

 community through conversation

SPECTRUM



Falling Out of the Church Window | *In Tune with God* |
Herbert Blomstedt's CREDO | *Adventist Churches: The View from
the Road* | **The Politics of the Prophetic Gift** | *Ellen White
Re-Enactors* | **Who is the Average American Adventist?**

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SPECTRUM is published by Adventist Forum, a nonsubsidized, nonprofit organization for which gifts are deductible in the report of income for purposes of taxation. The publishing of SPECTRUM depends on subscriptions, gifts from individuals, and the voluntary efforts of the contributors. SPECTRUM can be accessed on the World Wide Web at www.spectrummagazine.org

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Letters to the editor may be edited for publication.

ISSN: 0890-0264

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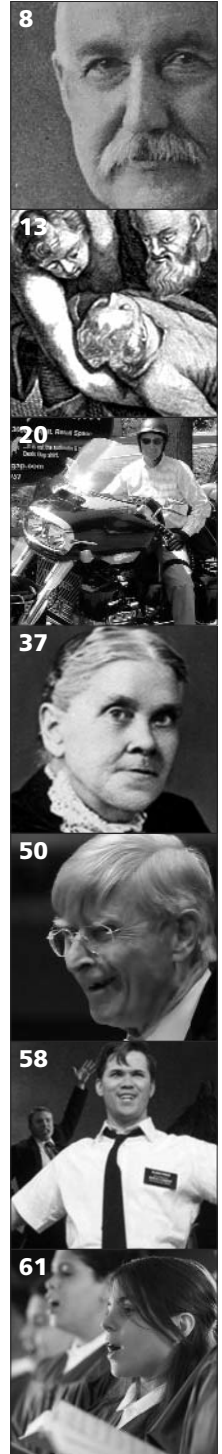
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I Hear Adventism Singing | BY BONNIE DWYER



It was October 22, a Sabbath in 2011, so we were gathered for Sabbath School at the Roseville SDA Church. The program was to be a celebration of Adventist music. The first guest to be introduced was Wayne Hooper, who charmed the audience with a quick song to help them remember their Memory Verse. Poet and hymn writer Annie Smith came next. She recited her “Proofreader’s Lament” and talked about how the Great Disappointment drove her out of the Advent movement for a time. The coincidence of having the same dream as Joseph Bates about one of his meetings convinced her to return, she said. Then James White came in from the back of the room, singing as he walked down the aisle.

We sang old Adventist hymns and heard about the time James and Ellen White sang a duet at General Conference. Annie Smith downplayed the stories of early pioneers sometimes associated with the verses in her song “I Saw One Weary.” She emphasized the aspect of hope when she introduced her hymn. Wayne Hooper told us that his inspiration in writing that great Adventist hymn “We Have This Hope” came from Brahms. So we listened to Brahms and then sang our hearts out with the all-time favorite General Conference theme song.

It was Wayne Hooper’s son Jim who was re-enacting his father for us. Wayne Judd played James White, and Robin Franzke acted the part of Annie Smith. Skipping across time with these historical figures highlighted the continued power and importance of Adventist music. Re-enactment of historical figures gave their words new life and portent as stories were told. As a congregation, I felt that we bonded with each other in new ways, as well as bonding with our musical heritage.

As noted in the Introduction to *The SDA Hymnal* (that Hooper helped to produce), “From their beginning, Seventh-day Adventists have been a singing people. The very

first book they published was the 1849 collection of *Hymns for God’s Peculiar People That Keep the Commandments of God and the Faith of Jesus*. James White published five hymnals and four supplements even before the church was formally organized in 1863.”

In this issue of *Spectrum*, it is a pleasure to hear from two of Adventism’s finest musicians: Herbert Blomstedt and Lilian Doukhan. The internationally famous symphony conductor Blomstedt gives us his personal “Credo.” What beliefs does a life in music develop? In a review of Doukhan’s book *In Tune with God*, reviewer Ken Parsons lauds her efforts to restore music’s good name.

And just who are the people who are currently singing in Adventist churches? Ron Osborn analyzes two surveys of Adventists that come to very different conclusions about just who the people in the pew are. Can both be right? Acknowledging that even trained statisticians read data differently, it is fascinating to think about what a difference the numbers make. Obviously, the latest reports from the Annual Council session show that the denomination is paying increased attention to what the numbers say. Pastor Marvin Wray gives us another view of the local church based on his journey across the United States via motorcycle, visiting Adventist churches along the way.

Whoever the people, in whatever church, in whichever form of praise they choose to worship, my musical wish is for the power in Adventist singing to again be felt as in the days of James White and that, like the psalmist, we will sing praises to God with all our being. ■

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.



Going Forward While Going Backward | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

In spirit and language alike, Ted Wilson's leadership evokes another era, one older Adventists can still recall. In key respects he is the second coming of Robert Pierson. So, like Pierson, he speaks (very properly) of revival and reformation. But with respect to his fears, Elder Wilson is also redolent of that era: he is ill-at-ease with the sort of ferment that was heating up in the 1970s. He is ill-at-ease, indeed, even with the *orthodoxy* of the 1980s, and wants to revise, in a fundamentalist direction, the Statement of Beliefs that dates from the beginning of that decade. As for the dynamism of the Adventist pioneers—the energy, the self-questioning, the constant shifting of views—he is, at least in his spoken discourse, a stranger to it.

It's a safe bet, unfortunately, that this frame of mind will not bring wholeness to Adventism. In the older strongholds, much of the beauty of Adventism persists, but we are also broken by factions and disunity. The brokenness cries out for fixing, but Elder Wilson's perspective leaves it, I'm afraid, ever more entrenched.

Toward the beginning of October, world church leaders had an opportunity to repair some of the brokenness. Meeting for Annual Council in Silver Spring, they considered a change that would help open a new door in two world church Divisions for women.

Church policy continues to distinguish between "ordained" and "commissioned" pastoral ministry. The former (except in parts of China where the distinction goes unrecog-

nized) is a status granted exclusively to men. But around the world women "commissioned" for pastoral leadership are serving as church pastors or even as conference officers. Under current world-church policy, however, no woman may be a conference president, since that role requires male-only ordination.

Two Division leaders, Dan Jackson from North America and Bertil Wiklander from the Trans-European Division, proposed that the Annual Council grant a "variance" from the "model constitution" used in Division policy books. The variance would allow their respective constitutions to state that "commissioned" ministers may serve as conference presidents. The variance would apply only in their Divisions, where constituents seem ready for it.

As discussion began, Elder Wilson left the chair so that, from the floor, he could oppose the variance. He did not mean, he said, to denigrate anyone's spiritual leadership. But policy dictates that "commissioned" pastors may not "organize churches" or "ordain elders and deacons," and persons in "top spiritual leadership," he argued, should be able to do so.

He said, too, that embracing the variance would violate the unity of the church. The church has agreed that ordination be "recognized around the world." Adventism is not the church "in America" or in any other division; it is one community. "We are," as he put it, "a worldwide church." The implication was that the proposed variance would be inconsistent with Adventist unity. "I would encourage you," he said, "to vote against the motion."

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down.*

Elder Wilson then returned to the platform as meeting chair. After lengthy discussion, the proposal was defeated; 117 voted Yes and 167 voted No.

Some men serve as commissioned ministers. But none of them is excluded from ordination for biological reasons. Women are. They are grateful, I expect, for the proposers and speakers who came to their defense at Annual Council, risking public disagreement with the General Conference president. But they also feel, no doubt, the way I would if, for reasons having *nothing to do with my abilities or character*, the General Conference declared me (once again!) ineligible for a role my near-at-hand colleagues might actually want me to occupy.

That the question of women in leadership should go on and on—as least since 1881, when the General Conference Committee first considered the ordination of women—signals brokenness. And because leaders could resolve it, and don't, it also signals moral failure.

Every knowledgeable church leader knows that a good scriptural argument for the full equality of women and men can be made. Each one knows, too, that it is legendarily hard to express a knockdown version of the argument. The fundamentalist mind and heart can easily resist what it wants to resist.

One form of such resistance is appeal to a bloodlessly abstract version of the church's unity in Christ. Here, as in Elder Wilson's remarks, unity is bureaucratic; it is uniformity. On this view local need seems not to matter. To put it another way, here unity has far too little to do with the concrete meaning of love. But just that kind of love constitutes the "new commandment" God gives to us in Christ. Its absence makes us nothing more than noisy gongs and clanging cymbals.

For many who have a long devotion to the church, all this seems, and feels, tragic. But it was not the whole story of October, 2011. Toward the end of the month leaders of the North American Division, gathered in Silver Spring for year-end meetings, considered what the General Conference had said—and *re-affirmed their commitment to allowing "commissioned" (not just "ordained") ministers into the conference presidency*. The narrative is a touch complicated, but that is the gist of it, and it meant that in this Division women as well as men are now eligible to lead a conference. Even though a discriminatory view of ministerial ordination still holds sway, opportunity for NAD women has advanced.

Adventism, like all things good and beautiful, stands on the razor edge of danger, and these days the sense of precariousness may seem particularly keen. But there are shining moments when movement forward faces backward movement down. This was one of them.

A wooden obsession with bureaucratic (and doctrinal) uniformity looms large as an obstacle to love. Unity that transcends uniformity—transcends bloodless abstraction—is an expression of love, not an obstacle to it. In October NAD leaders gave evidence of understanding this.

Love of this kind reflects not only the New Testament story but also, I think, our own *historic* identity. In 1872, for the benefit of non-members and for the first time ever, Adventist leaders published a statement, or "synopsis," of Adventist belief. The publication of the statement satisfied both bureaucratic and doctrinal needs. (These needs, of course, do matter.) But the first paragraph said that the statement was not meant to "secure uniformity" among Adventists. It was not, in other words, to be an instrument of oppressive unity.

Why is such wisdom often scorned today, or at least ignored?

I don't know. But inside of faith, hope outlasts despair. It is the gift that enables us to kick sand into the great tide of human pain and disappointment even when the odds against success seem overwhelming. Now and then, the tide actually weakens. It just did.

Do we have a shot at making love the winner in the great battle between the essence of faithfulness and its bureaucratic distortion? Can we take steps toward shaking off obsessive fundamentalism? Up the divine sleeve, perhaps, are even more surprises. Why not?

Recently my wife and I saw a new play about Martin Luther King called *The Mountaintop*. Although I walked toward the exit with mixed emotions about the play itself, my feeling about a T-shirt the theater had for sale was anything but mixed: I loved it. On the front, in huge letters, were these words: "Can I get an Amen?"

Gospel witness tries our patience. But we must never lose hope or shrivel into silence. Like many at the October Annual Council, and most at the NAD year-end meetings, we must bear our witness. We must continue to bear our witness.

Can I get an Amen? ■

Charles Scriven chairs *Adventist Forum*.



Re-arranging the World Church

Report from the church's Annual Council

STORIES FROM ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK BY ELIZABETH LECHLEITNER AND ANSEL OLIVER

TOP LEADERSHIP of the Seventh-day Adventist Church voted in October to make several changes in the oversight of the church's work in several regions of the world.

First, the Executive Committee of the General Conference voted to transfer administrative oversight of church operations in the Middle East from the church's Trans-European and Euro-Africa divisions to church headquarters.

The **newly formed Greater Middle East Union Mission** is home to 21 countries and more than 500 million people, and has 2,900 Adventists worshipping in 70 churches and companies.

Under the new organization, South Sudan becomes part of the church's East-Central Africa Division and the church's Southern-Asia Pacific Division will oversee the Pakistan Union. Culturally, Pakistan can better be served by the division that also serves Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, leaders said.

The church's Euro-Asia Division will absorb Afghanistan. The world church headquarters will directly



Church officials appointed Homer Trecartin to serve as president of the church's Greater Middle East Union Mission. The union was formed when Annual Council delegates voted to transfer administrative oversight of the church in the Middle East to world church headquarters.

oversee the Israel Field and the new Greater Middle East Union Mission. That union mission will also include the Trans-Mediterranean territories. South Cyprus will remain in the Trans-European Division.

Despite more than 100 years of outreach to the region, data indicates that the mission of the church is changing with challenges in the region, members of the church's Greater Middle East and Mediterranean Survey Commission said in an October 9 report to Annual Council delegates.

Attaching the "high priority" Middle East region directly to world

church headquarters will enable quicker implementation of projects, commission members said in the proposal. "It would make movement of personnel, funding and ideas easier across what used to be different division boundaries," they said. The realignment would also group countries together that have similar cultures.

Commission members also said the Middle East "should be the focus of the entire church," citing another advantage for moving regional leadership to oversight by world church headquarters.

In 2010, the church tasked the commission with studying Adventist work in the Middle East, with the intent that a territorial realignment



Annual Council delegates vote to approve transferring the church's Middle East administrative oversight to the denomination's world headquarters. Leaders said the move signals that the region is a world priority.



Bertil Wiklander, president of the Trans-European Division, addresses the chair with his support as well as some concerns about the proposal to adjust administrative structure in the Middle East, which includes his division. Behind him, Bruno Vertallier, president of the Euro-Africa Division, waits to speak. The proposal also affected his division. The proposal later passed.

might be necessary. A study of historical, demographic and statistical evidence seems to indicate that the church grows best when overseen by a unified and geographically contiguous body, commission members said.

The Middle East is part of a region called the 10/40 Window, where two-thirds of the world's population lives, only one percent of which is Christian.

"I want you to think of the incredible challenges in the Middle East," world church President Ted N. C. Wilson told delegates. "We want to give full credit to the workers already there," he added.

Bertil Wiklander, president of the Trans-European Division, said he and his team had some reservations about parts of the proposal but would fully support it if approved by the world body.

"We have personal ties to our people in this area, and we have spent much time in prayer with and

for them. We have thoroughly enjoyed working in our attached fields and have poured our best time, talents and resources into it," Wiklander said.

Euro-African Division President Bruno Vertallier said that in recent years, the region has redoubled its work in the Middle East and that the administrative shift would be considered difficult for some people.

"Our recommendation is to strongly emphasize the training of local people," Vertallier said. "We have some wonderful people working there right now, and we must add to them. The great challenge will be to train more people in local fields and give them the best tools possible to meet the needs of Adventists and community members."

Adventist Church President Ted N. C. Wilson said the move would signal that the region is a global priority for the denomination.

"The Middle East is a unique place," Wilson said. "We have to take this area of world field as a special burden. We're also grateful for what the Euro-Africa and Trans-Europe have done to foster and nurture Adventist mission in those areas of Middle East."

Homer Trecartin, undersecretary of the World Church, was chosen to serve as president of the newly formed Greater Middle East Union Mission.

Trecartin has previously served as secretary-treasurer of the former Middle East Union and planning director for the world church's Office of Adventist Mission, among other positions.

Trecartin replaces Kjell Aune, who served as president of the region

when it was overseen by the church's Trans-European Division. Tibor Szilvasi will continue in his capacity as union secretary for the region.

World church Secretary G. T. Ng said church leaders will review possible candidates for the union's treasurer and announce their nomination at a later date. Delegates voted current Associate Secretary Myron Iseminger to replace Trecartin as world church undersecretary.

In other changes, the Guam-Micronesia Mission, an administrative region comprising islands in the western Pacific Ocean, will now report to the denomination's North American Division.

The shift, approved by the denomination's Executive Committee moves oversight of the region



Southern Asia-Pacific Division President Alberto Gulfan addresses the chair of Annual Council regarding the shift of the Guam-Micronesia Mission to the North American Division, whose president, Dan Jackson, sits nearby.

from the church's Southern Asia-Pacific Division, which is based in the Philippines.

The mission region includes the United States territories of Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Northern Mariana Islands and Palau.

"Over the years there has been discussion whether it would fit better elsewhere," said world church Undersecretary Myron Iseminger. "Regulations are U.S.-oriented and many employees come from North America."

The region is home to roughly 4,500 Adventist Church members. The Adventist Church there also operates numerous elementary and secondary schools, which are staffed largely by student missionaries.

North American Division President Dan Jackson welcomed the move. "We are always happy to cooperate with the world church, and we will embrace the peoples and the ministry of the Guam-Micronesia Mission," he said.

Southern Asia-Pacific Division President Alberto Gulfan confirmed that his executive committee had made several requests to shift oversight of Guam-Micronesia.

"We loved serving Guam-Micronesia over the past years, but we have some challenges, and we are very happy and grateful to the leadership of the North American Division...for their willingness," Gulfan said. "I believe this is God's timing."

Southern Asia-Pacific acquired administrative oversight of the denomination's operations in Pakistan in the territorial realignment involving the countries in the Middle East.

Finally, church leadership voted to split the Northeast Brazil Union Mission

into two administrative bodies—the Northeast Brazil Union Mission and East Brazil Union Mission.

The move recognizes burgeoning membership and impeccable handling of finances in the region, church leaders said. It comes on the heels of a similar realignment of the church's administrative structure in Brazil last year.

The former Northeast Brazil Union Mission is home to almost 340,000 Adventists and a growing network of churches and church-run schools. Membership there has more than doubled since the union was established in 1996. As of July this year, the church in the region welcomed more than 20,000 new believers, or about 3,000 accessions per month.

"This region for us has a strong potential for growth," said South American Division President Erton Kohler. "The people there are very receptive. We believe that a new union there can give strong support to our church in the region and help fulfill the mission."

The newly formed Northeast and East Brazil union missions will each begin in 2013 with more than 100 percent of ideal working capital, said world church Undertreasurer Juan Prestol. Neither region is saddled with debt, he added, and both are in "exceptional" financial condition.

The Adventist Church in Brazil has undergone numerous administrative realignments since it was organized in the country in 1895. Church leadership regularly reorganize church administrative structure to

accommodate membership growth. Most recently, delegates at last year's General Conference Session voted to recognize the split of the former North Brazil Union Mission into two entities, creating the Northwest Brazil Union Mission.

"We praise the Lord for the dynamic growth in South America and especially in this region of Brazil," world church President Ted N. C. Wilson told Annual Council delegates.

Also, church leaders voted to rename the current East Brazil Union Conference. To avoid confusion with the newly formed East Brazil Union Mission, the region is now called the Southeast Brazil Union Conference. ■



A PowerPoint graphic shows the Southeast Brazil Union Conference. Church leaders renamed the union when they split another union in two, creating a similarly named church region. The new union demonstrates church growth and financial stability in Brazil, church leaders said.

FROM THE SPECTRUM BLOG:

Germany— A new mission field?

BY LOTHAR E. TRÄDER

In his first year in office the newly-elected president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church speaks at five major events in Germany.

IN SOME COUNTRIES, especially the United States, German Adventism is still perceived under the “Conradi Syndrome.” L. R. Conradi, a highly gifted evangelist, author, and administrator, had managed church growth rates to rival and at times outdo those of the Adventist homeland in America. This, however, didn’t cause his schism from the world church. It was rather his independent direction in theology and church organization, as

This scathing review has upset many in Germany because Pöhler’s book is an official publication of the church in Germany. So when Ekkehard Müller denounces German-speaking churches as being “deeply polarized,”² many feel that such generalized statements are of little help and accuracy.

In order to more accurately understand the current situation of the Adventist churches in Germany, a couple of preliminary remarks from church history are in place. In Europe, ever since the Reformation, the adherence to a church or denomination has always been tantamount to a battle cry. The two major Christian faiths—Roman Catholic and Lutheran—initially stood fiercely opposed against each other. Because the political powers played into the scheme, this led to much bloodshed. Add to this a phe-

life in Germany is the geographic diversity of different forms of religiosity. In one part in the west of Germany, the Rhineland Christian faith traditionally took the form of conventicles, small house churches gathered around one leader, joining in Bible study. This is where Adventism in Germany originated. The Lindermann Movement in Rhineland was the cradle of German Adventism.⁴ Also located in the west is pietism. The northern and eastern parts of Germany are predominantly Lutheran. Additionally, in the west and the south we have a strong representation of the Catholic Church.

For Adventist churches in Germany this means—and I write this as a church historian—that we are acquainted with a Lutheran type of Adventism, with the religiosity of con-

PAULSEN PHOTO: ANNI



well as his critical attitude toward Ellen G. White. This is the legacy with which we are still dealing in Germany. Additionally, reservations are palpable that remain largely nonverbal, but we distinctly sense them from time to time. Lately, however, reports and rumors seem to have spread in the U.S., painting a rather sinister picture of the church in Germany. This impression is amplified by publications like the Biblical Research Institute’s recent review of Rolf Pöhler’s book on the twenty-eight fundamental beliefs.¹

nomenon largely unknown to the American religious landscape: the difference between a church and a cult or sect. Up until recently (and quite commonly, still in public perception), we Adventists here in Germany were being labeled a sect or cult in public opinion, with all of the painful prejudices. Only in 2009 did we change our official name to “free church”³ (*Freikirche der STA*) instead of the traditional label “community” (*Gemeinschaft der STA*) that we were called hitherto.

Another particularity of religious

venticles, with pietistic Adventism, as well as with so-called crypto-Catholic Adventists. Additionally, however, one new element has been added to this: namely, to use the terms “Lutheran Adventism” or “pietistic Adventism” in a somewhat judgmental demeanor. Sometimes the terms “liberal” or “conservative” are used, sometimes the label “fundamentalist.” Representatives of all these can be found in almost any church, and for a long time they managed to coexist peacefully. That has changed lately.

Don't misunderstand me; the majority of the [Adventist] churches in Germany are theologically healthy and mission-oriented, harmoniously living their faith. And in the past it was of minor importance whether a church was more Lutheran or more pietistic in their tradition, whether the stress lay more on justification by faith or on personal piety, with sometimes a bent towards perfectionism and an emphasis on just works, hidden behind the term "sanctification." The differences were known, but the different groups respected each other—up until recently.

Today we observe that those Adventists more inclined towards pietism (that is more in the tradition of Calvin than that of Luther) have come to understand themselves as true Adventists. They insist on a more rigid, traditional form of Adventism, fighting against a more supposedly liberal brand of Adventism. While there is agreement in the basic doctrines of our faith tradition, there are distinct differences when it comes to the Adventist specifics. As long as Jan Paulsen was president of the world church, conservative forces in Germany remained rather silent. Even Ekkehard Müller's book review was only published in 2011, though Pöhler's book had been in print since 2008. The theological change begun in Atlanta in 2010 has fuelled the controversy in Germany.

The preceding paragraphs provide the background for a phenomenon which to my knowledge is singular in the history of the advent movement: the newly elected president of the General Conference, in his first year in office, has visited Germany five times, in order to preach in five major con-

ventions. Obviously, he was alerted that Germany was in imminent danger, or that German Adventists were on the verge of schism, or at least heading towards disavowing Adventism. This situation necessitated the intervention of Ted Wilson; at least this is how I interpret his frequent visits to our country in his first twelve months. One or two visits would have been considered normal, but five trips? That prompts further questions.

So after his departure I asked myself which special message he had in store for German Adventists. However, after analyzing his talks, I realized that the subject matter has remained the same since his initial keynote address in Atlanta in July 2010. The president's massive commitment to stamp these topics into German Adventism leads me to conclude that there is an alleged deficiency perceived in our country, a misperception, in my opinion, certainly due to one-sided information.

The outcome of his addresses was predictable: the members in Germany were divided. Several reveled in the message that they had missed for too long. Elder Wilson's sermons were characterized by sincerity and a high sense of responsibility, but they tended to be couched in old phrases and clichés. I don't claim to judge the reactions of the individual listeners, but I found it disenchanting to hear formulae that smacked of being regressive, leaving me with the distinct impression that they were uttered to satisfy the needs of the fundamentalist section.

I have to add, however, that many left the meetings deeply discouraged. Due to lack of objective data I am not able to tell which group represented

the majority. Many had hoped to glean directions on how to deal with current world events. Some perhaps hoped to gain new insights into the interpretation of difficult Bible texts. Those with a passion for theology (and there are many of them in Germany) know about theological discussions with diverging views within the world church. Would Ted Wilson admit that an Adventist theology could be worded differently for the northern or the southern hemisphere? But all we got was the old, stereotypical phraseology. Obviously, there seems to be a confusion of the terms "reformation" and "restoration" because what is expected of us has little to do with genuine reformation and much to do with restoration. Every reformation bears in it the seed of something new, but restoration takes the old and revamps it.

So I ask myself if I am bigheaded in concluding that Ted Wilson never really addressed the issues relevant to us, but rather spoke to us from an altogether different tradition of faith and thinking. I may have misheard, but what appeared to be lacking was the theological bandwidth of the world church. The reflections we heard were one-dimensional, and in writing this I hear the voices of old stereotypes labeling us Germans as notorious critics and wiseacres. However, our official publishing press disproves this argument, as there is nothing to be found except praise and affirmation.⁵ But I want to give my honest assessment, and I don't think it would change even if the editors of *Spectrum* should be faced with furious letters from Germany.

How did I understand Ted Wilson's sermons? Allow me two comments

about them. First, I noticed a dangerous version of end-times theology. He never ceased to emphasize the imminence of the Second Advent. Taking as a starting point the somewhat peculiar and overemphasized notion of the latter rain (which never played a significant role in Palestine), we are called to pray for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit in order to speed up the final work resulting in the coming of Jesus Christ. Many will ask themselves whether Elder Wilson was never informed about the twofold ways to translate the term that Martin Luther rendered with “soon,” since another possibility is to translate it with “suddenly” or “unexpectedly” (KJV: “quickly”), which accords much better with our eschatology. What will happen if next year in all the pastors’ conventions around the globe, ministers are called to preach this message, but the longed-for cosmic event does not materialize? Wouldn’t that create something like a second Great Disappointment among Adventists?

The second observation from listening to Ted Wilson’s sermons is that during the five big conventions at which he spoke, there was a discernible shift in emphasis. Undoubtedly, his visits to the places of the Reformation had borne fruit. His first sermon in Mannheim was very much in the tradition of his keynote address in Atlanta.⁶ His last, in Friedensau, having visited Wartburg and Wittenberg, shows much more grace and theological depth. Deeply convinced in Mannheim that Christ’s return would be imminent, in Friedensau he dared to formulate that it is of little relevance whether Christ will return in five or fifty years.⁷ That was a new beat of the

drum. The thoughts he expressed in Friedensau showed that his visits to the places of the Reformation had deeply impressed him. The main thrust of his argument was still there, but with less pathos than in Atlanta.

So I conclude with delight that Ted Wilson is a learner like all of us, and perhaps he should come back to Germany more often to discuss issues with our fine theologians in Friedensau, and to get to know not only those churches with a pietistic slant, but also those in the heartland of the Reformation. ■

Lothar E. Träder is a retired pastor, teacher and former rector of Marienhöhe, an Adventist boarding school in Darmstadt. He holds a doctorate in church history.

References

1. Pöhler, Rolf. “Hoffnung die uns trägt,” 2008, *Advent Verlag*.
2. Müller, Ekkehardt. *BRI Newsletter* (April 2011): 11.
3. “Free church” is a term frequently used in countries with established state churches to denote independence and an adherence to a strict state/church separation. In German “free churches” this difference is often seen in the more derogative use of the word “church” (*Kirche*) as opposed to the more commonly used term “community” or “congregation” (*Gemeinde*).
4. The first Adventist churches in Germany (Solingen and Vohwinkel) recruited their members from an independent church which was founded and led by Johann Lindermann. Believers met on his compound and most likely they became sabbatarian somewhere in the 1860s. Attempts by J.N. Andrews and J. Erzbeger to integrate the whole group into the SDA-church failed because of Lindermann’s independence and doctrinal dif-

ferences.

5. For instance in the official German church paper *Adventisten Heute*, 8 (2011).

6. See my critical review of that homily (in German): www.kaleidoskop-freikirche.de.

7. Morning devotional, July 8, 2011, with university staff and employees.

<http://spectrummagazine.org/blog/2011/09/19/germany-ausgezeichnet-adventures-revival-and-reformation>

Selected Comments

Zane Yi - Mon, 09/19/2011 - 06:27

Thank you for this thought-provoking report and analysis. This past year, I had a couple friends from Germany as house guests and they tried to explain the “liberal”/“conservative” divide in Adventism there. Your explanation of the regional/cultural differences that influence the kind of Adventism that is promulgated is very helpful. It makes me wonder how much this happens in other parts of the world, and how much of Adventism in its “original” form was a product of such factors.

On a side note, here, in the States, as far as I can tell, we do not have much experience/success dialoging with those from the Pietist or Lutheran traditions, so we have much to learn from Germany.

Graeme Sharrock | Mon, 09/19/2011 | 10:31

It is good to get an informed and reflective report on what is happening in Adventism outside of the USA.

I traveled to Germany in the last decade to present a paper at a conference and met with theologians such as Rolf Poelher, social scientists, and many students from all over Europe. I was impressed by the diligence of the Germans, the vitality of the Italians, the community-mindedness of the Spaniards, the friendliness of the English (the conference had few eastern Europeans). The fact that the GC president was European and

embracing of diversity was a fact of quiet pride that encouraged the students who wondered aloud about the possibilities of secular engagement by believers.

Although I am not, I was perceived as an American and had to explain that I did not work for the church, but taught at a private university in America. Most importantly, I experienced first hand how European Adventists had created a community among themselves where the differences in culture were more or less taken for granted. Historical experience has taught them how to maintain positive and diplomatic relations with others who may not share the same worldview. No one got bent out of shape, for instance, when a German speaker went on and on, long past the scheduled ending of a meeting, insisting that he had to read every word of his paper, or an Italian speaker handed out pocket knives to audience members as gifts.

European Adventism is as variegated as in the USA and Canada, with even larger differences of language, nationality and culture. I hope we hear more reports about what is happening there and how European voices are contributing to the wide spectrum of faith and practice today.

Ole-Edvin Utaker | Tue, 09/20/2011 | 09:46

Ted Wilson and his wife visited Norway last weekend and had meetings in Oslo. I went to hear what he had to say, and it seems to me that it is mostly the same sermon he preaches everywhere these days - strong emphasis on SDA identity as the remnant church, different from the rest of Christianity, defined according to him by two key signs: the sabbath and the spirit of prophecy as manifested in EGW. He had a strong emphasis in eschatology and the world to come. He didn't mention once the present role of the church in the local or the global civil society today, except for preaching the unique SDA message. He claimed that "we know exactly what happened in 1844" and emphasised the preaching of God's judgemental understood as the investigative judgement, the latter rain..... He sermon was "other-worldly"

I spoke to a lot of people afterwards, also SDA pastors, young people, and middle-aged. Except for one, all said that they did not support his version of Adventism. My little "research" is of course not representative of the 600-700 who attended the meetings, but I believe it mirrors some of the disappointment with the present world leader, also from denominational workers. What surprised me was that many were quite open and direct in their criticism of him. Some expressed they were afraid that TW would destroy much of what has been built up in Scandinavia the last 20 years and that his approach is like moving 30- 50 years back in time. It has no appeal to Europeans in late modernity, except for conservatives and fundamentalist.

Christian Wannemacher | Wed, 09/21/2011 | 8:35

Let me explain who the author is, especially for the American readers. Lothar E. Traeder (retired pastor, teacher and school principal of Marienhoehe in Darmstadt) educated the generation of German pastors (including church leaders) who are active now and intensely took issue with Ted Wilson's initiative on fundamental #6 in Atlanta. As founder of AWA (an Adventist Scientific Study group that is built after the image of Adventist Forums although not quite the same) he is a respected retiree in certain circles of the church but not without exception because as a cheeky Berliner he likes to polarize.

Now a young generation of Adventists, not educated by Dr. Traeder, begins to redefine the shape of Adventism in Germany ("Youth in mission") boldly. As a response to the present condition of the society and church at large they are much more traditional, less academic and some of them are not only pretty much open to pietist but maybe also to fundamentalist brands of Adventism. Ted Wilson was well received during their last session. The leadership outside the mainly pietist Baden-Wuerttemberg does not always like the strong voice of this highly visible and mission-oriented mega-event organized by the Baden-Wuerttemberg conference.

To my mind Traeder is a church politician like Ted Wilson. As partisan and spokesman he is in part to rate responsible for the present situation in Germany as well. Lately he is more defending his accomplishments instead of being a renovator as he used to be in the past. His last national initiative ("Quo vadis, Adventist Church") was thwarted by Ted Wilson's global initiative "Revival and Reformation." In Germany there are quite some people who disagree with Traeder's emphasis on congregationalism and his analysis of (church) history steering away from the focus on events in the US to mark the Adventist prophetic position.

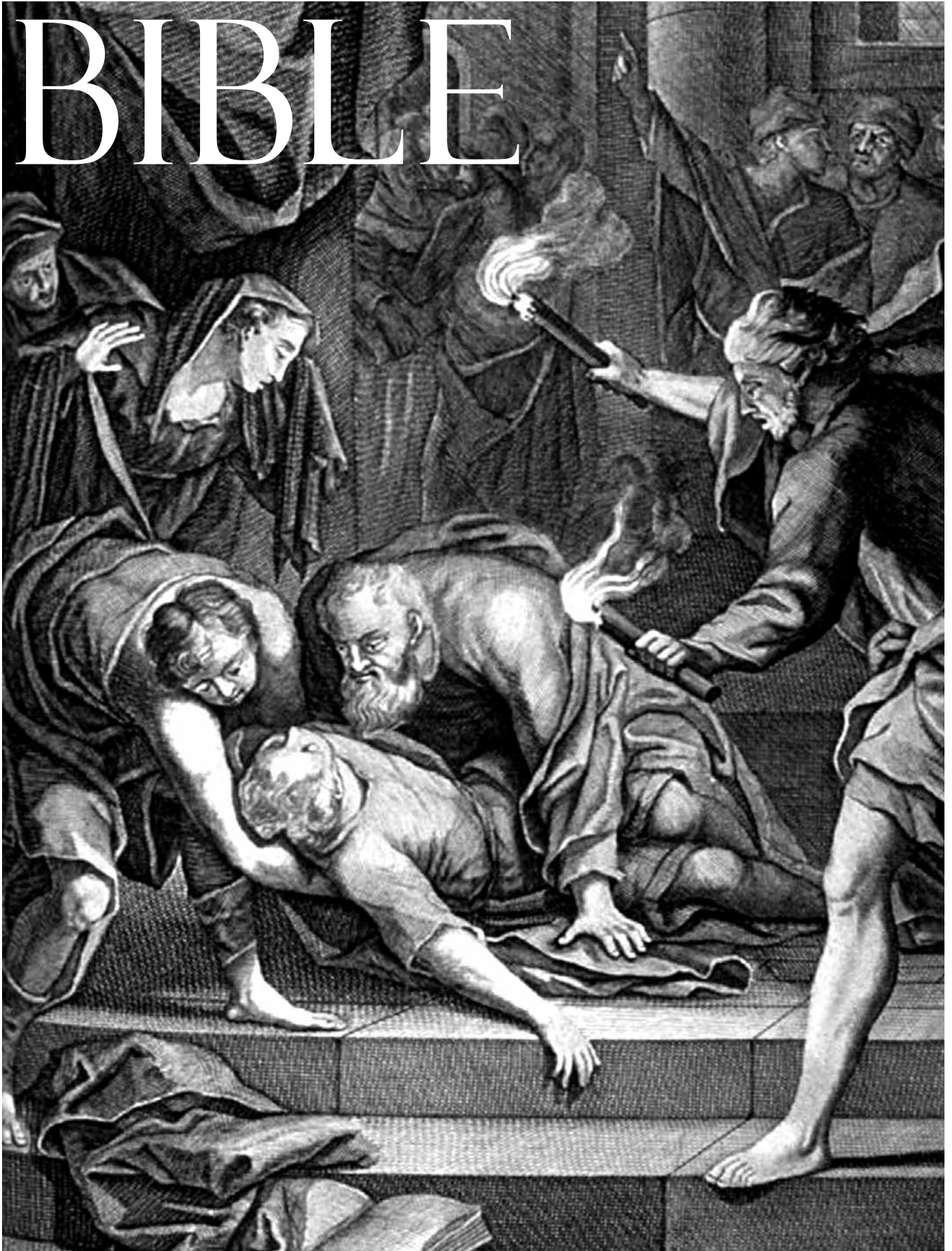
Sonja K | Wed, 09/21/2011 | 14:51

Thank you so much for your insightful comments on the situation of the Adventist church in Germany and of our world church as such. Being an "Exile German" since 10 years back I have watched the recent development in the German Adventist faith community with growing concern. As you so clearly pointed out there has always been a (rather healthy) diversity in many questions, but in all diversity there was a willingness to accept each other in a spirit of faith community. This has changed very conceivably. My childhood church which has been a loving and accepting congregation as long as I can remember has become a place with a rather "militant spirit" - where you either fit or don't fit. Where you don't have a chance to be granted eternal life if you eat meat or drink coffee. And where the absence of church growth is the fault of some church members who live sinful lives and therefore make it impossible for the congregation to be blessed by the Holy Spirit. Just thinking about this radical change makes my heart shiver.

Right now I work as a pastoral intern in another European country and when asked whether I could imagine working as a pastor in Germany - I have to say "no" (especially since working options for female pastors aren't really great in Germany, but the above mentioned reasons weigh heavily as well.)

Thank you for sharing your thoughts! ■

BIBLE



Falling Out of the Church Window | BY KENT HANSEN

The following is adapted from Hansen's e-newsletter, "Monday Grace." (mondaygrace.com), posted on April 4, 2011, and April 11, 2011.

On the Saturday night, when we gathered for the breaking of the bread, Paul, who was to leave the next day, addressed the congregation and went on speaking until midnight. Now there were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were assembled, and a young man named Eutychus, who was sitting on the window ledge, grew more and more drowsy as Paul went on talking, until, completely overcome by sleep, he fell from the third story to the ground, and was picked up—dead. Paul went down, threw himself upon him, and clasped him in his arms. "Do not distress yourselves," he said to them, "He is alive." He then went upstairs, broke bread, and ate, and after much conversation, which lasted until dawn, he departed. And they took the boy home, greatly relieved that he was alive (Acts 20:7–12, REB).

This story is best known as a cautionary tale about long-winded preaching, and a description of one of the miraculous signs and wonders that accompanied the power of the Holy Spirit in the early Christian church. I think it speaks a much deeper message to the contemporary church.

A young man sits on the window ledge of the church, halfway in and halfway out. What brings him to that position? Apparently, that's where he has followed his family and friends, but there isn't much attraction in the message; he can't relate to it and is bored. The preaching lulls him to sleep. He falls out of the church and dies.

A concerned embrace revives him. Fellowship, a meal, and conversation renew him. He returns home with new life.

I know a lot of young men and women like Eutychus. In fact, I've been Eutychus—born into a Christian family;

brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; attended church and church school; listened to thousands of sermons, homilies, and devotional talks. There is a common but false premise in the circles in which I grew up: that just showing up and listening is going to bestow citizenship in the kingdom of heaven, along with a godly spouse, good-looking kids, perfect job, and white picket fence, here on earth. When that doesn't prove true, accusations fly about who and what has gone wrong.

I have worked with Christian schools, colleges, and universities for thirty years, and never cease to be bemused at the projected blame of parents, teachers, and denominational leaders when young people walk out the door at graduation and leave the church. Judgments issue forth in blasts of self-righteous invective:

"It's the parents' fault. There is a failure of devotion in the home and a lack of support for the school!"

"The church has failed to keep up with the times. The message lacks a vital nexus of relevance to the challenges and enticements of contemporary society!"

"The schools betrayed us. Faithlessness and cynicism in the classroom destroy the beliefs of our youth!"

"You don't want these young people to think for themselves. All we've done here is raise legitimate questions and give them some exposure to what the world is really like. It's up to them to find the answers for themselves!"

Each of these statements can have factual merit, but they also carry a Christ-denying arrogance that salvation depends on human performance. The best that parents, teachers, and pastors can do is to plant the seed. Only God can give the growth (1 Cor. 3:7). It makes sacred sense, then, to focus on the crucified Christ (John 12:32, 1 Cor. 2:2, Gal. 6:14) in our own devotions and in where we point the youth, but pride keeps us fighting rather than focusing. Stunningly and disgustingly, we too often

close our hymnbooks and go right back to our senseless arguments of comparative fault. Meanwhile, more and more young people fall off the ledge and go missing.

Each one of us has a free choice to go with Christ or to pursue our own path. Whenever we invite someone to join us in commitment to Christ, they look at us as an example of what they will become if they accept the invitation.

If what is observed is an angry, stubborn, hair-splitting debater, the invitation will, quite likely, receive a pass. If it doesn't, this most likely means that the proselyte shares a pathology with the proselytizer. Then the question is whether the conversion is to the life of Christ or to a human point of view.

I have many friends who have just given up on the faith and doctrines learned in their childhood. Many of these reprobates actually believe that the teaching is correct, but they lose hope in the face of its harsh application and demands for perfect performance. They are confused and disheartened. They quit and drop out in despair. For the most part, they don't move on to any other faith community. They just suppress the spiritual aspect of their life, unwilling to live their faith as their rule of life.

I know some who believe they have it spiritually made because they are doing the "right" things with the "right" people and avoiding all the "wrong" things with the "wrong" people. My basic question for them is this: If you are so sure of your righteousness, why are you angry and miserable toward everyone else whenever two or three of you of like mind are gathered together?

There is a larger "safety-in-numbers" crowd comprised of individuals who aren't as sure about where they stand on the spectrum of absolute right and wrong. They find comfort in showing up at the same time and doing the same thing as their peers, without giving much thought to the deeper implications of what God may want for or from them (compare with Gal. 6:12–13).

Some of us (I learn about more all the time) are hungry for more than we've been getting. We are criticized for dissatisfaction with the status quo by those who profit from control of the religious franchise. We are disdained as "too serious" and "too religious" by the safety-in-numbers crowd. We don't want to fight over what it means to follow Christ, because it really doesn't matter to us what

someone else thinks about that. Scripture is our compass, and prayer is our desired means of communication.

There is an increasing pressure in my heart from the Holy Spirit. A one-day-a-week, set-piece Christianity expressed in glib platitudes doesn't cut it. I see people hanging on for dear life to the window ledges of the church, and falling when their strength gives out because they aren't offered anything compelling enough to bring them into the center. No one extends a hand of rescue when they are teetering on the edge.

My heart burns with desire to say to them, "Wait, wait, don't give up on Jesus, who has never given up on you. Whatever you have heard, he is bigger, better, and more demanding than that, and his burning passion is for you. I am pleading with you—don't settle for anything or anyone else. Let's talk." It takes time and relationship-building to bring someone back from that window ledge. This takes patience and substance that are rarely devoted to the challenge.

Parents bring their wayward children to hear me speak. Spouses drag their husbands into my sermons, hoping that this Christian lawyer will say something that will turn everything around. They do it with preachers and evangelists too. Folks, it's just not realistic to hang the hope of salvation and the godly life on a person or an institution, let alone a sermon. This breeds the cult of personality, "lone ranger" religion, or the heresy of corporate salvation.

One of the real disappointments that I know as a Christian is that our culture is so accepting of the status quo, and devotes so little thought to the implications of the great gift of our salvation, reflected in the way that we live and relate to each other. Why do we settle for so little?

When Jesus said, "I came that they might have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10), he was speaking in the plural. He was not talking about one man, one woman, or one-day-a-week religion. He condemned "hired hand" religion as leaving the flock open to scattering under attack. He proclaimed the benefits of life in community: "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd" (John 10:16). Only engagement in community will fulfill the life that Jesus gives us.

Jesus picked twelve persons as disciples to change the whole world. The best educational theory says that knowledge transmits best in a ratio of somewhere between one to one and one to thirty. So by what mad-

ness does modern Christianity celebrate a one-to-three-thousand ratio as a success through the “preaching” model?

Once a week, most of us go to church in anonymity, then return to our private lives for the next six and a half days. We are exhorted to do more, but we think, “Who has the time?” But what is that person going through who sits next to us on the pew, kneels in front of us, or passes by us in the foyer? What is breaking their heart, or giving them new hope and delight?

How will we ever know, and how can we ever help, when we are content to sit lined up in rows, looking at the backs of those sitting in front of us? Do we not know and fear that many modern-day Eutychuses are not coming in off the ledge, but instead are falling asleep and dropping out the window to their spiritual death because the old ways of “show up, sit down, and shut up” are not engaging them?

If Jesus came to give us life and we accept it, then we need to live. We can’t sleepwalk through the kingdom. We need to be alert and responsive to what’s around us.

Participating in community, I was asked to deliver the sermon for my twentieth anniversary homecoming at the Christian high school that I attended. What could a lawyer say to these people that would be of spiritual value? I simply gave my personal testimony and urged people to open up to the possibilities of God in their everyday lives. The response overwhelmed me. One couple spoke to me with such obvious spiritual pain that it haunts me still. They had driven 1,800 miles for the weekend from their home in another state. I sent them a note of encouragement the following week. Here is what they wrote in response:

We struggle daily. Our [professional] practice has consumed us. We are so exhausted that we collapse the day we go to church and don't even feel sociable. We have no time for Bible studies even though there are requests. I feel like a dry well—like the clouds that blow over this dry part of our state only to keep going, leaving us parched and desolate. With that

state of mind we went to alumni weekend, and you can see why your sermon was meaningful.

We are suffering from shell shock after being here for sixteen years. Our church school is closed, and our membership all in terrible need of being infused with life. We are tired of playing “bazooka quote” in Bible class and afraid of bringing anyone to church where they get blasted and discouraged.

Too many souls dry up like this and fade away in spiritual aridity, but it doesn’t have to be that way. We know that the first Christians lived their lives together and shared their material possessions with each other “as any had need,” says Luke. They spent their days together going to the temple for worship and visiting each other’s homes for fellowship, meal-sharing and praising God “with glad and generous hearts,” and their community grew exponentially (Acts 2:44–47).

The letter to the Hebrews says that the assurance we have of our salvation and the forgiveness of our sins in Jesus Christ grants us access to a close and intimate relationship with a God who is faithful to us. This confidence, we are told, gives us the freedom to stir each other to love and good deeds, and that’s why we meet together—to encourage each other. We need to do more of this as time grows short and the world deteriorates in stress (Heb. 10:19–25).

The purpose of our gathering together is to encourage each other. Eutychus came to life when he was embraced, held close, prayed for, fed, and engaged in conversation.

Am I taking license with this incident in Acts? Absolutely! I take this license from Paul in 2 Cor. 5 when he says Christ, in love, died for us all and was raised so we could live fresh and free as new creations, without the need to build ourselves up by criticizing the frail humanity of others. Encouragement and reconciliation are the stuff of hands-on religion, requiring engagement rather than passive listening.

There is always a danger that one of us, worn and weary with the struggles of living, will drift to the edge of the congregation, fall

Whenever we invite someone to join us in commitment to Christ, they look at us as an example of what they will become if they accept the invitation

asleep and tumble out the window. The resulting injury can leave us in chronic spiritual pain, spiritually paralyze us or deaden our spirits. What we all need and want from our community is a brother or sister who will come to our aid, embrace us in our brokenness, bring us back to life in fellowship, share a meal with us, converse in encouragement and help us home in healing grace.

Why isn't there more of such ministry? Because whatever our lip service, there are pitiful few of us who seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness to the exclusion of self (Matt 6:33). What does that "seeking first" require of us?

It requires our commitment of body, soul and spirit to the achievement of community in the bond of Christ. It requires us to unclench our spiritual fists and jaws and unfold our arms in mutual submission to the wisdom of Christ revealed in the Word. It demands that we converse in the mutual upbuilding of love and not talk at and past each other in spiritual "one-upmanship." It means that we must sacrifice our competitive desire to score points to the greater goal of winning a brother or sister in love.

Seeking first the kingdom of God requires each of us to plant and root our lives in Christ alone while generously sharing the fruits of our growth in Christ with the others in our community. At the same time, our quest for the kingdom of God and his righteousness calls us to resist the temptation to shape our faith community in our own image, and insists on transparent fidelity to the Word of God without reservation or condition. Grace, the applied righteousness of God, requires that we develop an alert mind and heart for the mercies of our heavenly Father who, Jesus says, "is kind to the ungrateful and evil" (Luke 6:33).

Hardest, but most important of all, community requires us to accept on trust that Christ equally loves both us and those who irritate us most, so that our hearts become open and capacious for the lost and the damaged. God's express intention is that repentance be obtained through kindness, forbearance and patience (Rom. 2:4). Christ demonstrated this spirit when he prayed for a Judas who betrayed him; dined with sinners; washed feet that in a matter of hours would run away from him; reached out to a Peter who denied him; loved a James and a John who misrepresented him; and forgave his murderers.

We are so impatient with the broken, the shameful, and the stubborn. It is tempting to tidy up the community by the euthanasia of legalistic condemnation. "Out of sight, out of mind," the saying goes. But revival is a stirring to life, not a process of elimination. Sanctification is a fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit, not an obstacle course for ascetics.

We have a calling to patience expressed in the very autobiography of the Apostle Paul himself: "I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life" (1 Tim. 1:16–17). In receiving "the utmost patience" from Christ, Paul found a rule for successful living in the fellowship of believers, which he shared with the Colossians, in Col 3:12–17. Everything Paul describes is meant to contend with the threats and ravages of sin. There is brokenness, meanness, arrogance, pride, and impatience at work in the world. So we clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, all found in the robe of righteousness that Christ places on us (Isa. 61:10).

We have frictions and grievances, but we are called to forgiveness. We have differences and divisions, but we are asked to drape ourselves together in the silken folds of love. We have doubts and resentments, but we can submit our issues to the rule of the peace of Christ in our hearts, which umpires all disputes in the body of Christ.

If selfishness is robbing us of joy, we can count our blessings in thankfulness. When we are famished, exhausted, angry and lonely, we can let the word of Christ fill us with the truth that we are loved. We can sharpen each other against complacency with the wisdom of the word applied to the realities of life together, and refocus on Christ in musical worship.

All of these things are done with Christ and for Christ. This is the positive Christian life that Paul is talking about, lived out in relationship. It is the kind of engaged, growing life that draws us together because we are looking only to Christ. It is neither simplistic nor unrealistic.

The proud and critical naysayers who rebuke us that a life like this will only end in disappointment are the real rebels against the reign of Christ. Any time we seek our own strength as a hedge against the uncertainties of love within our community, we express an odious mistrust of the Savior. God is love, and we love because he first loved us. If we can't accept and live in that truth, the Apostle John says, then we prove we don't know God (1 John 4:7).

I write this as a man blessed by a fellowship of encouragement and accountability that keeps me away from the window ledge. It begins each morning with prayer and study of the Word. As we reach the challenges of midday, the streams of personal devotion join in a flow of grace running through my home and my law offices. Colleagues and friends who know each other's personal and professional challenges and weaknesses join in prayer and encouragement.

If need be, within five minutes a dozen or more of us can join in intercession, called by pager, cell phone, and email. Sometimes we gather for prayer and worship, not because anyone tells us to do so, but because it is the pressing desire of our heart. The point, as one of my colleagues says, is "to walk through each day holding hands with Jesus."

This is made more difficult for many of us because we work in faith-based settings where religious programming is de rigueur, and spontaneous religious expression can be viewed with suspicion. What is it if it can't be motivated, trained, reduced to policy, incentivized, and assessed? This is a question that I've encountered more than once, and rises out of pride of status and fear of the unknown. Nothing freezes the corporate heart quite like Jesus' observation that "The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

Love is irrepressible, however, and like flowing water it finds its own level. So we who know that we are loved find each other in the ways that the body of Christ has always grown—growing with a growth that comes from God alone (Col. 2:19).

I recently gave the morning devotionals at a camp meeting. After one session, an attractive thirty-something woman approached me. "Where did you get what you talk about?"

"You mean God loving us and not quitting on us no matter what?"

"Yes."

"Out of my experience," I told her. "Years ago, God connected with me on an airline flight

and the Word came alive for me and that Word was that God loved me. Nothing has been the same since."

"I know what you mean," she said. "I wandered far away from God. My life was going nowhere."

"The Holy Spirit impressed me to go to church one morning," she continued. "I didn't want to go, but the Spirit kept pressing me. I sat through the class study and it was the same as I remembered it—so-so.

"I wanted to leave and was getting ready to go. Then an older woman sat down next to me. She talked to me kindly and even reached in her purse and showed me a picture of her son who had died in the Vietnam War. She took my hand in hers and held it. I kept thinking that I should go, but she held my hand clear through the service. I don't remember a thing about the sermon that day. But when I left I knew that God loved me and I haven't forgotten since."

The older woman's handclasp revived the young woman to the vibrant glow of eternal life, just as Paul's embrace brought Eutychus back to life in the little community of Ephesian believers. The kingdom of God is always and ever a "hands-on reality."

Paul moved on after that night, but he sent the Ephesians a letter that ended with these words: "Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 6:23–24). We couldn't have a better prayer for our community of faith. ■

Kent Hanson is a Christian attorney, author, and speaker. He practices corporate law and is the managing attorney of the firm of Clayson, Mann, Yaeger & Hansen in Corona, California. Kent also serves as the general counsel of Loma Linda University and Medical Center in Loma Linda, California. His books include *Cleansing Fire*, *Healing Streams: Experiencing God's Love Through Prayer and Grace at 30,000 Feet* and *Other Unexpected Places*. Previous "Word of Grace" messages can be found on his website, www.mondaygrace.com.

The purpose of our gathering together is to encourage each other. Eutychus came to life when he was embraced, held close, prayed for, fed, and engaged in conversation.



CHANGING
PROFILES IN
ADVENTITISM

Adventist Church: *Membership audits planned, revised figures contemplated* | MARK A. KELLNER, ADVENTIST REVIEW

9 Oct 2011, Silver Spring, Maryland, United States, Adventist News Network

PHOTOGRAPHS: ANSEL OLIVER

The General Conference leadership is urging the world church's divisions to carefully audit membership rolls and remove the names of those no longer active in the movement or who have passed away, said David Trim, director of Archives, Statistics and Research at the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Silver Spring, Maryland, world headquarters.

"The stones can cry out, but so can membership statistics if we have ears to hear. [The numbers] are telling us they are not entirely accurate," Trim told delegates to the church's 2011 Annual Council meetings. "I believe that inaccuracies have not crept in through a desire to deceive, but by not keeping proper records. Have we overstated gains and understated losses?"

The proposed audits and reviews are expected to take place over the next few years, Trim said, and likely will result in a lower overall membership number than the recent claims of between 16.5 million and 17 million baptized members worldwide. Although it has been estimated by church officials that as many as 25 million to 30 million people worldwide attend Adventist worship services weekly, the church only counts as members those who have been baptized. Traditionally, the Seventh-day

Adventist Church has only baptized those old enough to make a conscious decision to unite with the church, and does not baptize infants.

The call for greater scrutiny of membership statistics reflects a desire for accuracy and transparency, Trim said. As servants of God and of His church, the first need is to be open and above-board in representing its membership numbers.

"This doesn't mean that God hasn't blessed the church or is not blessing," Trim said before his report. "It's just that we're being honest."

G. T. Ng, Adventist Church executive secretary, told Annual Council delegates on October 9, "The numbers game is not about numbers. It's about people—souls that are lost twice. If these souls had not been lost, we would have a membership of 24 to 25 million."

Such losses may only be for a season, however. On October 7, Jairyong Lee, president of the Northern Asia-Pacific Division, acknowledged the loss of tens of thousands of names from the rolls during a recent audit. However, new evangelistic efforts in China and other nations in the division have replenished those numbers, and new members are being disciplined and nurtured so they remain active.

Another division president voiced



David Trim, director of the Archives, Statistics and Research department, calls for the denomination to reassess its membership records. Church mortality rates have been found in some regions to be vastly lower than mortality rates of the general population in those local areas.

support for the move: "I really appreciate the Secretariat's...bold move," said Paul Ratsara, president of the Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division, one of the world church's largest regions. "This is a test of accountability and transparency for all of us. I believe we really have to do this."

Organized in 1863, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is the top administrative body for the church, which is active in 203 countries and territories worldwide. The Annual Council meetings are designed to inform the movement's world leaders of current trends and needs, as well as to take actions necessary to carry forth Adventism's mission. ■

Adventist Churches—The View from the Road:

Questions for Motorcyclist, and Pastor Marvin Wray | AN INTERVIEW BY BONNIE DWYER



Wray at Bryce Canyon National Park.

Journeys is your book about a motorcycle trip across the US visiting Adventist churches? Why did you go?

When the Northern California Conference announced that they would allow three pastors a year to take a sabbatical of up to three months, I thought that would be a great opportunity to do what I have wanted to do for some time—visit churches all across the country. And wow, I've always wanted to ride my motorcycle



across the country. So I submitted the proposal, and it was granted.

I spent a year making plans. There were some specific churches I had in mind: Salt Lake City and Las Vegas, for instance. What is working in the headquarters of Mormonism? Is anything particularly effective in a hugely secular city? What is working? Is anything working?

In Las Vegas there are nine churches. I picked one—the Mountain View Church, where I knew good things were happening. However, at least fifty percent of the churches were picked at random according to a route and a reasonable number of miles. I visited a pastor or church leaders every mid-day and every evening.

I had a strong desire to see what was working, who is growing, who isn't and why. I admit I had some preconceived perceptions. I knew that most of our churches are not really growing. Most are trying to stay current, but struggle with building a core group of young adults. In one church I visited the average age was mid-70s. I asked the pastor, "Where do you see the church in twenty years?"

In the book, I tried to emphasize positive aspects about each place, and to generalize criticisms.

Why did you go on a motorcycle? Did that affect your interaction with the churches?

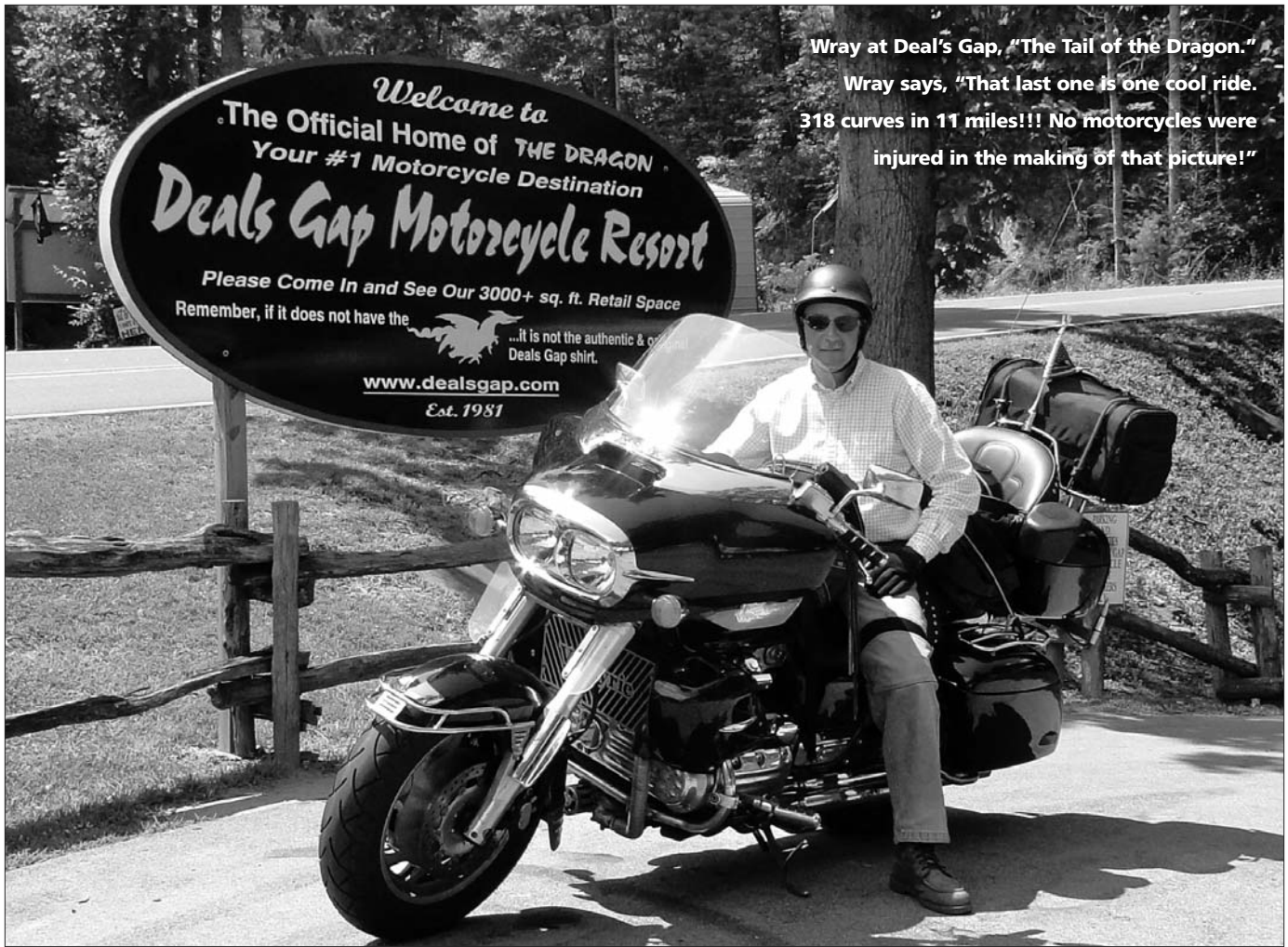
I did that largely just because I thought it would be a lot more fun. I didn't hear any negative feedback. I think it generated interest. I also thought it would make the book more readable for many. And I'm happy to say that after 11,393 miles I only had one really bad segment.

How many churches did you visit?

I met with representatives from 70 churches, including 48 pastors.

The view of the church was often clearer, less biased, from members rather than pastors. But some pastors really opened up and talked about not being able to do what they wanted to do because most of the time the membership does not turn the leadership over to the pastor. Even in the more professional churches, they are hesitant to truly allow the pastor to lead. They want him

I thought [a sabbatical of up to three months] would be a great opportunity to do what I have wanted to do for some time—visit churches all across the country. And wow, I've always wanted to ride my motorcycle across country.



Wray at Deal's Gap, "The Tail of the Dragon."

Wray says, "That last one is one cool ride. 318 curves in 11 miles!!! No motorcycles were injured in the making of that picture!"

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to preach and do the visitation. The place I really saw the greatest opportunity for pastoral leadership was in church plants where they just started something new and didn't have a long history. The longer the history of the church, the harder it is to embrace change and to be cutting edge.

Were the pastors embracing change and being cutting edge?

The majority of them wanted to, yes, but very few of them were actually empowered to do it either by the conference or by the local congregation. I would also say that most of them were not getting continuing education that would encourage and inspire them along those lines either.

David Newman, in Fulton, Maryland, is a good example of working on the cutting edge. I don't think that he started New Hope Church. But he went there when it was young and grew it.

He has built up and empowered his staff as well as his lay leaders very effectively.

Conferences need to encourage true creativity. There are so many ways to use the new technology. We always need a balance, but we do need to embrace changes in technology and generational needs, and our administrators need to find fresh approaches to equip our pastors to teach old truths in new ways. You've got to turn the pastors loose a little bit. Several conferences were hesitant and were not going to encourage real creativity.

Another problem is that I feel too often conferences are simply filling pastoral slots with whoever needs to move instead of matching the gifts of a pastor with the needs of a church. We need to address anew the value of a ministerial secretary. There are not many conferences where a ministerial secretary has the role of pastoral placement. The pastors need a pastor as well as someone that will lobby with administration for them.

What was your methodology? What were you looking for in your visits?

The first question for the pastor was, "What's happening in your church that you are passionate about?" There are all the standard things that have to be cared for, but is there something that is creative, is there something that could really make a difference in your church? I wanted candid responses. They had to really think about that. In many cases it caught them off guard. I think many of them are lacking the tools, the idea bank.

I get tons of ideas reading both from within as well as outside of the Adventist church. I really get inspired by Mark Batterson's *In a Pit With a Lion On a Snowy Day*. He wrote another one, *Primal*, that is fantastic. Another great read is David Platt's *Radical* and the sequel, *Radical Together*. Batterson founded the National Community Church in Washington, D.C. They started by opening up a coffee bar right across from Union Station. Now they have branches in movie theatres connected with subway stations.

Some of the pastors I visited are not encouraged to read from outside sources, but we don't supply them with the same energy from within very often. I have appreciated George Knight's books, and Jon Paulien's devotional on Revelation is great. I would also greatly encourage every pastor to read his latest book, *Where Are We Going?* But I also believe we should be in touch, for example, with David Kinnaman's books such as *Unchristian*, and his latest, *You Lost Me*.

The majority of pastors that I visited were in small churches or districts. They were not exposed to much creativity, and often they are fairly isolated from other pastors. I'm so lucky to be working in Napa and to have Roy Ice as my sidekick. It doesn't get much better than that.

Were you recommending materials?

Yes, but mostly I was encouraging pastors simply to read, and to read widely. In some places they just think that is a terrible idea. We're missing so much. We don't have to take it all, but don't miss it all either.

You said members were more creative in answers?

Lay leaders who were willing to meet with me were there because they had something that they were passionate about.

In Roswell, New Mexico, it was late when I pulled in. I'd had a long hot ride. Three members met me at the church, and after we had visited for awhile they asked, "Would you like to see our prayer ministry?" We walked to what I thought was a storage building, but it was their prayer ministry.

It was set up so beautifully. First, I went into a waiting room. One of the prayer ministry people met me there and explained what I was going to be doing at the seven or eight stations. I had time to meditate, to write down my burden, and I picked up a brick to go with it. Then I went on to another space where I wrote in sand what I had written on the paper, and then I smoothed out the sand and laid my brick down. I picked up a link of a chain that had been broken. The whole thing amounted to identifying my burden, laying it down, and believing that Christ could answer my prayer and then coming out and having my burden lifted. I went through it with them, and I was moved just walking through it.

The members want to make it available to their community 24/7. This was a ministry with lay-led passion.

Did a lot of people from the community utilize it?

The word was getting out. They wanted people to know that if they had a prayer in the middle of the night, there was a place that they could go.

This was a new Adventist family that was doing this. They were passionate. They had tears in their eyes as they told their story. The passion showed all over their faces.

The next day I told the next pastor about my experience the night before. He said, "We have the same thing." All the same steps were laid out, but not nearly as attractively. And he said they were talking about turning the space back into Sabbath School rooms. The differ-

[Their] prayer ministry... amounted to identifying your burden, laying it down, and believing that Christ could answer your prayer and then coming out and having your burden lifted. I went through it with them, and I was moved just walking through it.

As I rode hours, going from state to state and church to church, I had a lot of time to reflect on what I was and wasn't seeing.

ence was that in that church they had no one passionate about that ministry.

That is not necessarily a bad thing. I just thought, there is no one program. All you need is one program that somebody is passionate about.

You mix in your personal spiritual journey with your physical journey. Why?

While I was riding down long, hot roads, scenes from my own spiritual journey came to mind. I thought it would build a greater readership. I didn't know a book title before I left, but I began to think about two journeys. There was the Sabbatical journey to the churches, and there was my journey. I had been through a lot of personal change. I just wanted to set that out, too.

How did your physical journey impact your spiritual journey?

It had an impact on my ruling passion to get my emphasis in the right place. As I rode hours,

going from state to state and from church to church, I had a lot of time to reflect on what I was and wasn't seeing and to think about the need for growth in my own life.

More and more I feel that we have to get the message of Christ's grace and compassion out there in front where it needs to be. There are a lot of churches that are not doing that really well. I'm really worried about our denomination's overall health. There is so much that we can be doing in a broader scope of revival and reformation. We need revival and reformation, but perhaps we need to look at how we need to reform the Adventist church because I don't think the next generation is going to pay the bills in the same way past generations have.

Let's talk about some of the specific churches: the Aldergrove Church in British Columbia was one of your favorites from the trip. Why?

It had younger leadership. The average age



The wall in the children's division at Aldergrove, British Columbia. Wray's comment: "FANTASTIC!"



in that church appeared to be 40 or under, and yet there were older people there who were intensely involved. It was alive with young adults. They had a well-organized community outreach. They do an extreme home makeover each year. They supply one or two vans to single moms. They do oil changes and tune-ups for single moms. They also have the more traditional programs, such as health outreach. It is a very attractive church. I walked in and went down to their children's division. On the stairwell going down there were paintings beautifully done showing children and animals. I think there was also a map of the world with children in native costumes, but the faces were the faces of the children from their own church family.

I felt relaxed and welcomed. They had a praise team, no drums. They were not trying to be contemporary or traditional, just worshipping the lord with what they had. I don't think it takes a big bank account to do what they are doing. It takes working together. When we work together, we can do a lot.

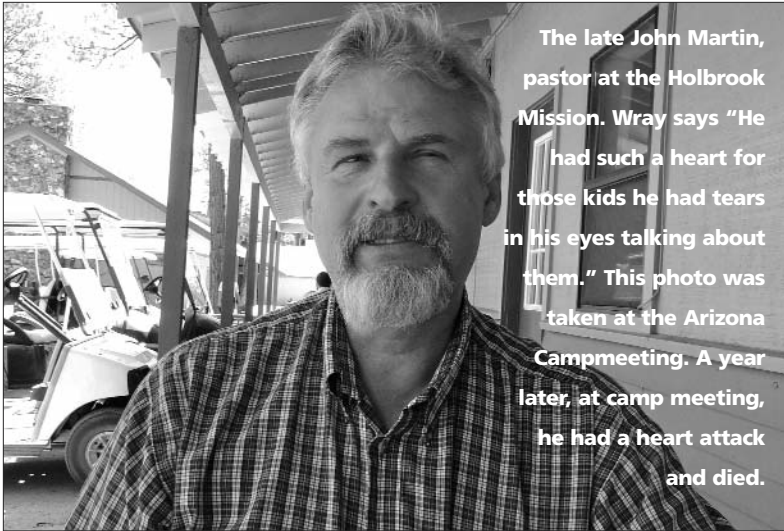
In Battle Creek, Michigan, you say that the church had just distributed 45,000 copies of the *Great Controversy* in anticipation of a fall evangelistic series. Do you have any idea of what results came from that distribution?

No, I don't. They were doing very traditional outreach. Things seemed to be doing okay. The church has a rich history and beautiful sanctuary. It was nicely up-to-date. They will do all right because of the history. But I don't think they will attract large numbers of new, young families. But maybe that is not everyone's goal.

There are a lot of churches that want to draw people in, but they want them to adjust to what we already are. They expect people to make changes in their lives and adapt to what their church already is.

In your last chapter on what you learned, you say that more should be done to empower the local church and church pastors. What specifically would you like your conference to do for your church in Napa, California?

They were not trying to be contemporary or traditional, just worshipping the Lord with what they had.



The late John Martin, pastor at the Holbrook Mission. Wray says "He had such a heart for those kids he had tears in his eyes talking about them." This photo was taken at the Arizona Campmeeting. A year later, at camp meeting, he had a heart attack and died.

Somebody has to stand up for the young guys that still have 25 years of ministry ahead of them.

Hmmm, is my president going to read this? We need to find a way to funnel more of the money back to the local church. There is not much funding available for creativity, and some of it takes money. I feel blessed in my church and in my conference. I'm not forced to do any top down programming. We're building and growing, slowly but safely. I'm not getting pressure to do any specific programs. Give me options. Give me ideas. Again, we've got to find a way to get resource funding back to the local church. The conferences and unions have cut their staffs, and I think that's good. We're still not using up-to-date technology as effectively as we could. I would like to see all conferences make a stronger effort to immerse their pastors in creative ideas and encourage them to experiment.

In the two years since your trip, are there additional insights that have come to you because of the journey?

I am more and more passionate about what I see, and getting bolder with what I say and how I say it. Somebody has to stand up for the young guys that still have 25 years of ministry ahead of them. The church is full of professionals who are doing what they do because they are allowed to do it their way. Yet, some of those same people will not turn the church over to a professional. Very few churches are willing to accept their pastors as a professional.

How has the journey with the book compared with the journey on the motorcycle?

The motorcycle was more fun for sure. The hard work was the year before in planning and the year after in the writing and the rewriting. I self-published; it was my own investment. The journey with the book has been very rewarding, but in ways other than money. I'm not making any money on this journey. But I've got one lady whom I've never met who has bought 70 copies of the book, and she has sent them to church leaders and conference leaders. The book renewed her faith in God and changed her life. I find that to be very humbling and immensely rewarding. I've sold 400 copies so far. My goal is 1,000 copies.

I'm sitting back now, and I'm feeling good about what I did and how I grew with it. I have a deeper passion to keep the main message. It is a book that has a timeline that doesn't have to die. If I had it to do over again, I would definitely make two-thirds of the churches I visited be non-Adventist. That would give a broader perspective and increase readership.

In the preface of the book you say that changes (in opinion) are the hope of the church for the future. Have you seen recent changes in the church that give you hope for the future?

No, not really. I early on coined the phrase, "pockets of hope." I saw precious few places that showed me much hope for real growth. I saw some places where they could do some significant things and grow. But for the church as a whole, am I seeing things that will lead us to growth? No. I'm seeing the opposite. I'm seeing more attempts to do the same things we've been doing for the past many decades.

We have got to engage the thinking of the 20-30-somethings. They do not have the same carte blanche commitment to tithing or to Adventist education, and yet they are sincerely committed Christians many of whom want to be part of the SDA church. But they want to see things done differently. We've got to turn a greater segment of the church over to these people. I don't think that we have to go away.

I'm not a scholar. I don't have any arguments with our doctrines. I don't think we need to change anything in substance. But there are aspects that I have questions about and things I don't fully understand. I want to be in an environment where I can ask questions.

In our worship we have to present messages that people feel completely safe bringing their unattached family and friends to experience. Worship services have to be experiences of worship and praise where we send people out with more hope than they came in with. Then let's study with them in a more personalized format.

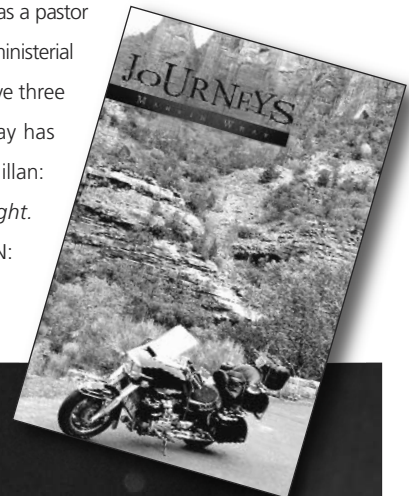
I tie that with assurance. A whole positive experience. I'll challenge them in their spiritual walk, but I want them going out whistling a tune, not a funeral dirge. I want them to think and be challenged.

The bottom line from my sabbatical is that

not many of our churches are positioned and ready to embrace the young families in today's world. We will retain a portion of those who have grown up in the church, but I don't see much happening that will take our beautiful message to young adults who would be hearing it for the first time. Somehow, I think that is what we're supposed to be doing. ■

Marvin Wray has been the lead pastor of the SDA Church in Napa, CA, for the past 12 years. He has served as a pastor throughout the U.S. and Hong Kong and as a ministerial director for five years. He and his wife Ingrid have three grown children and five grandchildren. Wray has co-authored two other books with Len McMillan: *First-Class Male* and *Putting Up with Mr. Right*.

Wray, Marvin. *Journeys*. (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2010).



One of the stations at the prayer ministry in Roswell, New Mexico.

Who is the Average American Adventist?

Comparing Two Demographic Profiles of Seventh-day Adventists

| BY RONALD E. OSBORN

In March 2011, an article by religion writer G. Jeffrey MacDonald appeared in *USA Today*, *Christian Century*, *the Kansas City Star*, and other news outlets, calling attention to the Seventh-day Adventist church's high growth rates relative to other denominations in the United States. With an annual increase in new members of 2.5 percent, largely among Latinos, MacDonald reported, Adventists are now the fastest growing denomination in North America. MacDonald did not say in his story where his figures came from, but in reply to a letter I sent him he indicated they were based upon the church's self-reporting for the year 2009 (the most recent year for which data was available), which he then simply compared with the self-reported figures of other denominations in the National Council of Churches *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*. This is a highly problematic basis of comparison since different groups might follow very different counting methodologies and also have greater or lesser incentives for monitoring and reporting growth. In addition, David Trim of the General Conference Office of Archives and Statistics reports a more accurate growth figure for Adventists is 2.1%. MacDonald's article does, however, focus attention on the rapidly changing demographics of Adventism in the United States, and on the need for more accurate statistical reporting about the church.

Perhaps the most important recent source of statistical information on Adventists in the United States is a 2008 study conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (a subsidiary of the Pew Charitable Trust).¹ If accurate, the Pew data reveals some surprising details about Adventists that have not been widely publicized by church leaders and that challenge the findings of studies conducted by the North American Division (NAD). The Pew survey indicates, among other things, that Seventh-day Adventists in the United States are significantly: less educated; less

economically well off; more economically unequal; and less likely to be married when compared with most other Christians as well as with the U.S. population as a whole. What should Adventists make of these unsettling findings? And just how representative is the Pew sample as far as Adventists in the United States are concerned? In this article I will analyze what the Pew study tells us about Adventist demography. I will discuss the survey's methodological limitations and explore possible reasons for the great disparity between its findings and those of a 2007–2008 Center for Creative Ministry survey sponsored by the NAD.

The New Demography of American Adventism?

In a landmark 2008 study of religious life in America conducted by the Pew Forum, a startling picture of Seventh-day Adventists emerges that greatly complicates longstanding narratives of the denomination as a vehicle of upward social mobility and faith community uniquely committed to higher education. The survey was based upon phone interviews of a nationally representative sample of the total adult population. Out of 35,556 persons interviewed, 135 self-identified as Seventh-day Adventists. The margin of error for Adventists, given this small sample size (or "small N") out of an estimated Adventist population of more than one million, Pew calculated, is approximately 10.5 percentage points with 95% confidence.² In layman's terms, what this means is that if the Pew study were repeated any number of times following the same methodology, 95 out of 100 times we would see the same results plus or minus 10.5% for any given question about Adventists (compared, for example, with a margin of error of 1.5% for Catholics, 10.5% for Muslims, 4.5% for Jews, and 0.6% for questions related to the total population). The U.S. Religious Landscape Survey reports the following demographic facts about adult Adventists (those aged 18 and above):

Education: Adventists are significantly less educated than the general population and than most other Christians, Pew found. Despite the church's great emphasis on education (which includes operating 14 fully accredited colleges and universities in the United States), more than three quarters (80%) of adult Adventists have not graduated from college compared with 73% of all Americans. Approximately one quarter (24%) of Adventists have not graduated from high school compared with 14% for the nation as a whole. Only 5% of Adventists have earned postgraduate degrees. By contrast, 11% of all Americans have postgraduate degrees, including 9% of all Protestants and 10% of all Catholics. Out of 27 Protestant denominations included in the Pew survey, only two, both in the Pentecostal tradition, have a higher percentage of members without high school degrees and only four have a lower percentage of postgraduates. The most highly educated Protestant groups are mainline Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Anglicans (57% of Episcopalians have earned college degrees). The most highly educated religious group of any kind in America, the Pew Forum reported, is Reformed Judaism, with 66% of its members having graduated from college (including 35% having earned postgraduate degrees).

Income: Adventists, Pew found, are significantly poorer than the general population and than most other Christians. Whereas 31% of the country as a whole has

Educational Level by Religious Tradition

	Less than High School %	High School Grad %	Some College %	College Graduate %	Post-Graduate %	N %
Total Population	14	36	23	16	11	35,298
Total Protestants	14	38	24	15	9	18,825
Members of Evangelical Prot. Churches	16	40	24	13	7	9,411
Members of Mainline Protestant Churches	9	34	24	20	14	7,429
Members of Hist. Black Prot. Churches	19	40	25	11	5	1,985
Catholic	17	36	21	16	10	7,990
Mormon	9	30	32	18	10	578
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	8	30	33	18	10	555
Jehovah's Witness	19	51	22	6	3	211
Orthodox	6	26	22	28	18	362
Greek Orthodox	2	33	21	25	18	168
Other Christian	12	22	27	20	20	129
Jewish	3	19	19	24	35	676
Reform	1	17	17	31	35	315
Conservative	4	18	21	23	35	218
Muslim*	21	32	23	14	10	1,031
Buddhist	3	23	26	22	26	408
Hindu	4	12	10	26	48	253
Other Faiths	7	25	28	18	21	448
Unitarian and Other Liberal Faiths	3	16	30	22	29	296
New Age	13	38	25	13	11	118
Unaffiliated	13	34	24	16	13	5,009
Atheist	8	28	23	21	21	509
Agnostic	5	22	29	23	20	825
Secular Unaffiliated	10	35	24	17	13	1,995
Religious Unaffiliated	21	40	22	11	6	1,680

Adventist Educational Level

	Less than High School %	High School Grad %	Some College %	College Graduate %	Post-Graduate %	N %
Seventh-day Adventist (Evangelical Tradition)	26	30	26	16	5	134

* From "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," Pew Research Center, 2007
 Due to rounding, rows may not add to 100.
 Question: What is the last grade or class that you completed in school?

an annual income level below \$30,000, 46% of Adventists in America do—a higher percentage than any non-Christian faith and equal to or higher than any Christian denomination with the exception of the historic Black wing of the Independent Baptist Church. While 31% of Americans have an annual income above \$75,000, only 18% of Adventists do. Nearly three quarters of Adventists (72%) earn less than \$50,000 annually, compared with 53% of the country as a whole. In terms of broad religious traditions, only members of the historically Black Protestant churches and Jehovah Witnesses have comparably low incomes (members of the Black churches earning slightly less than Adventists, Jehovah Witnesses slightly more according to Pew).

Income Level by Religious Tradition

	Less than \$30,000 %	\$30,000– \$49,000 %	\$50,000– \$74,000 %	\$75,000– \$99,999 %	\$100,000+ %	N %
Total Population	31	22	17	13	18	29,435
Total Protestants	32	23	17	12	15	15,741
Members of Evangelical Prot. Churches	34	24	18	11	13	7,943
Members of Mainline Protestant Churches	25	21	18	15	21	6,142
Members of Hist. Black Prot. Churches	47	26	12	7	8	1,656
Catholic	31	20	16	14	9	6,565
Mormon	26	21	22	16	16	512
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	26	21	22	16	15	493
Jehovah's Witness	42	23	17	9	9	178
Orthodox	20	24	16	13	28	290
Greek Orthodox	17	22	18	13	30	138
Other Christian	29	21	13	13	23	111
Jewish	14	11	17	12	46	520
Reform	11	8	14	12	55	251
Conservative	12	14	17	14	43	162
Muslim*	35	24	15	10	16	868
Buddhist	25	19	17	17	22	357
Hindu	9	10	15	22	43	220
Other Faiths	28	25	16	13	18	378
Unitarian and Other Liberal Faiths	19	25	16	13	26	243
New Age	39	23	17	12	9	106
Unaffiliated	29	23	16	13	19	4,279
Atheist	21	20	16	15	28	439
Agnostic	18	22	19	16	25	730
Secular Unaffiliated	25	24	17	13	21	1,686
Religious Unaffiliated	40	24	15	10	12	1,424

Adventist Income Level

	Less than \$30,000 %	\$30,000– \$49,000 %	\$50,000– \$74,000 %	\$75,000– \$99,999 %	\$100,000+ %	N %
Seventh-day Adventist (Evangelical Tradition)	46	26	10	7	11	115

* From "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," Pew Research Center, 2007

Due to rounding, rows may not add to 100.

Question: Last year, that is in 2006, what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes? Just stop me when I get to the right category. (READ IN ORDER) Less than \$10,000, 10 to under \$20,000, 20 to under \$30,000, 30 to under \$40,000, 40 to under \$50,000, 50 to under \$75,000, 75 to under \$100,000, 100 to under \$150,000, \$150,000 or more.

Income Inequality: Not only are Adventists less well off economically than the country as a whole, the Pew study indicates, they are also more unequal. Although the Pew survey did not discuss unequal distribution of wealth, it is possible to use its dataset to generate conservative Gini coefficients (a widely used statistical measure of income inequality) for both religious and nonreligious groups. The gap between the rich and the poor within Adventism is greater than for any other group in the survey with the exception of the historically Black Protestant churches (47% of whom earn less than \$30,000 annually) and Reformed Jews (55% of whom earn more than \$100,000 annually). The most egalitarian religious groups in America in terms of

income distribution include Mormons, Buddhists, agnostics, and mainline Protestants, which are as a whole both more prosperous and more economically equal than Adventists, as are also Catholics by a significant margin.

Marriage: Adventists according to Pew are less likely to be married than most other people in the United States and than most other Christians. While 54% of all Americans, including 58% of Catholics and 55% of all other Protestants, list their current status as married, fewer than half of those who self identify as Adventists (48%) do. Of unmarried Adventists, the Pew data suggests, 10% are currently living with a partner—the highest percentage recorded of any Christian group, Catholic or

Protestant (although this figure cannot be taken at face value for reasons I will discuss in part two of this article below). The only other groups in the Pew Survey who reported double-digit figures for cohabiting out of wedlock were Unitarians, atheists, agnostics, and the secularly and religiously unaffiliated. The number of Adventists whose current status is divorced or separated (11%) is meanwhile on par with the national average (12%). One quarter (25%) of Adventists have never been married, compared with 19% of the total population and 17% of other Protestants. The Protestant group with the highest percentage of married members is nondenominational evangelicals (68%), while those exhibiting the greatest commitment to marriage in the United

States today are Hindus: 79% are married and only 5% are divorced, the highest and lowest figures respectively of all groups in the survey. Despite being less likely to be married than others, the Pew survey indicates, Adventists are more likely to have children. While 35% of Americans have at least one child under the age of 18 living in their care, 38% of Adventists do.

Gender: Some of these figures might be related to the fact that Adventists appear to have one of the most imbalanced gender ratios of any religious group in the United States, with 60% of the church being female and 40% male (exactly the same ratio as Jehovah Witnesses and the historically Black Protestant churches). Only a small cluster of mostly fundamentalist churches have a gender imbalance greater than 10%, and Adventists are one of only seven Protestant denominations with a gender disparity of 20% or higher in the Pew study (the difference is 4% for the nation as a whole, with 52% of the country being female). By far the most gender-imbalanced group, however, is atheists, who are 70% male.

Ethnicity: Adventists are by far the most ethnically diverse religious community of any kind in the United States today with the exception of Muslims. They are the only Christian group in which no single ethnicity comprises 50% or more of their membership. More than a quarter of all Adventists in the U.S. today, the Pew

Race by Religious Tradition

	Non-Hispanic				Latino %	N
	White %	Black %	Asian %	Other/Mixed %		
Total Population	71	11	3	3	12	35,101
Total Protestants	74	16	1	3	5	18,753
Members of Evangelical Prot. Churches	81	6	2	4	7	9,380
Members of Mainline Protestant Churches	91	2	1	3	3	7,383
Members of Hist. Black Prot. Churches	2	92	0	1	4	1,990
Catholic	65	2	2	2	29	7,987
Mormon	86	3	1	3	7	571
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	87	2	1	3	7	547
Jehovah's Witness	48	22	0	5	24	212
Orthodox	87	6	2	3	1	358
Greek Orthodox	95	3	0	1	2	167
Other Christian	77	11	0	8	4	126
Jewish	95	1	0	2	3	671
Reform	95	0	1	1	3	309
Conservative	96	1	0	1	2	218
Muslim*	37	24	20	15	4	1,030
Buddhist	53	4	32	5	6	405
Hindu	5	1	88	4	2	255
Other Faiths	80	2	1	13	5	436
Unitarian and Other Liberal Faiths	88	2	2	5	4	291
New Age	84	1	0	10	5	113
Unaffiliated	73	8	4	4	11	4,955
Atheist	86	3	4	2	5	499
Agnostic	84	2	4	4	6	817
Secular Unaffiliated	79	5	4	4	8	1,971
Religious Unaffiliated	60	16	2	5	17	1,668

Adventist Racial Demographics

	Non-Hispanic				Latino %	N
	White %	Black %	Asian %	Other/Mixed %		
Seventh-day Adventist (Evangelical Tradition)	43	21	5	4	27	134

* From "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," Pew Research Center, 2007

Due to rounding, rows may not add to 100.

Question: Are you, yourself, of Hispanic origin or descent, such as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or some other Spanish background?

[IF HISPANIC ASK:] Are you white Hispanic, black Hispanic, or some other race? [IF NON-HISPANIC ASK:] What is your race? Are you white, black, Asian, or some other?

Forum reports, are Latino (27%) and more than one fifth are Black (21%). A smaller number (5%) are Asian or are of mixed race (4%). Whites comprise 43% of the denomination (compared with 71% of the total population, 74% of other Protestants, and 65% of Catholics). Jehovah Witnesses have the most similar racial composition to Adventists but with a slightly higher percentage of Whites (48%), lower percentage of Latinos (24%), and no recorded Asians in the Pew sample. Muslims, the most ethnically diverse religious community in the U.S., are the only group with double-digit percentages for at least four racial categories: 37% White, 24% Black, 20% Asian, and 15% of mixed race.

Region: When compared with the total population distribution of the United States, Adventists according to Pew are slightly overrepresented in the South (where 38% of Adventists live compared with 36% of all Americans) and West (26% compared with 22%). They are most underrepresented relative to population size in the Midwest (where 17% of Adventists live compared with 23% of all Americans and 25% of all Protestants). Nearly 20% of Adventists live in the Northeast where the denomination historically began. Among all Christian groups (not including Mormons), only two denominations have a higher percentage of their members concentrated in the West: the Church of the Nazarene (28%) and nondenominational evangelicals (38%).

Age: Adventists are slightly younger than the general adult population in America and younger still than Catholics as well as most other Protestants. Twenty percent (20%) of adult Adventists are between 18 and 29 years old, Pew reports. Only three other denominations (two in the historically Black tradition) have a higher percentage of adult adherents under the age of 30. The greatest percentage of Adventists, though, are between the ages of 30 and 49 (44%), making Adventism in the United States an essentially middle-aged religion. With 64% of its members under the age of 50 (compared with 59% for the general population, 55% for all Protestants, and 58% for Catholics), Adventists are among the ten youngest religious groups in the country alongside the historically Black Protestant churches (60%), Buddhists (63%), and Mormons (66%). They are not as young, though, as nondenominational charismatic and Evangelical Christians, more than 70% of whom are under 50, Hindus (76%), and Muslims (77%). Atheists are overwhelmingly young; 37% are under 30 and 73% under 50. The youngest group in the United States—with approximately the same number of self-identifying adherents as Adventists—is the New Age movement, with 43% being under the age of 30 and 86% under the age of 50.

Representation: The Pew data helps to shed light on another important fact about the church: Adventist demographics are very poorly reflected in church governance structures. While 60% of Adventists in the United States are female according to the Pew survey, only 20% (three out of 15) of its officials at the North America Division are female. And while 20% of adult Adventists in the United States are under the age of 30, the NAD sent a single person under

the age of 30 to the 2010 General Conference Session in Atlanta among its 237 delegates. Despite 64% of adult Adventists in the U.S. and an even higher percentage overseas being under the age of 50, the average age of newly elected GC officials in Atlanta in 2010 was 60, as estimated by journalist Keith Lockhart (for Spectrum Online). At the time of his election, by comparison, President Obama was 47 and Prime Minister David Cameron of Britain 43. When the Adventist church was formally organized in 1863, James White was 42 years old and Ellen White was 36.

Retention: Among Protestants, Adventists according to Pew have one of the highest retention rates in the country alongside Baptists and Lutherans. Fifty nine percent (59%) of those raised in the Adventist tradition remain Adventist compared with 52% of other Protestant denominations (and only 37% of Jehovah Witnesses, the group with the lowest retention rate). This single fact from the Pew survey inspired a long article in 2008 in the *Adventist Review* by Mark Kellner (“Adventists Score High in Membership Retention”). In the story, Kellner quotes NAD Vice President for Ministries, Debra Brill, praising Adventist education for keeping members in the church. No mention is made in the piece, however, of the Pew data on Adventist education rates. Kellner also devotes a paragraph to the fact that Catholics, according to the Pew study, have experienced the greatest net loss of members: 31% of Americans say they were raised Catholic while only 24% of the population now identifies as Catholic. What Kellner omits from his article is the fact that Catholic retention rates according to Pew are nevertheless significantly higher than those of Adventists, and that the Catholic Church has held a stable percentage of the total population for at least the past 40 years (in 1972, studies showed that 25% of Americans were Catholics, essentially the same as today). According to the Pew report, Catholics actually have among the highest retention rates of any religious group in the nation with 68% of those being raised Catholic remaining Catholic. Other traditions with higher retention rates than Adventists include Mormons (70%), Eastern Orthodox (73%), Jews (76%), and Hindus (84%).

The Catholic Church’s losses, the Pew researchers note, have been largely offset through immigration—a conclusion that applies even more strongly to Adventists, who have managed to maintain high growth rates despite higher losses than Catholics among those raised in the church. As a percentage of the total population, Adven-

tists, as well as Catholics, have in fact seen no significant change in membership over the past several decades. In 1990, the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) found that Adventists comprised 0.4% of the total population in the United States. In 2001, ARIS found that this percentage had declined to 0.3%. The 2008 Pew study found, once more, that approximately one million or less than one half of one percent (0.4%) of Americans self-identify as Adventists.

Margins of Error: How reliable are the Pew Survey's results compared with the NAD's study for the same year?

It is important to avoid picking and choosing which parts of any study to accept or reject on the basis of its margins of error. The *Adventist Review* reported on Pew's relatively positive findings about Adventist retention rates (when compared with other Protestant denominations). But these figures are no more or less accurate than Pew's figures on Adventist education levels or income inequality, raising the question of why the *Review* did not report on the study in its entirety. There is a sense, however, in which some Pew results are more reliable for Adventists than others.

The small sample size of Adventists in the Pew survey yields a 10.5% margin of error. This means that for some of its findings it is impossible to draw any meaningful conclusions. The number of Adventists living out of wedlock in the survey, for example, was 10%; but if we were to repeat the study using the same methodology 100 times, 95% of the time the number would range anywhere between 0% and 20%. This is clearly too high a margin of error for us to make any strong claims about Adventists relative to other groups for this particular question other than that more research needs to be done to see if the 10% figure holds. The same problem arises for many of Pew's other figures on Adventists where the differences between religious groups are less than 10%. But other Pew figures for Adventists cannot be lightly dismissed.

The safest approach to any statistical study is to identify its 95% confidence interval, which gives a clear sense of minimum and maximum possibilities. For example, the Pew survey finds with 95% confidence that between 17% and 38% of Adventists in the United States are Latinos; between 38% and 59% of Adventists are married; and between 10% and 30% of Adventists have earned a college degree. Figures lower and higher than these cannot be

accepted unless we are able to offer a critique of the Pew survey's methodology that goes beyond its sample size and identifies other sources of bias or error. (All surveys can include responder bias, problems with question wording, and inaccurate reporting on the part of interviewers.) Following this conservative approach, it is clear that the Pew survey's results cannot be reconciled with the results of a 2007–2008 survey sponsored by NAD Secretariat and conducted by the Center for Creative Ministry (published under the title "Seventh-day Adventists in North America: A Demographic Profile," and available through the CCM website at a cost of \$14.95).

The NAD survey, authored by Monte Sahlin (who provided generous information and critical feedback as I was writing this article), was based upon phone interviews of 931 Adventists across North America with a reported margin of error plus or minus four percentage (4%) points. Both the Pew and the NAD studies reported similar frequencies of church attendance, similar age demographics, and virtually identical income levels for Adventists (within three percentage points of agreement, showing that 69 vs. 72% of Adventists earn less than \$50,000 annually and 15 vs. 18% earn more than \$75,000). However, even allowing for the most generous margins of error in the two surveys, their reports differ sharply when it comes to their figures on ethnicity and education.

According to the 2008 NAD study, the percentage of Latino/Hispanic Adventists is 12%—that is, less than half the percentage of Blacks in the church (27%) and lower than the percentage of Latinos in the population as a whole (in 2006, the U.S. Census Bureau found that 15% of Americans were Latinos). This extremely low percentage of Latino Adventists seems to be plainly contradicted by the NAD's figures on Adventist immigrants in the same report. NAD found that the "percentage of immigrants in the Adventist Church is more than double the rate for the general population in the United States and significantly greater than the percentage in Canada." The question therefore arises: If Adventism in the United States is as heavily comprised of immigrants as NAD reports, but they are *not* Latinos, where exactly are they coming from? The NAD 95% confidence interval says that the actual number of Latinos could be between eight and (at most) 16%. The Pew survey, however, puts the figure of Adventist Latinos anywhere between 17% (at the least) and 37%. The high end of NAD's margin of error and the low end of Pew's do not overlap. (Similarly,

the percentage of married Adventists in the NAD survey is between 59% and 67%, while the Pew figures are significantly lower, between 38% and 59%.)

More glaring problems arise when we compare Pew's and NAD's figures on Adventist educational attainment. According to the NAD study, the percentage of "members with a college degree is more than double that of the general population." Fully 46% of Adventists, it reports, have earned a bachelors or associates degree, while another 15% have earned graduate degrees. These are astonishingly high figures. If 61% of Adventists in the United States possessed a college degree or higher, Adventists would be the most highly educated Christian group in the nation. Their college graduation rate would be triple the rates of most other evangelicals and on a par with Episcopalians (57% of whom have at least a college degree according to the Pew survey). Adventists would in fact be the third highest educated group of any kind in the country, only slightly less educated than Reformed Jews (66% of whom have a college degree or higher with a margin of error plus or minus 4.5 percent).

These figures are extremely hard to believe in the light of the Pew data on the income levels of other groups. More than one-third (35%) of Episcopalians and more than half of Reformed Jews (55%) have incomes above \$100,000 annually, compared with only 11% of Adventists. Adventists (both the Pew survey and the NAD survey agree) are almost 50% in the bottom half of income earners in the country, and more than 50% non-White (ethnicity and income being two key predictors of educational attainment). For Adventists to achieve a college graduation rate above 60% as the NAD found would, therefore, not simply be a major accomplishment. It would be close to a sociological and statistical miracle.

There are additional reasons to question the NAD's 2008 estimation that 61% of its members have earned college degrees or higher. The 2001 ARIS study (based on interviews with more than 50,000 people) found that 29% of Seventh-day Adventists in the U.S. have earned a college degree, while the 2001 U.S. Congregational Life Survey also place the number at approximately 30%. These figures are within the 10.5% margin of error of the Pew study. And previous studies conducted by Sahlin's Center for Creative Ministries also support an Adventist college and graduate degree figure in the range of 30%.

In its 1998, report, "Trends, Attitudes, and Opinions," Sahlin noted that there had been no statistically significant

change in the general level of education among NAD members during the past decade. In 1997, as in 1989, about "a third [of Adventists in North America] have completed higher education and two-thirds have not." Sahlin did, however, report disconcerting changes at the low and high ends of the Adventist educational spectrum: the percentage of members who had not completed high school had increased from 18% in 1989 to 22% in 1997, while the number who had completed graduate degrees had declined from 13% in 1989 to 10% in 1997. "If this trend were to continue over several decades," Sahlin warned, "it would have the effect of eroding the present character of the Adventist community as one that is highly educated and values education."

How is it, we must therefore ask, that the NAD should report in 2008 that these trends had been so dramatically reversed? Why did it find that the percentage of its members with graduate degrees, instead of continuing to decline, had suddenly leaped in a 10-year period from 10% (in 1997) to 15% (in 2007-2008)? How could it conclude that the percentage of North American Adventists with college degrees or higher had doubled in a single decade? Can we assume that the 2008 NAD figures are more accurate than the Pew data simply because they were based upon a larger number of interviews and so a smaller reported margin of error? Unfortunately, the 2008 NAD study contains significant methodological problems, which means its figures should be viewed with even greater caution than the Pew Forum's findings.

The NAD survey, Sahlin told me in a telephone conversation in April, was based upon a randomized list of church members drawn from 200 church telephone directories obtained from the pastors of churches across the country. This means that the NAD survey in contrast to the Pew study excluded all persons who might self-identify as Adventists and regularly attend church but without being official members. This fact, together with the fact that about 10% of NAD membership is Canadian, might explain a significant part of the difference between NAD's findings and Pew's. They were in fact measuring different things and so are not fully comparable. There are two major potential sources of bias, however, in the NAD methodology. First, problems might easily arise in the process of selecting which churches are most representative of Adventism as a whole. Second, church phone directories do not include valid phone numbers for a high number of members.

The NAD has for several years maintained an electronic

directory of all conference membership records, including phone numbers. This “eAdventist” dataset is kept strictly confidential by the NAD’s Information Technology Services Department. It was not even provided to Sahlin for his research, he told me, despite the fact that his studies are conducted for the NAD and released under its name. The NAD’s IT offices responded to an initial email I sent them asking if they might provide some figures from their dataset but then abruptly told me they could not be of help in response to some additional questions I sent them. The NAD’s response to my initial letter, however, revealed an important fact: in 2010 the eAdventist directory included telephone numbers for barely 70% of all members (719,210 out of 1,032,232 persons listed). Of these numbers listed in the church directory, many would in all likelihood be disconnected or invalid.³ Immigrant Adventists whose official memberships might still be in home countries other than the U.S. would not be included in the NAD phone directory at all. Further, baptized Adventists who are undocumented with the U.S. government and permanently living in the United States might be very reluctant to provide personal contact details to church offices to be entered into a computer database.

These facts suggest that at least one-third of Adventist members in the United States, if not more, were simply not represented in the NAD study in 2007-2008. A very high percentage of these excluded Adventists whose phone numbers are not included in any church database might be Latino, poor, and/or less educated than the general population. U.S. Census data shows that Latinos earn approximately 30% less than the average American and are less than half as likely to earn a college degree. This would go far to explain why the 2008 NAD figures on Adventist educational attainment are so implausibly high—and why the Pew Forum’s low figures are entirely credible. The Center for Creative Ministry based its work upon an unrepresentative sample of all Adventists in North America, potentially capturing only what we might call “high commitment” or “traditionally rooted” Adventists who have made sure to provide valid, up-to-date phone numbers to church offices.

The Pew study, by contrast, is a truly randomized survey that does not include such clear sampling bias. Its major weakness is simply the small number of Adventists interviewed, but this can be taken into account by paying careful attention to its margins of error. Even taking the NAD study’s margins of error for sampling size into consideration,

however, it is very hard to know how accurate its findings are given the fact that such a high number of members are not included in church phone directories. We must also note that the NAD’s survey makes no attempt to include non-official or lapsed members who continue to self-identify as Seventh-day Adventists.

It must be noted that Sahlin’s research methods—selecting a randomized sample of Adventists from a randomized selection of membership directories—may be the only feasible method available. What the very evident problems in the education figures in the 2008 NAD study point to is the fact that the best available membership directories may not be representative of Adventism in North America today. In order for the church to have more accurate statistical reporting and analysis, more information must be collected on all of its members. The data from the NAD’s eAdventist dataset should also be made available at least to its own researchers.

The demographic picture of Adventism that emerges in the Pew study can perhaps best be summarized with reference to the words of the Apostle Paul: “Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth” (1 Cor. 1:26). I leave it to others to wrestle with the possible institutional as well as missional implications of what the Pew study suggests: that Adventism in the United States today is a faith of the poor, the uneducated, and quite possibly the undocumented, and these trends will probably increase in the future. ■

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References

1. The complete report may be accessed online at: <http://religions.pewforum.org>
2. For some questions, Pew collected answers from fewer than 135 Adventists, although this does not significantly change the margin of error.
3. As a general rule, random digit dialing surveys require that at least three times the number of phone numbers needed be called since two-thirds of any randomized list of phone numbers will be disconnected or unassigned. See Roger Wimmer and Joseph Dominick, *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*, 9th edition (Boston: Wadsworth, 2006), 95.

ELLEN WHITE



The Politics of the Prophetic Gift

by Gilbert M. Valentine | A REVIEW BY DOUGLAS MORGAN

Valentine, Gilbert M., *The Prophet and the Presidents*, (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2011).

As the General Conference moves forward with plans to circulate 50 million copies of *The Great Controversy* in the coming year, Gilbert Valentine, in *The Prophet and the Presidents*, takes us back to a time when denominational leaders resisted Ellen White's pleas for aggressive marketing of the book. It was a different era in the politics of the prophetic gift.

Politics? In the broad and neutral sense, any endeavor to influence the behavior of others, be it through a sermon, article, committee discussion, blog, or tweet, is "political." The same goes for a "testimony," as Valentine shows in this groundbreaking study of the power relationship between prophetic and administrative authority during an era filled with upheavals of extraordinary importance for the future direction of the denomination. He immerses us in Ellen White's own politics—her strategic choices, successes and frustrations in influencing church leadership during the General Conference presidencies of O. A. Olsen, G. A. Irwin, and A. G. Daniells in the years from 1888 until her death in 1915. At the same time, Valentine shows us the agency of these presidents and other influential figures, both in seeking to influence Ellen White and to marshal her "testimonies" to their political advantage.

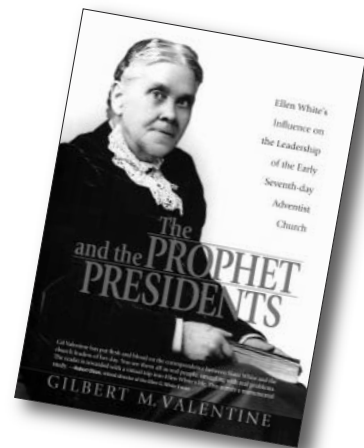
My sense is that, if given due attention, *The Prophet and the Presidents* will be seen as more than just a thoroughly researched, well-written book, but as a landmark in Ellen White historiography. It is not bombshell revelations that make it stand out in this way, though I suspect that even the most well-informed reader will find valuable and perhaps surprising new information in it. It is rather the rigor, depth, and candor with which Valentine consolidates and advances trends that have been building for some time toward studying Ellen White's prophetic career in the light of the very human vicissitudes of her life experience and its cultural context, rather than working with her writings as a

kind of compendium of disembodied oracles.

The questions Valentine raises and the way he goes about answering them will be unsettling to some. He recognizes inconsistencies in Ellen White's writings and does not try to smooth them all out. Nor does he assume that she always had the higher moral ground or purer motives than her opponents. He is, of course, not the first to take such an approach. The same could also be said not only of anti- Ellen White polemicists, but also the pioneering scholarship of Ronald Numbers, Jonathan Butler, and Ronald Graybill in the 1970s and 1980s.¹ But while the work of these scholars involved serious turbulence in their relationship with the Adventist church, Valentine's book is a self-described "believer's history," published by Pacific Press. And there's no mistaking the "believer" part. Valentine has served the church for decades as a pastor, professor, and administrator, and is currently chair of the Department of Administration and Leadership at La Sierra University. He is the author of several scholarly works on Adventist history, including *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation* (Review and Herald, 2005). He conveys a deep desire to help his church derive fuller, richer nurture from the writings that perpetuate Ellen White's prophetic ministry. It seems valid, then, to discuss first the book's contribution to historical understanding, then comment on its significance for the believing community, recognizing that these categories cannot be neatly or fully separated.

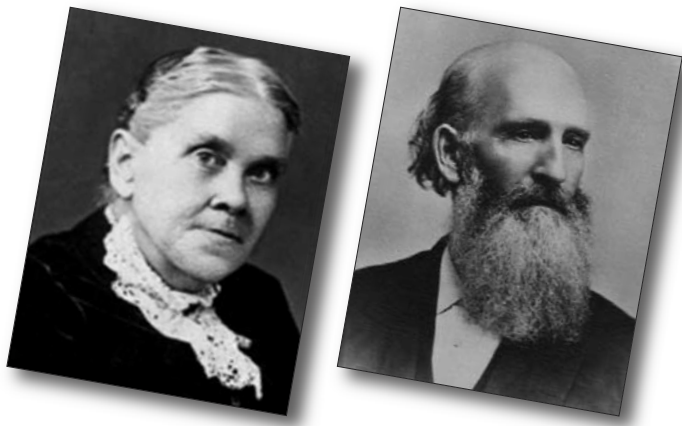
Prophecy and Administration in Tension

Valentine undertakes a dual historical task. He seeks first to analyze the interaction between the two foremost channels of governance in the church: the charismatic authority of Ellen White and the institutional authority of the General



Conference. In so doing, one of his most valuable and original achievements is illuminating the perspectives of the presidents—the complexities they faced, and the varying ways and extent to which each took initiatives to shape events, rather than simply function as passive instruments of directives from Ellen White.

Still, the author's foremost interest, and surely that of his potential readers, remains with the prophet. Thus,



Ellen and husband James White, who died in 1881

Valentine's second major goal is to broaden the range of contextual factors considered in studying Mrs. White's work. Going beyond simply the historical circumstances—the consideration of “time and place” that she herself urged as essential—Valentine contends for much fuller attention to the role of personal circumstances—family and financial stresses, and, bound up with these, emotional and physical health.

Valentine also brings gender into the picture, though he does not press it very far as an analytical tool. Nonetheless, his narrative provides revealing close-ups of the female prophet's struggle to bring prophetic authority to bear on the male leaders in the denomination in the decades following the death of her husband, James, in 1881.² Valentine picks up the story in 1888, when Norwegian-born Ole A. Olsen assumed the General Conference presidency, replacing George I. Butler, who bitterly opposed Ellen White's tolerance, then endorsement, of the “new theology” proponents, Alonzo T. Jones and Ellet J. Waggoner.

Olsen, the most yielding of the presidents in responding to Ellen White's exhortations, turned out to be the least effective in implementing her wishes, making him, in turn, the brunt of increasingly sharp rebukes.

As Ellen White saw it, Olsen's mandate, as an outsider to Battle Creek, was to break up the dominance that a small circle of leaders held over the Review and Herald Publishing Association and the General Conference itself, particularly in its financial affairs. Antagonism built between these leaders and Ellen White as she decried their resistance to the spiritual and theological reforms sparked by the 1888 conference and charged them with rapacious business practices, harsh treatment of employees, and injustice to authors, not least herself, with regard to marketing, royalties, and copyrights.

After leaving for Australia in 1891 with tensions high over such matters, Ellen White became increasingly critical of Olsen's indirect, conciliatory style of dealing with powerful figures she opposed, such as Harmon Lindsay, General Conference treasurer, and Archibald R. Henry, who not only managed the Review and Herald but also chaired the General Conference Association, the holding corporation for the denomination's legal and financial affairs. With Olsen's weakness, the problems in Battle Creek had only worsened, she wrote in 1894, characterizing the denomination's venerable publishing company as “a den of thieves and money changers.”³

At the General Conference, progress on organizational reforms to decentralize denominational administration was halting at best. Meanwhile, the depression that began in 1893 placed severe financial pressure on the church, already deeply in debt, making Olsen even more dependent on the expertise of men such as Henry, whose skill as an investor brought badly needed financial relief benefit to the denomination, even as his creative financial schemes at times seem to have shaded into venality.

As Ellen White's frustrations grew, she came to regard her move to Australia as a serious mistake, for which she blamed Olsen. She had talked him out of relinquishing office in 1893, but as the 1897 General Conference approached it became clear that she wanted a change, and Olsen seems to have been genuinely relieved to step down.

However, the election of George A. Irwin—a man about whom she knew little—came as a disappointing surprise to Ellen White. She had favored the denomination's leading educator, W. W. Prescott, as best equipped to lead out in the desired reforms. She was initially cool towards Irwin, and more than a year after he took office commented in a letter to E. J. Waggoner that the “proper” persons had not yet taken leadership in Battle Creek. Yet as Irwin made dili-

gent efforts to implement her counsel, with a measure of greater success than Olsen, their relationship warmed. Along with his receptivity, Irwin seemed to take somewhat greater initiative in sending her his questions and assessments, even correcting her facts on occasion.

Despite this gradual growth of rapport, and despite key personnel changes (including the removal of Henry) and implementation of reforms at the Review and Herald, Ellen White continued an unrelenting barrage of testimonies denouncing management of the publishing work in 1898 and 1899. With the General Conference appearing impotent to resolve this and other problems, and as the structural reforms, which she advocated to break up the “kingly power” held by a few men, were stalled, the intensity of her frustration reached its peak. Her declaration in 1898 that she no longer regarded the General Conference as “the voice of God” is relatively familiar, but Valentine highlights some even more vivid passages from the same manuscript: She declared, for example, that the leaders in office were no more qualified for the task “than are children to guide steamships over the broad ocean.”⁴

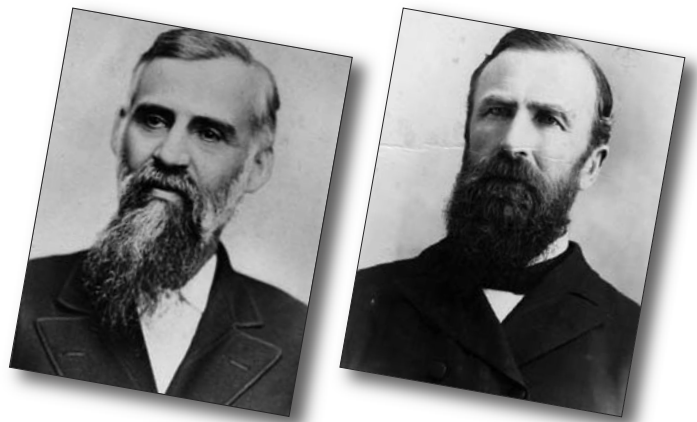
The steamship image may have suggested itself because the question of her return to America had been under consideration for some time, and she finally decided to do so in 1900, with the 1901 General Conference on the horizon. I found Valentine’s narrative of the run-up to the transformative conference held in Battle Creek that year particularly riveting. He brings to light how interconnected concerns in the United States, Australia, and South Africa shaped events, and how the South African Wessels family, major donors to the church whose largesse was drawn from a diamond fortune, played an influential role. In all of this, alignments began to solidify over Dr. John Harvey Kellogg’s growing assertion of the independence his medical missionary enterprises had from denominational governance.

The relationship between Ellen White and Arthur G. Daniells, who took the helm in 1901, was the closest of the three that Valentine analyzes, but also the one in which the pressure exerted by the prophetic and presidential poles of authority was the most bi-directional. The question of which of these two strong-willed leaders was the more dominant in their relationship has been a matter of much speculation and debate. Valentine does not attempt a definitive resolution of the question, but

the impressive range of evidence he brings together advances the discussion.

Though Ellen White was the spiritual mother of the entire Adventist family, the epochal struggle for the soul of the denomination that followed the 1901 conference pitted two of her closest “sons” against each other. The nurture that Kellogg received from the Whites is fairly well known, but it may be less well known that while in Texas during the late 1870s, James and Ellen also shared their home for a year with newlyweds Arthur and Mary Daniells. Arthur, in his first assignment in denominational service, was assisting R. M. Kilgore as “tentmaster.” Daniells’ sojourn with the Whites had been a pleasant one, and his bond with Ellen White had strengthened as they had worked closely together in Australia during the 1890s.

Their relationship, however, had its share of friction, and it was by no means a foregone conclusion that she would side with him against Kellogg, though she did so when push came to shove. Valentine shows how Ellen White, following the 1901 conference, continued to demonstrate considerable support for the decentralizing aspects of organizational reform. She wanted the church’s



General Conference Presidents George I. Butler and Ole A. Olsen

reformers and innovators, such as Jones, Waggoner, David Paulson, Percy T. Magan, Edward L. Sutherland, and her son Edson to thrive with as much freedom as possible from the strictures of an overbearing General Conference administration. Daniells, on the other hand, emphasized the centralizing aspect of reform: achievement of greater coordination and unity by bringing the agencies for various lines of church endeavors under the umbrella of conference administration.

While Daniells took a firm and unyielding stand

against Kellogg's refusal to accept General Conference oversight of Battle Creek Sanitarium and the Medical Missionary and Benevolent Association, Ellen White repeatedly pushed the president to make efforts for conciliation. Until the stormy Lake Union Conference session of 1904 brought an end to hopes for such efforts, Daniells and his allies were never sure on which side Ellen White would end up. Daniells apparently took some credit for influencing the prophet away from her sympathies with Kellogg, and, arguably, never pursued reconciliation in as whole-hearted and persistent fashion as she would have liked. In a sense, then, one could say that Daniells "won" this round, though she kept him off balance throughout.

However, Ellen White did not surrender her resistance to top-down authority. If Kellogg was too defiant, powerful, and theologically fuzzy to be entrusted with independence, she believed it could and should be afforded those more in harmony with her agenda. Daniells's greatest perplexity and most direct clash with Ellen White came on this point. Ellen White wanted Daniells both to endorse Magan and Sutherland in conducting their enterprises in the South on an independent basis *and* to make a large appropriation from the denominational treasury to their Madison Sanitarium in Nashville. In other words, they



GC President G. A. Irwin and educator W. W. Prescott

were to be allowed to solicit donations from the faithful that might otherwise be given through regular denominational channels, while at the same time receiving funds given through those regular channels—funds desperately needed to support countless denominational institutions around the world—all the while remaining unaccountable to denominational leadership. Daniells was diplomatic yet

firm in his resistance. Ellen White never abandoned her position, but eventually made peace with the reality that the sanitarium could not be financially sustained.

With regard to evangelistic work in the large cities, Ellen White's exhortations held greater sway. A series of escalating reproofs of Daniells' failure to address this matter culminated with her declaration in 1910 that he was no longer "prepared to direct the work of the General Conference."⁵ Such a strong reproof from the prophet, even at the age of 83, was enough to topple a president, even one as strong as Daniells. In discussing the matter with his colleagues, Daniells expressed willingness to leave the presidency and accept reassignment. Instead, the General Conference Committee granted him a one-year leave to conduct public evangelism, which he did in New York City. For Daniells, the greatest value of the experience seemed to be gaining firsthand awareness that the denomination was not well prepared to work effectively in the cities. Yet the fact that the initiative had been undertaken was enough to lift the burden that had so strongly pressed on Ellen White's soul.

Stressed-out Prophet?

If reception of prophetic counsel sometimes meant daunting, even overwhelming challenges for church presidents, exercising the prophetic gift was no easy matter either. In his crucial Chapter 11, Valentine pulls together his case for greater attention to the personal factors affecting the prophet—"emotions, health concerns, and specific life circumstances"—in constructing a "hermeneutical paradigm" for understanding Ellen White's writings.⁶

Here and throughout the book, Valentine brings to light a gamut of human contingencies in communicating the messages of divine origin, including rare occasions in which they were sent to the wrong person. Most striking of all are Ellen White's own self-doubts and frustrations about communicating the Lord's messages. She had to balance her duty to convey messages of reproof with her perception of the recipient's ability to receive it, and more than once worried that she had been too harsh or hasty or otherwise inadequate. Misunderstanding and misapplication of her testimonies at times compounded her frustration.

Valentine suggests that the hyperbole, extreme metaphors, and "super-heated language" to which Ellen White often resorted should not be taken with mechanical literalism. That seems noncontroversial. He ventures onto

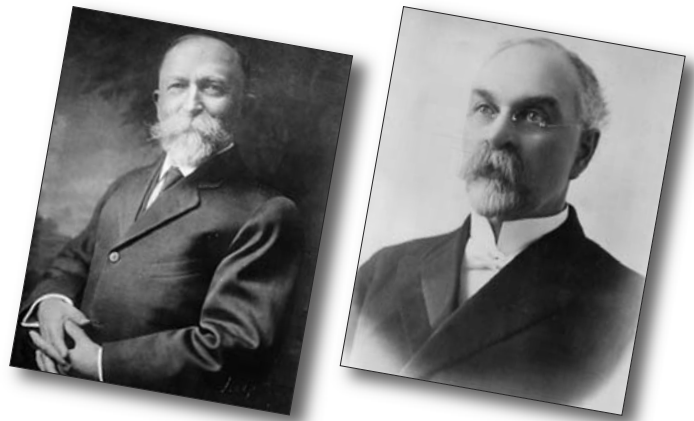
riskier ground, however, in weighing the influence of such factors as sleep deprivation, stressful circumstances, and self-interest, raising the possibility that calculated prophetic principle was not always the governing impulse in writings.

He is particularly persuasive in depicting the impact of her circumstances and emotional outlook while in Australia. Severe financial “embarrassment” (debt) causing her to fall behind in paying wages to her staff and curtailing her ability to support projects important to her—her own in Australia and her son, Edson’s, in the American South—surely colored the intensity of her denunciations of the unjust, oppressive practices of the *Review and Herald*. During this time, she declared (in retrospect) that “his satanic majesty was in the management of my books.”¹⁷

Two reservations come to mind, however. The first has to do with the extent to which the personal, emotional factors that Valentine highlights were in the driver’s seat, rather than prophetic principle. For example, did a large measure of the fervor of Ellen White’s calls for outreach to African Americans in the South in the 1890s derive from the fact that it was her son who took the lead in the project? Did her seemingly ceaseless, and, in global perspective, seemingly disproportionate demands that resources be invested in that work in the 1900s reflect a diminished passion for *world* missions, now that she was back in the United States? In raising these possibilities, Valentine by no means suggests that her motivations were devoid of important principles. Indeed, he points out that in portraying the denominational leaders’ diversion of funds away from the needy black South, in such terms as “oppression” and “robbery,” Ellen White was doing what prophets do, taking “the side of the minority and the marginalized and the downtrodden...over against the establishment and the status quo.”¹⁸

However, in pitting this idealism against the presidents’ practical need to oversee worldwide distribution of limited funds in a balanced way, Valentine may underplay the keenness of Ellen White’s prophetic insight and the depth of her principled commitment to a cause that stood at the forefront of her concerns for nearly twenty years. The strength of her convictions about the need to rectify the failure of Adventists, and American Christians in general, to “do justice and love mercy” with regard to the freed slaves, comes through in her address “Our Duty to the Colored People,” given in 1891, several years before Edson took up the challenge. In a *Review and Herald* article published early

in 1896, Ellen White referred to the education and consequent expansion of economic opportunity entailed in the holistic “missionary enterprise” that she was advocating as “the best *restitution* that can be made to those who have been robbed of their time and deprived of their education.” This analysis broadens the context for considering the



Dr. John Harvey Kellogg and Arthur G. Daniells

rhetorical extremes of Ellen White’s critique of church leaders. Shifting resources away from the “southern work” involved more than just prioritizing one worthy church project over another, but failure to address the “heavy debt upon the American nation” from the legacy of slavery and missed opportunities of the Reconstruction period immediately following the Civil War.⁹

A second reservation has to do with the distinctiveness of the 1890s with regard to the impact of bitter conflict, the pressure of harsh circumstances, and the consequences for emotional balance on Ellen White’s writings. Valentine’s richly textured portrayal of her circumstances in Australia is worth the price of the book in itself, and I am open to the proposal that controversy and emotional upheaval had an especially strong effect on the prophet during that decade. My impression, though, is that similar conflicts and supercharged rhetoric appear throughout much of Ellen White’s career. The extent to which that is true, however, would correspondingly serve to expand the value of Valentine’s study.

Moreover, reservations aside, Valentine clearly succeeds in establishing the necessity of greater attention to factors influencing Ellen White’s state of mind and heart than has generally been given. This is so, if for no other reason than that he shows Ellen White herself acknowledging such factors and even admonishing church leaders to take them

into account. Following the 1903 General Conference, when she had explicitly and publicly sided with him against Kellogg, she cautioned A. G. Daniells and his allies not to use her most strongly worded reproofs of the doctor so as to alienate him beyond the possibility of reconciliation. “Do not use the words that I have spoken under great perplexity and distress, to hasten a crisis,” she pled. It was time now to “step softly and wear the gospel shoes.”¹⁰

Honest Politics

The value of Valentine’s work for Adventism as a living community of faith can best be expressed, in my view, by citing one of the New Testament’s richest passages on spiritual gifts, Ephesians 4:11–16. In brief, *The Prophet and the Presidents* offers a significant advance toward the maturity that comes through wise and diligent appropriation of the gifts Christ gave to build up the church, his body. My guess, though, is that not everyone will share this positive assessment of its spiritual impact. That is reason for gratitude, not only to the author but also to Pacific Press Publishing Association for its willingness to risk some controversy, and to the Ellen G. White Estate for facilitating the research. While the warm endorsement from Robert Olson, retired director of the White Estate, strategically placed on the front cover, cannot be taken to represent the views of current officers, Valentine’s acknowledgements and endnotes suggest an open

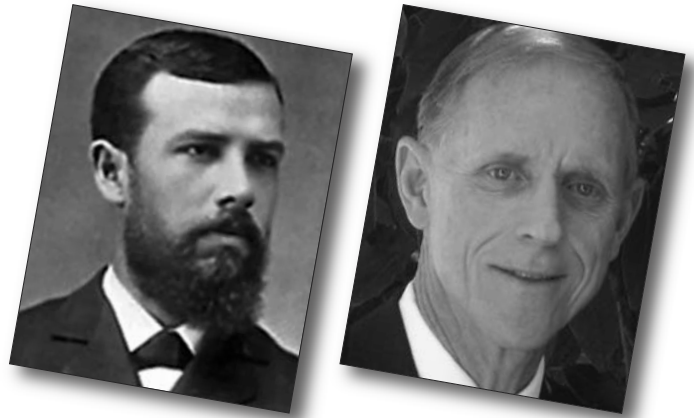


James Edson White and E. J. Waggoner

and supportive atmosphere for research, including freedom of access to necessary documents.

Moreover, it is not difficult to imagine an endorsement from W. C. White, for Valentine can be seen as moving forward in the direction toward which the prophet’s son

pointed. Valentine describes how W. C. W., in seeking to help the church adjust to the prospect and then reality of the loss of a living prophet, tried to counteract the “idealized and oversimplified” conceptions about Ellen White that had become widespread. He believed that a proper understanding of the “spirit of prophecy” could only come about in connection with a “better understanding of all the other gifts in the church.”¹¹ Similarly, A. G. Daniells rejected the verbal inspiration of Ellen White’s writings,



W. C. White and author Gilbert M. Valentine

seeing the validation of her prophetic gift instead in the fruit of her ministry.¹²

Valentine’s intensive and broad-ranging exercise in contextualization has led him to see evidence of Ellen White’s extraordinary prophetic gift along similar lines. He is not drawn to stories about clairvoyant phenomena or amazing predictions come true, or claims for one hundred percent accuracy and consistency. Rather, he is impressed by the “rich tapestry” of Adventist experience produced by the interaction of three agencies: 1) Ellen White—the passionate visionary and risk-taker who sometimes got angry, wrote impulsively, questioned herself, and changed her mind; 2) those who found her prophetic voice credible but also sometimes questioned it; and 3) divine providence.

A. G. Daniells paid a political price for his views of Ellen White’s authority, which he expressed with candor at the 1919 Bible Conference. His ouster from the General Conference presidency in 1922 came about in part through exploitation of a kind of fundamentalism about Ellen White that was appealing in its absolutism and sensationalism, but untruthful to history and unfaithful to her own appeals.

Political use of the prophetic gift in Adventism is not only inevitable; it can be legitimate. Works such as *The Prophet and the Presidents* that “speak the truth in love” can make for more open, honest, and productive politics. A church well informed about Ellen White’s career and how her prophetic gift functioned will be less easily manipulated by selective and distorted use of her writings under the guise of exalting her authority. It will also be better equipped to withstand the toxic winds generated by Ellen White haters. Most importantly, it will be better positioned to find in the central themes that animate her writings deeper unity in Christ, and thereby grow and be built up in love. ■

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3. Valentine, 102.
4. ———, 132–133.
5. ———, 289.
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9. Republished in *The Southern Work* (1901), 54, emphasis supplied.
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Upcoming Events at Adventist Forum Chapters

New York Forum

Columbia University, St. Mary’s Church

December 3, 2011

Ed Samuel, architect, philosopher, and scientist
“Beauty Matters”

December 10, 2011

Alexander Carpenter, visual arts and religion teacher at Pacific Union College; Spectrum Blog editor
“The End of Adventism: Does Our Eschatology Corrupt Our Ethics?”

December 17, 2011

Special Christmas Celebration
Our Christmas Celebration, through music and scripture

Central Florida Chapter

February 3–4, 2012

Jon Dybdahl, author and immediate past president Walla Walla University
“Towards an Adventist Spirituality”
Forest Lake SDA Church

February 18, 2012

Iman Mubammad Musri, president Islamic Society of Central Florida

San Diego Forum

The Tierrasanta SDA Church

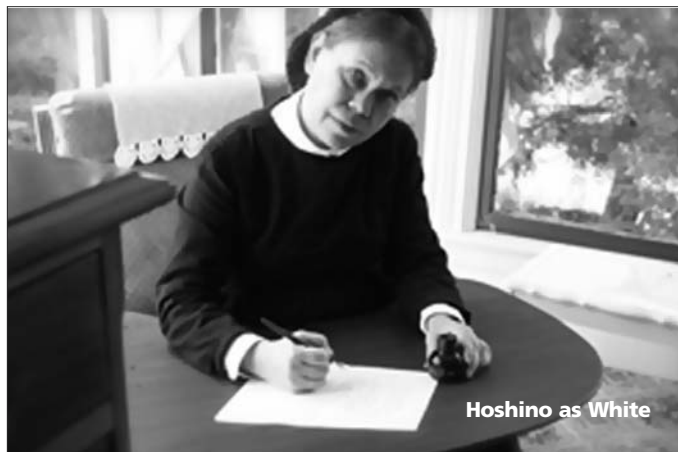
February 18, 2012

David Neff, editor, Christianity Today
“A Better World: How compassion and justice can flourish alongside eschatology”

May 4 & 6, 2012

John R. Jones, PhD, associate professor of Religion, La Sierra University
“The B-List: Early Christian Writings That Didn’t Make the Cut—and what they tell us about the early church”

Ellen White Re-Enactors | BY MIDORI YOSHIMURA



Experiencing Ellen:

Rita Hoshino Portrays Ellen G. White

How come you're here when you're dead?" a young girl asks the woman wearing black and a gentle smile. Rita Hoshino, licensed Ellen G. White reenactor, pauses; she's not quite sure how to explain this. Even her resourceful contacts at the Ellen G. White Estate might be stumped. However, Hoshino knows at least one person who would have loved to try.

"[Ellen] just loved kids," says Hoshino, Ellen White's modern counterpart, who is petite, part-Hawaiian, part-Chinese. "You know, so many people have seen the strict Ellen. From the pictures she never smiled. Well [like everybody else back then], she never smiled because the film was so slow!" Photography has greatly improved since the prophetess's day, but Hoshino often finds that understanding of Ellen is still unclear. By portraying Ellen White, she helps others come to terms with, or introduces them to, Seventh-day Adventism's iconic prophetess.

"I was raised among the books [written by Ellen White]," remembers Hoshino. Her father worked at Pacific

Press Publishing Association, and she helped in the bindery department. Because of this connection, when Pacific Press asked her to portray a teenage Ellen White, she agreed. As a Pacific Union College student, she acted as Mrs. White for PUC Children's Church Ministries.

Hoshino has not grown out of her alter ego's costume, though she is currently adding pockets ("for a microphone pack") to Mrs. White's iconic black dress. The graphic artist and calligrapher has portrayed Ellen White at St. Helena Hospital's 125th anniversary celebration, Loma Linda University Hospital's Centennial Anniversary, and the Hiram Edson Farm Dedication, not to mention church services, and schools. She has been invited to represent Adventist Heritage Ministry and has received a nod from the E. G. White Estate, according to her website, www.ellenwhitelegacy.com. Increased publicity led to her most visible role yet: portraying Mrs. White at the 2010 General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia.

"At the GC, people tried to 'cup' my face," Hoshino remembers. This unique expression of affection involved strangers placing their hands on either side of her face, holding it within their palms' embrace. Others offered her money to be a prop for their product, or attract passersby to their booth. Hoshino says, "I had to hide just to be able to eat!" Her popularity as Mrs. White meant that Rita had to have a security guard or a handler. Exclamations of "You look just like [Ellen White]!" rang through the air. She jokes, "Well, it's not terribly complimentary when people think you look like someone who looks like they got hit by a car." That wasn't the only memorable conversation. "I had one lady say, 'Oh you're fatter than Ellen,' and all I could say was, 'I don't believe so,'" remembers Hoshino. Her background in stand-up comedy reminds her to maintain a sense of humor. "I'm not trying to beat people over the head with her; I am trying to portray her

as the woman I know her to be," she says.

Hoshino sees her role as an encourager. Drawing near the prophetess from the past, people tell her, "We don't know Ellen White, we haven't met her, we want to fall in love." Others encountered Ellen as a hammer: "They had been hit over the head with 'red books.'" With Ellen White quotes such as, "He will never leave you in uncertainty," she wants people "to feel the sense that they themselves are adored by Jesus too. Then I can just slip away into the background." She sees her role "not to point people to Ellen, but to point them to Jesus."

As a spiritual signpost, Hoshino has to remind herself, "I am *not* Ellen," that she is "managing two personalities." Nor, as many people believe, are the two women related. "When people ask me, 'Are you related to her family?' I say, 'family of God.' I'm sure she wasn't part Hawaiian, with some Chinese," she says. But getting into costume—originally a repurposed pilgrim outfit—and adjusting her snood (signature hairnet) has affected her view of her alter ego. "I was never beaten over the head with the red books. I never felt negative about them; it was more towards a neutral feeling." Studying Ellen White's writings leads Rita to embrace her more than ever before. "She had to be faithful to her calling, faithful every day of her life... I would want to learn from her utter dependence on God for every single detail."

Both the preparation for and portrayal of Ellen White seems to have helped Hoshino find her own experience of Ellen. She says, "I feel like people try to play 'stump the Ellen,'" which often leads to "silly" questions. To some who ask, "How does it feel to get hit in the face with rocks?" she replies, "This is *how much* of Ellen you have read? They usually say, 'I read almost everything.' And I say, 'And *that* is what you come away with?'" Other pointed questions about Ellen White's "real" nationality, originality of her works, etc., lead her to say, "I admit that I don't know... what percentage is original with Ellen. I am not Ellen." But by portraying her, she herself learns how to "come away" from the prophetess. "Ellen was a woman who dearly loved Jesus. She was willing first—absolutely willing—to submit everything for the cause of Christ."

Cries of "One photo, one photo," encircle the iconic figure, as "Mrs. White" patiently smiles for another picture. The flash can't quite catch it, but Rita Hoshino has revealed Ellen G. White in a new light. ■

Reading Between the Lines:

Bringing Ellen G. White to the Stage

Who would think of Ellen in a red dress? Of my generation, who could imagine she owned anything red?" Elisabeth Reeves is from Angwin, Calif., a city that includes Pacific Union College, Elmshaven, site of Ellen White's home, and a large Adventist population. But before the 2007 play, *Red Books: Our Quest for Ellen White*, Angwin was almost all that Ellen White and Reeves had in common.

Written and performed by the Dramatic Arts Society of Pacific Union College, *Red Books* explored Ellen White's impact on others across the divide of time and culture, through the candid voices—wounded, reverent, ignorant—of Adventists and ex-Adventists alike. Mei Ann Teo, then resident artist and artistic director of DAS, teamed with



Elisabeth Reeves as White

"The Crash," a scene from *Red Books*, depicts the implosion that took place at some Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities in the 1970s, when academics began dissecting the prophet.



The fact that I can connect with the community about Ellen White brings me back in [to the community], and I appreciate it.

PUC students Eryck Chairez and Zach Dunn to work on a script, and began production in the fall of 2006. By portraying Ellen White, Reeves truly met "Ellen" for the first time.

Yet "the play wasn't about Ellen White; it was about how a community relates to her," says the PUC alumna, who currently works in the college's chemistry department. Keeping with its goal to create dialogue, both within the production and outside the theatre, each cast member was originally supposed to portray the prophetess, lending their own interpretation of Ellen White to the script. This plan changed when the cast developed the play on a weekend retreat in the Sierras. Fore-shadowing her own impression of Ellen, Reeves realized she would be depicting Ellen—alone.

"The opening scene of the play, the Great Disappointment, impacted me the most," remembers Reeves. "That's where it hit me that I was doing something monumental." At the beginning of *Red Books*, the cast crowds together, looking to the ceiling for a heavenly future only they can imagine. "We're humming 'Shall We Gather at the River,' and one by

one, everyone leaves. [The stage is] left with me singing; I've never been comfortable singing alone," she says. She was struck by "the whole idea of being in the center of a group and having the whole group trickle away to leave you alone, very exposed." This theme threaded through the entire play. "There was this idea of solitude...I hadn't thought of her in [that] light before. When she started out [in her ministry], she was very, very alone," Reeves remembers.

Growing up in the predominantly Adventist community of Angwin, Reeves says that coming into the play, she "knew very little" about Ellen White. Though she frequently attended church at Elmshaven, and "once or twice toured her house on Glass Mountain Road," Reeves says, "I never really formed an opinion for or against her. I read very little of what she had written, just the first couple chapters of *The Great Controversy* as a student missionary, because it was in a storage cupboard with other Ellen writings." Among the DAS team, she wasn't alone in this understanding of Ellen White. "Everyone else in the *Red Books* cast pretty much knew nothing at all [about Ellen White]. The play was a process of discovering why that had happened."

Reeves explains part of the reason, gleaned from a presentation in the PUC Church Choir Room Sabbath School by PUC history professor, Dr. Paul McGraw. She shares McGraw's insights, first shared with her by Teo. "The generations alive with the prophet see her as enlightened; their children put the prophet on a pedestal and use her as a hammer to get their children to believe; and the fourth generation ignores her completely and knows nothing about the prophet." As part of the fourth generation, Reeves says, "Portraying Ellen White has changed my sympathy [toward her]. The idea of being alone, exposed, as a woman, as a prophet, and how much she had to struggle with how much people demanded of her as an individual...is one thing I can sympathize with her about. I understand where's she's coming

from, in terms of individual struggle.”

Red Books has also changed Reeves’s relationship with her community. “What struck me most is how much my portraying her has meant to the community I live in. People will stop me in random places and ask me questions about Ellen. It shows how much she is a part of the community here, and continually points out my lack of knowledge of her.” According to Reeves, this even happens in the PUC weight room, when “Ellen” is clad in workout clothes. “How can [they] see me the way I am right now and think of Ellen White?” Reeves wonders. Most often, people ask her how she managed to memorize “all those lines,” or they simply say thank you. Their appreciation is “often for unspecified reasons, whether for my portrayal of Ellen White or for the entire production.” Sometimes, she received more specific thanks: for “being involved in a production that helped [others], in some way, comprehend their own struggle, or heal their wounds” related to their past experiences with Adventism’s well-known prophetess.

Reeves’s role as Adventism’s prophetess is a connection point between her and the community. “The fact that I can connect with the community about Ellen White brings me back in [to the community], and I appreciate it,” she says. The grateful Reeves wants to leave her audience with two particular messages: “One, that Ellen was most definitely a human being, full of all of the faults and joys and complexities that any average human has. Second, just because we have different ideas about her and opinions toward her, toward everything she embodies, doesn’t mean we can’t get along, can’t have a healthy, open discussion about our opinions. And conversely, just because our generation has been raised differently doesn’t mean we should spoil it for someone else.”

Though Reeves isn’t sure how *Red Books* has personally changed her, portraying the prophetess has readjusted the spotlight on Ellen White—for herself and the audience. ■

Midori Yoshimura is a senior in the honors program at Pacific Union College, with majors in English and Spanish, and a minor in public relations.



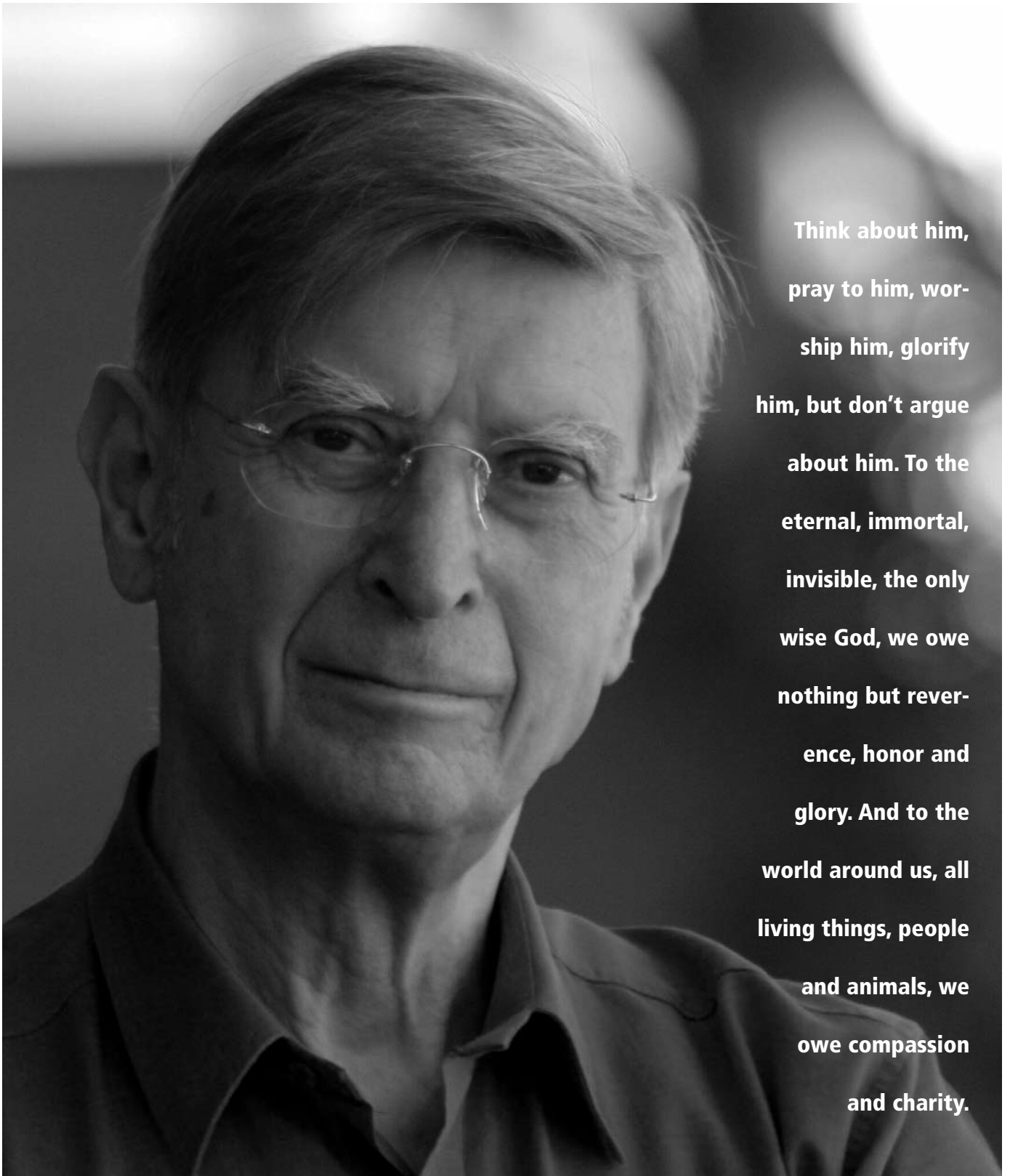
The cast of *Red Books*

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Think about him, pray to him, worship him, glorify him, but don't argue about him. To the eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, we owe nothing but reverence, honor and glory. And to the world around us, all living things, people and animals, we owe compassion and charity.

CREDO | BY HERBERT BLOMSTEDT

The following talk was delivered at Mountain View Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, Mountain View, CA, on April 2, 2011.

As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;... Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen. —1 Tim. 1:3–8, 17. KJV

When I was invited to speak to you here in Mountain View, I first hesitated. After all I have enough to do, and my mission is primarily in music. I prefer to speak with my hands and not with words. But you asked me some time ago to be an honorary member of this church, and I am happy to be back with you. For once I don't have to turn my back to my audience!

You may wonder about the title of my topic. *Credo* is a Latin word and the first word in the famous Nicene Creed, written in the fourth century under Emperor Constantine, which means "I believe." It was intended to unify the beliefs of the Christians who had been struggling with different opinions, especially about the nature of Christ. Some, like the Arians, believed that Christ was not a part of the Godhead, but a later created being. This threatened to pull the church apart, much like it had been in Ephesus, as we read in 1 Tim. 1:3–8, 17. Paul uses his most ironic language and says that false teachers had turned to "fables and endless

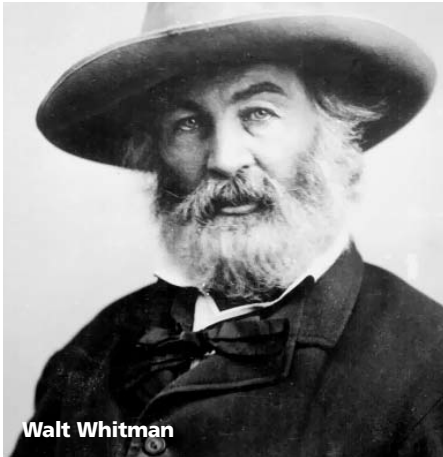
genealogies," to "vain jangling... Understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." And even worse, the church members loved it. Paul accuses them of heaping "to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (2 Tim. 4:3).

Now the young church decided that Christ was co-existent with the Father from the very beginning: *genitum, non factum*, "born—not made." But that is not very clear either, and in almost two thousand years we have not come very much closer. Arguing about this poses more questions than answers, as Paul rightly observed. We simply have to admit that we cannot fathom in our limited language the great mystery of an infinite "GOD."

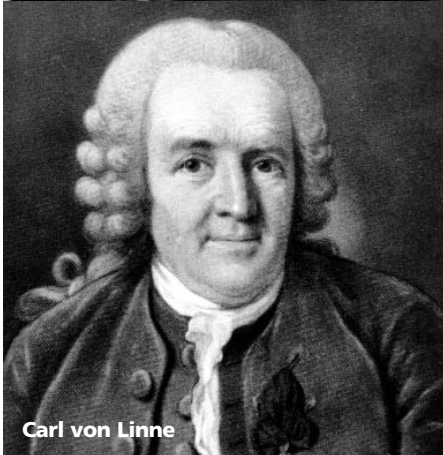
Paul draws the right conclusion: "Now the end of the commandment is charity" (1 Tim. 1:5). And he draws the bottom line in the concluding verse: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim. 5:17).

The great American poet Walt Whitman was on the same track when he penned his version of the Ten Commandments in the prose preface to *Leaves of Grass*. They are positive—"Thou shalt nots"—and they are very American. They begin like this: "Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to everyone that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants." And then comes the only negative command: "Argue not concerning God." What wonderful advice. Think about him, pray to him, worship him, glorify him, but don't argue about him. To the eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, we owe nothing but reverence, honor and glory. And to the world around us, all living things, people and animals, we owe compassion and charity.

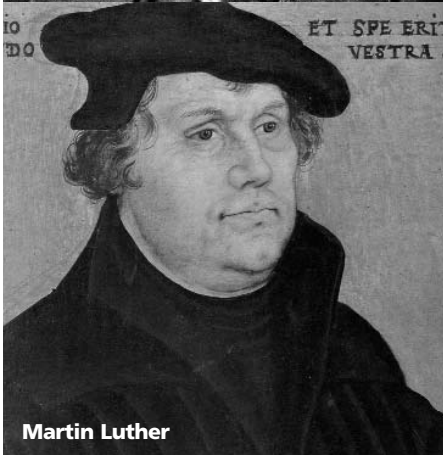
Our own church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, has debated many times about whether we should have a creed in order to set things straight, to define who we are,



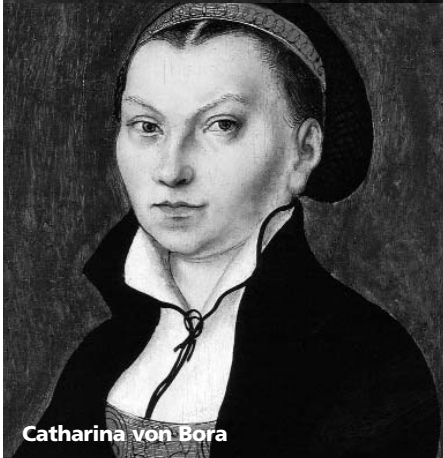
Walt Whitman



Carl von Linne



Martin Luther



Catharina von Bora

to bind us together in a common unified worship. But for good reasons our leaders have always turned it down. One reason is that it puts up barriers that we don't want. The Bible should be our only creed, they have argued. We do have a set of fundamental beliefs, but they are not written in stone and can be modified.

However, the worldwide situation is very different today compared to when our church was young. Nineteenth-century America was basically a Christian country that stood for liberty, and where more or less everybody went to church regularly. New religious movements sprang up like mushrooms in the forest, and these groups needed to define their special brand of Christianity as precisely as possible. The road to the Present Truth got narrower and narrower. As the French say, *Vive la difference!* (Long live the differences!) In the arts and sciences we often say a little humorously that "the devil is in the details." But for countless religious groups their god was found above all in the details.

Today the background for the Christian scene is almost completely secular. People in Western Europe consider churches an anachronism, and they attend only on special occasions, if at all, perhaps for a wedding or a funeral. In Sweden, for example, those who regularly attend church services are perhaps around five percent of the population. Talk about God, sin, and salvation is not understood at all and considered irrelevant for modern society. It is a little different in the United States where perhaps half the population still regularly attends a church, synagogue or mosque. I recently saw a

big headline in a German newspaper: "Is God American?" It may look like that—and I once heard a good old SDA say that she was sure English would be the official language in heaven.

Since the relative number of professed Christians in Western society is constantly decreasing, the differences between the churches seem less important, and what binds us together gains weight. I am convinced that the specialties of each church are necessary for theological research and advancement. This is also what Ellen G. White stressed: we must always search for "new light." But in the daily life of the Christian, the emphasis lies on another level. We will not be saved because we are "right" and all the others are "wrong," but because God through his abundant grace has changed our lives.

What use is it to talk to people about subtle details of God's salvation plan when they have no concept of God whatsoever? Our first missionary duty must now be to bring God to people's attention. We cannot prove his existence. No scientific or philosophical arguments have ever been able to do that. The only convincing argument is a real personal experience. A life lived as in the presence of God is a powerful testimony that does not go unnoticed.

The great Swedish naturalist Carl von Linné, who in the eighteenth century laid the foundations for a *Systema naturae* (1735), a nomenclature for flowers and animals that is still in use today, was such a man. Over the door to his bedroom he placed a motto which read, *Innocue vivito, numen adest* (Live unimpeachably; God is present).

The great reformer Martin Luther, whose wife Catharina von Bora was a woman of noble rank, once surprised her husband by saying, "Martinus, God is dead!" He was shocked. "What are you saying? Of course God is not dead. What do you mean?" She answered, "You act as if God were dead." Perhaps he had a day when he doubted his mission—had he gone too far? Thousands were killed because of his preaching. Perhaps he just had one of his frequent bad tempers—he was a noted choleric. At any rate, he appeared to act as if God were dead, or at least forgotten, out of reach.

For too long the Bible has been primarily used to prove that we are

"right" and all others accordingly are "wrong." But to be Christian is not the same as confessing to certain doctrines. It is a way of life, a life in "charity," as Paul said to Timothy. The sum of all the great religions, for Jews, Christians and Moslems, is found in the Golden Rule: *Treat your neighbor as you want them to treat you.* Or as Confucius termed it five hundred years before Christ: *Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself.*

Jesus said: *This is the law and the prophets* (Matt. 7:12). All the rest is "commentary." All scripture could be interpreted as teaching us compassion.

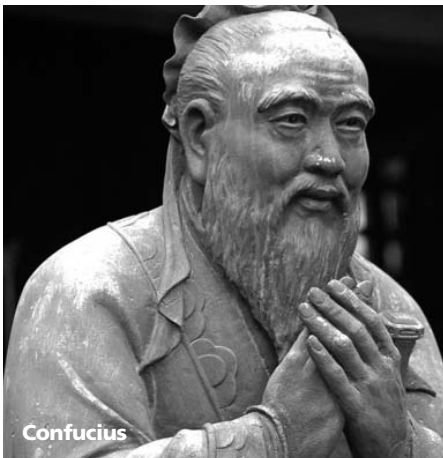
This is not to say that theological research is in vain. Personally, I must confess that I am also fascinated by religion as a science. I started once to

study the *Talmud*, the great commentary on the Hebrew Bible, and subscribed to the new Steinsalz edition. Rabbi Steinsalz, who is teaching in Jerusalem, is called a "once-in-a-millennium scholar." The *Talmud* proved to be too overwhelming for me, also financially, so I gave up after the twelfth volume, but I do have a complete *Mischna* in my library. It is the written version of an oral tradition of commentary from the third century after Christ. And, of course, I follow with great curiosity the findings of Adventist theologians, many of whom are my personal friends. They sometimes arrive at vastly different conclusions, but that does not disturb me at all. On the contrary, it proves their scholarly independence and is worthy

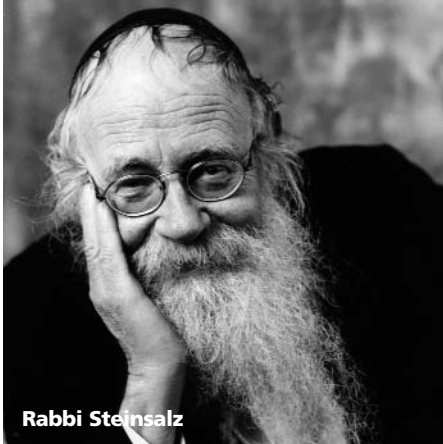
**What use is it to
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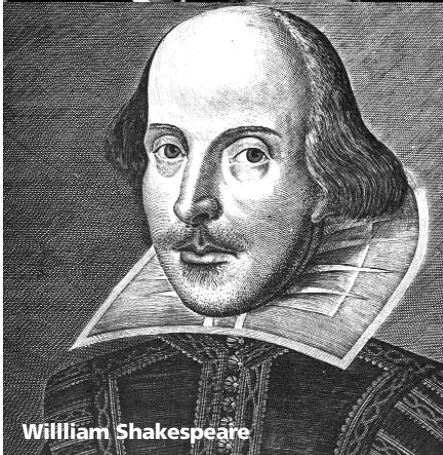
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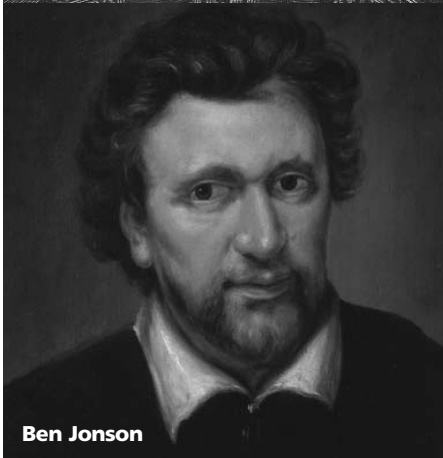
Confucius



Rabbi Steinsalz



William Shakespeare



Ben Jonson

of serious discussion. What we need is a healthy debate culture that is compatible with Christian ideals.

It is amazing how much Adventist theology has changed, even during my lifetime. This is amazing because religion by its very nature is conservative, especially when it gets institutionalized in an official “church” that needs to preserve its identity. Perhaps we don’t notice it because changes come slowly and gradually and do not affect our daily life and weekly worship. But they become noticeable, sometimes strikingly or even painfully, when we meet fellow believers who have been isolated for a long time. In Germany, for instance, many immigrants have come from countries that were formerly behind the iron curtain, like Romania. They are very conservative and often upset over the views and practices of their Western brothers and sisters. They have not experienced the gradual change in the West and are shocked. What is unfortunate is when these groups do not respect each other, and the result is isolation or even separation. It need not happen when Christian compassion is the reigning principle.

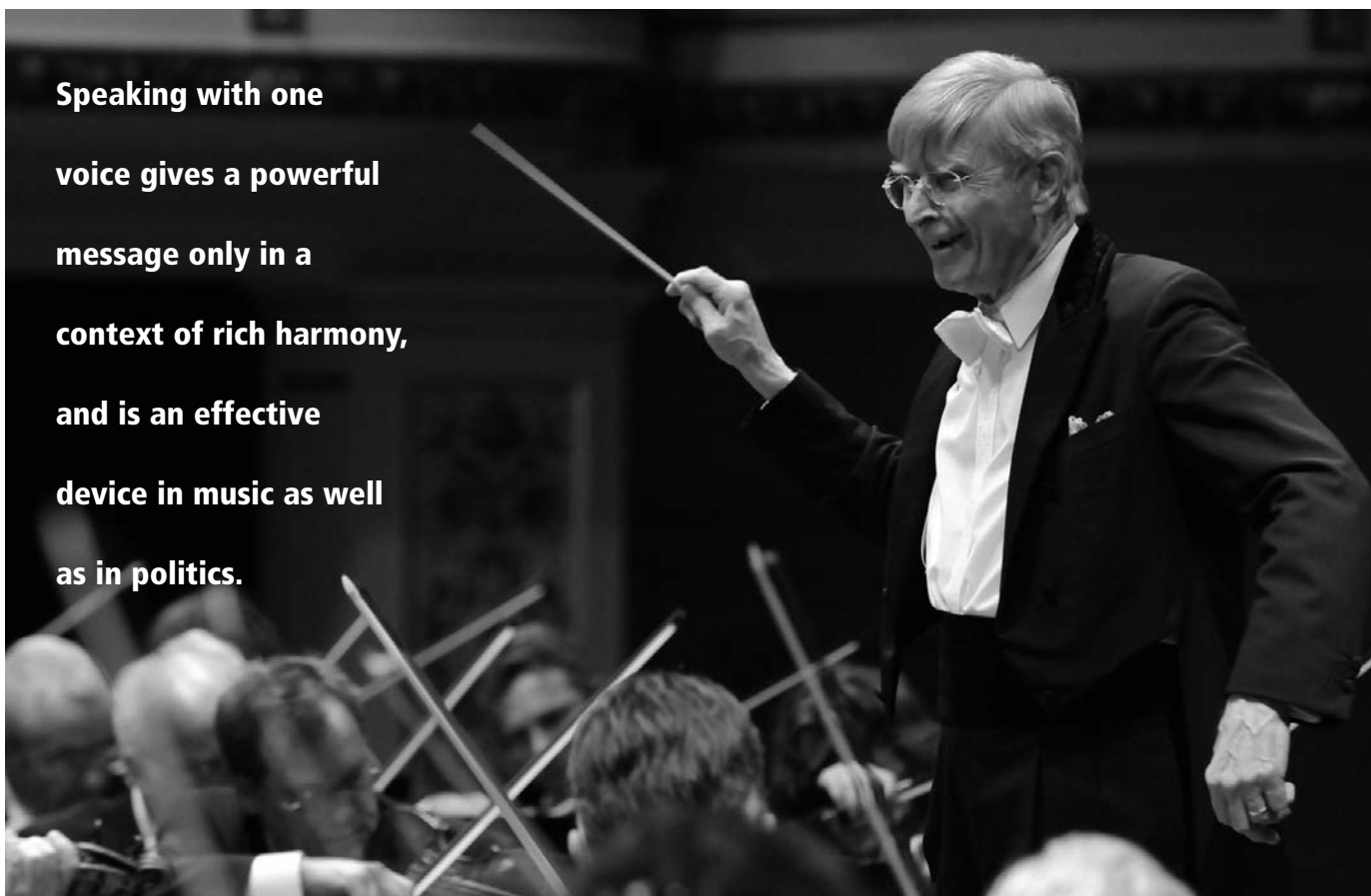
Heikki Silvet is a friend of mine from Estonia. When he was a pastor in Tallin, the capital of Estonia, and the iron curtain started to come down, two Adventist evangelists from Finland, only fifty miles to the north across the bay, came for an evangelistic campaign. Heikki was dumbfounded over what he heard and completely lost orientation for a while, left the ministry, and went off to Siberia to study the origins of Estonian and Fenno-Ugorian culture. The stress on righteousness by

faith—so central for us today—was too much for him. Old-style Adventism taught “faith and works” on equal terms, and he felt he had been cheated. Thank God he came back into balance and became a teacher and librarian at the new seminary in Zaokski, Russia.

I don’t particularly like the labels “liberals” and “conservatives,” but these two groups of people need each other. The conservatives halt the liberals when they seem to go too far, and the liberals push the conservatives when they resist change. But they should not be allowed to halt our mission, which is to spread understanding and compassion and to be “the salt of the earth.”

I am fortunate to be invited every year to conduct the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam, considered by many to be the best symphony orchestra in the world. This wonderful concert hall with its perfect acoustics is like a temple for music. In the “green room,” where the artists can meet visitors after the concerts, there is a mysterious sign on the wall. Only when you look at it in the great mirror on the opposite wall will you discover that it is “mirror writing.” It is a quote from a play by Ben Jonson, Shakespeare’s contemporary, and says, “All concord’s born of contraries.” How true! And the truth is illustrated through the type of writing. It takes two sides to arrive at the truth. *Concord* is harmony, peace, mutual kindness. But it takes at least two voices to reach harmony. If they are always in unison, there is of course no disharmony, but no harmony either! How tedious in the long run. Speaking with one voice gives a powerful mes-

Speaking with one voice gives a powerful message only in a context of rich harmony, and is an effective device in music as well as in politics.



C/MATTHIAS CREUTZIGER

sage only in a context of rich harmony, and is an effective device in music as well as in politics. But repeated without variation it smells of propaganda and turns us off. How I long for that kind of concord! Shakespeare says in *Macbeth*, “Had I power, I should pour the sweet milk of concord into hell!”

That brings me to the second and more personal part of today’s message. In another play, *The Merchant of Venice*, Shakespeare says something about music that reveals a wonderful insight: “The man who hath no musick in himself, / Nor is not mov’d with concord of sweet sounds, / Is fit for treason.” This is a very strong statement, but true. It seems exaggerated—is it really impossible to trust someone who is insensitive to music? Perhaps it is easier to accept a more positive ver-

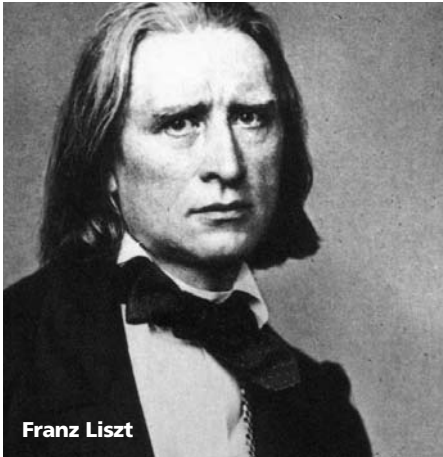
sion of the same thought, penned by Ellen G. White: “[Music] has power to subdue rude and uncultivated natures, power to quicken thought and to awaken sympathy, to promote harmony of action” (*Education*, p. 168).

I have been an Adventist all of my life. This summer it will be 70 years since I was baptized, and I have never regretted it. My parents’ influence has formed my character, and in addition, without my church I would not be what I am today. My father was a zealous and hardworking pastor, very conservative, with an ascetic bent. He had a burden for souls and stressed that we, his three children, must be models for his church members. Sometimes it was not easy to wear that cloak, but we admired our father, and our admiration grew with maturity. He could be

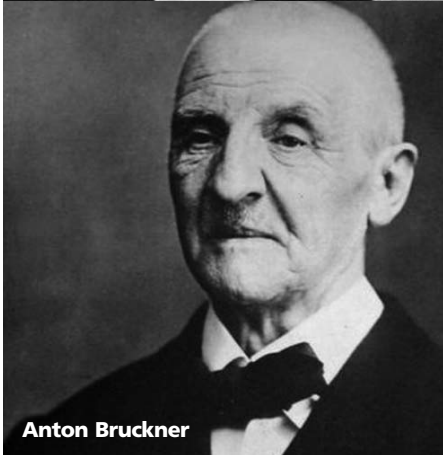
harshly demanding sometimes, but he had a real soft spot for music, so according to Shakespeare he was certainly not “fit for treason.” He had a good tenor voice and would have preferred to be a singing evangelist.

He married a young girl who was a gifted pianist, and he would arrange for her to perform a piano recital with works by Chopin and Liszt before he gave his public address. In the 1930s he could fill the concert hall of the Sibelius Academy in Helsinki with an announcement like this: “What happens when there is half an hour of silence in heaven? Come and listen to Pastor Adolf Blomstedt from the USA. Fifteen-minute piano recital before the presentation.”

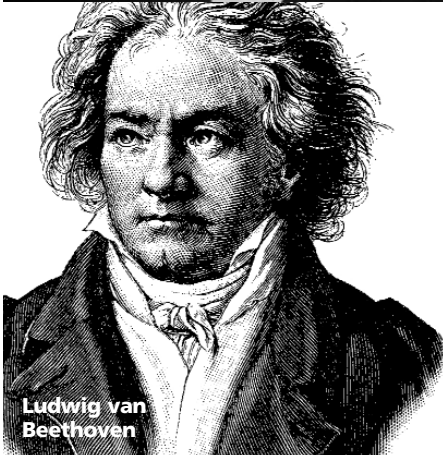
That was before the days of FM Radio, TV, LPs and CDs. Today nobody would respond to such



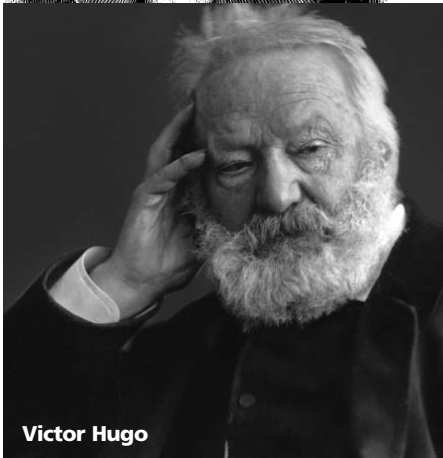
Franz Liszt



Anton Bruckner



Ludwig van Beethoven



Victor Hugo

inserts in the local papers. “Heaven” is just romantic nonsense to modern man, and Chopin and Liszt have given way to pop tunes and rock music over the headphones. But our burden for souls remains. How shall we reach them when they don’t understand our language? This is the real BABYLON—“confusion”—not understanding each other.

A couple of weeks ago I conducted three concerts with the Berlin Philharmonic, another of the world’s leading symphony orchestras. Symphony orchestras are for me what the harp was for King David. A symphony is the highest and richest form for musical expression in Western culture. They are spiritual confessions and can be profoundly moving. But there are also symphonies that include words from sacred texts, like the Catholic Mass. In Berlin I played such a work by Anton Bruckner, one of the greatest symphonists after Beethoven. It was his Mass No. 3 in F minor, for great orchestra, chorus, and four soloists. The text is all from the Bible plus the *Credo* movement, which is a setting of the Nicene Creed. And here I connect with the title of this sermon. There were very appreciative reviews in the Berlin papers, all stressing that the concert had been like a worship service. But one critic complained bitterly about the text. The very pious composer had interrupted the fugue at the words “and I believe in eternal life” with triumphant shouts of CREDO—CREDO / CREDO / CREDO! This was too much for the apparently nonbelieving critic. He found it obsessive and totally unacceptable. He loved the music but hated the

words. Perhaps he was afraid that he might lose his atheistic convictions and in his inner self heard the words of King Agrippa when listening to St. Paul: “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28).

I can understand him. His reaction was like that of Michael Steinberg a few years ago here in San Francisco. He was the program annotator for the San Francisco Symphony and a wonderful man, a great scholar. He could write about music better than anyone I have ever met. But as a Jew he was apprehensive about the message in Bach’s *St. John Passion* we were performing at the symphony. He knew that the Christian church had based much of its sometimes anti-Semitic attitude on the Gospel of St. John, where the Jews get all the blame for having killed the Messiah. But Steinberg could not help loving Bach’s great music. So what should he do? He wrote a long article in the program book solemnly warning the public not to *believe* what was being sung. “Enjoy the music, but disregard the text—it is not true.” He meant that Bach’s music could not be prohibited, but that every performance of this work should have a warning label attached—like the cigarette packages that announce that smoking can kill you. This is an excellent demonstration of the power of good music! Even the devil knows it—and trembles!

By way of explanation, what do we mean when we sing “CREDO”? Actually the word “believe” has not always meant just the acceptance of certain doctrines. The word originally meant “to love” or “to hold dear.” It comes from the old German word *belieben*, which means just that: “to hold dear,

to love." So when we sing CREDO, we really say, "I love, I commit myself." It is a summons to action and not so much a confession of believing in certain dogmas.

A summons to action is what I am pleading for today. Not only every sermon by a pastor or a layman, but every day in the life of a Christian should be a demonstration of a life in God's presence. God has no other way of acting in the world but through people. Christianity is a dead theory and nonsense if not lived in action. It is like a musical score. In a materialistic world it looks only like meaningless dots and lines on a paper. Only when awak-

ened by the understanding spirit and skillful hands of the musician does it become a reality, giving a powerful message of hope, comfort, joy and riches beyond description. Yes, for the person who, according to Shakespeare, "hath . . . musick in himself," it can bring him closer to God than any other human experience. Just as music "expresses that which cannot be put into words, but on which it is impossible to be silent," according to Victor Hugo, so it is with a life for God—it is the only way to bring him to life.

Let us not be silent. Arise and sing. Wake up and live. ■

Herbert Blomstedt is one of the leading symphony conductors of our time. He has been the music director of some of the finest orchestras in the world, including the San Francisco Symphony, the Dresdner Staatskapelle and the Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig. Now in his mid-80s, he still guest conducts top orchestras on three continents in about 70 concerts a year.

Every Sabbath finds him in an Adventist Church wherever he may be, sometimes delivering the sermon, as on this occasion in Mountain View, California, on April 2, 2011. He also considers his concerts a kind of worship, reaching out even to people who have not yet found their way into a church. For those sensitive to classical music, his desire is for it to be a spiritual experience for the listener, "preparing the heart for an encounter with God."



Herbert Blomstedt with Joshua Bell

HILARY SCOTT

What Adventists Can Learn From the Play *The Book of Mormon* | BY RON REECE

Book, music and lyrics by Trey Parker, Robert Lopez, and Matt Stone. Directed by Casey Nicholaw and Trey Parker.

Every denomination should be so lucky to have the creators of *South Park* write a play about them. The cleanest-cut audience I had ever seen at a Manhattan play, many a Mormon had come to check out this year's Broadway hit *The Book of Mormon*. There was much for the Mormon and non-Mormon audience to laugh about, wince about, reflect

upon, and cheer about. Two young Mormon men sitting next to me—looking like they just played hooky from a mission trip—exclaimed between themselves the worthiness of the play's nine Tony awards.

The play revolves around Elder Price and Elder Cunningham, two young Mormon men beginning their two-year missionary stint dressed in white shirts and



Andrew Rannells, center, and Josh Gad, right, play missionaries to Africa in 'The Book of Mormon.'

ASSOCIATED PRESS/ITTF/WWW.TOLEDBLADE.COM/W/USC-THEATER-DANCE/2011

nametags. Elder Price, preppy, clean-cut and recently graduated with high marks in Mormon history and doctrine, is teamed up with frumpy, plump, and doctrinally-challenged Elder Cunningham. Elder Price sings of his desire to go to Orlando, Florida, the home of Disneyland. Elder Cunningham sings of his desire just to have a friend, and is happy to go anywhere with Elder Price. Ironically, they end up in war-torn Uganda, where previous Mormon mission teams had yet to convert a soul.

In Uganda, real-life Africa meets white Mormonism. How do religion and God confront tribal civil wars, genocide, poverty, famine, female circumcision, and men with AIDS who believe that sleeping with virgin baby girls will bring a cure? Not very well; the Ugandans, in anger and desperation, sing of God's abandonment. Against all odds, bumbling Elder Cunningham strikes a sympathetic chord in the heart of Nabulungi, a young African woman who wants to know more about Mormonism. Elder Price, overwhelmed by Uganda, packs his bag and heads off to the airport to fly home.

With courage and a wild imagination, which would have pleased Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, Elder Cunningham presents the Mormon gospel with an embellishment or two or three or four. Cunningham tells of Joseph Smith receiving the Book of Mormon from the Angel Moroni, who had come down from the Starship Enterprise. Cunningham creatively finds verses in the Book of Mormon condemning female genital mutilation and other verses embracing blacks. Cunningham pulls out all the stops, bringing in Yoda, the Jedi Knights, Darth Vader, and Frodo from *The Lord of the Rings* to enliven the "dry and boring" Book of Mormon. It works; the tribe is converted. Meanwhile, Elder Price finds his courage but is kidnapped by local African warlords. Elder Price's copy of the Book of Mormon has to be extracted by the local proctologist.

The play ends with a play-within-a-play. The Ugandan tribe performs a play depicting

the Book of Mormon—Elder Cunningham's version—to the visiting Mormon hierarchy that has come to greet their first Ugandan converts. All of Cunningham's characters and embellishments are added, including Mormons' strong inducements for fertility and large families—African style. The Mormon leadership is not happy, but they have their first converts. Peace and order come to the village, female mutilation stops, as "the clitoris" is seen as a gift from God, and the tribe now goes door to door—Mormon style—to convert more Africans to Mormonism. Through it all, faith, hope and grace work their way into the lives of these Ugandans, even when the vessels of God's service are flawed, doctrinally topsyturvy and self-centered.

Although distinctly different in doctrine and theology, Seventh-day Adventists and Mormons share similarities. Both denominations emerged from upstate New York in the mid-1800s—a location not lost on the Manhattan crowd. Like Mormonism, Adventism came into existence with a shaky start with its failure to accurately predict the second coming of Christ in 1844. The Book of Mormon was brought into existence when the Angel Moroni suggested that golden books be dug up by Joseph Smith from a local hill; unfortunately, those golden books were secreted away by Moroni before anyone could carefully examine or copy them. The Adventist sanctuary doctrine, causing much controversy and later the expulsion of many a committed Adventist pastor and teacher, was inspired by an isolated cornfield vision of Millerite farmer Hiram Edson.

Both Mormons and Seventh-day Adventists suffer from the sin of denominationalism: namely, giving their denominations, prophets, and doctrines near-divine and unquestioning status. Sin at its core is idolatry or placing false gods before God. And the closer a thing, idea, or person is to God—i.e. religion, religious doctrine, a denominational prophet, or authority figure—the greater the temptation that these

Both Mormons and Seventh-day Adventists suffer from the sin of denominationalism: namely, giving their denominations, prophets, and doctrines near-divine and unquestioning status.

Our
sanctuary
doctrine might
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choreographed
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every human
is depicted as
a temple or
sanctuary of
the Holy
Spirit.

good religious things or people will be substituted for God. Not surprisingly, God's first three commandments warn against idolatry.

A prophet in our time is Timothy Keller. Founder of Redeemer Presbyterian Church located several blocks from the Manhattan theatre district, Keller has written three prescient books for our modern age: *The Reason for God*, *Counterfeit Gods* and *The Prodigal God*. In *The Prodigal God* both older and younger sons are alienated from the father. The younger son is alienated by choosing a life of immorality and debauchery. The older son, although living at home with his father, is equally alienated from the father because of the father's self-righteousness, rigid doctrinal conformity, and moral piety. Both sons are lost.

The younger brother ultimately sees the error of his ways and returns to the father's extravagant, unmerited grace and embrace. The parable sadly ends with the sullen and angry older brother refusing to enter the party—a party of the “fatted calf,” and “music and dancing” meant by the father for both the older and younger brothers' enjoyment (Luke 15:23–25). Humility is in, pride is out. Mormons and Adventists need to avoid the spiritual pride of the older brother.

If the *South Park* directors were to write about Adventists, there would be much to cheer about, wince about, laugh about, and reflect upon. Our health message would not be ignored. Adventists' recent insistence on a literal six-day creation week might lose its exclusive luster in a medley of alternative Genesis 1 interpretations. Our sanctuary doctrine might be reworked into a colorful choreographed routine where every human is depicted as a temple or sanctuary of the Holy Spirit. The Three Tenors—the Apostle Paul, St. Augustine and Thomas à Kempis—could sing “Why is Spiritual Formation a Sin?” The prophetess Ellen G. White might even lead a chorus line of Adventist female seminarians singing “Ordain and Testify.”

Adventists are not without a sense of

humor. At the annual meeting of *Spectrum* at Asilomar in 2009, Pacific Union College's Dramatic Arts Society presented a collage of skits and songs entitled “This Adventist Life.” A healthy smile comes to mind when I reflect upon “Clean: Remembering a Friday Afternoon” or “Salsa, What if the Second Coming is a Dance?” or the Heretic Singers giving a witty rendition of “1844.” *Red Books*, another play produced by Pacific Union College's DAS, similarly presented a refreshing and balanced look at the “human” Ellen G. White. Laughter and humor can lower defenses while illuminating false worship centered on cherished idols.

Not for the faint at heart, the play *The Book of Mormon* at times was raw and irreverent, at times it brought tears to my eyes in pure laughter, and at times it brought anxiety, knowing God's infinite love for the world in Jesus Christ is presented by imperfect humans and institutions. The Book of Mormon is a modern-day parable, from which other denominations could benefit by temporarily inserting their story for self-inspection. The Mormon Church's official response reveals an encouraging direction in Mormonism: “[While] the production may attempt to entertain audiences for an evening, the Book of Mormon as a volume of scripture will change people's lives forever by bringing them closer to Jesus.”

If life is a cosmic play on a cosmic stage, surrounded and supported by God, a successful play will have the self-sacrificing love of Jesus at the center of one's life, family, denomination, doctrines, and culture. ■

Ron Reece is a fourth-generation Adventist physician practicing in Northern California. Reece recently completed a diploma in Christian Studies at Regent College, Vancouver, British Columbia.

In Tune with God by Lillianne Doukhan

| A REVIEW BY KEN PARSONS

Doukhan, Lillianne. *In Tune with God*. (Hagerstown, MD: Autumn House/Review & Herald Publishing Co., 2010).

As a musically voracious teenager in the 70s—with a strong interest in my faith, I read everything I could find published by the church on music. However, the general tenor of most of it bothered me, condemning as it did entire genres of music as evil—insidiously inflicting spiritual, moral, and even physical harm on all who dared listen. In 1983 as a capstone project for the honors program at Walla Walla College, I wrote a paper titled “A History of Appropriateness in Protestant Church Music.” What I discovered was that controversy over church music has been brewing, and in many cases boiling over, for hundreds of years. The project gave me an even greater sense that music’s reputation had been unjustly besmirched by many church writers, and left me with an abiding interest in books on music, the mind, and spirit.

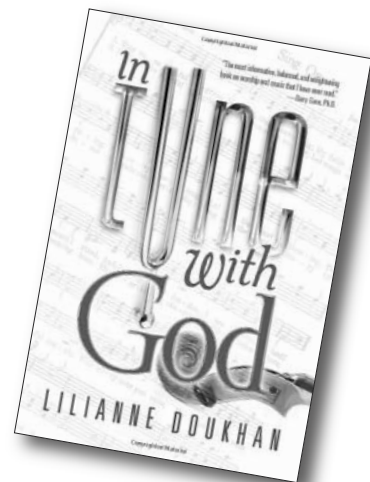
Hence, I was anxious to read Lillianne Doukhan’s new book, *In Tune with God*. I was delighted to find the book impeccably researched, carefully thought out, and clearly and convincingly written. While the entire book has much to recommend it, I’d like to focus on Doukhan’s efforts to restore music’s good name.

A cardinal argument made by earlier writers is that certain rhythms, chords, as well as entire genres of popular music, are at best “damaged goods” and more likely, simply evil. This notion always struck me as somehow Gnostic in its equating a part of the created order with evil. During the Middle Ages, the church adamantly denounced the interval of the tritone (three

whole steps) as *diabolus en musica*—“the Devil in music”—and forbade its use. With time, this prohibition faded, and today every hymn on every page of every Christian hymnal contains tritones.

In spite of many similar prohibitions that have eventually wilted, commentators have continued to rail against the “evils” of various instruments and genres. Doukhan incisively traces this objection to the Greek doctrine of “ethos” and the Platonic view of the spiritual world as the only true reality. Music was held to be a sign of this spiritual reality, and was therefore able to effect spiritual and emotional changes in listeners. Musical scales felt to upset listeners’ emotional equilibrium were banned by the Greeks (47–52). Doukhan contrasts this philosophy with the biblical perspective: the power to transform lives belongs not to created objects or elements, but only to the Holy Spirit (53). Unlike the Greeks who conceived of good and evil as residing in concepts such as harmony and dissonance, biblical writers describe good and evil as obedience or disobedience to the law of God (54). Doukhan quotes Jesus’ statement in Mark 7:15: “Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him ‘unclean.’” When it comes to music though, as Doukhan details, church leaders—right down to our own day—have tended to side with Plato and Aristotle rather than Jesus and Paul.

So is Doukhan saying that music is neutral, completely powerless? Certainly not. “The real power of music lies in its ability to transform a



Controversy over church music has been brewing, and in many cases boiling over, for hundreds of years.



given situation, namely, to intensify, to beautify, to stimulate, to create associations, and to build community” (62). In my experience, and Doukhan’s as well, I’m guessing, it is the associative phenomenon that is most powerful in shaping human response to music. We all have specific associations with individual pieces of music; for me, “Day is Dying in the West” will forever conjure up vivid images of Sabbath vespers in the Walla Walla College Church, while

1 Corinthians 8 and 10 in this connection, suggesting that substituting musical terms for food-related terms will help us see the relevant application: “One man’s faith allows him to listen to [eat] everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, listens only to a particular style [eats only vegetables]. The man who listens to [eats] everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not listen to [eat] everything must not condemn the man



Too often, those in charge of planning services, in a desire to be relevant, focus exclusively on contemporary styles.

“A Bicycle Built for Two” reminds me of my son as a three-year-old (he learned to sing it at day-care!). Many of us have shared associations: Elgar’s “Pomp and Circumstance” March No. 1 reminds us of countless graduations, while Tchaikovsky’s “1812 Overture” evokes Fourth of July fireworks. Entire genres of music have been linked in this fashion to various activities.

For many in my grandparents’ and parents’ generations, jazz was and always will be the music of bars and brothels and therefore unacceptable for Christian enjoyment. For nearly all of my students, though, it’s just another style to be explored and enjoyed. All of us, however, must recognize that these associations, while personally intense, are probably intensely personal—your mileage may vary. In addition, even widely held communal associations may change over time, as the circumstances previously linked with a piece or a style change. With concerted effort, associations may even be deliberately changed. Because of these factors, all of us must think and act charitably toward those with different associative constructs than our own.

Doukhan aptly cites Romans 14 and 15, and

who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else’s servant?” (Romans 14:2–4). “Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak” (1 Corinthians 8:9). “So whether you [sing or play] or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, . . . even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved” (10:31–33) (122, 123).

Having established that music (or any of its constituent elements) has no inherent moral qualities, but can be marshaled to reinforce either good or evil, Doukhan cites the varied efforts of church leaders through the ages to advance the gospel through music. She finds the most positive, energetic example in the ministry of Martin Luther. Luther used music for evangelism, worship, and community-building through his many chorales. Based almost entirely on pre-existing musical materials (only three out of over 170 are original in both tune and text), Luther’s chorales are predominantly upbeat, rhythmic and joyous, with over 25 percent containing syn-

copation (174). According to Doukhan, Luther had no concept of sacred or secular music—all music was potentially useful in spreading the gospel (181, 182). While he retooled contemporary popular music for worship, he also vigorously held on to earlier church music, wanting to maintain connection with the church of the past.

In the final section of the book, Doukhan addresses the current state of church music, and offers helpful suggestions for churches wishing

finding pieces that are “truthful”—lyrics that not only have “theological correctness, but [also] depth, meaningfulness, directness, and poetic quality” and music that is “well articulated, flowing freely, and able to carry a message clearly” (227, 229). The discrimination to make this kind of choice is often in short supply, but is vital if church music of any genre is to be truly meaningful. This sifting must be done whenever one is confronted with new music—there’s far



to maintain (or regain) a vibrant musical ministry. While much of the book lays the groundwork for accepting contemporary popular styles within the worship service, Doukhan is clear that she—like Luther—sees tremendous value in retaining traditional styles as well. Her experience resonates with my own that while students enjoy and are blessed by contemporary worship music (CWM), they do not want traditional music to be excluded. Too often, those in charge of planning services, in a desire to be relevant, focus exclusively on contemporary styles. However, in their quest to break free from the “monotony” of traditional church music, they simply substitute one monotony for another. A blended service will meet the eclectic tastes of most youth, and give many older members opportunities to be gracious.

Doukhan does mention several challenges in utilizing contemporary worship music: frequent lack of musical training, amateurish technological support, the ease of slipping into entertainment mode, the possibility of emotional manipulation, and keeping one’s attitude and ego in check. She also discusses the challenge of

more junk than gems out there. For this reason in part, contemporary worship music often pales dramatically in comparison with established hymns. The hymnal is a collection of gems—pieces that have stood the test of time. There have undoubtedly been hundreds of hymns every bit as hackneyed as that praise chorus you can’t stand, but thankfully they’ve been swept up in history’s dustbin. It will take years for a serious repertory of “contemporary” worship music to be amassed, and by that time, there will a new genre pressing for inclusion.

In Tune with God is a must-read for those even remotely involved in planning or presenting worship services, and for anyone wishing to learn more about the sometimes turbulent saga of church music. We all owe Lilianne Doukhan a debt of gratitude. ■

Ken Parsons is an associate professor at Southern Adventist University’s School of Music.

The hymnal is a collection of gems—pieces that have stood the test of time.

A Leader Should Take You Forward

A REVIEW BY RAJMUND DABROWSKI

Jan Paulsen, *Where Are We Going?* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2011).

Immediately after his election as the world church leader, Paulsen identified three main audiences for his particular attention—the youth and women (“two majorities often treated like minorities”), as well as church leadership. In his book, Paulsen spells out his concerns as to how the church nurtures these individuals and groups, how it responds to their particular needs and interests, and what course needs to be pursued. You will not find a “them” and “us” language in *Where Are We Going?* whether the author is dealing with the church members in their internal church setting, when in conversation with young people, or with adherents to other religions.

In the realm of social media, Paulsen’s volume is a book of quotes suitably destined to populate the Facebook pages. Here is a sample: “Adventist ministers and leaders don’t have mysterious powers to assign people to heaven or hell” (31). Again about leaders: “Outstanding Adventist leaders realize that they are not always right” (35).

Another, “True communication takes place only in the absence of fear. Do our colleagues feel safe when they are talking to us?” (32). On the same page: “God will save people, not statements.” *Where Are We Going?* is a book of questions. Countless questions. Simply start with the book’s title. It opens with a question and is an invitation to a conversation.

Asking questions is an effective method for a teacher whose interest is to make his students think and think for themselves. Paulsen invites the reader to consider a language of openness, “communication without fear,” as he puts it. He calls for more listening when relating to each other, with a language of civility and acts of generosity. As “our words matter,” what’s needed is that we “really listen,” he writes.

In a chapter entitled “Living in Tension,” Paulsen challenges with a comment, “We tend not to like those who ask difficult questions.... Questions lead to a dia-

logue, which in turn contributes to the bonding between God’s people.

And questions keep us alert.” And he continues, that “As an Adventist leader, don’t be afraid of questions. Instead, fear silence, for apathy is far more hazardous to the body of Christ than is critical thinking” (110).

It’s quite expected that many readers will appreciate what the book presents. Some may perhaps study it. Others will have mixed, even negative feeling about it. In any case, such is a destiny for all endeavors when thoughts are put into words, and are made public. Paulsen will smile and simply quip that if there was no criticism, the author has failed.

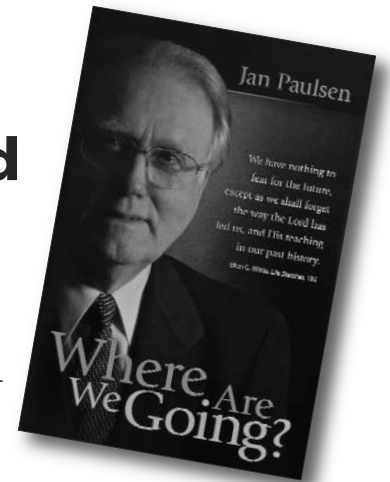
Indeed, in an ecclesiastical world of sameness and predictable, lofty declarations, some readers will find the author’s invitation to a healthy, civilized discourse about the church’s future as threatening. As I see it, the author is unapologetic when pointing at the values stated and restated by Scripture, and the reality that “we have not arrived yet.”

Considering the unfinished journey of a Christian pilgrim, one knows exactly what Paulsen means when he reminds himself that “it’s impossible to walk backwards into the future with eyes fixed on how things used to be” (34). For a Christian church, there is only a future to be considered. As one expected, page after page, Paulsen re-states a firm belief that the church’s mission is yet to be accomplished.

Neither is God finished with me, he comments.

Though offering plenty to chew on, the *Where Are We Going?* leaves the reader wanting more.

Until we hear again from Jan Paulsen, there is already plenty to reflect, reclaim, and...change. ■



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THE ART IN MUSIC

What is the relationship between art and music?

Violinist, painter, psychologist Kent Rich puts all of his training and creativity into painting specific pieces of music. In the case of the paintings on the covers of this issue of *Spectrum*, the music was Bach's *Mass in B Minor*.

Rich begins by listening very deeply to the music, letting the sounds become visual. After several days of listening, he starts with charcoal and works on shapes. Colors begin to appear with specific instruments assuming different colors. Rhythms happen after he has listened extensively. When painting with oils, and after preparing the undercoating, he then addresses the canvas while the music plays and lets it all go.

His engagement with the music is an inspired creativity that surprises even him: he never saw the crosses in these pieces until after he was finished.