

 community through conversation

SPECTRUM



Growing Up Adventist

My Partying Problem

I'm a Pastor and My Son Is Gay

Divided in Christ: The Dangers of Tyrannical Unity

Before the Wall

Adventist Health Care in the Public Square: Where Holiness and Humanity Meet

Emerging Adventism

community through conversation
SPECTRUM

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About the Cover Art:

This multi-media painting "Legacy" is from a series of paintings that explore the author's experience growing up in an Adventist home. She published the series in a painted memoir titled Secret History in 2009. The book is still available on Amazon.com. In this issue of Spectrum, we also feature a chapter from another one of her memoirs, On Fire for the Lord, which is also available on Amazon.com.

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Just Because I Am an Adventist . . . | BY BONNIE DWYER

There is a scene in the movie *Boyhood* where the divorced father is having a heart-to-heart conversation with his two children, who are in their early teens. He asks what they remember of their childhood, of vacation trips and their times together. Do they remember going to the Alamo? Well, no, idyllic events are not what's memorable to them. "What I remember," says the daughter, "is you and Mom yelling and fighting all the time."

Ah, the child's perspective, ever surprising to the parent expecting agreement with his own ideas. But the scene also made me wonder if negative experiences are always more memorable than perfect "Kodachrome" moments like Paul Simon used to sing about. They give us the nice bright colors, but, yeah, the kids have a point. Kodachrome moments are not all there is to growing up. What about the other kinds of moments? What do we do with bad memories? Can we heal from them? What about the embarrassing memories of social faux pas? When can you laugh about what you did in high school?

Stories of growing up Adventist that capture well the culture of our past can charm, inspire, and validate us all at once. They make room for emotions in a cerebral religion defined by truth. They provide the backstory, the rest of the story. They can challenge us in the same way that a child challenges a parent's memories of good times together. Stories in the genre are some of the most memorable articles that *Spectrum* has carried over the years. So, it is a pleasure to add four more in this issue. Two are from recent college graduates, the third is from a woman with a little more distance between her present life and the earlier years she recalls in humorous fashion. And the fourth adds the parent's perspective on growing up.

Just as individuals grow and change over the years, so do Adventist institutions. Adventist hospitals today have come a long way since the sanitarium days of the 1800s.

Samir Selmanović celebrates the innovations of Adventist hospitals in the public square, asking questions that look to their future growth.

And with the growth of the church has come diversity—and division. Geoff Patterson frames the story of the Tower of Babel in a totally new way (to me) and helps us understand why there will be divisions among us until Jesus comes, no matter how much we talk about unity.

On a recent trip to 826 Valencia, a writing center for young people in San Francisco's Mission district, I picked up one of the center's literary journals and was charmed by the structure given to young writers to compose a poem about themselves. The set-up began, "Just because I am a Mexican _____", or, "Just because I am an athlete _____." The formula seemed like a good way to explore what it means to grow up Adventist. As I drove home, my own poem began taking shape.

*Just because I am an Adventist
Doesn't mean that I am a fundamentalist
Doesn't mean that I am a Master Guide
Doesn't mean that I love prophecy*

*Yes, I love the Sabbath
Want Jesus to come and end war and hunger and greed
Yes, I've had disappointments
Controversies, both great and small*

*Hope trips me up, though
Confounds expectations
Just because I am an Adventist
Doesn't mean that I can explain it all*

It's a fun exercise. Try it. And while you are trying things, we have a puzzle in this issue too. Along with all the stories, Caleb Rasmussen is back with a uniquely Adventist crossword puzzle. As summer slides into fall, happy reading. ■

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.



Emerging Adventism? | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

Jesus said, “Follow me.” In signature Adventist passages from Revelation, the “remnant” ideal connects God’s will with Jesus’ own witness, his own lived faith. The Gospel of John says that Jesus took up his ministry so that we might “have life, and have it abundantly.” Jesus, then, was about *how we live*, and whether we feel truly *alive*. What mattered was freedom from self-fixation, an *aliveness* shaped precisely to the common good, the Kingdom of God.

If such a vision of the abundant life reflects the spirit of the New Testament, how can bickering over doctrine—over tenets *about* God rather than responses *to* God—become so all consuming?

Actually, of course, doctrinal discord is *not* that all-consuming. Many Adventists, perhaps most, do not have enough interest in church beliefs even to attend a Sabbath School class. Bible teaching has become, all too widely, a back-burner issue. The exception, of course, is the class of religious professionals. Adventist administrators, evangelists, pastors, and theologians—and the slim minority of members who share their concern—bestir themselves into regular consideration of these matters, and the conversation can be as fresh and renewing as the month of May. Healthy conversation takes place in many classrooms and Sabbath Schools, even around some dinner tables.

But talk about the church’s teachings is often fearful, defensive, and petty. In early August I listened to a presentation given at the 2014 Adventist-Laymen’s Services and Industries (ASI) convention in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Its entire focus was last-day “deceptions” and “delusions.” I heard nothing of love and justice or related scriptural motifs; nor did I feel any drive toward deeper insight than currently official understanding may provide. The theme was the shortcomings of others, and mainly, on this occasion, the shortcomings of other Adventists. Classroom listeners, largely mute, heard the presenter

worrying about new readings of Genesis 1–11 and zealous calls for the observance of Old Testament feasts. We must be ever alert, he was saying, to “heresies” like these, arising from within.

Call it the *antagonism mindset*, the “we’ve got doctrine right / you’ve got doctrine wrong” way of pursuing Christian mission. Although most members seem distant even from serious discussion of the Bible, those who are aware at all know that the antagonism mindset—its sights on insiders and outsiders alike—now typifies official Adventism. Where bureaucratic authority is prominent, this mindset is prominent as well.

Let’s be clear that our convictions do matter. Convictions are life-shaping beliefs, including the life-shaping aspects of doctrine, or what we want to teach. Convictions, then, undergird the way we live—they undergird the way anybody lives. It’s not, therefore, wrongheaded to be on the lookout for error. But it *is* wrongheaded—decisively and tragically wrongheaded—to be so caught up in us-versus-them thinking that we lose sight not only of what others can offer but also of what *we* may need. A consuming suspicion of people not ourselves gives rise to self-satisfaction and narcissism. These maladies go unchecked if we rush to dismiss perspectives different from our own.

I should say that ASI is an impressive, even an amazing, organization. Their annual convention is astonishingly professional and in many ways deeply inspiring. But the leadership appears quite at home with us-versus-them thinking. One target this year was the so-called emerging or emergent church, a movement of contemporary evangelical Christianity. The presenter I just referred to made disparaging mention of it. Another criticized the movement in some detail, arguing (according to the ASI website) that “Emergence Christianity” stands “in direct opposition” to Scripture. It is simply “incompatible” with biblical Christianity.¹

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I have made myself somewhat familiar with the movement, and I know at least one Adventist, the pastor-activist-writer Samir Selmanović, who is a well-known contributor to its point of view. Advocates of Emergence Christianity take as their basic premise (aside from faith itself) the belief that civilization, certainly civilization in the West, is now undergoing a truly epochal cultural shift. The shift involves: the *relativism* (extreme, or more nuanced) sparked by historians and philosophers and also by scientists like Einstein and Heisenberg; the *democratization of information* that comes with the digital revolution, along with attendant undermining of hierarchy; the *new awareness of religious diversity*—it's now in our neighborhoods and among the caregivers at our hospitals—and with that awareness a new reluctance either to scorn or dismiss what others believe.

In short, the contemporary culture doubts whether anyone has the God's-eye view, or whether authority, not least that of sacred texts and sacred institutions, still deserves to be trusted. Such a cultural shift goes along, of course, with a shift in human consciousness, and as that new consciousness continues to “emerge,” the pressure on churches grows ever stronger. Conventional church life—its collusion with violence, its doctrinal obsessions, its lack of humility and unwillingness to change—seems increasingly off-key, and people, especially young people, are walking away from it. The *aliveness* that Jesus meant to give seems to have waned.

But not everywhere. Some Christian leaders—three examples are Brian McLaren, Phyllis Tickle, and Rob Bell—are meeting the “emergence” of new culture with “emergence” of fresh faith. This, they believe, is one of those every-five-hundred-year “hinge times”—the last one was the Great Reformation—and it is a threat and also an opportunity. A church “rummage sale” would now make sense. Top-down, or Constantinian, Christianity can no longer work. Ungracious response to those outside the church can no longer work. What can work, on the other hand, is new appropriation of Christ as climax

of the Bible story and model of authentic Christian existence. What can work is church life founded on persistent, honest, Spirit-guided *conversation* about what to think and do.

I don't want, of course, to align myself uncritically with any movement. I've seen Emerging Church treatments of the Holy Spirit that seem insufficiently attentive to John 16's insistence that the One who teaches new understanding also glorifies precisely—Christ. And as an Adventist (and admirer of Sigve Tonstad's work), I believe, of course, that the Sabbath Jesus honored—which has no prominent place, so far as I know, in Emergence Christianity—is not only a great gift but also a necessary discipline.

These are examples. I would no doubt benefit from further conversation about them. If I sank into an us-versus-them frame of mind, conversation with people different from me would cease even though it could help me dethrone my own narcissism and grasp my own self-deception. What is more, I would be taking an ungracious stance toward persons who are, in truth, my brothers and sisters under God. Sometimes, I heartily grant, it is important to make judgments about others: the story of Bonhoeffer and the Nazis is sufficient reminder of that. But a *mindset* of antagonism to new ideas serves no purpose but conceit. And, as for willingness to learn from others, it need not lead—that dreaded bugaboo!—to *syncretism*; I might correct—and also enrich—my own *distinctive point of view*.

What goes for me as an individual goes, too, for Adventism as a whole. Now especially, when epochal change is so challenging, we need, by Spirit-led conversation, to “emerge” into a fresh and more faithful expression of who we are.

The process could spur a new sense of *aliveness* and take us past bickering to truly constructive interaction—some of it, I imagine, in small circles on Sabbath mornings. ■

Charles Scriven chairs Adventist Forum.

References

1. “2014 Seminars,” <http://www.asministries.org/seminars>.



Praise and Headship

Great Stuff



WELL, I AM “wowed” by this current issue [Vol. 42, Issue 2, Spring 2014]. Where do I begin? Olive Hemmings’s piece on hermeneutics and feminism is so insightful!

With all the reading I have been doing on this subject, noting how our hermeneutics has evolved in a defensive manner to protect our doctrines, I missed its development because it associated women’s ordination with radical social agendas that are much too closely tied to a “liberal agenda.” Of course!

Chudleigh—those of us who knew Bacchiocchi at the Seminary knew he was a male chauvinist. So, this was not a surprise, but the fact he borrowed it all from the Calvinist-Gothard movement was news to me!

Butler and Numbers; Haloviaks, all of them. Great stuff!

JIM LONDIS
Ooltewah, Tennessee

Chudleigh on Headship

TODAY I READ WITH INTEREST Gerry Chudleigh’s article, “A Short History of the Headship Doctrine in the Seventh-day Adventist Church” (*Spectrum*, Vol. 42, Issue 2, Spring 2014). While he presents fascinating details about the development of the response to feminism, he is sim-

ply wrong when he asserts that “the modern headship doctrine never appeared in any published book or article written by an Adventist before 1987.” Equally incorrect is his statement: “Headship theology played no part in Adventist thought until the late 20th century.”

The following quotes from early Adventist official publications should serve to correct this misunderstanding. Each statement is from the old *Review*, *Signs*, or a widely used book for Bible workers—all printed on Adventist presses, read by Adventist church members. I do not find any evidence that these ideas were anything other than commonly accepted views among Adventists at the time. The headship principle is not new or alien, as Chudleigh claims.

Most of the emphasis in the statements is mine, unless noted.

1862. James White wrote of the headship principle in a *Review* article:

“Kindred to the text under consideration is 1 Tim. ii, 9–13, which reads, ‘In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety. . . . Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve.’

“Here again we have the idea of subjection. Paul does not suffer a woman to teach, or to usurp authority over the man; and we do not learn from the Scriptures that women were ever ordained apostles, evangelists, or elders; neither do we believe that they should teach as such. Yet they may act an important part in speaking the truth to others. That we are correct we think will appear from the following texts.” [James

I do not find any evidence that these ideas were anything other than commonly accepted views among Adventists at the time.

White continued the article by citing examples of women who preached as lay workers, i.e., “the aged women,” “every woman that prayeth or prophesieth,” Aquilla, Philip’s daughters, and Anna.]

—*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Dec. 2, 1862, 6.

1866. *Review* editorial. Uriah Smith teaches headship in an article titled, “Let Your Women Keep Silence in the Churches.” The relevant section is as follows. (Note that the italicized words “under obedience,” “not,” and “usurp authority” were italicized in the original. The other italics are my own emphasis of this verbatim quote.)

“The antithesis of the command, ‘Let your women keep silence in the churches,’ is expressed in these words: ‘But they are commanded to be *under obedience*, as also saith the law.’ This shows that the speaking which is prohibited, is of that kind which would show that they were *not* under obedience. But what is meant by being under obedience? *The Scriptures represent, that a subordinate position, in a certain sense, is assigned to the woman, for the reasons that she was formed from the man, and at a subsequent time, and was first in transgression.* 1 Cor. xi, 8; 1 Tim. ii, 13, 14. *The leadership and authority is vested in the man.* ‘Thy desire

shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.’ Gen. iii, 16. *The order is not to be reversed, and the woman take the position which has been assigned to the man; and every action on her part which shows that she is usurping this authority, is disorderly, and not to be allowed.* Hence Paul says plainly to Timothy, 1 Tim. ii, 12, ‘But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to *usurp authority* over the man, but to be in silence.’ There is no doubt but it was the very same point, the usurping of authority over the man, that the same apostle had in view in 1 Cor. xiv, 34.”

—*The Review and Herald*, June 26, 1866, 28.

1878. *Signs* editorial.

“*The divine arrangement, even from the beginning, is this, that the man is the head of the woman.* Every relation is disregarded or abused in this lawless age. But the Scriptures always maintain this order in the family relation. ‘For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the church.’ Eph. 5:23. Man is entitled to certain privileges which are not given to woman; and he is subjected to some duties and burdens from which the woman is exempt. *A woman may pray, prophesy, exhort, and comfort the church, but she cannot occupy the position of a pastor or a ruling elder. This would be looked upon as usurping authority over the man, which is here [1 Timothy 2:12] prohibited.*”

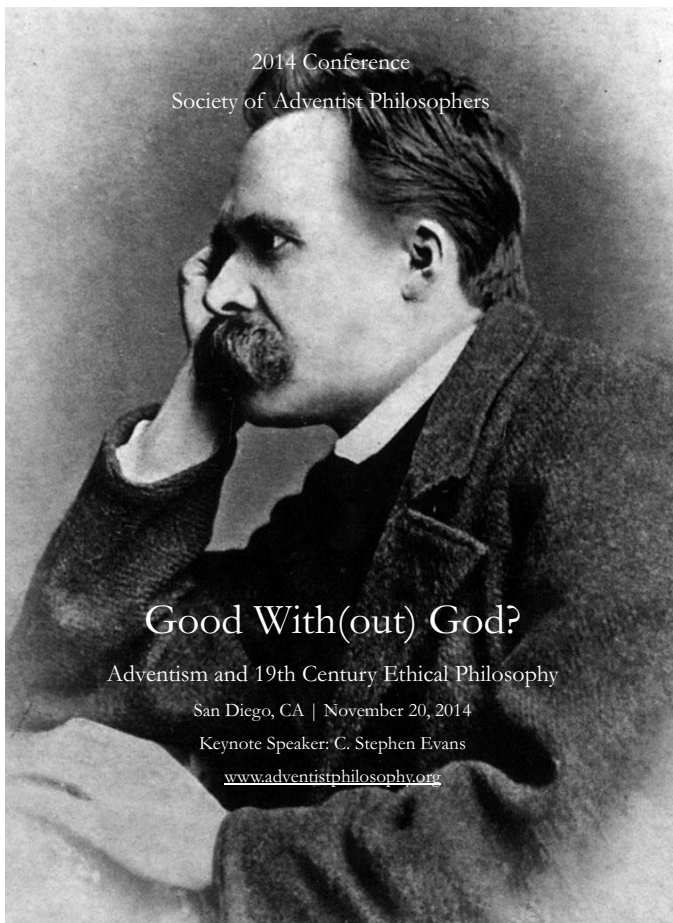
—*The Signs of the Times*, Dec. 19, 1878; emphasis mine.

1895. *Signs* Q/A. The following statement regarding biblical headship is found in an answer to a question.

“No. 176. Who Should Be Church Officers? Should women be elected to offices in the church when there are enough brethren? V. A.

“If by this is meant the office of elder, we should say at once, No. But there are offices in the church which women can fill acceptably, and oftentimes there are found sisters in the church who are better qualified for this than brethren, such offices, for instance as church clerk, treasurer, librarian of the tract society, etc., as well as the office of deaconess, assisting the deacons in looking after the poor, and in doing such other duties as would naturally fall to their lot. The qualifications for church elder are set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1–7 and in Titus 1:7–9.

“*We do not believe that it is in God’s plan to give to women the ordained offices of the church. By this we do not mean to depreciate their labors, service, or devotion. The sphere of woman is equal to that of man. She was made a help meet, or fit, for man, but that does not mean that her sphere is identical to that of man’s. The interests of*



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the church and the world generally would be better served if the distinctions given in God's word were regarded."

—*Signs of the Times*, Jan. 24, 1895.

1919. *Bible Handbook*, by S. N. Haskell (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1919). Under the heading, "Bible Etiquette," Haskell lists several text references with brief summaries. The relevant comment: "1 Tim. 2:12, 13. *Women should not be forward and take the place of men, but should recognize men as occupying the first place*" (179).

I trust these primary source quotes will serve to set the record straight.

BARRY KIMBROUGH
Auburn, Massachusetts

Chudleigh responds:

SOME PEOPLE SEEM TO believe that in "A Short History of the Headship Doctrine" I tried to establish that no Adventists believed women should be submissive to men until the 1980s, when Samuele Bacchiocchi introduced that idea to the church. Such an absurd argument could, of course, be easily disproved.

As late as the 1950s, almost everyone in North America, whether Christian or not, assumed that certain roles should be filled only by men. To name a few: minister, physician, soldier, military officer, lawyer, judge, police officer, college president, hospital president, truck driver, bus driver, airplane pilot, race car driver, construction worker, mayor, governor, president, corporate CEO, or corporate department head. Women who entered, or tried to enter, those occupations were considered abrasive and disruptive, and sometimes a bit comical. Some Christians condemned them for "usurping male authority." When society changed and women began to fill virtually all the roles that culture had previously reserved for men, Adventists who wanted to maintain the status quo discovered that they were missing something very important: a convincing biblical argument, or "theology," that would bar women from ministry.

It is clear that Bacchiocchi already believed a woman should not be a pastor when he went looking for new and stronger arguments to prove that point. He did not return from his research with a new opinion but with a new set of arguments, a detailed theological framework, that had recently been developed by a few Evangelical theologians.

Modern headship theology builds on a new founda-

tion and ends with new and far more radical conclusions than those expressed by Adventists before Bacchiocchi. First, instead of trying to create modern applications for Paul's counsels about women—that they should wear head coverings, not teach men, be silent in church, etc.—modern headship advocates build their theology on a new and creative understanding of the Creation story. They assert that before sin Adam was created to be head over Eve, thereby establishing a fundamental and eternal principle of patriarchy. They support this view with (disputed) arguments that only Adam was created directly by God (Eve's creation utilized Adam), that only Adam was given charge over the garden, that Adam named Eve, that God instructed only Adam in regard to not eating from the forbidden tree, that after sin God called to Adam alone, that God did not make Adam and Eve naked until after Adam sinned, and that Eve followed Adam out of the garden. To drive home the point of Adam's original authority over Eve, they argue that Eve's sin was not in trying to be like God but in trying to be like Adam, and that Adam's sin was primarily in failing to exercise his authority over Eve and abdicating his responsibility for her behavior. They go on to argue that God's post-sin announcement that Eve would be ruled by Adam was only a "distortion" of the rulership that God had previously assigned to Adam at creation.

These arguments had not previously been made by Adventists.

Second, if accepted as biblical, this new version of the story of Creation and original sin transformed the submission of women from an interesting topic over which good Adventists friends might disagree to a testing truth, dividing those who were obedient to God from those who were in rebellion against God. Restoring male "headship" and rejecting female spiritual leadership became as important to the restoration of God's true church as restoration of the Sabbath.

These new arguments from the Creation story and these radical new "shaking time" conclusions are not found in the statements that Pastor Kimbrough presents. Rather, those statements reflect the culture of their time, often called the "cult of domesticity."

In his 1862 statement, James White illustrates the weakness of Adventist arguments before modern headship theology. He asserts that Paul's counsel in 1 Tim. 2,

that women should not teach men or usurp authority over men, means that women today should not be ordained as apostles, evangelists, or elders. He does not say why he believes this, and he never mentions “headship” or Adam being created to exercise authority over Eve. But evidently he still believed that in some way God saw him as spiritual leader in his home and church. Was he right? His wife, Ellen, did not seem to believe he was: “I hope God has not left me to receive my duty through my husband,” she remarked to Lucinda Hall in 1876. “He [God] will teach me if I trust in Him” (letter to Lucinda Hall, May 10, 1876, quoted in *Daughters of God* [Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2005], 267).

Bizarre

IN AN ARTICLE TITLED “The Hedgehog, the Fox, and Ellen G. White,” Butler and Numbers try to undermine the new *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia* by dismissing the mathematics used in my book *Acquired or Inspired*. They use words such as “bizarre” and “abandoned from all connections with reality” when I quantify the probability that the health writings of Ellen White statistically could not have been a random copy from the other health writers of her time. It is not me they are denigrating, but a top mathematician from Melbourne University. He is cited in a note at the end of my book. To make judgment on probability needs a mathematician and not an historian.

I got my example of wheat from a fable about the invention of chess. It is found in Wikipedia. Just type in “wheat and chessboard problem.” It was taught to me by my math teacher to show how a sequence of calculations can lead to unbelievably large numbers well beyond what we intuitively expect. A similar, but greater number occurs with the sequence of calculations to assess probability that Ellen White got her health writings from 19th century knowledge. You have to multiply each step with a factor starting from a number greater than 2, which then progressively increases with each calculation.

Butler and Numbers state, “If every distinct health reform teaching were represented by a grain of wheat, together they wouldn’t even fill a tea cup.” This may be so, but in my analogy the grains of wheat represent probability and not the health principles. For their analogy to work the cup must contain two grains mixed together, say wheat and rice. Repeatedly half a cup is tipped out and refilled. The probability is how many times you have to do this

until in a single tip all the wheat is tipped out and all the rice remains in the cup. The number of tips represents the probability for this to occur. Intuitively one would say it’s impossible. Yes, it is close to impossible, but mathematics is an exact science, and it can come up with a figure. It will be 10 to the power of a very large number. This mimics what Ellen White achieved.

If the mathematics is beyond reproach then the words used by Butler and Numbers of “bizarre and “abandoned from all connections with reality” make little sense. What is “bizarre and “abandoned from all connections with reality” is how Ellen White got her information, as it is so improbable that she got it from the writers of her time.

DON MCMAHON

via email

Butler and Numbers respond:

DR. MCMAHON CLAIMS THAT the probability of Ellen White’s selecting so many correct principles of health reform was analogous to a chicken’s plucking one grain of rice out of a pile of wheat covering the United States or Australia to a depth of fifty miles. This calculation, however, is not a historical assertion at all.

In other words, to apply mathematics here is for the birds. The accuracy of her health teachings has less to do with mathematics than with an informed reading in the history of science or medicine. How many health ideas there were for her to choose from is a matter of historical fact, not mathematical probability.

And how right she “needs” to be to be a prophet cannot be calculated, either by a mathematician or a historian. We should leave that to the theologians.

Correction

The photographs in “Progress or Regress: Adventist Women in Ministry” (*Spectrum*, Vol. 42, No. 2, Spring 2014) should have been identified as follows:



Norma Osborn



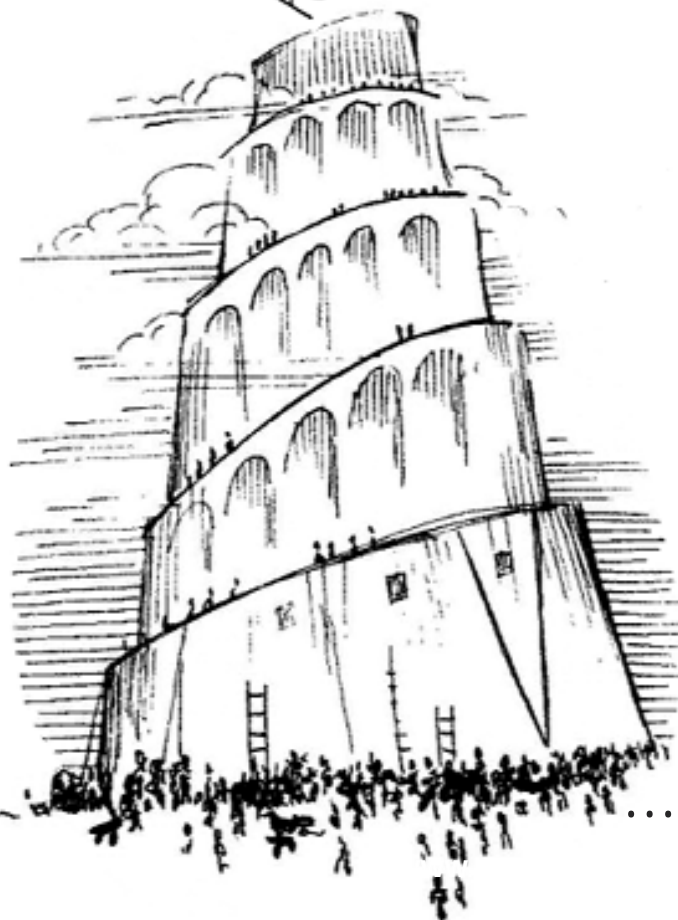
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Anna Knight

Unity and Diversity in THE BIBLE

CONFUSSION Flood harmony UNITY GRACIOUSNESS
rebellion Conflict Deliverance Example freedom Kingdom Division
Defiance Fallen Tyranny weakened Kingdom Resolution Repentance
Dangerous death blessings Contemplation Peril HUMANITY Restoration Patonement Survival
World illusion risks Follower Persecution Doctrine Destruction Restoration Tolerance risks
WOE gifts



Divided in Christ: *The Dangers of Tyrannical Unity*

| BY GEOFF PATTERSON



Is it not

primarily our

fundamental

dividedness

that is

the source

of our strife

and pain?

I want to talk to you today about what I believe is an undervalued blessing that God gave to our fallen world.

That blessing is division.¹

Now I am not speaking of the mathematical operation called division. Rather, I am speaking of a certain life-sparing, God-given blessing implanted in us long ago by the gracious God who loves us and wants to save us and restore us.

I'm speaking of division—that gift of God to fallen humans that has both produced our world of rival nations and assured that we inevitably, to one degree or another, remain at odds with each other.

Maybe you never thought of the world's chronic case of division as a blessing at all—rather more like a curse. For is it not primarily our fundamental dividedness that is the source of our strife and pain? And doesn't it seem obvious that if we could all just come together and unite, we could be so much more effective and happy?

It does seem that way, but is it true? Are we, in fact, at our best when we are united?

Abraham Lincoln said that a house divided against itself cannot stand. True enough, but does saying this mean we must always seek to be united, regardless of the cost?

Let's try this another way.

- Would the world be better if Americans controlled it all?
- Would America be better if we were subject to a one-world state (even if it were democratic)?
- If we were to live in a "united" world, who do you think should choose what that world would look like? And what should we do to the ones who don't want it that way?

But doesn't it seem almost heretical to call division a gift of God? I mean, by doing so, am I not in fact suggesting it is God's fault

that we humans can't get along?

I will save you the drama of wondering if I am saying such a scandalous thing. I am saying this scandalous thing. But I am not all that fearful in saying it, for the fact that God is the original source of the division that convulses the world is actually a fact well established by the Bible. And the Bible also tells us why He did it. [Quotes Genesis 11:1–9, the Tower of Babel.]

Today I want to take a risk similar to the one Jesus took in Matthew 23, of speaking directly against a mentality and way of thinking that many think to be right. The text for consideration is Matthew 23:13–39, a passage commonly known as “The Woes to the Pharisees,” where Jesus finally lays everything on the line and directly confronts the subtle and not-so-subtle sin at the heart of the religion of the scribes and Pharisees. It’s a make-or-break moment, after which the Pharisees will either have to repent or see to it that Jesus is destroyed. And it is not many days after that Jesus, at their instigation, is crucified. It is a passage worthy of deep contemplation leading to repentance, for we too can fall into many of the attitudes and behaviors that Jesus describes.

Yet it is not Jesus’ specific words from this passage that have inspired me today, but instead it is His example that compels me. What example? His willingness to take a risk and say what needs saying, even in a time when such a saying might not be very well received. And so, with considerable fear and trembling, I hope to do just that—say what needs saying.

There are two contexts to which I want to speak today, and I am likely to trouble many who hear me with either the first or the second contextual application. I want to speak to you about fallen humans, and the grave perils of unity, and our desperate dependence upon division. I suspect I will be misunderstood by some, but it seems to me to be a risk worth taking.

A Babylon of division

I suggested that I believe the divisions we see in the world, and that indeed cause us so much pain, are a blessing given to us by the

God who loves us. And I suggested that the reason God gave us division is found in Genesis 11, specifically in the story of the Tower of Babel. We need to go there again, but we dare not stay too long, just long enough to learn a quick lesson about fallen humans, the perils of unity, and our desperate dependence upon division.

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:1–4).

In case you have forgotten, the building of the city and the tower mentioned in Genesis 11 is recorded to have occurred after the flood, a biblical event of global impact, absurdly parodied in the current movie, *Noah*, and pretty much, without exception, dismissed by nearly all the so-called learned of this age, yet an event for which nearly all supposedly isolated cultures of the world seem to have a legend.

I find it more than just interesting that the Mesopotamians, the Greeks, the Mayans of Central America, the Ojibwa of North America, the Muisca of South America, and the ancient peoples of the Indian subcontinent all have flood narratives. Could the reason for this fact be what the Bible says next? “But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The Lord said, ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them’ ” (Gen. 11:5, 6).

Now, one could mistake the saying in verse 6 as a positive in that the united humans, who were seeking to stay together, were, by merit of their unity, able to do wonderful things.

**The fact that
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**Jesus finally
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Yet the action the Lord takes because of this fact is not one that suggests God considered the almost limitless capacity of a world of united humans was in fact a good thing. Instead, it seems God thinks quite the opposite: “‘Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other’” (Gen. 11:7). And on that day, division was born: division by the design and by the hand of God.

“So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:8, 9).

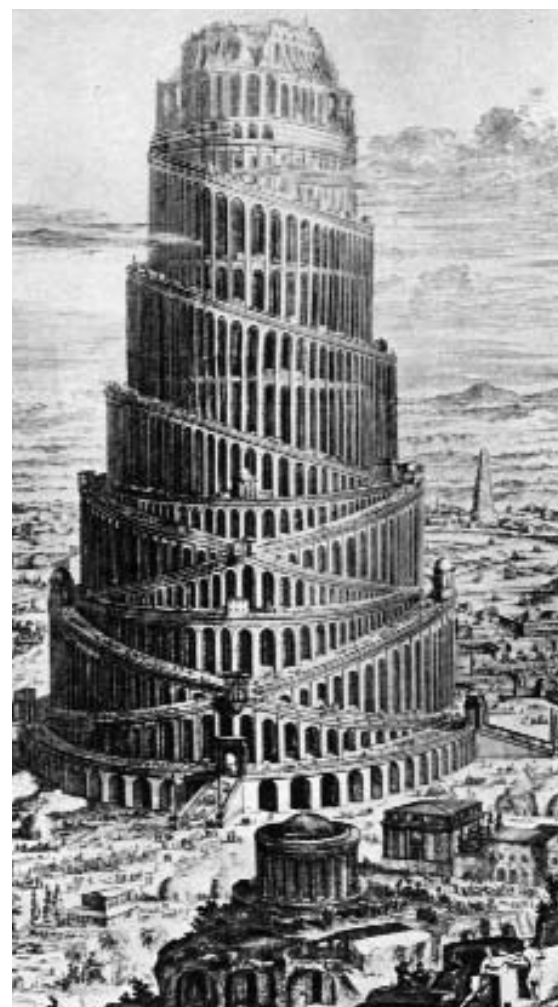
So, why did God divide us? Why, if when we are united, we are so much more efficient, so much more effective, so much more able, why would God step in to divide us in the first place, and, if current reality is any indicator, continue to allow us to remain divided? Based on this story, here’s why I believe He did it: God had to divide us in order to save us.

When fallen humans were united, it was a unity of great strength, but it was also a unity of rebellion and defiance, one that would have led to our total destruction. And so God divided the kingdoms of fallen humans and made us weak. Setting us each against the other so that later we would be unable to mount a united resistance against Him when He would invade the earth with Jesus and with the Kingdom of God.

Remember, a house divided against itself cannot stand. Therefore God set the houses of the kingdoms of men against each other so that our kingdoms of rebellion would one day fall, and the reign of Jesus would begin.

But something bad happened on the way to the Kingdom: the Kingdom people got united, and then by being united, nearly destroyed the Kingdom they claimed they were trying to build. And this is where our thinking today begins to become quite dangerous, for from

here, the chances of offending become legion. Yet we can’t stop now. We haven’t yet made it back to Matthew 23. So, Lord willing, we must press on.



FR. ATHANASIOS KIRCHER, RECONSTRUCTION OF THE TOWER OF BABEL, XVIITH CENTURY

The divided early church

After Jesus, God established His Church on earth to be the keepers and proclaimers of Jesus’ story, announcing the Good News of salvation by faith for all fallen humans who will believe, and declaring the great hope of the resurrection of the dead to life in a world made new.

But there were divisions, conflicts, false teachers, and deceivers. For you see, the earth was still full of fallen humans. And soon enough, so was the church.

To be fair, it has always been that way, full of fallen humans, even from the earliest days, like when the church in Jerusalem was nearly

torn apart by a cultural conflict regarding aid to widows, or like when Paul and Barnabas disagreed so violently about Mark that their ministry partnership collapsed, and they went their separate ways with different ministry partners.

And division was certainly already present in Corinth, where one group claimed to be followers of Peter, while another group claimed Paul, a third was loyal to Apollos, and a fourth tried to pass themselves off as only following Christ.

Not even the happy-clappy church in Philippi was able to escape divisions, as Paul had to specifically write: "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord" (Phil. 4:2).

And so what does this teach us? That as long as fallen humans are a part of the church, the church will have to confront divisions. And since everyone who is a part of the church is a fallen human, I guess it is safe to say that the church will never escape this dilemma fully.

So it is not so much the existence of divisions in the church that in the long run becomes the problem, for indeed, what other option is there? Rather, it is in how the church deals with the inevitable divisions that the true danger lies, and it was in its desperate effort to be united that the church nearly destroyed itself.

The story goes like this: As long as the apostles were still alive, the church had access to living authorities who could, and usually would, resolve the inevitable conflicts that arose simply by deciding who was right and who was wrong. But after they were gone, what now? It's not like the divisions went away. In fact, if you study the history, the divisions increased.

Yet, there they were, the church in desperate need of unity in order to fulfill the God-given purpose of proclaiming salvation to all through Christ.

And so they did what they thought they could: for the sake of unity, they appointed elders in their local churches for the purpose

of leadership and conflict resolution. Then when the churches in the towns came into conflict, they appointed overseers in the towns to settle the conflicts between the churches. But when divisions formed between the overseers of one town and the overseers of another (such as the bitter rivalry that developed between Antioch in modern-day Syria and Alexandria in modern-day Egypt, ironically two places where it is difficult to find any Christians today), the churches tried calling councils of overseers together to try to resolve the problems.

It kind of worked, but eventually the overseers who couldn't get what they wanted from one council of overseers would then call together a rival council of overseers and seek to overthrow the rulings of the other. In the end, for the sake of unity, there was really only one option left: choose someone to be the final word on all church matters so that we can finally, once and for all, put down all these divisions and rebellions and finally be united.

The intent was good: this individual would be a good and faithful man of God who would rule from love for his fellow men and divine insight from God. But somehow, these things just never seem to work out in the long run.

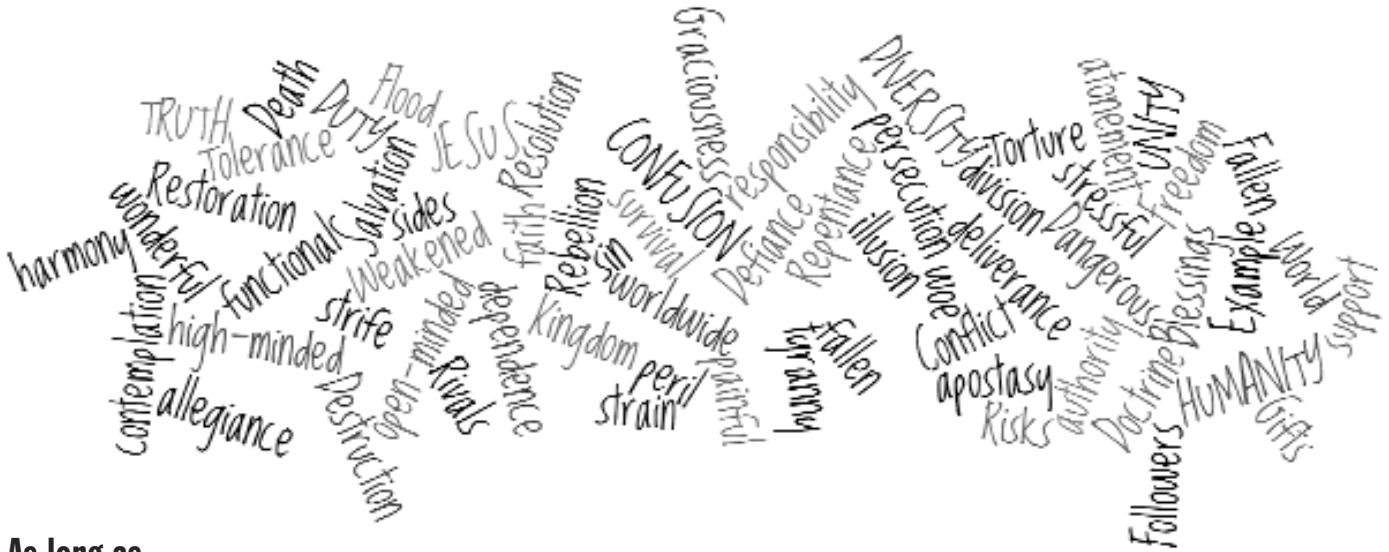
Sad history of "unity"

What I am suggesting to you today is troubling: it was primarily a high-minded drive for a practical unity amongst the believers that produced the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages:

- For the sake of deliverance from the discomfort of interpersonal divisions, the believers slowly sacrificed their individual and local responsibilities and freedoms in Christ for the simplicity of the inerrant rulings of a remote, external judicial authority.
- For the sake of clarity in doctrine, they gave up their solemn duty to search out the truth for themselves, choosing instead to trust the latest mandates from their chosen doctrinal authoritarians.

**God set the
houses of the
kingdoms of
men against
each other so
that our
kingdoms of
rebellion would
one day fall,
and the reign
of Jesus would
begin.**

- For the sake of functional unity, they gave up their functional divisions, thereby cutting themselves off from the only defense that has ever saved fallen humans from the disasters that happen whenever they finally get united.
- This very day, Venezuela writhes in the aftermath of “unity” under Chavez.
- And in North Korea, an absurd man named Kim Jong Un kills his starving people in an effort to keep them “united,”



**As long as
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are a part
of the church,
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will have
to confront
divisions.**

Make no mistake, the church of the Middle Ages did manage to achieve a “unity,” in that everyone who would agree with what the church said could be united, but everyone who would not had a rather short list of possible outcomes, most being very unpleasant: excommunication, economic persecution, physical torture, death.

This list, or one very much like it, has always been where fallen humanity’s drive for unity ends up, because eventually you have to have some way of dealing with heretics. I mean, pick your ideology and pick your era of human history:

- The Roman Empire’s “unity” had to persecute Jews and later Christians because they refused to be united.
- We already listed the wretched abuses inflicted in the name of Christian “unity.”
- In the last century, millions died in Russia in a struggle for “unity” under Joseph Stalin.
- And millions more died as a result of German “unity” under Hitler.
- Long has Cuba suffered under the “unity” of Castro.

while to his south, people of the same ethnic make-up prosper strikingly by laboring to live in a society that accepts divisions as essential to survival.

So am I saying that unity is bad? No, I’m not. What I’m saying is that unity for fallen humans is dangerous. And because it is so dangerous, we must always be on our guard against those who call us to compromise our freedoms or our convictions for the sake of unity.

The bishop and the pope

It is true enough that a house divided against itself cannot stand. But then, whoever said every house that currently stands needs to keep standing? Some houses need to fall, especially the ones that maintain their standing through tyranny, or the ones that seek to establish their tyranny by playing upon the ignorance of the people.

All of which brings me to a quite remarkable event that took place in February of this year [2014]. At a gathering of Pentecostal ministers hosted by noted Pentecostal televi-

sion celebrity Kenneth Copeland, a most unexpected presentation was made by a man named Tony Palmer. Bishop Palmer, as he is referred to, was noted as a leader in the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches, Celtic Anglican Tradition, meaning he wasn't actually Anglican, but rather from a group that departed from the Anglican Church.²

It turns out that Bishop Tony Palmer was friends for years with a certain Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who might be better known to you as Pope Francis, the recently elected head of the Catholic Church.

Kenneth Copeland invited Bishop Palmer to address the gathered Pentecostal ministers, and he came with a rather startling proclamation: The Catholic Church has changed its position on atonement and reached an agreement with the Lutherans on the matter. Therefore, the protest of Luther is over, and there should no longer be such a thing as a Protestant, for the protest is over. We can all be united again as one church under Jesus, the way God intended things to be.

Now you have to admit, if you weren't already skewed to think against any such thing, the notion of Christian unity might sound pretty good, right? And if you are largely ignorant of what the Bible says about salvation, and that the Protestant Reformation was about way more than just one simple issue of atonement, but you know that society is always beating the drum around you, calling for the "tolerant unity of all humankind," and that somewhere the Bible must say something about love and unity, it would be very hard to not welcome this as potentially good news. I mean, Christian unity—what could be better than that, right?

It was intriguing to note the rather stunned responses coming from the gathered ministers. Yet, sadly they soon enough figured out they were supposed to be all in for this, and began to applaud and cheer quite raucously after what in another context probably would have seemed to them some pretty crazy things to say.

And then the whole scenario got even more strange when Bishop Palmer cued the AV team to play for the ministers a personal video message from Pope Francis. The message was seemingly shot on the spur of the moment by Bishop Palmer on his iPhone, just days before when he had been visiting the pontiff in Vatican City.

And, boy, does Pope Francis ever come off as a totally sincere God-follower who loves the poor and longs that the body of Christ be reunited. And in truth, I'm not even sure I would be bold enough to claim he isn't just that. For all I know, his motives might actually be pure.

But here's the thing: it doesn't matter what his motives are, because if the unity he speaks of were to be achieved, it wouldn't be to the glory of God. We've been down this road already, and one doesn't need to be an Adventist to know where it ended up last time.

But back to the event: if you thought the whole thing couldn't get any more bizarre, then you didn't watch long enough to see and hear Kenneth Copeland get up and, after expressing what a miracle it is and how thrilled he is and how much he just loves the pope, then proceed to lead the room in a prayer in tongues that the pope would prosper.

I have to tell you, rather than being inspired or frightened by it all, I found myself almost having to laugh at the absurdity. First you hear the sharp, biting, staccato cadence of Bishop Palmer, speaking terse, demanding phrases in his South African accent. Then you hear the Spanish/Italian accent of Pope Francis, delivered plaintively, appealingly, almost more grandfatherly than fatherly. And to wrap it all up, there is Kenneth Copeland with his good-ole-boy southern Christian drawl.

There is Palmer with his pseudo-theology declaring the end of the Protestant Reformation, Francis with his call to reunion based on the willingness of us all to share the blame for the tragic divisions the Reformation caused, and Copeland with his "the Spirit done told me this is good" attitude that blows by all chance for rational dissent by suggesting,

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always be on
our guard
against those
who call us to
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our freedoms
or our convictions for the
sake of unity.**

without saying it, that “anyone not in agreement with me just can’t be very spiritual, now, can they.”

It leaves me with this thought: the only two things the three of you are actually united on

While the call for unity may sound high-minded, and may in fact be well intended, and in principle to be greatly desired, still I am very wary of it.



is the absurd notion that you are united and the potential benefits each of you might gain by promulgating this illusion of unity.

And so, gentlemen, I have to say to you, I cannot be united with you, for the only unity you can call me to is unity under the authority of fallen man. And no matter how much unity might sound good to me, it’s not worth that. So you will have to count me out. I think I’ll stick with division for now.

Issues in our ranks

But this is just the first case we must consider today, for while we may be well enough predisposed to stay away from any tyrannical unity involving the Charismatics and the Catholic Church, are we equally as vigilant to the tyranny that can arise from calls for unity within our own ranks? Or did you think the dangers of unity only applied to everyone who wasn’t one of us?

In the event you hadn’t noticed, let me just say, the past couple of years have exposed significant division and strain within our own spiritual community, the Adventist Church, divisions that have seemingly coalesced into sustained strife between our own versions of ancient Antioch and ancient Alexandria. Both “sides,” to use a less-than-ideal word to describe them, have developed to a greater or lesser degree their own networks of support and communication, and each has its favorite leading voices and events.

Divisions aren’t fun. Instead they are always stressful and sometimes downright painful. And for a church like ours, where we place an extremely high value on the specifics of both our theology and our practice, divisions of the nature and extent we currently see frighten us.

Because divisions can be very painful, and because we are a people called by God to the mission of proclaiming the soon coming of Jesus, the appeal to unity at any cost is compelling, because how can we ever finish the work if we are divided?

And so for many years it has been the appeal of the leaders of the Adventist Church that we as a worldwide communion of faith do all we can to stay united in purpose, united in theology, and united in practice. And while I agree in principle with the intentions of such a call, to what ends should we go to answer it? And while worldwide unity sounds wonderful, could the drive to achieve this lofty dream not in fact prove to be as perilous to us as it was to the believers fifteen centuries ago? And to what extent does division actually serve us?

Rather than being the only thing holding us back from the successful fulfillment of our mission, is it possible that, in truth, division is the main thing that keeps us from tyrannical apostasy, either on the left or on the right?

No issue has pushed our primary division like the issue of the recognition of the role of women in pastoral ministry in the Adventist Church. And while I might easily forgive a bias on this issue against the role and recognition of women in someone from a small church where no woman has been a pastor, or the bias of someone from a culture where women have not been given the chance, I must admit I am hard pressed to see how someone from this church could regard the contributions of Bernie, or Mark, or Delwin, or me³ to be worthy of greater organizational acknowledgement than those of Sabine or Barbara⁴ (excluding Patty only because her training is in education, and pastors always discriminate against them).

But we have, I believe, in the name of unity, created a real mess for ourselves. And because this mess has become so messy, we are starting to hear a very dangerous call, the call to set the demands of unity above conviction. The argument goes this way: maybe it is OK to ordain women, and maybe it isn't. The voices are strong on both sides. But since we can't all agree, for the sake of unity, you must adopt the decision of the majority, even if doing so violates your conscience. Nothing matters more than unity.

To which I say no, I cannot be united with you on this, for this is a call to unity under fallen man. And forced unity on that basis never ends well. And while the call for unity may sound high-minded, and may in fact be well intended, and in principle to be greatly desired, still I am very wary of it, for despite the fact that division is inefficient and disconcerting and sometimes very painful, history has not shown that the greatest of the dangers to fallen man lie in our divisions, but instead it is the unity of fallen man that has resulted in the worst of our sins.

What I cannot do

And so I have to say, not just to Bishop Palmer and Pope Francis and Kenneth Copeland, but to my own family of faith as well, it is not the discomfort of our open-minded division that I fear, but instead it is the peril of a coerced, blind unity under fallen man that unsettles my soul. And whenever you call me to sacrifice conscience for unity, I will have to respectfully say no, no matter who you are.

I cannot, for the sake of deliverance from the discomfort of interpersonal divisions, sacrifice my individual and local responsibilities and freedoms in Christ just to gain the simplicity of an inerrant ruling from a remote, external, judicial authority. To do so is to take a step toward Rome and toward tyranny under fallen humans.

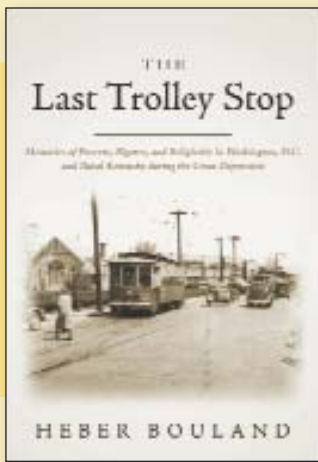
I cannot for the sake of clarity in doctrine give up my solemn duty to search out the truth for myself. Truth is not established by majority vote, and I cannot sacrifice my solemn individual duty to seek truth to any council, no matter how righteously it might be formed. To do so is to take a step toward Rome and to tyranny under fallen humans.

And I cannot, for the sake of functional unity, give up the intentional, functional divisions built into our church structure to protect us from unity gone wrong. To do so is to take a step toward Rome and to tyranny under fallen humans.

Any rightly constituted body of the Adventist Church, be it local church, conference, or union that sacrifices, in the name of unity, its God-given decision-making responsibility to the next organizational level is by the act abdicating its sacred duty to protect us from runaway unity and leading us one step closer to Rome.

I'm not saying we can't agree. What I'm saying is that we can't agree to agree before we know for sure what we are agreeing on, for the hearts of fallen humans are deceitful, even the hearts of mostly righteous, God-appointed humans. And we must never come, against con-

**Jesus
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to unity,
but not to
unity under
fallen
man.**



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science, either willingly or under coercion, under the tyranny of the unity of fallen humans.

There is only One to whom we must give final allegiance: His name is Jesus. Make no mistake. He does call us to unity. But it is unity under His wings. And here finally we find our way back to Matthew 23, and to these words: " 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing' " (Matthew 23:37).

Jesus is calling us to unity, but not to unity under fallen man. Rather only to unity in Him, a unity that will only come in fullness when Jesus comes again.

It is not wrong for me to be united with other humans. Indeed, it is essential. But I must never sacrifice my primary allegiance to Jesus to that of any institution or organization of fallen men, even if I know their intentions to be good. And not only must I live with divisions, I must also recognize my desperate dependence upon divisions as my primary protection against the perils of unfettered unity. And I must fight against the efforts of any who would seek a coerced union.

It might seem, from this, all is danger and there is no hope. But to believe this is to admit our hope is in the houses of fallen man rather than in the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is only One to whom we must give final allegiance: His name is Jesus. ■

Geoff Patterson is senior pastor of the Forest Lake Seventh-day



Adventist Church. He is married to Alicia, and together they have four children. The Pattersons live in Apopka, Florida.

References

1. This article is adapted from a sermon delivered at the Forest Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church on April 12, 2014. Some oral elements of the presentation have been retained.
2. Tony Palmer died in a motorcycle accident in the UK on July 20, 2014.
3. Male pastors of Forest Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church in Apopka, Florida.
4. Female pastors of Forest Lake Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Diversity: A Biblical Paradigm | BY REINDER BRUINSMA

PENTECOST_OLDTRACTORINSHED.NET_BY MARKA HEWITT



In any serious study it is important to carefully define the terms we intend to use.¹ That is most certainly also a “must” when we discuss the topic of diversity and intend to make a case for diversity as a biblical paradigm.² Some will rather uncritically welcome the term *diversity* and are prepared to “celebrate” any amount of diversity, in our society as well as in the church. For others, the term *diversity* is closely associated with

such concepts as pluralism and relativism and is therefore often quite suspect.

The need to carefully define what we mean by diversity is all the more urgent since it has become a key word in our postmodern culture. Modernity longed for *harmony* and *unity*. Postmodernity, on the contrary, accentuates *difference*, *plurality*, and *diversity*. This does not apply only to the arts, but also to other aspects of Western culture. Moreover, this

**We do not
hear the
Truth alone;
we need
each other,
and we can
learn from
each other
as we
listen to one
another.**

shift is accompanied by another postmodern characteristic. Postmodern people are no longer interested in exploring how different elements or ideas may be connected, or to determine whether one idea has more value than another. Since there is no Absolute Truth, they say, and everything is a matter of *interpretation*—my interpretation is as good as yours. These diverse interpretations may be totally incompatible, but that is not considered a problem.

When I claim below that diversity is a biblical paradigm, I do not want to take this *post-modern* understanding of diversity as my point of departure. I do not speak of the kind of diversity that has no desire to differentiate between ideas that are informed by a Christian, Bible-oriented worldview and that which is hostile or, at best, indifferent to this worldview. The kind of diversity I have in mind is rather a matter of *differences in perspectives* that may complement each other, and not the kind of differences that do not worry about any truth claims and that can easily slide from tolerance into indifference.

The kind of diversity that, I believe, represents a biblical paradigm does not lead to a defense of a pluralism that rejects all specific truth claims.³ It does not suggest that “anything goes” and that we all can have our own individual corner of the truth, without any need to define Truth as best as we can. It reminds us, however, that we do not hear the Truth alone, but that we need each other, and that we can learn from each other as we listen to one another.⁴

This article focuses on *diversity as a biblical paradigm*. It is a diversity in approaches and perspectives that enriches our understanding but does not destroy the underlying unity of the biblical revelation. It leads us to conclude that not every instance of diversity in theology and in the church is necessarily a problem to be overcome, but rather may be a blessing of God, who invites all people, in all their diversity, to participate in the church’s ministry and in enhancing its understanding of the truth.

A history of diversity

It is important to realize that Christianity has, from its inception, been greatly diverse—whether we think of first century Christianity,⁵ medieval Christianity, the church in the Reformation era, or the modern church. Many Adventists do not sufficiently appreciate the fact that in its very beginning their church was very diverse. Early Adventism was far more diverse than many Adventists today realize or would be comfortable with.⁶ The undeniable reality is that, in spite of its constant insistence on the need for unity, contemporary Adventism, worldwide, shows a great amount of diversity—both in its outward forms as well as in the interpretation and application of many of its beliefs.

One may disapprove of some of the developments in Adventism, but this, I believe, does not mean that all diversity is, by definition, always a regrettable threat to the cohesiveness and unity of the church. My contention would be that a healthy church needs a healthy degree of diversity,⁷ *and that diversity, as such, is a biblical paradigm.*

A diverse God

The foundation of biblical religion and of true worship is the nonnegotiable premise that there is only one God. Over and against the belief in many gods by the nations around Israel was Israel’s insistence that “the Lord is our God, the Lord alone!”⁸ It was the principle that no other gods beside him were to be worshipped.⁹ Later, the followers of Jesus would echo this same uncompromising monotheism: There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism.¹⁰

However, soon the Christian church came to understand that the biblical evidence indicates that God’s unity must somehow be understood in terms of a differentiated plurality. The Christian church wrestled with this mystery, and over time developed the doctrine of the Trinity as the best possible human formula to describe the deep mystery that God is one essence in three persons. But whatever words we use, and whether we speak, for instance, of an ontological or an economic trinity, we will have to do justice

to the oneness of God on the one hand, and to the diversity within that oneness, on the other.¹¹

The infinite distance between God and man makes it impossible for us to have a full comprehension of who and what God is and to speak about him in adequate terms. To get a glimpse of God, we must depend on divine revelation—in the person of Jesus Christ, the *living Word*, and in the *written Word*. The information we receive about God through the written Word comes to us in a multitude of images and metaphors. The names that are given to God and the metaphors that describe aspects of his nature demonstrate a diversity of aspects that allows us to much better appreciate his greatness, his infinite power and love, than any one single human term could ever do. The fact that some of these metaphors carry male, and others female, connotations, reiterates this even further.¹²

The diversity of man

God's creation gives evidence of an astounding diversity. In a special way, this diversity is reflected in us, human beings, who constitute the crown of God's creation.¹³ This diversity is, of course, seen in our outward appearance—in the fact that the shape of our body and of our face ensures that we can be recognized as unique individuals among thousands of other people.

Surely the biblical view of man is holistic, or monistic. The human being is a unity of body and spirit. She cannot be separated into a temporary material shell and an eternal nonmaterial element. She is a "soul."¹⁴ Yet, the human being is characterized by a fundamental diversity that goes beyond the color of the eyes or the shape of the nose. There is, most notably, the fundamental difference of gender. Male and female God created man.¹⁵ This fundamental diversity is God's wonderful gift to humankind. It was not a divine afterthought. "God created the bipolarity of the sexes from the beginning."¹⁶ The diversity is further highlighted by the fact that the individual human being is not complete without being part of a family. He/she exists in relationships and needs a community, where the individual differences complement each other.

The diversity in the living Word

When sin entered the world, the plan of salvation was ready. From eternity, the divine Son of God was prepared to become the Savior.¹⁷ God became man. The second person of the Godhead miraculously integrated a divine and a human nature in his one person. No more baffling demonstration of glorious diversity can be imagined. The eternally preexisting God emptied himself¹⁸ and became fully man, even to the extent of experiencing death. And yet, he remained fully God. As the church formulated it at Nicea: Christ was "of one substance with the Father."¹⁹ The Chalcedonian fathers affirmed that he was and remained "the one Lord Jesus Christ. . . . true God from true God."²⁰ Yet, at the same time, while being "very God," he was and is "very man."

Christians, it was concluded, were to confess Christ as fully divine and fully human, to be acknowledged in two natures, "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation."²¹ Other church councils further elaborated upon, and refined, these formulas that attempted to describe the indescribable: the miraculous diversity in Christ that is the ground for our salvation.

The diversity in the origin of the written Word

The diverse character of God's revelation is also very clearly discernible in the Bible. The sacred Scriptures consist of a number of very different documents, divinely inspired, but reduced to human language by a highly diverse group of people. Although there is a marvelous harmony in God's written Word with regard to the main themes and its overall message, there is no denying that the writings that make up the biblical canon demonstrate a wide variety of literary approaches and manifest conspicuous differences in literary ability on the part of the authors. Adventists have long recognized this. Ellen G. White left us in no doubt about her position in this matter, as we can read in her well-known statement in *Selected Messages*, vol. 1. I quote a few significant phrases:

**Early
Adventism
was far
more diverse
than many
Adventists
today realize
or would be
comfortable
with.**

The writers of the Bible had to express their ideas in human language. It was written by human men. . . . The Scriptures were given to men, not in a continuous chain of unbroken utterances, but piece by piece, through successive generations. . . .

There is not always perfect order or apparent unity in the Scriptures. . . . God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen. Look at the different writers [emphasis added].²²

It seems worthwhile to quote one more paragraph from this book. It should be noted that the editors have appropriately put "Unity in Diversity" as a heading above this paragraph:

There is a variety in a tree, there are scarcely two leaves just alike. Yet this variety adds to the perfection of the tree as a whole.

In our Bible, we might ask, Why need Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the Gospels, why need the Acts of the Apostles, and the variety of the writers in the Epistles, go over the same thing?

The Lord gave His word in just the way He wanted it to come. He gave it through different writers, each having his own individuality, though going over the same history. Their testimonies are brought together in one Book and are like the testimonies in a social meeting. They do not represent things in just the same style. Each has an experience of his own, and this diversity deepens and broadens the knowledge that is brought out to meet the necessities of varied minds. The thoughts expressed have not a set uniformity, as if cast in an iron mold, making the very bearing monotonous. In such uniformity there would be a loss of grace and distinctive beauty.²³

When I was reading the words of Ellen White about the diversity in the gospel stories, I remembered how, during my early experience in theological studies, my teachers tended to downplay this element of diversity. During the academic years 1963–1964, one professor at Newbold College ordered us to cut up two Bibles and glue a "harmony of the gospels" together. This activity was to convince us that all gospel stories fit beautifully into one single time line. But a year or so later, Sakae Kubo, then my teacher in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, in fact made sure that his students would appreciate the diversity of the New Testament, both in writing style and content.

The diverse content of the written Word

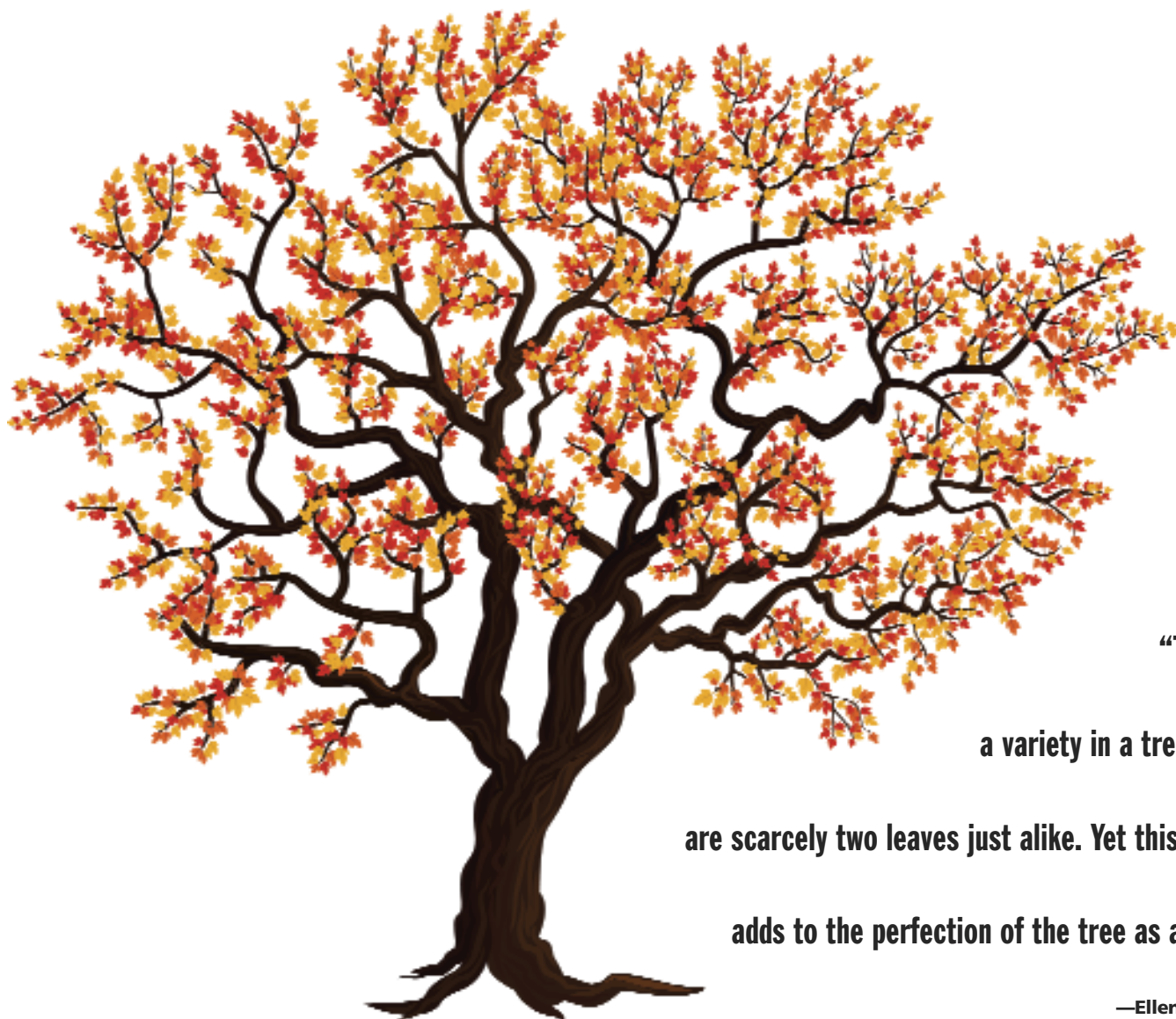
Both the Old Testament and the New Testament exhibit great diversity in the subject matter they present, but also in the theologies of the different writers. How one regards

this *theological* diversity does, of course, depend to a large extent on one's position regarding the origin of the various books of the Bible and their relationships. The person who accepts most of the ideas of the higher critical approach to the Scriptures, and emphasizes the value and findings of redaction criticism, will more readily acknowledge and emphasize the theological diversity in the Old and in the New Testament than the person who continues to support the traditional views regarding matters of authorship, and who tends to doubt the existence of different sources and different strands of material in what has traditionally been ascribed to a single author.

It would go beyond the scope of this short article (and beyond my expertise) to deal with this in any depth. But it would seem fair to *at least* accept that different parts of the Bible often manifest different emphases and that theological developments over time are clearly discernible, in both the Old and in the New Testament. Some might say that John Goldingay, a fairly conservative British Old Testament scholar who presently teaches at Fuller Theological Seminary, goes too far when he refers to " 'the multiplex nature of the Old Testament tradition,' which includes representatives of 'completely divergent 'theologies'' and 'struggling contradictions.' "²⁴ Yet his book on theological diversity in the Old Testament offers a most illuminating and quite convincing survey of this diversity.²⁵

Every Bible reader soon becomes aware of the fact that the New Testament contains four different versions of the story of Jesus. While there are significant differences between the three Synoptics, the difference between these three and the Johannine version is particularly striking. It is quite generally accepted, including among most Adventist scholars, that the Pauline writings, which originated when the gospels were not yet written, offer many theological insights and interpretations that are not readily found in the Gospels.²⁶ The conclusion must be that diversity "is fundamental to the biblical witness."²⁷ The New Testament writings emerged from particular communities and addressed particular, and diverse, situations.²⁸ The "unity of New Testament theology," Frank J. Matera maintains, "is a diverse unity that expresses itself in a multiplicity of ways because no one way can fully capture the mystery that is God in Christ."²⁹

In his book, *The Challenge of Diversity*, Lutheran scholar David Rhoads suggests with regard to the New Testament that



“There is
a variety in a tree, there
are scarcely two leaves just alike. Yet this variety
adds to the perfection of the tree as a whole.”

—Ellen G. White

the later Christians who decided which writings to include in the Christian canon were well aware of the differences among the books they selected. Instead of choosing only those books that agreed with one theology and church order, they chose the writings closest to Jesus in time and influence, and they allowed the pluralism to stand.³⁰

Diversity in the biblical view of atonement

One of the important biblical topics that manifest a wonderful diversity in the ways the various authors grappled with the miracle of grace is the atonement. How can the astonishing fact that God restores the relationship with fallen human beings, through the intervention of his divine/ human Son, be explained?

If anywhere, we here find that the biblical material offers a wide range of perspectives. Among the images the Bible uses, some were inspired by the Old Testament sacrificial system: Christ is the Lamb who is sacrificed. Another image is that of the death of Christ as a ransom that is paid. Some terminology is borrowed from the judicial system, while still other terms are related to the motif of war and victory over the enemy.³¹ The various images help us to understand the process of salvation:

We should remember that they are metaphors rather than exact descriptions of what took place. They are each capable of explaining some facet of truth. . . . The truth of what Christ accomplished for us is far more comprehensive than either their individual and composite suggestions.³²

Through the centuries theologians have developed a range of theories about the atonement (approaches based on substitution, satisfaction, moral influence, etc.), all employing (part of) the available biblical evidence. Just as the biblical metaphors highlight different, but not contradictory, aspects of the atonement, the existence of these diverse theories is a further illustration of the enormous challenge of finding adequate human categories and words for describing the miracle of God's grace.

Diversity in the biblical view of the church and its mission

We find a similar situation when we look at the biblical concept of the church. Paul S. Minear, an eminent American Catholic New Testament scholar, who died in 2007, made a list of almost one hundred different metaphors for the church that can be found in the New Testament.³³ Among the most well known of these are such concepts as the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, God's temple, the people of God, and the priesthood of all believers.³⁴ The body of Christ may be in itself the most powerful illustration of the diversity in the church. There is one body. Christ is the head, but all members have their diverse roles and functions.³⁵

The aspect of diversity is not just found in the metaphors used to characterize the church but is especially prominent in the gifts with which the Spirit of God has equipped the church.³⁶ While the *unity* of these spiritual gifts is stressed—the charismata are all given by one and the same Spirit, and for one and the same purpose—the *diversity* is particularly highlighted. The Spirit does not equip all church members in the same manner but distributes the gifts in a variety of ways, as he sees fit.³⁷

Directly linked to the diversity of the spiritual gifts is the ethnic and cultural diversity of the church and the all-inclusiveness of its mission. This is foreshadowed in the Old Testament, when Abraham receives the promise that in him "*all the nations*" of the earth were to be blessed.³⁸ We discover in the Old Testament many instructions that specifically target the non-Israelites. This shows that God does not limit himself to one people. We see this most distinctly also in the stories that relate to Israel's mission to the world outside its borders, of which the story of Jonah may be the most striking example. The book of Jonah clearly shows God as One who cares deeply about nations other than his special people, Israel.³⁹ It is definitely not God's intention that other nations should cease to exist but that eventually all people,

in all their diversity, should worship him. The covenant concept emphasizes the element of kinship on the one hand but, on the other hand, always underlines that there is a place for the stranger. Moreover, the temple, the center of the JHWH worship, was built as a spiritual home intended for all peoples.⁴⁰ And then: what could better illustrate God's positive attitude toward diversity than the fact that He included non-Israelite women in Christ's ancestry?⁴¹

The all-inclusiveness of the mission of God's people is abundantly clear in the New Testament. Jesus associated with non-Jewish people: with Roman soldiers⁴² as well as a Syrophenician woman⁴³ and a Samaritan woman.⁴⁴ Moreover, the gospel commission makes it clear that God is interested in all nations and all cultures and language groups.⁴⁵ The apostles meet their first mission challenge when they are confronted with the immense cultural and linguistic diversity on the Day of Pentecost, and the Spirit enables them to preach the gospel to as diverse a crowd as they will ever meet.⁴⁶ Soon afterward, deacon Philip witnesses to the Ethiopian eunuch,⁴⁷ and the apostle Peter to the Roman centurion in Caesarea.⁴⁸ It is not long until the church has members who are of Jewish origin but also many who have Greek or other non-Jewish roots, and the church will have to deal with that new reality of diversity.⁴⁹ Paul will have to write about this increasing diversity in several of his letters.⁵⁰

The book of Acts recounts how the gospel spreads into the world of antiquity. It is the beginning of the realization of God's plan, which will ultimately find its complete fulfillment when a diverse multitude, coming "from every nation, tribe, people and language,"⁵¹ stands before the throne of God, and when "the nations will walk by the light of the Lamb," and the kings of the earth will bring "their splendor" into the new Jerusalem.⁵²

Diversity: a biblical paradigm

It is important to emphasize the unity of the body of Christ. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has made this a constant priority, and rightly so. But let us remember: The oneness of the flock is in the fact that we have one shepherd, not in the fact that all sheep are clones. We are a diverse people. This is not just a reality to be tolerated but rather a fact that we should celebrate. This does also imply that, because of our diversity in culture, history, language, tradition, etc., we may also have a diversity in theologies. We cannot avoid the question: Is theological diversity an asset

or a threat? I tried to answer that question in a recent article in *Ministry* magazine.⁵³ I argued that theological diversity should not be perceived as a threat but rather as an asset, if some clear parameters are established.

In concluding, I want to offer a suggestion that, I believe, emerges from what we discussed above. If God decided that he needed to use a great diversity of methods, images, and metaphors; if he felt that he needed diverse people with diverse skills and diverse backgrounds to put his Truth into human words; and if we discover in our reading of the Bible how comfortable our God is with diversity, does that not inevitably lead to the idea that even in our days—yes, in our own faith community—we must welcome a diversity of approaches and perspectives in our study of the Scriptures, in order to help us to grow in our understanding of what God wants us to know about him and what he wants us to communicate about him to others? After all, even though we can gratefully build on the work of the inspired authors of the Bible, we are still faced with the humanly impossible challenge of trying to put God's truth into human thoughts and words in such a way that it can be understood by, and be relevant for, contemporary people. Would it not be in line with the biblical paradigm of diversity to enthusiastically welcome a diversity of perspectives amongst us? Should we not realize that we need each other in our communal attempt to reach ever further into the depths of God's revelation?

The words of Loma Linda University theologian Richard Rice are well worth quoting:

*A great natural wonder like the Grand Canyon or the Himalayas invites us to look at it from many vantage points. It never ceases to impress us, and no one perspective captures its grandeur. To a far greater degree, Christ's accomplishments defy our powers of description.*⁵⁴

Is John Franke, an American professor in missional and biblical theology, not at least partly correct when he suggests that we cannot bear witness to the truth alone: "No single individual, no single church, no single culture or tradition" is able to do that. "We need each other."⁵⁵ By quoting this, I do not want to imply that the Adventist voice must cease to claim uniqueness, or that the Adventist tradition should not carefully protect its precious heritage. But I would challenge us to always admit our human limitations, and to continue to pursue our pilgrimage on the path of Truth

together. In our diversity we can complement each other. We must realize that all our speaking of God and of what he does always remains approximate. We never have the last and final word. We always proclaim the truth as far as we can grasp it. It would therefore seem that we follow a biblical paradigm if we decide to let the plethora of ideas that arise from our diverse scholarly community help us to arrive at a fuller picture.

I conclude with a quote from Ellen G. White that specifically refers to the Bible authors but does seem to have a wider application:

*The creator of all ideas may impress different minds with the same thought, but each may express it in a different way, yet without contradiction. The fact that this difference exists should not perplex or confuse us. It is seldom that two persons will view and express truth in the very same way. Each dwells on particular points which his constitution and education have fitted him to appreciate. The sunlight falling on these different objects give those objects a different hue.*⁵⁶ ■

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a long career in pastoral, editorial, teaching, and church leadership assignments in Europe, the United States, and West Africa. After receiving a bachelor's degree from Newbold College and a master's degree from Andrews University, he earned a bachelor of divinity

with honors and a doctorate in church history from the University of London. He recently interrupted his retirement to serve as the president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Belgium and Luxemburg. He has authored more than twenty books, in Dutch and English, and a large number of articles. He has also translated various theological books from Dutch into English.

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Growing Up ADVENTIST



Rachel Logan with her favorite little French boy from Sabbath school class in Collonges, France, who called her "Mademoiselle."



Sterling Spence on Wolfe Atoll in the Marshall Islands.



Sterling Spence helping with the rigging on the crossing from San Francisco to Honolulu.



Rachel Logan clowning around at Leoni Meadow's Summer Camp...otherwise known as the best job ever.

**We were
born Adventist;
what does
that make us
now?**

San Francisco Bay Blues: *Growing Up in Missional Adventism* | BY STERLING SPENCE

School and church taught me two contradictory views: think for yourself, and believe like us.

My parents were sailors, both licensed US Merchant Marine masters. They sailed by the stars without a GPS device and lived on a thirty-foot trimaran. In the 1970s, the two had fled out of the Golden Gate on the San Francisco winds, leaving behind the counter-culture of the sixties and the celebration of that

father had visions of the Bible, a book he hadn't read, opening in front of him, and a small voice urging him to look in the Gospels for answers. The two of them finally found what they were looking for in Australia from an Adventist pastor. They were baptized into the church and born to a new calling. They sold their boat and returned to the San Francisco Bay to birth me, and also a



Snorkeling with my dad on the outer island of Onoun in Chuuk State.

medical mission called Canvasback.

In one generation, my family went from being wild sea rats to raising me, a dyed-in-the-wool little Adventist boy.

I went to school at a K-12 Adventist academy; at ten years old (the age of enlightenment), I was dunked in the tepid water of our church's baptistry;

renaissance dancing around the funeral of the church. They were looking for God, but not the Christian God of stuffy America. They wanted answers for a new world, and so, for seven years, they went searching across the ocean.

During that time, they experienced the kind of miracles only found in the wilderness. They were caught in a hurricane and blown across the sea for twenty-three days. A little bird became an answer to prayer after it showed them the way home. My

and at sixteen I became a Pathfinder Master Guide. I suppose that makes me about as Adventist as you can get.

I wasn't converted by some Revelation crusade. I didn't choose my church. It was given to me as a gift, just like my identity as a San Francisco Bay Californian. That meant there was an unavoidable culture clash. San Francisco started the conversations of marriage equality and women's rights long before Adventism was even

ready to admit that there was such a thing as a gay man. This distance between contemporary and religious culture means that I, like many in my generation and in generations before, started wondering, from early on, whether or not I belong in this church. We were born Adventist; what does that make us now?

As far as I was concerned while growing up, all that Adventism had done for my parents was to make them boring. In their wedding photo, they were dressed in flowers, my dad has a shaggy beard, and my mother's hair reaches down to mid-thigh. It's a classic summer-of-love shot. Then Adventism hit, and the next thing you knew, my mom's hair was bobbed above her shoulders and she was dressed in an unholy dress-suit but-

toned up to the throat. Instead of sailing the open seas, they moved ashore and spent their days in an office building. They worked late and, in order to promote the mission, spent a lot of weekends traveling to churches.

Each Saturday I would be sitting in a foreign Sabbath School clutching a familiar *Primary Treasure*, hoping to make some single-Sabbath friends. It wasn't a lonely thing; I actually met people quite easily. We Adventists sure do love a good mission story, and my parents had plenty to tell. Canvasback sailed doctors out to remote islands in the Pacific, so there was always some adventure of running from storms or herding seasick doctors aboard to rush off to save lives. The best part for me was that I got to go along, and

then I could tell the stories. My head was filled with adventures.

During the school year, my folks would take me out of classes for a month at a time. I'd squeeze in workbook lessons between free-

diving and running around with kids in loin-cloths. I learned to gamble by playing rock-paper-scissors with little shells and bits of coral. And it was in this context of church and island that I was taught my faith.

Surrounded by conservative donors and thrill-seeking doctors, I learned the tenets of Sabbath keeping, pork avoidance, and the overarching demand to convert. I was taught "Missional Adventism," a version intent on proving its uniqueness. It placed huge importance on inter-

ventionist prayer because it came from situations where there was nothing we could do—like when the ship was out of water and all that was left to do was to pray for rain. It sought a personal God because service in a foreign culture can be very lonely work. Most of all, it found the great spiritual journey as the most important task of existence.

Whenever I returned home and the boredom of suburban life set in, I could turn to the adventure of my spiritual journey to feel as though I was doing something significant. Youth pastors and rallies used this adventure to market faith. We were told that it was supposed to be so exciting and important that we would ignore our raging hormones and deny the allure of the big



My mom cut off her long hair when she became a missionary. Our hairstyles match.

In one generation, my family went from being wild sea rats to raising me, a dyed-in-the-wool little Adventist boy.

The religion I had been taught was about another world outside of this one, a spiritual plane that could be tapped into with prayer and Bible study.

city. Just like most teenagers I knew, I found that it only half worked. I struggled with the confines of the church.

Northern California Adventism isn't the Bible Belt, but it also isn't a base of radical creativity and questioning. The school and church taught me two contradictory views: think for yourself, and believe like us. As they tried to be progressive, the stifling tendencies hung as heavy as the combined weight of all the post-mortem publications of Ellen G. White writings. We academy kids were never sure where the boundaries were, but like good Adventists we only half-heartedly acted out, as if we were asking permission to rebel.

As I entered high school and started the questioning stage, I found that, despite growing up in this version of Christianity, it just wasn't how I experienced religion. I didn't hear God's voice, I didn't see the links people tried to point out between prayers and changes in the world, and

band, they came to our shows, which was excruciatingly embarrassing, but in hindsight, showed their support. So here's what confused me: the doors were open for me to walk away from the church. I didn't like Adventism. I would have told you I wanted out. But I didn't leave. I stayed in Pathfinders. I went on mission trips with my high school where I knew our humanitarian work only thinly disguised the motivation of baptizing teenagers. I played in the praise bands, and when the time came and I could have chosen any kind of school, I went to La Sierra University because it just felt right to stay Adventist.

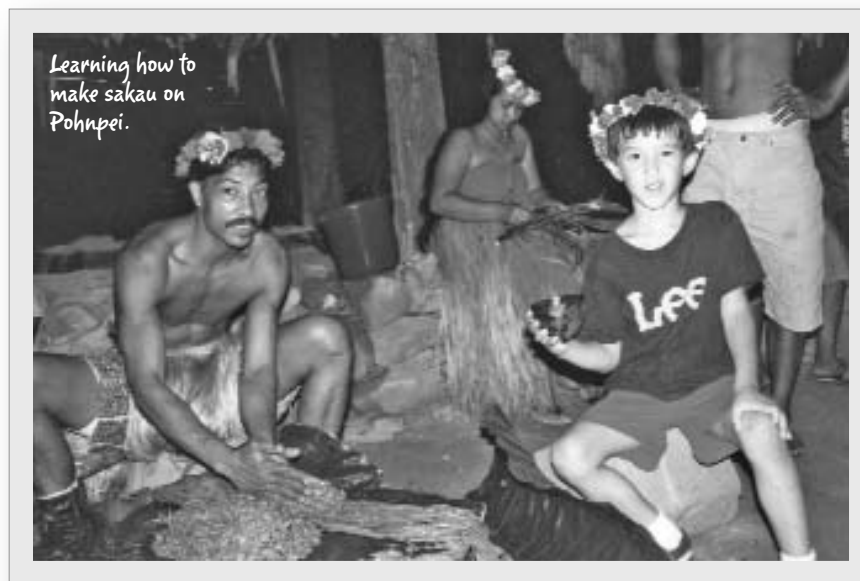
The problems I was running up against in my religion were rooted in my early experiences aboard the Canvasback ship. As much as we were a band of evangelist missionaries, we also offered something more desperately needed. When the ship docked in the transparent waters of the Micronesian lagoons and women came

out to the beach holding their babies, they weren't waiting for Bibles. Those islands had a 50-percent child mortality rate. They wanted help with the here and now.

I remember watching from the deck one day as my father came running full speed across the beach, his white Canvas-

back trucker hat flying off into the waves. A baby had been brought into the clinic near death, and we had supplies aboard that the doctors needed immediately. My dad was in his sixties then. We used to play baseball in the backyard, and he would only jog-walk around the bases. I'd never seen him run.

The image of him sprinting across the coral stuck with me through high school and cement-



I couldn't look at the people I met in the islands and believe that my worldview was better than theirs. I found myself a missionary kid who was unable to relate to the worldview of missionaries and, in a more general sense, the worldview of Adventism.

My parents weren't the over-sheltering type. They didn't cry if I decided not to go to church or to pierce an ear. When I started a punk rock

ed in my mind that the physical work we did was urgent. Though I had heard that the end times were upon us, we didn't run like that to church. The religion I had been taught was about another world outside of this one, a spiritual plane that could be tapped into with prayer and Bible study. I was starting to struggle with that vision. The world I saw was a tangible realm of poverty and sickness, and in the Gospels I was seeing a narrative of a God who entered into that reality and worked in the dirt.

I entered university fully hoping to lose the rest of my faith. I spent five years at La Sierra, one of which was as a student missionary in Micronesia. I was introduced to a political theology, one that was rooted in community involvement and liberation. The rat-infested basement of La Sierra Hall, where the offices of the great minds of Adventist theology were relegated, started to feel almost sacred. They turned me around. The academic culture I found was one where disagreement was all right. Adventism was less about conforming to a set of beliefs and more about a culture. We could discuss Adventism as liberating and hands-on while knowing full well that it wasn't those things in most churches. We could be Adventist and not agree with the General Conference. In fact, we could be Adventist and not agree with the pastor at our pulpit or even with each other. I was given an understanding of why I hadn't been able or willing to leave the church and a working answer for where I belonged.

For those of us who are born into our religion, it isn't just something voluntary; we don't choose to be Adventists. It is as much a part of us as our last name. Walking away wouldn't be like changing clubs; it would be like leaving a family, and in some ways, that's something you just can't do. My last name is Spence, and to be a Spence means that I grew up in a family that sailed across the ocean. It means that my Saturdays were spent in a church pew. It means that when I look at the world around me, I find that service is more important than doing whatever makes me happy. I might find that I relate to another

family more, or I might really dislike a cousin, but that doesn't mean I'm not a Spence. I can change my name and never talk to my relatives again, but that history will always be mine.

I see my discomfort and disagreement with Adventism in the same way. My thoughts are born and bred by Adventism. My disagreements



Canvasback Missions used to invite folks to view the boat for fundraising. I had to get dressed up for this one on the Sacramento River.

with religion are disagreements with Christianity as I perceive it, filtered through Adventist lenses. I was born to this; it made me who I am, and so I am an Adventist.

For an increasing number of us, staying or leaving isn't what makes us SDA. The cultural and political wars of the church will rage on. We will be proud some days and incredibly disappointed on others. Still, this can't take away our identity. Being Adventist is our birthright. So for me, I'm here for the long haul, and I suppose that's all right with me. ■

Sterling Spence graduated from La Sierra University with a



double major in management and religious studies. He now works at Canvasback Missions and is completing an MA program at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California.

**I didn't like
Adventism.

I would
have told
you I
wanted
out. But
I didn't
leave.**

My Partying Problem | BY RACHEL LOGAN

At first

I was dumb-

founded,

and then

I began

to cry.

Growing up Adventist has taught me several things for certain: Special K Loaf always tastes better reheated, summer camp is the best place in the world, and swimming on the Sabbath is expressly forbidden. When I think of my childhood as a fifth-generation Adventist, I remember rules—lots and lots of rules. Don't laugh in church. Don't clap after

only a year after my baptism, that church people were the sternest people I knew.

As I grew older and entered Adventist academy, I remember learning more about the Adventist politics that circulated through our church: women were trying to become ordained ministers. Because I had never desired to be a minister, the subject didn't interest me much, but I did think it was interesting that I learned about women's suffrage in history class and heard about women's oppression in religion class.

By the time I arrived at Walla Walla University, I was almost completely disassociated from Adventism. I couldn't wait to be graduated from university so I could shake my religion entirely and all the rules I felt it imposed on me. I didn't have visions of rebellion. I didn't want to go out and party, have premarital sex, or shack up with an atheist. But I longed for the day I could live without worrying about the judgment of Adventists. In my experience, the more religious the Adventist, the more judgmental they were. The welcome arms of the church seemed only open to those who behaved. Everybody else could stand outside until they realized the error of their ways.



that song. Don't disagree with Ellen White.

I remember hushed conversations between my parents about church members who switched to another church because of heated board meetings revolving around church carpet colors and drums during song service. I remember wondering why it mattered, and what it had to do with God. I remember thinking, at the age of ten,

The intervention

During my sophomore year of college, a man from the church approached me to conduct an intervention. He spoke to me kindly, asking how I was doing, and we made small talk for a minute or two. Then, cautiously, he shifted into the real reason for our meeting: my apparent partying problem.

He assured me that he didn't judge me, but that he had heard about my rampant party lifestyle at Walla Walla University. Drugs, alcohol—everybody was talking about it.

At first I was dumbfounded, and then I began to cry. Not from relief that somebody could help me, but from anger and confusion. Everybody had been talking about me? I felt betrayed. Who had been talking about me? And why was this man, a man I barely knew, the only one to show enough concern to actually ask me about the issue?

Shaking, I said, "But I have *never* even had sip of alcohol or done one drug!"

I couldn't believe that this conversation was even happening. Despite my struggles with Adventism, I always prided myself on my choices. Sure, I drank coffee, but I never smoked marijuana or slept around. I didn't drink alcohol or do drugs. I had no idea where any of this was coming from.

The man didn't look convinced, so he continued: "I've been approached several times, and your name is always on the list of young women who lead a partying lifestyle."

I couldn't believe it. Not only had there been rumors circling about me that held no merit of truth, but there was an entire list of sinners being analyzed.

"Who told you this?" I asked.

He wouldn't tell me, but, alarmed by my tears, he began to backtrack. "Many different people have said . . ."

I felt cornered and attacked. I kept replaying in my mind what he had said. Everybody had been talking about me, spreading rumors and assuming the worst. I wondered how long these stories had been circulating in the church and why no one had thought to ask me about it before.

"Well, I swear on the Bible that I haven't!" I had never sworn on the Bible before, and I knew that I wasn't supposed to do it so rashly, but I was caught off guard. I wanted to clear my name, but I wasn't sure how, when I hadn't even done what I had been accused of.

He looked shocked, but I could see on his face that he believed me. He even looked sorry to have brought it up at all. "Well, if you haven't been doing those things, these stories must have come from the company you keep. Your reputation is probably being marred by those you choose to spend your time with."



"So what should I do?" I asked. "Not hang out with people that drink or smoke?"

"Well, maybe," he said. "Your reputation is on the line. People are associating you with that lifestyle."

"So let them!"

I thought back on my life at Walla Walla University and tried to envision the list of girls he had been told were partiers. Maybe he had some names right, but I doubted he had gotten them all correct. Suddenly, I became furious, not just for myself, but for every person on that list—the girls who were on there correctly, and the girls who weren't.

The words began to flow off my tongue, channeling fourteen years of Adventist education and biblical studies. "I won't stop being a friend to someone just because they've decided to drink or do drugs." There was no point in denying that I knew the people he was referring

**I remember
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at the age
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knew.**

to. "I was friends with them long before they did drugs, and I'll be friends with them when they are done. I'd rather be the person they call for a ride when they're drunk than the pastor who is called when they are dead from drunk driving and is needed by the family to offer grief support. Jesus hung out with the prostitutes and the thieves. He didn't care about His reputation."

It was a dramatic speech, not well formed or eloquent, but it epitomized my experience with the church, one of judgment and politics. I felt the hot burn of accusation from all those who had been whispering about me. I was hurt by their words and by their lack of support. If this was the church, I wanted nothing to do with it.

At the time, it seemed like the church only wanted those who were "perfect Adventists." But I was confused: if this is how I felt, a seemingly "good Adventist," I could only imagine how

who are doing their best to follow Christ's example. The problem comes when we get so caught up in trying to fix people that we forget to stop and ask them if they even want fixing, or if we are addressing the right problems. Back when I was nineteen years old and confronted about my "partying problem," the church gentleman was all fired up and ready to fix that issue. At the time, though, I wasn't struggling with substance abuse but with loneliness and a lack of direction.

Jesus performed many miracles of healing in the Bible. He healed the blind, the paralyzed, and the demon possessed. When the sick came to Jesus, He didn't sit them down in a prayer group or have them memorize the ten commands. He *healed* them. By meeting people's needs, Jesus inspired faith and love within them more than any Bible study ever could. Likewise, when people come to our church, we need to stop diagnosing their problems for them, and instead, let them tell us what their needs are. If a woman comes to church pregnant and unwed, she doesn't need to be whispered about or shunned. Maybe she needs education about healthy eating for her and her baby. Maybe she is worried about finding babysitters for when she has to go back to work. We need to stop judging people, making lists of all that they have done wrong, and instead start loving them as Christ would.

We also need to stop pushing our own personal agendas and instead start asking what our communities and churches need. It is hard to focus on spirituality when you have emotional and physical needs that are not being met. We get so caught up in tradition and legalities that we lose sight of the end goal, which is to bring people to Christ through love.

A few weeks ago, I met up with one of my childhood friends from elementary and academy days. While catching up and discussing the future, she mentioned that she planned on raising her children as Adventists. I was surprised. When I was attending Walla Walla University she had been pursuing her dreams at a public university in California. After she

**"Your reputation
is probably
being marred
by those
you choose
to spend your
time with."**



someone with real problems felt trying to live within our community.

Since then, I have a little more perspective on the church. I realize that in my heart I still believe what the Seventh-day Adventist Church stands for. I believe in the second coming of Christ. I believe in the ten commands. I believe in the state of the dead and the health message. The things I find issue on in the church have evolved from sinful human nature.

I believe that the church is full of good people

had been out of the Adventist bubble for the past four years, I was curious at her motives for coming back. Wouldn't that be difficult?

"You know, it's funny, I never thought I'd come back," she told me. "But after being at a public university, I realized all the wonderful things about Adventism that I didn't recognize before.

"Adventists have created a community. Yeah, we're nosy, and sometimes pushy, but we're a family. You and I have been friends since we were six. At university, some girls don't have friends for more than a couple years. And that's common. These girls have never been in love, or even know what love is. At the end of the day, Adventists care about each other. We take care of our own."

After we finished our meal and went our separate ways, her words stuck with me. She was absolutely right; one of the most beautiful things about Adventism is the sense of connectivity that you feel a part of. No matter where you go, if you run into an Adventist you find that have at least one friend in common. How many times had an Adventist offered me shelter when I was in a foreign city? Or fed me potluck when I was visiting a new church? How many times had my church rallied together when tragedy struck?

When Jesus walked this earth, he gathered disciples. He didn't mean for us to be alone but to have community and fellowship. During vesper at Walla Walla University I heard one speaker say: "Don't let our churches sit stagnant, steeped in tradition and rigidity. Let us constantly be evolving to meet the needs of our members and our communities. We should be able to go into any community where our churches are located, and be able to ask any stranger about the local Seventh-day Adventist church. If he or she doesn't know of us, or feel our positive impact in the community, we're not working hard enough. Every person in a thirty-mile radius should feel our presence and love."

After our conversation about partying, I never thought I would speak to that man from

the church again. Why would I? I associated him with the judgment of others who were too afraid to come forward and speak to me themselves. I didn't see him as the only person who cared enough to try to help, as I do now. Years later, I consider him a dear friend, one who has stuck by me, and those who are



important to me, in many times of hardship. In him I see Christ and the community that he represents, and it is a community that I want to be a part of. ■

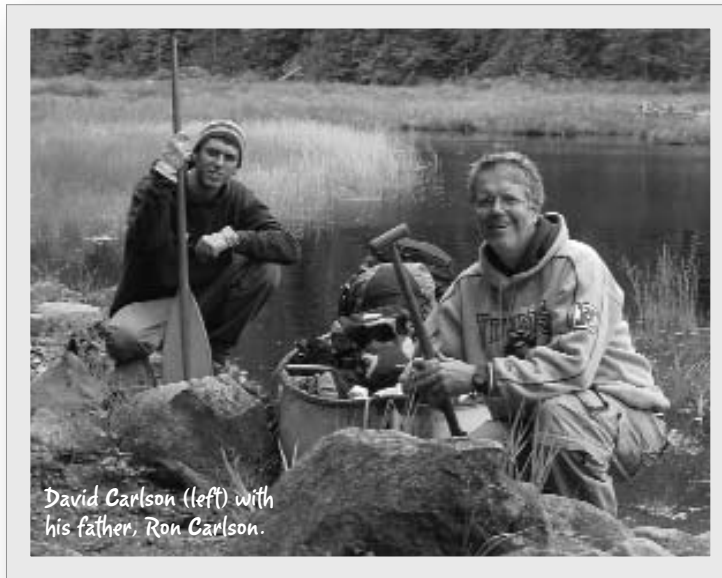
Rachel Logan is a 2014 graduate of Walla Walla University, where she studied creative writing. While living on campus, she was a page editor for the campus newspaper, *The Collegian*. She now lives in Sacramento, where she is interning at *Spectrum* magazine. During her free time she loves to travel the world and learn about other cultures.



One of
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I'm a Pastor and My Son Is Gay | BY RON CARLSON

**“Trust Me.
Love him.
Don’t push
him away.”**



That was the beginning of my special journey with David thirteen years ago. I quickly called reliable friends and family for advice. Soon I discovered organizations and counselors familiar with same-sex attraction and reached out to them. David, a sincere Adventist Christian, was willing to do anything to understand and deal with his unwelcome feelings.

Yet the stress took a toll. Later in the summer, for no discernible medical reason, his back went into spasms so he could barely

The phone rang on a warm Sunday afternoon. My seventeen-year-old son David was on the other end. He was working at our summer youth camp between his junior and senior years of academy. I could tell he was not calling simply to say hello. After a few minutes of small talk, his voice broke a bit.

“Dad, I have a crush on a guy, and I don’t know what to do.” I knew I had heard him correctly but wasn’t sure how to respond.

“Tell me about it,” I said, sending up silent prayers. I lay on my back in the grass of our backyard, listening to his description of fears and confusion about feelings he could not deny. We talked for more than an hour. During that time, amidst all of my own fears and confusion, I heard my answer from God. It was: “Trust Me. Love him. Don’t push him away.”

walk. Today we believe it was a result of the extreme emotional stress he was experiencing.

David and I talked regularly, sharing deeply. When school began, we had arranged for him to begin phone sessions with a therapist on the West Coast who claimed to eliminate same-sex attractions. The academy chaplain was made aware of David’s situation and acted with grace and professionalism.

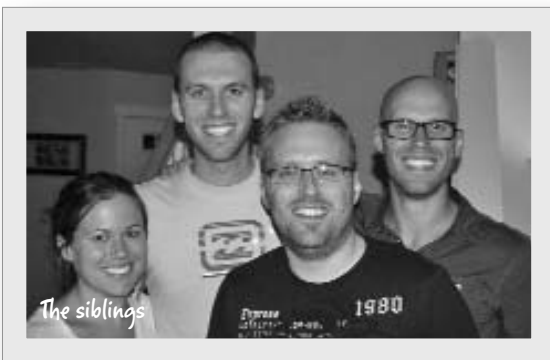
He stayed involved in academy life, participating in gymnastics, choir, drama groups, and worships. His religious life remained open and authentic. He became a leader in the dorm and school, was elected student body president, and graduated with honors. He even had a girlfriend, so I breathed some prayers of thanksgiving. I didn’t try to dig into what his counselor told him, yet I was always willing to listen whenever he wanted to talk.

College journeys

David was impressed by the therapists working with him, so at Union College he majored in psychology. He became an advocate for marginalized people, demonstrating a passion to help the hurting and those feeling cornered by their circumstances. As a student leader he brought in speakers to address relevant issues such as pornography, eating disorders, and self-esteem. He became known on campus for his love for people as well as his faith in God. He dated a couple of very nice Christian girls at different times, but neither worked out.

By then he had attended several retreats designed to help him connect with his manhood. I attended a weekend retreat in the woods of northern Minnesota with him. When he came home from one of the retreats, I sensed he wanted to tell me something. His face glowed and his body vibrated with excitement.

"Dad, I'm not gay!" he exclaimed. We embraced, and neither of us could hold back the tears. He told me he had discovered that he needed more male companionship than most guys did and that maintaining regular physical contact with guys was critical. It was an emo-



tional moment. Maybe for the first time we both realized the level of fear and tension we had been carrying.

During these years David and I made our annual summer trips to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness on the Minnesota-Canada border. The hard work, days in the wilderness, gorgeous scenery, and poor attempts at fishing proved priceless. In the evening as we lay side by

side in our little tent, after reviewing the day and making certain everything was prepared for any unexpected night storm, we prayed. I was humbled to hear his sincere and specific prayers for his friends, many facing tough times and some making poor decisions. He was my son. I was proud of him, and I loved him deeply. Still, I knew he was still in an emotional wilderness himself, with more questions than answers.

College life for David went quickly. His brothers were graduating and getting married, both entering careers in pastoral ministry. His sister was one year behind him, preparing to be an elementary teacher. Faculty and staff would often stop my wife and me on campus to tell us what an amazing guy David was and extol his faith and leadership. Some knew about his journey of sexual orientation, others did not.

Yet five years into this, in spite of therapy, retreats, prayers, and the loving, unconditional support of his family and friends, David was still attracted to men. David told me he pleaded with tears in his private prayer times that God would heal him of this curse and cause him to be attracted to women. Only as I began to realize that his attraction to men was just as powerful and involuntary as mine was for women could I even slightly enter his reality.

"What would you think?"

One day after some awkward silence in the car, David asked, "Dad, what would you think if I were to try dating guys?" I was learning not to react. I asked a few questions, trying to buy time and waiting for God to give me that "fix-all" answer. No easy answer appeared. The only answer I seemed to hear from heaven was the one I had heard lying in my backyard several years before: "Trust Me. Love him. Don't push him away." So we talked. We confirmed God's love, grace, and care for us. I confessed my fear and confusion. Yet, I trusted God and I trusted David's walk with Him. No conclusions were reached.

I expected him to begin dating guys, but he didn't. College degree in hand, David determined to expand his ability to serve people by learning

David
became known
on campus
for his love
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well as his
faith in God.

Spanish. He enrolled for a summer session at our Adventist college in Spain and then a full school year at our Adventist college in Argentina. His year overseas seemed good for him. Through letters and Skype he told us about his new friends, his experiences, his plans for his future. He believed God was calling him to get a master's degree in counseling. He wanted to earn his degree from a highly respected school, yet one that taught from a Christian perspective. When David received his letter of acceptance from George Fox University in Portland, Oregon, he sensed God was confirming his dreams for his future. David knew that God had never left him.

We will never forget the day we pulled away from his new apartment near Portland, seeing a few tears in his eyes as tears ran down our cheeks. Our son, now twenty-three, would have to deal with the reality of who he was without the support of Adventist schools, friends, family, and everything familiar. Eventually, all of us have to face ourselves. David made good Christian friends, both male and female, at GFU. He excelled in school, attended an Adventist church,



and explored the beauty of the Pacific Northwest.

Yet a deep loneliness haunted him. David reached out to a male friend he'd made at some of the retreats he'd attended, and this friend visited David in Portland. While there, their relationship moved past a platonic friendship, and this left David feeling very unsettled, especially because his friend had a wife. David witnessed a life divided between what society expected and his actual attractions. It was a vivid example of what it meant to be in denial of one's sexual ori-



entation. David believed in a God of health, wholeness, and honesty and wanted to live an authentic Christian life rather than a life of pretending. He did not want to be gay but couldn't deny that there was no change in his sexual attraction after years of doing everything possible to change it. Feeling trapped, for the first and only time in his life he considered suicide. He saw no hope in his future. Late one night in the middle of a panic attack, David phoned us—life was caving in on him. Our own panic, 1,800 miles away from our son in distress, was killing us too. We were able to reach two of his close friends, who went to his aid and helped him through the darkness.

Because most of us have "normal" sexual attractions, where guys like girls and girls like guys, we rarely realize how much our sexuality defines us. In spite of years of therapy, love, prayers, and understanding, David still did not know who he really was. As a result of recent painful discoveries, he believed that he couldn't stay true to the God he loved while living in denial of who he was. David prayerfully and deliberately chose to begin mixing with other gays. Again I heard God's voice: "Trust Me. Love him. Don't push him away."

A few weeks later, David let me know that he had an upcoming date with a guy. A friend had set them up, and they were meeting for dinner. We talked. We prayed. Repeatedly on the day of David's date, his mother and I prayed. We had learned by then that the only request we could feel confident with was to ask God to speak to David's honest, God-loving heart and lead him. David called the next day to tell us that his date never showed up.

**His face
glowed and
his body
vibrated with
excitement.
"Dad, I'm
not gay!"
he exclaimed.**

David realized quickly that, just like straight people, gays are kind and cruel, trustworthy and corrupt, morally strong and decadent, people of faith and agnostics. This was a precarious road.

His oldest brother, Jeff, had finished studying at the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary and was assigned to a church in Auburn, Washington, just a few hours north of where David lived. Jeff and his wife, Mary Ellen, are both wise and deeply compassionate people, and they provided a safe haven for David. Occasionally, David would make the trek north for the weekend and worship with them on Sabbath.

David heard about a gay Christian network and a special weekend in Portland that year, where gay Christians come together for inspiration, safe worship, and fellowship. When he told us he would be going there, we prayed our prayer of trust in God's unchanging love for David, confidence in David's faith-filled heart, and that the combination of those two would be enough for us.

The next thing we heard was about Colin. He was a wonderful Christian young man from Vancouver, British Columbia. David met Colin at the event, they were both blessed by it, and they decided to stay in touch. We prayed some more. Several months later, David asked if he could bring Colin home for Christmas to meet the entire family.

Jeff and Mary Ellen had already met Colin several times and agreed with David that he was an extremely nice guy, a deeply committed Christian gay man. Like David, Colin was raised in a loving home where Jesus was honored and faith was welcome. His story of teenage confusion and pain closely mirrored David's.

One change

All of our children came home to Topeka for Christmas 2010 with spouses and babies, to open gifts, eat, sing, pray, laugh, play games—and to meet Colin. This was new territory for all of us. Everyone was committed to allowing God to lead while enjoying the holidays. There were even a few “gay” jokes, as only Jeff can get away with.

Today, David and Colin are married and liv-

ing in Surrey, British Columbia. Our whole family attended their wedding in 2011. David finished his post-graduate degree and is a full-time counselor for children and youth. Colin and David attend church each week. There aren't many churches for them to choose from that will allow a gay couple to attend. Colin is a loved part of our family. They have started the process of adopting children from the foster care system and are praying for siblings who need a home and don't want to be split up.

Is this what we prayed for or expected? No. Has it been a confusing and sometimes painful



journey? Oh, yes. Have we been told that our son is living in sin? Not directly. We are surrounded with very nice people but are aware that many Christians believe just that. Have we heard about families who have rejected their gay children? Yes, sadly. Have we heard all the theological arguments on either side? Yes. Do our hearts go out to families with gay children? Yes! A thousand times, yes!

After thirteen years on this journey with David, my only clear answer from God now carries a slight change from what I received before: “Trust Me. Love them. Don't push them away.” ■

Ron Carlson grew up in Minnesota and graduated from Union



College. He has served as a pastor in North Dakota, Missouri, and California for about twenty-four years before transitioning to church administration and has been president of the Kansas-Nebraska

Conference since 2006. Ron and Sue have four children and four grandchildren. Ron enjoys preaching, camping, running, and building model ships. Grandchildren now top his list!

**David
told me he
pleaded with
tears in
his private
prayer times
that God
would heal
him of
this curse.**

A God Called Josh | STORY AND ARTWORK BY BODI PARKHURST

After one
confession
Daddy said
impatiently,
“You don’t
have to
confess every
little thing,
Pam.”

We didn’t have television in our home. “There’s too much trash on it,” Momma and Daddy said. Instead, we had a flat reel-to-reel tape recorder. On it Momma listened to taped sermons, gospel quartets, and a wobbly-voiced lady named Deldelker. Sally and I admired her full, fruity tones extravagantly.

“Listen to me,” we shrilled to each other. “I’m Deldelker.” And we would summon as full a vibrato as we could manage.

For a few weeks we flirted with the idea of actually becoming Deldelker when we grew up, but when Pam heard us, she disabused us of this notion. “You can’t sing,” she told us bluntly when we shared our plans. She was wrong. Sally and I could and did sing, often and loudly, with full vibrato.

Finally it got to be too much for Momma. “I don’t want you kids doing that; it’s not nice to copy people,” she said sternly. To take our minds off Deldelker, she put on a story tape for us. The tape was a mixture: a radio drama of Noah and the flood; Eric Behair reading “Chinese Lady and the Rats,” “Pokey, the Runaway Bear,” “Sally, the Runaway Monkey,”

and “Packy, the Runaway Elephant,” and then, as filler, “Little Black Sambo.”

The first time Momma played the tape I listened enthralled as God spoke from our tape recorder, telling Noah to get a move on and

build the ark. I heard the people’s exclamations as Noah’s sons started construction and Noah started preaching. I heard his congregation ridiculing him and his family, and then gasping as the animals thumped aboard. I heard Noah’s last invitation to come into the ark. And then I heard the door close, the first few droplets of rain, and then a downpour. Thunder crashed.

Someone screamed, “Open the door!” Someone else pounded on it. And suddenly our living room was full of the sounds of terrified people dying in the crashing waters while Noah and his family listened from inside the ark, righteous, safe, and smug.

They didn’t even throw a rope over the side. The pastoral peace of the ark after everybody outside got done drowning gave me time to catch my breath, but I never really got over the horror of it. *Why didn’t they pull some of the people up on deck, at least?*



“Legacy”

The nightmares started. I floundered in the crashing waves outside the ark, my family safe within. It took me a long time to die. I learned to busy myself in another part of the house during the flood story, which brought up a new fear. *Was I Grieving Away the Holy Spirit by avoiding the terror and guilt the flood story brought? Should I listen, search my heart, and then confess, as Pam did?* I had seen her at it, playing, looking thoughtful, creeping up to Daddy or Momma and whispering furtively.

I never knew what her transgressions were, but after one confession Daddy said impatiently, "You don't have to confess *every little thing*, Pam." I knew from this that Pam's sins must be positively miniscule, because Momma and Daddy's usual view was that no sin was too small, no transgression too minor, to keep us out of heaven.

This brought up a new worry—which sins did I need to confess? Momma and Daddy's answer—every single one—didn't tally with Daddy's impatient reaction to Pam doing exactly this.

Was confessing a sin unnecessarily a sin? Did I need to confess the unnecessary confession? Maybe it was showing off—my besetting sin, according to Marie. Did I need to confess that too? I was afraid to ask. I couldn't pinpoint what my sins were, aside from showing off and bed-wetting, but my guilt told me they were real.

Happy heathens

The next story on the tape was almost as bad. "Once upon a time there was a little old Chinese *la-a-a-dy*, and a little old Chinese *ma-a-a-n*, and they lived together in a *little old Chinese house*. Now, they didn't know *our* Jesus. They prayed to a god

called *Josh*." That seemed a little informal to me, but perhaps that was how they did things in China. It turned out that the little old Chinese house was filled with little old Chinese rats, which ate all the little old Chinese man and lady's rice. They talked it over with Josh. "But," Eric Behair informed us, "Josh couldn't *see*, and



Josh couldn't *hear*, and *Josh couldn't do anything*. He just sat there, and he *loooked*, and *loooooooked*, and *loooooooked*."

The little old Chinese lady left the house—probably to get away from the rats, I decided. In her wanderings around town she heard beautiful singing. My stomach tightened at this part. Many mission stories involved perfectly happy heathens being lured into evangelistic meetings by beautiful singing.

But the songs were the honey in the trap. Once they entered the church, their carefree heathen lives were over. They had only two choices. They could get baptized and cope with the fallout. And fallout there would be: Christians

Suffered For the Lord. They lost jobs, homes, and families; gave up beautiful, colorful native dress for a ragged pair of black pants and a white shirt; and then came to America, where the best Adventists were, and lived in poverty.

If they made the other choice, and left the meeting unconverted, they got roaring drunk and then were mauled by a lion as they staggered homeward, although sometimes it was a crocodile or a cobra. Or their favorite child died. God didn't take kindly to being spurned.

I willed the Chinese Lady to ignore the singing and hurry home to Josh, waiting in her nice, safe, rat-infested kitchen. But this was a

**Suddenly
our living room
was full of
the sounds
of terrified
people dying
in the
crashing
waters while
Noah and
his family
listened from
inside
the ark.**

mission story, and the Chinese Lady disregarded my telepathic messages. She went in. She listened to the story of Jesus. She was sold, had herself baptized, and rushed home to share the good news with the little old Chinese man.

He was less than enchanted. His dinner was late, and the rats had been running

little old Chinese man plain rice. Her beat her, but it did no good. The rats were everywhere.

Desperate, the little old Chinese man finally offered his wife a deal: If Jesus could get rid of the rats, he could have Josh's job. The little old Chinese lady wanted to get rid of the rats herself. Also, she was eager to try a form of witnessing



**For a few
weeks
we flirted
with the idea
of actually
becoming
Deldelker.**

around. "Cook me some pork and rice, wife," he told the little old Chinese lady.

"But I am a Christian now," she replied. "I can't feed you pig any more. I follow the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Lord Jesus Christ tells me not to."

The little old Chinese man had been counting on pork and rice, and now some god he had never heard of said he had to eat his rice plain. And the pork was *right there*. "If you go to church I will beat you," he told her. "Josh is good enough for us."

Yes, I silently encouraged the little old Chinese man. *Josh is good enough for you. Make her listen. Show her who's boss.*

But the little old Chinese lady mule-headedly insisted on her new religion. Moreover, being a good Adventist woman now, she instantly recognized an opportunity to Witness *and* Be Persecuted for Her Faith, thus killing two birds with one stone. She went to church, returned home, took her beating rejoicing, and then cooked plain rice for the little old Chinese man, who beat her again for not cooking him pork.

This state of affairs continued for some time. The little old Chinese lady spent all her time hanging out at church and rubbing balm on her bruises. She ignored Josh, who returned the favor, gazing dustily at her while she cooked the

that didn't involve Grievous Bodily Harm. "All right," she said.

She and the little old Chinese man sat down in the living room, and she taught him how to pray in Adventist. "You have to fold your hands, like *this*," she said. "And you have to close your eyes, like *this*."

The little old Chinese man followed her instructions. The little old Chinese lady prayed. A few rats ran across the floor and out the door. "Huh," said the little old Chinese man. "Josh coulda done *that*."

The little old Chinese lady said, "Jesus isn't done yet." She prayed again. More rats ran out.

"Huh," said her husband. "Josh coulda—"

"*Jesus isn't done yet*," said the little old Chinese lady, and she got a little snippy about it. She prayed yet again. At long last, Jesus ponied up. Rats poured out of the walls, out of the rice bin, out of the beds. They raced out the door. Eric Behair concluded: "And they *never . . . came back . . . again*. And *next week*, when the little old Chinese lady went to church, the little old Chinese man . . . *went . . . too*." Organ music swelled.

Hurrah for the little old Chinese lady, hobbling along on her little old bound Chinese feet. Jesus saved her the cost of an exterminator. I hated that story. I liked the little old

Chinese lady, cooking pork fried rice for the little old Chinese man. I liked dusty, sleepy Josh. He sounded like a god you could live with. He might not be up to much, but at least worshipping him didn't get the little old Chinese lady beaten.

She didn't spend her days in an agony of guilt, fearing hell because she knew she had sinned but didn't know how. Josh let her put a little flavoring into her life, a little pork in the rice. It made me sad when the little old Chinese lady forsook colorful, exotic, albeit dusty, Josh for the gray and chilly world of Adventism.

Run away

The runaway zoo animals in the stories were pretty much interchangeable. They lived in nice cozy cages, were tended by friendly keepers, ate good food, and yet in spite of this idyllic situation they still dreamed of freedom. Each found a cage door fortuitously open one day and escaped to wander through the city. Sally the monkey ended up in the hospital. Packy the elephant became a delinquent and ended up knocking over parking meters and sitting on cars. Pokey fell victim to depression and found his despairing way back to the zoo on his own.

All three animals went on to live quiet, blameless lives, hav-

ing learned their lesson: Flight Is Futile. Resistance Is Useless. Submit.

Momma generally turned off the tape before Little Black Sambo. She didn't approve of him. He was immodest since he wore only a loin-cloth. Besides, the story of a tiger running around a tree until he turned into butter was not

very uplifting. Also it was fantasy. A real tiger would have eaten Little Black Sambo long before butter came into it anywhere. Little Black Sambo was Fiction and therefore forbidden.

When the tape broke, Momma repaired it with Scotch tape. When it broke again, she repaired it again, and again, and again. Eventually the tape player disappeared into a cupboard and from my life, but the lessons it taught me endured. *Choose the lonely path of obeying God or die. Good Christians welcome suffering. Flight is futile. Resistance is useless. There is no escape; God is the only game in town. Josh is dead.*

The tape's most enduring lesson was exactly the opposite of the lesson the storytellers, and Momma, intended that I learn. That tape was created and played to reinforce my belief in God's intervention in the world. And oddly enough, I was prepared to believe that God *did* intervene—in *his* world. But the world in which I lived was not a world in which God was interested.

God spoke to Noah. God honored the Chinese lady's faith. God was good, real, and present for others, but not for me. God was good to good people. But I wasn't a good person; all God held for me was a dreary lifetime of failure, followed by the lake of fire that burns forever and ever, amen. I might have stood a chance with Josh.

The lesson of the tape was that the God I was learning about in worship and Sabbath School wasn't the god who ruled my life. ■

Bodi Parkhurst is a pseudonym.



"Words"

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He was
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only a
loincloth.**

Adventist
HOSPITALS



This pencil drawing by intensive care nurse Roberta Kullen took the prize for professional art in the second annual art contest at Adventist Midwest Health.

**USING THE
ARTS TO EXTEND THE**

HEALING

MINISTRY OF CHRIST

Adventist Health Care in the Public Square:

Where Holiness and Humanity Meet | BY SAMIR SELMANOVIĆ

I was working with a team of entrepreneurs in a large, newly renovated brick building in the meatpacking district of Manhattan. It is a beehive of offices, studios, and the innovation labs of a hundred or so new companies. To churn out new ideas, the place is equipped with everything needed by upcoming creatives, who exude an air of confident inevitability. Every first Wednesday of the month, our consultancy team would gather and have one person share something from outside of our current projects.

This particular Wednesday it was my turn. At first I had thought of sharing something about mindful leadership, identity and storytelling, or befriending of the unknown—something that would make them sit up and notice. As the food for the meeting arrived and good-natured banter began to quiet down, I hesitated. *What if they don't understand what I'm talking about? What if they do understand but cannot relate?* I took a deep breath, made eye contact with those bright faces sitting before me, and put my palms together.

"I want to talk to you about the Sabbath day."

They did not blink. As I spoke, they listened. Even when I ventured into Bible passages and the life of Christ, they kept listening. I went on to describe the biblical view of "reality as relational," in which everything that makes us human, from food to friendships to purpose, grows in the soil of time. I contrasted it with our culturally sanctioned view of "reality as thinghood," in which all of our hopes are deposited into what we can own and in which time is feared, a taboo really. Sabbath eluci-

dates the difference between having and being and has power to cause disruption in the cultures that are based on the exhausting cycle of dissatisfaction and consumption.

They kept listening, and, against my better judgment, I waded into Sabbath boundaries, rules, and discipline. From the book of Isaiah, chapter 58, I talked about the inherent problem with avoiding disciplined spiritual practice in favor of doing what we want: If we simply go where our desire leads us, we will end up in a place where we don't want to be.

I closed with an invitation to the Spirituality of Time, one of the sweet fruits of my Seventh-day Adventist experience. And my time was up.

Immediately, a young female professional with a charming and slightly intimidating stud in her nose said, "The world around us has become boundary-less and, as such, exhausting. We are in need of some structure and discipline."

Another woman, an indomitable marketing consultant, said, "Hm. I would love for my family to live like that. Do you have some good rules of life to share with us?"

"Paradoxically," I replied, "my denomination has spent decades talking about freedom from rules, structures, and disciplines of Sabbath."

She said, "I am asking you about Sabbath *because* I want to be free."

Another frontier for conversation

Around that time, away from my home in New York City, I had been learning about another cultural context, the world of Adventist hospitals. For more than a decade, working as an

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ordained Adventist pastor, I had paid no attention to Adventist hospitals. They were large buildings around which protected and well-kept communities of Adventists were born, married, and died. I could see that they were run by capable professionals, and I thought of Adventist hospitals as an Adventist improvement over regular hospitals, like the way Stripples® have improved on bacon.

Over the past several years, however, I realized what should have been obvious from the beginning. Adventist hospitals go farther and deeper. They have done for Adventism what the church has wanted to do all along. They brought our faith into the world and the world into our faith—both directions of this movement being critically important for our denominational future. Through their success,¹ we have been brought into a frontier conversation with the world. This is a real place.

Life in the public square

Of all the religious institutions in society today, it is our hospitals that provide context for overcoming our artificial division of life into secular and sacred. On the one hand, Adventist hospitals have to operate in the face of disruptive and unforgiving forces of business, markets, and technology. Current pressures to reduce costs, increase quality, and improve patient experience are only the latest wave of imperatives. On the other hand, these hospitals are planted in the sublime realities of the human experience of birth, suffering, healing, and dying. As a result, they are emerging as public sanctuaries where humanity and holiness meet. At a time when people are turning away from theological abstractions and organized religion, transformative experiences in Adventist hospitals spur people's search for meaning, re-calibrate their relationships, and spill over into their daily lives. Our hospitals bring the treasures of Adventism into the public space where, for more than a hundred years, we had wanted to be but never quite knew how.

And yet, the very success of Adventist hos-

pitals points to a wide gap between Adventism and the world, a gap that is unnecessary and that Adventist hospitals of our generation can help us bridge. Our hospitals give us an opportunity to reimagine our uniqueness.

Faithfulness through innovation

At the annual mission conference of Adventist Health System (AHS) in 2013, executives in leadership pointed to the generative tension of being in the world *and* being true to oneself. The discussion was based on Jeremiah 29:4–7, where the prophet invites God's exiled people to go to Babylon and leave behind their binary thinking of either isolating themselves from the world or being assimilated into it. He implores them to make their home in Babylon *and* seek its wellbeing.

Over the years our hospitals have been our mission outposts and sites of innovation and—because of innovation—sites of faithfulness. For all stakeholders in the national health-care drama, from patients to employees to physicians, from communities to government to insurers, it is Adventist health-care institutions that offer rooted and potent stories of holistic health that American citizens always needed but are only now awakening to as a society.

As I was preparing this article in mid-2014, Gerald Winslow, Vice President for Spiritual Life and Wholeness at Loma Linda University Medical Center, sent me an email:

We have just completed a conference of Adventist health leaders meeting in Geneva [Switzerland]. There were over 1100 leaders assembled from 81 countries. It's difficult to imagine many organizations of any size that could convene that many people committed to health ministry as an integral and practical function of Christian faith. Now that the whole world is recognizing the financial impossibility of coping with the NCDs (non-communicable diseases) by spending unimaginable sums to rescue people from conditions that could have been prevented, the Adventist emphasis on health promotion and disease prevention is "in demand" as never before in my lifetime. This gives us a new opportunity to provide leadership around the planet.²

The Power of Art in Healing

Explored at Adventist Midwest Health | BY BONNIE DWYER



National Arts Program "Healing Arts" exhibit reception

Pencil drawings by a nurse, child portraits by a physician, sculptures by a mechanical engineer—the second annual art contest at Adventist Midwest Health gave employees a chance to share their creativity. Sponsored by the National Arts Program Foundation, the contest included \$2,400 in prizes for winning art pieces. It was just one of the ways art is transforming the four hospitals in the Adventist Midwest Health System.

The first art contest exhibit was held at the Hinsdale campus. Working with the hospital's foundation, organizer and visionary Sue Kett installed a professional gallery hanging system, providing not only for the art contest but for future exhibits as well. She turned to the nursing staff to help with the development of an art cart program that takes art directly to the patients. There have been painting classes for the nurses

too. And the "I Am Who I Am" exhibit gave special-needs children a chance to shine in an exhibit featuring their art.

In a survey about the arts program, employees reported seeing benefits in the emotional and physical wellbeing of staff and the healing of patients. It made for a more pleasant environment for everyone, as well as a more committed and joyful nursing and medical staff. They saw improved relationships in the community because of the col-

laboration. Improved patient outcomes were also noted, an important result in these days of the Affordable Care Act's emphasis on patient satisfaction.

Musical performances are also part of the arts program. Hinsdale Hospital has a chorale, and local musicians are also brought in to perform. A Healing Arts Council of employees and volunteers plans the programs and events.

Kett says the program has been a unifying experience for the hospitals. The winners of the most recent art contest included a man who works in the boiler room, a physician, and an Intensive Care Unit nurse. People get to know each other in a different way through art.

The beauty of the art provides serenity for the hospitals and is thus seen as a benefit to the culture of spirituality. The hospital chaplain is one of the members of the arts council and a major supporter of the program. ■



"I Am Who I Am" exhibit

Adventist
hospitals go
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what the
church has
wanted to do
all along.

To learn about what challenges might await Adventist health-care leaders who are stewards of our hospitals' cultures and—on the other side of the coin—our hospitals' brands, I decided to turn outward to the experience of others who have been on a similar journey before us. I interviewed leaders of other faith-driven nonprofits with a history of success. I asked them about ideas that might help Adventists understand and navigate the challenge of living out our larger story in the midst of the exploding plurality of our shared life. How can we stay true to ourselves on the expanded stage brought about through the success of Adventist health care?

Timm Glover is Senior Vice President, Mission Integration for Ascension Health, the largest



1
FACILITATE COURAGEOUS
CONVERSATIONS

nonprofit hospital system in the United States. Rooted in the Roman Catholic tradition of Christianity, Ascension Health is profoundly dedicated to the care of the poor and vulnerable.³

Until the summer of 2014, Tom Farquhar was the Head of Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C., a flagship school of the most respected faith-based educational system in the United States, known for educating the children of presidents and other prominent officials.⁴

I also include here what I have learned from my participation and collaboration with 92nd

Street Y, a world-class cultural and community center, serving from the platform of Judaism, located in Manhattan, where I live.⁵

Following are some of the results of my research expressed through the views of the interviewees, as well as the implications for our Adventist context, all summarized in four practices.

1. Facilitate courageous conversations

The fact that difficult conversations are occurring regularly here means that we are not bound by absolute dogma or doctrine, that there is a degree of freedom and a safe space for every individual or community within our institution to share a perspective.

—Tom Farquhar

Physicians send a lot of their poor to us to assist with charity care for procedures needed. One of the things we ask is, "What level of charity care are you providing or planning to provide to this patient?" We want to really partner with physicians, and charity is about solidarity with the patient in need and solidarity between provider and health system. Yet, a physician billing a patient for full cost while we provide our care as charity isn't a partnership or solidarity. What this begins to do is it begins to deepen and elevate the kinds of conversations we're willing to have with each other and therefore who we are willing to be with each other.

—Timm Glover

The challenge of having real and relevant conversations today lies in the changing nature of boundaries that once set us apart and gave us a distinctive identity. Our group boundaries are now overlapping, morphing faster than our respective cultures have time to adapt. Those who used to be "out there" have moved into our physical, intellectual, and emotional neighborhoods. Our previously functional walled-in/walled-out sense of identity is falling apart, and our identities now follow more organic laws. Like a tree whose protective glass nursery walls have been removed, we are forced to grow deeper roots while our branches are being strengthened by the wind of exposure.

Loma Linda's Mission:

Make the World Whole | BY ELIANA ZACARIAS

At an event I attended in July 2014, Loma Linda University Health (LLUH) president Richard H. Hart, alongside professors, board members, and the LLU board chair, aided by video testimonies of patients and students, announced the groundbreaking vision for health care and education called Vision 2020.

Vision 2020 is a \$1.2-billion strategy that will set new records in fundraising in the Adventist Church. Of the \$1.2 billion, the organization plans to raise \$350 million in private philanthropic donations—the largest amount of donated money for one project in the history of the church. The remainder of the money, a Loma Linda representative says, will be a combination of funds from the State of California, operating gains, and loans.

Plans for Vision 2020 will affect Loma Linda University Medical Center (LLUMC) on multiple fronts. An update to the State of California's seismic requirements that must be implemented by 2020 has rendered parts of the Medical Center, like in many other hospitals in Southern California, non-compliant with new seismic safety standards for inpatients after that year. Rather than a retrofit to the current structure, the plan calls for an entirely new main hospital building, along with an expansion

of the children's hospital. The first part of the project is made possible through the personal commitment of \$100 million by Inland Empire couple Dennis and Carol Troesh, who have a long personal history with LLUMC and the university.

Vision 2020 also includes plans for another new building on campus, which will feature research and house the Wholeness Institute. This \$60-million structure is a new frontier for LLUH and will be geared toward research, community programs, and professional education. It will house expert researchers from a variety of disciplines—molecular biologists, psychologists, nutritionists, and physicians, among others. With LLUH's mission statement, "to continue the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus Christ" in mind, the new project seeks to explore all aspects of what it means to live a whole life across all dimensions of the human experience.

According to Hart, the research and discovery center will expand the size of research facilities that had become cramped as research projects grew over the years. The new center will make room for more laboratories and contribute fresh proposals to LLUH's offerings. The new facility brings researchers together in one building, fostering interdisciplinary work, while also



Richard H. Hart (right) with Dennis and Carol Troesh

creating opportunities for more faculty development, student research, and scholarships.

A future project for the Wholeness Institute is a new executive health program. The program's goal is to better prepare area leaders to be a guide and example to their employees and their community in preventive wellness—to create "a model for health in corporate America."

I heard speakers at the event repeating key phrases such as "redefining what it means to be healthy" and "treating the whole person," along with references to "transformation." It seemed that these concepts were the basis for the drafting of Vision 2020.

With the tagline, "The campaign for a whole tomorrow," LLUH hopes, with this new venture, to transform not only Adventist health but health care overall. In particular, the new building that will house research and the Wholeness Institute is LLUH's way of setting new goals for health care, leading the way with scientific and technological advances and yet remaining true to the original ideal—holistically treating the patient. ■

**Our hospitals
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Now, non-exposure is death. In this identity-threatening turmoil, to survive and thrive, faith-driven nonprofit organizations have to tap deeper into who they are and learn to tell a larger story.

Paradoxically, it is conversations about difficulties of the past and present that offer the most potent elements for the new and larger narrative to emerge. The wrinkle here is that all cultures tend to censure such conversations among participants as well as their leaders, all the while being unaware that they, in fact, are avoiding speaking about certain topics, not



bringing up certain ideas, and inhibiting others from speaking to them.

This is because safety from loss of identity has always been paramount to any culture, particularly religious culture. What has changed now is that what used to protect us from loss of identity has now become a liability. In our hyper-connected world, the walls of isolation have been scaled by communication technology, and all kinds of conversations are occurring, whether sanctioned or not. If not recognized and developed, these critically important conversations will go underground, and with each departure, the organization weakens.

What's remarkable about the three institutions we will consider here is that each of them

was able to articulate courageous conversations they have fostered. At 92nd Street Y, for example, early in their rich history, leaders had to have one such conversation about the direction of the institution, weighing the pros and cons of turning their energy outward in service to non-Jews at a time when Jewish immigrants in New York City needed all the help they could get. As a result, today's 92nd Street Y has an astonishing presence in the city and internationally, and is a real place in the hearts of a wide spectrum of people, while at the very same time serving Jewish people beyond any of their early dreams.

The word *courage* comes from the Old French word *cuer*, meaning heart. It is courageous conversations—conversations that we want to avoid—that take us to heartfelt conversations. To have courage is to continually lean into difficult conversations and continually nourish the greatest source of organizational strength: wholeheartedness. Through conversations that matter, wholehearted leaders, employees, and other stakeholders in Adventist health care would be, and in fact are, increasingly able to both feel and articulate the evolution that Adventist hospital brands want to see in the world and the way their organizations position themselves to effect such transformation. If continually pursued with courage, these conversations will develop new missional language that is vivid, impatient, and inspiring.

2. Develop robust authenticity

Cultural uniqueness must not be scrubbed out of the nonprofit institutions serving a general audience or else the strength of that association will be weakened and broken. People don't want more generic. They want distinctive.

—Tom Farquhar

We have to really watch out for merely trying to make this place simply a corporation where persons purely advance their careers. We can't do business as usual, "sprinkled with holy water," as a colleague often says. The question is always how do we really

become more authentic, have more integrity, and are more imaginative and inclusive. . . . Faith has a way of defining reality and as such becomes an organizing and animating dynamic.

—Timm Glover

To be, one must take a risk. Corporate poet David Whyte notices that we have picked up

the strange idea, unsupported by any evidence, that we are loved and admired only for our superb strength, our far-reaching powers, and our all-knowing competency. Yet in the real world, no matter how many relationships have been initiated by strength and power, no [relationships] have ever been deepened by these qualities.⁶

Not only as individuals, but also as organizations, we believe in an outright fallacy that we will engender “loyalty, and admiration in others by exhibiting a great sense of power and competency.”⁷ To the contrary, real relationships are based on mutual vulnerability.

In conversation with these interviewees, I have noticed how challenging it is for every organization that fosters people’s identity to understand the growth potential in awkwardness and vulnerability. Instead of seeing “not knowing” and “not being in control” as potent practices for spiritual and organizational growth, organizations tend to experience them as loss of self.

And Adventism is not immune to this. In our context, the root of our particular fear of vulnerability might have been sustained through our collective memory of having been expelled from mainstream Christianity during our formative years. We have spent a long time trying to prove that we are just fine after being rejected, all the while not being just fine and desiring to be accepted by the world. Like every healthy human being or community, we needed to be needed, but we have had a hard time coming to terms with it.

The challenge for every organization, both religious and secular, is that in the interdependent world we live in, one must come to

terms with the fact that half of the interdependence equation is one’s own dependence. As one Christian pastor told me more than a decade ago, “The world will need Adventists when Adventists learn to need the world.”

Fortunately, our hospitals have been discovering the power of interdependent partnerships. At Florida Hospital, part of AHS, for example, I have been surprised by the positive impact of non-Adventist leaders, whether they were employees of the hospital or leaders of local partnering organizations. On the national level, one outstanding example of interdependence is the involvement and the leadership of the various Adventist health systems in North America in a group called Stakeholders Health,⁸ a cooperative effort that has involved the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, the comparable office at the Department of Health and Human Services, and dozens of faith-based health systems. The primary goal is to shift emphasis from acute care toward community health development, with a focus on health promotion and disease prevention—an Adventist wheelhouse.⁹ As a result, through interdependent partnerships like this, Adventists have tasted the blessing of being needed, wanted, and respected in the world.

The greatest source of untapped power is often the place in one’s story that needs to be reconciled. Here is an example. Jewish immigrants to the United States were in many cases citizens who, although willing to lay down their lives for their home countries, were treated as outsiders there. The 92nd Street Y has turned this dynamic around. Instead of being the other in another’s land, they became the land. Their hospitality to people of all faiths and persuasions has staged a reversal and created empowerment of Jewish experience. They have become the land that welcomes the other, as they were not welcomed. They have healed their wound by creating the world they wanted to have.

Similarly, I believe that our hospitals have a growing presence in the world, not in spite of

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like the way
Stripples®
have improved
on bacon.**

**It is
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health-care
institutions
that offer
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potent stories
of holistic
health.**

our difficult Adventist past but because of it. The greatest untapped power in our Adventist story has been our own hard experience of being excluded. This is *our* reversal and empowerment moment. We have always championed religious freedom because we have been denied freedom. Now we can be even more true to our origins story by offering deep empathy and collaboration to people whose religion differs from ours. We can be like Moses, who was first called God's remnant. He refused God's offer of favoritism and even preferred being excluded



from the Book of Life (a.k.a. being with God forever) rather than participate in excluding people. And God loved him for that.

As Adventists, we are vulnerable in small ways when we—being dance challenged—mingle our lives with those who are different from us to the extent that they have an opportunity to drag us to the dance floor at their events that celebrate life. The resulting scene of an Adventist dancing is almost always as endearing as it is funny, and often liberating.

We become vulnerable in more significant ways when we transform, reinterpret, or leave behind beliefs or practices that have served God, the world, and our story in the past but now need to give way to new life and new ways of God. This is a historical flexion point in which

our pivot to the future is nothing less than practice of robust vulnerability and authenticity that accompanies any real transformation.

One meaningful way to maintain such practice would be to make public the riddle that animates our organizational life. Every passionate community struggles with their own beautiful question, a question that is larger than the community itself, a question that others can resonate with and would want to help answer. Riddles like “what it means to heal a person” or “what it means to be whole.” Adventist hospitals that are willing to pursue their riddle publicly and make mistakes—which are an integral and necessary part of real learning and innovation—will be irresistibly attractive. Ultimately, most people are not attracted to perfection; they are attracted to passion and recovery after falling that comes with believing in something larger than oneself.

3. Cherish your mission

There is this progression of a holy and sacred movement. We are part of this movement as a community, which is part of this movement of God's people, which is part of this movement of Christ, which is part of this movement of the Reign of God. So, when you ask me why we do health care, well, we do it to manifest the Reign of God. This reign of God supersedes Catholicism both in scope and substance. Our multiple sponsors have incredible distinctiveness about each one of them, but we all unite under this fundamental and empowering sense of being called to sacred service and healing presence in the world. . . . The Reign of God proclaims each person's intrinsic worth that has no dependency upon economic category, period. . . . This is what we see as Reality. That's why we serve the poor.

—Timm Glover

Our school sets us apart from the crowd in two ways. One is that we are known as being distinctively ambitious and successful academically. We are also known for having this mysterious framework of values related to the principles, practices, and traditions of Quakers. . . . These values most people consider universal but they remain challenging to put into practice.

CREATION Health | BY RACHEL LOGAN

Florida Hospital is extending its health ministry program through CREATION Health, a “faith-based wellness plan” that provides lifestyle seminars and training programs for those desiring to live healthier, happier lives.

The Florida Hospital organization consists of twenty-four campuses with more than 2,200 beds and 18,000 employees, making it the largest nonprofit health-care system in the United States. Known for its quality care, Florida Hospital was named by *The Wall Street Journal* as the “Hospital of the Future.”

CREATION Health, a health and ministry initiative, works to promote healthier and happier lifestyles through these factors, represented by the acronym C-R-E-A-T-I-O-N: Choice, Rest, Environment, Activity, Trust in God, Interpersonal Relationships, Outlook, and Nutrition. By incorporating these different principles into daily life, CREATION Health aims to “fulfill God’s original plan for our lives, which is to live and be happy.”

Not only is CREATION Health part of Florida Hospital’s desire to provide better health care, it is also a lifestyle the hospital encourages everyone to emulate. Robyn Edgerton, administrative director



of mission development for Florida Hospital, describes how the program evolved from its biblical roots: “The Bible speaks of health in the Old Testament’s creation story; it was the ideal that God intended for all of us.”

This Old Testament health message was continued by Jesus’ healing ministry in the New Testament: “Christ showed through His ministry how to reach people’s hearts; He mingled with men, oftentimes healing them, then invited them to follow Him,” Edgerton continues.

Florida Hospital’s mission is to take these biblical principles of physical, emotional, and spiritual healing to extend the healing ministry of Christ.

Edgerton explains why a program like CREATION Health is important: “People are suffering physically and emotionally from diseases that are influenced by anger, loneliness, and fear. CREATION Health addresses the root causes of these diseases.”

There are several ways to get involved in CREATION Health.

One way is by attending CREATION Health seminars and learning how to live a CREATION lifestyle. Another way is by becoming a certified seminar leader through certification programs offered in Orlando, Florida or online at Creationhealth.com. And finally, anyone can sign up to become a CREATION Health member and join the CREATION Health community. By doing so, members will enjoy emails, text updates, health tips, news clips, and devotionals.

Church groups are also invited to host their own CREATION Health seminars for their communities. Turn-key packages are available online for purchase and include training DVDs, small-group kits, marketing materials, and Vacation Bible School programs.

“CREATION Health is a whole-person health philosophy and program that speaks to this healing,” explains Edgerton. “It is a modern expression of the SDA health message upon which our church was founded more than a hundred and fifty years ago.” ■

Every presentation the school makes to any audience of prospective community members, whether it is prospective employees or prospective students or prospective parents, every presentation refers to these principles that are distinctive in a Quaker institution. . . . The weekly silent meeting, for example, is a practice that is non-negotiable for the entire community, an essential part of what we do.

—Tom Farquhar

Each interviewee had a sense of fascination and joyful celebration about whatever was in the center of their communal faith.

The name *Israel* means “to struggle with God,” and that’s why 92nd Street Y, for example, has opened a wide public space of learning. Landing on their web page and browsing through their community class offerings and the list of guest speakers is truly a breathtaking experience. My last two classes were one with an outstanding instructor of feng shui and the other with Bill McKibben, addressing a couple of hundred high-schoolers on the topic of the environment and their future vocations. Many of my Jewish friends see this struggle with God as even more life-sustaining than their belief in God. Judaism does not require them to agree with or even believe in God, but it does require them to engage.

The center that holds such a great community together can never be exhausted, because the center is a mystery. Not data, not laws, not influence, not money, but mystery. This is particularly true of faith-driven nonprofits. There is a unique pearl in the center of every religion around which religious community of practice develops. Although we all share common perennial wisdom and common ethical ideals, it is in our mysteries that we differ.

For AHS, for example, this wonder in the center is AHS’s mission to “extend the healing ministry of Christ.” Around this mystery, AHS has built complex institutions in which thousands of people have discovered their life calling. In my experience, many of the employees, physicians, and partners find their inspiration

there, and it is the real reason why many of them get up to go to work.

However tempting it is to break down the healing ministry of Christ into steps or principles that we can operationalize and scale, this mission statement is larger than us, and we can never fully master it. Monica Reed, the CEO of Celebration Health, part of AHS in Florida, brings this tension between operation and inspiration into a generative balance:

Both mystery and mastery are necessary. . . . It is a true organizational maxim that what we don’t measure escapes our focus. It is also true that everything that’s measured does not matter. . . . Effective organizations are on the journey to balance the two. We must find the ways to measure how effective we are with our mission statement and know whether we are making progress to our truest North. The mission of “the healing ministry of Christ” is both mystical and methodical.¹⁰

A mystery is not something that cannot be known. Rather, it is something that can be known but known without end. Christ and his healing ways will forever spill over the edges of our current comprehension. It will take many lifetimes for the healing ministry of Christ to be embodied into an institution, all the while fueling its day-to-day operations.

To guard us from losing the mystery of our calling, the work that every nonprofit institution needs to learn how to do well is the work of cherishing. Vision and mission statements, left to themselves, have a propensity to become a laminated cluster of words hung on the wall, no matter how many times they are repeated within the walls of the culture. In contrast, we cherish our mystery by paying attention to it, like lovers paying attention to one another, learning to love each other in ten thousand ways. The organizational cultures that fearlessly open up access to the interpretation of their central mystery to everybody, from young to old, from followers to leaders, from scientists to artists—providing support and space to create, share, and celebrate this mission—will grow stronger. Diversity of

As entrepreneurs love to say, the future is already here; it’s just not widely distributed.

expressions, rather than uniform definitions, will maintain their depth and longevity.

Cherishing one's unique mystery as expressed through a mission statement has another critical advantage. It gives the organization powerful leverage, a firm ground from which to deal with the forces of the market, commoditization, and narrow bottom-line thinking, in which profit is the only way one measures success. Many organizations have a nice version of the following statement: "We want larger market share, we want more influence, and we want lots of money." This statement leaves them hanging high and dry when they need to make far-reaching strategic decisions or make a transition into a different business model. Without a vision that serves the world, they have no leverage to push back against the urgency of profit making and no faith to help them survive the dark nights that



every organization faces. They are left with extensive expertise but without deeper wisdom that can take them into the future.

Also, we cherish our mysteries by making them intelligible to more people. As Tom Farquhar emphasized in the quote above, one's mystery must touch people universally. AHS, for example, has found a way to cherish its mystery by making it incredibly accessible

through the wholeness plan called CREATION Health.¹¹ It offers eight windows into the healing ministry of Christ. Instead of collapsing the mystery, it opens it up to different people at different places on their life journey. Through CREATION Health, each person may discover the healing ministry of Christ in their own way and time. It makes it possible for each person to weave their own story into the story of Christ, or, at the very least, the story of Christ into their own.

4. Offer radical hospitality

Health care reform provokes a lot of financial and vocational anxiety for the physicians. Why did I become a physician in the first place? How can we collaborate with physicians in such a way that fosters a reconnection with their sense of calling as a physician? This is our task. To become partners. The paradigms of health care we have all been working with and under truly didn't work anyway. We are finally admitting they didn't work. Now we have the opportunity to co-create something together that is a connection with our sense of callings and make that real in the world. Designing how we care for populations and care for persons across the entire continuum of care truly points to this. An example is financially incentivizing primary care practices to focus on prevention and wellness by sharing in the cost savings achieved through the reduction of inappropriate utilization or readmissions.

—Timm Glover

Over one hundred years ago, our founders spent years actually seeking a Quaker Headmaster who could open this school, and after long search, they acknowledged to the larger Quaker body that they had not found anyone. Interestingly, two months later the school was opened under the management of a young man named Thomas Sidwell. He was not a Quaker, so they made an arrangement with him. Rather than sponsoring the school themselves as a Quaker congregation, they rented the rooms to him to run his own school in the Quaker Meeting House. He operated the school for 53 years. He did become a Quaker, but he courted one of the teachers, a non-Quaker who was

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not likely to become a Quaker. So, he went to a particular congregation in Baltimore that was willing to marry the two of them.

—Tom Farquhar

Hospitality is being kind to strangers. Biblical hospitality is far more radical. It is accepting the stranger as a blessing and a necessary help for one's own survival and thriving. Strangers have arrived in our daily lives with their beauty, wisdom, and vulnerabilities, as well as their suffering, grievances, and aspirations, all of which offer priceless wisdom to us. In this new world, we are confronted not only with a new view of those we used to consider outsiders but also with a new view of ourselves. They see in us what we could not recognize in ourselves, and, when we invite them, they tell us what we cannot tell ourselves. Like an uninvited company consultant who can see what the company cannot see and say what the company cannot say, the stranger reveals.

That's why the Bible obsesses about care for strangers. Priest Melchizedek, who blessed Abraham, the father of faith, and the Magi who blessed Jesus who was the Christ, were strangers from a different religion, with sacred texts, rituals, and ways of being that we know nothing of. Yet their wisdom and authority played a critical part in the formation of Christianity, including the first funding of the Christian movement in the currency of frankincense, myrrh, and gold.

Furthermore, Christ's words and life taught us that he is in "the other," in people from the wrong group, whether Samaritans, Greeks, Romans, lepers, or prisoners, or whatever that wrong group is for you or for me. God is a trickster in this way. When we fail to learn and receive from "the other," we risk failing to learn and receive from God.

The blessing of the stranger goes even deeper. When encountering another, we also encounter ourselves in a new way. Each encounter challenges our isolated and ingrown ideas about ourselves and helps us become our

better selves. Throughout the millennia, religion has been one of the most potent identity-forming mechanisms. Today, when the walls of isolation are down, we have a chance to transcend our own limitations and delve deeper into what the healing ministry of Christ could do for *us*, how it can heal *us*—teach us that we are part of a larger web of life in which "the other" is part of our own life.

In this light, the most potent practice of radical hospitality is the practice of receiving. Continually giving to others and blessing them without authentically receiving and being blessed by them puts us in a position of power and masks our needs and vulnerabilities. To receive the blessing and treasure from the other is an act of conceding the presence of God in them. Receiving is, paradoxically, the greatest gift one can give to another. It is in the valuing of what others have to give us that we practice generosity.

As obvious as it seems, it is worth repeating that our teachers, guides, and leaders don't have to be Adventists. They can be anyone who can help us on our way to heal and be healed. Our mission is not only to reach out to everyone but also to be enriched by everyone who comes and blesses us through their own traditions, stories, and practices. To earn the title of a respected teacher, one has to embrace the continual role of a master learner who knows how to receive.

Our response to the, at times, bewildering diversity that surrounds us does not have to be a fear of losing our identity. It can be curiosity and gratitude. Through exposure to the beauty and truth that others have, we grow roots into our own story. Through the other, we don't compromise but learn more about Christ. When we serve our world together in partnership with others who can teach us as we teach them, we evolve a more authentic, genuinely responsive, and newly aware Adventist identity.

Such processes have been underway in our hospitals. The vast majority of employees, physicians, and even directors are not Adven-

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tists. As such, our hospitals are representative microcosms of the real world and create context for life-giving diversity in a safe space hosted by Adventists.

Becoming whole

These four practices, I believe, would help Adventist institutions bridge the gap with the world “that God so loved” and weave them into the fabric of the present Kingdom of God, a domain larger than Adventism. Our Adventist community is only a part of a larger whole and larger undertaking of God. Randy Haffner, CEO of Porter Adventist Hospital in Denver, Colorado, puts it this way: “We have a unique value to add to the conversation. However, uniqueness is not the goal, the point, or the intended outcome. We engage with others to learn their perspective and make our distinct contribution to a larger good in the world.”¹²

As diverse as we Adventists are, whether liberal or conservative, urban or rural, young or old, we have a burning desire to see the days when we will be able to open our treasure chest and dust off beautiful stories we might have forgotten—of our first light and first love, of being misfits in the world, of being lost and being found again and again, of our heart-stopping discoveries in the Bible, and of the questions that are ravishing us today. And eventually the time will come when we will leave behind our conversations about protecting our identity and focus our conversations on our integrity—on becoming whole.

Many who serve in our denomination are already living out this future. On the West Coast, Richard Rawson, CEO of Loma Linda University Medical Center-Murrieta and the Senior Vice President for Strategic Planning at Loma Linda University Health has his heart soaked with the mission of the healing ministry of Christ, all the while dealing with the crucible of business:

We are determined to break out of the traditional relationships, offerings, and services to minister and heal beyond the walls of our hospitals and clinics. . . . I

*believe that strategy focused on Wholeness is both good mission and good business. By being true to ourselves, we create an unassailable competitive advantage because very few of our competitors understand, let alone invest in it.*¹³

Similarly, leaders I have met at Florida Hospital are determined to live out their faith *in the world*. Ken Bradley, the CEO of Winter Park Memorial Hospital in Florida,¹⁴ and his religiously diverse leadership team are seeking to integrate Sabbath into their core identity and manifest it through their presence in the community. Monica Reed, CEO of Celebration Health¹⁵ and her equally diverse team, on the other hand, are pursuing deeper understanding of the healing ministry of Christ through faithful innovation in every corner of the campus and, through Nicholson Center,¹⁶ spreading it around the world. Pastor Andy McDonald and the Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church have been so authentic and courageous in their hospitality that the place has been buzzing with new life and creativity.

This is going on in thousands of different ways in a thousand different places, in ways both big and small. As entrepreneurs love to say, the future is already here; it’s just not widely distributed.

Ascension Health, Sidwell Friends School, 92nd Street Y, and Adventist health-care institutions are each called to serve something larger than their own success, whether by God, or by a people’s own hearts, or by their surrounding human communities in need. Perhaps it is all one calling anyway. The challenges of staying true to one’s calling in the real world that we explored here are not for the faint-hearted. The path is littered with faith-driven nonprofits that have regressed, dissolved, or imploded.

Yet for Adventism this is a moment to pause and celebrate, even in the eye of the health-care reform storm. Through patient, skillful, and visionary work taking place in Adventist health care, the edges of Adventism—places where we touch the world—have

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been revived. “The right arm of the gospel” has strengthened, and we now have a real opportunity to become a movement again. ■

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References

1. The five Adventist health systems are: Adventist HealthCare on the East Coast of the United States, Kettering Health Network in the Dayton, Ohio area, Adventist Health on the West Coast, Adventist Health System, based in Florida and now by far the largest, with forty-five facilities in ten states, and Loma Linda University Health, with six hospitals in south-eastern California. They provide a distinctive health ministry that serves millions of our fellow citizens every year. Together, they operate hundreds of clinics and more than seventy hospitals in North America and employ more than 120,000 people.

2. Gerald Winslow, personal email, July 18, 2014.
3. See www.ascensionhealth.org/.
4. See the details at www.sidwell.edu/.
5. More information at www.92y.org/.
6. David Whyte, *Crossing the Unknown Sea: Work as a Pilgrimage of Identity* (New York: Riverhead, 2001), 128.
7. *Ibid.*, 129.
8. Originally called Health System Learning Group.
9. See the list of Adventist participants at Stakeholder Health, www.stakeholderhealth.org/participants/.
10. Monica Reed, personal correspondence, July 16, 2014.
11. See CREATION Health at www.creationhealth.com.
12. Randy Haffner, personal email correspondence, Aug. 12, 2014.
13. Richard Rawson, personal correspondence, July 21, 2014.
14. See www.floridahospital.com/winter-park-memorial.
15. More information at www.celebrationhealth.com/.
16. The Nicholson Center trains physicians from all over the world in leading-edge surgical techniques: www.nicholsoncenter.com/.

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RICHARD RICE
SUFFERING
and the Search
for Meaning

Contemporary Responses to the Problem of Pain

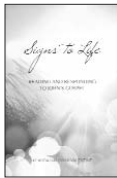
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Herold Weiss and Kendra Haloviak Valentine on the Fourth Gospel: *A Review* | BY NORMAN H. YOUNG



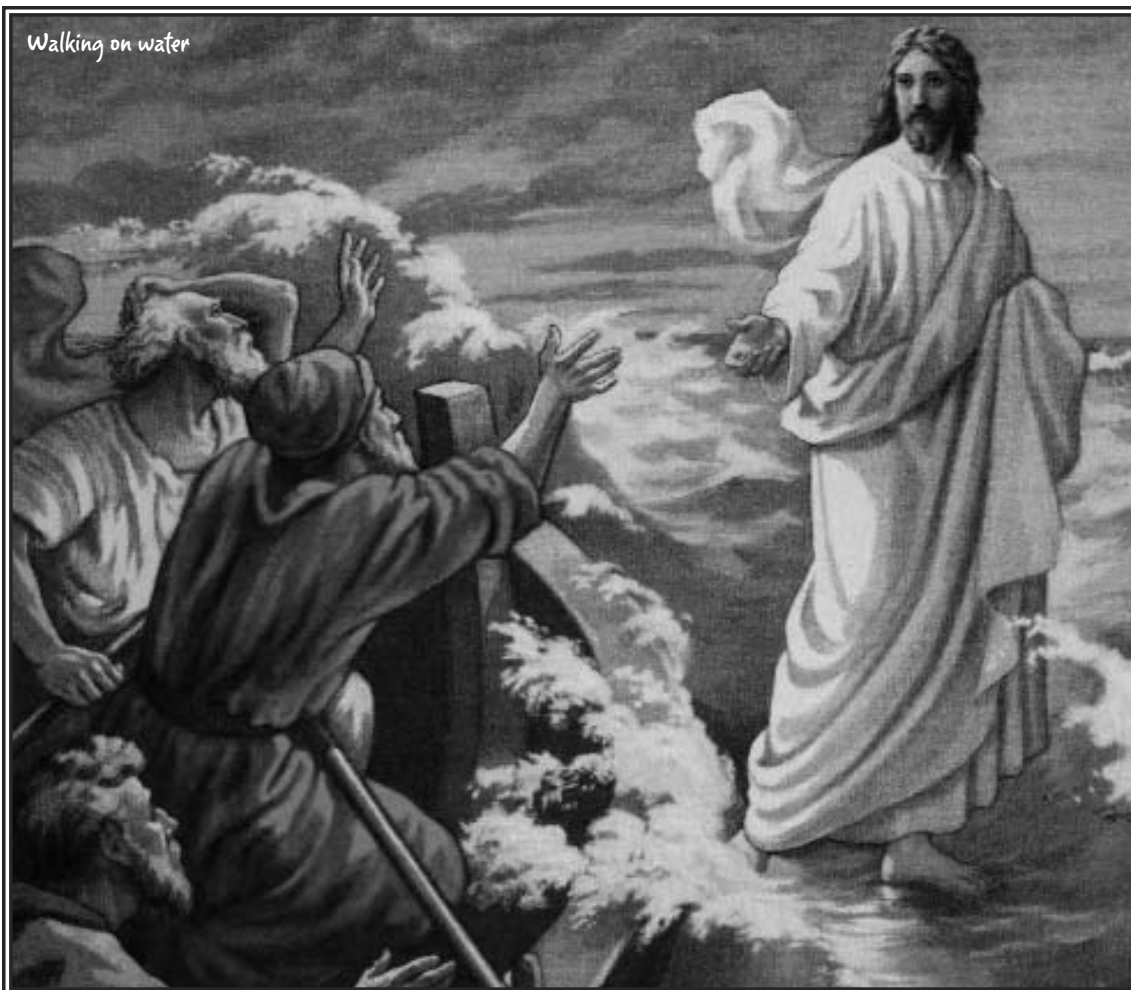
Signs to Life: Reading and Responding to John's Gospel
by Kendra Haloviak Valentine
(Warburton, Australia: Signs, 2013)



Meditations on According to John: Exercises in Biblical Theology
by Herold Weiss
(Gonzalez, FL: Energion, 2014)

Kendra Haloviak Valentine and Herold Weiss have drunk long at the spring of John's living water, and they have feasted on its spiritual ambrosia. No parched soul will read either or both of these books without being refreshed. Valentine is an especially gifted communicator, both as a writer and as a speaker (the included CD with her book is ideal for the car's audio system). Weiss is an engaging

Most commentators recognize seven "signs," but the lists do vary.



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scholar, who both stimulates the mind and inspires the heart. Valentine provides a bibliography, so the reader is well informed regarding her research range. Although Weiss does not provide a bibliography, one hears echoes of Raymond Brown, Paul Duke, and C. K. Barrett as one reads. He is obviously well read in the literature of Johannine studies.

Admittedly, some will stop reading Weiss when they discover early in the book that he thinks the author of the Fourth Gospel (FG) is unknown; indeed there was no single author, according to him, but a series of contributors, editors, and narrators over a fifty-year period. If such data is too much for any reader, I'd suggest skipping the introduction and jumping straight into the exposition, as Weiss has great respect for the FG's text (however it came about) and interprets it with creative insight, extensive learning, and spiritual sensitivity. Indeed, though he gives the FG such a piece-meal process of composition, he admits that "the text displays amazing stylistic, verbal and theological integrity," and, we should also add, frequent *aporias* (perplexing literary and logical jumps in the text).

Both these books have similar origins: Valentine's began in 2004 as a series of worships delivered to an audience of denominational leaders at the Adventist church's world headquarters, while Weiss's chapters were originally written as a monthly column for the online *Spectrum* (www.spectrummagazine.org). Consequently, both books are very audience-focused and very readable for that. However, the audiences were very different, and no doubt that influenced the two presentations. Both writers approach the text using reader-response methods. The fact that Weiss's chapters began as regular columns does cause some occasional repetition in his book, but Valentine largely escapes this because she follows set passages of Scripture rather than themes. She concentrates on the "signs" found in the first half of the FG.

Most commentators recognize seven



"signs," but the lists do vary. The most common list is as follows: the water into wine (2:1–11), the healing of the official's son (4:46–54), the healing of the lame man (5:1–18), the feeding of the five thousand (6:1–15), the walking on water (6:16–24), the healing of the blind man (9:1–41), and the raising of Lazarus (11:1–57). Sometimes the miraculous catch of fish (21:1–11) either replaces the walking on water or becomes an eighth "sign." Weiss helpfully concludes that all "the signs point to THE SIGN. The crucifixion and the resurrection"; "their function," he says, "is to bring about the recognition of the crucified as the glorified." Valentine agrees ("Jesus will transform the agony of the crucifixion into an event that glorifies God") and very persuasively parallels the setting of Jesus' turning the water into wine with the scene surrounding the cross.

Weiss's thematic approach allows him to

cover the whole narrative of the FG, whereas Valentine basically restricts herself to John's "signs." The "signs," she informs us, are miracles that are largely unique to the FG, and more than this, they are the means of revealing Jesus' identity. Rather oddly she includes "A Wedding at the Well" (John 4:7–42) as one of her seven chapters even though it hardly qualifies as a miracle and is certainly not one of the FG's "signs," as she is fully aware (she combines "signs" four and five into her chapter 5, which allows her to have only seven chapters despite the inclusion of a non-sign). She justifies the inclusion of the story of the Samaritan woman by rather adroitly integrating its theme of "living water" with the miracle of turning the water into wine and the final great "sign" when Jesus cried, "I'm thirsty" (19:28–30) and when blood and water issued from his side (v. 34). I am glad she did incorporate John 4 into her study of the "signs," as it is one of the FG's most brilliant exchanges, and Valentine skillfully helps us to appreciate its treasures.

Both authors pick up on the significance for the early Christians of the words "on the third day" that commence the narrative about the wedding at Cana, and they both relate it to a

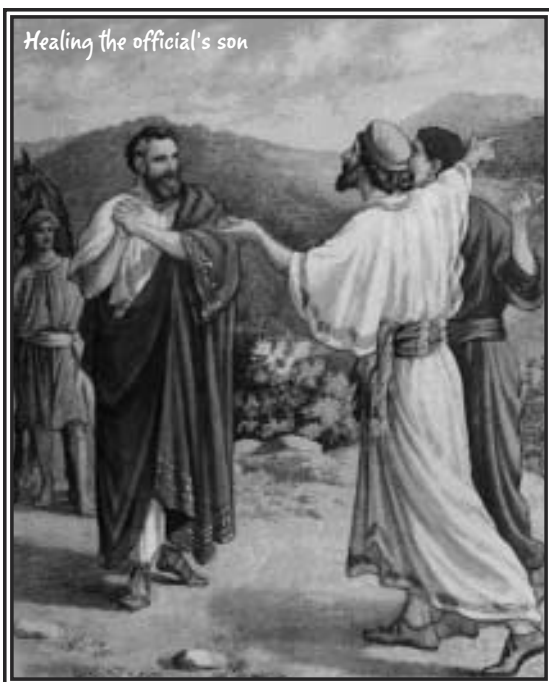
post-resurrection Christian community. To quote Valentine: "On the third day, there was new life at Cana. It was the first of Jesus' signs. His glory was revealed and his disciples believed. And on another third day, the crucified One would have new life. It would be the most amazing sign of all." I assume Weiss is uniting the crucifixion and the resurrection when he says, "Jesus' work was consummated when he was lifted up, on the third day, on the cross."

Weiss goes even further than Valentine when he tells us that it was the community that produced the Gospel According to John (as he consistently refers to the FG throughout his monograph). Following Louis J. Martyn, Weiss argues that the FG tells the story of Jesus with the community's experiences and its disputes with Judaism in mind. The tension with Judaism he finds in the references to believers being expelled from the synagogues (9:22; 12:42–43; 16:2). This does not mean that the Jesus-remembered was a complete creation of the community, and Weiss does not say it was.

As J. A. T. Robinson observed long ago, "John is concerned primarily with theological verity rather than with historical verisimilitude. Yet once again, it is the truth of the history that he claims to present, not of a fictitious tale"; and again, "John seems to be giving the truth, as he sees it, of the history, rather than creating *ex nihilo*." With this Weiss agrees when he says that the FG is "the result of theological reflection on what took place by a community that 'remembers' the past in the light of the Scriptures and the 'teaching' of the Comforter (14:26)."

Weiss interprets the "best wine" being served last almost allegorically, but not unhelpfully. Clearly the custom was to use the best wine first while guests could appreciate its quality. The cheaper wine was produced when the guests were less discerning. "What is this narrative about?" Weiss rhetorically asks. It's about Moses, the efficient steward, who

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and the
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know.



“served the best wine first, when he gave the law. The Christians insist, to the contrary, that the good wine is to be served ‘on the third day.’” “The religion of ritual purifications, the religion of ‘your law’ (10:34; 15:10; 18:31; 19:7), has run out of wine. It has been refurbished with the best wine that is life and truth.” Weiss’s application of this “sign” to the Johannine community’s situation seems reasonable, but is it any less relevant to Jesus’ own disputes with his Jewish contemporaries? Mark 2:21–22 may indicate that it is not.

The authors share an Adventist heritage, so we should analyze how each of them handles the two “signs” involving the Sabbath—the healing of the lame man (5:1–18) and the healing of the man born blind (9:1–41). The earliest Christians, Weiss notes, were Jews, and as Christians they were still as exercised about what works were excluded during the Sabbath as were the Jews themselves. However, the Christian Jews not only cited Scripture, they also appealed to the conduct of Jesus. Picking up on the “until now” (5:17), Weiss concludes that it refers not to the future but to the present as the culmination of a process. Since the Father works continuously, so the Son does the works of the Father while it is day, even on the Sabbath. Christians, too, as with the Father and the Son, work on the Sabbath, that is, “they live in a perennial Sabbath,” constantly bringing “more life to the world.” What this means in the actual worship life of the early

church is not altogether made clear.

Valentine sees the Sabbath as itself a “sign.” She contrasts a zeal for Sabbath observance that allowed persecution (5:16) and plotting to kill on the Sabbath (v. 18) with One who employed the Sabbath as a day for healing and the restoring to life (v. 21). The essence of Valentine’s study leaves the reader with a question, the answer to which she makes inescapable. The Father works on the Sabbath, as both Jesus and his opponents agreed, but who in Jerusalem was doing his work on the Sabbath? The ones plotting homicide or the One performing healings?

The FG lacks any true parables along the lines of the Sower, the Ten Maidens, the Good Samaritan, or the Prodigal Son. What the FG has are dialogical stories, and one of the most powerful, in my opinion, is the healing of the man born blind (John 9:1–41). One of Valentine’s longest chapters is given to this dramatic narrative. The genius of this account is that Jesus is absent for most of it, featuring only at the commencement and at the conclusion. Yet he’s the one on trial, *in absentia*. His defense is left in the hands of an illiterate and formerly



blind beggar. Some advocate, one might wonder. Well, in fact he was as harmless as a dove and as sharp as a serpent. How did our authors deal with this magnificent story?

First up, Valentine disabuses us of any thought that John 9:2 teaches that calamities are a divine punishment for a crime committed by either the parents or the newborn: “Suffering was not an occasion for a *debate*. Rather it was a call to *act* faithfully and to see with new eyes” (italics added). Surprisingly, Weiss found “quite inadequate the notion that sickness is caused by sin.” Valentine argues (and I agree) that this is the very notion that Jesus, in John 9:2, dismisses. In John 16:21 Jesus uses the birth process to illustrate how pain is soon replaced with joy once the baby is in the mother’s arms. Again, I find it surprising that Weiss interprets this as teaching “the notion that a woman’s purpose in life is primarily to bear children.”

Weiss sees the issue over the Sabbath in the healing of the man born blind as reflecting the debate between the Johannine community and their Jewish neighbors. He beautifully juxtaposes the different ways the Pharisees, the parents, and the blind man *know*. The Pharisees *know* Jesus is a sinner (he broke the Sabbath) (9:24); they *know* God spoke through Moses (v. 29a), but they do not *know* where Jesus comes from (vv. 29b, 30). The parents *know* the healed man is their son (v. 20a), but they do not *know* how he sees or who healed him (v. 21). The blind man does not *know* where Jesus is (v. 12), or whether he’s a sinner (v. 25a), or who the Son of man is (v. 36), but one thing he does *know* that though born blind, he now sees (v. 25b). With us, too, smug knowledge can hinder the experience of seeing the light of the world, or, as Valentine puts it, “And then ‘the light of the world’ encounters people who are crippled [John 5], blind [John 9] and mourning [John 11]—suddenly Jesus changes their lives forever.”

Many of Jesus’ followers found it hard to accept the words that unless they ate the flesh

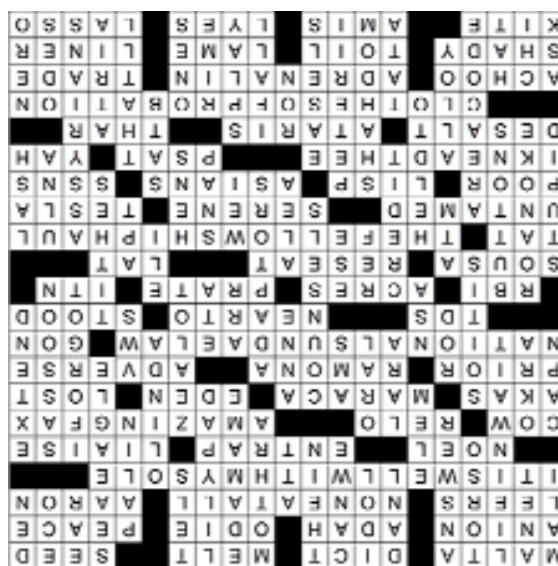
of Jesus and drank his blood they’d have no life in them. Eternal life was only for those who ate his flesh and drank his blood (John 6:53–54). The metaphor becomes less offensive when Weiss informs us that “to eat” in the FG means “to believe.” And things become even clearer when Valentine helps us to see this language in the context of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper in the small house-churches in which the early Christians gathered.

There is much more in these two books worthy of mention: the place of women in the theology of the FG, Weiss’s superb chapter on the “truth” in the FG, the four readers’ response to the FG at the end of Valentine’s book, and the way both writers helpfully segue from the first to the twenty-first century. No reader will leave these books without understanding the Fourth Gospel better. ■

Norman H. Young is a research fellow at Avondale College of Higher Education in Cooranbong, Australia, where he taught as Senior Lecturer from 1973 to 2004. He earned his PhD under F. F. Bruce at Manchester University in the UK and is still trying to understand the Bible better.



Solution to crossword puzzle on back cover



The Christian
Jews not
only cited
Scripture,
they also
appealed to
the conduct
of Jesus.



Before the Wall

BY JOHN R. JONES

Geneva, Switzerland

July 2014

So here we are, Lord—
back in front of that Wall, again.
Rampart, touchstone, stern and silent witness,
site of our returns along half a century's years,
singly or with one another.
Mostly singly.

Feels different, this time. A sense of ultimacy.
We each know it in our bones, though we don't much say it:
Here, at last, is where the pilgrim frame freezes,
and sepia tints the wellspring.

So one last time, Lord?
What shall we salvage of the erstwhile Call?
That imperious summons, whose ancient certainties, so
newly liberating in their day,
also impelled our own.
How now to take new bearings from old waymarks?

Mute, we stand: clinging to one another, listening again as
we have before,
like Rilke before Apollo.

Christus?
check

Fide?

sure

Gratia?

Scriptura?

Gloria Dei?

the familiar inventory—all still there, still reassuring.

It's the solas that get us, now.
Those skullcaps, that once shaped mind and world and
cosmic order,
now speak less of erudition than of enclosure—
A rear-view vision, accelerating in retreat
back behind the budding humanism to which it
gave rise.

So how does this work, for us today?
Is the good old Adventist wholism born merely of exclusion?
A pre-Enlightenment vestige from before the Great Shattering,
when the Truth became truths, and every path its own
justification?

Once the faith that believes is prescribed as the faith that
must be believed,
can *fide* perdure as mere fidelity?
Or the bodhisattvas of grace are proscribed,
is not *gratia* itself denied?

A shift in the wind—less of preachments now, more of
self-reflection.

It's our own lives that call out to be changed.
The old mandate yields to new instincts:
more about humility than hubris.

Are we overreaching, Lord?
In our self-assured drive toward the Absolute,
are you reining us back in to the conditioned,
to the limits of all truth-claims?
And once we share common ground,
can our wholism walk the path of inclusion?

Heroic, magisterial and sure, the iconic figures tower
—and yet fall short.
Our queries outreach their horizons.

Mute, we stand: clinging to one another,
like Esau before Father Isaac.

Yet one blessing left for us, Lord?
With what remnants shall the Remnant march forward?

John R. Jones teaches courses in New Testament studies and world religions in the Divinity School of La Sierra University. Current projects include the development of online courseware in religious studies. He also regularly participates with on-site teams for the denominational accreditation of Seventh-day Adventist institutions of higher education in Asia and Africa.



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Proclaiming the Advert Message

BY CALEB RASMUSSEN

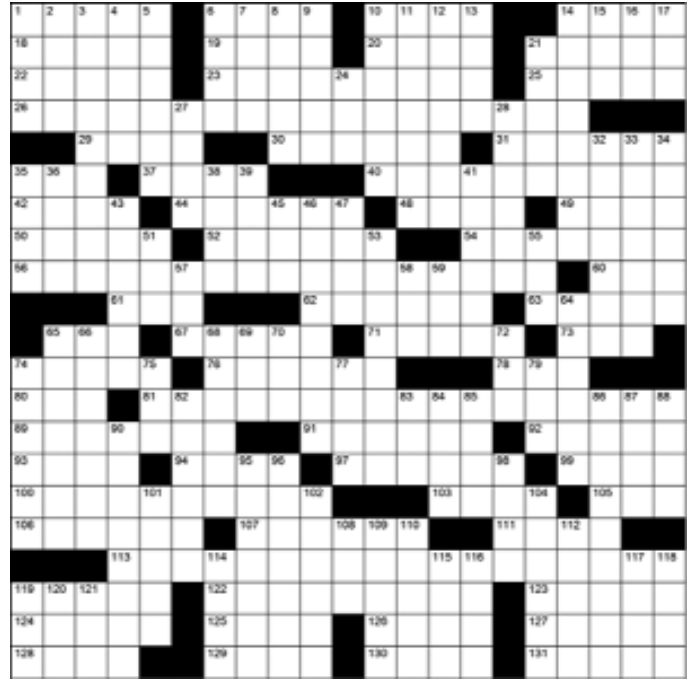
"Thank you all for coming to this month's business meeting. Since tithes have been down recently, we've been looking at some new ways to make ends meet. For a small fee, we're advising local businesses on Adventist-targeted marketing. Here are some of our tentative slogans . . ." (Answers on p. 63.)

ACROSS

- 1 Island on which Paul was shipwrecked
- 6 Wordsmith's ref.
- 10 "The mountains quake before him and the hills ___ away" (Nah. 1:5, NIV)
- 14 Parable of the Sower item
- 18 Negatively charged atom
- 19 Esau's first wife
- 20 "Garfield" dog
- 21 Characteristic of Solomon's reign
- 22 Looks with malicious intent
- 23 Zilch (3 wds.)
- 25 First Israelite high priest
- 26 "Experience our wide selection of comfortable footwear and you'll be saying . . ." (6 wds.)
- 29 The first one can be found in the Adventist hymnal
- 30 Snare
- 31 Communicate
- 35 Representation of a year in Pharaoh's dream
- 37 Move, in real estate lingo
- 40 "At our independent office supply superstore, you're sure to find a fantastic copier, an incredible scanner, or an . . ." (2 wds.)
- 42 Aliases
- 44 Shaker instrument
- 48 Place known for light clothing
- 49 Like a sheep or coin in Jesus' parables
- 50 Earlier
- 52 Quimby of Beverly Cleary's children's books
- 54 Unfavorable
- 56 "Try one scoop of our delicious ice cream and you'll no longer fear the . . ." (3 wds.)
- 60 Geometric suffix
- 61 Football stat.
- 62 "The Lord is ___ all who call on him" (Ps. 145:18, NIV; 2 wds.)
- 63 What Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego conspicuously did
- 65 Result of a solo home run
- 67 Farmland units
- 71 Talk tediously
- 73 BBC competitor
- 74 "The Liberty Bell" composer
- 76 What deacons often have to do when the congregation returns from foot washing
- 78 Map abbreviation
- 80 Skin art, in slang
- 81 "Our movers are so friendly, you'll call your next relocation . . ." (3 wds.)
- 89 Still wild
- 91 Unruffled
- 92 Rival of Edison
- 93 Like the widow who gave a small offering
- 94 It might make a sinner thinner?
- 97 Figures in many Eric B. Hare stories
- 99 ID digits
- 100 "My schedule at Three Angels Massage is flexible: Every hour . . ." (3 wds.)
- 103 Exam taken by many academy juniors
- 105 Slangy affirmative
- 106 One must do it to Dead Sea water before drinking
- 107 Early videogame consoles
- 111 "___ she blows!" (whaler's cry)
- 113 "We'll never require the mark of the beast when you buy your new wardrobe at . . ." (3 wds.)
- 119 Sound made seven times by the Shunnamite's son when Elisha resurrected him
- 122 Flight-or-fight hormone
- 123 Merchant's concern
- 124 Like Jonah's spot, before the worm came
- 125 One result of the curse in Genesis 3
- 126 Like a man later healed by Peter
- 127 Protective covering
- 128 Bird described as unclean in Leviticus
- 129 British writer Kingsley
- 130 Caustic chemicals
- 131 A Pathfinder with the knot-tying honor can probably make one

DOWN

- 1 Landlocked country in the West-Central Africa Division
- 2 "How useless to spread ___ where every bird can see it!" (Prov. 1:17, NIV; 2 wds.)
- 3 Prepare an ambush (3 wds.)
- 4 Trunk
- 5 A gentle one turns away wrath, according to Proverbs
- 6 ___ Webster (name of Twain's "Celebrated Jumping Frog")
- 7 The golden calf, e.g.
- 8 "___ find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?" (Gen. 41:38, NIV; 2 wds.)
- 9 ___ crowd (2 wds.)
- 10 Insectoid Godzilla foe
- 11 Green soybeans
- 12 Frog's perch
- 13 Archaeological mounds, from the Hebrew word for "heap"
- 14 Fish-eating predator (2 wds.)
- 15 Body part reattached by Jesus
- 16 Environmental prefix
- 17 Daniel was cast into one
- 21 Former governor of Alaska
- 24 Telecom letters
- 27 Acad. preceder
- 28 Well-preserved Brazilian colonial city
- 32 Excuse for a lapse (2 wds.)



- 33 British haridresser Vidal
- 34 Reach out
- 35 Joseph Bates's seagoing title, informally
- 36 Gumbo vegetable
- 38 *Tomb Raider* heroine Croft
- 39 Televangelist Roberts
- 41 Epithet of the disciple Simon
- 43 "___ with everyone born of the Spirit" (Jn. 3:8, NIV; 3 wds.)
- 45 Short mornings?
- 46 Part of many Ellen White compilation titles
- 47 Youngest of the Brontë sisters
- 51 Possession of 25-Across which budded
- 53 They help things come together
- 55 Beetles and Rabbits, e.g.
- 57 Code-cracking org.
- 58 Pirate's exclamation
- 59 Letter found in early copies of the New Testament?
- 64 Stewardship sermon topic
- 65 North Carolina colony that mysteriously vanished
- 66 Fasteners
- 68 Ellen White receives one in *The Record Keeper*
- 69 Whistle blower, for short
- 70 Andrews Univ. to General Conference HQ, on a compass
- 72 He told Samuel to go back to bed
- 74 "Whoever hates correction is ___" (Prov. 12:1, NIV)
- 75 Cash cache
- 77 "___ *iacta est*" (Caesar's Rubicon-crossing words)
- 79 Fitting
- 82 Didn't let go of (2 wds.)
- 83 Chinese dynasty contemporaneous with the Council of Ephesus
- 84 Lose it
- 85 Layers, of a sort
- 86 Captors of the ten northern tribes of Israel
- 87 Radius counterpart
- 88 Punishment endured many times by Paul
- 90 Loma Linda University's is 909 (2 wds.)
- 95 Iran, before Khomeini
- 96 A pope who took this name might be seen as rather presumptuous
- 98 Letters seen on many choral scores
- 101 The belly and thighs of Nebuchadnezzar's statue, metallurgically
- 102 Stands for Harry Anderson and Nathan Greene
- 104 "___ be the day!"
- 108 *Prophethess of Health* author Numbers
- 109 "My foes will rejoice when ___" (Ps. 13:4, NIV; 2 wds.)
- 110 Spread out
- 112 Heart parts
- 114 Farewell
- 115 Crystalline coating in winter
- 116 Small offerings
- 117 Lyric poems
- 118 Ruler in *The Acts of the Apostles*
- 119 It's accompanied by "seek" and "knock" in Matthew 7:7
- 120 Combined with rho, an early symbol of Christianity
- 121 Mitre or yarmulke, e.g.

Caleb Rasmussen teaches seventh- and eighth-grade English as well as fifth- and sixth-grade everything at Chico Oaks Adventist School in Chico, California. Other crosswords he's written have appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.