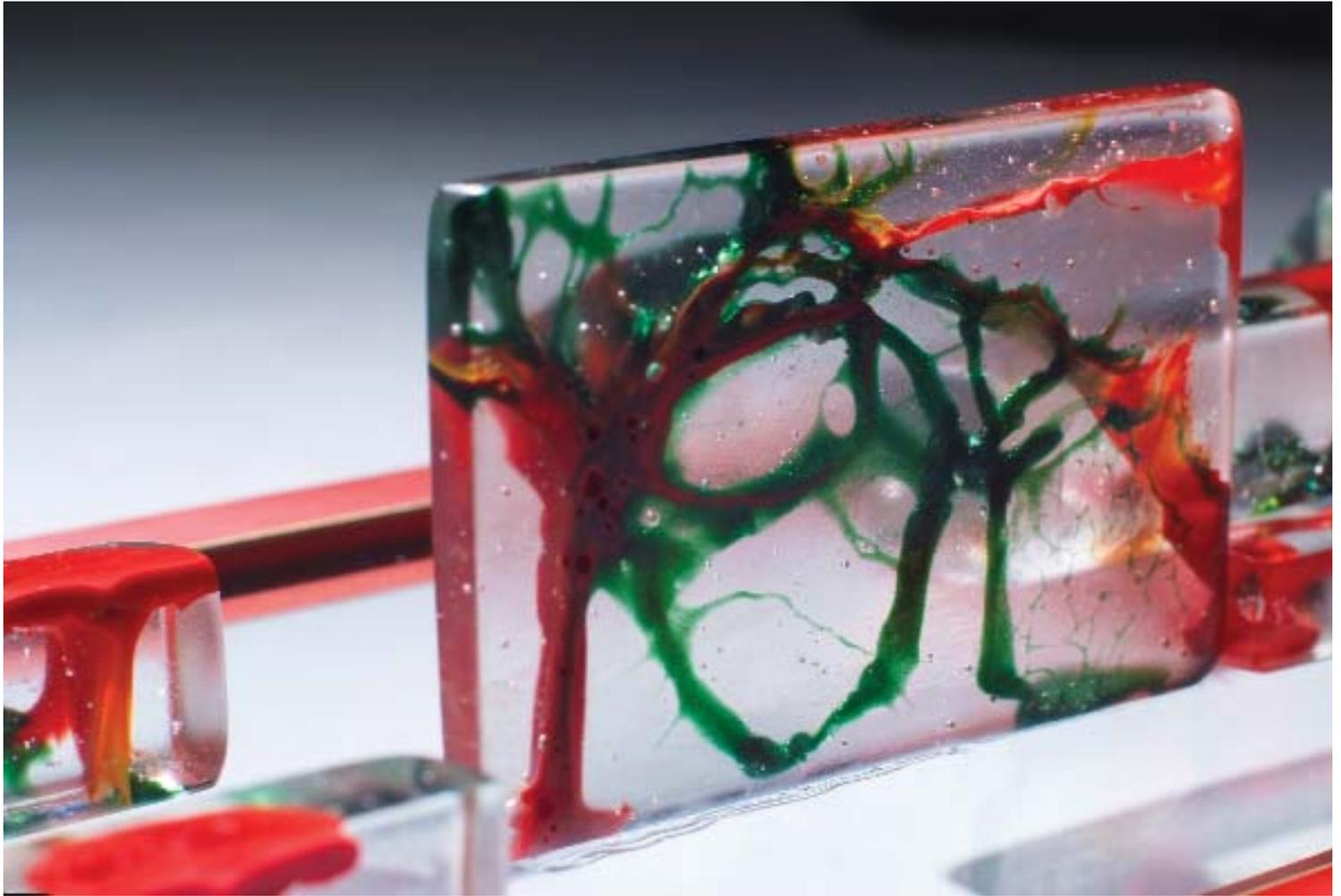


 community through conversation

SPECTRUM



Editing the 28 | *Christ Our Law* | **Adventists**
Finding Identity in God | *Is Headship Theology Biblical?*
My Friend Moshen | *Too Small a Thing* | **The Role**
of the Holy Spirit in Christian Spirituality | *And Now*
We Are One...But Wait!

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Cover

Our little house, in a mythical forest, on a foggy autumn morning, fused glass, 38" x 8" x 10". By Janene Evard.

Artist's Statement

The essence of my work involves the building of translucent color layers and textures that play with light. Themes are often musical or allegorical/fantastical in nature. "Warm Glass," for me, is the most exquisite way to create 3-D forms. As I cut stacked and kiln-fused layers of glass, I began to see forest forms. I "cold-worked" the glass (sandblasted, sanded, polished) and re-fused until I had the blocks of the house and the misty forest. Working, for me, is a long prayer of meditation and interaction with the Creator.

About the Artist

For the past thirty years, Evard has played with light, color, and form in many mediums. She majored in biology, and also holds a master's degree in vocal performance. In addition to organizing science fair seminars, she was the first director of kite art for the American Kite Association. Lately, glass has become a new fascination. Evard says that she can't do any of this without God's help. "He tells me, 'Be still, and know that I am God. I will guide you through it; calm down, breathe, and keep going.'" View her artwork in the collections of www.ovac-ok.org and www surfacedesign.org.

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Doing the Numbers | BY BONNIE DWYER

With the help of its worldwide educational system, the Seventh-day Adventist church has embarked on unprecedented data gathering in recent years. Two major surveys on beliefs, attitudes, experiences in the local church and on spiritual life practices have been conducted in the last three years. Survey teams from the various Adventist universities around the world helped to conduct interviews and distribute questionnaires with 26,000 church members on six continents in nine divisions. An additional 1,200 current students/graduates (aged 20–30) of Adventist universities in North America have been questioned. The views of ex-SDAs were sought, too, and over 900 of them filled out questionnaires. In another study, tithing was the topic taken to church members on four continents. Responses were gathered from 9,000 members. Pastors (4,260 of them) from all divisions have been surveyed.

Why all the studies? Reporting to the General Conference Executive Committee in October, Archivist David Trim said the data is being collected to assist with strategic planning. Data-driven decisions are becoming the norm.

And what do the numbers from those worldwide surveys say? I found the demographics of the church membership particularly interesting. The official stance is now that the church is 56.8% female and 43.2% male globally. That varies, of course, depending on where in the world you are. The divisions with the greatest extremes are the East Central Africa Division where it is 35% male and 65% female and the West Central Africa Division that is 60% male and 40% female.

Globally-speaking, we are a young church. Those over 60 comprise only 10.22% of the membership, but in the North American Division the over-60 crowd makes up 43% of the church and less than 20% are under the age of

40. By contrast, in the Southern Africa Indian Ocean Division, 68% are under the age of 40 and only 6% are over the age of 60; in the South American Division 65% of the membership is under the age of 40 and 6% are over the age of 60. There are four large divisions where less than 10% of the membership is over 60.

These figures raise questions as well as provide direction for strategic planning. What does it mean to the current issues within the church that the membership is young? The only age-related result that Trim shared in his report came from the survey in North America of current students and recent graduates in the 20–30 age category. That survey showed a 49% acceptance of practicing homosexuals as church members. Acceptance of practicing homosexuals as church leaders got 21% approval.

Anyone who has tried to explain the current discussion about women's ordination to someone under the age of 25 knows they respond to the discussion very differently than someone over 50. "You mean we don't ordain women?" they will say with a look of astonishment on their face. "Why is this still an issue?"

Well, one of the reasons it is still an issue is because of headship theology. In this issue we take a look at the conversation about headship that has taken place within the North American Division theology of ordination study committee by including some of the documents from their report. The entire report is available online at www.nador-dination.com.

Other divisions will be adding more papers in the weeks to come in anticipation of a 2015 vote when our prayer is that the Spirit will guide the numbers. ■



And Now We are One...But Wait! | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

The leadership of the General Conference has learned that you can put your shoulder against Tomorrow, but you can't guarantee that Today will last forever.

With moral support from some entities in other parts of the world, North American Adventism has reached two new milestones. Despite the opposition of General Conference executive officers, a woman has become the president of a conference here. And despite similar opposition, the Division's leadership has voted overwhelming support for the full equality of men and women in ordained Adventist ministry. (On November 12, as I was completing these comments, word came that leaders of the Inter-European Division [EUD] had voted to throw their division's support behind the ordination of women.)

Sandra K. Roberts became the president of the Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on Sunday, October 27. The first woman ever elected to such a responsibility, she won her job despite a warning from GC president Ted Wilson that her election would not be recognized by world Adventism. Days later, on October 31, members of the North American Division Executive Committee, meeting in Silver Spring, MD, welcomed her into their circle. The NAD secretary explained that Roberts had been "duly elected" by a proper Adventist entity; the Pacific Union Conference president said her constituency had appointed the person "best qualified" for the job.

North America, at least, would recognize

her presidency.

Wilson's objection reflected his belief that Roberts' ordination—a prerequisite for the office of conference president—was invalid. Policies voted in the Pacific Union and the Southeastern California Conference undergirded her ordination, but General Conference leaders do not accept the legitimacy of these policies.

On this point, too, North America has weighed in. In the NAD Executive Committee deliberation on November 4, members listened to a report from their division's Theology of Ordination Study Committee. The committee's chair, Gordon Bietz, president of Southern Adventist University, reviewed the context—long years of official conversation, a nearly two-foot-high pile of accumulated official documents—and said the Committee majority was now convinced that ordination to gospel ministry should be conferred on men and women alike.

Two members of the committee, one of them from the General Conference Biblical Research Institute, gave a minority perspective, arguing that scripture supports "male headship" for both home and church. Later, speaking from the floor, the president of the Michigan Conference made a similar case for "male headship." But several committee members representing the majority position spoke after the minority report, and remarks by Richard Davidson of the Adventist Seminary at Andrews University had addressed the "headship" argument persuasively. When the time came for NAD Executive Committee

[Sandra K. Roberts]...won her job despite a warning from GC president Ted Wilson that her election would not be recognized by world Adventism.

members to respond to the report, 182 voted in favor of ordaining women. Only thirty-one opposed the idea. Three persons abstained.

Before bringing Bietz to the podium, Dan Jackson, NAD president, had said that Ted Wilson wanted members not to take a vote on the report. But with Jackson's backing, the vote did take place. Jackson clarified its significance, once in the meeting itself and once in a later statement issued with a view to a misunderstanding he had noticed in online responses to Monday's vote. NAD Executive Committee members had approved a *recommendation*. This was, as he put it in his statement, "an indication to the World Church where we as a division stand."

Jackson was alluding to the plan whereby all divisions of the world church will express themselves on the question of women's ordination. In the end, delegates to the 2015 General Conference session will, according to this plan, make a policy for the entire church.

So North American Adventism believes world policy *should* change. But the ever widening sphere in which women here can achieve full recognition as ordained ministers may continue to stand athwart the will of the General Conference.

A second recommendation from the North American Division Theology of Ordination Study Committee addressed the potential for ongoing disharmony. Members recommended support for authorizing each church division "to consider, through prayer and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, its most appropriate approach to the ordination of women to gospel ministry." The point was to disavow the idea of a one-size-fits-all policy on a matter that remains controversial in many, or perhaps most, parts of the world church. Local nuance should be taken into account. With their vote, Executive Committee members were supporting this recommendation as well as the first one.

There is much still to decide. But with the passing of two milestones—Sandra Roberts now leading her conference, and the division now officially endorsing gender equality in ordained ministry—women are standing taller. And so are (many) men, who come into a better version of themselves when they forswear the arrogance of "headship," the male assertion of power over wives and other women.

Some who defend the assertion of male power over women say in effect, "Headship then, headship now,

headship forever." Jesus himself offered useful perspective concerning this argument. When he was asked about the Deuteronomic warrant for easy, male-initiated divorce, he took issue with it. Appealing to the creation story in Genesis 2, he said that when God brings man and woman together they become "one flesh." So a man's whim should not "separate" what God has brought together—"from the beginning," Jesus declared, "it was not so" (Matthew 19:6, 8).

What *was*—even if it be enshrined in Holy Writ—does not foreclose on change toward what *can be*, change toward something better, something more aligned with God's will from the beginning. This argument from Jesus counts, in itself, against the idea that men were ever *meant* to put women at a disadvantage to themselves. Later, he bridled when he saw the disciples angling for status in his circle. The rulers of the Gentiles "lord it over" people, he said, but among you the truly great are the ones who serve. "I myself," Jesus said to bolster the point, "came not to be served, but to serve" (Matthew 20:24–28).

This surely clinches it: ruling "over" was never meant to be the Christian way. And that is why Paul could famously announce that life in Christ dissolves all distinctions of status: as there can no longer be Jew or Greek, slave or free, there can no longer be male and female, "for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

We can say now that the North American church bureaucracy gets it. But the second recommendation embraced in Silver Spring tells us the NAD may get something else as well. The Letter to the Ephesians says lives "worthy" of the Christian "calling" proceed "with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:1–3).

Encouraging the General Conference to permit world divisions to think longer about the ordination of women, and to consider local nuance, seems to exemplify what Ephesians is talking about. Unity is not unison. The bond of peace is not a straitjacket. ■

Charles Scriven chairs Adventist Forum.



Summer reading responses

Re: Spectrum 41-3

My copy of the most recent issue of *Spectrum* recently arrived (up here to Canada). I just wish to say: Excellent job! Kudos to you and all on your staff. I was especially impressed with the student section, and rather pleased to see the amount of representation from students here at Canadian University College—including the wonderful cover art!

Wow!

Thank you,
 JOHN MCDOWELL
 CANADIAN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
 ALBERTA, CANADA

Re: "What's an Adventist, Anyway?" by Giampiero Vassallo

Thank you, Giampiero, for your insightful article. Growing up in Canada in a largely First Nations community, within a mixed Irish/Métis family, I saw the conflict between bounded-set and centered-set worldviews on a regular basis. Many of the cultures originating within North America are largely centered-set, in contrast to the Western-style culture that shapes our national governments. Over the past few hundred years, these various cultures have been forced to form bounded-set organizations in order to interact with a bounded-set government otherwise incapable of understanding them. The enforced closed-set nature of these imposed organizations has led to a gradual change in self-identity as we start to believe a bounded story, leading to the creation of divisions within communities based on arbitrary intrinsic concepts like blood quantum, ideas that have no *relational* meaning whatsoever. Where once marriage or friendship meant inclusion, intrinsic boundaries now can keep people separate. Where once the centrality of a way of living with the land



and each other was what defined a community, now this approach to establishing identity has faded in the face of lists of defined intrinsic qualities enforced with violence by authorities, or even by individuals within groups.

Watching this struggle play out in my church is difficult, because I can look back in history and see all the ways in which this approach has played out horribly, resulting in the destruction of relationships and the impossibility of building new ones. When I see the centrality of a way of searching for truth being replaced with lists of group-sanctioned identity markers, I appreciate knowing that there are others who resist resorting to bounded-set shortcuts as a way of defining and structuring our church community. I hope to see a real change as we as a community become aware of the inherent incompatibility of this worldview with the character of Christ.

DALE MCCREERY
 HAZELTON, B.C., CANADA



Editing the 28



Annual Council Delegates Review Suggested Rewording to 28 Fundamental Beliefs

BY ELIZABETH LECHLEITNER/ADVENTIST NEWS NETWORK

Annual Council delegates recently approved the next step in a five-year process to better articulate the church's core beliefs, using clearer—and frequently more inclusive—language.

Adventist theologians led delegates through a reading of an edited draft of all 28 Fundamental Beliefs prepared by the church's Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee. The group was appointed in 2011 to follow up on a decision during the 2010 General Conference Session to strengthen the church's interpretation of origins.

It came as no surprise, then, that Fundamental Belief Number 6 received the most red ink. One proposed edit to the church's belief on Creation replaces "In six days, the Lord made" with "In a recent, six-day creation, the Lord made." Another suggested change specifies that creation took place within the span of "six literal days."

The word "literal" closes what some Adventists have

claimed is an interpretive loophole that hypothetically allows theistic evolution to explain the Genesis origins account.

The edited draft also replaces the document's citation of the first verse of Genesis, which states "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth" with a passage from Exodus 20, which says God created "the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them..."

The change allows for differing understandings of whether the creation of the "cosmos," or universe, was coincident with the six-day creation of life on earth. Some creationist Adventist theologians believe Genesis 1:1 may refer to creation in a broader sense (see Job 38:7), whereas Exodus 20:11, the draft states, "seems to restrict the creative act to what took place during the six days of creation."

"The suggested version doesn't bring anything new to the belief. It just states with a firmer voice, or a more clear voice, what we have always believed," said Artur Stele, an Adventist world church vice president and co-chair of the Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee.

Overall, the draft proposes changes—most of which are minor and editorial in nature—to eighteen of the church's 28 Fundamental Beliefs.

Stele provided additional background on the new gender-neutral language that shows up consistently throughout the draft document. "Man and "mankind" now read "human" and "humanity."

"We wanted to determine whether the suggestion was biblical or just reflecting the spirit of the day," Stele said. After a close study of Hebrew usage in the Old Testament, "you cannot conclude words such as 'man' only refer to the masculine gender."

Even in the New Testament, Stele said, inclusivity is the clear biblical intent. The original Greek word "man" was always gender-neutral until the modern era. "It

means human being," he said.

The draft also underscores the church's belief on Marriage and Family, suggesting that the phrase "a man and a woman" replace the current word "partners" to ensure that the church's definition of marriage cannot apply to same-sex unions. The new version "removes any ambiguity," church leaders said, that could be "misused" by Adventists supporting gay, lesbian or transgender marriages. Changes to Fundamental Belief Number 23 also include removing the word "disciplinarian" when urging parents to emulate Christ's relationship with humanity when raising their children.

The draft also does away with outdated English vocabulary and usage. "Which" frequently becomes "that" and "gracious" is now used to describe God, instead of "beneficent." Another change replaces the archaic word "fruitage" with "fruit."

Stele assured delegates that the Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee only included proposed changes that met several criteria. The only included suggestions that survived editorial scrutiny were ones that "deepen" the statement, refrain from "elaborations of ideas already present" or present key ideas currently missing. The committee also **editing the 28** → **continued on page 10...**

Highlights

<p>4 133-13GS FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS - 5 AMENDMENT 6 7 RECOMMENDED. To amend the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, to read as 8 follows: 9 10 Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists 11 12 Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental 13 beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the 14 church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements 15 may be expected at a General Conference Session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a 16 fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of 17 God's Holy Word. 18 19 1 The Holy Scriptures 20 21 The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by 22 divine inspiration through holy men persons of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by 23 the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to men humanity the knowledge necessary for 24 salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the final authority and the infallible revelation of His will. 25 They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, 26 and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (Ps. 119:105; Prov 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; 27 John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.) (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 28 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.) 29 30 2. The Trinity 31 32 There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons. God is 33 immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond 34 human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He is forever worthy of worship, 35 adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Gen. 1:26; Deut. 6:4; Isa. 6:8; Matt. 28:19; 36 2 Cor. 1:21, 22; 13:14; Eph. 4:1-6; 1 Peter 1:2.) (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; 37 Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:7.) 38 39 3. The Father 40 41 God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He 42 is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and 43 faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also 44 revelations of the Father. (Gen. 1:1; Exod. 34:6, 7; Deut. 4:35; Ps. 110:1, 4; John 3:16; 14:9; 45 1 Cor. 15:28; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 John 4:8; Rev. 4:11.) Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 15:28; John 3:16; 1 John 46 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:17; Ex. 34:6, 7; John 14:9.)</p>	<p>Comment [TKB1]: Inclusive language</p> <p>Comment [TKB2]: Inclusive language</p> <p>Comment [TKB3]: This addition aims to make explicit the principle of <i>sola scriptura</i>.</p>
---	--

13 John 1:1-3, 14; 5:22; 10:30; 14:1-3, 9; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17-19;
14 Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 2:9-18; Heb. 8:1, 2.) (John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:15-19; John 10:30;
15 14:9; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:17-19; John 5:22; Luke 1:35; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:9-18; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4;
16 Heb. 8:1, 2; John 14:13.)

5. The Holy Spirit

17
18
19
20 God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation,
21 and redemption. He inspired the writers of Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws
22 and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of
23 God. Sent by the Father and the Son to be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to
24 the church, empowers it to bear witness to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it
25 into all truth. (Gen. 1:1, 2; 2 Sam. 23:2; Ps. 51:11; Isa. 61:1; Luke 1:35; 4:18; John 14:16-18, 26;
26 15:26; 16:7-13; Acts 1:8; 5:3; 10:38; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Peter 1:21.) (Gen. 1:1, 2;
27 Luke 1:35; 4:18; Acts 10:38; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:11, 12; Acts 1:8; John 14:16-18,
28 26; 15:26, 27; 16:7-13.)

6 Creation

29
30
31
32 God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic and historical
33 account of His creative activity. In six days a recent six-day creation the Lord made "the heavens
34 and the earth, the sea and all that is in them" and rested on the seventh day, "the heaven and the
35 earth" and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus
36 He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His creative work performed and
37 completed during six literal days that together with the Sabbath constituted a week as we
38 experience it today, completed-creative-work. The first man and woman were made in the image
39 of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with
40 responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was "very good," declaring the glory
41 of God. (Gen. 1-2; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Isa. 45:12; Acts 17:24; Col. 1:16;
42 Heb. 11:3; Rev. 10:6; 14:7.) (Gen. 1; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 11:3.)

Comment [TKB6]: This may be the best place to incorporate the historicity of the narrative. We can explore other possibilities, but the impression we have is that if we place it somewhere else within the Statement, we may have to elaborate on it.

Comment [TKB6]: This is the best place to introduce the idea of a recent creation.

Comment [TKB7]: The quote is not from Genesis 1:1, but from Exodus 20:11. The reason is that terminology used in Exodus seems to restrict the creative act to what took place during the six days of creation and is not necessarily dealing with the creation of the cosmos. The Bible makes clear that during the creation of the earth, other intelligent beings already existed in the cosmos (Job 38:7). We also believe that sin originated in heaven among the angels before the creation of humans. Therefore our creation statement should reflect this biblical information without developing it. By quoting Exodus instead of Genesis, we leave open the possibility that Genesis 1:1 is dealing with the creation of the cosmos and the creation week is about life on the planet.

Comment [TKB8]: This is already included in the biblical quotation from Exodus.

Comment [TKB9]: We retain the verb "completed" in indicate that the biblical creation account is not describing a still ongoing process.

Comment [TKB10]: The question of a real week is considered to be important, but it is difficult to find a proper place for it and to express it in language that is clear and that does not add too much to the text.

8
9 God, the image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants
10 share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to
11 evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent
12 mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and
13 one another, and to care for their environment. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7, 15; 3; Ps. 8:4-8; 51:5, 10;
14 58:3; Jer. 17:9; Acts 17:24-28; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Eph. 2:3; 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20.)
15 (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7; Ps. 8:4-8; Acts 17:24-28; Gen. 3; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20;
16 Ps. 51:10; 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20; Gen. 2:15.)

8 The Great Controversy

17
18
19 All humanity is now involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding
20 the character of God, His law, and His sovereignty over the universe. This conflict originated in
21 heaven when a created being, endowed with freedom of choice, in self-exaltation became Satan,
22 God's adversary, and led into rebellion a portion of the angels. He introduced the spirit of
23 rebellion into this world when he led Adam and Eve into sin. This human sin resulted in the
24 distortion of the image of God in humanity, the disordering of the created world, and its eventual
25 devastation at the time of the worldwide flood, as presented in the historical account of
26 Genesis 1-11. Flood: Observed by the whole creation, this world became the arena of the
27 universal conflict, out of which the God of love will ultimately be vindicated. To assist His
28 people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and
29 sustain them in the way of salvation. (Gen. 3; 6-8; Job 1:6-12; Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-18;
30 Rom. 1:19-32; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 1:14; 1 Peter 3:8; 2 Peter 3:6; Rev. 12:4-9.)
31 (Rev. 12:4-9; Isa. 14:12-14; Job. 28:12-18; Gen. 3; Rom. 1:19-32; 5:12-21; 8:19-22; Gen. 6-8;
32 2 Peter 3:6; 1 Cor. 4:9; Heb. 1:14.)

9. The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ

33
34
35
36 In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection,
37 God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this
38 atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and
39 holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and
40 the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness.
41 The death of Christ is substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming. The bodily
42 resurrection of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept

Comment [TKB12]: There are a couple of reasons for placing this sentence here. First, this is the only place in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs in which the flood is mentioned; second, the phrase "worldwide flood" is the equivalent of the originally suggested reading ("and that the flood was global in extent"); and third, Statement 48 takes us back to creation and the fall making it possible to make a reference to Genesis 1:11 and not only to chapters dealing with the flood.

Comment [TKB13]: This makes explicit what is already implicit in the statement.

13 and Lord, ~~Lord and Christ~~, as Substitute and Example. This faith, which receives salvation, ~~faith~~
14 ~~which receives salvation~~ comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's
15 grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from
16 the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our
17 minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life.
18 Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation
19 now and in the judgment. (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 45:22; 53; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 33:11; 36:25-27; Hab.
20 2:4; Mark 9:23, 24; John 3:3-8, 16; 16:8; Rom. 3:21-26; 8:1-4, 14-17; 5:6-10; 10:17; 12:2;
21 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Gal. 1:4; 3:13, 14, 26; 4:4-7; Eph. 2:4-10; Col. 1:13, 14; Titus 3:3-7;
22 Heb. 8:7-12; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:21, 22; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rev. 13:8.) (2 Cor. 5:17-21; John 3:14;
23 Gal. 1:4; 4:4-7; Titus 3:3-7; John 16:8; Gal. 3:13, 14; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; Rom. 10:17; Luke 17:5;
24 Mark 9:23, 24; Eph. 2:5-10; Rom. 3:21-26; Col. 1:13, 14; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26; John 2:3-8;
25 1 Peter 1:23; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 8:7-12; Eze. 36:25-27; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rom. 8:1-4; 5:6-10.)

11 Growing in Christ

29 By His death on the cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the
30 demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their
31 ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as
32 we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Now the Holy Spirit dwells within us
33 and empowers us. Continually committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from
34 the burden of our past deeds. No longer do we live in the darkness, fear of evil powers,
35 ignorance, and meaninglessness of our former way of life. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are
36 called to grow into the likeness of His character, communing with Him daily in prayer, feeding
37 on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for
38 worship, and participating in the mission of the Church. We are also called to follow Christ's
39 example by compassionately ministering to the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual
40 needs of humanity. As we give ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing
41 to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and
42 every task into a spiritual experience. (1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12;

Comment [TKB14]: The reason for using the title "Christ" is not clear. The connection between the two Christological titles and the final clause in the sentence ("as Substitute and Example") also needs clarification. The suggested changes resolve both items.

Comment [TKB15]: Proper English punctuation.

Comment [TKB16]: This addition summarizes a genuine Seventh-day Adventist concern for service to suffering human beings that is not emphasized in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs and will make it unnecessary to add a new statement of faith on Christian Social Responsibility.

2 Gal. 5:22-25; Eph. 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; Phil. 3:7-14; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15;
3 1 Thess. 5:16-18, 23; Heb. 10:25; James 1:27; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 1 John 4:4.) (Ps. 1:1, 2; 23:4;
4 77:11, 12; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; Luke 10:17-20; Eph. 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; 1 Thess. 5:23;
5 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Phil. 3:7-14; 1 Thess. 5:16-18; Matt. 20:25-28; John 20:21;
6 Gal. 5:22-25; Rom. 8:38, 39; 1 John 4:4; Heb. 10:25.)

12 The Church

10 The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.
11 In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world;
12 and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration
13 of the Lord's Supper, for service to humanity, all mankind, and for the worldwide proclamation
14 of the gospel. The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word revealed in
15 the Scriptures, Word, and from the Scriptures, which are the written Word. The church is God's
16 family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The
17 church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The
18 church is the bride for whom Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse her. At His return in
19 triumph, He will present her to Himself a glorious church, the faithful of all the ages, the
20 purchase of His blood, not having spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish. (Gen. 12:1-3;
21 Exod. 19:3-7; Matt. 16:13-20; 18:18; 28:19, 20; Acts 2:38-42; 7:38; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:22, 23;
22 2:19-22; 3:8-11; 5:23-27; Col. 1:17, 18; 1 Peter 2:9.) (Gen. 12:3; Acts 7:38; Eph. 4:11-15; 3:8-
23 11; Matt. 28:19, 20; 16:13-20; 18:18; Eph. 2:19-22; 1:22, 23; 5:23-27; Col. 1:17, 18.)

13. The Remnant and Its Mission

27 The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a
28 time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God
29 and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims
30 salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is
31 symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in
32 heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have
33 a personal part in this worldwide witness. (Dan. 7:9-14; Isa. 1:9; 11:11; Jer. 23:3; Mic. 2:12;
34 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Peter 1:16-19; 4:17; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Jude 3, 14; Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4.)
35 (Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jude 3, 14; 1 Peter 1:16-19; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Rev.
36 21:1-14.)

Comment [TKB17]: Inclusive language.

Comment [TKB18]: The sentence implies that there are two sources of authority for the Church, namely Christ and the Scripture. But what we know about Christ is what the Scripture says or has revealed to us. The revision seeks to clarify this point.

Comment [TKB19]: This clause is now redundant.

23 Marriage and the Family

1
2
3 Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union
4 between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment
5 is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between a man and woman
6 ~~partners~~ who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric
7 of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the
8 relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who
9 divorces a spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some
10 family relationships may fall short of the ideal, ~~marriage partners~~ a man and a woman who fully
11 commit themselves to each other in Christ through marriage may achieve loving unity through
12 the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that
13 its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Parents are to bring up their
14 children to love and obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that
15 Christ is a loving, tender, and caring counselor ~~loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring,~~ who
16 wants them to become members of His body, the family of God. Increasing family closeness is
17 one of the earmarks of the final gospel message. (Gen. 2:18-25; Exod. 20:12; Deut. 6:5-9;
18 Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6; Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:11, 12; John 2:1-11; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11;
19 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; 6:1-4.) (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:3-9; John 2:1-11; 2 Cor. 6:14;
20 Eph. 5:21-33; Matt. 5:31, 32; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; Eccl. 20:12;
21 Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6.)
22

24 Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary

23
24
25 There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which ~~that~~ the Lord set up and not
26 ~~humans, men.~~ In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of
27 His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High
28 Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension, which was symbolized
29 by the work of the high priest in the holy place of the early sanctuary. ~~ascension.~~ In 1844, at the
30 end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning
31 ministry, which was symbolized by the work of the high priest in the most holy place of the
32 ~~earthly sanctuary, ministry.~~ It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate
33 disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of
34 Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices,
35 but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The
36 investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ
37 and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes
38 manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the
39 faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This
40 judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those
41 who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of
42 Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent. (Lev. 16; Num. 14:34;

Comment [TKB29]: The term "partners" and the phrase "marriage partners" could be misused by those promoting homosexuality. The revision removes any ambiguity.

Comment [TKB30]: The term "partners" and the phrase "marriage partners" could be misused by those promoting homosexuality. The revision removes any ambiguity.

Comment [TKB31]: The phrase "through marriage" reintroduced the term "marriage" deleted from the previous line.

Comment [TKB32]: The English term "disciplinarian" has undergone some change in meaning, giving to the sentence a negative tone. The additions aim at correcting this.

Comment [TKB33]: Editorial change based on English usage.

Comment [TKB34]: Inclusive language

Comment [TKB35]: The statement does not mention the typological significance of the work of the high priest in the holy and most holy places of the earthly sanctuary. These additions make the connections clear.

Comment [TKB36]: The statement does not mention the typological significance of the work of the high priest in the holy and most holy places of the earthly sanctuary. These additions make the connections clear.

editing the 28 → continued from page 10...

welcomed editorial suggestions meant to clarify or condense the beliefs. Members rejected any suggestions that they felt "primarily promoted a personal agenda," he said.

Adventist world church General Vice President Ben Schoun, who chaired the presentation, reminded delegates that the draft is "not the final copy" and urged them not to spend the afternoon debating semantics. He then invited delegates to lead discussions in their respective church divisions and submit further edits to the Fundamental Beliefs by June 1, 2014.

The Fundamental Beliefs Review Committee will prepare a second draft of the document for the 2014 Annual Council, Schoun said. Ultimately, delegates will vote whether to add the second draft to the agenda of the 2015 General Conference Session, where a final vote would occur. ■

To view the entire document online, go to http://news.adventist.org/fileadmin/news.adventist.org/files/news/2013/FB_pc_133GS.pdf

collage
artwork
by
heather
langley

BIBLE



Thinking Creatively About the Trinity

Christ Our Law | BY IVAN T. BLAZEN

Christ's
love
strengthens
the will
of God.

The question as to what is the first or greatest commandment of the law was much discussed in Jesus' time. The Torah (meaning "teaching" or "instruction"), which is the basis of Jewish thought and life, is contained in the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures, Genesis through Deuteronomy. Materials in these books were divided into two categories: *Haggadah* and *Halakah*. The former term, derived from the Hebrew verb *haggad*, meaning "to narrate," referred to the stories of the Torah (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc.), and the latter term derived from the Hebrew verb *halak*, meaning "to walk," and referred to the commandments of the Torah. When Jews counted up the commandments of the Torah, they came to the figure 613. Such a large plurality of commands presented a problem: How could all these commands be handled and observed?

One way was to distinguish between lighter or easier commands (Matt. 5:19, "Whosoever breaks the *least* of these commandments...") [*italics mine*] and the weightier or more difficult commands (Matt. 23:23: justice, mercy, and faith[fulness]).¹ Another way was presented in the Talmud, as summarized in Anders Nygren's *Commentary on Romans*.² This tradition declares that on Mount Sinai Moses received

613 commands, and then indicates how successive abridgments were made to get to the essence of the law. After Moses, David came and summarized the law with eleven commands (Ps. 15). Then Isaiah summed up the law with six commands: those who will escape fiery judgment will be those who (1) walk righteously, (2) speak uprightly, (3) despise the gain of

oppression, (4) do not take a bribe, (5) stop their ears from hearing of bloodshed, and (6) shut their eyes from looking on evil (Isa. 33:15). After this Micah presents three commands: to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God (Mic. 6:8). Once more Isaiah appears, this time with two commands: to maintain justice, and do what was right (Isa. 56:1). Finally, Habakkuk drew the ultimate

summary: the just shall live by faith[fulness] (Hab. 2:4).

So the issue was a live one. How did Jesus deal with it? Note the chart, opposite:

A Proposal

When the biblical testimony to God's grace is understood in all its fullness, it becomes clear that God's law is not called for in order to balance grace—as if God's grace might lead us into sin (Rom 3:8, 6:1, 6:15)—but God's law is seen precisely *in* his grace. The will of God is



Paying taxes to Caesar

The Great Commandment in the Settling of the Controversy Stories

Matthew 22

Paying Taxes to Caesar
22:15–22

The Resurrection
22:23–33

The Greatest Command
22:34–40

22:40

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (unique to Matthew's story)

Mark 12

Paying Taxes to Caesar
12:13–17

The Resurrection
12:18–27

The Greatest Command
12:28–34

²⁸ **One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?"**
²⁹ Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; ³⁰ you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."
³² Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; ³³ and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."
³⁴ When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." **After that no one dared to ask him any question.**

Luke 20

Paying Taxes to Caesar
20:20–26

The Resurrection
20:27–40

The Greatest Command

20:39 **And some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well."**

Luke 20 has the beginning and ending to Mark's great commandment story, but lacks the story itself. It is found ten chapters earlier in Luke 10:25–37, and is connected with the parable of the good Samaritan, which interprets the meaning of the Great Commandment.

20:40 **For they no longer dared to ask him any questions.**

David's Son
22:41–46

David's Son
12:35–37

David's Son
20:41–44

The Parable of the Good Samaritan
Luke 10:25–37

²⁵Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" ²⁷He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live."
²⁹But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" ³⁰Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³²So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'³⁶Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" ³⁷He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

revealed ultimately in Christ himself, not in a code outside of him. The error of Judaism was that it considered the law its Christ, whereas God intended Christ to be its law. Christ as the ultimate revelation of the love of God is the supreme revelation of the will of God.

In describing how he became all things to all men, in

order that he might win them for God, the apostle Paul says, "To those under the law I became as one under the law—though not being myself under the law—that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law—not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:20–21,

**It is impossible
to love as
Christ loved
and not to keep
the laws of
God.**

RSV). The expression translated “under the law [ennomos] of Christ” literally means something like “in-lawed to Christ.” In other words the ultimate will of God is seen only in Christ. Christ in his redemptive deed and word was Paul’s law. It is in harmony with this that Paul says that when we help to heal the fractured lives of others and bear one another’s burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:1–2). This is the law of self-giving love. Believers are called to serve one another in love (Gal. 5:13).

The manifestation of this love in Christ is the fundamental principle of the rule of God. All other commandments, codes, and ethical instructions are subservient to the meaning of love revealed in Christ. These moral principles are understood properly only in connection with his love. To see Christ as the supreme exemplar of the will of God is the heightening of morality, not its diminution. Christ’s love strengthens the will of God. The claim of God in Christ allows no loopholes, as often occurs when morality centers on law. Indeed, Galatians 5:13–14 and Romans 13:8–10 make clear that the whole law, with all its commandments, is fulfilled in the command to love. It is love understood as the self-giving love of Christ, which fulfills the law, or fills it full. It is possible to keep laws, even the Ten Commandments, yet not really love. But it is impossible to love as Christ loved and not to keep the laws of God. Love is the fulfilling of the law, but law is not necessarily the fulfilling of love. We may say that the law defines love, and in part this is true. But on a deeper level, love defines the law and gives it its true meaning.

Fulfillment of the law and focus on the law are to be distinguished. The law is only truly fulfilled when the focus is on Christ. To be sure, the law is holy, just, and good (Rom.

7:12). To be sure, its righteous requirement is fulfilled in the life of one who walks according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:4), and in the way of love (Gal. 5:13–14; Rom. 13:8–10). Nevertheless, the final rule of behavior for the New Testament Christian is the character and redeeming quality of Jesus’ life and death. This is what gives ultimate expression to the character and will of God.

In addition to the texts already cited that suggest that Christ is our law (1 Cor. 9:21 and Gal. 6:1–2) we may note three other significant passages in which following the will of Christ is stressed. According to 1 Corinthians 10:31–11:1, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved. *Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ*” (italics mine). This means that when Paul acts in redemptive concern for others, rather than self-concern, he is imitating Christ. Ephesians 5:1–2 says, “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, as Christ

loved us and *gave himself up for us*, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (RSV; italics mine). Here the imitation of God is found in following the sacrificial love of Christ.

Thus, we may say that the standard of human morality is set at its highest point by an act of God rather than by a command. This act is the manifestation of God’s love in the

life and death of Christ. Therefore, while precepts supply guidance, the ultimate pattern for behavior is given in a person rather than a precept. True, for believers the moral laws of scripture, whether embodied in the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, or



The resurrection

other ethical statements, continue to function as authoritative sources of guidance and concrete illustrations of what life in Christ involves. But the essence of New Testament teaching on the matter is that only by what God gives do we see with clarity what he requires, and does it become possible to begin fulfilling his requirement.

Biblical ethics has to do not merely with a listing of what the Bible calls us to do or avoid, but is a challenge to act toward others in a way that derives from, and is empowered by, the way Christ redemptively acted toward us. The indicative of God's grace (what God in Christ has done) is the presupposition for the imperative (what we are to do).

There are a number of passages that ground what believers are to do in the gift, example, and strength of what Christ has done for them. The following are a sample of these:

John 13:34: "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."

Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

Ephesians 4:32: "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you."

Romans 12:1: "I appeal to you therefore...by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God."

Romans 15:7: "Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you."

2 Corinthians 5:15: "He died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them."

Galatians 5:25: "If we have gained life through the Spirit, let us also conduct our lives by the guidance of the Spirit" (my translation).

These texts, and others like them, make it clear that in Christ's act of self-giving our

redemption was accomplished and the nature of our discipleship was revealed. In Christ the biblical commands are not left behind, but are radicalized, internalized, and brought within the structure and service of the higher will of God, that greater righteousness, which was revealed in the self-giving love of Christ. The will of God for Christ was the cross; it is the same for the Christian. The cross stands for



The greatest commandment

that unselfish love which always seeks to help and heal and never to hurt. The cross reveals love that is willing to lose itself so that others may live (though the self which is lost through love is, like Christ, bound to rise again). As worthy and permanent as the Ten Commandments are, they cannot by themselves, as a written code (2 Cor. 3:6-7; Rom. 7:6), fully define the

claim of God that God's grace lays upon us. The will of God can be strongly suggested, but never completely exhausted by any group of rules. Judaism put its rules and regulations into the thousands of pages of the Talmud. But the largeness of the Talmud would look timid by comparison if we tried to set forth a codified rule for every possibility in life.

We can cap off an oil well; we can put a ceiling on a house; but we can never cap off or put a lid on the ethical commitment the gospel calls us to. Even when we have exemplified love itself, the apostolic call is to love more and more. Paul says that the Thessalonians are living to please God, but they are to do so more and more (1 Thess. 4:2). And even though they have no need to be taught about love and are showing much love, they are to do so *more and more* (9-10). Paul prays, "May the Lord make you to *increase and abound* in love" (3:12). It is important to point out that the fundamental reason for the "more" of these texts is not because original sin keeps us from doing the

The ultimate pattern for behavior is given in a person rather than a precept.

**For Christians
the center
of the
seventh-day
Sabbath must
be Jesus.**

good, or doing it perfectly, but because of the inexhaustible nature and challenge of Christ's love. In other words the "more" is related to a positive rather than negative reality.

In Philippians 1:9–11 the apostle says, "And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God." This text uncovers the nature of the Christian ethic. As the Christian lives in the insight of Christ's love, he or she is to *learn* the excellent way that meets with God's approval. This concept coheres with that expressed in Romans 12:2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may *discern* what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect" (NRSV; italics mine). Within the framework of the love of Christ transforming the mind, the Christian is called to discover and discern what God's will is in the varied circumstances of life. According to Ephesians 5:8–10, "For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. *Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord*" (italics mine). In other words, the Christian is one who in every situation seeks the will of God, for what pleases him (see 1 Thess. 4:1–2).

Is this situation ethics? Yes, but not in the sense that many understand the phrase. It is situational in the sense that the very specific nature of Christ's love, its self-giving quality, which is the basic principle for Christian existence, is applied to every situation of life. Every problem is to find its resolution in the life and love of Christ. And the very

fact that it is the principle of love that has to be applied means that in every case the action must be in real measure a creative reaction to the situation. It can never be mere legalistic or formalistic obedience to a precept. The beginning of right relations with one's neighbor is to see in him or her one for whom Christ has died (1 Cor. 8:11; Rom. 14:15). The Christian will always say, when tempted to injure another or use another for his own purposes, "But how can I do this? This person is one for whom Christ (no less than *he!*) died (no less than *that!*). Can I now bring hurt, when Christ's purpose was only to heal?"

As already observed, the Christian life is not a legally conceived or oriented life. A list of rules can never in extent or depth express the fullness of God's will. To those who think morality can be reduced to a list of commands and who claim, like the rich young ruler: "All these I observed from my youth" (RSV)—to these Christ will always reply, "One thing you still lack" (Luke 18:22, RSV). Not only can the totality of morality not be encompassed in a list, but there is no strength to do God's will in such lists. Romans 7 makes this clear with its picture of a person who wills the right, but cannot but do the wrong. As the law cannot justify, neither can it sanctify.

The gospel offers us first and foremost a new life, not a new list. That is why Paul says in Romans 7:4, 6, "Likewise my brethren, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God... But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we

serve no longer under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit" (RSV). According to Romans 8:3–4, "What the law could not do"—it could not save from sin—God did,



David's son

through the offering of Christ who died in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk by the Spirit. The law is not fulfilled in terms of legal or formal service to commandments, but in terms of following the guidance of the Spirit, which produces the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal. 5:22–23).

Against such things Paul contends, “there is no law.” This has a twofold meaning, I believe. Not only does the law not make stipulations against such qualities, but the intention of the law is fulfilled when the Spirit with its fruit is present. The latter point is supported by Galatians 5:13, which declares that love fulfills the law.

Paul also uses the word “fruit” in Philippians 1:11, “the fruit of righteousness,” and in Ephesians 5:9, “the fruit of light.” The word “fruit” suggests that the good deeds of believers are characterized by spontaneity. They are the natural outcome of a transformed nature rather than the strenuous attempt to conform to an external code. Ellen White says it well: “If we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to his will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses.”³ And though we speak of fruit and spontaneity, it remains true that the good things the law requires are still to be done, but the motive force behind these actions is love for the Christ who loved us, rather than legal striving after obedience. Ellen White makes this relevant statement:

In heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but

as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their creator. Obedience to them is no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory dwells, his words are re-echoed. “I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart.”⁴

The basic argument of this paper may be applied to the Sabbath. Adventists believe that the Sabbath represents the final test in the Great Controversy. This can only be possible if the Sabbath is understood in terms of

the reality of Christ himself. While the fourth commandment does require the keeping of the seventh day as the Sabbath, the Sabbath test is not only which day we are to keep, the *law* of the Sabbath, but whether Christ is the *Lord* of the Sabbath and the Lord of our lives. For Christians the center of the seventh-day Sabbath must be Jesus. In a



The good Samaritan

striking statement on the significance of the Sabbath, Ellen White states: “To all who receive the Sabbath as a sign of Christ’s creative and redeeming power, it will be a delight. *Seeing Christ in it, they delight themselves in Him.* The Sabbath points them to the works of creation as an evidence of His mighty power in redemption. While it calls to mind the lost peace of Eden, it tells of peace restored through the Savior. And every object in nature repeats *His invitation, ‘Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.’* Matt. 11:28” (italics mine).⁵ The question of the Sabbath is therefore the question of Christ.

In conclusion, we may represent the relationship of Christ to all the law in terms of the shape of a pine tree. At the bottom of the tree are the varied precepts found throughout scripture; higher up, as the tree narrows, are

Christ our law ➔ continued on page 59...

**The gospel
offers us
first and fore-
most a
new life, not
a new list.**

Adventists Finding Identity in God | BY RICHARD RICE

Coming to Terms with God



The doctrine of God has never been a defining aspect of Seventh-day Adventism. Unlike certain religious groups, we are not known for our distinctive perspective on the divine reality. In fact, in the century and two-thirds that Seventh-day Adventists have existed, the topic of God has seldom been the central focus of our theological concern. For the most part, the descriptions of God that appear in our doctrinal books do not break new ground, but merely restate standard theological formulas. For example, in a two-column article on "God," the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* offers nothing more than brief comments on the statements that God is spirit, love, self-existent, immutable, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, faithful, and holy.¹

This is not to say that God is relatively unimportant to Adventists, only that we have not given the topic extensive formal attention. A community's understanding of God involves much more than formal doctrinal statements; it involves concrete religious intuitions as well. To appreciate the connection between Adventist identity and God, we need to appreciate the importance of both elements. We must be sensitive to doctrines and to experience. In a sense, therefore, we must be both modern and postmodern.

Philosopher Richard Rorty says, "It is pictures rather than propositions, metaphors rather than statements, which determine most of our philosophical convictions."² The same is true in

religion. Here, too, our most fundamental convictions are framed in symbols rather than in clear-cut concepts and propositions. Story, picture, and metaphor—things that speak directly to our imaginations—have a greater influence on the way we apprehend God than homiletical discourse or theological essay.

My own understanding of God certainly reflects this fact. Looking back to the earliest stages of my own spiritual odyssey—which has never taken me outside the Seventh-day Adventist community—I have become aware of the profound influence of stories, pictures, art, and music on my religious development. The very first book I remember was volume 1 of *The Children's Hour* by Arthur S. Maxwell. Paging through that book years later, along with the four that followed it, I recalled the stories that so engrossed me as a child—stories that guided my life, fostered my values, molded my attitudes, and, most importantly, shaped my view of God. As many of you know, children are the central characters in many of Uncle Arthur's stories. His favorite plots seem to involve three things: the serious consequences of disobedience or bad judgment; the rewards of obedience (which weren't nearly as exciting); and miraculous deliverances from peril, often in direct answer to prayer.

It is interesting to reflect on the view of God that such plots communicate to young minds. God is firmly in control of the world and takes a keen interest in boys and girls, particularly in their behavior. God rewards those who are obedient to the divine will—or

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artwork by heather langley

**Experience
and doctrines
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community.**



to their parents or teachers, who act in God's stead. And those who disobey meet with dire consequences. God answers prayer in remarkable ways, protecting us from harm or meeting a desperate need just in the nick of time. We may not think of moralistic anecdotes as primary sources of doctrine, but the widespread exposure to such stories by several generations of Adventists has had a significant influence on our collective view of God. My guess is that Uncle Arthur has contributed more to the way Adventists feel about God than all the books our theologians have written.

As we explore the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of God here, we will focus on doctrinal formulas. But we should bear in mind that they are only part of the picture. Experience and doctrines have reciprocal effects in the life of a religious community. On the one hand, we give our collective apprehension of God conceptual formulation in response to emerging challenges to communicate and defend our faith. On the other hand, our concepts of God also shape our apprehensions and expectations of God. So, our experience of God gives rise to doctrines about God, and our doctrines, in turn, affect the way we experience God.

Central Features in the Seventh-day Adventist Understanding of God

The Johanne exclamation, "God is love," comes as close as any biblical statement to a definition of God. And the same affirmation plays a prominent role in Ellen White's writings. In fact, the theme permeates her writings. *The Conflict of the Ages* book series begins and ends with the words: "God is love." *Steps to Christ*, her devotional classic, opens with the assertion, "Nature and revelation alike testify of God's love."³ And her descriptions of this central divine attribute are often filled with superlatives. One of the most inspiring appears in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5:

All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. Tongue cannot utter it; pen cannot portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the love and compassion of the heavenly father; and yet there is an infinity beyond. You may study that love for ages; yet you can never fully comprehend the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world. Eternity itself can never fully reveal it.⁴

In recent years a number of Seventh-day Adventist writers have underscored the importance of love for an understanding of God. Alden Thompsen appeals to the freedom-loving nature of God to establish a continuity between the God of the Gospel and the God of the Old Testament.⁵ In the opening essay of a symposium volume expounding Arminian theology, Fritz Guy observes that love is the one word that Christians apply to God without qualification. Accordingly, he maintains, love is more basic to God's character than qualities such as power and justice. It leads God to take enormous risks and provide extravagant displays of affection. It also makes God dynamically responsive to creatures and vulnerable to disappointment.⁶

No contemporary Seventh-day Adventist thinker has concentrated more exclusively on God's love than the late A. Graham Maxwell. His book *Servants or Friends? Another Look at God*⁷ reiterates the themes that his large following appreciated for many years. Taking as his key text Jesus' statement to his disciples, "I do not call you servants any longer, but friends," Maxwell argues that the notion of friendship is central to an adequate understanding of God.⁸ God invites us into intimate, personal friend-

ship with him. In contrast to the servant obedience of those who erroneously think of God as an exacting master, the response of those who understand the truth about God is love and trust. Based on their friendship with God, they are able to tell others the truth about God.

Although the doctrine of God as such is not a typical Adventist preoccupation, from time to time it has received specific attention. Significantly, each of these developments connects in interesting ways to the fundamental quality of divine love. Let us consider the following points:

1. Only a personal being can love.
2. God's love has to overcome opposition.
3. It is God's very nature to love.

God as Person

The question of God's person-ness became a contested issue among Adventists twice during Ellen White's ministry—during the 1850s and around the turn of the century. On both occasions she staunchly defended the notion that God is a distinct personal being.

The "spiritualizers" of the 1840s and 1850s responded to the Great Disappointment by asserting that Christ had in fact returned as the Advent Movement had predicted. But they construed the Second Coming as a spiritual event, not a physical, visible return to earth. In a somewhat similar way, they also spiritualized the nature of God, viewing divinity as a pervasive influence in the world, rather than a specific, self-conscious being. In reaction, important Adventists such as James White and Uriah Smith defended God's personal nature by asserting that Christ is both clearly distinct from and subordinate to the Father.⁹

Ellen White appealed to the fact that she had seen the Father and the Son in vision as distinct physical realities. "I have often seen the lovely Jesus, that He is a *person*," she wrote in 1851. "I asked Him if His Father was a person and had a form like Himself. Said Jesus, 'I am in the express *image* of my Father's *person*.'"¹⁰ Although the Father and the Son apparently have identical physical forms, only

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that of the Son is visible, even in vision. Several years later, Ellen White said that God was presented to her in vision as a physical presence, but not one that human eyes could directly behold. "The Father was enshrouded with a body of light and glory, so that His person could not be seen; yet I knew that it was the Father and that from His person emanated this light and glory. When I saw this body of light and glory rise from the throne, I knew it was because the Father moved."¹¹ God must be a person, and therefore cannot be mere spirit, she seems to argue, because God has a concrete physical form.

Although Ellen White's early statements connect divine person-ness with the possession of a physical form, her later statements are strikingly different. She returned to the question of God's person-ness some fifty years later, and this time she defended the concept on entirely different grounds.

Ellen White produced her most sustained discussion of the nature of God in response to what is often called the "pantheism" crisis. It was published as section 5 of *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 8. In this passage, she repeatedly affirms the personal nature of God, but not once does she invoke the notion that God has a physical form to defend this point. She rejects "the theory that God is an essence pervading all nature" more because the idea is inadequate than inaccurate.¹² "God is the mighty power that works through all nature and sustains all things," she asserts, but this power is "not merely an all-pervading principle, an actuating energy. God is a spirit; yet He is a personal being, for man was made in his image."¹³ Mentioning the image of God could lead to the idea that there is a physical correspondence between human beings and God, but this is not the avenue Ellen White takes. We must understand God as personal in nature, she argues, that is, as a distinct conscious being, because we see intelligent agency at work in human origins, in the ongoing course of nature, and most significantly, in the life and ministry of Jesus.



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God in Conflict

The love of God also provides the backdrop for the concept of a cosmic conflict, which figures prominently in Adventist theology.¹⁴ Ellen White's Great Controversy vision of 1858 provided the basis for a series of volumes titled *Spiritual Gifts*. This was later enlarged to form a second four-volume series, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, and ultimately expanded into the five-volume *Conflict of the Ages* series, which Adventists widely regard as the most influential expression of Adventist thought.^{15 16 17}

As depicted by Ellen White, the entire moral universe is engulfed in a contest between God and his archrival, Lucifer, which began with Lucifer's rebellion in heaven and will ultimately end with the final destruction of the wicked and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom on earth. The mighty fallen angel was the power that tempted the first humans in the Garden of Eden. Speaking through the serpent in the Garden of Eden, he persuaded Eve to eat from the forbidden tree and gained control over humankind when Adam followed suit. Variouslly identified as the devil, Satan, and the enemy of souls, this great antagonist has been active throughout human history to foment sin and strife. He is the ultimate cause of all the misery on this planet. So, the course of human history represents one long, sustained warfare between God and the devil, as God pursues divine objectives in creation, populating this planet with loyal beings happy in God's service, while the devil strives to undermine all that God seeks to accomplish.

There would be no rebellion, of course, unless God's creatures were free to rebel, and God endows them with freedom because he loves them and desires them to love him in return. Because God is a God of love, he "takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance," but "desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character." This is why God grants to his creatures freedom of will. He desires that they

"render Him voluntary service."¹⁸

The decisive battles in this protracted conflict occurred during the ministry of Jesus. Satan worked on two fronts to defeat Christ's mission. He tried to persuade Jesus to distrust and rebel against God, and he stirred up opposition to Jesus' ministry. In the face of powerful temptations, Jesus remained loyal to the Father, and faithfully followed the path of suffering servanthood to the cross. The Son's condescension to the level of humanity and submission to a humiliating death on the cross played a key role in resolving the Great Controversy. By demonstrating beyond all doubt that God is generous, caring, and self-denying, they provided a decisive refutation of the devil's charges against God.

Christ's work demonstrates that the devil's charge that God is tyrannical, overbearing, and unfair is utterly without foundation and completely inexcusable. "It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence... Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable... the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government." And "In the final execution of the judgment it will be seen that no cause for sin exists."¹⁹

There was only one way for God to respond to this problem: it was necessary to provide a manifestation of divine love so powerful that no rational creature could possibly deny it. This is precisely what the cross represents. It showed beyond all doubt that God is unrelentingly committed to the welfare of creatures—and is willing to suffer and sacrifice in order to win their confidence. This display of divine love laid to rest any doubt regarding God's benevolence. In so doing, it exposed Satan's charges for exactly what they were—pure fabrications spun from a mind filled with self-promotion.

The idea of the Great Controversy has important implications for God's relation to the world. It points to a genuine interaction

between God and creatures. God does not achieve divine purposes simply by willing them to be so. This is most obvious in connection with human salvation. Adventists have traditionally believed that God offers salvation to all, but that not all receive it. While faith does not contribute to the gift, the gift has no effect unless we accept it. It also implies that God takes risks and makes sacrifices. The fact that he endows his creatures with freedom to accept his love means that they are free to reject it.

The most important implications of the Great Controversy thus concern the fundamental nature of God. It places love clearly at the center of the divine reality. Love is not merely an attribute of God—not even the most important of divine attributes. Rather, it describes the very essence of the divine being. Love is not something God happens to do, but is something that expresses God’s inner reality. It is God’s very nature to love. To express this conviction Christians centuries ago developed the doctrine of the Trinity.

God as Trinity

Whereas Seventh-day Adventists developed their concept of God’s person-ness in a succession of rather distinct episodes, the view of God as Trinity emerged within Adventism through a process of gradual evolution. Even though it never crystallized as an “issue” that stimulated extensive discussion or precipitated official action, we find striking differences between the views of early Adventists and the church’s more recent thinking. As George R. Knight observes, so removed is the church’s position now from what it was at the beginning that “[m]ost of the founders of Seventh-day Adventism would not be able to join the church today if they had to subscribe to the denomination’s Fundamental Beliefs.”²⁰ Important early Adventists directly opposed the idea of the Trinity. For Joseph Bates it was unscriptural, for James White it was an “absurdity,” and for M. E. Cornell it was a fruit of the great

apostasy that also included Sunday keeping and the immortality of the soul.^{21 22} In fact, C. Mervyn Maxwell concludes that early Adventists were “about as uniform in opposing Trinitarianism as they were in advocating belief in the Second Coming.”²³

In contrast, Seventh-day Adventist thinkers today are as uniformly supportive of the idea. They use explicitly Trinitarian language to talk about God and they interpret the concept of Trinity with care and subtlety. For example, in an *Adventist Review* article entitled “The Mystery of the Trinity: God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” Raoul Dederen, professor emeritus of theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, defends the doctrine of the Trinity as biblically based, even though, as he notes, the word itself is not found in Scripture. He also rejects all tritheistic or modalistic conceptions of God and urges us to respect the essential mystery of God’s triune reality.²⁴ Gerard Damsteeg’s widely circulated commentary on the 1980 Statement of Fundamental Beliefs is equally explicit in affirming the Trinity and it, too, explores the meaning of the idea, albeit briefly. The Godhead comprises a relationship of love that comes to expression in the work of salvation, and most clearly at the cross of Christ. The Trinitarian differentiations within God correspond to the various saving activities of God.²⁵ In his substantial contribution to the *Handbook of Adventist Theology*—an essay of fifty-five pages on the doctrine of God—Fernando Canale devotes eighteen pages to the topic of the Trinity.²⁶

When and how did this transformation take place? I’m not sure we can tell. The earliest version of the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists (1932) describes “the Godhead, or Trinity,” as consisting of “the Eternal Father,” “the Lord Jesus Christ,” and “the Holy Spirit.” The 1980 revision of the Statement clearly affirms and further develops the idea. Belief 2 asserts, “There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit a unity of three co-eternal Per-

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Mervyn C. Maxwell

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sons,” and Beliefs 3, 4, and 5 deal respectively with “God the Eternal Father,” “God the Eternal Son,” and “God the Eternal Spirit.”

One of the Adventist Church’s most significant liturgical sources also points to a doctrinal transition in recent years. Looking at the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* of 1985 alongside the 1949 *Church Hymnal* it replaced, we surmise that there were reservations among Adventists about the concept of the Trinity in the late 1940s but that these reservations were largely overcome within the next three decades. The 1949 publication altered a number of familiar Christian hymns in order to remove their Trinitarian references. The 1985 publication restored the Trinitarian references to these hymns. Thus, the closing line of “Holy, Holy, Holy” in the 1949 hymnal—“God over all who rules eternity”—becomes in the 1985 hymnal “God in three persons, blessed Trinity!” The 1949 version of “Come Thou, Almighty King” deletes a stanza that begins with the words “To Thee, great One in Three, Eternal praises be.” The 1985 version restores that stanza. The 1985 publication also adds no fewer than ten new hymns containing straightforward Trinitarian language. Consequently, we can now sing the following lines: “Praise the Father, praise the Son, and praise the Spirit, three in One” (in hymn 2); “Holy Father, Holy Son, Holy Spirit, three we name You” (in hymn 30); “The Trinity whom we adore, forever and forever more” (in hymn 148).

If a community’s worship provides an important indication of its religious understanding, it is clear that significant developments have taken place in the past few decades in the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of God. It has brought our understanding of God into harmony with the profound insights of some of the earliest Christian thinkers, who recognized this affirmation of God’s complex unity as the only adequate way to safeguard the central claim of Christian faith, “God was in Christ.” And it places us squarely within the circumference of orthodox Christianity.

The texts most frequently cited to support the

idea of Trinity are Matthew 28:19–20 (the baptismal formula) and 2 Corinthians 13:14 (the apostolic benediction). But the close connections among God the Father, the Son and the Spirit are evident in other passages, too. According to both Paul and John, the sending of the Spirit parallels the sending of the Son. And in John, sending the Spirit is attributed to both the Father and the Son.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children. And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God. (Gal 4:4-7)

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. (John 14:26) Cf.

When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf. (John 15:26)

The designations of those who send, “God,” “the Father,” and “Christ,” and of the ones who are sent, the “Son” and “the Spirit,” indicate that all of God—Father, Son and Spirit—is involved in salvation history.

The close association of Father, Son and Spirit in the plan of salvation tells us something important about God’s own life. Early Christians arrived at this insight as they worked out their understanding of Christ’s divinity. Behind the question, “Is Jesus Christ divine?” lay a more basic question: Is salvation God’s own work, or did God send a subordinate to carry it out? In upholding Christ’s full divinity, the early church affirmed that salvation is God’s very own work, not that of a lesser being.²⁷ In other words, God loves us so much that God himself entered human history in the person of the Son in order to effect our reconciliation.

If this is true, then there must be an intimate connection between God’s saving activity and God’s inner life. As Jesus declared to

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the disciples, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:8–9). In other words, God revealed himself in Jesus as he really is. The plan of salvation manifests something that has always been true of God. Love is the central characteristic of God's own being. God has always existed as Father, Son and Spirit, as an everlasting community of love.^{28 29 30}

If the events of salvation history have their counterpart in God's own life, then the Christian community owes its identity, as well as its origin, to its unique relation to the triune God. God's activity as Father, Son and Spirit not only brings the church into existence, the love that characterizes God's eternal existence imparts to the church its essential character.

The close connection between the Christian community and the life of God becomes apparent in the "farewell discourses" of the fourth Gospel and in 1 John. In these passages we find the following ideas circling around the theme of divine love, joining together in more and more complex relations: the love that church members have for each other; their love for God and God's love for them; and the love that unites God himself, namely, the love between the Father and the Son.

First of all, the distinctive quality of life within the Christian community is that of love: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Love is the essential feature that sets Jesus' followers apart from other human groups. Consequently, those who think they are part of the community and don't love each other are deceiving themselves. "[A]ll who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters" (1 John 3:10). On the positive side, "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another" (1 John 3:14).

Second, it is not love per se, or just any sort of affection that identifies Jesus' followers. It is the specific love that Jesus has for them that sets the standard for their love to one another.

"Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (John 13:34). "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:12–13). Jesus' followers should be prepared to love one another to the end, just as he "loved them to the end" (Cf. John 13.1).

Third, Jesus' love for the disciples expresses the Father's own love for them. "[F]or the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God" (John 16:27). The Father's love flows through the Son into the Christian community.

Indeed, Jesus' statements about his relation to the Father and his relation to his followers indicate that Jesus wants his followers to enjoy the same relation to God that he enjoys. Just as the Father comes to the disciples in the person of Jesus, Jesus brings the disciples to the Father. "Those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them" (John 14:21). "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them" (John 14:23).

The idea that Jesus' followers enjoy a relation to God very similar to his own appears in a number of passages. "When we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" wrote Paul, "it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:15–17).

Fourth, the love that Jesus has for his followers reflects the love that he and the Father have for each other. For his followers present and future, Jesus prayed, "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us... The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John

**A doctrine of
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part of the
Advent mes-
sage; properly
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is the Advent
message.**

17:20–23). The author of 1 John brings together fellowship with one another and fellowship with God this way: “That you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3). The divine love that creates Christian community thus manifests and extends the love that constitutes God’s own life.

This line of thought leads to a dramatic conclusion. The central dynamic of the Christian community not only resembles the essential dynamic of God’s own life; its members actually share in that life. Through the Spirit, those who are “in Christ” come to share the eternal relationship that the Son enjoys with the Father. The love that radiates between Father and Son flows into the church. And because participants in this new community are co-heirs with Christ, the Father bestows on them what he eternally lavishes on the Son. In summary, the church owes its existence to God’s saving activity and derives its essential character from God’s own identity.³¹

This understanding of the church puts a new slant on one of Ellen White’s best known statements about the condition of God’s people and the end of time. “Christ himself is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in his people, then He will come to claim them as His own.”³² If love is the central dynamic of God’s own life, and it was Christ’s mission to reveal this love, then the essential purpose of the church is to find its identity in the quality that is essential to God’s own life. Its mission is to demonstrate by the love its members display toward one another the love that characterizes God’s own reality.

Toward a Seventh-day Adventist View of God

With these things in mind, we can identify several tasks that Adventist thinking about God should address in the future.

First of all, we need to give the doctrine of God explicit theological attention. It has developed among us

more or less spontaneously over the years. In some ways that is good, because it has prevented us from formally committing ourselves to erroneous views. But the time has come to give the doctrine of God the attention it deserves. We cannot let our understanding of the central theme of Christian faith grow like topsy. This means that we should elevate our doctrine of God to a position of paramount theological importance. As many Christian theologians now acknowledge, God is the central and all-encompassing article of Christian faith. Everything else the church has to say is commentary on this one, fundamental doctrine.

Second, as we develop our doctrine of God, we need to draw on all the resources that bear on our understanding. This means attending to neglected Biblical themes, particularly those dealing with the inner life of God. We give far too little attention to such phenomena as divine repentance and divine sensitivity, in spite of the fact that they are central to the Biblical portrait of God. We also need to attend to the insights of our own religious experiences. Our personal apprehensions of God sometimes provide a helpful corrective to traditional theoretical formulations.

Third, we need to determine what is central and what is peripheral to our understanding of God. If love is really the most important divine attribute, then everything Adventists have to say is a commentary on divine love. We need to demonstrate how the definition of God as love informs our understanding of God, and we need to explore the consequences of this transformation for everything else we believe. This will lead us to expand our understanding of God as Trinity. To do this, we should draw on some of the powerful resources of Christian tradition, as they explore what it means to proclaim that God is love. The concept of the Trinity is not a Hellenistic corruption of the Gospel nor a philosophical departure from primitive Christianity. Rather, it is a profound meditation on the meaning of God’s self-giving in the mission of Christ to redeem the fallen world.

Fourth, we need to develop a rationale for believing in

God that addresses contemporary challenges to its credibility. There have seldom been more outspoken opponents of religion than in the last decade or so. The writings of the “new atheists”—as figures such as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Samuel Harris and Christopher Hitchens are sometimes described—have made their way onto the best seller lists with forceful objections to the very idea of a divine being. If Seventh-day Adventism is to be a vibrant force in the developed countries of the world, it must address the serious doubts people have about God.

The first great commandment is a call to worship God. So, too, is the first angel’s message. A doctrine of God, therefore, is more than part of the Advent message; properly understood, it is the Advent message. Our central mission is to portray the love of God to the world. ■

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his wife Gail, who also teaches at LLU, have two grown children and four grandchildren. His latest book, “Suffering and the Search for Meaning: Contemporary Responses to the Problem of Pain,” will be available from Intersivity Press next July.

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14. For an examination of the concept as a theodicy, see Richard Rice,

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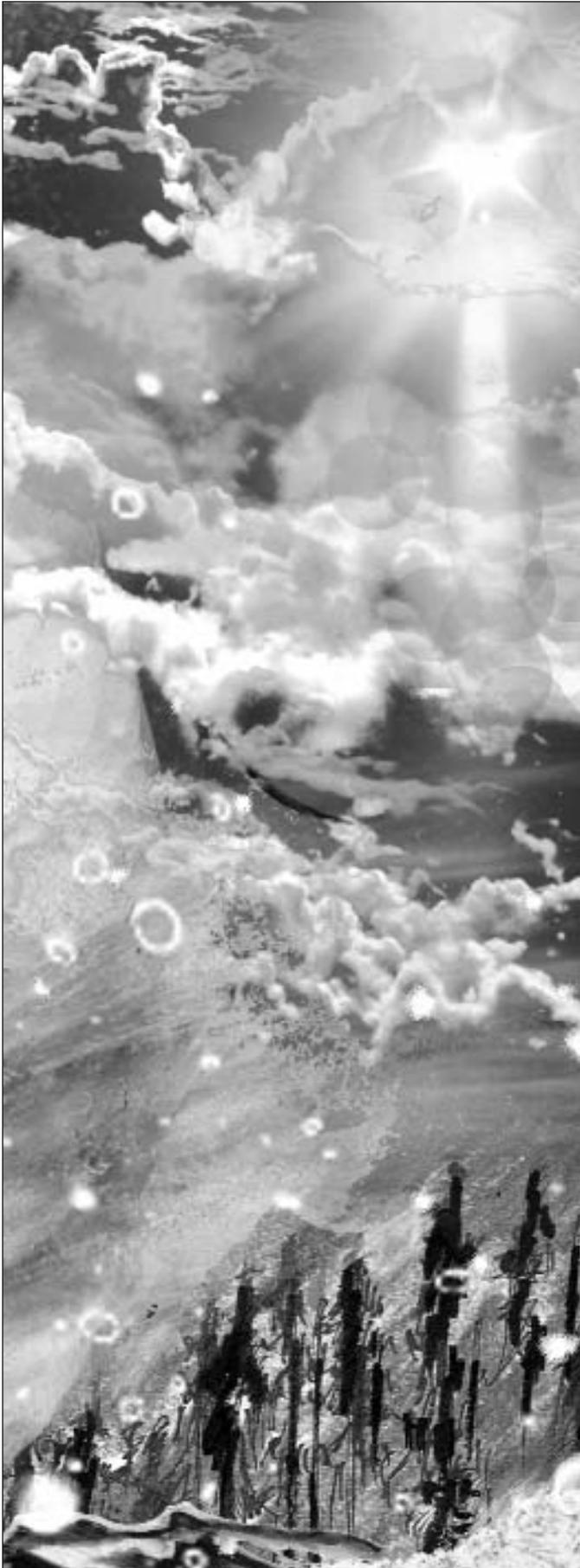
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The Role of the Holy Spirit in Christian Spirituality | BY HARRI KUHALAMPI, THD

Hunger, thirst, longing, yearning, desire, waiting, etc. describe the quest for a more meaningful relationship with God. There is in all of us a deep-seated inner need for meaning, purpose, belonging, transformation and hope, which is not satisfied by intellectual explanations or emotionally-charged experiences. Even after the most striking and moving religious involvement we may sense a deep craving somewhere within us for a more real and more lasting encounter with the Divine.

Spiritual longing is a healthy consequence of our fundamental sinfulness. Sin is not only a behavioral problem but an inseparable part of who we are. Questions about who and what we are form a point of departure which can be expected to produce mature spirituality. In contrast, questions about what kind of people we wish to become are unhelpful here. Christian spirituality is commonly understood to be composed of an endless variety of practices, ideas, feelings and relational attitudes intended to respond to our fallen and sin-polluted human nature. However, the whole plethora of spiritual teaching and praxis is without ultimate significance if it is set apart from a direct relationship with the Holy Spirit. In fact, one of the primary purposes of the Holy Spirit is to make a person more intensely aware of her inescapable weakness and crookedness. The goal is not to cause desperation and despondency, but to inspire a calm acceptance of our existential reality and a transformation of our whole existence accord-



ing to what God has designed for humanity.¹

Our temptation is to deal with Christian spirituality by employing doctrinal, emotional, relational and behavioral language, believing that these offer us sufficient answers in our search for a lasting solution to the predicament of human evil, which we all share. However, spirituality aims at a deeper realm within us beyond the key Christian teachings. The true essence of spirituality goes further than that which can be observed, assessed, comprehended or explained.

Jesus also describes the essence of the Holy Spirit in terms of hiddenness and mystery.² It is unfortunate that the interest of Christians of all times has often focused on the external and explicable aspects of both the Holy Spirit and spirituality. In the most extreme cases, formal religion can replace authentic spirituality; the external performance supersedes the internal silence in which the encounter between the Spirit of God and the human spirit take place.

Spirituality aims at a deeper realm within us beyond the key Christian teachings.

The Mystery of the Spirit

We must somehow come to terms with the fact that the third person of the Divinity is ultimately an unattainable secret in the same way as God himself is hidden from us and completely beyond our natural realm of perception. When Jesus explained to Nicodemus that the effects of the Holy Spirit are produced by invisible factors, he also wanted to demonstrate that the Spirit's essential qualities and characteristics cannot be concluded from what we can identify or detect. This means that the Christian teaching about the Holy Spirit, i.e. pneumatology, is only a dim representation of who and what the Holy Spirit actually is. For this reason I do not wish to linger too long on theological definitions of the Holy Spirit.

Instead of attempting to comprehend the Holy Spirit through intellectual means, we are better off if we allow Spirit to remain the inconceivable and perplexing divine being that s/he is.³

Unlike some of the early Adventist leaders, the Bible and the majority of Ellen White's writings agree on the fact that the human sin problem is an existential one.⁴ The traditional name for this notion is original sin. Because the core of our sinfulness is an inseparable part of us, God's solution to this problematic state must also involve a strong existential element. It is the wickedness of our being which makes us long for an existential answer. In optimal circumstances we may be able to learn new ideas, assume different attitudes and even alter our way of life, but we are hopelessly unable to change our nature or permanently remove our inborn inclination to evil. This is the reason why the divine help must come to our aid at the deepest and the most hidden level of our being. It is the immanent presence of the Holy Spirit which conveys in us the divine good, although there may be no clear, experiential evidence of Spirit's presence.

Whether we like it or not, the primary qualities of the Holy Spirit can be detected in his/her hiddenness, his/her seeming absence and his/her inscrutability. This is probably contrary to what many evangelical Christians



presently believe about the Holy Spirit. The starting point for most modern Christian thinking is the desire to establish and present divine matters and concepts by way of definitions and explanations that are as concrete and definite as possible. Among Seventh-day Adventists, there is also a growing back-to-the-basics mentality, which calls for clear-cut doctrinal definitions with no tolerance for any uncertainty or any alternative interpretations. Consequently, there is little room for the mysterious or hidden elements seen by those who treasure the fundamental conceptions of Biblical faith. However ambiguous God may be, there seems to be no room for ambiguity in a church with well-defined doctrines and exact views about religious matters. As a result, the inexplicable and mysterious nature of the Holy Spirit seems not to be regarded as a major issue by the church or its theologians.

Despite all theological study and reasoning, the essence of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity remains without exhaustive explanation. What this means is that theological concepts or ideas do not constitute a fruitful method of coming to know the most fundamental aspects of the Trinity. Human intellect is far too limited to comprehend the mysteries of divinity. If that is the case, it begs the question whether we should instead assume a more practical and action-oriented approach to the divine mysteries.

Whether we like it or not, the primary qualities of the Holy Spirit can be detected in his/her hiddenness, his/her seeming absence and his/her inscrutability.

The Presence of the Transcendent Spirit

Among Christians, there is somewhat of an obsession to describe the effects of the Spirit's activity within our lives in terms of orthodox faith and obedience to God's law. However, the compulsive desire to ascertain the cause-and-effects of God's work does not always lead to a comfortable and relaxed attitude to spirituality. As a consequence, there tends to be an unhealthy emphasis on norms and standards. Often, pastoral supervision and church discipline become methods of enforcing the expected form of spirituality.

Adventist theologians have extensively exploited all soteriological implications of the Heavenly sanctuary,⁵ whereas traditional Adventist references to the human body as the temple of the Holy Spirit seem to have only an anthropological bearing, with special reference to questions of health and temperance, but not really to soteriology or spirituality.⁶ However, depicting the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit implies an idea of the presence of this divine being. The concept of a temple carries the assumption of its being primarily a divine dwelling place rather than a house of worship, which a church would be.⁷ The Spirit

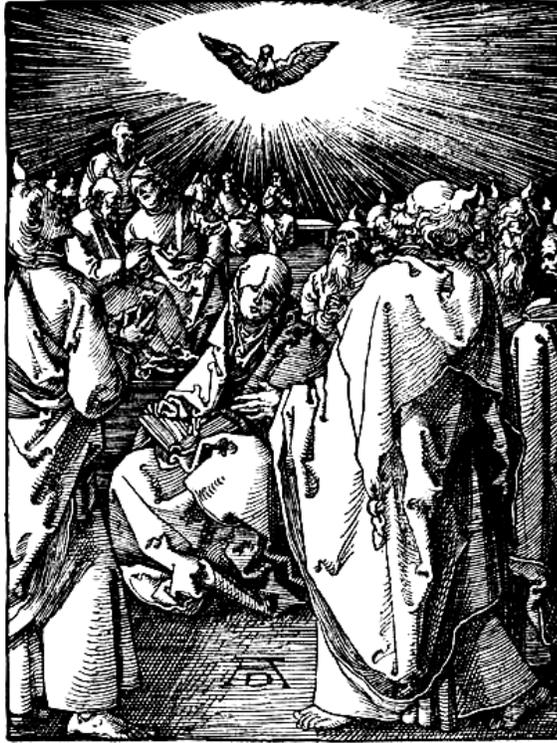
settles in for the purpose of providing the closest possible intimacy between divinity and humanity. The Spirit of God does not hover somewhere around or above us, but has entered in, even to the very center of our being. As a consequence of the immanence of the Holy Spirit, he who prays faces a person rather than a cold, cosmic void.

Interestingly, George W. Reid has chosen "Health and Holiness" as one of the subheadings of his article about the doctrine on health in the *Handbook on Seventh-day Adventist Theology*.⁸ He describes both health and holiness as results of human endeavor, of qualities such as moral uprightness, faithful observance of instructions, and obedience to the given instructions. No one can deny that these excellent patterns of conduct have massive positive effects; however, what must be kept in mind is that no human attempt can produce holiness, because holiness does not exist apart from the one who is holy.⁹ The chain of cause and effect must proceed in the correct order: the outcome of the presence of the Holy Spirit is a balanced life conducted in harmony with the best principles, not the other way around.

It is unfortunate that holiness, a concept

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of our being.**





The transcendent Holy Spirit is a total mystery because he/she is constantly present with us and in us, making it possible for us to assume a transformed identity.

dealing exclusively with absolute, divine qualities, has become a term used for relative, human characteristics. There is no justification for using the term holiness to describe even the most diligent devotion or piety, nor the fruit they produce. The sole access we can have to absolute holiness is when the Holy Spirit brings it with him into his own temple, the human body. Out of respect for the presence of the Holy One within, every understanding believer will wish to care for the overall integrity and wellbeing of this temple.

The reception of God's absolute holiness as a result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not the only blessing Spirit brings with him/her. On the basis of the divine presence, preconditions are being created for a new ontology. In the context of Christian spirituality ignited by the Holy Spirit, terms like peace, joy, confidence or hope are no longer limited to describing their respective emotional states, but also constitute the foundational elements for approaching life and existence from a totally different perspective. I give just one example: instead of regarding joy as a positive feeling, it is seen as a favorable way of being. The Holy Spirit makes a new identity possible.

Because of the presence of the Holy Spirit, we are no longer forced to identify ourselves on the basis of the dire reality of inherent imperfection and sin. Instead, we are invited to view ourselves from an absolutely affirmative perspective.

Moving Toward a New Way of Being

Jean-Paul Sartre's famous maxim "existence precedes essence" is, in my view, worth considering in relation to our topic, regardless of the fact that he used this very argument in defense of his atheism.¹⁰ It is a fact that none of the things which we regard as significant have meaning unless we exist at the outset. Therefore, we must ask ourselves such fundamental questions as: "Who am I?", "What am I?", "Where do I come from?", and "Who is God?" As we search for answers, we are forced to candidly recognize our inherent propensity to selfishness and sin. In fact, we have to admit that our total lack of holiness is the hallmark by which we will always be recognized. Without the presence of the Holy Spirit these negative characteristics would remain the ultimate points of reference in relation to which the essence of our being would be defined. Subsequently, it is absolutely vital that the Holy Spirit be present, residing permanently within us, creating by his presence a totally new way of being, a different ontology.

For many modern Christians, any discourse on the issue of the Holy Spirit immediately brings to mind a charismatic approach to spirituality and an emphasis on related phenomena. For them, the essence of the Holy Spirit is found in spiritual gifts and charismatic experiences. They insist that in order to be a true born-again Christian, there must be clear manifestations of the Spirit in a person's life. This belief has led to widespread cultural changes in worship styles and forms of prayer. Typical for this approach to religion is a fairly strong affective charge and a keen interest in the external indications of the movement of the Spirit.

By using some rather exaggerated generalizations I would like to illustrate some basic

dangers of a one-sided perception of Christianity. The awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit can be obstructed by several things:

- An overly intellectual approach to religion shifts the attention to rational understanding of doctrinal concepts, ideas and structures. Those adhering to the orthodox teachings of the church are regarded as the ones with proper faith.
- A surpassing concentration on Christian action or practice causes an imbalance in the way spirituality is perceived. Those who are faithful followers of the church standards and obedient to all religious laws and principles are esteemed as believers in good and regular standing.
- An extreme focus on the emotional aspects of religion distracts from the fact that the mere presence of the Holy Spirit is essential to the feelings that the Spirit itself awakens. The demonstration of strong religious feelings is no guarantee of a faith relationship with Christ.
- An exaggerated emphasis on social, relational or communal facets of religion tends to position these beautiful human elements too prominently within spirituality. Christians, who are inclined to approach their religion from an interactive and collective angle, often perceive faith as the plaster holding different kinds of people together.

The Holy Spirit Makes Spirituality Possible

Christian spirituality is a paradox: human beings desperately need intellectual structures and rational conceptualizations to make our religion meaningful. A sound doctrinal structure is as necessary for religion as the skeletal structure is for the body. In the same way, work and action play a decisive role in a balanced spiritual experience. On the other hand, a multifaceted spirituality also includes affective and relational aspects as integral characteristics. Mature spirituality is holistic by nature because of its existential and ontological undercurrent. We exist as intelligent, active, feeling and rela-

tional beings because we have been created that way. Who we are and what we are is continuously reflected in the way we think, act, feel or relate. The transcendent Holy Spirit is a total mystery because s/he is constantly present with us and in us, making it possible for us to assume a transformed identity.

I love how Ellen White articulates her ideas on holistic spirituality:

“The sanctification of the soul by the working of the Holy Spirit is the implanting of Christ’s nature in humanity. Gospel religion is Christ in the life—a living, active principle. It is the grace of Christ revealed in character and wrought out in good works. The principles of the gospel cannot be disconnected from any department of practical life. Every line of Christian experience and labor is to be a representation of the life of Christ.”¹¹

The work that God has performed through Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit makes experiences of joy, peace, hope and trust possible for anyone and everyone. If we dare to momentarily leave our well-formulated religious structures and the theological solutions which have been offered to us in answer to our spiritual cravings, and if we set out to seek inner silence and stillness instead, the Holy Spirit will have a better chance of doing in us that which s/he has come to do.

Eventually we may end up in a dilemma where we feel an inner desire for solitude and tranquili-



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ty, while the church increasingly encourages us to become more and more involved in intellectual and theological activity. However, a monastic life is not the answer to this predicament. The Holy Spirit knows what s/he is doing, and s/he will perform in us all that is necessary. In fact, it is an excellent thing that we will never exhaust the inner longing for a more intimate relationship with the Divine— not until Jesus comes to fetch us to be with him forever. ■

Harri Kuhalampi, ThD, is currently working as an accredited assistant and political advisor at the



European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium. He has previously worked as a pastor and counselor in Finland, his home country, but his ministry has extended also to Sweden and to Pak-

istan. His doctoral studies at the University of Helsinki focused on the theology of Christian spirituality. The title of his thesis is "Holistic Spirituality in the Thinking of Ellen White."

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455: "In order to receive help from Christ, we must realize our need. We must have a true knowledge of ourselves. It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save. Only as we see our utter helplessness and renounce all self-trust, shall we lay hold on divine power." See also White, Ellen G., *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1999), 130–131.

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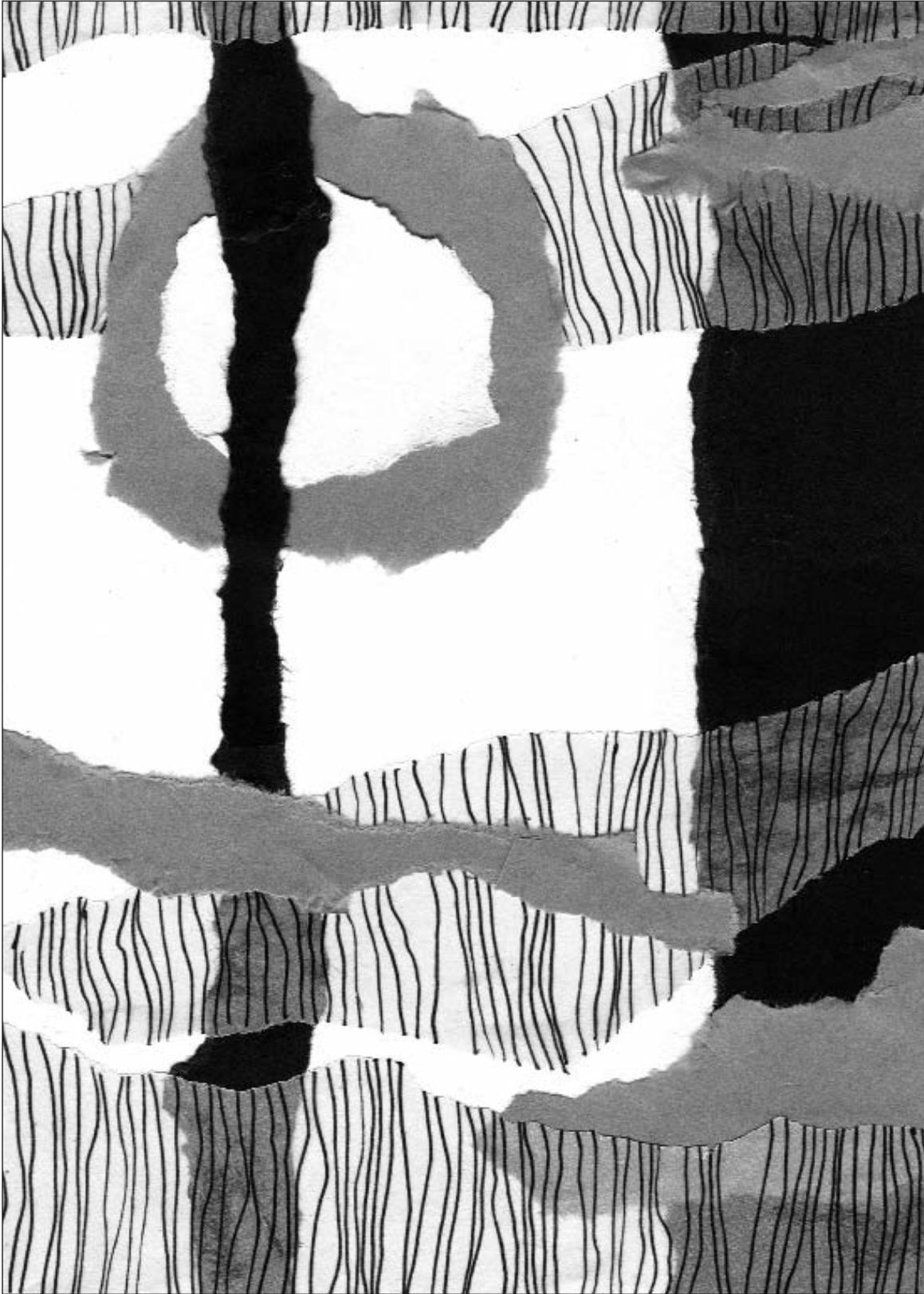
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9. White, Ellen G., *Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1956), 60. "He who is trying to become holy by his own works in keeping the law, is attempting an impossibility. All the man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin. It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, that can make us holy."

10. In my view, in the attempt to explore and define Christian spirituality it is necessary to draw ideas and concepts from philosophy, psychology, sociology and other areas of knowledge in addition to religious and theological ones. In order to avoid describing spirituality in rather sentimental terms, thoughts from such Existentialist philosophers as Søren Kierkegaard, for example, will open up a fresh perspective.

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Ordination Summary Report | BY THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION

THEOLOGY OF ORDINATION COMMITTEE*

...differences
in opinion and
practice on
this issue do
not constitute
disunity in
Christ nor in
the Church.

This report is the product of our assignment by the North American Division to conduct a comprehensive review of the theology of ordination—its theory and practical implications—and to present our conclusions and recommendations for action.

Process

Since May 2012 our diverse committee of pastors, theologians, and administrators has been engaged in a thorough exploration of ordination, identifying current policy and practice and considering the appropriateness of ordaining women to pastoral ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In addition to studying Scripture, we considered numerous papers, books, and resources, and we undertook various assignments for in-depth research. We exercised accountability to each other by reading drafts together aloud, discussing our findings, and incorporating peer feedback in revisions. And we prayed together, inviting the Spirit to govern our process and guide us into all truth. The unified desire of our hearts has been to bring glory to God and to obey his will.

Definition of Ordination

We understand all believers to be called and equipped—anoointed—by God for service. Indi-

viduals are imbued by the Holy Spirit with spiritual gifts in order to edify the body of Christ and fulfill the gospel commission, and in this general sense all believers are “ordained.”

The committee agreed on the following statement as a common point of reference:

Ordination is a formal acknowledgment and authentication of one's call to service ministry by God. Authentication should be understood as ratifying what only God can dispense. Ordination neither supersedes God's call nor enhances it. Ordination affirms the genuineness of the call as having borne the proper fruit of the Holy Spirit's work. God initiates the call and equips the recipient for enacting it. God's person accepts the call. God's people affirm the call.

Recommendations

While the recommendations in this report represent the position of the overwhelming majority of the committee, not all concur; however, the committee stands in unanimous agreement with respect to the following statement:

We believe that an individual, as a Seventh-day Adventist in thorough commitment to the full authority of Scripture, may build a defensible case in favor of or in opposition to the ordination of women to the gospel ministry, although each of us views one position or the other as stronger and more compelling.

As a culmination of our study, the committee submits the following recommendation for North American Division action:

* **Contributors:** Khoshin Ahn, Gordon G. Bietz, Dedrick Blue, Jo Ann Davidson, Kendra Haloviak Valentine, Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson, Dwight K. Nelson, Leslie N. Pollard, Edwin E. Reynolds, Stephen A.L. Richardson, Russell Seay, Tara J. Vincross, Clinton Wahlen, and Ivan Williams.

Recommendation 1

In harmony with our biblical study, we recommend that ordination to gospel ministry, as an affirmation of the call of God, be conferred by the church on men and women.

Because the Bible does not directly address the ordination of women, and because the principle-based evidence is neither complete nor irrefutable, it can be expected that differing conclusions may be drawn by equally sincere and competent students of God's Word. We believe the interpretive approach adopted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church as explained in the "Methods of Bible Study" document may allow Bible-believing members to have differences of opinion on this issue. In light of this, we submit this additional recommendation:

Recommendation 2

The committee humbly recommends that the North American Division support the authorization of each division to consider, through prayer and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, its most appropriate approach to the ordination of women to gospel ministry.

What follows in this report is a summary of the key points of our study, including evidences from Scripture and the writings of Ellen White, which we regard as overwhelmingly supportive of ordaining women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In-depth analysis of the major themes, as well as a minority report, are provided with this report.

History

Our earliest founders were reluctant to organize, not wanting to repeat the mistakes of other churches of the time in what seemed like exalting human authority. However, in the interest of curbing the threat of confusion caused by false, "unauthorized" teachers, and in response to visions of Ellen White in the early 1850s and diligent Bible study, steps were taken to organize. Preachers were "set

apart," generally by the laying on of hands, as the official indication of approval.

Throughout Adventist Church history, the role of women has not been formally clarified. Early discussions about some of the controversial texts in the Bible arose in relationship to Ellen White's influential public role, which was unusual for a female at the time. Women have served as licensed preachers, evangelists, conference secretaries, General Conference treasurers, and in many other positions. As early as 1881, a resolution recommending the ordination of women to ministry was presented at the General Conference Session, but after being forwarded to the General Conference Executive Committee, no action was taken. One-hundredthirty years later, after numerous resolutions, studies, meetings, recommendations, and votes, a request at the 2010 General Conference Session led to the present worldwide study of the theology of ordination.

Prior to this time, General Conference Session rulings have consistently maintained that women not be ordained to pastoral office, partly out of concern that the global church would not yet be ready for it. Recent actions by North American unions to ordain women pastors lend urgency to the need for resolution.

Hermeneutics

An understanding of the influence of hermeneutics is helpful for recognizing differences in the ways individuals discern the meaning of Scripture. Hermeneutics, the science of interpretation, considers all the factors that influence worldview. Biblical hermeneutics refers specifically to the principles and practice of interpreting Scripture.

Early in our study process, the committee unanimously acknowledged as a guide the principles outlined in the "Methods of Bible Study" document, which was voted and published by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1986 to provide parameters for the study of Scripture.

The model shown at www.nadordination.com helps illustrate the range of approaches compatible with the "Methods of Bible Study" document.

ordination summary report ➔ continued on page 58...

Because a scripturally based, reasonable case may be made in favor of or opposed to the ordination of women to pastoral ministry, a worldwide mandate is neither practical nor necessary.

Is Headship Theology Biblical? | BY KENDRA HALOVIK VALENTINE



Is this letter
really saying
that women
are saved
by bearing
children and
by other good
works...?

This is one of ten papers included in the report of the North American Division Theology of Ordination Study Committee.

The Bible verses in the New Testament often referred to as “the headship passages” must be considered carefully and prayerfully since, as many perceptively note, the interpretations often say more about the interpreters’ biases than Scripture’s intent. We undertake this brief study seeking to understand Scripture and to live it faithfully. We are not surprised that understanding Scripture is often a challenging task. Sometimes a note written just two weeks ago by a loved one or close friend can be misunderstood and requires clarification. Phrases written almost 2,000 years ago in a language other than our own certainly require care and prayer as we seek to understand. So we proceed in humility, grateful for a God who has made us all one family. This paper will show that headship,¹ as understood with the English connotations of ruler or leader, is not present within these New Testament passages.

Rome’s Theology vs. Paul’s Theology: “Caesar is Ruler!” vs. “Christ is Lord!”

The wonder of the literal words of Scripture is best grasped against the backdrop of the time in which they were written. Imagine a world where Caesar reigns and everyone is vulnerable to his whims. In this world power is always top-down, and all people are subject to the authority of those above them on the hierarchical ladder. Always at the top is the emperor, followed by royalty, elite Romans, Greek patrons, soldiers, merchants, tradesmen, peasants, the sick, slaves, and untouchables. In such a world, people know their place. If not, life is cheap; such lives can easily be extinguished.

Then a letter arrives to a group of Christians who meet regularly in house churches in Ephesus. They are a small minority in such a big city, but they are trying to remain faithful to Jesus. The letter says to “be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ”² (5:21), continuing on to show that Christ, not Caesar, must be Lord of their lives. When Caesar is replaced by Christ, new thinking is possible! Christians are called to a sense of mutual responsibility between husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves (5:22–6:9).

In another letter to the house churches in Philippi, Christians are challenged to “let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” (2:5), and then they are reminded of Jesus’ sacrifice through words set to a hymn (2:8–11):

He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him

the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Here is the motivation and inspiration for another way of looking at the world. Caesar seeks honor and exaltation, even demanding it from his subjects. In contrast, Christ willingly became a suffering servant, even entering the grave and forever proclaiming by his actions that humility is better than so-called “kingly power.”

Paul is so convinced of this new era ushered in by Christ that, in his declaration to the house churches of Galatia focusing on the centrality of faith in Christ, he includes: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (3:28). The Jewish men—who had regularly said the prayer at synagogue thanking God that they were not made Gentiles, slaves, or women—could no longer pray that prayer as followers of Christ. Paul’s challenge to the rite of circumcision reflects his conviction that a new creation had begun in Jesus (Galatians 6:15; Romans 8; 1 Corinthians 15) and that it included the uncircumcised.

There Is No Longer Jew or Greek

Paul elaborates on the first phrase, “there is no longer Jew or Greek,” in his longer letter to the Romans. “For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (3:22–24). This letter to those Christians trying to be faithful in the emperor’s capital city concludes with a list of twenty-seven people to be greeted for the apostle. Some of the names are Latin, some are Greek, and some are Jewish. The list embodies a wondrous diversity, all included and remembered by Paul. He greets Jewish women serving as deacons and as apostles (16:1, 7), a very wealthy male convert of Corinth named Erastus (16:23), Greek men who had joined the

faith (16:14), two male slaves (16:22–23), and the list goes on.

There Is No Longer Slave or Free

Paul elaborates on the second phrase, “there is no longer slave or free,” in his very short letter to those worshipping at the house of Philemon and Apphia. Using the rhetorical style of a well-educated Roman, Paul pushes Philemon to change his thinking from the world of Caesar, where master is over slave, to the kingdom of God, where Onesimus is Philemon’s own brother in Christ. Although Paul could demand Philemon’s actions (vs. 8), he would rather Philemon respond on his own accord, on the basis of love (vs. 9). Would Philemon treat Onesimus as he would treat Paul’s own “child,” his “heart,” or as he would treat Paul himself (vs. 10, 12, 17)? Would Philemon see that a fellow believer must be considered “no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother” (vs. 16)?

There Is No Longer Male and Female

Paul assumes the third phrase, “there is no longer male and female,” in several letters that are now part of the Christian Scriptures. In several places within his first letter to the house churches in Corinth, Paul suggests new ways of understanding the family. Men and women may remain single, with their focus on the work of God, rather than following the traditional pressure to marry (7:25–40). Men and women opened their homes as places of worship (16:19), and men and women prophesied (11:4–5). Paul cautions that, due to customs and cultural norms (11:16), men should keep their heads uncovered and women should cover their hair in worship, since private homes had become public spaces. Out of respect for their first-century cultural norms, and embracing the principle of loving others more than their own freedom (8:1–13; 10:23–11:1), men should act as the other men of their day acted, and women should act distinctly as women while leading in prayer and

It is ironic and distressing that one of the most liberating passages in the New Testament for women (2:11) has been typically used to suppress them.

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prophesying (11:3–5). The relationship between God and Christ was to be the model for the relationship between husbands and wives (11:3).

Continuing his calling and cautions to church members at Corinth, Paul considers the variety of spiritual gifts, noting that “all these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses” (12:11). Believers are then reminded that “in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (12:13). Why isn’t the “male or female” couplet included here? Was elitism due to ethnicity and class more of a problem than sexism when it came to seeing the distribution of gifts, thus the caution of 12:13? This entire section about spiritual gifts never distinguishes between gifts for women and gifts for men (12:1–14:25). The focus throughout the section is on the building up of the church body through gifts that the Spirit gives to all members, with particular emphasis on the gift of love (13:1–13).

Then why is the very specific command made that women “be silent in the churches” (14:34)? Is it because of problems with speaking in tongues and disorderly worship? This seems to be the focus of the section (14:26–40). But to what is Paul referring in verses 14:34–35? Does the request for women to ask questions of their husbands at home (14:35) suggest that there is a sense of lively (too lively) discussing and talking while at worship? After saying that “women should be silent in the churches,” why does Paul then ask the male believers: “Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only ones it has reached?” (14:36). Is Paul actually quoting others when he includes the phrase “women should be silent in the churches”? How did the believers in Corinth understand this letter, and how did it shape their worship and church community? After all, Prisca and Aquila would continue their ministry of setting up house churches in Rome (Romans 16:3–5), Ephesus (1 Corinthians 16:19) and Corinth (Acts 18). The apostle would also affirm the church in Nympha’s house (Colossians 4:15), and the one in the home of Philemon and Apphia (Philemon 1–2). The tension reflected in 1 Corinthians 14 suggests that the Christian community experienced diversity of opinion concerning the changes that come when Christ is Lord rather than Caesar.



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“Source-ship” Rather Than Headship

However one understands the situation at Corinth, and therefore Paul’s concerns and commands throughout the letter, one point needs to be clearly made. The Greek word *kephalē*, translated as head in 1 Corinthians, is a play on words, with one use being the literal head of a person (11:4–7) and the other meaning best understood as life source. If Paul had meant ruler or leader, another Greek word would have been used.³ Paul is arguing that what men and women wear on their physical heads is connected to the idea of man as woman’s life source (11:3, 8–9). This argument continues with the proclamation: “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God” (11:11–12).

Here it is important to understand that word meanings are determined not only by a dictionary but by how words are used (*kephalē* is not used as ruler or leader in the New Testament) and by the context of words in a sentence and passage. The wordplay works in verse 12 only if the origin of humanity is being considered here. It seems that dress code in the Corinthian house churches was being challenged as some Jewish men adopted the cultural habit used by Gentile men, who covered their heads as a status symbol. (Roman men also covered their heads during some cultic celebrations.) In addition, some Christian women leading out in prayers and prophesying were leaving their hair uncovered, which was against Jewish synagogue norms and emulated Roman women at the time. Paul says “no” to both behaviors. Elite male Christians must not flaunt their status, and females must not flaunt their freedom. The reputation of the house churches was at stake. In his argument Paul appeals to “source-ship,” if you will. In worship they should follow the hair and dress codes that underscore maleness and femaleness, a reminder of creation and the God who created

man and woman (11:7–9), while acknowledging that hair coverings are customs (11:16). (I am reminded of Maasai women I met on a trip to Kenya in the 1980s, for whom shaving the head is the embodiment of femaleness, while males wear their hair longer.) Paul says that church members should follow dress codes in worship. When praying, men should act appropriately. When prophesying, women should embrace their femaleness as created by God. One could actually see this passage as reflecting Paul’s conviction that both men and women are needed in leading the churches. The use of this chapter in Corinthians to argue for a theology of “headship” imposes the similar English words head and headship on words and ideas that are not present in the passage.

Discipleship, Not Distractions

When a group of angry men and wealthy women was causing problems in the house churches of Ephesus, the apostle uses strong language to their pastor, Timothy (1 Timothy 2:8–10). The wording throughout this letter against false teachings suggests that the message sent earlier to those living in Ephesus had been neglected by at least some members of the house churches there. The wondrous message that Christ’s flesh “has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us” (Ephesians 2:14) had been forgotten, and instead anger and immodesty filled the church (1 Timothy 2:8–10). The community apparently had much to learn, and the traditional rabbinical way of learning, historically available only to males, was listening quietly to the master. This small letter endorses the radical idea that women could learn as male students learned, “in silence with full submission” (2:11). Women’s flaunting of wealth (2:9) did not disqualify them from their new freedom in the gospel, but they needed to learn before they could teach others (2:12). As we hear these words, we again wonder at the events occurring in the city of Ephesus and the small minority of the population who met as Chris-

In fact, the New Testament view of the Christian family contrasts with the typical assumptions about headship as rulership.

tians in house churches. Why is the church reminded of Adam and Eve and told of the order of creation (2:14)? Is this letter really saying that women are saved by bearing children and by other good works (2:15), contradicting Paul's deep conviction that salvation is through Christ alone?

We do not know why some of the men meeting in the house churches of Ephesus were angry and perhaps even violent (2:8). We also do not know why some women worshipers were extremely wealthy. Were they converts? Were they considering converting? What is very clear from the apostle's description in 1 Timothy 2:9–10 is that they were letting others know of their status (braiding one's hair with gold was a status symbol and only available to the extremely wealthy). Were they formerly part of the cult at the temple of Artemis (Diana) in their large city? This famous cult had only women priests, who often encouraged other women to take control of their lives by living celibately. For some members of the cult of Artemis, child bearing was a burden and was unavoidable in the first-century world unless they refused to have sexual relations with their husbands. Is this the background to these new worshipers? What were they suggesting to other members of the congregations?

It is ironic and distressing that one of the most liberating passages in the New Testament for women has been typically used to suppress them: "Let a woman learn in silence with full submission" (2:11). Learning "in silence and with full submission" was understood as the way students or disciples learned from a teacher or rabbi in that day. The phrase "sitting at the feet" refers to the student's position before the teacher; and it is a sign of respect and submission. Paul was this kind of a disciple to Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). In the first century, the opportunity to study was available to very few men—and certainly no women. It was this very challenge to social convention that bothered Martha about her

"sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying" (Luke 10:39). How could her sister assume such a traditionally male position (Luke 10:38–42)? It was just not right. Yet, Jesus affirmed Mary and reassured Martha.

Even as women were now allowed to learn, 1 Timothy 2 goes on to say: "I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent" (2:12). Does this mean always and in every situation? Or only in church services (which would seem to contradict 1 Corinthians 11)? Or does this mean specifically while listening to the teacher, in order to be a good disciple (2:11)? Is this a command to the new believers who had only recently left the Artemis cult? Some translate "teach or to have authority" as having a sense of "trying to dictate" to men or "seizing control" over others. What exactly was going on at Ephesus? We do not know. But it sounds like this letter of concern about false teaching (1:4, 6–7; 4:1, 7, 16; 6:3, 20) also conveys concern that women not be deceived like Eve (2:13–14) but learn what is right and wrong, including that child bearing is not an evil thing, but a wondrous gift (2:15).

Some Concluding Comments

The above interpretations suggest that headship theology is not present in these passages. In fact, the New Testament view of the Christian family contrasts with the typical assumptions about headship as rulership. A top-down understanding of power and authority is not an adequate reflection of the meaning of particular words in these New Testament passages, nor of first-century house churches and the gifted men and women who led out in them.

In the context of the first-century Roman Empire, where Caesar was worshiped as savior, believers living in major cities as minority communities were trying to be faithful to Jesus Christ. They struggled, as we do, with the intersection of Christ and culture. To what

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degree should they continue the Jewish culture that birthed Christianity? To what degree could they maintain parts of the Greco Roman world in which they lived? To what degree did the call of Christ mean a radical departure from their cultural norms? Like all humans, the first century church members messed up, posed challenging questions, acted contrary to the gospel, and had blind spots. But one of the wonders of Scripture is that 2,000 years later we can read the words written from inspired apostles who were trying to help these congregations, guiding them into greater understanding and more faithful living.

The language of headship is a cultural construct that we impose on the texts. It is a way to discuss certain New Testament passages from a particular perspective. While Scripture uses language that says “the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church” (Ephesians 5:23), most Christians today would not say that the husband is the savior of the woman’s body, even though the metaphor continues in just that way: “the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior.” To interpret the metaphor as denoting authority, power, or rulership would be to impose a personal perspective that ascribes to the Caesar model. It is an imposition of the modern concept of headship onto the term head, which is not part of the Greek meaning. If the Caesar model is actually being challenged in the New Testament, and Christ is the new model for the believing community, head then connotes humility, self-sacrifice, and being “obedient” to others (Philippians 2:8).

The demographics we are accustomed to in the United States today would have been unthinkable in the New Testament. In the United States, 102 million adults (44.1 percent of the population) are unmarried. Of these, 53 percent are women, 47 percent are men, and 62 percent have never been married. In 2011, 33 million Americans lived alone (28 percent

of all households). In addition, 10 million unmarried mothers live alone with children, and 1.7 million fathers are unmarried. In the United States today, male headship has little logic or relevance to people living alone, and it could be confounding to single mothers and their children.⁴

Included in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians is a call to respect and love others in one’s faith community more than one’s own freedom (8:1–13; 10:23–11:1). This must guide our discussion of the question of the ordination of women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This is why we are not asking for the ordination of women as a global policy, even though we are convinced that such a policy is biblically and morally right. Rather, we are asking that in those places in our world where not treating men and women equally is not respecting cultural norms and is hindering the mission of the church we love, that we be allowed to follow the mandate of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians and respect culture even as we proclaim the gospel.

For Further Research

This approach to interpreting Scripture is also reflected in the Principles of Interpretation listed for the proponents of the ordination of women in Jan Barna’s work, *Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Theology*.⁵ This book is extremely helpful for understanding the two major hermeneutical positions of Adventists who are opponents and proponents of the ordination of women. It is clear from Barna’s study that both sides are deeply committed to Scripture and, while embracing significantly different presuppositions, have much more in common than is sometimes understood (see especially pages 253–318).

In his chapter in *Women in Ministry: Biblical & Historical Perspectives*, Richard M. Davidson concludes that equality was the ideal, but that after the Fall, “the husband was given a servant headship role to preserve the harmony of the home, while at the same time the model of

Paul suggests new ways of understanding the family. Men and women may remain single, with their focus on the work of God, rather than following the traditional presure to marry (7:25–40).

equal partnership was still set forth as the ideal.⁶ This male headship is limited to the relationship between a husband and a wife and does not apply to society as a whole.⁷

In a paper commissioned by the Biblical Research Committee for the 1973 Mohaven meetings, Madelynn Haldeman challenges the church to be careful not to endorse pagan societal norms rather than the way of the New Testament, which she believes proclaims that all women “have been called by Christ and some of them to the pulpit.”⁸

Sheryl Prinz-McMillan in *The Welcome Table: Setting a Place for Ordained Women* concludes that when New Testament passages are taken in their historical context, “there is no such thing as biblical ‘headship,’”⁹ at least not understood in terms of hierarchy. Discussion of Ephesians 5 in light of the Roman household codes shows Paul leaving out the command for husbands to “rule” their wives and rather to “love” them (Ephesians 5:25–33).¹⁰

Peter M. Van Bemmelen shows that in Ellen White’s writing the focus of redemption is on the restoration of God’s ideal for man and woman.¹¹ He writes, “Equality and companionship are key concepts for Ellen White in connection with the marriage relationship.”¹² And in regard to the church: “Never does Ellen White quote biblical ‘headship’ language in reference to the human leadership of the church; neither is there any evidence in her writings that she referred to ordained ministers in terms of headship.”¹³

Adventist Fundamental Belief #14, Unity in the Body of Christ:

The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children. (Romans 12:4, 5; 1 Corinthians 12:12–14; Matthew 28:19, 20; Psalm 133:1; 2 Corinthians 5:16, 17; Acts 17:26, 27; Galatians 3:27, 29; Colossians 3:10–15; Ephesians 4:14–16; 4:1-6; John 17:20–23.) ■

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References

1. The word *headship* itself is a relatively recent word, first used in 1582. The word *leadership* is even more recent.
2. Unless otherwise specified, the New Revised Standard Version is used.
3. The Greek word *archon* (ruler or leader) is used in the New Testament for Jewish leaders, of Roman officials, of the forces of evil, and of Christ, but never of Christian ministers.
4. In addition, what does male headship mean to the 22 nations currently led by female prime ministers or presidents and to the 13 commonwealth countries with women serving as governors general? Additionally, in the United States women make up 49 percent of currently enrolled medical students, 51 percent of law students, 47 percent of dental students, and 60.8 percent of pharmacy students.
5. Barna, Jan, *Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Serbia: Euro Dream, 2012), 242-243.
6. Davidson, Richard M., “Headship, Submission, and Equality in Scripture,” *Women in Ministry: Biblical & Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 284.
7. *Ibid.*, 259–295.
8. Haldeman, Madelynn, “The Role of Women in the Early Christian Church,” *Mohaven Papers* (September 1973), 52; available online at <http://www.adventisr.archives.org/t973-s-mohaven#.UaEvRdimXl8>.
9. Prinz-McMillan, Sheryl, “Who’s in Charge of the Family?” *The Welcome Table: Setting a Place for Ordained Women*, cd. Patricia A. Habada and Rebecca Frost Brillhart (Langley Park, MD: TEAM Press, 1995), 216.
10. *Ibid.*, 197–221.
11. Van Bemmelen, Peter M., “Equality, Headship, and Submission in the Writings of Ellen G. White,” *Women in Ministry: Biblical & Historical Perspectives*, Nancy Vyhmeister, ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1998), 297–311.
12. *Ibid.*, 305.
13. *Ibid.*, 306.

Women in Scripture and Headship | BY EDWIN E. REYNOLDS, PH.D.

AND CLINTON WAHLEN, PH.D.

This article is an excerpt taken from the Minority Report of the North American Division Theology of Ordination Study Committee. The article begins with a discussion of hermeneutics and the Genesis account of creation. We pick it up as it moves into consideration of leadership and carry it to its conclusion.

Throughout Scripture women are active in many influential roles, but there is no clear instance of their exercising a spiritual headship role. That is, no woman was ever placed by God as a religious head over a man: women were never given a priestly role in the Old Testament nor in the New Testament are they ever seen functioning as apostles or elders. Some women in the Bible are described as prophetesses,¹ but one cannot necessarily assume, by virtue of this work, that God intended for them to fulfill a spiritual headship responsibility. Miriam, for example, was explicitly condemned for attempting to arrogate to herself the privileges that God had given to Moses. She argued, "Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" (Num 12:2), implying that, since she also had the gift of prophecy, she was somehow equal to him in spiritual authority. God made it clear by afflicting her with leprosy that her assumption was not only wrong but sinful. The punishment of Aaron, who joined with her in this challenge to Moses' authority, was evidenced by God's departure from the sanctuary (Num 12:9–10). Interestingly, however, by virtue of his headship authority as high priest, he could still intercede for Miriam, which, together with Moses' prayer to God, availed for her healing.

Deborah is a woman in Scripture who has been considered not only as a prophetess but



Deborah

also a judge. However, by means of several important indicators, the Biblical text reveals that Deborah was not a judge in the same sense as other judges. First, she is never called a "judge"² nor is the normal formula ("X judged Israel Y years") used of her.³ Second, the temporary character of Deborah's judging activity is emphasized in several ways (Judg 4:4), including use of the phrase "at that time" (*bā 'ēt habî*).⁴ Third, in order to prepare the reader for a woman temporarily acting in this capacity, the way Deborah is introduced deliberately emphasizes in five different ways that she is female before mentioning her work of judging.⁵ Finally, rather than sitting

in the gate as judges and elders did (e.g., Ruth 4:9–11; 1 Sam 9:18) and kings somewhat later (1 Kgs 22:10; Jer 38:7), the description of Deborah is more in line with her role as a prophetic messenger (sitting under a palm tree between Ramah and Bethel, Judg 4:5): “In the absence of the usual magistrates, the people had sought to her for counsel and justice.”⁶ Confirmation that Deborah’s activity was more an extension of her prophetic role because the divinely-intended judge was unwilling to lead is indicated several times throughout the narrative: God calls Barak to act as Israel’s deliverer through Deborah’s prophetic message (vv. 6–7); at Barak’s refusal to lead Israel into battle unless she would accompany him “and thus support his efforts by her influence and counsel,”⁷ Deborah prophesies that she will go and the victory will be gained, but that it

Jezebel



“will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman” (Jael, not Deborah, vv. 8–9); the “Song of Deborah,” sung by Deborah and Barak, alludes to both of them as “leaders” who “took the lead in Israel” (5:1–2).

In short, Deborah was obedient to the prophetic role that God had called her to do in an exceptional situation. Her work was temporarily expanded to encompass some of the functions that a judge would do, but, as Ellen G. White indicates, it was Barak who “had been designated by the Lord himself as the one chosen to deliver Israel.”⁸ This reading of Judges is confirmed by the New Testament, which mentions Barak, not Deborah, in recalling Israel’s deliverance at that time (Heb 11:32). This single Biblical example of notable leadership by a woman during the time of the judges, when “there was no king in Israel” and “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judg 17:6, etc.), does not provide a sound basis for establishing a principle of female headship in contradiction to the rest of Scripture. Underscoring the fact that having female leaders of Israel was not God’s plan, the two examples of women queens usurping power in the Old Testament are thoroughly negative. Queen Jezebel led the Northern Kingdom of Israel into apostasy and endeavored to exterminate God’s true prophets, including Elijah (1 Kgs 18:4; 19:1–2). Athaliah, after coming to the throne of Judah, consolidated her power by killing all the male heirs save young Joash who was hidden away for six years by the wife of the high priest (2 Kgs 11:1–3; 2 Chr 22:10–12).

In the New Testament, female believers were called to significant supportive roles in the ministry of Jesus: learning lessons from him just like the other disciples (Luke 10:39), providing financial means for the furtherance of his ministry (Luke 8:3), and supplying moral encouragement during the crucial closing week (John 12:1–8), not least by their determined presence at the cross (Mark 15:40–41; John 19:25). They were also his witnesses before and after his resurrection (Luke 8:1–2; 24:9–10). Jesus com-

manded Mary Magdalene to tell the news to the other disciples (John 20:15–18) and, together with the other women who went to the tomb, was among the first witnesses to his resurrection (Luke 24:2–10). Although these roles would undoubtedly have been offensive to Jewish cultural sensitivities, Jesus invited them to fulfill these important tasks. So out of step was Jesus' treatment of women with prevailing Jewish attitudes, that even the apostles did not believe the witness the women brought them of the risen Lord (Luke 24:11).⁹

We also have ample evidence of women working in local churches: Priscilla and her husband Aquila in their spare time labored in Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome, working with Paul, teaching accurately “the way of God,” and opening their home for church gatherings (Acts 18:1, 18, 26; 1 Cor 16:9; Rom 16:3); Phoebe, a “servant” (*diakonos*)¹⁰ of the church at Cenchreae near Corinth and patron of Paul and others, delivered Paul's epistle to Rome and may have encouraged generous support of his mission to Spain (Rom 16:1; cf. 15:25–32); Mary was notable in Rome for her hard work in the church (16:6); Junia with Andronicus were “well-known to the apostles” (v. 7);¹¹ Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis “worked hard in the Lord” (v. 12). But there is no clear evidence that any of these women ever exercised a headship role. Their labors appear to be supportive of the work being carried forward by the apostles and other men whom God had called to lead his church. Today God still seeks both men and women willing to fill supportive roles in the advancement of his work. Paul indicates the importance of each person's contribution to the process of reaping the crop for harvest (1 Cor 3:4–11). Every worker has an important role to play, but God gives the resultant increase so that no individual is more important than another. Equality of service is not incompatible with different roles; all are servants of Christ and the glory belongs to God for the growth of the church and the abundant final harvest.

Ordination in the New Testament Church

Jesus established his church by ordaining twelve men from a much larger group of disciples.¹² He named them “apostles,” thus anticipating their future sending as his personal emissaries (Mark 3:13–14). This took place more than a year after their initial call (cf. Mark 1:16–20; John 1:35–51)¹³ and represents a further stage both in their experience as disciples and in the development of the church. While all who join themselves to Christ are expected to be fruitful disciples (John 15:1–6), some were set apart or ordained to special leadership capacities. After his death and resurrection, Jesus bestowed the Holy Spirit on the apostles, making them his undershepherds, instructing them, and authorizing them to act on his behalf (John 20:21–23). In this light, Ellen White draws out the significance of the gift of the Holy Spirit in qualifying men for the gospel ministry:

Before the disciples could fulfill their official duties in connection with the church, Christ breathed His Spirit upon them. He was committing to them a most sacred trust, and He desired to impress them with the fact that without the Holy Spirit this work could not be accomplished.... Only those who are thus taught of God, those who possess the inward working of the Spirit, and in whose life the Christ-life is manifested, are to stand as representative men, to minister in behalf of the church.¹⁴

Ordination (to “set apart for an office or duty”)¹⁵ is described in the New Testament by various Greek words, which reflect the preferred vocabulary of the individual authors. The only ritual associated with ordination in the New Testament is the laying on of hands, although prayer, fasting, and other practices are also sometimes mentioned. Use of the ritual, based on Old Testament precedent (Num 8:10; 27:18) serves to represent both the sanction of the church at large (through the one previously ordained by the church) and church members (who have expressed their confidence in God's calling of the individual through their vote with the uplifted hand, 2 Cor 8:19).

Equality of service is not incompatible with different roles; all are servants of Christ and the glory belongs to God for the growth of the church and the abundant final harvest.

Specifically mentioned as being recipients of the laying on of hands are deacons and elders (Acts 6:6; 14:23), which explains why these two offices also appear together in I Timothy 3. Paul, in writing to Titus on the island of Crete, makes no mention of deacons, instructing him to appoint elders for the churches in the various towns there (1:5). Timothy, on the other hand, was stationed in Ephesus. Being one of the leading cities of the empire, it must have had considerably larger churches than the island of Crete, because, like the church in Jerusalem, both elders and deacons were required. The role of Timothy and Titus, as elders overseeing a number of churches, is similar to that of the ordained minister today.

Turning in greater detail to 1 Timothy, the verses immediately preceding chapter 3 contain what some consider to be instructions as to how wives should relate to their husbands. However, normally such instructions are given as part of

Mary Magdalene



what is generally referred to as a household code like those found in Ephesians 5:21–6:9 and Colossians 3:18–4:1. The use in Ephesians 5 of pronouns which are translated “one’s own” (*idios*, v. 22; *beautou*, vv. 28–29) show clearly that the Greek words *anēr* and *gynē* should be translated in that context as “husband” and “wife,” not generically (“man” and “woman”). The article has a similar function in Colossians 3:18–4:1 to specify “wives” (v. 18), “husbands,” (v. 19), as well as “children” (v. 20), “fathers” (v. 21), “slaves” (v. 22), and “masters” (4:1). 1 Peter 2:18–3:7 addresses instructions to servants (2:18) followed by “similarly” (*houtōs*, 3:1, 7) to address wives and husbands, thus signaling the presence of a household code there also. In short, household codes always have indicators showing that reference is being made to husbands and wives.

First Timothy 2, while it resembles a household code, has no such indicators; nor is there mention of masters, servants or children. So here *anēr* and *gynē* should be translated generically, “man” and “woman” rather than “husband” and “wife.” Further support for this translation is seen in the fact that 1 Timothy 2 deals with worship life rather than home life, as well as from 1 Timothy 3:15 which calls the church “the house of God.” Understandably, then, this passage has been labeled a church code.¹⁷

Such an application of the rules of the house to the church should not be all that surprising since we have many references in the New Testament to churches meeting in homes, including in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:19) where Timothy was located at the time that Paul wrote his first epistle to him (1 Tim 1:3). First Timothy 2 begins with instructions that prayer should be offered for all people (vv. 1-7),¹⁸ and that the men “in every place,” i.e., wherever there is a church gathering for worship (cf. 3:15), “should pray, lifting holy hands, without anger or quarreling” (v. 8). Next follows instructions for “women who profess godliness,” i.e. believers—women in the church.¹⁹ They should dress modestly and prudently (vv. 9–10), so that fashion does not lead to rivalry or divisions in the church. What

immediately follows should also be understood as part of this church code: women should not take an authoritative teaching role (vv. 11–12) apart from or independent of the male-based church leadership prescribed in 1 Timothy 3. Again, as in the earlier part of the chapter, Paul gives his rationale for this assertion, this time based on the history and theological significance of the Creation and the Fall: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor” (vv. 13–14).

Mentioning the order of creation, man first and then woman, concisely invokes from Genesis 2 the male leadership principle that God established in Eden. The word Paul chooses for deceive (*exapataō*; cf. Gen 3:13, LXX) means “to cause someone to accept false ideas about someth[ing].”²⁰ As we saw above, the serpent deceived Eve by approaching her as if she were the head, reversing the headship principle, and by suggesting that she and Adam could rise to a higher level of power through eating the forbidden fruit. Adam was not deceived—he saw the headship principle had been reversed and “mourned that he had permitted Eve to wander from his side. . . . Love, gratitude, loyalty to the Creator—all were overborne by love to Eve. She was a part of himself, and he could not endure the thought of separation.”²¹ Yet, Paul also exalts as crucial one of the roles that only women can play in counteracting the Fall and obtaining salvation—as mothers in fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. This verse points first and foremost to the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the promised seed (Gal 3:16), the source of eternal salvation (Heb 5:9); but it is also a part of God’s plan that women who have the opportunity exercise this God-given privilege and role of bearing and raising godly children (1 Tim 2:15; 1 Cor 11:11–12). Paul is not suggesting that women who are unable or choose not to have children cannot be saved since he makes clear that the condition for obtaining salvation is not child-bearing per se, but maintaining one’s connection with Christ by continuing “in faith and love and

holiness, with self-control” (v. 15).²²

Paul’s explanation in 1 Timothy 2:11–15 of the relations between believing men and women in the church, predicated on the creation order of Genesis 1–3 (which Paul had already established in 1 Cor 11), lays the basis for his stipulations regarding the qualifications for overseers and deacons that immediately follow in 1 Timothy 3. Confirmation that these chapters form a church code appears in 1 Timothy 3:14–15: “...that you may know how it is necessary for people to conduct themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth” (cf. v. 5, Mounce). As those who carry responsibility for the spiritual and material well-being of the church, overseers and deacons must be carefully selected based on the specified qualifications, which are almost the same for both offices. In addition, however, the overseer must also be “able to teach” (*didaktikon*, cf. 2 Tim 2:24), a qualification not required of deacons. Another church code, Titus 1:5–3:2, gives nearly identical qualifications for the overseer/elder, including competence in teaching (1:5–9).²³

The importance of such competency is apparent in view of the frequent New Testament references to false teachers, and not only in the Pastoral Epistles. Requiring this competency of the overseer or elder coupled with disallowing women an authoritative teaching role (1 Tim 2:12) helps to explain why the person filling the office of overseer/elder “must be . . . the husband of one wife” (3:2, *dei . . . einai, mias gynaiikos andra*), a stipulation Paul underscores also to Titus (1:6). Deacons have a similar requirement (1 Tim 2:12).²⁴ Some translate this phrase as “one-wife husband,” arguing that the word order in Greek places the emphasis on “one-wife” (as opposed to two or more) when actually the syntax makes all parts of the phrase emphatic. It stresses competence in managing a stable, respectable Christian home, which demonstrates in turn that, as an ordained officer of the church, the man should be capable of caring for and managing well God’s church. The requirement that he be “the

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husband of one wife” cannot refer to polygamy, which was not practiced in cities of the Roman empire such as Ephesus;²⁵ rather, it stipulates that men be appointed who exemplify a loving, unselfish headship and the values of a lifelong marriage. The parallel between 3:12 for deacons and 3:2, 4–5 for the elder shows that there is a connection between having one wife and the ability to manage the household well (including any children).

The New Testament’s emphasis on the importance and integrity of the family social structure is not simply out of convenience to harmonize with the surrounding culture or out of expedience to facilitate mission. In fact, not unlike today, there were many cultural forces in Greco-Roman society that tended to undermine family stability including immoral lifestyles, homosexuality, and materialism. In the church too, Paul expresses concern that false teachers

Mary and Martha



were subverting “whole families” (Titus 1:12). The key role that Christianity accorded to the family, placing it at the heart of religious faith and worship, helps explain its explosive growth and rapid expansion throughout the ancient world. It also makes clear that the church’s continued growth, vitality, and stability depend largely on godly spiritual leadership in the homes that compose it.

Paul underscores that the structure of the human family was established at creation: “the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man” (1 Cor 11:3 NIV). “For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (vv. 8–9; cf. 1 Tim 2:13). Christ is not just the head of Adam, but the head of every man. And “the husband is the head of the wife” (Eph 5:23). This human family structure was integrated at creation into heaven’s existing order in which cherubim and seraphim are nearest the throne (Ps 99:1; Isa 6:2; Ezek 10:3; 11:22), Christ as Archangel is head over these as well as the rest of the angelic host (1 Thess 4:16; Rev 12:7; cf. Josh 5:13-15), and “the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3).

First Corinthians 11 is similar to 1 Timothy and Titus, but as a corrective church code. We see the same clues: a generic use of man and woman in connection with an argument from the creation order (11:3, 7-9) and instructions for how men and women are to behave in the church (11:4–6, 13–15). Apparently there were some believers in Corinth who were not following the accepted practices for affirming the headship principle in the church. So Paul first articulates the overarching principle that “the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man,” which is modeled by Christ himself, who is submissive to his Head, God the Father (v. 3). Paul makes application of this headship principle, based on the governing role of the head to the body (vv. 4–6, as also in Eph 5:22–33), and he defends it vigorously (vv. 7–16). “Head” (*kephalē*) in this context, as elsewhere in the New Testament,²⁶ does not refer to

“source,” which is not at issue here, but to “authority” (v. 10).²⁷ The notion of head as authority is frequent also in the OT, where the term (Heb. *rōš*) is used for rulers, chiefs, captains, and other authorities. Even in prophecy, heads symbolize authority, whether kings, rulers, powers, or kingdoms (Dan 2:38; 7:6; Rev 17:9–10).

After explaining how the headship principle articulated in verse 3 should impact one’s decorum in worship, Paul gives several supporting arguments for the principle. His primary Biblical rationale comes from the order and purpose of creation in Genesis 1–2: (1) woman is the glory of man inasmuch as she came from man (1 Cor 11:7–8); and (2) woman was created for the man (v. 9). He also appeals to the decorum angels manifest in worship (v. 10).²⁹ Paul balances this male leadership principle, however, with a “nevertheless” (*plēn*) clause in vv. 11–12 in order to remind his readers that it is not unconditional, that interdependence also functions among believers. Thus, as in the New Testament household codes,³⁰ unselfish love is presumed in the church code too. Paul wraps up his instructions with subsidiary arguments which are universal, not local or cultural—from reason (v. 13) and nature (vv. 14–15). Finally, he makes clear that all of the churches follow a consistent practice, from which no deviation will be considered (v. 16). While the nature of the head covering is not completely clear, Paul’s main point applies with equal force today: the way men and women conduct themselves in church should indicate that the principle of male church leadership is operative and accepted by all who take part in worship. Since every reason Paul gives for upholding this principle transcends local culture and practice, it follows that what he enjoins for the church at Corinth is not unique or applicable only to them. The principle of submission to the designated head is not limited by location or circumstance because it is practiced in all the churches and even in heaven. Paul shows how headship functions throughout divine-human, human, and divine relations,³¹ thereby empha-

sizing the same kind of nourishing headship relation by men in the church that Christ has with the church as a whole (cf. Eph 5:23), which resembles the role relation God the Father bears to Christ (1 Cor 11:3).

A few chapters later, in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul lays down another corrective church code. This set of rules deals with disruptive speech by both men and women in the church. Verses 33b–35, which forbid women from speaking in church, must be understood in this setting. Rather than contradicting what Paul has just said in 1 Corinthians 11:5 about women praying and prophesying in church, the rule should be read in light of this more comprehensive instruction that precedes it.

Relation of Spiritual Gifts to Ordination

There are several lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament, which together reflect a wide diversity of talents put to spiritual use. These gifts include prophecy, evangelism, teaching, helps, hospitality, ministry to the poor, and many others. Such gifts are available to both men and women without regard to race, class, or nationality. Still, while everyone is given some gift (1 Cor 12:7), there may be gifts that are not available to everyone since each of them is distributed in accordance with the Spirit’s choosing, bestowal, and direction, not ours (v. 11). The same may be said of church offices. Various church capacities, including that of prophet, are open to women (Luke 2:36; Acts 21:9; cf. 2:17–18; 1 Cor 11:5). However, women are never seen functioning as pastors, even though some, like Priscilla with her husband Aquila, were certainly involved in the work of instructing and making disciples, because the commission to share the gospel is something that all Christians should be actively engaged in (Luke 24:8–10; Rev 22:17). Nor are women ever seen functioning as elders/overseers, no doubt because this office combines headship and shepherding functions. Paul speaks tenderly to the “elders” (*presbyteroi*) of the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:17), whom the Holy Spirit

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appointed as “overseers” (*episkopoi*) to “shepherd” (*poimainō*) the church of God (v. 28). Peter also seems to use overseer and shepherd (or “pastor”) synonymously when he speaks of Jesus as “the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (1 Pet 2:25),³² as well as in his exhortation to the leaders of the churches of Asia Minor to “shepherd the flock of God, . . . exercising oversight [*episkopountes*]” (5:2). The elder is given oversight over God’s “flock” to protect it from danger and deception (Acts 20:29). It is an office that was given only to men who, like Adam and other spiritual leaders of the home and the church, will be called “to give an account” (Heb 13:17).

Summary and Conclusion

In the course of this brief but wide-ranging study, we have seen that the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of ordination and church order was established very early through extensive Bible study and remained essentially unchanged until the 1970s and 1980s when church policy started becoming more dominant in defining ministerial functions. However, the increasing conflict over the ordination of women, seen in recent years at various levels of our church, suggests that deeper theological issues are involved which can only be fully resolved by returning to a more Biblically based understanding and practice of ordination. An alternative approach suggests that we must continue down the path of pragmatic solutions because the Bible provides us no more than a vague, principle-based “trajectory.” It implies that the Old Testament’s consistent affirmation of male priests, the precedent of Jesus in ordaining twelve men as apostles, the selection of seven male deacons, and the teachings of Paul regarding the qualifications of church officers, are all products of the time, circumscribed by the limits of the culture. In fact, ordaining women represents a significant departure from the Biblical model. Is our degenerate Western culture of modernism and post-modernism, with its intentional dismantling of the family and family values, Christian distinctiveness,

and, ultimately, “truth,” better equipped to address the needs of the church today than are the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy? From our earliest beginnings as Seventh-day Adventists, we have found a solid, Bible-based approach to be our source of unity, and this challenge will be no exception. Ultimately, when policy-based rather than Scripture-based solutions to theological problems are employed, church order and unity may be undermined, as our recent experience in connection with this issue has shown. Genuine unity is the product of the converting power of the Word of God. It must be our guiding light—not a social reengineering of gender roles and functions that can never bring lasting relief from the abuses brought about by sin. Jesus has shown us the way, not through external social reforms but through inner transformation and the power of a positive example.

Beginning with the creation narrative of Genesis 1 and 2, the Bible consistently describes human beings as both equal and complementary, assigning the primary leadership role to the man with a supportive role given to the woman. The entrance of sin attempted to reverse these roles, but God indicated that male leadership would continue (Gen 3:16). Paul describes, based on Genesis, how this leadership, both in the home (Eph 5) and in the church (1 Cor 11), is to be subject to and modeled after Christ’s own unselfish headship. Throughout Scripture, women fulfill important supportive roles and women were specifically included by Jesus in his ministry. They also assisted the apostles in their work of establishing churches, but none are ever seen functioning as an elder or deacon because such persons “must be” (*dei . . . einai*) the husband of one wife, exhibiting godly character qualities and demonstrating wise spiritual leadership in the home (1 Tim 3:2–5, 12; Titus 1:6). This same Scriptural requirement applies also to pastors, whose headship role transcends that of a local church elder. The theological basis for this requirement is grounded in the early chapters of Genesis. Paul sets out guidelines for men and

women in the church based on the creation order, which in turn is based on the relation between the Father and the Son (1 Tim 2–3; 1 Cor 11, 14; Titus 1–3). Within this Biblical paradigm of godly male headship, all supportive avenues for service within the church are open to both women and men based on their Spirit-bestowed gifts and calling, including teaching, helps, hospitality, ministry to the poor, and many others. Naturally, how men and women relate to each other in a church setting will vary somewhat from culture to culture. At the same time, it will be evident that the principle of male church leadership is supported by the congregation as a whole, particularly by those who take leading roles in worship.

To follow the Bible model on the issue of women's ordination will require courage like that of our pioneers. Nevertheless, it is the only basis on which we can expect to maintain global unity, receive God's continued blessing, and, most importantly, anticipate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to finish his work. ■

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References

1. Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Noadiah, and the wife of Isaiah in the Old Testament, and Anna, and the four daughters of Philip in the New Testament.

2. Although the qal participle *šōpēt* is used substantively to mean "judge" (Judg 2:16, 17, 18ter, 19; 11:27), this is never applied to Deborah, who calls herself "a mother in Israel" (5:7).

3. See Judg 10:2 (Tola), 3 (Jair); 12:7 (Jephthah); 12:9 (Ibzan), 11 (Elon), 14 (Abdon); 15:20 and 16:31 (Samson).

4. Besides this temporal phrase in Judg 4:4, use of a participle ("judging") rather than the normal verb form ("judged")—the only such case in the entire book of Judges (besides the verses listed in the previous endnote, see also Judg 3:10; 11:27; 12:8, 11, 13, all of which employ either a qal perfect or a qal imperfect with waw-consecutive)—suggests "a comparatively transitory act" (GKC §116f; cf. Jouon §121f).

5. Judg 4:4 is literally translated: "Now Deborah [feminine proper noun], a woman, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she [feminine pronoun]." ... Since Deborah is a feminine name and "prophetess" (*nēbî'â*) is grammatically feminine in Hebrew there is no need to add that she was a woman unless that point is being stressed. Furthermore, this construction is unique in the Old Testament; nowhere else is "woman" (*'iššâ*) linked to *nēbî'â*.

6. White, Ellen G., "Defeat of Sisera," *The Signs of the Times*, June 16, 1881, par. 4.

7. *Ibid.*, par. 6.

8. *Ibid.*, emphasis supplied.

9. Cf. *ZIBBCNT* 1:182.

10. In the New Testament, *diakonos* is the preferred designation for all church workers irrespective of capacity, because all serve Christ, who made Himself a Servant (Luke 22:27; cf. Phil 2:7, which uses *doulos*). Elsewhere *diakonos* carries the technical sense of "deacon," a church officer working under the authority of an elder/overseer (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8–16), in apparent contrast to women who seem to have fulfilled some church duties, though without an official title (1 Tim 3:11).

11. Literary, epigraphic, and historical evidence is divided

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(BDF 125.2; MM 306) as to whether the name *Iouian* is feminine (Junia) or masculine (Junias), though the latter possibility is strengthened by the presence of three other shortened names in this list ending in -as (Patrobas, Hermas, Olympas, vv. 14–15), all clearly masculine (William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [4th ed.; ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1900], 422–23); see also Al Wolters, “IOYNIAN (Romans 16:7) and the Hebrew Name Yēhunnī,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127/2 (2008): 397–40. The translation “among the apostles” is possible too, but in that case may refer to “missionaries” (2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25) rather than to authoritative church leaders. Andronicus and Junia, then, could be a husband and wife missionary team with Junia directing “her energies especially to other women” (Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* [BECNT 6; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998], 797).

12. White, Ellen G., *The Desire of Ages*, 296: “When

Miriam

Jesus had ended His instruction to the disciples, He gathered



the little band close about Him, and kneeling in the midst of them, and laying His hands upon their heads, He offered a prayer dedicating them to His sacred work. Thus the Lord’s disciples were ordained to the gospel ministry” (cf. *idem*, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 4).

13. See *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (ed. Francis D. Nichol; 7 vols.; Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1956), 5:230–31; cf. 196–97.

14. White, Ellen G., *The Desire of Ages*, 805.

15. Edwards, D. Miall, “Ordain, Ordination,” *ISBE* (1915 ed.), 4:2199, col. 2. The word “ordination,” derived from *ordinatio*, has its analogs in the other Latin-based languages. However, the concept is translated in various ways, in some languages closely reflecting the Biblical idea of the “laying on of hands” (e.g., Russian and Korean), while in others (e.g., Indonesian and Tagalog) translating it with a word that means “poured oil.”

16. Hugenberger, Gordon P., “Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis?,” *JETS* 35/3 (1992): 357, is forced to admit that at most it is only “a partial household code.” However, as we shall see, it really pertains to church life rather than home life.

17. Towner, Philip H., “Household Codes,” *DLNT*, 514. Similarly, David L. Balch, “Household Codes,” *ABD*, 3:318, who calls it a “congregational code.”

18. Paul gives several reasons for this: God wants all to be saved, Jesus is mediator and died for all, and Paul was ordained a preacher, apostle, and teacher of the Gentiles, which embraces the world.

19. Paul is well aware that some became believers while their spouses did not (cf. 1 Cor 7:12–16) and so, if he were writing about how to behave at home, he could not assume that the women “profess godliness.” He can only assume this because he is giving instructions for behavior in a worship setting. Besides, if this is a homesetting verses 9–10 do not make sense: why would Paul be concerned about how women dressed at home?

20. *BDAG* 345.

21. White, Ellen G., *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 56.

22. Some women (the unmarried or otherwise incapable of giving child-birth) might need to accept that it is not

God's plan yet for them to have children; to such this verse obviously does not apply.

23. Here, and in Acts 20:17, 28, overseer (*episkopos*) is used interchangeably with elder (*presbyteros*). Judging from the negative qualities listed in Titus 1:10–14, there may have been problems with some of the overseers of the churches on Crete.

24. The possibility of construing *anēr* as “person” is excluded because it is linked in both these verses with *gynē* which refers to the man's wife. Further confirmation is found in v. 11 where “the women” are referred to separately and without such a specification, perhaps because they were the wives of the deacons. In any case, these women had a supportive role, doing work similar to that of the deacons though without the title (see n. 50 above).

25. Cf. Walter Scheidel, “Monogamy and Polygyny,” in *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (ed. Beryl Rawson; Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World; West Sussex, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 108: “Greco-Roman monogamy may well be the single most important phenomenon of ancient history that has remained widely unrecognized.”

26. The word is used elsewhere of Christ as “head over all things” in relation to the church (Eph 1:22), which is His body (v. 23; similarly Col 1:18), and as the “head over all rule and authority” (Col 2:10 NIV). Both passages refer to His supremacy—over the church, as the Chief Shepherd and Overseer of our souls (1 Pet 2:25; 5:4), and over all other authorities and powers that have been made subject to Him (1 Pet 3:22). Parallel to Christ's headship over the church is the husband's headship in relation to his wife (Eph 5:22–24).

27. This has been clearly established by Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “*Kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11:3,” *Int* 47 (1993): 52–59; Wayne Grudem, “The Meaning of κεφαλή (“Head”): An Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged,” *JETS* 44/1 (2001): 25–65, who on 61–64 cites many others reaching this conclusion.

28. See, e.g., Exod 6:14, 25; 18:25; Num 1:16; 7:2; 10:4; Deut 1:15; 5:23; 33:5, 21; Josh 14:1; 19:51; Judg 10:18; 11:8, 11; 1 Sam 15:17, etc. None of these heads were sources in any sense of the word, as indicated by the

Septuagint's translation choices (*archēgoi, archai, chiliarchoi, archontes, hēgeisthai, hēgoumernoι, kepltalē*).

29. Perhaps referring at once to the reverence the angels exhibit in God's presence (covering their faces, Isa 6:2), the high degree of order they exemplify (cherubim, seraphim, etc., vividly described in Rev 4-5), and their presumed presence during church worship.

30. Wives are enjoined to submit to their husbands as to the Lord (Eph 5:21–24). Children are instructed to obey their parents in the Lord (6:1–3). Servants are enjoined to submit to their masters as serving the Lord (6:5-8). In addition, those in positions of authority are enjoined to reciprocate: husbands to love their wives (5:25–28), fathers to deal gently with their children so as not to exasperate them (6:4), and masters to deal gently with their servants, knowing that both serve the same Master, who will not show favoritism of the one over the other in the judgment (6:9). This reciprocation of love and kindness by the authority figure helps make the incumbent submission easy to practice and is akin to the mutual love and submission that all believers are to manifest toward one another (5:21).

31. The word order in each of the three relations places the heads in parallel and prioritizes Christ by placing this relation first, perhaps because He is the connecting link between the other two relational pairs.

32. Jesus likened Himself to the “good Shepherd” promised in the Old Testament (John 10:1-16; Mark 14:27; cf., e.g., Jer 23:4; Eze 34:23; 37:24; Zech 13:7).

**...women are
never seen
functioning as
pastors, even
though some,
like Priscilla
with her
husband Aquila,
were certainly
involved in
the work
of instructing
and making
disciples...**

ordination summary report ➔ **continued** from page 39...

The “no inspiration” side of the continuum represents the idea that the Bible is not divinely inspired and should be regarded as any other literary work. The “biblical inerrancy” side represents the idea that God dictated the precise words of Scripture. The traditional Adventist approach to interpreting Scripture reveals a centrist path of “thought inspiration.”

Since the various hermeneutical approaches can lead to differing interpretations, it follows that approaches designated by more distant points on the continuum—even those within the central portion representing traditional Seventh-day Adventist guidelines—may draw conflicting conclusions about issues for which there is not a clear, unequivocal biblical mandate.

Headship

The decades-old debate about the role of women in Seventh-day Adventist Church leadership is complex and sensitive. Those who disagree with ordaining women to the offices of elder and pastor are usually in harmonious agreement concerning most facets of the discussion—that women, too, are created in God’s image; that they are created of worth equal to men; that they bring equally valuable gifts to the church; and that they also bring exclusively female contributions to the mission of the body of Christ.

The agreement breaks down around passages in Scripture that have been associated with the concept of headship. Generally, those who would stop short of ordaining women to the offices of pastor or elder take issue with appointing women to headship roles, maintaining that a plain reading of Scripture does not allow women to exercise spiritual authority over men. Others believe that biblical headship does not apply to church leadership roles but is limited in application to the husband’s role as servant-leader in the home. Still others contend that headship is not even a biblical concept, but rather a relatively modern term, and that the original Greek word for *head* (*kephalē*), denotes source, not leader. These argue that hierarchical position is not the point, and that correct interpretation of these challenging passages is dependent on understanding the context in which they were written.

The majority of the committee does not view the issue of headship as a barrier to ordaining women to pastoral ministry.

Unity

Some may be concerned that the unity of the worldwide Church is compromised if members in some regions practice the ordination of women while others do not. In its supreme sense, unity is characterized by oneness with God and with each other, as Jesus said in his prayer in John 17. However, unity must be differentiated from uniformity, which implies invariability.

In deference to the unity Jesus identified, our doctrines comprise the common ground upon which our Church denomination is organized. For the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the 28 Fundamental Beliefs are the common doctrines. They are officially adopted and are considered scripturally clear. Other issues not unequivocally outlined in Scripture are subject to varying interpretations. Because a scripturally based, reasonable case may be made in favor of or opposed to the ordination of women to pastoral ministry, a worldwide mandate is neither practical nor necessary.

In recent years, the General Conference has established policies recognizing women in leadership roles: the ordination of deaconesses and elders and the commissioning of pastors. Although these policies are not practiced in all regions of the world, the Church has remained a single, worldwide organization. It is the conclusion of the study committee that differences in opinion and practice on this issue do not constitute disunity in Christ nor in the Church.

Since the first resolution recommending the ordination of women in 1881, members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have intensely debated, without consensus, the advisability of ordaining women to the gospel ministry. In 1973 the General Conference made its first formal appointment of a committee to study the role of women in the Church. Forty years later, it is the recommendation of this North American Division Theology of Ordination Study Committee that ordination to gospel ministry, as an affirmation of the call of God, be conferred by the Seventh-day Adventist Church on men and women. ■

**Submitted by the North American Division
Theology of Ordination Study Committee**

November 2013

Christ our law → continued from page 17...

the Ten Commandments; higher still are the two great commands of love to God and neighbor. But crowning the tree, the glory of the tree, which suffuses the entire tree, is the self-giving love of Christ, the love of the



The Resurrection

cross. To experience and manifest this kind of love is the will of God in its supreme expression. The law of sacrificial love for the sake of others transforms all other moral principles, showing their true foundation and the heart of him in whom God's will

was perfectly fulfilled. Indeed, as Ellen White observed, the law of self-sacrifice is the law of life for the universe.⁶ We see this law fully embodied and fulfilled in Christ. Thereby we know: Christ is our law. ■

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Lessons from the Third Way

My Friend and Brother, Mohsen | BY WILLIAM G. JOHNSON

The following is adapted from a presentation given at the 2013 Adventist Forum Conference at the Sheraton Read House Hotel in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on September 7, 2013. The conference's theme was interfaith dialogue.

For the past 40 years I have been trying to figure out America. My wife and I came to America to study. We left but soon returned to work here. We fell in love with the land—this land of breathtaking natural beauty, of purple-mountain majesties and amber waves of grain.

Even more than the land, we fell in love with what America stands for:

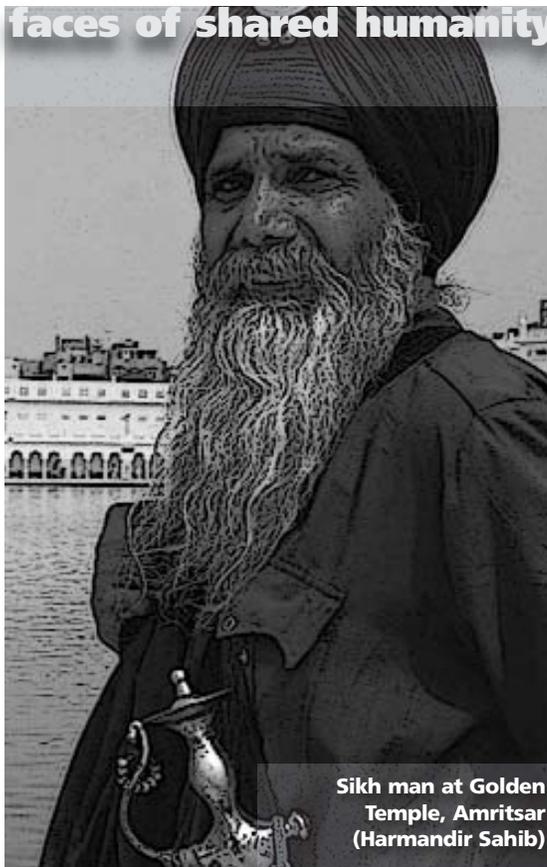
- Its freedom to think new thoughts,
- Its freedom to express them,
- Its freedom to pursue hopes and dreams,
- Its freedom to live and grow and be.

So my wife and I decided to be naturalized. We didn't rush it—we had lived here twenty years before we eventually took out the papers. In a deliberate, considered act, we became Americans.

I have to tell you, however, that I'm still trying to figure out America. Some aspects of the culture confound me—the obsession with guns? I don't get it; I don't think I'll ever get it.

And then there is a dark side that every now and then bubbles up into full view from the depths of the culture.

Just as nature here turns terrifying with hurricanes, tornadoes and wildfires, so every now and then the ugly America, never far out of sight,



[I dream] that each of us would...make the effort to befriend someone of another religion... to get to know them at the deep level of our shared humanity.

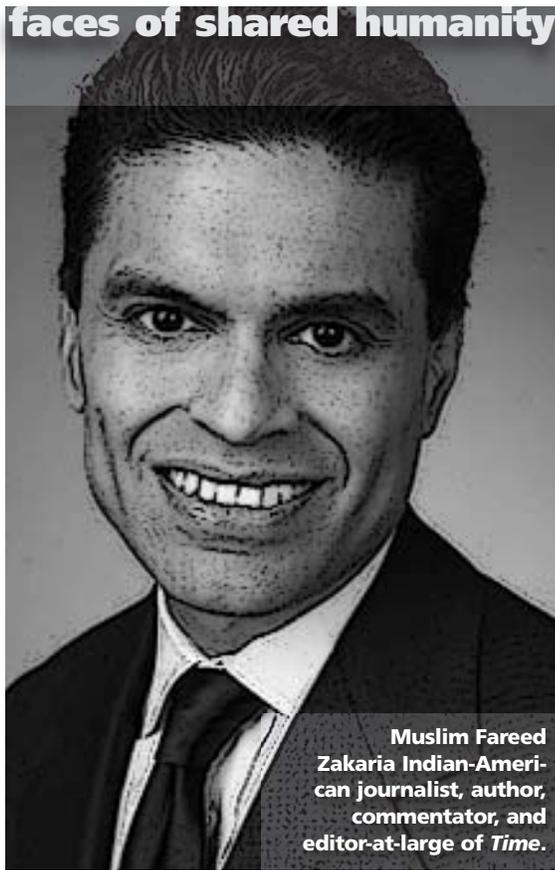
erupts. This is the dark side of men in white hoods, with their burning crosses and lynchings; the dark side that ridiculed and beat and bullied and killed Jews and Roman Catholics and Mormons—and Seventh-day Adventists.

There was, there is, a deep racism here. This country, so blessed, is also cursed. Slavery cursed the white race as surely as it cursed the black. Its pernicious roots continue to spread like a malignancy, distorting relationships, eating away at the freedom to be truly human.

Now, along with racial prejudice, religious

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The curse of racism and the curse of the current religious bigotry is that it destroys



Muslim Fareed Zakaria Indian-American journalist, author, commentator, and editor-at-large of *Time*.

our common humanity, the humanity implanted by the one God.

hatred again stalks throughout the land. The attacks of 9/11 have thrown us off-kilter. The land of the free and the home of the brave has become poisoned with religious ignorance, bigotry, and hatred.

Although following 9/11 President George W. Bush, in one of his finest moments, urged Americans to avoid branding all Muslims as terrorists, this is exactly what happened. We're twelve years along from the events of that fateful day, and it seems to me that the mood has become more intolerant, more hateful, more crazy.

Just over one year ago on August 5, 2012 at 10:30 a.m., members of the Sikh community in a Milwaukee gurdwara were preparing for worship. A 40-year-old white man drove up and began shooting with a semiautomatic weapon. He shot and killed six people and wounded four others; then he took his own life.

What ignorance! The Sikhs are not Muslims—theirs is a completely different religion.

They also look different: Sikh men do not cut their hair or shave their faces. Their turbans set them apart from the crowd.

And that's all it takes to turn them into a target for hatred and violence.

I am troubled—deeply troubled. America has changed since 9/11. We have lost much—in freedoms, in kindness, in love, in the largeness of spirit that made this a great country.

This time of worship isn't your usual sermon. As poorly as it may come across, think of it as the *cry* of an anguished heart, a cry for the land that won my heart.

With that I also want it to be a *call*, a plea to join me in helping to roll back the dark. As citizens of America, we must call her back to the freedoms that made her great. And as followers of Jesus of Nazareth, the Prince of Peace, we must take up the challenge of his call: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons [children] of God" (Matt. 5:9, NIV).

Interfaith Relations with Apostle Paul

In the book of Acts we find the apostle Paul, that intrepid church planter, in an interfaith setting. Facing stiff opposition in Berea, Greece, the brothers have whisked him away to Athens. It was all done in a hurry: Paul had been targeted by the enemies of the gospel. His fellow workers, Silas and Titus, apparently were not in danger; they stayed behind in Berea to wrap up the work Paul had started.

So here is Paul in Athens. He's all alone, waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him. Athens is a fascinating city. Once the heart of the Greek empire, its political power has waned, but it is the intellectual and cultural capital of the world. It's a place where ideas are batted around; it's the cutting edge, like today's New York or London.

Here East and West come together; here philosophers and wandering gurus hold forth; here ancient religions collide with new expressions of faith. What will Paul say in this situation?

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbling trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean."(Acts 17:16–23)

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To an Unknown God. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you."

"The city was full of idols." Travelers from the period inform us that Athens was cluttered with religious objects: shrines, temples, images, altars. It had become a joke; it was said that in Athens it was easier to find an altar than it was to find a person.

Paul walked the city and what he saw distressed him.

But the polytheism and idolatry weren't all—there was a synagogue there where Jews and Greeks attracted to the Hebrew religion used to meet for worship. As Paul did in other cities, he went to the synagogue and spoke to the worshipers about Jesus.

And there was a third group in this interfaith mix. In the marketplace Paul encountered them—Epicureans and Stoics. These people followed schools of thought that had originated in Athens some three hundred years earlier.

The Epicureans held that pleasure was the ultimate good. They weren't altogether hedo-

nists, but they were like a lot of modern people—you only go around once, so eat, drink, and be merry. A common epitaph on their gravestones read: "I was not. I was. I am not. I don't care."

The Stoics disputed with the Epicureans. Their founder was Zeno, who liked to teach in the Painted Porch of Athens among its *stoa*, or columns (hence the name "Stoic"). This philosophy, which exerted great influence for several centuries and attracted some famous Roman emperors and writers, was thoroughly pantheistic. Nature is God: God has no individual being apart from nature. It taught that we conquer the world by conquering ourselves. Self-control and fortitude—these were the qualities that enabled one to "live according to Nature." All people are manifestations of the one universal spirit, so we should live in brotherly love. Thus Diogenes of Sinope used to say: "I am not an Athenian or a Corinthian, but a citizen of the world."

Like Epicureanism, this philosophy taught that there wouldn't be any individual existence after one died.

Paul meets people in the street and begins to tell them about Jesus. Well, they had never heard of him! And the idea that he came back from the dead—preposterous! That idea had been mooted several centuries earlier and had been laughed out of court.

This Paul: he's a charlatan. They call him a "*spermologos*," someone who dabbles in ideas like a sparrow that picks up seeds here and there.

But it will make for some fun. So they take Paul to the Areopagus, the highest council of the city, and invite him to share his ideas, crazy as they seem to be.

What will Paul say in this interfaith setting? First, he does *not* take them to task for their idolatry. Instead of castigating them—"Gentlemen, I never saw such a junked up city in all my travels! I thought you guys were supposed to be intelligent"—he says: "This is a very religious city. I even saw an altar inscribed 'To An Unknown God.' You are so careful to cover all

**As citizens of
America,
we must call
her back to
the freedoms
that made
her great.**

faces of shared humanity



The Apostle Paul preaching in Greece

... God
is too big to
be contained
within the
limits of our
puny minds...

God must

forever to

some extent

remain

“The Unknown

God.”

your bases that you erected this monument to whatever deity there may be beyond the gods we know of in Greek and Roman religion. Yes, you are religious indeed!”

And Paul goes on: “This is the god I want to tell you about. Not Zeus or Apollo or Aphrodite or even Athena—you already know about them—but the Unknown God that you think might just be out there.”

Here Paul gives us three important points for interfaith dialogue today:

1. Treat the other religion with respect,
2. Look for common ground, for points of contact,
3. Take a positive approach; avoid negatives.

Luke, who wrote the book of Acts, provides a synopsis of Paul’s speech. It runs through verse 31 of chapter 17. In it, we see three movements or moments—one God, one humanity, and one Man for the ages. And not once does Paul quote a text from the Old Testament.

Instead, he quotes from two poets whose work

would be familiar to the audience—from the Stoic Epimenedes and from Arastus.

Only one God, says Paul, not a pantheon of gods and goddesses on top of Mount Olympus, making love and making war.

Only one God, who made the world and everything in it.

Only one God, too big to be confined to a temple.

Only one God who doesn’t need human beings to bring him food or drink.

Only one God, who gives life and breath to every creature.

Only one God—*this* is the Unknown God!

And today I say it with Paul: Only one God. Not many gods; not Yahweh and Jesus *and* Allah and Vishnu *and* Buddha.

One God—above every human conception of God.

One God—greater than all, the source of all that is—the life of all that is.

We who are Christians understand this one God through Jesus Christ, who said: “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). But God is too big to be contained within the limits of our puny minds; because God is God and we are human, God must forever to some extent remain “The Unknown God.” We “grope” for God, says Paul, using a word that denotes the stumbling of a blind person feeling his way (Acts 17:27).

God made man in his image. Ever since we have been busy making God in our image. Not the one God, but our little gods. Yes, even Christians. Yes, even Seventh-day Adventists.

So out of the current craziness we hear:

“God doesn’t hear the prayer of a Jew.”

“God doesn’t hear the prayer of a Muslim.”

“God doesn’t hear the prayer of a Hindu.”

What presumption! What distortions of the one God, what idols, what gods do we make when we give voice to such statements!

One of the worst claims made by Chris-

tians, including Adventists, is that Allah is the name of a pagan deity, not the one God. This is ignorance: long before Muhammad was born, the Christians of Arabia spoke of Yahweh as Allah, and they still do today.

Paul goes on to say that as there is one God, there is one humanity.

One Humanity

The one God made one humanity. We all come from the same stock, whether Americans or Arabs, Indians or Russians, whether red, yellow, black or white.

We are joined at the hip. We are joined at the heart.

And Paul quotes the Greek poets in support: **Epimenedes:** "For in him we live and move and have our being." At the core of our being, beyond the accidents of skin color or place of birth or social status, we share the same common stock. God is the Father of every person, and we live by him and in him.

Aratus: "We are his (that is, the one God's) offspring." We are family. We're related. We're brothers and sisters.

The curse of racism and the curse of the current religious bigotry is that it destroys our common humanity, the humanity implanted by the one God. Instead of brothers and sisters, we become mere animals, closeted and caged, separated, divided by suspicion, riddled with lies, consumed by prejudice.

At Cornell University, near the entrance to the main hall of the College of Arts and Sciences you find a telling statement: "Above all nations is humanity."

This world made by the one God is achingly wonderful. May the Lord forgive us for not loving it enough. And the best part of this wonderful world are the people. The people! Their endless parade, their quirks, their beauty, their funny ways. And their struggles to cope, to survive. Their heartache, their pain, their disappointments. May the Lord forgive us for not loving his children enough.

Most mornings I go out walking in a park near our home. It's a beautiful, quiet place. Often you see deer, occasionally a bluebird. Because I go out at the same time each day, I have become acquainted with other people who walk at that hour. One man I always look for—"Mr. Good." No, that isn't his name, but that is how I think of him. I can recognize his gait from a distance. As soon as he sights me, he puts up both hands and breaks into a huge smile. When we meet, we follow a ritual: we slap hands and he says, "Good! Good! Good!"

What's it all about? It's about the joy of a new day, exhilaration of walking in the fresh air. And our shared humanity. Because as Robert Browning put it: "Life is just our chance o' the prize of learning love."

One God, one humanity. But Paul isn't done yet. He closes where he always closes, no matter where he begins. He closes with Jesus.

One Man for the Ages

The book of Acts reads: "For he [God] has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by that man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

Jesus is the meaning of the Creation.

Jesus is the message of history.

God made humanity for himself. He put within each of us a divine spark, a God-hunger so that, says Paul, we would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him: "God did this so that men would seek him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27).

Man is incurably religious. Whenever and wherever humanity exists, you'll find forms of religion. Some of these forms are crude and infantile; some of them are noble with high moral content.

Man is *homo religious*.

As he is *homo sapiens*, man the thinker, and *homo faber*, man the maker, he is also *homo religio-*

God made man

in his image.

Ever since we

have been busy

making God

in our image.

The one God made one humanity. We all come from the same stock, whether Americans or Arabs, Indians or Russians, whether red, yellow, black or white.



sus, man seeking God.

All our ignorance in religion—all our idols, all our little gods in our image, all our distorted worship and conceptions—come into judgment. The Man of the Ages, the Man appointed by the one God, will call the world to account.

This was Paul's final word to the interfaith audience of the Areopagus.

That word brought a mixed response. Some of the hearers openly scoffed at the idea of resurrection. Others, more polite, said, "Let's talk more on this subject."

But there were some who went away impressed by what they'd heard that day, impressed enough to become followers of Paul. One was member of the Council of the Areopagus; he was named Dionysius. Another was a woman named Damaris. And there were others, but apparently not sufficient to form a congregation of believers. There is no record of an ancient Christian church in Athens.

I find this account of Paul's experience in Athens especially instructive in light of our

times. Now some people will tell you that Paul blew it, that his address to the Areopagus was a failure because not many of his hearers accepted Jesus, that Paul learned from this failure and determined, when he moved on to Corinth, to preach only "Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

I'm not convinced. Instead, I incline towards F.F. Bruce's assessment that Paul's different approaches in Athens and Corinth merely demonstrate his ability to adapt his presentations to different types of audiences. And if Paul erred in his approach in Athens, I find it extraordinary that Luke would devote so much space to it in his account.

No—not a failed attempt. Instead, I see Paul's Areopagus address as a model for us today as we encounter men and women of other faiths or of no faith.

My Friend, Mohsen

Now let me tell you about my dear friend and brother, Mohsen. He died last year; I miss him terribly. We had grown very close. He had taken to signing his email messages to me: "Your friend and brother, Mohsen."

I should probably start the story with a confession: my wife Noelene and I went to India as young missionaries straight out of college. For fifteen years we lived in that amazing country—that fountainhead that gave birth to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism; that opened its doors to the Parsis, Zoroastrians who fled for refuge; and that today has a Muslim population of nearly two-hundred million. But I cannot think of one non-Christian person with whom we formed a close friendship. I confess this fact with a sense of deep regret.

We came to India to give, not to receive; to convert, and not to make friends.

After India I taught at the Theological Seminary at Andrews University and then enjoyed a long—really long—stint at the *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World*. When at last I hung it up at the end of 2006, I planned to go back to the classroom. But my boss Jan Paulsen had a different idea.

"I want you to stay on and work as my personal assistant," he said. "Our church is everywhere in the world—Adventists have neighbors who are Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists—but we are scarcely known. I want you to contact leaders of these other faiths at the highest level possible. Tell them who we are and what values we hold. If they accept our message, that will be fine; but it's not your primary purpose."

So that is where my life has gone ever since. I have been involved in interfaith relations. I have learned a great deal, traveled a lot, and changed—for the better, I hope. I have been enormously enriched. And I have experienced something altogether unanticipated: controversy, with some of the ugliest mail I ever received (and as editor I thought I'd seen it all).

Most of my work has been among Muslims in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. An Adventist pastor—who writes a weekly column in Arabic for a newspaper and who is consequently well known—opened doors for me. I was amazed at the range of civic and religious leaders I was able to meet: the chief judge of the secular and sharia courts; Princess Basma, sister of the late King Hussein; the chief imam of Jordan; the former ambassador to the United Nations, and others.

Everywhere I was received graciously. These leaders knew nothing about Seventh-day Adventists, yet each showed great interest in our lifestyle and values.

With several Jordanian leaders I had ongoing contacts, and we became friends. Because of their good offices Adventists were able to sponsor two conferences on teaching respect for all religions. The second symposium, held in a university setting, was opened by the state minister of religion.

These contacts in Jordan shattered the stereotypes about Muslims. Without exception the leaders whom I met were people of finest quality who condemned acts of violence, whether or not perpetrated by terrorists calling themselves Muslims.

I soon realized that Adventists and Muslims

have much in common and wrote an article for the *Adventist World* making this point. Titled "Adventists and Muslims: Five Convictions," it was published February, 2010 and developed five ideas:

1. The Lord is preparing the Muslim world for his second coming.
2. Seventh-day Adventists are uniquely positioned to interact with Muslims.
3. Prophecy can be a valuable approach to arouse the interest of Muslims.
4. We Adventists need to undergo major changes in attitudes and in spiritual lives before the Lord can use us to appeal to Muslims.
5. Interaction with Islam has the potential to renew and reform the Adventist Church.

The article brought more mail than anything I ever wrote. It went viral among Adventists, and responses kept coming for two years. Some of them took me to task: I was naive, I had been deceived, I had played into the hands of Muslims, whom one cannot trust. You cannot trust Muslims, the argument went, because the Koran teaches them *taqiyya*—permission to lie and deceive.

But the biggest surprise was still to come.

The General Conference received an intriguing request: a Muslim leader in Sydney, Australia, a sheikh, had met some Adventists and wanted to meet leaders of the church. Would the GC send someone to talk with him?

Dr. Paulsen appointed three of us to follow up: Angel Rodriguez, Ganoune Diop, and me. I went on ahead of the others to assess the situation and frame an agenda for the first meeting.

I shall not forget that first encounter. I expected to meet someone with a long beard and turban. Dr. Mohsen Labban, clean shaven and hatless, was dressed in a business suit. At his invitation the meeting took place in the large living room of his home in a Sydney suburb. Eventually, I would come to know that room very well: here the Sheikh spoke each week to between twenty and thirty followers seated around its perimeter.

Our church is everywhere in the world—Adventists have neighbors who are Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists—but we are scarcely known.



Portrait sculpture of famous Buddhist monk wearing silk kesa

One of the
 Sheikh's
 followers once
 spoke to me at
 length about
 how he lives by
 the Sermon on
 the Mount.

This first day we were just two people—Dr. Labban and I. After welcoming me, he asked pointblank: “Do you believe that Jesus will come soon?”

“I do.”

“Yes, but how soon?”

“Soon. We Adventists don't set a time for the Second Coming.”

“I believe Jesus is coming very soon.”

We talked for hours, talked easily and cordially. I learned that Dr. Labban, a spiritual leader for a division of the Sufis, was an Egyptian trained in economics. He served the United Nations in Geneva as chief financial officer for sixteen years, then as advisor to the government of Australia.

And he revealed why he was so interested to meet with Adventists. He told me that “he”—I was not sure whether he meant Allah or a messenger of Allah—had showed him that Seventh-day Adventists had a message that Muslims should receive.

That was the first of many meetings over

the course of the next three years. We shared and discussed and bonded. I made a series of trips to Australia. I spoke at his mosque. I sat with the large group in that living room—educators, medical personnel, attorneys, financiers, students—listening as the sheikh dispensed wisdom until the wee hours of the night. Often he would ask me to comment on an item or to lead in prayer.

He liked Noelene. Once in an email Noelene, knowing of his struggle with lung cancer, shared her thoughts on prayer. He was deeply impressed and thereafter referred to her as “Sheikh Noelene.”

The Sheikh lived with a sense of the immediacy of the supernatural. He frequently pointed up and said that “he” told him this or that. One time I asked him about the revelations he received about Adventists. He pointed up—“he,” he said—and held up three fingers:

“Three times,” he said. “The same message.”

During one conversation as he and I sat in the big living room I asked when he had first met an Adventist. He named a fellow academic from long past. “It's been thirty-eight years since I heard from him,” he said.

Just then the telephone rang—it was the same person on the line!

I could share much, much more about my friend and brother Mohsen, but one additional item will have to suffice. From someone I picked up a piece of information that I could hardly believe, so I decided to enquire if it could be true. One day, instead of sending his son to pick me up at my hotel, he arrived for me in person, seated behind the wheel of the car with the roof down. The moment was right to ask: “Dr. Labban, I heard that you used to compete on the Bendigo car racing circuit. Is that true?”

He smiled. Without a word he put his foot to the pedal and we took off at high speed through the streets of Sydney. He reached down and took out a CD. “Do you like this?” he enquired as he put on the Tijuana Brass at high volume. So we raced through Sydney, music

blaring, and holding on with white knuckles.

What a man! My friend and brother,
Mohsen!

For a couple years we entertained high hopes of something groundbreaking—a book on the Second Coming, jointly published by Adventists and Muslims. Dr. Labban wanted it printed in English, Arabic and French and circulated by the millions throughout the Muslim world.

We came close to seeing it happen. But alas, at the critical point our church leaders—who initially had been enthusiastic—got cold feet. The Sheikh was bitterly disappointed, and so was I.

But he didn't give up on Adventists. He solicited my help in planning for a public event on the Second Coming. To be called "The Descent of Issa," it was scheduled for June 2012. I promised to come back for it.

He did not live to see it. He succumbed to cancer in May of that year. His followers, led by his son Akram, decided to go ahead as planned. I flew to Sydney for the event and spoke.

On the Saturday evening following the event, family members and close followers gathered around a long table laden with food at the Labban home. I had sat at the table in the past, always on the Sheikh's right. This time, over my protests, they placed me at the head of the table in the Sheikh's chair.

Our Shared Humanity

One question remains, and I expect you have been wondering about it: Jesus—what about my friend and Jesus?

Dr. Labban and his followers spoke of Jesus in glowing terms: Jesus was sinless; he was born of a virgin; he is the way by whom we come to God. He will come back to the earth because only he can solve the mess that this world is in. One of the Sheikh's followers once spoke to me at length about how he lives by the Sermon on the Mount: "There's not a day goes by that I don't think about

Jesus," he told me.

The doctrine of the Trinity as it comes down through the ancient creeds was a problem to Dr. Labban, as it is to other Muslims. I told him that he might understand it better if we put the creedal language aside and went back to the scriptures. He wanted to talk more about it with me, but he passed away before the opportunity arose.

He was a good man, a godly man. I leave him in the keeping of my Lord, who does all things well. And I leave all Muslims, all Hindus, all Buddhists, all Sikhs in those same hands. Jesus, the savior of the world, is also judge of the world.

This man, my friend and brother Mohsen—just by getting to know him—shattered stereotypes of prejudice, ignorance, hatred and bigotry, exposing them as lies.

As I close, could I leave with you two dreams I have? First, that each of us would determine to make the effort to befriend someone of another religion. Not just a casual acquaintance, but to get to know them at the deep level of our shared humanity.

Second, that we each do what we can to make our schools, our hospitals, our churches a welcome place, a safe place, for people of other faiths.

Join me in working to roll back the darkness. ■

William Johnsson, PhD, represents the General Confer-



ence and North American Division in Interchurch Relations. Previously, as special assistant to the GC President, he served in Interfaith activities.

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Too Small a Thing: *or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the World* | BY RYAN BELL

**Christians
find themselves
blinking in
the bright light
of pluralism,
awakening to
the harsh truth
that we must
share power.**

The following is adapted from a presentation given at the 2013 Adventist Forum Conference at the Sheraton Read House Hotel in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on September 7, 2013. The conference's theme was interfaith dialogue.

It might be cliché to say so, but it is absolutely true: the day I was shaken from my slumber—the day the world, and my heart, broke open—was September 11, 2001. I realize this is probably true for thousands of people, but that doesn't make it less true for me.

On that fateful autumn day I was headed to Manhattan with my wife and one-year-old daughter to work with my friend and pastor, Samir Selmanovic, on a conference we were calling *Loving Babylon*. We left our home in Bucks County, Pennsylvania quite early that morning and were driving along the New Jersey turnpike when Samir called and said that a plane had hit one of the buildings in lower Manhattan. He suggested taking the George Washington Bridge rather than one of the tunnels since traffic around Battery Park would be terrible. We naturally had no idea at that point that the plane was an enormous passenger jet loaded with beautiful people. Within minutes Samir called back, audibly shaken, saying another plane—both now confirmed to be commercial airliners—had hit the World Trade Center. I needed to turn around and head home immediately, he said. We did just that, narrowly avoiding the gridlocked traffic that resulted from the island being shut down completely.

Learning to Love the World

The *Loving Babylon* conference took place just under a year later, in August of 2002. We welcomed dozens of courageous urban explorers to the Big Apple and invited them to see the city with new eyes—to love the city in a new way.

That event was way over my head. We were inviting people to engage with things that were way beyond my expertise. Samir and his members had much more experience living in New York City, but for me, I was running the event on faith. It was like inviting your friends over for dinner and then cooking a meal you've never made before (which, come to think of it, I do all the time!).

Together, we pressed into our fears. And we pressed others—those 75 brave souls who journeyed to Manhattan for three days—we pressed them into their fears too. That event remains one of my favorite things I've done in my ministry. It was the new world that broke open on 9/11, and it was my involvement in planning and running the *Loving Babylon* conference that helped me “stop worrying and love the world.”

It was in the months following the horrible 9/11 atrocity that I discovered the Middle East and Muslims. I came face to face with Americanism, which had been disguised as Christianity. It was in that season that I learned to pray for my enemies. It was also when I discovered my church had an American flag in the sanctuary—which was the only bit of symbolism in the entire worship space. In that sea-



**"Branches", pastel, 30" x 40"
by Heather Langley**

son I learned about idolatry as I attempted to move that flag into the foyer of our church.

Those were intense months, and they changed me. My wife and I had also just had our first baby. Zoë was 11 months old when the planes hit the buildings. Think of the world she is growing up in! She never knew a pre-9/11 world. It was in those early days after 9/11 that I knew we would not send our children to parochial schools. I wanted them to learn to love the world and we felt they could do that best in public school, where they would be exposed more completely to the diversity of people.

As a result of these life events, I've used the last eight years to become intensely involved in creating interfaith relationships with a focus on loving and caring for our world. I now teach a course in Intercultural Communication to undergraduates at Asuza Pacific University. We spend several days talking about race and white privilege, and I watch as my students wrestle with the same issues I struggled through over a decade ago. They are so far ahead of me. I was a year out of graduate school and nearly thirty years old when I learned these lessons. I now find myself in a position where I am able to work at this full time, helping groups of people get out of their own way, stop worrying, and love the world.

The Challenge of Religious Identity

I have a visceral reaction these days whenever anyone brings up questions of religious identity, especially Christians. I want to say three words and change the subject: Get over it. It's a brave new world out there. Christians find themselves blinking in the bright light of pluralism, awakening to the harsh truth that we must share power. It's not easy, but we can and must learn to do it.

The challenges to our involvement in interfaith relationships as it relates to our Christian identity are primarily inside our heads. As such, the work at hand is to get out of our heads. As a hardcore "over-thinker," I understand the difficulty. There are real fears about

what it means to step outside of our comfort zones and into another person's world. I want to name these fears as I've encountered them. There are also fantasies. Once we get past some of our fears it is easy to romanticize about interfaith dialogue and cooperation.

Fears

Fear #1: *The religious other is dangerous.* The fear of Muslims, or Islamophobia, has become grist for the right-wing paranoia mill. Sadly, Christians are caught in this. The reality is that there is an industry of Islamaphobia in America, as a recent Center for American Progress Report reveals.¹ In some ways, Muslims are the new Communists, a point the recent comedy documentary *The Muslims Are Coming* makes in a humorous way.²

The reality is that there are extremists in every religion. I actually call them minimalists. The vast majority of Muslims are not violent. For those that are, religion is just a front, just as a minority of Christians are violent and we would not claim their version of Christianity as our own. The reality is that there are secular and nationalist extremists just as there are religious extremists.

There are plenty of things to be afraid of in our world. The question is whether we are going to run and hide from that fear, escalate the fear by playing into it, or whether we will defuse the fear by choosing love and grace. After all, somewhere it is said that "perfect love casts out fear."

Fear #2: *Interfaith relationships distract us from the main thing we're called to do, such as proclaiming the gospel, the three angels' messages, etc.* The reality, however, is that God has been universalizing the message of redemption from the beginning of salvation history.

From the story of the Tower of Babel, in which God creates diversity as a means to his good purposes; to the call of Abram, in which God tells him that he is specially blessed, but blessed instrumentally, to be a blessing to the nations; to the prophets, who kept insisting

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that the blessings Israel had received were not exclusively for themselves; to Jesus, who, to the consternation of the religious elite, consistently welcomed and blessed Gentiles, Centurions, lepers, women and other outcasts—the scripture is a story of God universalizing the scope of God's salvation to include all peoples.

Take for example this brief but poignant oracle found in Isaiah 49:5–6:

*And now the Lord says—
he who formed me in the womb to be his servant
to bring Jacob back to him
and gather Israel to himself,
for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord
and my God has been my strength—
he says:
“It is too small a thing for you to be my servant
to restore the tribes of Jacob
and bring back those of Israel I have kept.
I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”*

Notice the Lord says it is “too small a thing” for God's people to simply gather up the tribes of Jacob that have been scattered. That is important, but it is not enough. It is not enough to bring back those of Israel who have been taken into exile and to restore the fortunes of Jerusalem. These are important promises and God will do these things, but God has much bigger plans. And so God, through the prophet Isaiah, says, “I will also make you a light for the Gentiles that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

Our narrow, parochial concerns that consume so much of our attention are, says the Lord, too small, too shortsighted. We want a proprietary message, complete with intellectual property rights. But this is too small a thing to be worthy of our God. It's not that we have a completely faulty vision. It's just near-sighted, whereas God's dream for creation is vast and inclusive, unlimited by the bounds of our religious tribes and narrow denominationalism.

The ultimate example of this kind of proprietary attitude is found in Jonah. His biggest

fear is that God would extend his mercy and grace beyond the chosen community and be merciful to those damn Assyrians in Nineveh. This is exactly what God does, and instead of being in awe of God's generosity, Jonah wants to die.

Fear #3: *We'll lose our identity.* Some feel that openness to interfaith relationships necessarily comes at the expense of our own identities. Indeed, I have at times worried that opening my life to the religious other must make me less committed to my own beliefs. That fear is sometimes articulated as if other people's religion is like a contagious, airborne disease; that we will somehow catch it just by being in the same space with someone.

I'll never forget the first time I prayed with my Muslim brothers at the mosque near my house. I experienced that familiar fear rise up in me. It was an inarticulate fear, but if I were forced to articulate it, it would have sounded something like an argument with myself. It went something like this:

What if this is wrong?

What could be so wrong about praying?

Well, maybe they're praying to a different God.

But they're not.

I know, but still, it's different, right? Maybe I'll express that I believe things I really don't believe.

You've never done that before?

Like what?

Oh, I dunno, like, “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.”

I see your point.

So what's the worst that could happen?

I stand when I'm supposed to kneel?

Right.

We are understandably afraid that we will lose our identity if we spend time deeply engaging with people of other religions, but *the irony is that we will lose our identity if we don't.* Without interfaith relationships we run the risk of being hopelessly self-referential, choosing only to talk about

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things that are of interest to us without noticing that people today aren't asking the same questions we are. If we do not get outside our safe, secure religious bubble, we can easily lose the very identity we are so concerned to preserve.

Reclaiming Our Religious Identity

It is also true that we will have our identity shaped by relationships with the religious other. It is not true that our identity will be *lost*, but neither is it true that we will escape with our old identity intact. We will be changed in the most important ways.

I was recently searching for something I had written a while ago on the internet, and so I Googled my name with some other search parameters. Instead of the article I was looking for, I found a blog that was talking about me. Unable to resist, I went to the site and started reading the blog comments.

There are three kinds of comments on blogs. The first kind is congratulatory and fun to read. There were none of these. The second kind is intelligently critical. Those are the hardest to read because they reveal blind spots in your arguments and ideas and force you to reconsider things. I couldn't find any of these, either. The third kind is so irrationally critical that it doesn't bother me much. In fact, those comments are sometimes amusing. This comment was one of those.

The person said something like, "What do you expect when he went to non-Adventist universities? He clearly didn't go there to witness to them. He accepted all their ideas." First of all, I would never blame my predicament on Fuller Theological Seminary (hardly a bastion of liberal theology, by the way). Secondly, and more importantly, the comment assumes what I find so often in the church: *we are here to teach others. There is nothing for us to learn.* This ideology is espoused in the Adventist church from the most humble Sabbath school to the Office of the General Conference President.

My main claim is this: interfaith relationships threaten our identity in the ways it needs

to be threatened, and strengthens our identity in the strong but compassionate way that Brian McLaren writes about in his book, *Why Did Jesus, Moses, the Buddha, and Mohammed Cross the Road?: Christian Identity in a Multi-Faith World*.⁴

Engaging only with people of one's own religious tribe is the equivalent of religious incest. Without that diversity, the DNA of our religious life is corrupted and our faith is malformed. Interfaith relationships have the potential to save us from ourselves. We have gifts to offer people of other faiths, but only if we are willing to receive the gifts others have to offer, and be changed by that encounter.

If we are unwilling to be changed, we will still lose our identity. Remember the teaching of Jesus?

*Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it.*⁵

Fantasies

Once I got over some of these fears, I found it was easy to romanticize about interfaith relationships, too. I believe three fantasies are common among those who have gotten past their fears and wish to engage with the religious other.

Fantasy #1: *We're all talking about the same thing anyway.* On the opposite end of the spectrum from the fear of losing our identity is the fantasy that all religions are basically the same; that we are all seeking the same thing in more or less similar ways. We just have different names for God and different ritual pathways to that same goal. The reality is that all religions are not the same, though there are some common elements. The great world religions are, in fact, attempting to answer different questions.

For a number of years I was a board member of the Interreligious Council of Southern California. We had remarkable conversations, not only about what we had in common—our commitment to compassion, the dignity of every person, and service—but also the things that were different about our faiths. Buddhists are pursuing nirvana—perfect happiness

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through the death of our desires. Christians are seeking salvation from a world of pain and brokenness. Judaism is committed to *tikkun olam*—healing the world. The focus of Islam—indeed, the meaning of the word—is submission to God. We can see each of these themes present in most religions, but the emphasis and end goals are often different.

The Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Lévinas, describes the irreducible otherness that exists between every person. He points out how we do violence to one another when we try to collapse that distance. When I try to make you into me (usually to reduce the anxiety caused by genuine difference and make myself feel better) I am not affirming the humanity of the other person, but in fact denying it.

Authentic interfaith relationships do not attempt to minimize these differences by saying, “Aren’t we all basically the same, anyway?” Which brings me to the second fantasy I had to overcome.

Fantasy #2: *We’ll all get along.* The reality is that we will not always get along. The differences between us often cause intense debates and conflicts.

The motivation within some interfaith circles to claim that we’re basically the same and the fantasy that we will easily “get along” is almost always well-intentioned, but ultimately misguided. It usually flows from the dominant religion to those in the minority and comes across as one more effort at colonization. For a Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim to hear, in predominantly Christian America, that we’re basically all the same is to hear, “Why can’t you just be more Christian so I will feel better about your otherness?”

The mostly unintended consequence of forcing a desire to “get along” is that we end up with only surface-level relationships and conversations—what Eboo Patel calls “inter-faithing”—or worse, we do real violence to the important differences between our religions.

I will never forget the conversation we had

in the Abrahamic Faiths Peacemaking Initiative group here in Los Angeles in January 2010, in the midst of Operation Cast Lead. Israel was aggressively shelling the Gaza Strip from land and air in response to the rocket attacks from Gaza. I had just returned from visiting Israel for the first time just weeks before the fighting escalated into a full-scale war—albeit a very one-sided war. Muslim, Jewish and Christian leaders met in Los Angeles to discuss what, if anything, we might say to the public about this violence. The best we could do is to say with one voice, “Violence is not the answer.” Beyond that, we could not agree. The Muslims in the room were outraged at the imbalance of power on display and the inhumane aggression being carried out upon the citizens of Gaza, to say nothing of the daily conditions resulting from the blockade of the Gaza Strip. The Jews present, though they decried the war, emphasized the legitimate security needs of Israelis. I sat quietly hoping no one would ask me my opinion.

Fantasy #3: *It will be easy.* This fantasy is closely related to the second. The reality is that interfaith relationships can be fun, but they aren’t always easy. They stretch you out of your comfort zone.

A couple of years ago, a few of us from the Abrahamic Faiths Peacemaking Initiative conducted a fishbowl conversation for the students at Pepperdine University. There were two Jews, two Muslims and I was one of two Christians. It sounds like the beginning of a joke but we were not joking. We were modeling for the one hundred or so students that gathered what real interfaith relationships look and sound like. I had my doubts about how authentic this conversation could be, sitting in front of a hundred students.

After introducing ourselves and declaring our undying friendship, we launched into a conversation about the tension in the Middle East. We talked about the wall that separates Israel from the West Bank. We talked about bombings and

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the prospect of peace. We talked about human rights violations and the overreach of the military. It was intense. The other Christian pastor Paige and I sat in the middle of the half circle of interlocutors turning our heads back and forth like we were watching a tennis match. Finally, our moderator Joshua said something like, “The Christians have been pretty quiet. What do you have to say?”

Paige started. “I feel stuck,” she said. “My church members want to speak out about the injustice being done to the Palestinians. But we have dear friends in the Jewish community for whom that is a conversation stopper. We don’t know what to do.” I don’t remember what I said but I think I probably mumbled my agreement with Paige and expressed my frustration that we couldn’t more frequently drop the heated rhetoric and hear each other more deeply.

When we really get into these conversations they are very difficult. In my experience the glue has been the friendships we have cultivated over the years. We really like each other. More than that, we trust each other. We are able to hear the other person say things we disagree with because behind that disagreement is a human being we love and respect.

This, it seems to me, is the only way forward. It is not easy. Sometimes it’s not even fun. But our love for the world and our respect for each other compel us to stay in the conversation.

Mutually Transformative Experiences

Over the years I discovered that my ministry was too small—that it was too small a thing for me to concern myself with helping my church members be good Seventh-day Adventists. We had to help each other become good Christians and good human beings in a pluralistic and sometimes dangerous world. How could we, like Daniel in Babylon, train ourselves to be faithful to our story under the pressure of pluralism?

Can we be Christians even when the empire is no longer propping up our faith for us? Can we hold to our principles and not sur-

render to our basest fears under the staggering pressure of, say, a terrorist attack?

This is why we need interfaith relationships. These mutually transformative relationships and experiences help us to stop focusing so exclusively on our own, sometimes petty concerns, and take a wider look at the world that God loves and longs to see healed.

The religious other can save us from the paralyzing worry about our own identity. Interfaith relationships help us broaden our horizons. They help us learn to hold difference in tension while deepening our understanding.

Interfaith relationships aren’t a panacea. They won’t fix everything—we need the steady pattern of other formative experiences as well. Yet honestly, if I were to name two of the most important Christian practices, I would say that loving our “enemies” and giving and receiving hospitality to and from strangers rank at the top of the list. Interfaith relationships give us the opportunity to do both. ■

Ryan Bell lives with his family in Hollywood, California, where



he is the pastor of the Hollywood Adventist Church. The church is home to a growing community of fine artists, photographers, filmmakers, musicians, actors, graphic designers, interior designers, writers and architects. Together they are finding God in some unexpected places.

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Sabbath is Our Liturgy | BY VIKKI LEON-SALAS

The following is adapted from a response given at the 2013 Adventist Forum Conference, held at the Sheraton Read House Hotel in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on September 7, 2013.

“Happy Sabbath!” To many of us, the response to this greeting is as easy and as natural as breathing. But for those like me, who are newer to the Adventist tradition, it might have taken some getting used to. However, I’m now getting pretty good at beginning my Saturday morning with a “Happy Sabbath” or even “¡Feliz Sábado!”

In the Adventist Church, we often emphasize the importance of doctrine. There’s 28 Fundamental Beliefs floating around that I remember studying to prepare for baptism. But I have to admit, no doctrines or fundamental beliefs influence my day-to-day worship practice—the everyday liturgy of my faith—as much as Sabbath does.



For us, as Adventists, Sabbath is a defining part of our identity and of our liturgy. So how does this part of our liturgy, the Sabbath, influence the way in which we as a community practice our faith?

How can we use Sabbath to strengthen our own identity as Adventist Christians, without excluding or distancing ourselves from other faiths, and even from other Christians? For me, coming from the Episcopal tradition, which emphasizes liturgy as a means to share a

common worship experience, the shift from attending church on Sunday to attending

church on Saturday has been a powerful reminder of where our Christian heritage originates: in the Jewish faith tradition. To keep Sabbath, just as our spiritual ancestors did, links us to our faith cousins in the Jewish community and reminds us that we share many common beliefs and practices. But while Sabbath can help connect us to other faiths, it can also exclude and separate us from other people—especially from other Christian denominations. Many of us have sat in Sabbath School and heard comments about “those Evangelicals,” or “those Catholics,” or even (a little puzzlingly) “those Methodists.” If we’re honest with ourselves, a large part of the importance of Sabbath to us as Adventists is that it defines how we are different—especially from other Christians.



To have something that distinguishes us, something that sets us apart from everyone else, is not such a terrible thing. Much of who we are as human beings is caught up in how we are different from others—short or tall, male or female, American or New Zealander (like me). These differences are a part of who we are, but they don’t have to be barriers separating us from other people. As Adventists, the challenge for us is to find a way to define the Sab-

While Sabbath can help connect us to other faiths, it can also exclude and separate us from other people.

bath that maintains this important aspect of our Adventist identity, without letting it become something that excludes and separates us from our brothers and sisters who have their



own unique and special ways of honoring God.

So, how do we do this? I'd like us to begin by defining Sabbath in a different way. Not in

terms of how others are wrong—keeping Sabbath on the “wrong” day, or keeping Sabbath in the “wrong” way, or dear me—not even keeping Sabbath at all! And not in terms of a seemingly endless list of rules and regulations that can make very little sense to an outsider, or even to a brand-new Adventist—walk, but don't run; cook at home, but don't go out to eat; spend time with friends, but don't play soccer; watch a documentary (preferably about nature), but never a film. Instead, let's share this worship practice, this exercise of our faith, with our brothers and sisters in Christ and with our spiritual cousins in God by showing them the joy that comes from keeping Sabbath. Let's define Sabbath by what it really means to us as Adventists, and show others how this part of our worship experience transforms our everyday lives.

I believe that Sabbath is liturgy in its purist sense, putting worship into practice as a community, without the need for church or music or props. To set a time aside for God, to say that this day is special, is a reminder that there is a purpose to our lives. Every day in the week is one day closer to Sabbath. We work so that on the seventh day God might look on us and see that it is good, and give us rest.

For us to show the blessing of Sabbath to others, it must first be a blessing to us. So I say that our liturgical challenge as Adventists is to find the joy and blessing in our Sabbath, such that people around us will ask what this day is

that transforms the rest of our life. Look at the list of “don'ts” that we've created, and let the Holy Spirit work through you to transform them into a list of Sabbath “do's.”

Do worship—see the wonder and joy in the world and in the people around you.

Do fellowship—with your fellow Adventists and with people from other faiths.

Do invite the other—into your home, into your worship experience, into your life

Do love.

Let's use Sabbath as an opportunity to express the “Advent” part of Adventism. To help ourselves and others, as author, speaker, and activist Brian McLaren says, “to see Christ as still coming to us from the future in perpetual advent,” by welcoming his Holy Spirit into our lives here and now, as we rest with him on the day that the Lord has given us. ■



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of Adventism.

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Episcopal Church, is united not just by common beliefs, but also by common worship.

Reference

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Servant God: A Review | BY CARMEN LAU

How is Jesus like God? What if God is just like Jesus? Have you ever wrestled with the thought that Christianity sometimes seems like a narcissistic sin-management system? If any of these questions are familiar to you, then I have a new book to recommend. *Servant God*, edited by Dorothee Cole, brings together an eclectic group of theologians, evangelists, pastors and lay Bible students to consider the issues and questions surrounding the premise that Jesus is just like God. Seeking to ground biblical authority first and foremost in the person and teachings of Jesus Christ, this book delivers information on many levels: theoretical, historical, psychological, and practical.

There are eighteen authors featured in the book, including Adventist theologians Alden Thompson, Sigve Tonstad, and Jean Sheldon. The well-known evangelical pastor Greg Boyd and Adventist speaker/evangelist Herb Montgomery are also contributors. Filling out the authors' group are physicians Tim Jennings, Brad Cole, and Dorothee Cole, and their friends who are computer programmers, web designers, nurses, builders, and teachers. This community of writers, many of whom were part of the Good News Tour conferences 2006–2009, provides fresh details and new ways of looking at familiar concepts throughout the book.

Take, for example, the issue of sin. Tim Jennings examines the implications of viewing sin as the breaking of an imposed law, versus viewing sin as a deviation from design principles that have been in operation since creation. Further demonstrating the spectrum of law and its impact on

humanity, we are given a charming elaboration on the book *Proverbs: Wisdom to Live By* by Virginia Davidson and Ernest H. J. Steed.

Several chapters provide help for believers who are troubled by conflicting passages describing God. Alden Thompson provides a memorable essay on grappling with God as portrayed in the Old Testament. It has frequently been said that God's justice is not like man's justice. What does that really mean? Delving into the original Hebrew we see that God's justice gives more emphasis to healing and reconciliation than to punitive, legal matters. I appreciated Brad Cole's synthesized definition of God's justice: "Do what is right to make things right by exercising compassion to those treated unfairly."

In a way that is both conversational and challenging, *Servant God* also tackles the topics of God's wrath, intercession, judgment, community, prayer, and resurrection. While remaining loyal to the Seventh-day Adventist motif of cosmic conflict between God and Satan, *Servant God* emphasizes the subtlety of this conflict. Sigve Tonstad contends that strength is not at issue; rather, the controversy is about who is trustworthy. First, it is key to recognize Satan's deceptive nature, as evidenced in a polemic war of words (Revelation 12:9). It is also important to consider the framing of the issues that unfolded in Eden. Eve's original temptation was about more than disobedience; rather, Satan set a trap to cast doubt onto God's commitment to the well-being of humanity. Can God be trusted? It is against this backdrop that history has unfolded, providing evidence of a trustworthy God and, if God is

***Servant God* offers a discussion on theodicy, contending that God's will is best demonstrated in the life of Jesus.**

like Jesus, a servant God. Tonstad traces the debate back to the early church and references Origen, whom some say is the supreme theologian of freewill, who took note of passages in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 and identified the importance of Satan's role. Thus, we see that a concept of cosmic conflict was being recognized almost 2,000 years ago when Christianity was very young. In decades following, Constantine lessened the emphasis on humility and freewill through triumphalism and coercion, weakening the concept of a servant God as seen in Jesus. If servant-hood is the essence of God's character, we can see how this has become muted in centuries of Christian orthodoxy.

Atonement is another concept *Servant God* traces over time. Respect for etymology is necessary to discern the true meanings of atonement. The sixteenth-century King James Version translates the Greek word *katallage* as *atonement* in Romans 5:11. Though rarely used in the New Testament, the word has become a theological staple or, increasingly, a sort of hot potato. Five-hundred years ago, *atonement* referred to the concepts of unity and reconciliation more than a legal restitution, which is the common (yet narrower) interpretation today.

Author Jean Sheldon elaborates further on the concept of atonement, documenting a search for the historical roots of the word's prevalent legal emphasis. She reveals that church fathers Tertullian, Aquinas, and Anselm were influenced by the context in which they lived and therefore over-emphasized the metaphor of viewing atonement as a transaction, effectively limiting other rich meanings. Further discussion uncovers the influence of the pagans and the sacrifices required to appease their gods.

Servant God goes on to cite the four legs of modern evangelicalism: the immortality of souls; eternal hell; sovereignty of God (predestination); and forensic atonement. I am intrigued that some in the Adventist Church seem hesitant to explore the nuances of atonement outside the forensic view held by modern evangelicalism. We have not been afraid to reevaluate tradition in other areas. Moreover, some scholars say that to remove one of these four legs would cause the whole structure of modern evangelicalism to falter. Perhaps scholars in the Adventist Church feel somewhat hamstrung by the Questions on Doctrine debate.

Lending support to a healing view of atonement, *Servant God* highlights some key verses in their original languages. The original King James Version translates Isaiah 53:12 as "He was wounded for our transgressions" when, as Sheldon explains, a better translation of the Hebrew intent would

read, "He was wounded *from* or *by* our transgressions," to better reflect twenty-first century meaning. *Servant God* contends that the "Old Testament issue at stake in atonement is not divine anger against sin that must be legally dealt with, but the moral problem of sin as a very real destroyer to those who choose it."

The contributor with the potentially greatest name recognition (at least in evangelical circles) is Greg Boyd. His thoughts appear near the end of the book in two chapters entitled "A Different Kind of Kingdom" and "Living In, and Looking Like Christ." Boyd, the only contributor who is not a Seventh-day Adventist, challenges followers of Jesus to change the world by thousands of small choices made daily. He suggests that many in Christendom might be influenced by a sort of Gnosticism in which right belief is assumed to be the goal. Boyd says,

True faith... always makes a difference in the life of the person who exercises it. This is what James is getting at, when he teaches that faith that doesn't lead to action is useless (James 2:20). For the same reason, the New Testament never entertains the possibility of believing in Jesus without aspiring to live like Jesus. "Whoever claims to live in him [Christ]," John says, "must live as Jesus did." (1 John 2:6)

Careful Adventist readers will note Boyd's emphasis on studying God's character is similar to this exhortation given by Ellen White 100 years ago:

Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God, and by beholding we become changed. Goodness, love for our fellow men, becomes our natural instinct. We develop a character, which is the counterpart of the divine character. Growing into His likeness, we enlarge our capacity for knowing God. More and more we enter into fellowship with the heavenly world, and we have continually increasing power to receive the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of eternity (Christ's Object Lessons, 355).

Published by Loma Linda University Press, *Servant God* is a comprehensive and conversational work that will enable readers to further understand God—what he did through Jesus and what he wants us to do now. ■

Carmen Lau likes to think and read and explore. Pondering God's love and grace is her delight. She is a member of the Adventist Forum Board who lives in Birmingham, AL.



To order this book, please visit its website:

<http://godscharacter.com/index.php/servant-god>

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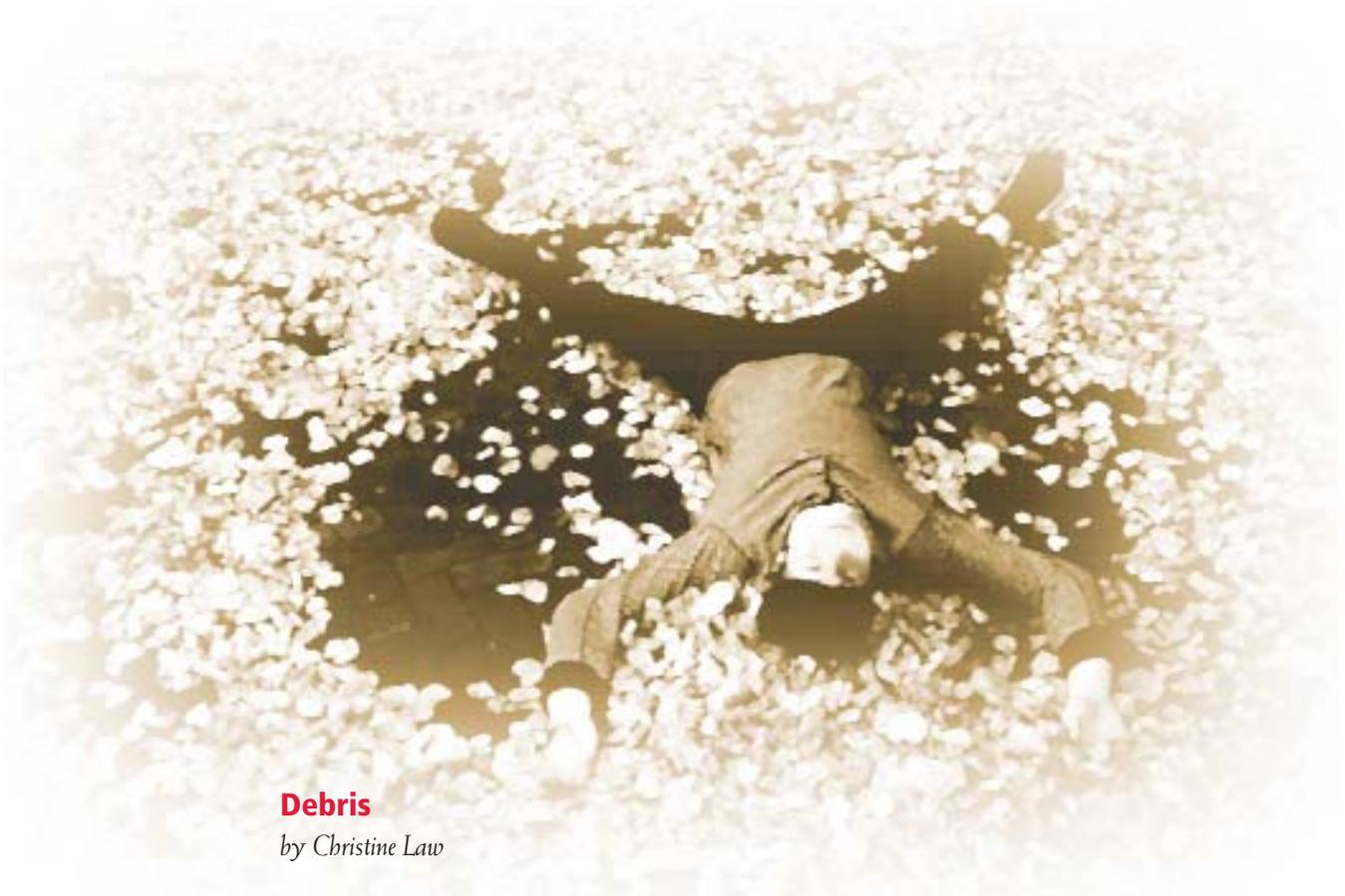
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Debris

by Christine Law

Leafdrift pile thickly
beneath
birch trees emaciated with
despairing fingers
yet leaf angels can only be
made when i fall backwards
into the autumn drift
pushing away debris by
waving my arms & legs
on my back i see God's
luminous footsteps across
the sky,
they are clearer when the
tree limbs are naked.

Christine Law is a freelance writer



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