



Letters Beget Letters, Editorials Questioned

Soil Reasons

I WAS DELIGHTED to see Graham Will's article on New Zealand soil formation in the volcanic region of the North Island in *Spectrum* 38:4. Now, for the first time, these observations are available for discussion.

In 1981 and 1985 Will took the late Dr. Asa Thoresen and me to see these multi-soil layers, each overlaid by layers of undisturbed ash. The humus layers varied in thickness due to the length of time under development by present-day native ecosystems before new volcanic ash was deposited, beginning the successional sequence all over again.

The rate of present-day humus formation can be measured based on today's environmental conditions and species. In this way, surface layers can be dated and earlier layers dated beginning at the present. Humus formed by natural organic material (e.g. leaves, twigs, etc.) and profiles can be observed differently from organic debris laid down via flooding.

There was no evidence of alluvial deposition; therefore, humus and profiles were naturally creating a clock going back in time. Graham Will is right to conclude that an explanation cannot be tied to a short time period. Only longer times can be concluded based on the evidence.

The counter letter by Ariel Roth in *Spectrum* 39:1 seems to make "apples and oranges" comparisons and gives unjustified doubt to this research by making comparisons with different ecosystem soils and tree growth in Hawaii. His analogy is misleading. For example, a 3–5 year-old, pithy "Tree of Heaven" would be taller than a 4,500-year-old dense wood Bristlecone pine. Also, without getting into the radioactive dating controversy, to list only two negative C-14 titles and not mention that there are thousands of positive ones in the literature gives a misrepresentation of the knowledge of the subject.

There is sound ecological evidence here supporting

much longer periods of soil formation going on into the past and no support for a short post-flood timeframe. I saw no evidence of any alluvial deposits in these ash/humus layers (Will's response also). These evidences along with the distinctive natural history and biogeography, geology and plate tectonics/continental drift history of New Zealand make it very hard to place these phenomena into any short, worldwide post-flood history. These and other similar long-term data are going to have to be addressed sooner rather than later, it seems to me.

DENNIS W. WOODLAND

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In Response to Scriven's Memo to Elder Wilson

THANK YOU for putting into words what so many of us feel instinctively, but have found it uncomfortable to try to express. I cautiously raise my voice in favor of moderation when it comes to making our fundamental belief about creation more precise than Scripture itself—"improvements to the book of Genesis," "meddling with holy writ," as you put it. Yet I know some desire such specificity to make public the exact ingredients of their belief. Unfortunately they would insist that I adopt their specifications when I have no need to. The Scripture alone is sufficient for me.

The creation is complex, and, even for those of us who attempt to unravel some of its inner workings, mysterious. Surely our brothers and sisters in the church who desire this added precision can understand that there is much more to carrying out the creation than what is implied by a sterile reading of "God spoke and it was done." The creation is not an event, or only a series of six days of events, but a process, on-going now.

The expression of our belief about creation must allow for the dynamic character of the creation itself. And our

reading of Scripture must be compatible with that also. Extra-biblical detail leads to over-simplification of that which is multi-faceted, and squeezes the dynamic character of the creation into a static, ill-fitting mold.

If the church could find a way to accept the simple testimony from its teachers of belief in God as creator, and then leave it to them to untangle the complex details of how it was rendered, and how it now works, there would be a genuine revival of spirit, of commitment, of consecration. Indeed, true revival will come when people know they are loved and wanted, in this case, by their brothers and sisters in the church.

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In Search of Activism

THE WINTER ISSUE brought me face-to-face with the realization that *Spectrum's* editors and audience, while willing to opine about what bothers us about the Adventist Church, seem reluctant to speak out or take action that will bring us into direct conflict with official church hierarchy, i.e., refuse to pay tithe or organize protests at Silver Spring. In other words, *Spectrum*, as a magazine and blog, is a place where disaffected, cultural Adventists like me can let off steam. It's not a place where activists are comfortable.

In her editorial "A Time to Mourn," Bonnie Dwyer reflects: "*In the spiritual journey of our community, we pause for reflection at the passing of these family members. Each was controversial in his own way—Wilson for his handling of crises related to church theology and the equality of women, Maxwell for his theology, and Drum for her sexual orientation. Yet they are all part of the Adventist family and so deserving of our love.*"

Bonnie, Holly Drum was not a part of the "Adventist family." According to the Adventist Church Manual, she was an Adventist pariah. She was a practicing homosexual. For that offense against God and the Adventist Church, she warranted inclusion in this "A" list of sinners: sexual pervert, sexual abuser of children, fornicator, one who is promiscuous sexually, one guilty of incest, and a producer and distributor of pornography (p. 44).

There was no cry of outrage that our church may have been complicit in Holly Drum's suicide and who knows how many others? It was only recalled that she was crushed when she was "*disfellowshipped by her home*

church in Oregon years ago and that she was very interested in finding out if a local church would be open and accepting."

Charles Scriven's editorial "Memo to Elder Wilson" begins with these words:

Because my counsel is unbidden, it may never reach you, or if it does, it may seem obtrusive. But we are brothers in the faith, and that makes me bold to offer perspective on two challenges you are embracing. One is revival and reformation." The other is "the doctrine of creation.

Chuck, aren't you distraught that your carefully reasoned, logical, friendly, even obsequious attempt to reason with Ted will fall on deaf ears? He has repeatedly demonstrated that he is dismissive of your "perspective." He is divinely appointed; he already knows THE TRUTH and controls all the levers of power in a hierarchical system that takes its orders from the top. That's him.

I ask again, "Where is the outrage, the call to mobilize, the call to action?" Don't look for it in *Spectrum*. Our motto is "community through conversation."

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Scriven Responds

YES, ANDREW HANSON, I would be pleased to see Elder Wilson engaging the likes of me—and of the church's many scientists—in dialogue. Part of my life mission is to press for discipleship over fundamentalism, and I do not doubt, especially now, that it is a fool's errand. But if 1 Corinthians is any clue, Paul himself was on a fool's errand. And while I am on that subject, let me say that, though awash in discord, Paul evinced both candor and kindness. Somehow (I don't have all the answers) that is relevant here.

CHARLES SCRIVEN
Kettering, Ohio

Dwyer Responds

BECAUSE THE CHURCH is the people, changing the way Holly Drum was treated requires a change in all of our hearts. Just as *Spectrum* cannot change the actions of the brethren in Silver Spring, only call to attention what has taken place there, we cannot change the way local churches function. Noting Holly's death was meant to be a wake-up call to all of us that how we treat each other matters.

BONNIE DWYER
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