

 community through conversation

SPECTRUM



Creation and Devolution

Global Interfaith
Conversations

Exile and Responsibility

Embracing the
Stranger: *Toward
an Adventist
Theology of Migration*

Ellen White Returns Home

Leland Kaiser
on the Future of
Health Care

community through conversation

SPECTRUM

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Cover Art:

"Desplazados," detail
by Beatriz Mejia-Krumbein
2010
Mixed media

Artist Biography: Born and raised in Colombia, South America, Beatriz Mejia-Krumbein lived in Germany and Mexico before immigrating to the United States. She studied fine arts and music in Colombia, and received an M.F.A. from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Currently she is the chair of the Art Department at La Sierra University in Riverside, California.

Her mixed media paintings and assemblages incorporate layering processes, representing the multiplicity of her own life as artist, teacher, mother, and wife. She says her art work helps her to understand and accept that all her blessings and misfortunes have left a distinct mark. She says, "The most valuable knowledge I was granted is my conviction that all humans are equal and experience the same needs and feelings. We share experiences that transcend the world of forms, color, and words."

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contents

Editorials

- 2 Stand Up and Cheer: *Hope for and by Adventist Authors* | BY BONNIE DWYER
- 3 Creation and Devolution | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

Feedback

- 5 Letters | HILDE, PESTES, JAKOBSEN

Noteworthy: Guarding the Line Between Contextualization and Syncretism

- 7 Roadmap for Mission Voted at 2009 Annual Council
- 10 New Director Merklin Takes Reins of Adventist Muslim Study Center

Conversations

- 12 Global Interfaith Conversations | RACHEL DAVIES INTERVIEWS WILLIAM JOHNSON

Bible: Strangers in the World

- 14 Exile and Responsibility: *A Perspective on the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Exilic Calling* | BY ABI DOUKHAN
- 19 Embracing the Stranger: *Toward an Adventist Theology of Migration* | BY LOURDES E. MORALES-GUDMUNDSSON
- 23 Zogby Survey Finds Religious Leaders and Members at Odds | PRNEWSWIRE-UCNEWSWIRE

Sunrise in Maine

- 24 Ellen White Returns Home: *The Ellen White Project—2009* | BY BEVERLY BEEM
- 30 SIDEBAR | Ellen White: *American Prophet*
- 31 "Joy in the Morning" | BY KENDRA HALOVIK

Health-Care Future

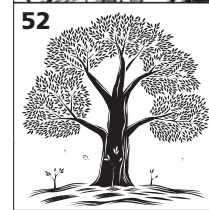
- 37 Health-Care Reform 2009–2010: *Is it Yes or Is it No?* | BY LARRY A. MITCHEL
- 38 My View of the Future of Health Care | BY LELAND R. KAISER
- 42 Faith-Based Caregiving in a Secular World: *Four Defining Issues* | A REVIEW BY LAUNA RASMUSSEN

Healing of the Nations

- 46 The Gospel According to Moses and Elijah | BY ROY E. GANE
- 52 Repairers of Broken Walls and Restorers of God's Justice | BY ZDRAVKO PLANTAK
- 60 The Promise of Peace | A REVIEW BY MATTHEW BURDETTE

Poetry

- cover Blue | BY JOHN MCDOWELL





Stand Up and Cheer: *Hope for and by*

Adventist Authors | BY BONNIE DWYER

What makes you stand up and cheer for Adventism? Is it a Fox news report of people in Haiti gathering on an Adventist church campus taking care of each other? What about the significant campaign to stop violence against women called ENDITNOW, under the direction of Adventist Women's Ministries and the Adventist Development and Relief Association, that is currently gathering signatures around the world? Do announcements of increased enrollment at your alma mater touch you?

For me, it is all of the above plus the publication of books by my favorite Adventist authors. And when my favorite authors address my favorite subject—the Sabbath—I am ready to stand up and cheer.

In this issue you will find reviews of two such books: *The Promise of Peace* by Charles Scriven and *Faith-Based Caregiving in a Secular World: Four Defining Issues* by James Londis.

From the titles, you can tell that the Sabbath is not the central point of these books, but it plays a significant role in each. And I love it when articulate people give us profound descriptions of the day such as this:

"Sabbaths were, each one, holidays of hope. They were sheer grace wrapped in the ribbon of ritual," Scriven says as he describes the Sabbaths in the Old Testament.

We featured Londis' thoughts on Sabbath as God's cure for burnout in a previous issue of *Spectrum*. Returning to them in this book, it is good to be reminded that Sabbath is about health and healing, too:

"The Sabbath rest is imbued with this multilayered concept of curing and healing through forgiveness. The command to rest implies much more than a cessation of physical labor. The Hebrews were to give time to God in worship, to their families in hours of refreshing conversation and recreative activity, and to their community in fellowship



ADRA relief workers in Haiti distribute basic necessities.

and service. For us today, observing the Sabbath rest means attending to the needs of imperfect relationships with God and with each other. This day reminds us that our most significant achievements are not in the world of commerce but in the intimacies we enjoy with God, family, and our worshipping community. These interactions heal us in so many ways and at so many levels, it is impossible to adequately chronicle them," he says.

Healing is a significant topic in this issue of the journal; and we have several noteworthy authors addressing different aspects of that word.

Renowned health futurist Leland Kaiser looks ahead at a significant issue within the United States—health care.

Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson, author of *I Forgive You, but...*, provides thoughts on a different kind of healing—healing of international relationships. She would have us consider reasons for an Adventist Theology of Migration.

We close the journal with two excellent addresses that were given by the presidents of the Adventist Theological Society and the Adventist Society for Religious Studies at their shared session in New Orleans in 2009. Roy Gane, author of five books, and Zdravko Plantak, author of *The Silent Church* spoke movingly about the healing power of the Gospel. Their presentations gave hope for the healing of Adventism and were certainly an occasion to stand up and cheer. ■

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.



Creation and Devolution | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

**"I saw Satan laughing with delight
the day the music died..."**

—Don McLean

Optimism? Pitch it in the dumpster. The Adventist church reflects the American—and now the contemporary American—environment, so it may be expected, I suppose, to decline into reckless quarreling. Certainly, disagreements about Genesis seem likely to worsen and to cause yet more injury to the body of Christ.

No doubt everyone who speaks up bears some of the blame. I am touched by the tawdry goings-on in the human heart, and so are you.

Still, even if optimism is a little screwy and our defective hearts a grievous burden, we may still *hope* for something better. It's not inevitable that we pick up the worst features of the culture around us.

But hope for what? Exactly what would we have to overcome in order to become a community of constructive conversation? What would it take to exchange the shouting and sneering for searching and praying—together? This latter, after all, is far more likely to heal our hearts and expand our minds.

Consider first the problems of arrogance and unfriendliness. Which of these has the firmer grip on Adventist life is sometimes hard to tell. But, we Adventists just do find it difficult to allow that God's thoughts are higher than ours, and equally difficult to show empathy and kindness toward those we disagree with.

Consider also fear and ignorance. Again, which of these explains more about our problems is hard to tell. But it's certain that many church-employed Adventist scientists, along with more than a few pastors and theolo-

gians, are afraid to say what they think about creation and science. At the same time, some Adventists, at least, have made anti-intellectualism a near-article of faith.

These traits guarantee devolution—of conversation, certainly, but also of the church itself. When they infect our disagreements about Genesis, they exacerbate decline. No organization suffused with arrogance and unfriendliness or bogged down in fear and ignorance can long endure; not, at least, in a vibrant and mattering way.

But can we not *hope*, at least, for less of all these toxins—less of arrogance and unfriendliness, less of fear and ignorance?

If time and again optimism is shallow and too easy; hope is, well, a *virtue*. You train for it; you hold on to it against the odds. When you succeed in being hopeful, it often surprises you. You feel gifted, like a receiver of grace.

As for myself, I am hopeful. With respect to the debates about creation and science, what, then, do I hope for? In a word, faithfulness. I hope for wider faithfulness to the risen Christ whose story the Gospels tell.

From the Gospels I learn that, against the pull of pride and pomposity, Jesus listened. He listened not just to those He was comfortable with, but also to those capable of challenging Him, such as Nicodemus and the foreign woman He met in Syrophenicia. What is more, He said, according to Mark, that not even the Son knows all that the Father knows. In this person's life, humility showed arrogance the back door.

I learn also that despite indifference and cruelty all around Him, Jesus loved others—including His enemies. He knew nothing, so far as we can tell, of sustained unfriendliness, and certainly did not shut out, or try to hurt, those who disagreed with Him. In the end, He idealized friendship as the crucial feature of His bond with the disciples.

New York's Best-Kept Secret

Highlights of Recent Services:

2/6

Ronald Lawson: *The Ellen White Project*

2/13

Lisa Clark Diller: *Modern Minds, Medieval Bodies & Sex and the Incarnation*

3/6

Marciana Popescu: *Reframing Christianity within a human rights paradigm*

3/13

T Joe Willey: *Can the logic of science be used to establish the supernatural in the health writings of EGW & Who were the confused races of men created by amalgamation?*

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The Gospels also say that during His public ministry, right up to the crucifixion, Jesus showed great audacity and nerve. He did not give in to fear, and neither did He stifle discussion through the tactic of fear. He embodied and facilitated courage.

They say, too, that from start to finish Jesus was eager to learn. As a child, He sat at the feet of rabbis asking questions. As a teacher, He manifested an astonishing grasp of His religious heritage. The book of Hebrews says that He was learning obedience even as He suffered. No evidence—nothing substantial, nothing itchy-bitsy—suggests that He was hostile to knowledge or afraid of the intellect.

Jesus embodied traits that renew, not traits that destroy. Why, by God's grace, can't we? Why, at least, can't we move by inches, or even a hair's breadth, in the right direction?

Then we'd start to see that the God's-eye view is simply *unavailable to us*. So we'd all be less preoccupied with the fine details of orthodoxy and more preoccupied with the big picture and with the practice of faith to which it points. As we already regard Jesus' Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus as, in some sense, metaphorical; we'd

more readily interpret words and stories about God as *pointers*—often metaphorical pointers—to a truth too deep for language to express fully. We'd get in touch with our finitude. We'd accept mystery.

Furthermore, we'd start to love one another—and not in the abstract alone. To our fellow Adventists, we'd begin to say: If some mysteries of faith leave you thinking differently from me, I still welcome you—into conversation and into joint solidarity with Christ. We'd begin to exclaim: Let's bear one another's burdens, intellectual and otherwise, and not make these burdens harder to bear. We'd each begin declaring to the other: So long as you intend to follow Jesus and to build up the life of your congregation, I will not sneer you out of the Adventist circle; I will not try to disgrace you; I will try not to put your church employment or the institution you work for at risk.

Then, without supposing we'd ever plumb its depths, we might actually progress toward a deeper reading of the Genesis story. We'd have the courage to say what we think. We'd begin seeing, perhaps, how the story is really about relationships and values, as Sigve Tonstad says in his fine, new book, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day*. We'd begin to get past hostile arguing about creation's how and when, and shift to far more constructive and congenial discussion of creation's why.

By generous listening, we could also consider ways in which evolutionary theory may shed light we really need to consider. In addition, we could explore how, taken to reductive extremes, the theory undermines our sense of freedom and dignity, and so sets itself, as the University of Chicago's Leon Kass has said, "against the evidence of our lived experience."

But we can only take up this conversation if we begin to embody traits evident in the life and faithfulness of Jesus. If we did, we might thereby renew our sense of the deeper music of Adventism. And we might thus—in small increments, if not at one fell swoop—cause Satan, who otherwise laughs with delight at our bickering, to feel...sad. ■

Charles Scriven chairs Adventist Forum.



Creation Clarifications, Doubts, and Debates

Clarification to Fall Issue

IN THE 2009 FALL issue of *Spectrum* I read “In the Eye of the Storm: an Interview with La Sierra University President Randal Wisbey” by Bonnie Dwyer and noticed a few things I felt should be clarified. She writes:

Debate over that event ended up on the internet and then a website was created that attacked La Sierra fairly specifically, even taking the university's name as part of the website name. Was legal action taken by La Sierra over the use of its name? The website changed its name to Educate Truth.

While it is true that La Sierra took legal action, it wasn't till after LaSierraUniversity.net had been shut down for six-days due to reasons unrelated to LSU. The site was shut down June 2 and the legal papers served June 8. Which makes Wisbey's response to Dwyer interesting:

Our General Counsel did write to the individual associated with the website, noting that they did not have permission to use the university's name, and the name of the website was soon changed.

While LaSierraUniversity.net shared similar content to EducateTruth.com, they were not owned or run by the same people. There has been a misconception that I was the one who created and ran LaSierraUniversity.net.

There are two things I want to make clear:

1. LSU legal counsel was made aware June 8 that I was not responsible for the creation, purchase, or content of the domain LaSierraUniversity.net.
2. LSU legal counsel had no influence with the naming of EducateTruth.com as it was created five days before LSU sent the letter from their legal counsel.

Thank you.

SHANE HILDE, Editor, EducateTruth.com
Via the Internet

Response from Bonnie Dwyer

To be clear, Wisbey stated in his response to my question that (as of that time) no legal action had been taken by La Sierra University. Perhaps noting that there is a difference between a letter from a lawyer and legal action clarifies this misunderstanding.

Doubt

I CAN IDENTIFY with various *Spectrum* staff (writers) who also have had doubts, not only of our “beliefs” but about what was considered “reality.”

A good beginners book is “Zero” by Charles Seife.

Science vs. religion is a 4,000-6,000 year old struggle. It is riveting, if you still remember high school mathematics. The history of such nonsense is still alive in sermons that equate the center of the universe coming to earth. Geocentricity is still not totally dead. Aristotle's thoughts still linger for reality. How long will it take to realize:

1. The antiquity of the universe
2. The antiquity of earth
3. The antiquity of life
4. The antiquity of mankind

And this antiquity is verified by

- a. The continuity of Egyptian dynasties
- b. The 15,000 tablets of Ebla
- c. The continuity of cuneiform writing predating Abraham to 50 AD
- d. The 6400 year-old civilization of the city states like Brak in Northeast Syria
- e. The early European civilizations in Romania and surrounding areas
- f. Neanderthal cave paintings
- g. Counting stones

More Listening In...

Some recent and upcoming events at
San Diego Adventist Forum
Recordings are available on CDs or audio cassettes

- Michael Scofield August/09
Adventist Higher Education: Which School Shall Close First?
- T. Joe Willey, Ph.D. September/09
Science Falsely So-called: Can Modern Science Establish the Supernatural in the Nineteenth Century Health Writings of Ellen G. White?
- Lourdes Morales Gudmundsson, Ph.D. October/09
Embracing the Stranger: Toward an Adventist Theology of Migration
- Arthur Patrick, Ph.D. November/09
The Re-parenting of Seventh-day Adventists? Reflections on the Historical Development, Substance, and Potential of Ellen White Studies
- Andrew Howe January/10
The Intersection of Faith and Film
- Gary Chartier, et. al. February/10
What's at the Center? University Students Explore the Integration and Evaluation of SDA Belief Systems
- Doug Hackleman March/10
Filthy Lucre

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- h. Bone counting notches
- i. Ice cores
- j. Erosion rates
- k. Volcanic fingerprints
- l. Mountain lifts
- m. Continental drifts
- n. Atlantic rift

My intensity on the matter probably comes from the fact that I have been “hoodwinked,” misled, lied to and asked to “just have faith.”

MICHAEL PESTES
Sierra Vista, AZ

Creationism/Evolution Debate

SINCE I DO NOT have a university education, I have to use a simpler language than the professor I quote here—from Bryan Ness’s article on Creation, Evolution and Adventist Higher Education. On page 48 in the Fall 2009 issue of *Spectrum* he writes: *Evolutionists currently have no tenable theory for the origin of life by purely naturalistic processes so this is the easiest point to make.* In my opinion this

is a kind of a rhetoric trick, because real and true science shall not look for that kind of evidence. If it does, it is not true science. Here in Europe it is obvious for most ordinarily educated persons, but SDAs repeat this fictitious argument over and over again, and young pupils and students believe it is a valid argument against evolution. There is an insurmountable difference between natural science and faith by divine revelation. Why? Because God cannot be investigated by science, and every attempt to do that is futile and even presumptuous.

He continues: *More difficult, is finding scientific evidence that supports a recent creation; and I am honest about this too, pointing out that creationist scientists are continuing to search for evidence in this area.* If that kind of “science” is to continue, it is not science at all, and will never be acknowledged by the scientific community. Bryan Ness and other creationists know that, but they blame the scientific community for atheism and working against Christian faith. This is all wrong. On this side of the Atlantic most Christians know that, and it is not a discussion which find much interest here, because this is so obvious.

And he still continues: *Creationists, on the other hand, invoke a supernatural cause for the origin of life and exercise faith in divine revelation that someday we will understand how to harmonize this with scientific evidence.* What does he mean by “supernatural”? If this “supernatural” phenomenon was possible to investigate, and that investigation was successful, the “supernatural phenomenon” would no longer be supernatural. Does this make sense?

Science knows that knowledge of the laws of nature is limited and steadily increasing. Science also knows that everything happens according to the laws of nature. Science and anybody know that it is legitimate to say that the number of the laws of nature must be infinite. That opens for “anything” to happen.

I am myself an SDA and active in my local church. Opinion in my church is differing, but a debate on this topic would be detrimental to our loveable fellowship and unity. God has created all the laws of nature. He never breaks them. He has never regretted any of them, because they are perfect. Not only science says that they cannot be broken, the Bible also does.

How long shall this irrational debate continue?

KRISTEN FALCH JAKOBSEN
Via the Internet



Guarding the Line Between Contextualization and Syncretism

Editor's Note: No statement explaining the Adventist church's approach to mission has existed within the official Working Policy, delegates to the 2009 Annual Council were told. The following is the text of the statement that was proposed and adopted at that meeting.

Roadmap for Mission Voted at 2009 Annual Council

GOD'S MISSION for this world motivates and informs our mission. For this reason, mission is the lifeblood of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Mission is woven into our identity; mission defines who we are and why we exist. Early in our movement, we took the Great Commission (Matt. 28: 18–20) as our divine mandate motivated by the vision of the everlasting gospel reaching every nation, tribe, language, and people (Rev. 14:6–12). The genuine quest for God in world religions provides a pathway for the proclamation of the gospel.

Under the blessing of the Lord, our Church has grown, reaching to Earth's farthest bounds. When we began, our mission placed us among people who had traditions of Christianity. Today, however, mission takes us to populations that are rooted in other world religions. Furthermore, in some areas of the world, conversion to Christianity is frowned upon or even runs the risk of threatening one's person and life. The history of Christianity indicates that this has practically always been the case.

At the same time, the spirit of the age encourages acceptance of all world religions as valid expressions of the human spirit and discourages efforts to persuade people to turn from one religion to another. Some Christian theologians even argue that the task of missions is to affirm people in their own religion—to make Hindus better Hindus, Muslims better Muslims, Buddhists better Buddhists, and so on.

Among Seventh-day Adventists, one finds a variety of initiatives and methodologies toward people of different

religions and cultures. While the concern for mission is commendable, the proliferation of approaches makes it all the more imperative for the organized Church to articulate simply and clearly the nature of our mission—what it is and how we go about it—firmly grounded in the authority of the Scriptures.

We must find our roadmap for mission in the specific instructions and acts of Jesus and the apostles as recorded in the Scriptures. In His sovereignty, the Lord takes initiatives to reveal Himself to men and women through a variety of means. For instance, in the Old Testament, we read of people outside the circle of the chosen people who were followers of God—Meichizedek (Gen. 14:18–20), Jethro (Exod. 18:1–27), Naaman (2 Kgs. 5:1). Likewise, the New Testament tells of the Magi (Matt. 2:1–12), of Gentiles who were “God-fearers” (Acts 13:43, 50; 16:14; 17:4, 17), and of others who obeyed God's law through following their conscience (Rom. 2:14–16). Such examples, however, do not provide a template for Seventh-day Adventist mission; they simply provide laudable examples of the Lord's working.

The Mission

Seventh-day Adventist mission is centered in God's loving gift of His Son to be the Saviour of the world. We are to share this good news with all people, telling them that “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12), and that “whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

At its core, mission is bearing witness through word and life and in the power of the Holy Spirit. As the Lord commanded Israel of old, “You are my witnesses ...and my servant whom I have chosen” (Isa. 43:10), so the Risen Lord commands us, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my

witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Seventh-day Adventist mission is comprehensive in its scope. It involves proclaiming the good news to the whole world (Matt. 24:14), making disciples of all nations by going, baptizing, and teaching them (Matt. 28:18–20), and inviting them into the *ecclesia*—the end-time community of believers in Jesus who worship God the Creator and Redeemer (Rev. 12:17; 14:6–20 7).

This community, the Church, is the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12, Eph. 1:21, 22; 4:4–6). In this fellowship where Jesus is confessed as Savior and Lord, and where the Scriptures provide the foundation for instruction, members experience the transforming power of the new life in Christ. They love one another (John 13:31, 32); they are united, despite differences of race, culture, gender, or social standing (Eph. 2:12–14; Gal. 3:28); and they grow in grace (2 Peter 27 3:18). They, in turn, go out to make disciples of other people, and they carry forward Jesus' ministry of compassion, help, and healing to the world (Matt. 10:7, 8).

Although other Christians also preach the gospel, Seventh-day Adventists understand our special calling as proclaiming the good news of salvation and obedience to God's commandments. This proclamation takes place during the time of God's judgment and in the expectation of the soon return of Jesus, bringing to an end the cosmic conflict (Rev. 14: 6, 7; 34 20:9–10).

Seventh-day Adventist mission, therefore, involves a process of proclamation that builds up a community of believers "who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12). They live lives of service to others and eagerly await the second coming of the Lord.

Fulfilling the Mission

Our mission remains unchanged wherever we find ourselves in the world. How we fulfill it—how we go about it—however, takes a variety of forms depending on differences in culture and conditions in society. Fulfilling the mission where non-Christian religions prevail often entails significant modifications in approaching the task. We encounter cultural differences, other writings that are deemed sacred, and sometimes restrictions in religious freedom.

The Example of the Apostles

The conditions Seventh-day Adventists face in sharing the message of Jesus to people of other religions largely parallel

those that the apostles encountered. How they went about the mission is instructive for us today.

The first Christians faced a world of many deities. It was also a dangerous world, as the Caesars in Rome increasingly demanded not only respect, but worship as divine. Yet they risked everything they had, even their lives, and many lost it, in an unbreakable commitment to their Savior.

In this environment, the apostles always uplifted Jesus Christ as mankind's only hope. They did not shrink from proclaiming who He was and what He had done. They announced forgiveness and new life through Him alone, and they called people everywhere to repentance in view of judgment to come and the return of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:4; 1 Cor. 2:2). And they proclaimed that only one person could rightly be adored as Lord—Jesus Christ: "For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many 'gods' and many 'lords'), yet for us there is but one God, the Father... and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 8:5, 6).

Although they modified their approach in keeping with the audience, they never deviated from proclaiming the uniqueness of Jesus as the hope of the world. They never suggested that they had come to help their hearers find a deeper spiritual experience within their own religions; on the contrary, they challenged them to turn to the salvation provided in Christ. Thus, the Apostle Paul in Athens began his discourse on Mars Hill by referring to the gods the people were worshipping, but led them to the message of Jesus and His resurrection (Acts 17:22–3 1).

Writings of Other Religions

Paul made references to non-biblical writings in his speech in Athens and his letters (Acts 17:38; 1 Cor. 15:33; Titus 1:12), but he gave priority to the Scriptures (the Old Testament) in his proclamation and instruction to the new Christian communities (Acts 13:13–47; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 4:2).

In Seventh-day Adventist witness, the writings of other religions can be useful in building bridges by pointing to elements of truth that find their fullest and richest significance in the Bible. These writings should be used in a deliberate attempt to introduce people to the Bible as the inspired Word of God and to help them transfer their allegiance to the Scriptures as the source of faith and practice. However, the nurture and spiritual growth of new believers must be accomplished on the basis of the Bible and its exclusive authority (see "Guidelines for Engaging in Global Mission").

Contextualization

Jesus, as our model, was the perfect example of love in His relationships with others. As we imitate Him in our mission, we should open our hearts in honest and loving fellowship. The Apostle Paul described how he adapted his approach to his audience: “Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Cor. 9:19–22). The apostles did not make it difficult for people to accept the gospel and join the fellowship of the Christian community, but they did not shrink from declaring the full purpose of God for them (cf. Acts 15:19; 20:20–24).

From Paul’s example arises contextualization: the intentional and discriminating attempt to communicate the gospel in a culturally meaningful way. For Seventh-day Adventist mission, contextualization must be faithful to the Scriptures, guided by the Spirit, and relevant to the host culture, remembering that all cultures are judged by the gospel.

As the Church seeks to adapt its approach to mission in a very diverse world, the danger of syncretism—the blending of religious truth and error—is a constant challenge. Contextualization should be done within a specific cultural location, close to where the people live; it is a process that should involve church leaders, theologians, missiologists, local people, and ministers.

Openness and Identity

Paul sought to be open and honest in his presentation of the gospel: “We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Cor 4:2). Likewise, we are to carry out our mission, and identify ourselves as Seventh-day Adventists, in a manner that avoids creating formidable barriers.

In seeking to find connections with people from other religions, the theme of cosmic conflict, which is found in various expressions, may be a useful starting point. Other areas that can prove helpful are prophecy, modesty and simplicity, and healthful living.

Transitional Groups

In some situations, Seventh-day Adventist mission may include the formation of transitional groups (usually termed Special Affinity Groups) that lead the people from a non-Christian religion into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In forming such groups, a clear plan that emphasizes the end result should be followed. These groups should be established and nurtured only with the endorsement and collaboration of church administration. Although some situations may require an extended period of time to complete the transition, leaders of these groups should make every effort to lead the people into membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church within a deliberate time plan.

Any ministry or group that is formed with the intention of representing the Seventh-day Adventist Church in any part of the world will endeavor to promote both the theological and organizational unity of the Church. Although the theological dimension may be given the chief emphasis in the initial stages of the group, the leader of the group should intentionally lead its members to a sense of Seventh-day Adventist identity and an awareness of Church organization, with growing participation in the lifestyle, practices, and mission of the Church.

Baptism and Church Membership

Candidates for baptism shall confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (Rom. 10:9), accept the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church as summarized in the Fundamental Beliefs, and understand that they are joining a worldwide fellowship that is loyal to God and awaits the second coming of Jesus.

Opportunities and Needs

Today, because of immigration and other factors, followers of world religions are found throughout the world. In this new context, leaders in all the world divisions should develop specific plans to bring the Seventh-day Adventist message to these peoples.

For the fulfillment of the mission globally, the Church needs to help people develop expertise in the writings of other religions, along with literature and programs to train clergy and lay members in reaching adherents of these religions. The Global Mission Study Centers should play a major, but not exclusive, role in these endeavors. Worldwide, our pastors and members need to be educated to accept new believers from world religions. This will require

the developing of competence among leaders, local elders, pastors, missionaries, and frontline workers. In the allocation of human and financial resources, the needs of the mission to people of other world religions should be included as part of strategic planning.

Where Freedom is Restricted

Our mission takes us at times to societies where religious freedom is severely restricted. These areas of the world are not to be abandoned; rather, new methods of fulfilling the mission are to be attempted. These include the “tentmaker” approach, which is when individuals use their occupation to support themselves financially, usually in a challenging mission area for the purpose of Christian outreach. Another approach is to simply encourage those from such countries who have become Seventh-day Adventists in another society to return to their home countries as ambassadors for Christ. And even where a human presence is not possible, the witness through radio, television, or the Internet may, like the altars left behind by Abraham on his wanderings (Gen. 12:7), be used by the Spirit to lead men and women to accept the Advent message.

Conclusion

The mission to reach followers of world religions poses substantial challenges. However, the mission itself remains unchanged because it is God’s mission. Through whatever approach we follow, its end result is to lead men and women into membership with those who confess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, who embrace the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, demonstrating the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, and looking forward to the soon coming of Christ. They shall identify themselves with the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church in doctrine, life values, hope, and mission.

God, the Lord of the mission, is free and sovereign. He can and does intervene to reveal Himself in various ways, drawing people to Himself and awakening them to His majesty and sovereignty. But to His Church He has entrusted His mission (2 Cor. 5:18–21). It is a comprehensive mission, but it is a single mission. He has not established parallel or multiple tracks for us to follow, which is to say, we should all be committed to the same beliefs and be organized and work in harmony with the world Church. ■

Revised 10-06-09

New Director Merklin Takes Reins of Adventist Muslim Study Center

RICK KAJIURA / ADVENTIST MISSION / ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

15 Dec 2009, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States



FORMER MISSION INSTITUTE director Lester Merklin (left) assumed his new post December 1 as head of the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations.

The center is one of five Global Mission religious study operations by the church’s Office of Adventist Mission established to build bridges of understanding between the Adventist Church and major world religions. The center consists of Merklin, who will also continue as a faculty member at Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Merklin, 61, has served as a pastor and seminary professor in the United States, Belize, Pakistan, and the Philippines. Most recently he was the director of the church’s Institute of World Mission, which offers training for the church’s cross-cultural workers. He holds a master’s of divinity from Andrews University and a doctorate in ministry from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. Merklin replaces Jerald Whitehouse, who stepped down as director in June.

“The center has an important role to play in helping Adventists understand Islam,” Merklin said. “We are in a unique position to converse with our Muslim friends because of our mutual emphasis on doing God’s will, looking for the coming of Christ, expecting a day of judgment, and following scriptural health laws.”

Islam is the world’s second largest religion with some 1.5 billion believers. As the dominant religion in many countries in the Middle East and Asia, Islam is also experiencing growth in Europe and North America, Merklin said.

“His experience in cross-cultural communication will be an asset in helping church members develop skills to reach the unreached,” said Ganoune Diop, director of the Study Centers for the Office of Adventist Mission.

The other four Global Mission religious study centers operated by the Office of Adventist Mission are the World Jewish Friendship Center in Israel, the Buddhist Study Center in Thailand, the Hindu Study Center in India, and the Center for Secular and Postmodern Studies in England. ■

PHOTO COURTESY ADVENTIST MISSION



Global Interfaith Conversations | RACHEL DAVIES INTERVIEWS

WILLIAM JOHNSON



Davies: *You recently retired from a long post as editor at the Adventist Review. Now you have been appointed assistant to the General Conference president for interfaith relations. How did this come about; and, what, specifically, are your new responsibilities?*



Johnson: *At the end of 2006, as I was about to retire from the Adventist Review, I planned to go back to academic life. Loma Linda University invited me to teach; and Jon Paulien and I had begun working on courses and schedules.*

Then Pastor Jan Paulsen contacted me and asked me to come back to the General Conference and work on a part-time basis as his assistant for interfaith relations. He said that he wanted me to chair the official dialogues between the General Conference and other Christian churches and also to develop relations with leaders of the world religions. In today's world, Adventists occupy the same ground with Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and followers of other religions; and it simply makes sense that we should try to engage with prominent leaders of other faiths—and to begin with Islam, because of its size and widespread nature.

Q: *How are you enjoying your new work?*

A: I am having a ball!

Q: *What interfaith conversations are you currently engaged in?*

A: We completed dialogues with The Salvation Army and with the World Evangelical Alliance. For the past

three years, we have been in conversation with the Presbyterian Church (USA); these discussions are ongoing. Interestingly, they approached us at headquarters requesting a dialogue. Our church is being noticed as never before; and others want to find out more about us. We are also moving toward official conversations with the Mennonite World Conference.

Q: *How about non-Christian religions?*

A: We are involved in a serious conversation with Muslim spiritual leaders in one country and close to entering into an official Adventist-Muslim dialogue in another country. Recently, representatives of the Sikh community in the US expressed to us a wish for an official dialogue. Of course, Adventists are engaging Muslims and other faiths in conversations in various places around the globe; I am involved only in GC-level discussions.

Q: *You recently returned from an overseas trip in the interests of interfaith relations. Where did you go; and whom did you meet?*

A: Jordan. It was my third visit in less than two years. Dr. John Graz, director of the GC PARL [Public Affairs and Religious Liberty] department, accompanied me on this visit; and we were joined by church leaders from the Middle East. We met with HRH Princess Basma, a sister of the late King Hussein and a leading voice for women's concerns in the Arab world; the Minister for Information and Communication; the director of The Royal Jordanian Institute for Interfaith Studies; the former Ambassador to the UN; and other leaders involved with human rights.

Q: *Please talk about your experience with and commitment to interfaith dialogue prior to your new appointment.*

A: I have been involved in inter-church dialogues for twenty years or more, as a member of the Adventist team. Now I take the lead in these conversations. I believe in and am committed to this process—I would rather talk than fight! I believe that Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, called us to be peacemakers. So far as other religions are concerned, my doctoral studies included a minor field in World Religions; and I spent fifteen years in India. At Spicer College, I taught classes in each of the great faiths.

Q: *How is the church currently thinking about its relationship with other religions? Are we interested for the sake of refining outreach approaches; establishing genuine friendships; having a more recognized voice on the world stage; or is it some combination of all these things?*

A: All these, and more. As I see it, our relationship with other religions can be understood as operating on three levels. First is the level of cooperation: joining with Muslims, Hindus, or whoever to help in community projects, times of crisis, disaster relief, and so on. The next level involves closer interaction: this is the stage of dialogue. Here the intent is to listen and to seek to understand. We want leaders of other religions to know who Adventists are and the values that we hold. And we want to understand them, removing false stereotypes and misinformation—there are a lot of false ideas out there, particularly with regard to Muslims! These dialogues typically proceed by way of a series of discussions involving exchange of scholarly papers and continue as long as each side finds the process valuable. The third level of interaction is one where genuine friendship between Adventists and Muslims blossoms into a desire to know more about our faith. These three levels are not necessarily sharply distinct. I see them all as part of fulfilling the Adventist mission to the world.

Q: *What reactions do you get from Adventists concerning interfaith dialogue?*

A: Some are suspicious. They think that inevitably we will give away the store in an effort to please the other side. I just wish they could be present to witness the dynamic. Early on I learned that the only way is to be transparently open and honest, telling it like it is, the acceptable with the less welcome. After all, in dialogue the purpose is not trying to prove any side right or wrong but to understand the views of the other.

Q: *How long have Adventists been involved in these conversations?*

A: I have never seen a history—it would make a fascinating study, I think. Without having researched the matter, I would be surprised if we weren't involved at some level from early in our history. Our very presence in the world leads to interaction with others. In modern times, however, we can trace Adventists' increasing involvement to one individual—Dr. Bert B. Beach. He is truly a world figure, probably better known and more appreciated in other circles than by Adventists. Some of our people have severely criticized him for his efforts to introduce who we are and what we stand for to the top-most leaders of Christianity; I applaud him. I think he has made a huge contribution.

Q: *At last year's Annual Council the church voted a new document called "Roadmap for Mission." Can you provide a short history and synopsis of the new policy?*

A: Early in 2009, General Conference president Jan Paulsen set up a small committee of theologians to develop a statement on our mission. He asked me to chair the group. At our first meeting together, he explained why he thought the work was necessary and laid out parameters. I was surprised to learn that, after so many years of mission activity, Adventists have never had a document defining our mission. Paulsen indicated that he hoped the document that would emerge would have a sound scholarly basis but would be worded in language that the average member could follow. The committee worked diligently and, I think, did excellent work. As we thought about our assignment in the context of the times, we realized how much such a document is needed. The spirit of the age holds that there is good and bad in all religions, so it is arrogant to suggest that one religion is better than another. In terms of the world religions, many today would say that the task of Christian missions is to make Muslims better Muslims, Hindus better Hindus, Buddhists better Buddhists, and so on. The idea of seeking to encourage anyone to change their faith is not intellectually acceptable.

We had the initial draft ready for the 2009 Spring Meeting in April. It was well received, and various sug-

Continued on page 17...

BIBLE:



STRANGERS IN THE WORLD

Above: "Stampede"

by Beatriz Mejia-Krumbein

1995. 72" x 80" mixed media

Exile and Responsibility: A Perspective on the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Exilic Calling | BY ABI DOUKHAN

As Seventh-day Adventists, we are called to be witnesses to another reality. We recognize that this world is not our home and that we are waiting for another order. Such is the destiny contained in our very name—*Adventist*. We are the people of the Advent, the people who wait for the ushering in of a new era or order. We are, essentially, a people in exile, strangers in this world wherein we have made it our destiny to wait and hope for another reality. Our hope is thus connected to our exile. It is our very condition of exile, our sense of alienation, of not-belonging in this world which fosters our hope in a better world. Thus, our identity is not just that of a people of hope, but essentially, and primordially that of a people in exile.

The question remains, however, as to how we are to live this exile. Is this exile a call to separate ourselves from the world, to distinguish ourselves from its hopes and aspirations? Are we simply to live detached lives from the world, separate and exiled from the world, whilst doing our best to prepare ourselves for our hope? Or is our exile rather to be experienced from within the world? Does our exile mean a separation from the world; or does it point, on the contrary, to a responsibility for the well-being of this world, to a work of reparation of the world? How are we, as a Church, to live our exile? What is to be the meaning of our exile; and more importantly, what is to be our *calling* as an exiled people?

Indeed, exile as a calling can already be found throughout the Scriptures. I would like, however, to focus on one particular passage, Peter's first epistle. This article will show that this epistle speaks to two facets of the exile of the Christian church. The first one is that of exile as a *calling* to come out of the world, to separate oneself from the world, to be *ex-iled*. This calling does not constitute a form of escapism or of detachment or

indifference to the matters of this world, but, on the contrary, signifies towards a *responsibility* for the world. Which brings us to the second facet of exile as responsibility. The exile's calling to responsibility would thus entail that he or she remain *within* the world, that he or she has a central role to play there.

Exile as a Calling

To God's elect: strangers in the world (1 Peter 1:1)

IN THIS PASSAGE, it is possible to observe a direct connection between the believer's election and his or her exile in the world. Election is here intrinsically connected to the status of the believer as a stranger or exile in the world. And indeed, exile can be seen, throughout the Scriptures, as a form of election, as a sign of discipleship to God. Already, Abraham, the first believer, was called by God into a form of exile. The first Hebrew was defined as a stranger in the land, as would be his entire offspring. In the Hebrew context, exile is seen as a calling away from the stability and comforts of idolatry towards an invisible and unpredictable God. Exile thus presents a necessary step towards encountering God. It constitutes a veritable experience of initiation to discipleship and to the Hebrew faith.

This initiation by exile was again manifest in the gospels. Just like God called Abraham to a life of exile, Jesus calls His disciples to a life of exile. To follow Jesus means to forsake all earthly attachments and abodes and to follow the one who Himself has no home. We are reminded here of Jesus' answer to a potential follower: "Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the son of man has no place to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20). To follow Jesus necessitates the courage to "leave the nets behind" and to engage in a journey unto the unknown. And indeed, just as Abraham did not know where he

was going, Jesus' disciples were to go forward in faith without knowing where they were going and what was to happen. Exile was for them the ultimate experience of initiation to the Christian faith.

We are thus, as believers, elected to a destiny of exile in the world, called to be separate, to be different from the world around us. We are called to be in the world but not of the world. The question remains, however, as to what this means? Is this calling of exile to lead us away from the world? What kind of separation is here meant by the exile? Does this exile mean that we are to remain separate from the world in a way that takes away our involvement in the world? Is this exile to be lived as a form of escapism, as a form of indifference to the matters of the world? Such was indeed the Greek conception of exile. For the Greeks, exile was seen as a lesser condition, as a curse, that was to be overcome by detachment from the material world and an ever-increasing preoccupation with the spiritual realm. Is this the kind of exile that we are called to live?

The direction taken by our text is an interesting and surprising one. While the exile of the Christian does constitute a conscious act of separation from the world, it does not entail an evasion of our responsibilities to this world, nor an indifference to the matters of the world. On the contrary, our text forgoes all escapism and indifference and connects exile with an attitude of responsibility towards the world. We shall see that Peter's epistle engages us to a dual responsibility: an ethical responsibility and a religious responsibility.

Exile as Responsibility

I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world...to live such good lives and to glorify God. (1 Peter 2: 12–13)

IN THIS PASSAGE, the condition of exile—of being aliens and strangers in the world—is not associated with an attitude of quietism and indifference but entails a double responsibility: The responsibility to “live such good lives” and to “glorify God.” Exile is not just a static condition that we must endure until things get better as it was for the Greeks. Our condition of exile is understood in this passage as a dynamic condition, as containing a calling, a destiny, a vocation. There must be, according to this passage, an orientation to our exile, a meaning, a sense to it. It is not to be lived as an absurd and tran-

sient condition that we have to endure until the kingdom comes. Such is again the Greek conception of exile. Exile for the Greeks was a decadent state, a lesser state that had no value in itself but had to be overcome by a return to one's divine origin. This conception of exile as a negative and transient state is not the understanding of this passage. Exile, according to this passage has a value in itself, it has a calling of its own: To live “good lives” and to “glorify God.” But we must now better understand these two orientations of our exile.

To Live Such Good Lives

OUR CONDITION AS aliens and exiles must be understood not as a lesser form of being, but as a call to “live good lives.” The life of the exile is not a life of nostalgia for a paradise lost but a life entirely grounded in existence and dedicated to doing good. Exile entails a call for ethics. Our exile has an ethical connotation, that of a doing good, of a responsibility for the matters of the world. Interestingly, for us, the text emphasizes here the need for *action*. Too often, our contribution as exiles in the world has been limited to a verbal testimony of a better reality, of another order or kingdom. We feel, as citizens of that other order, called to *speak* of that new order. Thus, we speak of a soon-coming judgment, whereby the oppressed will be delivered, justice will be rendered to them and their oppressors will be overcome. We speak of a soon-coming re-creation, whereby the environment will again be restored to its original state of beauty and purity. We feel that our responsibility as exiles is to testify, to speak of our hope of a better world.

Our passage, however, does not talk of *speaking* but of *doing*. The destiny of the exiled is to *live* a certain way, is to take an ethical stance in this world and not just speak of a better world. As exiles, we are called to be more than speakers of hope, we are called to *enact* our hope. To *do* good would signify here working concretely for the making of a better world: to actively work for justice, for the environment, for peace, and not limit ourselves to speaking about it. Only in this way would we become genuine imitators of Jesus who did not simply *speak* of another kingdom, but enacted it: healing the sick, raising the dead, feeding the hungry, and delivering the oppressed. The calling of exile resides in this enactment of our hope. As a stranger in the world, the Christian has a calling: not to escape and separate himself or herself from the world, but to work within the world and for the world; to enact the

hope that he or she is waiting for.

This enactment raises, however, a number of objections: was not this idea that we can work towards a better world, that we can enact our hope for a better world, precisely the temptation and pitfall of secular humanistic philosophy? Indeed, the making of a better world was precisely the dream of humanism. The idea that we, as a human race, could enact our hopes of a better world, could work out our own redemption, was the leitmotif of the Enlightenment and humanist project. Is the text posing such a philosophy, which, incidentally has completely failed us? Indeed, the two world wars have forever snuffed out the humanist dream of our successfully working out our salvation and making for a better world. As Barth pointed out in his essay on 19th century theology: "Modern man can no longer impress us." The humanist project is forever destroyed by the events of the two world wars. Human solidarity, we now know, will never bring about the kingdom of God. Why then does the text exhort us, nevertheless, to engage in a doing, in ethical action and engagement within the world? The answer is found in the second part of our passage.

To Glorify God

CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH the importance of living "good lives" is the injunction to "glorify God." For our passage, the two are closely connected. The impulse for living a good life must be understood in the light of this second proposition: "to glorify God." The question that arises, however, pertains to the meaning of "to glorify." Indeed, such a word must first be defined if we are to understand the why of an ethical engagement in the world. To glorify comes from the Greek *doxa* which has the connotation of brightness and of light. To glorify can be associated with shedding light upon, with bringing light to. To glorify God amounts to revealing Him, to shedding light upon His presence.

In our text, this revelation, this glorifying of God is however intimately connected to our living good lives. It is as if God's presence were revealed through our deeds. To glorify God, to reveal His presence, does not consist in describing who God is, but in the enactment of godly deeds. Indeed, no words can come close enough to describing a God, who Himself, escapes all definition. Genuine testimony to God, according to our passage, does not reduce God to a verbal definition such as: "God is

love," but reveals Him indirectly through *deeds* of love. And indeed, the proposition "God is love" cannot be grasped outside of these deeds of love which give meaning and denotation to that phrase. Without the human deed of love, there would not even be a concept of love and, by extension, of a loving God. Authentic testimony, glorification of God passes, according to our text, through human actions, through loving deeds.

We now better understand the *raison d'être* of living a good life, of acts of responsibility towards the world. Although we realize that these acts of responsibility can never solve the ills of the world, can never bring about the kingdom of God; they retain their significance inasmuch as they testify to the *possibility* of such a kingdom; inasmuch as they glorify, or reveal, God in the world. And indeed, without these acts of responsibility, without a concrete working towards justice and environmental restoration, we would not even have a concept of what judgment and restoration mean. Our message—which precisely revolves around these two concepts—would have no meaning, no denotation. People would not understand what we are talking about. These actions are thus the only tangible signs of the kingdom of God. They serve as a trace, a sign of another reality, of another order. Acts of responsibility do not solve the world's problems, but they kindle our hope. Without them, there would be no sign, no evidence that another reality is even possible. We would not even have the concept of an alternative and would be left to a dark, oppressive reality.

Far from occulting God's action and redemptive work, our concrete acts of responsibility pave the way to this redemptive work; they signify towards it. Indeed, it is these very acts which give meaning and strength to our hope. Without them, our hope would remain unintelligible and feeble. Environmental, political, and social actions, whereby our solidarity with the plight of nature and humans is affirmed, are the only tangible signs of the kingdom to come and of the future redemptive actions of God. In this sense, although it does not resolve the problem, human solidarity opens a window of hope in a world which would otherwise sink into despair. Human solidarity is the only testimony to the possibility of the kingdom of God and, it is in this sense, that it "glorifies God." It shines in the world as an incomprehensible, absurd, unexplainable, and infinitely fragile light pointing us to another kingdom and to a God who otherwise would remain hidden.

Exile as a *Calling*

THE TEMPTATION OF exile is always escapism—it is a common mode of survival within an alien and threatening world. The temptation of the exiled is always to escape to another reality; it is always the temptation of other-worldliness. The exiled dreams of a better world; he or she tells stories of that world in an attempt to forget the pains of exile, the surrounding threats of the alien world he or she is now condemned to live in. But thereby the exiled is only trying to numb his or her exile and to forget it through pleasant dreams and stories. On the contrary, the first epistle of Peter serves to remind us that exile is a *calling*. It was the calling of Jesus; and it is our calling today. Only by assuming this exile will we again share Jesus' burden of carrying and caring for the world. Only by recovering its exilic condition, will our church again become a haven for the oppressed of the world, for the poor, the marginalized. Only then will it again keep the commandment of old: "You shall welcome the stranger as you yourselves were strangers in Egypt" (Deut.). And only then will the ultimate Stranger, the ultimate Other, God, find a home within our world. ■

Abi Doukhan earned a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Paris X-Nanterre with a focus on ethics and philosophy of religion. She is currently teaching philosophy at Elon University, Elon, North Carolina.

CONVERSATIONS ■ *Continued from page 12*

gestions were made from the floor. During the months that followed, we continued to entertain new ideas from anyone. Eventually the statement, with some changes from the Spring Meeting draft, went to the Annual Council where it was adopted with strong support.

Q: *How and why has the church changed its approach to world religions? How is the new policy impacting the work of Adventist pastors on the ground?*

A: I see the roadmap as solidly in the line of Adventist mission from the earliest days of our history. We are a distinct people with a distinct message to give to the world: we believe that Jesus Christ is coming again soon; and we invite everyone to join us in proclaiming this good news. The roadmap reiterates this under-

standing in the context of today's church, where we are now a significant player on the world scene. In the past, our engagement with the world religions has been slight, with foreign workers taking the lead. Now we have national leadership at every level of the church. The roadmap challenges everyone to get involved: it calls on administrators to refocus funding for the development of experts in understanding and appreciating the scriptures of other religions, and so on. This is really not a new approach; rather, it is a call to more thoroughgoing mission in light of the times and the modern Seventh-day Adventist church. The roadmap was voted only last November; it is too soon to speak about its impact.

Q: *What is the future of the church and interfaith relations? What are your own hopes and dreams?*

A: I think that by putting his weight behind interfaith relations, Dr. Paulsen has made a major and lasting contribution to the task of Adventist mission. The Adventist church must not turn back. We are here; in ever-increasing numbers, we are here. We have a message of hope and a lifestyle that people everywhere need to hear about. We should seize every opportunity to meet with government and religious leaders—up to the very highest levels. We should be open, honest, and genuine, commending our message by the grace and friendliness we bring to the table.

Three years along, I have been amazed at the way in which Muslims in high—and some very high—positions have received me. I have been surprised by their deep appreciation as I have shared who we are and what we are about. Their kindness, lavish hospitality, and friendship give the lie to the stereotypes and myths that too many Americans, Adventists included, have bought into. Interfaith work has opened up new vistas in my experience. It can do the same for the whole church, helping to make us a more tolerant and loving people. ■

William Johnsson was editor of the *Adventist Review* from 1982–2006 and has written over twenty books and 1,000 articles. He is currently the assistant to the president for interfaith relations at the General Conference.

Rachel Davies is a member of *Spectrum's* web team and is the youth and children's pastor at the Toledo, Ohio, First Seventh-day Adventist Church.



Left: "Waiting"

by Beatriz Mejia-Krumbein

1995. 86" x 45"

mixed media on paper,

on fabric

Embracing the Stranger: *Toward an Adventist Theology of Migration* | BY LOURDES E. MORALES-GUDMUNDSSON

"...when human rights are perverted in the presence of the Most High...does the Lord not see it?"

Lamentations 3:35–36 (NRSV)

In this country, the United States of America, where I was born and raised by Christian Venezuelan-Puerto Rican immigrant parents, the challenge of dealing with the immigrant, particularly the immigrant from just across the United States-Mexico border has divided American Christians into two camps: those who would associate true patriotism with resistance and even hostility toward this alien, and those Christians who belong to a longer tradition of providing "sanctuary" for these immigrants and refugees to the United States. The first group, armed with the justification of "illegality" provided by American immigration laws that no longer serve the interests either of Mexico or the United States, has made these "illegal aliens" the target of vitriolic accusations: of labor market subterfuge, undermining of American culture, and criminality. Other Christians remain either uncertain or silent in their response to such rhetoric. Yet some, determined to uphold the American Christian church's historic role of protector, try to provide for newly-arrived immigrants.

Morris Dees, founder and director of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a human rights watchdog organization, calls the current acrimonious debate surrounding Latino immigration a test of the American spirit. He states that the Federal Bureau of Investigation reports that hate crimes against Latinos have risen by 35% and Center investigators have recently confirmed that 946 hate groups are now active in America, more than a 60% rise in their numbers since the year 2000.¹ In Attorney Dees words, "This unprecedented growth is the result of an escalating anti-immigrant fervor that is contaminating our

nation's very soul." (Dees 2008, 3). He, as a Christian himself, goes on to make a statement that should cut to the heart of every American Christian: "While people of good will can have different opinions about our nation's immigration policy, hatred, racism, and violence should have no place in the debate" (*Ibid.*).

Where is Adventism in this conversation? There is an absence of a stated position on immigrants and immigration by the Seventh-day Adventist church. However, there are elements in the Fundamental Beliefs that could help us shape a statement in the context of what has come to be called the "theology of migration."

What is the "Theology of Migration?"

The concept of a "theology" of migration, born within the Catholic tradition and now being adopted by evangelical and mainstream Protestants as well, seeks to address issues of Christian duty specifically toward immigrants and refugees. Since this most recent stranger in our midst often falls into the category of the poor, the widow, the orphan, the slave, and the outcast; that is, those kinds of persons that Jesus cared about and cared for, Christians likewise have a biblical and moral duty toward these newcomers. That is the basic assumption of any theology of migration.

In a document issued by the Catholic bishops of the United States in November 2000 entitled "Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity," the Catholic church affirmed its historic stance with regard to the immigrant and refugee. It is the church's duty to welcome new immigrants and help them join American communities in ways that respect their cultures. They propose to do so through a tripartite program of *conversion, communion, and solidarity*.

Conversion calls for an acknowledgement of past failures and sinful patterns of chauvinism and discrimination

toward newcomers and a “profound conversion of the spirit” (*Ibid.*, 5).

Communion recognizes the need to better understand different cultures and promote intercultural communication.

Finally, *solidarity* means putting the fruits of conversion and communion into practice by meeting the newcomers on their terms in order to be truly welcoming, acting on their behalf by participating in public policy advocacy, and pushing for laws that are respectful of human rights and the dignity of the immigrant (*Ibid.*).

Migration theology, according to Ellacuría, has to confront the negative in reality in order to transform it, which explains why theologians and pastoral personnel who subscribe to this view will as often be found serving food to the hungry and water to the thirsty as preaching a sermon.

The second step requires taking responsibility for the ethical demands that grow out of that reality of migration: demands for justice, acceptance, and human dignity. When the United States claims to be a “nation of immigrants,” the migration theologian expects that there will be a sustained reflection on how that claim impinges on issues of social justice.

Thirdly, this active theology is committed to addressing whatever threatens human dignity and the rights of the immigrant as a living human being, made in the image of God.

And, finally, this theology recognizes that the migrant experience is not simply one of suffering and marginalization, but of the hope and courage these immigrants bring to the nearly insurmountable obstacles they find on their journey to the life they are entitled to live as God’s children (Campese in Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007, 179–180). For the border immigrant, those obstacles include having to make the initial decision to emigrate in order to provide a minimal life of dignity for himself and his family. It means breaking with family and with the familiar, crossing an inhospitable desert and facing the possibility of death, dealing with unpredictable and sometimes unscrupulous “coyotes” and the Border Patrol, *La Migra*, and its detention centers, once on the other side. With the closing of the usual routes across the border, immigrants find themselves facing the dangers of more challenging routes through the desert: rattlesnakes, hunger and thirst, the implacable desert heat, suffocation in train cars and vans.

Other Voices for the Immigrant

Thus it is that church groups as well as interfaith coalitions and secular organizations based in the United States, convinced that both the church and the state have failed bor-

der immigrants, have offered “shelters, shrines, know-your-rights booklets, water stations, and blessings” (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2007, 13) to migrants in danger of dying from hypothermia and dehydration. “While state regulations create an increasingly dangerous landscape, religion steps in to minimize risk, danger, and social injustice” (*Ibid.*, 13). On the United States side of the border, those involved in immigrant rights are not limited to mainline Christian churches. Muslims and Buddhists as well as nonreligious community and interfaith religious groups such as Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights, and Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice regularly work to address what they perceive to be injustices aimed at those least able to defend themselves.

Most recently, the bishops of the United Methodist Church committed to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform that is humane and effective and that upholds the human and civil rights of immigrants” (“Global Ministries,” May). Specifically, these bishops support providing a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants currently living in the United States and want an immigration system that reunifies immigrant families separated due to workplace raids.

To be sure, an increasing number of American Christian individuals and organizations are engaged in faith-inspired volunteerism to aid Latino immigrants before and after they cross the United States-Mexico border. For example, the *Casa del Migrante* (www.migrante.com.mx/Tijuana.htm) in Tijuana is a shelter for men who have been deported. Humane Borders,² a coalition of Christian individuals and churches, based in Arizona, states on their website that their work of providing more than eighty water stations along the United States-Mexico border, on both sides, is a humanitarian labor “motivated by faith,” (www.humaneborders.org) intended to save lives and invite public discourse.

The New Sanctuary Movement is creating much debate surrounding the tensions between the dictates of law and those of the individual conscience. Influenced by the older Sanctuary Movement that grew out of the influx of refugees from Central America in the 1980s, the newer movement seeks to protect immigrants from unjust deportation by sheltering them in churches where government officials, to date, have been reluctant to trespass to make arrests (Levitske 2007, 1).

Tucson-based BorderLinks (www.borderlinks.org), created in 1987 with origins in the Sanctuary Movement, is a

bi-national organization with facilities on both sides of the border. Its board of directors includes faculty from different universities and community leaders. Their mission is to provide educational resources and raise awareness among United States citizens about the socio-economic and religious realities of the border and the effects United States policies have on Mexico and Central America.

What is interesting are the teachings and motivations that inform the work of these Christian groups and individuals. Some are inspired by the Liberation Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez, the writings of Paulo Freire, Quaker and Mennonite teachings on non-violence, or the principles of social justice deriving from the Christian faith (duty to the poor and marginalized). Others simply say, “God sent me here” (*Ibid.*, 119–120). It is common for those engaged in immigrant work to say that they see in the immigrant the personification of Christ. That is, they believe that serving this community is a form of serving Christ who was a kind of undocumented alien who took up the cause of the poor and oppressed (*Ibid.*, 119). This identification of the immigrant with “the lowly Jesus” is linked to the notion that immigrants have the right to emigrate and that, often, the decision to emigrate is not purely individual, but influenced by broader structural forces. As Ufford-Chase puts it:

*The most successful way to resolve our border and immigration crisis is to create economic opportunities that will allow people to stay in their countries of origin. But that will never be accomplished with a trade policy that regards smaller nations as nothing more than a cheap labor supply. It is not morally defensible to create a global economy without accepting the responsibility of building a global community (*Ibid.*, 119; emphasis mine).*

It is common for these organizations and individuals to believe that the Christian faith cannot be limited to private spirituality and corporate worship. It must engage in the socio-political life of the nation as it impinges on the poor. The reasons for engaging in immigrant work may vary depending on the Christian denomination, but “they do similar work, engage in similar ways of organizing, oppose violent structures, and dedicate their lives to pursuing justice and creating a just society” (Menjívar 120).³

In recent years, voices have been raised against the historic role of the Christian church as protector of, or provider for, the newcomer. In fact, in very recent history, efforts

have been made to criminalize the work of the church for undocumented Latino immigrants. For example, at the beginning of 2006, Congress attempted to pass a bill (HR 4437) making it a federal crime to offer assistance or services to undocumented immigrants. In response, Bishop Gerald R. Barnes, speaking for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, warned that such a law would place churches and their outreach social programs at risk of criminal prosecution for doing what they always have done. Not only did church leaders speak out against such legislation, faith-based and secular groups organized and mobilized the largest immigration rights marches ever seen in the United States in Dallas and Los Angeles, as well as in most major cities. The largest one was held on April 10, 2006, the National Day of Action for Immigrant Social Justice with marches and rallies in over sixty cities across the country.

Christians for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CCIR) is yet another coalition of Christian churches (largely evangelical) that supports immigration reform. Recently, under the leadership of Sojourners’ Reverend Jim Wallis, it made a statement of principles endorsed by twenty-seven national religious organizations and forty leaders. It proposed five guiding principles (*SojoMail*):

- Enforcement initiatives that are consistent with humanitarian values
- Reforms in our family-based immigration system that reduce waiting times for separated families to be reunited
- A process for all immigrant workers and their families already in the United States to earn citizenship upon satisfaction of specific criteria
- An expansion of legal avenues for workers and families to enter our country and work in a safe and legal manner with their rights and due process fully protected
- Examining solutions to address the root causes of migration, such as economic disparities between sending and receiving nations.

Ellen White and the “Foreigner”

The absence of any specific statement on the Adventist church’s position on immigrants and immigration should not lead us to conclude that there is no interest in this topic or that the founders had nothing to say about the topic. Ellen White, for one, had quite a bit to say about the way in which Adventist were to treat the “foreigner.” It was her belief that Christ died for the immigrant (6T. 274)⁴ and that church members were to be “rivers of living water” for

the stranger. She complained that, “instead of imparting the gifts of God, many who profess to be Christians are wrapped up in their own narrow interests, and they selfishly withhold God’s blessings from their fellow men.” (6T. 274). She goes on to define what those “gifts of God” might be: “In the professed Christian world there is enough expended in extravagant display to supply the wants of all the hungry and to clothe the naked” (6T. 274). Those who bore the name of Christ were gratifying the appetite and pride while “to suffering human beings they give scarcely a look of pity or a word of sympathy” (6T. 275). The following paragraph of this same passage describes the misery of the typical late nineteenth-century inner city where immigrants and the native poor lived in squalor. She calls on the church to do a long-neglected work, not only donating money to address the afflictions of the stranger and the poor, but getting off the “stilts of your dignity and superiority” (6T. 277) to personally get involved in their lives.

By the time she finishes this chapter, it’s easy to forget that the poor to whom she is referring are, in fact, in large part, foreigners seeking a new life and finding themselves in deplorable conditions. She makes a radical call to Adventist Christians: Your benevolence is not enough; you need to visit these people and show them God’s mercy and compassion. In fact, immigrants from around the globe were destined to come to America to hear the truth (Ch. S. 200)⁵ and take that truth to their kinfolk and neighbors. Church members, as she saw it, were to be the conduits of that “truth” by being present to the newcomer. Her vision seems to be that the immigrant should return to their countries and share their faith as well as do so in their communities in the United States. She saw outreach to these newcomers as a “duty” of the Adventist church (8T. 36; Ev. 570–571).⁶

In general, her concern was that these communities be evangelized (Ch. S. 200–201; 8T. 35, Ev. 569–573), but she was also concerned with the treatment of these immigrants. She reminded Adventists, as members of the “New Israel,” that, like ancient Israel, they are to treat the alien with kindness and love them as ones for whom Christ died (6T. 274). And she goes beyond mere kindness in Adventist dealings with those from other countries and cultures; Adventists were to provide for the newcomer. She again gives the example of ancient Israel who was instructed to leave a portion for the stranger at harvest time (6T. 274). It was not enough to show kindness with the intent of

proselytizing; she understood that there was a biblical mandate to show kindness as well as to provide for the needs of the stranger. She even went so far as to suggest that, like ancient Israel, Adventists were to include the stranger in their “feasts” (6T. 274),⁷ which explains her opposition to churches and conferences separated by language and culture (See 9T. 195 where she objects to a separate German conference, for example).⁸ In this sense, she envisioned a truly united and inclusive Adventism.

Toward an Adventist Theology of Migration

It seems clear that there are mandates both from the Bible and Ellen White that could serve as a basis for an Adventist theological conversation about immigrants, one that might result in a re-examination of the relationship between peoples of other languages and cultures and native-born Americans, to begin with, and then in an official statement that would open the way for continued explorations relating to issues of justice and mercy toward those among us newly arrived from other cultures and language groups, particularly those bringing unskilled but willing hands to work.

The following are some suggested elements of an Adventist theology of migration that build on some of the most fundamental Adventist beliefs:

1. **The character of God:** Fundamental Belief (hereafter referred to as F.B.) #3 defines the character of God as Father: Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. In the following and related F.B. #4 about the “Son,” it is declared that the Son of God is the incarnate revelation of the loving and compassionate character of the eternal Father. It is this divine presence in all humans that endows each one with certain inalienable rights that we call “human rights.”
2. **The “*imago dei*” of every human being:** F.B. #7 states that “man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do.” In a theology of migration, the “*imago dei*” implies that each person not only has inherent rights to freedom of expression and thought as well as to the exercise of a free will, but merits compassion, justice, and respect. The image of God is no respecter of persons.

Continued on page 62...

Zogby Survey Finds Religious Leaders and Members at Odds

WASHINGTON, D.C., DECEMBER 29, 2009

/PRNEWSWIRE-USNEWSWIRE/

In contrast to many national religious leaders who are lobbying for increases in immigration, a new Zogby poll of likely voters who belong to the same religious communities finds strong support for reducing overall immigration. Moreover, members strongly disagree with their leaders' contention that more immigrant workers need to be allowed into the country. Also, most parishioners and congregants prefer more enforcement to cause illegal workers to go home, rather than legalization of illegal immigrants, which most religious leaders prefer. The survey of Catholic, mainline Protestant, born-again Protestant, and Jewish voters used neutral language and was one of the largest polls on immigration ever done.

The full results are at <http://www.cis.org/ReligionAndImmigrationPoll>. Among the findings:

Most members of religious denominations do not feel that illegal immigration is caused by limits on legal immigration, as many religious leaders do; instead, members feel it's due to a lack of enforcement.

- Catholics: Just 11 percent said illegal immigration was caused by not letting in enough legal immigrants; 78 percent said it was caused by inadequate enforcement efforts.
- Mainline Protestants: 18 percent said not enough legal immigration; 78 percent said inadequate enforcement.
- Born-Again Protestants: 9 percent said not enough legal immigration; 85 percent said inadequate enforcement.
- Jews: 21 percent said not enough legal immigration; 60 percent said inadequate enforcement.

Unlike religious leaders who argue that more unskilled immigrant workers are needed, most members think there are plenty of Americans to do such work.

- Catholics: 12 percent said legal immigration should be increased to fill such jobs; 69 percent said there are

plenty of Americans available to do such jobs, employers just need to pay more.

- Mainline Protestants: 10 percent said increase immigration; 73 percent said plenty of Americans are available.
- Born-Again Protestants: 7 percent said increase immigration; 75 percent said plenty of Americans are available.
- Jews: 16 percent said increase immigration; 61 percent said plenty of Americans available.

When asked to choose between enforcement that would cause illegal immigrants to go home over time or a conditional pathway to citizenship, most members choose enforcement.

- Catholics: 64 percent support enforcement to encourage illegals to go home; 23 percent support conditional legalization.
- Mainline Protestants: 64 percent support enforcement; 24 percent support legalization.
- Born-Again Protestants: 76 percent support enforcement; 12 percent support legalization.
- Jews: 43 percent support enforcement; 40 percent support legalization.

In contrast to many religious leaders, most members think immigration is too high.

- Catholics: 69 percent said immigration is too high; 4 percent said too low; 14 percent just right.
- Mainline Protestants: 72 percent said too high; 2 percent said too low; 11 percent just right.
- Born-Again Protestants: 78 percent too high; 3 percent said too low; 9 percent just right.
- Jews: 50 percent said it is too high; 5 percent said too low; 22 percent just right.

Continued on page 44...

SUNRISE

Ellen White Returns Home:

The Ellen White Project—2009 | BY BEVERLY BEEM

It was the day before sixty-plus scholars of Ellen White and nineteenth-century religious history were to meet for a working conference to produce a scholarly book on Ellen White. Terrie Aamodt, Ginger Harwood, and I were poking around the city of Portland, Maine, looking for the places familiar to those of us who consider the story of Ellen White a part of our heritage. We saw the Deering Woods Park where Ellen was struck by a rock; visited the waterfront where Ellen was baptized; found her school, now turned into a deli; and the place where her childhood church was located. Typically in New England, a plaque marks places of historic interest, but nowhere in Portland did we see an acknowledgement of one of its most prominent daughters. Ask most anyone in Portland what they know of Ellen Harmon White, and the answer would be a quizzical “who?”

That widespread unawareness of the existence of Ellen Harmon White is one of the problems this conference was called to address. By setting the conference in her childhood home, the participants could see the setting in which Ellen Harmon grew up. It also introduced the people of her own home town to one of the most influential American women of the nineteenth century, one who grew up in their midst. Portland provided the ideal setting to introduce twenty-one non-Adventist scholars in nineteenth-century American religious history to a woman they likely knew little about.

Adventist historians have known that their denomination is little known in general religious studies circles.

They observed that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is one of the four most innovative denominations founded in the United States in the nineteenth century, along with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; the Church of Christ, Scientist; and the Jehovah's Witnesses. At the present time, the Adventist church has the largest worldwide membership of the four. Gary Land, professor and chair of history and political studies at Andrews University and the lead editor of the book, explained, “The LDS denomination and its leaders have undergone thorough historical treatment, and Christian Science has been extensively examined as well. Much less attention has been accorded the Witnesses and the Adventists. Wider scholarly discussions on Ellen White are long overdue.” To illustrate, while a search of scholarly book titles on Mormonism, Joseph Smith, and Brigham Young yields over one hundred titles and for Christian Science and Mary Baker Eddy, several dozen, a search of titles on Seventh-day Adventism and Ellen White yields fewer than ten.

The vision for a historical conference on Ellen White in the context of her times began with the Adventist historians who met at the 2007 session of the Association of Seventh-day Adventist Historians Triennial Conference. Four historians took on the job of coordinating the event: Gary Land; Ron Numbers, Hilldale professor of the history of science and medicine at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; Terrie Aamodt, professor of history and English at Walla Walla University; and Julius Nam, asso-

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ciate professor of religion at Loma Linda University. The outcome of the conference will be a book, *Ellen White: American Prophet*, to be published by a major university press. Professor Land said, "Ellen White has been identified with Anne Hutchinson, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Mary Baker Eddy, and Aimee Semple McPherson as one of the most prominent women in American religious history; yet, she is one of the least studied and understood. This work will encourage further examination and discussion of her role in history."¹

The planned book is in its essence a collaborative effort. The process was to assign twenty-one chapters on various aspects of her life to specialists in Ellen White and her contexts and to distribute the papers to respondents.

Each chapter received a formal response by two scholars in a related area. In addition, Grant Wacker, professor of Christian history at Duke University, was invited to write the foreword to the book, and George Knight, professor emeritus of church history at Andrews University, was asked to take up the task of writing the afterword that will evaluate the book's place in Adventist studies. Terrie Aamodt said, "Adventists bring a deep understanding of Ellen White's life, and other scholars bring fresh eyes to apply those details to a wider context." Jon Paulien, professor and dean of the School of Religion at Loma Linda University, referred to the non-SDA participants as "almost a 'Who's Who' in American religious studies."²

Randall Stephens, associate professor of history at Eastern Nazarene College, reported his reaction to the invitation to attend an Ellen White Conference. He said, "I know so little about White and Adventism—something I found on further investigation that I share with other participants...that I hesitated to take part at first. But the organizers hoped that those outside the field would ask broad questions about research and writing. I rushed to my library to read Ron Numbers' biography *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*. Yet I only had time to crack the book. So, into the breach."³

As we gathered at the conference site in the Regency



A view of the waterfront area in Portland, Maine.

Hotel, it was good to see old friends who had invested themselves in Ellen White studies; it was good to meet new friends, many of whom we knew by reputation. We may have read some of their works or heard them speak at conventions. Now we could see them in action as we all turned our attention to the task at hand. The conference felt like one huge conversation with over sixty partners. The setting around a large rectangular table, provided with water pitchers and microphones, reinforced that dynamic.

With the participants assembled, Gary Land set out the one ground rule first articulated by Ron Numbers: no bashing and no apologetics. They were gathered for the scholarly task of examining the place of Ellen White in American history. The conference worked on a tight schedule with forty-five minutes devoted to each book chapter. Articles and responses were distributed to all participants in advance, along with response forms for each article. Each session granted ten minutes apiece to the author and two respondents with fifteen minutes open to all participants. The chapters covered many aspects of her life and work: the shaping of the Adventist community, early religious experiences, religious culture of her times, the *Testimonies*, science and medicine, race relations, historiography, popular culture,



The schoolhouse (now a deli) that Ellen attended.

mind and metaphysics, society, theology, eschatology, institution building, women's roles, education, Ellen White as an author, Ellen White as a public speaker, Ellen White from the inside, Ellen White from the outside. Terrie Aamodt observed, "The discussion that results from this merger of authors and respondents, Adventists and non-Adventists, Ellen White scholars and specialists in all aspects of her contexts is what we wish academic discourse would always be like."

The Adventist participants were impressed with the vigor and seriousness that their non-Adventist colleagues brought to the assigned task. They came early and stayed late. And they worked hard alongside the chapter authors to help them identify and clarify the insider language of the Adventist world. They helped situate Ellen White's place in nineteenth-century America. The questions in the minds of these scholars centered upon who she was as a woman and what she accomplished in co-founding a world-wide church. They looked at the institutions she established. How was a woman with a third-grade education able to establish colleges and universities and the largest parochial school system in the Protestant world? How was a near-invalid able to establish hospitals and medical institutions like Loma Linda? How did she establish a public voice outside the sphere

accorded to women in the nineteenth century? How did she deal with the demands of motherhood, marriage, travel, and writing? How did she become an orator that held the attention of crowds of 20,000 in open-air temperance lectures? What vision for the community did she have? What kind of a spiritual leader was she? Gary Land said, "All the questions, comments, and suggestions that emerged in the discussion indicate how much there is to know and how much remains to be explored."

These scholars were intrigued by what they were learning about Ellen White. They said in any number of ways that Adventists were sitting on a gold mine. The questions our guest scholars were interested in were not always the same ones the Adventist scholars brought to the table. Some of the embarrassing issues, like plagiarism, were of slight interest to them. Joan Hedrick, Charles A. Dana Professor of History at Trinity College and author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Harriet Beecher Stowe—a contemporary of Ellen White—helped us put these things in context.⁴ Ciro Sepulveda, professor and chair of the history department at Oakwood University, asked her specifically, "It's clear from hearing your talk that you have profound admiration for your subject, but how do you deal with the flaws?" Hedrick responded:

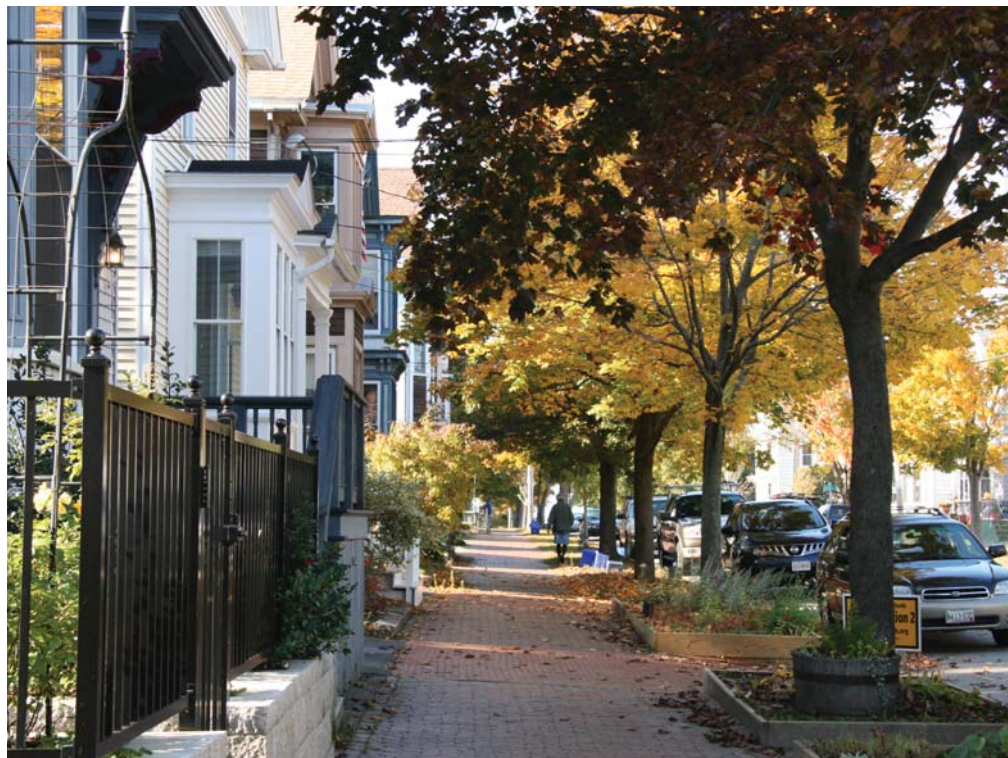
I view them as great complications of the plot, as good material for biographers. And they really are—the flaws, that's what brings a person into sharp focus. Nobody is human without having flaws. To see the flaws as well as the virtues, and how they intersect—we can all see in ourselves that our strengths also have a downside. Seeing the human is seeing the human being whole. I don't see it as a problem; I see it as a possibility. I see it as great literary material and sometimes as great didactic material. I see the greatest problem of Harriet Beecher Stowe as the author of Uncle Tom's Cabin that in her own relationships with black women she was not the egalitarian that I would have hoped she was. That has to be said about most abolitionists in the 19th century. They wanted to abolish slavery, but that did not mean they wanted to be social equals with black people. They just wanted to have that legal institution gone, but they did not want to have lunch with them. The North segregated the lunch counters and the trolley cars and all of this—I was very aware at various points that Stowe was seeing black people through her middle class white eyes and wasn't really seeing the people that were right in front of her, in spite of writing that wonderful story of a life.

Neither bashing nor hagiography will produce sound scholarship. The historians saw that principle at work in Hedrick's model biography. The questions being asked within the Adventist church about White's plagiarism and her statements that seem rooted in her times need to be dealt with, but they do not destroy her. They are part of the richness of the fabric and only a small part of the fabric. They do not detract from the influence of this woman who brought a world-wide church out of the tattered remnants of the Millerite movement.

Grant Wacker, who is writing a biography of the contemporary religious figure Billy Graham, discussed some of the challenges of writing a cultural biography.⁵ While we are studying Ellen White in her nineteenth-century contexts, he is studying Billy Graham, born three years after Ellen White died, in his twentieth-century contexts. Billy Graham could not have been a Billy Graham in the nineteenth century. We cannot know what Ellen White would have been in the twenty-first century. Biographers approaching their subject as insiders face the temptation to protect the subject, but hagiographers do more damage to the subject than debunkers. Hagiography simply is not true. The subject is not a marble statue. The hagiographer loses credibility, and the subject loses humanity. What biographers must be is fair. They must be able to understand the world as the subject sees it, and they must be able to look the subject in the eye afterwards. Wacker reminded us that anyone who is writing a biography is probably writing about someone who has accomplished a great deal, probably a lot more than we have, and that should give us some perspective. He concluded with,

Biography enables us to live the present in the light of the past. It turns the evaluation question around: the task is not so much for us as biographers to evaluate them, but to stand back, and, with humility, allow their lives to evaluate us.

Part of the task of understanding the work of Ellen White is understanding the Adventist community that she helped shape. We invited our guest scholars to experience an



A typical street scene in Portland, Maine.

Adventist worship with us at 7:00 Sabbath morning in the historic First Parish Church in downtown Portland. There we sang Ellen White's favorite hymns and listened as Kendra Haloviak, associate professor of New Testament studies at La Sierra University, spoke about the weeping in the night that turns to joy in the morning. The psalms of disorientation (Psalms 30 and 137) speak of the songs of weeping sung in a strange land.⁶ She said, "It's a bold act of faith to say you can't sing in a strange land even as you sing a new song. It's a bold act of faith to shake a fist to the heavens on October 23 and to say, 'Where are you?' because more than anything you wanted to be in the presence of God." She described the movement of the heart from weeping in the night to joy in the morning. She asked, "How does one move from 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' to 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow?'" The Adventist experience is born in that movement from the Great Disappointment to the Great Advent Hope. She said,

At their best, communities of faith do what the psalms do. They take the seasons of life and bring them to speech—seasons of orientation and disorientation and new orientation. Communities of faith know great disappointments and they weep and they weep until the day dawns. But then—there's a brand new day, and those same communities of faith sing their Advent hymns once again.



Another view of the waterfront area in Portland, Maine.

The Ellen White Project still has work to do. The conference is over, and the book is in progress. What might all this mean to Ellen White studies in the future? Certainly this conference was unprecedented. Ron Numbers said that it was “the most important event in Ellen White studies since 1919.” One thing is clear: Ellen White will be more visible in the future. With the foundation laid by this conference, she should more easily find her place in the histories of American religion. There should be more openness, both ways. Adventist scholars need not fear the scrutiny of peer review. An understanding of Ellen White is their gift to American history. Non-Adventist scholars will have a resource that orients them to the major issues in Ellen White studies and establishes a foundation for continuing work. The work of American religious historians and Adventist church historians can only be enriched by the collaboration.

My hope is that Ellen White will come to be recognized as one of Christianity’s great spiritual teachers. I would like to see some of her writings listed as classics in spiritual literature. Her testimonies are pastoral epistles written to people and churches facing the difficult realities of lived religion. Her devotional books guide people in the process of sanctification to restore the image of God in the soul. I would like to see the spirituality of the

Adventist church understood and embraced in the context of our history as a rich and distinctive tradition, a gift to the Christian world.

I hope this conference will inspire Adventists to see their own heritage with fresh eyes and embrace it with a new passion. It may be that by understanding Ellen White in her historical contexts, we can learn to hear her voice more clearly in ours. ■

Notes and References

1. See the conference website, <http://ellenwhiteproject.word-press.com>, for pictures of the conference and additional information.

2. See Jon Paulien’s five-part entry, “An Historic Event” on his blog <http://revelation-armageddon.com> for another account of the conference. Alden Thompson, professor of

biblical studies at Walla Walla University also wrote an account on the www.spectrummagazine.org/blog. See also the interview with Gary Land on the Ellen White Project by David Hamstra, www.spectrummagazine.org/blog/2009/11/15/interview_gary_land_ellen_white; and the two-part report by Jared Wright of a follow-up conference at Loma Linda University, “Ellen White in a New Key—LLU, December 6, 2009,” www.spectrummagazine.org/blog/2009/12/05/ellen-white.

3. Randall Stephens, Religion in America Blogspot. <http://usreligion.blogspot.com/2009/10/ellen-white-project-portland>. Amanda Porterfield, Robert A. Spivey professor of religion and professor of history at Florida State University and the co-editor of *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture*, reported on the same site.

4. Joan Hedrick’s book is *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

5. Grant Wacker’s book is tentatively titled *Billy Graham and the Making of Heartland America*.

6. Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984).

Beverly Beem is professor of English at Walla Walla University, Walla Walla, Washington.

Ellen White: *American Prophet* | PORTLAND, MAINE, OCTOBER 22–25, 2009

Conference Participants

Grant Wacker, Duke University, *Foreword*

1. **Jonathan Butler**, Independent Scholar/*Biographical Sketch*

Craig Newborn, Oakwood University

Heather Curtis, Tufts University

2. **Ann Taves**, University of California, Santa Barbara/*Early Religious Experiences*

Ginger Hanks Harwood, La Sierra University

Robert Fuller, Bradley University

3. **Ronald D. Graybill**, Loma Linda University/*Ellen White and Religious Culture*

A. Gregory Schneider, Pacific Union College

Joseph Conforti, University of Southern Maine

4. **Jeff Crocombe**, Helderberg College/*Ellen White's Eschatology*

Jon Paulien, Loma Linda University

Paul Boyer, University of Wisconsin -Madison

5. **Merlin Burt**, Andrews University/*Ellen White and the Shaping of the Sabbatarian Adventist Community*

Gilbert Valentine, South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists

Margaret Bendroth, Congregational Library

6. **Graeme Sharrock**, University of Chicago/*The Testimonies and the Development of the Adventist Community*

Beverly Beem, Walla Walla University

David Rowe, Middle Tennessee State University

7. **Arthur Patrick**, Avondale College/*Ellen White as Author*

Susan Gardner, Southwestern Adventist University

8. **Terrie Aamodt**, Walla Walla University/*Ellen White as Public Speaker*

Marilynn Loveless, La Sierra University

Joan Hedrick, Trinity College

9. **Floyd Greenleaf**, Southern Adventist University/*Ellen White and Education*

W. G. Nelson, Kettering College of Medical Arts

William Trollinger, University of Dayton

10. **Jerry Moon**, Andrews University/*Ellen White as Denomination Builder*

Bert Haloviak, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Randall Stephens, Eastern Nazarene College

11. **Woodrow Whidden**, Adventist Institute of International Advanced Studies/*Ellen White as Theologian*

George Knight, Andrews University

Grant Wacker, Duke University

12. **Ronald Numbers**, University of Wisconsin/*Ellen White and Health*

Daryll Ward, Kettering College of Medical Arts

Jean Silver-Isenstadt, National Physicians Alliance

13. **Rennie Schoepflin**, California State University, Los Angeles/*Ellen White and the Mind/Metaphysics*

Joe Willey, Independent Scholar

Jon Roberts, Boston University

14. **Laura Vance**, Warren Wilson College/*Ellen White and Women's Roles*

Lisa Clark Diller, Southern Adventist University

Bernadette McCauley, Hunter College

15. **Douglas Morgan**, Washington Adventist University/*Ellen White and Society*

Ron Lawson, City University of New York

Shawn Peters, University of Wisconsin (Madison)

16. **Eric Anderson**, Southwestern Adventist University/*Ellen White and Race Relations*

Joan Francis, Columbia Union College

John Grayson, Mt. Holyoke College

17. **Benjamin McArthur**, Southern Adventist University/*Ellen White and Popular Culture*

Roy Branson, Loma Linda University

Charles Reagan Wilson, University of Mississippi

18. **Michael Campbell**, Rocky Mountain Conference of Seventh-day Adventists/*Images of Ellen White from the Outside*

Ciro Sepulveda, Oakwood University

J. Spencer Fluhman, Brigham Young University

19. **Theodore Levterov**, *Adventist Views of Ellen White, 1844–1915*

Alden Thompson, Walla Walla University

Ruth Alden Doan, Hollins University

20. **Paul McGraw**, Pacific Union College/*The Legacy of Ellen White*

Jud Lake, Southern Adventist University

William Peterson, University of Maryland

21. **Gary Land**, Andrews University/*Historiography*

Donald McAdams, Center for Reform of School Systems

Amanda Porterfield, Florida State University

George Knight, Andrews University (emeritus)/*Afterword*

Vern Carner, Independent Scholar, *Respondent-at-large*

Plenary lectures

Joan Hedrick, "Writing a Woman's Life"

Grant Wacker, "Billy Graham and the Challenges of Cultural Biography"

“Joy in the Morning” | BY KENDRA HALOVIK

Advent believers Reuben & Belinda Loveland buried their 17-year old daughter, Mary, shortly after her death on December 12, 1857. It was their third daughter to die in two years. Her obituary in *The Review & Herald* began this way:

“It becomes our painful duty to announce the death of another daughter of brother and sister Loveland, of Johnson, Vermont. Yes, Mary too has gone” (Albert Stone, *The Review & Herald*, Jan 7, 1858).

THREE YOUNG WOMEN, sisters, lost to death in two years. A decade and a half earlier, Reuben & Belinda Loveland had accepted the Advent message after hearing the preaching of William Miller.

They had given up their farm for the cause and experienced the Great Disappointment.

Later, listening to Joseph Bates, they had accepted the sanctuary & Sabbath messages.

For a decade and a half, the Lovelands had studied the law and the apocalyptic writings.

But at Mary’s funeral, the homily focused on a passage found in the poetry of the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah, which begins...

*A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children
because they are no more... (31:15).*

The funeral homily also used a phrase two verses later...

*There is hope for your future, says the Lord:
Your children shall come back to their own country (31:17).*

Reflecting on the Babylonian Exile, Jeremiah’s poetry captured the lamentation of loss and the hope for a future. These particular words of Scripture acknowledged both the Lovelands’ unspeakable tragedy and their Advent hope.

They missed their daughters terribly.

Belinda would write in a letter to Uriah Smith, editor of *The Review & Herald*:

“Their places are vacant around the family altar; no more I hear their shouts of victory and songs of praise” (*Review & Herald*, June 11, 1857).

They missed their daughters terribly.

But the Lovelands also believed they would see their daughters at the Second Advent.

Again, from Belinda’s pen in that letter to Smith:

“They will sleep but a little while; for in bright hope they died. Yes, I believe with all my heart in a little time from this, all will be over” (*Review & Herald*, June 11, 1857).

Weeping & Hope, side-by-side in Hebrew poetry and side-by-side in the experience of an early Adventist family.

DECADES LATER, Ellen White, while living in Australia, would watch another Adventist family deal with the loss of a child.

John & Charlotte Pocock had no steady income after John accepted the Sabbath in 1892.

Living 30 miles north of Sydney, John struggled to find odd jobs in order to keep his growing family fed.

Sometimes he did not succeed.

One daughter always remembered the times when her mother had only a cracker to give each child for supper. Then she would say: “Now children, don’t tell Dad that this is all you had...He would feel too sad” (Joan Minchin-Neall, “Adventist Heritage,” Spring 1992, p. 23).

When Ellen White heard of this family’s situation and struggles, she offered John a job helping to build “Sunny-side,” her home near Avondale College.

Suddenly the Pocock family's future contained new possibilities!

There was hope for a new start!

Steady work and income.

A community in which to raise their children.

Eventually John moved his family near Avondale.

But within a week of their move, they had buried their 4-year old son, Albert.

*A voice is heard in Ramah,
lamentation and bitter weeping.
Rachel is weeping for her children;
she refuses to be comforted for her children
because they are no more... (31:15).*

*There is hope for your future, says the Lord:
Your children shall come back to their own country (31:17).*

Weeping & Hope...

Terrible loss mixed with the hope of a new life.

A new start, forever linked to the death of a child...

A place of new possibilities...and now, also, a place of loss.

How did Reuben and Belinda Loveland, John and Charlotte Pocock get through the nights that followed the death of their children?

How do any of us get through the long nights of weeping?

I WAS INTERESTED to learn while reading Gil Valentine's latest manuscript on Ellen White and the General Conference Presidents that many things kept her up at nights; unable to sleep...

Not only concerns for people—her children and her church. But also finances—how to pay the bills; how to meet those responsibilities? Health issues kept her up at nights, as did church leaders who disappointed her.

Several weeks ago, I read a pamphlet in my doctor's office. Over seventy percent of adults suffer from some sort of insomnia; some experience of not being able to rest for all the fears and anxieties.

How did Reuben & Belinda Loveland get through the nights that followed the deaths of their daughters?

Was it easier decades later?

Or, did the delay of the Advent make their loss even more difficult?

How did John & Charlotte Pocock deal with the death of their little boy?

How do any of us get through the long nights of weeping?

A voice is heard in...Ramah, and in...

Johnson, Vermont

Cooranbong

Elmshaven

Takoma Park

Berrien Springs

and Portland, Maine...

Rachel is weeping for her children...

How do any of us get through the long nights of weeping?

And what does the Psalmist mean when he says:

*Weeping may linger for the night,
but joy comes with the morning??*

HEBREW BIBLE SCHOLAR, Walter Brueggemann, has suggested three categories in which to place the poetry of the Psalter. (Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms*)

While not wanting to dismiss their variety, nor to force them into a rigid grid, Brueggemann suggests that most psalms can be seen as either psalms of:

- orientation
- disorientation
- new orientation

Psalms of **orientation** are those that express a season of well being, joy, delight.

Those prayers and poetry that express the speaker's sense of being blessed by God; surrounded by the things that bring contentment.

When one has an overwhelming sense of satisfaction, ease, the good life.

Psalms of **disorientation** are those that express the seasons of anguish, suffering, death, rage, resentment.

Those prayers and poetry created by speakers who know deep loss, discontinuity, alienation, lament.

Since in much of Jewish theology all things find their beginning in God, one must direct such experiences of anger and loss to God; even to an absent God.

Psalms of **new orientation** are those that surprise.

Right before disorientation is loss.

Right before new orientation is gift...

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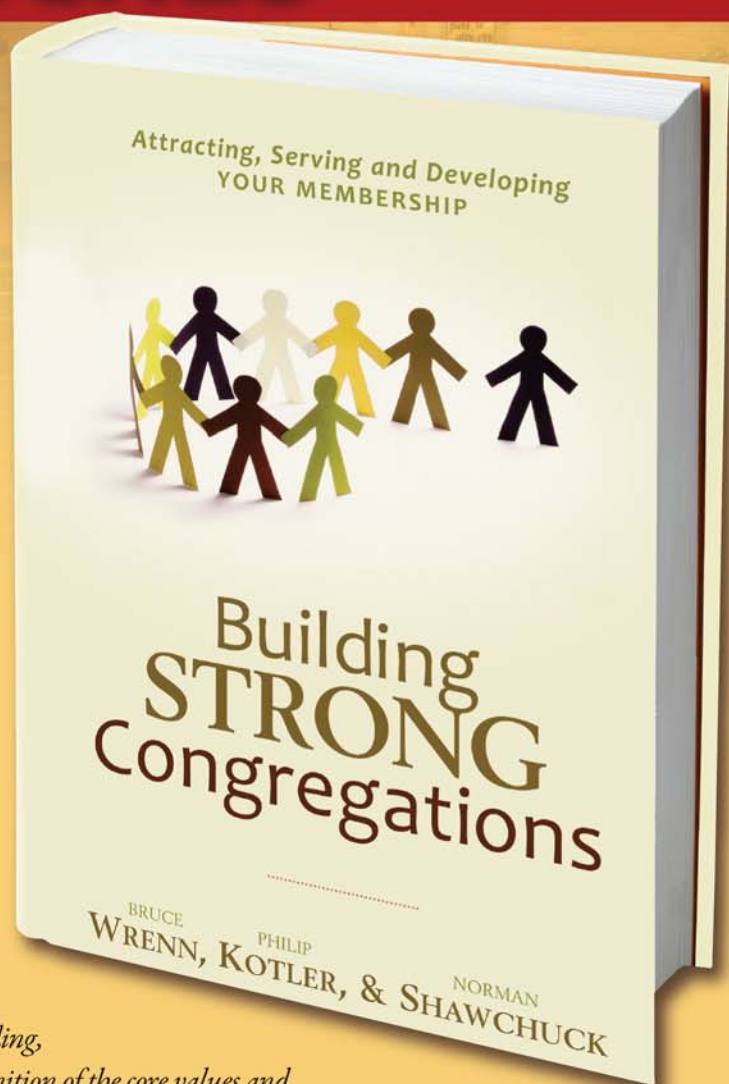
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Of course, humans know all three...we know orientation, disorientation, new orientation.

We know the tension found in cries against God's absence...and we know doxology at new beginnings.

For Brueggemann, the Psalms are the seasons of life brought to speech.

I am intrigued by those seasons of life where agony meets newness...loss experiences new gift...

Where: "My God, my God...why have you forsaken me?"
Becomes..."Praise God from whom all blessings flow..."

I am intrigued by the early Advent believers who went through the Great Disappointment but then experienced a new orientation... somehow finding even greater commitment and conviction possible.

Were such individuals deluded? Psychologically unhealthy? In denial?

Or, did they understand, at some level that I long to, the Psalms? Did they get the Psalms?

Did they experience, as Brueggemann states: "that hope [which] is rooted precisely in the midst of loss and darkness, where God is surprisingly present" (Brueggemann, 11-12)?

I guess I'm drawn to theology that takes seriously the experience of weeping at night...

And doesn't let an absent God off the hook.

But, in the anger and agony of experiences of disorientation, keeps talking with God, even if it is to raise a fist and voice in protest...

Somehow, in that action... that action of refusing to give up on a God who seems to have given up on us... somehow...

There is a new experience of the presence of God; a rushing in of new wonder, gift, gratitude.

Brueggemann says that it's...

"Because this One has promised to be in the darkness with us, we find the darkness strangely transformed, not by the power of easy light, but by the power of relentless solidarity. Out of the 'fear not' of that One spoken in the darkness, we are marvelously given new life, we know not how" (Brueggemann, 12).

THIS IDEA HAS BEEN CAPTURED in a powerful way by the musical group, "Sweet Honey in the Rock."

In 1973, Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. began an *a cappella* vocal group made up of five African American women musicians. Their songs challenge acts of oppression while embracing the courage of faith and justice. One of their songs is an interpretation of Psalm 137.

They start out slow...and very low...

By the waters of Babylon...where we sat down...and where we wept...when we remembered Zion...

This part of the Psalm is repeated...

By the waters of Babylon...where we sat down...and where we wept...when we remembered Zion...

One can almost see people in chains, walking to Babylon...weeping...being allowed to rest, to sit down beside the Babylonian river Chebar and then weeping some more...

And then there is a reminder of the next part of the psalm...

*Those who carried us away to captivity...required of us a song...
How can we sing our holy songs in a strange land?*

This part of the Psalm is also repeated...

*Those who carried us away to captivity...required of us a song...
How can we sing our holy songs in a strange land?*

The song increases in volume...and in intensity...and in hope as one realizes...

Even as they ask, *How can we sing a sacred song in a strange land?* they are, indeed, doing just that!

These women, representing all who weep through the night...all who experience an absent God...

are walking to Babylon in chains... and asked by their oppressors to sing/perform/entertain us...

they respond: *How can we sing our sacred songs in a strange land?*

Yet, at that very moment, they are singing a sacred song in a strange land...a new psalm is created!

The psalms/songs of disorientation are a bold act of faith.

It is a bold act of faith to say you can't sing in a strange land even as you create a new song.

It is a bold act of faith to shake a fist to the heavens on October 23 and say "Where are you?" because more than anything you wanted to be in the presence of God; and shaking a fist is at least aimed somewhere.

It is a bold act of faith to attend a conference and to ask tough questions of Adventist history and then to participate

in an Adventist worship service early in the morning on a Sabbath morning.

The Psalms of disorientation are a bold act of faith. And they are an act of new creation; a new song.

The voices, in their state of alienation, bondage, disorientation, the loss of all that is familiar, those very voices...

...will testify

...will create new sacred songs

...will sing once again.

How does it happen?

What moves the poetry from weeping...to hope?

What transforms the weeping itself into song?

How is it possible to sing our holy songs in a strange land?

How to sing when our children's voices are no longer with us around the family altar?

When we stand at a grave site?

When nights seem endless and sleep doesn't come?

When there is no easy forgiveness...of our enemies, our plight, of our God...?

The Psalms take seriously the experience of disorientation. Disorientation means real loss...

- of a companion, of a child
- of a church we no longer recognize
- of an imagined future
- of a heritage that must be re-evaluated, re-considered

Disorientation means real loss...and the Psalms take disorientation seriously...are honest about tragedy; tragedy that makes it difficult to breathe, to move, to put one foot in front of another...

but then, sometimes, with just a pause in the poetry, in a break between stanzas, there is a shift in the poetry from weeping...to hope

From Psalm 30:5—

Weeping may linger for the night,

but joy comes with the morning.

So how does one move from the poetry of night ... to the joy of morning?

How does one move from "My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me?"...to a new song?

As Brueggemann works through these Psalms, he observes:
...the speaker and the community of faith are often surprised by grace, when there emerges in present life a new possibility that is inexplicable, neither desired nor extrapolated, but wrought by the inscrutable power and goodness of God. That newness cannot be explained, predicted or programmed... (124).

The believing community responds in amazement and gratitude through song because "new life requires doxology" (127).

At their best, communities of faith do what the Psalms do... They take the seasons of life and bring them to speech. Seasons of orientation...and disorientation...and new orientation.

Communities of faith know great disappointments where they "weep and weep until the day dawns."

But then there is a brand new day. And those same communities of faith sing their Advent hymns once again.

ON APRIL 25 OF THIS YEAR, the grandson of John & Charlotte Pocock, Arthur Patrick, along with his wife, Joan, took the great great great granddaughter of Reuben & Belinda Loveland to a dawn service in celebration of ANZAC (Australia—New Zealand—Army Corp) Day.

It is a day each year remembering those who have sacrificed during times of war. It begins before six in the morning; before dawn.

Arthur, Joan, and I went to the service held in Morisset, a small town not far from Ellen White's "Sunnyside" home in Cooranbong.

As we stood in the darkness, the memories and scenes of war brought tears. Those of us gathered in the dark considered the loss of so many young men and women. We imagined the soldiers riding the train nearby, headed to Gallipoli and the Kakoda Trail and Kabul and Bagdad. All the Rachels weeping for their children.

But then the dawn came; the sun began to rise...and the local college band, the Avondale College band, played...

And we sang songs of freedom and hope.

And I don't know exactly how it happened,

but there was joy in the morning. ■

Kendra Haloviak is associate professor of New Testament Studies in the School of Religion at La Sierra University, Riverside, California. She presented this homily at the sunrise Sabbath service on October 24, 2009, in Portland, Maine, during the Ellen G. White Project.

HEALTH- CARE FUTURE



...a woman...came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment; for she said to herself, "If only I touch his garment, I shall be made well." Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well.

MATTHEW 9:20-22A

Health-Care Reform 2009–2010:

Is it Yes or Is it No? | BY LARRY A. MITCHEL

With the passage of HR 3590, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Washington, D.C., is closer than it has ever been to a health-care reform bill (HCR). And if you thought it was easy, you weren't paying attention.

To recap: the House first passed out of Committee, then voted on the floor, a bill that was the result of the work of three House Committees of jurisdiction. Then in the Senate, first, the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, and belatedly, the Senate Finance Committee, reported out different versions of HCR. After these two Senate bills were combined, the result, the "manager's amendment" (championed by Majority Leader Harry Reid), went to the Senate floor. After days of procedural actions, it was passed by the Senate, 60–39 (Senator Jim Bunning missing). That was just before Christmas—literally.

Over the holiday recess, staff members from the House and Senate worked on minor discrepancies, awaiting the return of the House and Senate leaders to begin work in earnest on the large disagreements between the two bodies. That work goes on up to this writing (January 18, 2010), most of it away from the glare of the media.

Among those larger items of disagreement are: financing—taxing high-cost plans (Senate) vs. taxing high-income individuals and families (House); abortion provisions (some conservative Democratic votes ride on this in both houses); a so-called "public plan" (now essentially gone from HCR); and coverage (31 million additional insureds for the Senate, 34 million for the House).

Organized labor is a critical constituency for the President and for many in Congress. So it is not surprising that the Senate proposal to tax expensive ("Cadillac") health plans, many of them tied to union contracts,

was a real sticking point. So the upper range was raised a bit—and labor signed on.

Well-connected health-care industry advocates from time to time hear elements of the negotiations, but mostly it's a black hole: information and advocacy goes in, but almost nothing escapes.

With the election of Scott Brown to the U.S. Senate from Massachusetts, the perceived balance of power in the Senate has shifted. Democrats no longer enjoy a filibuster-proof majority; and the ramifications of this to progress on the HCR legislation have been immediate and significant. Even with the President calling for renewed efforts for health-care reform in his State of the Union Speech, it is not altogether clear that the political will exists to continue the fight.

The most recent suggestion to break the impasse—without need to resort to cloture—has been a "two-track" process whereby the House voted first on a set of "budget reconciliation" measures to "fix" elements of the Senate bill they don't like. Assuming these fixes are acceptable to the Senate, these could be passed with 218 votes in the House and only 51 votes in the Senate. Then the House would pass the Senate's bill on a simple majority, the President would sign first the core bill and then immediately afterward sign the reconciliation bill changing certain elements of the core bill.

Should the bill(s) pass, one way or another, and be signed into law, then the real work begins, with enabling regulation and the inevitable industry adjustments to the new situation. We will be at this for years to come—assuming we get a bill or bills in the first place. ■

Larry A. Mitchel is director of government relations for Adventist Health, Roseville, CA. This article represents his personal views, not those of Adventist Health.

My View of the Future of Health Care

| BY LELAND R. KAISER

We essentially face two major health care challenges in the next decade. The first challenge is to make our existing medical care delivery system available to all of our citizens regardless of their ability to pay. The second challenge is to reduce the amount of disease, disability, and accidental injury in our population.

Unless we can reduce the amount of morbidity in our population, we cannot as a nation afford to pay for it. This is one of the major reasons our current efforts at health-care reform are experiencing such limited success. We have too much sickness in our population.

Our past and current efforts at national health reform have fallen short of what is needed, but they are a step in the right direction. Even slow change is very expensive; and cost estimates always prove to be on the low side. There are too many vested interests and powerful lobbies in health care—it is difficult to change anything. Every contemplated change means that someone's ox will be gored. They don't like that and will try to prevent it from happening; thus, future legislative reform will be slow at best.

Meeting the second challenge goes beyond our current human will and social capacity. First, we must convince people to live healthier lifestyles and then we must support them in their efforts to do so. Second, we must learn how to design healthier living environments. This is often referred to as habitat design; and it is a very high priority in America. The evidence is clear—sick environments produce sick people. We have a lot of pathology-generating environments in the United States.

Critical Health Care Issues

There are diseases of poverty and diseases of affluence. Both cause untold suffering; and both are often fatal. Both are greatly affected by the life environment. People



living in poverty do not have the money to buy good food and, therefore, cannot eat well. By contrast, very affluent folks may make very poor food choices. And it is not just a matter of education. Well-educated folks do not necessarily eat what they know is good for them.

We are frequently encouraged through social norms and media advertising to live unhealthy lifestyles. Since we can get away with it for many years, there often is little incentive to change our behavior until it is too late to do so.

Look around you. The amount of morbidity we are currently generating with the problem of obesity in young people will culminate in national health-care costs that are sobering. The fast food industry is little help in this regard. Their reply is that they just supply what people want and pay for. This is all too true. If you want to see a preview of the health bill in the next few decades, examine the school lunch program in your community. The schools, when criticized, often reply they can't afford to buy more expensive food and, even if they did, the kids would not eat it.

Then we have the matter of our aging population. Older people use more medical care even if they have lived relatively healthy lifestyles. With fewer young people to support the bill for this additional care, a huge financial burden is created. The bottom line is—more government aid will be needed and, in all likelihood, greater rationing of health services will occur as a result. When it is no one's fault in particular and everyone's fault in general, we pass the buck—often to our children's generation. It is hard to assign accountability in the matter of healthy living.

Passing the buck is a very common excuse for many misdeeds that negatively affect people's health and well being. It always takes the form of—"it's really not my fault. It is because of someone else who is acting badly." As many of you know, I have tried for years to get competing community hospitals to work together to help the uninsured. The answer is always the same—"the other hospitals would take advantage of us if we tried to work with them." Since no one wants to make the first good faith move, the *status quo* prevails.

Now, I don't want you to think I have a negative attitude about all of this or that I am a fatalist. I am not. I know full well that when things get bad enough, we as a society will do something about it. Extremity forces remedial action. The question is—do we have to hit bottom before we act? The answer to that question is not in yet.

Living Laboratories

I think the answer is to create a number of powerful demonstration communities across our nation where we do things the right way. These demonstration communities would have to be a combined effort of government, business, and the volunteer community. Waivers and enabling legislation will be necessary to permit this to happen.

We need living laboratories where we can systematically experiment with a number of different approaches to improving the health and well being of residents. To the degree possible, these demonstration communities should be self-sustaining, green communities. They must be real human communities and not "hot house" demonstrations that cannot maintain themselves economically or politically. Some of the communities could come from new towns while other communities could take the form of renewal of existing communities.

The point is simple—to greatly improve the health

and well being of community residents, you have to do a lot of things the right way. This requires a holistic systems approach and cannot be achieved in any piecemeal manner. Of course, fragmented efforts in this direction are all that we have experienced in our lifetime. To do more will require a very special effort at all levels of our society. We need models for our future; and I know of no other way to develop them.

To attain healthier communities in the future we must: (1) leave behind our destructive competitive mindset, our pursuit of unbridled materialism, our destruction of the environment, our exclusive focus on disease, and (2) develop a new mental model of health care characterized by new patterns of organizational collaboration, community and personal empowerment, and the capacity to dream great dreams. This is a design challenge for our generation—to escape the old and create the new. This is not a matter of adapting to what is, however bad it may be. It is a matter of creating something new and better—what I often term potentiation—liberating the inherent potential in any person or environment.

The only limitation we face as human beings is the limitation of our own consciousness. What we cannot imagine, we cannot achieve. Imagination becomes the limiting parameter of our societal possibilities. We must expand our minds and hearts to reach out and touch great things that wait for our reaching.

A New Mental Model

We do not presently live in the fullness of God's universe. We live in a restricted mental model handed down by previous generations. This limiting model, often unconscious, restricts what we can perceive and cognize. It is high time to build a new mental model of ourselves and our relationship to the universe. It will be a model rooted in holism, relationships, and interdependence. It will synthesize science, spirituality, and business. It will stress social networking and virtual teams. It will build bridges across all the existing chasms in our society. The new mental model views community as a living organism and sees every organization as an organ in that collective body.

The next step in human consciousness is the ability to think collectively as well as individually. We see evidence of a hive mentality in bees and ants, but they evidence little respect for the good of the individual member of the

hive or colony. In our modern health-care marketplace, we see evidence of extreme individuality among healthcare providers but little regard for community and the greater social good. The holistic mental model creates a shared mind field which permits us to consider the well being of the whole as well as the good of all the individuals that make up the whole. In good health-care design, each part prospers as does the whole. You see this composite strategy in the design of the human body where each organ prospers at the same time the organism as a whole thrives. A well-designed health-care system generates no losers. Patient, provider, and payer are integrated in a win-win strategy. What is good for one, is good for all.

With accelerating rates of change, left-brain function begins to falter. Reliance on logic, language, linearity, and predictability give way to the need for a new brain function that can deal with high levels of chaos and ambiguity and low levels of order and predictability. Non-linear brain processes, such as intuition become essential to survival. Images of possibility, large emergent patterns, and impending events will be sensed by the right brain and then transferred to the left brain for

analysis, strategy, action, and implementation. Full-brain function replaces the old reliance on left-brain function. Since many health-care professionals have received little training on the right side of the brain, courses in nonlinear thinking will be in great demand.

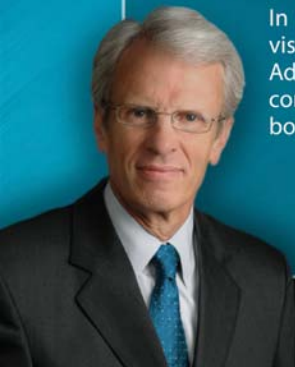
With the increasing advance of computers and telecommunication technologies, humanity will develop global consciousness. The Internet will forever change the face of health care. In a global marketplace, local service areas are less important. The real global challenge for existing health-care providers is global health tourism. People will fly to the location that has the best price and best clinical outcomes. E-commerce will attract health-care buyers by the millions. Medicine is moving into cyberspace—the race is on to see who can develop the most popular consumer health web page. Anything on that web page, including advertisements for your clinical services, will be available to the entire planet in a matter of a few hours or days. Patients seeing your ad have only to purchase an airline ticket and fly in for your service. Therefore, innovative and cost-effective products become a primary strategy for all health-care organizations.

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CHARLES SCRIVEN

Knowledge Management in Health Care

Knowledge management is currently a matter of survival in the corporate world and will soon achieve the same status in the health-care world. Knowledge management looks at how you manage your internal knowledge base and how you access external knowledge bases that affect your health-care services and products. In an age of information, your organization must know what is known. In your area of competence, who on this earth can rightfully boast “best in world practice”? Can they do anything you cannot do? How many site visits have you made to them? Do you do regular computer searches in all of your relevant knowledge areas? Are you systematically monitoring breakthroughs in instrumentation and technology? Most health-care organizations lag far behind industry in the area of knowledge management. This is a habit that must be overcome if health-care providers want to prosper in the future.

To significantly improve the health and well being of our nation, we must go upstream to the point where morbidity is being generated in people’s lives. As valuable as they are, physicians and hospitals do little to improve the health status of a population. Other institutions in our society face this same upstream issue. Prisons do not significantly reduce crime. Having more churches does not make us more spiritual. Spending more money on colleges and universities does little to improve the average literacy level of the nation. It is time to face up to the fact that most of our institutions do not accomplish what we had hoped they would. Because we catch everything too late, our problems do not appear solvable. We work too far downstream to make a real difference.

It is now time to begin moving upstream. With genetic engineering, we can design out diseases rather than trying to treat them. With better neighborhoods and greater social justice, we will reduce the number of criminals, not simply build more prisons. A focus on new media and the Internet will put higher education in reach of the masses. A new spirituality will transcend the differences that now separate religious congregations.

I believe our current century will be known by future historians as the design age, when humanity collectively assumed responsibility for its social outcomes and began redesigning itself to produce a healthier, better educated, more affluent, and evolved population.

Body, Mind, and Spirit

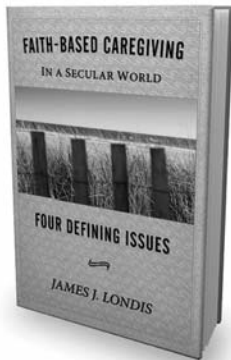
Currently, the spiritual dimension of health care is virtually ignored. Existing health-care providers often mistake the religious orientation of the facility for spirituality as an alternative healing modality. We talk about body, mind, and spirit; yet, we ignore spirit. In the future, we will explore the power of soul-based therapies that enable patients to release their inherent healing potentials. These therapies involve viewing disease as an opportunity for personal transformation. They include the creation of sacred areas in the hospital such as a labyrinth and a healing garden. They utilize music and art as therapeutic agents. They focus upon fostering a greater sense of meaning in the patient’s life. They explore the healing potentials of forgiveness and acceptance. They empower patients to better incorporate events in their past and to create a preferred future. In the future, we will do physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual scans to determine the locus of disease and generate a multi-dimensional approach to treatment for all of our patients.

In this century, areas of knowledge and effort once separated will begin to come together. We will develop integrative medicine which will be a synthesis of allopathic, complementary, and alternative modalities. Care will be provided by multidisciplinary teams; and the appropriate mix of modalities will be determined for each patient. All patient interventions will be evidence based and grounded in commonly accepted best practice models. The three domains of government, the marketplace, and the voluntary sector will also come together—no single domain can meet the total challenge. We cannot increase taxes enough to provide necessary health services to the whole population. The marketplace sector cannot serve those with no money. The civic sector can provide lots of volunteer help, but not enough to meet the total need in our country. All three domains working together, however, could do the job without vastly increasing taxes, taking business from the marketplace, or exhausting volunteer resources. Together, we can accomplish what we cannot accomplish separately.

The future of health care is indeed bright. We are entering a virtual Renaissance of thought and practice. It is a great time to be in this field! ■

Leland R. Kaiser is a health-care futurist, an executive coach, and an organizational consultant. He is founder and president of Kaiser Consulting, a health-care consulting firm in Brighton, Colorado.

Faith-Based Caregiving in a Secular World: *Four Defining Issues* | A REVIEW BY LAUNA RASMUSSEN



Dr. James Londis, below, discusses Christian health-care issues in his latest book, above.



In his book, *Faith-Based Caregiving in a Secular World: Four Defining Issues*, Dr. James Londis addresses what he feels are some misguided beliefs concerning healing that Christian caregivers need to be aware of in order to better fulfill their ministry.

The first misconception he addresses is that the important thing is curing the disease. The second, that a caregiver's connection with a person is unnecessary to the person's healing. The third, that caregivers giving their all is more important than caring for themselves. And the fourth, that God has a delineated plan for each person's life.

In each chapter, Dr. Londis demonstrates that one of these misconceptions is a commonly held belief, often through anecdotes that will likely be representative of the experiences of his readers. He then argues that the belief is, in fact, detrimental and suggests how caregivers should alter that belief to strengthen their healing capabilities. I agreed with much of what Dr. Londis had to say and feel that every Christian could gain from reading it, as we all are caregivers at some point in our lives. The book is definitely aimed, however, at health-care professionals.

My main qualm with the book was the disconnect between the title and the content. Londis' phrase "in a secular world" led me to expect a discussion of Christian caregiving in secular hospitals and clinics. I expected the four issues to include topics such as the culture shock Christian caregivers may feel in secular hospitals, how Christians can defend a whole

person approach to health care, the importance of helping patients feel like a person and not a number in a secular hospital, and maybe the difficulty of getting a day of rest (which in fact is easier at secular hospitals than Adventist ones). Instead, the book addresses how to revolutionize faith-based caregiving.

Londis' first two misconceptions could have been combined into a single chapter. In discussing the first misconception about curing disease being paramount, Londis reminds readers that Jesus healed people as opposed to merely curing them—which means, to Londis, that he restored them to their communities in addition to ending their physical ailments. This essentially provides historical background and reasoning for the misconception Londis deals with in his second chapter—the need to address the whole person when healing them and not just work to cure their disease. A title of *Faith-based Caregiving: Three Defining Issues* would have better prepared me for the content of the book.

While all of the book's main points—to heal the whole person not just the disease, to make sure to take time for ourselves to rest and recuperate, and to remember that God doesn't minutely control every aspect of our lives—are relevant; the last point is probably the most relevant to everyone. The average person, only regularly called to be a caregiver to an ill family member, doesn't risk losing sight of the "patient's" humanity. Such a person is not working to cure a whole floor of patients but only has one family member to care for and so is more likely to already work towards healing the whole

person, especially with the Adventist emphasis on wellness.

Likewise, the emphasis on Sabbath rest is something the Adventist community is already familiar with and has, in fact, been overzealous towards in the past. Now, perhaps, the pendulum has swung too far in the other direction. Dr. Londis reminds us of the original reason behind our Sabbath rest; and it is refreshing to remember that this injunction is not all about the dos and don'ts but rather about taking the time to be with family and community and to be refreshed by God's Spirit so that we will then have the energy to continue our work.

The third and most widely relevant point concerns the common platitudes given to those who are suffering. They are often told that God is in control or that their suffering is part of God's plan; and some may suggest that their suffering is caused by a lack of faith. All of these are harmful to those who hear them and those who say them because they imply that either God or the afflicted is responsible for the suffering. Londis' view is that just as the sun shines on the good and the bad, suffering happens to both the good and the bad. It isn't God's doing—it's just the result of living on this Earth. To a suffering person, reassurance that God is there to help us through our suffering and affirmation of hope in a new world free from suffering can be the most encouraging.

For our own Adventist hospitals, I feel they at least have the first point down. After working as a nurse in both Adventist and public hospitals, I have found that Adventist hospitals actually do a pretty good job in working to heal the whole person. Nurses are still busy in Adventist hospitals, but somehow there is more of an emphasis on actually talking to and caring for the patients. Far more patients in the public hospitals than in Adventist hospitals have shared their frustrations with me about being treated like a checklist or waiting for hours for someone to discharge them, turn them over in bed, or silence the irritating, unnecessarily beeping medical devices.

As to the second point, taking a Sabbath rest, I found that this was easier in public hospitals than our own. At a public hospital, there are many people willing to work weekends for the extra money, and so there is no problem for employees wanting to take Sabbath off. In Adventist hospitals, that doesn't work as well because you can't have an empty hospital on Saturdays. However, rather than treating this as a problem, it seems we haven't addressed it at all; and so some people may end

up working every Sabbath and not getting that important rest time. I wonder if we could address this by treating Sabbaths like holidays and having employees rotate through so that everyone gets an equal opportunity at taking their Sabbath rest.

As to the third point, I think our chaplains especially should (and many do) share Dr. Londis' views regarding God's relationship to suffering.

With all of the current public scrutiny of health care and attempts to create a new health-care system in the United States, it did not surprise me to find that one of our own had written a book addressing four issues in Christian health care. His advice is sound and relevant for every Christian today, but especially for those who are involved in the work of caring for the sick. Aside from feeling that the title is a bit misleading, I highly recommend this book to all caregivers and, probably most importantly, to their administrators who can perhaps lift a bit of the paperwork burden, as well as plan for the Sabbath rest and allow caregivers to truly fulfill their calling. This book should be on the gift list for every unit manager to give to their nurses, respiratory therapists, and doctors. ■

Launa Rasmussen has been a medical-surgical nurse in both Adventist and secular hospitals and is now working as a clinical instructor.

Londis Responds to Rasmussen

NO GREATER GIFT can be given an author than a thoughtful, critical review by a knowledgeable reader. My thanks to Ms. Launa Rasmussen for her appreciative comments on my recently published book *Faith-Based Caregiving in a Secular World: Four Defining Issues*. Still, I would like to clarify what I intended to say in the book, since the reviewer's comments suggest I may have failed to be entirely clear.

First, the title: I never intended that the book be about faith-based caregiving in secular hospitals, only that it address how believing caregivers can better focus on their ministry in a secular health-care culture. For whatever reason, I never anticipated readers interpreting the title in some other way, which perhaps I should have. Nor was the book intended for Adventist audiences or hospitals alone, which is why I treated the Sabbath's meaning rather than focusing on the

specific day it should be observed.

Second, the reviewer's suggestion that I combine the first two chapters into one: I thought of that and tried to do it, but it did not work for me. Chapter 1 makes the point that in the time of Jesus, "curing" and "healing" were virtually one and the same. If a culture assumes that all sickness is a divine punishment and ostracizes the sick as "polluted," the only "healing" possible (convincing the sick and the community that the divine punishment has been lifted and they can live again in hope) is to "cure" the sickness. You cannot be "forgiven" of whatever caused God's displeasure apart from being "physically" cured. This was the thrust of Jesus' healing ministry: to "cure" sickness and to "heal" the person through forgiveness.

The second chapter makes clear that the link between "curing" and "healing" no longer exists in our scientific era. We can be "cured" of our physical problem (like the war veteran whose wounds have been sutured) but not healed of our depression; or we can be healed of our depression even while we are missing a limb. Faith-based caregivers can help patients realize that when no cure is possible, peace and hope for the future is still possible. Or, that even if one's physical problem has been solved, your challenges as a total human being may not be. That's what we call "whole-person care."

Rasmussen believes that Adventist hospitals do this pretty well. I agree, but believe we could do better. I have also found that while most non-SDA employees are devoted Christians and committed to the Adventist health-care mission, they are not always clear about how we understand the healing ministry of Jesus.

On issue three, the Sabbath, Rasmussen picks up my concern that caregivers rest but overlooks my point that the caregiver (Christian, not simply Adventist) most in danger of ignoring her rest is the one who most cares about her patients. I wanted all faith-based caregivers to understand that God's command to rest does not disappear because we are engaged in self-denying caregiving (though, admittedly, there are emergencies when we need to stretch ourselves to the limit).

I hope these comments clarify my intentions in the book. I can only hope that everyone who reads my book will give it as careful a review as has Ms. Rasmussen.

—James Londis

Discussion

Most major denominations agree that illegal immigrants must be treated humanely. But the leadership often goes much further and takes the position that illegal immigration is caused, at least in part, by not letting in enough legal immigrants. They then call for increases in the number of workers and family members allowed into the country. For example, early this year, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) issued a resolution stating that, "Due to the limited number of visas, millions have entered the United States without proper documentation." The NAE then calls for increases in the number of immigrant workers allowed in. The Catholic Church states that the law must be reformed so that more "laborers from other countries can enter the country legally." The Episcopal Church adopted a resolution in July of this year stating that, "Immigrants are filling the jobs that go unwanted and unfilled by U.S. citizens." The resolution makes clear more immigrant workers need to be allowed in legally. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in November 2009 adopted a document that states illegal immigrants do jobs that "citizens often will not do" and that legal immigration should be increased to meet, "the annual need for foreign workers." A Commission of the Union for Reform Judaism argues that limits on immigration contribute to illegal immigration, and calls for legislation that "increases the number of visas allowing unskilled laborers to work in the U.S."

Most parishioners believe that enforcing the law and improving the wages and working conditions of unskilled workers to attract more Americans is the best way to deal with illegal immigration. The huge divide between leaders and members means that if there is a full-blown immigration debate next year it will be all the more contentious, with Jewish and Christian leaders on one side of the issue, their members on the other, and elected officials in the middle.

Methodology

Zogby International was commissioned by the Center for Immigration Studies to conduct an online survey of 42,026 adults. Zogby used its online panel, which is representative of the US population. Zogby International weighted the data slightly to more accurately reflect the U.S. population. Zogby conducted the survey from November 13–30, 2009. The margin of error for the three Christian groups is +/- 1.1 percent and +/- 2.4 percent for likely Jewish voters. ■



HEALING OF THE NATIONS

...and
the leaves
of the tree
were for the
healing of the
nations.

REV. 22:2b

The Gospel According to Moses and Elijah

BY ROY E. GANE

THE LAST PROPHET of the Hebrew Bible concluded his appeal with these words:

Remember the teaching of my servant Moses, the statutes and ordinances that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse (Mal. 4:4–6; NRSV here and in subsequent quotations).

Malachi pointed back to Moses and forward to a future prophetic ministry like that of Elijah. Moses and Elijah represent Torah (“Teaching”) and Prophets. But Moses was also a great prophet, and later prophets brought their people back to his covenant and Torah. Thus, Torah is prophetic; and the Prophets are Torah. The Writings portion of the Hebrew Bible also builds on Torah (e.g., Ezra 3:2; Neh. 8:1, 14; 9:14). So Isaac Kikawada, a Japanese scholar at the University of California, Berkeley, aptly referred to the three parts of the Hebrew Scriptures as Torah, Torah, Torah.¹

The New Covenant/Testament also builds on Torah. Quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, Jesus stated that all the Torah and the Prophets hang on love (Matt. 22:37–40), which He reaffirmed as the principle to govern His followers (Jn. 13:34–35; 14:15, 21). On the road to Emmaus, the risen Christ queried, “Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things...?” Then He showed how Moses and the other prophets revealed Him and His role (Lk. 24:26–27).

Unity between Torah, Prophets, and New Covenant was affirmed when their living representatives appeared together on a mountain. There, the transfigured Christ conversed with glorified Moses and Elijah regarding His exodus (“departure,” Lk. 9:28–31; cf. Mk. 9:2–4; Matt.

17:2–3). Here are Moses and Elijah in the Gospel narrative, in historical time. Jesus and the New Testament writers believed their stories and witness to God; or their appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration would be meaningless. Moses and Elijah had been grand ministers of the Gospel in their times, so they also ministered to the Son of God when He needed encouragement to offer the Sacrifice on which the Gospel is based.²

Moses’ Gospel of Deliverance

Moses’ Gospel concerned deliverance from Egypt (Exod. 3–15; cf. Rev. 15:3–4) to a new, better society guided and blessed through a covenant with God. Rather than forming and regulating this society according to a neat, abstract rule book that could be applied with equal ease to any community throughout history, God demonstrated His dream for the Israelites in ways they could better understand: by interacting with them in their own historical context. God reaches out to people where they are, not in a cultural vacuum.³ Like taking care of a child, the approach is a bit messy; but it is more successful than limiting nurture to systematic proclamation of magisterial maxims.

Accordingly, Christopher Wright urges that we allow the Old Testament to say what it says “warts and all,” and refrain from sprinkling our moral disinfectant around its earthiness or wreathing its human characters in stained-glass hagiography. Yet, at the same time we receive the Old Testament as the Bible of Jesus Christ and His church. Since it renders to us the God whom we acknowledge and worship as the Holy One of Israel, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is ultimately the Old Testament that claims and judges us, not we who judge, convict, or exonerate it.⁴

Much of God’s teaching through Moses is recorded in narratives, which show how the Lord treated His people and how they responded. Even laws, which were crucial for the

success of the infant nation, are embedded within the narrative framework, which tells a story of deliverance. The laws were not merely God's way to assert or maintain control; rather, they were a vehicle for further progress in delivering faulty, damaged, formerly victimized people to a better life.

There are several kinds of connections between pentateuchal laws and the narrative theme of deliverance:

1. God's laws were for grateful people who had already experienced deliverance from the pharaoh's oppressive rule (Exod. 20; Deut. 5); they were not to help the Israelites earn redemption.⁵
2. Pentateuchal laws reflect the character of the divine deliverer, whose holy moral character is love, which includes both justice and mercy (Exod. 34:6–7; cf. Ps. 85:10–11 [Heb. vv. 11–12]).⁶ By teaching and empowering people to live in harmony with His love, the Lord enables them to become holy in character as He is holy (Lev. 19:2, 18; cf. 1 Pet. 1:14–16; cf. 1 Thess. 3:12–13). So, nothing less than God's character is the authority for His law: "the reality of YHWH's character implies the authority for an ethic of imitation and reflection of that character in human behaviour. We ought to behave in certain ways because that is what YHWH is like, and that reality is sufficient authority."⁷
3. Having redeemed the Israelites from the Egyptian "god-king" (Exod. 12–13; Deut. 7:8), the truly divine king and protector of Israel resided among them and accepted their homage (e.g., Exod. 25:8; 29:38–46; Num. 23:21; 28:1–8).⁸ He made provision to forgive them through sacrifices, thereby delivering them from condemnation when they violated His laws (e.g., Lev. 4–5). Such expiatory sacrifices showed how God remedies sin with complete love by extending mercy with justice.⁹
4. God's laws are in harmony with principles of cause and effect that He has set up, so they are for the good of His people (Deut. 10:13), delivering them from nasty results of ignorance. Their distinctive society, favored by God, is a paradigm for the service of other communities (Exod. 19:4–6). When His people are blessed through sensible living, others notice their connection to Him because of their prosperity (4:6–8).¹⁰ Thus, all peoples can be drawn to Him so that they too can receive His blessings (cf. Gen. 12:2–3, 22:17–18). This could be called evangelism through excellence for the healing of the nations.



"Keeping the law, then, was not an end in itself for Israel, but related to their very reason for existence—God's concern for the nations."¹¹

5. Because God had delivered His people, they were responsible for passing the kindness of His justice and mercy on to others, including vulnerable poor persons and debt-slaves, widows, orphans, and resident aliens (e.g., Lev. 25; Deut. 10, 15, 16, 24; cf. Matt. 18:21–35). Divine laws even protected vulnerable animals and trees (e.g., Deut. 20:19; 22:6–7, 10).
6. Pentateuchal laws delivered Israelites from social instability caused by injustice or conflict, even when this legislation may appear chauvinistic to us. For example, God gave suspected adulteresses the unique right to trial at His sanctuary Supreme Court in order to protect innocent women from false condemnation by all-male human courts (Num. 5:11–31).¹² There is no corresponding suspected adulterer ritual because men did not need this level of protection. Another example: God freed females from their vows to Him when these solemn promises conflicted with interests of their fathers or husbands, who controlled property that women could offer to God (Num. 30).¹³ Thus, the Lord preserved domestic harmony within the existing patriarchal culture, rather than overturning the culture through social engineering.¹⁴ Patriarchal culture was not a divinely instituted, timeless norm. It was not the message, but part of the background, the imperfect ground that God tilled to accomplish His purposes.¹⁵
7. Divine laws separate right from wrong in a way that can provide vindication and profound emotional deliv-

erance to those who are innocent and victimized. Minnie Warburton searingly describes how Leviticus 18 brought her healing:

I remember very clearly the moment. Sunlight coming in the window onto my desk...and the pages...the words leaping out at me...“You shall not have intercourse with...” Incest taboos. One after another. I slammed the book shut. I was shocked. I had no idea that was in the Bible. I never imagined it might be mentioned there. I was reeling...

It didn't matter that my father by now was six years dead. Nor did it matter that long before he'd died, I'd confronted him on all the things he'd done to me. Nor did it even matter that he'd continued to deny them until the day he did die...I never knew that what he did was condemned by his God before he ever did it. I never knew he was breaking God's law. But there it was, clear as anything...

I will never be able to explain what that moment was like, that discovery of Leviticus 18. I wanted to call up everyone I knew and say, 'It was wrong. What he did was wrong. It says so right here, in the Bible.' Therapists had told me, my own instincts told me, everything had told me—yet nothing told me the way Leviticus told me. Wrong. Condemned. Hateful in the eyes of God. Even as I wanted to yell out, I was struck dumb, speechless. It was wrong, truly truly wrong. And for the first time I felt utterly and absolutely vindicated. For the first time, I felt clean. For the first time I felt that what had happened was between him and his God and he'd have to make his expiation however he did it. I felt absolved. I felt released.

What is striking to me now, even as I write this, is that what I am describing is precisely the effect that scripture should and can have. That if scripture is in any way the word of God, then it is an awesomely powerful agent. We need to be judicious when reading scripture...but we also need to remain open to hearing, because the voice of scripture can indeed heal, can absolve, can cleanse and purify.¹⁶

Elijah's Gospel of Deliverance

Like Moses' role, that of Elijah involved deliverance. God used him at Mount Carmel to deliver his people from the confusion of apostasy and from false religious leaders who refused the kingdom of heaven and prevented others from entering it (1 Ki. 18; cf. Matt. 23:13). Like Moses, Elijah was concerned with social justice. When Ahab and Jezebel abused their royal power to seize the ancestral inheritance of Naboth through judicial murder, it was the prophet who

issued divine condemnation (1 Ki. 21).

Most striking about Elijah was his deliverance from death itself, which he had earlier craved (1 Ki. 19:4),¹⁷ when he vanished into the sky (2 Ki. 2). The facts that he did not die and that Malachi prophesied a future Elijah ministry (Mal. 4:5–6) spawned hope that he might return (Mk. 6:15; 8:28; Jn. 1:21).

Malachi's Elijah is also a deliverer, but not in the way we would expect. After the words, “Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes” (4:5), we anticipate something dramatic like: “As at Carmel, he will call consuming fire down from heaven to show that the Lord alone is God” (1 Ki. 18:36–39; cf. 2 Ki. 1:9–12—consuming enemies). For Israelites and Seventh-day Adventists, that would be a satisfying way to end the Old Testament.¹⁸ Instead, we hear a kind of “still small voice”¹⁹ anticlimax: “He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse” (Mal. 4:6).

Reconciling parents and children is an important example of restoring relationships. Elsewhere, Malachi is concerned about other relationships, such as between husbands and wives (2:13–16), his people and their ancestors (2:1–12), and the people and their divine Father (1:6). Lest we entertain the notion that reconciliation is of trifling significance, the Hebrew word for “curse” in 4:6 is none other than the terrifying *herem*, which refers to sacral devotion to total destruction (e.g., Num. 21:2–3; Josh. 6:17, 21; cf. Mal. 4:1).

The angel who announced the birth of John the Baptist as a fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy more fully described “Elijah” ministry:

...he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Lk. 1:15–17).²⁰

Here, God's Spirit empowers return to God, relational reconciliation, and character transformation to prepare for the Lord's coming. From Paul, we learn the secret of the Spirit's power: this divine personality pours unselfish love, the basis for reconciliation and transformation, into the hearts of those who have peace with God through faith in

Christ (Rom. 5:1, 5). Growth in this kind of love is growth in holiness (sanctification), which also prepares Christians for Christ's second coming:

And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints (1 Thess. 3:12–13).

Ongoing Benefit of Divine Ethical Teaching

In Malachi 4:4–6, there is a tight connection between the “Elijah” message of reconciliation (vv. 5–6) and the laws of Moses that God's people are to remember (v. 4): Both are about God's kind of unselfish love in relationships.²¹ Loyalty to God is expressed through ethical treatment of other people.

The appeal of Malachi (“My Messenger”) to remember divine teaching mediated through Moses, the founder of Judeo-Christian ethics, is echoed by an angel/messenger in Revelation 14 during a judgment before Christ's Second Coming (v. 7): “Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus” (v. 12).²²

As a group with eschatological self-awareness, Seventh-day Adventists know how to evangelize with vivid graphics of apocalyptic beasts, identifications of Antichrist, predictions of Armageddon, and by upholding the law of God. These are important. But have we fully grasped the importance of receiving love through faith in Jesus and following His example of life and faith, as the basis for obedience to the commandments and reconciliation with one another?

Principles contained in God's paradigmatic pentateuchal teaching continue their usefulness as guides to practical love and reconciliation.²³ Christians have tended to limit timeless moral law to the Ten Commandments. These are paramount examples; but elsewhere there are other straightforward statements of moral principles that similarly lack cultural limitations (*e.g.*, Lev. 18, 20; *cf.* 1 Cor. 5).

Christians routinely dismiss “civil laws” of Moses as obsolete and irrelevant. But beneath their cultural garb and apart from their ancient penalties, much of this neglected body of divine legislation incarnates valuable and timeless moral principles that are sub-principles of God's overarching principle of love, which can and should guide the interpersonal growth of modern Christians.

For example, Exodus 23:4 commands: “When you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, you shall bring it back.” The principle is respect and care for another's property, the opposite of stealing (20:15), even if the owner has not treated you well in the past. This law shows one practical way to fulfill Jesus' teaching: “Love your enemies...” (Matt. 5:44).²⁴

God does not ask for “knee-jerk,” unthinking obedience that thumps the Bible and intones the mantra: “Just read and do!” If He did, we need massive reform to reinstitute levirate marriage (Deut. 25:5–10). No, there is an intermediate step of analysis and reflection to accurately handle the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15): “Read, think, and then do.” It is timeless principles, not culture, that are authoritative for us. But differences in culture must be taken into account in the process of identifying biblical principles and applying them to our contexts.

When Jesus embodied the law of Leviticus 19:18 (“you shall love your neighbor as yourself”) in a paradigmatic case through the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30–37), He concluded with the words, “Go and do likewise” (v. 37).

Jesus did not mean that the young lawyer who had asked him the question should hire a donkey, buy some bandages, oil and wine, keep some change for friendly inn-keepers, and set off immediately on the road to Jericho to look for victims of robbery with violence. Jesus' words did not mean ‘Go and do exactly the same’. They meant ‘Go and live your life in a way which expresses the same costly and barrier-crossing neighbourliness that my story illustrates—that is what it will mean to obey the law (since you asked).’²⁵

A Community of Love from the Spirit

The eschatological messages of Malachi 4 and Revelation 14 concerning relational, ethical restoration to harmony with God and His principles are basically the same. Also relevant to people living before “the great and terrible day of the Lord” is Joel's promise of a special outpouring of God's Spirit (2:28–32 [Heb. 3:1–5]), who empowers relational growth by providing love (Rom. 5:5).²⁶

The Spirit does not simply perform seismic signs or overwhelm the populace with the indisputable correctness of our theological argumentation. The Spirit accomplishes a more powerful witness for Christ by enabling His community to be loving and united (Jn. 17:20–23), as His praying disciples became after His resurrection (Acts 2). The

greater the challenges to unity in the church and in the world, the greater the opportunity for the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22–23) to stand out.

As modern Christians, we have focused on individual salvation by faith in Christ. That is basic, but perhaps we have overlooked the evangelistic role of communal sanctification through growth in love. The church is not only to provide people with mutual support and to combine their outreach efforts; it should be a haven of divinely empowered social love to reveal God’s character. When the early church was such a haven, its growth was exponential (Acts 2).

As the “body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12), the Christian community extends the incarnate Word ministry of Jesus, which simultaneously upholds God’s ideal, draws all kinds of sinners to desire it, and welcomes all who will come and enjoy the forgiveness and transformation that He offers (*e.g.*, Matt. 9; Mk. 2). This balance between ideal and acceptance, law and grace, “the commandments of God” and “the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12), is impossible to achieve without wisdom, humility, and compassion provided by the Spirit.

It is easy to accept or condemn people the way they are. But to befriend all fallen sons and daughters of Adam and Eve and to walk together through Jesus’ miracle of “new birth” to a better life (Jn. 3; *cf.* 1 Cor. 6:9–11; Titus 3:3–7) is the real challenge, one that Christians have not always met. We could profitably ponder the following observation by Philip Yancey:

*I view with amazement Jesus’ uncompromising blend of graciousness toward sinners and hostility toward sin, because in much of church history I see virtually the opposite. We give lip service to ‘hate the sin while loving the sinner,’ but how well do we practice this principle?*²⁷

Jesus’ way with sinners didn’t make sense to Simon the Pharisee. He saw a woman who had lived a sinful life bring Jesus an alabaster jar of ointment, bathe His feet with her tears, wipe them with her hair, kiss His feet, and anoint them. The remarkable display of love only excited Simon’s suspicion that Jesus must not be a prophet (Lk. 7:36–39).

Just as the Shekinah Lord in Numbers 5 received a gift on behalf of a woman whom he judged at the sanctuary regarding sexual immorality, whose hair was also let down and who contacted something holy, the incarnate Lord in Luke 7 accepted the woman’s gift and contact with Him. She was not suspected by her husband in this situation, but

inwardly condemned by another man. As the Lord Himself judged a suspected adulteress, Jesus miraculously answered Simon’s thoughts to deliver a divine verdict: guilty as charged, but forgiven (Lk. 7:47–48). And He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace” (v. 50).²⁸

Jesus’ forgiveness did not mean that He was lowering Moses’ standard (*cf.* Matt. 5:27–28). It is not that His morality is weaker, but that His “new covenant” forgiveness, based on His own self-sacrifice, is stronger (*cf.* Acts 13:38–39). Thus, Jesus’ Gospel culminates the deliverance messages of Moses and Elijah and points to our role: If we love Christ a lot because He has forgiven us a lot (Lk. 7:40–47), we will find no greater joy than reconciling precious people to one another and to Him before the great day of His return.²⁹ ■



Notes and References

1. Presidential address, annual meeting of the Pacific Coast region of the Society of Biblical Literature, Santa Clara, California, 1986.
2. Moses and Elijah knew about departures and mountains (Exod. 12–13, 19, 24; Deut. 34; 1 Ki. 19; 2 Ki. 2), and they had powerfully interceded for their people (Exod. 32; Num. 14; 1 Ki. 18:36–37). If Christ did not die for everyone, including them, they would lose the glorified lives they were already enjoying.
3. *Cf.* Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004), 48.
4. *Ibid.*, 445.
5. Compare the fact that God delivered Noah and his family from the flood (Gen. 7–8) before giving them covenant stipulations (chap. 9).
6. *Cf.* Roy Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers* (NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 286–287; *idem*, *Cult and Character:*

Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 320. On the unity of love and justice in the character of God, see Hermann Cohen, "The Day of Atonement II," *Judaism* 18 (1969), 84.

7. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 460.

8. In a depiction at Abu Simbel, the tent of Pharaoh Ramesses II (13th century, B.C.) is in the center of his war camp, but the Israelite camp was arranged around the Lord's sanctuary (Kenneth Kitchen, "The Tabernacle—A Bronze Age Artifact," *Bible and Spade* 8 [1995]: 36).

9. Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 284–288; idem, *Cult and Character*, 318–323.

10. James Watts has pointed out that pentateuchal law shows YHWH's use of and adherence to internationally recognized ideals of justice (*Reading Law: The Rhetorical Shaping of the Pentateuch* [BSem 59; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999], 96–98).

11. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 64.

12. Cf. Herbert C. Brichto, "The Case of the Sōtā and a Reconsideration of Biblical 'Law,'" *HUCA* 46 (1975): 67; Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 350; idem, "A Husband's Pride, a Mob's Prejudice," *BRev* 12 (1996): 21.

13. Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 764.

14. As communism has attempted to do, with catastrophic results.

15. Within the patriarchal society, it made good sense that hereditary priests (restricted to Aaron & Sons) were male. Undoubtedly there were other practical reasons for this limitation, for example, to avoid defiling sancta due to internal (and therefore not always discerned) onset of female impurity, distancing from fertility cults, and the need for priests to guard the sanctuary. None of these carry any weight in limiting Christian ministry to males. Our ministers belong to the priesthood of all believers (1 Pet. 2:9). Christians have no elite mediatorial priesthood aside from that of Christ in heaven (cf. Heb. 4:14–16). Like all Israelite sacrificial animals, female victims (e.g., Lev. 4–5; Num. 15, 19) represented Christ (cf. Jn. 1:29), ruling out the notion that a female could not represent him (Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 375–377).

16. Minnie Warburton, "Letting the Voice of Leviticus Speak," *Sewanee Theological Review* 37 (1994): 166–7.

17. Cf. discouraged Moses' death wish (Num. 11:15).

18. But note that the Hebrew Bible ends with 2 Chronicles.

19. Or "soft whisper" (*qol d'mamah*; 1 Ki. 19:12).

20. Also Jesus identified John the Baptist as a fulfillment of Malachi's Elijah (Matt. 11:12–14; 17:12–13).

21. This love is the only principle on the basis of which "intelligent beings with free choice can live in harmony and not destroy each other" (Roy Gane, *Altar Call* [Berrien Springs, MI: Diadem, 1999], 88).

22. On the parallel between these requirements (keeping God's commandments and holding Jesus' faith) and the Israelite expressions of loyalty to God on the Day of Atonement—humbling through self-denial and keeping Sabbath by abstaining from work (Lev. 16:29, etc.), see

Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 413.

23. On the relationship between a total paradigm and principles embodied in it, see Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 70–71.

24. I have tentatively concluded that any given biblical law "should be kept to the extent that its principle can be applied unless the New Testament removes the reason for its application." The exception clause accommodates Acts 15, which has removed the reason and therefore the requirement for circumcision, which we could otherwise keep (Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 310). Thus I agree with Gordon Wenham: "the principles underlying the OT are valid and authoritative for the Christian, but the particular applications found in the OT may not be" (*The Book of Leviticus* [NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], 35). A considerable number of biblical laws have limited or no application for modern Christians because the institutions or situations they were designed to regulate no longer exist. For example, without the sanctuary/temple, we cannot keep the biblical festivals and their required sacrifices (Lev. 23; Num. 28–29), and we do not need deacons and deaconesses at the doors of our churches asking personal questions to exclude the ritually impure (cf. Lev. 15). Without ancestral land tenure we cannot observe the Jubilee (Lev. 25), and without levirate marriage we should not urge married men to additionally marry their widowed and childless sisters-in-law (Deut. 25:5–10). Without the ancient theocratic judicial system we should not think of stoning anyone or even knocking out one of their teeth (e.g., Lev. 24:13–23).

25. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics*, 72.

26. David W. Baker has pointed out an intertextual parallel between Joel 2:31 and Malachi 4:5, both of which speak of a time "before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes" (*Joel, Obadiah, Malachi* [NIV Application Commentary; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006], 301).

27. Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 259.

28. Gane, *Leviticus, Numbers*, 526–528.

29. "Malachi and John's third angel call us to repent of our uncooperative unlove that fragments our unity and thereby dilutes our witness for Christ in the world. There is one God, one Savior, one faith, one baptism, and one church body of fellowship (see Ephesians 4:4–6). It is time to return to the Messiah who has brought us together, to put aside our differences, to revel in our God-given diversity, to pull toward the banner of the uplifted Christ (see John 12:32) at the center of our faith, and to march victoriously through the end of the great war to the great peace on the other side!" (Roy Gane, *Who's Afraid of the Judgment? The Good News About Christ's Work in the Heavenly Sanctuary* [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2006], 128).

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Repairers of Broken Walls and Restorers of God's Justice | BY ZDRAVKO PLANTAK

Let me begin with the story of my mother's childhood. Angela was born in 1931 in Eastern Europe to two blind parents—a father blind from birth and a mother who had lost her sight as a consequence of Spanish flu at the end of the WWI. They raised Angela and her sister Victoria on their own which meant that Angela had to grow up quickly; her parents could not even teach her to walk. When she was three years old, Angela would go to the neighbors to fetch the milk that her mother would then give her to drink as her main diet. Her father was a teacher of Esperanto and her mum was a poet. They also owned a little brush making company; and eventually they got a street corner shop that raised them out of abject poverty to survival levels.

As a seven-year-old, Angela noticed that everyone in school had ironed clothes except her. So she learned to iron her and her sister's clothes in order to not stick out or be different from others. She learned Hungarian, Modern German as well as old Gothic, Esperanto, and Serbo-Croatian languages to the point that she could continue self-educating until the present day.

Her school was planning to send her to Budapest to study at the University as an exceptional child; but the Second World War interrupted this adventure and she was instead sent to Austria with her family as a refugee during the Russian surges in 1944. During the train journey that lasted seven days, the Russians and the Germans bombed the train several times. In one instance, God placed her in a position to save the entire train of refugees. The train stopped in Mursko Sredisce, which is now a part of Slovenia, and, while they were waiting, Angela went to play in the woods nearby. A partisan woman with a machine gun approached her and told her to go and tell the train driver to let another train go ahead of them. That intervention saved their entire train of refugees because the first train



was bombed and many perished in the horrific train crash.

Until the end of the war Angela was "safe" in the refugee camp in the Austrian Alps. However, the lack of food and clothing meant that the entire family was starving and freezing. One day, some of the refugee children went sledding and skiing in the Alps. Even though she was barefoot, she was having lots of fun; then some people took pity on her and gave her a pair of shoes so she could play in the alpine snow in freezing temperatures.

In July 1945, the Löesching family was sent back to former Yugoslavia; and they ended up for eighteen months in a camp for German *Folksdojcers* in Gakovo, a foul place not unlike the concentration camps of the previous war years. From a beginning population of 18,000, only 9,000 survived this death trap. They were treated with hatred and contempt physically, emotionally, and mentally.

Angela contracted stomach typhus first. Though she survived, her father died there in the camp from the same stomach typhus. Angela, just under fifteen years old, had to

prepare her daddy's body by wrapping it in a sheet, putting it into a wheelbarrow, and taking it to a pit with 500 other bodies for mass burial. She actually climbed down after the corpse to sort it with the other bodies and lay it out in an orderly manner. In the blackness of that night, she then had to struggle for several hours to climb the wet, steep soil out of the pit to avoid being buried alive.

After that, Angela contracted an epidemic typhus, with excruciating headaches that would not stop for days. Her mother also suffered from typhus at the same time. Then her eleven-year-old sister Victoria got a disease called "water sickness" and was swelling until she died in horrific pain after five weeks of suffering. During the last stages of her sister's illness, Angela developed a third typhus called "Pjegavac" or what is now known as Scrub Typhus or *Boutenmeuse Fever*. This one was the worst of the three; and she had to go into isolation from which out of 361 patients only two survived. She was one of the two. However, on the night Victoria was dying Angela could hear her mum call for her to come and be with them; but Angela was delirious and could not stand up to go to her younger sister.¹ The next day Angela had to pull herself out of bed to go and bury her sister. In addition, she buried a neighbor who, out of desperation, had killed her newborn twins with needles and then committed suicide.

Three times, Angela avoided being sent to Siberia by sleeping in a chicken shed or inside the bread-baking oven or by hiding all night in the top of a leafy, oak tree. And that is all before Angela married my dad, when she was just two months shy of seventeen.

My dad evangelized to her and her mum, and she became a Seventh-day Adventist. And somehow, miraculously, she felt that this Adventist faith became a balm to heal her open wounds, *that* faith pregnant with hope and shalom like leaves for the healing of the nations soothed her open sores and bleeding wounds which were so deep that, even though healed, they continue hurting till today.

No, it was not suddenly a brilliant and rosy life. A year after they married and six weeks after my mum delivered my sister, my dad was called into a three-year army service to an unknown territory over 600 miles away on the Macedonian, Greek, and Bulgarian border. This was 1948 and the tensest time of the Stalin-Tito conflict when Yugoslavia refused Russia control of the Balkans. And my mum was just shy of eighteen when she was left penniless with a newborn baby and a blind

mother after the Great War and with a husband who-knows-where in the army for thirty-six months.

So, she took her newborn baby on her back, went to the *kolkhoz* of the Communist agricultural company called *Ekonomija* and, falling on her knees, begged for work so that they could have some food. And yes, she worked with a small baby on her back until my dad returned from the service.

The Adventist church helped her at that time by giving her milk for the baby and providing her with wood to burn during the bitterly cold winters. Our church community, with all its faults, became the body of Christ. It became in a small but tangible way what Isaiah describes in chapter 58: "a well-watered garden, a spring whose waters never fail...repairer of broken walls and restorer" of social justice. Indeed, this became the Sabbath of delight for a broken, young girl who experienced a community that acted as leaves for the healing of wounds—a community, described in Isaiah 58, that practiced the fasting that was loosing the chains of injustice, untying the cords of yoke, sharing food with the hungry, providing the poor with shelter, clothing the naked, spending itself on behalf of others and satisfying the mental, emotional, and yes, even physical and material needs of the oppressed.

Why this personal story? I believe that our stories shape us; and they give us theological center and meaning. If Angela can be healed out of the utmost despair and pain of the horrors of this sinful world—which are almost unimaginable to my generation—and if she could persist in raising all three of her children (and four grandchildren) to work in Seventh-day Adventist ministry today, then God's restoration and reparation of the world are real. And that is a point that I would like to share with you today.

Prophetic Living

I have argued elsewhere² that today's church must have a much more "prophetic role" in the present age and that looking more closely at the biblical prophets would give us a much needed clarification as to how that prophetic role must be accomplished: less through our apocalyptic and time-line warnings and chart-ticking (in)securities, and more in the way that biblical prophets accomplished their tasks—through imaginative visioning and social activism in the socio-ethical, political³ and economic sense, especially as they fought for the poor, the alien, the widow and the orphan, therefore for the least of the social, political, and economic strata that suffered the worst injustice. Further-

more, I have made in several places a strong call for our two major theological tenets—the Sabbath⁴ and soon coming of Christ—to become significantly more socio-ethically relevant; and I have argued that the richness of this theological heritage should give us much greater interest in the “other,” whose human dignity, human rights, and human aspirations should be supported. Our Sabbatical attitude should include not only weekly Sabbaths that equalize us all before God but also annual Sabbaths that specifically call for social justice and are a moral call towards that great jubilee year that not only Levitical and Deuteronomistic texts point to, but that Jesus of Nazareth furthermore utilizes in explaining His mission in the inaugural messianic proclamation.⁵ And the teaching of the Second Coming is indeed about the hope that we, in the time between the first and the last coming, proclaim not only by evangelism but by occupying until Jesus returns, as referenced at the end of His Olivet Discourse, by doing to the least of His sisters and brothers in social and moral terms what we would do if it was Jesus Himself on the receiving end of those actions.⁶

Eschatological Living as Prophetic Living

However, I suggest one further point with which I have wrestled for several years now and through which I have, I believe, found a more helpful and satisfying conclusion. So far, I have been calling for more imaginative prophetic living; and I continue to think that this is a special calling for any prophetic community, especially a remnant prophetic community.⁷ However, now I also advocate for what I want to term “eschatological living.” The seer in the book of Revelation⁸ receives a vision of how that new world looks, directing our eyes to the lush garden with plenty of water springing and flowing freely and energizing the trees that give fruits in frequent cycle and produce leaves that are so therapeutic and homeopathic that they serve for the healing of the nations. My difficulty with this picture was that I always thought of it in terms of post-eschaton and therefore did not try to reconcile it with the invitation to the moral community of Christ here and now. And yet, eschatological living urges us to take seriously the aspirations of the New Jerusalem and project it to the eschatological living today; *that* living that is informed by what is soon to come.⁹ In some way, as South African scholar Adrio König argued in his remarkable book *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology: Towards a*

Christ-Centered Approach, our view must reject on one hand “a completed and [on another] a one-sidedly futuristic eschatology in favor of an eschatology in the process of being realized.” He goes on to suggest that “full eschatological reality requires... a realized eschatology (‘for us’), an eschatology being realized (‘in us’), and an eschatology yet-to-be-realized (‘with us’).”¹⁰ König then unpacks what he means by this middle stage of “eschatology being realized” between the first and the second coming of Christ:

In the New Testament, God’s children are sometimes called strangers and pilgrims in the world (Heb 11:13ff.; 1 Pet. 2:11). It is even said that their citizenship (Phil. 3:20–21) and treasure (Matt. 6:20) are in heaven, and that they aspire to a realm above (Col. 3:2). But this estrangement between God’s children and the world is due to the fact that God’s children are already (at least partly) renewed, while the earth is still old and “lies in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). Our alien status on earth is therefore temporary. It implies not that we are destined for some place other than earth, but rather that the old, un-renewed earth does not suit us yet. That is why the expectation of a new earth is a living hope for the faithful.¹¹

And that is why, having been born into a new life¹² and renewed by the living waters of the Holy Spirit,¹³ we are already living the life that we are hoping for and implementing the principles of the kingdom of grace that we soon expect to become a new earth and a New Jerusalem reality in the kingdom of glory.¹⁴ Jürgen Moltmann expresses it succinctly, “Time after the [first] coming of Christ must be seen as ‘fulfilled but not yet completed time.’ It is no longer the time of pure expectation, nor is it as yet the eternal present of the time of completion. That is why Christians live between the ‘now already’ and the ‘not yet.’”¹⁵ And this “future-made-present” creates new conditions for possibilities in history; it becomes the ultimate in the penultimate, and creates a reflection of the possibilities of the “future of time in the midst of time.”¹⁶ N. T. Wright, in his recent book *Surprised by Hope*, elaborates for several hundred pages on this same concept. Wright speaks about

... a sense of continuity as well as discontinuity between the present world (and the present state), and the future, whatever it shall be, with the result that what we do in the present matters enormously... It was people who believed robustly in the resurrection... who stood up against Caesar in the first centuries of

Christian era. A piety that sees death as the moment of “going home at last,” the time, when we are “called to God’s eternal peace” has no quarrel with power-mongers who want to carve up the world to suit their own ends. Resurrection, by contrast, has always gone with a strong view of God’s justice and of God as the good creator. Those twin beliefs give rise not to a meek acquiescence to injustice in the world but to a robust determination to oppose it.¹⁷

I have become fully convinced that the biblical imagery of the leaves that are given for the healing of the nations in Revelation 22:2 are indeed leaves that must be applied to our eschatological living here and now. And I have no doubt that the image is linked to previous passages in the prophetic and wisdom literature and to several other metaphors used to call a community of God-fearers to a prophetic living laden with social justice and concerned with the under-privileged and the most vulnerable.

Echoes of the wisdom poetry of Psalm 1 penetrate the vision of the seer: “He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever [the righteous] does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.” The righteousness that we strive for in this life is similarly described as the final righteousness of the new world order that God establishes when His will is finally enacted on earth as it is already fully realized in heaven. And the tree in Psalm 1 whose “leaves do not wither,” seems to bear some connection to the original Edenic Tree of Life. “As the tree situated in the garden of God served to confer everlasting life to the primal couple, so the psalmist’s tree is the sign and symbol” of blessedness and happiness for the individual. Similarly, in wisdom literature elsewhere¹⁸ and in Proverbs 11:30 and 15:4, texts explicitly associate the tree of life with righteousness and the healing properties of the speech. Willem A. VanGemeren indicates in his commentary on the book of Psalms that “Psalm 1 is a wisdom psalm, and shares many features common to the Book of Proverbs.”¹⁹ On numerous occasions in the book of Proverbs, righteousness and wickedness are described with powerful imagery, and so when we think about the word pair “righteous/wicked,” the terms that are such essential “elements of the psalmic vocabulary,”²⁰ we cannot neglect the contrast that Proverbs 29:7 paints about these two



groups: “The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.”²¹ So, the righteous that are planted like trees with deep roots and nourishing supplies of ever-flowing water are indeed the kind of people that care for the socially and economically disadvantaged. They are not like Isaiah’s “oak tree with fading leaves, like a garden without water” that will be so dry it will burn “with no one to quench the fire.”²² If tree symbolism in Psalms, as William P. Brown suggests, “underscores YHWH’s creative power to bless, recalling the shalom of the primordial garden,”²³ it appears that the prophet Isaiah develops this metaphor further and adds additional parallel similes to paint a fuller theological canvass of the community that is watered by God and consequently produces God’s justice and enacts God’s righteousness.

So, in Isaiah 1, the community that is called to repentance from meaningless worship and evil Sabbath assemblies (vs. 10–15) because they do not “seek justice, encourage the oppressed, defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow” (vs. 17, 22–23), become “like an oak with fading leaves, like a garden without water,” so dry that it burns without being able to be halted (vs. 30–31). The anger of God is against those who have ruined God’s vineyard (God’s people, Is. 5:7) because “the plunder of the poor is in [their] houses [because they are crushing God’s people] and grinding the faces of the poor” (Is. 3:14–15). As a viticulturalist and botanist, God plants His vineyard on a fertile hillside, takes care of it and expects its fruit to reflect the gardener’s loving touch and restorative powers. However, the spiritual vineyard and

“the garden of his delight” (Is. 5:7) lack social justice and do distressful things. They are so materially possessed and commercially driven that they add “house to house and join field to field till no space is left,” and they stay alienated and alone in their “fine mansions” (vs. 7–8.). So a shoot comes from the stump of Jesse and from his root a Branch bears fruit. The Spirit of the Lord is on the Branch in order to judge the needy with righteousness and to give to the poor of the earth with justice (Is. 11:1–2; 4–5). “Righteous branch’ wields power to implement justice and, thereby, bring about peace and prosperity for his people”²⁴ and for the nations.²⁵ And “a remnant [is called to once more]... take root below and bear fruit above” (Is. 37:31–32), an invitation to deep rootedness that results in fruit-bearing trees and ever-green branches.

Isaiah’s most elaborate explanation of these metaphors is in chapters 58 and 61. Here is again a reminder of how in a sun-scorched land YHWH satisfies the need of His community and strengthens their frame. He makes His Sabbath-keepers to “be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins, and will raise up the age-old foundations, you will be called repairers of broken walls and restorers of streets with dwelling.”²⁶ Just like the tree in the New Jerusalem that expresses God’s magnificence, Isaiah 61 describes the community of believers who “will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated.”²⁷ This indeed is the splendid picture of the community of faith serving as the leaves for the healing of the world, as those who loose the chains of injustice and share their food with the hungry, provide the poor vagabonds with shelter, and clothe the naked.²⁸ Their light will break forth like the dawn and their healing will quickly appear. And the healing of the well-watered garden and the spring whose waters never fail of verses 7 and 11 is identified in terms of “spending yourself on behalf of the hungry and satisfying the needs of the oppressed” in vs. 10²⁹ just the way the sheep on the right hand at the entrance of the celestial Jerusalem are told that they have done to Christ Himself, who was on the receiving end with “the least of his brothers and sisters,” as described at the end of His Olivet Discourse in Matthew 25. Isaiah’s called community is, therefore, not dissimilar to Jeremiah’s righteous

person who “will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green.”³⁰ Nor is it unlike Jesus’ description in John’s Gospel that “whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, the living water will flow from within him.”³¹ Nor is it unlike Ezekiel’s vision³² “of a great river [that] is depicted issuing from the temple to fructify the land”³³ that the seer of Patmos replicates with modifications in Revelation 22.

In summary, my argument is this: “eschatological living” of the present-day followers of Christ is motivated by the vision of the seer of Patmos, so that we do not passively wait for Jesus to return to the earth and establish a just society in which flowing waters nourish lush gardens and trees that produce fruit and healing leaves, but rather we become in the present moment the hands and feet of Christ and act in such a way that we already do the bidding of that embodiment of Christ, of that well watered garden, of that arboreal imagery that the poet and the prophet and the seer boldly use, of that lush vineyard that is not scorched by the strong Mediterranean sun. We act here and now as the righteous green-leaf trees that care for the justice for the poor. We are called today to be watered by the Holy Spirit that flows from under the temple of Ezekiel’s prophecy—the temple that we no longer need and will no longer need in the new Jerusalem because Jesus became our temple after the first Easter. We therefore, with the help of the Spirit, become streams of ever-flowing waters of justice; and God accomplishes through us reparation of the broken communities and restoration and rebuilding of the much-needed justice.³⁴ In simple terms, our prophetic calling and prophetic living must also become our eschatological living.

In what way will I become a leaf for healing in the ailing national and international community today?³⁵ Will it be as a leaf of peacemaking in the war-hungry world of imperial domination and military obsession,³⁶ Will I be a leaf of justice to the millions who are voiceless and need our voice and our advocacy, or a leaf for the fifth of the world population that is barely existing in abject poverty?³⁷ Will I be a leaf to advocate basic health access to the poor and uninsured,³⁸ or a green leaf to the alien and immigrant who need compassion and support? Will I actually be a leaf that heals the environment which has become so polluted that we all need to start acting like good stewards or like good

oxygen-producing trees on the environment's behalf before it is too late to reverse the climate change.³⁹ Is it not time to take our health message to another level and start advocating for the greening of Adventism? Can we indeed become the restorers of brokenness and repairers of God's world, leaves for healing of God's justice and God's instruments of compassion before he finally makes the kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven—the most “powerful and revolutionary sentence we can ever say. The prayer seemed to be powerfully answered at the first Easter and will finally be answered fully when heaven and earth are joined in the New Jerusalem,”⁴⁰ at His soon coming.

The great Christian writer G. K. Chesterton once wrote: “If a small seed in the black earth can become such beautiful rose, think what the heart of a human being can become on its long journey to the stars.” In our present “eschatological living” we must live as resurrection people between Easter and the final day as indeed a sign of Easter and a foretaste of the final coming of Christ. As Steve Monsma suggested in a recent book, *Healing for a Broken World*, C.S. Lewis in his famous *Chronicles of Narnia* refers at various points to Aslan—the great lion who is a Christ figure—as being “on the move.” “In our world today Jesus Christ is on the move. He is real; he is present. His redeeming, reconciling, healing work is progressing. But he had also not yet come in his full power and glory. That lies in the future. Until that day Christians are called to be Christ's instruments for reconciliation and healing in a broken world.”⁴¹

At the closing program of the World Council of Churches in Porto Alegre in 2006, Robina Marie Winbush preached a sermon entitled “For the Healing of the Nations.” And I shall use her concluding questions to ask our community the same questions:

*God is transforming the world: Are you willing to be a leaf on the tree of life, whom God uses for the healing of the nations? Are you willing to resist bowing down to the temporal gods of exploitation and domination and allow your life and your churches to be used for the healing of the nations and transformation of the world? Remember that the power and strength to be a leaf does not belong to you. It is a result of being attached to the tree of life whose roots are watered by the river of life that flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb.*⁴²



That God is “on the move” is clearly obvious in many stories that surround us. With my church members as a pastor and with my students as an educator, I have experienced again and again “God-on-the-move.” My mother's story is just one such example that God is healing individuals and through communities also the entire world. We all have our own stories of hurt and healing that we should do well to remember. There is no doubt that the hope that the seer of the Apocalypse presents to the reader in the last chapters of the Bible generates hope that has started penetrating God's world without it being an utopian hope without the final conclusion. Angela still hurts in terrible physical pains of arthritis and nerve damage that scream, “How long, O Lord?” Angela is not fully healed. And neither is our world fully healed. But, the Divine-On-The-Move has been healing the entire world with His grace and love and is willing to heal others even through us, the wounded healers of His beloved community. And we pray [and live eschatologically] that radical prayer of Jesus day by day: “Thy kingdom come and Thy will be done on earth as it is [already] in heaven”. ■

Notes and References

1. As I spoke today on her 78th birthday, my mum told me that because of that inability to come and comfort her sister and her mum in the moments of her dying, terrible feelings of guilt persist until the present time.
2. Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics*. (London: Macmillan Press and New York: St. Martins Press, 1998); “Adventist Basis for Human Rights”, *Spectrum*, (Vol. 27., (1999), pp.

16–29; “A People of Prophecy: Recovering the Biblical Role of the Prophets”, in *The Peacemaking Remnant: Essays and Historical Documents*, Edited by Douglas Morgan, (Silver Spring, Maryland: Adventist Peace Fellowship, 2005), pp. 21–34.; and “The Role of the Biblical Prophets: ADRA in the Midst of the Prophetic Community”, *Adventist Development and Relief Agency International Reflections: A Journal for Study and Reflection on Development Issues from a Christian Perspective*, Vol. 1, Issue 1., pp. 33–48.

3. Political theology not that is politicizing or getting involved into party politics but a theology of the market place or what is also know by the phrase “public theology.”

4. Zdravko Plantak, “There Should Be No Poor”, *Adventist Review*, (2002), Vol. 179, No. 44., pp. 10–11. [1610–1611].

5. See, for example, Deuteronomy 15 and Leviticus 25. Also compare with Jesus’ announcement of “the year of the Lord’s favor”, in his Nazareth manifesto in Luke 4:18–21.

6. A similar point was often raised by Mother Theresa who claimed that she could never have worked in the slums of Calcutta with the poorest of the poor if she did not think that when she was washing the sores of the lepers or holding a dying child that she was actually doing this to Jesus.

7. See further on this in Zdravko Plantak, “A Prophetic Community Today: Imaginative Visionaries and Social Activists for the Third Millennium”, *Exploring the Frontier of Faith: Festschrift in Honour of Dr. Jan Paulsen - Congratulatory Edition*, Edited by Reinder Bruinsma and Borge Schantz, (Lueneburg: Advent-Verlag, 2010).

8. Revelation 21 and 22. I shall focus my thoughts to the idea expressed particularly in Revelation 22:2.

9. See further helpful discussion on this point in Charles Scriven, *The Promise of Peace: Dare to Live the Advent Hope*, (Nampa and Oshawa: Pacific Press, 2009), pp. 20–33 and 72–84. The similar point was raised by Sigve K. Tonstad at the 2009 meetings of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies, in his paper, “For the Healing of the Nations.” Tonstead concluded, “In this text [Rev 22:2] the healing that belongs to the lush land of the future has broken in on the arid land of the present.” (p. 9).

10. Adrio König, *The Eclipse of Christ in Eschatology: Towards a Christ-Centered Approach*, (Grand Rapids: MI: William B. Eerdmans and London: Marshall Morgan and Scott, 1989), p. 147.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

12. Romans 6:4 and many other New Testament texts on “new life,” “life in the Spirit,” being “in Christ,” etc.

13. Cf. John 7:38–40. Jurgen Moltmann suggests that through his Spirit “God now already sets present and past in the light of his eschatological arrival, an arrival which means the establishment of his eternal kingdom, and his indwelling in the creation renewed for that indwelling.” In *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), p. 23.

14. These two phrases about the Kingdom of Grace and Kingdom of Glory are borrowed from Ellen G. White and are based on the biblical con-

cepts of the “Kingdom of God being at hand” and “Kingdom of God being in you.” See also more on the larger discussion regarding the theological richness of the debate in both the larger Christian as well as Adventist community on the concept of the kingdom of God and its two realities in Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics*. (London: Macmillan Press and New York: St. Martins Press, 1998), pp. 168–184.

15. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God: Christian Eschatology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), p. 11.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

17. N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*, (New York: HarperOne, 2008), pp. 26–27. Wright, furthermore, suggests that “to work for that intermediate hope, the surprising hope that comes forward from God’s ultimate future into God’s urgent present, is not a distraction from the task of mission and evangelism in the present. It is central, essential, vital, and life-giving part of it.” (p. 192.) See also on this point in Scriven’s *The Promise of Peace*, where he suggests that if Jesus’ “was the root meaning of a faith lived in the light of hope, then radical hope required attention to the needs of today.” (p. 25) In other words, “... the future has present relevance—it colors my life right now.” (p. 76).

18. See, for example, Psalm 52 and Psalm 92:12–13.

19. Willem A. VanGemeren, “Psalms”, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary with the New International Version: Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, Volume 5, Frank E. Gaebelin, General Editor, (Grand Rapids, MI; Zondervan, 1991), p. 52.

20. Jams Luther Mays, *Psalms: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), p. 46.

21. See further on this point in Zdravko Plantak, “Wisdom Tradition on Poverty”, *Adventist Development and Relief Agency International Reflections: A Journal for Study and Reflection on Development Issues from a Christian Perspective*, Vol. 1, Issue 1., pp. 48–65.

22. Isaiah 1:30–31.

23. William P. Brown, *Seeing the Psalms: a Theology of Metaphor*, (Louisville and London: John Knox. 2002), p. 74. Brown profoundly explores the significance of the metaphor of “tree” in Psalms and its significance at the beginning of the Psalter and compares it to other biblically significant passages throughout the Jewish scripture. See also last year’s AAR paper by Sylvia Keesmaat, “The Beautiful Creatures: Trees in the Biblical Story”, consequently published in *Theoetherjournal.com An Intersection of Theology and Culture*, at Mars Hill Graduate School, (July 16, 2009) found at <http://theoetherjournal.com/article.php?id=837>, (recovered on November 13, 2009).

24. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

25. Tonstad makes an important connections between Isaiah 11 and Revelation 22, especially in the context of the plural ‘nations’. See Sigve K. Tonstad, “For the Healing of the Nations”, Unpublished presentation,

ASRS, New Orleans, (November 20, 2009), pp. 5–7.

26. Isaiah 58:11–12.

27. Isaiah 61:3–4.

28. See excellent discussion on the justice and righteousness in Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets: An Introduction*, Volume 1. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), pp. 195–221 and Steve Monsma, *Healing for a Broken World: Christian Perspectives on Public Policy*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), pp. 46–61.

29. Similar metaphor abounds in the prophets and could be further explored in famous texts such as Amos 5:24 where “justice rolls on like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream.”

30. Jeremiah 17:8.

31. John 7:38. Verse 39 adds “By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive,” further showing how the healing of the nations through the well watered gardens and trees rooted in God could and should give its effect in between Jesus’ first and the second coming. For the sake of the limits of this paper, the elements of both Jesus as our temple from whom the living waters flow, a conversation that is often heard when Ezekiel 43 is discussed theologically by Christian interpreters, and the role of the Holy Spirit in that process as Jesus sends the Spirit to be present with his followers after his resurrection are important themes that need to be further unpacked in a future study on eschatological pneumatology.

32. The theological implications of Ezekiel 47 continue to be debated from the perspective that the vision never came to fruition in a literal sense and is therefore either explained in the context of the first coming of Jesus who became the new “temple” and from whose midst the living waters (John 4) flow freely so that “fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will never wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.” (Ezekiel 47:12). On the other hand, despite some significant differences between the texts in Ezekiel and Revelation, one could interpret that Ezekiel’s prophecy refers to the post-eschaton Jerusalem and suggest that John the Revelator clearly applies this vision to the new earth when there will be no temple and Jesus will be our temple (Rev 21:22).

33. Brown, p. 68.

34. Scriven calls this kind of living “the practice of hope,” “a hope grand and daring enough to motivate adventurous action today.” *The Promise of Peace*, p. 77. See how this was wonderfully understood and then utilized in the early Adventist history as well described in two other presentations from the recent Adventist Society for Religious Studies meetings in New Orleans in November 2009. Douglas Morgan, “Identity Without Insularity: Lewis Sheafe, Matthew Strachan, and the Threeness of African American Adventists,” unpublished presentation, ASRS, New Orleans, (November 20, 2009); and Roy Branson, “Healing of the

Nations: Mission of the Adventist Pioneers,” unpublished presentation, ASRS, New Orleans, (November 19, 2009).

35. Cf. Sigve K. Tonstead, “For the Healing of the Nations,” Unpublished presentation, ASRS, New Orleans, (November 20, 2009). Tonstead’s argument about the ‘nations’ that he connects with Isaiah’s vision in chapter 11 is especially worth noting.

36. Cf. Douglas Morgan, Ed., *The Peacemaking Remnant: Essays and Historical Documents*, (Silver Spring, Maryland: Adventist Peace Fellowship, 2005) and Charles Scriven, *The Promise of Peace: Dare to Live the Advent Hope*, (Nampa and Oshawa: Pacific Press, 2009).

37. Cf. Zdravko Plantak, “Why Should the Poor Concern Us?,” *Adventist Review*, (Nov. 44, 2002), Vol. 179, pp. 26–30. [1658–1662].

38. See further on my reasoning about the need to create universal access to health-care in Zdravko Plantak, “Universal Access to Health Care and Religious Basis of Human Rights,” *Update*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (June 2005): 1–12. See also on a larger issue of Christian involvement with health-care in Hans-Jürgen Becken, “The Church as a Healing Community,” *Mission Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1984), pp. 6–13. Most recently T. R. Reid, *The Healing of America: Global Quest for Better, Cheaper, and Fairer Health Care*, (The Penguin Press, 2009) and its review, LaVonne Neff, “It’s About Morality,” in *The Christian Century*, (November 3, 2009): 38–39.

39. See one of the best recent contribution on environmental ethics from a Christian perspective in Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth: A Christian Vision for Creation Care*, (Grand rapids: Baker Academic, 2001).

40. Wright, p. 29.

41. Monsma, p. 42.

42. Found on <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/4-messages-other-statements-sermons/sermons/robina-marie-winbush-closing-sermon.html> (Retrieved November 13, 2009).

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The Promise of Peace | A REVIEW BY MATTHEW BURDETTE



Charles Scriven, below, discusses his vision for the future of Adventism in his latest book, above.



Charles Scriven has offered his vision for what it means to be an Adventist, and I am feeling rather uncertain about it. In the opening chapter of his book, *The Promise of Peace*,¹ Scriven acknowledges that the place from which he writes is not a neutral one but that his writing reflects his life story. I will take this a step further by acknowledging that the reader, too, comes into conversation with a book not from a neutral place but from their own identity and experiences that are informed by ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality, age, faith and skepticism, etc.

I acknowledge this about the reader because I must acknowledge that my uncertainty about Scriven's vision for Adventism may well have more to do with my identity and experiences as an Adventist than it does with what Scriven says Adventism is all about. And I suspect that I won't be the only one to feel this way.

That being said, let me make perfectly clear that I liked this book. It is because I liked it so much that I am uncertain about it. I will explain.

Somewhat reminiscent of Jürgen Moltmann's theology of the cross, Scriven puts forward hope, and specifically the hope for God's peace for our whole world, as "the foundation and criticism"² of Adventist Christianity. Indeed, his case for a tradition as specific as Adventism is grounded in his belief that this hope for God's peace is the heart of Christian faith itself. Adventism is an eschatological community and is rooted in and motivated by this hope in between the experience of "disappointments and dreams." Again, this is somewhat reminiscent of Moltmann.³

Scriven frequently cites Adventist history and its significant figures throughout the book but nevertheless dedicates a chapter to outlining that history. It is this chapter that encapsulates the greatest weakness of Scriven's book: it is a progressive interpretation of Adventist history and, consequently, Adventist identity. For example, Scriven does not mention that the Adventist church believed and still believes that Ellen White had the spiritual gift of prophecy but instead describes her as "the visionary whose prophetic leadership would steer the church for decades" (25) and "the most influential of the Adventist pioneers" (28). Statements like these suggest that Scriven's target audience is those who are outside of the Adventist tradition; however, the book is quite relevant to those within the tradition. One can easily (and justifiably) interpret his loose reading of Adventist history as dishonest, but one can just as easily see that Scriven is challenging the dominant interpretation of that history and suggesting a different direction that is nevertheless faithful to the tradition. So, perhaps this weakness is actually a strength. Scriven has made himself into what he describes Adventism as—"the dissenting faithful" (28).

And this brings me to the next major thrust of the book: Adventist identity as "the dissenting faithful," the "peacemaking remnant." More than a few times, Scriven reminds the reader that Adventists have chosen not to have a binding doctrinal creed but have instead committed themselves to being open to the leading of God's

Spirit—Adventists are both “being” and “becoming.” In light of current debates happening in Adventism, Scriven could have written the whole book on this theme. The sections in which Scriven discusses Adventist identity as “being” and “becoming” are some of the more hope-inspiring sections. He writes, for example, “The pledge we make when we embrace the Adventist way might now be this: *Thanks to the gift of grace, and for the purpose of blessing to all, we join together in keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus*” (54). He sees this as a disclosure of the “heart of Adventism.”

That “heart of Adventism” finds its expression in the way of dissent and the way of peace. Scriven understands Adventism as a Radical Reformation movement whose loyalty lies with Christ and none other and whose loyalty is a radical, transcendent loyalty. It is this loyalty to Jesus that makes “the Adventist way” the “practice of hope” (47); and that practice of hope is the practice of dissent. Scriven sees the practice of Sabbath as the practice of hope and dissent in the Adventist community—looking forward to a restored world of peace in which all, like Israel, have been liberated from slavery. It is no coincidence, then, that Scriven makes much of the fact that Adventists were so opposed to slavery in the United States during the civil war: “The Sabbath was their embrace of the church’s Jewish roots, despite prejudice against Jews that had hardened under Constantine. Opposition to slavery was their refusal, despite Constantine’s vision of church-state solidarity, to equate loyalty to Caesar with loyalty to Christ” (59).

In dissent, Scriven writes that Adventists remained committed to peace and nonviolence. To Scriven, this is one of the most important aspects of Adventist mission in the world. While he does not use the language of “realized” or “collaborative” eschatology, that is exactly what Scriven is talking about: “True Christian hope is never passive, as if you were at some grimy bus stop where nothing happens and all you can do is wait for a ride to somewhere else. Hope is active, always looking to make an impact” (79).

One of the low points of the book was Scriven’s Christology, which I found rather deficient. The strongest Christological statement that Scriven makes is this: “So here was Someone like you and me—who, by the Father’s grace was so fully responsive to divine leading that He was the *human form of who God is*. In Him you could see the *identity of God*” (106). I shudder to think of the implications of Jesus’ divine nature being wrapped up in his responsiveness to divine leading. I understand that Scriven wants to be attentive to

those readers who are nonbelievers, but I remain unconvinced that downplaying the divinity of Jesus makes his case any stronger—quite the opposite, in my opinion.

The last section I will discuss is Scriven’s comments on the church. His first sentence in this section was my favorite: “The church is the beloved community, and the beloved community is... a mess” (111). From there, Scriven went on to talk about the problems in the Christian church from the New Testament, using the Corinthian Christians as an example. I fear that in this discussion Scriven almost makes the mistake that Barth once wrote about—speaking about the church in abstract terms of ideals instead of the reality of the living church as it is today.⁴ What Scriven says about the church is inspiring; and it is indeed a vision for which the church should strive. But the reality of the situation...

This brings me back to my original statement: I am uncertain about the vision that Scriven outlines in this book not because I disagree with it, but because I fear that it is just that—a vision. I fully intend to give this book to people—whether they are Adventists or not. Those people who are Adventists and are familiar with the Adventist community may, like me, wish that mainstream Adventist theology, ethics, and mission were as Scriven described. And those who are not Adventists and are unfamiliar with the community may well be drawn to Adventism after reading this book; but I fear that it will not take them very long to stumble across an angry, fundamentalist blog or cantankerous church member who will not hesitate to define Adventism in narrow, exclusive, hopeless terms. In spite of this, I am better for having read Scriven’s book; and I certainly recommend it. ■

Notes and References

1. Charles Scriven, *The Promise of Peace* (Nampa: Pacific Press, 2009).
2. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1974).
3. Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, trans. James W. Leitch (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).
4. Karl Barth, “The Church: The Living Congregation of the Living Lord Jesus Christ,” in *God Here and Now*, trans. Paul M. van Buren, 75–104 (London: Routledge, 2003).

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3. **The conflict between good and evil:** It is the work of Satan, the adversary of God, within the Great Controversy that distorts the image of God through the various manifestations of sin—prejudice, suspicion, greed, discrimination, exploitation, and so forth—that are suffered by immigrants who seek only a better life and, who, in fact, have the fundamental human right to choose to move where they can have such a life. If freely moving from one place to another around the globe to work and live is a right we assume for ourselves, it is a right we must concede to our immigrants.
4. **Our adoption as sons and daughters of God:** No human being is worthy of salvation. It is only through Jesus Christ that we who were far from God are now “adopted” into the family of God. The migrant as well as the native-born are both adopted children of the eternal Father, placing us on equal footing before God. It is not where on the planet or in what station of society we were born that matters. It is the compassionate choice of a loving God that opens the door of salvation and “childship” to all.
5. **The Christian life as a sojourn:** F.B. #11 suggests that the Christian life is a journey of growth in the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22). The following statement in F.B. #11 reflects how this process of spiritual growth can be applied to the stranger: “As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and every task into a spiritual experience.” This passage confirms what many of us who have worked directly with the immigrant poor have experienced: the very presence of God.
6. **The church as inclusive and united community:** Among the privileges of the “called-out-ones” that form the church is that of “service to all mankind,” according to F.B. #12. Real coexistence with the stranger calls on the practice of the highest virtues of the Christian faith, not the least of which is generosity with what we have and who we are and the willingness to share it with those new to our land. The immigrant and refugee now living in or near our neighborhoods and getting baptized into our churches are an opportunity to grow and mature in our Christian faith and practice. But only if we have direct contact with them and walk in their shoes and share in their experience of want mixed with hope.
7. **Sharing the Lord’s Supper in humility:** One of the earliest rites of the Christian faith is the Lord’s Supper (F.B. #16). As a prelude to this time of sharing is a time of humility, a time to kneel before an offended or offending brother or sister to confess, repent, and be reconciled. At the same time, the ceremonial act of washing a brother or sister’s feet is an equalizing act of acceptance. We humble ourselves to make room in our hearts and minds for the “other,” for the one who is different in language, nationality, and mindset. The current “separate, but equal” places of Adventist worship do not yet allow for the kind of true Eucharistic unity Jesus envisioned for His Church. This is an issue that a theology of migration can discuss and define more clearly for our church.
8. **Exercising the spiritual gifts:** Among the spiritual gifts listed in F.B. #17 are “reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people.” The purpose of all the spiritual gifts, including these, is for the spiritual maturity of the Body of Christ, the building up of the Church in “faith and love.” The exercise of these particular gifts is meant to move the members of the Body of Christ beyond distinctions that separate or that place members in a destructive hierarchy of preference. Compassion rather than criticism; generosity rather than selfish protection of what is perceived only to be ours; kindness rather than disdain; words of encouragement rather than words that hurt.
9. **The inclusive Sabbath as equalizer:** The Sabbath is important because it reminds us of the character of the Creator; His redeeming power, and our duty to our fellow humans, whether they are native-born, servants, or strangers. The covenant of the Sabbath is with all humanity and even with the animal and vegetable world. Release from work and enjoyment of the privileges of rest are inclusive privileges that we are invited to share with all those within our sphere of influence. Those privileges of rest are meant to draw the diverse Body of Christ together. How that might happen during Adventist Sabbaths, currently divided by race and culture, is a challenge that can be

met by the development of a theology of migration.

10. **The Law of God provides justice for the stranger:** F.B. #19 states that obedience to the Ten Commandments is “an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men.” Because the immigrant often finds him or herself struggling to negotiate new patterns of living in a new country and often in a new language, they are easy prey of the crimes of exploitation. Christians are called on to practice justice toward the stranger. During the six days God has given us to “work,” we must do the works of justice and mercy toward all those who cannot speak for themselves or defend the rights with which they are divinely endowed. Otherwise we cannot rightly enter the Sabbath “rest.”
11. **Stewardship toward the stranger:** Faithfulness in giving is fundamental to the survival of the church. Stewardship of money and time is meant to be directed toward the sustenance of the church’s work, which includes the poor and the stranger. As we have seen, Ellen White calls on Adventists to go beyond the offering plate and prioritize our time to include working and sharing with those who can be blessed by our presence even more than with our money. Beyond time and money, believers are also the stewards of the fruit of the Spirit as they apply to those who cannot speak for themselves or defend themselves from those who would steal their means and their dignity. Stewardship addresses the sins of silence and complicity because it implies active cultivation not only of money or time invested in relationships, but of the virtues that unite us rather than divide us.
12. **The Remnant church and its mission:** The work of the last church in human history is one of calling for repentance and reform. This work assumes there is evil in the world. But the Book of Revelation makes it clear that the Christian church is no mere observer of the evil that goes on in the world. Evil abides in the Church and must be counteracted with repentance from wrongdoing and reform through the practice of the saving virtues. This is a new call to keep the commandments and trust in God as Jesus did when He was on this earth, for few of us of our own accord can make the necessary changes in habits of thought and action demanded by our high calling to true unity in Christ. Our mission begins in

the intimacy of our prayer life with God. Out of this fertile spiritual womb will come the words and actions of holy consecration to justice and mercy in all our dealings with others.

Adventism and the Stranger

As Adventists begin the dialog surrounding our own “theology” of migration, our strengths, in my view, lie precisely in what we claim to believe. There is not one of our twenty-eight Fundamental Beliefs that cannot be used to bolster a new way of looking at the stranger among us. Our passion for mission and service is a solid foundation on which to build a balanced theology of migration. At the same time, there are habits of thinking and acting that need some adjusting in order for the door to the stranger to be fully opened in our church. How do we currently prioritize issues of justice and mercy? Is religious liberty the only human right for which we are willing to fight? Are the human rights of the Latino immigrant (or any suffering immigrant, for that matter) something that should concern us? Why? What does “I was a stranger and you welcomed me,” mean to Adventism in the context of the current debate surrounding immigration reform for the twelve million undocumented Latinos living in this country?

Finding a way of adapting our beliefs and practices to the acceptance of, unity with, care for, and even advocacy for the immigrant will only enhance that much more who we are as a church and as practicing Christians.

Notes and References

Unless otherwise noted, all references from The Holy Bible are from the New International Version.

1. Brentin Mock of the Southern Poverty Law Center (hereafter referred to as SPLC) lists a series of hate crimes experienced not only by Mexicans, but by Cubans, Ecuadoreans, Central Americans, and American-born Latinos (“Immigration Backlash” *SPLC: Intelligence Report*) ranging from murder to property damage.
2. For more details about the work of Humane Borders, see Robin Hoover’s “The Story of Humane Borders” in Groody, *Perilous*, 160–173 and the Humane Borders website, www.humaneborders.org/about/about_index.html.
3. The multidimensional challenges of Latino immigration are being addressed by a range of clergy (*ibid.*, 89–106).
4. “While God’s chosen people were to stand forth distinct and holy, separate from the nations that knew Him not, they were to treat the stranger kindly...” 6T. 274.

5. "Thus may be won to our ranks, and from among these may be developed laborers who can proclaim the message to those of our own nationality in our own land and in the other nations of earth" (*Review & Herald*, July 25, 1918).

6. "After you have given something for foreign fields, do not think your duty done. There is a work to be done in foreign fields, but there is a work to be done in America that is just as important" (8T. 36, January 23, 1904).

7. "While God's chosen people were to stand forth distinct and holy, separate from the nations that knew Him not, they were to treat the stranger kindly. He was not to be looked down upon because he was not of Israel. The Israelites were to love the stranger because Christ died as verily to save him as He did to save Israel ("Our Duty to the World,"

6T. 273–280).

8. "The instruction given [by God] was that should such separation take place, it would not tend to advance the interests of the work among the various nationalities. It would not lead to the highest spiritual development. Walls would be built up that would have to be removed in the near future...If we are to carry on the work most successfully, the talents to be found among the English and Americans should be united with the talents of those of every other nationality" ("German and Scandinavian Conferences," 9T. September 1, 1905, 195–198).

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Blue

Blue sky wide, songbird on wing
 stride, whistle a tune you believe,
 turn the corner, leafy road home,
 open the door, your house ablaze
 God naked as a jaybird in the kitchen
 hands flaming reach, contain
 everything you have cupped
 carefully all your wakeful life:
 stunned, you stumble on.

My God, is this what you have traveled so far
 for on your knees purple-blue bruised
 prayer after burning prayer?

Everywhere your head turns during church,
 or buying daily bread at Safeway,
 scheduling visits to the hospital cancer center,
 working in your cubicle, at your desk—
 photos of your family, your bright-faced children—
 ablaze—all, all—saffron-shimmer flame.

Red pull-alarms remain un-pulled.
 Your days and nights star blocked
 air throttled, grey dust falling, falling—
 ash from an old man's beard.

This is what it is like
 all of you, everything you have ever loved
 ablaze. How could you have thought otherwise?
 As if you've come at last to a place
 a room that will hold the kind
 of God who will embrace all creatures
 great and small—you're still afraid—facing
 consuming fire—his eyes—pure
 fierce blue flame—*Oh who can stand?*—
 piercing with such unbearable love.

John McDowell

John McDowell is a professor of English at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California, and director of the Honors Program. Sculpture/illustration by John McDowell, from *Reading the Bible Series: "Alarm"* Holy Bible, King James Version Reference Edition, Words of Christ in Red (flames added).

