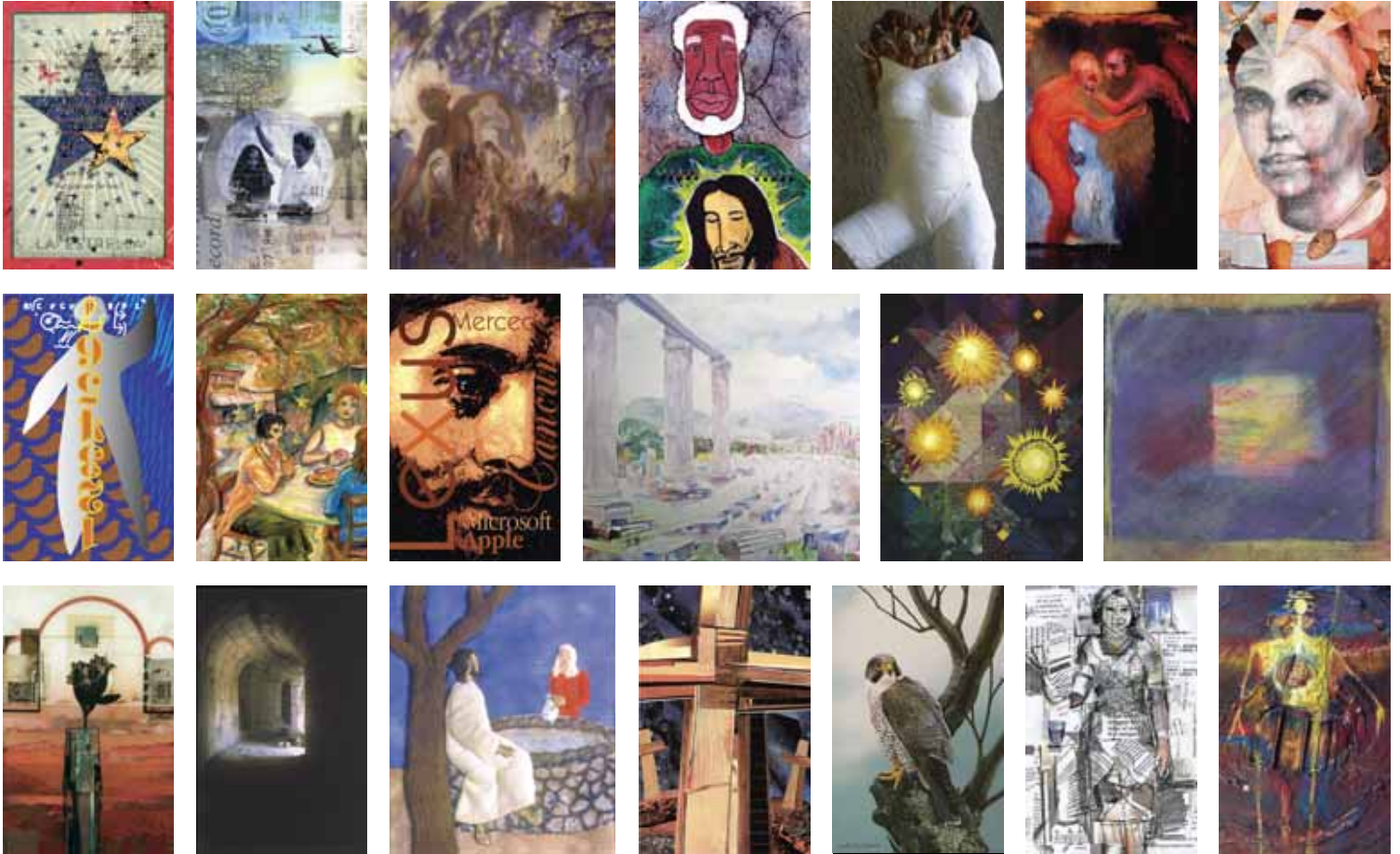


 community through conversation
SPECTRUM



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Women's Ordination as a Threat to Church Unity
The Faces of Women's Ordination in 2012
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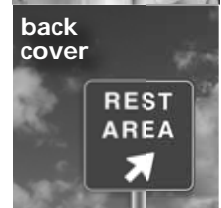
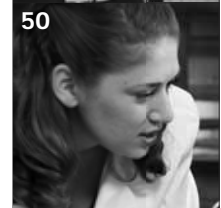
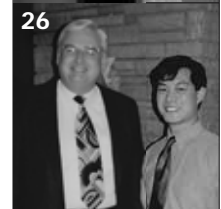
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EDITORIAL ■ *from the editor*

The Opening of the Digital *Spectrum* Archives | BY BONNIE DWYER

Your fingers
can do
the walking and
searching
in the digital
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archives.

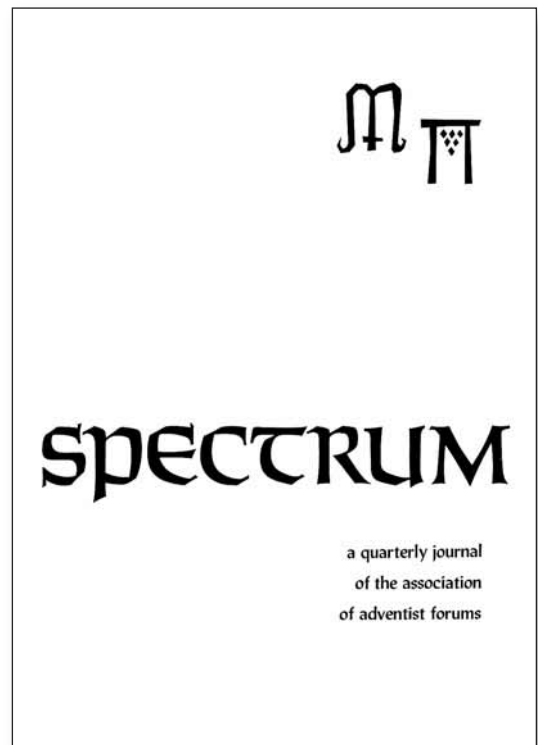
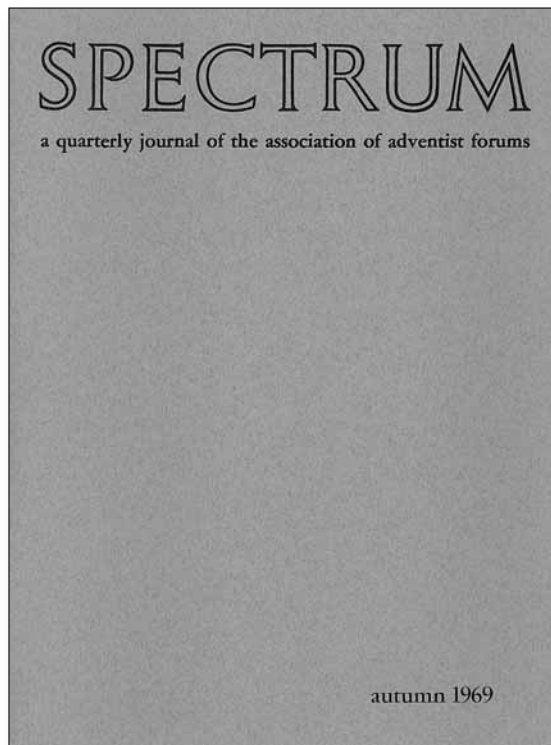
In the little house that is the *Spectrum* office, there is a small library with a long table. One can pull down past volumes of the journal from the bookcase and page through history—attend General Conference sessions of years gone by, read about geoscience trips, find amazing art and poetry. But I am about the only person who ever does so.

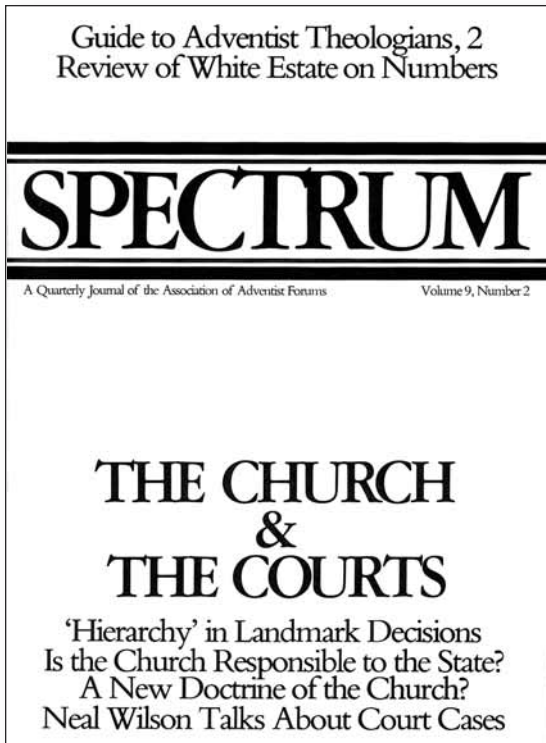
At Andrews University's James White Library, there is also a place where you can pull down past volumes of *Spectrum*, and you don't have to be in Berrien Springs to take a stroll through history. Your fingers can do the walking and searching in the digital *Spectrum* archives that are now part of the Seventh-day Adventist Periodical Index. Not only can you

find references to articles of the past, you can pull the whole issue off the shelf, so to speak, scroll through it, and print articles from your computer. You can search for a particular word, too, so in addition to Chuck Scriven's significant article on the Atonement, you can read James Londis, Ivan Blazen, Adrian Zytkoske, and Des Ford on that topic.

In this age of Google, where seemingly all questions can be answered in an instant on an iPhone, there are still some things that require a bit more advanced searching. Should you ask Google or Jeeves for Chuck Scriven's piece on the Atonement, what you get first would be the things that he has written for our website. As a nondigital publication, the journal does

Left to right:
Autumn 1969,
vol. 1, no. 4;
and vol. 6, no. 3 & 4
of 1974





Left to right:
March, 1978, vol. 9,
no 2; May, 1979,
vol. 10, no. 1

not float to the top of Google searches.

Thus, the work of the Center for Adventist Research to digitize our archives contributes significantly to the material that can now be found, searched, and printed. This resource includes all issues of the journal since the first one in 1969 through 2010. And it will be continually updated.

Wandering through the archives can add to current conversations in interesting ways. For instance, to write this article, I went to our library (as well as to the digital archives), and pulled down a few sample issues. The 1976 issues sported significant design changes—a new size, binding, and cover look with headlines to entice the reader—so I pulled down that volume. We only have a Xeroxed copy of volume 7, number 2, and I wondered what had made it so popular. Then I looked at the cover titles: “Women,” “Merikay and the Pacific Press,” “Did God Give Women Second Place?” “Fascinating Womanhood,” “Women Preachers: Evangelical Precedents.” Ohhhh! I turned to the table of contents, and was surprised to see Gerhard Hasel’s name in the list of authors, because of his reputation as the conservative dean of the SDA Theological Seminary. His article, “Equality from

the Start: Women in the Creation Story,” skillfully works through several theological interpretations of the Creation story. He concludes,

If salvation is concerned with the reproduction of the image of God in men under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, is it then not the responsibility of the church precisely to bring about the reproduction of the image of God in man, to restore harmony between God and man, to establish equality and unity where there is now inequality and disunity? Would this not involve among many things a restoring of equality between men and women in spheres of activity where the divine declaration of man’s rulership over his wife and the wife’s submission to her husband does not apply?

Furthermore, does the urgency of the task and the shortness of time not require the full utilization of all of our manpower and woman-power resources, which includes the full participation of women in ministerial activity? If “in Christ” there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free man, neither male nor female (Galatians 3:28), does this oneness and equality not call for a united effort to finish the task where all, both “male and female” (3:28) participate in full equality of responsibilities and privileges in all lines of work in order to hasten the coming of our beloved Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

What a pleasant surprise!

Wandering
through
the archives
can add
to current
conversations
in interesting
ways.



- If you experience a problem finding the right page for an article, please understand that pagination of issues is complicated in the digital world. When we prepare issues for your reading enjoyment on paper, we begin numbering the pages after the cover. It is the first inside white page that receives a number 1. In the digital world, the cover is number 1, the inside cover number 2, etc. The personnel at the library who prepared these materials tried to take that into consideration and adjust appropriately, but there are some issues that have complicating factors. The years that Association of Adventist Forums published a newsletter in the middle of the journal also affects the page numbers. So if the page numbers that you read in the table of contents don't match exactly, that is why. Keep looking, and you will find what you seek.

The *Spectrum*
archives
are a treasure
chest to
which we've
just given you
the keys.

Next I read (online) John C. Brunt's summary of the actions taken at the 1995 General Conference in regard to the makeup of the General Conference Executive Committee and the number of delegates to the General Conference sessions. That article helped me understand a little better what I had just watched at the 2012 Annual Council meeting in Silver Spring, Maryland.

For those who immediately want to go to their computer and check this out, here are a couple of caveats about reading *Spectrum* in the SDA Periodical Index (located at <http://www.andrews.edu/library/car/sdapiindex.html>).

- When you get to the opening page for the SDA Periodical Index, on the left there is a place where you can choose "Journal Title." Click on it, and then enter "*Spectrum*" in the search window. You will see that there are 2,896 entries for "*Spectrum*." Click on this option. Once there, you can search for authors, article titles, and words. When you have found an article that you want (published before 20120), click on "Full Text" in the center of the page to see the PDF full text of the article.
- Be creative. Play around with it.
- Be patient. The download is not instantaneous.

To me, the *Spectrum* archives are a treasure chest to which we've just given you the keys. Please use them. Enjoy exploring what is there.

Our thanks to David Trim, Merlin Burt, Jim Ford, and Steve Sowder for making this happen. If you see them, please be sure to add your thanks, as well. ■

Correction:

In *Spectrum* 40.3 (Summer 2012), the article "Demons and Football," by Adam Wilder, should conclude as follows:

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. ■



Formulating a Rationale for Adventist Education

A father's questions

DEAR EDITOR,

Almost every day now we get promotional mail from various colleges and universities inviting my son, Stephen, to attend their school. He is a senior at Auburn Adventist Academy, and his sister, Hannah, is right behind him as a Junior. AAA is my alma mater (class of '74) and my wife and I are thinking a lot these days about our children's academic futures. We've been setting aside money for the costs for some time now, but it still seems to have snuck up on us. But I think we have enough saved so that neither of them will have a burdensome debt laid on them when they graduate.

But the reason I write is not about how expensive Adventist education is. We anticipated that many years ago when we first discovered we'd be parents. What I didn't see coming was how conflicted I would be over whether my children should attend an Adventist university at all. I honestly didn't see that coming. My academy and college years were some of the most exciting years of my life. And it has been a fun second trip through to watch them grow during their academy years and watch them experience some of the same things I did during these special years.

But as I read the blogs and forums today in regards to our universities and the battles for intellectual, theological and philosophical turfs, I find myself asking questions I never saw coming. Such as, is there really that big a difference between my son attending a world-class school like the University of British Columbia or Boise State University (two schools he could attend) and attending a school like Walla Walla University (also my alma mater). If he attends UBC, he will be surrounded by teachers and students from many cultures and belief systems—some Hindu, some Muslim, some Christians, some Atheists, to name a few. He will likely have a sense of who he is in

that environment. In some ways, I am less troubled with that defined environment than I am an environment where overt and covert battles are fought between fellow professors, between the church and academia, between departments in the school. Am I to be attracted to a school where teachers are passionately focused on contributing to the saving of their beliefs rather than the souls of their students?

My wife and I are not cashew-cheese-eating Adventist fundamentalists. Far from it. Politically we are left of center. But we realize our church is changing, that our children will likely not know the Adventist university experience we did. Sure there were forums over issues like woman ordination back when I attended WWC, I know because I attended one sponsored by your organization, but there wasn't the vicious partisanship I read and see in our schools now. Professors were not as interested in swaying me towards their view of the Adventist Church. Few asked, openly or behind closed doors, whether the whole Adventist thing, or even traditional Christianity itself might just be a crock of nonsense.

As our distinctiveness from other schools dims, with some welcoming its dismantling, and others fighting to preserve it, I have a harder time formulating a strong rationale for investing in our schools when they promise less than what I got but cost much more than what I spent.

Ultimately, regardless of the merits of either side's arguments—evolution, inspiration, "church standards," academic freedom, et al., it will be parents like us that will have to be factored in. We spend the money and what we think does matter. And platitudes and promises from college recruitment offices won't carry the day. You taught us to think for ourselves.

LARS JUSTINEN | *via the Internet*



Following the Money

Annual Council Diary— VII: Reflections on the General Conference and the North American Church

BY BONNIE DWYER

CHANGES IN THE relationship between the General Conference and the North American Division were at the heart of this year's Annual Council Session that concluded on October 17. Not only was there the action responding to the unions that had voted to ordain without regard to gender, there was the money.

Earlier this year, a plan was presented to the General Conference in which the tithe percentage North America sends to the General Conference would be reduced from 8% to 6% (the other twelve divisions send 2%). Accordingly, the 2013 General Conference budget was structured to reflect this reduced percentage. However, unlike the actions regarding ordination, this change in finances generated virtually no discussion by the Executive Committee members.

Perhaps it was because the overall financial news at the session was positive. Tithes and mission offerings were reported to be stable, and in many regions, growing. Tithes to the General Conference from outside North Amer-



Delegates receive a statement on church policy which they voted 264–25 to approve. “The world church does not recognize the actions of unions or conferences that have authorized or implemented ministerial ordination without regard to gender,” the statement said.

ica through September totaled US\$20.7 million, a 5.6% increase from last year. Mission offerings from the same region were up 5.4% to \$45.1 million. (In North America, tithes were also up, but only by about 1%.)

Total income for the world budget is now split nearly fifty-fifty between the NAD and divisions outside North America. “As recently as 2006, that ratio was 66 NAD and 34 the rest,” according to church reports.¹ So, the other divisions can rightfully see their financial influence growing.

The General Conference's investments have also been positive this year, with that category showing an increase of more than \$19 million over last year.

So, even though the NAD is dropping the amount that it is sending to the GC, the budget for 2013 is up \$7.3 million. The \$174 million operating budget that was approved for 2013 (compared to the \$166.7 million budget for 2012) did not threaten appropriations for the other divisions, most of which were set to receive an increase (except Inter-American and South American Divisions).

General Conference Treasurer Robert Lemon began his financial report by saying that the Lord knew what he was doing when he started the Seventh-day Adventist Church in New England, because North America has given the majority of funds for the operation of the church since the

PHOTO BY ANSEL OLIVER/ANN

beginning. With that kind of introduction, it would be hard for other divisions to grumble about the reduction in funds coming from the NAD.

Lemon's attitude of gratitude goes a long way in a year that has seen significant discord between the General Conference and the NAD. Representatives from the North American Division came to the Annual Council Session with the warnings of "dire consequences" language, from President Ted Wilson's presentations at the union constituency sessions, ringing in their ears. Just what would those consequences be?

The answer to that question was that the unions were labeled as dissenters, their actions were labeled a mistake, and the certificates of ordination that the unions have issued to women will not be recognized by the rest of the world.

If you are not a woman pastor, that does not seem to be much in terms of a consequence, so the action was passed. One North American conference president noted that the small number of no votes did not even total the entire North American Division representation. (The tally was 264 yes votes to 25 no votes.)

Progress was made in the tone of the discussion, and it seems to me that *both* the votes of the NAD unions *and* the vote of the General Conference Executive Committee delegates in response to the union actions are good things that move us forward as a world church.

Why are they both good? There has been much frustration in both the Global North and the Global South on this issue, and not much effort had been put forth to bring the two sides together. Mark Finley's

Bible study during Annual Council probably marked a high point in showing both sides how to find common ground with the other. And while the timetable set out for the Theology of Ordination Study Committee seems long, bringing scholars together from around the world should help to foster better understanding and clarify biblical exegesis.

It is also a positive thing that the unions followed through on their votes with actual ordinations. In so doing, they remind the world church that we already have women pastors doing significant work. The question that remains for the church to decide is whether or not we are going to treat them as equal to their male peers.

At the 1990 General Conference Session, a two-tiered system was put into place, which is captured well by the *Adventist Review* in the timeline on ordination published in its October 11, 2012 issue. For July 1990, it reads: "GC session votes to accept the recommendations from the commission and GC Executive Committee that women not be ordained, but to allow female associates in pastoral care to perform some functions of an ordained minister in the local church."² Those functions would be to baptize and perform marriages. In other words, the church would accept women doing the work of pastors, even if it did not see fit to recognize that work with an equal credential. It is that inequality that is at the heart of the polarizing debates.

Disunity has come as a consequence of the 1990 action.

In North America, there are already 122 women pastors at work, according to Hyveth Williams, professor of homiletics at the Seventh-

day Adventist Seminary, where she notes 145 women are currently studying.³ When the General Conference leaders say that they want to limit their discussion of the issue to unity, policy, and how we make decisions, they ignore that the issue is about more than policy and unity—it is about people.

With an improved tone in the official conversation, and the theologians busily working on the theology of ordination, perhaps the unity that is so fervently sought by the General Conference officials can come by members unifying to affirm the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of all those called to be pastors. A "both and" solution will be needed for unity. ■

Bonnie Dwyer is the editor of *Spectrum*. She wrote an online diary about the 2012 Annual Council Meetings in Silver Spring, Maryland, which was posted on the *Spectrum* blog. This is the final segment of the diary. The other pieces can be read at spectrummagazine.org.

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Conversations About God

HUNGARIAN WOODCUT: ADAM AND EVE, FROM [HTTP://MYLIFEMONEHUNDREDOBJECTS.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://mylifemonehundredobjects.blogspot.com)

The Incarnation: *The Prince, the Hound, and Me* | BY GREG PROUT

It is not good for man to be alone. —Gen. 2:18 NASB¹

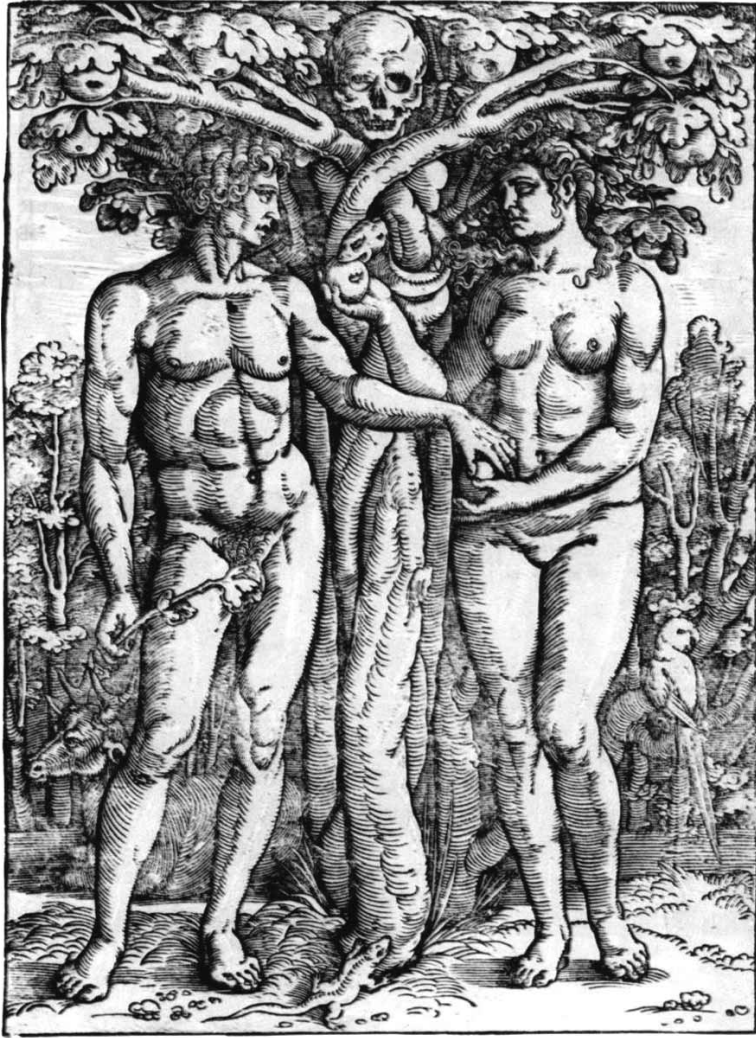
God said that. In his own words, he observed that he was not enough for man—man needed more, something earthy, something that could be seen, heard, touched; not “something,” but “someone”: a woman, a lovely counterpart, or as Hebrew, the ancient language, called her, “a helper” (Gen. 2:18). For the longest time, I thought God was everything to us (me), but even he says that is not true. So out of the heart of the Creator came the loving dynamic duo: man and woman. I used to tell my class of mushy-headed adolescents that Eve was such a “babe,” such a “fox,” that when Adam saw her, he froze, awestruck, his eyes popping like exploding stars, and from his drooling lips he exclaimed, “Wow, man!” which God contracted into “woman.” That corny interpretation they understood. Adam and Eve were hip because a babe had to have a “hunk” for her man; they were the perfect couple. And God was “cool” because he orchestrated the love match. It all made sense. My classroom reverberated with questions; the Bible came alive, and we had a rousing discussion about Creation, the Creator, loneliness, dating, love, and marriage. At least for that class, at that moment, their minds grappled with God as Creator.

Now I wrestled with the Creator; his statement about man’s need for company bothered me. The thought of God *not* being fully sufficient for my needs struck a blow at my fundamental idea of “God.” I explored the thought further. Apparently it was unhealthy for man to be alone, even though God visited him “in the cool of the day.”² God’s visits appear not to have been sufficient for Adam’s well being; God’s creature needed more. And “woman” was the textbook solution. Keep in mind that God made that statement *before* Adam and Eve took a bite out of the forbidden fruit. Even in a flawless environment, *paradise*, the Creator

knew man needed something beyond God. I was curious and confused. What could be more than God? Perchance man needed a “helper” to embellish his understanding of his Creator, like a unique ingredient in a classic recipe contributes to an appreciation of the whole? Could this be what our clever and wise God meant? The love, companionship, sharing, and giving would give Adam (a Hebrew word meaning both “man” and “woman”)³ keener insight into the triune nature of God, in which three distinct beings acted with one accord in the context of pure love, harmony, and kindness. Adam and Eve, a dyad of community, were in essence a living “school” in which God incarnated the human experience and revealed his heart. I began to think that the statement, “It is not good for man to be alone,” had nothing at all to do with God admitting his insufficiency, and was more about his wisdom in providing a social paradigm in which we learn what being God is like. Think about that. God was essentially giving the first couple a lesson in “being like God,” when the serpent comes slithering along and usurps that divine process. The serpent falsely states that by eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve will “be like God” (Gen. 3:5). The serpent co-opted God’s lesson, and “played” the first couple by suggesting that God had withheld the godlike experience (Gen. 3:5), while the very “couple-ness” they enjoyed was “being like God.” Somehow they missed it. Go figure. Marriage is the symbol of the Godhead, a living organism in which the participants learn the intimacy of heaven, where they peek inside the Triune Godhead and witness the beating heart of the Creator, and Adam and Eve gave it up for a lie; they accepted distrust over love. This is impossible to understand until I review my own life of distrust. Nevertheless, God’s desire for us was not to be deterred.

The resulting condition has me obsessed with the Incarnation: God’s obsession with us.

The Gospel of John, particularly the prologue, like



**We wanted
miracles and
quick fixes.**

lightning blinding darkness, joins us in Jesus, for “it is not good that man be alone.” Our atonement is found in God’s Incarnation. John is my favorite book in the Bible. I would be a believer if that short book was the entire Bible; nothing else, no psalms, no prophets, no Moses, zilch. And John wastes no time in saying, “And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it” (John 1:5). That is another way of saying, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14); Christmas morning. Much has been written about our lack of comprehension, our misperception. Darkness has no defense against light; night flees at the approach of daylight. We looked for a Messiah to conquer Rome (and our current enemies); we yearned for a Savior to cure all our ills and raise us from the dead. We wanted a God who calls down fire on those we

perceive as vile or perverted, a God who condemns those who don’t think and believe like we do. We wanted miracles and quick fixes. We expected a resplendent God filling the heavens with a jillion heralding angels in dazzling blazes of stupefying fire, singing “Hallelujah.” Instead, we got an unspectacular, incredibly disappointing, diminutive baby in a foul-smelling, dung-strewn stable. (Tell me God does not have a sense of humor.) His glory is his unselfish humility as he, the baby, represents the weakest of us. Transcendence. Our expectations wanted everything he was not; his light overwhelmed us. Still, our ignorance, our unbelief, our misconceptions, our bad choices, our intransigent blockheadedness, and our deep-seated sin did not stop him from showing up. In spite of our pitiful state, he came for us like Hosea seeking Gomer.⁴ A love never before observed in a god. And “the light shines in the darkness” (John 1:5) because “it is not good that man be alone”—too wonderful to comprehend.

The whole purpose of the Incarnation was the Father sending Jesus from his heart (John 1:18), revealing in flesh and blood the Father’s soul. This is John’s Gospel. From “the bosom of the Father,” Jesus rushes into our lives to embrace us and claim us as his own. This was God’s plan from before there was a beginning; the Incarnation summoned from the halls of eternity (Eph. 1:4–12). And nowhere in the Gospels does it say that we had to polish our shoes, put on a tie, comb our hair, store away our bad habits, or dust off our characters to prepare for his arrival; it is about him, not us. Grace and glory: Jesus. The Gospel of John should be titled the “Good News of Jesus,” Handel’s “Messiah” explaining the Father’s inclusive love, proclaiming the Father’s mercy as justice. He comes calling us “friends” (John 14:15). It is assurance that regardless of my worst behavior—if I make my bed in hell (Ps. 139:8), or live my life in a fetid stall, God arrives with open arms. Through the cracks of my soiled character he sees my heart. I am acceptable and approved; my sin does not send

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him looking for the exit. The Father is not offended by me. No. No. No. John shouts to the heavens about Jesus's thorough and absolute acceptance of me, just as I am. So it is with the Father (John 14:9). Now I can love him with a free heart, and not one filled with guilt, shame, obligation, or a sense of manipulation. No airs, no pretenses, only the glaring truth that he loves me without limits and regardless, period and forever. The Gospel.

This is "grace and truth realized through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17), the Light shining into our darkness, the Prince exchanging places with the pauper.⁵ We need to plant this fact deep down, where the roots of our heart feed, where our souls roam, at the center of our center, as the horizon swallows the sunset. This is the light, the good news. Deep into our psyches and souls, just as God poured his love for Adam into the freshly made heart of Eve, like a second nature, we must soak in this truth. There, and here, grace transforms us; his love is the substance of our faith.

Surprisingly, the Incarnation is frequently overlooked or painfully ignored, or assumed to be an incidental detail. Too often, it is begrudgingly relegated to a holiday sermon. Seldom have we seen its incandescent brilliance from the bleak corners of our spiritual abyss. The Incarnation provides for the cross and Resurrection like Christmas prepares us for Easter.

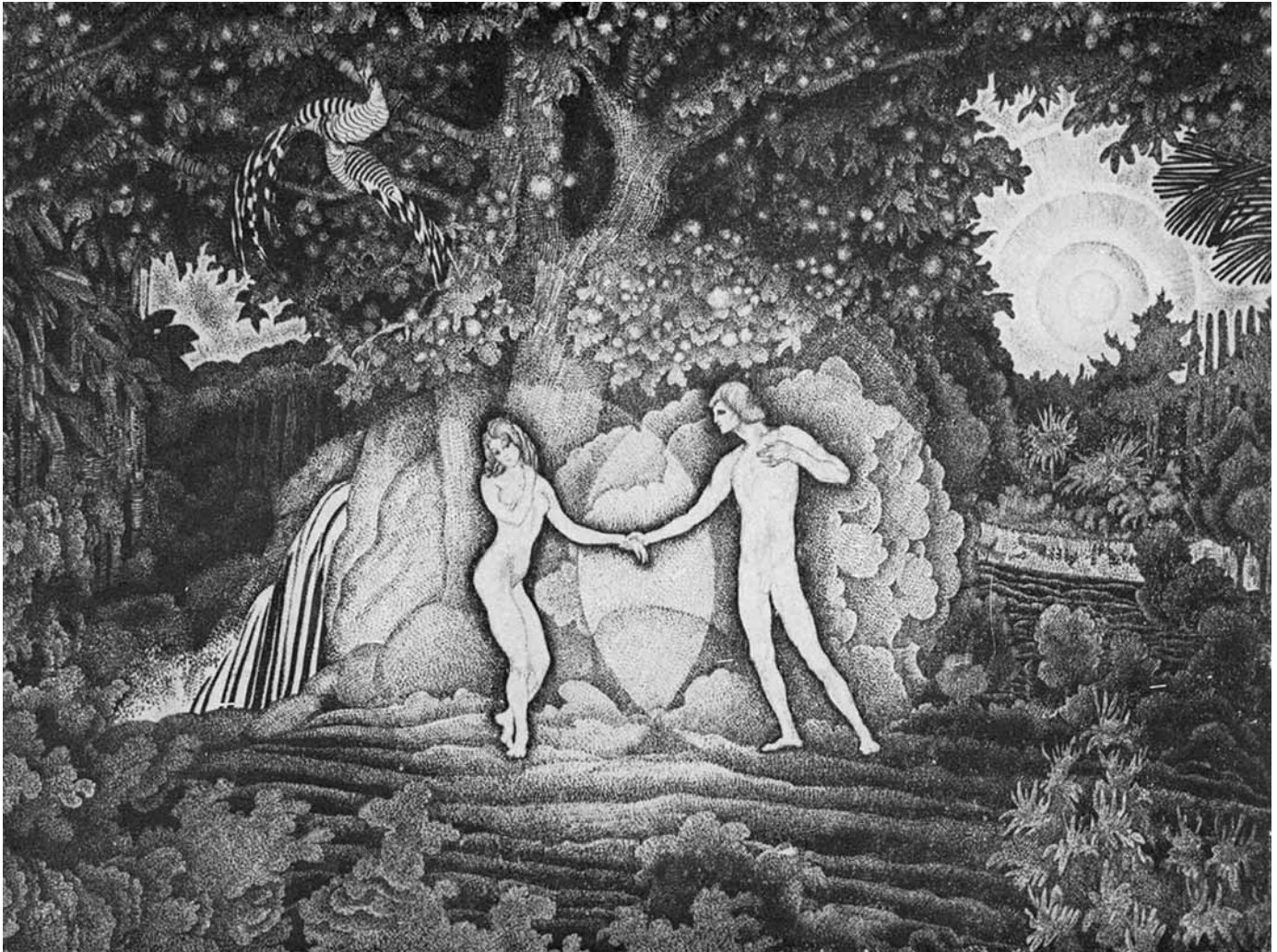
Most of us can imagine Jesus walking the dusty streets of first-century Judea; we can see the Incarnation there, but what about here and now? Is it something only to remember or something that immerses itself in the twenty-first century? It is both (John 16:13–16, with emphasis on verses 15 and 16).

All goodness comes from God, a fact that a Christian cannot dispute. Every kind word, tender act, courteous gesture; every act of goodness, every demonstration of unselfishness, every display of love in whatever context has God's fingerprints all over it, whether displayed by Christians, atheists, Jews, or Philistines alike. From saving the trees to feeding the hungry,

goodness comes from God. Inspiring sunsets or playful puppies; the birth of a child; the vows of love; the healing of a broken marriage or the reconciliation of friends long at odds, these and every other good gift are but vestiges, examples, symbols, and evidence of the Incarnation exercising its presence in our *now*. Song lyrics that send us out of our skin, poetry that leaves us breathless, literature that speaks to our hearts with life lessons, side-splitting laughter and self-deprecating humor—these are the Incarnation, God having his way with us in our culture and in our lives, for "it is not good that we be alone."

My earthly father was consumed by personal demons that led him to find comfort in substance abuse as our home fell apart. Yet in later years, my love for my dad expanded, as I learned to forgive and discovered his keen sense of humor and adept conviviality that was usually distorted or hidden by his addiction. Such lessons facilitated my interactions with others, making life easier to navigate. In that way, I learned grace from my broken dad, and he died hopeful and knowing I loved him beyond words, which was God embracing us both. Immanuel: "for it is not good for us to be alone."

In God, I have sought the father I was denied, so God sent me professors, counselors, pastors, and friends as mentors, who filled the fatherly need. This was God, becoming incarnate in my life. There's not a day that goes by that I don't see, hear, feel, and know that, like the Hound of Heaven,⁶ God is nearby and making sure I am not alone. My prayer life finds its answers not in miracles or bursts of Damascus light, but in the friends, the foes, the daily encounters that define my existence. God is gently poking me, reminding me of his nearness, perpetually nudging me to remind me of his presence; I am not alone. And I have scriptural evidence that I am precious in his sight, his friend, and one in whom he delights (Isa. 42:1, 43:4). God *likes* me, he does not only have principled love, which can be exercised without feeling, but also has profound emotional liking. God's uncountable thoughts are of me (Ps. 139:17–18), of hanging out in my



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This
was God,
becoming
incarnate in
my life.

broken life, of never letting me go. The Incarnation's meaning assures me of that. God left eternity to make sure I am not alone because he himself said it is not good that I should be solitary in this world, which is frequently off its axis and is spinning into oblivion. In my sin I am not alone, for his love transforms me. He is with me whenever, wherever, and whatever, from the start, until the end. Amen. Incarnation: because it is not good that I am alone. God said that. ■

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Union Station Homeless Services in Pasadena, California. Besides listening to his beard grow, Prout gravitates toward good conversations and gatherings of friends and family. He and his wife Mary Ventresca have three grown children and live in Sierra Madre, California.

References:

1. All scriptural references are taken from the New American Standard Bible.
2. Gen. 2:18, 3:8. See *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 231.
3. Gen. 1:27, 5:2. See *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 245.
4. Hosea 3:1-3.
5. Mark Twain, *The Prince and the Pauper* (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1882).
6. Francis Thompson, *The Hound of Heaven* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1926).

The Hiddenness of God: A Civil Blog

Conversation | BY CHRIS BLAKE

It happens rarely, a stimulating conversation that both challenges and enlightens. Yet embedded in the commentary mix on Herold Weiss's article, "I have overcome the world," posted on *Spectrum's* blog on February 9, 2012, appears such a conversation—a discourse of infinite proportions, a mystery snapping with fresh questions and new clues.¹

The discussion revolves around the timeless topic of God's hiddenness and one question: "How could God do it better?" As in Plato's *Republic* (though without a Socrates), in the best dialectic tradition all sides are rocked by deep and forceful counterarguments. Participants are referred to by their usernames: *Chris. Blake*, *Aage Rendalen*, *Graeme E Sharrock* (also *Graeme Sharrock*), *Beth*, and *Elaine*. At the discussion's end, one participant observes, "This is what I have always wished for."

Chris. Blake: We tend to think that life should be fair because God is fair. But God is not "life." God is behind life, the Author of life, the Energy of life, the Hope of life, the End of life: He/She is not "life." And yet, of course, God is *life*. The closer we get to truth, the closer we get to paradox.

Keeping in mind Dr. Weiss's eloquent distinctions concerning "this world," I have to ask Aage and others, *How could God do it better?*—manage His creation very well. How can God simultaneously honor freedom and individuality and not have rebellious children hurting one another? Realistically, that is, keeping with the known laws of the universe.

Go ahead, make a case, create a more palatable reality, and play defense for a change.

Aage Rendalen: While I reflect on your challenge, let me share a poem by the Norwegian poet Jan Erik Vold called, OM JEG VAR GUD (If I were God) in which he

addresses human arrogance:

This I would say / if I were God: / Don't ram your spires / into my heavens /—they are the seat of my pants / Spires burn like fires.

Chris. Blake: One wonders then what God thinks of orbiting satellites and space probes. Yes, please continue to reflect. After decades of inquiry, I have yet to hear a valid, plausible alternative to "all of this."

Aage Rendalen: The question is, "How can God simultaneously honor freedom and individuality and not have rebellious children hurting one another? Realistically, that is, keeping with the known laws of the universe." I think the answer comes down to enforcement of the rules. That's what characterizes a well-run country. It's based on sound moral values, and it reserves the right to restrain and punish those who refuse to go along with these values.

The age-old rap on God is that he does nothing to restrain evil. To believers this is seen as God respecting the free will of human beings, as if stopping a murderer's hand as he is about to bash in the head of a 7-year-old child would be a violation of the murderer's free will. Adventists often add a wrinkle to the problem of theodicy by arguing that what's at stake is God's reputation.

The Adventist Great Controversy approach to explaining why God does not stand up for humanity, presupposes that his celestial creatures are slow-witted and have a hard time figuring out who's the good guy and who's the bad guy. But if the Holocaust was not enough to enlighten the minds of a morally obtuse universe, I have my doubts anything will.

Graeme E Sharrock: "I think the answer comes down to enforcement of the rules." Well, now, Aage, I'm surprised at your answer. Didn't see that coming. But we are really getting down to basic questions. Your answer reflects a strong tradition—I shall call it the Law and Order tradition—where society

If you
wish to pick
God apart,
pick on
Jesus.

—Chris. Blake

maintains its security at the expense of the freedom of its citizens. Just how does this happen without some form of Fascism? How far does it extend? Into the bedroom?

If good behaviour is the goal—citizens conforming to prescription and rules—I have one comment and four questions: Comment: This has been tried repeatedly and found to be a failure. If applied on a worldwide scale, we'd end up with mega-fascism.

Now my four questions: 1) Who decides what the rules are? 2) Just how do you educate people to stay within the rules? 3) How do you guarantee enforcement? 4) What is the cost to this solution?

Aage Rendalen: Somebody's got to have your back. Ultimately that ought to be God, if God exists. The dilemma of the religious person is that in terms of daily life you're just as likely to get melanoma and die at 38 or to be hauled out of a Rwandan sanctuary to be slaughtered than anybody else. Theodicy is all about God's failure to act: Why don't at least you, God, have my back? At best you get a rain check, and that is not much when your two-year old is dying from cancer.

God could at least provide humans with enough of his vast medical knowledge to create medication that would take out malaria and cancer and all other diseases. That would not even impinge upon the freedom of humans. Provide prescriptions for all ills that marinate the world in suffering. But God and his inverse mirror image, No God, are equally passive. Both let the two-year-old die and the praying Rwandans be massacred.

Those prescriptions would be high on the agenda, those and a brigade of guardian angel Clarences to help people along. And oh, I would send in my Flying Seal Team to get Satan. If the occupants of the universe haven't figured out by now that Satan is the bad guy, I would recall them and upgrade their mental and moral software, and I'd apologize profusely for the poor craftsmanship the first time around.

I'll stop there. I'm no more qualified than Jim Carrey to play God. I appreciate it's not an easy job, yet the current occupant of the Universal Throne could do better.

Chris. Blake: Aage, First, you didn't answer Graeme's four questions. Would you, please? They start to get at the dismal, intractable options God has here. To your points:

1. *"Somebody's got to have your back."* Yes, God does have my back. God also asserts the universe will not adapt to me. It's a mature perspective. If I'm a believer and I dive off a bridge, I will die. Moreover, if someone else dives off a bridge and lands on me, I'll die then, too. Sin is both a random destroyer and a servant of terrific fidelity to universal laws, including physics and the eternal laws of relationships such as forgiveness, acceptance, and sharing (grace). Moreover, freedom is sacred to God. God would rather have us free than have us safe—or "saved," for that matter. Otherwise God would force both. "Humankind cannot bear very much reality" observes T. S. Eliot. Would I have God reverse natural laws at my whim, abolishing the law of gravity if I fall, dismissing E=MC², and reconfiguring molecules if I mash into a maple? What

on earth could we count on? Like a parent giving too much license to a child, continuing to shield and "bail out" bolsters irresponsibility and becomes the ultimate act of sabotage. The wonder to me is not that God does not act but that God does act. I freely admit I don't know how prayer works. Somehow prayer enables God and ennobles me.

2. *"God could at least provide humans with enough of his vast medical knowledge to create medication that would take out malaria and cancer and all other diseases."* Really? God has already given life-sustaining principles in the Original Testament. They were and are perverted, ignored, and ridiculed. We have adequate medication NOW to "take out malaria," but it won't happen. Human greed, hate, sloth, and egoism have triumphed for centuries. Cancer (my father died of lymphoma at age 58) is primarily the outgrowth of a chemically poisoned/saturated environment and the effects of stress on humans. Both could have been prevented by loving others, following conscience, and trusting God; both will be absent on the new earth.

I believe God hasn't come back to start over yet because God wants to "save" as many as possible, not to prove He is right to a dense universe. (*"Why I Don't Pray for Jesus to Come 'Soon'"* and *"Why Jesus Comes Back"* [published online by *Spectrum*] are in *Swimming Against the Current*.)

3. God doesn't always get His/Her way, just as Jesus didn't always get His way (asking three times to be spared the agonizing separation). By analogy, when I bought a house I got mortgage payments; the bank actually owns "our" house, and we must make payments to the bank. Understand, *it is not my desire to make those payments*. We make them because they come with the territory, the house.

The "house" God has bought is freedom, human free will (as logician Alvin Plantinga eloquently lays out). The mortgage payments on the house are the sufferings that result from our choices. The powers and principalities of darkness are the bank—the "ruler of this world" as Jesus calls him, but hastens to add the title of this post, "Don't be afraid, for I have overcome the world." Someday God will buy back the bank.

Forgive my sermonizing tone; I don't know how to rebut your points any other way.

Aage Rendalen: Chris, you and Graeme have pushed me out on thin ice here. I can't even get the cat to obey me, and when it lies down on my newspaper in the morning I have to struggle with myself to push her away. (What is it with cats and paper?) Playing God is definitely above my pay grade.

First, your contention: *"Freedom is sacred to God. God would rather have us free than have us safe—or 'saved,' for that matter."* When you read the OT, however, the last thing you would assume was that God's priority was freedom. It was rather, "You do this or I'll bust your kneecaps."

What I would expect from a moral deity would be something along the lines of what we see in the parts of the Old Testament where God interferes directly in the affairs of humans. I would, of course, want the ideal God to take a more liberal and broadminded view of morals than in the OT, and not have people killed for trifles (collecting firewood on the wrong day or being

Egyptian), but the enforcement part is okay with me. If God would enforce the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights when human agency was not enough, I think this could become a great planet to live on.

"1) *Who decides what the rules are?*" Presumably the rules are the transcript of God's character, the way the laws of science reveal the character of nature. The answer to your question is that the question arises only if there is no God. If God exists, the rules are already there.

"2) *Just how do you educate people to stay within the rules?*" First, it would help if the rules allowed you to show yourself to people and address them. Failing that, you send Clarence the angel to reason with the confused and wayward, and you send Apollyon to Baku to get rid of a young Bolshevik bank robber on the rise named Stalin, and a few years later you send him to Munich to look in on a rising Nazi by the name of Hitler.

"3) *How do you guarantee enforcement?*" If Batman can keep the criminal element in Gotham on defense, Apollyon should be able to do even better. America's superheroes, from Superman to Batman, are the idols we have created to make up for a God who is not there when we need him.

"4) *What is the cost to this solution?*" I would say, the same cost that we're currently paying for living in a civilized country. We give up some of our personal desires to benefit the common good.

Graeme Sharrock: Aage, ROFL!!! I am entertained more than watching the movie I saw tonight (*The Tree of Life*). You are much more theological than I am, and make recourse to God language in almost every sentence. I can't do that, even in church.

Actually, I was hoping you could offer some more earthly reflections (but was glad you wrote what you did!). So let me paraphrase at least the first couple: "Which humans decide what the rules are?" and "How do humans educate their own kind to stay within the rules?"

Aage Rendalen: The phone catalog is funnier than *Tree of Life* (and more uplifting). When the ending credits came on, somebody in our theater cried out, "Finally!" And that was in an art theater.

"Which humans decide what the rules are?" If I were God I would at least spell out what the moral laws of the universe were. As to "How do humans educate their own kind to stay within the rules?" I would say that even the most successful countries are still trying to work that out. The problem that Christianity has created for itself is holding out to people the promise of a perfect world, free of suffering and ornery people, in sharp contrast to the world we know. The minute you hold out the pie to a hungry world, the question immediately rises, Why can't we have it now?

Beth: If I were God, and one of my followers sincerely asked to know my will, I'd let them know what it was. I wouldn't leave them guessing, floundering around, making bad decisions, even after they had pleaded with me to know what to do. They would still be able to decide not to do it (assuming they have free will), but at least they'd know.

For just one minor example, when the GC voted on allowing commissioned people to lead conferences, I believe the vast majority of the people

voting sincerely wanted to follow God's will on the topic. I assume most of them prayed about it. And yet, we end up with a vote that looks suspiciously like God wasn't letting people know what his will was. Not because it didn't go the way I think it should, but because so many people voted either way—both thinking they were following God's will. I'd also answer the prayer of those trying to be better people, and I'd do it in a way that is distinguishable from people who became better people without my help.

Something else along those lines and a little more personal. If someone was pleading with me to not let them lose their faith, I'd figure out some way to help them with that so they didn't. That would be nice.

Chris. Blake: I believe the Original Testament is an exceptionally incomplete picture of God. Jesus is the most accurate, most complete picture of God. If you wish to pick God apart, pick on Jesus.

What mature, responsible parent doesn't allow her child to learn from trial and error? Which of us desires to control our children so that they can *never* hurt others? Human beings hurt others most with our words—those spoken and those unspoken. To control this hurt, God would then have to control our thoughts, even our "unwilling" thoughts. Are you really open to that? Really? Wars are waged to prevent such a coercive milieu.

"If one of my followers sincerely asked to know my will, I'd let them know what it was." And then, of course, we have strictly individualized inspiration. "God told me this" would have to suffice, I suppose, because there would be no way to check it out. But in the real world we write things down when they're important—for purposes of verification and comparison. Yes, we can disagree on the import and interpretation of the writing (Bible), but therein rests a call to trenchant discernment.

"I'd also answer the prayer of those trying to be better people." Fortunately, God does help people to become better people. As the parable of the two sons in Matthew 21:28–31 attests, even those who say "I want nothing to do with God" can live godly lives, open to conscience and God's Spirit without acknowledging such, and will be neighbors on the new earth. Yes, and some who say "I'm working for the father" won't be there. As their lives attest, they have not accepted the grace of God.

It does seem to me that when God starts over ("hell" denotes the end of suffering, a means of beginning again), pride and hatred cannot be allowed to raise their loathsome heads. All who populate a renewed, forever-free planet/universe do so after accepting the Eternal Guest Pass—which makes them humble, and thus teachable. We have many lessons to unlearn. And we shall enjoy learning to forgive, accept, and share for eternity.

"If someone was pleading with me to not let them lose their faith, I'd figure out some way to help them with that so they didn't. That would be nice." Beth, I feel your pain and the pain of many of my students with similar lament. Faith is another name for trust. Obviously, there are infinite things and ways we should not trust. I'm so glad I lost my faith/trust in many spurious things and pursuits.

Whether it's fashionable or not, I continually urge everyone to look to Jesus, who pulled me out of the slough of despond. Jesus, who endured the bugs and blisters and spittle and slaps of injustice. Jesus, who included every

last misfit into His kingdom—"whosoever will." Jesus, who beckons me to grow up, to let go, to be deep and brave and fun. In the beginning and in the end, I trust Jesus.

Beth: Chris, I don't think some additional interaction by God (whether by dealing more directly with the problem of evil, or whether by communicating his will for our lives more directly) has to come anywhere near some sort of totalitarian mind control.

Chris. Blake: Any mind control, if not granted freely, lovingly, and trustingly, is totalitarian. When Jesus says, "The kingdom of heaven is within you," He speaks of the sanctuary between our ears—a safe place for God and His/Her creation.

Beth: All right, say you have a quick treatment for molesters that takes away their desire for children. It leaves everything else about who they are intact, but they no longer want to rape five-year-olds. Now say some molesters have come to you begging for the treatment. Do you give it to them? Or do you tell them, "I'm sorry, it would be wrong for me to give it to you because it would be interfering with your free will to choose to rape five year olds. It is more important that I protect that than it is for five-year-olds not to be raped."

God has that treatment (according to Christian theology) but doesn't give it, even when asked. That is the reality of the world we live in. Maybe you are able to justify that in your mind somehow but I can't. And yes, there might be a few cases where molesters, after much psychological work and the effects of aging, are able to lessen their urges somewhat. Most don't, though, even after asking for help. BTW, I think one could make the ethical case for giving them the treatment even if they didn't ask.

Chris. Blake: Beth, the sexual predator analogy is problematic, as (from what I've gathered) they rarely are "cured." Then what about a "quick fix" for the serial liars? The manipulators? The innumerable ways we're passive-aggressive? The lazy, the lustful, the selfish, the covetous? Where do you stop "interfering"? Today, an 11-year-old girl will be raped 20 times or so in a brothel in Mumbai, India. She will be raped 20 times tomorrow, and the next day, and the next...I can't get my mind around that.

Aage Rendalen: Chris, if I were to summarize the debate, I would call it in Beth's favor: Beth 2, God 0. It would be better to walk away from it all and declare it a mystery than trying to talk about free will and the vindication of God. And when it comes to the all-important "free will," how's free will going to be enhanced or diminished by reintroducing a perfect world? And how come the Bible is totally uninterested in any philosophical debate about free will?

Beth: Chris, I appreciate your patience with my heresy. Let me tell you about a client I had while I was still working as a therapist. She was a devout Christian who had prayed deeply before marrying her current husband. She had the support of her family and church community for the marriage to this

godly man. He ended up molesting their oldest daughter before my client found out and left him.

She asked a simple question for which there is no answer. "Why couldn't God have impressed on me that this marriage was a mistake before I married him? I asked over and over." Indeed. How could a God who is loving, powerful enough to know this guy's heart, and involved in the lives of his people simply turn his back on her heartfelt question about the rightness of the marriage? Unless one wants to suggest that God wanted her to marry him, which has its own set of problems.

Where to stop on the whole interference scale is a good question, but it doesn't let God off the hook for stopping way before he should. Curing the molester would greatly increase the freedom of both the molester and any potential victims, if you have a God who values freedom so much. Just because there is a line that would constitute mind control doesn't mean that there isn't quite a bit of territory before that line is crossed.

All of this isn't to say that no one ever thinks they feel God's will for their lives, or no one is ever helped by offering up a prayer. But there is no evidence that overall people are helped in tangible, measurable ways beyond feeling good. And for anyone who thinks that the Great Controversy theme helps with what we've been discussing, I'd say this. If you see a kidnapper start to drag a child off and you are perfectly capable of stopping him, what reflects better on your character? Pointing at the kidnapper and saying, "Look how awful he is. I wouldn't do that. Someday I'll do something about him, but right now I won't because I think his freedom is more important than the child's freedom"? Or would it reflect better on your character to stop the kidnapper?

Yes, you'd still come out looking a little better than the kidnapper even if you didn't stop it, but I wouldn't trust you with my kids. I wouldn't want your comfort or your promise to "suffer alongside me." I'd be giving you an earful that if you can do something to reduce suffering, you do it, especially when it is as easy as it would be for God. You don't just sit on your hands and show up later to offer solace to the grieving parents.

No wonder the other worlds are taking such a long time to figure out who the bad guy is.

Chris. Blake: First, I'm really not into "keeping score" here; I am fully relishing probing some mind-reeling aspects of arguably planet earth's greatest problem—the hiddenness of God—and so I'm in this discussion with you, not against you. Thanks again for an exchange free of ad hominem attacks, straw people, and grandstanding.

Beth, your client asked, "*Why couldn't God have impressed on me that this marriage was a mistake before I married him? I asked over and over.*" While I grieve with her, I have no answer either, of course, particularly because (along with everybody else) I don't know the full context.

But with all your troublesome scenarios I am still left with two questions.

1. *When?* At what point does God "intervene"? Take the case of the child molester. This person didn't pop from the womb as a molester. The process was likely gradual, imperceptible, including a typical day as an adolescent:

- Read Facebook posts

- Looked at ads for upcoming movies
- Talked on the phone
- Watched TV
- Read some blogs

What we don't know is that one or more of these tipped the scales toward pornography or rage or self-loathing. The tipping could happen dozens of times a day. (It also could have happened dozens of times a day for someone who previously molested this adolescent.)

Does God step in each time? When does God intervene, and how often—10,000 times? At what point should unsolicited interventions subside or cease? "As easy as it would be for God" to do so, what could we believe is "reality"? Why should anyone believe disobeying God is devastating if we can count on God to continually and forever bail us out—even when we don't ask?

And what if the molester or kidnapper stops but later returns to their dysfunctional lifestyle slide? Should God just erase the person? That's the approach in the O.T. God tried being "not hidden" there, but people still forgot about God's directions as quickly as an apple core turns color.

This *when* question is less about ease than loving efficacy. Putting myself in God's position, I don't know when I could possibly back off from manipulating humankind—the type of coercive, deceptive approach that most accurately characterizes evil.

2. *How?* I'm a communications professor. Humans communicate in a myriad of ways. How should God best communicate with us?

- Scream often, "Stop thinking of molesting, dammit!"
- Act as a Handicapper General, as in Kurt Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron"
- Flip, unbidden, a switch in people's minds—the ultimate in "hiddenness"
- Effect change through those people who are open to God's leading

God knows (and parents and teachers know) we learn best by doing, by getting involved. That's why God involves us—leaves the communicating, the loving, the accomplishing, to us. If God stepped in to stop or start everything, He/She would be stepping on our ability to grow in godly ways. We would become comfortable, insular, careless, and weak—like the humans in *Wall-e*.

I agree with Bevin's assessment posted yesterday on the "Reflections on The One Project" thread Mon, 02/20/2012 — 13:32 >>> "How is God going to ensure that sin never happens again in the new world without infringing on free will?"

"The biggest difference between the universe before Lucifer's fall and the universe after Satan's defeat will be the availability of knowledge of the period between. It is knowledge of consequences that stops a loving intelligent being from making mistakes, not externally imposed constraints. Personally, I think that the absence of this knowledge in a complex universe is what made the fall unavoidable—and the presence of the knowledge makes its repetition avoidable."

God communicates with us through a thousand sources, including literature, music, Isaiah, and sweet corn. Yet I need to keep my mind trained to hear His/Her voice. Otherwise I cannot "hear" no matter what God says. My conscience becomes "seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:2); it grows calloused, hardened, desensitized. *How* can God stop that from happening?

Aage Rendalen: Chris, According to Christian thinking the day will come when God no longer will sit on the sidelines, twiddling his metaphysical thumbs. When he starts over again, he will pull out the bug zapper and that'll be that. The slow-witted inhabitants of the Universe will finally have figured out that he is the good guy, and that any zapping of evildoers is justified. Although Jesus praised those who embraced spiritual realities by faith and didn't need to probe reality with their finger, like Thomas, the absolute faith of Christians in the goodness of God can't be trusted. The believer might believe that the molester was the good guy and God was the bad one.

I can make no sense of this kind of thinking. To me, it's simply an attempt to make theological lemonade—an extremely tart one at that—from a mountain of lemons.

Chris. Blake: Aage, I can't make sense of that kind of thinking either. And I'm also quite thankful for Thomas; I believe I would have been there with him, wondering about the walking dead Man. Thomas provides more credibility to the veracity of the astonishing appearance. No credulous sycophant, he.

Beth: Chris, I too appreciate your willingness to dig into these difficult things without using the intellectually lazy methods of distortion, straw men, and labeling.

Why should anyone believe disobeying God is devastating if we can count on God to continually and forever bail us out—even when we don't ask? I'm not asking why God doesn't make the calories magically disappear after I eat a whole pan of brownies, even when I ask nicely. I'm not arguing that God should continually and forever bail us out for things we are responsible for, especially when we don't ask. I'm asking why God doesn't cure the molester when he asks nicely and we humans are not capable of doing it ourselves—among many, many other examples.

God no
longer will
sit on
the sidelines,
twiddling his
metaphysical
thumbs.

—Aage Rendalen

Now to your *how* question. *If God stepped in to stop or start everything, He/She would be stepping on our ability to grow in godly ways.* I've always hated this one. Really hated it because it sounds so reasonable and logical on the surface until you actually think about what it means. God allows children to starve to death so that you and I can learn how to be better people. How can that possibly be okay?

Even if a group of people were able to become nicer and more loving, there is still so much bad that happens in our world that is just not our fault. Again, no one is arguing that God should always step in and take over where we should have stepped up. But there is an awful lot that we have no control over and no matter how godly we become, the world is still going to be a mess.

Given the evidence, the Christian God might represent our sincerest hopes and vision, but the most likely explanation, given the evidence, is that there is not a being who is, at the same time, loving, powerful, and intervening. In fact, if you only get rid of the loving requirement, things fit much more easily. That seems to be everyone's favorite part though...

Chris. Blake: Yes, after all the postulating there remain two words: "Jesus wept."

"They claim that God helps people become better and they assume (but cannot demonstrate) that this happens in some way that is more than would have occurred without an intervening God."

Demonstrate? What about the centuries of countless changed lives (including mine) after a commitment to God? Alcoholics, sex offenders, liars, slackers, craven disciples, crack heads... the list is endless.

"How do you know Jesus turned the water to wine?" the critic asked. "Were you there? Did you taste it?" "No, I wasn't there for that miracle," the Christian admitted. "But I was there when He turned my beer into furniture."

You may lightly skip over the immense, intractable questions surrounding *When?* and *How?* But let's be clear: Not answering those questions doesn't mean you have answered those questions.

A vast difference exists between admitting, as I did in *Searching*, "I don't understand exactly how God 'speaks' to us, how He honors our personal freedom and yet accomplishes His designs, or why some *obviously* good answers don't occur, and some obviously bad requests seem to gain positive responses"—and saying God is not demonstrably working in the world.

What for you would be adequate evidence of God's involvement? And please don't say, "All the world's problems go away." If your child disobeys and misbehaves, that doesn't prove that you are not his/her parent or that you aren't working diligently to redeem your child.

That 11-year-old girl I mentioned who will be raped 20 times today in Mumbai? Here's the other side of the story. A Christian organization called Tiny Hands International, based here in Lincoln, began in 2006 to fight human trafficking. They made meager inroads until 2009, when they began to wholly dedicate themselves and their ministry to prayer. Since then, they have intercepted an average of 140 girls a month, saving them from lives of unbelievable torture. At the border stations between Nepal and India, THI uses volunteers from local Christian churches 24/7 to stop the traffickers.

At Union College, our Amnesty/Tiny Hands International Club raises thou-

sands of dollars for this cause, and two of our students have gone to Nepal to help. (See www.tinyhandsinternational.org) You can call me "humanistic" (as was done recently on another thread ;) but I believe that's God working to "overcome the world."

Beth: Chris, After further reflection, I realized I could and should address your how and when questions more than I did. In answering them, the best model I can use is a parenting model. I'm a parent and generally I'm loving, powerful, and intervening. I respect the fact that my children learn best from a variety of methods, including trial and error, and I know that I can stunt their moral learning by intervening too much.

However, I also know that there are limits to any one child's freedom. I discipline because learning works best in an environment where you feel safe and where discipline is intentional. I don't worry about my children loving me less because I prevent them from hurting each other. I don't worry that I'm stifling my son if he tries to hit my daughter and I stop him. I help him when he cannot help himself because that helps him learn that it isn't okay to hit. His right to choose his own behavior does not trump my daughter's right not to be hit.

If my teenaged son picks up a knife to stab a sibling, would I say, "Well, I told him not to kill. He is choosing not to listen and so now I have to let things play out so the other siblings can see how tragic the consequences are when you disobey"? No, for a lot of reasons, but the first being: I am privileging his right to kill someone over the other sibling's right to live. I would stop it if I could because that is what loving, powerful, intervening parents do. And I'd do it no matter how old he was.

We parents are not perfect and somehow we still manage to figure out how to intervene in loving and powerful ways. In fact, we recognize that to not do so is being a terrible parent. When I appropriately intervene, my kids learn that I care enough to help them be better people, that I'll protect them while they are learning so they are still around to learn, and I'll provide quick, effective consequences when the natural consequences aren't enough. I think if I can figure out how to do it, even as imperfectly as I do, God could manage it. Asking God to rise to the level of even imperfect parent isn't too much to ask.

Chris. Blake: On Sabbath, our Conflict and Peacemaking class taught inner city third, fourth, and fifth graders at the inaugural Peace Camp how to handle bullying using the four pillars of peacemaking: dialogue, justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation. It was wonderfully exhausting, a satisfying Sabbath experience.

Similarly, it seems God is continually trying to teach us, "You must adapt to the universe." This humbling assertion bothers us, of course, but Galileo helped refocus our anthropocentric sights in this general direction: It's not about us. Tough news, yet also Good News.

To my mind, Beth still (after multiple attempts, thank you) fails to adequately address the most troublesome *When?* and *How?* questions, viz.:

When does God intervene, and how often—10,000 times? At what point should unsolicited interventions subside or cease? What could we

believe is “reality”?

And what if the molester or kidnapper stops but later returns to their dysfunctional lifestyle slide? Should God just erase the person?

My conscience grows calloused, hardened, desensitized. How can God stop this from happening?

“Just do it” isn’t an adequate response. There are some things an omnipotent God cannot “do”—create a two-sided triangle; sustain life forever for someone who unplugs from the Source of life; continually violate and at the same time guard free will; enable fear-based behavior and nurture love—because the approach is nonsensical and self-defeating. It is against the law of noncontradiction.

Answering those questions would suit me. The questions matter because they help delineate the mystery of God’s perceived non-existence. I don’t find adequate answers apart from this troubled life we are experiencing.

Beth: Maybe we are at an impasse here but I’m not sure what else to say. Would God’s healing child molesters that ask be making a two-sided triangle? Would it be violating free will too much or would it put God in some sort of contradictory impossibility? I guess I don’t see how. Yes, there are situations that could be impossible for God. There are situations that a free will-honoring God can’t violate. I’ve acknowledged that. I just don’t see how any examples that I’ve been arguing would fit that.

Chris. Blake: The architecture of the human brain comes into play. The nature of “curing” is a complex, labyrinthian thing, subject to a million unknown prompts, guides, ruts, motives, and furnishings. Here are some “cures” I’d like to see: a) my faulty memory b) my anger against past wrongs (*super* memory, there!) c) my tendency to think first about myself d) my propensity to easy laziness e) any deceptive thoughts

If I ask God, should He/She cure me right now? Some of these could ultimately lead to heinous behavior.

Beth: If they will lead to heinous behavior, then yes.

Chris. Blake: Wow. I can’t buy that. As I have laid out, such btm (benevolent thought molesting) would be pervasive, invasive, and continuous. It would absolutely sabotage free will, empirical cause-and-effect, personal responsibility, distinctive individuality, and ultimate authenticity.

I am not willing to take that trade-off. More to the point, apparently neither is God. Even in a world of toxic pain, the root question is “Robots or rebels?” Give me rebels—and a chance to start over.

Beth: So what you are saying then is that God can’t cure anyone right away because that would be benevolent thought molesting even if they ask? I think you are trying to have it both ways. God doesn’t cure anyone right away because that would be thought molesting, except when it happens and then it is evidence of a loving God.

You have stated that God helps people become better and I’m assuming that means God adds something specific to the process of getting better. What would that be? If it can’t have anything to do with influencing our thoughts, what is it?

Elaine: Beth, now you’re going for the jugular! I’m anxious to hear Chris’s answers.

Beth: Yikes, I hope it’s not coming across like that—if so I apologize to Chris and any other readers still hanging on.

Aage Rendalen: I think Elaine meant the “jugular” of the argument, not of Chris. And in that she is right. You can’t argue, as Beth says, that God interferes in the world when we pray (or when we don’t: see Sodom), then turn around and argue that it would be against the rules for God to interfere in our world.

The believer’s conundrum is that while God can help you with guilt and trivial things that atheists do on their own, like finding lost keys and parking spots or the right house, he can’t do anything that really matters, like protecting your children. When evil intercepts the ball and heads for the end zone, God vacates the field, refusing to block or send a linebacker to do the job. That’s one heartbreak we non-believers don’t have to deal with.

Chris. Blake: Some distinctions on having it both ways:
1. Should God intervene when we don’t ask? Aage mentions Sodom, whose chief sin was her “pride, surfeit of food and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy” (Ezekiel 16:49). *Imagine if that were the litmus test today.* How many in the U.S. would be spared?

But then there’s (as I continually maintain) the clearest manifestation of God—Jesus—who rebukes His disciples for wanting to rain fire down on enemies; who claims His Father makes the sun shine on the unrighteous; who loves everyone, everywhere; who uses kindness to bring us to repentance (Rom. 2:4); who “desires all to be saved” (1 Tim. 2:4), “not wishing that any should perish” (2 Peter 3:9).

I concur, we can’t have it both ways. We can’t wish the proud and selfish to be dealt with against their will and yet malign God for dealing with the proud and selfish (us) against our will. Sometimes I too want God to “intervene” (whatever

We [imperfect]
parents...
manage to
figure
out how to
intervene.

—Beth

that actually means). But again, at what point should unsolicited interventions stop?

2. Everything matters—trivial or otherwise. Aage argues, “*he can’t do anything that really matters, like protecting your children.*” This, of course, is specious generalizing. Nobody knows if God has in fact “protected our children” dozens of times a day. And protected from *what*? From reality? I prayed and pray that my children would confront reality, be educated by reality, embrace reality, adapt to reality. While I pray for “safety” for them, I sincerely don’t wish for them to be insulated.

Our smallest thought matters, ultimately. The most “trivial” crack in the concrete leads to the crumbling and ruination of the dam. Much like the false dichotomy of secular and sacred, trivial and important are also deceptive constructions. In this life, the urgent is rarely important and the important is rarely urgent.

So does God step in with every trivial crack, patching and smoothing everything over? Or should He/She just let the cracks grow naturally and step in every time just before the deluge descends? Who would ever give a dam about the cracks?

You can’t have it both ways. You can’t have God continually bail us out with virtually every thought and have God value our freedom, individuality, and responsibility. It’s simply not possible.

3. “*God can’t cure anyone right away because that would be benevolent thought molesting even if they ask?*” Beth, this is the most perplexing question, even to believers in God. To be clear, if they ask, then God’s response isn’t benevolent thought molesting, at least to my thinking. (!) Yet I agree, “I don’t understand why some *obviously* good answers don’t occur.” Here’s what helps me.

a. Richard Foster reflects, “For me, the greatest value in my lack of control [in prayer] was the intimate and ultimate awareness that I could not manage God. God refused to jump when I said, ‘Jump!’” We see this in Jesus’ refusal to perform miracles in front of Herod. It wasn’t vain pride that made Him refuse but because acquiescing would forever enshrine the false, idolatrous notion of a domesticated, tame Being, a Celestial Vending Machine—where we, in fact, are God.

b. Jesus’ prayer, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done” allows the wiggle room God deserves, especially with absurd or selfish requests. Most of life is conditional to some degree—people pray for contradictory answers, and God cannot always honor both requests, though He/She is amazingly resourceful and creative.

Often God takes an indirect route to answer prayers. The mother of Augustine prayed all night that God would stop her son from going to Italy because she wanted him to become a Christian. While she was praying, he sailed away to Italy, where he converted to Christianity. Naturally, his mother believed for a time that her prayers had gone unheard. As with any healthy relationship on earth, friendship with God is characterized by mutual freedom.

c. I want to always retain my anger and my loving, redemptive battling against injustice. The oft-misquoted 1 Thess. 5:16–18 reads, “Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in

Christ Jesus.” It doesn’t say “give thanks *for* all circumstances.” James Hilt points out, “Thanking God for evil as well as good presumes evil also finds its source in Him. This is a terrible distortion. God should not be thanked for anything of a fallen nature—anything that finds its source in this planet’s rebellion against God. This includes accidents, health problems, natural disasters.”

d. God can and does cure right away, as demonstrated by Jesus. The question is, Why not more often? For me, that’s where loving trust comes in. I love and trust God more than I love and trust my best earthly friend. Am I willing to give my earthly friend the benefit of the doubt? (Yes.) Am I willing to believe that God is acting in every plausible way, as demonstrated in the life of Jesus, to bring about hope, love, freedom, joy, and peace? Am I willing to consider all the points listed above? If I am to remain God’s friend, and keep Him/Her as mine, as with any deep, nourishing friendship, I can’t both trust and distrust the core of my friend’s intentionality and action. I cannot have it both ways.

Beth: Thanks, Chris, for what has been a stimulating and respectful conversation. I’m going to leave my part of it for now. Best wishes with the Mumbai work you are a part of. I’m grateful there are people doing it.

Chris. Blake: Thanks, Beth, Aage, Graeme, et al. I’ll sign off as well.

Aage Rendalen: Thanks, equally, for a good conversation. This kind of constructive exchange of views is what I have always wished for on this web site. It’s refreshing to deal with people who take part in a conversation because they’re interested in exploring an issue and not to demonize people. It may have been that Dr. Weiss’s exegetical space made this level of civility possible. ■

Chris Blake is an associate professor of English and communication at



Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. He has won numerous national awards for writing and editing, and is the author of hundreds of published articles and many books, including *Searching for a God to Love* and *Swimming Against the Current*.

References:

1. Herold Weiss, “I have overcome the world,” *Spectrum*, last modified February 9, 2012, <http://spectrummagazine.org/article/column/2012/02/09/i-have-overcome-world>. This discussion is edited for space and adherence to the initial question, “How could God do it better?”

women's

or ordination

Historic Votes in the North American Division



Columbia Union Conference staff count the ballots at the July 29 constituency meeting where the motion to ordain without regard to gender passed on a vote of 209 yes votes to 51 no votes and 9 abstentions.



Delegates to the Aug. 19 constituency meeting of the Pacific Union Conference voted 79% to 21% to ordain without regard to gender.

The Faces of Women's Ordination in 2012: A Photographic Yearbook

The following is a list of women recently approved for ordination. The Columbia Union Conference approved fifteen women for ordination on September 26, 2012, and the Pacific Union Conference approved fourteen women for ordination on September 5, 2012.

Recently Approved for Ordination

Columbia Union Conference

Josephine Benton, Emeritus

Allegheny East Conference

Rosa Taylor Banks
Brenda Billings
Paula Fils-Aime
Lisa Smith-Reid

Ohio Conference

Linda Farley
Lori Farr
Sandra Pappenfus
Carmen Seibold

Potomac Conference

Karen L. Cress
Sharon Cress
Jennifer Deans
Debbie Eisele
Cherilyn O'Fill
Sonia Perez

Pacific Union Conference

Southeastern California Conference

Marlene Ferreras
Raewyn Hankins
María Carmen Ibañez
Genevieve Koh Isidro
Audray Johnson
Andrea Trusty King
Jacqueline Lynch
Chris Oberg
Sandra Roberts
Halcyon Wilson

Northern California Conference

Marit Case
Mary Maxson
Norma Osborn
Jessica Richmond

Columbia Union Conference



Brenda Billings

Position: Senior pastor of the Metropolitan SDA Church in Hyattsville, Maryland.

Length of ministry: Pastor for twelve years, preached independently for ten years before being hired by the Allegheny East Conference.

Ordination status: Commissioned on July 2, 2004, expects to receive her new credentials as an ordained minister soon.

Quote: I celebrate this decision by our union because one, it is a clear affirmation of the ministry and gifts God has graciously granted to me to be used for his glory; two, it signals an intention to cease any practices of discrimination within our union; three, it encourages and affirms the work of the church members under my leadership; and four, it offers hope to the women who are diligently pursuing their educational degrees in theology.



Linda Farley

Position: Chaplain at Soin Medical Center, part of the Kettering Health Network, in Beavercreek, Ohio.

Length of ministry: Health care/hospital chaplain for nineteen years, previously in a pastoral role for four years with husband Steve Farley.

Ordination status: Commissioned on June 26, 2004, date of ordination service pending.

Quote: I delight in being a coworker with Christ... But... there are those whom God has called, educated women, who have not been invited to ordination, have even been denied commissioning, and have been treated with disrespect, their call maligned. My prayer and desire in ordination is like Esther: to use my [skills] and ordination for "such a time as this" to promote unity, weaken the hold of prejudice and fear, encourage all believers, give future generations of women hope, and to strengthen God's work and church.



Lori Farr

Position: Senior pastor of a three-church district (Wooster, Canton, and Carrollton) in Ohio.

Length of ministry: Pastor for eleven years.

Ordination status: Commissioned on June 26, 2011, date of ordination service pending.

Quote: It is not man who has chosen me to do God's bidding, but in our world, it is man who must recognize whom God has chosen.... It is God who... has ordained me.... But I believe it is the church's responsibility to set apart those called by God; therefore, women's ordination is something we must do to show that we believe God calls all people, regardless of gender, to do His bidding. Receiving ordination, for me, is merely a recognition of what God has already done.

My prayer and desire
 in ordination is . . .
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 weaken the hold of
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 encourage all
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—Linda Farley

These biographies and interviews were researched and compiled by **Alita Byrd** and **Midori Yoshimura**. Byrd wrote an article for *Spectrum* 38.2 about women pastors in the Trans-European Division. Yoshimura is *Spectrum's* assistant editor.



Sandra Pappenfus

Position: Resource hospital chaplain at Kettering Medical Center.

Length of ministry: Chaplain for eleven years, spiritual director for “Walk to Emmaus” women’s retreats (interdenominational Christian retreat).

Ordination status: Commissioned in December 2005, with full ministerial credentials as an ordained minister; ordination service pending.

Quote: Women’s ordination is a confirmation from the Body of Christ with whom I worship that God indeed has called me to this work. I no longer feel “less than” . . . I also realize this decision is creating confusion and fear among those who strongly believe only men should be consecrated for this work. I am deeply saddened that Satan can use this as a foothold to disrupt our purpose to bring people to Christ, baptize them and disciple them.



Jennifer Deans

Position: Campus pastor for Community Praise Center, Dulles Campus, in Dulles, Virginia.

Length of ministry: A full-time pastor since 2005, worked as a volunteer pastor during school, beginning in 1999.

Ordination status: Commissioned on July 23, 2011, received ordination credentials in July 2012.

Quote: Being ordained is a great honor—one that I wasn’t sure I would ever receive. Very early on, I knew I was called by God and decided I would minister in any position he called me to, which would not be dependent on ordination. This allowed me to . . . focus on ministry . . . That being said, I’m very excited to be part of this exciting time in history for the Adventist church and to have my ordination credentials.



Debbie Eisele

Position: Congregational care pastor at Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Length of ministry: Fifteen years of volunteer ministry in four different countries, has served at Sligo for eleven years.

Ordination status: Approved for ordination-commissioning in 2007, ordained September 29, 2012.

Quote: Jesus just meant [ordination] to be plain and simple: to be a servant leader, to be there for the people . . . the most important part [of women’s ordination] is that we can do so much more work when we’re empowering our men and women, and not just dismissing half of the population . . . I simply want to convey God’s love to all of us, that’s where the unity lies; God’s love for us and our conveying it to others.

The Faces of Women's Ordination in 2012: A Photographic Yearbook, continued...

Pacific Union Conference



Marlene Ferreras

Position: Associate pastor at the Azure Hills Church.

Length of ministry: A pastor for twelve years in three different churches: Campus Hill Church, Loma Linda Spanish Church, and Azure Hills Church, in youth ministry, then in children and family ministries.

Ordination status: Ordained October 6, 2012.

Quote: The subject of women's ordination means my church affirms God's calling on my life... I am first and foremost a disciple of Jesus, and my mission has been to live after the model he has provided... I really never considered questioning whether God's calling on my life was appropriate for my gender. After all, this is the God of Israel we are talking about and God has a history of calling unlikely candidates to be disciples, apostles and leaders.



Raewyn Hankins

Position: Lead pastor at the Victorville Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Length of ministry: Began as a pastor at Chula Vista SDA Church, after seminary pastored for three and a half years at the Yucaipa SDA Church.

Ordination status: Ordained-commissioned June 18, 2011, recognized as ordained by the Pacific Union Conference on September 5, 2012.

Quote: Women's ordination means that women called to ministry will no longer have to choose between pleasing God and pleasing their church community. Our daughters called to prophesy will not be discouraged from answering that call by an ambivalent church. Women not called to pastoral ministry will come to know a God who created them, male and female, in God's image, and called them one in Christ Jesus, not requiring a father, husband, or brother for full access.



Maria Carmen Ibañez

Position: Associate youth director in the SECC Youth Ministries Department, executive director of Pine Springs Ranch.

Length of ministry: A pastor for nineteen years.

Ordination status: Ordained on October 26, 2012.

Quote: My feelings in regards to ordination are somewhat mixed. This may have to do with the fact that I have been a pastor for nineteen years without having been "ordained." ... It is an amazing feeling to finally be affirmed by the church body, even if it is only in our union. I compare it to the feeling after having been baptized... it's that sense of peace and love that came over you once you came out of the water... With ordination, you feel the embrace of your church.



Genevieve Koh Isidro

Position: Pastor for junior high ministry at the Loma Linda University Church.

Length of ministry: A pastor for nine years; four at Garden Grove, one and a half at Crosswalk, and more than three years at Loma Linda University Church.

Ordination status: Ordained on October 6, 2012, at the Loma Linda University Church.

Quote: Women's ordination is a celebration of what Jesus has done and is continuing to do through us. When the Pacific Union and Southeastern California Conference recognized my call to ministry as a fully ordained minister of the gospel on October 6, 2012, it was a reaffirmation of what God called me to twelve years ago. When God calls his people, male or female, he will fully qualify and prepare them for His work.

A note: Because the titles for a woman pastor have changed over time, and varied from conference to conference, the titles given in this article may not appear consistent. In the 1970s, women were referred to as pastoral associates. Later that was changed to commissioned pastors. To treat their pastors equally, some local conferences then voted to ordain-commission all their pastors. This year, there have been votes to ordain without regard to gender. It is at the local conference that pastors are nominated for ordination. The union in which that conference is located confirms the ordinations for the church at large.



Chris Oberg

Position: Senior pastor at the La Sierra University Church.

Length of ministry: Began in 2000 as an associate pastor for La Sierra University Church, moved to Calimesa as senior pastor, returned to La Sierra as senior pastor.

Ordination status: Ordained-commissioned in June 2005, ordained in April 2012.

Quote: Being in a policy-driven conversation is like being buried beneath piles of paper. Manuals, bylaws, constitutions, voted actions and statements, and legal counsel to keep us internally coherent. It ought not be so complicated. Even the dual credential is bound by a two-tiered system and was always intended as a step in the process. When did we become policy over people? Supporting ordination for all comes not from rebellion, but from a deep conviction to the Gospel.



Halcyon Wilson

Position: Pastor for diverse ministries at the La Sierra University Church.

Length of ministry: A pastor for thirty-two years; was the first woman officially hired by the SECC.

Ordination status: Ordained on December 2, 1995, ordination affirmed on August 19, 2012.

Quote: Ordination means that my administration recognizes my call from God to be a minister of the Gospel... it has been a long and sometimes painful journey, sometimes joyful, but one in which God has led and I am grateful... Ministry has been my dream, my vocation and my passion... I am grateful to still be serving the La Sierra University Church after thirty-two years. It is with humility and joy that I serve this congregation and thank God for the opportunity to do so.



Marit Case

Position: Associate pastor for nurture and counsel, as well as children's ministries, at the Carmichael Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Length of ministry: Served in the Netherlands youth department for two years, then from 1991-2000 as an associate pastor at the Pacific Union College Church, followed by Carmichael Church, for a total of twenty-one years.

Ordination status: Commissioned on May 24, 2008, ordained on December 8, 2012.

Quote: I was the first woman in the Northern California Conference to be a pastor... I feel very humbled by the whole process because it's not something I fought for. I just keep doing what I am doing... My greatest joy is that we now have five women in the Northern California Conference... It took time for people to...know that ministry, too, was a field for women.



Norma Osborn

Position: Recently retired as associate pastor at the Pacific Union College Church.

Length of ministry: Twenty-five years, including ministry at Sligo Church and Community Praise Center of Alexandria.

Ordination status: Ordained on September 23, 1995, received ordination credentials on September 15, 2012.

Quote: Women's ordination means... I can continue to serve God in whatever capacity he calls me without having a chain of oppression continually trying to hold me back... the women who come after me have a greater opportunity to be part of the denominational system and realize their deep desire to serve God as Pastor... the younger generation can appreciate this church as a place where the desire of all is to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

The Ordination Debate: *Scratching the Twenty-Year Itch* | BY ANDRE M. WANG



The Hoosier Dome in Indianapolis

It was July 11, 1990. I was a member of the Auburn Adventist Academy choir—the Sylvan Chorale—and we were about to perform at the General Conference Session in Indianapolis, Indiana. By the time of our performance, it already had been a historic session. Bob Folkenberg had just been elected president of the General Conference a few days before. But on this day, the world church was going to debate and vote on whether to ordain women into the ministry.

Waiting for our cue to enter the convention floor, the choir stood backstage as we watched the legendary Del Delker perform a set of songs. Wow. Del Delker was our opening act. Now this was truly historic.

After we performed our five songs, we made our way up, up, up, up to the top section of the Hoosier Dome. We were then released to roam the convention hall for the next couple of hours. As my friends disappeared into the expanse of the convention, I unfolded the nearest stadium seat and sat down to watch the ordination debate.

I studied the delegates as they approached two microphones—“for” and “against.” (Confusingly, the resolution was *against* ordaining women into the gospel ministry. So to be *in favor* of the resolution was actually a position *against* ordaining women.) Many spoke in articulate, resolute, measured tones. Others spoke with such inflamed passion that they were barely coherent. After the first hour, the arguments for both sides had already been exhausted. But the debate continued for another two and a half hours. Nonetheless, I sat through the entire proceeding. I knew I was watching something significant.

The final vote wasn't even close—1,173 to 377. The resolution passed. It was on that day that I resolved to become an active member within my church.

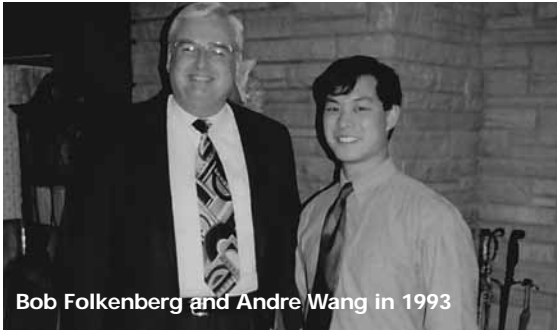
Three years later, as a junior at Pacific Union College, I took the course Christian Ethics. At



Del Delker

the time, Dr. Carmen Seibold and Dr. Gerald Winslow were the ethics professors at PUC, and today I count myself immensely blessed to have had the opportunity to study under them. My topic for the course's final paper was “Women's Ordination and the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” In it, I laid out the biblical and ethical

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Bob Folkenberg and Andre Wang in 1993

arguments in favor of ordaining women. But in my conclusion, almost as a postscripted afterthought, I posited that one way to resolve this issue would be to leave the question of gender-inclusive ordination to the union conferences. I argued that under denominational policy and practice, ordination credentials were conferred at the union level. Let them decide what fits their geographic jurisdiction and culture.

After I submitted my paper, it was suggested (whether seriously or in jest, I don't know) that I submit a copy to Tom Mostert, then president of the Pacific Union Conference, and to Bob Folkenberg. "Yeah, right," was my ambivalent response. The only credence I gave to the suggestion was, "So, does this mean I get an 'A?'"

A few months later, on a Thursday evening, the phone in my Nichol Hall dorm room rang. It was late, about ten thirty in the evening; not late for a college student, but late enough. It was Elder Folkenberg. He was on campus and, to my astonishment, he had read my paper. As I was a Student Association officer, several student leaders were already scheduled to meet with him at the home of President Malcolm and Eileen Maxwell that forthcoming Sabbath. However, Elder Folkenberg asked if I would stay afterward to discuss my paper with him privately. We locked in the appointment.

Two days later, eleven students had Sabbath lunch with the president of the General Conference. Dr. and Mrs. Maxwell were gracious hosts that afternoon. After everyone left, Elder Folkenberg and I retreated to the Maxwells' dining room table to discuss what I had written.

He never questioned the reasoning of my position. Instead, he probed into how I became so absorbed in the subject and policy. He listened intently as I shared my story from the GC Session in 1990. Watching the debate. Critically examining both sides. Meeting Del Delker. Everything.

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Malcolm and Eileen Maxwell

some merit. But it was 1993, only three years after the GC Session. The church just isn't there. The time just isn't right. Then, as he closed the manila folder that contained my paper, he said, "This could take twenty years to play out."

Nearly twenty years later, I have watched with keen interest—and, admittedly, satisfaction—as the Columbia Union and Pacific Union Conferences overwhelmingly passed resolutions adopting gender-inclusive or gender-neutral ordination policies. And today, the Indianapolis pledge that I made to myself endures. I am privileged to serve on the North Pacific Union Conference Executive Committee and its Ad Hoc Committee on Women in Leadership.

Once again, I find myself part of something historic. This time, I'm not in the upper deck of the Hoosier Dome. ■

Andre M. Wang is an attorney in Portland, Oregon, and a member of the Sunnyside Seventh-day Adventist Church. He serves on denominational committees too numerous to count. And he is still looking for the paper that he wrote for his Christian Ethics class.



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Women's Ordination as a Threat to Church Unity: An Ethical Analysis | BY MARK F. CARR

I feel a special interest in the movements and decisions that shall be made at this Conference regarding the things that should have been done years ago. . . . There are thoughtful men here, and they need to think.¹

—Ellen White

What sort of a leader was Ellen White at times when diversity and disunity threatened the church? My purpose in reaching back to her 1901 speech at the opening of the General Conference Session in Battle Creek, Michigan, is not to emphasize what her particular position was regarding the decisions at stake there. Rather, once she took a position was she stubborn and uncompromising? Was her tone strident or pastoral? Was she a mediator, helpful in negotiating differences between combatant parties?

Regardless of how we define unity in Seventh-day Adventism, the single most important factor in maintaining unity is the leadership of the church at the time of a threat. When our leadership chooses to emphasize spiritual unity through the effective use of rhetorical unity, we are more likely to keep all parties in “dialog and consultation.” When our leadership chooses to negotiate challenging measures of structural and theological unity, we are more likely to keep all parties in “dialog and consultation.”² Thus, we maintain our overall sense of unity.

Types of unity

My thesis includes four different types of unity: rhetorical, theological (or doctrinal, if you wish), structural, and spiritual. While these various foci of unity are interrelated, we do well to understand each clearly.

Rhetorical unity The ancient art of rhetoric is alive—though not well—in today's Adventist pulpit. Would that more preachers understood the distinctions between rhetorical devices used to bring congregations to an under-

standing of the truth, and outright psychological manipulation. Morally responsible preachers who take the effort to understand their rhetorical craft recognize the power of the pulpit to persuade.

Rhetorical unity is the sense of togetherness we feel after a moving sermon or singing “We Have This Hope” at camp meeting. This is the sense of unity that comes from being together in prayer, in worship, in sharing the great story of this church. There are at least two important Adventist themes associated with rhetorical unity. The Remnant and the Second Coming provide a backdrop or foundation for our preachers and evangelists who use the art of rhetoric well in our pulpits. The great preachers in our tradition use rhetoric in a positive and uplifting way in the development of unity. They do this purposefully.

The use of rhetoric is, however, a double-edged sword. Many preachers also use it to foster disunity and divisiveness. Some do it consciously and with purpose, others do it without realizing what they are doing. For instance, when President Ted N. C. Wilson recently attended the Pacific Union Conference's Special Session on the issue of ordaining women, he brought one of his vice presidents, Elder Armando Miranda. Wilson asked Miranda to “share a few words of encouragement to our people.” Miranda's use of rhetorical flourish was anything but encouraging. Affirming the idea that “we are convinced, now more than ever, that we are living at the end of time,” Miranda offered a quick survey of all the wonderful ways that the Reformation and Revival movement is “mobilizing the church in the fulfillment of the mission.”

At this point, however, Miranda's rhetoric took an ugly turn. After all this positive news, he was saddened to say that “hundreds of Adventists” were “leaving the church. So the shaking is starting.” “It is natural,” he said, “that the devil is angry in attacking the church, trying to distract us from the mission, creating disunity, and bringing confu-

sion." He went on to "encourage" us not to take actions "contrary to the world church."³ Were the constituents of the PUC really doing the work of the devil?

Theological/doctrinal unity Theological unity in the church is broad, even if it has become very specific in the form of the now 28 Fundamental Beliefs. I say it is broad because of our historic concern to avoid becoming a creedal church. The early statements of unity with regard to theology and doctrine were simple; we formed a covenant together in 1861 to "keep the commandments of God and uphold the faith of Jesus Christ."⁴ The interpretive license available here was enormous, and is striking in comparison with today. Apparently, we are far more creedal now than we were then. For instance, what type of unity are we attempting to foster by rewriting fundamental belief number 6? The measure of unity that results from a broadly stated view of the fact that God is our Creator was more attractive to our founders than the measure of unity that results from a decisive test statement that narrows down the creative work of God to 144 hours. What sort of unity are we aiming for with such statements?

Shockingly, the *Adventist Review* published the following in an opinion piece on the creation/evolution debate. "For those among us who have already decided—despite the Bible and Ellen White—on evolution, there are plenty of other churches for you. Ours isn't one."⁵ Clearly, the author would rather use doctrine to divide than to unite. Similarly, a recent combined televangelism project with Amazing Facts and 3ABN was titled, "Anchors of Truth: Doctrines that Divide." In the description of their purpose in this five-part series, the Amazing Facts website says, "For one to be right about a major Bible doctrine, it means that others must be wrong."⁶

We can always use theology and doctrine to divide. However, it takes a lot more effort and a lot more influence from the Spirit of God to use theology and doctrine to foster unity. Former General Conference president, Elder Jan Paulsen,

exemplifies the effort to foster theological unity in a paper he presented to a gathering of world church leaders in early May 2002. The theme of their meeting, hosted by the Biblical Research Institute, was "Theological Unity in a Growing World Church." Paulsen writes,

There is some theological polarity in our church.

Whether they be to the right or the left, reactionary or liberal, they are there. What should be done about it? Anything? No one should be surprised at their existence, nor should we expect that there will ever come a time when they will be gone. . . . An environment of polarity is sometimes the by-product of uncompromisingly held views—misguided or otherwise. What do we do with all of that? In the main, I suspect that we just learn to live with it. Little is to be gained by chasing these polarities. Doing so has a way of usurping the church's agenda, and the environment created within the church becomes hostile and strained. I say we learn to live with it.⁷

Structural unity The unity resulting from the administrative structures of our church has been immensely important throughout our history. Is there a time that structure has been paramount? Is structural unity the single most important form of unity for Seventh-day Adventism around the world and throughout our history?

Structural unity revolves around church administration and its policies, and involves issues like the flow of tithe, the assigned responsibilities of local churches, conferences, unions, divisions, and the General Conference. This sort of unity allows employees of the church to engage in their work with a measure of clarity about who, what, where, and when. There is no lack of clarity with regard to what documents establish the essential structures of the church. In the statement released at the 2012 Fall Council, titled, "Statement on Church Polity, Procedures, and Resolution of Disagreements in the Light of Recent Union Actions on Ministerial Ordination," three documents are said to establish this structural unity: the "General Conference Working Policy, the Church Manual, and General Conference Session decisions."⁸ But for all the

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help that such documents provide, the structure they establish changes through the years and is routinely open to interpretive license.

Take the example of the document “received” at the spring meetings of the 2012 General Conference, titled, “The General Conference and its divisions—a description of roles and relationships in light of organizational structure development, current governance documents, and practices.” Within weeks of the release of this document, which was itself an interpretive document using the essential documents referenced above, the Pacific Union Conference used it to justify their assertion that union-level management of ordination was well established.⁹ General Conference leadership, however, took umbrage at the PUC’s interpretation, and corrected the PUC leadership and executive committee members in a letter dated June 27, 2012, from the Office of the President.¹⁰ The following passage best summarizes structural unity as seen by the Office of the President:

The essence of unity in Seventh-day Adventist organizational functioning is the mutual commitment of all organizations to collective decision-making in matters affecting the whole family—and the acceptance of those decisions as the authority of the Church. . . .

We agree that it is not the only value or mechanism that contributes to Church unity. But unless this value is maintained, all other values that contribute to unity are seriously weakened.¹¹

Elder Miranda at the PUC Special Constituency Session put the idea more simply. In his address, he encouraged the delegates to “Maintain loyalty and respect for the policies of the Church, because it is clear that our authority comes from the policies. When we do not respect the policies, we lose authority and we destroy the system by which God blesses his people in our mission. If we don’t respect the policies. . . it’s gonna be terrible.”¹²

Spiritual unity Spiritual unity is the most compelling form of unity, even if it is the most difficult to clearly identify. The other forms of unity enhance spiritual unity, but spiritual unity is not

dependent upon them. The kind of unity we experience here cannot depend upon any particular corporate or personal spiritual practices.

When we gather together, we cannot expect to experience it, and yet we routinely do. By analogy, spiritual unity is like family unity; one is forever bound by it, uplifted by it, and occasionally put off by it, as well. It is tough to create and it is difficult to require.

Ellen White speaks of this type of unity on occasion. In *Manuscript Releases*, volume 11, we read:

Christ prayed that His disciples might be one even as He and His Father are one. In what does this unity consist? . . . We cannot then take a position that the unity of the church consists in viewing every text of Scripture in the very same light. The church may pass resolution upon resolution to put down all disagreement of opinions, but we cannot force the mind and will, and thus root out disagreement. These resolutions may conceal the discord, but they cannot quench it and establish perfect agreement. Nothing can perfect unity in the church but the spirit of Christlike forbearance.¹³

I am sympathetic to church leaders who seek to develop and maintain structural unity; I would want it myself were I in their position. However, I cannot encourage structural unity over and above spiritual unity. When under threat, spiritual unity must trump structural, theological, and rhetorical unity.

Ethical analysis of leadership styles

An ethical analysis of leadership and our sense of unity in the wake of a threat highlight at least two styles of leadership: deontological and relational.

Deontological orientation The deontological approach invokes our sense of duty. The primary task of leaders with a duty orientation is to follow rules and maintain the status quo. In this line of thinking, the primary focus of attention is on actions. Duty typically demands certain actions. These leaders thrive on clear, authoritative, and widely recognized policies. They excel within well-established institutions that do not

encourage flexibility. In academic settings, these persons work in the Records Office. In government and law, these leaders are policy wonks. They are exceptionally skillful with technical details. They are detail people, and they are absolutely certain that the “policy way” is the best (no, the only) way to do things. These leaders are still very much concerned for other necessary aspects of institutional thriving; it is just that in almost every case imaginable, the concerns of duty outweigh other concerns. When one follows the rules, when one does one’s duty, other issues will turn out okay; that is why we have the policies we do.

Relational orientation Closely associated with virtue or character ethics is so-called care ethics. The ethics of care attunes to the concerns of human relationships. In the context of the church, while following one’s duty as a church leader may be important, when situations arise that put policies in conflict with human relationships, there is no question for those who abide by care ethics; human relationships trump policies. The virtues of compassion, empathy, and honesty rise to the forefront of this leader’s style and orientation. Those with whom one is closely associated are highly esteemed, and this circle of important relationships expands outward to include all others to some degree. Pastors who are relationally oriented tend to get in trouble with the conference office when they fail to follow standard procedures, such as filing the obligatory monthly workers’ reports. His or her churches may be thriving, but conference ministerial officers do not expect to see a worker’s report in the office when it is due. More than likely it will show up, but only when the duty that requires it finally catches the pastor’s attention. More important to such persons is the nature of the interaction enjoyed in any given appointment, over the duty to show up for it on time.

The fact is, most leaders blend both deontological and relational styles, particularly in a church context, in which our administrators are typically

pastors. Pastors tend to be relationally oriented, which is why so many of them do not make very good policy wonks when they advance to positions of leadership. This is why so many church administrators who did not spend much time as pastors typically fail to attend to the relational work in their role as administrators.

A simple way to characterize the differences in styles of leadership, and to check your own orientation, is to ask a couple questions, the first more common than the second. First, in an adaptation of the famous question “What would Jesus do?” we might ask, “What would the GC president do?” in this particular situation. Note the fact that the orientation of this question is on action and duty. Action is the primary focus of a duty-oriented moral agent.

Second, rather than ask what action is required in any given situation, the question changes to the following: “Who would the GC president be?” in a situation of this sort. What kind of character traits would she portray? What sort of emphasis would she contribute, regarding how our relationships could or should influence our decisions in situations like this? It is not that our actions are unimportant, it is just that who we are as we engage in these actions is more important. How are our motivations, our habitualized tendencies toward compassion, empathy, and honesty compelling us? When Jesus shapes a person’s identity, what character traits would she want to live out in this situation? Indeed, what relevance does Jesus even have in this conversation, if not in his effect on our relational orientation toward others? Which of these two questions is more important to emphasize? I generally favor the latter because I believe Jesus, as our moral exemplar, should influence how we relate to one another and to God.

The imposition of Jesus

Jesus imposes upon my analysis of what to do or who to be. I cannot escape the idea that he would rather we be persons of Christlike forbearance than persons who always do the right thing. Of course, the two are connected and we

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do well to blend them. But scripture demonstrates the fact that character leads to action. Alternatively put, correct action never justifies the failure to be like Christ.

As the Gospels portray Jesus's interactions with others, the reader is drawn into event after event, through which we get to anticipate what Jesus would do; what actions he would engage in. Those who opposed him tried to paint him into a corner, certain that he would have to act in ways that duty demanded. For example, those who manipulated the confrontation between Jesus and the woman caught in adultery knew exactly what he was morally obliged to do under a deontological view. His duty was clear, and yet he did not do what they knew he must. His opponents were frustrated and put off by his failure to act. Rather than act in the way duty required, he chose to model a character trait, compassion. Then he acted, compassionately.

Jesus surprised Nicodemus, he surprised his disciples, he surprised the woman at the well, and he surprised the moneylenders at the temple with the virtue of indignation. Repeatedly, he focused not on actions, but on character and relationships. Christlike forbearance is an imposition on me. His life and character are an imposition on each of us in our families, classes, churches, and yes, in our administrative offices, as we attempt to uphold the structural unity of our church. This imposition encourages me to value relationships over policies.

The aspiration of Paul

In addition to the imposition of Jesus, we must deal with the aspirational call of the apostle Paul. Paul calls us to a higher standard of character in the body of Christ. Romans 12 and Galatians 5 help demonstrate my point. Romans 12 (The Message) speaks for itself:

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. . . . Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God.

You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

[We] are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we?...

Keep a smile on your face. Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle. . . . Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody. Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody.

Gal. 5:22ff

We often read Galatians chapter five for the simple yet striking comparisons that Paul lays out in his description of the fruits of the Spirit versus the works of the flesh. The wider context of the chapter denotes a state of conflict in the church regarding circumcision. Dare I say the conflict was about whether or not structural or spiritual unity would hold the position of primacy?

What can we learn from Paul here about the ethics of how the church resolves such conflicts? Again, the point is not which side is getting it right; whose actions are correct. Paul clearly positions himself, but for our lesson in ethics here, we focus on Paul's aspirations for us when our church fights. "But if you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another."¹⁴ He goes on to compare and contrast the *actions* of someone driven by the "works" of the flesh with the *character* traits of someone transformed by the "fruit" of the Spirit. Paul would have us aspire to these personal character traits, not simply in times of ease but especially in times of conflict. Why? Because, according to Paul here (v.

14), when we love our neighbors as ourselves we “fulfill” the whole law. This chapter illustrates the fact that the body of Christ routinely fights over structure and policy. Let us take Paul’s lesson to heart; namely, when we fight we must practice the character traits of the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self-control. For, “against such there is no” policy.

Conclusion

When we invoke church unity and whether or not the specific issue of women’s ordination will affect church unity, we should be very clear what we mean by church unity. Is it primarily structural? Does it depend upon theological foundations or rhetorical devices? Or, in the end, does it boil down to how we experience the Spirit’s presence among us as members of the body of Christ? With apologies to Paul—rhetorical, theological, structural, and spiritual unities abide, but the greatest of these is spiritual.

Lingering questions

What is the GC trying to communicate through its charge of “rebellion”? Does their concern go beyond “structural unity” to include notions of remnant theology? Do they mean to communicate that the unions who are in rebellion are in fact removing themselves from the remnant church?

What if we really are a Protestant church?

No other branch of Protestant Christianity has remained structurally unified. Every single one has splintered. Why would we think that we would be able to maintain a structural unity when no one else in the history of Christianity has?

Is the General Conference the only authentic Seventh-day Adventist Church on the globe?

Perhaps the structural unity the GC is trying to maintain is already gone. For example, the unity the GC has with Chinese Adventists is not structural; it is spiritual. By its own admission, the GC has no control over what our church does in China. In a direct address on the question of the church in China, the GC said:

In China, the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not have a formal church organization. . . . While the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church acknowledges the fact of women’s ordination in China, it neither recognizes it nor endorses it. It doesn’t seek to initiate, guide, or control the process. The church in China functions in the context of its environment.¹⁵

As far as I know, no one questions whether Chinese Adventists are indeed Seventh-day Adventists or part of a “rebellion.” On the contrary, we seem enthusiastic to enjoy our sense of connection with them via a spiritual unity. In effect, Seventh-day Adventism is no longer a single global church entity in light of the church in China. If it is problematic for ordained women to travel the Adventist world in their capacity as clergy, then we here in North America and the CUC and PUC in particular are not the only ones responsible for this problem. Perhaps if we are removed from the sisterhood of churches of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, we can appeal to our church in China for inclusion in their great movement. ■

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School of Religion. After getting his associate’s degree in biology from the University of Montana, Missoula, Carr became a Seventh-day Adventist. He later received a bachelor of arts in theology from Walla Walla College (now Walla Walla University), his

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New York’s Best-Kept Secret

Metro NY Adventist Forum Fall Highlights:

November 3

Bailey Gillespie: Conversion and Rebirth / Valuegenesis 3

November 10

Thomas Eby

December 1

Dr. Marciana Popescu

December 8

Richard Coffen: Grace is Not a Blue-Eyed Blond / Thirty-four Years in SDA Publishing

December 15

Special Christmas Celebration: Special Music and Reading

See www.MNYAForum.org for our current program. Contact us at (718) 885-9533 or chaplain@mnyforum.org.

Worship with us Sabbath mornings at 11:00 at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, 521 W. 126 St., Manhattan (two short blocks from the 125 St. Subway station on the #1 line).

When we
fight we must
practice
the character
traits of
the fruits of
the Spirit.

References:

1. Ellen White, General Conference Bulletin, April 3, 1901, par. 1, 8, <http://egwtext.whiteestate.org/publication.php?pub-type=Periodical&bookCode=GCB&lang=en&year=1901&month=April&day=3>.

2. ADCOM/EOM/PreC/SecC/TreC/GCDO12SM/12SM to LCC, "116-12G The General Conference and its Divisions—A Description of Roles and Relationships in Light of Organizational Structure Development, Current Governance Documents and Practices," April 23, 2012, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/90832745/The-General-Conference-and-Its-Divisions-SM-2012>. The last paragraph of this document is perhaps the most revealing: "Structural relationships in the Seventh-day Adventist Church are dynamic—they can change over time not by independent initiative but through deliberative, consultative, and collaborative action. The General Conference Executive Committee (in Annual Councils) is authorized to review, change, or create policies to facilitate the worldwide mission of the Church. However, the relationship among entities of the Church is more than a matter of law and policy. Therefore attempts to codify that relationship will always be inadequate. The primary strength of the Church comes not from its structure but from its collective desire to live out a commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Such a commitment embraces a call to community."

3. Elder Miranda's talk is available in video format at <http://session.adventistfaith.org/video-of-session-2012>. His talk begins at 1:22:50 of the video recording available there.

4. See the original report of the Michigan conference meeting minutes in the *Review and Herald*, October 8, 1861, http://www.adventistarchives.org/docs/RH/RH18611008-V18-19_B.pdf#view=fit.

5. Clifford Goldstein, "Seventh-day Darwinians," *Adventist Review*, July 24, 2003, <http://www.adventistreview.org/2003-1530/story4.html>.

6. "Doctrines That Divide," Amazing Facts Media Library, <http://www.amazingfacts.org/media-library/media-archives/t/04-Revival/sq/3/o/123/th/c.aspx>.

7. Jan Paulsen, "The Theological Landscape," *Adventist Review*, June 13, 2002, <http://www.adventistreview.org/2002-1524/story3.html>.

8. PRE/PREXAD/GCDO12AC to TNCW-12AC, "Statement on Church Polity, Procedures, and Resolution of Disagreements in the Light of Recent Union Actions on Ministerial Ordination." October 16, 2012, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/110234750/Annual-Council-Statement-on-Unions-and-Unity>.

9. I quote: "the Seventh-day Adventist Church assigns Unions the final decision-making authority and responsibility with respect to ordination (NAD Working Policy L45 05 3, Spring Council 2012 116-12G Report)," Gerry Chudleigh, "Union Committee Calls Special Constituency Session To Amend Union Bylaws," *Pacific Union Recorder*, June 2012, <http://pacificunionrecorder.adventistfaith.org/issue/65/16/1155>.

10. In the letter, Elder Wilson states, "In our view, point #7 in the Preamble and several excerpts cited in the Process has been used to support positions that are not reflected in the document itself....The selected statements, as used, create significant misunderstanding for people who have not been provided with more comprehensive information." This letter was included in the packet of information to the delegates of the PUC Special Constituency Session of August 19, 2012.

11. Correspondence dated June 27, 2012, from the Office of the President, General Conference World Headquarters, to the PUC officers and Executive Committee members.

12. Some have wanted to assert that the GC is seeking uniformity in their response to the women's ordination movement. I do not see this as a legitimate charge. As Protestants, no matter how seamless we may like our administrative structures, such a desire would be completely out of character. The GC presidency has responded to the charge of seeking uniformity, insisting that they are not. I am inclined to believe them. It remains clear to me that in both action and character, they are aggressively trying to maintain structural unity. To the extent that uniformity can be equated with structural unity, those who make this charge may have a point.

13. Ellen White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 11, 265–266, https://egwwritings.org/?ref=en_11MR.266.1.

14. Gal. 5:15 RSV.

15. "Questions & Answers Regarding Current Issues of Unity Facing the Church," *Adventist News Network*, August 9, 2012, <http://news.adventist.org/en/archive/commentary/2012/08/09/questions-answers-regarding-current-issues-of-unity-facing-the-church>.

The Pit Dug for Adventist Women Ministers

BY BERT HALOVIK

The following presentation was given at the Southeastern California Conference's discussion of women's ordination, titled, "Let's Talk," at the Loma Linda University Church in Loma Linda, California, on Sunday, August 19, 2012.

In the mid-1890s, while Ellen White was serving in the Australasian Union Conference, a question arose about the authority of the world church headquarters in Battle Creek and that of the Australasian Union Conference. Ellen White decided to address it. "Is [God] any nearer to the men in Battle Creek than to the workers who are laboring in his service in far-off lands? *Has the Lord to go to Battle Creek; and tell men there what the men working in distant countries must do?*" (emphasis added).¹

By the 1970s, Takoma Park, Maryland, had replaced Battle Creek as the church's world headquarters. Available documentation shows that from the 1970s until the 2012 localized actions, two men determined the position of women in ministry. This stance was set in concrete in the 1970s, not maliciously, but as the product of the beliefs of the General Conference president, Robert Pierson, and the vice president for North America, Neal Wilson. All the actions taken by the church since then, in one way or another, relate to the decisions of those two men.

Mohaven and presidential reluctance

By 1968, a long-forgotten Ellen White statement from 1895 about the ordination of women had been rediscovered. The GC president asked Harry Lowe, retiring chairman of the Research and Defense Literature Committee, to investigate the issue. Lowe's report established a pat-

tern for future administrative decision making, for without probing into the context of nineteenth-century ministry, Lowe applied the Ellen White statement to refer to "deaconess" ordination. That interpretation provided a semblance of progress by advocating a practice that had "apparently" never been implemented.

Pierson seemed pleased: "When your committee is ready to report we will be glad to receive it, but we can foresee approximately what it is going to be, and it seems that the Adventist church isn't too far out of line with some of the other Christian faiths."² By 1973, the president had approved a "Council on the Role of Women in the Church," consisting of fourteen women and thirteen men who met at Camp Mohaven in Ohio. Some twenty-seven study papers were produced by top theologians, administrators, and scholars. The result was a remarkable consensus that suggested that the time was opportune not only for ordaining Adventist women as deaconess and elders, but also for initiating a program in a welcoming locale for licensed female ministers to pastor a congregation. If the results were positive after two years, the 1975 GC Session would be informed and, it was hoped, approve the ordination of women as pastors in appropriate areas. The theological papers concluded that no scriptural evidence precluded women from ordination.

Pierson, however, believed the council went too far, and his response is clearly indicated in his personal correspondence, comments to others, and explicit actions to point the church in another direction. Already by 1972, the president's view had surfaced. He had received advance copies and

Two men determined the position of women in ministry.

summaries of some of the papers to be presented. By August 1972, Pierson indicated that any decision whose goal was the ordination of women as ministers would need approval by the full world church. Anyone with denominational experience knew that the likelihood of such a prospect occurring was zero in 1972. This nullified the pilot program, and its demise deflated the original "Mohaven optimism" that almost all of the delegates experienced.

No one seemed surprised at the 1974 Annual Council conclusion that "the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a world church...and because a survey of its world divisions reveals that *the time is not ripe* nor opportune, therefore, in the interest of the world unity of the Church, no move be made in the direction of ordaining women to the gospel ministry" (emphasis added).³ "The time is not ripe" or its variation "more study is needed" has prevailed until more recently.

IRS intrusion

In 1984, the Potomac Conference believed it had a mandate for its three women ministers to baptize.⁴ This was the first conference in more recent history to have women trained and prepared for full ministerial duties. The conference also voted to issue these women the ministerial license, since it had been granted to women in past church history. In his handwritten notes on that section of the Potomac Executive Committee Action, GC President Wilson, formerly the president of the NAD, observed that the question of the women's ministerial license had been "clarified in the '70s."⁵ What was the nature of such "clarification"?

This need for clarity began in the mid-1960s, when the Internal Revenue Service informed the GC that its licensed ministers no longer qualified for the tax benefits provided up to that time. Since licensed ministers could not perform the same functions as the ordained ministry, they were not ministers as defined by the IRS. Wilson, then the newly elected vice president for the NAD, realized that each licensed minister would lose 9% of his salary, and the church would have to absorb that loss. What should the church do in this situation? Although the gradually increasing functions of the licensed ministry took over a decade to redefine, an initial step concluded that if the licensed minister was ordained as a local church elder, he could perform certain functions formerly off-limits. Adding responsibilities to assist in ordinances, baptismal services, and presiding at business meetings, however, did not resolve the issue to the IRS's satisfaction. At the end of 1971, the NAD asked for

and received authority to "take whatever steps are necessary to secure for licensed ministers full status as ministers of the gospel."⁶

Wilson, after additional failed attempts to satisfy the IRS, offered a new plan to GC officers in September 1976. He considered his plan as not moral or theological in nature, but a matter of church policy. The crucial sentence in this latest proposal, which was not, and still is not, in harmony with the church manual, reads:

*A licensed minister is authorized by the Conference Executive Committee to perform all the functions of the ordained minister in the church or churches where he is assigned.*⁷

Meeting prior to the full Annual Council of 1976, the home and overseas officers and union presidents made it apparent that the field outside the United States disapproved of the critical phrase. Despite world opposition, the NAD passed the legislation. Thus, the action voted at the afternoon October 20 Annual Council meeting with representative world participation differed from the action voted at the North American section of the Annual Council meeting on the evening of October 20. The critical sentence was not printed in either of the Annual Council booklets for 1976, or the *Adventist Review's* listing of Annual Council actions, but nevertheless became effective.

Since the 1975 GC Spring Meeting allowed for the ordination of women as church elders, the question of their eligibility for the enhanced functions of the male licensed ministry arose. Legislation already passed and on the horizon provided a resounding "No!" The 1977 NAD Annual Council also added some new terms for policy implementation, such as "Associates in Pastoral Care." That phrase identified "persons who are employed on pastoral staffs but who are not in line for ordination."⁸

Licensed female ministers, contrary to their male counterparts, had followed a ten-year downgrading of their ministerial prerogatives, until by 1977, women were fully placed upon a separate ministry track that made them ineligible for ordination. While they could be defined as ministerial workers, women were not on track for ordination, where they were before the problems with the IRS.

Josephine Benton

The NAD's change to the role of a licensed minister, made in response to the problems with the IRS, caused significant disruption and pain for women already in ministry.

For example, women who previously held ministerial licenses now had them revoked. One such woman came to the General Conference archives to do research.

Surprisingly, Josephine Benton was ordained as a local church elder in the Brotherhood Church in Washington in 1972. Presidents from both the Potomac Conference and the Columbia Union participated in her ordination. To put this into context, remember that it was not until 1975 that official sanction was given for local church female elders to be ordained. The year after her ordination, 1973, Josephine attended the Mohaven meetings, at which she presented a paper. She was the associate pastor of Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, from 1973 to 1979, and was the minister at the Rockville Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rockville, Maryland, from 1979 to 1982.

She arrived at the GC archives with a long list of women who had received the ministerial license from 1904–1975. Benton had one basic question: what did that ministerial license mean and for how long had Adventist women received it? This led to huge surprises, for no one had pursued that topic in the church. At the time, I was the assistant director of the Office of Archives and Statistics at the General Conference in Silver Spring, Maryland, and helped Benton with her research. By looking at the minutes of local state conference meetings held annually in the nineteenth century, Benton and I soon realized that women have received ministerial licenses since the 1870s. Once we had the names of those women ministers, we could look at their ministerial reports regularly published in the *Review*. Josephine published her research in her book, *Called by God*.

Why am I emphasizing this? I have described two towering male administrators, Robert Pierson and Neal Wilson, who faced the troubling and controversial issues of the 1970s and onward, and who created policies assuring that the positions they honestly believed in would prevail. Here was one woman who, instead of proposing policies, probed women's heritage in Adventist ministry. No one in Seventh-day Adventism, and especially

not the two top leaders, had a clue about the heritage Benton uncovered when *they* made their set-in-concrete decisions in the early 1970s.

Benton and I learned that the licensed women ministers were indeed ministers as the nineteenth-century Adventist church defined ministry. They were tested by local conferences before receiving a ministerial license. We discovered several cases in which Ellen White actively participated in the exams prior to women receiving their license. Mrs. White even lectured on the importance of the ministerial license. Women were members of the Ministerial Association and made presentations at its meetings. Over twenty different women were licensed as ministers from 1869 to the end of the nineteenth century. They were not lay members, but licensed and paid from tithe funds by the local conferences or the General Conference. The women followed the same path to ministry as men; there was only one track in ministry. As some women were licensed for seven or eight years consecutively, local conferences obviously considered them successful ministers.

The ministry continued to be upgraded through the 1870s and 1880s, and women continued to be licensed by local conferences. At the 1887 GC Session, the General Conference implemented what had been done at the local conference level eighteen years earlier, licensing two women to serve in General Conference mission areas within the United States. The bottom-up approach to ministerial credentialing seemed to work in nineteenth-century Adventism.

Australasia and the propriety of ordaining women

Beginning in 1891, Ellen White ministered in the Australasian Union Conference. She advanced a new concept of ministry, closely involving both male and female ministers. Until 1895, Seventh-day Adventists had not ordained women. Then Ellen White wrote in the *Review* that women who participated in ministry "should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands."

Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the



Josephine Benton

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*sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. . . . Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be hushed; let every individual labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work.*⁹

The Australasian context reveals Ellen White's full support of the full-fledged ordination of women to be the most progressive ministry in the church up to that time. An analysis of the term *public labor* reveals that throughout SDA history, public laborers were recognized as ministerial workers, and generally paid from conference or tithe funds.

A ministry known as Christian Help Work helped train lay members of local churches to visit community families, report their physical needs, and provide scriptural training for them. Although trainees from local churches were lay volunteers, the Australasia Union provided financial support for those who educated them. This ministry supported both women and men, and resulted in more than doubling the Australasian church membership from 1,146 in 1894 to 2,375 by 1900.

Mrs. White was fond of quoting Isaiah 61:6 when she considered women and men in their Australasian ministry. She shattered all presuppositions Seventh-day Adventists may have held concerning women in ministry: "Of those who act as his helping hand the Lord says, 'Ye shall be named priests of the Lord; men shall call you the ministers of our God.'" Here, Ellen White applies to both men and women a passage from Isaiah, written when there were no women priests. In Isaiah's day, to be named a priest implied ordination.¹⁰

The history of ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the nineteenth century demonstrates that Seventh-day Adventist women indeed served as *priests* and *ministers* of the Lord.

One last question remains: Must the Lord first go to Silver Spring to tell the General Conference president what is right for the

Pacific Union, or is it possible that the Lord speaks directly to believers in the Pacific Union? ■

Bert Haloviak is a former director of the General Confer-



ence Office of Archives and Statistics in Silver Spring, Maryland. He joined the General Conference as a research assistant in 1975, then became director of the Office of Archives and Statistics in 1998, and worked there until his retirement in 2010. Haloviak also taught as an adjunct professor at Columbia Union College/Washington Adventist University from 1988 until 2010, in areas of theology and Adventist heritage.

References:

1. Ellen White to A. O. Tait, August 27, 1896.
2. Robert Pierson to H. W. Lowe, April 28, 1969.
3. Minutes of Annual Council, October 17, 1974, 388.
4. This assumption was generated by contact with the General Conference's policy specialist William Bothe, who without being told that the question involved women ministers, informed the Potomac Conference that a licensed minister who was ordained as a local church elder had the authority to baptize. It also came from discussion with GC President Neal Wilson, who made a similar assertion, knowing it involved a woman minister. However, he did not anticipate that it would occur at Sligo Church, where plenty of ordained ministers were available.
5. Neal Wilson's handwritten statement on the Potomac Conference Executive Committee Action, May 16, 1984, 2.
6. Minutes of the North American Division Committee on Administration, December 23, 1971.
7. Minutes of the President's Executive Advisory Committee, September 14, 1976.
8. Minutes of the North American Division Annual Council, October 17, 1977, 143.
9. Ellen White, "The Duty of the Minister and the People," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 9, 1895, 434.
10. Ellen White, St. Helena, California, January 17, 1901. *Special Testimonies*, 1901, 296, 303. See also "Ordain," vol. 3, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995) 612.

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Furthering the Mission of the Church: *Women's Ordination* | BY BILL MILLER



The following presentation was given at the Columbia Union Conference Constituency Meeting at the Southern Asian SDA Church in Silver Spring, Maryland, on July 29, 2012.

I want to thank the Columbia Union Executive Committee for entrusting to this Ad Hoc Committee the privilege of praying together, dialoguing, researching, and submitting recommendations. Today I will highlight a few points of scripture, history, and the present status [of women in ministry]. Dr. Raj Attiken will discuss unity and authority, and Pastor Brenda Billingsy will discuss one's calling. The intent of the committee was not to become a lexicon of information and arguments, but rather to make a recommendation of how to best affirm women in ministry, as challenged by the North American Division, and to identify major areas that should be included in the discussion.

The Bible says: "Then after I have poured out my rains again, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men

will dream dreams. Your young men will see visions. In those days, I will pour out my Spirit even on servants, men and women alike" (Joel 2:28–29 NLT).

This passage is again referred to in Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on women and men—each empowered with gifts for building up the church. In the New Testament, it is clear that the gifts that Paul speaks about were not gender specific, but rather given to individuals who had "accepted Jesus Christ." *Throughout the New Testament and scripture*, there is evidence that women were church planters, apostles, deaconesses, leaders of house churches, missionary partners, evangelists, prophets, and church leaders—all, men and women—working for the mission of Jesus Christ and the advancement of the gospel.

Today, the church is called to this mission, the mission of reaching individuals with the gospel of Jesus by every means. I am reminded of the words of Paul in Philippians 1 about his imprisonment: "I want you to know brethren that what has happened to me has really turned out for the

advancement of the gospel" (RSV). Paul's heart and soul were about the advancement of the gospel, the mission of Jesus Christ in whatever manner necessary.

James White said in 1860, "All means which, according to sound judgment, will advance the cause of truth, and are *not forbidden by plain scripture declarations*, should be employed"¹ (emphasis added). In SDA church history during the lifetime of Ellen White, there were many women serving in the General Conference as executive secretaries, treasurers, in local conferences as presidents, executive secretaries, treasurers, ministerial directors, departmental directors, pastors, evangelists, church planters, and more. By the 1950s, there were no women departmental directors serving from the General Conference to the local conference, *because of ordination issues and the secular and fundamentalist cultural view of women*.² As Seventh-day Adventists, we exist to advance the cause of truth by all means—this includes men and women—as supported in our fundamental beliefs, numbers 14 and 17.

A discussion in the Columbia Union for more than fifty years has been the discussion of the role of women in ministry, as it involves the advancement of the gospel and the mission of Jesus Christ. *The Columbia Union has not rushed this process or discussion, or rushed to its present conclusions.*

In 1972, there was an action taken in the Columbia Union to allow qualified women to be *ordained as local elders*, for it was understood that for the furthering of the mission of the church, a recognition of the gifts of the Spirit in the individual was theologically correct and morally/ethically responsible. This was not a practice of the church, and was seen at several levels of church structure as one that would divide the church, break the unity of the church, and create widespread confusion. This earthquake did not happen. *The church has remained together, and the Columbia Union's action is now policy.*

In 1984, the Columbia Union moved forward to allow women pastors, as ordained local elders, to baptize and perform marriages, and to issue ministerial licenses, for it was understood that to further the mission of the church, a recognition of the gifts of the Spirit in the individual was theologically correct and morally/ethically responsible. *This was not a practice of the church*, and this action was seen at several levels of church structure as one that would divide the church, break the unity of the church, and create widespread confusion.

The General Conference in 1984 chose to discuss the Columbia Union actions at the autumn Annual Council.

The following vote was taken:

Columbia Union/Potomac Conference Request—Role of Women in Church

Voted,

1. To advise the Columbia Union Conference and the Potomac Conference that their request has been carefully and prayerfully reviewed by the General Conference Officers.
2. To request the Potomac Conference Executive Committee to *keep tabled* the issues of *ministerial licenses* for women and *baptism by women* who are in full-time pastoral work, and who are also local church elders, until the *larger issue* of women in the gospel ministry is decided by the Church (emphasis added).

They went on to state that every division would be involved with the decision, and every division would set up committees to study women's ordination, and would be ready to discuss the issue at the 1985 General Conference session. I quote,

The decision of the 1985 General Conference Session will be definitive and should be accepted as such by the Church worldwide.

At the 1985 GC Session, the following vote was taken:

Ordination of Women to the Gospel Ministry

Voted,

1. *To take no definitive action at this time regarding the ordination of women to the gospel ministry* (emphasis added).
3. To prepare further Biblical and other studies on the question of ordaining women by assigning specific topics to scholars and theologians for research.

There was no definitive answer as promised.

The Columbia Union chose to support the Potomac Conference, and now women are allowed to baptize and do weddings and have ministerial licenses. The earthquake did not happen. *The church has remained together*, and these issues are now policy and are widely accepted in this division.

The Columbia Union in 1989 endorsed the ordination of a qualified, Holy Spirit-gifted woman from Ohio. But they chose to wait until after the 1990 General Conference session, as they were given several assurances that a vote on women's ordination would pass. There is much debate as to

the real intent of the 1990 and 1995 General Conference votes in regard to women's ordination. However, what is evident is that the votes taken did not explicitly forbid such ordination, and that the church culturally was not ready to accept it.

Since the early Adventist church recognized women's ability to express their gifts, placed on them by Holy Spirit, and at each step of addressing the issue of women in ministry, one point is clear. Local grassroots constituencies voted actions that later became policies. According to church structure, this is where these decisions should be made. The church works best when decisions are made at the proper levels, as designed by the world church.

In March 2012, the Columbia Union established an Ad Hoc Committee to consider ways to affirm women in ministry. The committee, which I chaired, interviewed women pastors and reviewed scripture dealing with issues of headship, the laying on of hands, whether the Holy Spirit's gifts were gender specific, the writings of Ellen White, the documentation and world church actions about women in ministry, and specifically the ordination of elders and deaconesses. In many divisions, we found that there is no organizational unity or uniformity on this issue. We reviewed the previous commissioned studies as authorized by the church on the theology of ordination, a biblical perspective of ordination, the history of ordination, the practice of ordination, and church actions about ordination. We reviewed timelines on women in ministry in the SDA church and the history of unity, authority, and spoke with several individuals who were part of the many discussions and votes taken over the past forty years. We inquired of attorneys about constitutions and bylaws.

What became evident was that there is a wealth of research, opinion, and misunderstanding on this issue. *What has become clear is that one of the favorite pastimes of the church is to commission another study.* Since the 1950s, it appears that this topic of women's ordination has received more commissioned studies than any other topic. What

became clear is that *we are at this point, not because of activity, but inactivity*—waiting for the next study. What became clear to the committee is that *we do not need new information, but new biblical courage.*

The committee's research confirmed that one of the roles of the union is to help local churches and conferences to find appropriate new understandings and expressions of church life. Each time there has been movement forward for women in ministry, in the present era, it was never initiated from the world church—world church policy; but from the grassroots,³ the local area, most specifically the Columbia Union, and later was adopted by the world church, but only after the movement of the local union.

The Ad Hoc Committee considered the evidence of the obvious calling and Spirit-filled lives of many faithful women pastors, both past and present, serving in their districts, fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ, and advancing, like Paul, the gospel of Jesus Christ. These women had the same training, a Spirit-led calling from the same God, no evidence in scripture of gender-specific spiritual gifts—yet it is obvious that God was and is working in them to fulfill the great commission, whether in China or North America. For even Jan Paulson admitted in 2009, in the context of acknowledging ordained women in China: "It is clear the Holy Spirit is at work in China."

On May 17, 2012, the Ad Hoc Committee made its recommendation to the Union Executive Committee, after much prayer and debate, regarding the best way to affirm women in ministry. *Recognizing that this is a moral and ethical issue,* the committee recommended that,

1. Ordination should be to qualified individuals filled with the Holy Spirit regardless of gender.
2. A special constituency should be called to consider this issue.

Why call a session now and not later—2015? There are many—to name a few:

1. If there is *strong evidence* of the Holy Spirit working through women, how long should

God used
a woman to
guide this
denomination.
Yet women
have had
a hard time in
the church.

—Opal Stone

we wait before we affirm the working of the Holy Spirit; should policy and tradition instruct the Holy Spirit or should the Holy Spirit instruct policy?

2. This decision of women's ordination, based on the authority of the world church, is the *responsibility of a union*;
3. The understanding that the union has a constituency, and recent actions of the General Conference that are restrictive of women serving in some areas of church structure;
4. At the previous General Conference Session a request was made to consider again the theology of ordination by a group of theologians. The process requested and the process being taken, as recommended by the administration and the steering committee, are very different, with no reference to the issue of ordination of women;
5. In 1975, the world church in session voted the approval of ordination of deaconesses and instructed the Church Manual Committee to make the changes. It took until 2010 to complete;
6. Knowing that each step that has been taken to bring women back into active ministry roles has taken a specific union action;
7. Knowing that it is a moral and ethical issue rooted in the Word of God and Spirit of Prophecy.

The Ad Hoc Committee also believed that to engender good discussion, there were three areas that should continue to be considered: scripture, history, and diversity in unity. This was reported in the June issue of the Columbia Union Conference's *Visitor*, of which you may read if you haven't already.

Dr. Bert Haloviak, who served with distinction in the GC archives and statistics, relates the following story of Ms. Opal Stone, who served the church for more than thirty-five years with distinction, as she reflects on women in ministry:

"The idea is abroad that the [Biblical Research] committee believes that little feeling of inequity existed among women until quite recently. That it was possibly sparked by Women's Lib. If that is correct, the committee has been misinformed. . . . In earlier years women held departmental secretary positions in local conferences. They spoke at the worship hour week after week as they visited churches. True, their reception varied. In four years as a local conference Sabbath School secretary, I learned to expect anything,

but for the most part I was accepted. I recall one church elder who declined to sit on the same platform, but at the close of the service somewhat gruffly said, 'Too bad you aren't a man, but come again anyway.'

The sad part of the inequities is that many well-qualified women have left denominational employ because of it. And some of them kept on going all the way out of the church. Their loss? Yes, but a loss to the church, too.

God used a woman to guide this denomination. Yet women have had a hard time in the church. It seems peculiar.

I've been retired for some years. I have no bitterness; I was as fairly treated as the rest of the women. But I would like to see the present generation of women workers have a better change. Please don't believe that women were asleep all the past years and have suddenly awakened."

Ms. Stone died at the age of seventy-nine in 1973.

The Ad Hoc Committee spent much time reviewing the issues of unity, uniformity, and authority in spite of division. We have asked Dr. Raj Attiken to come and speak to this issue. ■

Bill Miller is the president of the Potomac Conference, and is presently



working on a doctorate of ministry in leadership. He began his ministry in 1981 in the Northern California Conference, followed by the Hawaii Conference, and later became the Youth Ministries Director for the Northern California Conference. In 1996, he served as

the senior pastor of Olympia Seventh-day Adventist Church for the Washington Conference, then became the vice president of administration. In 2001, he accepted a call to the Mid-America Union Conference as president of the Minnesota Conference until 2007. Miller enjoys reading, seeking a deeper relationship with Jesus, and adventure sports (he has summited the highest peaks in Washington, Oregon, and California).

References:

1. James White, "Making Us a Name," *Review and Herald*, April 26, 1860, 180–182.
2. Based on comments on a presentation by Darius Jankiewicz from the Andrews University Seminary at Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church, July 28, 2012.
3. In talking with Dr. Gary Patterson, the reality of the "grassroots" is the local conference and union in this context—where this type of policy should be made.

Confronting the Shadow Side of Ordination:

Thoughts on Humility and Christian Leadership | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

Those formally “set apart” for Adventist ministry¹ receive public blessing and encouragement, the sense of divine and communal support for challenging responsibility. Therein lies temptation. In being singled out for affirmation, the set apart receive an impression, however muted, of their own worth. The public ceremony may resonate with reminders of grace and finitude, but the words and gestures nevertheless express confidence in the ability and character of particular human beings. The risk for those set apart is that the impression of fitness for special ministry may edge into the sense of superiority and entitlement to power. The history of Christian “ordination,” and of its slant toward arrogance and hierarchy, draws attention to this point. Lost humility is the shadow side of the laying on of hands.²

A clue from one of Christianity’s most forceful interpreters suggests that one shield against the temptation to arrogance may be deliberate, sustained focus on the virtue of humility. Augustine argued that the way of Jesus “consists, first, of humility, second, of humility, and, third, of humility.” He said that unless humility “precedes, accompanies, and follows whatever we do...pride will have bereft us of everything.” Humility is the virtue that supports all the others. “Are you thinking,” he asks, “of raising the great fabric of spirituality? Attend first of all to the foundation of humility.”³

On this account, humility would be particularly important for those formally set apart. But in spite of this, humility receives relatively little consideration. Two well-known works of contemporary pastoral theology explore ordained ministry without attending to this virtue at any length. One is Thomas C. Oden’s *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*, a book whose index mentions just two pages that address humility. On one, the author calls for “humble submission” to the authority of divine revelation. On the other, he quotes Jesus’s declaration that the truly great are

as “humble” as children. But in summing up what Jesus meant by this comparison, Oden writes: “Jesus regarded children in their simplicity, trust, and innocence as heirs of the Kingdom.” He does not elaborate on the meaning or importance of humility per se. The second work is William H. Willimon’s *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry*. Its subject index contains no reference to humility. And when the author sums up the “virtues required to be a good pastor,” he names “wisdom, truth telling, courage, compassion, study,” saying, truthfully, that these “do not come naturally to most of us.” He makes no mention of the one virtue that may be most basic and most difficult of all.⁴

Both works touch on humility indirectly, without paying specific attention to it. The *Seventh-day Adventist Minister’s Manual* is similar. I notice that the 1992 edition, which I keep at home, reminds pastors to “overcome their pride,” and urges resistance to the “assumption that your holy calling makes you holy.” But the index to that edition contains no reference to humility. The only such reference in the 2009 edition concerns the foot washing ceremony (“Humility, ordinance of”), but the text’s three-paragraph discussion, which begins with the story in John 13, provides only how-to directives for the conduct of the foot washing ceremony. There is no theological exposition, no account of how the narrative might inform an authentically pastoral frame of mind.⁵ But just this latter—the authentically pastoral frame of mind—is what inattention to humility gravely imperils. In what follows I wish to establish the Augustinian, or better, *biblical*, claim that humility is utterly basic for Christian consciousness, a virtue so indispensable as to be the “mother of all virtues.”⁶ And if this is so, it surely invites the particular attention of those “set apart,” those who have received public assurance of their fitness to be *leaders* among Christians.

As I suggested earlier, the story of pastoral self-con-

sciousness underscores the relevance of this point. Although “ordination” became the name for formal induction into pastoral ministry, that word does not appear in the New Testament (except as a mistranslation).⁷ The New Testament confers no special status upon a class of “ordained” Christians; the distinction between the clergy and the laity does not even appear.⁸ The New Testament church did, however, “select” persons for special responsibility. Acts 6:1–6 contains the most complete account of the setting-apart process, which in this passage concludes with public affirmation involving prayer and the laying on of hands.⁹ But in the New Testament, *all* the faithful are “saints,” all set apart for service under God. All belong (1 Pet. 2:9 NRSV) to the “royal priesthood” that constitutes “God’s own people.”¹⁰ Thus Hendrik Kraemer, the Dutch theologian of the laity, could say that from a New Testament perspective all members have the “same calling, responsibility and dignity. . . .” Gottfried Osterwal, the Adventist theologian who learned from Kraemer and in 1972 published the excellent *Mission: Possible*, echoed the thought: every member, he wrote, “shares equally in [the church’s] life, worship, mission, and government.”¹¹

Due largely to the idea (not found in the New Testament) that the Lord’s Supper is a sacrifice of the sort familiar from the Hebrew Bible, a distinction between priest and layperson comes into view by the start of the third century, some one hundred years after the end of the New Testament period. By now, Christian writers are also distinguishing among levels of pastoral authority, with bishops having primacy relative to elders (presbyters) in the developing sense of hierarchy. No description of an ordination rite for installment to pastoral ministry appears in the Christian literature until about this time, and the description reflects these changes: now the bishop alone has authority to ordain presbyters and deacons, and these latter, the deacons, are not priests at all, nor even recipients of “the Spirit that is possessed by the presbytery.” Deacons exist to carry out the bishop’s commands.¹²

Between 248 and 258 CE, the bishop of Carthage was Cyprian, an adult convert to Christianity who suffered persecution for his faith and was finally beheaded. But in his concern for the “unity” of the church, he expressed vivid and highly influential support for the hierarchical point of view. Cyprian wrote that the church is “founded upon the bishops, and every act of the Church is controlled by these same rulers.” He said further: “You ought

to know that the bishop is in the Church, and the Church is in the bishop; and if anyone be not with the bishop, that he is not in the Church.”¹³

Early in the fourth century, Constantine set out to reconcile his political domain with the Christian faith, a move that had the effect of accelerating the church’s drift toward centralization of authority. More and more, it took on the trappings of empire. As V. Norskov Olsen, the Adventist historian and former president of Loma Linda University, wrote, pagan Rome “grew into papal Rome.” By the middle of the fifth century, Pope Leo the Great was reinforcing his authority by conjuring up a theory about the apostle Peter’s connection with the bishop of Rome. His ideas fed the process that finally established the medieval papacy, an organization whose most illustrious eleventh-century leader, Pope Gregory VII, could declare that the Roman pontiff “may be judged by no one.”¹⁴

Challenges to medieval ecclesiology occurred several times, but it was Martin Luther, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, whose challenge finally ignited the Protestant Reformation. Appealing to the New Testament, he simply denied the clergy-laity distinction. In his *Open Letter to the Christian Nobility*, written in 1520, Luther asserted that each baptized Christian “can boast that he is already a consecrated priest, bishop, and pope,” even if, to “exercise such office,” the individual must await the “consent and election” of the “community.” He meant by this to reclaim the New Testament idea of the priesthood of all believers. John Calvin, the Reformation’s greatest systematic thinker, was of similar mind. In Christ, he wrote, “we are all priests.”¹⁵

With respect to the ordained ministry, an institution both Luther and Calvin upheld, this reaffirmation was clearly a shift away from the sense of superiority and entitlement to power. That shift was radicalized in the thinking of the Anabaptists. Their movement, a part of the so-called Radical Reformation, was a protest against continuing reliance on state power under Luther, Calvin, and other Magisterial (as they are now called) Reformers. This latter was left over from the shift to church-state partnership that had occurred under Constantine, and further confirmed the idea that some church members may have authority *over* others. More than the other Reformers, Anabaptist writers put great emphasis on the *shared* authority of church members. For the “common good,” said one of the Swiss Brethren, each voice mat-

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of hands.

ters. To his Zurich-rooted Anabaptist community, sermon monologues themselves were ill advised. Paul had noted (1 Cor. 14:26) that when Christians assemble, each might bring a “lesson” or “interpretation.” No one was to dominate. The same Swiss brother spoke unhappily of “preachers” who “presume that they need yield to no one.” That posture simply went against the movement’s grain. Another Anabaptist, the lengthily named Ambrosius Spitelmaier, described the Radical way as follows: “When they have come together they teach one another the divine Word and one asks the other: how do you understand this saying?” Expanding on the point, he declared: “Thus there is among them a diligent living according to the divine Word.”¹⁶

Teaching, then, was for the sake of Christian practice, or “living,” just as in that favorite Adventist passage, 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, where the proper use of scripture is equipping “everyone who belongs to God...for every good work.” To the Radical Reformers, the point of shared authority was “edification,” so that congregations could “be a bright light” against the “presumptuous attacks of the adversaries.”¹⁷

Prominent Neo-Anabaptists, modern heirs of the Radical Reformation heritage, emphasize that all this evokes the ideal of “consensus.” Commenting on 1 Corinthians 14, John Howard Yoder notices in Paul’s letter the “simple trust that God himself, as Spirit, is at work” in the local community’s “disciplined human discourse.” Instead of limiting responsibility to those formally credentialed or empowered, this chapter and its Anabaptist interpreters embrace what Yoder calls “dialogical liberty,” a conversational strategy in which “the individual participates and to which he or she *consents*” (emphasis added). Neither “arbitrary individualism” (I am my own pope) nor “established authority” (the hierarchy decides) resolves the questions that arise in Christian life. This process is a matter, as he later puts it, of “decision making by open dialogue and consensus.”¹⁸ In a similar vein, James Wm. McClendon, Jr., Neo-Anabaptism’s most accom-

plished systematic thinker, explains why he visited twenty-five “centers” of Anabaptist thought (one was Walla Walla College, now Walla Walla University) before publishing the first volume of his three-volume systematic theology. He did so in deference to an Anabaptist paradigm he calls “consensus based on conversation.”¹⁹

Conversation takes place, of course, under the authority of Christ. Anabaptism’s quarrel with the Magisterial Reformers over matters such as obeisance to the state reflected the movement’s conviction that the “apostolic pattern” must have “normative character.”²⁰ Under the apostles, Christ trumped all other claims on human loyalty, including the state’s. “To him,” wrote one Anabaptist, “is given all authority in heaven, on earth, and under the earth,” and his followers must therefore honor and love him “above all creatures.” Even to understand scripture “correctly,” the reader must acknowledge that it comes under the authority of Christ. “The content of the whole Scripture,” wrote another Anabaptist, “is briefly summarized in this: Honor and fear God the almighty in Christ his Son.”²¹

Just this authority, together with the Anabaptist penchant for scripture’s *practical* meaning, sheds a dramatic light on the pastoral frame of mind that befits the end of hierarchy and the embrace of consensus based on conversation. Both Yoder and McClendon give careful attention to the famous hymn, found in Philippians 2, that follows Paul’s admonition to lay aside “conceit” and “in humility regard others as better than yourselves.” Paul elaborates by explicit reference to Christ: “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,” following up with a long quotation from the hymn.

Both these Neo-Anabaptist scholars say that the hymn may be read simply as an account of the Incarnation. Both notice, however, that it begins (Phil. 2:6) by saying that Jesus was in God’s form or image, and both notice that God-likeness is an intended attribute of—Adam (Gen. 1). So the hymn may be about Jesus’s story on earth: it may, indeed, parallel the Old Testa-

ment story of Creation and the Fall, where the first temptation (Gen. 3) is about grasping after equality with God. On this reading, the hymn is a summation of Jesus's life, of his magnificent spiritual victory. Like Adam, he faces the temptation to seize high status ("equality with God"), but unlike Adam he empties himself, embracing service (Phil. 2:7) as a way of life. Indeed, Jesus humbles himself to the point (v. 8) of enduring a shameful death, "even death on a cross." And it is just because of this—just because of the humility that Adam, for his part, spurned—that God can "exalt" Jesus (v. 9–11) into someone whom we may confess as "Lord."

Without insisting that this is the only legitimate reading of the hymn, McClendon notes that in the earliest patristic literature it was the dominant one, and that this reading continued to appear in later patristic authors. The aforementioned Cyprian, for example, said the passage makes the very same point as the foot washing story of John 13, where Jesus lays aside all conceit and shows his high regard for others.²²

In any case, on this Neo-Anabaptist interpretation of Paul's hymn, Jesus is unmistakably a brother to his disciples, unmistakably an example to be imitated. And precisely to the point Augustine made and to the one I am making now, this (and even the other) interpretation puts humility at the center of the God-oriented life. *If pride portends a fall, and if humility both underlies Jesus's exaltation and defines true discipleship, then Augustine said rightly that humility is the "foundation," the virtue that must precede, accompany, and follow "whatever we do."*

In light of all this, consider Norskov Olsen's perspective. Writing as an Adventist, he takes careful note both of the Anabaptist claim that "all the members of the fellowship had something whereby to enlighten the others" and also of its rejection of "external ecclesiastical and political compulsions." He speaks as well of the movement's "principle of consensus." At least three times, moreover, he remarks on how "covenant-remnant-eschaton motifs" color Anabaptism's ecclesiology, and he quotes Robert Friedmann's assertion that among the sixteenth-century reforming movements, only the Radical Reformation persisted in giving the Second Coming a "legitimate function" in the life of faith.²³

This is more than a hint of the movement's special relevance to Adventism, although Olsen does not make that argument explicitly. But several have done so (one at book length), each making the point that Adventism's Reforma-

tion roots go back to Anabaptism.²⁴ And Charles Bradford, the former North American Division president, drew a clear connection between the Anabaptists and the Adventist pioneers in an article specifically focused on ministerial ordination. In light of this connection, he declares that we "must stoutly resist any reappearance of hierarchy in any form." In just this spirit he cites the third verse of 1 Peter 5: "Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock." He also cites Ellen White, whose "phrase 'kingly power'" was "a warning to pastors and leaders not to abuse their authority." Summing up, he writes: "The Christian ministry is not a new priestcraft. Anything that smacks of exclusivity, of special class, of privilege that comes by initiation (ordination) must be demolished with the trust and reality of the gospel."²⁵

If the story of pastoral self-consciousness bends toward arrogance, it seems, then, also to bend back. The papal declaration that the Roman pontiff "may be judged by no one" gives way, especially in the Radical Reformation, to the idea of shared authority under Christ. And this latter idea has taken hold, though somewhat feebly, in Adventism. As Charles Bradford saw, it may be found in the writings of Ellen White. An example would be her commentary on Jesus and the foot washing ceremony, which focuses attention on "humility of heart," a trait precisely at odds with the human "disposition" to seek "the highest place."²⁶ And a familiar theme in her work is "primitive godliness," which she explicitly associates with "apostolic times" and thus with the age before hierarchy and centralization of authority.

All this has an Anabaptist ring, though Ellen White would not have known it since the Anabaptist movement was practically unknown during her lifetime. That unawareness—historians didn't recover the story until well into the twentieth century—may account for some of her ambivalence about centralized authority. She objected, it is true, to "kingly power." And she certainly doubted whether the General Conference could speak for God, remarking in 1899 that it "has been some years since I have considered the General Conference as the voice of God." But earlier she had said that the General Conference is God's "highest authority" on earth.²⁷

In popular Adventism, and also among most current leaders, her earlier remark is the better known and honored. But at its very beginning, Adventism recoiled from locating theological authority in any leadership elite.

During the 1861 organizing meeting of the Michigan Conference, the first of such entities, James White argued that an official creed, voted by meeting delegates, would block “new light” and stand in “direct opposition” to the “gifts” of the Holy Spirit. And when Adventist leaders put forth a somewhat lengthy statement of their faith in 1872, it was merely informational: they were explaining themselves to the wider world. The preamble of the statement said it was to have no “authority with our people,” nor was it meant to “secure uniformity among them, as a system of faith.”²⁸ Today, however, official statements of belief voted at General Conference sessions are edging toward status as doctrinal litmus tests, giving the spiritual elite who attend these sessions as delegates (most of them ordained) a certain power *over* the rest of the church.²⁹

The argument Neo-Anabaptists make concerning humility and shared authority is a compelling reason for Adventists, who in any case share the same heritage, to adjust toward fuller embrace of the Radical Reformation point of view. Philippians 2 seems itself to settle the case for humility. And any concordance-assisted perusal of the New Testament will easily turn up thirty or more passages that bolster the case, among them the many virtues lists that highlight humility.

A crucial passage is Luke 18:9–14, which records Jesus’s words to “some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt.” In the parable told here, the very praying of the Pharisee is prideful, whereas the praying of the tax collector involves “beating of his breast” and a plea for mercy “to me, a sinner!” The tax collector, not the religious leader, is the one who finds favor with God. “[A]ll who exalt themselves will be humbled,” Jesus concludes, “but all who humble themselves will be exalted.” The parable feels, indeed, like an echo of the hymn in Philippians 2.³⁰

Another passage of particular importance is Ephesians 4:1–6. The disciples must live in “humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing

with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the body of peace.” Those to whom Christ grants the various gifts of leadership—here “pastors” are mentioned—do their work for no other purpose than to “equip the saints” for ministry and to build up “the body of Christ.” They seek the “unity of the faith” and the maturing of the faithful into “the full stature of Christ.” Again, the theme is humility and service, and both of these summon the believer into (Phil. 2:5) “the same mind... that was in Christ Jesus.” The hymn that clinches Augustine’s argument for humility as the “foundation” of spirituality seems again to have found an echo. And in this light the ideal of shared authority makes all the more sense for Christ’s followers today, not least because in the New Testament there is, in any case, no hint of hierarchy.³¹

How, then, may those “set apart” for Adventist ministry come to embody the virtue of humility? Were a “consensus” about this virtue to emerge, discussion of its meaning would go on and on. But some things seem immediately clear. Pastors would lay aside conceit and regard others who are in Christ as (so Paul puts it) “better than” themselves. These others would include truck drivers, landscapers, nurses, computer programmers, entrepreneurs, and (not least!) scientists. What is more, the widespread sense of “hierarchy” in Adventism, to whatever degree it may be warranted, would become an embarrassment. Conversation on how to distribute authority more widely would ensue, but in such a way (although this is a subject all its own) as to preserve and enhance Adventism’s sense of worldwide unity and reach. In the course of the give-and-take, the idea that the fundamental unit of Christian fellowship is the “two or three” of whom Jesus spoke would command sustained attention, and would drive Adventism toward respect for, and patience with, local nuance.³² At all times, however, it would be understood that humility and shared authority are *for* the unity of all—*for* the unity of all *through* the participation of all.

Humility
is the virtue
that supports
all the
others.

This agenda would be difficult. Owing to the derangement of the human spirit, the underlying values would blow hot and cold, and like the tax collector Jesus spoke about, the church—and the pastors it ordains—would often have to acknowledge their sin and pray for mercy. But this would be healthy. Karl Barth, an enormously influential theologian of somewhat Anabaptist temper, toppled the self-satisfactions of early twentieth-century Protestantism with his commentary on Paul's Letter to the Romans. Remarking on the first verses of chapter 12, he declared that precisely repentance—the “renewing” of mind, the “transformation of thought”—is the “primary ethical action.” This is the action “upon which all ‘secondary’ ethical conduct depends and by which it is illuminated.” Just here, in repentance, is that “turning about” by which we are “directed to a new behavior.”³³

This primary *action* corresponds, surely, to the primary, or foundational, *virtue* of humility. Its repetition is a path to moral growth, and when the *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Handbook* counsels the ordained to engage in “[d]evotional repentance,” it strikes exactly the right note. Faithfulness here would be the best possible support for every pastor's pledge to work for the church and to offer its members (as we might say) humble service in the name of Christ.³⁴ ■

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he served seven years as senior pastor of the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, where he doubtless could have used, he says, a little more humility.

References:

1. I am one of them.
2. My paper assumes that the “laying on of hands” may be fitting in connection with induction into pastoral ministry. But as I indicate later, the rite of “ordination” as we know it came into being after the New Testament period.
3. For these quotations I rely on Daniel J. Harrington, SJ, and James F. Keenan, SJ, *Paul and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology* (New York: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), 143–145. The first two direct quotes are from Augustine's Letter 118, the third from Sermon 60 from his *The Word of God*.
4. Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 138, 143; William H. Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 24.
5. The Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Silver Spring, MD) “prepares and publishes” the *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Manual*. The quotation from the 1992 edition appears on p. 59; the material from the 2009 edition, which I will reference again, appears on p. 170.
6. In his *Humilitas: A Lost Key to Life, Love, and Leadership* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 131, John Dickson quotes this phrase from Stephen R. Covey.
7. V. Norskov Olsen, *Myth and Truth: Church, Priesthood and Ordination* (Riverside, CA: Loma Linda University Press, 1990), 6, 123–125, 176–177.
8. Gottfried Osterwal is the Adventist theologian who first emphasized this point, in *Mission: Possible* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1972), especially in the chapter on “The Role of the Laity,” 103–120.
9. Some other pertinent passages are Acts 13:2–3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6. The book of Acts links the laying on of hands with reception of the Holy Spirit (8:18–19; 9:17), but without suggesting that the gift of the Spirit depends on the laying on of hands (10:44–48).
10. Paul refers to recipients of his letters as “saints,” as in, e.g., 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; and Philippians 1:1. As Olsen writes on p. 26, the term's biblical meaning is that of “consecrated persons” or persons “set apart” for God.
11. Hendrik Kraemer, *A Theology of the Laity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), 160; Osterwal, *Mission: Possible*, 105.
12. I am relying as in the paragraph and in the one that follows on Olsen, *Myth and Truth: Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 97–100; also 149–150, where the author summarizes a perspective on the ordination rite found in *The Apostolic Tradition* by Hippolytus, a Roman presbyter.
13. See footnote 12.
14. *Ibid.*, 50–54; on p. 175 of his book's “Epilogue,” a theological reflection on Christian ministry, Olsen repeats the point about pagan Rome growing into papal Rome.
15. Quoted *ibid.*, 155. Luther's remark may be found in *Luther's Works*, 44:129; Calvin's remark is from *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV. xix. 28.
16. Walter Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1981). See p. 126 for the quote from the Swiss brother, and 124 for the quote from the Spitelmaier remarks.
17. Remarks of the same Swiss brother, *ibid.*, 126.
18. John Howard Yoder, *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 29, 22, 24 (*italics mine*); the later remark is from Yoder, *Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 368.
19. James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Ethics: Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 8.
20. Robert Friedmann, *The Theology of Anabaptism* (Scottsdale, PA:

Herald Press, 1973), 121.

21. Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources*, 27, 150; Leonhard Schiemer wrote the first quote, Bernhard Rothmann the second.

22. See John Howard Yoder, *Preface to Theology: Christology and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Books, 2002), 81–87; and James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Doctrine: Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 266–69. McClendon also published “Philippians 2:5–11,” in *Review and Expositor* 88 (1991): 439–444.

23. Olsen, *Myth and Truth: Church, Priesthood and Ordination*, 115, 117, 176; the Friedmann quote is from Friedmann, *ibid.*, 102.

24. See W. L. Emerson, *The Reformation and the Advent Movement* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983). Emerson, who was born in 1901 (!), argues that the Reformation—in particular, the Radical Reformation—anticipates the vision that comes to full expression in Seventh-day Adventism. In the same year, I myself located Adventism’s roots in Anabaptism in “Radical Discipleship and the Renewal of Adventist Mission,” *Spectrum* 14 (December 1983), 11–20. In *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), George Knight argues that the Radical Reformation is an important key to Adventist identity.

25. Charles E. Bradford, “An Emphasis on Ministry: Is Ordination for Honor or for Service?” *Adventist Review* (May 1995): 8–10. My copy of this article gives no date within the month, although alternative pagination (in parentheses) is 456–458.

26. Ellen White, *Desire of Ages* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2002), 650.

27. The cited remarked on “primitive godliness” is from *The Great Controversy* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 464. Ellen White’s comments on the General Conference range from the claim (written in 1875, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 3 [Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1885], 492) that the General Conference is “the highest authority that God has upon the earth” to the thought that regarding the General Conference as “the voice of God” is “almost blasphemy,” in MS 37, 1901, April 1, 1901. The comment against the General Conference as “the voice of God” appears in the 1899 *GC Bulletin*, 74. I was first indebted to Bert Haloviak, now retired from the Ellen White Estate, for this information. Now a collection of quotes on

these matters may be found at http://www.truthorables.com/Gen_Conf_Highest_Aut.htm.

28. The Michigan Conference story is told in *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1996), 310. Another account appears in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Early Years, 1827–1862* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985), 453–454. See <http://www.greatcontroversy.org/gco/orc/fb1872.php/> for the 1872 statement. A brief account of Adventist statements of beliefs appears in Gary Land, *Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 107–108.

29. The current initiative to rewrite Fundamental belief #6, on the Genesis Creation story, seems to many members to be a means of gaining leverage against some scientists who teach in Adventist institutions.

30. Here and in the next paragraph, when I say “feels like” and “seems to” I mean no more than that; as a New Testament nonspecialist, I am neither asserting nor denying the influence of the Philippians hymn upon the writers of the two other New Testament documents.

31. The Catholic (!) New Testament scholar Luke Timothy Johnson, in his *Prophetic Jesus, Prophetic Church: The Challenge of Luke-Acts to Contemporary Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 70, argues that leadership in Luke-Acts is not hierarchical, not about directives from a centralized theological authority. In Acts, he says (this is, in part, a comment on Acts 15) we “find no sign of hierarchy.” I have made an argument to this effect in “Drift, or Adventist Ideals at Risk,” *Spectrum* 40 (Spring 2012): 3–4.

32. See Matthew 18:15–20, a passage crucial for the original Anabaptists and also for their Neo-Anabaptist heirs.

33. Karl Barth, tr., Edwyn C. Hoskyns, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; translation first published in 1933), 436. I owe Daryll Ward thanks for directing me to this passage.

34. In her commentary on Judas at the Passover meal, Ellen White, in *Desire of Ages*, 645, suggests a link between humility and repentance, as follows: “But he would not humble himself. He hardened his heart against repentance...” The Ministerial Association of the General Conference, *ibid.*, 21. I owe the phrase “humble service in the name of Christ,” which I love, to Adele Waller, a lead teacher of the Sabbath School class I attend.

**Humility
and shared
authority
are for
the unity of
all—for
the unity of
all through
the participation
of all.**

higher ed

Campus Spotlight

Pacific Union College

In August, *Newsweek* named Pacific Union College the nation's most beautiful college. The ranking considered student ratings of the attractiveness of men and women at the college, as well as the appearance of the college itself. The average number of sunny days per year and the average comfort index—a measure of humidity and afternoon temperature—was also taken into account. The Angwin, California, liberal arts college topped Bucknell University, Point Loma Nazarene University, Chapman University, and Santa Clara University.



Left and center:
students at the
Welcome Back
Celebration;
right: Clark Hall

Education



Adventist Campuses Today

PUSHPIN ILLUSTRATION BY MAX SEABALGH

Checking the Political Pulse of the University: Findings from the 2012 SDA Religion and Social Issues Survey

BY JOHN T. GAVIN, WILLIAM W. ELLIS, AND CURTIS J. VANDERWAAL

The questions of social and religious identity are deep and abiding. Who are we? Why are we here? Where did we come from? Where are we going? These questions are simultaneously theological, social, and political. Who is the *political Adventist*? Does she vote? Where does he stand on economic issues? Does she lean right or left? If so, what issues are important in

deciding whom to vote for? Where do Adventists stand on the social and political issues that are part of the public discourse? These questions are especially pertinent in light of the 2012 national elections, as our nation struggles to recover from a recession, and grapples with sharp and seemingly intractable differences on social issues.

To address these questions, we surveyed the faculty and staff at Seventh-

day Adventist colleges and universities as a demographic slice of the overall Adventist population. Why collegiate faculty and staff? First, Seventh-day Adventist thought leaders can often be found in Adventist colleges and universities. These are places where people with good educations are expected to engage in careful study and reflective thought and dialogue. This process should hopefully translate into insights that are imparted and at least partially assimilated by the next generation of Adventist thought leaders. Granted, most of these faculty and staff are not political or social scientists; however, they have been trained to think carefully and critically, making their perspectives on political and social issues worth exploring. Second, Adventist thought leaders who work outside universities generally attended Adventist institutions of higher learning and are, in part, shaped and influenced by the opinions of university faculty. Staff at Adventist colleges and universities are equally important, as they provide an Adventist perspective that may be less influenced by the sometimes firm boundaries of academic disciplines.

What then do Adventist faculty and staff believe about the political and social issues of the day? Is the stereotype of the liberal college professor really true? Do faculty and staff think

Table 1. Survey response information by institution and demographic characteristics*

Responses by institution	Percentage (N) of respondents	Percentage (n) per institution
Andrews University	47.8% (N=248)	53.8% (n=248 of 461)
Union College	11.9% (N=62)	33.3% (n=62 of 186)
Loma Linda University	10.8% (N=56)	3.6% (n=56 of 1561)
Washington Adventist University	7.3% (N=38)	5.0% (n=38 of 754)
Kettering College	5.0% (N=26)	20.0% (n=26 of 130)
La Sierra University	3.9% (N=20)	11.9% (n=20 of 168)
Walla Walla University	3.5% (N=18)	9.2% (n=18 of 195)
Oakwood University	3.3% (N=17)	10.7% (n=17 of 159)
Southern Adventist University	2.7% (N=14)	5.7% (n=14 of 244)
Southwestern Adventist University	2.1% (N=11)	10.0% (n=11 of 110)
Pacific Union College	1.5% (N=8)	4.8% (n=8 of 166)
Faculty responses	50.0% (N=264)	
Staff responses	47.0% (N=248)	
Neither faculty nor staff	3.0% (N=16)	

*Number of responses vary slightly between categories due to respondents skipping some questions.



Southwestern Adventist University

Southwestern Adventist University's staff and students were recognized for their positive impact on local youth. The East Cleburne Community Center, an after-school program that provides activities for local at-risk children, awarded Southwestern's students and professor of religion, Dr. Kilgore, a community service award for their work with the center. Dr. Kilgore initiated a weekly program connecting the center with Southwestern's international students, and students from Southwestern's Students in Free Enterprise team contribute financial tutoring to the center's junior high students.

Above: A history class in one of the beautiful classrooms in Pechero Hall. Right: Dr. Kilgore and students receive a community service award for their efforts on behalf of at-risk youth.



Left: new campus sign/monument; below: Adventist University of Health Sciences, exterior

Adventist University of Health Sciences

Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences became Adventist University of Health Sciences, effective August 2012. The university will continue Florida Hospital College's commitment to healthcare as ministry and its legacy of excellence in education, while still maintaining close ties to Florida Hospital and Adventist Health System. David Greenlaw, president of the university, stated, "the name Adventist University of Health Sciences is representative of the college's continued growth while still preserving our past. Our new name doesn't change who we are, it simply better defines us."





Andrews University

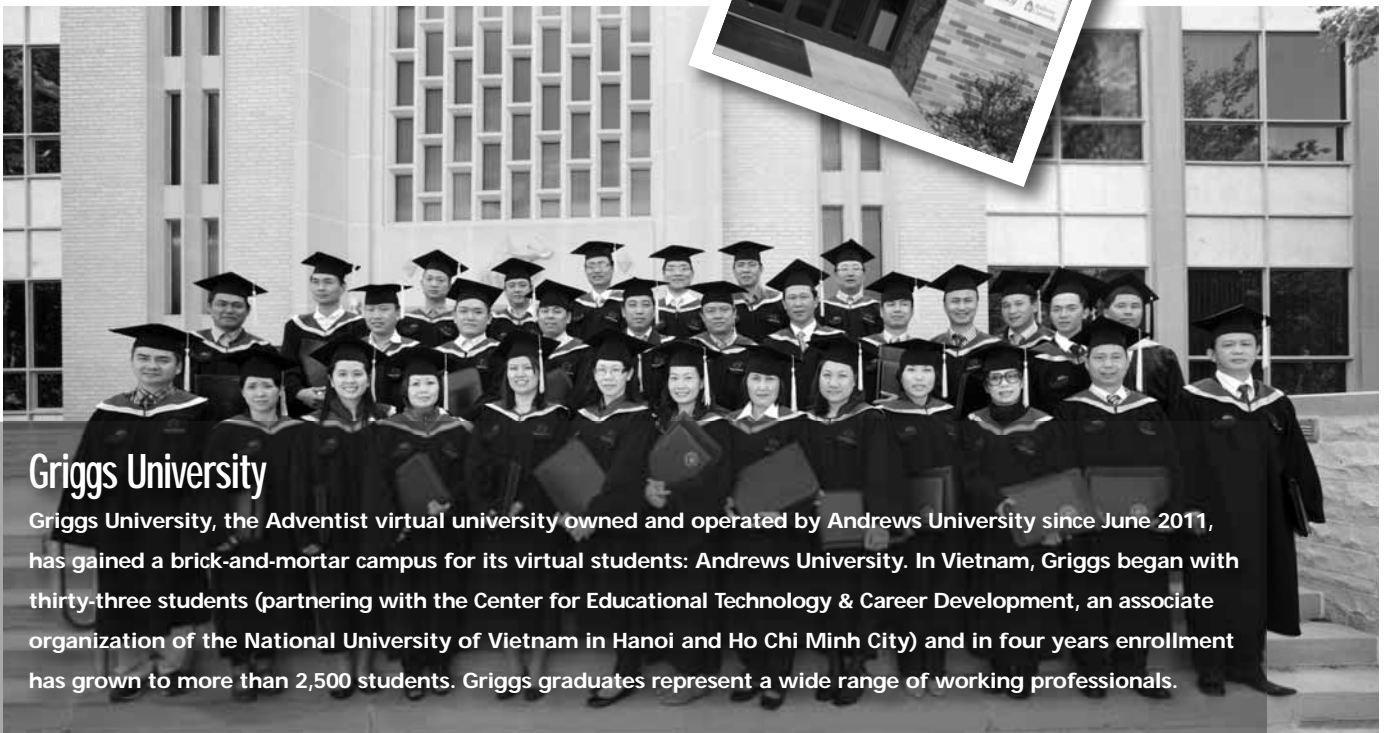
Andrews University inaugurates its new School of Health Professions in the 2012–2013 academic year. The School of Health Professions includes the Department of Nursing, Department of Physical Therapy, Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences, Department of Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology, and the Department of Nutrition & Wellness. Emmanuel Rudatsikira, a respected educator and researcher, is the first dean of the new school. The school's vision is to be global leaders in Christian healthcare education through the didactic and clinical training of health professionals.



Above: new school's audiology booth; below: ribbon-cutting for Department of Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology.



Left: Griggs Hall. Below: graduating students from Vietnam.



Griggs University

Griggs University, the Adventist virtual university owned and operated by Andrews University since June 2011, has gained a brick-and-mortar campus for its virtual students: Andrews University. In Vietnam, Griggs began with thirty-three students (partnering with the Center for Educational Technology & Career Development, an associate organization of the National University of Vietnam in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City) and in four years enrollment has grown to more than 2,500 students. Griggs graduates represent a wide range of working professionals.

differently about issues such as abortion, poverty, and health care than the Adventist population as a whole? For that matter, do faculty think differently about social issues than staff do at these institutions?

Our survey replicates many aspects of a national study sponsored by *Spectrum* in 2004, "Religion and Public Issues Survey," by Roger Dudley and Edwin Hernandez.¹ Our research also draws on questions from public opinion surveys such as the Gallup Poll, the Faith Matters Survey, and the National Civic and Political Survey of Young People. Space constraints keep us from reporting findings from the entire study, so in this article we focus on the political and social aspects of our findings.

Methods

In July and August 2012, we sent email messages to a random sample of approximately one-third of all faculty and selected staff who were employed at Seventh-day Adventist universities and colleges in the United States. The email invited them to participate in a fifty-nine-question survey titled, "The Seventh-day Adventist Religion and Public Issues Survey." Using the 2012 *SDA Yearbook*² as the source for our sample, we asked faculty and staff of La Sierra University, Loma Linda University, Pacific Union College, Southern Adventist University, Southwestern Adventist University, and Walla Walla University to participate in this survey. Our direct connections with Washington Adventist University, Andrews University, Union College, and Kettering College gave us the opportunity to send email invitations to all faculty, administrators, and a broader group of staff at those institutions, using requests from the presidents or provosts of those institutions.

Table 2. Survey response information by institution and demographic characteristics*

Demographic characteristics		
Length of time as Adventist	2012 survey	2004 religion/public survey
Less than one year	1.3% (N=7)	-
1 to 5 years	1.0% (N=5)	.4%
6 to 10 years	2.5% (N=13)	.2%
11 to 20 years	6.1% (N=32)	3.4%
Over 20 years	89.1% (N=467)	96.0%
Generation as Adventist		
Second generation	81.0% (N=436)	69.0%
First generation	19.0% (N=102)	31.0%
Place of birth		
United States	79.9% (N=430)	88.0%
Outside the United States	20.1% (N=108)	12.2%
Gender		
Male	49.2% (N=263)	61.5%
Female	50.8% (N=272)	38.5%

*Number of responses may vary slightly between categories due to respondents skipping some questions.

Sample

Table 1 shows that 530 persons completed the survey, with response rates varying from 1.5% to 47.8% across the schools. The total number of responses from each school is also shown in table 1, and indicates that the most responses came from Andrews University (47.8%), followed by Union College (11.9%), Loma Linda University (10.9%), and Washington Adventist University (7.3%). Responses from the remaining institutions ranged from 5% to 1.5% of total responses. Because of large differences in school size, we also report percentage response rate per institution in table 1. These response rates range from 54% (Andrews University) to 5% (Pacific Union College) across the schools, giving us widely varying levels of school representation. Wide differences in responses were likely due to the availability of faculty

and staff during the summer months and how active college administrators were in encouraging participation in the study. Those who did respond may also have a higher interest in political and social issues, resulting in some data bias. In addition, those faculty and staff from institutions where surveys are more common may have been more likely to participate.

The number of faculty and staff responses were almost evenly split, 50% and 47%, respectively. Similarly, the number of male and female faculty and staff was about even (49% vs. 51%), with 79% reporting they were married. Respondents were generally older, with more than half (55%) being 51 years or older. They were also very highly educated, with three-fourths (75%) having completed postcollege graduate study or degrees, and another 16% having completed a four-year college degree.

Table 3. Survey response information by institution and demographic characteristics*

Demographic characteristics, continued

Marital status

Married	79.0% (N=425)	76.5%
Divorced or separated	7.8% (N=42)	4.1%
Single, never married	11.3% (N=61)	3.6%
Widowed	1.9% (N=10)	15.8%

Age

18 to 35 years	15.7% (N=84)	.7%
36 to 50 years	29.3% (N=157)	9.4%
51 to 65 years	43.0% (N=23)	26.7%
Over 65 years	12.0% (N=64)	63.2%

Level of education

High school or less	.13% (N=7)	12.1% (3.4% under high school, 8.7% high school)
Some college study	7.1% (N=38)	24.4%
Four year college degree	16.2% (N=87)	14.2%
Post-college graduate study or degree	75.4% (N=405)	49.4%

Ethnic background

Black/African-American	9.2% (N=49)	5.2%
Hispanic/Latino	5.2% (N=28)	1.5%
White/Euro-American	75.9% (N=406)	89.3%
Asian or Pacific Islander	4.9% (N=26)	1.2%
Multi-racial	3.2% (N=17)	-
Other	1.7% (N=9)	2.8%

Family income

	2011	2004
Under \$40,000	12.2% (N=66)	11.8% (<\$20K)
\$40,000 to \$49,000	9.3% (N=50)	49.0% (\$20-\$50K)
\$50,000 to \$74,999	27.7% (N=149)	21.9% (\$51-80K)
\$75,000 to \$99,000	17.7% (N=95)	17.3% (>\$80K)
More than \$100,000	27.2% (N=146)	-
Didn't know or preferred not to answer	5.8% (N=31)	-

*Number of responses vary slightly between categories due to respondents skipping some questions.

Over three-fourths (76%) self-identified as White-Euro-American, with 9% identifying themselves as Black/African American. There were approximately an equal number of Hispanics/Latinos and Asian or Pacific Islanders (5% each). Almost half (45%) of faculty and staff reported total household income to be above \$75,000, with another 28%

reporting income between \$50,000-\$75,000. Based on Adventist pay scales, these amounts likely represent two-income families. In short, faculty and staff of Adventist institutions are more likely to be white, married, second-generation Adventists who are above middle age, well educated, and earning a steady income.

There were some important differences between faculty and staff. When compared to staff, faculty were more likely to be male (59% vs. 39%), over 50 years old (65% vs. 44%), and married (85% vs. 73%). In addition, faculty were much more likely to have a postgraduate degree (98% vs. 52%), have higher incomes (89% vs. 55% over \$50,000 in total household income), and to view themselves as less religiously conservative (25% vs. 36%; no table provided). Interestingly, however, the majority of responses showed few appreciable differences between the two groups, leading us to keep the two groups together when reporting our initial findings for this publication. We attempted to highlight a few notable differences between these two groups where relevant.

The profile of the average American Adventist is complicated by several sometimes contradictory studies,³ and it is helpful to compare our sample with the profile presented in the 2004 study by Dudley and Hernandez. Our sample is similar to the 2004 cohort in terms of age, ethnicity, financial stability, and education. They are similarly second-generation Adventists, but with fewer lifelong Adventists. Table 1 compares both samples. Clearly, the faculty and staff of Adventist colleges and universities do not represent the typical Adventist in North America. However, they do represent, or in many cases influence, the thought leaders of the Adventist church. As such, their opinions on social and political issues are important to understand, since these individuals are educating the next generation of pastors, teachers, doctors, and other less traditional Adventist professions and degrees.

Perceived importance of political and social issues

There are a host of political and social issues relevant to the 2012 election. Issues range from the economy, immigration, health care, abortion, jobs, and the federal deficit, to Medicare, gay marriage, gun control, education, and foreign policy, as well as birth control, Afghanistan, the environment, taxes, energy, and Iran. Figure 1 shows how Adventist faculty and staff rated issues they considered to be very important to their decision about whom to vote for in the election. Health care (71%) and the economy

(70%) were, by far, judged to be the most important election issues. Certainly, these issues are among those reflected in the 2012 campaign and central to the discourse leading up to the election. The reported importance of health care and the economy may also reflect that Adventist faculty and staff are largely in the mainstream when it comes to American concerns.

Education (56%), jobs (55%), and the federal budget deficit (50%) are the next most important election issues to Adventist faculty and staff, followed by taxes (45%), foreign policy (41%), Medicare (39%), energy

(36%), the environment (31%), and immigration (28%). Again, these issues feature prominently in 2012 campaigning and public discourse. Finally, the lowest rankings were found for terrorism (22%), abortion (20%), gun control and gay marriage (19%), Afghanistan (14%), Iran (12%), and birth control (12%).

When we combined the “Very Important” and “Important” scores together (no table provided), respondents scored nine of the seventeen issues at an 80% or higher level of importance, indicating that a large number of issues were of great concern

Figure 1. Importance of issues in voting

Percentage of Adventist faculty and staff voters ranking issues “Very Important,” 2012

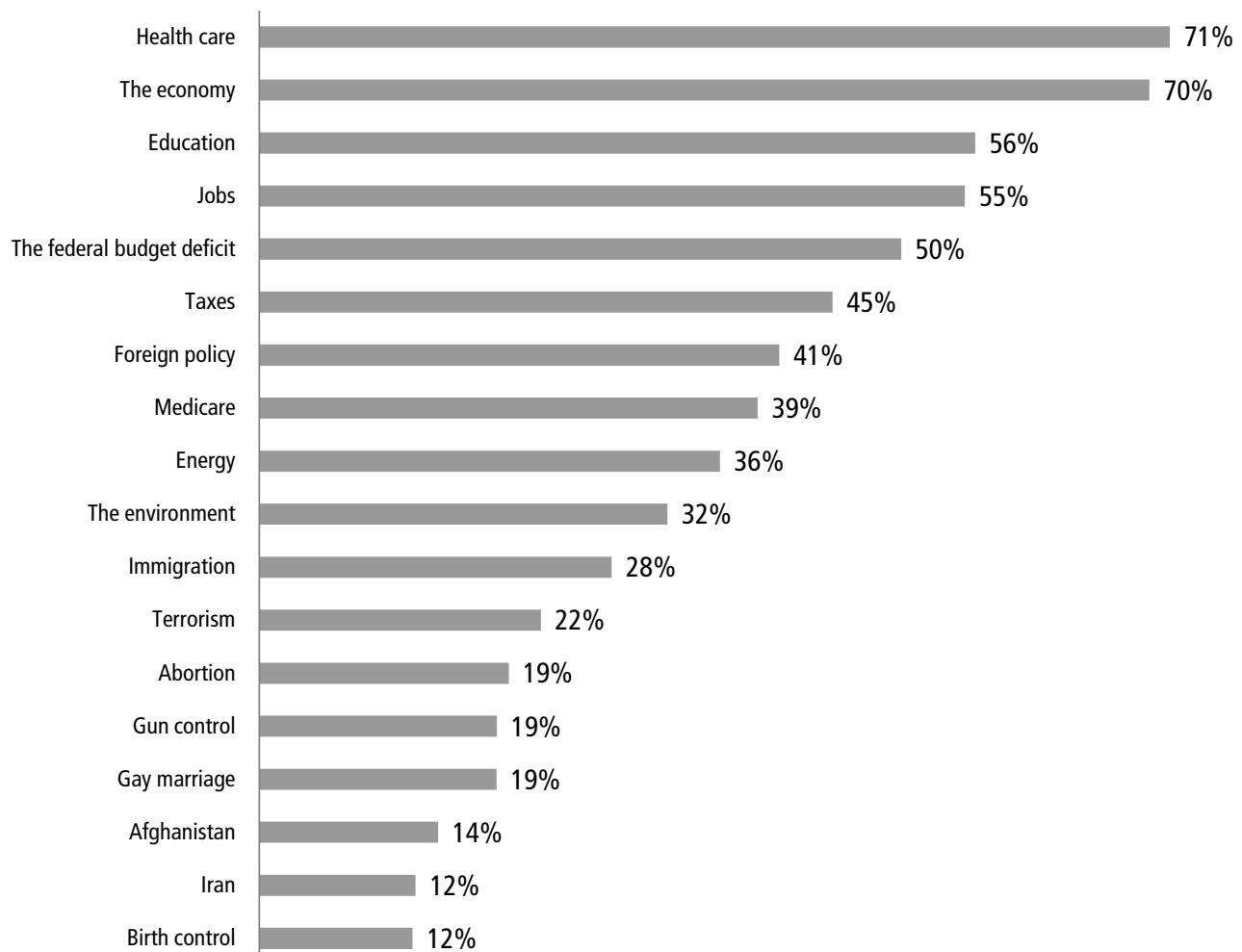


Figure 2. Political orientation

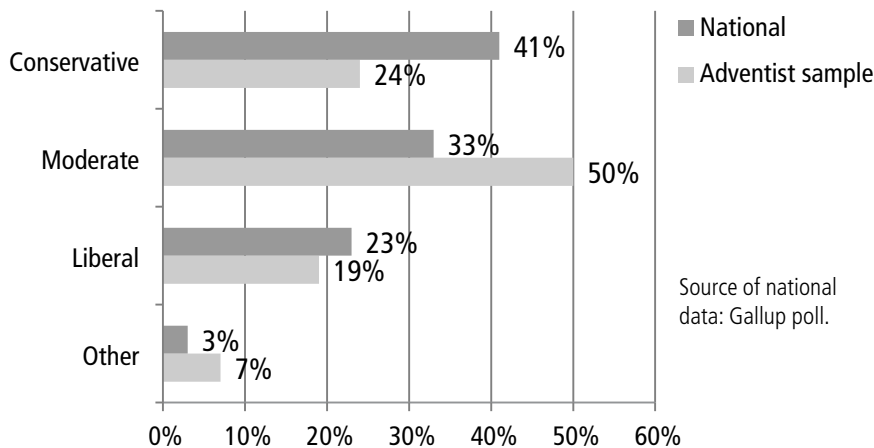
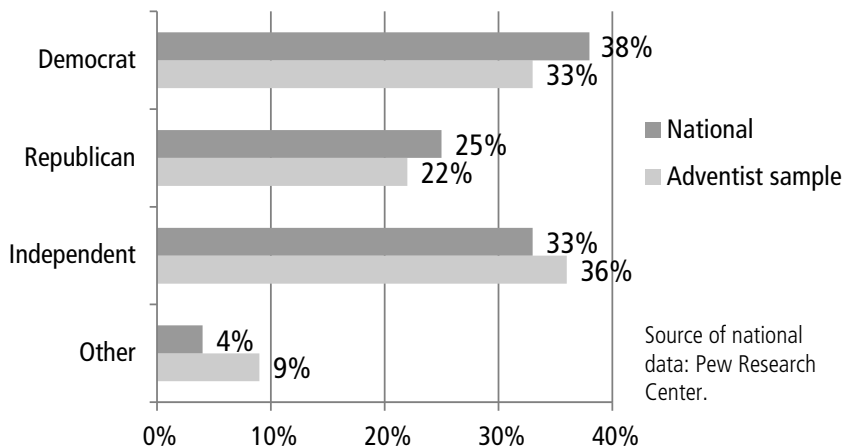


Figure 3. Party identification



to them. Such high scores indicate that Adventist faculty and staff have a host of serious concerns.

Only abortion, Medicare, gay marriage, and birth control failed to score higher than 50% when combining “Very Important” and “Important” categories together. Interestingly, all of these issues feature prominently in the conservative agenda. If the relative unimportance of these issues in voting is an indicator of political leaning, Adventist faculty and staff seem to be expressing a more liberal view on these

issues. Action by lawmakers on important legislation relating to many of these issues is apparently being delayed until after the election, thereby turning the election into a referendum of sorts on important political and social issues.

Politics: Adventist universities and the general US population

In their thoughtful piece on political identity, Roger Dudley and Edwin Hernandez identified several themes in the Adventist political personality.⁴

- Our moral outlook is traditional.
- We oppose government meddling in religion.
- We tend to look at ourselves as citizens of the Kingdom and only secondarily citizens of this Earth.
- Our religious beliefs influence our politics—or we believe they do.
- Like many others, we have many interests among the bevy of current political issues.

In many of these issues, we found a certain consistency between our two surveys, but in a somewhat closer look at some aspects of our political personality, we found that Adventist faculty and staff think and vote differently than Seventh-day Adventists as a whole.

Conservative vs. liberal

At the national level, in a Gallup poll taken in May 2012, 41% identified themselves as conservatives, 33% as moderates, and 23% as liberals, with only 3% other or undefined identifications.⁵ Dudley and Hernandez’s 2004 sample was even more conservative, with 58% identifying as politically conservative, 32% as moderate, and only 4% as liberal. However, Adventist faculty and staff in our sample showed a different pattern. In our survey, 24% of Adventists identified themselves as conservative, 50% as moderates, and 19% as liberals, with 7% other or undefined identifications (figure 2). While the studies by Dudley and Hernandez document that most Adventists are typically more conservative than the general population, the patterns in our study suggest that Adventist faculty and staff are less conservative and more moderate than the general population.

Party identification

Our Adventist sample's pattern of voter identification with political parties generally tracks US voter preferences. In a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in July 2012, 38% of registered voters identified themselves as Democrats, 25% as Republicans, and 33% as independents.⁶ A small number identified themselves with other political groups or not at all. In our Adventist faculty and staff sample, 33% identified themselves as Democrats, 22% as Republicans, and 36% as independents, with a small number of others (figure 3). In contrast, Dudley and Hernandez's sample found 54% Republicans, 16% Democrats, and 30% independents.

Voting patterns and intentions

In the elections of 2008 and 2012, there are differences between the general voting of Americans and the voting of Adventist faculty and staff—whether the actual votes in 2008 or the intended ones in 2012.

Figure 4 shows that in 2008 a slightly larger proportion of our Adventist sample voted for Obama than did national voters.⁷ Drilling deeper into the data, we found that approximately 50%—give or take 5%—of our Adventist faculty and staff sample reported voting for Obama, regardless of their age. This contrasts with the national vote totals in which 66% of those ages eighteen to twenty-nine voted for Obama, a percentage that declined with each advancing age category to 45% of those over age sixty-five who voted for Obama (no figure provided for this data).⁸

At the national level, about the same number of men voted for Obama (49%) as voted for McCain (48%),

while more women (56%) voted for Obama than for McCain (43%).⁹ In contrast, among our Adventist sample approximately the same proportions voted for Obama (60%) and for McCain (37%; no figure provided).

So how do these same two groups plan to vote in the coming November elections? As of this writing, the nationally representative Rasmussen Reports finds likely US voters about equally divided between Obama and Romney, with about one in eight or fewer undecided. This ratio has been stable over the last several months.¹⁰ In sharp contrast, figure 5 shows that, as of July 2012, when our data was col-

lected, 22% of Adventist faculty and staff said they planned to vote for Mitt Romney, while 43% intended to vote for Barack Obama. The remaining respondents were either undecided (23%), independent (4%), or didn't plan to vote (8%).

This may be partially explained by the high education level of the surveyed faculty and staff of Adventist institutions of higher learning in the United States. For this reason, it is likely that the apparent strong preference for Obama among Adventist faculty and staff who have made up their minds about the presidential race is real, but with a large number of per-

Figure 4. Presidential vote, 2008

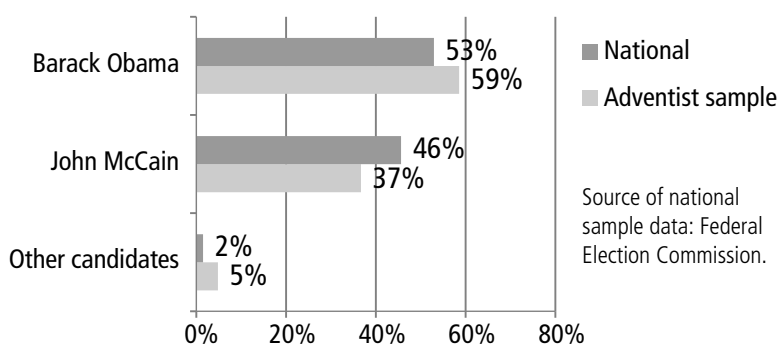
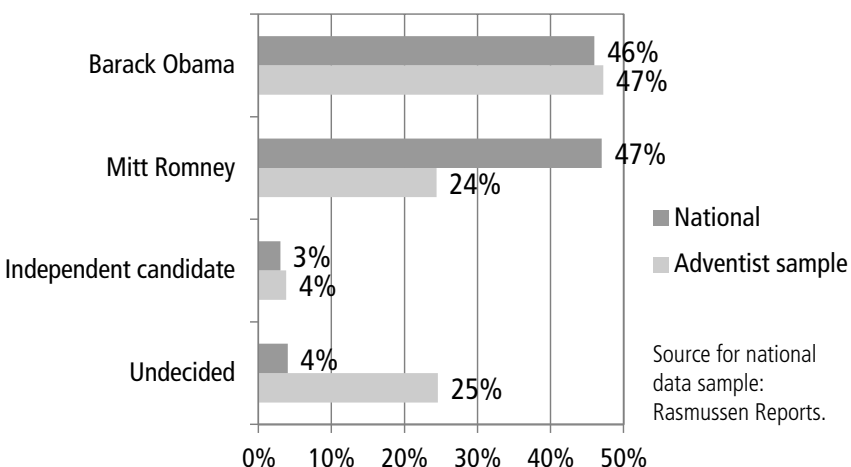


Figure 5. Intended vote for president in 2012



sons undecided. In contrast, Dudley and Hernandez found that their more general sample of North American Adventists was strongly in favor of George Bush over John Kerry in the run-up to the 2004 election. Adventist faculty and staff appear to be a more liberal group than the 2004 sample.

Current issues: support or opposition?

We also posed a series of questions about current issues in American society, asking faculty and staff to decide if they favored or opposed each one. There are both similarities and differences between the national electorate and our Adventist sample regarding the relative importance of these current issues, though the overall pattern is basically similar.¹¹

Health care and economic issues—including jobs, social security, and taxes, as well as the general health of the economy—are the top two issues for both.

Government corruption is an added top issue at the national level, though not for Adventist faculty and staff.

For both, education was the next most important issue.

The final tier of issues, in more or less the same order, includes energy and environment issues, national security, and immigration.

More specifically, those in our Adventist sample *favor or strongly favor*:

- Reducing the national debt through spending cuts (83%)
- Adventists running for political offices (76%)
- Giving illegal immigrants a chance to obtain legal status (71%)
- The United States working closely with the United Nations (68%)
- Decreased military spending (64%)

- Government support for stem cell research (62%)
- Teaching “creation science” in public schools (59%)
- Health insurance for all citizens regardless of ability to pay (59%)
- Increased gun control (56%)
- Reducing national debt through tax increases (45%) (vs. 43% who oppose)

Those in the Adventist sample *oppose or strongly oppose*:

- Increasing the role of the United States as a police force in world affairs (79%)
- Indefinite holding without formal charges of persons suspected of terrorism (78%)
- A law to allow churches to campaign for or against candidates for political office (77%)
- Elimination of the phrase “under God” from the mandatory Pledge of Allegiance (76%)
- Tax cuts for the wealthy enacted by Congress (73%)
- The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (69%)
- Expressing views on social and political issues from the pulpit (68%)
- Capital punishment (51%)
- Government vouchers to attend religious schools (42%) (vs. 34% who favor)

Based on past surveys, these patterns are not what would be expected of Adventists, who have generally been found to have political and social opinions grounded firmly in the conservative political realm. While this assertion was more likely to be supported in Dudley and Hernandez’s 2004 study, it is apparent that colle-

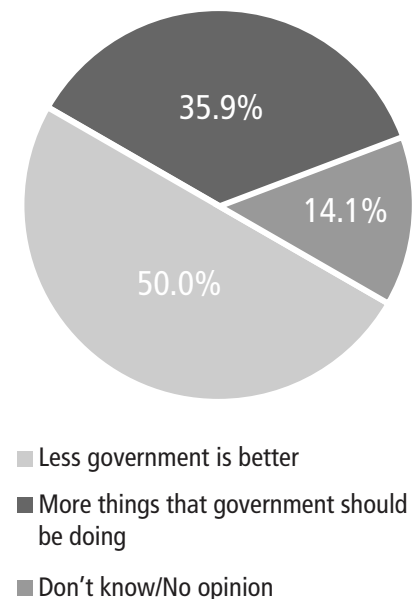
giate faculty and staff trend toward moderate to liberal positions on social and political issues, though they are not overwhelmingly liberal. Interestingly, initial comparisons of faculty with staff showed roughly similar beliefs across most categories.

One consistent theme that remains across all Adventist political studies is the staunch opposition to most initiatives or policies that would weaken the separation between church and state. Such positions are historically consistent with Adventist support for religious liberty and show that, regardless of political and social orientation, the desire to support a strong wall between church and state remains firm across the Adventist spectrum.

We can also conclude that Adventist faculty and staff are not “typical” Adventists, if there is such a category.

Figure 6. Size of government

Some say the less government the better, others believe there are more things that government should be doing. Which comes closer to your views?



Faculty at most colleges and universities across the United States are more moderate or liberal on social and political issues than the US population as a whole, and our sample is certainly consistent with that pattern. We would suspect, however, that Adventist faculty are probably more conservative than the typical secular faculty member in many US colleges.

Views on social issues

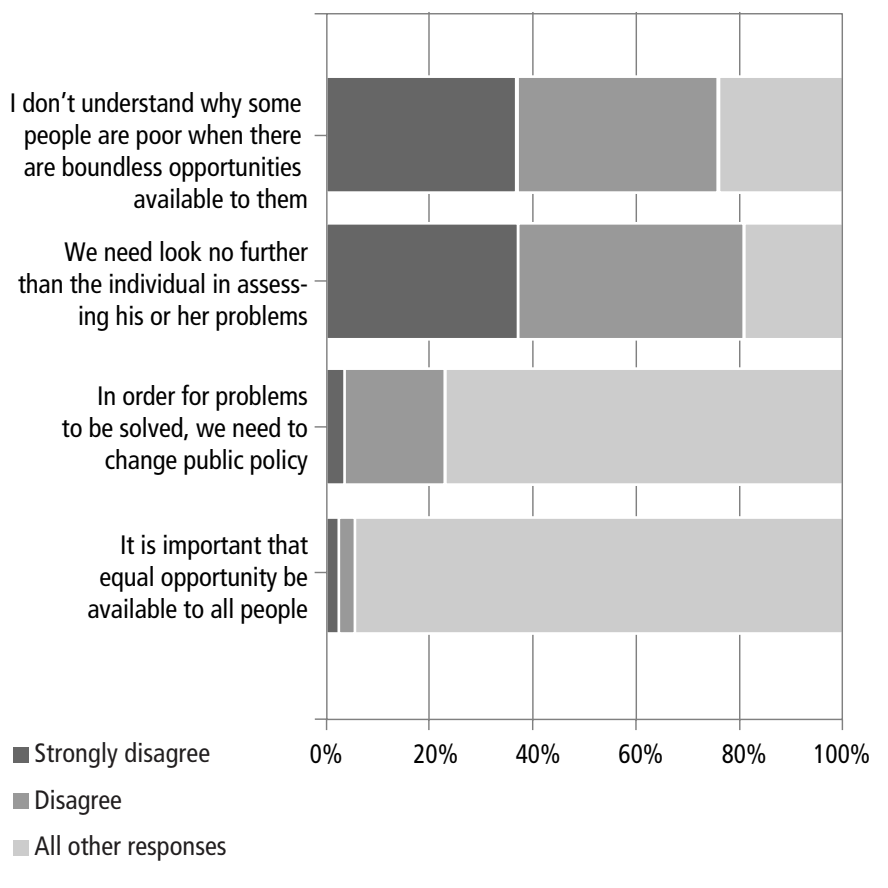
We next turn to a few additional social issues that have achieved prominence this election cycle. We continue to compare our sample from Adventist higher education to the general Adventist population, and with the general US population, to further develop an understanding of Adventist political identity in the areas of poverty and the poor, abortion, and health care.

Poverty and the poor

This election has demonstrated sharp contrasts between the candidates on the role of government in helping people who are poor or near poor. At a private fundraiser earlier this year, candidate Romney said, "There are 47% of the people...who are dependent on government, who believe they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe they are entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name-it."¹² Romney touched on a deeply held belief by some Americans: that far too many people are dependent on the government and view government aid as an entitlement. However, Adventist faculty and staff appear to hold a more nuanced view of this issue. Figure 6 shows that half the respondents believe that less gov-

Figure 7. Perceptions of poverty

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:



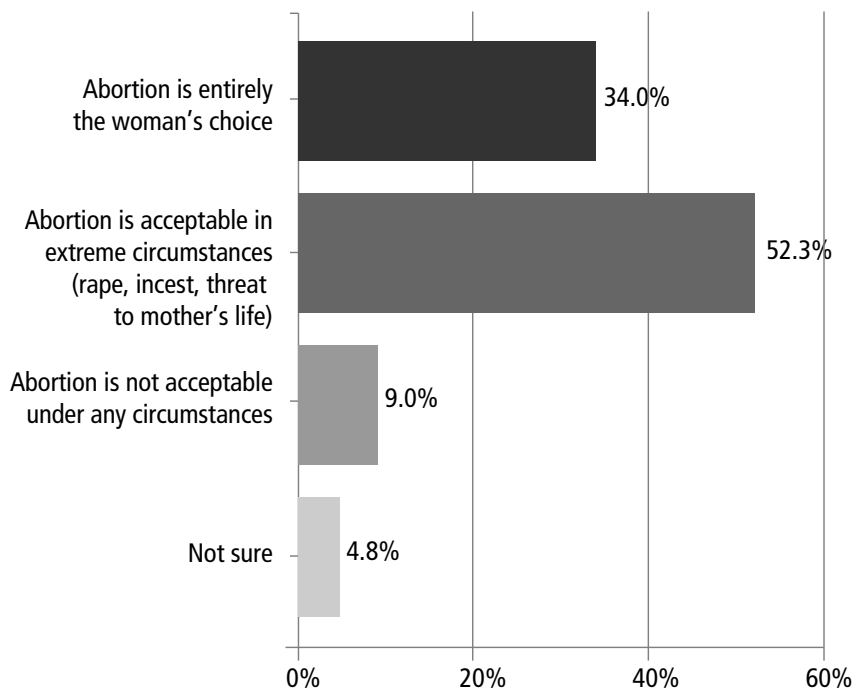
ernment is better. In contrast, figure 7 indicates that over three-fourths disagree that the poor have "boundless opportunities available to them." Figure 7 further shows an even greater percentage (81%) disagree that the individual is to be entirely blamed for his or her problems, with over half (54%) of respondents believing that changes in public policy are needed to solve problems. Over 90% of all faculty and staff believe it is important for equal opportunity to be available to all people. Such responses at least indirectly imply that personal responsibility, a key component of conservative ideology, is not always enough to help those who are in need.

Abortion

As part of a larger election narrative on women's rights and roles in society, the Democratic Party has strongly reaffirmed its belief that a woman should have the right to make decisions about her own body, including the very personal decision about whether to have an abortion. This complex issue continues to be a flashpoint in the so-called culture wars, with some conservatives taking a stand that does not allow for compromise on abortion, even in the case of rape, incest, or threat to a mother's life. In contrast to most evangelical church positions, the Adventist church, in its official policy statement,

Figure 8. Views on abortion

Which of the following statements comes closest to your own views on abortion?



places a high value on life, but ultimately leaves the difficult decision of whether to have an abortion up to individual conscience. Dudley and Hernandez's 2004 study showed that only 13% of Adventists who responded believed that abortion is entirely a woman's choice, with the large majority (78%) believing that abortion is only acceptable in extreme circumstances (rape, incest, or threat to the mother's life). However, figure 8 shows that 34% of SDA collegiate faculty and staff feel that abortion is entirely a woman's choice, with another half (52%) believing it to be acceptable in extreme circumstances. Only 9% believe that abortion is not acceptable under any circumstances. The substantial difference between the 2004 and 2012 survey respondents is consistent with the more moderate-to-liberal political and

social perspectives of the SDA faculty and staff, but may also reflect a larger proportion of women in the 2012 survey (51% in 2012 vs. 39% in 2004).

Health care

Our study indicates that 95% of SDA collegiate faculty and staff believe health care issues are very important or somewhat important in the upcoming election. While only one-third (36%) of SDA faculty and staff believe that there are more things that government should be doing in society, figure 9 shows that over half (54%) believe that it is the responsibility of the federal government to make sure all Americans have health care coverage. SDA faculty and staff are slightly more favorable toward the federal government's role than the general public, favoring government involvement

by a 50% to 46% margin in a recent Gallup poll. Furthermore, when collegiate faculty and staff were asked whether or not they favored repealing the health care law, close to two-thirds (61%) of respondents opposed the repeal (figure 10). Such positive perspectives on government involvement in health care may reflect Adventists' traditionally strong support of health care as part of the larger emphasis on health.

Interestingly, while differences between faculty and staff were minimal in many categories, health care is an area of substantial differences between the two groups. While 65% of faculty believe the federal government has a responsibility to provide health care coverage, only 43% of staff hold this same belief (no table provided). Similarly, while only 31% of faculty favor repealing the health care law, 47% of staff are in favor of a repeal. Such differences may be influenced by political preferences, as faculty are more than twice as likely as staff to consider themselves as politically liberal (27% vs. 12%).

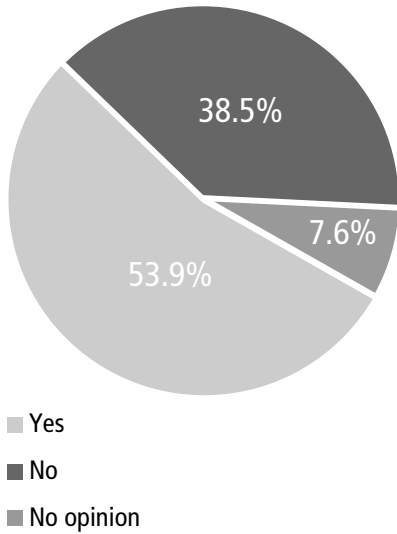
The bottom line—who is the political Adventist?

Our sample only represents a slice of the general Adventist population. At the demographic level, it appears to be generally representative. Compared to the 2004 cohort, both groups are more likely to be white, married, second-generation Adventists who are well educated, relatively well-off and above middle age.

However, collegiate faculty and staff differ significantly in terms of political outlooks, voting behavior, and their positions on political and social issues. Faculty and staff are less conser-

Figure 9. Government responsible for health care

Do you think it is the responsibility of the federal government to make sure all Americans have health care coverage?



vative in their positions, and even perceive many traditionally conservative social issues such as abortion, national defense, gun control, stem cell research, and birth control as less important than other issues such as health care, the economy, education, and jobs. They identify more strongly with the Democratic Party, voted for Obama in 2008, and are likely to vote for his re-election in 2012.

On social issues, we are unable to compare the cohorts on health care, who is to blame for poverty, the role of government in helping the poor, and the importance of equal opportunity for all. Yet it is clear that SDA collegiate faculty are more likely to hold much more liberal or moderate positions on abortion and birth control.

Adventist faculty and staff are considered thought leaders within the church, as they convey their worldview in the classroom, stimulate dis-

ussion about current events, engage in research, and share their findings. Thought leaders not employed at our colleges and universities, such as pastors and teachers, are often the products of our colleges and universities, and have considerable influence over the general membership through their speaking, writing, and training. Over time, this leadership may influence US Adventists as a group to become more moderate in their political and social views.

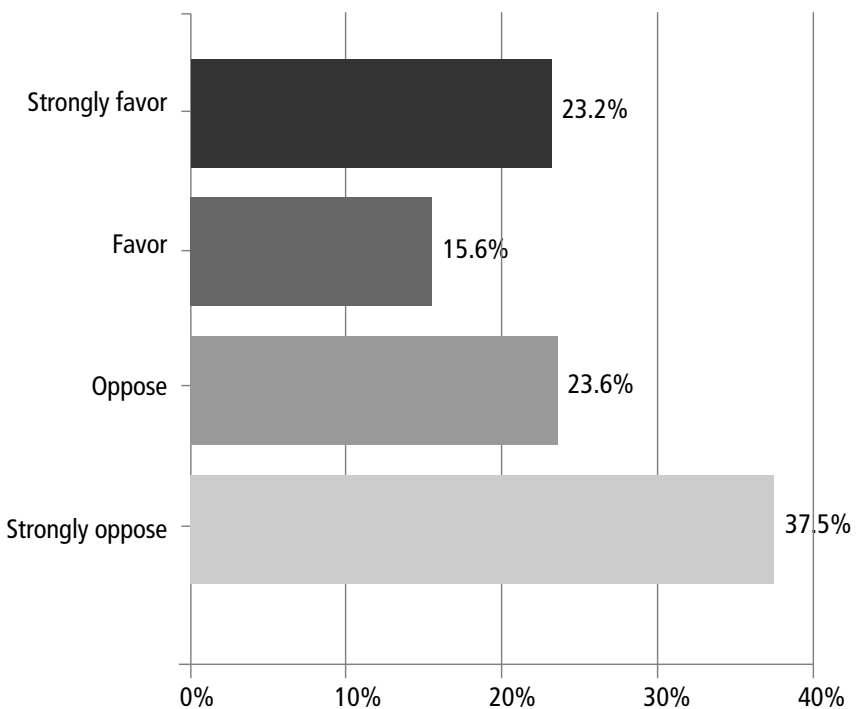
An alternative perspective grows out of Ron Osborn's recent review of Adventist demographic studies, which suggests that the Adventist population as a whole is less educated and poorer than the general population of Americans.¹³ This trend may be due to the larger number of newer and less-estab-

lished immigrants, who represent a growing segment of US Adventists. Also, the more highly educated Adventist population may be reflective of geographical differences. For example, a 2008 study of Adventist education in the Baltimore Washington area conducted by John Gavin and Gaspar Colon found that 89% of the Adventist population in that region had earned undergraduate or graduate degrees.¹⁴ Although this suggests a high educational level for Adventists in some metropolitan areas, if fewer poor and immigrant Adventists are attending Adventist institutions, this would moderate any effect that Adventist educators would have on the social and political views of the general Adventist population.

Our survey has a number of short-

Figure 10. Presidential repeal of health care law

If a Republican is elected president in this November's election, would you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose him repealing the health care law when he takes office?



Good,
honest, and
even vigorous
dialogue is
critical to
a vibrant
Adventist faith
community.

comings, the most obvious being the low response rates from many of the colleges and universities. This likely has some effect on our findings—perhaps those who responded are more politically engaged and/or more liberal than collegiate faculty and staff as a whole. Perhaps Andrews University, which represents almost half of the total respondents, has a different profile than faculty and staff at other institutions. Certainly our findings raise many more questions, including how political and social responses differ when comparing findings by faculty vs. staff, education level, gender, age, ethnicity, as well as levels of conservatism, religiosity, and involvement in community activities. Further exploration of these issues will be provided in more complete reporting from this survey in the coming months.

In the meantime, candid and civil conversations around political and social issues must continue. Good, honest, and even vigorous dialogue is critical to a vibrant Adventist faith community. This means that we need to talk more with our fellow Adventists about both our shared and disparate beliefs, outlooks, and intentions for the government that we share. Above all, we need to remember that God is above and beyond political party affiliation. Any political or social position must ultimately be grounded in God-centered

moral and spiritual principles that defy political typecasting and simplistic labeling. ■

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Southern Adventist University

At Southern Adventist University, a new 832-solar-panel array now converts sunlight into electricity destined for millions of homes. The idea was seeded by Southern's chapter of the international Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE) organization, and the resulting project is the second largest solar panel system in the Chattanooga area. SIFE's projects for 2012-2013 include additional green-friendly efforts such as Campus Rain-Works (an EPA stormwater project), and Value Our Voltage (a campaign to raise awareness of energy-saving practices).

Southern Adventist University has increased its green efforts dramatically, due in large part to efforts by the Students In Free Enterprise team.



Dr. Frankie Rose, assistant professor of biology, and Dr. Amy Utt, assistant professor of biology, work closely with students in the lab.

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Union College

Union College has launched a new major for students with an interest in medical professional schools such as medical or dental school. The new biomedical science major contains a large section of study devoted to another field outside of science allowing students to pursue an area of interest without an extra semester spent in undergraduate studies. The program's development coincides with shifts in medical school acceptance requirements and the construction of a new science and mathematics complex on Union's campus.





Kettering College

Kettering College has posted its highest opening enrollment in the 45-year history of the school, with a total of 981 students enrolled for fall semester. The number eclipses the previous high of 938 that was set at the start of the 2011–2012 school year. This is the fifth consecutive year that the college has topped its previous best opening enrollment numbers. Kettering College had 510 students at the start of the 2000–2001 academic year. Since then, the school has nearly doubled in attendance.

BOTTOM: ED MEIA / TOP: COLIN GATLAND



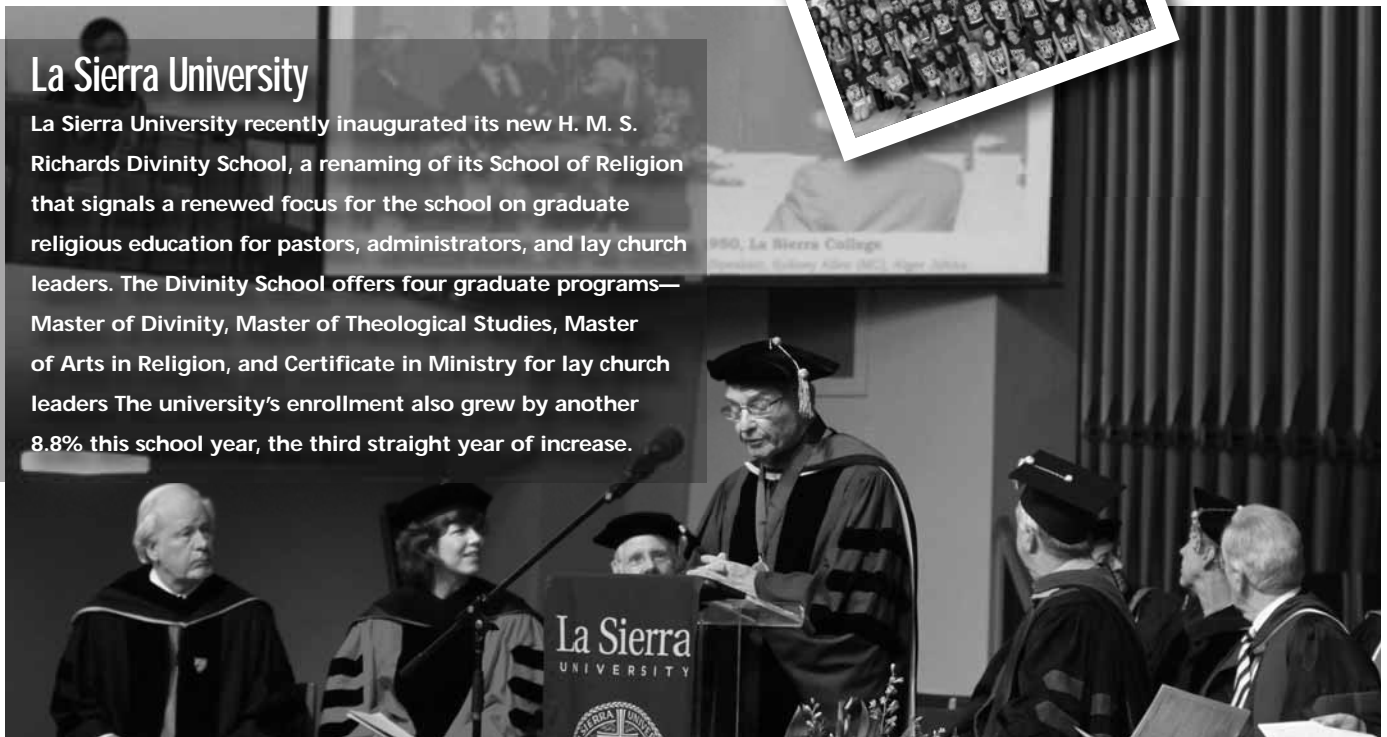
Above: exterior of Kettering College; left: students in Kettering's learning laboratories.



Below: dedication service for the Divinity School; left: the freshman class of 2012–2013.

La Sierra University

La Sierra University recently inaugurated its new H. M. S. Richards Divinity School, a renaming of its School of Religion that signals a renewed focus for the school on graduate religious education for pastors, administrators, and lay church leaders. The Divinity School offers four graduate programs—Master of Divinity, Master of Theological Studies, Master of Arts in Religion, and Certificate in Ministry for lay church leaders. The university's enrollment also grew by another 8.8% this school year, the third straight year of increase.



Are Adventist Colleges and Universities Worth It? *An Analysis of Institutional Metrics* | BY HENRY E. FELDER

On average, receiving a baccalaureate degree is associated with higher lifetime earnings, lower unemployment, and many believe, a better quality of life.¹ However, the estimated average four-year cost of attendance at the most prestigious private colleges and universities in the United States approaches \$250,000 for students who started in the fall of 2012, while at some Adventist institutions, the four-year estimated costs may be as high as \$184,000.² The cost of attendance for most public schools is usually less than that of Adventist schools, and this has raised the issue of whether Adventist baccalaureate education is worth the additional cost. But choosing which college to attend can be a complex decision, and the relative costs are but one factor in that decision. The worth of an institution is partly in the eyes of the beholder. Some may assign a higher value to the qualitative aspects of education at an Adventist institution—attributes such as the religious environment, the social contacts, teaching consistent with one’s beliefs, and the overall nurturing that occurs. These attributes cannot be priced, and some are willing to pay a premium to receive them.

Quantitative benefits may include the smaller size of an Adventist institution, likelihood of being accepted, likely graduation rates, and other metrics that can be agreed on when comparing an Adventist institution to a public college or university. Therefore, any comparison is by definition a subjective one, as the qualitative aspects cannot be objectively measured and compared.

Background

A four-year degree program may be obtained at one of the 678 public, 1,543 private, not-for-profit, or 649 for-profit institutions in the nation.³ There are fourteen postsecondary, not-for-profit educational institutions in the North American Division, with nine of them within the United

States. Four other postsecondary institutions within the NAD are health related, and one is in Canada.⁴ Atlantic Union College recently shut down.

Niels-Erik Andreasen, the current president of Andrews University, once suggested that one of the questions institutions must ask is whether parents and students get good educational value for the money spent.⁵ Fritz Guy suggests that “What the parents may have been saying was that the quality of Adventist education does not justify its costs.” Guy also opines that there are attractive and accessible educational alternatives for Adventist students.⁶ Dallas Kindopp suggests that there are competitive influences from neighboring community colleges and public institutions that must be taken into account when assessing SDA higher education.⁷ George Knight explores the ongoing tension between the missiological roots of Adventist higher education and the academic vision of those seeking such things as secular accreditation and fully credentialed professors.⁸ The mission to prepare young people to work for the church has long been a primary mission of Adventist higher education, but more recently, colleges and universities are more likely to tout their placement in the *U.S. News & World Report* rankings than their student missionaries.

A postsecondary institution is chosen when the relationship between quality, quantity, and net cost of attendance meets the condition noted below. That is, each individual decides the manner in which the qualitative factors and quantitative factors interact, and whether they are greater than the net cost of attendance. The equation then would be: $f_i (\text{Qualitative Factors, Quantitative Factors}) \geq \text{Net Cost of Attendance}$

This is a demand equation regarding the individual’s preferences. On the supply side, the institution examines test scores, grades, extracurricular activities, essays, and special factors in deciding whether to grant admission. Admission is generally blind to financial need, and

the net cost is not an issue in an institution's admission decision. Because of the complexity of admission and enrollment decisions, this study will look only at some of those factors that can be measured.

Methodology

Title IV institutions have an agreement with the US Secretary of Education that permits their students to receive federal financial aid, and they are required to report institutional statistics to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES).⁹ These data are published for all institutions, and are the basis for this analysis. The metrics being considered are the 1) net cost of attendance, 2) percent admitted of those who apply, 3) the percent of first-year students who return for at least a second year, 4) the percent who graduate within six years of enrolling, 5) the debt burden of those who graduate, and 6) the default rate of the institutions.

A comparison is made between the metrics of the nine Adventist institutions and baccalaureate degree-granting,

publically supported institutions. The question is, to which public institutions should comparisons be made? One approach would be to compare Adventist institutions with public institutions in the state that the individual comes from. However, students who attend Adventist institutions largely come from outside the state in which the institution is located, so making such a comparison poses some difficulty.¹⁰

Another approach is to compare Adventist institutions with all 678 public institutions nationwide. This is not practical, nor do most students truly have access to all the public institutions nationwide. Instead, this study measures an Adventist institution against the public institutions in the state where the institutions are located. All states included in this analysis have one or more "flagship" institutions that are generally more selective and have the highest levels of retention and graduation among the public institutions in their states. Students who are accepted in these institutions generally have higher test scores and grades than those who attend other public institutions in that

Table 1. Number and enrollment of Adventist and state-supported institutions—fall 2010

Adventist institution (date founded)	Undergraduate enrollment	States in which the Adventist institutions operate	No. of state- supported baccalaureate institutions	Undergraduate students in the state institutions
Andrews University (1874)	1,931	Michigan	15	233,382
La Sierra University (1922)	1,755	California	30	525,674
Oakwood University (1896)	1,867	Alabama	13	128,509
Pacific Union College (1882)	1,495	California	30	525,674
Southern Adventist University (1892)	2,732	Tennessee	10	124,319
Southwestern Adventist University (1893)	762	Texas	32	462,228
Union College (1889)	829	Nebraska	6	43,646
Walla Walla University (1892)	1,529	Washington	8	97,586
Washington Adventist University (1904)	1,176	Maryland	12	118,879
		Totals¹	126	1,734,223
Average size of Adventist institutions	1,566		Average size of public institutions	13,764

Sources: US Department of Education, *National Center for Educational Statistics*, College Navigator. Fall 2011; *College Handbook*, College Board, 50th ed. New York. 2013.

¹California is only counted once to get the sums.

Table 2. Estimated one-year cost of attendance of SDA institutions for full-time beginning students in 2011–2012

Adventist institution	Tuition and fees	Room and board	Books and expenses	Personal expenses	Cost of enrollment
Andrews University	\$23,428	\$6,974	\$1,100	\$900	\$32,402
La Sierra University	\$27,231	\$7,350	\$1,656	\$3,096	\$39,333
Oakwood University	\$14,678	\$9,038	\$1,400	\$8,325*	\$33,441*
Pacific Union College	\$25,965	\$7,275	\$1,656	\$3,096	\$37,992
Southern Adventist University	\$18,324	\$5,356	\$1,100	\$4,000	\$28,780
Southwestern Adventist University	\$17,080	\$7,010	\$1,142	\$2,430	\$27,662
Union College	\$18,780	\$6,020	\$1,000	\$3,300	\$29,100
Walla Walla University	\$23,898	\$5,595	\$1,068	\$3,225	\$33,786
Washington Adventist University	\$20,180	\$7,600	\$1,200	\$1,100	\$30,080
Averages	\$21,063	\$6,913	\$1,258	\$3,275	\$32,508

Source: US Department of Education, College Navigator for each institution, <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>.

*These amounts seem high, but are the amounts reported on College Navigator. No refuting information is provided through the College Board website.

state.¹¹ A comparison with these flagship institutions would represent an unfair basis for looking at metrics.

To account for all public institutions, an enrollment-weighted average of all four-year, baccalaureate degree-granting public institutions in a state is used for the comparison group.¹² Thus, the effects of the flagship institutions are weighted with the other public institutions in the state, and all public institutions are included.

Table 1 shows the nine Adventist institutions and the dates they were founded; the states in which these institutions operate; the number of state-supported, baccalaureate degree-granting institutions in that state; and the total enrollment of students in those institutions. All state-supported institutions in each state are represented in the weighted averages. While we cannot know the states from whence the students in Adventist institutions originate, the 126 institutions represent a broad cross section of the 678 public institutions nationwide.

Clearly, Adventist institutions are substantively smaller than the average size of the public institutions in the same state as the Adventist institution. Southern Adventist University, with 2,732 enrolled undergraduates in fall of 2010, is the largest of the nine Adventist institutions considered, while Southwestern Adventist University, with an enroll-

ment of 762, is the smallest. Adventist institutions' enrollment numbers, averaging 1,566, contrast with public institutions that average 13,764 in enrollment, and are nearly nine times larger. Smaller institutions are often associated with smaller classes, a greater likelihood of close attention from professors and the administration, and the ability to know most of the other undergraduates. Larger public schools are often associated with a much larger range of class opportunities, but a more impersonal environment. While class size can be quantified, a strong preference for a smaller or larger school makes size more of a personal preference than a quantitative measure for comparison.

Cost of attendance

Gross cost of attendance Table 2 shows the estimated average total cost of attendance for beginning undergraduate students for one year, starting in fall 2011 for each of the nine Adventist institutions. The estimated costs are for on-campus students who have the average expenses in the following reported categories: 1) tuition and fees, 2) room and board, 3) books and expenses, and 4) personal expenses. These are the institution-reported cost estimates as required for all Title IV institutions, and placed on the website for the National Center for Education Statistics.

These first-year estimated average expenses range from \$27,662 for Southwestern to \$39,333 for La Sierra. On average, the gross cost of attendance at an Adventist institution is \$32,508, and is frequently the basis for the angst felt by many parents and their children when contemplating Adventist postsecondary education. Over a four-year period, using a simple multiplier of 4%, education at these institutions can cost up to \$184,000! It is no wonder that many families are asking if there are reasonable alternatives.

Net cost of attendance Few students pay the full price of tuition for their education. The gross cost of attendance is met through a combination of 1) institutional grants, 2) state and local grants, 3) federal financial aid, 4) family contributions, and 5) loans. Institutions negotiate with each student to offer a combination of federal, state, and institutional aid, while any remaining cost deficiencies are supplemented with work-study, public, and private loans. The average net price is generated by subtracting the average amount of federal, state/local government or institutional grant, or scholarship aid from the total gross cost of attendance.¹³

Table 3 shows a comparison of the published net price for the nine Adventist institutions and the weighted average published net price for all public institutions in the selected states. Several things should be noted about table 3. First, the net price is what the institution offers to the first-year student, whose family is then responsible for paying that net amount.

The ratios on table 3 also show how much more expensive the Adventist institutions are than the representative public institutions. For example, Andrews has a net cost of attendance of \$18,671, which is 1.47 times the weighted average net cost of attendance for state-supported baccalaureate institutions in the state of Michigan. La Sierra and Pacific Union must compete with the public systems of California that tend to be relatively inexpensive. This is especially true for the generally less selective California State University institutions. La Sierra, with a net cost of \$23,027 has a net cost ratio of 2.28, while Pacific Union has an estimated net price of \$23,792, which is 2.31 the weighted average for the public institutions in California. The lowest net price ratio is at Washington Adventist, which has a ratio of 1.23 times the weighted average net cost of attendance at institutions in Maryland.

Finally, the data show how Adventist institutions vary in the net price they present to the prospective student, with an implication of how much the family will need to borrow or provide through its own funds. Many choose to apply to more than one Adventist institution and, if accepted, may consider the net price as part of the decision process. In each instance, students who wish to attend an Adventist institution pay a premium above the estimated net price for the state-supported institutions. That is hardly surprising, as private institutions generally cost more than public ones.

Table 3. Average Adventist and public institutions' net price of attendance

Adventist institution	Average net price for Adventist institution	State	Weighted average net price for public institution	Net price ratio—Adventist/public
Andrews	\$18,671	Michigan	\$12,683	1.47
La Sierra	\$23,027	California	\$10,083	2.28
Oakwood	\$25,389	Alabama	\$12,061	2.11
Pacific Union	\$23,792	California	\$10,083	2.31
Southern	\$19,376	Tennessee	\$10,999	1.76
Southwestern	\$18,691	Texas	\$ 9,404	1.99
Union	\$17,612	Nebraska	\$12,304	1.44
Walla Walla	\$22,932	Washington	\$11,733	1.95
Washington Adventist	\$16,303	Maryland	\$13,270	1.23

Source: US Department of Education, College Navigator for each institution, <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>.

Table 4. Admission, retention and graduation rates for Adventist and state-supported institutions

Adventist institutions			State-supported institutions				
	Percent admitted	Percent that return	Percent that graduate		Percent admitted	Percent that return	Percent that graduate
Andrews	45	77	50	Michigan	73	81	51
La Sierra	47	73	32	California	50	85	58
Oakwood	44	67	40	Alabama	70	75	46
Pacific Union	47	70	41	California	50	85	58
Southern	49	73	50	Tennessee	69	74	44
Southwestern	Open ¹	66	45	Texas	55	75	48
Union	57	66	57	Nebraska	84	74	50
Walla Walla	89	78	57	Washington	74	83	62
Washington Adventist	Open ¹	69	29	Maryland	54	73	52

Source: US Department of Education, College Navigator for each institution, <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>.

¹“Open” refers to open enrollment, with no specific admission rates.

Admission, retention, and graduation

Admission, retention, and the graduation rate are among the key indicators of how postsecondary institutions are measured. For many, these are key indicators of the overall quality of the education experience for first-year students. Table 4 shows the percentages of those who are admitted among the applicants; the percentage of the first-year beginning students who return for the second year; and the percentage of those who enrolled in 2004 and who graduated in the six years following enrollment, at Adventist institutions, as well as the weighted average of all public schools in the states in which they are located. These quantitative measures are at the heart of what the extra net price of Adventist institutions helps provide. Of course, there are qualitative values in both the Adventist institutions and the public schools that are not easy to measure, but these quantitative measure help provide information about what one receives for the greater net cost of attending an Adventist institutions.

Admission The percent admitted column reflects to a degree how selectively an institution chooses from its application pool. When it comes to admission, state-supported institutions truly are bifurcated. For example, flag-

ship institutions, like Michigan, Berkeley, and UCLA tend to admit less than 30% of those who apply, while the less selective public institutions admit between 40% and 83% of those who apply. According to the NCES:

At both public and private nonprofit institutions, the six-year graduation rates for first-time, full-time students who sought a bachelor's degree in fall 2004 varied by the acceptance rate of the institution. Graduation rates were highest at institutions with the lowest admission rates. For example, at public four-year institutions with open admissions policies, 29% of students completed a bachelor's degree within six years. At public institutions where the acceptance rate was less than 25% of applicants, the six-year graduation rate was 82%.¹⁴

Admission is a complex activity for a postsecondary institution, and the comparison of Adventist and public institutions leaves much to be desired. When we look at admission rates we find that the Adventist institutions tend to admit a smaller fraction from their pool of applicants than do the state-supported institutions. For example, La Sierra and Pacific Union admit at a ratio that is 94% of the weighted average for all the California institutions (47/50). Since nearly all students at La Sierra and Pacific Union are

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supported
institutions.

from California, these data are consistent with students having just as likely a chance of being admitted at one of the public institutions, some of which admit close to 85% of those who apply. On the other hand, Andrews and Oakwood admit students at a rate that is 62% of the average rate for students who apply in Michigan (45/73) and Alabama (44/70). Southwestern and Washington Adventist have open enrollment, and do not have a reported admission rate. Their ratios cannot be compared with the weighted average for a public institution.¹⁵

Walla Walla, alone of the Adventist institutions, will admit a greater portion of those who apply than the public institutions in the state in which the Adventist institution operates. The data are consistent with the mandate most public institutions have to educate the youth of their state and allow the majority of students who want to get a college education to do so. That is not a requirement of the Adventist system, and may contribute to the lower admission rates. Public institutions' greater admission rate poses a special issue for Adventist institutions, as more of the youth who choose a college may find it easier to attend a public institution than an Adventist one.

Retention Returning to an institution for second and subsequent years is a reflection of several factors. Inertia sets in, college credits may be lost, and sometimes it is easier to return than transfer to another school. Returning students are generally pleased with the school where they completed their first year, and have settled into a routine. It is also likely that the net price of attendance for the first-year student is not carried over in the second and subsequent years. On average, students in Adventist institutions return the second year at a lower rate than do students in the public institution in their state. For example, 67% of the beginning students at Oakwood, and 66% of the first-year students at Southern and Southwestern return for a second year, but 75% of the weighted average of Alabama, 75% of Tennessee, and 75% of Texas students return. Other Adventist institutions have similar differences in their return rates, but in

each instance the return rate for Adventist institutions is lower. Among the flagship institutions in the states, the return rates are substantively larger. For example, the University of Alabama and Auburn University both have retention rates of 85% or greater.¹⁶ UC Berkeley and UCLA in California have return rates that exceed 90%. Among Adventist institutions, when retention comparisons are made between Adventist and public institutions, absent the flagships, the return rates are more favorable. Because the return rate is consistent across all states and Adventist institutions, these results carry additional weight. It is likely that a student's home state has similar metrics on retention.

Graduation The ultimate objective of attending a postsecondary institution is to graduate within a fixed period of time. Approximately 58% of first-time, full-time students who began seeking a bachelor's degree at all four-year institutions in fall 2004 completed a bachelor's degree within six years of the normal completion time. The six-year graduation rate at private, nonprofit institutions was 65%, 56% at public institutions, and 28% at private for-profit institutions.¹⁷ The NCES requires institutions to report the percent of students who have graduated since beginning in fall 2004. Some students transfer to another school and graduate from there, but that data are not captured by the NCES.

The graduation rates for Adventist institutions are lower than those of the public institutions in their states, with the exceptions of Southern Adventist and Union College, both of which graduate 57% of those who enrolled in 2004. The graduation rates are very low for La Sierra and Washington Adventist, with rates of 32% and 29%, respectively. None of the Adventist institutions reach the graduation average of 65% that the NCES indicates for private, not-for-profit institutions. Thus, the overall performance of the Adventist institutions, as it relates to graduation rates, shows that a very small percentage of first-year students stay around long enough to graduate. The data are consistent with a large percentage of students "sampling" an Adventist

Table 5. Average debt at graduation for those with debt, and average default rate for the institution

Adventist institutions			State-supported institutions			Ratios ¹	
	Average debt	Percent default		Average debt	Percent default	Debt	Default
Andrews	\$34,200	2.6	Michigan	\$23,519	3.4	1.45	0.76
La Sierra	\$28,876	5.7	California	\$14,099	3.1	2.05	1.84
Oakwood	\$15,000	12.5	Alabama	\$15,732	6.6	0.95	1.89
Pacific	\$23,792	5.2	California	\$14,099	3.1	1.69	1.68
Southern	\$23,379	3.3	Tennessee	\$15,803	7.3	1.72	0.45
Southwestern	\$27,121	9.2	Texas	\$18,585	6.2	1.46	1.48
Union	\$18,691	3.7	Nebraska	\$15,089	4.0	1.55	0.93
Walla Walla	\$28,287	2.8	Washington	\$11,319	4.4	2.50	0.64
Washington Adventist	\$16,225	7.7	Maryland	\$13,785	3.5	1.18	2.12

Sources: 2009 default rates data taken from NCES, College Navigator for each institution, <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator>. Information on the amount of debt is taken from Peterson's College Guide 2012.

¹Debt (Default) Ratio = Adventist Debt (Default) Rate / State Weighted Average Debt (Default) Rate.

education for a few years, then finishing their college education at a public institution. When retention and graduation are looked at together, the best result among Adventist institutions is at Walla Walla, where 78% of the first-year students return, and 57% graduate in a timely manner.

Post-graduation debt and institutional defaults

On average, individuals who graduate from SDA institutions have a much greater debt load and a mixed record of default on that debt than do individuals who graduate from a state-sponsored institution in the states where they are located. These results are found on table 5.

Average debt Students' debt loads range from a low of 95% (\$15,000/\$15,732) for those who graduate with debt from Oakwood, when compared to the weighted average of public institutions in Alabama, to a high of 250% (\$28,287/\$11,391) for those who graduate with debt at Walla Walla, when compared to graduates with debt in public institutions in the state of Washington. Students who graduate with debt at La Sierra also have a debt load that is double the amount of those who graduate with debt from the average public institution in California. The

greater debt load for Adventist institutions follows from the higher net cost of attendance, but also is consistent with financial aid that is not sufficient to bring Adventist costs to parity with public schools.

Student debt cannot be discharged under bankruptcy and many a student has "buyer's remorse" regarding the choices made to pay for college. In a recent *Quarterly Report on Household Debt*, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York indicated that student loan debt reached \$904 billion in the first quarter of 2012, and is now greater than credit card debt.¹⁸ The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau director is quoted as saying, "Too many student-loan borrowers were given loans they could not afford for more money that they needed. They are now overwhelmed by debt and regret the decisions they made."¹⁹

Default rates Loan default is not making the contracted payments as agreed to when the loan was taken out or consolidated.²⁰ The default rate is calculated for an institution after the student has left all other institutions and is expected to begin the repayment of federal loans. Adventist institutions have a mixed record regarding defaults, in which some institutions have a lower relative default rate than the surrounding state institutions, while others have more. The

national default rate for all institutions is 8.8%.²¹ Oakwood and Southwestern have higher default rates than the national average, at 12.5% and 9.2%, respectively. At Oakwood, one student in eight who has left the institution with a student loan is in default on that loan. A default will have adverse effects on one's credit rating and such things as the ability to rent an apartment or buy a car. Students who default on loans face many years of an affected financial life. If the institution's default rate reaches certain levels, institutional restrictions will be applied.²²

The issue of expected postgraduate student loan debt and the amount of debt reported for those who graduate with debt must figure into any analysis of whether Adventist colleges and universities are worth the costs. If student loans become excessive (relative to income flow from postgraduation jobs), it can impede job choices, location, and other options. In making a choice of where to attend a postsecondary institution, how one expects to live in the postgraduation years of one's life is another variable to consider when deciding whether to pay the additional costs of Adventist higher education. The NCES, however, does not report the percent of all graduates who also have debt.

Summary

This analysis considers a few of the most basic metrics as published by the NCES. As shown earlier, the decision to attend any institution has both qualitative and quantitative factors, while the qualitative factors and their role in the selection are a matter of some choice. This analysis is not able to determine the extent that students at Adventist institutions prepare for employment with Adventist schools, churches or other institutions. These will certainly affect the weight of qualitative factors.

However, the quantitative metrics for Adventist institutions, when compared with those of a weighted average of the public institutions in their state, are problematic. Adventist postsecondary education is more costly than the public institutions in the states in which Adventist institutions are located. At the same time, students in Adventist institutions have lower admission rates, are less likely to return for a second year, and are less likely to graduate than the first-year undergraduates in the public institutions in that state. Once students in Adventist institutions graduate, they are likely to have greater debt and a mixed record of whether or not they default on their federal student loans, compared to students at public institutions. Qualitative fac-

tors in the choice of postsecondary education at an Adventist institution cannot be measured, but for some students these factors compensate for the weaker results that come from the quantitative measures. This analysis does not answer the issue of whether an Adventist postsecondary education is worth it, but it does raise questions about what the extra expenditures are purchasing. ■

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4. The NAD postsecondary institutions not included are: Loma Linda University, Kettering College of Medical Arts, Florida Hospital of Health Sciences, and Griggs University, which are specialty postsecondary institutions, and there are no US statistics for Canadian University College. <http://www.adventistarchives.org>, Section 1, 56.
5. Niels-Erik Andreasen. "The Quality of Adventist Education: How can we know how well we are doing?" *Journal of Adventist Education* (October/November 2007): 12–15.
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9. Federal student aid programs are authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and are periodically reauthorized. The website FinAid: The Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid, published by

footnotes ➔ continued on page 77...



Walla Walla University

Dr. John McVay has agreed to return to the role of Walla Walla University's president. The university has also announced two new vice presidents: Dr. Robert Cushman, professor of paleobiology, as vice president of academic administration, and Jodi Wagner, formerly vice president of marketing and enrollment, who is expanding her role to become vice president of university relations and advancement. Student enrollment is also up significantly; 1,940 students are enrolled for fall 2012, the sixth highest enrollment in the university's history.



Right: returning WWU President John McVay; **top, far right:** new vice president Jodi Wagner; **far right, below:** new vice president Bob Cushman.



Left: Leroy and Lois Peters Music Center; **below:** memorial to Virginia-Gene Rittenhouse, WAU music professor and New England Youth Ensemble founder.



Washington Adventist University

Washington Adventist University opened its first new building in forty years—the Leroy and Lois Peters Music Center. The building features cutting-edge technology, multiple practice rooms, libraries, smart classrooms, recital rooms, and teaching studios. WAU also notes increased enrollment, a positive fiscal outlook, and a campus-wide effort to improve programs and facilities. In March, the university's accreditation status was also reaffirmed for another ten years by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Loma Linda University

Loma Linda University is tops among all schools for starting salaries in the nation, according to an article from ABC News. The article, "12 Colleges Whose Payoff In Pay Beats Harvard's," published September 20, 2012, by Alan Farnham, reports that graduates from LLU have a higher starting median salary than Harvard or Princeton. Loma Linda University has consistently ranked at the top of the annual Payscale.com report, ranking second in the 2010-2011 report, and first in the 2009-2010 report.



Above: breezeway with students; right: Prince Hall, home of the School of Dentistry.



Left: Opening of college bistro; below: the Aeolians Choir, men's basketball team, and Honda Campus All-Star Challenge national runners-up.

Oakwood University

Oakwood University is known as the "Julliard of the South": the small school with the big mouth. This past summer, Oakwood's Aeolians Choir won three gold medals and the World Spirituals Music championship trophy at the Seventh World Choir Games, considered the "Olympics of Choral Music." This was the university's first international choir competition. Oakwood has also produced musical artists such as five-time Grammy Award winner Mervyn Warren and opera singer Angela Brown, and the a cappella sextet Take 6.



Mark Kantrowitz, at <http://www.finaid.org>, contains a comprehensive listing of everything one needs to know about financial aid. See also "Funding Education Beyond High School: The Guide to Federal Student Aid," <http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications>.

10. In-state residency for first-time degree-seeking undergraduates is 23% at AU, 90% at LSU, 14% at OU, 80% at PUC, 23% at SAU, 54% at SWAU, 8% at UC, 41% at WWU, and 49% at WAU. Percentages found on College Navigator for each institution.

11. The distribution of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) score and American College Testing (ACT) score, which give the 25-75 percentile distribution, are uniformly higher for the flagship schools in each of the states where the Adventist institutions are located than are those of Adventist institutions. In most states, however, the SAT and ACT distributions are similar for schools that are not the flagship institutions. The SAT and ACT are often used as part of the selectivity criteria.

12. *Weights*, $w_i = n_i / \sum n_i$; *Weighted average* = $\sum w_i * Metric_i$, where n_i is the enrollment of the i th institution in the state and $Metric_j$ is the j th metric in the institution.

13. NCES definition found in College Navigator for each institution.

14. NCES, "Postsecondary Graduation Rates," *The Condition of Education 2012*: indicator 45.

15. Both SWAU and WAU set minimum guidelines for which students will be accepted based on their high school records. If those criteria are met, the student will be admitted. Open enrollment status is reported in the College Navigator of NCES.

16. NCES, College Navigator.

17. NCES, "Postsecondary Graduation Rates," *The Condition of Education 2012*: indicator 45, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_pgr.asp. See also tables 195, 205, and 291. See also <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d10/tables> for an alternative way to calculate completion rates.

18. Federal Reserve Bank of New York, "New York Fed Quarterly Report Shows Student Loan Debt Continues to Grow," May 31, 2012, <http://www.newyorkfed.org/newsevents/news/research/2012/an120531.html>.

19. Blake Ellis, "Private student loan debt reaches \$150 billion," *CNN-Money*, July 2012, <http://finance.yahoo.com/news/private-student-loan-debt-reaches-091200422.html>.

20. A cohort default rate is the percentage of a school's borrowers who enter repayment on certain Federal Family Education Loan Program loans or William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program loans during a particular federal fiscal year, October 1 to September 30, and default or meet other specified conditions prior to the end of the next fiscal year. The US Department of Education releases official cohort default rates once per year. The last cohort rate was 2009. NCES College Navigator.

21. See <http://www2.ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/defaultmanagement/defaultrates.html>.

22. *Ibid.*

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Review of Elaine Pagels's *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy and Politics in the Book of Revelation* | BY JOHN R. JONES

The defining question is not "What's going to happen?" but "What did happen?"

Of all the books of the Bible, Daniel and the Revelation have come in for the most speculative and varied interpretations. While this may say something about the interpreters who are drawn to these works, it also derives from a certain scholarly diffidence. The sober currents of biblical scholarship that have provided interpretive guidance elsewhere have slighted St. John's Apocalypse as being narrowly sectarian and marginal to the Christian canon.

But this neglect is changing. It took too long, but the major discoveries in the 1940s of ancient texts near the Dead Sea and near Nag Hammadi in Egypt have sharpened scholarly understanding of the formative role played by visionary "last-day" prophecies in Jewish and Christian life of two millennia ago. The past three decades, in particular, have seen a convergence of academic interest around this strain of thought and writing in antiquity that is distinctly different from classical prophecy. Typically marked by a strong sense of alienation from an evil world; the impending end of all things; a cosmic showdown between good and evil; obscure symbology and numerology; ranks of heavens, angels, and demons; various resurrections of the dead; final judgment of all beings; and the deliverance of an elect people who are in possession of secret, hidden knowledge, this complex of themes and notions now appears to have pervaded much more of early Christian thought than previously recognized. Its formative impact was brought into focus in the 1960s

with the pronouncement of influential New Testament scholar Ernst Käsemann, calling the world of biblical scholarship to recognize this phenomenon as "the mother of all [early] Christian theology."¹ With this, Christian groups that traditionally felt a certain ownership of Daniel and especially of the Revelation now find themselves sharing the turf with other authorities who have sometimes concurred with and sometimes challenged their established ways of reading.

While the ground has shifted under academic feet, yielding important new insights into how to understand these ancient texts, the gap between serious scholarly attention and freewheeling popular appropriations of



"THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE" BY ALBRECHT DÜRER

the Revelation has been slower to close. Elaine Pagels, a recognized scholar as well as an accomplished writer for the nonspecialist, is well positioned to pull these two worlds together. In her latest book, *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy and Politics in the Book of Revelation*,² she proceeds through five substantial chapters (followed by a brief conclusion) to explore recent insights into the role of St. John's Apocalypse in the life of the early Christian movement, with implications for our own use of the book today. Pagels's first chapter provides a survey of the Revelation's familiar contents against the expanded background of what we recently learned of such ancient writings. It is now more clear, for example, that the beastly figures of Daniel and the Revelation evoke primordial archetypes common to their ancient Near Eastern thought-world: the imagery of origins, recycled into that of the End. In her second chapter, Pagels takes up the attempt to more explicitly locate the Revelation in the various currents of Christian ideas toward the close of the first century CE.

Both of these initial chapters, which Adventist readers may find the most arresting, provide deliberate demonstrations of the traditional scholarly assumptions and procedures for interpreting literary works. The contrast with established Adventist applications is immediate. From the earliest Millerite preaching, Adventists have inherited the assumption that the Revelation refers definitively to successive events along the arc of the "last days" from Calvary to the New Earth. Such "continuous-historical" readings, with some elements reserved for a "futurist" fulfillment in the eschaton, underlie the sensational fictionalizing treatments that appear today.³ The academy's rejoinder is to inquire after controls: what norms, what canons of interpretation, can we identify that can help structure an objective (and thus trustworthy) reading of the Revelation?

On the conviction that the most objective pathway to what a given writing should *mean* for us today is through some determination of

what it *meant* in its original historical and cultural context, Pagels builds her report around the scholar's standard pair of questions: What circumstances gave rise to this work? And what was its author intending to say in addressing those circumstances? The resultant focus is on what has classically been termed the "preterist" frame of interpretation: the assumption that the Revelation has to do with its own era's conditions and tensions. While this leaves some room for an "idealist" or "symbolic" frame, in which the Revelation's messages might be re-applied in principle, whenever comparable situations arise, the defining question is not "What's going to happen?" but "What did happen?"

Certain of Pagels's results represent the broad consensus of scholarly opinion—starting with the general conviction that apocalyptic literature speaks to a situation of warfare, if not of persecution and oppression. In other regards, she proves more selective. Pagels's third chapter examines a sampling of non-canonical works⁴ that, dating back to within about a century and a half after Christ's death, represent some thought patterns or motifs comparable at points to those of the Revelation. By shedding valuable light on the Jewish and Christian apocalyptic movements, they flesh out our understanding of John's Revelation in its original setting.

Yet key mysteries remain. The strong polarities in the Revelation, so typical of such writing, still puzzle: who are the "synagogue of Satan," who "claim to be Jews but are not?"⁵ The answer lies in the book's historical location between Jews who believed in Jesus as Messiah, and a nascent religious movement called "Christianity," populated overwhelmingly by non-Jews and clearly divorced from Judaism. If, by its generally accepted date of the early 90s CE, the Revelation belongs to the latter perspective, the term "Jews" is being reapplied by Christians to themselves, over against unbelieving Jews—the most common interpretation today. Pagels draws on the



Elaine Pagels

The contrast
with established
Adventist
applications is
immediate.

Who are
the “synagogue
of Satan,”
who “claim to
be Jews but
are not?”

opposite interpretation dating from a century and a half ago that sees the Revelation as a rearguard protest by a Jewish believer in Jesus against the gospel’s perversion by Gentile adopters. In such a view, Paul’s converts can only be seen as champions of a Satanic delusion, to be condemned in the Last Judgment.⁶

In her fourth chapter, Pagels paints the sociological picture of what such a struggle would have looked like by the second and third generations after Jesus. A contest between two kinds of authority, it would have pitted traditional legal prescriptions against claims of new spiritual inspiration, with the resultant tensions centering around questions of ritual purity. Only such purity, in the Revelation’s perspective, can adequately motivate Jesus’s true followers to stand firm against idolatrous compromise with imperial Rome.

On this reading, our problem with the Revelation today is the problem that arose with Constantine’s conversion: how to reapply a book so alienated from an oppressive world, so absolute in its eschatological solution, when “what came to an end was not the *world*, but *persecution*.”⁷ The richness of the Revelation’s symbology provides the solution, as this is the kind of discourse that best lends itself to reinterpretation. From the whore of Babylon to the idea of the Resurrection, Pagels’s fifth chapter illustrates how fourth-century Christians found ways to lend new life to the ancient text. Ultimately, then, Pagels implies that whether we have come to this ancient work from a “preterist” or a “continuous-historical” perspective, the “symbolic” frame may offer the most helpful hermeneutic for all Christians as time goes on. But the question of interpretive criteria remains. For Pagels, the ultimate test is the interpretation that speaks not only through the voice of fear, but also through the voice of hope. Pagels provides the best-informed, most up-to-date, and most readable treatment of current scholarly work in the Revelation and its genre. For interested individuals, small discussion groups, or even

for classroom use, it fills a pressing need in helpful ways. ■

John R. Jones is an associate professor of religion in the H. M. S. Richards Divinity School at La Sierra University. A graduate of Walla Walla University and Andrews University, his doctorate from Vanderbilt University is in New Testament studies, with a secondary emphasis in Asian religions. Prior to coming to Southern California, John and his wife Pat, a professor of nursing at Loma Linda University, taught at Hong Kong Adventist College and at the Adventist International Institute for Advanced Studies in the Philippines.



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2. Elaine Pagels, *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2012).
3. Adventist interpretations of the Revelation breathe different air. Yet we too must speak of “interpretations” in the plural, with substantial differences among them. Nor do our various past interpretations stand up consistently to re-readings today, in light of subsequent developments. We too increasingly recognize our need for criteria.
4. *The Revelation of Zostrianos, The Revelation of Peter, The Revelation of Ezra, The Secret Revelation of John, The Apocryphon of James, The Dialogue of the Savior, The Gospel of Truth, Allogenes, and Thunder: Perfect Mind*, plus others in passing.
5. “I know the slander on the part of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan” (Rev. 2:9 NRSV).
6. “I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but are lying—I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you” (Rev. 3:9 NRSV).
7. Pagels, 134 (italics in the original).

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Illumination

Shabbat.

Like every day it flows along
from evening star to rosy dawn
then midday sun to silver dusk.
Or as some say, in vertical
and horizontal form to shape a cross,
joining at a centre place of rest.

Shabbat

perhaps is really in totality
a state of mind celestial,
from Doppler blue to red,
or Milky Way extravaganza;
a vast experience, unlimited,
galactic or bright nova.

Orion's door
declares *Shabbat* is not a gift
of mystery, but pools of light,
a galaxy of grace. Torn hands
outstretched, Creator God comes
robed in stars. *Peace, my child,
I am myself your rest. Be still.*

Marye Trim