

 community through conversation

SPECTRUM



Wisdom

Ellen White and the Love of Wisdom

Missions

*Looking for Lessons in the ADRA Leadership Change
Demons and Football*

Bible

Bible Texts and Homosexual Practices

community through conversation

SPECTRUM

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Cover Art: "Delicate Stars," Photograph, September 7, 2010.

Artist Biography:

Growing up in the Colorado Rockies, Grant Ordelheide's love of nature long preceded his love of photography. Being part of a family that explored the outdoors helped him enjoy the landscape. Ordelheide spends as much time as he can in nature by backpacking, climbing, and snowboarding; photography is a byproduct of being outside. He hopes that his passion for traveling and nature translates into something special for the viewer. To see more of Grant's work, visit grantordelheide.com.

About the Image:

Ordelheide chose a unique way to photograph Delicate Arch in Arches National Park near Moab, Utah. He gingerly climbed down the steep sandstone bowl below the arch, waited for darkness to come, then photographed the stars as they rotated around the arch for over eight hours. His perch on the cliff was so steep that he could not let himself fall asleep, or he would fall fifty feet to the bottom of the bowl. Ordelheide hung on all night, as the stars moved above his head, then hiked back to his car just before sunrise.

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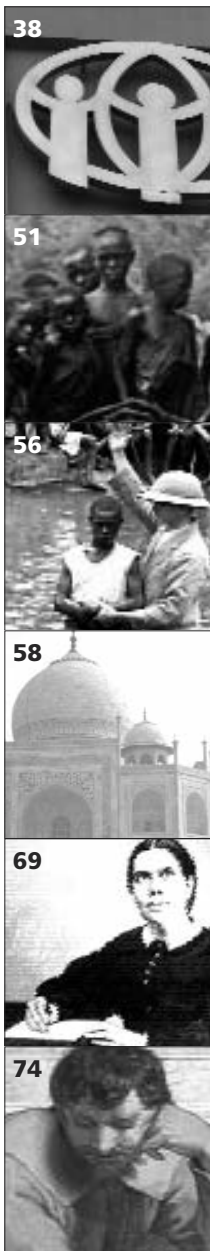
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At the Movies | BY BONNIE DWYER

Living in San Francisco in 2008, Stephen Eyer and Daneen Akers experienced California's Proposition 8 campaign against gay marriage in a very personal way. The couple, who is married and was awaiting the birth of their first child, saw the election through the eyes and experiences of their gay Adventist friends. It made them think about what kind of church they wanted for their unborn child. It was a life-changing moment, so they decided to make a movie.

Making a movie was not something new—they are professional film producers—but unlike previous projects, this movie took over their life for four years. They attended the 2010 General Conference Session with gay friends and recorded their reactions to the event. They went to the Andrews University Conference on Homosexuality. They crisscrossed the country, meeting and listening to gay Adventists.

Finally they decided to follow three key people—their San Francisco friend Marcos, who had previously pastored the largest Adventist church in Brazil; Sherry, mother of two girls, who wants to rear her children in the Adventist faith that nurtured her; and David, a single gay man for whom “change ministries” changed nothing. What happened to these key people over the next year slowly pushed out any thought of a script that debated the topic of homosexuality. The stories became the movie.

Now that it has been widely shown, *Seventh-Gay Adventists* has opened the door for an informed conversation about an emotionally charged issue within our community. But there have been some dramatic moments in the aftermath, too. Take the reaction when the *Adventist Review* ran a column by Andy Nash about the film. While he began with complimentary aspects of the film, he closed by saying:

What other tendencies named in Romans 1 would supporters of a gay lifestyle also encourage struggling people to live out? Worshipping created things? Greed, envy, murder, strife? Gossip, slander, insolence,

arrogance? Dishonoring parents, heartlessness, ruthlessness? Why is it only this tendency [homosexuality] that's now OK to practice? Because it doesn't hurt anyone else? Or because it hurts only those who practice it?

A retired Adventist pastor with a gay son told Akers, “Andy Nash’s article feels like a punch to the solar plexus.”

Akers wrote a response to Nash’s article that was posted on *Spectrum’s* website. Within days there were hundreds of comments. Perhaps the most significant came from Ron Carlson, the president of the Kansas-Nebraska Conference, and the father of David. He wrote:

... please remember that we are talking about people, not proof texts. I know what the Bible says. I am not rejecting its teachings. I just hope the many people who will bat around opinions, strong convictions, simple answers, sarcasm, joking, etc., will keep in mind that the real subject is people, men and women who have grown up Adventist, attended our schools, were baptized on Sabbath morning somewhere, believe the Sabbath, look forward to the coming of Jesus, may be vegetarian, yet, in spite of knowing how most people in the church feel about them, they still want to be Adventist. If you ever get the chance to meet a gay who still embraces Jesus and wants to be an Adventist, please listen to them. Don't lecture, listen. ... They are sons and daughters, siblings, grandchildren, true friends, who are caught in a very confusing predicament which they did not choose nor ask for, but they still want to worship with us. Please do your best to show grace in what you say and what you write. Thank you.

It is in the spirit of Elder Carlson that we have prepared this issue of *Spectrum*, with articles about what is happening within the Adventist gay community and Ivan Blazen’s very evenhanded review of the biblical texts about homosexual practice. They are meant, like the movie, to provide common ground for conversation on a very volatile topic. We hope you can read with an open mind.

And, if the movie comes to your town, don't miss it. ■



The Adventist Spring? | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

So was it? Was it the Adventist Spring? After more than four decades of anguish and hope—actually, many more—the lay and pastoral leadership of the Columbia Union Conference voted on Sunday, July 29, to eliminate gender as a condition of recognition for fully credentialed pastoral ministry. Eighty percent of delegates to a special meeting of the union's constituency agreed that it was time to bind up the injured, refuse bureaucratic pressure toward discrimination, and declare, as Jesus did in welcoming Mary, that women may join the inner circle.

The union's leadership gave General Conference representatives the opportunity to speak, and Ted Wilson, the General Conference president, warned darkly that breaking with male-only ordination policy would put the Columbia Union not just at "variance with," but in "opposition to," the world church. It would lead to "fragmentation" and "congregationalism." The effects would be "devastating."

At the meeting's end, the 20 percent of delegates who had voted against the motion to eliminate gender discrimination were standing with the rest, singing "Blest Be the Ties That Bind." But even though the hymn was an affirmation of accord, it's a safe guess that worries about the cohesion of Adventism will persist—over this action and, as we may surmise, actions yet to come. A community of faith at once united in spirit and worldwide in reach is a gift, but a vulnerable gift. On this point the delegates and the General Conference representatives would certainly agree, but agreement about dealing with difference eludes us, and will never be easy.

In response to the prospect that union conferences might soon break with General Conference policy, world leaders had several weeks before circulated "An Appeal for Unity in Respect to Ministerial Ordination Practices."

It was meant to halt passage of the motion that did, in fact, prevail on July 29, and like speeches by General Conference representatives at that meeting, it paid no attention to scripture.

Fears about disunity do matter. Still, they need not paralyze us, and it is precisely the Bible that can help us conquer our fears. General Conference communication overlooked this.

The appeal simply stated that policy from "the General Conference in Session" limits pastoral ordination to men and forbids "localized" exceptions. It simply disparaged unauthorized ordination of women pastors that has occurred in China. It simply asserted, again without scriptural reflection, that church unity depends on uniformity in the credentialing of pastors. Even if our "convictions" differ, said the appeal, our practices must not.

The document's tone was as polite as the speeches were on July 29. Mention of a new "Ordination Study" threw out the hint, actually, that world church policy might change. Unacknowledged, however, was the fact that many studies over many decades have yielded no transformative effect, and have left women and their friends increasingly cynical. Further unacknowledged was Elder Wilson's persistent personal opposition to pastoral equality for women.

Columbia Union constituents resisted both the appeal and the speeches that repeated it. They seemed to grasp something that indolence concerning Bible study too often obscures, something that comes through in the story of Paul's dealings with the church at Corinth.

Eighteen months after Paul left Corinth, the congregation he founded there was a mess, rife with lawsuits, sexual sin, and quarrels over doctrine, idols, and food. But even in those circumstances, Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians, the Gospel and those who had embraced it were a stark alter-

**Refusal to
bind up injuries
anywhere
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up everywhere
is absurd.**

native to the wider culture that did not see kindness at the heart of things, nor even hear a call to kindness. What is more, the congregation's members were still Paul's "beloved children," and still recipients of God's grace and peace.

Given our own bent to anger over differences of thought and practice, one thing about the letter is shocking: it does not say, or even insinuate, that Christians in Corinth must agree on everything. Paul realizes something too easily forgotten: with respect to certain controversies, knowledge claims get in the way.

"Knowledge puffs up," he writes, "but love builds up" (8:1). Theory, then, must give way to love; without love, it matters no more than "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (13:1, 2).

Spiritual discernment involves skill, including, crucially, the ability to tell the difference between what matters a lot (some things do!) and what matters less. Paul in his letter does insist on big-issue unity: he has no kind word for idolatry or incest. But our sense of what constitutes a "big issue" may undergo change, and for Paul one example concerns food offered to idols. Once this was verboten, but after Christ, he says, the restriction no longer applies.

Still, Paul bends to the assumptions of the people for whom he is working. Here, a certain disagreement is acceptable, and he avoids unnecessary insult to groups on either side of the debate. "To those under the law"—those who read the law conservatively—"I became as one under the law," and to "those outside the law I became as one outside the law" (9:20–21). What he calls "Christ's law" holds at every point, but otherwise Paul is "all things to all people, that I might by all means save some" (9:21–22).

Unity does not require uniformity. You can be sensitive to the needs you meet, sensitive to local nuance. Certain things, including knowledge and prophetic power, mean nothing, after all, except as we love one another, except as we bind up the injured and strengthen the weak.

The skill I am talking about involves no easy formulas; distinguishing what matters deeply from what doesn't is often hard. But slight (and

fully principled) accommodation to polygamous marriage—what has actually occurred in Adventism—did not shatter church unity. And no one said racial integration of congregations in North America had to await resolution of apartheid in South Africa. Refusal to bind up injuries anywhere until they can be bound up everywhere is absurd.

All this applies, surely, to the question of women in ministry. Here, as in other domains—some yet unknown or unacknowledged—attention to local need is one way to love our brothers and our sisters.

This is profoundly liberating. It is Paul's Gospel, and it can deliver us from paralyzing fears. Ellen White also doubted whether "perfect agreement" was possible. "Nothing can perfect unity in the church but the spirit of Christ-like forbearance," she wrote soon after the 1888 General Conference Session. Paul exemplified such forbearance, and I cannot help thinking that he exemplified it for us.

Earlier this spring, on April 23, constituents of the Northern German Union voted 160 to 47 to "ordain female pastors within the NDV equally to their male colleagues." Over the years other entities, notably the Potomac and Southeastern California Conferences, have also led the way, over long and often lonely years. If we could only embrace the *biblical perspective on unity and uniformity*, we might, through sensitivity to local need and respect for local pioneers, find still other ways to grow as a church into the full stature of Christ.

If it could be done, why shouldn't it be done? Then the Adventist Spring, if that's what it really is, could take deeper root, and help to heal us all. ■

Charles Scriven chairs *Adventist Forum*.



Of Women's Ordination, Bullies, and Peace

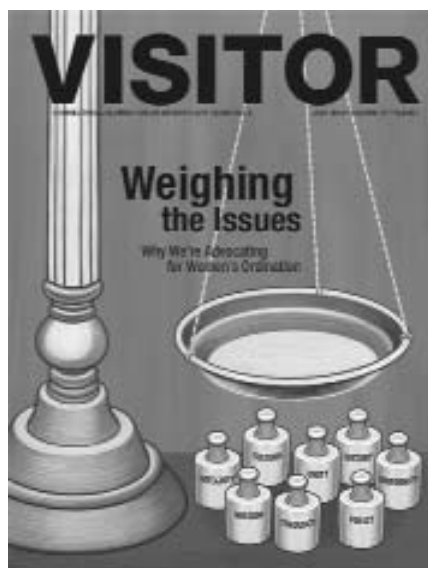
Women's Ordination Approved in Columbia Union Conference

BY JARED WRIGHT

AFTER TWO HOURS of presentations and 90 minutes of discussion, the Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists voted 209–51 to “authorize ordination to the gospel ministry without regard to gender.”

Speakers included General Conference President Ted Wilson, GC Vice President Lowell Cooper and North

The July 2012 issue of Columbia Union Conference's *Visitor* magazine was titled “Weighing the Issues: Why We're Advocating for Women's Ordination.”



American Division President Daniel Jackson. Jackson led the meeting with worship, followed by Wilson's address to the delegates. Wilson framed women's ordination as a unity-or-disunity issue, saying “I come to you today because I care about the unity of the church at large.” He warned that a vote in favor of ordaining women might lead to “fragmentation, congregationalism and a breakdown in collegialism.” But Wilson was quick to add, “I'm not threatening you in any way, just presenting the facts.”

Both Wilson and Cooper made political appeals, but did not address biblical or theological issues.

Potomac Conference President William Miller pointed out that in similar, past discussions about women in ministry, people predicted dire consequences. Yet “the earthquake didn't happen,” Miller repeatedly said. He also showed that policies affecting women in ministry were historically enacted at local, grassroots levels, and then eventually adopted by the world church.

Ohio Conference President Raj Attiken noted that unity lies in ideals rather than church structure. “Diversity is intrinsic to authentic unity,” he told the audience.

Pastor Brenda Langford Billingsy,

senior pastor of the Metropolitan Church in Hyattsville, Md., pointed to her prospering congregation as evidence of God's enabling power through women ministers, and compared ordination to graduation. “The cap is God's calling, anointing and producing, the gown is God's grace. But no graduation is complete without a diploma, which for us is ordination, not a substitute, made-up word like ‘commissioning,’” she said, according to the CUC press release.

Billingsy turned in her ministerial credentials “in hopes that ... I will be able to see our president sign his name on this diploma and choose to put X over the word commissioning and write in ‘ordained,’” she stated. “All heaven awaits your vote,” Billingsy said, to loud applause.

CUC leadership immediately made a motion to “authorize ordination to the gospel ministry without regard to gender,” then opened the floor to delegates.

Sharon Cress, Potomac Conference's Women's Ministries director, said, “The General Conference calls for unity in the face of unfairness and this wounds deeply the women who serve this church.” She continued, “Some have appealed for unity today to justify continuation of unfairness. I tell you there is no unity today, and

there can be no unity as long as we practice unfairness," according to the CUC press release.

Others spoke against the motion. Larry Boggess, president of the Mountain View Conference, whose executive committee released a statement opposing the motion, said, "If we say we are the body of Christ, then we would act in unity. What we do today will not generate thousands of new members. I'm sorry but that will only happen when the rank and file in the pews go out and do Bible studies..." according to the CUC press release.

Following discussion, an amendment to the motion was offered to clarify its wording. However, several minutes of confusion ensued as delegates tried to understand what they were being asked to vote. After much deliberation, the amendment was voted down, and CUC president David Weigley called for a vote on the original motion.

"Using secret ballots, delegates from the eight conferences within the union's Mid-Atlantic United States territory voted 4 to 1 in favor of the motion. The actual vote was 209 in favor and 51 opposed, with nine abstentions," stated the CUC press release. Following Jackson's benediction, the congregation sang "Blest Be the Ties That Bind."

On August 19, the Pacific Union Conference will be the second union within the North American Division to vote on a similar issue. ■

Jared Wright is a graduate of La Sierra University who is currently serving as pastor for media and collegiate ministries at the Azure Hills Church in Grand Terrace, California.



"A People of Peace": *A Look at La Sierra University's Anti-Bullying Program*

BY PATRICK GARRETT YORK

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS filmmakers, celebrities, the president of the United States, and many others have collectively committed to making a

four-letter word out of one that has long made American high school students duck their heads in fear and hustle to homeroom.

The word is actually five letters: bully. And the word represents, as recent tragedies nationwide have demonstrated, more than just a benign antagonist who may crack jokes or throw Slurpees in freshman faces by the lockers.





Lady Gaga visited the White House in 2011 to discuss bullying prevention with Obama administration staffers.

Bullying is nothing new for Americans. Nor are horror stories that have become all too common in our newspapers. For years, newscasts have brimmed with tragic stories about suffering and suicide, resulting from years of undetected or unchecked bullying in schools.

Last November, fourteen-year-old Jamey Rodemeyer of Williamsville, New York, took his own life after harassment about struggles with his sexuality became too much to bear. His video contribution to the It Gets Better Project, an organization dedicated to spreading awareness and providing support to victims of bullying, was aimed at helping others overcome struggles similar to his own.

Yet shortly after posting the video, he committed suicide, prompting performer Lady Gaga to declare that she would devote herself to illegalizing bullying, going as far as to say she would meet with the president. "It's a hate crime," she famously tweeted. Following, President Obama released his own "It

Gets Better" video in which he encouraged Americans to "dispel this myth that bullying is just a harmless rite of passage." The president was responding to not one, but several cases involving suicide prompted by bullying.

In 2011, *Bully*, a film by Lee Hirsch (poster, page 7), premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and entered American movie theaters on March 30. The film focused on the suicides of two additional victims of bullying in 2010: Tyler Long and Ty Smalley.

Despite the prevalence of awareness and support campaigns, documentary films, and celebrity support, it's still difficult to determine exactly *what* bullying is, *where* it happens, *who* is involved, or *how* to stop it. Stopbullying.gov, a government resource providing information about and support of this issue, illustrates the fact that bullying even happens virtually through "cyberbullying"—the bully doesn't have to be physically present to cause as detrimental an outcome as do the more familiar forms of bullying that take place on secondary or high school campuses.

Bullying in the workplace is also a national concern, illustrating that a bully, many times, is not a middle school student, but a college graduate, a fellow adult employee, or a healthcare professional.

"Bullying does need to be illegal. The question is when? how? at what point? These are questions that we as a society need to answer," Dulce Peña, a member of La Sierra University's Center for Conflict Resolution, said in response to Lady Gaga and others' efforts to make bullying illegal. Many organizations nationwide have committed to addressing the

challenge of what "bullying" actually means and how best to combat what has become an often talked about, but more often perpetrated, offense.

One of the main complications in bullying prevention, according to Richard Pershing, director of La Sierra's Center for Conflict Resolution, is simply identifying a bully correctly. "Now that bullying is in the media often, just about any time anyone's being adversarial they are called 'bully.' That's not what a bully is."

Over the past two years La Sierra University has developed the Anti-Bullying Program in the Center for Conflict Resolution, operating out of the university's School of Business, in an effort to address such complexities and develop practical solutions to the problem of bullying.

Richard Pershing is a founding member of the center and an attorney practicing in Riverside, California, serving as legal counsel to Versacare—a nonprofit organization that provides funding for Adventist initiatives. Versacare was ultimately responsible for laying the foundation for what would become the center. With Robert Coy and Ron Wisbey, the president and vice president of the board of directors of Versacare, respectively, the center's objective was to address the goal of achieving peace through mediation and conflict resolution in the Adventist community.

Pershing, Coy, and Wisbey all had experienced the benefits of conflict resolution and mediation. In a 2010 conversation they resolved that the Seventh-day Adventist Church's institutions could greatly benefit from the mediation process. Coy, previously deputy general counsel in

the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, had promoted similar training and conflict resolution strategies in the VA, and had experienced a significant decrease in dispute claims there. Wisbey had seen complex litigation resolved by mediation.

“What seems to get lost in all of this is that we were a people that wanted to be peacemakers, and don’t desire to be drawn into conflicts,” Pershing said in an interview. “For one reason or another, our tradition of being a people of peace is rarely articulated in our subculture.”

He mentioned, however, that there are some groups, citing the Adventist Peace Fellowship in particular, that act to fulfill such a tradition. Pershing mentioned a 2002 General Conference statement titled “A Seventh-day Adventist Call for Peace,” in which the “pillars” or “ingredients” for peace were enumerated: dialogue, justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation. For someone with feet in the world of mediation training, no clearer call to action could exist. Yet, in the ten years since the resolution, Pershing said he has seen little resulting action. It was only when the center began its development that its members noticed other Adventists making similar efforts toward achieving peace.

After a number of conversations and planning sessions between the La Sierra School of Business—particularly with its dean, John Thomas—and the university’s board of directors, Versacare began funding research and development for the Center for Conflict Resolution in March 2010, meeting university board approval in the summer of the same year. The center began pilot

testing a forty-hour Mediation Training program the following fall, based on an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program curated by an additional member of the center’s adjunct staff, Tony Belak of the University of Louisville, Kentucky. The center has since conducted mediation training with physicians, members of the university, educators, lawyers, and others. The center also piloted conflict resolution training for grades 5-8 in pilot programs conducted at Madison Campus Elementary School in Tennessee, as well as at San Diego Academy in California in early 2011.

Conflict resolution training is, however, distinct from bullying prevention. The two share similarities, but clear differences exist.

“Conflict resolution works on the premise that people of relatively equal bargaining power want to negotiate a resolution to something that causes conflict,” Pershing said. “In bullying, you have a situation where there is unequal power—often referred to as ‘the cycle of violence.’ With bullying, you have to intervene in the cycle, whereas such an intervention is unnecessary in ordinary conflict resolution.”

After researching the work of Dan Olweus, PhD, the preeminent researcher and authority on the topic, and due to the national urgency and awareness of bullying concerns in education, the Center for Conflict Resolution has adopted the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program as its key initiative in K–12 education. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program has been shown to reduce the incidence of bullying in schools by as much as sixty percent. The center has

developed a relationship with the Hazelden Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides online behavior modification resources and Olweus Bullying Prevention Program materials, and Clemson University, an entity specializing in Olweus research and training. As Pershing said, “Educators can obtain definitive data that pinpoints the type, location, frequency, and duration of bullying behavior in school.”

Pershing explained that the cycle of violence involves three members: the bully, the target, and the bystander. To successfully intervene in the process, one must address all three members. Anti-bullying measures involve a “culture change,” not simply an individual reprimand. Each member of the cycle must be dealt with as a complex individual, said Pershing, so they are not misun-



The well-known bully, Bluto, a cartoon character created in 1932 as Popeye’s nemesis, was repeatedly revealed to be a coward at heart.



Bullies have long been negatively portrayed in popular literature, including over 427 mentions in the Rover Boys book series, created by Edward Stratemeyer in 1899. The Stratemeyer Syndicate also created other well-known series including Nancy Drew, The Hardy Boys, The Bobbsey Twins, and Tom Swift.

derstood or misrepresented.

For example, many are tempted to blame the bully for his or her repeated antagonistic behavior. However, “most bullies are bullies because someone made them want to be,” Pershing says. In anti-bullying measures, the target is not the only member who stands to gain from a break in the cycle. The bully, if dealt with correctly, may reform their behavior and avoid causing of future conflict. The bystander—anyone that witnesses acts of bullying, whether an authority or peer—may be as affected as the target of the bullying. Fear and guilt resulting from a lack of action may follow bystanders into later life. Explaining Olweus’s research, Pershing said,

“Bullying is a symptom of something that is taking place in a community and the entire community must be involved in addressing and preventing it. Every student in the school, every teacher, administrator and staff person (bus driver, janitor, etc.), every parent, and the community in general, must be informed and collaborate to create a culture of respect. Otherwise, a seminar is held, a poster is put on the wall, and while awareness may have been increased, a change of the culture, at home or the school, has not been changed from allowing disrespectful behavior to encouraging and acknowledging respectful behavior.”

The program has multiple priorities: 1) to collect as much data as possible to more fully diagnose the problem of bullying and its complexities in the United States generally and in Adventist subculture specifically; 2) to provide training based on collected and analyzed research; and 3) to create ombudsmen that can actively seek to intervene in future bullying cycles.

Beginning with Olweus’s research as a way into the international conversation on bullying, the center first plans to collect data with which they can measure their program’s success, “seeking to help Seventh-day Adventist education see how bullying is a part of our educational culture,” said Pershing. This may help members of the community deal with a global issue, using a common language and understanding of the problem, and the way to seek its resolution.

On May 21, 2012, the North American Division Education Council approved, in principal, the center’s initiative to implement the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Survey

in all of the K–12 schools of North America. Providing the North American Division with metrics, based on decades of Olweus Bullying Prevention Program research, will provide quantitative data to identify where work needs to be done and how to improve the impact of the program. The desire is to have useful data rather than just “anecdotal” support for the problem and how to address it. Versacare has provided the center with a grant to provide the survey and Olweus Bullying Prevention Program online training for all principals or head teachers of academies in North America.

Pershing said that a unique problem in making such training available to academies is that the majority of them have a hundred students or less, and are located in rural areas. The solution is a computer-based sys-



Today, bullying has become more sophisticated through “cyberbullying,” victimizing not only school children, but also high school and college students, and even adults in the workplace.

tem—the Olweus System—that can provide the training without an on-site facilitator or in-service teacher.

Finally, through programs resembling the forty-hour course in conflict resolution that the center piloted at its conception, Pershing and the center's other members hope to produce a culture of ombudsmen—neutral third-party mediators—that are capable of resolving conflict and addressing the GC's call to peace. Ombudsmen need a firm grasp on a handful of skills to successfully participate in Alternative Dispute Resolution: 1) negotiation; 2) conflict coaching; 3) mediation; 4) facilitation; and 5) reconciliation.

The center has conducted a number of for-credit courses for health-care professionals in training at Loma Linda University Medical Center, again assisted by Tony Belak of the University of Louisville.

The Anti-Bullying Program has already inspired additional initiatives aimed at diagnosing and addressing bullying. La Sierra University's Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) team, assisted by faculty fellow Dulce Peña, has developed a Bullying Prevention Program they have titled "Bully Busters," based on the Olweus Program, which they have pilot tested at La Sierra Academy. The SIFE project, headed by student Ricky Kim, has independently developed a curriculum they plan to conduct in numerous classes in the year to come.

Peña has also incorporated Alternative Dispute Resolution training in classes she teaches in the university's master of business administration program. The School of Business is now committed to creating an emphasis in conflict resolution for its

MBA program and to transform that emphasis into a graduate certificate offering.

Pershing, an Adventist who has volunteered much of his time to the center, said that the Anti-Bullying Program, as well as conflict resolution, are both tangible ways to answer the "Call to Peace."

"Conflict resolution and bullying prevention are some of the greatest expressions of what the Gospel really is. People talk about the Gospel literally as providing good news, which means not only that our relationship with God is renewed, but also that our relationship with each other is restored or improved. Most of us, at one point or another, have been in anguish over our relationships: parent-to-child, sibling-to-sibling, classmate-to-classmate, as well as bosses and employees. The good news is that there really is something that can make those relationships better."

Cases of bullying persist in national newscasts despite various calls to action and voices of support. On June 23, Karen Klein, a sixty-eight-year-old bus monitor, was heckled to tears by the profanity-laden jeers of a group of middle school students in New York. Klein's story has spread virally and has prompted many to outrage and some to financial support, gathering over \$600,000 to send the financially shaky Klein on a well-deserved vacation. "We need to create a culture of kindness," said Pershing, explaining that the void of violence and bullying must be filled with something positive. As Klein's story has illustrated, when made aware of bullying, a community will gather in support. The goal is to prevent bullying from happening, avoiding the potential pain and damage to



Students at Cypress Ranch High School created an anti-bullying video to the song "Who Do U Think U R?," a song written and sung by student Kaitlyn K. The project was filmed and performed entirely by the students in Cypress, Texas.

all members of the conflict, rather than trying to pick up the pieces afterward.

The North American Division is currently vetting the Olweus system before approving it for implementation in academies nationwide. "These are small steps," said Pershing, "but we are moving in a positive direction in successfully addressing the bullying problem."

For more information on the Center for Conflict Resolution, or the Anti-Bullying Program, visit the La Sierra University website. ■

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BIBLE

Scriptural Roots of Understanding



In the synagogue at Capernaum.

Jerusalem Syndrome: *Some Reminiscences of the Recent Bible Conference in Jerusalem* | STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY RICHARD RICE

Thanks mainly to the fact that I serve at a General Conference institution, Loma Linda University, I was invited to attend the Third International Bible Conference, which met at two sites in Israel—Galilee and Jerusalem—from June 11 through June 20. Organized by members of the Biblical Research Institute (BRI), the conference brought together some three hundred Seventh-day Adventist scholars and administrators from around the world to consider “Issues in Biblical Anthropology from an Adventist Perspective.” The various presentations dealt with a wide range of topics and, like other good meetings of its kind, left its participants with a list of things to think about for the future.

After an evening plenary address from Artur Stele, GC vice president and director of the BRI, the next four days took conference members to sites of historical significance from Galilee to the Dead Sea, before settling down for some sustained study at the Ramada Jerusalem on Friday evening. Each day began with a devotional, usually by one of the various division presidents in attendance (Dan Jackson of the North American Division was not among them), followed by various scholarly presentations. In all, there were thirteen plenary addresses dealing with matters from spiritualism to Darwinism, and sixty-five “breakout sessions” (six or seven at a time) devoted to papers dealing with a wide range of topics. About half of these were biblical in focus; the rest fell into the areas of theology, missiology, and science; and a couple even touched on philosophical and literary themes. During the days in Jerusalem, attendees also visited important places in and around the city, such as the Mount of Olives, the Western Wall and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

On the final evening, attendees considered a consensus statement that was drafted by a committee chaired by Ángel Rodríguez, past director of BRI, and composed of members from different parts of the Adventist world.

(The organizers evidently felt a need to show the church that the conference accomplished something concrete.) There have never been significant differences within the SDA community over the general topic of the conference. SDAs throughout the world, and throughout their history, have rejected dualism in any form—the idea that someone’s soul or spirit survives bodily death. At the same time, the sense that one’s departed ancestors offer guidance and protection is a persistent feature of popular consciousness in various parts of the world, even among SDAs, and this seemed to be one of the factors that led organizers to select the theme.

Many of the conference presentations will be no doubt published in one form or another, as articles in various journals and as chapters in one or more books. And the *Adventist Review* will provide something in the way of an official report in the near future. The following paragraphs represent a personal retrospective on the conference rather than anything like a comprehensive report.

A good number of the plenary addresses and breakout sessions involved the careful study of biblical material, focusing on familiar themes and giving careful attention to the language of the Bible. In their plenary addresses, both Leslie Pollard of Oakwood University and Richard Davidson of Andrews University discussed the meaning of the image of God, one of the Bible’s most important anthropological expressions. Jon Paulien, the dean at LLU’s School of Religion, gave a plenary address on resurrection and the new man, offering an interesting comparison of Christ and Adam. Another plenary speaker, Felix Cortez, a young professor at the University of Montemorelos, devoted his time to a study of various biblical expressions related to death and hell.

In keeping with the general trend among SDA biblical scholarship in recent decades, the call for papers contained this stipulation: “All papers accepted for presenta-



Anna Galeniece
and Erik Galeniaks of Adventist
University of Africa

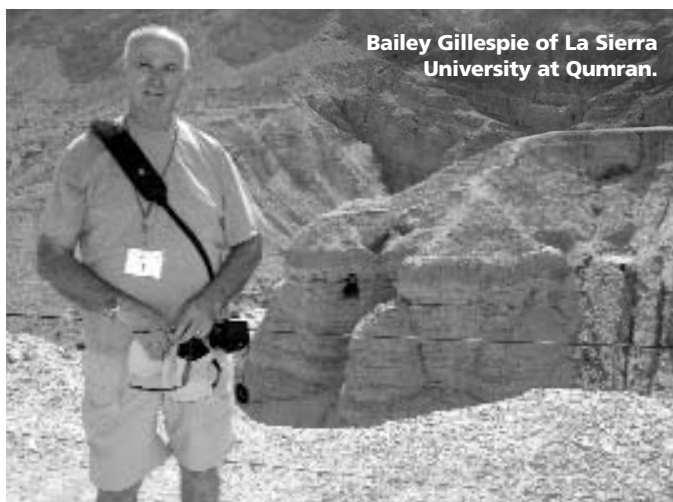
tion will utilize a historical-grammatical and/or literary method which accepts the text in its final form and avoids the more critical approaches to the text of Scripture." In addition, page 4 of the conference program listed seven principles drawn from the "Methods of Bible Study" that were voted by the General Conference in 1986.¹ These principles call on Adventist scholars to regard the Bible as "an authentic, reliable record of history," to recognize that the Bible "transcends its cultural backgrounds to serve as God's Word for all cultural, racial, and situational contexts in all ages," and to subject human reason to the Bible—measures designed to preserve a sense of scripture's divine inspiration and unique authority. As Randy Younker's plenary address during our first night in Jerusalem indicated, appreciation for the Bible—a "high view of scripture," as he described his position—has led to noteworthy results in the area of archeology. Although we do not rely on archeology to prove the Bible, he said, Adventist scholars, such as Siegfried Horn and Larry Geraty (two he mentioned), along with a number of others, have taken their place among the foremost biblical archeologists in the world.

Among the presentations I found particularly interesting were a morning devotional provided by Alberto Gulfan, president of the Southern Asia-Pacific Division; the plenary address of Francisco Gayoba, president of the Adventist University of the Philippines; and the breakout presentations of Ben Clausen of the Geoscience Research Institute and Grenville Kent of Avondale College. Alberto

Gulfan encouraged us to live by faith even if our dreams are not fulfilled, when we face disappointment and God's activity, or lack of it, seems to contradict God's promises. I appreciated his recognition that life presents us with questions for which there are no easy answers, something important for us to keep in mind on an intellectual as well as a practical level.

Francisco Gayoba emphasized the importance of directing our mission to the varying experiences of those we are trying to reach. And he noted that the mentality of many in parts of the developing world (my expression) is quite different from that of more intellectually oriented Westerners. In his discussion of the geology of the Holy Land, Ben Clausen, who also led those on the "GRI" bus to some alternative sites, like Mount Sodom, where Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, did a masterful job of offering his listeners both conventional and "short chronology" views. Among other things, he urged that SDA scientists must always be fair in their interpretations of the evidence and avoid questioning the motives of those they disagree with. Grenville Kent provided an intriguing interpretation of 1 Samuel 28, Saul's visit to the witch of Endor, who is described as conjuring up the deceased prophet Samuel. According to Kent, the woman sustained Saul (temporarily) with a meal, but delivered a message from "Samuel" that she specifically designed to dishearten the king and send him into battle with a sense of impending doom.

GC President Ted Wilson was featured in both the Sabbath church service and, along with his wife Nancy, at a question-and-answer session in the afternoon. Among other topics, he outlined his plan for finishing the work,



Bailey Gillespie of La Sierra
University at Qumran.

especially in the world's great cities. It involves sending young people door-to-door and placing millions (175 million, actually) of copies of *The Great Controversy* in people's hands around the world. In response to a question regarding women's ordination, Mrs. Wilson showed that movements in this direction fail to capture the Wilsons' support.

The people. I've never been a delegate to the General Conference Session. (In fact, the only GC I ever attended was one in San Francisco in the early 1960s). So, the conference gave me a dramatic demonstration of the worldwide nature of the Adventist Church. Attendees came literally from all parts of the world and from numerous educational institutions, some I had never heard of before, such as the Adventist Seminary in Bulgaria and Adriatic Union College. I was reminded of the fact that in recent decades Adventism, like Christianity in general, has experienced its most dramatic growth in the Southern hemisphere—in Africa and Latin America. I met remarkable people from a variety of places. A breakfast conversation with Bold Batsukh, for example, gave me a fascinating picture of life in Mongolia and of Mongolian Adventists in particular.

The places. Although I've visited the Holy Land more than two dozen times with study tours from La Sierra University, it never fails to inspire me. To a Christian, there is no place on earth like the Galilee, where Jesus's early ministry took place, or the city of Jerusalem, where the dramatic scenes of his passion and resurrection occurred. So, I felt privileged to find myself once again surrounded by reminders of our faith. I've never regarded myself as a pilgrim, and no, I'm not a victim of the so-called Jerusalem syndrome, a psychiatric disorder that renders visitors disoriented and dysfunctional upon finding themselves in a setting of such profound religious significance. But I've never grown immune to the impact of the Holy Land and the Holy City.

The country. It is impossible to visit Israel/Palestine without encountering the peoples who live in that contested sliver of land and reflecting on the complexities and crosscurrents that run through their lives. A couple of encounters brought to mind the range of perspectives that characterize modern Israelis. For example, the guide on our bus, an energetic fund of information named Avner, divulged the fact that his son was overjoyed when the young man's years of military service came to an end.

He couldn't wait to leave the army. I couldn't help contrasting his experience with that of Paul Miller, an older man who served as a guide for the study tours I helped lead for many years. An immigrant from Russia via China, Miller was the veteran of a number of Israel's wars. He positively venerated the Israeli army and delighted in recounting their dramatic successes.

I met someone from a strikingly different segment of Israeli society while riding from our hotel to the Old City on Jerusalem's sparkling new tram one warm afternoon. She boarded our car with a grocery trolley filled with produce from an outdoor market, wearing a long-sleeved, floor-length black coat and a cap over what appeared to be a shaved head. I heard her speaking English with a New York accent, and asked if she was shopping for a



large number. "For eight," she said, "and for more who visit on Shabbat." She lives in Mea Shearim, a neighborhood of largely ultra-orthodox Jews. When I mentioned that we were Christians who observed Shabbat, she asked, "Oh, are you Adventists?" Turned out that she visited Israel first as a teenager, and when she "breathed the air of Eretz-Israel" she knew she had to make it her home. After finishing her education in the United States—the "old country," she called it—she came back to Israel and settled there permanently. She beamed as she assured us, "The land is consoled when her children return."

I guess my general takeaway from the conference is a new appreciation for the global reach of the Adventist community and the extent of its academic resources and

activities. We seem to have educational institutions everywhere with well-trained faculties and a strong commitment to serious biblical scholarship. Artur Stele, for example, encouraged our institutions to develop academic journals in order to provide our biblical scholars with avenues for publishing their work.

The conference also impressed upon me the importance of continuing and extending the scope of our study of humanity. Over the past several years, support has been growing for the view of the human that Adventists



Grenville Kent describing Saul's meeting with the witch of Endor.

have always embraced. Whether we call it wholism, monism, nondualism, or physicalism, the idea that humans are not composite beings—that “soul” and “body” are one reality, not two—now enjoys the support of neuroscience, cognitive science, philosophy, and theology, as well as biblical scholarship. New Testament scholars Joel B. Green and N. T. Wright, to mention just two, are among those who insist that the Bible clearly presents us with a wholistic view of humanity. Adventist scholars have a lot of potential conversation partners.

A strong view of human wholeness also suggests areas for further study. Since the Bible knows nothing of non-physical human existence, our characteristic interest in the physical, as well as the commitment to physical well-being evident in our health message and our medical institutions, provides a basis for developing a theology of the body—a topic that has received increasing scholarly attention in recent years. Conceivably, Adventists have

important things to say about what it means to exist as a physical form in the physical world.

At the same time, a wholistic concept of the human raises important questions of a philosophical nature. One arises from the reductionist tendency of many who endorse physicalism—those who are convinced that there is nothing about the human, no aspect of human experience, that cannot be reduced to physical events. Such views eliminate conventional notions of human freedom and a host of other concepts that depend on it, such as selfhood and personal responsibility. Our view of the human embraces physicalism, but it excludes reductive physicalism. We need to work this out more fully.

Another important question involves the possibility of personal life after death. If a physical form, indeed, a specific physical form, my body, is intrinsic to my reality, and death brings this reality to an end, how could it ever be recovered? How can we account for continuity between human existence in this life and existence in some future state? How could another physical form that begins to exist sometime in the future really be me, rather than a duplicate or a replica? Questions like this lead a number of Christian scholars to argue that dualism is the only view capable of accounting for a human future beyond death.

Along with an interest in questions like these, the conference also deepened my sense that the focus of SDA biblical scholarship today is notably narrower than it was in the 1960s, the decade during which I attended college and seminary. My professors then were open to methods



Simbarashe and Joel Musvosi, of Helderberg College and the Adventist University of Africa, respectively.

of biblical study that are now perceived as incompatible with confidence in the Bible's inspiration. Whether this transition represents a gain or a loss for the church is something I have been thinking about for a long time.

There is a good deal to be said for affirming the Bible in its "final form," or "as a whole." The Bible as we have it, this collection of sixty-six books divided into Old and New Testaments, after all, has served as undisputed authority for the Christian church for over 1,600 years. To read the Bible theologically is to take seriously the whole range of biblical material on any topic of religious significance, just as the "Methods of Bible Study" enjoins. At the same time, the exclusion of all critical methods of biblical study seems to ignore some obvious and important features of the Bible—in particular, the historical qualities that characterize virtually every aspect of the Bible. Whether we consider the translations of the Bible, the original texts behind the translations, the collection of documents that form the Christian canon, or the individual documents themselves—in every case we encounter questions of a historical nature. The Bible has a complex history, and over time a variety of disciplines has developed to explore it.

When it comes to Adventist biblical scholarship, there has been a remarkable change of attitude toward these disciplines. We find cautious affirmations followed by emphatic rejections. According to volume 5 of *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, published in 1956, "The higher criticism of the Bible may be divided into two types...that which takes a skeptical attitude toward the Bible, and that which criticizes it on the basis of available historical evidence."² "There is a legitimate, as well as a destructive, higher criticism."³ But according to the 1986 statement on "Methods of Bible Study" referred to above, "Even a modified use of this method that retains the principle of criticism which subordinates the Bible to human reason is unacceptable to Adventists."⁴ And in *The Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Richard M. Davidson argues that attempts to go behind the biblical text and reconstruct its history makes human reason, rather than God's inspired Word, the final determiner of truth. It is impossible, he argues, to use the method of historical-critical study and avoid its anti-supernatural bias, because "presuppositions and method are inextricably interwoven."⁵

Participants in the recent Jerusalem conference did



Newton Gleghorne of Northern Caribbean University in Palestinian keffiyeh.

not get into issues of this nature, but they are unlikely to go away. They may not stand at the forefront of Adventist biblical study today, but there is a cost to dismissing them out of hand. Like our scholarly forebears in the fifties, a number of Adventists still believe that a judicious use of various biblical disciplines can contribute to our understanding of God's Word, and their voices should be heard. ■

Richard Rice joined the faculty of Loma Linda University in 1974.



His current projects include a book on the theology of suffering, written for InterVarsity Press.

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1. This statement can be found at the following website: <http://adventist.org/beliefs/other-documents/other-doc4.html>.
2. *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, ed. Francis D. Nichol (7 vols.; Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953–57), 5:147.
3. *Ibid.*, 188.
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5. *Ibid.*, 96.

Biblical Texts and Homosexual Practices

BY IVAN T. BLAZEN

The difficulty of the subject

To speak on the subject of homosexuality in any Christian church today, in particular conservative churches, is a trying venture. The subject bears heavily and personally on questions of sin and salvation, ethics and church membership, identity and relationships. Furthermore, it frequently engenders extreme visceral sensitivities and volatilities. Stark divisions and strong enmities can arise as soon as the subject is introduced and basic opinions are expressed. To give one's views can be intimidating because of the suspicions aroused. As John Macquarrie, prominent Scottish theologian, once observed, "It's an old theological trick. You not only tell a man he's wrong; you tell him he's a sinner." In other words, a person would not hold a wrong opinion unless something was (morally) wrong with him. This trick is all too often played when views on homosexuality are expressed that seem at variance with traditional understandings.

In addition, the pastoral task is great. How does one minister faithfully and well both to those in the church who are totally opposed to homosexual activity and those who are homosexual? For them the issue goes to the core of their existence and self-understanding, to questions of guilt and God, and to the possibility of wholeness and fulfillment in life.

The concern of this paper

What I would like to make perfectly clear at the outset is that there is no activist agenda in this paper. In the remarks that will be made I seek neither to support homosexual practices nor to condemn homosexual people. My only interest is to better understand the meaning and significance of the biblical texts which lie at the root of the

church discussion on homosexuality and hence, to further dialogue. To use a German word, the Bible's teaching is the *Brennpunkt*, the central issue and storm center, for so much of the debate. So to the Bible we go.

The Bible and homosexuality¹

At the outset, before passages are considered, it is very important to note two things. First, the Bible has no specific term for homosexuality. This word did not appear until the mid-nineteenth century in Europe and, in the English-speaking world, as evidenced by *The Oxford Dictionary of English*, not until the early 1890s. The word *heterosexual* followed in the early 1900s. Why is this the case? Because it was not until the nineteenth century that sexual orientation came into focus as something to be differentiated from sexual activity.² The Bible speaks only of activity. With this in mind, the modern translation "homosexual" in certain versions of 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, for example, is misleading. Today the word "homosexual" carries with it, as fundamental to its meaning, the concept of orientation. Thus, when this modern concept is read back into 1 Corinthians 6, which says that homosexuals, as well as other types of unrighteous people, will not enter God's kingdom, the text is not saying that the mere possession of a homoerotic orientation excludes one from the kingdom. Only certain activities are in mind.

Secondly, it must be frankly admitted that the Bible offers no endorsement of the same-sex activities it describes. Monogamous marriage between male and female is the ideal upheld and, in the relatively few places where certain same-sex practices are in view, the verdict upon them is always negative.

The passages bearing directly on the question of homosexual practice may be divided into three categories: narrative, legal, and pastoral. I deal with them in that order.



The shaming of Noah
by Julius Schnorr

Narratives

The first passage that is sometimes invoked is Genesis 9:20–27, which recounts the story of Ham and his father Noah. After the flood Noah becomes inebriated from the wine produced from his vineyard and lies in his tent uncovered. His son Ham observes him in his naked state and publicizes what he has beheld to his two brothers, Shem and Japheth. Rather than going and seeing the spectacle for themselves, they take a garment, place it on their shoulders, walk backwards, and cover their father and, with faces turned away, do not look upon his nakedness. When Noah awakes and discovers what Ham did to him, he curses Ham's son, Canaan.

It has been argued by some that Ham had committed an act of incestuous, homosexual rape of his father and that this presages and links up with the abominations of the Canaanites, such as are described in Genesis 19 with the homosexual intentions that the townsmen have toward Lot's visitors.

Leviticus 18:6–23, with its manifold proscriptions

against “uncovering the nakedness of” (meaning having sex with) various family members and the injunction against male with male sex, is called in to support the contention that Ham uncovered the nakedness of his father, Noah, by an act of sexual aggression.

This hardly is the case, as two considerations indicate. First, Ham is not said to uncover his father's nakedness, but to look upon him in his naked state. The drunken Noah had uncovered himself. Second, if the remedy was Shem and Japheth covering their father without looking at him, then the wrong done to Noah must have been observing him in his nakedness.

If Ham's act was not having homosexual relations with his own father, it nevertheless was an act of complete disregard of parental dignity and authority. Noah's drunkenness, a wrong itself, did not give Ham the right to play the part of a voyeur and thus denigrate his father. The command to honor father and mother, the leadoff command of the second half of the Decalogue, is already broken by Ham. Such anarchic action on the part of Ham would be mirrored in

the abominable lawlessness of the Canaanites (see Lev. 18:3, 24–25). This may be the reason for the curse upon Ham's progeny, Canaan, instead of upon Ham himself.

Perhaps the sin of Ham should be understood in parallel with that of Adam and Eve. In the earth that God had created, the first couple broke faith with God by rejecting his authority and seeking to go beyond the limits of their creaturehood by attempting to become like God. In a similar way, Ham, just after the renewed earth is established following the flood, rejects the limits inherent in his relationship with his earthly father and puts himself on the level of his father by going into his tent, as if he belonged there, and viewing his nakedness. Did he think this would give him new potency or power?

The narratives of Genesis 19 and Judges 19 have been fodder for the argument against homoerotic practice. The stories are very similar, so much so that some scholars have speculated that they are doublets of the same story. In any case, both stories portray the entire male populations of Sodom and Gibeah as storming the homes of Lot and a Benjamite in order that they may "know" (have intercourse with) the visitors who are spending the night there (Gen. 19:5; Judg. 19:22). Both hosts attempt to dissuade the male crowd, arguing that this would be a wicked act, for it would violate the laws of hospitality for strangers. And both hosts also propose to put out their virgin daughters, plus, in the Benjamite's case, the visitor's concubine. "Ravish them as you wish," the hosts propose. The men of the cities remain insistent on realizing their goals, and rush the door. In Lot's case the angelic visitors smite the townsmen with blindness so they cannot find the door. In the case of the Benjamite, the host puts out the visitor's concubine and the men of the city rape and sexually abuse her all night long. In the morning she is found dead at the door.

As these stories are examined, the following conclusions can be reached. First, though homosexual actions are intended, there is not a word about caring homosexual love between two people, which is the issue for many homosexuals. Second, can we seriously imagine that every single male in the towns portrayed was homosexual?³ Third, as the stories are not about love, they also are not about lust. They are about violence in the service of humiliation. The perverse mob is animated not by the satisfaction of lascivious desire, but by the demonstration of power and supremacy over strangers who are perceived as possible enemies. Rape for the purpose of disgracing, subjugating,

and dominating is the issue in Sodom.

This rape of males by males would, of course, involve anal intercourse, often an accompaniment of conquest in ancient times. As an example, there is extant an ancient picture portraying the victory of the Athenians over the Persians in 460 BC at the river Eurymedon. A Greek soldier with hardened member in hand approaches a Persian who has surrendered and, with hands upraised and body bent over, awaits his fate.

The urge to violent conquest is clearly implied by the response of the townsmen of Lot, who is attempting to get them to desist. They are unhappy with Lot playing the judge, and exclaim, "Now we will do worse with you than with them" (Gen. 19:9). It cannot be missed that they had intended to harm Lot's guests.⁴

Fourth, when God destroys the city after the episode described in Genesis 19, it should not be thought that this is because the city was populated by homosexuals. Prior to the incident concerning Lot and his visitors (19:1–11), God had already intended to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (18:16–33). Why? The answer given in Genesis is that a great outcry against the cities had come before the Lord (18:20–21 and 19:13). The outcry could only have come from those who lived in and around the cities. It sounds as if there was something more to the issue than Sodom and Gomorrah's sexual perversity, which in any case is not the real point of Genesis 19:1–11. If so, what would it be? Other parts of the Bible give indications. Ezekiel 16 is quite descriptive. In a critique of Jerusalem as being more corrupt and abominable (cf. 16:18 which refers to abominable idols and child sacrifice) than Sodom, the prophet says:

As I live, says the Lord God, your sister Sodom and her daughters have not done as you and your daughters have done. This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy." (16:48–49)

Materialism with social injustice is what is involved here. In Isaiah 1:10 (also 3:9), Israel is addressed as "Sodom" because, as the context shows, while great emphasis was laid on sacrificial rituals and the accoutrements of religion, there was a lack of goodness and justice, which would involve rescuing the oppressed, defending orphans, and pleading the case of widows.

Fifth, some homosexuals the Gibeah gang members were! They could switch from sex with males to sex with females quite easily.

Sixth, one can imagine, with reference to the story of Lot's visitors, that the Lord was as much or more aggrieved by the proposals of Lot and the Benjamite that their virgin daughters or concubines be used to assuage the passions of the mobs, rather than allow an attack upon male strangers. Where in the Bible has the dignity of women, established in Genesis 1, been as unrecognized and disregarded as here?

Legal texts

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are the only specifically legal declarations in the Old Testament against homosexual activity. These texts are enshrined in the so-called Holiness Code (Lev. 17–26), whose purpose was to promote the separation (that is, holiness) of Israel from the surrounding nations and their practices so as to belong to God, and to secure Israel's obedience to God (18:3–4, 24; 20:24, 26b). "You shall be holy, for I am holy" is the call (19:2; 20:26a).

Leviticus 18:22 prohibits a male from lying with a male "as with a woman" (literally in the Hebrew text, "the lyings of a woman"), for it is an abomination, and Leviticus 20:13, reiterating the thought of 18:22, prescribes the death penalty for the one who commits this offense.

These injunctions are connected in their immediate

contexts with a number of laws regulating sexual conduct, including incestuous relations with family members (18:6–18), adultery (18:20; 20:10), relations with animals (18:23; 20:15–16), and intercourse during menstruation (18:19; 20:18). Strangely, and seemingly breaking the sexual string of offenses, the law just before the one prohibiting male with male sex in Leviticus 18 interdicts idolatrous child sacrifice (18:21).

The concept of a man lying with a man, "as with a woman," which is a translation of the Hebrew expression "the lyings of a woman," can only refer to one thing: the *penetration* of one male by another, i.e., anal intercourse. This is admitted by almost all authorities discussing the subject. The Hebrew Bible distinguishes between the "lying of a man," that is, the role of a man as penetrator, and the "lyings of a woman," that is, the role of a woman as the penetrated. (Apparently, the word "lyings" is plural in reference to women since they have two orifices.) Thus the man has the active role of giver, and the female has the passive role of receiver. When Numbers 31:17–18, 35, and Judges 21:11–12 distinguish between a young girl or virgin who has not known the lying of a man, and a woman who does, it seems obvious that the difference is that of penetration.



The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, artist unknown.

So, analogously, for a man to lie with another man the “lyings of a woman,” would seem necessarily to point to the penetration of the other, in this case the anal orifice being substituted for the female vaginal orifice. Interestingly, one of the words for a woman in the Old Testament is *neqebah*, which comes from the verb *nagab*, which means to pierce, to bore, or to perforate. On this basis the woman would be the one who is penetrated, and thus the “orifice bearer.”

If the Hebrew texts of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 combined were translated in accord with their meaning, the prohibition would say, “A male who has anal intercourse with another male has committed an abomination and is to be put to death.” This seems quite specific, and thus raises the question, which needs discussion, as to whether the text as it stands can be taken as a general prohibition against all male-to-male affection as well as female-to-female sex, the latter of which has no proscription at all in the Old Testament. And would the text, by extension, prohibit anal sex between heterosexual couples? In brief, is the text restricted or unrestricted in its significance and application? And why would females not be included in 18:22 and 20:13? Might it be that penetration is the issue, and there was not thought to be penetration in the case of female with female sex? Thus, would there be no debasement as there was with males who, by submitting to penetration by other males and becoming like females, had forsaken their role as the active partner and head of the woman—something which would introduce confusion into Israelite society, which was striving for stability and order in a hostile world?

Interestingly, on the topic of confusion, in Leviticus 19, which intermingles moral and ritual laws, we find laws against mixing (just after “you shall love your neighbor as yourself”): animals are not to be bred with a different kind, fields are not to be sown with different kinds of seed, and garments are not to be made of two different materials (19:19). This law is repeated in fuller detail in Deuteronomy 22:9–11, which is preceded by a prohibition of cross-dressing, an abhorrence to the Lord (22:5). It is clear that lines of distinction and separation are to be drawn so as to avoid disorder and discomplementarity. Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 quite likely belong to this realm.

Male homosexuals sometimes raise the question as to how the Levitical laws pertain to them when they are not at all interested in anal intercourse but in other types of affec-

tion. It is a question that requires addressing in the church.

And what of the term “abomination”? This concept, occurring many times, and for which there is more than one word, is applied to 1) idolatry and its practices, 2) moral transgressions, and 3) breaking purity regulations and taboos. An example of breaking the purity code would be having intercourse with a woman during menstruation (Leviticus 18:19 in the light of 18:27, 29) and eating what is unclean (20:25). An example of a taboo would be Deuteronomy 24:1–4, where a woman, after being divorced by her husband and marrying another, may not return to her first husband after being “defiled” by a second marriage. This is said to be abhorrent to God and something that brings guilt upon the land.

In what way is male homosexuality an abomination? Into which category does it fit? Perhaps the question is not good since it is derived from modern distinctions that the Hebrews did not hold. As Leviticus 19 shows, moral and ritual laws are not set into types but are intermingled.

Thus, when all due consideration has been given to them, the Levitical texts raise as many questions as they may be thought to answer.

Pastoral materials

First Corinthians 6:9–11 contains a vice list such as was common in the Hellenistic world. In the Corinthian passage Paul insists that maintenance of these vices as part of one’s *habitus* disqualifies a person for entrance into the kingdom of God. This is a serious matter, indeed, over which one should not be deceived, Paul declares. The possibility of deception could arise easily out of the theology some of the Corinthians had. From notices in Paul’s letter it is clear that, like the heretics of 2 Timothy 2:18 who held that the resurrection was already past, the Corinthians had embraced what we may call an “overrealized eschatology.” In arguing that there was no future resurrection of the body (15:12, 35), they had embraced the thought that a spiritual resurrection, raising them above all the contingencies and temptations of the present time, had occurred. Thus they were already reigning with Christ in the heavenly realm (4:8), to which speaking in tongues, not only in the tongues of men but especially of angels, gave witness (13:1). In this state of eschatological fulfillment they claimed that “all things were lawful,” (6:12; 10:23), which is to say that nothing done in the body could hurt their already accomplished spiritual transformation. Their continuance in resurrection life was guaranteed by baptism, which was efficacious even for those who were

dead (15:29), and the Lord's Supper which, in the language of the apostolic father Ignatius in the second century, was "the medicine of immortality." This rather magical view of the sacraments is countered in 1 Corinthians 10, where Paul presents the story of Israel's privileges, which included prototypes of baptism and the Lord's Supper, but which did not keep Israel from falling. So, concludes Paul, "Let anyone who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (10:12).

Because of this theology with the danger of immorality inherent in it—certain Corinthians thought it was quite all right to visit the prostitutes, for example (1 Cor. 6:12–21)—Paul says:

Do not be deceived. Fornicators, idolaters [the latter being the cause of the former in biblical thought], adulterers, malakoi, arsenokoitai, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6:9–10).

The words in italics are transliterations of the Greek, and the question is how they should be translated. The chart (below) gives an indication of the possibilities and also the difficulties of translation:

Every translation is an interpretation, of course, so the issue is to understand the meaning of the terms. Bearing on this is the question of the relationship between the two terms. Are they separate from each other, each having its own island of meaning, as some translations might seem to suggest, or are the two terms connected with each other, so that each sheds light on the other? (As can be seen, some translations use one word or phrase to encompass both terms: "homosexuals," "sexual perverts," or "homosexual perverts." One might observe that these three translations can have a range of meanings. They are not simply equal to each other.)

All kinds of views reign as to the meaning of the two terms in their individuality or connectedness. But certain broad agreements are found. First, the idea of one sexual partner being active and the other passive is dominant among the Greeks and Romans, as well as among the Jews. Second, the prevailing form of homosexual behavior in Paul's time was that of an older man and a younger boy, in other words, pederasty. Applying these two points to 1 Corinthians 6:9, the two pairs, active and passive, older man and younger boy, go together

1 Corinthians 6:9: Translations of Two Greek Words Relating to Homosexual Practice

Version	<i>malakoi</i>	<i>arsenokoitai</i>
KJV (King James Version)	effeminate	abusers of themselves with mankind
NKJV (New King James Version)	homosexuals	sodomites
RSV (Revised Standard Version)	homosexuals	homosexuals
RSV (later edition)	sexual perverts	sexual perverts
NRSV (New Revised Standard Version)	male prostitutes	sodomites
NIV (New International Version)	male prostitutes	homosexual offenders
TNIV (Today's New International Version)	male prostitutes	practicing homosexuals
NEB (New English Bible)	homosexual perverts	homosexual perverts
REB (Revised English Bible)	sexual pervert	sexual pervert
TEV (Today's English Version/Good News Bible)	homosexual perverts	homosexual perverts
NASV (New American Standard Version)	effeminate	homosexuals
NAB (New American Bible)	boy prostitutes	practicing homosexuals
NJB (New Jerusalem Bible)	the self-indulgent	sodomites
Moffatt	catamites	sodomites
J. B. Phillips	the effeminate	the pervert
An American Translation (New Testament by J. Edgar Goodspeed)	sensual	given to unnatural vice

well and may describe what we have in the text. There were various forms of pederasty in operation when Paul spoke.⁵ In addition to what may be termed platonic pederasty, where there was no sex, but the prepubescent boy in a number of ways accompanied and served the older man, there was also sexual pederasty, which was lauded in Greek society. Here the boy, in addition to other services, gave the older man sexual favors. The form of sex here was intercrural, the older man moving through the thighs of the younger. Besides this there was slave pederasty in which boys, often products of military conquest, were herded into houses and utilized for sexual purposes by older males. In addition, and quite prominently, was prostitution pederasty in which boys became “call boys,” and received payment for their services. Some of the translations of the text reflect this practice. If this is what is present in Paul’s statement, and it is a pretty good guess that it is, then the *malakoi* (derived from a word meaning “soft”) might refer to young boys, and the *arsenokoitai* (also found in 1 Timothy 1:10), to the older males who used them. These would be the passive and active partners, respectively, in pederastic sex. Moffatt’s translation captures this in an excellent rhetorical way with his “catamites and sodomites.”

If this be the case, and the word “if” has to be used, what Paul was condemning was quite specifically a form of prostitution, in which both buyer and seller are included. This would fit in with the subject of prostitution, which Paul deals with further in 1 Corinthians 6:12–21, namely, the Corinthian male practice of sexual relations with female prostitutes. The net effect would be that both kinds of prostitution, and all who engaged in them, would be condemnable. The question, however, is how a reference to male homosexual prostitution would be applicable to other forms of homosexual activity in which commitment and love are present. This is a significant issue for study and interpretation in the church.

Among more conservative commentators

there is a tendency to move from the more specific and restricted interpretations to a general interpretation that encompasses all homosexual active and passive participation in sex.

It is important to say that even if the text is specific (homosexual prostitution) rather than general, this does not of itself legitimate other forms of homosexual activity. In other words, to point out that a particular action is wrong does not make all other actions right.

The picture is complicated, of course, by various other explanations of the two terms in 1 Corinthians 6:9. It is well known that *malakos* can legitimately be translated “effeminate,” and refer to men who, in a state of moral weakness and materialistic wantonness, prettied up their faces and dolled up their bodies in order to sexually attract other females or males. Could Paul be referring to this?

The other term, *arsenokoitai*, is found in Hellenistic literature in lists of economic injustices, where it can refer to forms of sexual exploitation for gain.⁶ Pimping might be an example of this. Then again, since the word is not found anywhere before Paul, and since the term is a combination of two Greek terms employed in the LXX (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, *arsen* and *koite* (separated in 18:22 but standing together in 20:13, as translations of the Hebrew *miskav zakur*), it has been surmised that Paul may have been the one who coined the term. Possibly, then, 1 Corinthians 6:9 reflects a Pauline affirmation of the continued validity of the Levitical laws regarding male same-sex activity. If so, we may ask if Paul would be assuming anal intercourse among the Greeks, just as among the Hebrews, though this was not the usual Greek method in pederastic sex. This leads to a larger question: Would Paul’s use be restricted or unrestricted, a specific reference to one kind of sexual activity or a general term for every form of male with male sexual activity? And now the largest question: Does Paul’s statement speak to the issue of committed homosexual love among those who are of a same-sex orientation? Since Paul describes only actions, how does the discov-

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ery of orientation affect the issue, if at all?

Romans 1:26–27 is considered the most important scriptural text on homosexual relations. It is important to locate this passage in the general thrust of 1:16–32 as a whole, which is a description of Paul's theological assessment of the moral state of humankind. Up against the righteousness of God, which is being revealed dynamically to persons of faith through the preaching of the Gospel (1:16–17), Paul places the wrath of God, which is being revealed from heaven against all those who unrighteously suppress the truth. Clearly, unrighteous humanity needs God's righteousness to be delivered from the results of this suppression. What is the truth that is being suppressed? In carefully worked out steps Paul shows that humans have subverted the truth of the eternal God revealed in the created world, to whom is due the honor of worship and the giving of thanks. Replacing the glory of the immortal God, mankind has turned to idols of humans and other creatures. This leaves humans inexcusable and with resultant futility of thought and darkness of mind (1:19–23).

But that is not all. Three times over, like a bell tolling in the night, it is said that in consequence of God's rejection by humans, God has judicially administered sentence upon humans by giving them up, essentially turning them over to themselves (1:24, 26, 28). Humans want autonomy, and God gives them precisely that. The consequences of the divine handover are degradation of their bodies (1:24), homosexual passions and practices (1:26–27), and a host of debased actions (1:28–32). These consequences flowing from God's handover are sometimes viewed in terms of a kind of automatic operation of cause and effect in a moral universe. This is too modern a conception. The text is clear that idolatrous humankind meets up with God's judgment. God is not pictured passively in Romans 1. According to 1:18, the headline text for the passage, God reveals his wrath against unrighteous people. This wrath is expressed precisely in the threefold mention of his giving over of the Gentile world. Further, we may note 1:27, which speaks of "the penalty which was fitting for their error."

There is another threefold repetition in the passage. The word "exchanged" is found three times, twice in reference to God (1:23, 25), and once in reference to humans (1:26). As humans willfully and rebelliously exchanged the truth of God for a lie and the worship of God for idols, both males and females also willfully and perversely exchanged "natural" (*kata phusin*) sexual relations with the opposite sex for sexual relations that are contrary to nature (*para phusin*). No one can miss Paul's point that the fact of a vertical exchange with the true God is mirrored in the horizontal exchange of their true sexuality.

Romans 1 is not a prescriptive ethical text but a theological statement describing the fallenness of humankind. The homosexual relations Paul refers to are for him an illustration of this fallenness in which the Creator's design is deliberately distorted. Undoubtedly this is why he describes homoerotic activity as "contrary to nature" (*para phusin*), or "unnatural," over against that which is "in accord with nature" (*kata phusin*) or "natural" in 1:26–27. The reference seems to be to the way God made things. True, the meaning of the word "nature" here has been debated. Some have argued, in part on the basis of 1 Corinthians 11:14 ("Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair, it is degrading to him, but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory") that the word "nature" can refer to custom or convention rather than creation. No matter how that discussion turns out—and one can also argue that 1 Corinthians 11:14 is a reference not to custom but to the creation account in Genesis 2 and inferences from it (cf. 1 Cor. 11:7–8)—it seems clear from the context of Romans 1 that creation is in mind (see 19–20). However, it must be noted again that Paul makes no reference to sexual orientation, but only to actions. The perception of orientation had not been born. Instead of two types of people, one with a heterosexual orientation and the other with a homosexual orientation, Paul seems to conceive of only one **homosexual practices** ➔ **continued on page 79...**

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LGBT

Community News and Conversation



Intercollegiate Adventist Gay-Straight Alliance: *Sowing Seeds of Love* | BY ELIEL CRUZ

At 9:22 a.m., the room was buzzing. It didn't even take the caffeine that I was inhaling to feel the mixture of excitement, nerves, and electricity that saturated the air. All of the planning and conversations came down to this: the first annual Intercollegiate Adventist Gay-Straight Coalition (IAGC) Summit was about to begin.

Student leaders from Pacific Union College, Walla Walla University, La Sierra University, and myself, from Andrews University, began to take our seats. At 9:30 a.m., as I called for everyone's attention, I knew, in that room, students were poised and ready to take on the world.

We were making Adventist history.

The IAGC was founded in the spring of 2012. Amador Jaojoco, then president of Pacific Union College's unofficial Gay And Straight People (GASP) alliance, presented the idea of the IAGC at the annual Seventh-day Adventist Kinship advisory council. The council is a group of Adventists who work to help build bridges between Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, a support ministry for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) Adventists, and the official Adventist Church. Jaojoco talked about the importance of a network for the universities to better provide resources for the growing Gay-

PHOTO BY PAISY LYNCHREINA, LTD



Straight Alliances (GSA) on Adventist campuses.

That's how a group of student leaders came to meet for our first annual summit on June 16. The summit's purpose was to discuss, create, and plan the purpose and future of the IAGC. And after nine hours of discussions, that's just what we did. The mission statement we drafted reads:

In the spirit of Jesus' ministry of love and Paul's directive in 2 Corinthians 5:20 to be ambassadors of reconciliation, the Intercollegiate Adventist GSA Coalition (IAGC) seeks to promote understanding, compassion, education, awareness and community for those who wish to integrate their faith with their sexual and gender identities. Therefore, IAGC is a student-run organization that seeks to bridge the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) community and the Seventh-day Adventist community within the academic setting. The members of the IAGC strive to create a community of fellowship that affirms diversity while sowing seeds of love.

Our goal is simple: to bridge the gap between our Seventh-day Adventist faith-based institutions and the LGBTQ students who attend them.

We are creating a network of official and unofficial Gay-Straight Alliances from Adventist campuses to provide resources, programs, and support for each campus individually and universities nationwide. We plan to have yearly programs and events, including a mission trip and educational scholarships, as well as educational tools and resources.

Adventist education is incredibly important—as is salvation. As my mother always said, she wishes her children to be “safe and saved.” Although a degree from an Adventist institution does not guarantee a “golden ticket” through the pearly gates, a spiritual environment where the students and faculty have the same morals and beliefs can be a nurturing ground for students to grow. Growing up in the Adventist school system, the Adventist culture has been instilled in us. From haystacks to worshipping on the Sabbath, there is a culture that sets us apart from other Christian denominations. There is a common bond we Adventists have with one other. This is why we feel it is important to have a distinctly Adventist Gay-Straight Alliance. We have unique questions, challenges, and issues that relate to our Adventist faith and identity. We value our Adventist beliefs and want to work to make our educational system a safe space for all students, particularly those dealing with a sexual orientation that has historically put students on the margins and in the closet.

Issues such as bullying, harassment, and student policies

that are outdated or discriminatory come up on our campuses every day. Every student leader at our summit had personally experienced harassment and had witnessed many other incidents. Adventist educational institutions have only recently even begun admitting that they have LGBTQ students; homosexual students are often punished, ostracized, or even expelled simply for being who they are. This isn't an issue of the church's stance on sexual orientation and identities. These are issues of equality that face all students. An entire group of people is being neglected, and whether this has been intentional or unintentional isn't the issue. The IAGC wishes to help remedy this situation for current and former students, and help build bridges of understanding and awareness.

We are at a unique place in our church history when many are beginning to accept LGBTQ people and are working for LGBTQ rights within our church. As the president of the IAGC, I wish to create safe places for discussion and the growth of students and faculty alike to honestly ask questions without consequences about their sexual orientations and identities. The IAGC is not asking for religious acceptance of LGBTQ students. We are not asking for our universities to put aside their religious beliefs. On the contrary, we are inviting our universities to embrace our religious beliefs, believing that we are all created equal in the image of God. Creating safe places and amending student policies to address sexual orientation and identities is important for the safety and well-being of each individual on campus, LGBTQ or straight.

IAGC is on the wings of the Seventh-Gay Adventist movement, with six campus GSAs already operating, and more in the works. We are the students and allies that have seen injustice, sometimes in our own lives, and sometimes in the lives of others. The IAGC envisions Adventist campuses in which faith and the LGBTQ community are unified through conversation, mutual respect, and understanding. Our backgrounds may be diverse, but it is our common belief in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior that ultimately unifies us all as children of God. ■

Eliel Cruz is the president of the IAGC. He is pursuing a dual degree in international business and French at Andrews University, and will graduate in 2013. For more information, contact iagc.andrews@gmail.com, find the IAGC on Facebook at [Facebook.com/IAGCAdventist](https://www.facebook.com/IAGCAdventist), or follow them on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/IAGC2>.



Let My People Go | BY CRYSTAL CHEATHAM



I bank on this word “whosoever,” as I sit in a meeting room at the business offices of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). I am one of five individuals from my group of seventeen chosen to talk with LDS church officials about ways their doctrines hurt people that I love. I’m shaking. For the first time in my life I relate to what Moses must have felt like outside of Pharaoh’s throne room with the “Let my people go” message lashed to his lips. I can feel the back of my neck dampen with sweat.

The day started out hot. On my morning jog I passed the temple where the Mormon Tabernacle Choir had

sung the day before. I remember thinking that if we Adventists had an entire city it would look a lot like Salt Lake City. The thought brought on a chuckle and I lightheartedly darted past dozens of tulip beds, pruned bushes, and manicured walkways. The city was golden in the early morning sun—so clean, so fresh. My imaginings of what Heaven must look like brought to life by the paisley pastel colors.

But the beauty didn’t stop me from wondering where they were. I flicked my eyes. Where would they hide? The thousands of homeless youth discarded like old lunch meat, tucked away behind Walmart dumpsters,



**We are a
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but we
are here.**

under broken bridges, like loosened debris in an endless ocean of theological rhetoric: forgotten between the pages. The pastels streamed by in a wash of color as my tennis shoes beat the sidewalk harder, faster—the truth dawning on me. They wouldn't be here of all places, not near the Temple itself—my friends, my lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) siblings in Christ. I wondered if any of them knew that Soulforce's 2012 Equality Riders were there to talk to their church for them—to advocate for their religious rights.

Could I really do this? My heart beat irregularly. It was fear threatening to break my stride. With the singsong melody from old Sabbath School lessons, my heart instinctively launched into recovery mode, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begot-

ten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16 KJV). The verse played on in my head. Stumbling over my feet I gasped for air, positioned my body so that I wouldn't topple off the curb. "I am Whosoever. I believe. I am Whosoever."

On that foundation I regained my balance and turned to head back to the motel. It would soon be time to get ready. There would be a prayer before we left for the meeting. I had to rejoin my friends.

As an Equality Rider I was part of Soulforce. Soulforce is a nonprofit organization that seeks to bring freedom to the LGBTQ people from religious and political oppression. Within Soulforce, the Equality Ride is a two-month social justice tour. This year seventeen of us climbed aboard our bus and traveled through twenty-two different cities. Our mission was to speak with churches, youth groups, community centers, and universities about their policies that exclude and oppress the LGBTQ Christians among them. We call it "spiritual violence." The term refers to anyone using personal beliefs and religious doctrines to ostracize and oppress others. Spiritual violence has been used to oppress many folks, including women. It has been used to support slavery and segregation. It is most effective when certain biblical texts are held to higher standards than others, or quoted out of context. When this happens, the Bible is a weapon of fear pushing folks away instead of pulling them closer to the Christ that loves them—just the way they are.

Because of things like spiritual violence Salt Lake City has one of the highest percentages of homeless youth in our nation. Within that percentage a startling amount of teens are self-identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. This percentage is not unlike the LGBTQ teens who attempt or succeed at suicide and identify as Christians.

As a lesbian, a Christian, a Seventh-day Adventist, a Cheatham, daily sinner, and repentant, I hold onto that hinge of the gospel.

Through that promise “whosoever,” I am marked and covered by his blood. Yes! Me too. I feel a connection with those youth in Salt Lake City because like them I feel that my church addresses my seemingly complex bundle of identities with a glazed eye. It is too much to sort out. I am unseen, unheard, unworthy.

Recently President Obama stated his support for same-sex marriage. As a church this is startling, but it brings our attention to the wrinkle in our otherwise smooth theological rhetoric—does it not? There seems to be a gap between policy and practice. Truthfully LGBTQ members, students, faculty, and siblings live among us, but in a culture of silence. Another fact shows that therapies that “pray the gay away” do more harm than help. Furthermore, the American Psychological Association (APA) denounced those therapies. Therapists who lead those practices are rapidly losing their licenses. Even Paul says that we must be called to celibacy, not forced into it. Don’t we owe it to them and ourselves as a progressive Christian denomination to offer the LGBTQ amongst us more than a shrug of the shoulders?

God surely did not leave me out. When I open the book of Genesis and read the story of creation I am in awe. During the Equality Ride I would gaze outside my bus window and watch the American landscape flit by. It was passing through the desert planes of Texas, the mountainous regions of Colorado, and flower-bathed valleys of Oregon state that I came closest to the images of my Creator. It reminds me of the beginning.

In Genesis, God made the earth, then the animals in pairs. Lastly he made Adam. By Genesis 2:18, God has given Adam everything he needs to survive: food, housing, work, animal friends, and beauty. Yet this is not enough. God pauses over his masterpiece. What is it all missing? Whatever it is, it’s the first un-good thing in all of his creation—his first eraser mark on a perfect canvas. His statement follows, “It is not good for man to be

alone.” There it is, my favorite part. “I will make a helper for him.” With that God gives Adam a helpmate, a friend, a partner. Secondly we are introduced to this creature. It is Eve. Her sex is female.

This message of loneliness is what I hear when the president sides with same-sex marriage. His affirmation is music to my ears; however our meeting with the LDS church bears less hopeful fruit. After hours of discussion we only agree that LGBTQ teens shouldn’t end up on the streets. I left that meeting knowing that the conversation couldn’t stop there. Leaders in my own church had to know that they were hurting their parishioners too by excluding them from leadership roles, baptism, and yes, marriage. What else can I say? We are a small group, but we are here: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Seventh-day Adventists. Love us too. Include us too. ■

Crystal Cheatham grew up as a singer/songwriter, gracing



such stages as Pioneer Memorial Church and Oshkosh Camporee 2009. She is now a masters-level creative writer and author of *The IDentity Kit: For Queer Christian Youth*—a tool for young adults

to affirm orientation and spirituality. As a Soulforce Equality Rider, Crystal led workshops and panel discussions at universities including Stanford, Dallas Baptist, Mills College, and Southern Nazarene University. Along with copywriting and communications work, Crystal continues her support of the Queer Christian community through IDentity Kit workshops hosted at Philadelphia’s William Way Community Center for youth and young adults. Crystal is also a longtime speaker for teen advocacy and a key facilitator in church leadership. Find out more about Crystal and her work at YourIDK.com and CrystalCheatham.com.

**LGBTQ
members,
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Adventism and the Intersex Problem | BY RICH HANNON

The Adventist church, like many conservative Christian denominations, takes an official position condemning homosexuality. The 1999 General Conference Annual Council approved a position statement, found on the church's website at www.adventist.org/beliefs/statements/main-stat46.html that states:

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes that every human being is valuable in the sight of God, and we seek to minister to all men and women in the spirit of Jesus. We also believe that by God's grace and through the encouragement of the community of faith, an individual may live in harmony with the principles of God's Word.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that sexual intimacy belongs only within the marital relationship of a man and a woman. This was the design established by God at creation. The Scriptures declare: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24, NIV).

Throughout Scripture this heterosexual pattern is affirmed. The Bible makes no accommodation for homosexual activity or relationships. Sexual acts outside the circle of a heterosexual marriage are forbidden (Lev. 20:7–21; Rom. 1:24–27; 1 Cor. 6:9–11). Jesus Christ reaffirmed the divine creation intent: "'Haven't you read,' he replied, 'that at the beginning the Creator "made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?" So they are no longer two, but one"' (Matt. 19:4–6, NIV). For these reasons Adventists are opposed to homosexual practices and relationships.

Seventh-day Adventists endeavor to follow the instruction and example of Jesus. He affirmed the dignity of all human beings and reached out compassionately to persons and families suffering the consequences of sin. He offered caring ministry and words of solace to struggling people, while differentiating His love for sinners from His clear teaching about sinful practices.

First a few, hopefully uncontroversial, observations:

1. The concept of homosexuality is *contingent*. That is, it depends on a definition of gender. The document states intimacy should be confined to a marital relationship between a man and a woman, with homosexuality forbidden because it falls outside the approved group.
2. The position statement assumes that gender separates into two *well-defined categories*: men and women. There is no suggestion in the document—or the Bible—that humanity might not always be unambiguously divisible into these two categories.
3. The position statement assumes homosexuality is *undifferentiated*. There is nothing there to suggest subcategories within homosexuality, which of course might open the door to the possibility that only certain types of homosexuality should be condemned. Note that this is a simplification and is not mandatory. Consider the word *cholesterol*. We often use it in an undifferentiated way. And there would be no reason to add complication unless the unqualified use proved inadequate, as in recent times has been the case. We now often differentiate between LDL and HDL cholesterol as LDL cholesterol is associated with increased risk of coronary heart disease while HDL cholesterol can help prevent atherosclerosis. Note, however, that the Adventist undifferentiating of homosexuality is just following the biblical lead, where the term is also undifferentiated. But this does not conclusively demonstrate that the concept is *inherently monolithic*.
4. The position statement is intended to be *categorical*—an unqualified definition of what constitutes homosexuality.
5. The position statement is *propositional* in nature. That is, it is expressed in language that allows for deterministic verification of its truth or falsity. You could almost express it mathematically. Something like: humanity (H) is the sum of the sets male (M) and female (F).

Intercourse (I) is sex between two members of humanity. Marriage (MA) is the union of one M and one F. Then for all H, any I outside of MA constitutes sin.

Please note that nothing in what I have said above infers that the Adventist position with respect to homosexuality is incorrect. That is, my observations are simply intended to call attention to characteristics of the position statement, not to make any sort of value judgment about its truth or falsity.

Now, let's look more closely at the topic of *intersex*.

The term suggests that gender does not always neatly divide between men and women. Intersex is a word (sometimes less accurately called *hermaphrodite* or *androgyny*) used to define people born with somewhat ambiguous genital and/or chromosomal composition. The Intersex Society of North America (<http://www.isna.org>) states:

"Intersex" is a general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. For example, a person might be born appearing to be female on the outside, but having mostly male-typical anatomy on the inside. Or a person may be born with genitals that seem to be in-between the usual male and female types—for example, a girl may be born with a noticeably large clitoris, or lacking a vaginal opening, or a boy may be born with a notably small penis, or with a scrotum that is divided so that it has formed more like labia. Or a person may be born with mosaic genetics, so that some of her cells have XX chromosomes and some of them have XY.

[http://www.isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex]

So nature doesn't decide where the category of "male" ends and the category of "intersex" begins, or where the category of "intersex" ends and the category of "female" begins. Humans decide. Humans (today, typically doctors) decide how small a penis has to be, or how unusual a combination of parts has to be, before it counts as intersex. Humans decide whether a person with XXY chromosomes or XY chromosomes and androgen insensitivity will count as intersex. [http://www.isna.org/faq/what_is_intersex]

If you ask experts at medical centers how often a child is born so noticeably atypical in terms of genitalia that a specialist in sex differentiation is called in, the number comes out to about 1 in 1500 to 1 in 2000 births. But a lot more people than that are born with subtler forms of sex anatomy variations, some of which won't show up until later in life. [<http://www.isna.org/faq/frequency>]

There are at least three dozen well-documented variations in humans that result in something called "intersex," or non-standard

male and female anatomy. Though the mythical hermaphrodite—fully male and fully female—is a physiological impossibility, some people with intersex conditions are indeed born with both ovarian and testicular tissue. Some are born with both an apparent penis and an apparent vagina. Some are born looking really female but with XY chromosomes, and some are born looking really male but with XX chromosomes. Some are all male, except for a small or even non-existent penis, and some all female except for a big clitoris.

[<http://www.isna.org/node/670>]

While the boundaries of where intersex begin and end may not be totally clear, it is uncontroversial, medically, that intersex is a genuine condition affecting many people. Consequently the assumption in the Adventist position, above, that gender unambiguously resolves into men and women—is too simplistic. It fails to adequately classify all of humanity. And, more importantly, the Bible has the same limitation.

Some might note that this "problem," practically speaking, is relatively small. And any attempt to amplify and thus clarify the current Adventist position risks diluting the church's current clear stance on homosexuality. It is also likely true that intersexed people would not be very interested in Adventism, given the somewhat hostile attitude many within the church have toward homosexuality. But, however true the pragmatics might be, they are not relevant. The church's position is an attempt to clarify what the Bible counts as sin. And Christ died for all, not just those who can be easily gender-categorized.

This inadequacy of gender definition has significant implications. Because the definition of homosexuality is contingent, if gender cannot be adequately divided into male and female only, then the definition of homosexual behavior has a corresponding ambiguity. Consider an intersexed individual who, by anatomical inspection, could not be classified as either female or male. What kinds of sexual activity, if any, should be considered homosexual—and therefore sinful—for them? The position statement is unable to say. Yet the statement seems to be suggesting that it provides a categorical method for determining the sin of homosexuality.

Further, and perhaps even more important, the implication that the Bible's categorical-type statements do not admit exception is undermined. The Bible seems to categorically divide humanity into only male and female. No exceptions are noted anywhere. It might be plausible then to assume that no exceptions exist. But exceptions in the

case of gender *do* exist. So we cannot take the Bible's apparent categorical statements on gender at face value. We would have to conclude that the Bible is silent in the cases where gender is indeterminate.

But if we have been mistaken as to the scope of the Bible's definition of gender, why should we remain fully confident that the Bible's definition of the concept of homosexuality is categorical, and admits no exceptions? In both cases (definitions of gender and homosexuality) the Bible is silent concerning exceptions. But we see that exceptions exist in gender.

Please recognize that the argument I'm expounding here does *not* conclude that the church's position on homosexuality is wrong. It does, however, propose that the *grounding* of the current position statement is insufficient to support its conclusion. That is bad enough. It would seem that the demonstrably weak definition of gender as male + female only is a significant challenge to the adequacy of the church's rationale for universally condemning homosexuality. ■

Rich Hannon is a software engineer whose outside interests range from philosophy to medieval history. He is also a member of the board for the Association of Adventist Forums.



Selected Blog Comments

Zoe Brain

"Throughout the whole animal kingdom we see male and female, not in-between or third genders."

Except for snails, which are hermaphroditic. Or Clownfish, which are dichogamous—being born one sex, changing to the other. Or Freemartin heifers, that have been masculinised in the womb. Or Pigs with 5ARD, so are much prized in the Pacific Islands as they lack the "boar taint" in their meat.

Or... you get the idea. Tens of thousands of examples throughout the animal kingdom of Intersex.

In agrarian herding societies such as existed in the Middle East in Biblical times, the existence of Intersex was obvious. It could be seen in many animals. Matthew 19:12's first line wasn't stating something new, it was stating something so obvious everyone was aware of it, and then using that obvious fact as a launching point for further elucidation.

DSD is a neologism coined just to apply to humans, and many in these situations reject it. It's problematic because we don't call the CCR1 mutation responsible for red hair a "disorder of hair colour", no matter how badly the sufferer with it gets sunburnt when others don't. Many see themselves as

just another biological variation, like being left-handed, or having red hair, or being colour-blind (which can enable them to see past certain camouflage patterns). The boundary between a natural variation and a disorder is ill-defined, though there are extremes we can pretty much all agree on.

As for me a nose by any other name would smell. Dr Milton Diamond proposes the retention of DSD as a term, but as "Difference of Sexual Development" rather than "Disorder". Personally, while some conditions could rationally be seen as mere variations with no significant effect, anything that compromises fertility, as most Intersex conditions do, could rationally be seen as a disorder, something undesirable, something awry. Others disagree with me on that, and can get quite defensive about it. Most Intersex groups prefer the term Intersex to DSD, as it puts us in context with the same biological situations found in animals. This discourages the idea that we ourselves are responsible for being born as we are, that we deserve all we get and more.

John 9 is apposite: ¹ *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.* ² *And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?*

My personal experience is that quite a few people react in the same way, either saying (as Virginia Rep Bob Marshall did last year) that we're being punished by God for the sins of our parents, or are somehow responsible for sins committed while still in the womb, or that our souls are naturally and intrinsically corrupt from conception.

The vast majority though think no such things. Society mirrors the comments here, with some both knowledgeable and compassionate, such as Dr MDB, some not so competent in either area, while the majority don't know too much but want to do whatever is right.

Thanks so much for the kind words that have been spoken about me. I'll try to live up to them, but please forgive me if I fail.

hopeful

Comments here (& interestingly also re: the Sabbath hours <http://spectrum-magazine.org/bl...> claim that the challenges of the extremes from "normal" are so few that they should simply be ignored.

I would hope that understanding, grace, & compassion for the "very least of these" (in number) is exactly what should guide/inform our faith & praxis. After all, if our theology can't cover the extremes, it isn't addressing the true human condition. How many considered "abnormal" must have suffered in past ages. Christianity in the Middle Ages demonized left-handedness. Now we have the privilege of seeing how complex these issues are to help us not cause more suffering to our fellow travelers.

Thanks, Rich, for writing on this topic.

Raul Batista

Nice posts. Well-intentioned comments. Freedom of speech valued and respected. No doubt it's a worthwhile site notwithstanding its peculiar filters.

I had the pleasure of attending Adventist college with a friend whom

While the boundaries of where intersex begin and end may not be totally clear, it is uncontroversial, medically, that intersex is a genuine condition affecting many people.

others assumed was gay. My friend, I subsequently learned, was intersexual. Ostensibly a “true hermaphrodite,” as conveyed to me by a mutual friend.

Needless to say, my friend thought it ill-advised to return to Adventist college, though deeply religious, and chose to live abroad, marry and adopt a child.

I’ve lost touch with my intersexual friend 25 years now. I wish my dear friend happiness wherever life has directed folk of a similar state.

I hope at some point warm and loving individuals like my friend can be integrated into society at large and Adventist fellowship as well.

MDB

As a Seventh-Day Adventist pediatric endocrinologist I have read this article and the following comments with interest. As a pediatric endocrinologist (MD), I specialize in children with hormone problems, including Disorders of Sexual Development (DSD). “Intersex” is no longer the appropriate term for the collection of these disorders which are very variable in pathophysiology. It was replaced by DSD a few years ago. I am not a quack and do not practice “pseudo-science” as some have claimed. I’m the product of the good old Adventist education system, all the way through Loma Linda for my MD. These are well described and frequently well understood disorders and can be explained in layman’s terms to the families of these children in ways that they understand what is going on with their child. Just like one might explain to a family that their child has a heart defect or cleft palate or any other disorder in the development of their child. In the case of DSD, the development disorder is the genitalia. The category of DSD is a collection of many different types of disorders with varying presentations, treatments, and repercussions, so one has to be careful when making generalizable comments about DSD.

As you can imagine, I cringe with every post from Pagophilus. Although it has been stated in these posts, I do want to reiterate that gender is NOT always determined by genetics and that physical manifestations are NOT always consistent with gender identity. That would make life simple, but as we all know life is not simple. I’m sorry Pagophilus, but we’re all the result of sin and everyone of us has defects and are deformed due to sin, not just those with DSD.

One aspect of this discussion that I don’t think has been clarified sufficiently is the distinction between gender identity and sexual orientation. This article uses issues with gender identity in the context of DSD to question the grounding of

the church’s position on sexual orientation (or rather the behavior associated with a homosexual orientation). The terms or concepts begin to be used interchangeably in the following posts. However, these two issues or concepts are very different. Gender identity is whether a person feels more typically male or typically female. Sexual orientation is whether a person is attracted to the same gender or the opposite gender. They are completely separate from each other and are not interchangeable. Gender identity is typically known very early in life, 4, 5, 6 years old. Sexual orientation is not necessarily known as early. Dr. Shepherd, teens are frequently “ambiguous” regarding their sexual orientation but not their gender identity, very different.

In response to Dr. Shepherd’s comments regarding the spread of disease via homosexual relations, a correction. It was promiscuity (oh yeah, and blood transfusions), not homosexual relations that spread such “diseases”. For the past 20 + years, the spread has primarily been through heterosexual promiscuity and not homosexual. And remember, it was God who cut off Sodom, not man. We have to be very careful when we, particularly physicians, begin to think we can be God.

I want to thank those with DSD who shared about their lives and experiences, an invaluable insight into this challenging topic. It was a thought provoking article. Although there are babies born with ambiguous genitalia, that doesn’t mean that a gender isn’t assigned to them or that they don’t have a gender identity that is either male or female. The vast majority of people with DSD have a gender identity which may or may not match their external genitalia (I understand that Carlitas is one of exceptions as Carlitas stated feeling neither male nor female). So, classification of sexual orientation based on gender identity, i.e. male or female, though not external genitalia, as a grounding still seems appropriate to me. I think our church should show a more loving attitude toward our LGBT brothers and sisters as we are all children of God.

RonOsborn

Rich, if it is true that sexuality is to some extent a social construction as you write, then this must be true not only of traditional male/female binaries but of the concept of “intersexuality” itself. It would be deeply ironic, then, if in the name of challenging a particular kind of essentialist ontology one in the end simply replaced it with another to serve a new social or political project. I can’t help but wonder if your article unconsciously does this. When you write that “intersex is a genuine condition affecting many people”, for example, you

seem to be signalling that you favor a particular social construction of “intersex”, even though it is, from what I gather, a highly contested and medically controversial term. Here is an abstract I came across to an article in the Journal of Sex Research by Leonard Sax that illustrates what a difference one’s point of view and the categories one chooses to use can make purely on the scientific side of the conversation:

“Anne Fausto-Sterling’s suggestion that the prevalence of intersex might be as high as 1.7% has attracted wide attention in both the scholarly press and the popular media. Many reviewers are not aware that this figure includes conditions which most clinicians do not recognize as intersex, such as Klinefelter syndrome, Turner syndrome, and late-onset adrenal hyper-plasia. If the term intersex is to retain any meaning, the term should be restricted to those conditions in which chromosomal sex is inconsistent with phenotypic sex, or in which the phenotype is not classifiable as either male or female. Applying this more precise definition, the true prevalence of intersex is seen to be about 0.018%, almost 100 times lower than Fausto-Sterling’s estimate of 1.7%.”

I realize this doesn’t answer the theological or ethical questions of how the church should counsel intersex individuals or their parents. It might, though, help to put those questions into clearer perspective.

Allen shepherd

Wow, what a discussion. First, on immutability of gender identity, one case alone does not by any means prove it. That is merely an anecdotal experience. My understanding is it is quite malleable. And can change. I cannot quote the source but teens are often ambiguous about their sexual identity. So gender identity is not carved in stone. I think Zoe Brian’s comments are amazingly inclusive and wise from one in the heat of the battle. The Bible is broad in its commands and takes a more basically practical approach than a specific one on this matter. I thus see prohibitions in scripture against homosexuality as practical in nature. Homosexual practice results in decreased life span and diseases that can spread to the population at large as we have seen in our lifetime. The prohibitions were thus a sort of ancient quarantine so to speak. In other words, God’s best solution to a difficult problem. Leprosy was handled similarly. Some will be hurt, but the results of sin sometimes require this type of “surgery”. Was making lepers unclean wrong? Well in a limited sense yes, but in a larger sense it gave a longer per capita life span. As a surgeon I have had to cut off an arm to save the life. Sometimes God did something similar to save mankind. I see the story of Sodom this way. Sounds cruel, but the consequences of not acting were worse still. We have yet to see the consequences of our broad acceptance of homosexuality.

James N. Coffin

I like tidy and simple. So articles such as the one Rich Hannon wrote about “Adventism and the Intersex Problem” are unsettling to me. Especially so

because of a seemingly simple statement made by Jesus.

When questioned about divorce, Jesus seemed to take a hard-line stance (Matthew 19:3–12). So His listeners asked a second question: How did He harmonize His hard-line position with the seemingly easy path to divorce allowed by Moses?

“Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard,” Jesus replied. “But it was not that way from the beginning.” For me, the implications of that statement are nothing short of mind-boggling. Here’s why.

Seventh-day Adventists teach that marriage and the Sabbath are the only two spiritual institutions that date all the way back to Eden, thus pre-dating humanity’s fall into sin. Yet purely on the basis of spiritual inadequacy, God was willing to amend the rules governing this most sacred institution—marriage—even though He knew the change He was permitting was far short of the Edenic ideal and would yield great pain, especially for the women who were thus spurned.

Really think about what Jesus said: Just because people were spiritually immature—stubborn, selfish, whatever—God changed the rules governing one of the two spiritual institutions handed down from Eden. Note that He didn’t change the rules because some natural calamity was threatening human survival. He didn’t do it because the gene pool was being weakened. He did it because people refused to grow up spiritually.

Now, as I understand it, spiritual inadequacy can be changed—at least to a great degree. We can do something about it. That’s what many sermons are about. That’s what much of scripture addresses. We don’t have to remain estranged from God. We don’t have to remain so selfish. We can, by reaching out for divine power, grow spiritually. We can change. We can be born again. We can overcome besetting sins. Some Adventists even claim we can become perfect. So why would God adjust the rules of marriage rather than just demand much-needed spiritual growth?

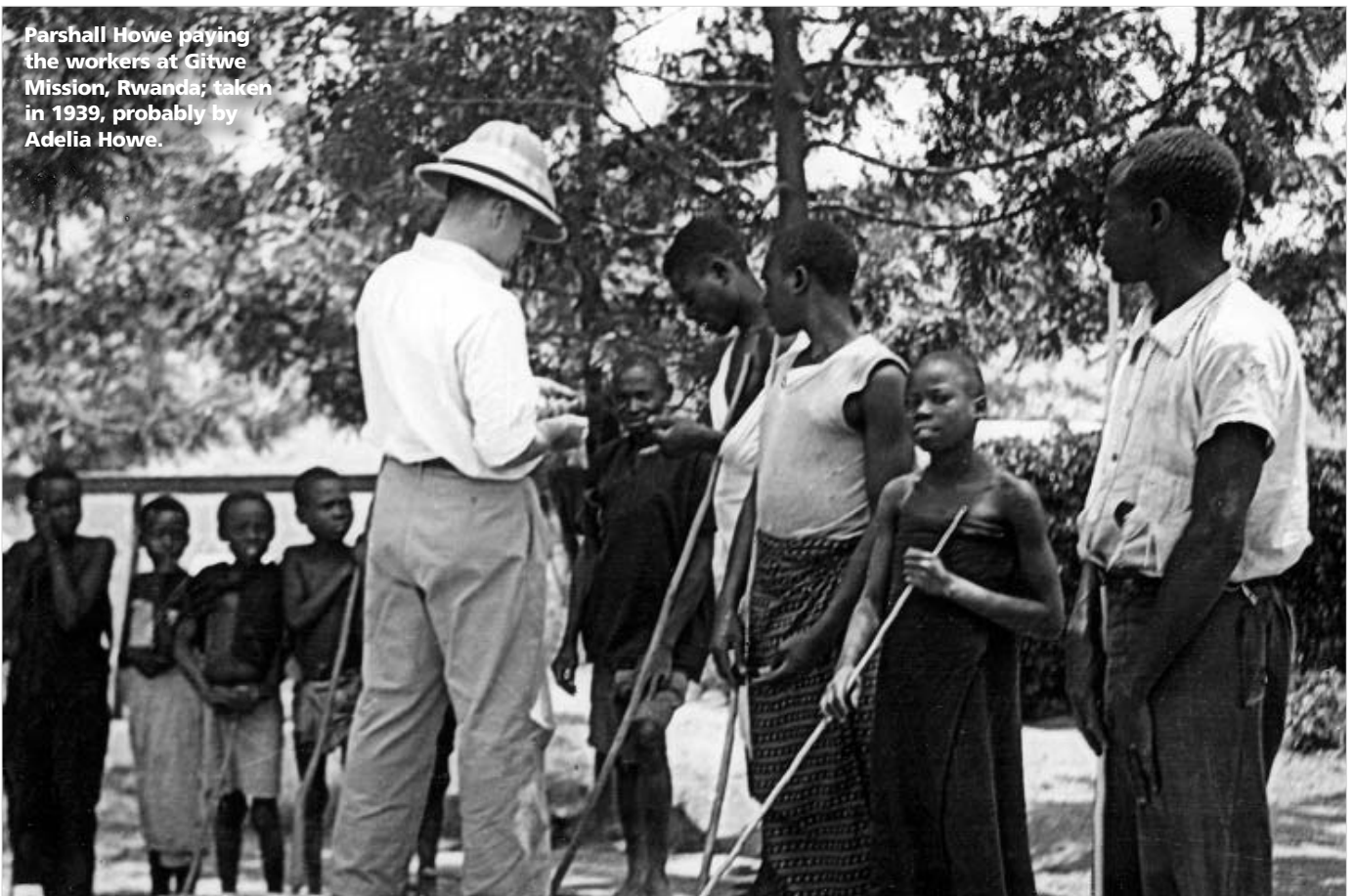
It strikes me that it would be a lot more reasonable to expect spiritual growth from the rank and file than it would be to expect a 180-degree re-orientation on the part of people facing some of the amazingly convoluted sexual identities I’ve read about when I’ve done a Google search on “sexual ambiguity.” To me, the latter seems organic, physiological—and therefore lot more unchangeable and inescapable than the former. Yet even for the former, the Bible tells us, God was willing to change the rules of marriage. Seemingly, He saw the situation in Moses’s time as being so totally out of control that He appears to have opted merely to try to do some damage control rather than cling to an ideal.

If that was God’s response to people who merely couldn’t get their act together spiritually—had hard hearts—how would God deal with the people facing the truly challenging circumstances that Rich Hannon describes and that some commenters say they personally face? More pertinent still, how would God have us relate to them? ■

MISSION STORIES

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HOWE FAMILY PHOTOS



Looking for Lessons in the ADRA Leadership Change

| BY ALITA BYRD



At a specially convened meeting of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency International Board on Sunday, June 24, 2012, Rudi Maier was removed from his position as president of ADRA International. In his 621 days in the president's chair, thirty-three of ADRA International's seventy-eight staff resigned or were fired, including all the internal auditors and all but one member of the planning department. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), a major funder, terminated money for a large project in South Sudan. Donor Versacare asked for \$86,000 in grant money to be returned after ADRA repeatedly failed to provide reports on how it was being spent.

The turmoil at ADRA Intl over the last two years is only a fraction of the whole ADRA story—the story of providing water systems for villages in Ecuador, of developing energy-

efficient straw bale homes to keep families in Mongolia warm, of providing clean water, shelters, and much more for thousands in Haiti, and the list goes on. But because the turmoil has had—and continues to have—an impact on funding and the ability of ADRA Intl to get things done, and because it has diverted the agency into survival mode instead of planning for its future, it merits examination.

Beginnings

In its fifty-six years of existence, ADRA has grown into a worldwide humanitarian agency with more than six thousand employees implementing over \$150 million in funded projects.¹ The agency grew out of relief aid efforts organized by the Adventist Church after World War II in the 1940s and the Korean War in the 1950s, and was incorporated by the church as a welfare and relief agency in 1956. The original name was the Seventh-day Adventist Welfare Relief Service, and its purpose was to carry out international relief for victims of war and other disasters, as well as to help with reconstruction, like restoring or building schools, libraries, and hospitals. In its early days, the organization was administered by the Department of Lay Activities, the church's community services department.²

In 1973 it was renamed the Seventh-day Adventist World Service, or SAWS. The General Conference administratively recognized SAWS as a separate corporation in 1978, directly responsible to the General Conference Committee.

As the agency continued to expand, with more focus on long-term development projects rather than just disaster relief, the name was changed again. In 1983, SAWS became the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, with a separate board of directors.

A year and a half after the name officially became ADRA, church administrator Ralph Watts became presi-

dent, a position he held for sixteen years. When he retired in February 2002, a search committee began looking for a successor. Charles Sandefur was named.

Sandefur also had a background in church administration, having served as the president of three conferences. In his doctoral work at Princeton University, he had focused on theology and social ethics.³

Sandefur served as ADRA president for more than eight years. During that time the agency underwent many structural and management systems changes. Changes were also made to the board, including the addition of more lay people from around the world.

Change from the top down

At the quinquennial General Conference Session held in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2010, Elder Ted N. C. Wilson was elected president of the worldwide church. No one knew it yet, but this heralded big changes for ADRA. First, in the reshuffle of duties for General Conference vice presidents, Wilson removed Lowell Cooper as ADRA's board chair, a position he had held for ten years. He also removed Pardon Mwansa, who had been vice chair for five years. He named Geoffrey Mbwana, a new GC vice president who had previously served as president of the East-Central Africa Division, as ADRA's new board chair, and GC vice president Ella Simmons as vice chair.

On October 4, 2010, the board of ADRA met for its regular autumn meeting. On October 11, during the autumn Annual Council meetings at the General Conference, the ADRA Membership Committee informed members that they had been appointed or reappointed to the board, and invited them to a special board meeting called for the next day. With less than twenty-four hours notice, only two of the thirteen lay members on the thirty-seven-member board were in attendance. Most of those present were division presidents, who command a place on ADRA's board by right of their job title.

At the meeting, Wilson announced that he

could not support Sandefur's continued tenure as ADRA president, claiming depressed morale and finances at the agency.⁴ Wilson proposed a replacement: Rudi Maier, a professor of mission at Andrews University's Theological Seminary. Maier was telephoned directly from the meeting, and immediately accepted the position. No search committee was formed, no pool of qualified candidates was created, and no interviews were done.

Soon after relocating to Maryland and taking up his position as ADRA president, Maier mentioned to a staffer that Wilson had originally called him back in July, soon after the GC Session, and offered him the job as ADRA head.

Red flags

At first, Maier seemed like a potentially good choice to lead ADRA. He had more international development experience when he arrived than either of his two immediate predecessors. He boasted a doctorate in sociology and international development from American University, and a master's degree in South Asian languages and culture from the University of Chicago.

Maier also had experience at ADRA. Between 1981 and 1983 he worked as a project director in Sri Lanka, took a two-year break to earn his master's degree, and then moved to ADRA Intl, where he worked until 1988 to build up ADRA's monitoring and evaluation programs. He was also close to the church, having studied theology at Pacific Union College and earned his MDiv from Andrews. His appointment looked like a welcome departure from the just-hire-a-church-administrator model of the past.

"I, I believe like most, was ready to work with the new president," said Daniel Wortman, then bureau chief for program management, overseeing all US government-funded development projects, as well as private donor-funded projects.

But a cursory reference check by the board might have thrown up some red flags. Maier had helped to develop Andrews' master's degree in international development, and had

**Officially,
Black Tuesday
was called
a "reduction
in force."**

been the initial director of the program. But he was later removed from his position because of a multitude of problems, according to a former administrator at Andrews. One former ADRA employee with many friends who had studied under Maier at Andrews said, "The poor man just has the worst interpersonal skills I have ever seen. He says the worst possible thing to anyone in any situation."

Maier's presidency began on October 12, 2010, and a short time later, he called all the ADRA Intl staff together for a meeting at the nearby Beltsville Church. According to staff members who attended, Maier talked about greater transparency, "bringing the Adventism back to ADRA," and wanting the agency to return to being a "shining star." He talked about how he first became acquainted with what was then SAWS as a kid in Germany, and how his whole life had been leading up to this position at ADRA.

The meeting included a worship service. Ken Flemmer, an ADRA employee who had worked with Maier in the 1980s, broke down during prayer. Another employee prayed for healing, and also choked up, according to staff members who were there.

"It was clear that those close to him felt they had been suffering under Sandefur," said a former employee, one of five current or former employees who spoke to me on condition of anonymity.

According to many staffers and former staffers, Maier formed a small "inner circle" of trusted staff. These were the only people he took advice from, or discussed decisions with.

"From the beginning it was clear he had already formed opinions about the organization and wasn't interested in engaging with the current staff," said Heidi Straw Camargo, former assistant to the president for licensing and governance, who was let go.

Wortman, who held a critical senior management position, said Maier did not even speak to him when he arrived. When Wortman introduced himself to Maier as they were passing in the hall, the only comment Maier made was that people like Wortman (presumably he meant senior managers) ought to think about bringing Maier's son back to work at ADRA.

"He never consulted me or asked for updates," Wortman said. "This seemed unusual, especially given his background in evaluation, a discipline that centers on rigorous data col-

lection and assessment before drawing conclusions."

In her role spearheading an ADRA office licensing initiative, Camargo was one of only two people (other than the vice presidents) who reported directly to the president.

"Even though Maier was my direct supervisor, he only had one meeting with me during the five months I reported to him, and that was only after I had requested it when my efforts to communicate in writing were never answered," Camargo said.

Under Maier's tenure, weekly staff meetings became worship services. Regular meetings of all bureau chiefs also ended, as Maier removed that rung of management. At a meeting of the administrative committee, Maier told attendees that would be the group's last meeting.

Dissolving all the regular channels of communication in the agency, and not replacing them, meant it was difficult for Maier to communicate any ideas about ADRA's strategy and direction to his employees.

The things that Maier *did* focus on made no sense, a current senior staffer told me.

"Rudi was very focused on what he knew. He knew education, and he was set on turning ADRA into an academic institution. But we had already looked at that and decided that our training should be vocationally based."

Maier was also very interested in pursuing some of the types of funding he had worked to get during his previous time at ADRA, the staffer said. Some of those grants didn't exist anymore. On others, ADRA had done a cost-benefit analysis, and had decided the investment was not worthwhile.

But Maier "was not prepared to recognize that things had changed during the years he was away from ADRA," the staffer said. Maier did not like to be told he was wrong.

When questioned on a decision, Maier would say, "I've been told that I'm the president."

Maier and Flemmer both wanted to take things back to how they were done in the 1980s, according to several former staffers. "Flemmer was chief nostalgia officer," one told me. "In every meeting they referenced how they used to do things. They felt Chuck [Sandefur] had ruined everything."

By Christmas 2010, Maier had been sitting in the president's chair for just over two months. ADRA's work was continuing, but the staff was starting to feel uneasy.

Then came a big Christmas party, held at the National Aquarium in Baltimore. "We hadn't done anything that fancy in a long time," said a former staffer. "His approval

rating went up a little.”

Another staffer said, “It was a great event. Yes, some people questioned the cost, but most of us were very excited.”

As people came back to work in January, there were some rumors about staff reductions. But there still had been no meeting to announce a plan or strategy for the agency, so most people dismissed them. After all, the lavish Christmas party must indicate that things were going well.

During a phone board meeting on February 10, Maier had two of the vice presidents, Gideon Mutero and Mark Webster, removed, and replaced with Ken Flemmer as vice president for programs and Robyn Mordeno as vice president for finance. Mario Ochoa was executive vice president, but his title was changed to vice president for network relations. A press release called the three “ADRA’s new leadership team.” As it turned out, vice presidents Mutero and Webster were only the first to be let go.

Black Tuesday

Less than two weeks later came Black Tuesday, as staffers dubbed it. On February 22, 2011, bureau chief for marketing and development Julio Munoz and director for public awareness Healy Mayr were called to talk to management. Munoz was called to the president’s office, while Mayr was called to a conference room upstairs where vice presidents Flemmer and Ochoa waited. Munoz was told that his department was being reorganized, and half of his portfolio was being taken away. Mayr was told his job was being eliminated for financial reasons.

One by one, people were called to Maier’s office or to the conference room. Soon it became clear that Ochoa and Flemmer had been given the task of letting people go, while whoever was called to Maier’s office was told of restructuring, and often demotion. A total of seventeen employees (mostly senior, experienced staff), or 20 percent of ADRA Int’l’s workforce, were fired.

Camargo, who was five months pregnant at the time, was one of the first people told that she was being let go. “You could argue that the



In Yemen, USAID partially suspended an ADRA emergency project.

new president has a right to abandon the old president’s initiatives,” Camargo said. “But letting so many of the technical people go didn’t make any business sense at all, especially the proposal writers who are the income-generating heart of the organization.

“It was obvious they had made the decisions without having any real idea what most of the people did. For example, one person’s position was fully funded by existing grants. When you cut that person, you can’t just continue to bill the grant for their time!”

Officially, Black Tuesday was called a “reduction in force.”

Locks changed

When Wortman saw the phone number of the upstairs conference room flash on his ringing phone, he knew what that meant, and went upstairs to answer the summons.

Ochoa and Flemmer gave what seemed to be a by then well-practiced spiel about ADRA going in a different direction, and thanked Wortman for his service, but said that his position had been eliminated. Wortman went back to his office, told his assistant that he would be out for a while, and drove home to tell his wife the news.

The board had no part in the decision making to downsize ADRA Int’l’s staff.

Before he returned to the office later that afternoon, he found that his Blackberry had been frozen, and he could no longer access his ADRA email account. When he got back in the building, he discovered the locks on his office had been changed.

At the Christmas party two months before, Maier had presented Wortman with a certificate recognizing his ten years of service, working his way up from a junior position to managing eighteen staff members. And it wasn't only his ADRA experience that Wortman had to offer: he had also worked at several competing organizations, but had returned to ADRA because he believed in its mission.

Just a lottery?

On February 24, ADRA Intl leadership called a meeting of all staff at the Spencerville Church, just a short drive away from ADRA's offices in the GC building. Maier read a prepared statement, explaining that the seventeen people had been let go because of a decline in current and projected revenue from funding sources.⁵

After Maier read his statement to the staff, he opened the floor for questions, and was immediately asked about the

criteria for laying people off: was it performance-based or just a lottery? And from there the questions kept coming, but no satisfactory answers were provided. Finally Maier cut them off. He told the staff to take the following day, a Friday, off work to "heal."

"At that point everyone lost respect for him," an employee who later resigned, said.

At the time of the firings, a nine-member proposal team was working on the largest funding proposal ADRA had ever done, worth more than \$50 million for a project in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It was due that Friday—the day Maier suggested everyone take off. He had fired more than half of the team spearheading the proposal.

In June 2011, ADRA Intl's audited financial statements for 2010 were released. They showed it to be ADRA's best year ever in terms of funding. Total revenue for the year increased by just over \$18 million to \$77,543,276. ADRA's assets grew from \$33 million in 2009 to \$42 million in 2010.⁶

It was, as one board member put it, "a total rebuff of Rudi and friends' assertions that ADRA was bankrupt



ENDITNOW BANNER PHOTO JONES

when he took it over.”

When vice president for finance Mordeno was asked during a board meeting this year whether the reduction in force had saved the agency money, she answered “No.”

Board votes to accept report

Office morale dropped sharply after the dramatic reduction in force. People who had retained their jobs were now worried about losing them. A number of staffers who had held senior positions now had less responsibility. Matthew Gameda, former bureau chief of internal auditing and financial compliance, with almost fifteen years of accounting and auditing experience, was now a staff auditor—an entry-level position. Many of the remaining ADRA staffers started quietly looking for other jobs.

Finally ADRA's board got involved.

The board had no part in the decision making to downsize ADRA Intl's staff—even though it is the board's responsibility to vote ADRA's annual budget, and to put corrective measures in place if the agency gets into financial difficulties. In a phone board meeting in December 2010, the budget for 2011 had been presented by vice president for finance Gideon Mutero (who was replaced by Mordeno on February 10, 2011), with no mention of financial difficulties and including funding for all of the positions Maier would eliminate only a short time later.

Not long after the firings, board officers Mbwana and Simmons began an investigation into what had happened. They contacted a representative sample of the people who had been let go, as well as staff who had remained, and listened to what they had to say.

On April 6, six weeks after the reduction in force, the board met for its regularly scheduled spring meeting. The meeting dragged on for eight hours, without even breaking for lunch. Mbwana and Simmons presented the information they had gleaned about the chaotic reorganization. According to one board member, they anticipated a change in leadership. A motion for removing Maier from his post as president was made. Then, according to board members present, Wilson made a speech about forgiveness and second chances and being a Christian. That “just sucked the air out of the room,” one person said. The board “voted to receive ADRA President Rudi Maier's report on the recent changes and

will continue to move forward and work with management in the development of the strategic mission of ADRA,” the agency's official press release stated.

The board did decide to create two committees: one to consider the defining elements of ADRA, and one to oversee the group's bylaws. So far no information has been made public about the conclusions of either committee.

The fallout

The impact of the February 22 firings was felt far beyond the seventeen people who lost their jobs.

First, the initial press release listing ADRA's financial difficulties as the reason behind the reduction in force painted a worrying picture for ADRA's funders and partners. “It might have helped justify the move to the church, but it was a poor external PR move,” Camargo said.

Second, the ADRA staff members who were let go, as well as many others who resigned in the wake of the firings, went to work for other development agencies all over Washington, DC, and beyond, taking their story with them.

Third, some of the huge goodwill and credibility ADRA enjoys among Adventist church members around the world was lost, thanks to the lack of transparency around the reorganization of the agency.

And fourth, the way the firings were handled meant that ADRA's outside contacts were left in the dark. People managing projects around the world could no longer get in touch with managers at ADRA Intl. Because the people let go were told they had to be out of the building by 5 p.m., donors and projects were left hanging.

Longer term, ADRA Intl's mission has been obstructed. There was no real consideration given to how ADRA would continue to operate after letting so many key people go, a current staff member said. “The quality of our work has suffered because we are being stretched so thin.”

In addition, firing its technical staff was a crippling blow to the agency's ability to attract funding. The HIV/AIDS specialist and the gender integration specialist positions were eliminated. Subsequently, the nutrition specialist resigned. “Without that kind of technical expertise it is impossible to argue our skills in those areas,” the current employee noted.

Programs curtailed, funding returned

Among many examples of the negative effects of the ill-planned reduction in force, a few stand out.

SSHINE In South Sudan, ADRA won funding from USAID's Food for Peace for a high profile, complex, and competitive project beginning in July 2010. The Southern Sudan Health, Nutrition and Empowerment project was supposed to last until July 2013. But in June 2011, vice president for programs Ken Flemmer received a letter from Food for Peace's director saying that USAID had decided to cut off funding for the project. She said ADRA could continue its activities over the next year to use up stocks and cash resources, but that the whole project would be terminated a year earlier than originally agreed.

In early 2011 Wortman and other managers at ADRA Intl had been able to reassure USAID that the project was progressing, despite challenges including an incredibly complicated post-conflict environment and a below-market salary structure that made it difficult to attract qualified staff. Suddenly, February 22 came. Wortman, along with other senior staff working on the project, was fired, and a myriad of details were dropped. Without warning, the experienced people who had been sitting in meetings with USAID stopped responding to emails or phone calls. USAID lost its faith in the ability of ADRA to complete the project.

Yemen In Yemen, USAID partially suspended an ADRA emergency project because of a lack of technical expertise in the water and sanitation portion of the project. USAID said that if ADRA was not able to adequately test the quality of water it was providing to people, and not teaching correct principles for sanitizing water, local people would be at greater risk than they were before the ADRA project began. ADRA's director for health, with a background in water and sanitation, had resigned.

Such problems damage ADRA's reputation with USAID. "It's a big thing when they don't believe we can do something we have said we are going to do," said a staffer familiar with the project.

enditnow A \$225,000 grant from not-for-profit foundation Versacare, earmarked for the enditnow campaign targeting violence against women, came into question early this year. In March, Versacare's president Robert Coy sent a letter to Maier via certified mail, after numerous requests for progress reports and accountings of the money went ignored.

Two weeks later, ADRA's Mordeno sent a reply, apol-

ogizing for the lack of response and explaining that "staff restructuring" meant Versacare's previous requests had not been directed to her office. She enclosed financial analyses and a detailed cost summary for the funds. She noted that \$138,843.06 had been spent already, leaving \$86,156.94 in ADRA's accounts. She touched on the ways that ADRA would like to use the remaining funds.

In early April, Versacare, with a faintly apologetic tone, asked that the remaining funds be returned. Versacare said it appreciated the audited accounting sent, but said it was no longer comfortable that the new ADRA financial team was fully up to the task of meeting the appropriate financial requirements related to the program.

Then Maier personally responded to the letter from Versacare, and his tone was anything but apologetic. Instead, he was angry and combative. He did enclose a check for the unused funds, but also railed against Versacare's "unwarranted attack" on ADRA and its staff.

Maier's letter betrayed a lack of knowledge about the program, made no apology to the donor about the lack of communication, and seemed designed to alienate Versacare.⁷

Licensing

The administration's decision to terminate Camargo had the indirect result of halting the licensing program.

The project—initiated even before Sandefur took office and voted by the ADRA Board—was a campaign to license all the different ADRA country offices working around the world. It was like creating a franchise, and would standardize the relationship between ADRA Intl, the Adventist Church, and the country offices. The plan was designed to limit legal risk for all parties, put the individual offices in a better position to get funding (as many donors increasingly give to local organizations), improve governance, and increase professionalism.⁸

In some places, ADRA Intl had started a country office. In other places, someone had just opened an office and called it ADRA. Under the new licensing program each country office would sign a contract and could formally use the ADRA name and logo and participate as part of the worldwide ADRA network.

When she was let go, Camargo had been working on the project full time for three years, and estimated the project would be finished in another year and a half. ADRA had spent a significant amount of money on the project,

although it was considered an investment that would save ADRA money in the long run by limiting liability, among other things.

Camargo said she tried to argue that the initiative could not simply be dropped—that the ADRA Intl board had voted it, and must be consulted—but this never happened.

“We had been training leaders around the world about the importance of good governance,” Camargo said. “When the GC president turned the ADRA Intl board into a rubber stamp it made a mockery of all the reforms we had been trying to accomplish.”

“When Wilson walked into the [ADRA Intl] board meeting and told them to fire one president and hire another it destroyed the whole idea of good governance.”

The board behind the scenes

How is it possible that ADRA’s board appointed a president without a search process? How is it possible that the board let its previous decisions, such as a licensing initiative, be revoked? How is it possible that the board allowed the ADRA administration to fire 20 percent of its senior staff for “financial reasons,” without any board input?

Notwithstanding his previous statements about the importance of transparency, board chair Mbwana (as well as vice chair Simmons) did not respond to repeated requests for information for this article. Failure to answer questions about the decisions of the board and plans it is implementing brings even greater concern to the many ADRA stakeholders.

“Unfortunately in light of the fluidity of the present situation at ADRA and the uncertainty over the potential outcomes of recent decisions made, we are not at this point able to nor at liberty to comment,” the GC’s legal counsel, Karnik Doukmetzian, stated on behalf of ADRA officers and board members.

Maier and Wilson were also asked to comment for this article, but both declined.

This atmosphere of secrecy and concealment is nothing new. According to several ADRA



ADRA’s director for health resigned, crippling the Agency’s ability to deliver on water projects in Africa.

staffers (who spoke to us on condition of anonymity), Maier was always suspicious of his staff’s loyalty, and he would often call people into his office and accuse them of not being supportive of him.

“ADRA used to be an energetic and exciting place to work,” said John Torres, former assistant director of public relations, who left the agency on June 26 of this year. “Then there was an atmosphere of fear and trepidation. No one could say anything because they were afraid of being fired.”

Maier was absolutely insistent that his staff not speak directly to the ADRA board without his prior approval, in contrast to the previous administration, during which bureau chiefs were regularly invited to board meetings to make presentations. According to a former senior staff member, Maier openly told employees that the board did not have authority over him, and that the board chair was trying to get him fired.

In the case of ADRA’s internal auditors, who were required in the course of their jobs to report audit results directly to the board’s Audit Committee, Maier tried to change the relationship so that they would report to him instead, undermining the independence of the internal audit.

“...we are not at this point able to nor at liberty to comment...”

"He did not seem to understand the authority, roles, responsibilities, and structure of internal audit activity," a former employee said.

Shortly after ADRA's 2010 audit was completed, the bureau chief for internal audit and financial compliance resigned, citing an environment that did not allow internal audits to be performed in accordance with professional standards of independence and objectivity.

ADRA Intl's other two auditors, Roger Keaton and Titus Biyete, also resigned one after the other, leaving only the administrative assistant in the internal audit department.

Maier's assertion that staff members should never talk to the board is an indication of possible problems. According to the World Association of Non-Governmental Organization's Code of Ethics: "Key staff shall be enabled to communicate serious concerns to a member of the governing board or officer."

Board member Gilbert Burnham, codirector of the Center for Refugee and Disaster Response at Johns Hopkins University, says he believes that more personnel from within ADRA should be involved in board activities. "Their perspectives can be very useful to members of the board in understanding various issues that the board is considering."

Board bylaws

The ADRA Board is governed by its bylaws. The bylaws are eleven pages long, and not excessively detailed. They specify annual board meetings and/or meetings at the call of the chair, with a quorum of at least one-third of board members. The board must have a minimum of twelve members, and a maximum of sixty, who are elected by the General Conference Executive Committee.⁹

The chair and vice chair of the board are both to be vice presidents of the General Conference, and are to be recommended by the General Conference president.

The board is required to appoint ADRA's president, vice president, and vice president for finance for terms of up to three years. No process for making these appointments is mandated. Officers may be removed "either with or without cause, by the vote of a majority of the Board of Directors at any duly called meeting of the Board." Other than the vote, no formal procedure must be followed.

Downward spiral

As 2011 wore on, ADRA's remaining employees found their job descriptions, titles, and departments constantly



changing. "We all wanted to just move ahead and get things done," one employee said. "But he [Maier] kept picking at the scab!"

Instead of the Human Resources Department making available an organizational chart that showed the workflow of ADRA, including who reported to whom, as had been done previously, Maier took over this task himself.

"The organization changed," said Torres. "We went under a different flow chart, but unfortunately we didn't get to see that chart for months after all those people were let go."

Another employee said, "If you wanted to see it, you had to beg, and then he would just show you your section."

A total of thirty-three out of seventy-eight ADRA Intl staff were fired or resigned between February 2011 and June 2012. At press time, the latest departures were Phil Gallankamp, director for planning, and Torres in public relations on June 26, 2012.

A few weeks earlier, fifteen staff members got together to write and sign a letter to the board asking for its intervention.

Gallankamp's departure left just one person on the proposals writing team. Without grants being written, funding would dry up.

It is difficult to pinpoint the precise tipping point for

Wilson, who had continued to support Maier for more than a year and a half, but on June 5, shortly after the last resignations came through, Wilson put in a call to Maier and told him to resign as president.¹⁰ Though it was not Wilson's job to hire or fire Maier, he was personally involved from beginning to end.

The following day, Maier received an email from board chair Geoffrey Mbwana, reiterating the directive. Mbwana said that if Maier did not do as asked, a board meeting would be called to decide Maier's future.

Maier did not resign. So on June 14, Mbwana asked him to leave the office, and suspend any involvement with ADRA matters in anticipation of the special board meeting called for June 24.

"Rudi genuinely believed that what he was doing was the best thing for ADRA," said Torres. "That, I believe, kept him from seeing all the damage his actions had caused."

Maier's attitude was apparent in a four-page letter he sent to the board and to the ADRA network on June 18, days before the board meeting. He said he was "really flummoxed" by what was happening, and asserted that he and his family had made big commitments to help ADRA by moving away from Berrien Springs, Michigan, "at a time when the housing market there had been very depressed" and "another quick move would have grave financial consequences for our future."

He said he only had a limited understanding of specific staff concerns, and asserted that only a small group had expressed dissatisfaction with his "leadership/management style and/or some executive decisions regarding efforts to make ADRA more efficient and effective and operate within its financial means."

He expressed unhappiness that staff members were communicating directly with board members, and vice versa. He questioned how an ADRA president could function if board leadership got involved with day-to-day operational matters.

He asked how the board members would determine his performance and achievement during the June 24 session, and requested that benchmarks be established by mutual agreement.

On Sunday, June 24, the board met. Members could call in to the meeting if they were not able to be present in person. According to one board member, just over half of the members were in the room or on the phone, more than enough for a quorum. Maier was given an

opportunity to speak to the board and answer questions. The vote to dismiss Maier as ADRA's president was definitive, though not unanimous.

A seven-member search committee made up of ADRA board members and ADRA staff was formed and tasked with conducting an international search to come up with three names from which a permanent president can be chosen. A job description has been carefully drawn up, and input sought from across the ADRA network and church community.¹¹

On July 3, ADRA announced that former General Conference Treasurer Robert Rawson will serve as acting president.

Lessons for the board

It is clear that the board is acting much more cautiously than it did when selecting Maier as president. But what safeguards can be put in place to ensure that the board continues to act more responsibly in the future?

ADRA staff members, past and present, say they are hoping to see governance improved and greater oversight from a stronger and more involved board.

The composition of the board could be part of the problem. The thirteen division presidents (currently twelve, as the Trans-European Division president has asked one of his officers to serve in his place) help to make the board's viewpoint more international, but the church officers may not individually have any training or expertise in relief and development work. In addition, they are accountable to the General Conference president. Does this give one person an excess of power over board decisions? Events since Wilson became GC president seem to indicate that it does.

The lay members of the board, on the other hand, may be too far removed from ADRA's work, and may not understand the trends and direction of the humanitarian aid sector.

Board member Gilbert Burnham says ADRA's board is larger than that of other NGOs he is acquainted with, and much lighter in members with technical knowledge of field and NGO management skills.

A quick survey of similar faith-based charities in the Better Business Bureau's Wise Giving Alliance shows that in most cases, ADRA's board is larger—often more than twice as large—as the boards of organizations that have more staff members and bigger budgets.¹²

Burnham believes that a few practical changes could help to improve the ADRA board's performance. For instance, utilizing the Executive Committee provided for in the bylaws would help the board to work more closely with ADRA management between formal sessions, and deal with urgent matters as they arise.

In addition, he believes using more electronic and video conferencing could make it easier to hold meetings.

"Further, some board members have a wider understanding of the role of humanitarian and development agencies than others, and bringing all members up to speed would be important," he said. "Having more members on the board from the relief and development community would provide more technical counsel and support."

Funding challenges past and future

Since long before Maier arrived, ADRA has struggled to deal with financial challenges that go beyond its internal problems.

ADRA Intl gets almost half its funding from the US government, or more than \$34 million in 2010, the most recent year for which figures are available.¹³ (This includes donated commodities and freight costs, as well as grants.) By comparison, just under 30 percent of ADRA's revenue is from private cash donations, and 8 percent comes from the SDA church.

But everyone agrees that grants from USAID and other government sources are becoming more difficult to get, as the funding environment becomes more competitive.

Another challenge is that funding is shifting from parts of the world where ADRA has a long-established presence and ongoing projects, like Latin America, and focusing more on places like Africa. "ADRA has not been able to adapt very well to shifts in donors' geographic priorities," Wortman said.

Burnham agrees. "There needs to be more flexibility in staff pay and benefits and the ability to assign staff quickly where new opportunities arise. This movement between divisions is now difficult using conventional church personnel management."

Finally, some of ADRA's recent projects have not gone very well, as evidenced by the programs in South Sudan and Yemen being cut off. "ADRA needs to improve its monitoring and compliance systems," a former senior staffer said. "In a hypercompetitive environment, the weaknesses just become more glaring."

Filling gaps

Another challenge is ADRA's hiring practices. People have been hired just because they know someone—sometimes the jobs have not even been advertised. Of course, sometimes those people may turn out to be competent employees, but other times they have not been able to deliver.

Finding competent people is made more difficult by the fact that ADRA has an explicit hiring policy that prefers Adventists. ADRA has been known to hire non-Adventists, but that decision is made on an administrative level, and often positions remain vacant if an Adventist applicant is not found.

"For a lot of positions in our organization, there is a very small pool of Adventists who can fill them," a current employee said. People with specialized technical expertise are especially hard to find. Sometimes people are hired to do jobs they are not qualified to do, the employee said.

"If ADRA wants to retain its very talented staff, it has to offer competitive pay and benefits and make the agency a highly desirable place to work," Burnham said. "As it is, ADRA is the training ground for many excellent people now working for other organizations—often in senior positions."

Of the thirty-three people who have left ADRA since February 2010, about half have taken jobs at competing international development organizations—a brain drain not only for ADRA, but for the Adventist Church.

At press time, ADRA Intl was advertising four vacancies, down from seven only a few weeks previously. While many ADRA employees have been jumping ship, others have been coming on board to take up positions that, in many cases, are described only slightly differently than positions that were "eliminated" last year. Tellingly, as positions are filled, the number of ADRA employees is creeping back up to the same level as before the reduction in force.

But not all of the positions ADRA Intl needs filled are being advertised. ADRA is not advertising for internal auditors to fill the empty internal auditing department right now, for example. According to a current employee, this is because ADRA employees and the board's Audit Committee have been desperately trying to finish the annual audit in the absence of the internal auditors. "Once the audit cycle started, we couldn't do both," the employee said.

ADRA did advertise for internal auditors previously, but did not receive any applications from Adventist candidates who met the required qualifications for director of internal audit, so pulled the advertisement, a board member said.

Looking ahead

In his first days as the interim president, Robert Rawson told the *Adventist Review*, “We have a tremendously talented staff... Our employees are our greatest asset and that needs to be realized. Confidence is what I’m trying to reestablish.” So his first action was to set up appointments with every staff member.

Noting that he was not charged with creating a new vision for ADRA Int’l (that will be the task of the permanent president), he said his task was preparing the staff for the transition.¹⁴

The permanent president’s immediate task will be to focus the agency.

All of the ADRA staff members I spoke to, both current and former, complained that ADRA’s focus and strategy was not clearly defined.

“The strategy has to be designed by the leadership,” a current employee said. “First tell us where we are going, and then we will get you there.”

Wortman noted that most other NGOs focus on clearly identified priorities, such as specific countries, funding sources, or technical areas like health or agriculture. Based on their priorities, they can make investment decisions, set quantifiable targets for growth, and make strategic plans to get there. Their executives can be held accountable based on the performance of those plans. ADRA is much more generalized in its approach, and sometimes avoids the hard choices on trade-offs, he said, nor has it instilled a strong culture of accountability.

A clear strategy would also define the types of funding ADRA is seeking. Should it try to diversify its funding sources to a greater degree? Seek more private funding? Continue to compete for US government grants?

Maier has argued that he was ADRA’s first president to develop a clear written vision for ADRA, contained in three different papers. “Vision 20/20 for a Changing World—Advancing Excellence in Development” was one he referenced frequently. But according to one experienced staff member, “It was a vision if you consider being on hallucinogenics a vision. It had no basis in reality, and did not lead to any



When experienced staff members working on a USAID project in South Sudan were fired, USAID lost its faith in ADRA’s ability to complete the project.

actual policy change, or change in direction.”

An important element of the discussion is ADRA’s relationship with the Adventist Church. Even though ADRA is an independent organization, the composition of its board, with so many places reserved for senior church administrators, means it will always be closely tied to the church. The fact that ADRA Int’l is based inside the Adventist Church’s world headquarters is a clear statement to the intimate connection.

Many church members, even those with no specific ADRA connection, feel a personal affinity with the agency and faithfully donate to ADRA’s work.

“Of course ADRA is very aligned with the mission and vision of the church, and this needs to remain so,” says Burnham.

The principles and mission of the Adventist Church guide ADRA’s work. However, ADRA subscribes to a code of conduct pledging it will not overtly promote specific political or religious beliefs.¹⁵

“One rotten apple”

Current and former staffers agree that dismissing Maier from his post was an important and necessary move—even late as it was—in helping ADRA Int’l to regain its footing. But they believe that ADRA’s difficulties run deeper than ADRA’s top officer.

**“First tell us
where we
are going, and
then we
will get you
there.”**

"Removing Rudi is not even 10 percent of the solution," said an employee who resigned last year. "It is going to take a long time, and a CEO that allows changes to take place, if ADRA is to remain competitive."

Wortman believes that even an excellent president and a highly competent leadership team could still take years to regain donor trust, rebuild the agency's reputation, and re-establish its funding position.

While ADRA Intl struggles to right itself, ADRA's thousands of employees in countries around the world continue the work of helping people in emergencies, and planning long-term development projects. They are not dependent on ADRA Intl for all of their funding, and in some ways they are far removed from the drama of the GC hallways. But an operational US office can only make ADRA as a whole more successful. And that includes looking beyond the president's chair.

"Even though the board has removed Rudi, it hasn't addressed the core issues," said a current staffer who has been with ADRA for more than a decade. "The entire leadership team needs to be looked at. There is pretty widespread opinion, for example, that one of the vice presidents is not even remotely qualified for his position."

"[The board has] just removed the most visible person, without addressing the broader questions. . . Removing this one rotten apple does not mean the barrel is now safe." Recent board moves seem to indicate the body is taking its responsibility more seriously. But ADRA Intl needs more than a step in the right direction right now—it needs a drastic change. ■

Alita Byrd has written several major investigative reports for *Spectrum*,



including one in 2000 about the turmoil at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital and Adventist HealthCare over large executive pay packages, and one in 2002 on an Adventist pastor convicted of genocide in Rwanda. More recently, she has covered Adventist

higher education in North America and women pastors in Europe. She lives with her husband and two sons in Atlanta, Georgia.

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5. A press release published on ADRA's website the following week titled "From the Desk of the President" said: "The difficult decision to reduce the number of professional, dedicated ADRA staff came after a close review of the agency's current and projected financial situation. These projections indicated that expenses, if not modified, would exceed the budget allocation for administrative costs." The press release was pulled from the website two days after it was posted, at the request of the ADRA administration.

6. *ADRA International: Financial Statements 2010*. See <http://www.adra.org/site/DocServer/ADRA-2010-Annual-Report.pdf?docID=3181>.

7. Former ADRA President Charles Sandefur is chair of the Versacare Board. In terms of full disclosure, *Spectrum* has received Versacare funding for unrelated reporting projects.

8. *ADRA Country Office Licensing and Registration*, brochure created by ADRA Intl to explain the licensing program.

9. Traditionally, all thirteen General Conference Division presidents, whose positions are under the General Conference president, have a seat on ADRA's board by virtue of their job title, but the bylaws do not mandate this. Board members serve five-year terms, beginning after each General Conference session. An executive committee, chaired by the board chair and made up of twelve to sixteen board members is authorized to conduct business on behalf of the board between full board meetings. (The board does not seem to have utilized this provision recently.) The bylaws also provide for a finance committee and an audit committee.

10. Maier included these details in a memorandum he sent to the board chair on June 18, 2012.

11. July 11, 2012, letter signed by Ella Simmons and addressed to ADRA board members, ADRA regional directors, and ADRA country directors.

12. See www.bbb.org for a searchable database of charities and detailed information on each one, including ADRA.

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15. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' Code of Conduct for the IFRC and NGOs in Disaster Relief is available at www.ifrc.org/en/publications-and-reports/code-of-conduct. Of the 492 organizations that have signed the Code of Conduct, twenty are ADRA country offices.

“We Wish to Inform You”: *Baptism and Genocide in Rwanda* | BY ANDREW HOWE; HOWE FAMILY PHOTOS



On April 16, 1994, several thousand Tutsi men, women, and children were massacred in the Seventh-day Adventist mission complex just outside of Mugonero, Rwanda. This episode, the bloodiest in the hundred-day ethnic cleansing period, contained a subplot that added infamy: many of the Hutus assaulting the compound that day, as well as the mostly Tutsi victims, were baptized Adventists. By the 1990s, missionary work in Rwanda, first by Catholics and later by Protestants, had

been so successful that it was conceded to be the most Christian nation in Africa, with over 90 percent of the population identifying themselves as such.¹ This statistic did little to stop the killing, which culminated from residual ethnic strife regarding colonially mandated caste systems and map-drawing practices based upon European preconceptions. The day prior to the massacre, Tutsi pastors trapped in the compound had written a letter to Pastor Elizaphan Ntakirutimana, a Hutu Adventist and former colleague. Their letter contained

the famous line, subsequently memorialized in the title of Philip Gourevitch's book on the genocide: "We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families." Ntakirutimana's response to his besieged brethren was chilling indeed: "You must be eliminated. God no longer wants you." The massacre occurred the following day on a Sabbath morning, a sickening irony capping this particular drama.

This article attempts to situate the events of 1994 within the greater Adventist missionary effort in Rwanda, both in the period of late colonialism immediately prior to and during World War II, and during the present day. Two primary sources will be examined, respectively, for evidence as to the causes and effects of the genocide. The first of these involves stories, letters, and photographs associated with two missionaries from California, my paternal grandparents Parshall and Adelia Howe, who lived in Rwanda between 1937 and 1941. These memories have been collected in *Coming Home*, a chronicle of the Howes' six years in central Africa, as well as the 2008 trip of the author, Barbara Howe Djordjević, and her brother. During this trip, these siblings retraced the footsteps of their parents, visiting the places of their birth and early childhood, some of which would subsequently become associated with the 1994 genocide. This article will endeavor to understand the mission work undertaken by the Howes and look for clues to explain how the process of conversion may have served to mask, and perhaps even exacerbate, the ethnic tensions that largely lay dormant during their years in the country. The other primary document is "The Land of Dry Tears," the journal of Michelle Jacobsen, who after graduating from college served first as a volunteer and later as director of the Gakoni Adventist Orphanage during 2009 and 2010. Unlike *Coming Home*, this source serves to uncover some of the continuing tensions that exist fifteen years after the genocide.

Aspects of Rwandan history and the geno-

cide will be highlighted, casting light on this tragic landscape of colonialism, religion, and sectarian violence. Finally, a central tenet of our Adventist heritage, that of an end-time apocalyptic struggle, will be briefly scrutinized as to how it may have contributed to both the massacre itself and how the events have subsequently been interpreted by those who emerged from the storm with their lives shattered and their faith tested.

As the world was rapidly moving toward global conflict during the late 1930s, Parshall and Adelia Howe were slowly making their way to Rwanda. A year after graduating from college and marrying, they had committed to a seven-year stint in central Africa. As recorded in stories in *Coming Home*, the next seven years would demonstrate the complexity of the mission experience. Although much of the seven-year period was spent in Rwanda and Burundi, which at the time were considered a single entity known as Ruanda-Urundi, the Howes would also spend time in the Congo and Lebanon. During this time period, two children were born to the Howes. *Coming Home* contains some of the letters that Adelia Howe wrote to a Mrs. Charlotte Jones, a fellow missionary who had served in Rwanda until her husband had been killed by a Cape buffalo. As she shared with Mrs. Jones a friendship born out of mission and tragedy, these letters are fairly frank in their assessments. A sense of practicality is very much in evidence, one that must have been quickly ingrained in my grandparents as they began new lives in a radically different culture. These letters were actually written toward the end of their stay in Burundi, although the majority of each letter is spent reflecting upon their lives in Rwanda. Certain caste issues appear in these letters and are treated at face value, although they are more often categorized by vocational type, than along ethnic lines, signaling a more Western view of societal division. Indeed, there are scarce references to Hutus or Tutsis in these letters. The Howes were no doubt

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aware of the society in which they lived, as well as its history; however, it is easy to imagine that a practicality born of their mission caused them to sublimate tensions they didn't associate with religious identity. True belief involved faith that investing in the truth and undertaking the ritual of baptism would sweep away all previous divisions.

Another striking aspect of the Howes' time in Africa is the complexity of missionary work. Parshall served as teacher, administrator, engineer, accountant, nurse, scientist, and deacon. Although current mission work still favors the generalist, in a time when the infrastructure of European colonialism was fast crumbling such work required a very wide range of skills. For instance, Parshall designed a better system for bringing water to one of the camps, administered projects and disbursed monies to the workers, improved health conditions by demonstrating in a public multiday experiment that maggots came from flies and not inside meat, and documented ongoing efforts to build a bigger and better Adventist mission in Rwanda. Indeed, a couple of amazing photographs document a mass baptism, as Elder Robert Jones and six Rwandan pastors spent a morning baptizing converts thronging the riverbanks, who seven by seven took part in this ritual of belonging. Although my grandfather did not actively take part in the baptisms other than documenting them with a camera, he was part of a church effort that baptized both Tutsi and Hutu alike, promising them that such an action would result in the equality of salvation. It is impossible to tell from the photograph which converts derived from which group. The only distinction for people like my grandparents was that these converts had embraced Christianity, an identity marker that was well established in the general population by April 1994. However, it paled in comparison to the far deeper ethnic ties.

The area surrounding Mugonero has perhaps the highest density of Seventh-day Adventists in the country; a 2004 census

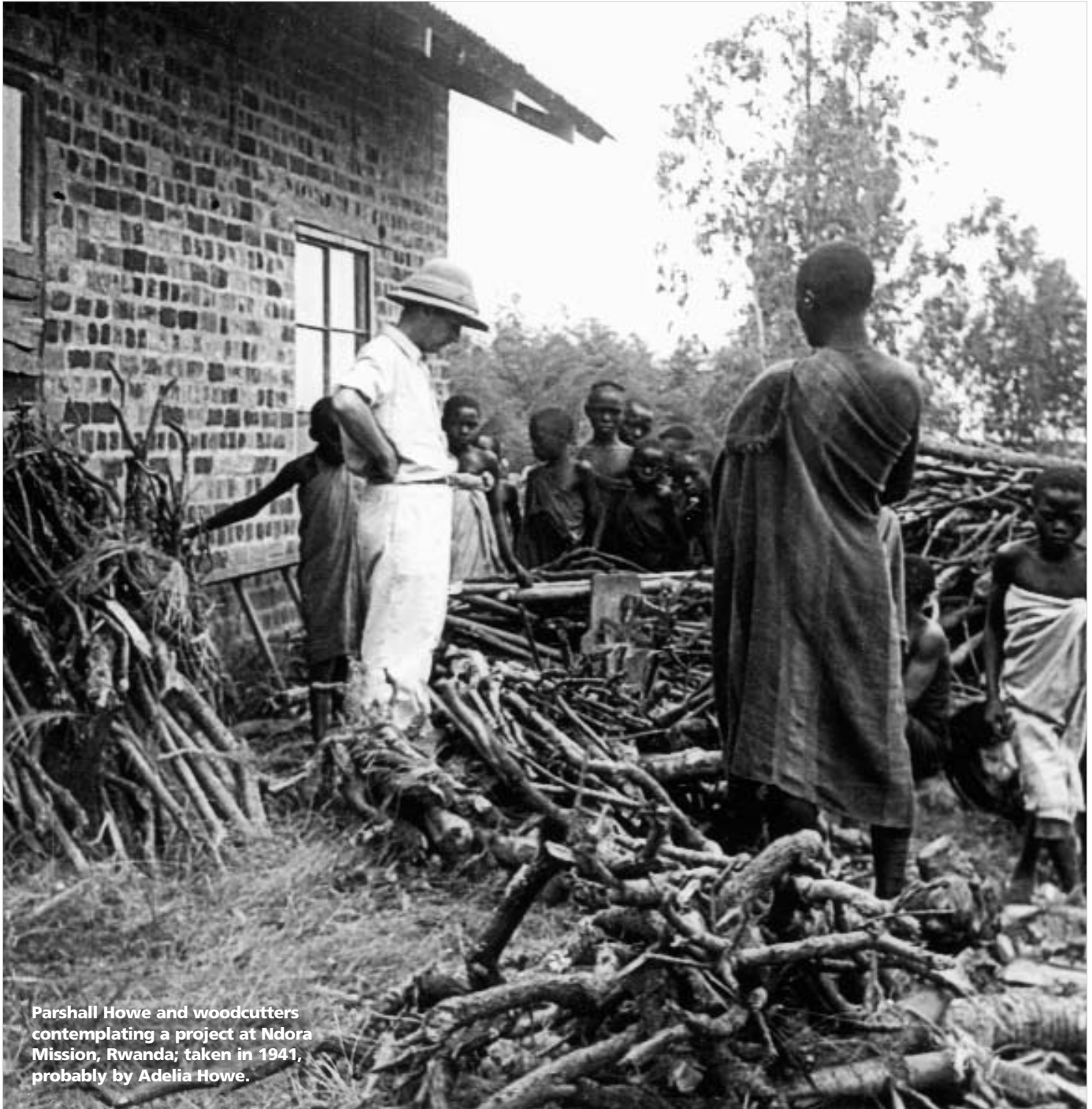
recorded that 22.6 percent of the population was Adventist.² The Howes did not spend more than a few months there, although this location was quite important to them, as their daughter Barbara was born and Adelia found the location to be "peaceful and beautiful." By 1994, my grandmother was beginning a long decline from Parkinson's-related dementia that would claim her life less than two years later, and it is debatable whether she realized the full extent of the events at Mugonero. At that point, my grandfather was still very clear of mind. He avoided talking about the genocide for many years after that, and I have often wondered what he thought when he heard of Adventists killing Adventists at Mugonero. I wonder if he questioned the efficacy of advocating Western religious concepts in a society with different cultural beliefs and attitudes, or the potentially exacerbating factor of introducing a religion with tales of violence and rebellion into a culture with tremendously stratified ethnic divisions. To the best of my knowledge, he only said two things of substance regarding the genocide. Years after it had played its course, he wondered about the effects of banana beer in causing Adventist to turn on Adventist. However, a statement he made regarding the complete failure of Christian brotherhood during those awful one hundred days implicated Western instead of native culture. He told a close relative, "I wondered if all I was doing there was just teaching Western culture." Although this latter statement indicates self-doubt regarding his time in the mission field, the African years were such a big part of my grandparents' identity that I have a hard time believing he felt those years to have been wasted. I can only guess at the extent the events of 1994 undermined or at least qualified his faith in his mission service.

After graduating from La Sierra University in 2009, department of history graduate Michelle Jacobsen traveled to Rwanda to work as a volunteer at the Gakoni Adventist Orphanage, where she was promoted to direc-

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tor later that year. Joining the Adventist mission apparatus in Rwanda allowed her to experience a society still deep within the shadow of a recent genocide. At Mugonero, a plaque memorializes the events of April 16, concluding, "The path to recovery and modernization has been a long and hard one." Jacobsen suggests that this view might be overly optimistic in "The Land of Dry Tears." In August 18, 2009, she observed: "I have heard a lot about being able to feel forgiveness in the air

here in Rwanda. I am not sure that [this] is true." She expressed a much stronger sentiment in a September 2011 interview, suggesting that grudges were more pronounced than ever and that relations continue to deteriorate. According to Jacobsen, an "us-versus-them" mentality is still very much a part of Rwandan identity politics, and these issues have largely been repressed due to the international focus following 1994. Individuals still identify themselves as Tutsi or Hutu before all other



Parshall Howe and woodcutters contemplating a project at Ndora Mission, Rwanda; taken in 1941; probably by Adelia Howe.

labels, and some of the long-held beliefs of hierarchy are still valued. For instance, as a mechanism of control and a way to instill cultural superiority, Tutsi mothers are known to comment upon the unfavorable lip and nose sizes of their children. Indeed, such a fascination is not solely wasted on educating children. One of the first things asked of Jacobsen upon her arrival at the Gakoni Orphanage was if she would consent to having her facial features measured. "He measured my lips and nose and then his. He told me I had perfect Tutsi features." It is obvious that assumptions about ethnic identity are still pervasive, and that the scars of genocide are still incredibly deep. Attending a genocide remembrance event on April 7, 2010, Jacobsen noted: "Sixteen years later and I have never heard people wailing such sobs before. Some people even passed out." The veneer of religious identity may be thin and easily pierced, but the ethnic rivalries and subsequent events of genocide are not so easily forgotten.

Much of this anger and frustration comes from those who were either born after the genocide or were too young at the time to fully appreciate its historical and political dimensions. As Jacobsen notes, the children are being raised in a toxic environment and are adopting such beliefs and attitudes despite the government's pleas for forgiveness and reconciliation. Indeed, many of those who survived the genocide suffer from a lack of emotion: "I have noticed a great sense of apathy with both our gardeners and mothers and other people throughout the village we have tried to help. It is as if surviving the genocide is enough. And so the day-to-day struggle continues." Obviously, someone or something is teaching the young to hate, and any future conflict will likely be carried out by those not directly involved in the 1994 genocide. Thus, it can be argued that the genocide was too all-encompassing in its damage for any truly comprehensive regime of rehabilitation. The scars noted by Jacobsen run too deeply throughout

the community, regardless of religious affiliation or belief. Evidence that the label of religion is the outermost layer and therefore easily removed appears throughout her diary. Although unrelated to the genocide, one example of this is how converts dealt with alcohol. Beer was very much a part of Rwandan culture prior to the appearance of Adventist mission work. According to Jacobsen, local Adventists claim that the banana and sorghum beer they make is nonalcoholic. Although it perhaps has a lower alcohol content than beer made by non-Adventists, in many cases it is still very much alcoholic, serving as an example of how religion is bent to the will of pre-existing culture. On a broader level, this would implicate that a religious identity based on God's selection of a chosen group is grafted onto a split society predicated on generations of caste division and ethnic conflict, the results can be unpredictable indeed.

More than almost any other Protestant denomination, the Adventist church embraced twentieth-century mission work throughout central Africa, sprinkling schools, orphanages, and hospitals throughout the region. With the disruption of colonial services due to two successive world wars, the timing was perfect for maximal impact of message. In many cases, the Howes and others benefited from the void created by the death of colonialism throughout the continent and the era of African nationalism in the thirty-year period following the end of World War II. By the time that most sub-Saharan African nations had gained independence, Christianity was the predominant religion in Rwanda, with Adventism as one of its notable flavors. The success of the mission work was so pronounced that, when magnified by huge population growth in countries such as Rwanda and Burundi during the post-World War II period, the overall percentage of African Adventists in the world church rose precipitously. By 1995, representation at the GC meeting in Utrecht from developing nations was such that a local control bill, large-

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The Adventist Connection



What follows is a story of two families sharing a connection across several generations, passed down from my grandparents to their children, and then to me:

Elder Robert Jones was on a trip to the Belgian Congo in the late 1930s when he was gored by a Cape buffalo while trying to help a couple of companions escape by climbing a tree. Back in Rwanda, my grandfather received a message that had been sent by runner from village to village: “Bwana Jones is dying.” As the local language lacked verb tenses, he didn’t know if Elder Jones might die, was dying, or was dead. Sadly, the latter was true, and my grandfather had to tell Mrs. Jones and her four children that their husband and father had been killed.

About fifteen years later, my grandparents had, by happenstance, settled in the same community as Mrs. Jones and her children: Angwin, California. One of her adult sons, whose wife was pregnant with their first child, suffered from severe depression and without warning took his own life. Once born, the baby, a son, was given up for adoption.

Two decades later, a young man approached the head librarian at Pacific Union College and said, “Hello, I’m trying to find out information about my family. I was adopted and only know a few things about my past: my parents were from the Bay Area and were Seventh-day Adventist. I heard that Angwin was an Adventist community and thought I might find some records in the library. I also know that my grandfather was a missionary and was killed in Africa.” The head librarian knew that my grandmother, who worked in the library, had served as a missionary in Africa. He asked her to come to the front desk, and she immediately recognized the young man as the baby who had been given up for adoption, as he was the spitting image of his father. The returned son was able to visit Mrs. Jones before she passed, and met his father’s siblings. A close relationship developed with those siblings, and he eventually became a Seventh-day Adventist.

The Jones family experienced tragedy spread across several generations, but in the end there was healing and resolution. And my grandparents experienced all three acts in this amazing family drama. ■

ly proposed in order to allow local churches to determine whether or not to ordain women, was defeated despite support from the European and North American delegations. The church has certainly benefited from the development of a multicultural, international texture, although the growth of the African delegation in both overall numbers and empowerment is implicated in a growing rift within the world church between those who label the more conservative brand of Adventism that has resulted as reactionary and those who view it as a revival.

The 2,300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14, as interpreted by early pre-Adventists, lent urgency to history, as the second coming of Jesus Christ was given a distinct timeline and linked to apocalyptic trials that must be endured and tests that must be surpassed. I myself grew up attending Sabbath School with stories that intimated future events that would parallel those faced by the early Christians in Roman arenas. I remember hearing that we would need to “run away to the hills” in order to be safe, and worrying that there were very few hills near where I lived. What was perhaps meant to be metaphorical to my culture must have felt quite literal to those awaiting certain death at Mugonero in the hilly country of East Africa. It is difficult to imagine what must have gone through their minds as they lay awake the night before the massacre. Was their fear and devastation drawn against a belief that the arrival of Jesus Christ was surely at hand? Did they retain their faith up until the moment that men with machetes struck them down amidst the broken and butchered bodies of their families? There are no easy answers, but surely the apocalyptic dimensions of the Adventist belief system helped define the way both Hutu and Tutsi interpreted the events as they unfolded. Clearly, this same narrative of suffering followed by revelation followed by reward has continued to attract followers, as statistics suggest that church membership in Rwanda grew from 190,000 to 324,000 between 1994 and 2000.³

Rwanda has seen its fair share of baptisms, both in water and blood. Mugonero may have been the end for those who perished there, but it was not the end of time and neither a beginning nor ending to the intersection of Western religion and indigenous culture in Rwanda. Although very clear lines of cause and effect can be drawn between the interference of Western ideas and the continuing problems in Rwanda, it is necessary to

separate mission from actor. Volunteers such as Parshall and Adelia Howe and Michelle Jacobsen did much good, bringing comfort and solace to those who were genuinely suffering. They and those like them, who dedicated themselves to service in a world increasingly ruled by individualism, cannot be held accountable for the unforeseen excesses of the missionary impulse. There are much larger, structural problems at stake involving colonialism and sectarianism that are much too formidable to solve, even for those who have the faith and determination to try. ■

Andrew Howe teaches courses in American history, film studies, and popular culture at La Sierra University. A third-generation teacher in Seventh-day Adventist higher education, he grew up hearing stories about the years his paternal grandparents spent as missionaries in central Africa.



Notes:

I am particularly indebted to the following three works in the writing of this article: Barbara Howe Djordjević's *Coming Home* (Blurb.com, Banning, CA., 2010), Michelle Jacobsen's "The Land of Dry Tears" (unpublished journal, 2011), and Jerome Ngabo's "Implantation and Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda (1919–2000)" (master's thesis, University of South Africa, 2008, <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/2322/dissertation.pdf?sequence=1>). For previous insight into this dimension of the Rwandan genocide, see Ron Osborn's excellent *Spectrum* piece, "No Sanctuary at Mugonero: Notes on Rwanda, Revival, and Reform" (2010, <http://spectrummagazine.org/blog/2010/10/16/no-sanctuary-mugonero-notes-rwanda-revival-and-reform>).

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1. Ngabo Birikunzira, Jerome. "Implantation and Growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda (1919–2000)" (master's thesis, University of South Africa, 2008), 8, <http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/2322/dissertation.pdf?sequence=1>.
2. Ibid., 100.
3. Ibid., 10.

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Demons and Football: *Searching for God in the Jungle* | STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADAM WILDER*

For the third weekend in the space of a month, an army of trucks and SUVs has invaded my town in the southeastern United States. I walk downtown—only a few blocks from my apartment—and the streets swarm with traffic. Vehicles race past under the streetlights, their drivers hidden behind the glare of the windshield, locked inside with the air conditioning running. Every vehicle displays the iconography of the local college football team, in the form of custom license plates, bumper stickers, vinyl decals, and flags mounted above the driver and passenger doors. On University Avenue, a pedicab driver waits forlornly for customers as the automobile traffic races past. The police have barricaded off a section of Loblolly Street, where a rock band prepares to play on a stage in front of the Episcopal church. Families and couples meander along the sidewalks and the street, past the restaurants and bars with music thumping and booming out of their open doors. Teenaged blondes in skimpy outfits cling to their boyfriends. The massed multitudes talk and text their concerns to each other and friends afar: shopping, college football, steak, fried chicken, beer, beer, beer.

Meanwhile, above it all—above the traffic and the text messages and the passengerless pedicab; above the chatting blondes and brunettes wearing shorts with one-inch inseams; above the restaurants and bars and all the beer—rises the moon, peering through gaps in the overcast sky, setting the clouds aglow with a silvery light. The moon has lost a little light on the right side, meaning that it is just past full. I knew this moon once. During my term as a missionary and volunteer schoolteacher in tribal India, I knew the moon's every phase: its waning and waxing, and most importantly, the time of fullness. When I first touched down



*The author's name, all individuals' names, and the name of the place have been changed to protect the people involved.

in Mumbai, the full moon hung high in the damp late-monsoon sky. For the next nine months, each full moon marked another month completed in my term of service among the Burungmande tribe. The moon was my friend—not always present, but reliable and dependable to return after regular absences. The moon greeted me in the evening and offered me company during power outages in the dark tropical nights. Shortly before I left to return to North America and my home country, the full moon gazed down at me once again from above the forested hills of Burungland.

Then I returned to the developed world and lost touch. Now how long has it been? Three months? Four? How many times has the moon waxed to fullness, then waned unnoticed?

I feel India slipping away from me. Life back in the West is an amnesic stream of Lethe. While in India, I began to doubt that the West really existed, with its overstocked supermarkets and paved roads. Now I have my own doubts about India. I doubt that people really ride on the roofs of buses, and cows and goats roam freely in the streets. I also



doubt that slum children live in plastic-bag houses next to the Uttarpur railway station, happily tossing clods of dirt to each other as the express trains rumble past.

In India, I had many unique and memorable experiences in a land almost entirely unlike my own. While my journals and notebooks brim with tales of games with students, rickshaw rides, and hikes in the hills, none of these stories will be in this article. At the same time that I adapted to the baffling customs of the tribal people, I also wandered through a labyrinth of spiritual doubt and indecision. I battled the demons of fundamentalism and nihilism, whose combined assaults nearly succeeded in driving me away from God and religion. But in the end, I triumphed, and found my way back to my own religious tradition.

This essay tells of my seeking, and finding, God in the forests of tribal India. I share my story not out of vanity, but to provide hope and courage to the many others who wrestle with the same questions that I faced in India, and continue to face in my life back in the West.

Beginnings

The foundations of my beliefs and thought processes, which I carried with me to India, began to develop early in my life. Although my method of thinking was already very much in disarray by the time I got to India, the foundations nevertheless continued to inform my thinking throughout my times of questioning and doubt. It is thus necessary that I provide an outline of my backstory before I proceed into my narrative.

I was born and raised in a Seventh-day Adventist family. From early on, I had a strong inclination toward fundamentalism, probably more than most of my contemporaries. In particular, I was very much taken by so-called creation science, which used a literal interpretation of certain Bible passages to claim that the Earth came into being roughly six thousand years ago, rather than four billion years ago, as claimed by mainstream science. I was encouraged in this thinking by both the denominational elementary school I attended and Sabbath School classes at church on Saturdays.

Despite my fervent dedication to strict creationism, I eventually abandoned this philosophy, as well as the rest of Christian fundamentalism. As early as grade school, I began to sense that some creationist arguments did not ring true. I recall a particular story that I read in the Sabbath School magazine *Primary Treasure*, in which a mother

scoldingly explains to her son that a rock could not possibly have sat on top of a mountain for millions of years. I knew little of geology myself, but even then I felt that the argument was weak and the author did not have a clear grasp of the topic.

In high school, I seriously began to have my doubts about strict creationism, although I did not actively seek to explore alternative viewpoints. During my first year of college, a single article written by an astronomer and bitter atheist sent my own creationistic house of cards crashing to the ground. Over the course of my five years of college, I became convinced that literalism was an abuse of scripture. By the time I graduated, my abandonment of fundamentalism was complete.

I did not, of yet, have anything to take its place. After a childhood friend died in a plane crash at the age of nineteen, I had no idea what to believe. The trite platitudes that I had often encountered in my religious education, about God's plan and eternal life, could not help me now. In the tumultuous year after my friend's death, the Christianity of my childhood was replaced by a man's Christianity—but still a young man's amorphous and ill-defined belief. I believed in God as the Creator, and Jesus as the Messiah, but I couldn't clearly say how they related to each other or how I might relate to them.

After taking a world religions course, I began an exploration of sacred texts outside the Judeo-Christian tradition. I read the *Qur'an*, the *Dhammapada*, the *Bhagavad Gita* twice, and a major portion of the Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*. From reading the Bible, I had long known of the wisdom of Solomon and the benevolence of Jesus, but I was surprised to find similar ideas in the teachings of Krishna and the Buddha, and the recitations of Muhammad. What could I make of all of this?

While pedaling back to my apartment on a pleasant spring afternoon during my last term of college, I lost myself in thought about these other scriptures. I realized that I believed that the *Qur'an* was a prophecy in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel. If the *Qur'an* was a prophecy, then Muhammad was a prophet. Along with every other Christian, I already believed the first part of the Islamic declaration of faith: "There is no god but God." Now I also believed the second part: "...And Muhammad is his prophet." I was now technically a Muslim. From not having had anything to believe a few years prior, I now had too much to believe, and I could-

n't reconcile the differences between these beliefs.

In the final months before my departure to India, I contracted an acute case of "first-world guilt." From books and articles, I knew—or thought I knew—that the average resident of the developed world consumes twenty-three times the resources of his or her counterpart in the developing or underdeveloped world. I didn't know how this could even be possible, but I felt that the chance of my birth had granted me far more than I deserved. Furthermore, as an American, I carried my own nation's legacy of slavery and genocides against the American Indians. How could I reconcile or atone for this?

My first-world guilt grew stronger every day. At the same time, I developed a romanticized view of India. This seems ridiculous now as I write about it after the fact, but I was merely responding to the information I had available to me. Growing up around the postmodern, neo-hippie subculture of a university town in the American West, I had absorbed an image of India in which everybody ate delicious vegetarian food while living deeply spiritual, fulfilling lives. Indians, I naïvely believed, lived a simpler, purer life, free from the materialistic excesses of the West. I was not finding the cure for my spiritual malaise in crass, commercialized America. Maybe I would find it in India.

My battles with demons

Almost immediately after stepping off the plane and getting my passport stamped in India, I realized that the real India was nothing like the India of my imagination. If anything, India was more crass and commercialized than my own country. In the domestic terminal at the Mumbai airport, flat-screen televisions blared out ads in which the ancient Hindu gods sold televisions and washing machines. Once I got to my school in tribal India, I found that nobody was a vegetarian. Far from playing sitars and meditating on mountaintops, they were more interested in strumming on guitars and belting out American pop songs.

Far worse than the crass American pop culture was the religion I found in tribal India. I knew beforehand that the Burungmande tribe was pre-

dominantly Christian. They, along with many of the fellow hill tribes in the region, had converted from their animistic tribal religions in British times. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Burungmande were a disunited group of headhunting tribes, constantly declaring war on each other and the hapless Hindu and Muslim peasants on the plains below. By the time of Indian independence, the Burungmande were good Baptists, going to church and school and learning to read and write. Based on my idealized image of India and its people, I had assumed that the tribal Indian Christians were open and accepting, not judgmental and condemning of other religions or ways of thinking.

I was soon shaken out of this uninformed notion. Tribal Indian Adventism, I found, bore a striking resemblance to American Adventism of the 1950s, as I had encountered it through my late grandfather. When I went to teach my first ninth-grade Bible class, the principal gave me the class textbook: a battered copy of *Principles of Living*, a how-to manual of Adventism first published in the 1950s. Each book chapter contained a sprinkling of Bible verses and page after page of scatterbrained quotes selected from all of Ellen G. White's published writings. Tribal Indian Adventists followed parts of these writings to the letter. Wearing jewelry and drinking tea were tantamount to apostasy.

Strangely, these Adventists ignored other parts of Ellen White's writings, such as the injunctions against eating meat and spicy foods. The smallest boys could eat through a half dozen raw chilies with one meal. (One chili was enough to make me sweat.) Beef, chicken, and every imaginable preparation of fish figured prominently into the tribal Indian diets. Any mention of animals would lead to a discussion of how best to prepare them for consumption. Lizards, snakes, and insects were all fair game. I never learned how the tribal Indian Adventists decided which parts of Ellen White's writings to follow and which to ignore.

As far as I could tell, all of my fellow teachers held to this selectively fundamentalist form of Adventism. One teacher in particular, Gaikhuan,

I battled the demons of fundamentalism and nihilism, whose combined assaults nearly succeeded in driving me away from God and religion.

might as well have been a premature reincarnation of my grandfather. Like my grandfather, Gaikhuan was obsessed with the literal interpretation of prophetic writings, primarily in the apocalypses of Daniel and Revelation. Every great calamity—rumored or true—coincided somehow with biblical prophecy. Gaikhuan had an enormous library of videos stored on his laptop computer, which he insisted on sharing with me. One of his favorites linked the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks with an American government conspiracy, income taxes, and the New World Order. Another video predicted an imminent National Sunday Law in the United States, in which worship on all other days of the week would be banned. To Gaikhuan, these dubious conspiracies represented the precise fulfillment of prophecy.

To me, they offended my most basic rational instincts. As a student of American history and a native-born citizen with more than two decades of firsthand experience with my own country, I could not possibly believe in a modern Sunday law. I tried to explain to Gaikhuan that the current cultural and political climate of the United States could never accept a Sunday law. Gaikhuan wouldn't hear a word of it. Ellen White had written about it a hundred years ago, so it must be as true now as then.

At the same time that I struggled with tribal Indian Adventism, I also clashed with a different form of fundamentalism, represented by my German roommate, Jens. Before going to India, I had hoped that my roommate would be somewhat like me: eager, curious, and interested in seeing all that he could. Why else would somebody choose to spend a year in India? I got my answer when I met Jens: he went purely out of a sense of duty. While I roamed the surrounding countryside in the afternoons after classes, Jens sat in the house and read German novels sent to him from home. The two of us differed in other ways as well: from my perspective, Jens was infuriatingly pious in comparison with my own doubt and confusion. When he didn't have a fresh novel, he read his Luther Bible, chapter after chapter and verse after verse. I believe that he made it all of the way through the Bible three times while living in India. Before going to bed each night, he spent a long time kneeling and praying on the hard marble floor of our house.

From what I could tell, both tribal Indian Adventism and Jens's own Adventism sought certainty, built up from the literal interpretation of Bible passages and Ellen G. White quotes, taken out of their cultural and historical contexts. Rather than asking questions about the Bible—as the Adven-

tist pioneers did in the nineteenth century—they accepted the old interpretations at face value. This orthodoxy of certainty produced a wall of exclusive truth that only the Adventists possessed. Anybody who missed key doctrines—such as keeping the seventh-day Sabbath and not wearing jewelry—fell outside of the Truth. The Catholics and the Baptists were just as bad as the old headhunters.

I could not do this; my basic rational instincts would not permit it. Thus the fundamentalist demon declared: because I rejected authority, I did not belong in God's church or kingdom. I would be thrown out with the headhunters, where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

At the same time, a different demon attacked from the opposite direction. It represented materialism and nihilism. While the demon of fundamentalism existed in the physical environment, materialism emerged from my own consciousness. Long exposure to materialistic philosophy—especially during my tender childhood years in a liberal university town—had told me that faith and belief in anything unproven by empirical evidence was immature and foolish. Although I did not believe this, I had nevertheless absorbed materialistic philosophy, and it now affected my thinking against my will. While fundamentalism shouted in one ear, materialism whispered in the other. It told me that I could not be a rational scholar and a theist at the same time. The only reasonable thing to do was run away and leave all religion and belief behind.

And so I found myself caught between two extremes, battling two demons at the same time, like a gladiator in an arena fight. In front of me, the demon of fundamentalism jabbed at me with his trident, and I ineffectually deflected his blows with a tiny shield of common sense. From the back, the demon of materialism had me caught in a net, and he was pulling me in his direction. I didn't like where I was going, but I had no power to resist and no defense against the demon and his net. Fundamentalism and materialism were demons with great strength and weapons at their command, but I was, after all, just a man.

The muezzin's cry

My term as a volunteer schoolteacher straddled two academic years, which meant that I had a long holiday during the winter interterm break. This holiday gave me a chance to get out and explore more of India. It also offered me a reprieve from my forced contact with tribal Indian Adventism, which had bent me almost to the breaking point.

Shortly before departing for a trip around North India and Nepal, I came to a realization that gave me hope that I might triumph over the demons. During the preceding months, I had been carefully reading through the Gospels, trying to look at them with a fresh eye. Time and again, I came to negative realizations that pushed me ever farther away from fundamentalism—God is not this, Christianity ought not be that. While reading the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew, I reached my first positive realization—an understanding of what is, not merely what is not. In the past, when I read the Sermon on the Mount, I shook my head and said “tut-tut” at all of the people who professed to be followers of Christ but did not follow his teachings. I know that this reading is not uncommon among nonconservative Christians. When I read the sermon in India, I realized that I had been missing the point. It is no good just to realize where other people have fallen short; I must live the teachings in my own life, and not concern myself with what others have or have not done. Jesus preached that we should, “Love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). He did not say, “Condemn those who do not love their enemies.”

Finally, after tearing down so many old beliefs, I had begun to build anew. In the empty hours and minutes of my travels, I had much time to think and come to further realizations that would serve me as weapons in my final victory over the demons.

First in Varanasi, then in Delhi, and again and again throughout my travels, I encountered a strange breed of person: the white-skinned tourist from the West. Some of these people may have been scholar-adventurers or volunteer schoolteachers on leave like me; most of them were not. From what I could tell, they had traveled to India to find something they had lost at home. Perhaps afflicted by first-world guilt and turned off by their own countries’ ugly legacies of slavery and imperialism—as I was—they cast off their own traditions and went to India in search of a new way. Thus they wandered the alleyways of India’s holy cities, looking for temple bells to ring and incense to buy.

At a tourist café in Darjeeling, I overheard a telling conversation. Two tourists were talking: an American man and a woman of unknown origin. The woman asked the American where he was from, and he replied that he came from Virginia. “Nice,” the woman commented.

“Actually, it pretty much sucks,” the American responded. “That’s why I’m here.”

I could not approve of this approach. I had been in India long enough already to understand that its culture was not substantively any better than my own. It was simply different. By rejecting their own cultures, the seekers from the West had removed their own philosophical foundations. Anything new they found in India could not hope to stand; it would only crumble without a foundation. I concluded that if I could not find beauty, truth, and wisdom in my own culture and history—not to mention religion—then I should not expect to find it anywhere else.

I understood then that all of my later realizations would have to come in the context of my own cultural and religious inheritance. As a Euro-American Adventist Christian, I had a rich inheritance. It included the works of the Hebrew prophets, the Greek philosophers, the apostle Paul, Tennyson, Thoreau, Steinbeck, and many, many others. It also included Ellen G. White. A key to my victory over the demons would be understanding my own cultural inheritance. Thus, paradoxically, I turned away from the foreign culture around me, because it could offer me no solutions. My answers would have to come from within.

What should I make of these other religions, whose adherents constituted the vast majority of the Indian population? Did their own inheritances offer solutions and salvation, as I believed mine would? Or were the tribal Indian Adventists right, and did fundamentalist Adventism provide the only path to God?

I got an answer to this question at the Jama Masjid mosque in Delhi, which I visited with my parents on a Sabbath afternoon during the second Id festival. The festival commemorates the story of Abraham’s aborted sacrifice of his son, who is identified as Ishmael in the *Qur’an*. Throngs of people visited Jama Masjid to offer prayers there on this holy day. When we reached the mosque, it was time for afternoon prayers, and the gatekeeper would not let visitors inside until the prayers finished. We sat down on the sandstone steps outside to wait. As I watched a giant flock of pigeons settle on a small dome at the corner of the mosque enclosure, I contemplated the mystery of the many different approaches humans take to reach God. Suddenly, the muezzin’s voice blared through a loudspeaker, calling the faithful to prayer:

Allahu Akbar!

God is greatest!

Ash-had an la ilaha illa Allah.

I testify that there is no god except for God.

Ash-hadu anna Muhammadan rasulullah.

I testify that Muhammad is a Messenger of God.

Hayya 'ala-salahl.

Come to prayer.

Hayya 'ala 'l-falah.

Come to worship.

Allahu Akbar!

God is greatest!

La ilaha illallah.

There is no god except for God.

Listening to the muezzin's cry, I mused that perhaps the different approaches are not especially a problem for God. While humans tend to divide and put up barriers between groups and one another, perhaps God includes. In particular, I decided then that God has a positive outlook, rewarding the good he sees in people. I decided then that, while I did not believe that all paths lead equally to God, I did believe that God rewards all honest seekers, coming from any direction.

Darkest India

Lieutenant R. K. Wilcox, the first British administrator of Burungland, mounted a village-by-village campaign to stop headhunting. When he subdued each village, he would convince the village leaders to burn their collection of trophy skulls. Thus began the taming and civilizing of the Burungmande tribe. Later, when the American Baptist Mission began to make inroads into the hills, the Burungmande Christianized some of their old tribal customs. In pre-Christian times, the Burungmande would consecrate a new ceremonial drum by sacrificing a chicken and smearing some of its blood on the drum. Now, in Christian times, Burungmande youths enjoyed beating their unconsecrated drums to celebrate the birth of Christ. For a week before Christmas, Burungmande teenagers marched up and down the road in front of my

school, beating their drums and singing Christmas carols, innocent of their tribe's recent violent past.

And yet, I felt, they weren't entirely innocent. The longer I stayed in Burungland, the more I felt that something of the headhunter spirit still lived within my friends and neighbors. Sanjib and Raksil, husband and wife, were two of the most popular teachers at the school. Their flat, on the bottom floor of a house between the big and small girls' hostels, was constantly swarming with students. The principal, Pastor Shira, ordered them to move to a house on the other side of campus. As far as I could tell, he was jealous of their popularity. Raksil and Sanjib complied until the end of the school year; then they quit teaching and moved to one of the nearby villages, where they turned all of the local Adventists against Shira. In gossipy conversations, the church people referred to Pastor Shira as "Saddam Hussein" (on account of his short stature and mustache) or even "Satan." Raksil told me that she could never forgive Shira for his wickedness; she could hardly wait to see him get his due at the Last Judgment. In the past 150 years, I thought, Christianity had only made a superficial impression on the Burungmande and the other tribes. At heart, they remained the same cruel headhunters from Darkest India.

After returning from my winter adventures and resuming school, my encounters with tribal Indian Adventism began anew, stronger and ever more offensive than before. Consequently, I became less and less happy about where I was and what I was doing. In particular, I began to loathe the church services. Every week, we stood up to sing dolorous renditions of the same half-dozen hymns, as the headmaster's wife plodded away on the electric piano. The hymns were all about obedience and blood and sacrifice. When I suggested once that we sing some hymns about the glory of God and the beauty of creation, the pianist vetoed my suggestion, because she didn't know those songs.

While the hymns were the same dull, soulless fare week after week, the sermons seemed to get worse from one Sabbath to the next. The Adventists became ever closer to perfection with each passing week; the nonbelieving Hindus, Catholics, and Baptists fell farther and farther from Truth. I wanted to stand up and scream, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" The tribal Indian Adventists' beliefs were just as systematized, rigid, and exclusive as Pharisaism in Jesus's time. As the weeks and months passed, I grew increasingly aggravated with each Sabbath. The seventh day was now a day of torment,

rather than a day of rest. I came to dread the Sabbath, and I had trouble dragging myself out of bed in the morning. I began to fantasize about running away into the jungle on Sabbath mornings. One Sabbath, I nearly did.

By now, the demons had disappeared. While the wind and sun of the dry season desiccated the hills and valleys of Burungland, the demons drove my heart into its own dry and empty desert. They left me there to wither and die in my own doubt. My battles with demons had worn me down, and I now believed almost nothing. And yet I wanted to believe—not naïvely, with a wall of tenuously constructed ideas built up around me, but earnestly and honestly, with my mind, my senses, and my heart in agreement. Thus, while I still doubted and disbelieved, I tried to reach out to the Divine, hoping beyond hope that there really was a Something that stood behind all things. It was just at this time, in my hour of deepest doubt, that the Divine reached back to me.

During my time in India, I ended my days by meditating, lotus-style, under the mosquito net on my bed. The form of meditation changed throughout the year. At first, I concentrated on regulating my breathing and trying to clear my mind of distractions, while simultaneously contemplating the Divine in an abstract fashion. Later, I brought more words into this ritual, so that my meditation became more like prayer as I had once known it. Once I found myself in the desert of doubt, I called off all pretense of ritual. There was no point in approaching God with ritual if I was not even certain that God was real and good. During my nights in the desert, I asked the Divine question after question. “Why am I so tormented and confused? Why can’t I just believe like I used to? The others around me can believe like anything; why is the Divine so distant and inaccessible to me?”

One night in February, a voice responded in my mind, “Because it’s better that way.” Startled, I asked, “Why?” The voice responded, “Because it makes you stronger.”

At around the same time, I also had an emotional encounter with what I perceived to be the Divine. During another of my nightly meditation sessions, I complained again about my confusion, insecurity, and disbelief. “Please make me a better person,” I asked. Suddenly, a wave of tingling relief passed over my body, starting in my right shoulder and moving to fill my entire back. I knew then that I had reached a turning point in my spiritual quest in India.

I only had one such emotional experience, but I had a

series of thought communications with the inner voice. A skeptic at heart, I naturally doubted that the voice was anything but a creation of my own consciousness. I decided to test it analytically, attempting to determine whether it was mundane, infernal, or divine. Over the course of the next few weeks, the voice made a number of statements that did not seem like thoughts that would have originated from my own consciousness. For instance, when I expressed my frustration and confusion yet again one night, the voice instructed me to write a psalm. It specified that I write the psalm in blank verse, when I asked with hope if I might be inspired while writing. I had long had a mystical fascination with the concept of divine inspiration, but I had almost never felt the breath of inspiration myself. To my disappointment, the voice said that I would not be inspired. Had my own consciousness produced the inner voice, it surely would not have refused inspiration.

During my weeks of testing, I concluded that the voice did not originate in my own consciousness, but rather came from somewhere else. I never did determine exactly where the voice originated, but eventually I decided that this was not something I needed to know. The voice had already offered me comfort and guidance, demonstrating that it was a voice of good, not evil. Further questioning would be foolish. The inner voice led me to read the book of Job, where I found an answer to my question. The answer was another question: “Who do you think you are, asking all these foolish questions?” If I believed that the inner voice was a voice of good, then that was enough.

The Middle Path

At last, I reached a kind of peace in my own internal struggle. Slowly and almost imperceptibly, the inner voice led me back toward faith and belief. Even a melancholy skeptic like me could believe in both the reality and the goodness of God. The demon of materialism could object, saying that faith is childish and immature, and that empirical evidence should serve as the foundation for all belief. If faith were merely blind belief in a received doctrine, creed, or party line, then I would have to agree with the demon. I discovered, though, that faith is much more than that. Faith is not a childish impulse; it has the potential to be one of a person’s noblest traits. Faith is belief in goodness. It believes that the goodness of God will overcome the evil of the world and the wickedness of the human heart. An individual cannot receive this belief externally

from doctrine; it has to come from within.

To my surprise, I also reached peace in my relations with tribal Indian Adventism. The causes for this peace are difficult to define. It may have been partly the result of my soon departure or the end of the dry season and the return of the rains. It may also be linked to my thankfulness after recovering from a violent tropical illness. Whatever the reason, I no longer dreaded Sabbath mornings, and I stopped thinking about running away into the jungle. The sermons stopped offending me, and I even began to enjoy the same half-dozen hymns that we sang every week.

Tribal Indian Adventism did not change, and I did not compromise my beliefs. Somehow, though, I changed my attitude. I realized that I did hold beliefs in common with my tribal Indian Adventist brothers and sisters, despite all of our religious, cultural, and philosophical differences.

I came to see that the Adventist Gospel message really could change lives for the better, even among the tribal peoples of India. June Taseng, one of my favorite students (I had many favorites) saw this happen in her own family. June was born in a village in the Himalayan foothills. All of the families in the village were Hindu. June was born in the middle of a large, dysfunctional family; the children and the mother worked, and the father drank. One day, when June was about ten years old, an Adventist evangelist visited her village. Most of the Hindu families rejected the evangelist's message, but the Tasengs paid attention and converted to Adventism. The other families in the village shunned June's family at first, until they realized that June's father had stopped drinking. When June told me this story, she concluded by saying, "Now we are happy family."

Another factor that helped me make peace with tribal Indian Adventism was learning about my own religious and cultural inheritance as an Adventist. Under recommendation from one of my Bible professors in college, I asked my parents to send me *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs*, by church historian George R. Knight. The book described how Adventist beliefs developed and matured in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This lesson in church intellectual history gave me badly needed perspective. Although I might doubt prophetic interpretations now, I could not escape the fact that prophecy was essential for the foundation of the church during the Second Great Awakening. An American National Sunday Law might not be a valid concern in the present day, but it was a real danger a hundred years ago. At that time, the fledgling

fundamentalist movement campaigned to Christianize America. One of its strategies was the introduction of state-level legislation restricting commerce on Sunday.

In addition, George Knight's book helped me appreciate certain aspects of Adventism that I had previously ignored, such as the writings of Ellen White. On numerous occasions, Mrs. White stated that she did not want her writings decontextualized and treated as a scriptural authority. I hadn't approved of the scatterbrained Ellen White quotations in *Principles of Living*, and Mrs. White wouldn't have either. All of the Adventist founding fathers and mothers were honest seekers of truth. None of them conformed to an established doctrine unless their spirit and their intellect agreed with it. After reading George Knight's book, I decided that Adventism still had much that I could believe in and take pride in, even if I found many faults in its present tribal Indian incarnation.

I had to find balance between many opposing forces. In my battles with demons, I prevailed against fundamentalism and materialism by resisting both equally. Succumbing to either would have been my undoing. I came to see that this principle of balance could benefit me in other parts of my life as well. This was not an original idea; it was the substance of the Buddha's enlightenment under the Bo tree. The Buddha preached that the seeker of truth should live a life of moderation between asceticism and hedonism. Walking the Middle Path saved me from the demons in India. As I prepared to return to my home country, I planned to continue following the Middle Path in all of my endeavors. Life in the United States would present me with new tests and challenges; I would need the Middle Path back at home as much as I had while living in a distant land.

When I went to India, I naturally expected to find something new. According to many of the books I read beforehand, India was the most spiritual country in the world. If India could not offer water to quench the spiritual dryness of the West, I didn't know what could. Ironically, my search for truth led me back to the truth I had already known. To my surprise, I found myself arriving at an orthodox reaffirmation of Christianity. After all of my studying and seeking, I expected to end up with more of the *Gita* and *Qur'an* in my beliefs. As it transpired, I found all of the truth, beauty, and wisdom that I needed in the Bible and my own religious tradition.

This belief is extreme even for fundamentalist Adven-

tism. Nevertheless, all my observations suggested that this was a widely held viewpoint among the adults at my school. In sermons and worship talks, teachers confessed their past sinful habits, which included drinking tea and belonging to the Baptist church. One day in the teachers' room at school, Miss Esther wondered aloud whether Mother Teresa would be in heaven. At a nearby table, Sir Sangma sat shaking his head. "No," he said, "you can only go to heaven if you follow God's commandments." In other words, a woman who had given her life to help the poorest and most destitute of God's children was damned because she didn't keep the seventh-day Sabbath.

Fundamentalist Adventism became a demon that assailed me unceasingly for months. The fundamentalist demon's

opening salvo was this: because I could not accept the literalistic interpretations of scripture and the writings of Ellen White, I could not be an Adventist. The demon continued to batter me with accusations and judgments: My own doubt and uncertainty made God reject me. Searching and questioning were not actions of a true believer. To gain salvation, I only needed to believe everything the church said about the Bible. As the popular hymn says, I should simply,

Trust and obey, for there's no other way

To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. ■

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WISDOM

Philosophy and the Search for Wisdom



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Ellen White and the Love of Wisdom

| BY ABI DOUKHAN

In her commentary on Jesus's life and teachings, Ellen White¹ makes an interesting observation regarding knowledge and wisdom: true education is "imparted by Him 'in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'"² In other words, knowledge and wisdom are to be found in Jesus and in Jesus only. This statement, however, raises a number of questions. If Jesus is to be the only source of wisdom, what then of the philosophical enterprise? What then of the deep thinkers of the past, present, and future, of these seekers of wisdom, of these philosophers? If Jesus is the source of all wisdom, why take the time to read and study the works of these philosophers? Why even bother with the study of philosophy?

This article will seek to address this problem and will constitute a response to Ellen White's seeming deprecation of the philosophical enterprise. Before attempting a response to Ellen White's views on philosophy, we must first try to understand *how* she understands philosophy, what her definition of philosophy is. Only then can we deeply understand her reservations in regard to a certain mode of philosophizing, and recover perhaps a more genuine philosophical stance: one that does not obstruct divine revelation, but welcomes it. Our article will thus have two sections. In the first section we shall analyze Ellen White's critique of philosophy and see how this critique is justified. We shall see that it is philosophy as rhetoric that is criticized by White, and not philosophy as a search for wisdom. It is this definition of philosophy as a

search for hidden wisdom that we shall argue for and discuss in our second section as a possible response to White's critique of philosophy, and as a possible way of philosophizing that would be in line with biblical teachings.

Philosophy as rhetoric

Ellen White's reservations about philosophy are well known. Her book *Education* contains many a warning against "human philosophy"³ and the dangers of such a philosophy superseding divine revelation in the mind of the believer. The text quoted previously in *Desire of Ages* thus constitutes an attempt to redirect the interest of the believer to what White deems the source of all wisdom: Jesus Christ. The question remains, however, as to what constitutes precisely the threat of philosophy. For this, we need to more finely analyze her argument. Going back to the text from *Desire of Ages* on "true education...Imparted by him in whom are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge," we realize that here Ellen White is quoting from the book of Colossians. The full text in Colossians goes like this: "My purpose is that they may...know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments" (Col. 2:2-4 NIV). In this passage, philosophy, cast as "fine-sounding arguments" in a direct reference to the Greek method of philosophizing, is explicitly denounced as being deceptive, and the believer is pointed back to Christ in his search for wisdom.

**Does not
philosophy
testify to the
most basic
desire in
humankind:
that for
truth?**

But more needs to be said about the nature of these arguments. They are, according to our passage, “fine-sounding.” In other words, there is a *seductive* quality to these arguments. It is thus a certain mode of philosophizing, philosophy as rhetoric, as a concoction of seductive ideas and ideologies setting themselves up to be the truth, but which upon deeper analysis have no truth-content, which is condemned by the epistle. The passage exhorts us to be wary of beautiful thoughts that turn out to be only charms and illusions, and to turn to the true source of wisdom, Jesus Christ. This is the essence of Ellen White’s critique of philosophy. In *Education* she states, “human philosophy has taken the place of divine revelation. Instead of the heaven-given standard of truth, men had accepted a standard of their own devising. From the Light of life they had turned aside to walk in the sparks of the fire which they had kindled.”⁴ The danger with philosophy as rhetoric thus lies, according to Ellen White, in its intention to supersede divine revelation. When philosophy sets itself as the standard of truth and erects itself as an authority as to how one should think or act, however, it becomes guilty of deceptiveness.

The point is well taken, and I agree with her. Yet we must bear in mind that both the epistle’s and Ellen White’s critiques of philosophy pertain to a certain definition of philosophy as rhetoric—as a seductive ideology serving to divert from the truth and taught to the masses to satisfy their longing and thirst for meaning. And yet, is there not another way to see philosophy? Not as an attempt to seduce and cheat the masses, but as an authentic thirst for truth? Does not philosophy testify to the most basic desire in humankind: that for truth? Such was incidentally Plato’s definition of philosophy. Over and against the Sophists who practiced philosophy as rhetoric, as ideology, in order to seduce the people, Plato defined philosophy as the desire for wisdom. A desire which would stop at nothing until it had found what it was looking for, and which would never be satisfied



Ellen G. White books.

**To be a
believer does
not mean that
one possesses
the truth, or is
in the truth,
but simply
that one is
searching for
the truth.**

with half-baked truths. It is this definition of philosophy as a resolute, audacious, yet humble quest for truth that I would like to develop in my response to the Ellen White passage mentioned above. Yes, philosophy as rhetoric must be done away with, but can the wisdom of God be found without a basic desire for truth, which constitutes precisely the very essence of the philosophical endeavor? It is this alternative definition of philosophy as the search for hidden wisdom that I would like to develop as a possible mode of philosophizing, which would be in line with biblical thinking. For this, we need to go back to the passage from Colossians in order to discover what divine wisdom is and how philosophy can attune itself to it.

Philosophy as the search for wisdom: argument

The Colossians passage describes divine wisdom and knowledge as “hidden.” In other words, divine wisdom is hidden, it is not obvious; it is like a buried treasure, which must be earnestly sought and desired if it is to be possessed. As Christians, we are used to thinking that divine wisdom is accessible to all and readily available to anyone. This passage nuances this view. Yes, divine wisdom is available to all, on the condition that they *seek* and *search* for it. Divine wisdom reveals itself only to the seeker, embodied by the child in the

Gospels because of the child's curiosity, sense of wonder, and capacity for endless questioning. Jesus himself expounded on the hiddenness of divine wisdom in his parable of the pearl. Only those who give up all to the search and quest for wisdom will receive it (Matt. 13:45). Finally, Ellen White describes the necessity of the quest for wisdom. In speaking of this quest she says, "we have, as it were, been working on the surface of the mine, when rich golden ore is beneath the surface, to reward the one who will dig for it. The shaft must be sunk deeper and yet deeper into the mine and the result will be glorious treasure."⁵ Like golden ore, buried in the depths of the earth, divine wisdom is not obvious; it is hidden and must be sought after with great care and energy. Because divine wisdom is infinite, the quest can never end, as observed by Ellen White: "Let none think that there is no more knowledge for them to gain...the highest, deepest, broadest flight of the imagination cannot find out God. There is infinity beyond all that we can comprehend."⁶

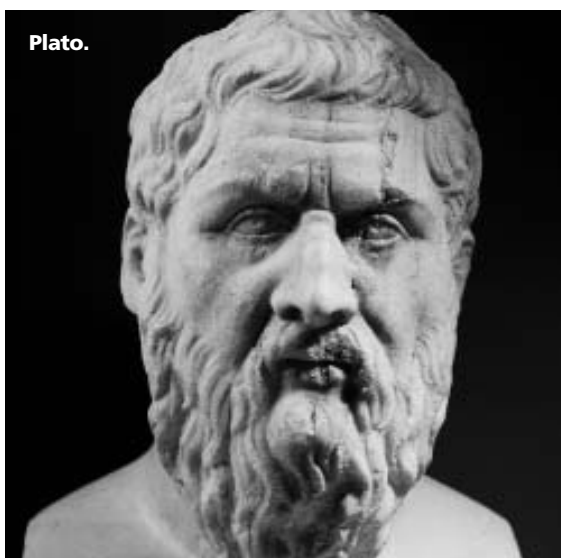
Such a definition of wisdom in turn redefines what it means to be a believer. To be a believer does not mean that one possesses the truth, or is *in* the truth, but simply that one is searching for the truth. To be a believer is not to hold a certain wisdom anymore, but to realize one's poverty of mind. We are reminded here of the

Beatitudes, where a special blessing is given the "poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3). To be poor in spirit is not, as certain are led to think, to be ignorant. To be poor in spirit is to realize one's spiritual poverty, one's lack of wisdom. Such a poverty is not praised as *such*, but inasmuch as it leads the believer to seek and to search for wisdom. The believer is not then exhorted to remain ignorant or naive in matters of truth, but to seek earnestly to further his or her knowledge of the truth. Thus, poverty in spirit is not a state that the believer should comply himself or herself with—there should be no vow of intellectual poverty—but, on the contrary, it should be experienced as an incentive to acquire the wealth and riches of wisdom and knowledge.

Is this not, however, precisely the definition of the philosopher? Plato himself already defined philosophy as the desire for wisdom, or love of wisdom. In his *Symposium*, Plato defines the lover of wisdom in a way very close to the scriptures. According to Plato, the lover of wisdom is a beggar who realizes his need and lack, much in the sense of the "poor in spirit" from the Beatitudes. The love for wisdom described in the *Symposium* is portrayed as an attitude of earnest seeking. The philosopher will give up all earthly attachments for his love of wisdom, will, like in the parable of the pearl, give up everything for wisdom, and follow the difficult and austere path to wisdom. Philosophy is here very far from rhetoric. Unlike rhetoric, which was full of empty promises, philosophy according to Plato is the narrow path. Philosophy is not described here as another seductive ideology but as a certain attitude: an attitude of humble and earnest desire for truth. And as such, it constitutes the very stance of the believer!

Indeed, inasmuch as the believer is defined in the gospels as "poor in spirit," intent on seeking the pearl of wisdom, then the believer's task coincides with that of the philosopher's. Inasmuch as philosophy defines an attitude of desire for truth, then the believer's stance is primarily a philosophical one. If to philosophize is to awaken to a desire for truth and wisdom, then

Philosophy is described as... a certain attitude: an attitude of humble and earnest desire for truth.



Plato.

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the philosophical attitude can come to characterize the believer. What's more, it must qualify the believer! For without this sense of poverty and attitude of desire and search, divine wisdom cannot be approached. This was what Jesus meant when he said that the rich cannot find their way to the kingdom of God (Matt. 19:24). The way to divine wisdom is not through a certain wealth of beliefs or credo; it is through a renewed perception of one's poverty and lack of wisdom, and through an earnest desire for this wisdom. And as such, the true believer is always essentially a philosopher, that is, one who desires wisdom.

Skepticism vs. a sense of wonder

This definition of the believer as a philosopher brings forth, however, a number of objections. Indeed, the philosophical stance has more often than not been associated with a skepticism leading to loss of belief and a turning away from God. Ellen White states of philosophy, "Of all the errors that are finding acceptance among professedly Christian people, none is a more dangerous deception, none more certain to separate man from God, than is this."⁷ If the believer is to adopt the philosophical stance, is he or she not in danger of arriving at a skeptical attitude about everything including God? Does not the philosophical stance lead *away* from God rather than to God? Indeed, inasmuch as skepticism denies the existence of any dimension other than that which can be ascertained by the senses, does not philosophical questioning ultimately lead to the abolition of transcendence and of the infinite?

In Plato's *Symposium*, the explication of the philosophical way is introduced by both a woman and a foreigner: Diotema. The introduction of a female and foreign interlocutor in a context that was otherwise male and Greek is interesting, and attests to philosophy as an endeavor that points to a distinct and transcendent realm. Diotema represents the estrangement of philosophy to otherwise worldly and human concerns. Philosophy thus situates itself,



Ellen G. White
circa 1899.

in its beginnings, at the threshold of the invisible and infinite realm, and is seen as a divine science, pertaining to the gods. The essence of philosophy must then be defined as this sense of wonder at a mystery, an enigma which one senses within the world. As such, philosophy constitutes an eternal question in the face of transcendence. This is what incidentally differentiates the philosophical task from other scientific enterprises. Other tasks seek answers. Philosophy remains, and knows that it must remain, within the realm of the question. To stop questioning would amount to losing this sense of wonder in the face of the Absolute, and as such, to lose the very sense of transcendence.

But we must here differentiate this manner of questioning with skepticism. Often the one who questions is reduced to the skeptic. But there is a fundamental difference between the two. Indeed, skepticism has nothing to do with a sense of wonder. It has much more to do with disillusionment, with the realization that our questions lead nowhere and that there is no truth, no answers out there. The stance of wonder, on the other hand, is fundamentally hopeful. Its questioning stems from a genuine desire to know, to discover, to approach the Absolute. The questions of the wondering one are a guiding thread to the truth; they do not deny truth but earnestly seek to approach it. Skepticism, on the other hand, stems from a fundamental dog-

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conceptual-
izations.**

matism that makes the unfounded affirmation that there is no truth, which has decided for everyone and for always that there is nothing new under the sun. Such a skepticism asks questions not in order to learn more, but in order to prove its point that there is no truth and that truth cannot be found—an affirmation which in reality dissimulates a profound dogmatism.

Very different is the mode of questioning which stems from a sense of wonder. Such questioning can offer the same questions as the skeptic. It can also ask, “Is God dead?” or “Does God exist?” but the spirit in which it does so is completely different. It is a spirit of humility, of wonder. It is a genuine question and not a rhetorical one like the skeptic’s, which definitively hides a dogmatic content. Such questions do not lead away from God but to God, in that they stem from a desire to know, from a thirst for the Absolute. Instead of hiding or obliterating the divine dimension, such a questioning can unveil it. Ellen White herself acknowledges the value of an inquisitive mind and sees true education as that which awakens inquiry rather than stifles it: “True education is not the forcing of instruction on an unready and unreceptive mind. The mental powers must be awakened, the interest aroused. . . Then, as inquiry was made, the instruction given impressed mind and heart.”⁸ Indeed, God is sometimes better revealed by our questions than by our dogmatic answers and conceptualizations. Earnest questions which sincerely seek to know God and which refuse to be appeased by something less than the truth will better approach God than false or limited conceptualizations.

Conclusion

We now can better understand why our passage speaks of the “treasures of wisdom.” Wisdom is seen here as a treasure in that it brings the searcher closer to the Infinite. The true searcher of wisdom is one who has been awakened to a sense of the Absolute, who thirsts for transcendence. It is in this sense that one might also understand the passage in Proverbs, which states

that the “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 1:7). The philosophical quest stems, from the onset, from a thirst, a desire for the Infinite. Thus philosophy can be seen, not as the obstruction of truth, but as a thirst for truth. But this treasure of truth will not give itself to the one who already has a sense of truth, rather than the one who searches out of his or her sense of poverty. Divine wisdom eludes both the dogmatic—who thinks he knows God—and the skeptic—who knows that there is nothing to know. Only the one who is neither the skeptic, nor the dogmatic, but the earnest searcher of truth, will be able to approach divine wisdom. Only to the poor in spirit will wisdom be revealed, not to the ones who already know. True philosophy cannot be proud, or arrogant, as pointed out by Ellen White. As such it does not deserve the name of philosophy. The genuine philosopher is he or she who has made a vow of poverty. As long as philosophy retains the humble garb of the seeker, and keeps its vow of humility, it will remain in tune with divine wisdom. ■

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3. *Ibid.*, *Education* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2002), 74.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 113.
6. *Ibid.*, 113.
7. *Ibid.*, *Ministry of Healing*, 243.
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Legitimization, Articulation, and Critique:

Adventism and the Three Modes of Philosophy | BY ZANE YI

My initial exposure to philosophy and interest in the discipline began through my study of theology as a college undergraduate. At that point, I was mainly interested in apologetics. As I had learned to do with the Bible when it came to doctrine, I wanted to do with foundational issues not directly addressed by the Bible. I wanted assurance that what I believed on these matters was right, and conversely, that what others believed was wrong. Furthermore, I wanted to convince others, rationally, to believe what I believed. In other words, I was mainly interested in philosophy as a means to legitimate and communicate my beliefs. In many

ways, I suppose that the formal study of philosophy has taught me how to more effectively do both. But as I look to completing my formal training, I am surprised at how I have grown to appreciate another mode of philosophy that seems at odds, at least initially, with these other two modes.

In what follows, I focus on this third, critical mode of philosophy. I use the word “critical” in three related, but distinct senses. First, instead of assuming the legitimacy of one’s own

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**School of Athens,
by Rafael (detail).**

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beliefs, or the beliefs of one's own tradition, critical philosophy calls them into question. Secondly, in addition to questioning them, one honestly examines the arguments given for and against these views. Lastly, one assesses the reasoning capacities that are used to derive these beliefs, ascertaining their proper limits.

The cumulative result of engaging in philosophy critically is a loss of certainty about some beliefs. This seems to present a peril for Adventists engaging in philosophical inquiry, for there is the real possibility of a loss or change in one's beliefs. But, I will argue, criticism is an essential aspect of teaching and studying philosophy, and this mode of philosophy holds great promise, providing, ultimately, essential preconditions for genuine faith.

The study of philosophy exposes students to the important questions and ideas that have shaped, and continue to shape, society. Engaging these questions and ideas imparts a valuable set of skills—the ability to read and think critically, to analyze and offer arguments, and to make nuanced conceptual distinctions. This exposure and set of skills can be appropriated for different ends: *legitimization*, *communication*, and *critique*.

In some Christian circles, philosophy is primarily valued as a means to defend key Christian beliefs. This includes beliefs that may not be directly addressed by the Bible, but are understood to be foundational to the teachings of scripture (such as the existence of God, the possibility of miracles, the historical reliability of biblical texts, etc.), or certain claims of scripture (such as the Resurrection, or the Incarnation, etc.). Reasoning is used apologetically to show how Christian beliefs are true, justified, or generally superior to competing views.¹

Another approach to philosophy is as an analysis of worldviews. One studies the dominant metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical assumptions of a given culture in order to communicate the teachings of scripture to it more effectively.² Attempts to build conceptual bridges are made between the reigning philosophical thought of the day and the teachings

of Christian theology. Philosophy, thus, can be valuable for the missional purposes of the church, translating its beliefs into the conceptual framework and language of a given culture.

There is another distinct mode of philosophy, however, that seems at odds with the first two modes, and unlike them, appears immediately threatening to Christian faith. Such an approach to philosophy is described in one of the earliest philosophical works of the Western canon. In the *Apology*, Socrates is on trial for corrupting the youth of Athens.³ Socrates explains the real reason for this accusation—his public and incessant questioning of civic leaders and the influence this has on the young people of the city. Apparently, they find Socrates's questioning, and the inability of people to answer him, amusing, and begin to imitate his behavior.⁴

Socrates identifies his activity as being philosophical. His mode of questioning, what eventually becomes known as the Socratic method, is personally and socially disruptive. Instead of legitimating Athenian ways, he calls individuals, beliefs, and traditions into question. Attempting, unsuccessfully, to answer Socrates's questions, interlocutors enter a state of *aporia*, i.e., a state of confusion, uncertainty, and doubt, as they become aware of their ignorance about a given issue.⁵

Inquiry continues to be essential to the practice of philosophy.⁶ Adventist students who study philosophy will consider and ask difficult questions. They will be exposed to the perennial questions humans have asked and continue to ask about a variety of fundamental issues. The exposure to such questions, as Socrates's questions did in Athens, can induce a state of *aporia* in students as they wrestle with them.

In addition to encouraging students to consider and ask questions, the study of philosophy also exposes them to the variety of answers that have been offered to these questions. Some of these answers will inevitably conflict with beliefs the students affirm as being true. So, through the study of philosophy Adventist students will be exposed to materialistic conceptions of reality, deterministic accounts of

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**Is, then,
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Adventism?**

human action, relativistic accounts of ethics, and dualistic accounts of the human person. Some of these ideas can have a corrosive effect from the standpoint of faith. William Desmond is correct in claiming that, in a certain sense, the practice of philosophy requires one to be a taster of poisons: “One might become a helper to others in alerting them to toxins, initially intoxicating, sometimes sleeping in beguiling mutations, but in the longer run liable to be deadly to mind and spirit.” Desmond warns, “Philosophy is a dangerous vocation. There are thoughts that can warp the soul...”⁷

This leads to the second sense in which philosophy is critical. Besides asking questions and becoming familiar with the various answers that have been offered to these questions, studying philosophy also introduces students to the arguments that have been given to support those answers, as well criticisms of arguments that support their own respective positions. Students will be forced to critically consider their own views in light of compelling arguments and counter arguments. Sometimes, this can lead to the realization that some of their views, from a purely philosophical standpoint, are held on tenuous, or even indefensible, grounds.

Lastly, philosophy is critical in a deeper sense. Reason is self-critical and can be used to ascertain its own limits. The wisdom of Socrates, in the *Apology*, is an awareness of his own ignorance. An awareness of the inherent limitations of reason can heighten this sense. A serious engagement with what is loosely termed “postmodernism” brings about an awareness of the questions that reason cannot definitively answer, and a sensitivity to the wide array of historical, sociological, linguistic, and psychological factors that influence both how we reason and what we reason about.

The cumulative effect of engaging in philosophy critically, of coming to an awareness of unresolved questions, variant views, arguments, and counterarguments, as well as the historical and cultural contingency of one’s own views, is less certainty about one’s own views. One’s

own beliefs, to borrow a term from Charles Taylor, are “fragilized” in a sea of competing and compelling options.

Is, then, the practice of philosophy a threat to Adventism? This returns us to the central question of the *Apology*. Is Socrates corrupting the youth? Put differently, is his practice of philosophy beneficial or detrimental to the city? The Athenian jury decides it is a great danger, undermining the political stability of the city, and eventually sentences Socrates to death.

In like manner, philosophy, because of its critical mode, will be viewed as a threat by many in the Adventist community. The questioning of fundamental beliefs and practices affirmed by the community seems opposed to the goal of religious education; it generates uncertainty, and those who identify certainty as an important characteristic of faith will likely view philosophy as a threat.¹⁰

One might attempt to circumvent this outcome by appropriating philosophy in an uncritical manner. Certain questions and issues might be deliberately avoided for fear of where the exploration of them might lead. If they are asked, students might be shielded from the full range of answers given to those questions. And when exposed to certain views, the arguments for them might be presented in their worst possible light before being refuted. Lastly, some approaches to philosophy might resist taking the self-critical turn. This leaves students, unfortunately, naively unaware of the conditions and limitations, i.e., the historical and cultural contingency, of their own reasoning abilities.

Such approaches to philosophical education, in the end, apart from dismissing an essential aspect of the discipline, open up other pitfalls associated with the other modes of philosophy. Apologetics, without self-criticism, can become overly dogmatic and defensive, discrediting what it seeks to defend in the very attempt to defend it.¹¹ A dearth of critical distance and assessment can lead to the legitimization of irrational views and unethical practices. Critical reflection is also necessary in order to faithfully

communicate the teachings of scripture into a given cultural context; naïve attempts at translation can lead to a loss or change in the actual content of what one seeks to communicate.¹²

So, an uncritical approach to philosophy presents its own dangers. This is why, in the *Apology*, when faced with the threat of death, Socrates refuses to stop his activity. He acknowledges that his practice of philosophy is irritating and disruptive; yet, he insists that he is a divine gift and blessing to the city.¹³ When the jury finds him guilty, he asks to be lavishly rewarded as an Olympic athlete or war hero.¹⁴

Why Socrates thinks his philosophical activity is such a benefit to the city becomes evident in another Platonic dialogue. In the *Meno*, Socrates barrages a slave boy with a series of questions about geometry. Although the boy initially answers the questions confidently, eventually he is reduced to state of perplexity and confusion, i.e., *aporia*. He realizes that his initial answers are inadequate. He knows he does not know, and this, paradoxically, is an advance in knowledge. Socrates explains that the awareness of one's lack of knowledge instills in the individual a desire to further investigate a matter in order to attain true knowledge.¹⁵ Unless one considers the possibility that what one assumes to be true is incomplete or wrong, there can be no genuine learning or change.

A promising outcome of philosophical questioning and critique, then, is an attitude of openness to further truth. One might call this, in honor of the early Adventist pioneers, a radical openness to "present truth."¹⁶ "Present truth," James White explains, "is *present* truth, and not future truth, and the Word as a lamp shines brightly where we *stand*, and not so plainly on the path in the distance."¹⁷ Therefore, in the words of Ellen White, "There is no excuse for anyone in taking the position that there is no more truth to be revealed, and that all our expositions of Scripture are without an error. The fact that certain doctrines have been held as truth for many years by our people is

not proof that our ideas are infallible."¹⁸

An awareness of the nature and limitations of one's own reasoning protects individuals from conceptual idolatry—of creating gods in their own image. A naïve view of reasoning leads to a naïve realism that mistakes what is presented to one's understanding, immediately, as reality. Becoming cognizant of the hermeneutical structure of reasoning, however, makes one sensitive to the prejudgments that influence both experience and textual interpretation.¹⁹ It prevents individuals from claiming too much about God, and also makes one sensitive to the ways humans conceive of God and read scripture to legitimate their personal and cultural biases and agendas.

This critical self-awareness can lead to criticism at deeper levels: as an analysis of the factors or assumptions that make certain beliefs seem intuitively plausible or implausible. Once one identifies such a prejudice, he or she can suspend, examine, revise, and/or reject it, making new and further light possible. The critical study of philosophy is, thus, essential to developing historically and hermeneutically self-aware reasoners and readers of scripture, which is one of the requisite conditions for encountering truth.

The epistemic openness and humility that comes from an awareness of the limitations of reason is beneficial in other ways, as well. On the interpersonal level it makes genuine conversation with others possible. As David Hume notes, an awareness of "the strange infirmities of human understanding" instills more modesty and reserve in humans, diminishing their naturally fond opinion of themselves and their prejudices against antagonists.²⁰

Such an adjustment of attitude, although it may seem counterintuitive, can be valuable to the mission of the church. Being *less* dogmatic about one's beliefs can make sharing them *more* effective. Sometimes, the way something is communicated is just as important as what is said. Claims made with dogmatic certainty often seem shrill and disingenuous. Evangelization should

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be done with a sensitivity to and empathy with people who find faith difficult. Instead of being conceived of as a one-way discourse, disseminating canned answers, it becomes a process of conversation and mutual learning.

Lastly, the uncertainty generated by critical philosophy makes genuine faith possible. Denying reason, according to Kant, makes room for faith.²¹ It can be understood to do so in at least two ways. First, critical philosophy clarifies what can be counted as knowledge and what lies beyond the scope of reason, and therefore, must be affirmed by other means. Secondly, it aids in the recovery of an understanding of faith that is more consistent with the way it is described in scripture. Rather than being conceived of as cognitive certainty about beliefs, it becomes trust in a God one does not fully understand. Jürgen Moltmann reminds us that

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*...it is not of their own strength, reason and will that people believe in Jesus as the Christ and hope of the future as God's future... It is not faith that makes Jesus the Christ; it is Jesus as the Christ who creates faith. It is not hope that makes the future into God's future; it is this future that awakens hope. Faith in Christ and hope for the kingdom are due to the presence of God in the Spirit.*²²

The uncertainty generated by an awareness of the fragile nature of our beliefs and rational abilities can lead to a deeper trust in the God who reveals, but ultimately transcends, words, concepts, and thought.

The critical mode of philosophy, I have argued, is essential to the teaching and practice of philosophy, providing an indispensable condition for a genuine encounter with truth. It, however, is not the only aspect of philosophy, and its tension with the constructive aspects of philosophy that have also been examined above prevents philosophy from reaching excessively skeptical conclusions. As criticism protects one from blind or naïve legitimization, as well as uncritical attempts at communication, the two other modes of philosophy protect those who engage in philosophy

from nihilism and relativism. Chastened by criticism, with time and effort, reason can still make advances, eventually coming to an adequate understanding and well-reasoned conclusions on some issues. These conclusions, however, in light of philosophy's critical mode, must always be understood as provisional, fallible, and incomplete. Philosophy teaches one to be constantly open to the present truth. ■

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1. In addition to these teachings, Adventists may be interested in philosophy to defend philosophical positions that intersect important theological teachings of the tradition such as a compatibilist view of free will or a nondualistic conception of the human person.
2. In the Latin West, some prominent historical examples of thinkers who have attempted this are Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Rudolph Bultmann. Augustine put Christian theology in dialogue with Neo-Platonism. Aquinas later does this with Aristotelian thought, Schleiermacher with Kantian philosophy, and Bultmann with Heideggerian existentialism.
3. *Apology*, 24c.
4. *Ibid.*, 23c.
5. *Meno*, 80a–83d.
6. As Simon Critchly notes, "The freedom of the philosopher consists in either moving freely from topic to topic or simply spending years returning to the same topic out of perplexity, fascination and curiosity." See Simon Critchley, "What is a Philosopher?" *New York Times*, May 16, 2010. <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/05/16/what-is-a-philosopher/>.
7. William Desmond, "Despoiling the Egyptians—Gently" in *Gazing through a Prism Darkly: Reflections on Merold*

Westphal's *Hermeneutical Epistemology*, ed. B. Keith Putt (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 34.

8. I have the analysis of thinkers like G. W. F. Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Michel Foucault in mind.

9. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007), 556.

10. Such an understanding of faith has unknowingly been influenced by the epistemic ideals of Enlightenment philosophy. Descartes is the one that argued that one must be certain of a belief in order for it to count as knowledge. See René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

11. As Kierkegaard notes, "How extraordinarily stupid it is to defend Christianity, how little knowledge of humanity it betrays, how it connives if only unconsciously with offence by making Christianity out to be some miserable object that in the end must be rescued by a defense...To defend something is always to discredit it." See Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*, ed. and trans. by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 119.

12. Classical Protestant liberalism is an example of this. In attempting to make Christian theology palatable to post-Kantian thinking, theologians reduced the teachings of Scripture to its moral "kernel."

13. *Apology*, 29d–31c. Socrates compares himself to a "gadfly."

14. *Ibid.*, 36c–37.

15. *Meno*, 84a–d. Noting the slave boy's state of confusion, Socrates asks, "Do you think that before he would have tried to find out that which he thought he knew through he did not, before he fell into perplexity and realized he did not know and longed to know?"

16. 2 Pet. 1:12 KJV.

17. James White, *Review and Herald*, December 31, 1857, 61; quoted in George Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 19.

18. Ellen White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), 35.

19. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 188–195; Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. edition, trans. J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 2004), 268–285.

20. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Part III.

21. Kant's exact words are "I therefore found it necessary to deny reason in order to make room for faith." *Critique of Pure Reason*, 2nd ed., Bxxx.

22. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 1st ed. 195.

homosexual practices ➔ continued from page 25...

kind of sexual person (undoubtedly, from our modern standpoint, a heterosexual), and this person can act either in harmony or out of harmony with nature's design, which is innately present in him or her. This has a bearing on the church's discussion today, and the question is whether Paul's statements need to be seen together with genuine new knowledge concerning homosexuality that was not present to him. Is it the case that one simply acts in or out of accord with the sexual drive God established at creation and implanted in people? The drive of homosexuals is essentially different, for whatever reason, from that of heterosexuals.

What Paul regards as sinful is those who "exchange" what he considers to be natural to them for what is not natural to them. This looks as though same-sex types make a personal decision to rebel against their creation-designed, natural sexual bent, just as they willfully turned away from the true God they knew from the revelation of himself in the natural world (Rom. 1:19–20). If this is a correct characterization, can we just take over this argument in our time without a thorough dialogue as to how these ancient, inspired words relate to the sexual knowledge we have gained and the sexual concerns we must address today?

A major element in Romans 1 that must be understood is that homosexual practice and the other wrongs listed are not presented as the *cause* for God's wrath, but as the *effect* of it. The primary cause that leads to God's judicial handover of humankind, and which in turn leads to the various malpractices Paul depicts, is idolatry. Humans have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped the creature rather than the Creator (1:25, 23). This false worship is an act of gross ingratitude to God (1:21). Consequently, God gave up those who did not want him.

It is just here that a serious issue arises. If God punishes—and no less a word than this fits the passage—idolatrous mankind by giving it up, and immorality is the result for people apart from God, how does this fit the situation of homosexual people who have not rejected the true God and are not idolaters, but who worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? How can they have the effect of a cause, idolatry, which they do not have in their lives?

We must also ask what the purpose of Romans 1:26–28 is in the larger framework (Rom. 1:16–3:26) of which it is a

part. When isolated from this context, 1:26–28 has often been used only to condemn and even to hurt homosexual people. Clearly, Paul does see the actions he describes in 1:26–28 as wrong, but is his purpose primarily to denounce? Not if the point of the larger context (1:16–3:26) is consulted. Paul begins this section not in the negative, but in the positive, with his thesis statement in 1:16–17 announcing the theme of all of Romans. Paul declares that the Gospel message is the instrument for conveying to people of faith God's righteousness (i.e., God's saving activity which puts people right with himself). As such it is the power of God that leads to salvation. Then, after a description of the unrighteousness of all mankind, both Gentiles and Jews, he returns in 3:21–26 to the theme of God's saving righteousness for people of faith. This righteousness is mediated through the event of Christ's sacrificial death (3:25), which is just what the Gospel (1:16) announces.

In the face of this, what is the purpose of Paul's description of the lostness of humans in 1:18–3:20? It cannot be missed—these are the very people God cares about, wishes to put into a right relationship with him, and to heal. His love for them transcends his judgment upon them. Instead of being repelled by them he draws nearer to them, and in his Son offers his life for them (3:25). According to 4:25 Christ was handed over (the same word as in Romans 1) to save those who had been handed over. The message of Romans is that of John 3:16: "God so loved the [fallen] world that he gave his only son..." Is not the inference clear? If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another instead of judging and condemning each other, which in any case is wrong, since we who would judge are doing much the same (Paul's argument in Romans 2.) According to 2:2, the Jews (named as such in 2:17) declare that God's judgment rightfully falls on the Gentiles who practice what is described in Romans 1. Paul shows in Romans 2 that it falls on the Jews as well, for they too are sinners. Paul's argument levels all people in regard to lostness, just as it does with respect to salvation, for they are all saved by the same grace (see 3:22–23).

Therefore, the whole point of Romans 1:16–3:26 is to speak of healing love for everyone, and that includes those with the homoerotic practices Paul describes in Romans 1:26–28.

In view of this, we can surely say that there is not just one moral question up for discussion, viz., the moral status

of homosexual people and practices, which is the only issue usually discussed. There are two questions, and the second is: What is the moral status of those who relate to homosexuals without Christian caring, healing, and self-giving love? While the church continues to study the whole issue of homosexual orientation and practice to understand better the nature of the issue and how to deal with it, there is one thing that can and must be done. In the name of Christ we are all called to treat homosexuals with the same love we have experienced in Christ Jesus. "Welcome one another as God in Christ has welcomed you" (Rom. 15:7). ■

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1. All biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) unless otherwise indicated.
2. See Victor Paul Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009), 57.
3. Alfred Kinsey in his book *Sexual Behavior of the Human Male* argued that about 10 percent of the male population is homosexual. Current research indicates that Kinsey's figure was incorrect, and the percentage must be revised downward. See the Family Research Institute's article "The Numbers Game: What Percentage of the Population is Gay?" at <http://www.familyresearchinst.org/2009/02/the-numbers-game-what-percentage-of-the-population-is-gay/>.
4. Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 73b.
5. See Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 29–43.
6. Dale B. Martin, "Arsenoikites and Malakos: Meanings and Consequences" in *Biblical Ethics and Homosexuality*, ed. Robert L. Brawley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 124–125.

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At 50: How to Remain Human

Realize the alternatives, and
consciously begin. Will
to war against nature.

Divide
important hatreds
from trivial lusts.
Honor your gifts.

Remember
that people will not always like you
or understand.
Persist.
Be kind.

Consider
the other side of time,
and of argument.
Admit
you could be wrong.

Disdain
cheap gains.
Love substance.
Take small steps toward the light
when you are unsure of your way
and your efforts go unrewarded.

Know who you are
and were meant to be.
Resist flattery.
Act accordingly.

Allow love
to enter your heart, and to change it.
Realize that love itself may change,
or leave you.

Relinquish control
by acknowledging
that it was never yours.

Be brave, by opportunity.
Honor the faith of others.
Nourish the seed.

Invite joy. Tend it.
Cultivate gratitude.
Practice reverence.

Remember
that life is a shining moment
moving ceaselessly forward
demanding
more than we can ever give
offering
more than we can ever receive.



Bruce Forbes
Lincoln, NE
2011