopez exposes the mythical factor of justifying race based upon skin complexion:

*To appreciate the difficulties of constructing races solely by reference to physical characteristics, consider the attempt to define race by skin color. On the basis of white skin, for example, one can define a race that includes most of the peoples of Western Europe. However, this grouping is threatened by the subtle gradations of skin color as one moves south or east, and becomes untenable when the fair-skinned peoples of Northern China and Japan are considered.<sup>10</sup>*

This statement closes the door to all the traditional indicators that we ordinarily associate with race. None of the three methods—genotype, phenotype, and complexion—are proper measuring criteria for the intractable category that we call "race." This leads Haney Lopez to conclude:

*The rejection of race in science is now almost complete. In the end, we should embrace historian Barbara Field's succinct conclusion with respect to the plausibility of biological races: "Anyone who continues to believe in race as a physical attribute of individuals, despite the now commonplace disclaimers of biologists and geneticists, might as well also believe that Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny and the tooth fairy are real, and that the earth stands still while the sun moves."<sup>11</sup>*

Critical Race Theory was first developed as a discipline by legal scholars, not scientists. Legal scholars, when they sought to address issues of social justice in present-day American society, saw the need to critique the limits of traditional law. Critical Race Theory questions the legal premises (the existence of race being one) that have gained a foothold as "givens" in liberal legal theory. As Richard

**The biblical social construction of race, it can be argued, is based upon the typology that comes from the myth of color.**

Delgado sees matters, the important themes of Critical Race Theory are “the call for context, critique of liberalism, insistence that racism is ordinary not exceptional, and the notion that civil rights law has been more valuable to whites than to blacks—and others as well.”<sup>12</sup>

This discipline is based on the assumption that culture constructs social reality for the benefit of society’s elite groups, to protect their interests.<sup>13</sup> Because culture constructs social reality, the ways of being in society are changeable. Certain legal modes that pretend to be fixed and nonmalleable can impede, rather than aid, the search for racial justice.<sup>14</sup> Alan Freeman’s understanding of the motivation behind Critical Race Theory scholarship is that traditional “legal doctrine has evolved to rationalize the irrelevance of results.”<sup>15</sup> This means that justice is defined by fair procedures and not by equitable results. This amounts to justice without beneficence, process without product. If merely fair procedures—and not equitable results—are the aim of social justice, problems arise for despised racial groups seeking a retributive and distributive social justice in fact—not simply justice in theory.

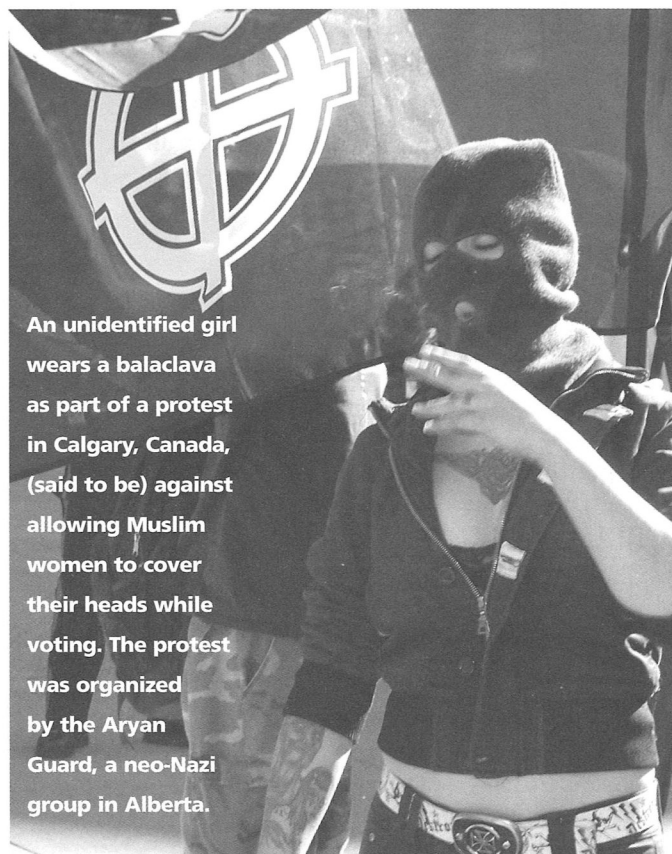
It is problematic that the racialized group referred to by the now-broken/discredited symbol of a “black” race is caught in a quagmire. On the one hand, the discriminated social group has a burden to expose the racial category as a myth of social construction and reject being identified with the despised race. On the other hand, having been disadvantaged by the social injustices caused by being legally encoded in racial terms, the group finds it necessary to embrace the racial identification in order to call for the remedial action of justice that revalues the group through proper recognition and social uplift.

The so-called African-American group has historically been discriminated against in the United States on the basis of race. Now that laws have changed and rules appear more equitable, this group is put in the strange position of seeking justice as a group for discriminatory practices in the past (that have put them at a current disadvantage), while rejecting the group identity predicated upon receiving the racial justice. In principle and for the sake of truth, race as a concept must necessarily be exposed as a (myth of) social construction. This is a necessary condition for the goals of a “color-blind society” to be met. In practice and for the sake of beneficial justice, race as a concept must necessarily be acknowl-

edged as a broken symbol for the only human hope of social remediation.

Herein lies the dilemma for black human equality or black human freedom. Here, too, exists the meeting ground of the conflated options of business as usual and the business of relative justice, which historically have sought the lowest of several ideals.<sup>16</sup> This agenda explores the place where the concept of distributive justice fights to share space with a concept of retributive justice.

Given that critical race theorists challenge the status



**An unidentified girl wears a balaclava as part of a protest in Calgary, Canada, (said to be) against allowing Muslim women to cover their heads while voting. The protest was organized by the Aryan Guard, a neo-Nazi group in Alberta.**

THUNDER/GETTY IMAGES

quo legal doctrinal approaches to shaping social order, what options are available to reform and make positive changes for racial justice? A survey reading of texts on Critical Race Theory leaves one with the impression of a call for radically revising the political resources and energy of society. This revisioning combines the tactic of shame with a revaluation of a despised race.<sup>17</sup> (It is important for the reader to be aware that we are now using the term *race* as a socially constructed category.)

Because the myth of race has been used in the past by one group of people to disenfranchise, discriminate, and dismiss another less powerful group of people, legal doctrines aimed at neutral procedures instead of equitable

results are inadequate to the aims of racial justice in Critical Studies.<sup>18</sup> However, the social construction of race should really not be a surprising notion to biblical students, who immediately think of the statement in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

That text brings us to the sacred part of the conversation.

### **Sacred Part of the Conversation: Sketches of a Constructive Proposal**

Let's now turn to the need for a constructive theological proposal that can help clarify the moral problem of discriminatory practices in race relations. This discussion centers on the model of Jesus' encounter with the Canaanite woman recorded in the Gospels. If race is socially constructed, then what are the implications for a theological anthropology that acknowledges race only as a social construct? What kind of theological anthropology goes along with aspects of our identity being socially constructed?

In order to investigate these questions, it is helpful to discover what a conversation between Critical Race Theory and moral theology might look like. If there is no real difference among what we call "races," then how would a constructive Christian theology view social relations informed by the ordinary theory of race? Is this simply harmless nonsense, or do humanly crafted unjust structures cause harm?

In the past, humans viewed otherness as a threat to cultural annihilation. There was no necessary burden to seek a common unity with otherness. What was needed was a mobilizing cultural force to combat the other, in the name of God, who planned races to be separated by the divine laws of natural ordinance. Although there are tragic cases of genocide in regions around the globe today, the concept of genocide is a modern notion, such that even biblical societies did not view the demands of holy war as genocidal. If God could be theorized as the

author of races, then God had a plan to keep them distinct. The unfortunate reality is that even the Judeo-Christian Holy Scriptures (an authoritative repository of spiritual wisdom) seems to hold to some of these categories of racially instantiated humanity.

Today, it is self-inflicted folly to limit otherness by laws that resist miscegenation, deny education, or be unjustifiably selective with immigration. Nowadays, there is a need to embrace the so-called other as an ally against the common dangers that threaten humankind's existence. In our day, we have the mandate of history to reconceptualize, retheorize, and reevaluate who the God of the despised races really is. We ask instead, who is the God of humanity? The criterion of humanization—taking "human historical existence to be of central importance; as something, therefore, for which humans must take full responsibility"—is rational, and rooted, I believe, in the biblical tradition.<sup>19</sup>

According to Richard Rice, the open view of God, a middle position between classical theism and process theism, is a resource that values both divine and human creative freedom by granting that God freely creates the world and that his policy of restraint involves granting humankind genuine creative freedoms.<sup>20</sup> This divine gift of freedom allows for human social construction, however, it also implies human responsibility.

For the Christian, the application of a theological anthropology that values creative freedom highlights the "anthropic principles" embedded in our conception of God. Whatever describes those matters of ultimate concern to us, in turn, helps us locate the symbol for God. For the purposes of social justice, Open Theism—that is, the view that God and humanity are in a dynamic, reciprocal relationship—most adequately provides a definite description of God. This freewill theistic view is one that locates ultimate concerns in the human aspirations for beneficence, justice, and freedom. This helps in presenting a theological critique of the current

**Nowadays,  
there is  
a need to  
embrace the  
so-called  
other as an  
ally against  
the common  
dangers that  
threaten  
humankind's  
existence.**





The Safe Harbour Youth Ambassador Diversity Program in British Columbia, Canada, teaches youth how to respond effectively to racism and hate, and champions multiculturalism, anti-racism and human rights.

problems of classifying race relations.

Although the biblical record is spotted with less-than-noble ethical norms, unscientific explanations of the universe, and even problematic theological claims, overall the sacred writing provides a comprehensive meeting place sufficient for a Christian moral theologian to frame theological inquiry and moral discussion. A number of biblical passages that address the issue of racial justice provide fruitful exegetical ground for a moral theology on race.

There is the metaphor of humanity made in the image of God found in the Genesis account of creation. There is also Yahweh's moratorium on holy war against the nations in the book of Judges. It is especially interesting to read:

*I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died... [T]he Lord had left those nations, not driving them out at once, and had not handed them over to Joshua.... They were for the testing of Israel, to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their ancestors by Moses. (Judg. 2:21–3:4)*

One is led to wonder how race relations were affected

during the time of the Judges and the Monarchy. There is also the biblical motif of Israel, not defined as a race or nation, but as "a people." The religious emotion found in these and other passages calls for new language that gives expression to our notions of a moral theology on race.

In order to exhaust the biblical resource, a person's hermeneutic must be informed by critical scholarship. It is important to recognize that the Bible is a compilation of multiple-layered literary traditions. The biblical record is an anthology of Jewish and Christian literature that spans hundreds of years, uses a variety of literary genres, and evidences the work of multiple editors. It is because the many voices of various communities of a faith tradition are left in place in this rich artistic creation that the Bible is valued as the "meeting place" for theological reflection by Christians.

Furthermore, the biblical writers understand God to be in relationship with humanity. The God of the Bible is fundamentally relational. The biblical record reports God as one who repents in Genesis 6:6, becomes displeased in Genesis 38:10, listens compassionately in Exodus 3:7–9, and possesses a host of other anthropomorphic relational

characteristics. This humanistic picture of God is the vision of reality robust enough to motivate creativity in social action.

The biblical story of Jesus and the Canaanite/Syro-Phoenician woman provides a disturbing possibility as we seek to understand the task involved in defining a social program that revalues a despised race. There are details about this story that suggest the hard labor involved in such a program of revisioning human difference for today. One factor is that both the Matthean and Markean passages preface Jesus' encounter with this woman by having him make a radical break with the legal tradition of Jewish dietary practices (Matt. 15:1–20; Mark 7:1–23).

As with Critical Race Theory today, this move questions whether the supposed legal tradition is nothing more than a cultural statement from an earlier era. Perhaps both the Mosaic codes and the U.S. Constitution should be understood not merely as legal expressions, but (more importantly) as cultural expressions that require reinterpretation and reexpression from time to time.

Another detail of the story is the uncomfortable choice of language Jesus used in conversing with the woman. He begins by suggesting an ethnocentric posture. Matthew reports him saying, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 5:24). Both Matthew and Mark report him saying, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs" (Matt. 15:26; compare Mark 7:27). Here again, moral theologians must force an honest and candid dialogue that includes disturbing myths and must be ready to hear painful discourse. This discourse will naturally revolve around the different stories of groups of people—those variable human aims at justice, fellowship (beneficence), and completeness (liberty).

The third detail that this story points to is how Jesus revalued this woman of a despised race by addressing the harms from which she sought relief. The story recognizes that justice without beneficence is form without sub-

stance. The woman wanted her demonized daughter to be made whole. In the end, all the talk about difference came down to the common conditions of all humanity—the death-producing conditions and the conditions of searching to understand our strange maladies. This point, the point of human need, is where moral theology must ultimately place its energy.

It might be that a program to repair government-sanctioned harms against a group must supplant a race-based affirmative action program. The language should be centered on the "descendants of the enslaved" in America rather than any racial designation. Maybe university and college admissions programs can discard the language of "underrepresented minority" and replace it with a policy redressing the "laws limiting the education of the slaves," thereby setting back the descendents of the people who were enslaved.

The focus ultimately must be on redressing the harms that were propagated (both legally and culturally) on a group of fellow humanity. By focusing on redressing the harms done—and not on the myth of race—we can revalue a despised race and bring about social justice both distributively and retributively. This I propose as a picture of a responsible moral theology for a pluralistic society. This searches out a language that speaks to the common conditions of human circumstances.

Jesus speaks of the final judgment as a day when all humanity will be evaluated by how they treated God in the person of disadvantage (Matt. 25:31–46). This is in line with Karl Barth's book, the *Humanity of God*.<sup>21</sup> This theme resonates with Jesus' most embraced self-identifying title: "Son of humanity." So, then, what the human hand (human legal institutions) cannot move can be moved by the human heart (human relational influence). Here is an alternative model for a sacred conversation on race that calls for a reevaluation of the way we frame the moral problem.

The Canaanite woman's encounter with Jesus

**Jesus  
revalued this  
woman  
of a despised  
race by  
addressing  
the harms  
from which  
she sought  
relief.**

How do  
we confront  
the new  
code words  
that are used  
to ensure  
majority  
control of  
social  
groups?

illustrates how his dynamic view of covenant, his magnanimous view of the Kingdom of God, and his creation/redemption perspective of humanity work together to inform an arrangement of the moral principles of justice, beneficence, and liberty. Jesus, in his prophetic role, amended the covenantal relationship of the Jewish people so that it included a covenant of *justice* for the Gentiles. In so doing, Jesus also recognized that the *benefits* of God's Kingdom are to be shared by all in the newly defined moral community. Finally, he acts as the creator and redeemer of this woman's daughter by healing her of the oppression that constrained her *liberty*.

There are no doubt limits to what options are available to us on this moral problem. Yet this discussion helps shift the focus from the mythological issues of race to the real life issues of harm that can be empirically measured and redressed if we have the willpower. What is next? What is needed to turn this conversation into a sacred practice on race? How do we address the problems of separate conferences in the United States and South Africa? How do we confront the new code words that are used to ensure majority control of social groups?

Whatever else can be done, I am certain that this conversation is a good place to start. The key word is *start*. ■

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**DISCUSSED** | Two-car garages, Southeast Asia immigrants, BMW convertible, pistol, ATM card, getting raped, Loma Linda, five hundred dollars, biblical promises, Gospel of Luke

## Uphill, Downhill, and the Wretched of the Earth | BY ADRIAN JAMES



**G**rand Terrace, California, is city built over large hills, where the elevation of one's home correlates roughly to income and taste. On the lower end of the city, close to the warehouses and State Route 91, is a set of apartments where the view doesn't get much better than the backside of a supermarket parking lot. The houses nearby have small windows and porches decorated with wooden figurines or potted plants that grow wild and parched brown. But things change driving uphill toward the picturesque rocky hillside that turns azure in the morning

light. Two-car garages become three-car garages and well-manicured lawns appear next to rosebushes, hedges, and walkways laid out in exotic stone: the stuff of glossy magazines.

Jenny worked her way out of the city's downhill apartments to a comfortable uphill home in 1993. It's been twenty-two years since she entered the United States as a Malaysian immigrant, spending a couple years at Andrews University in Michigan before moving to Southern California to take a well-paying job.

Her mother moved to the United States in 1997. Jenny




moved her into a nearby apartment—not downhill but uphill, in a section of town where homes come with a five-hundred-dollar-a-month landscaping fee.

Jenny's experience reflects a common narrative among Southeast Asian immigrants: entering the United States as a young person with little more than an education—starting the clock at zero in a world of uncertainty, pursuing American prosperity. Perhaps it's the same American dream pursued by other ethnic groups. However, for Asians there is a deep burden of pride and responsibility attached. It is a burden passed on during childhood, on days when report cards are carried home and children are told to double their efforts so that their children and their children's children will not need to be street sweepers.

Jenny's story might be considered a success by some cultural standards. She drove a red BMW convertible for a number of years before trading it in for a more fuel efficient Honda. Once a year, she takes a seven-day cruise to the Virgin Islands. She balances her time between work and taking care of her mother, who has a number of different health complications, including poor eyesight.

But there is a different America outside the world of suburban prosperity that Jenny is accustomed to, even if it's forgotten or ignored.

 One mid-January night, Jenny sorts through her mother's pills, carefully placing them in a green tablet box. Then she lays out her mother's clothes for the next day.

It's 11:10 when Jenny finishes her nightly routine. She steps out the back door of her mother's apartment, past the small garden and into the garage, hitting the open button. Outside is her white Honda Civic. She takes a call on her cell phone as she steps under dim white circles of light from the street lamps around the circular cul-de-sac.

It's her husband, Edward, on the telephone; he's miles away on an auditing assignment. "Hey, call me when you get home, alright?" says Edward.

"Right! I'll call back in a minute," says Jenny.

She has her cell phone and a set of keys in one hand as she opens the backseat door, leaving her handbag on the floor.

A car flashes past—a white Honda Civic, similar to hers. It stops thirty feet away. The street is empty except for the two cars. A door opens and a figure steps out of

the backseat. It's rather unusual. Hoping to be helpful, Jenny leans forward to offer directions: sharp turns around the circular cul-de-sac and the roads leading uphill can be disorienting at night.

But something goes wrong: two other figures step out of the car.

Jenny stops breathing. She sees a small caliber pistol—a man in a dark hood thrusts the gun in her face. Warm urine soaks her thighs. "Oh my God! Oh my God!" is all she can say, in a numb stupor.

The two other hoods in black close in. "We need your keys and your ATM," says one of them, snatching her cell phone away. The gun is inches from her face as Jenny quickly hands over her purse.

The gunman shoves it back toward her, "ATM card! ATM card!" Jenny hands over the keys and digs through the purse. She gives the hoods \$250 in cash and a blank check, as well as the card.

In the dim light, Jenny can see the faces of her assailants: they are young and clean-cut, with their heads shaved bald.

The hoods pop open the trunk of Jenny's car. "Get in," says the gunman.

"No, please, please! I'll sit in the backseat. Please let me sit in the backseat!" Jenny begs.

She's shoved into the backseat. The gunman gets into the front passenger seat and swings around, holding the weapon in her face as one hood takes the driver's seat and another gets into the other white Honda.

Within minutes, the cars come to a stop outside a quiet apartment building. "Get out bitch," says the gunman. "If you yell, scream, or try to flag anybody...you're dead!" As the gunman walks over to the other car, he keeps the pistol trained on her.

Jenny is standing on a curb in the cold. Tears stream down her face. The hoods are having a meeting a few feet away. For a second, a car moves down the street, and there's enough visibility for Jenny to look the driver in the eyes...but the driver simply rolls past.

After what seems like hours, the hoods move over to Jenny. "Alright, do you have your ATM card?" asks one of them.

"I gave it to you," says Jenny.

"No you didn't!" says the hood.

"Yes, I did. You must have dropped it...back there," says Jenny.



"We better find it, or you're dead tonight!" says the gunman.

Once again, they shuffle Jenny into the car. This time, the gunman takes the backseat with Jenny. He cocks the weapon menacingly, then holds the barrel at eye level. Jenny can see his finger on the trigger. Looking into her eyes, the gunman starts to raise his voice, "Didn't you know? I am 666, I am Satan! Jesus sent me to kill you! I don't even care if I die!"

The car moves erratically through the streets. For a second, they turn sharply into a darkened parking lot. Jenny fears for the worst: getting raped before getting killed.

But they arrive at her mother's apartment, where the garage is still open. The hood from the other car goes to retrieve the card.

"Who's in the house with you? You got a man?" says the gunman.

"No. It's just my mother. She's sick!" says Jenny.

"Let's take them in the house and shoot both of them," says the gunman.

"No please! Please...she's sick!" says Jenny, sobbing. The idea of what might happen makes Jenny ill.

Just then, the driver turns around. "Listen, I'm not going

to let anything bad happen to you. I love my mother. I won't let anything bad happen to you," says the hood.

"Dang! Whose side are you on? I'ma have to put a bullet in both of you!" says the gunman.

"Why did it have to be her? We should have got a man," says the driver.

The third hood comes to the window. "What's your pin?" Jenny rattles off the numbers.

"Do you know how much we can take out?" says the hood.

"I don't know, I never tried the maximum amount," says Jenny.

"What about five hundred dollars? Can we get five hundred?" says the hood.

"I think so," says Jenny.

They move to the nearest Bank of America in Grand Terrace, but the driver of the other car doesn't attempt to make a cash withdrawal. Coming back to the window, he says, "This isn't going to work. Do you know of anywhere else?"

Jenny's mind works fast. She knows her best chance of surviving is to stay in areas she knows best. "Loma Linda, there's a Bank of America in Loma Linda," says Jenny.

"Where's that?" says the hood. It's obvious the hoods are not from the area.

Jenny gives directions to the driver as the other Honda follows, until they reach Loma Linda.

The cash is retrieved quickly at the nearest ATM. Jenny wonders if she'll ever be seen again. She can identify her assailants, and the hoods know it. The thought of her body rotting in a field somewhere passes through her mind.

The cars return on the same route by which they had come. But the Honda, now in the lead, takes an abrupt turn down a street where a Shell gas station stands, and the other car follows. Jenny's pulse starts racing. She knows they'll soon hit a bad section of San Bernardino: a poorer section of the Inland Empire, where there's less of a chance that she'll come out alive.

"You said you'd let me go! Please, you look like such nice guys," says Jenny.

"Plans changed," says the driver coldly.

"Please, just let me off here. I can get home," says Jenny. She's pleads, louder than before.

The car makes another abrupt turn as the lead car speeds off. They're parked in front of an Arco gas station. "Get out bitch!" says the gunman.

There's a Frito truck refueling and a gas station attendant smokes a cigarette near the convenience store.

Jenny's Honda speeds off behind her. She doesn't look back.

The day after Jenny's abduction, I watch her family hold her tightly, tears in their eyes. I watch her husband arm himself with a Beretta pistol that he carries in a loose-fitting Polo jacket at night. I watch a neighborhood lose whatever innocence it once had. And it's not the America any of us dreamed of.

Jenny doesn't leave home for the next few days. It's days before she learns to feel safe in her own bedroom and weeks before she can drive on the streets alone at night, even though the men were arrested almost a week later.

I know all of the men will receive upwards of twenty-five years in prison. But I think about the madness that drove these men to risk everything for five hundred dollars (to some—the price of a monthly landscaping bill). I think about what it means to be taken from one's home and terrorized, to lose

ones sense of security—for five hundred dollars.

Jenny also thinks about the five hundred dollars. She says to me one day, "five hundred dollars is nothing to me! To go through all that, for five hundred dollars? You gotta be kidding me!"

She also thinks about the seconds before her abduction—the seconds that could have meant the difference between life and death. In a matter of seconds, she could have been in her car, avoiding the hoods as they passed by—if only she hadn't stopped to fumble with her keys. The idea constantly passes through her mind until she begins to see it as act of divine will. But why? She wonders. The thought hurts, like an act of spite or betrayal. To her, it is only the weak and the faithless that need to be tested in this way, not someone like her—who obediently claims "biblical promises," and clings relentlessly to her faith.

The answer for Jenny's puzzle never arrives. But she says she kept her faith because she doesn't know of any other ways to cope. She doesn't know of any other ways to keep her world from caving in.

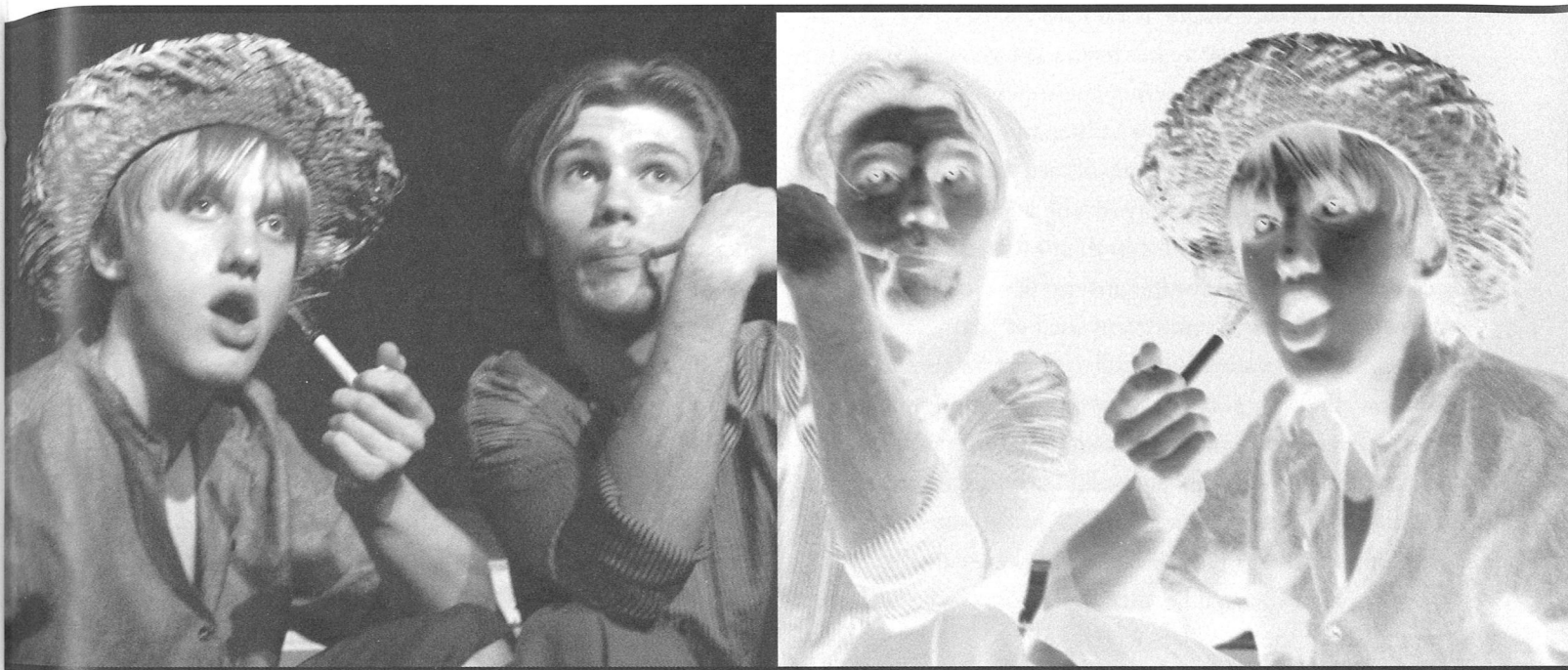
The newspapers reported later that one of the men involved was recent a deportee from south of the Mexican border. It was a revelation that made me extremely uncomfortable. While Jenny wrestled with her faith, I began to think about how the paths of two different immigrant communities crossed that night. It started to become clear to me that the old narratives for success that we Asian immigrants often aspire to need to change.

There must be new stories of men and women who are willing to cross the racial and social lines, to stand in solidarity with their immigrant brothers and sisters who live in poor communities. There must be new stories that echo the ministry of Jesus as found in the Gospel of Luke, where Jesus is seen among the poor and dispossessed, those whom Frantz Fanon would call "the wretched of the earth." ■

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## Reading Race | BY CARLYN FERRARI



I fell in love with literature as soon as I learned to read. As a child, I read everything from *Where the Wild Things Are* to *Goodnight Moon* and was fascinated by the vivid imagery created by the words on once-blank pages. In my adolescent years, my taste naturally matured, and I found myself helping Nancy Drew solve her latest mystery and bragging to my friends at school about how the latest *Goosebumps* book didn't make me flinch.

During my junior year in high school, my English teacher announced that we would be reading a book titled the *Adventures Huckleberry Finn*. I had never read it, but I briefly recalled a Disney movie starring then-teenage heartthrob Elijah Wood. My teacher then proceeded to give a disclaimer about the "offensive racial language" in the book. I brushed this off thinking that "offensive" by academy standards was nothing to worry

about, recalling that upon transferring from the public school system I had learned that most of my clothing was, in fact, "inappropriate."

I began to read the novel, and my teacher's cautionary words resounded in my mind each time the word *nigger* appeared—more than two hundred times. Behind the seemingly innocent tale of a young boy and his runaway slave friend was, at least for me, a kind of rude awakening. As a black teenager growing up in a predominately white neighborhood and attending a predominately white academy, I had certainly encountered racist language before. However, this was my first encounter with racist language in literature.

This experience sparked my curiosity, and ever since I have had a fascination with racial depictions in literature. I am interested in and write about blackness because it resonates with me as a person of color and as



a reader, but I think all of us should examine racial representations.

One may ask why the reader should even pay attention to race in literature. Well, thanks to science, we know that race is sociological, not biological. In other words, race is a social construct. Certainly, notions of race were not constructed and perpetuated in a vacuum. As you may recall from history courses, during transatlantic excursions travel writers wrote not only about landscapes abroad, but also about their inhabitants. The depictions in these writings helped to create particular ideologies in early modern Europe.

Historically, literature has been used as a means to spread information and perpetuate views. By paying attention to racial representations in literature, we can stay abreast of how current notions of race are both challenged and maintained. We can stay "in the know," so to speak.

We also know from history that interpretations can have devastating effects on racial groups. For example, the curse of Cham in Genesis 9 was used to justify African slavery, and thus sealed the fate of slaves for centuries.

How, then, should we deal with racial representations? Herein lies a complicated question that even scholars like Henry Louis Gates, Jr., have a difficult time answering. Let's return to *Huckleberry Finn* for just a moment. If we praise *Huckleberry Finn* and call it a "great American novel," a label critics have used many times, what are we saying about the racist language?

Author Chinua Achebe describes this dilemma in his famous critique of Joseph Conrad's novella, *Heart of Darkness*: "the question is whether a novel which celebrates this dehumanization, which depersonalizes a portion of the human race, can be called a great work of art."<sup>1</sup>

The answer will be different for each reader, as it should be. We each bring our own level meaning to the texts we read. For me, the answer is to keep reading and to keep asking questions like, "Why is such a representation in the text?" and "What is the author doing by including such a representation?"

I do not always come up with answers on the first read, but questions like these help me move past an emotive reaction and help me engage with the text. I strongly caution against psychobiographical assertions or any accusations against the author. I find that they tend to limit one's reading, as they often lead one away from the text rather than enhance one's reading. It

would have been very easy for me to conclude that Mark Twain was a racist, but such a shallow, uninformed reading would have stopped me from questioning.

**M**y love for literature has continued to flourish. If anything, my initial reading of *Huckleberry Finn* functioned as a catalyst for my academic career. Now as an English graduate student, I explore issues of race, paying particular attention to racial representations throughout history and noting how notions of race have fluctuated over time. In my reading, I now find that I am torn between admiration and frustration. The aspiring writer in me grudgingly tips my hat to writers like Twain and Conrad, who have clearly mastered their craft. However, the black woman in me is offended and appalled.

To be perfectly honest, I missed most of the plot of *Huckleberry Finn* upon my first read, and even though I have read this novel a total of three times now and have written an essay about it, the aspect that stands out most in my mind is the racist language.

However, I am able to look back and see how my views have changed, and I am able to move beyond a visceral reaction and ask questions. As I begin the daunting process of writing my master's thesis, I wonder how and if my perspective will continue to change. This is what reading literature is all about for me.

Because a black democratic candidate is in the U.S. presidential race, we may find it easy to think that racism is something from our distant past and that we are in an era of progress. Although I do not necessarily deny this, my hope is that in your next read you will notice something that perhaps you were not expecting—and begin to ask questions. ■

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help" shelves of bookstores is an outcome of the conflicts and concatenations of the two.

Among conservative Christians, it took a while to baptize popular psychology and make it seem safe from worldliness, but by the 1970s Tim LaHaye's *Spirit-Filled Temperament*, Dobson's "Focus on the Family," and kindred efforts ministered to the need for psychological ideas and programs that seemed plausibly "Christian" and thus, broadly, "safe" for the American Evangelical subculture.

This inward psychological turn among Evangelicals is important for Adventists because it sheds light on the spurt of popular Seventh-day Adventist interest in the perfectionist "harvest principle" theology during the 1970s. This is the theology that makes the individual's inner spiritual achievement the hinge of cosmic history.

Rather than look to actions of the Catholic Church or apostate Protestants on a stealth march to establish Sunday laws as evidence to support our faith, we could look within to elicit, develop, hope for, work for, the perfection of individual character, a perfection that if reproduced in a critical mass of faithful Adventists would move Christ to leave the Heavenly Sanctuary and come to receive his own.

This inward turn spared us the embarrassments of certain paranoid and apocalyptic habits of mind. It gave us instead an invitation to a great and heavy meaning of interior life, but also, for some of us, to cycles of unbearable psychological self-inflation and deflation.

This theology was also a fateful move in that it placed ever-heavier weight on the inspiration and authority of Ellen White exactly at the time that Adventist professionalism would produce a series critical literary and historical analyses of her writings. Adventists had been going off to get advanced degrees for some time, but it was an indicator of a new critical mass of Adventist professionals that the Association of Adventist Forums and *Spectrum* got started in 1969 and were only about ten years old when The Crash happened.

Being Adventist and professional, especially in certain academic areas, led to some serious tensions:

*Career vs. Calling:* Is my work a pursuit of mere worldly success or can it also be an instance of the service to God and humanity that my Seventh-day Adventist upbringing told me it must be?

*Professional reference groups vs. Seventh-day Adventist community:* Do I adhere to the standards of truth and good practice that I have learned in my profession and follow them wherever they lead, or do I limit what I am willing believe, teach, and do by way of the prior commitments of my religious community? Can my professional training actually help renew or reform my community's faith and practice?

In the midst of these conflicting demands, where does the sincere, believing Seventh-day Adventist professional find himself or herself?

For some of us, this question of professional and religious identity was profoundly complicated by the Ellen of the Pedestal, the Ellen who forbade all challenges to her authority, reducing them to expressions of human pride, or worse, insinuations of the Devil. This was the Ellen who insisted that every idea of ours be vetted through her writings.

She was the one who had long told us to guard the avenues to our physical bodies, denying ourselves all those sensations that might rouse passion and thus distract the soul from its heavenly calling. That was starvation enough, but what many of us felt was much broader, deeper, and more complex.

Indeed, any of several metaphors of bodily privation might serve to convey the problem: we were dying of thirst, we were suffocating. We had read of a Savior who promised life and life abundantly, but we could not taste, smell, hear, see, or feel it. The Ellen White we served was guardian of the boundaries. She told us to guard the avenues of our souls and the edges of the Sabbath.

So vigilant, so obsessive became our guarding of the boundaries that we knew better what we were not than what we were. Notions of sanctification, that work of a lifetime's garnering of imparted righteousness, came to suggest a patrolling of the boundaries so perfect as to render the physical body and the metaphorical bodies of the soul and of the Church perfectly impermeable. But no human body, literal or metaphorical, can survive that way, much less thrive.

Still in the grip of such boundary thinking while I wrote my senior honors thesis in theology, I produced a

wildly out-of-context and misguided assemblage of quotes from Ellen White matched up with quotes from Walter Rauschenbusch's *Theology for the Social Gospel*. In sixty dense typewritten pages, I demonstrated to my satisfaction, and apparently to the satisfaction of my religion professors, that Ellen White was, in fact, a proponent of the Social Gospel, this in a subculture where the phrase "social gospel" was still an epithet. Even as I finished the project,

Desmond Ford meant his message to repair and renew the Adventist faith, based on his diagnosis of a people paralyzed by salvation anxiety. It is not clear to me how well he sensed the mental, emotional, and bodily privation I knew from growing up Adventist in America. Regardless, Ford ran into a maelstrom of social and cultural forces that made the outcome of his ministry in the United States something rather different from his intentions.



I knew at some subconscious level that this vetting of ideas I was hungry for through the Ellen White test taste left me starving still.

Such hunger pushed me to head off to the University of Chicago Divinity School for graduate work in fields unconstrained by Ellen. At the same time, I was never more assiduous in my reading of Ellen White than when I was in graduate school. Picture a clean-cut child of the Adventist ghetto huddled over his copy of *Ministry of Healing* or *Christ's Object Lessons*, sitting early mornings in a quiet corner of a university building, taking in his daily inoculation of Adventist truth before the worldlings arrive, get their coffee, and start another day at the great bastion of liberalism and atheism.

I would go join them, of course, opening one compartment of my mind while sealing off another. I resolved to learn what I could from these people and sort out the contradictions later. I was determined to prove those Adventist leaders wrong who predicted I would lose my faith. I was even more determined to find the ways my learning could repair and renew the Adventist vehicle of salvation, this wonderful one-horse shay driven by Ellen White that was supposed to carry us all safely into and beyond the Time of Trouble.

Here's my effort to sort out the vectors of the storm we sailed into together at the end of the 1970s.

First, I think it likely that the cultural transformations and upheavals of the 1960s and 1970s having to do with sex and gender helped to undo decisively Adventism's nineteenth-century perfectionist synthesis of piety, health, diet, recreation, dress, and family all aimed at the control of sexuality. The practice of perfectionist spirituality as sexual restraint came to seem ever more implausible to wider and wider swathes of Adventist people. This change, as Bull and Lockhart have noted in their chapter on "The Science of Happiness," resulted in a "pick and choose" approach to Adventist lifestyle.

Such change did not come easily, however. I think it created a pervasive anxiety in American Adventism over boundaries and identity. This Adventist version of "cafeteria Christianity" was experienced as a promise of liberation by some, as a threat to the integrity of self, church, and cosmos by others. For most, it was likely strange mixtures of both.

Second, into the midst of this mostly subliminal stress, came the much more explicit disillusionment caused by historical-critical discoveries about Ellen White's sources,

including especially Ronald Numbers's deconstruction of Ellen White as prophet of the health message. From the perspective of the historians, what they were doing was their jobs. They were following the standards and practices of their profession, hoping to serve the Church by promoting deeper understanding its history. For many others in the Church, however, their works were an invasion and a betrayal—history as Trojan horse containing not Greeks, but Trojans who were traitors.

If "pick-and-choose" Adventism carried some vague sense of threat for many Adventists, the historians' work represented a direct attack. The target was Ellen, the idealized culture hero in whom the wholeness Adventist self and society held together—or so it seemed to many. The lifestyle of piety and probity supported by the ritual quoting of her writings became even more implausible after reading Numbers. Claims to attention and status by means of the mastery of Ellen White were invalidated. Even those who did not care much about strict piety and probity could feel attacked.

I remember my father, a firmly antivegetarian autocrat of the family dining table who also rejected Ellen G. White on sex, though he was less vocal about that, at least around the children. He was also a pragmatic agent of Adventist institutional life—local elder, Sabbath School teacher, chair of assorted building committees, conference committee member. He loved the Church and had a certain reverence for Ellen G. White as symbol of the Church, the mother to be looked up to, respected, and protected, but not necessarily obeyed. When the scholarly work on Ellen White came to public notice in the 1970s, my dad's antipathy for her health message on diet or sexuality was irrelevant. It was as if his mother were under attack, and no man worth his salt was going to stand for that.

Third, Ford was right that salvation anxiety pervaded many Adventist circles. No doubt it was fueled by the culture currents I mention above, but one should not dismiss it as "nothing but" a reaction to social forces. Messages of righteousness by faith were numerous in those days, and the cassette tape was a universal medium from bringing such sources of hope to the spiritually hungry. This pervasive salvation anxiety was the most obvious reason why Ford drew those standing-room-only crowds to Sabbath School in 1977 and 1978.

It was also the reason why he was so deeply convicted of the necessity of his message to the Church. On

the weekends he was not teaching Sabbath School, it was likely he was out in the churches somewhere in the Pacific Union or further afield, taking the gospel to people in the pew.

Paradoxically, because it is hard to imagine a less psychological person than Ford, his theology served as a kind of psychic solvent that dissolved the deep cognitive and emotional ties that many Seventh-day Adventists felt to a God and to a prophet who demanded an impossible cosmic rectitude in inner life and in bodily existence. This promise of freedom, to a certain segment of Seventh-day Adventists, was the pragmatic meaning of his message.

Before Ford ever delivered his invited lecture on Daniel 8:14, then, the maelstrom was upon us. The subversion of Adventism's nineteenth-century perfectionism by the newly permissive broader culture, the direct threat to perfectionist doctrines of Atonement and Incarnation coming from Ford his growing following, and the disintegration of Ellen White as idealized Adventist culture hero led to an emotional storm.

It was not just ideas at stake, it was our deep sense of Adventist selfhood. Ellen White provided a coherent set of ideals for Adventists to strive for, and in looking up to her we felt lifted up. This sense of uplift was one of the motives that made her nineteenth-century, antisexual "science of happiness" seem a worthy struggle. A complementary motive was the energy derived from the sense that we Adventists were the special focus of the attention of all the watching worlds of God's unfallen creation. Ellen White in vision was the sign and assurance of this attention—we were the people who kept the Commandments and had the Spirit of Prophecy.

The attention and respect won in ordinary church life through the ritual quoting of her sayings was a tangible echo of the Divine attention for all who were faithful to our heavenly calling. We were energized to move forward by this sense of God's special regard, to exercise persistently our disciplines of cognitive, emotional, bodily restraint in hopes of realizing the goal God had set before us. The disillusionment of finding the Prophet to be all too human disintegrated the self we had built upon her and left us desolate, dissipated, exposed to ridicule, including our own self-ridicule. Such blows to the inner self led to explosions of energy that had been bound to our now battered ideal, explosions of fear and rage.

Sometimes the object of rage was the church and its



prophet, seen most notably in reactions like Walter Rea's *The White Lie*, and its proponents. Sometimes the objects of rage were the academics who did or promoted the historical critical work. More often than either of these, the object of rage was Ford the heretic and all who seemed in some way tainted by association with him.

Ford, his message, and his association with Australian aliens Geoffrey Paxton, Anglican "outsider," and Robert Brinsmead, chronic heretic, were experienced as an invasive violation by defenders of the Adventist body of perfectionist doctrine and prophetic guidance. They became theological warriors analogous to the family values culture warriors like Jerry Falwell and James Dobson in the wider Evangelical world.

The fury with which they carried out their warfare, however, is traceable not only to theological disagreements about the fallen human nature of Christ, but also to the above-mentioned subliminal anxiety and to the threatened loss of Ellen White as an idealized culture hero and guardian of Adventist boundaries and identity.

Ford's message of Reformation righteousness by faith came across to these warriors as an effort to disintegrate the coherent, lifelong striving of body and spirit that Adventist perfectionism promised would result in personal salvation and in the ultimate cleansing of the cosmos. This alien righteousness promised not gospel liberation to them, it threatened worldly libertinism and demonic chaos instead.

In the end, Ford was accused of mental illness and demon possession in and around the Pacific Union College rumor mill and he was implied to be the "Omega of heresy" in Lewis Walton's scurrilous and dishonest best-selling polemic. The campus was rumored to be engulfed in rampant sexual immorality, drunkenness, and drug use—all as a consequence of the college administration's decision to harbor the heretic.

Pacific Union College administrators and faculty who were my mentors, main conversation partners, or both lost their jobs outright, or were given strong reasons to move on. Fred Veltman, veteran survivor of Seventh-day Adventist turmoil, ended his career in the long denouement of the *Desire of Ages* project, only to see his years-long effort refracted, deflected, and buried by church administrators. Many young theology majors judged too close to Ford found themselves without prospects, and many pastors in various local conferences found themselves isolated, stigmatized, and ultimately driven from the ministry. And

that's just the story near where I lived at the time. This was atmosphere in which I ducked.

A lot of Adventist baby boomers like me, weary of subjecting ourselves to the Ellen White of the Pedestal, just gave up in mixed resentment and relief the effort to make her work in our lives. The cohort of younger college-educated Adventists who witnessed the theological acrimony concluded that Ellen White was too toxic to be dealt with and anyway did not speak to the lives they were living. The loss of Ellen White was, by the early 1980s, a widely accomplished fact and an ongoing process.

**I**n closing, a few words about the recovery of Ellen White: "Every woman should have a red dress..." (Scene 4).

I hear that line, and I immediately react: What! and arouse the animal passions of the men her life?! But Scenes 3 and 4 in *Red Books* are intended to present a winsome, human Ellen White, one whom religion has not yet repressed. This is a woman, the writers and our interviewees are saying, who enjoyed the ordinary pleasures of childish mischief and practical jokes.

She was a woman who knew that women dress for women and who had empathy and compassion for those who maybe came out second best in the competition to look good. She had empathy because she herself liked to look good, and didn't mind standing out every now and then with the red dress. I should add that this humanizing message has been very popular with our audiences at talkback. People warm to the playful prophet without the pedestal.

I think the red dress scene is really the key suggestion the play has to make about the recovery of Ellen White, a suggestion that undoes the sexual suppression of the nineteenth century. I think the implications of this undoing are condensed in another line: "You may be tired of this world we're living in, but I haven't even had a taste of it yet" (Scene 6).

My last word on recovery stems from the frustrated rant of the young man whose caring but clueless father I play in Scene 6. The father is completely absorbed in end-time events, and not a day goes by that he does not rehearse end-time scenarios and outlooks to his son. To the son, it seems his father is tired of life. I think the father wants to avoid death. But to put so much energy into the denial of death is, as the existentialist philosophers and theologians

have long told us, to deny life as well.

The young man underscores his fear of this denial when he voices one of the jokes written into the play that has not gotten very many laughs. After listing some things he wants to do in life that he has not yet had the chance to do, he confesses, "And I don't want to go to heaven a virgin." I don't know if the lack of laughter is due to audiences thinking it too crude a line, or too poignant.

What I am sure of is that it underscores basic existential realities that Adventists, as a community of faith, need to come to terms with. The living know that they shall die, but the dead know nothing—until the trumpet sounds and the Lord calls forth his own. Birth, copulation, and death are realities that our hope in the coming of the Lord cannot and, in this life, ought not to deliver us from. They are rather the conditions that create the sequence of generations, the length of our days upon the earth that the Lord has given us.

Blessed are they who die in the Lord, from henceforth, says the Spirit. But blessed also are they who marry and make love in the Lord, blessed are they who are born in the Lord, and again, blessed are they who die in the Lord from henceforth, that they rest now from their labors and that their works follow after them.

Adventists have for a long time now been building a blessed community in which people are born, live, love, and die in the Lord. This community may not be the hinge of cosmic history in quite the way our forefathers and foremothers thought. But it is special—something worth holding on to, renewing, and handing on. We have had a habit of trying to recruit people to Adventism by telling them they should join or stay because we alone have the Spirit of Prophecy; we have Ellen White. But an event like *Red Books* impresses upon us that now our community is the reason to belong.

We study Ellen White because she is the foundation our own little earthen vessel, with its particular, peculiar treasure—an oil of idiosyncratic flavor and aroma, which still sheds light for us and for those whom the Spirit is adding to our numbers. In a sense, then, we do not have Ellen White, she has us, and we need to understand the ways in which she has sometimes vexed, but also blessed our living, loving, and dying. ■

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**A. Gregory Schneider** is professor of religion and social science at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.



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I do not concur. It is, however, a mark of the common tendency to essentialize "homosexuality" that these stories have been drawn into considerations of homoerotic behavior. It is rather the gang-rape aspect that both epitomizes the evil and negates the accounts' applicability to our purposes here.

This portion of this endnote did not make it into the *Spectrum* version.

(2) Endnote 3 also originally included a brief treatment of the Jude reference to the Sodom story:

*Jude 6–7, drawing on the apocryphal first book of Enoch, cites ancient contraventions of the barriers between humans and angels as a warning against false teachers in the early church who may have been claiming that their mystical experiences brought them into sexual contact with the "glorious ones" (v. 8), an order of angelic beings. Whether initiated from the side of angels (Gen. 6) or of humans (Gen. 19), such mixing of kinds is labeled as profoundly blasphemous (v. 8). The explicit parallel between the two Genesis examples makes clear that the wrong in both cases is "going off after other flesh" (sarkos heteras), as the Greek of v. 7 explicitly puts it—an expression whose import is missed by such renderings as the NRSV's "pursued unnatural lust." The underlying assumption seems comparable to Paul's in I Cor. 15:39–44, where he argues on the basis of just such distinctions between our present bodily existence and that of our glorified physical state in the resurrection. God makes various kinds of flesh. See L. William Countryman, *Dirt, Greed and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and Their Implications for Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 133–34.*

I do understand the challenges of trying to make a book chapter into a journal article!

JOHN JONES  
LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY, RIVERSIDE, CALIF.

IN REFERENCE TO John R. Jones's article, "Examining the Biblical Texts about Homosexuality," I appeal to John to use his gifted expertise to examine other texts in the Bible, like the following, and see if he still reaches the same conclusion:

*And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,'" and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined*

*to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt. 19:4–6, NKJV; compare Gen. 1:27; 2:24).*

I do not need to be a theologian to conclude from this passage that, according to Christ himself:

1. God instituted marriage and the rules governing intimate human sex relationship at the creation week, long before any "holiness code" came into existence.
2. He obviously intended both marriage and sex to be enjoyed within a monogamous setting and/or between "male and female."
3. This is the only human union that he recognizes as symbolically "one flesh," inseparable.

A similar text in the New Testament is 1 Corinthians 7:2, where single adults are advised thus: "Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband." Both texts clearly exclude polygamy, polyandry, and same-sex marriage.

As for Leviticus 18 and 20 and Romans 1, they address corrupt heathen practices, detestable to God, that he did not want to see practiced by his holy nation, Israel. Interestingly, the prohibitions against homosexuality and bestiality come one after another and are both punishable by death (Lev. 18:22, 23, and 20:13, 15).

The appearance of these prohibitions along with ceremonial laws does not make them mere ceremonial laws. Under theocracy, God promulgated moral, civil, and ceremonial laws together. However, it should be noted that the breaking of the moral law of God usually attracted capital punishment.

Moreover, Romans 1:26, 27, presents homosexuality and other related vices as unnatural or "against nature." Thus, they are worse than sin. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, homosexuality and other related immoral practices are listed with vices that prevent their practitioners from going into the Kingdom of God.

Because of his obsession with freedom in Christ, John went too far. In my opinion, he missed the point. I fail to see in Galatians 3:28, any relationship between homosexuality and the freedom of the fellowship enjoyed within the Church, Christ's spiritual spouse. Is John implying that this freedom in Christ can be extended to bestiality, too?

My hope is that the freedom John discusses in this article will not be a stumbling block to his readers, especially the weak in faith.

LUKA T. DANIEL  
COTE D'IVOIRE.

## Sects and the Church

REGARDING THE Bull and Lockhart presentations carried in *Spectrum* (summer 2008):

As a sociologist who has written on church-sect theory, I have problems with their approach.

First, they focus almost exclusively on theology in checking out the application of the sect theory to Adventism. This ignores the broad thrust of the theory, which these days is related to changing levels of tension between a religious group and its environment. In my writings about Adventism, I focus on relations with governments, other churches, and society itself—the latter including separation, difference, and antagonism rooted in behavioral norms and culture as well as beliefs. To focus on theology almost singly is to miss the broad picture.

Secondly, they persist in seeing church-sect theory as unidirectional. They rightly mention Armand Mauss's book, *The Angel and the Beehive*, as an example of a hierarchy (in this case, the Mormon hierarchy) setting out to increase tension in the "optimal" direction. His book does, indeed, do what they say it does, but it also shows that tension can move either way at a given time.

I raised the same possibility within Adventism, especially in the liberal democracies, where there has in recent years been an influx of immigrants from the developing world. But just as Mormonism has reversed course (Mauss's book was written under the last president of their church, so it has been once more moving in the denomination direction.)

I also conclude that there may have been hiccups along the way for Adventism. Some parts of the Church are moving in one direction and other parts the other, yet I hold firmly to the conclusion that when all the evidence is weighed, the immigrants are here seeking upward mobility and our general trajectory has been toward the denomination pole of the sect-denomination continuum. Take Barry Black as exhibit A, and the long story of our continuing compromise with the state over military service as exhibit B.

RON LAWSON  
QUEENS COLLEGE, NEW YORK.

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to go for information about Ellen White.

Several acquaintances have talked about writing "the big biography." Several Adventist historians have threatened or promised to write a biography, but all have fallen by the wayside. I left so much out—I focused only on her work as health reformer.

Recently, I met with several Adventist historians—Julius Nam, Terrie Aamodt, and Gary Land—about collaborating on a biographical project, where we would each focus on a different aspect of White's career. It wasn't my idea, but I remain interested in Ellen White.

**Q:** So what about your other work? How would you characterize yourself and your career?

**A:** I guess I would say I am a fairly decent redneck historian; a country historian from Southern Missionary College.

I am most interested in the history of science and am currently president of the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science.

Right now, I am trying to finish an eight-volume Cambridge history of science. I am also writing a history of science in America, which is driving me crazy.

I have an edited book, called *Galileo Goes to Jail and Other Myths in Science and Religion*, coming out from Harvard University Press next year, which should attract some attention.

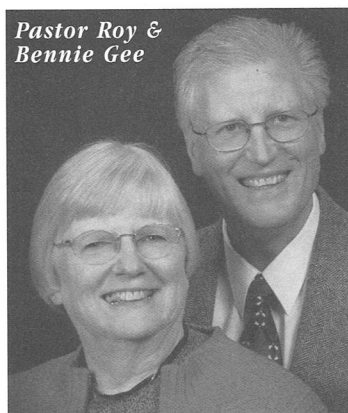
**Q:** This seems to be a good time to be publishing on science and religion. Look at Richard Dawkins.

**A:** I'm a flea compared to Dawkins. He sold something like a million copies before going into paperback. No historian of Adventism is going to get rich or famous. ■

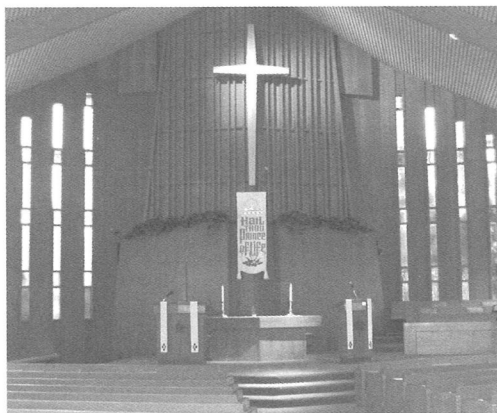
**Ronald L. Number** is professor of the history of science and medicine at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Issues of *Spectrum* magazine that focused on the first edition of *Prophetess of Health* (vol. 8, no. 2) and reprinted minutes from the 1919 Bible Conference (vol. 10, no. 1) can be viewed on *Spectrum's* online archive <[www.spectrummagazine.org](http://www.spectrummagazine.org)>.

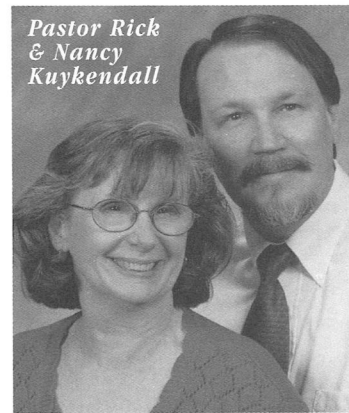
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