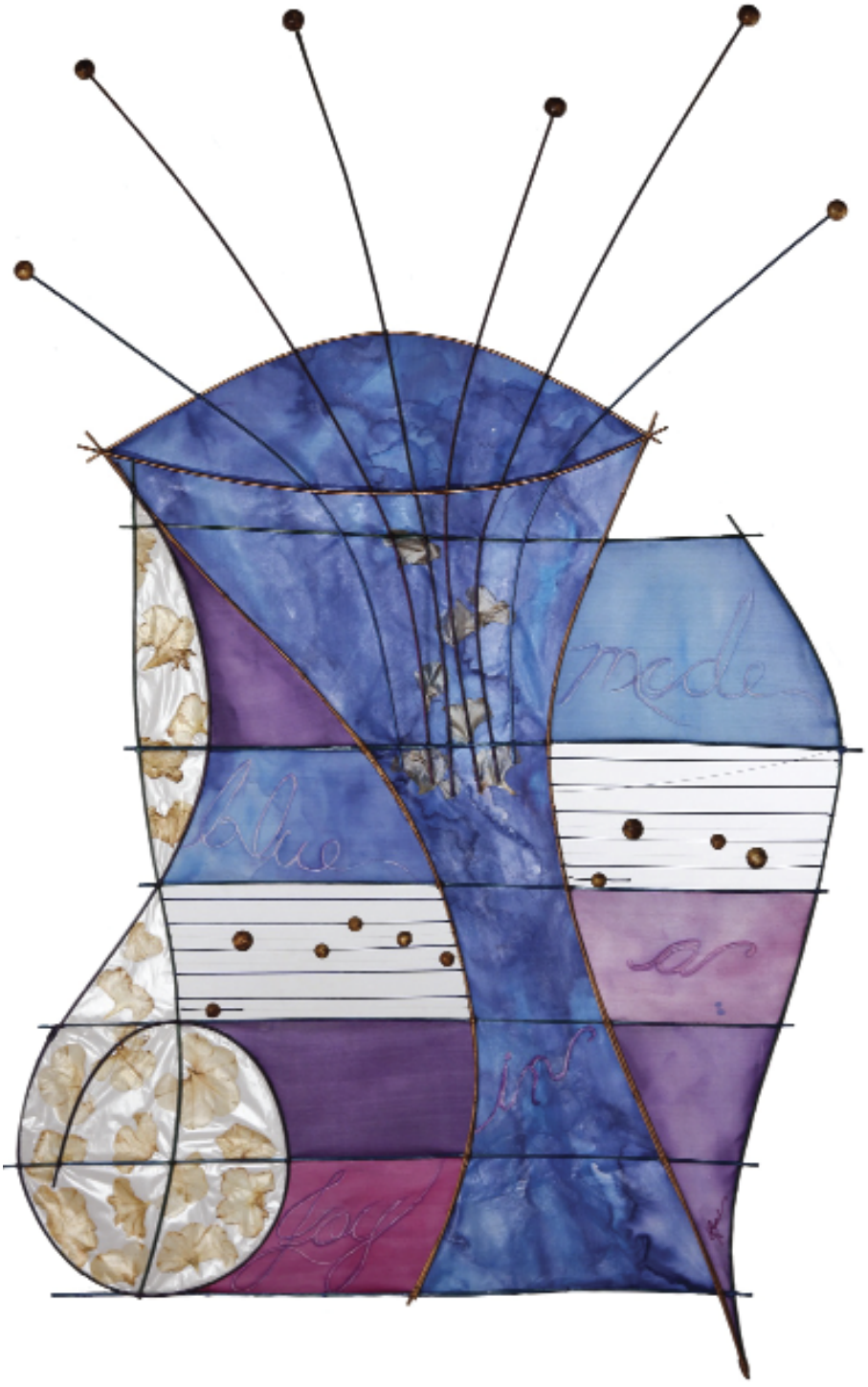
community through conversation

SPECTRUM



To Hymn or Not to Hymn

Adventist Hymnody and the Wonder of Creation

How Different Generations Read the Bible

James Londis on the Hermeneutics of Delay

What Shall We Do with Ellen White

Vision for the Medium: North American Adventism and Mass Media Today

VOLUME 42 ISSUE 4 ■ FALL 2014

community through conversation
SPECTRUM

About the Cover Art:
"Blue Note" by Janene Evard.

Artist's Statement:
Light—its interplay on surfaces and through surfaces, creating shadows, making new color, new shapes, defining edges or softening them—has always fascinated me. Thus translucency and playing with colors and their evolutions in many forms has been the background of all of my work, creating the illusion of multilayered surfaces, if not the reality of three-dimensional form.

I work with many media, from hard surfaces such as fused glass to silks and nylons that can blow in the wind or hang slightly away from to the wall, whose shapes may be held in place by framing with bamboo, paper, carbon, or fiberglass.

Working on ideas in my studio is a long prayer of meditation and interaction with my Creator. He is both the giver and coordinator of ideas, the master teacher who helps me when I am stuck, and the one who holds my hand when I don't think it is good enough. I have so much to learn

SPECTRUM is a journal established to encourage Seventh-day Adventist participation in the discussion of contemporary issues from a Christian viewpoint, to look without prejudice at all sides of a subject, to evaluate the merits of diverse views, and to foster Christian intellectual and cultural growth. Although effort is made to ensure accurate scholarship and discriminating judgment, the statements of fact are the responsibility of contributors, and the views individual authors express are not necessarily those of the editorial staff as a whole or as individuals.

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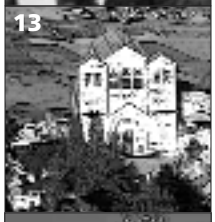

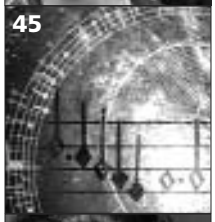

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Music of the Spheres

Poem

EDITORIAL ■ *from the editor*

Name That Tune | BY BONNIE DWYER

What is the title of the most famous Adventist hymn?

Think *Voice of Prophecy*.

Is it "Lift up the Trumpet?"

Think Wayne Hooper.

Is it "We Have This Hope?"

It's both. And the two songs have now been combined into a magisterial production number for the upcoming General Conference in San Antonio. Arranged by Williams Costa (director of the General Conference communication department) for orchestra, choir, and children's choir, the sheet music was distributed at Annual Council in October 2014, along with a DVD with tracks to use in rehearsal.

When I talked to Jim Hooper, son of Wayne, about the new arrangement, I asked what his father might have thought of having his most famous composition used in this way. "He would have loved it," Jim said.

Talking about Adventist hymns always make me think of Wayne Hooper and James White. To me, they are the Adventist hymnal heroes: James, for publishing the very first hymnal and for helping us sing our way through the Great Disappointment. And then Hooper for his work on the 1985 hymnal. In the 1970s, Hooper began his campaign for a new hymnal by bringing to the attention of the brethren how long it had been since the previous hymnal was published, in 1941. Once a committee had finally been appointed, Hooper worked full-time on the project for four years, writing arrangements and making sure everything was in order. Then he spent another six years working on a companion book to go with the hymnal, with stories and details about each song.

Perhaps it is time to sing that tune again about the need for a new hymnal, now that it has been thirty years since the last hymnal was published. Worship music has changed significantly in that time. And as Kendra Haloviak Valentine reminds us in her article on hymnody in this issue, singing together is important. Ron Lawson shows us in his piece how it is fragmenting. Richard Hickam of the Florida Hospital Church recently pointed out to us that, unlike in past years, for the upcoming General Conference there has not been an invitation to musicians to create new music.

In addition to music, we look at Bible reading in this issue. The study process created by the Theology of Ordination Study Committee revealed the difficulties that we have reading the Bible together. Three different scriptural interpretations emerged around the topic of women's ordination. Somer George tells us about how those readings were presented at Annual Council in 2014, as she recounts her experience as a lay delegate to the General Conference annual meeting.

We have three people helping us think about how we read the Bible: Smuts van Rooyen, James Londis, and Timothy Floyd. Each generation reads in a different manner, we learn from Floyd. Van Rooyen takes us to the text that shows God's priorities as we read. Londis helps us see how reading affects our own story as a church.

This issue's exegesis of our community life includes a look at Adventist television media in North America. And we close with a tribute to the exegesis of existence as experienced through the music of Franz Schubert. Check our website for links to the music in the Schubert story.

Janene Evard, our cover artist, created her exuberant art piece while at her home in the Swiss Alps and titled it "Joy Upon the Mountain."

We wish you joy as 2014 comes to a close, and we look forward to good times singing and reading together in 2015. ■

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.

What Shall We Do with Ellen White?

BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

COLLAGE BY LAURA LAMAR / AMPHORA: WWW.VILLA.CULTURE.FR_MEDIATHEQUE_COMMUNS

"Very simply—I want honesty."—Søren Kierkegaard

If the person who is forgiven much can love much, as Jesus said, such a person can also face self-deception and begin to overcome it. The virtues grow in the soil of grace. What is true for the individual, moreover, is true for the community: grace can burn away our sins. And now, with the new flowering of Ellen White scholarship, it is high time—again—for honesty about the church's prophet. What Kierkegaard said in his criticism of the church in Denmark, each of us must also say.

As recently as October, the editors of the *Adventist Review* published, in the monthly edition called *Adventist World*, an important sermon that declared the "Spirit of Prophecy"—Ellen White's prophetic ministry—to be "absolutely reliable." This phrase is admirable for its clarity and does produce, as good prose will, a shock of recognition. But what we recognize is that the claim the phrase expresses is not true. Given all we've learned since the 1970s, it comes across as sheer denial, even as *willful* disregard of truth. And you cannot read *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, the just-published Oxford University Press volume edited by Terrie Dopp Aamodt, the late Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers, without realizing all of this anew.

This book was written mainly by persons with links to Adventism. Nineteen of the 22 contributors are Adventist by current practice or background. More than half have given their lives to the church and its mission. The 18 essays and illuminating foreword peek into corners of Ellen White's life not yet fully explored and constitute an undoubtable challenge to the convention that grants her, as one contributor puts it, "a status very close to fundamentalist inerrancy." You can't think this challenge comes to nothing without *willing to look away*.

These scholars describe a woman who was, especially by the standards of her day, truly remarkable. Ellen White was insightful and visionary; confident, ready to stand up to men, gutsy in the face of controversy; tenacious and effective as a leader. She was and is our prophet, and the book gives us great reason to admire her. But Ellen White was also flawed. She said things that were wrong; used passages from other writers (including the historical errors) as if they were her own; fell short of sufficient humility and openness about her own finitude and brokenness.

Some were aware of these things even while she was alive, and vigorous debate concerning Ellen White's authority followed her death in 1915. The winners, as we all know, were the ones who ascribed to her a kind of "fundamentalist inerrancy." Their influence, moreover, kept the transcript of the 1919 Bible Conference, where key conversations took place, hidden from general view. So most of today's older Adventists grew up not realizing there was any doubt about what had come to be Ellen White orthodoxy. But the transcript from that conference eventually became public; and even before that, scholars began to review her life and work

using the standards of contemporary historiography. Now everyone who reads with an honest heart knows that the old orthodoxy fails. Although *Ellen Harmon White* underscores the substantial reasons to appreciate its subject, the book also reinforces the perception we now have that she was a fully earthen vessel, deficient and incomplete.

But disagreements about all this—disagreements amounting to communal brokenness—will doubtless persist. Paradigm shifts are like dream monsters, scary and beyond our control. What shall we do?

Part of the difficulty is that the church came to have an unhealthy dependence on Ellen White's advice. In a paper presented last summer to a conference at Friedensau Adventist University on Adventists and World War I, Gilbert Valentine, a professor at La Sierra University, described the frustration church leaders felt when Ellen White could not help settle questions related to the demands of the military. Eighty-six years old at the outbreak of World War I, she was too weak to come to the table, and confronting life without a *functioning* prophet was bewildering. For many, the prospect of life without an *infallible* prophet is alike bewildering.

Whatever we do, then, we must do with studied pastoral sensitivity.

A good first step would be to cut the overstatement. Traits attributable to God alone should not be attributed to Ellen White or anyone else. And not only must we stop using phrases that mislead, we must explain why. Ellen White herself said that "God and heaven alone are infallible" (*Review and Herald,* July 26, 1892). And from the greater light of Scripture we learn the same: "God is in heaven" and we "upon earth" (Ecclesiastes 5:2); God's "ways" and "thoughts" are "higher" than ours (Isaiah 55:8, 9); here and now we "know in part and we prophesy in part" (1 Corinthians 13:9, 10). I don't know what could be clearer, except that it's still not clear to conventional Adventism. From the press and the pulpit, these passages should be repeated again and again—not to discourage us but to make us truthful as well as passionate in faith.

Another step would be to grant, again repeatedly, the brokenness of many of the great heroes of our faith. David, the beloved composer of many Psalms, was at one point a murderous adulterer. Jonah ran away from responsibility, and after a second response to the divine calling, pouted over an outcome he did not expect or want. Or consider these examples from later than biblical times: Martin Luther heaped venom on the Jews and supported violence against his Christian enemies; Martin Luther King cheated on his wife and plagiarized parts of his doctoral dissertation. Most of us admire these people and quote them without reluctance. We're troubled, to be sure, but we adjust to the reality that those who speak for God fall short.

Still another step would be to tell the good stories and quote the best quotes with open, grateful hearts. No one should roar into the Michigan camp meeting bent on sledgehammer iconoclasm. Such a thing would do needless harm and be itself dishonest. Ellen White was a smart, persuasive, and farsighted leader. She stood tall when women were deemed undeserving of the vote, let alone leadership in society and church. As the key shaper of our heritage she offers wisdom we need to hear. We can no longer listen uncritically, but we can still listen, and we should. Her guts, for one thing, could inspire us to show some guts.

Biff Loman, the elder son in *Death of a Salesman*, bursts out angrily, "We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house!" The Loman house was dysfunctional, and dysfunction threatens ours. We cannot fool our way—or lie our way—into faithfulness and flourishing. We have to tell the truth.

Dan Jackson, the North American Division president, ended a sermon at the Division's 2014 year-end meetings by saying emphatically, "I love the Seventh-day Adventist movement. It. Will. Not. Fail." But it *will* fail—unless we tell the truth. He and his fellow leaders, and all those, like you and me, whose sway is some smaller corner of the church's life, have an evermore urgent responsibility, and it is this:

We. Must. Tell. The. Truth. ■

We cannot fool our way—or lie our way—into faithfulness and flourishing. We have to tell the truth.

Charles Scriven chairs Adventist Forum.

An Annual Council Delegate's Memoirs

My Place at the Table

Thoughts on being nominated to the General Conference Executive Committee

BY SOMER GEORGE

2011

There was not a single person wearing jeans. Other than me. In fact, what I thought was a nice, put-together, if a bit casual outfit suddenly felt way out of place. It was as if I had shown up at a formal cocktail party in yoga pants and running shoes. The anxiety about my appearance suddenly disappeared when I heard my name shouted across the lobby of the General Conference building, "Somer!"

I looked up and saw, walking toward me, an old friend, one I had not seen for nearly 15 years, whom I had last met on another continent. Peter and I had worked at a summer day camp together in our teens and twenties, both in the United States and in his native country of Slovakia. Neither of us expected to meet the other, years later, at the General Conference Annual Council meetings. And yet this unexpected meeting with Peter made me relax a bit and decide that maybe, just maybe, I would stay, jeans and all.

In spite of the fact that I have been a Seventh-day Adventist most of my life, I had never heard of the Executive Committee of the General Conference; if it ever came up, I didn't pay any attention. So when I received a letter in the mail informing me that I was a member of this committee, I was confused. What was this about, and how did I become a member? Did I want to be a member?

At first I set the letter aside, too busy with young children and graduate school to focus on something as random as this. But when I received another letter in the mail, this one congratulating me on my committee member status, I decided to at least investigate and determine whether this was something I wanted to be a part of.

I soon realized that the GC Executive Committee is the highest governing body of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is made up of General Conference officers, Division and Union leadership, plus a few lay people (you know, for diversity). At the committee's Annual Council meetings each October, "leaders from around the world meet to discuss the church's finances and resolve issues within the church"

As a woman in the church, did I really have a voice?

View of the 2014 Annual Council Meeting at the General Conference.

PHOTO: JARED WRIGHT

(according to Wikipedia).

Apparently my name had been taken to the committee for delegate consideration by someone I know who was a General Conference officer. The fact that I was a woman, under 40, and active in the church surely influenced my being chosen.

And yet I felt torn. On one hand, this felt like an honor, and an unusual opportunity. On the other hand, my skepticism about my church and its leadership left me feeling reluctant. Would this bolster my sometimes shaky faith in the church, or might it feed my growing concern about the way things were being run? Did I really want to know what was going on at the highest levels of the church? Or would I be better off letting someone else take my spot, someone who could lend 100-percent support where I had mostly curiosity and doubt.

The culmination of years of study by the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) would be presented and voted on. So why wasn't my heart in it?

Eventually, the curiosity won out. Plus, I'd get to stay in a hotel room for free for a couple nights and eat out every day. How bad could that be?

So here I was, in 2011, at my first meeting, dramatically underdressed and feeling apprehensive amid a sea of black suits. And not only was I wearing jeans (with a nice shirt and scarf) but I was also late. I had opted to bring my husband and kids with me for the weekend, and though I had intended to check in to the hotel and change clothes before attending the Friday evening meeting, I made a last-minute decision to stop by the building instead to register and check things out while hubby and kids went to the hotel. After the picture was taken for my badge, I was handed a binder the size of a briefcase, and then Peter and I walked together into the auditorium.

I was immediately struck by how few women I saw in the crowd. My anxiety shifted slightly to irritation. Is it only men who make decisions for our church? I didn't realize at the time that many of the women present that night were wives of delegates and GC employees. Most of them would later disappear when business meetings began.

On Sabbath, there was a sermon by Ted Wilson, with a generous number of lengthy Ellen G. White quotes on the screen. I worked to quietly occupy my children while he spoke of "the blueprint" and his "vision for the cities." The next few days were a blur of reports and church business. While the videos and presentations from each Division were often interesting and even inspiring, it also felt like each one was shouting, "Look at us! Look at all the wonderful things we are doing to further the work! God is blessing us so much! Yeah! Beat that!" But, of course, in much more spiritual language.

As the days went by, I had the strong feeling that I had become invisible. No one was unfriendly, but no one was very welcoming either; no eye contact, no smiles, no small talk. Men of all nations treated me as if I were not even there. They were about the important business of the church; I was only a layperson, a "young person," not to mention a woman.

I suppose I was part of the problem. I knew no one but Peter, and I didn't take much initiative to make connections with anyone but the few other women laypeople. I felt a sort of kinship with these women from New Zealand, Argentina, Michigan, South Africa, Zimbabwe. We might have different views on ordination or church policy, but we were connected because of our gender, and our scarcity. By the end of the session, I knew I had made new friends.

When the General Conference archivist mentioned that nearly 60 percent of the church membership is women, I looked around me and wondered, Where are the women? Why are there so few of us present here? How is it that a room full of men in their sixties is making the decisions that impact our church? I'm glad there is diversity in culture, but how about diversity in age? Diversity in gender? Suddenly, I began to feel angry. Maybe this was the way of worldly government, but we are the church, the body of Christ. Our entire church is based at least

partly on the writings of a woman whom we constantly quote as authoritative. How could the numbers be so unbalanced?

Soon there was more fuel added to the fire. A motion was brought to the floor to allow "commissioned" (and not just ordained) individuals to become Conference presidents. Although it was argued that this would open up opportunities of leadership for both men and women who are not ordained, the conversation (of course) focused on the "women" aspect. The discussion began. And quite a discussion it was. Although Ted Wilson was the chair, he began by giving his opinion on the motion. Of course, the president's opinion carries a great deal of weight, particularly within certain cultures, and few seemed willing to speak against him. The highlight for me was when Ella Simmons, one of the general vice presidents of the General Conference, stood and spoke. Her words were strong, laced with emotion, and I felt myself cry out a silent "AMEN!" as she spoke of the (now overused) term, "unity in diversity." Finally, the vote was tallied: 117, yes, 167, no. The body had spoken. And women were denied entry once again.

I suddenly realized why this elected group was almost entirely men. With the exception of a few lay members, Division and Union secretaries, and General Conference employees, everyone was male because of the requirement that to be a president, one must be ordained. Women could not be ordained, and therefore they could not become Conference, Union, or Division presidents. Since Conference, Union, and Division presidents make up the majority of this governing body, women would continue to be under-represented.

I left the meetings with a sour taste in my mouth, and were it not for friends I had made, I would have said that I'd have a hard time returning. When I got home, very few seemed to care much about the issue anyway; only my close friends even knew I had been a delegate. The people from my small church knew nothing of the GC Executive Committee or Annual Council meetings; only a few even knew the name of the GC president. I quickly put the meetings behind me.

Yet sometimes the questions would return. As a woman in the church, did I really have a voice? Was I just a token member on this committee? Would my opinions be heard? I had always been a supporter of cultural diversity, but I found myself fighting back resentment toward my brothers in Africa and South America whom I felt looked at me as less able than they to lead. Was I prideful? Probably. In my mind I critiqued their logic and concluded what seemed to me to be their unfair discrimination.

Over the course of that next year, Unions began to take action. I followed along in *Spectrum* and *Adventist Today*, which seemed to be the only places I could get honest news on what was happening. I quietly supported these "rogue" conferences as they made a move that validated the work that many women had been doing for years, and finally made a public recognition of their calling. And there was much talk, which I followed with interest, about what would happen at the next Annual Council. Would the conferences that appointed or ordained women be rebuked? Disfellowshiped? Could they disfellowship an entire Union? Would these actions be accepted? Would it break the church? I was secretly proud to be a part of one of these unions that moved forward according to conscience rather than just playing by the rules.

I stayed.

I am here.

Sometimes

I know why

that is.

Other times

I don't have

a clue.

Michael L. Ryan, a General Conference vice president and chair of the ordination session, waits as delegates vote on Tuesday, Oct. 14, 2014.

VIVIENE MARTINELLI / ANN

2012

This year the anticipation was high. My heart was warmed as I sat in on the meeting of North American Division delegates and listened to the Pacific Union president share his experience of his wish to stay out of the fray, and the Lord clearly compelling him to stand up for the women of the church. It was one of those moments when I felt like, I can stay. I am welcome. There are good men here who will not limit whatever God may call me (or anyone else) to do.

Then came Mark Finley's sermon about unity in the church. It was well delivered, as usual, and spoke to the way that these issues were resolved by the apostles in the early Christian church. It was clearly intended to guide and form the following conversation. But what was difficult were the strong statements that others made afterward about how clearly the Holy Spirit had guided the committee that drafted the statement of rebuke to the rebel conferences. Can one dare argue with the decision of the Holy Spirit? When the president says, "The Holy Spirit was clearly present and led us to this," how difficult it must be to choose to vote in opposition. And of course, very few did. Fortunately, while the document did not accept the actions of the unions, it also did little more than offer a rebuke and deny recognition to the women who had already been ordained. Several delegates stood up calling on the unions to repent, but most spoke in support of the document. I was disappointed that neither the president of the Columbia Union or that of the Pacific Union was given time to speak and explain why they had made the decision that they did to allow women as Conference leaders.

Time for presentation number three . . . women are a second choice, to be utilized in case of "emergency," but not God's ideal. Really?

I continued to feel somewhat invisible throughout the week, but I enjoyed seeing the friends I had made the previous year. I loved the fact that some had their babies or young children with them and were still able to participate. My only real conversation with any delegate who was not a layperson was over lunch with Clinton Wahlen from the Biblical Research Institute. While I disagreed strongly with his opinion regarding male headship, he took the time to inquire about my opinion, and he listened. I appreciated his willingness to speak and his gentle spirit, even as I felt constrained and boxed in by his perspective.

As I drove home that year, I could not shake the feeling of oppression that hung over me. I wanted to leave. I wanted to feel freedom. These did not feel like my people. I knew that God was bigger than all of this. How could it be that all of these people were as prayerful and godly as they seemed, and yet there could be this much spiritual pressure to conform? These questions lingered with me over the next year.

2013

The 2013 meetings were much more low-key. Nothing highly contentious, just business as usual. There was that chance meeting with Ella Simmons in the women's restroom where I expressed my appreciation for her leadership. She embraced me, and after a short conversation, where I know I saw tears in her eyes, and I felt them in mine as well, she said with conviction, "There is still room for us here. Don't give up." And while I do not personally feel called to become a pastor or to be ordained, I pass on those words to all the women out there who have heard that call from God that they cannot ignore, and for whom the church's recognition would mean so much more than just a pay raise.

This year I spent even more time with the friends I had met the years before. We had lunch together in the General Conference cafeteria and talked about our families, our lives back home, and the things that we shared in common. One evening, a group of us went out to dinner together, and as we talked and laughed, I looked around and marveled. Here we were, a group of women from four different continents, enjoying an experience that few people ever get to have. We are connected by our shared womanhood, motherhood, and faith, and the fact that we are part of the same church that in many ways bridges language and culture.

2014

By the time 2014 rolled around, I found myself feeling increasingly apathetic about the meetings. This was supposed to be a big one, the last before the GC Session in San Antonio in 2015. The culmination of years of study by the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC) would be presented and voted on. So why wasn't my heart in it?

Maybe it was because I was feeling maxed out on life with two kids, a career, and an adult daughter moving back home with her two children. With continued wars in the Middle East, the crisis on our border, children starving all over the world, I just couldn't muster up the energy for Annual Council. I had also come to terms (sort of) with the fact that my church didn't feel so much like mine anymore. I loved my church for the friends it gave me, the emphasis on Jesus, health, and the Sabbath. But whether it was the "remnant" church and had the absolute truth was less important. I didn't feel the drive to reform it or change it, but instead to simply live my life with as much integrity as I could.

I still loved worshiping with my friends and the fact that we had shared values; I still loved my local Adventist school with its safe environment and feeling of community for my kids; I still loved God and believed that he loved me. Whether we all agreed on topics like women's ordination, homosexuality, or creation timelines didn't matter. And yet that didn't mean I didn't care about the issues. I cared a lot, and maybe that was the problem. My caring made it difficult at times to want to stick around. I felt less earnest and yet more honest this time. I wasn't worried about my clothes or fitting in. I wasn't offended by men who walked right past me without noticing I was there. Honestly, what I wanted most was to take a nap in my hotel room, read some books, and write about what I was experiencing.

I had once thought of studying theology, of becoming a pastor. I had been in leadership roles in some earlier times. I was deeply interested in the Bible and in people. I had been affirmed by some, and yet I had this feeling that there might not be room for me. And honestly, I don't regret that. Knowing myself as I do now, the pastoral calling would have been a difficult choice.

And I love my career. I am a counselor. I work with adoptive and foster families, doing assessments of attachment relationships and providing help to parents who are struggling to meet their children's needs. My boss is a man. I work with men and women. I am never made to feel that I cannot play a leadership role or that I am limited by my gender. When at work, I am me. I have freedom. I am not placed in a box and expected to stay there.

I showed up at Annual Council Monday morning, having opted to stay home over the weekend with my husband and kids. I spent the morning listening to financial reports and some debate over wording of the church's fundamental beliefs. While I like the idea of using gender-inclusive language, other changes seem to narrow the meaning of fundamental doctrines and leave less room for question. For some, this is important to do; to me it feels a bit too tight.

After lunch I meet a friend, and we're off to downtown Washington DC for an early dinner and concert. I wonder briefly what I am missing at the meetings, with a twinge of guilt, but finally I feel relaxed and free to be myself for a while. At the concert the mood is uplifting and even worshipful at times, an interesting experience for a secular concert. In this room I feel alive and welcomed. People are smiling and joyful. I am not stifled or confined. Here I could be a drummer, or a pastor, or even a president. Here I can stand by men who see me not only as a woman but also as a person. Why does this feel more like church?

That night I stay up too late talking with my friend, analyzing the personalities of Ted Wilson, Mark Finley, Jan Paulsen, and even Ellen White (yes, we have a strange way of having fun). I wake up early the next day and make it to the meetings ten minutes early.

She embraced me and said with conviction, "There is still room for us here. Don't give up."

JARED WRIGHT

Pastor Brenda Billingy speaking for women's ordination at the 2014 Annual Council meeting

Today is the big day. Today is the day that we decide whether or not women can be ordained.

As I walk toward the door, my heart is beating to the words, "Why I stayed." You may remember when stories and videos of domestic violence were in our news feed, and the Twitter campaign that encouraged women to explain why they stayed in these relationships where they were being mistreated. (Do not get me wrong: I am not comparing the church to a violent spouse.) The phrase repeated itself over and over in my mind as I walked to the front door. Why have I stayed? Why am I still here? The questions seemed almost more important than the answers. Because the questions say something: I stayed. I am here. Sometimes I know why that is. Other times I don't have a clue. But, nonetheless, I stayed. And I continue to stay. Maybe, for now, that is enough.

In the first session, Artur Stele, chair of TOSC, stated that the one thing he learned from the experience of being on the study committee is that people do not change their minds; and I knew that he was right. The statement on the theology of ordination was agreed upon, by TOSC and by us. That was the easy part. It was this troublesome question of women that was so contentious. We prayed and prayed and prayed some more, as though, if we pleaded enough with God, he would hear our prayers and make us all agree. He declined.

Three differing positions were presented. When Clinton Wahlen got up, I began feeling anxious. As he spoke, I had to consciously keep from fidgeting; I looked around, trying to determine the reactions of others. He presents so nicely, so clearly; I began to fear that everyone would believe him. But, please, Lord, let him not be right. I can't stay if he's right.

And then he's done and we are on to position number two. This one is more like a sermon, less like a lecture. No slideshow. His arguments are compelling. But he places less emphasis on ordination itself and more on refuting headship theology and advocating the freedom of women to teach and preach. Come on, now. I'm going a little off track here, but are we really still debating this one? Whether women can teach and preach or not? If not, then let's stop arguing about it and all go home and put on our head coverings. The prophet of this church taught and preached and had authority over men (and still does). Maybe it was given to her by God, rather than by a document from the church, but is that any less significant? We have women teaching and preaching all over the world. What exactly is it that we're considering here? Are we really wondering whether women should be made to stop?

According to the statement we agreed on, ordination is the church "publicly recognizing those whom the Lord has called and equipped for local and global Church ministry" ("Consensus Statement on a Seventh-day Adventist Theology of Ordination," p. 21). It seems that the sticking point must be the statement that says that ordination also "confers representative authority upon individuals for the specific work of ministry to which they are appointed" (p. 21). This does not "convey special qualities" or introduce "kingly hierarchy" (pp. 21, 22). It does not give the one who is ordained authority over the male and female membership, but it does give representational authority. And this representative authority and public recognition, it seems, is what women cannot have.

But back to the presentation. Smoothly delivered, refuting the points made by the previous speaker concerning headship theology. Women can be called, can do whatever work God gives them to do; and as a church we should recognize that without getting hung up on gender.

We break for lunch. I decide to skip the crowd and the long wait for lunch and return to my hotel room for a quick nap. Then back to the meetings. I drive back ten minutes early, but the parking lot is completely full. By the time I find parking and get to the auditorium I am ten minutes late. I take my seat and watch another Division's presentation on evangelism. Time for presentation number three.

This one is pleasantly presented as well, and sounds so reasonable and moderate. Except for one thing—women are a second choice, to be utilized in case of "emergency," but not God's ideal. Really? While it may not be more

offensive than choice number one, it's still difficult to accept. It's not a case of "men are the head over women, period," but God would like men to be over women because that's best. If that doesn't happen, God will concede to let women fill positions of leadership.

With very little discussion, the three reports are accepted by vote.

Then comes the part we've all been waiting for . . . time to discuss the reports and put it to a vote. Elder Wilson stands up to the microphone. He explains that all the GC officers along with the Division presidents have gotten together and drafted a document that will be sent to the GC Session for a vote. Copies of this document are passed around, and I read through it. It sounds reasonable. Wait, though. At the end it says that the Executive Committee refers the question of whether women can be ordained by division or not to the GC Session in San Antonio.

What? Weren't we assured last year that there would be a decision here? A recommendation from us to take to the GC Session? That after all these years, this question would be resolved once and for all? And weren't we at least going to discuss the three positions that had been presented?

Apparently this was not the case. According to Ted Wilson, the agreement among the members of General Conference and Division Officers (GCDO) committee was unanimous. There had been a "sweet spirit" among them, and with much prayer it was clear that the Holy Spirit had led them to this decision. The only question left was to decide if the Holy Spirit was correct (my words, not his!). A motion was made to accept the document containing the question (of whether to allow Divisions to choose to ordain women) being sent to the GC Session where it belongs. It was seconded, and discussion ensued.

But not discussion about the three positions on women's ordination. Instead, it was discussion on whether we should decide this question now or pass the buck forward (once again). While there were many who supported the document, others encouraged the group to "take the leadership," "get this thing done—we've been debating this for years." Discussion was cordial and contained. There were brief moments of passion, but most seemed resigned.

I considered going to the mic. But my arguments were about the topic of ordination itself, not over whether to vote that day or to wait until 2015. In the moment I wasn't sure what made more sense concerning the actual motion and did not feel prepared to speak to that issue. Finally the vote was taken, and the document was endorsed. The entire question would be sent to the next GC Session and not decided at Annual Council.

And it was a good thing, because it was 6:00 p.m., and no more time had been allotted for discussion. What if, after all of those hours of debate, we decided not to vote yes, not to pass it on to San Antonio? What if we wanted to discuss the issue itself and send on a recommendation? Then what? How did they know which way the decision would go and plan the time accordingly?

And so the saga continues. The debate will continue in San Antonio next year with a much bigger group. And unless they decide to let divisions decide on the issue themselves, the struggle will not end.

And me? I'm still here. The issues come and they go. I get mad, I feel resigned. I am joyful and connected. I feel alone and out of place. I speak up. I stay quiet. Whatever happens here, life will continue on. And this is my church, like it or not. ■

And so the saga continues. . . . And this is my church, like it or not.

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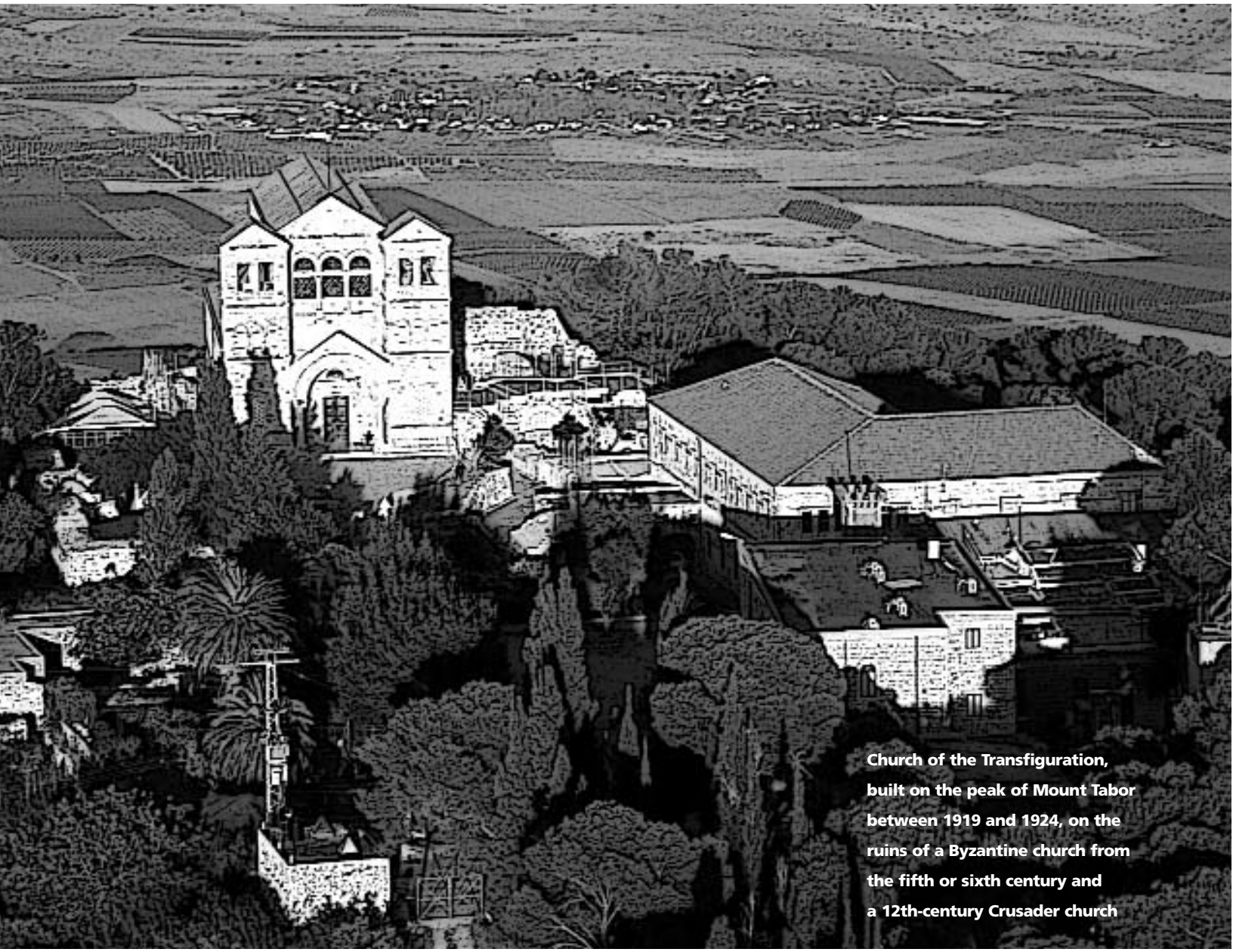
See Somer's poem, "My Church," on the back cover.

Back to (Reading) THE BIBLE



Church of the Transfiguration, built on the peak of Mount Tabor between 1919 and 1924, on the ruins of a Byzantine church from the fifth or sixth century and a 12th-century Crusader church

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About Building Shrines on the Mountaintop

Matthew 17:1–13, Luke 9:28–36 | BY SMUTS VAN ROOYEN

I've suggested a few embarrassing things in my life, so I'm not overly inclined to pass judgment on Peter. But Luke does not seem to share my sensibilities. He comes right out and says of the apostle, "He did not know what he was saying" (Luke 9:33). That is, Peter was significantly obtuse. Matthew is not as candid but clearly shared Luke's sentiments. And how did Peter succeed in putting his foot in his mouth? Well, on the Mount of Transfiguration he made an impulsive suggestion, and to Jesus at that: "Lord, . . . if you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah" (Matthew 17:4). Now even when one makes allowances for the fact that Peter had been overwhelmed by the splendor of the occasion (imagine Christ transfigured from head to toe, shining like the sun, and Moses and Elijah casually dropping in from heaven), his proposal was out of line.

Clearly, certain equivalencies should never be implied, let alone plainly stated, in good company. Moses (representing the law) and Elijah (representing the prophets) must not be put on an equal or competitive footing with Jesus, ever. There simply are no grounds for equality between creature and Creator, between mere word and the Word. Three shrines just will not do. But Peter, speaking off the top of his head, proposed just that.

Mercifully the heavenly Father interrupted the apostle's ineptitude midstream, "while he was still speaking," quickly wrapping him in a cloud to conceal his naiveté, and proclaimed, " 'This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!' " At this, Peter and his two colleagues fell terrified and nose first to the ground. But Jesus gently touched them by turn, perhaps on the cheek, and when they looked up, "they saw no one except Jesus" (v. 6).

So what is the point of this story? Well, it's a story about hermeneutics. That's right, hermeneutics. But it is about hermeneutics in its large contours rather than in its micro-specifics such as grammar and syntax.

Any good tracker knows that you cannot make efficient headway following spoor by only observing details such as broken twigs and bent blades of grass. Progress demands understanding the overall shape of the terrain, the big picture, to see which way the quarry you are pursuing would tend to go.

This magnificent story gives us the big picture by placing Jesus at the heart of Christian hermeneutics. It designates for Christians whose voice is the supreme authority within the Bible. So, yes, the face of Moses shines beautifully like the sun and is certainly not without light, but it dims when compared to the complete splendor of Christ, whose feet, head, body, and clothing scintillate with unbearable brilliance. In short, the final authority on earth has been appointed, and neither Moses nor Elijah is it.

The supremacy of Jesus to discriminate what holds and does not hold in the Law and the Prophets is also emphasized by other New Testament writers. The apostle John makes this astounding assertion about the Word: "In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind" (John 1:4). It's simple; his life is the normative light.

Then too there are the opening verses of the epistle to the Hebrews, which argue that although God has spoken to us in the past by the prophets, he has now spoken to us by his Son, who is, amongst other things, the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being. Which of the prophets has such credentials? There is an exactitude about Jesus in representing God that does not hold for the prophets. Christians believe that by means of the Incarnation God himself walked among us for thirty-some years and explained himself to us during that time in a normative fashion. Therefore all views of God given

The transfigured Christ in white robes

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by the prophets before that incredible incarnational event are lesser light. Moreover, all views of God given by prophets after the Incarnation also are lesser light. Everything must ultimately be evaluated by the spirit of Jesus.

In short, the final authority on earth has been appointed, and neither Moses nor Elijah is it.

Some of us might be asking what makes it necessary to call the absolute authority of the Law and the Prophets into question in the first place. Must they not be taken at face value as a final "that's that" in their view of God and of life? To concede such is to leave us stuck in a cultural and ethical morass that paralyzes and confuses our walk with God. Did God really instruct Samuel to tell a lie when he went to anoint David (1 Samuel 16:1–4)? Was an evil spirit sent by God to tempt Saul to throw his spear at David (1 Samuel 18:10)? Did God encourage Israel to own slaves, albeit only from other nations (Leviticus 25:44)? Is it still permissible to take an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Leviticus 24:19, 20)? Should we stone incorrigible children and Sabbath breakers (Exodus 35:2)?

Such issues make it clear that we desperately need an authoritative internal guide, a canon within the canon to help us through our scriptural troubles, and to protect the character of God. We simply cannot, as Peter does, treat everything in the Scriptures as having equivalence because of our philosophy of inspiration and thus leave Jesus sidelined. Everything in life and in the whole Bible must be held up to his life.

But the authority of the spirit of Jesus does much more than help us cope with the perplexities of the Old Testament. It brings in the kingdom of God. A green sheen of wheat-blade pushed up by an eager germination of seed suddenly shimmers across our farm. The gleam soon becomes a field of sturdy plants fresh-swelled with top-heavy clusters of seed. And finally it sun ripens white to rolling estates of nutritious wheat, ready for baking fresh bread. The kingdom is here!

When Christ arrived, unheard-of benefits came to humanity with him. Consider the joyful inclusion of the Gentiles (that's us!) within the people of God; and the writing of the law upon our hearts in the New Covenant; and the rush of the Spirit wind through our tired souls; and, of course, the revelation of a heavenly Abba who loves us. It's enough to take one's breath away.

The coming of the beloved Son who pleases the Father was a seismic event that pushed up a new mountain range onto our flat hermeneutical plain. Now we can see farther and more clearly than ever before, and the view is awesome. ■

Smuts van Rooyen is, in his own words, a retired, overweight pastor who came to trust God when he finally understood how utterly God loved him, and he presumes to make the attribution that God has called him to preach. He has a PhD in counseling psychology from Andrews University and an ABD (all but the dissertation) from the University of South Africa.

The Hermeneutics of Disappointment: *What Does the "Delay" of Jesus' Coming Do to the Adventist Story?* | BY JAMES J. LONDIS

Roy Allan Anderson's preaching about the nearness of Christ's *parousia*, or second coming, inflamed my teenage imagination like nothing I had ever heard before. Hearing him preach (in Carnegie Hall, no less) that "Jesus is coming soon," almost certainly in my lifetime, jolted me into a transformation that my mother and absent agnostic father could not fathom. Raised in a neighborhood of sexual predators, bookies, and gangs, I felt that my true family no longer dwelled in a tenement apartment on Neptune Avenue. I moved emotionally to Brooklyn's Washington Avenue Seventh-day Adventist Church. A "new" story would chart my future. That first year, I attended Sabbath School, church, MV meeting, choir practice, and prayer meeting almost every week.

One year later, with a brazenness and fearlessness that characterize teenage brains, Ron Halvorsen and I conducted evangelistic meetings in our Coney Island neighborhood. When a reporter from the New York *Herald Tribune* showed up to interview us, we felt "drunk" with success. Even the young pastors helping us were taken aback by this turn of events. However, when the article appeared under the headline, "Teenage Gangsters Turn Evangelists," our mothers were furious. Still, television host Virginia Graham wanted us to appear on her fledgling program, "Food for Thought." Her final question in the interview was this: "What message do you want to give to the youth of America?"

"Jesus is coming soon and you need to get ready," we answered. Strange things can happen to people seized by William Miller's passion.

As my Adventist education progressed, I better understood Miller's excitement at deciphering Daniel's prophecies. After all, what is more important than the climax of human history? Because of his fervor, the nineteenth-century Adventist story was born.

What has interested me of late is the hermeneutic on which Miller's analysis was based. In his 64-page tract, *Evidence From Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, About the Year 1844; Exhibited in a Course of Lectures*, he makes clear that his approach grew out of the hermeneutic employed by the Protestant orthodoxy of the Reformation, the same one employed by the early church fathers. Listen to what he says:

> *As prophecy is a language somewhat different from other parts of Scripture, owing to its having been revealed in vision, and that highly figurative, yet God in his wisdom has so interwoven the several prophecies, that the events foretold are not all told by one prophet, and although they lived and prophesied in different ages of the world, yet they tell us the same things; so you take away one, and a link will be wanting. There is a general connection through the whole; like a well-regulated community they all move in unison, speaking the same things, observing the same rules, so that a Bible reader may almost with propriety suppose, let him read in what prophecy he may, that he is reading the same prophet, the same author. This will appear evident to any one who will compare scripture with scripture. For example, see Dan. xii. 1, Matt. xxiv. 21. Isa. xlvii. 8. Zeph. ii. 15, Rev. xviii. 7. There never was a book written that has a better connection and harmony than the Bible, and yet it has the appearance of a great store-house full of all the precious commodities the heart could desire, thrown in promiscuously; therefore, the biblical student must select and bring together every part of the subject he wishes to investigate, from every part of the Bible; then let every word have its own Scripture meaning, every sentence its proper bearing, and have no contradiction, and your theory will and must of necessity be correct. Truth is one undeviating path, that grows brighter and brighter the more it is trodden; it needs no plausible arguments nor pompous dress to make it more bright, for the more naked and simple the fact, the stronger the truth appears.*[1]

As the 1844 movement evolved into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, more specificity was given to this hermeneutic. For example, this idea came into view: if God is the single author and the various writers record *divine* thoughts, Scripture is infallible in its teaching and largely inerrant in its language. Currently, in agreement with most conservative and fundamentalist theologians, many of our scholars argue that *Scripture is unlike any other book and therefore authenticates itself. Human reason, while necessary to read and interpret it, must bow to its presentation of human history and science*. As a result, historical research is limited in its ability to gain access to the true nature of Scripture. One prominent Adventist theologian has written that when a prophecy foretells apocalyptic or eschatological events, it is not "conditional" as other prophecies might be.[2]

What are we to make of being here two thousand–plus years after Jesus' resurrection?

In 1986 the Adventist Church officially adopted this very conservative hermeneutic at the Rio de Janeiro Annual Council and is known as the "Seventh-day Adventist Hermeneutic," even though a significant number of Adventist scholars were never consulted on it nor would support it at the present time. The complete treatment is available in a document called "Methods of Bible Study."[3] When Ted Wilson was elected General Conference president, he referred to this hermeneutic during his inaugural sermon in Atlanta and urged the church not to be tempted by the "historical-critical method."

While 1844 did not see the coming of Jesus, it did indicate for our founders that the prophetic "time of the end" had begun and that his arrival was "very soon." The judgment-hour message of the three angels in Revelation 14 meant that our people were given the task of preparing the world for his imminent return. People thought in terms of decades at most.

In our lifetime?

Every evangelistic meeting I attended back in the middle sixties reiterated an urgent message in fairly graphic imagery: Given the proliferation of nuclear weapons, we were "one minute to midnight." Russia's race into space meant the end of the world was near. Adventist preachers combed the headlines for world events that could be seen as "signs" that Christ was about to appear.

Fast-forward to twenty years later. Early in Elder Neal Wilson's presidency of the church, he invited a number of laypeople, pastors, teachers, and administrators to meet with him for a weekend in the Takoma Park General Conference building. He wanted to engage in prayerful conversation about the current state of the church and what our priorities should be for the future. On the opening evening, following comments made by Sargent Shriver (whose attendance was made possible by the offices of Roy Branson), the floor was opened for comments. First to speak was an Adventist attorney—Darren Michaels, I believe—whose language sounded like a lament:

"Elder Wilson, I am a third-generation Adventist. My grandparents believed that Jesus would come in their lifetime, my parents believed it, and I have believed it. Now that I am much older, I must tell you that this inexplicable delay weighs heavily on me and on many others in my local church."

No one in the room saw *that* coming. I expected comments on theology or policy.

Calvin Rock, then Oakwood College president, immediately reflected, "I resonate with what my brother just said. There is no more serious problem facing us than the delay of Jesus' coming."

Elder Wilson listened thoughtfully but said nothing.

What are we to make of such comments made thirty or more years ago? What are we to make of our still being here 170 years after 1844? Even more shocking, what are we to make of being here two thousand–plus years after Jesus' resurrection? The concerns expressed in that meeting reflected millennia of disappointment and frustration. Large numbers of the earliest believers said the same things in their time. Most of them, including

FAMOUS SIGN IN EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

It seems to me that if God is sovereign, Jesus is free to return at any moment.

the apostle Paul, believed that the *parousia* was so close that they would not see death. However, as increasing numbers of them passed away, Paul's community found the delay almost unbearable.

Some believers being fearful that they would die before Jesus returned, the apostle Paul had to reassure them in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 16 that those who are alive when Christ returns will not "precede" those who have died. In chapter 5 he addresses their efforts to read the "signs," or the "times and seasons," and reminds them that *"the Lord will come like a thief in the night. . . . But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness"* (1 Thess. 5:2, 4, 5, NRSV).

Peter, in 2 Peter 3:3, 4, addresses disciple anxiety about the delay in two ways. First, he reprimands them for forgetting that scoffers would appear in the last days, saying, " 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation' " (NIV). He then summons them to believe that just as the word of God created the heavens and the earth, the same word will destroy the present heavens and earth with fire.

Peter knows, however, that their longing for Jesus will not be relieved with a blustery call to believe, so he offers a metaphysical and evangelistic rationale for the delay.

> *But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed (vv. 8–10, NRSV).*

(On the other hand, I am told by some New Testament scholars that Matthew and Luke are very much aware of the delay of the *parousia*, and while they offer varying explanations, they put it in the future.)

Even though it took more than a thousand

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The first disciples never imagined that the phrase "a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day to God" should be taken literally.

years for the Messianic promise to be fulfilled in Judaism, following the excitement of Jesus' ministry, the first disciples never imagined that the phrase "a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day to God" should be taken literally. Did not Jesus' resurrection mean that the end of all things was imminent? A delay of two thousand years was unthinkable.

Going back to the beginning of our Adventist story, let me repeat, we became convinced that despite the disappointment of 1844, the "time of the end" had begun. We persuaded ourselves that the "signs" of Christ's coming would orbit around an eschatology centered in Sabbath faithfulness despite universal persecution. These many years later, these "signs" are being overwhelmed by unexpected events that bear little resemblance to our eschatology. How are we *Adventists* to cope with the crippling ennui that has resulted?

Work, for the night is coming

It seems to me that we can and should say several things:

First, any hermeneutic which assumes that God "authors" the Bible without recognizing its deeply human elements and diversity is no longer defensible.

Second, to insist that an inspired writer's eschatological pronouncements cannot be "conditional" makes dealing with the delay far more difficult than necessary. Believers are moved by whichever historical tide is flowing—are these "signs" or are they not?

Third, the "thief in the night" image used by New Testament writers should clue us in to the fact that while the Savior understood our fascination with signs, He did not encourage reading the signs at all. *There are no signs for a thief.* I fear a message that "Jesus is coming soon" based on reading such signs can be

described as no better than a weakened version of time-setting.

Finally, 2 Peter's response to the delay offers this potential insight: our historical consciousness in relation to divine purposes will and must differ from God's. And, in the modern era, the fact that astrophysics has demonstrated time frames in the billions of years, and time is not absolute but relative to the position of an observer, should make us shudder at the divine mystery. The sacred purposes of history will be worked out as God wills. If we insist that eschatological prophecy (as we interpret it) is not conditioned, how can we not be increasingly fretful at the delay?

I suspect our hostility to the conditionality of prophecy grows out of two concerns: first, the antagonism in many Adventist quarters to Open Theism theology (in large part a creation by our colleague Richard Rice) which leaves room for God to change the divine response to human history as it unfolds.

Second, we have acquired (dare I say it) a hubris fostered by the belief that Ellen White's eschatological vision infallibly anticipates the sequence and meaning of end-time events. We "know" that Sunday legislation will be one of the final signs of the "end of all things"; we "know" that Sabbath-keeping will be the divine seal and that Sabbath-keepers will be persecuted for it. One should never deny that these things may happen, but I am suspicious of the view that if such events do not transpire, we must default to the notion of a delay. If the New Testament writers did not understand how long it might take for the Lord to appear, given their expectations and "signs," perhaps we should not assume that we understand it more fully because we are, so to speak, the "last generation."

In this regard, I have found Jesus' discourse in Matthew 24 and 25 helpful. Just as Peter and Paul's communities were deeply distressed over the delay, Matthew's was as well. While there is insufficient space to detail the two chapters, let me lightly touch on their high points.

You will recall that Jesus responds to the inquiry about the destruction of the temple and his coming with a description of astronomical wonders and catastrophic events like earthquakes and famines. He warns the disciples that false prophets plying reports of his return will arise and that they should not be deceived by them. He insists that when he returns, everyone will experience the glory of that event at the same time. Then, in 24:30, in the only instance in the discourse, Jesus uses the word *sign*:

> *Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see "the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven" with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (vv. 30, 31, NRSV).*

One way to read this passage is to hear Jesus declaring that the only *certain* sign of his coming is the one that appears in the heavens moments before his arrival "with power and great glory." That is the position New Testament scholar D. A. Carson adopts in his treatment of Matthew 24.

This passage is followed by the parable of the fig tree, with a warning that no one knows the day or the hour—only the Father. We then read a description of life on earth proceeding quite normally, just as it was in the days of Noah, until the end came unexpectedly.

> *Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour (vv. 42–44, NRSV).*

. . . the Savior understood our fascination with signs. He did not encourage reading the signs at all.

FAMOUS SIGN IN EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND

Is Matthew warning the church that a preoccupation with "signs" will inevitably lead to disappointment?

If we must "be ready," if we must work as wise and faithful servants regardless of when the Master returns, what additional spiritual function can the signs perform? And when, in 25:31–46, Matthew paints a picture of Christ condemning those who failed to see his abiding presence in the suffering of the weak and vulnerable, the writer seems to hear Jesus saying: "Look for me *now* and not in the future; look for me on earth and not in the clouds." Is Matthew warning the church that a preoccupation with "signs" will inevitably lead to disappointment? The Master's return is a mystery. Is he also suggesting that such a disappointment will sap our energy for living and working for the gospel?

More positively, is he not also implying that a focus on "being ready"—with signs appearing or not—energizes the believers in all ages who wait for the bridegroom in spite of the delay?

Some may complain: Does not Ellen White suggest in *Christ's Object Lessons* that the delay in her generation was due to the character of Christ not being perfectly reproduced in His people? My rejoinder: Does that really indicate that we are in control of the timing of the end, or does it suggest that the human/church situation is just one factor? It seems to me that if God is sovereign, Jesus is free to return at any moment. *Not even specific eschatological events have to precede the final chapter of the Adventist story.*

Lastly: there is a tension between the view that the church, however understood, virtually controls the timing of the *parousia* and the chronic anguish of the whole creation. Can anyone really argue that the church's spiritual failure is an adequate justification for the endless suffering we endure? Or must we insist that God's timetable, while understandably fascinating, is ultimately not our concern, that we are not to worry about the "when" but the "what"? Perhaps our storyline should shift from "Jesus is coming *soon*" to "Jesus is coming," period. For that reason

alone, should we, as the parable insists, be about the Master's business?

If we believe that "he that shall come will come and will not tarry," should we despair because, to us, it feels like a "delay"? Or should we live in elation that *whenever* Jesus returns, our joy, at last, will be complete? Should not the Adventist story end as it began: "Even so, . . ." in spite of disappointment, even grief over the delay, "Even so, come Lord Jesus!" ■

James Londis received his PhD in philosophy from Boston University while a professor of religion at Atlantic Union College. In 1975, he

became the senior pastor of the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church and most recently served Kettering College of Medical Arts as chair of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences. He has published two books, several scholarly articles, and dozens of articles for Seventh-day Adventist journals.

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1. William Miller, *Evidence From Scripture and History of the Second Coming of Christ, About the Year 1844; Exhibited in a Course of Lectures*, http://sacred-texts.com/chr/esc/esc0.htm.

2. See Richard Rice's "Peril and Promise: Teaching Philosophy in an Adventist Context," *The Journal of Adventist Education*, Summer 2014, 4–7. Note especially his third footnote, citing Adventist thought leaders like Kwabena Donkor and Fernando L. Canale. Moreover, several dissertations from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University argue similarly. A case in point is Frank M. Hasel's *Scripture in the Theologies of W. Pannenberg and D. G. Bloesch: An Investigation and Assessment of its Origin, Nature and Use* (PhD diss., Andrews University, 1994). See the abstract at http://www.auss.info/auss_publication_file.php?pub_id=904&journal=1&type=pdf.

3. Available on the official Seventh-day Adventist website at http://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/documents/article/go/0/methods-of-bible-study/.

How Different Generations Read the Bible

BY TIMOTHY FLOYD

There has never been a more *multiform-itous* time in Adventism than today. We have more points of difference and *unlikeness* now that have sprung up as a result of diversity than at any time in our church's history. This diversity exists within a glaring absence of conversation about it and tolerance for it.

There is a need to acknowledge that some aspects of diversity cannot be controlled, such as being born into *that* family, *that* ethnicity, *that* gender, *that* personality type, *that* learning style, *that* generation. Then there are the things that people choose to subject themselves to for one reason or another, such as *that* educational background, *that* career path, *that* socioeconomic level (often influenced by other factors, but still in large part due to the choices a person makes), *that* geographic region lived in, *that* political affiliation, *that* religious belief system, and the beliefs about *those* social issues. All of these aspects of diversity have a tremendous influence on how a given person sees and relates to the world around them. To ignore diversity and to say that everyone is the same, or should be, ignores our humanity and stifles the body of Christ.

The apostle Paul, addressing diversity at the church in Corinth, begins the book of 1 Corinthians by saying; "I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to agree together, to end your divisions, and to be united by the same mind and purpose."[1] Later Paul dedicates an entire chapter to discussing the importance of every member belonging to the body in spite of the differences and gifts each brings to that body. After explaining the importance of the different members and the value of even the most insignificant part, Paul says, "Now I will show you a way that is beyond comparison," and then he begins what has become known as the Love Chapter. Diversity is an opportunity for God's people to love.

Generational conflict

It seems as though every generation struggles with how to adjust to the previous or the next one. I remember my grandmother constantly chiding my choices in music and entertainment when I was in junior high. I would often go to her house after school until my parents got off work. Grams and I would sit on the couch together and fight over which TV show we were going to watch. My choices were too crass and sarcastic for her, while her choices were too boring and old school for me.

Perhaps the most visible display of generational conflict within the Adventist Church is seen on boarding academy campuses. I have spent nearly ten years working in Adventist schools as an academy chaplain and Bible teacher. One thing that has remained constant wherever I have worked is that many of our schools are located in a nest of generational diversity, with the resulting conflicts constantly on display.

Generations and hermeneutics

The conflicts that arise in our churches are often directly connected to differing generational interpretations of the Bible. A church's hermeneutic is greatly affected by each member's education, culture, life experiences, gender identity, religious background, and a number of other factors. Many of the factors are shaped by one's generation. With so many external forces shaping the way each person reads and interprets the Bible to produce their hermeneutic, few people, if any, can honestly come to the Scriptures without some preconceived thought driving the way they interpret the text being studied. Because of this diversity, it is important to take an honest look at what factors influence our hermeneutics, both as individuals and as a church. A part of that honest look involves the differences in hermeneutics that each generation possesses. In understanding the differences between each generation's


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The Elders

hermeneutic, it becomes possible to begin healing some of the cross-generational conflict and begin a more credible attempt at unity as a church.

It is important to note that generational characteristics may be widespread but are not universal and must be understood in light of the fact that thousands of factors shape a person. The fact of a person's birth date placing them in a particular generation does not mean every person in that birth range is going to have all the characteristics of a particular generation.

The Elders (born 1925–1945). The Elder generation is also known as the Silent generation, the Builder generation, and the GI generation. For the most part, this generation was born between 1925 and 1940 and lived through several life-shaping events, such as the Great Depression and the two World Wars. According to Monte Sahlin and Paul Richardson, the Elder generation makes up about 13 percent of the US population. Within Adventism they make up about 31 percent.[2] Dennis Gaylord, director of Chi Alpha Campus Ministries, summarizes the consensus of many sociologists that the Elders are hard workers, savers, patriotic, loyal to institutions, private, and dependable. Their core values are dedication, sacrifice, hard work, conformity, law and order, respect for authority, patience, delayed reward, duty before pleasure, adherence to rules, and honor.[3]

The Baby Boomers (1946–1964). This generation gets its name from the population boom that started in the 1940s. Sahlin and Richardson state that the Baby Boomer generation makes up about 27 percent of the US population. Within Adventism they make up about 30 percent.[4] Gaylor notes that the Baby Boomers were shaped by the Cold War, the civil rights movement, the space race, and the Watergate scandal. The majority of the troops in the Vietnam War were from the Baby Boom generation. The Baby Boomers are well educated and desire quality in whatever they do. They are independent, cause-oriented, and fitness conscious. Baby Boomers have a tendency to question authority. Their core values are optimism, team orientation, personal gratification, health and wellness, personal growth, work, youth, and involvement.[5]

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In the August 20, 2009 issue of *Adventist Review*, Bruce Manners describes his view of his own Boomer generation:

> *We were out to change the world. We marched in political protests, openly brought sex out of the bedroom and marriage, and challenged authority. Individually, though, we soon settled into a lifestyle remarkably similar to that of our parents—the job, the marriage, the mortgage. Yet unlike our parents, we live with a certain restlessness. We change jobs regularly, our divorce rate is much higher, and our personal debt has skyrocketed. . . . Boomers have been called the most selfish generation ever. Unfortunately, there's some truth in the accusation. It's a truth that's reinforced every time a boomer says their main aim in life is to spend their kids' inheritance.*[6]

Generation X (1965–1980). Generation X (also known as Gen Xers, Baby Busters, and Generation 13) was born between the 1960s and 1980. Sahlin and Richardson claim that Gen Xers make up 16 percent of the US population but only 10 percent of Adventism.[7] Gaylor describes them as being shaped by Roe v. Wade, the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster, the fall of the Berlin Wall and communism, the AIDS epidemic, and the Clinton Administration's sex scandal. Gen Xers are characterized by parental neglect, self-reliance, loyalty to relationships, and a skeptical nature. This generation is also known as the latchkey kids, because their parents were often at work when they arrived home from school each day; it was a generation left to fend for itself. They are survivors, often stressed out, and serious about life. Their core values are diversity, thinking globally, balance, techno-literacy, fun, informality, self-reliance, and pragmatism. Gen Xers are the first generation to completely take on the postmodern view of life.[8]

The Millennial generation (1980–2000). Also known as Generation Y and Generation We, the Millennial generation is the second wave of the Baby Boomers' children. Sahlin and Richardson say that the Millennials make up around 26 percent of the US population, and 14 percent within Adventism.[9] According to Gaylor, this generation has been influenced by the World Trade Center attacks, the Oklahoma City bombing, the Internet, and the death of Princess Diana and Mother Teresa. In their book, *The Millennials*, Thom and Jess Rainer claim that the typical Millennial is not very religious but is spiritual. They are more highly educated than past generations, have grown up with helicopter (constantly hovering) parents, and have a tremendous respect for older generations.[10]

Millennials are characterized as entrepreneurial hard workers who thrive on flexibility. Unlike the Gen Xers, the Millennials were cherished by their parents, groomed to achieve and excel, viewed as heroes. Gaylor claims that this generation has the lowest parent-to-child ratio in the USA's history, meaning the Millennials are likely to have fewer siblings than the generations before them. Millennials are more law abiding, socially conscious, educated, upbeat, and full of self-esteem. Rainer also points out that this generation is motivated in almost every way by relationships, more than any other motivator. This goes for the workplace, religion, service, and politics. The relationship is the primary motivator for the Millennial to be engaged and present.[11]

The Millennial generation's core values are optimism, confidence, achievement, sociability, morality, street smarts, diversity, and civic duty. Volunteerism is high in the Millennial generation.[12]

Rainer also points out a major difference between the Millennial and Boomer generations in terms of how they respond to diversity. "The Boomer generation became the generation of tolerance, but the Millennials do not simply 'tolerate' those of different skin colors or ethnic backgrounds. They are far more likely to embrace them as friends and to make them a part of their world."[13] This appears to be true of Millennials in nearly every aspect of diversity. They are much more likely to go beyond toler-

ance to embrace and accept people for who they are. This is especially important in terms of religious views. Rainer claims that 70 percent "say they have friends who have different religious beliefs."[14]

It is easy to see how one generation shapes the next. The Elders were a reserved generation who did not get involved, but rather stayed on the sidelines. This made the Baby Boomers step up into positions of authority, which made the Gen Xers feel the need to rebel. The Gen Xer's rebellion and conserving life style was transformed by the Millennials, who have become more progressive and open-minded, putting their energies toward helping others. Each generation has a significant influence on the following generation.

General approaches to religion

It is clear that every generation is different and has vastly differing worldviews. These differences in worldviews shape the way each generation worships. Ruth Powell and Kathy Jacka point out that in general, the older generations are more likely to attend worship services weekly; prefer traditional styles of music in worship services; spend regular time in private devotional activity; have a strong sense of belonging to their denomination; and get involved in church-based community service, justice, or welfare activities. The younger generations are more likely to be involved in small groups; prefer contemporary styles of music in worship services; feel that their gifts and skills are encouraged; have helped others in a range of informal ways; value outreach, be involved in evangelistic activities, and actually invite others to church; and be newcomers to church life. They are more likely to have switched denominations or transferred congregations in the previous five years.[15]

Generational attitudes to God and church

The Elders perceive God and the church similarly to the way they view earthly authorities—with loyalty. Gaylor describes them as being committed to the church, supporting foreign missions, enjoying Bible study, being loyal to their denominations, and reverent in worship.[16] This loyalty is good for the denomination; however, in extremes this loyalty can lead to close-mindedness and a lack of independent thinking. Elders are susceptible to following "the church" blindly, rather than studying God's

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The Baby Boomers

Word for themselves. Elders will often view an interpretation of Scripture through what the church or pastor has said rather than studying it for themselves. In short, the Elder generation's hermeneutic is whatever the established church tells them it is.

The Baby Boomer approaches religious study in a slightly different way. While the Elders follow what the religious authority has said, the Baby Boomers would more likely believe that they know better than what the church says. This leads the Baby Boomer to study firsthand what a text says and means. The independent nature of this Bible study is beneficial because there has been a shortage of thinkers in the Adventist church. According to Gaylor, the Baby Boomers' religious characteristics are commitment to relationships, a desire to belong, support of people within the church, and a desire to experience their faith for themselves.[17] As with politics, Baby Boomers approach religion with the view that if something seems broken or not logical, they want to fix it. Baby Boomers jump in as leaders in the church and take an active role in the development of theology and issues of conflict.

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The Gen Xers do not take their religion secondhand either. In fact, Colleen Carroll claims that "this may be one of the first generations where faith is a conscious choice."[18] It is a generation fascinated with science and history, which sometimes conflict with traditional religious views, leading Gen Xers to be somewhat skeptical of absolute truth and established religion. Gaylor claims that, because of this mindset, denominations are not that important to Gen Xers. They want less structure and desire a faith that meets their needs. Carroll states that this generation wants "the hard gospel. They want a preacher or priest to tell it like it is, to give them morality that they believe is sound and doesn't simply cater to their whims."[19]

Because of the influence of postmodernism on Gen Xers, there is a great hesitancy among this generation to trust the church or its members. Everyone's ideas represent a potential truth rather than an established absolute. Ronald J. Allen notes that "an upside of postmodernity is its spirit of liberation from dogma and maximization of human freedom. A downside is a loss of confidence that life has ultimate significance or consequences."[20] Gen Xers and the following generations face the biggest obstacles to finding God: How can a person find God if they cannot trust that the church, or even a friend, is not biased toward a particular belief system?

The Millennial generation seems to see God in people more than institutions. Monte Sahlin gives hope for the future when he notes that the Millennials "have a more positive attitude toward the church than Gen X and greater denominational loyalty."[21] It seems that the Millennial generation gets its view of God and worship from traditions and stereotypes rather than the Bible itself. There are some who believe that the Millennials are drawn toward archaic forms of worship, such as candles and liturgies. However, in an article issued by the Barna Group titled "What Teenagers Look for in a Church," David Kinnaman is quoted as saying that

> *"all of the recent attention on young people gravitating to 'ancient traditions of Christianity' misses the fact that the vast majority of American teenagers do not express much interest in or appreciation for such traditions in the first place. Teenagers are a pinch-of-this-pinch-of-that generation, so without intentional decisions on the part of youth workers, many teenagers ride out their teen years in fruitless experimentation rather than genuine forms of spiritual development."*[22]

Generational views of the Bible

The single most significant issue in studying generational hermeneutics is how each generation views the Bible itself, closely followed by the generation's view of inspiration. These two issues shape the rest of the generation's theology. The Barna Group conducted a study of Christians across North America, asking a question about views of the Bible, and found that

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Generation X

a slight majority of Christians (55%) strongly agree that the Bible is accurate in all of the principles it teaches, with another 18% agreeing somewhat. About one out of five either disagree strongly (9%) or somewhat (13%) with this statement, and 5% aren't sure what to believe.[23]

In a study by Roger Dudley on Adventist college-age views of the Bible, he posed a question in relation to the Bible. The results were these: 11.8 percent believed the Bible was to be taken word for word; 83.3 percent believed in a middle-of-the-road approach to the Bible, that it was God's thoughts as expressed by men; and 4.9 percent believed that the Bible was only a collection of stories and therefore should not be taken very seriously.[24]

While each generation views the Bible in a slightly different way, there are actually some common themes among them about inspiration and the Bible. The Barna Group published the results of a study in 2009, in an article called "New Research Explores How Different Generations View and Use the Bible." The research revealed that a majority of the four recent generations believes that the Bible is a sacred book. Something else they have in common is that millions of them reported reading the Bible "in the last week."[25] The generations have some overlapping views on the nature of the Bible also. "Similar proportions of the generations embrace the most conservative and most liberal views."[26]

However, fewer young adults believe that the Bible is sacred: nine out of ten Elders and Boomers believe it is, and eight out of ten Gen Xers. But only two out of three Millennials see the Bible as a holy book. Furthermore, young adults are much less likely to view the Bible as totally accurate in all that it teaches. "Just 30% of [Millennials] and 39% of [Gen Xers] firmly embraced this view, compared with 46% of [Baby Boomers] and 58% of Elders."[27]

Barna concludes that the main view of today's young people toward the Bible is skepticism. "They question the Bible's history as well as its relevance to their lives, leading many young people to reject the Bible as containing everything one needs to live a meaningful life."[28]

Generational theology

It is easy to see how different views of theology can begin to develop within each generation. Beliefs, doctrines, views of the Bible, inspiration, and Ellen G. White are all

Millennials seem to be more progressive and open-minded, putting their energies toward helping others.

contributors to these differences in the generations. The Elders approach theology from a traditional and institutionalized stance. They view the theology of the church as foundational, as absolute truth, and they are passionate about following it to the letter because it is what the church has decided. Similarly, the Baby Boomers agree with the church's stance on the majority of issues, not because of the church's authority but because they have studied it for themselves and they concur. The Gen Xers are more skeptical about what the church teaches and form independent ideas that are sometimes in line with the church's stance and sometimes more influenced by secular culture. For the Gen Xers who remain faithful to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a revisiting of the fundamental beliefs occurs when this generation familiarizes itself with the teachings of the church and why the church believes what it does. The Millennial generation, although still skeptical about the dogmas of the church, chooses to find practical applications of the church's beliefs. Once they know "the truth," Millennials want to know how they can use it. More than any other generation, Millennials seek tangible and practical theology.

Because of the subjective nature of worship, each generation will act out worship in different ways. Each generation has its list of Bible texts to support their particular views of worship. Older generations might suggest Habakkuk 2:20 to support a silent, reverent attitude while in the church sanctuary. "But the LORD is in his holy temple;[29] let all the earth keep silence before him!"[30] Younger generations may refer to Psalm 47:1, 2, which says, "O clap your hands, all peoples; shout to God with the voice of joy. For the LORD Most High is to be feared."[31] These seem to be opposing views, yet both are biblical, and both are frequently used to support a particular view on worship. Both are also influenced heavily by culture and generation.

Ellen White addresses reverence in church in multiple writings. In *Testimonies for the Church*, she says,

> *When the worshipers enter the place of meeting, they should do so with decorum, passing quietly to their seats. If there is a stove in the room, it is not proper to crowd about in an indolent, careless attitude. Common talking, whispering and laughing should not be permitted in the house of worship, either before or after the service. Ardent, active piety should characterize the worshipers.*[32]

The generational problem occurs as the older generations venerate Ellen White and universalize her writings, while younger generations tend to contextualize her work and think that, although she was a talented writer, her writings do not contain the authority to change their perceptions or behaviors. This issue with Ellen White is much bigger than just the topic of reverence; it flows into every discussion involving her writings.

In a very insightful remark on the nature of young Adventists, Chris Blake says that

> *younger Adventists believe, deep in* their *hearts, that virtually all musical styles can laud God. That Jesus handed down no specific order of service. That God honors creativity and accountability and love. That the Sabbath exists to launch us into the week. That church is a community of uneven believers. And that what ultimately matters most to God is what happens on streets, in schools, and in homes outside any denominational building. [Gen Xers'] and [Millennials'] mindset is "incredibly savvy and unusually jaded."*[33]

The great exodus of Adventist youth

It is important to point out that our youth are tired of arguing. They are tired of division. Their generation is one of inclusion and acceptance. They simply cannot understand why anyone would be excluded or diminished in the body of Christ. Thom and Jess Rainer confirm this as well:

> *The Millennials are weary of the fights in our nation and world. They are tired of the polarization of views. They avoid the high-pitched shouts of opposing political forces. They are abandoning churches in great numbers because they see religion as divisive and argumentative. They want to know why we can't all just get along.*[34]

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The Millennial generation

Many youth are in fact leaving the church because of these generational conflicts of theology. Martin Weber did a survey of Adventist youth that goes to the core of this issue:

> *I interviewed a small number of young adults themselves. Their data highlighted the importance of that last principle—freedom to develop one's own faith. Spiritual carnage results from lack of freedom, along with a deficit of love and warmth. All but one of these six young adults describes their church experience as: Rigid, not Flexible; Closed, not Open; Exclusive, not Inclusive; Unfair, not Fair; Cold, not Warm; Dark, not Bright; Dull, not Exciting. These young adults reported significant confusion and despair regarding Adventist lifestyle standards. They seemed particularly distressed about what they experienced as heavy-handedness in enforcing these standards and unwillingness to even dialogue about them. It was interesting to note that most of these alienated young adults still embrace many fundamental Adventist doctrines such as the Sabbath, yet they resolutely reject the church that teaches them. When asked if they might possibly be active members in the Adventist church twenty years from now, if time lasts, all but one of them replied "small chance" or "no chance." . . . Together with the data I got from parents, these responses from the young adults themselves highlight what I perceive is a compelling need for a church atmosphere that offers flexibility rather than rigidity and freedom rather than oppression. This is not only essential for avoiding attrition—it's also Scriptural: "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17).*[35]

In a similar study by the Barna Group, David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons state that young people outside of Christianity perceive that Christianity is hypocritical, too focused on getting converts, anti-homosexual, sheltered, too political, and judgmental.[36] Meanwhile, young people within the Christian church are leaving because they feel the church doesn't allow for doubt. They also feel the church is exclusive, anti-science, overprotective, shallow, and repressive.[37] These attitudes have been known to push the younger generations away from Christianity as a whole and should be avoided at all costs!

In the Youth and Young Adult Retention Study, commissioned by the North American Division in conjunction with the Barna Group, Kinnaman found that within Adventism the youth exceeded the US average in agreement with each of those six categories. The areas of

greatest agreement were their views that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is anti-science (47%), repressive (37%), and overprotective (36%). This in-depth study revealed that our Adventist youth have a lot on their minds. If we as a church wish to keep them around, we have to change the way the conversation is being conducted. David Kinnaman concluded the presentation with a simple question, "Do you care more about your children, or your traditions?"[38] This is a question that every church must consider. This is a question that every generation must address.

A mutual respect and cooperation is essential to authentic cross-generational cooperation in the church.

What is the value of a young person who is looking for more? The old way is not enough for them anymore, they've been jaded, had broken relationships because of how different they are. They are tired of the hypocrisy of their parents' and grandparents' generations who say that things have to be their way. They are tired of being wrongly judged as "worldly" and "irreverent." The result is that they abandon their faith—not always their faith in God, but almost always their faith in the church that contains God's people.

Combating generational differences

The future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America is being shaped by the graying of the Elder and Baby Boomer generations as well as the losses of the Gen X and Millennial generations. The lack of tolerance for differing views is shaping a culture of elitism and oppression. Studies have shown that within two decades, the older generations will have lower numbers as they die, and the younger generations will continue to leave. The result will be a church in North America that has greatly reduced numbers unless these trends can be reversed.

The initial solutions to this predicament are education, tolerance, respect, and love. The educating of all as to the nature of both their own generation and the other generations is essential in understanding these problems. "When we know better, we do better." Education removes ignorant excuses and allows for knowledgeable exchange to occur.

The second part to this is a true tolerance of diversity. One of my professors in college said that "true tolerance is being so aware of what you believe that nothing can shake your core. You become able to discuss openly, ideas that may be contrary to your own views or values and yet, no insecurities or oppression will exist." This type of tolerance is hard to come by these days, but essential in building an authentic cross-generational community.

The third solution to the current and future condition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to recognize that all humanity was made in God's image, and that is a pretty big image. Ellen White noted that "every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator—individuality, power to think and do."[39] Because humanity was made in God's image, everyone is deserving of respect and individuality. Too often, people grow a feeling of superiority because of their education or experience. There are far too many under-respected people in every generation. Life experiences are not limited to any age category; therefore everyone's experiences and views become equal.

In his two-part article, *Crossing the Generational Divide*, Seth Pierce states that

> *the fifth commandment was given to all generations to learn how to share leadership in one community—not kids leaving the old folks in a retirement community or the elderly leaving the young in their online community. This commandment calls for mentoring, discipleship, and trust between generations—multiple generations moving as one.*[40]

He goes on to ask questions and give recommendations for each generation in part two of the article. For the Elder generations he asks, "What happens when the leaders no longer have the strength to lead? Who is being discipled? Where is the energy, creativi-

ty, and fresh perspective coming from?" For the younger generations, Seth recommends, "Listen, connect and find ways to bring the retired leadership with you on the journey God has called you to take."[41] A mutual respect and cooperation is essential to authentic cross-generational cooperation in the church. It is only with this cooperation that the church will be able to truly move forward as one body of believers.

This leads us to the final and most important of all solutions to the present church's condition—love. John 13:35 could not be clearer: "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."[42] When the church members have love for each other, they will act together. Respect will flourish, tolerance will bloom, and people will see the Seventh-day Adventist Church and know that we are God's people. Our differences will complement and not divide. They will unite as much as our similarities. We will be more effective in ministry and efficient in community. Without love we just become "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."[43]

Once this matter is understood more clearly, there is a greater chance that true unity can occur. However, true unity will only be possible with education, tolerance, respect, and, most important, love. ■

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It is important to take an honest look at what factors influence our hermeneutics.

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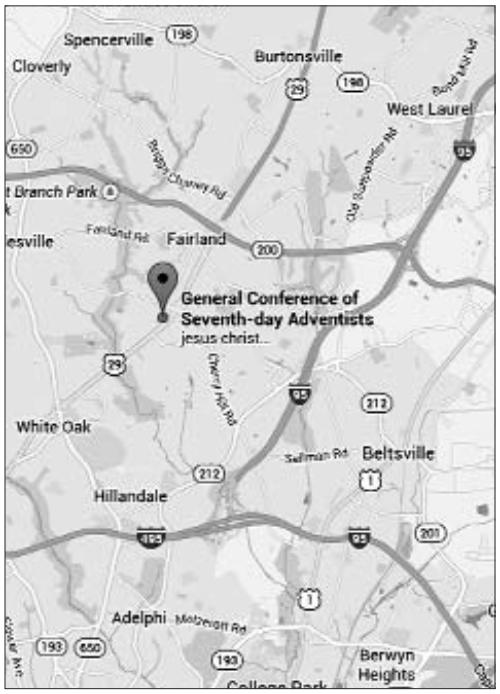
SDA GC world headquarters building

North American Division Votes to Move Out of the General Conference Building | BY JULIO C. MUÑOZ

Following an afternoon of spirited debate, the Executive Committee of the North American Division (NAD) Year-end Meeting approved two motions regarding the potential relocation of the NAD headquarters: (1) to accept the recommendation by the President's NAD Council and NAD and Union Officers (NADOUP) that the NAD headquarters be moved to someplace within the metropolitan Washington, D.C. area; and (2) that the NAD should proceed with the relocation process. A report presented by Tom Evans, treasurer of the NAD, showed data comparing moving expenses and cost recovery if the headquarters moved to Dallas, Denver, Atlanta, or remained in the Washington, D.C. metro area. The report, prepared by JLL, a consulting firm that specializes in corporate real estate, including corporate relocations, led the officers to determine that remaining in the D.C. metro area would be the most prudent move.



In addition to the financial data, Daniel R. Jackson, president of the NAD, listed ten non-financial considerations for the leadership team's decision. These included the access to qualified individuals, airports, churches, and schools for employees and their families. The first non-financial reason given was self-determination.

"The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America has a need to have its own unique message and strategies that are relevant and work in our territory," said Jackson. "While the Seventh-day Adventist movement began in North America, we are among the youngest divisions in the church, and it's time that we grow up and leave our parent's house." At the October 2014 Annual Council, GC Executive Committee members approved a recommendation from the GC Treasury to support a request from the NAD to explore the idea of moving its headquarters out of the GC building. If the division chose to move, the GGC would provide $3 million to assist with the transition.

"This should never be treated as an initiative to get them out of the building. Quite the opposite," Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Adventist world church, told Annual Council delegates after the vote.

Robert Lemon, GC Treasurer, echoed the sentiments of the GC president regarding the future NAD move from the building. He stated that while the GC would welcome the NAD remaining in the building, it fully supports the decision to relocate and establish its own identity. "This move does not represent any distancing of mission or purpose from that of the General Conference," Lemon said. "The North American Division has always been and continues to be the backbone of support, both financially and missionally, for the worldwide work of the Church." ■

This report is reprinted from the North American Division's *NADNewsPoints* bulletin for November 3, 2014. **Julio C. Muñoz** is associate director for the NAD Department of Communication.

Vision for the Medium: *North American Adventism and Mass Media Today*

BY TOMPAUL WHEELER

If you've ever attended the Sonscreen Film Festival, an annual event developed in 2002 by the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with a particular emphasis on developing young film talent, you've likely been impressed by the creativity and ingenuity on display. You watched videos by rising professionals and students from such schools as Southern Adventist University, Pacific Union College, and Andrews University, schools that have developed particularly strong audio-visual media programs.

If, later on, you tuned in to any of the official Adventist media—Hope Channel, or one of the church-sponsored telecasts aired elsewhere—you may have wondered, "Where can I see some of that creativity?" You may be hard-pressed to find it.

North American Adventism's oldest media ministries were conceived in the early to mid-twentieth century by creative individuals of singular vision: H. M. S. Richards, William and Virginia Fagal, George Vandeman. Each ministry focused on the needs and challenges of a particular audience and found innovative ways to connect with those audiences. But, though their ministries started out independent, in 1972 the church established the Seventh-day Adventist Radio, Television and Film Center in southern California, bringing together in one location such productions as *It Is Written*, *Faith for Today*, and *Voice of Prophecy*. The result was a mixed blessing—support from and collaboration with the church on the one hand, but disconnection from an ever more diverse demographic and diminishing of innovation on the other. The umbrella media organization was part of a wave of church mergers in the 1970s.

In 1993, the Center changed its name to the Adventist Media Center, and in 1996 it became one of the first institutions to change ownership from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to the then recently organized North American Division. In 2013 the board of the Adventist Media Center voted to recommend its own closure, with its ministries free to relocate to locations each found most advantageous.

"Historically, Adventist media has its roots in the vision of individual church members, not in the church organization," observes David Brillhart, director of electronic media at Maranatha Volunteers International, and formerly the first director of Media Services at the General Conference. "In the past two to three decades the opposite became true. Adventist media was institutionalized. Ironically this happened with the creation of the Adventist Media Center."

Dan Weber, director of communication for the North American Division, adds, "The reasoning behind the Adventist Media Center was, they could centralize services and potentially save on money. They moved into one of the highest cost-of-living areas in the country, southern California. As costs escalated, it became more and more expensive to operate there."

The Media Center's disbanding comes in a world quite different than Richards or Vandeman ever envisioned. A hundred years ago, the church connected with its members through the weekly periodical *Review and Herald* (now *Adventist Review*) and reached out to potential

A hundred years ago, the church connected with its members through the weekly periodical *Review and Herald* (now *Adventist Review*).

converts through such magazines as *Signs of the Times*. Fifty years ago it had added television programs aimed at an external audience, airing as paid programming on local stations. Today it operates 24/7 satellite channels around the globe and can communicate instantaneously with its members.

Over four decades, the Media Center ministries and production teams pioneered numerous firsts, from *Faith for Today*'s live-action drama series *Westbrook Hospital* and the feature-length motion-picture drama *John Hus* to the satellite evangelism of the 1990s. At the same time, it struggled with issues of funding, rivalry, vision, and approaches to evangelism.

Author and independent producer Charles Mills remembers the changes that media consolidation wrought. "I worked for *Faith for Today*, and I worked for the Media Center," he says. "When I first started working for *Faith for Today*, I rubbed shoulders with [founder William] Fagal, with the Bible school—I was part of the family. I was a technician, I was an editor, sound effects, lighting, etc., but I worked for the family. The mission of the family was my mission. When I worked for the Media Center, we would join one family as a surrogate child for a while, then another family for a while. I had the attitude, 'I'm going to do the best I can, my mission is personal,' but we lost the vision of the individual families.

"When the Media Center idea was sprung on us, we said, 'This is a mistake. This will not work.' "

"You lose a connection to the ministry when you're being a technician for all the ministries," Mills explains. "When the Media Center idea was sprung on us, we talked about this: 'This is a mistake. This will not work, because we are no longer part of a family.' We were trying to make other people's vision come true. When you no longer have any consistency of vision, you do your best, but you lose the connection. When I worked for *Faith for Today*, I was immersed in their culture. I knew what they wanted to accomplish. I knew what they were after, and I knew when I had hit the mark. I read the letters, and I knew how to reach those people. That frees you, as a technician, to be more innovative, to take chances, because you know what the mission is."

"The creation of the Media Center was an exciting development to me as a teenaged filmmaker," Brillhart remembers. "When I visited in 1976 hoping to find a place where I could contribute to Adventist media, the first person I met bristled coolly that the center wasn't there 'to help young people ride the wagon to Hollywood,' bruising my dream of being an Adventist filmmaker. Fortunately, David L. Jones, the director of *It Is Written*, encouraged me to carry on. Already, Adventist media was quickly becoming institutionalized."

"In previous years, production for television and radio involved professional, specialist equipment, personnel, and studios that were very expensive to set up and operate," reflects Russell Gibbs, producer for *It Is Written* from 2000 to 2003. "It made sense for the major media outlets of the church to share these costs and to ensure constant use of the facilities. The production department ventured into satellite uplinking services to the church around the world bringing the Net evangelistic [series] to a vast audience with downlinks to thousands of Adventist churches. Their expertise in this area was greatly valued, and income from this work supported the production facilities for many years."

In 1995 the church sold the Center's original Newbury Park location and bought property in Simi Valley, California. As 22,000 square feet of studios were constructed, costs rose, and the sale of the original center did not cover the new one as projected. The facility featured state-of-the-art (for 2002) production equipment, as well as digital satellite transmission equipment, enabling ministries to produce all their programs in-house. The next decade saw television transition to a high definition format, even as equipment costs plummeted. The shrinking costs of production inspired many of the ministries to use their own or other production facilities to produce programming.

"When *Voice of Prophecy* started [in 1929], you

had to have equipment that costs hundreds of thousands in today's dollars," Mills notes. "Now someone with a good computer and a copy of whatever software can do it. The ministries have become also-rans, and they're competing quality-wise with anybody. And today, we're saturated with media. A lot of it is garbage, but some of it is pretty good."

Paul Kim, former senior producer of Adventist Media Productions at the Media Center, now associate professor of documentary film at Andrews University, sees a world of missed opportunity. "The Adventist Media Center was a world-class facility with very experienced professionals running it," says Kim. "The problem was a lack of vision that would allow its full utilization. Creating great content at large scale requires a significant amount of resources, but the appetite for these kinds of budgets has only decreased. The result is that now every single organization or even department seems to have at the least a little one-man-band operation. Most everything has become small scale."

The biggest issue, Kim believes, is a fundamental misunderstanding of the medium. "I think the reason why we fear what I see as a renaissance in visual culture happening around us is because we really do not understand it. Most of our leaders see these things not as a core part of who we are and how life's truths come to be known, or even as elements that fulfill our innate desire and ability to create, but rather as some kind of trump card handed down from the divine to help fulfill the apocalypse.

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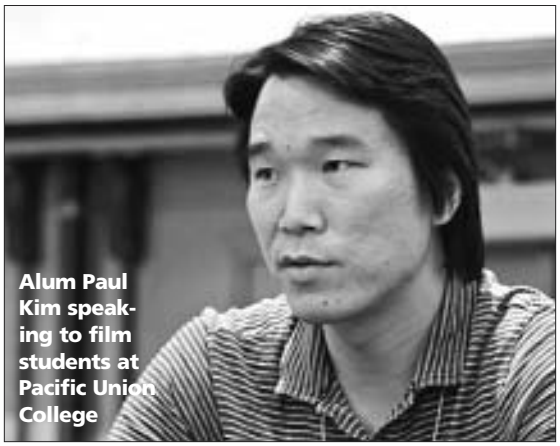

Alum Paul Kim speaking to film students at Pacific Union College

"And so rather than studying and seeing these visual and narrative mediums for what they are, we are truly ignorant about both their origins and processes, using them as replication tools to regurgitate what it is that we are already doing. For example, we are most likely to use media to simply recycle something that you can already experience live (and more effectively) in person, such as a one-to-many sermon or talk. Only a handful—and God bless them—recognize that the most effective use of these still fairly young visual forms comes through its ability to deliver transformative narratives. Stories. And that is much more difficult to do, requiring a pool of professional talent that goes beyond the average pastor and his tech-savvy youth.

"Every year, we have dozens of students graduating from Andrews, PUC, and Southern, who are gifted and extremely passionate about filmmaking," Kim says. "They're already creating some astounding material. While we've made progress, as a community we still have yet to understand how to give them affirmation and resources to continue to use their gifts. A number of years back, I joined the team there in Simi Valley because I saw the best odds I'd seen in many years that something great could happen in the combination of creatives and management there at the time. But we were never given a green light, and nothing came of it. This is indicative not only of what is happening in media today but in all aspects of our community. We always talk about younger generations leaving, well, it's because the only rooms left in the inn are for others of a different mind. The talent is there; they just don't want anything to do with what they're currently seeing. So if we could flip the model, as [Adventist Media Center manager] Warren Judd and I often talked about at the Media Center—rather than trying to pull the talent in to work for us, and instead try to find ways in which we might grow and support our talent pool—I think all of a sudden we would see some amazing things happen."

"What if the North American Division were to keep [the Media Center] and make it a labo-

"The first person I met bristled coolly that the Center wasn't there 'to help young people ride the wagon to Hollywood.' "


YOUTUBE

Pastor Elizabeth Talbot

ratory for innovative Adventist media?" Brillhart asks. "A Sundance for Adventists. Maybe even broader—a Sundance for Christians. Encourage Adventist and Christian filmmakers, writers, musicians, creatives to use the facility to make the next big thing(s). Subsidize it for five years and see what happens. Use the co-working concept to provide small shared offices or groups of offices to creatives, providing a centralized service center and studio operation. Minimize expectations and costs to these 'media missionaries.' Develop a center where there is potential for a creative explosion of Christian media. Why not? If you want younger church members to engage in this kind of activity, perhaps even pay tithe, this is the type of leadership that must be demonstrated."

The production department ventured into satellite uplinking services to the church around the world.

Reboot

As the Adventist Media Center is closing, the ministries are scattering and taking the opportunity to reboot. The television ministry *Breath of Life*, targeted at an African-American audience, has relocated to Huntsville, Alabama, where its speaker/director, Carlton P. Byrd, is senior pastor of the Oakwood University church. *Faith for Today*, the Spanish radio ministry *La Voz de la Esperanza* (*Voice of Hope*), and *Jesus 101*, hosted by Pastor Elizabeth Talbot, have joined together and are moving to Riverside, California. The 85-year-old radio ministry *Voice of Prophecy*, now hosted by former *It Is Written* speaker Shawn Boonstra, is reestablishing itself in Loveland, Colorado. *It Is Written* is moving to Chattanooga, Tennessee, with the possibility that it may align itself more closely with Southern Adventist University, known for its strong communications department, in the future.

The ministries see the current time of transition, along with broader changes in the industry, as opportunities to refocus their work. "We intend to produce programming different from what we've produced before, to reach a wider audience than ever and—by God's grace—make a greater impact for God," says John Bradshaw, speaker/director of *It Is Written*. "As a ministry that pioneered satellite evangelism in the nineties, and Internet evangelism in the years that followed, we're always seeking to reach people wherever they are—whether in person or via their phone, computer, tablet, television, you name it. And our goals for the future reflect that.

"There's no question the audience is changing," says Bradshaw. "On top of that, delivery methods are changing too. We've taken some very concrete steps recently to change the way we approach our programming. We also have on the drawing board a couple of programs that will deal with the subject of homosexuality. My intent for these programs is to engage with some members of the homosexual community, ask them about their viewpoint, talk with them about the tension between Christianity and the homosexual community, and do a little more listening and a little less pontificating. The end result will still be an examination of certain biblical principles, but we might look at it through a slightly different lens than we might have used in Pastor Vandeman's day."

Though a decade ago *It Is Written* did a significant amount of shooting on location, in recent years productions have remained largely studio-bound. Bradshaw notes that this is changing as well. "The vast majority of Christian television is filmed in a studio, talking-head style, and there are some good reasons for that," Bradshaw says. "But in recent times, we've frequently gotten out of the studio and filmed on location in places like Berlin, Auschwitz,

Paris, and many more. We've found that this is engaging an audience that has slightly less time for watching a preacher on a manufactured set. They respond to something a little more authentic. These programs are slightly less sermon-y and slightly more documentary in their orientation, and yet they still manage to teach important biblical principles. We're able to do some of this owing to our evangelism travel. If we're in Prague or London, why waste a fantastic location when there are stories that matter just waiting to be told?

"We've got new programming in the pipeline as well. After all these years, it's past time for us to roll out something different—not radically different, but different enough to move with the times and make a greater impact."

Making a connection

When the General Conference launched Hope Channel in 2003, it came nearly two decades after the independent Three Angels Broadcasting Network started broadcasting. In the decade since, Hope Channel has grown exponentially, and today comprises 23 channels around the world. Hope Channel airs its own programs, as well as productions by North American Division broadcast ministries and independent ministries like *Amazing Facts*. Its vision statement: "Hope Channel will be the premier Christian television network."

In 2010, the General Conference opened a $5.2-million extension of its Silver Spring, Maryland headquarters building, a 2,800-square-foot studio for Hope Channel. The new studios called into further question the future of the Adventist Media Center.

Hope Channel is available free over the air in such cities as New York and Philadelphia, on DirecTV (which has 20 million subscribers), via satellite, through the Roku streaming device (which has about 10 million users), and through online streaming. An average of 13,000 viewers stream programs online each week through hopetv.org.

"Hope Channel is a public-facing television broadcast, primarily focused at reaching non-Adventists," says Derris Krause, Hope Channel's vice president for marketing and fundraising. (Hope Church Channel features programming particularly for Adventists, such as live broadcasts of the Oshkosh Pathfinder camporee nightly programs.) Naturally, though, Adventists make up a large portion of Hope's viewership. Though concrete ratings information is hard to come by, among viewers calling Hope Channel's primary

phone number in August 2014, 7 percent were 18 or younger, 16 percent were 19–29 years old, 29 percent were aged 40–59, 46 percent were in their sixties or older, and only 2 percent were in their thirties. Seventy-three percent of respondents were female, 27 percent male; 52 percent were Adventist, 31 percent other Protestant, 15 percent members of no church, and 2 percent Catholic.

The demographic reached per program varies. *Cross Connection*, a roundtable program focusing on the life of Jesus, primarily reaches viewers aged 25–40. *Let's Pray* and *Go Healthy for Good* attracts primarily women 40 and older. *Hope Sabbath School* attracts a wider range of viewers.

As the Adventist Media Center is closing, the ministries are scattering and taking the opportunity to reboot.

At its beginning, one of the top Hope Channel programs was the weekly *Adventist Newsline*. It enjoyed a million-dollar annual budget, allowing field production around the globe. The church slashed its funding when it found that, for the same money, it could buy satellite time around the world.

"We produced *Newsline* for a year and three months," says Ray Dabrowski, director of communication for the General Conference from 1994 to 2010. "We built it around professional news people. Then a crunch came. When Hope Channel was building a budget for the next year, they pulled us together and said, 'You are spending far too much per program. We would like you to produce a program based on Adventist News Network and the wonderful news output you have. All you need to do is put somebody behind a desk, and you don't need to do any editing because it will be read. The whole thing will cost seven hundred dollars an episode.'

"Hope Channel is producing programs that are attractive to the audience that is giving money to it," Dabrowski says. "People are happy to say, 'This is Adventist; I will support it.' They are not discriminating in terms of what would be attractive to and speak to the needs of viewers. And they're not focused on what would reach an audience younger than their fifties and sixties. Mass media is a media of the youth. Of course, everybody watches TV, but look at who is watching what. We are not producing programs that would be attractive to the `Whatever' generation."

Typical secular cable programming features a host of "you are there" programs like *Dirty Jobs*, *Deadliest Catch*, *Top Gear*, and *Mythbusters*. Such shows engage viewers with questions of how they'd relate to given situations or allow them to explore intriguing issues or scenarios they may not encounter in real life. Considering Adventism's holistic emphasis, the lack of such programming from the church is striking.

"Raw, unbridled story-telling is what people have an appetite for today," says Brillhart. "Talking-head TV is cheap to produce. The downside is that it presents Adventism as all in the box and out of touch. I was once proudly told by a leader at headquarters that the budget for an hour-long show was $350. What is better, spending $350,000 for an audience of two million or $350 for an audience so small it cannot be measured?"

Hope Channel's annual budget is just under $10 million for its flagship channel. Of that, $4.9 million is appropriations from the General Conference, and $2.1 million in donations, along with miscellaneous income and assorted other appropriations. In 2013, Hope Channel produced 315 hours of new content at its Silver Spring studio. On average, about 10 percent of Hope Channel's programming each week is new content.

"Hope Channel quickly learned the challenge of filling a full-time schedule with the quantity of fresh and compelling content necessary to build and sustain a viewing audience," says Krause. "Extensive investment must be made not only in broadcast and distribution infrastructure, but also in quality program production. A significant area of continuing improvement for Hope Channel is to refresh frequently repeating programs with newer content. Hope Channel continues to learn the best ways to present message points that champion Seventh-day Adventist beliefs, faith practices, and mission in ways that are relevant to a pub-

lic audience. It is often easy to incorporate into shows Adventist language, news, and organizational references that have limited value to a public audience."

"We recognize the need for production variety," Krause says. "While budgetary limitations often keep us studio-bound, we have started making great strides over the past few years. In 2012 we introduced packages produced outside the studio that were incorporated into the typical studio-based interview program. In 2013 we produced *GOD?*—a series of sermons by David Asscherick preaching to a studio audience. While not a complete departure from preaching or [an] interview format, the production is a definite improvement to this type of production."

In 2012, Hope Channel started airing live programs with viewer participation. *Go Healthy . . . for Good* features cooking and exercise segments as well as practical demonstrations of best health practices. In autumn 2014 Hope Channel debuted *Natural Lifestyle Cooking*, combining a cooking demonstration of a three-course meal with a short devotional that shifts from the kitchen set to a family room set.

"In a partnership with Quiet Hour Ministries this season, we have a reality/on-location show that will add variety; more partnerships and program acquisition plans are underway," says Krause. In 2015 Hope Channel will premiere its first completely out-of-the-studio show, *Jesus Revolution*. It will compare Jesus' life while on earth and Jesus conveyed on the streets today. The program will be produced in the Middle East and New York City.

In September 2014, Hope Channel appointed 36-year-old Gabriel Begle as Vice President of Programming, Production, and Broadcast. "Modern TV is all about stories, and we'll work diligently to make Hope Channel the best storyteller in Christian media," a Hope Channel news release quoted Begle as saying. "It's about making a connection with a world of people who are looking to God for a better life."

NEW.LIVESTREAM.COM

Patricia Pieper
Novo Tempo

Novo Tempo

At hopetv.org, you not only can Web surf, you can channel surf, checking out fifteen of Hope Channel's affiliates from around the world. Two stations will likely stand out—the Spanish and Portuguese channels broadcasting from the South American Division media center in Jacareí, Brazil. Called Nuevo Tiempo in Spanish and, in Portuguese, Novo Tempo ("New Time"; trademark issues prevented the use of Portuguese and Spanish translations of "Hope Channel"), the center demonstrates a technical creativity and audience awareness that goes beyond typical religious fare. For instance, instead of just showing musicians singing live in the studio, the creative team produces their own artistic music videos. The studio carefully tracks audience response to each of their programs.

Located about an hour outside of Sao Paulo, the twelfth-largest city in the world (with a metropolitan population of 20 million), the SAD media center employs more than 330 people, including journalists, social media specialists, advertising developers, and graphic artists. According to a 2012 Adventist News Network article, the average employee is under 30 years old.

"Novo Tempo is growing faster than any other gospel TV channel in Brazil," says Isaies Moraes, a public school teacher and church member in Brasilia, Brazil. "It is on the two top cable television systems in Brazil, and available over-the-air in many cities. Lots of

The SAD media center employs more than 330 people, including journalists, social media specialists, advertising developers, and graphic artists.

people are studying the Bible by mail or Internet without any previous contact with the Adventist church."

Part of Novo Tempo's success, Moraes says, is the contrast between it and other religious broadcasters that offer more sensationalized programming. "Neo-Pentecostal churches, which are totally money-oriented, with their 'theology of prosperity,' can afford good time on over-the-air television," he says. "Novo Tempo is getting attention from people who are really tired of these common religious TV programs, which are full of supposed stories of cures and miracles. Novo Tempo is attracting people with an educational background."

"We would like to see what is happening [with] Novo Tempo happen in North America," says Krause. "Seventy percent of [Brazilian] households have access to Hope Channel on their chosen television viewing platform. To the public in Brazil, Novo Tempo is synonymous with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Most people's first encounter of the Adventist church is a positive one and is through Novo Tempo. Many churches co-brand their facility with the Hope Channel logo. Their positive learning experience and discovery of Jesus through Novo Tempo has them yearning for a like-minded faith community. As in Brazil, we want Hope Channel to be [an] instrument to introduce people to a loving God and a loving church family."

"[Novo Tempo] talks with people in Portuguese with cultural values that are understood by most of the people," observes Dabrowski. "One of the big problems Hope Channel has and will continue to have is that it does not understand the nature of the medium fully. TV is entertainment! And a little bit education. And a little information. Television is based on communication. I have been challenging those saying, 'We are all about evangelism.' I say, 'Wait a minute, evangelism yes, but evangelism without communication means little.'

"The South American media center does a lot of research in terms of the audience," Dabrowski continues. "They constantly evaluate, evaluate, evaluate. And much of their programming is entertainment, including a lot of music, on the top level. And also, they don't stay away from controversy. They have debates on TV."

"Even with instant access to the entire North American Division, we cannot expect the 'tried and true' methods of communicating the gospel to be effective."

North America

As a consequence of the General Conference headquarters being located in the United States, the North American Division is the only one that does not oversee the content of the Hope Channel in its territory. In July 2014 the NAD elected Gordon Pifher as its first Vice President for Media. Though the NAD already had a VP for communication, that office is focused on public relations and internal communications. Pifher is tasked with overseeing the former Media Center ministries' efforts to reach North America's urban areas and will work with Hope Channel to develop programming for a particularly North American audience. Along with Dan Weber, NAD director of communication, Pifher serves on Hope Channel's Program Development committee.

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Daniel Weber, NAD director of communications

The growing ranks of unchurched people in North America is of particular concern to NAD leadership. "It's easy for us to lose focus on who we need to reach out to," says Weber. "It's not all about baptisms—a lot of it's about going in and creating a presence in a community, so when we share the gospel it's not 'I don't know anything about Adventists.' Or if they're totally secular and know nothing about God, we're talking about the mark of the beast or whatever when they just want to know who God is. Instead of going from A to Z we need to bring them on a gradual journey and present the full alphabet of who we are and what we believe, in different steps and different phases. A huge part of that is letting the average person know who we are and what we stand for—health, education, family development. That's creating an environment where people know and respect each other and can share what they believe. That's gonna take a changing of a mindset as we try to deal with the changing demographics and society in North America."

The NAD recently built their own small studio to produce material to support its departments, such as a resource for Family Ministries called "Help, I'm a Parent."

"One-idea men"

"In my many years collaborating on Adventist projects in the North American Division, I worked with very talented and dedicated people," says Brillhart. "I have been told on more than one occasion by highly respected non-Adventist colleagues and peers that they are amazed at the dedication the Seventh-day Adventist Church has to media."

Though the bulk of commentary on Adventist media and publications tends to come from strident critics, Brillhart encourages church members to speak out. "Watch what is put out there by the church and have an opinion about it," he says. "Your tithe dollars paid for it. Support what is speaking to you. Send feedback about what concerns you or puts you to sleep. Promote via social media church-produced and independently produced media that you like.

"The democratization of media brings some interesting challenges and opportunities," Brillhart notes. "Anyone can say anything to just about everywhere. Controlling the message is a thing of the past. Perhaps the greatest challenge, at least when it comes to the external market, is relevance. Even with instant access to the entire North American Division, we cannot expect the 'tried and true' methods of communicating the gospel to be effective. Don't be 'one-idea men' were the words Ellen White penned to Adventist workers sharing the gospel a century ago.

"This is the challenge for those in Adventist media today," Brillhart continues. "Think outside the box, question the box, repaint the box, put some doors and windows on the box. Add wings. Be willing and courageous enough to try new things. Wait—isn't that the story of the recently completed series *The Record Keeper*? It is the institution, in this case the very institution that wanted to communicate in a new way, that is experiencing numbing dissonance when it comes to widely releasing the finished product. I am of the opinion that God cannot be embarrassed by us. God cannot be harmed by us. Adventism thinks it can be harmed. Remember the ancient [advertising] adage: 'Any press is good press.' "

As *It Is Written*'s John Bradshaw notes, "We're really only limited by our imagination." ■

"What if the North American Division were to keep [the Media Center] and make it a laboratory for innovative Adventist media?"

Tompaul Wheeler directed the feature-length documentary *Leap of Faith: The Ultimate Workout Story*. His half-hour program on Adventist Aviation Services in Papua New Guinea aired on Hope Channel in July 2014. The author of *God-Space*, he's working on a Master of Fine Arts degree in film and creative media at Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee.

MUSIC *of the* SPHERES

STILL IMAGE OF MUSIC OF THE SPHERES, COURTESY ANDREW LUCIA DESIGN

Adventist Hymnody and the Wonder of Creation: *What Composers' Cosmology Brings to Adventist Worship*

BY KENDRA HALOVIAK VALENTINE

"Before the message there must be the vision, before the sermon the hymn, before the prose the poem."

—Amos Wilder, *Theopoetic*

The two Adventist hymnals I have known in my lifetime both begin with praises to God the Creator. Although the first hymn in the *Church Hymnal* of 1941,[1] "Before Jehovah's Awful Throne," perplexed me when I first learned to read (what was "awful" about God's throne?), I sang with gusto the first stanza, concluding with: "He can create, and He destroy." By the second stanza I was singing my conviction that the same God "made us of clay." The first hymn in the 1985 *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*,[2] "Praise to the Lord," jumps immediately to the creative attributes of God: "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!"

This emphasis on creation isn't surprising. The Hebrew Bible's hymnal, the book of Psalms (sometimes referred to as the Psalter), contains many references to God as the creative source of all life. One of the early psalms celebrates the majesty of God as creator and talks of the heavens as "the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established" (Ps. 8:3).[3] Psalm 100, another favorite source of inspiration for writers of Christian hymns, proclaims: "Know that the Lord is God, it is he that made us, and we are his" (Ps. 100:3). The first of Revelation's sixteen hymns begins with four creatures before God's throne constantly singing: " 'Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come' " (Rev. 4:8), which is then followed by the first hymn sung by humans in this book: "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (v. 11).

Imagery in Seventh-day Adventist hymnals reflects these rich biblical understandings of creation because hymn writers (poets) draw from the cultural and literary worlds of the biblical authors. The imagery they used also reflects the scientific understanding of their time. Scientific assumptions enter our hymnody, and thus our liturgy, as new theoretical constructs, making possible new language for worship.

My husband and I became more aware of this about a year ago. We often sit at the piano and sing hymns together. One day we did this after a conversation reflecting on the current discussions over faith and science. Suddenly the creation imagery and scientific language of the hymns caught our attention! For several days afterward we kept reading the lyrics of hymns whenever we had a free moment, sharing our findings with each other.

"Did you find the one with 'radiant orbs'?"

"What about the one with 'boundless curves of space' in the title?"

"I found one that mentions the atom."

"I found *two* that mention the atom!"

Our discoveries launched me into a study focusing on the cosmologies (that is, various understandings of the structure of the universe) reflected in hymns found in the two most recent Seventh-day Adventist hymnals (1941, 1985). In any given hymn, what is the cosmology assumed by the poet?

The actual development of cosmological concepts and their implications for understanding the cosmos are for others such as astronomers and physicists to ponder. My goal is much more humble: to show that there is in fact a wide cosmological diversity in Adventist hymnals, and this is reflected in worship when Adventists sing together.

Hymns constitute a form of poetic language that is

inclusive rather than boundary making. Such language holds together heart and mind as it sparks the imagination, invokes wonder, and celebrates mystery. It is language that retains a sense of humility before God. As Adventists wrestle with ways to describe their hopes and beliefs for a new era, they need the language of poetry in all its richness. And Adventists need to keep singing together.

Creation imagery in Adventist hymnody

The most important source for the hymns Adventists sing is the Christian Scriptures, both Old and New Testament. This is illustrated by the "Scriptural Index of Worship Aids" (pp. 789–791) and the tightly lined sixteen-page index of "Scriptural Allusions in Hymns" (pp. 791–807) included in the 1985 hymnal. Of the total of 695 hymns represented in the two compendiums, only eight do not have any scriptural allusion.[4]

There is in fact a wide cosmological diversity in Adventist hymnals, and this is reflected in worship.

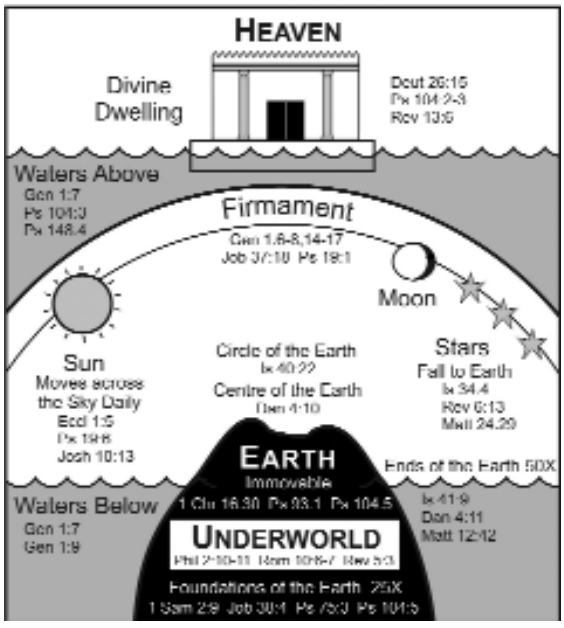
But how is the language of Scripture understood by the poets whose works are in Adventist hymnals? This article will take note of both the diverse theoretical assumptions and the new scientific language that became available at different times in the approximately three hundred years during which most of the hymns were composed (mid-seventeenth to mid-twentieth century). This was a period of remarkable change in scientific understandings of the universe and its basic elements, and the liturgical language of the hymns reflects these changes; that is, it reflects the best science of the poets' times. We can also see that science and worship need not be at odds with each other but work in harmony, at least within these liturgical documents we refer to as hymnals.

A three-tiered cosmology

It has long been observed that the authors of the biblical texts understood their world as part of what has been described as a three-tiered cosmos. The middle tier was the tier of human life. It consisted of the flat, circular (not spherical) earth (Ps. 136:6; Job 26:10; Prov. 8:27; Isa. 40:22) surrounded by the "waters below"; the firmament (or sky dome) holding back the "waters above"; and the sky in between the firmament and the earth, which made life possible (Job 26:7–14; Prov. 8:22–31). Biblical writers referred to the firmament as a "tent" or "canopy" (Ps. 104:2; Isa. 40:22) with portals that allowed rain to occasionally come through the firmament to earth. The dry land of earth was the floor of the tent or a circle on the face of the waters (Job 26:10; Prov. 8:27; Ps. 136:6). (See Fig 1.)[5] In describing events that affected all the living inhabitants of the flat earth, biblical writers emphasized the "four corners" of the earth (Rev. 7:1; 20:8). The earth was held up by "foundations" that made it immovable (Job 38:4–6; Prov. 8:29; Jer. 31:37; Ps. 93:1; 96:10; 104:5; 1 Chron. 16:30). The sun, moon, and stars existed toward the top of the sky dome, with the sun rising and setting each day (Gen. 1:14–18; Eccles. 1:5; Ps. 19:6).[6]

The top tier, "the heavens," was the place of God who reigned in the heavens (Ezek. 1:22–26). God was not confined to the second tier but existed beyond the sky dome and beyond the waters held at bay by it.

The third tier, the underworld, existed far below the earth and was part of the waters of the deep. This abyss (or pit or Sheol) (Jonah

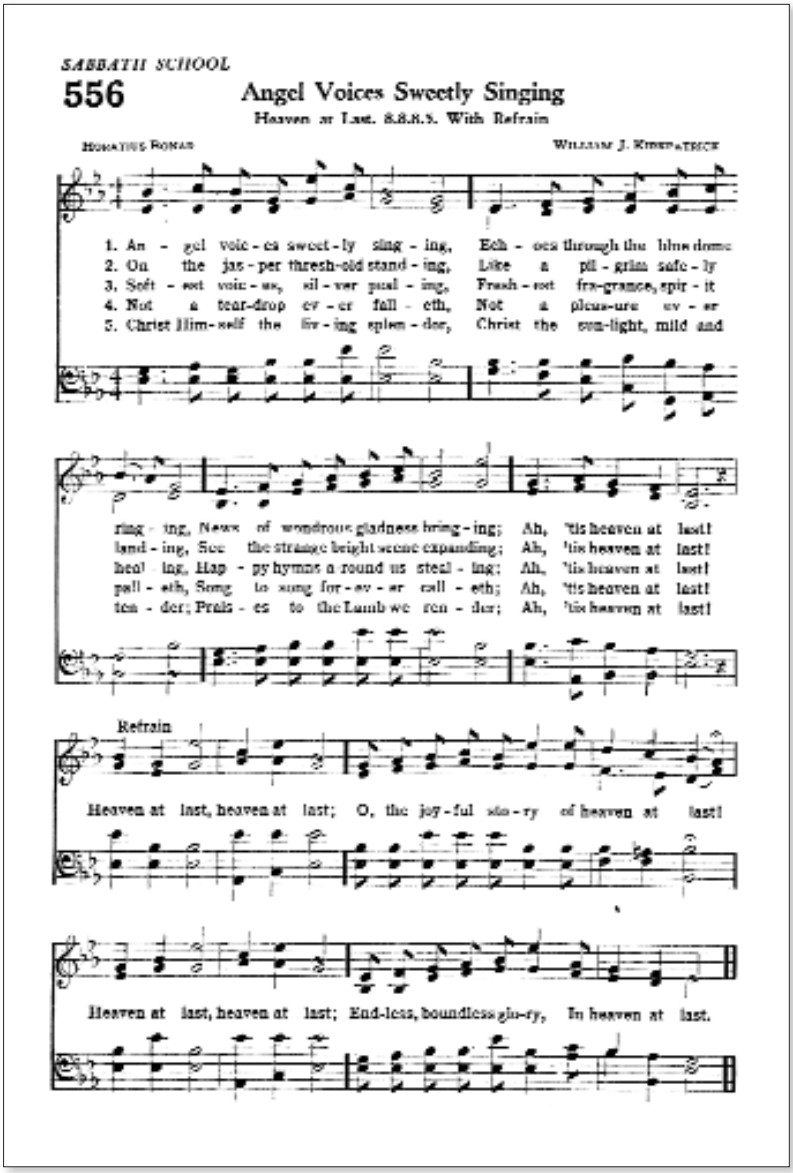


DENIS LAMOUREUX. USED BY PERMISSION.

2:2–6) was the location farthest from God and the heavens. It signified death and separation from God. Using the most comprehensive language possible in such a three-tiered world, the writer of the book of Revelation declared with emphasis that no one from any part of all three tiers could open the scroll held by the One seated on the throne: "And no one *in heaven* or *on earth* or *under the earth* was able to open the scroll or look into it" (Rev. 5:3, emphasis supplied).[7]

Drawing heavily on the language of Scripture and its assumptions concerning a three-tiered cosmos, the writers of many hymns bring this cosmology into contemporary liturgy. Thomas Chisholm's 1923 hymn, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," a favorite hymn of many contemporary worshipers, contains language in which celestial bodies follow designated courses above the earth: "Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above / Join with all nature in manifold witness / To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love."[8] In addition, quite a few hymns refer to the "dome" of the sky.[9] For example, Mary A. Lathbury's 1876 hymn "Day Is Dying in the West" includes the imagery of the night causing the sky's lamps to be lit (stanza 1), and then, in the second stanza, "Lord of life, beneath the dome / Of the universe, Thy home / Gather us who seek Thy face / To the fold of Thy embrace / For Thou art nigh."[10] Even though by the mid-nineteenth century science had long discarded the idea of a dome over a flat earth, this imagery continued in Christian liturgy even as it was combined with the concept of "universe." Scottish hymn writer Horatius Bonar (1808–1889) included it in his hymn, "Angel Voices Sweetly Singing," as the first stanza repeats the title and then continues with "Echoes through the blue dome ringing."[11]

The antiquated assumption of portals in a sky dome is also found in the popular hymn, "Praise Him! Praise Him!" written by Fanny Crosby (1869). The third stanza proclaims: "Praise Him! Praise Him! Jesus, our blessed


SABBATH SCHOOL

556 Angel Voices Sweetly Singing

Heaven or Last. 8.8.8.8. With Refrain

HORATIUS BONAR — WILLIAM J. KIRKPATRICK

1. An - gel voic - es sweet - ly sing - ing, Ech - oes through the blue dome
2. On the jas - per thresh-old stand - ing, Like a pil - grim safe - ly
3. Soft - est voic - es, sil - ver peal - ing, Fresh - est fra-grance, spir - it
4. Not a tear-drop ev - er fall - eth, Not a pleas-ure ev - er
5. Christ Him-self the liv - ing splen - dor, Christ the sun-light, mild and

ring - ing, News of wondrous gladness bring - ing; Ah, 'tis heaven at last!
land - ing, See the strange bright scene expanding; Ah, 'tis heaven at last!
heal - ing, Hap - py hymns a - round us steal - ing; Ah, 'tis heaven at last!
pall - eth, Song to song for - ev - er roll - eth; Ah, 'tis heaven at last!
ten - der; Prais - es to the Lamb we ren - der; Ah, 'tis heaven at last!

Refrain

Heaven at last, heaven at last; O, the joy - ful sto - ry of heaven at last!

Heaven at last, heaven at last; End-less, boundless glo-ry, In heaven at last.

"Angel Voices Sweetly Singing," by Scottish hymn writer Horatius Bonar, from *The Church Hymnal*, 1941 edition.

Redeemer! / Heavenly portals, loud with hosannas ring!"[12] Even the more recent 1985 hymnal includes the Thomas Kelly (1769–1854) hymn, "Look, You Saints! the Sight Is Glorious," where the second stanza includes the phrase, "On the seat of power enthrone Him / While the vault of heaven rings."[13]

Three-tiered cosmology often brought with it a tension between the three realms. Could one move from one realm to another?[14] Several hymns assume that one can, including the hymn written in 1781 by George Heath, "My Soul, Be On Thy Guard."[15] The first stanza asserts: "The hosts of sin are pressing hard / To draw thee from the skies." This sense of drama between the realms is underscored by Heath's

fourth stanza: "Fight on, my soul, till death / Shall bring thee to thy God; / He'll take thee at thy parting breath / To His divine abode."[16] This fourth stanza was omitted from both Adventist hymnals, and Adventists understand why. But aside from its understanding of the state of the dead, the hymn (including the sections that were kept) assumes a battle between the tiers or realms in Bible cosmology.

Another hymn that emphasizes this aspect of three-tiered cosmology is "How Vain Is all Beneath the Skies!" by David E. Ford (1797–1875). The assumption in the title of anything "above the skies" being in conflict with "all beneath the skies" is a vestige of three-tiered cosmology.[17] The hymn "Sweet the Time," written in 1779 by Calvinist preacher George Burder, considers the Incarnation as God leaving one realm to go to another. States part of the third stanza: "Sing the Son's amazing love; / How He left the realms above."[18]

One of the early psalms celebrates the majesty of God as creator.

In addition to Christ's movement between the three tiers, several hymns emphasize the location of God in the highest realm. Isaac Watts (1674–1748), writer of thirty-two hymns in the 1941 hymnal, uses many of the actual words from Psalm 36:5–8 in writing his hymn, "High in the Heavens."[19] His first line, "High in the heavens, eternal God" assumes the location of God in the realm above the "waters above"; and his hymn, "There Is a Land of Pure Delight" suggests that the realms are not far apart: "And but a little space divides / This heavenly land from ours."[20] Imagine the impossibility of this cosmology after Copernicus and the later launching of space flight, which highlighted the paradox of both "up" and "out" there.

We can see that assumptions about a three-tiered world held by biblical writers enter Adventist worship through the singing of hymns.[21] These are cherished alongside other hymns containing very different views of the universe. Ptolemy, who lived while the latest books of the New Testament were being written, developed a very different understanding of the cosmos, one in which a round earth hung in space without a "dome" or "vault." Ptolemy's cosmology would influence many other hymns treasured by the Adventist Church.

A two-sphere cosmology

In his work *Almagest*, Claudius Ptolemy (90–168 CE) articulated a comprehensive geocentric cosmology that would be authoritative for more than 1,300 years. This careful, documented, and detailed work replaced the three-tiered cosmology with an earth-centered solar system made up of "nested" spheres. The sun, moon, stars, and planets all orbited a stationary earth. Ptolemy's calculations even allowed him to consider the dimensions of the universe and estimate the distance between planets.

Another major work by Ptolemy, *Apotelesmatika* (a four-volume work translated as *Astrological Outcomes*), considered the effects of the movement of the planets on humans. Building on the work of Pythagoras (570–495 BCE) six centuries earlier, Ptolemy hypothesized that, given the mathematical proportions, precision, and harmony of the celestial bodies, sounds were created. Even if unheard by human ears, this sound could be called "the music of the spheres."[22]

The reader familiar with Christian hymns is probably already humming the tune to "This Is My Father's World." The first stanza exults because "to my listening ears, all nature sings, and round me rings / The music of the spheres."[23] This more developed cosmology made possible new images and new language for hymn writers.

Daniel Turner's hymn "Beyond the Starry Skies" considers the location of God using fascinating imagery: "Beyond the starry skies, / Far as th' eternal hills, / There in the soundless world of light / Our great Redeemer dwells."[24] Turner and his brother-in-law, James Fanch, adapted and expanded an earlier hymn written by Fanch that began, "Beyond the glittering, starry globes."[25] It is interesting that the adaptation of the first line from "starry globes" to "starry skies" removes the imagery of a

Ptolemaic cosmology, replacing it with the earlier imagery of a three-tiered cosmology. Older understandings prevail even as new knowledge becomes available.

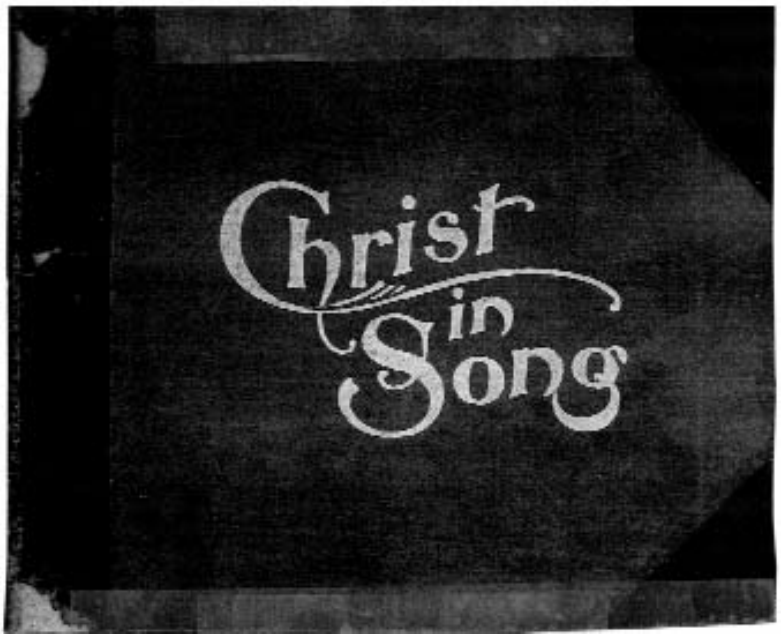
Other examples of geocentric cosmology assumed in the Adventist hymnals include Edward Perronet's 1779 hymn, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name!" In stanza three, the invitation is: "Let every kindred, every tribe, on this terrestrial ball, / To Him all majesty ascribe, and crown Him Lord of all!"[26] In Perronet's hymn, the earth is definitely no longer understood as a flat circle in the middle of the "waters of the deep," but rather as a sphere in the heavens. And Sydney Carter's 1961 hymn "Every Star Shall Sing a Carol" reflects a cosmology that has planets making some kind of music: "Every star and every planet, / Every creature, high or low, / Come and praise the King of heaven / By whatever name you know."[27]

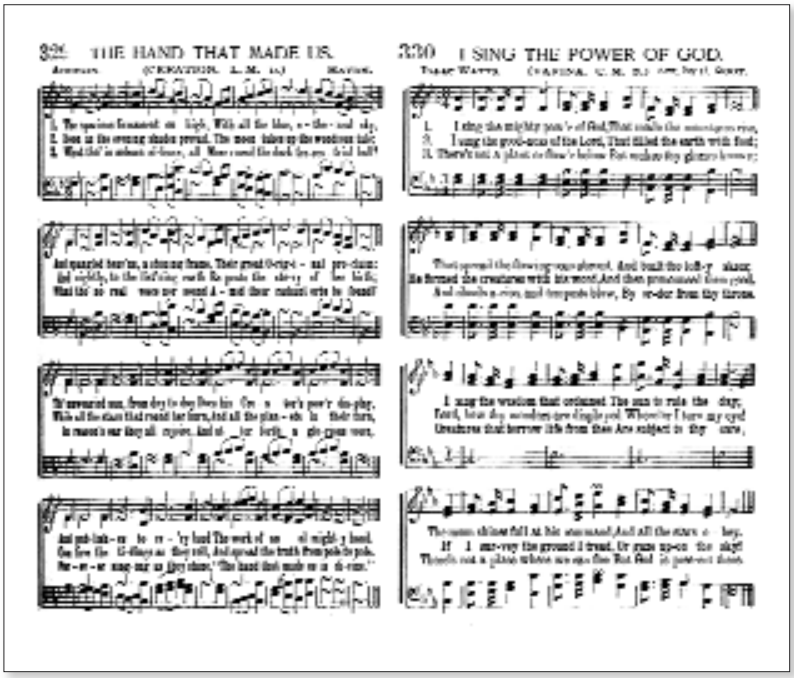
Joseph Addison's hymn "The Spacious Firmament" is a good example of the way liturgical language utilizes different cosmologies.[28] Like the hymnal itself, a single hymn is flexible enough (unlike other genres such as scientific journals and theological prose) to embrace and hold together contradictory views of the universe. Addison's much-loved 1712 hymn maintains the "firmament" language inspired by Psalm 19:1–3 while also assuming key elements of Ptolemy's geocentric cosmology:

The spacious firmament on high, / With all the blue, ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame, / Their great Original proclaim.
Th' unwearied sun from day to day / Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land / The work of an almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail, / The moon takes up the wondrous tale;
And nightly to the listening earth / Repeats the story of her birth;
While all the stars that round her burn, / And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll, / And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all / Move round the dark terrestrial ball?
What though no real voice nor sound / Amid their radiant orbs be found?
In reason's ear they all rejoice / And utter forth a glorious voice,
Forever singing as they shine, / "The hand that made us is divine."





1908 hymn book *Christ in Song*, "the largest gospel song and standard tune collection." Compiled and published by F. E. Belden, and sold by the Review and Herald Publishing Association in Washington, D.C.

The first stanza, dealing with daytime, uses the language of "firmament on high" and "shining frame," images from a three-tiered cosmology. The "dome" or "vault" as understood by biblical writers would definitely create a "shiny" appearance (see footnote 11). But the fact that the sky is an "ethereal" sky is a later classical Ptolemaic concept, where "ether" was the mysterious substance of space surrounding the spheres. The last two lines then consider the sun, the movement of which is now not referenced other than it being "unwearied."

The second stanza focuses on nighttime and the activity of the moon. If the "her" in line three is referring back to the earth of line two, then stars and planets orbit the earth, as in Ptolemy's cosmology. This is underscored in the first line of the third stanza, as "all" moves around earth ("the dark terrestrial ball"). The third stanza also suggests Ptolemaic science by alluding to the music of the planets ("forever singing"). But while referencing the Ptolemaic cosmology, is Addison's third stanza also reflecting a church-and-science conflict over an even more developed cosmology—that of Copernicus—whose discoveries suggested that the music of the spheres was no longer a valid idea? The phrases "What though in solemn silence" and "What though no real voice nor sound . . . be found" suggest that Addison is actually discounting the validity of the "music of the spheres," reflecting the cosmological challenges of his day even as he still confesses faith in the Creator.

An example of a heliocentric universe.

Addison is clearly playing with various categories—giving a nod to the cosmology of Scripture while considering more recent understandings of the universe. For example, if in the second stanza the "her" of line three is not the earth of line 2 but the moon of line 1 (recall that this stanza emphasizes the nighttime after the first stanza focused on the daytime), and earth is one of the planets in motion, then Addison may well be embracing less Ptolemy's cosmology than Copernicus' heliocentric cosmology. It is clear from some of Addison's famous prose contributions to the journals the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* that he was well aware of the debate over differing views of the structure of the universe.[29]

Readers should notice two other hints given by Addison that he is wrestling with changing concepts. First, the last phrase in the second stanza states that the night skies "spread the truth from pole to pole." While Ptolemy's cosmology moved humanity from the cosmos of the three tiers into the universe of space, it did not have the earth spinning on its axis with north and south poles. Those images are post-Copernicus. So, how many cosmologies are present in this one hymn by Addison? What is he doing in these three stanzas? What is Addison suggesting about God and our world?

In addition, the third stanza's phrase "in reason's ear they all rejoice" causes one to pause. The age of reason supplied new language for humans to understand our world. Is Addison winking at us, holding together in one hymn Scripture's firmament, Ptolemy's earth in space, and even further developments in science? "In reason's ear" the radiant orbs may not create sphere music, but they do witness to a divine Creator. Science changes; wonder remains. The language of liturgy (according to Amos Wilder, the language of vision, hymn, and poem[30]) can hold these various ways of describing what is wondrous about our world and its cosmos.

Copernicus' heliocentric cosmology

The shift in cosmology from an earth-centered to a sun-centered universe was such a radical ideological disruption that it would take terminology like "revolution" to adequately describe it. The Copernican Revolution began in 1543 with the publication by Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) of *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (*On*

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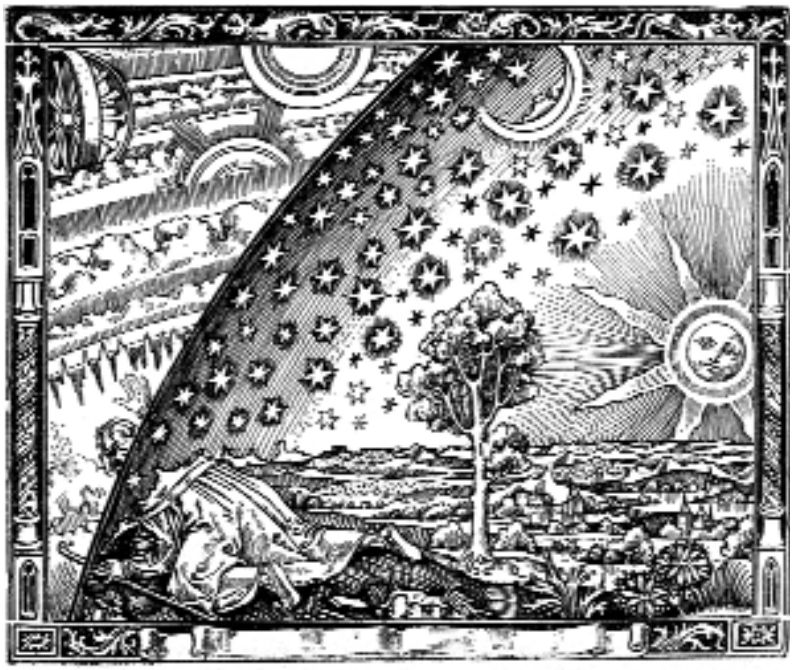
the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres), in which he articulated new understanding based on intricate mathematical calculations. The revolution continued with the work of Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), who, pointing his telescope to the heavens, found empirical support for Copernicus' new understanding of the cosmos. Two additional names warrant mention even in the briefest descriptions of the momentous shift in thinking: Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), whose laws of planetary motion included the elliptical orbiting of planets, and Isaac Newton (1643–1727), whose 1687 work *Principia*, about the law of universal gravitation and its ramifications for a solar system, is often considered the logical outcome and fitting conclusion of the revolution that Copernicus started 144 years earlier. With these scientists came insightful new imagery and new language for describing the universe. The earth in movement around the sun and spinning on its axis was a discovery that led to new considerations of the earth's two poles. The vastness of space expanded even farther beyond Ptolemy's universe as humans struggled to understand the implications and reassess their place amidst new worlds and multiple suns.[31]

Robert Grant (1779–1838) wrote the words to his 1833 hymn "O Worship the King" after reading the hymn by William Kethe, "All People That on Earth Do Dwell." These two hymns are in both the 1941 and 1985 Adventist hymnals.[32] Drawing from Psalm 104, Grant's second stanza includes the words: "O tell of His might, O sing of His grace, whose robe is the light, whose canopy space." It is important to note that by the time Grant writes his hymn, the "canopy" is no longer the firmament or dome under God's dwelling place, as was suggested by the psalmist. Rather, the location of God's being is in the vastness of space. John W. Peterson's 1948 hymn "It Took a Miracle" includes a refrain with Copernican assumptions about the vastness of space: "It took a miracle to put the stars in place, / It took a miracle to hang the world in space."[33]



This well-known engraving by an unknown artist first appeared in Camille Flammarion's 1888 book *L'atmosphère: météorologie populaire*. The engraving has been used to represent a supposedly medieval cosmology, including a flat earth bounded by a solid and opaque sky, or firmament.

Some sources suggest that the first recorded use of "space" in an astronomical sense in the English language is from John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, where he states: "All space, the ambient Aire, wide interfus'd imbracing round this florid Earth . . ."[34] In his use of space as "stellar depth" Milton gives us another reminder of the closeness between the philosophical implications of cosmology and the language of poetry. New scientific insights make their way into contemporary liturgy. Milton's life illustrates this point. While a teenager, Milton wrote a poem based on Psalm 136. At fifteen, his lyrics reflected a more traditionally Ptolemaic world, where "the golden tresséd sun, all day long his course to run."[35] However, after a lifetime of encounters, including one with Galileo, Milton would reflect more contemporary understandings of the universe in his epic poem *Paradise Lost*.[36]

Katherine K. Davis, composer of the Christmas favorite, "The Little Drummer Boy," wrote the hymn "Let All Things Now Living" under the pseudonym John Cowley.[37] In it she used the term *orbit* when speaking of the sun. In some versions of this hymn the lyrics in stanza two read: "His law He enforces: the stars in their courses, / The sun in *its* orbit,

Suddenly the creation imagery and scientific language of the hymns caught our attention.

obediently shine."[38] However, the version found in the 1985 Adventist hymnal reads: "His law He enforces: the stars in their courses, the sun in *His* orbit, obediently shine." Do these "textual critical" observations reflect a tension between a Ptolemaic cosmology that was adapted to conform to a Copernican cosmology?[39] Composer Brian Wren's 1978 hymn, "Is This a Day of New Beginnings?" is much clearer in its Copernican assumptions. His second stanza reads: "How can the seasons of a planet mindlessly spinning round its sun / With just a human name and number / Say that some new thing has begun?"[40]

Copernicus' cosmology not only placed the sun at the center of our universe, it also allowed for the existence of many other suns and worlds. The 1971 hymn written by R. B. Y. Scott was created to use with the grand tune *Jerusalem*.[41] The first stanza expresses well the new understanding: "O world of God, so vast and strange, profound and wonderful and fair, / Beyond the utmost reach of thought, but not beyond a Father's care! We are not strangers on this earth whirling amid the suns of space; / We are God's children, this our home, with those of every clime and race."[42] In his third stanza, Scott plays with the concept of time: "O world of time's far-stretching years! there was a day when time stood still, / A central moment when there rose a cross upon a cruel hill." Scott's hymn incorporates the new science with its vastness of space and time, yet retains and emphasizes the significance of humanity through Calvary's sacrifice; a "day when time stood still" is described along with the suns of the cosmos.[43]

While only a few hymns include the concept of multiple suns, quite a number of hymns include the plural "worlds" in their lyrics. The post-Copernicus possibility of worlds beyond earth seemed to deeply influence hymn writers. While some still alluded to the three-tiered cosmos of the biblical world, most found inspiration in a vast space that might include life in worlds beyond our own. For example, a hymn about the day of Sabbath rest, "Again the Day Returns" by William Mason (1725–1797), includes the phrase, "Lord of all worlds, incline Thy gracious ear."[44] Daniel C. Roberts' 1876 hymn "God of Our Fathers," whose stirring musical composition by George W. Warren included a beginning with a fanfare of trumpets, is another example. Its first stanza proclaims: "God of our fathers, whose almighty hand, / Leads forth in beauty all the starry band, / Of shining worlds in splendor through the skies, / Our grateful songs before Thy throne arise."[45]

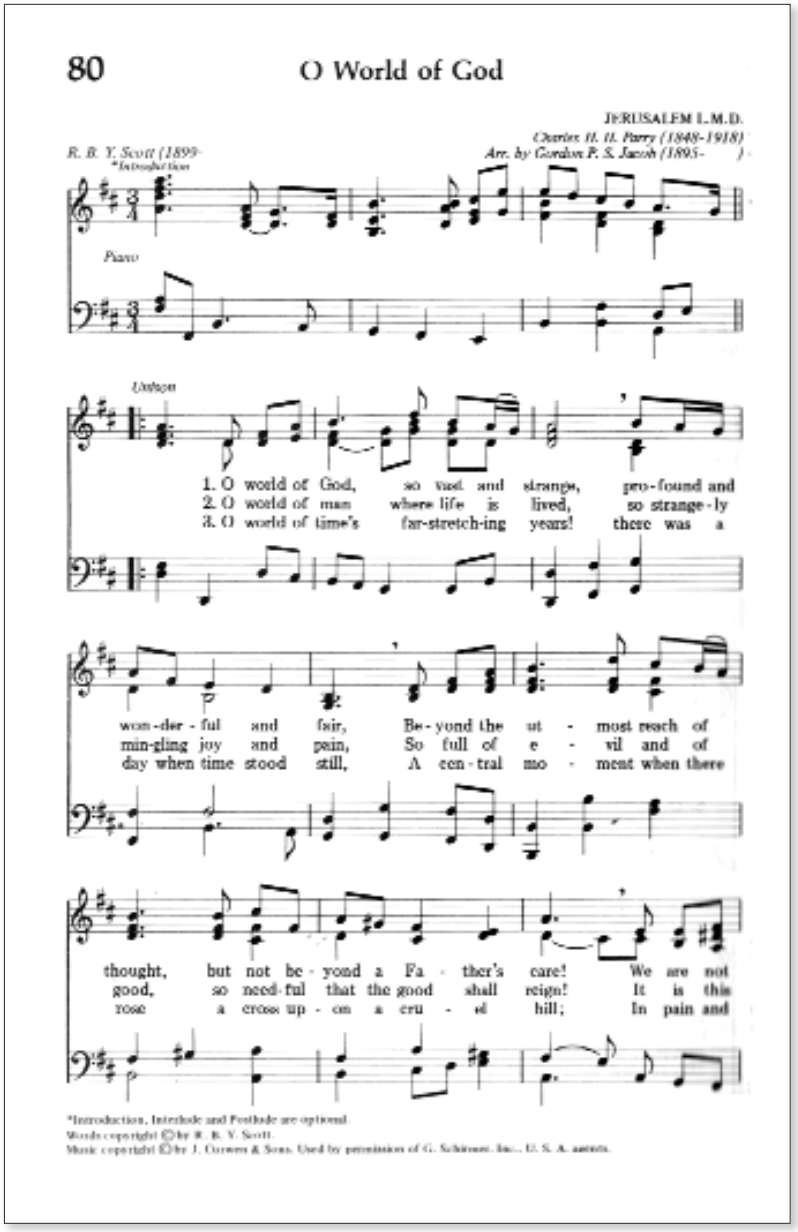
Two hymns by Isaac Watts (1674–1748) included in the 1985 hymnal also illustrate the way that a single composer used the imagery of diverse cosmologies. Both of these hymns were written for Watts' *Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament*, published in 1719. The hymn "With Songs and Honors" concludes the first stanza with words describing "the Lord on high": "Over the heavens He spreads His cloud, / And waters veil the sky."[46] Watts, who was very informed concerning advances in eighteenth-century cosmology,[47] maintains a three-tiered cosmology in this hymn. However, in another hymn published in this same 1719 collection, "Let All on Earth Their Voices Raise," he includes these words in the second stanza: "He framed the globe; He built the sky; / He made the shining worlds on high."[48] The assumed cosmology here is post-Copernican, with the location of a round earth and the possibility of multiple worlds in the vastness of space.[49]

Three other hymns in the 1985 hymnal underscore the "worlds" of distant space. The cosmological assumptions of these hymns provide a foundation for key theological concepts. One hymn emphasizes God's attributes as Creator, another the wonder of the Incarnation, and a third gives a vision of human work and witness that goes even beyond our world. First, "How Great Thou Art," originally written by Carl Boberg in 1885 and later translated into English by Stuart K. Hine (the final version wasn't com-

pleted until 1948), is strongly Copernican.[50] The first stanza reads: "O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder consider all the worlds [works] Thy hands have made, I see the stars, I hear the rolling [mighty] thunder, Thy pow'r thro'out the universe displayed." An asterisk in the 1985 hymnal draws attention to the phrases "all the *worlds*" and "I hear the *rolling* thunder." The note explains that the "author's original words are 'works' and 'mighty.' "[51] Contemporary performers and worshipers are clearly able to interchange the "works" and "worlds" of God without any difficulty. What would have been impossible in a three-tiered or even Ptolemaic universe is possible after Copernicus.

The hymn "Of the Father's Love Begotten," emphasizing the Incarnation, is included in the section of the 1985 hymnal dedicated to the First Advent.[52] Like "How Great Thou Art," this hymn underwent a translation transformation. Originally written by Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (348–413?) in Latin, the phrase we now sing as "ere the worlds began to be" was originally "before the beginning of the world."[53] The beginning of all life is invoked as a way to honor the image of God the Father whose son Jesus is born. The first stanza continues: "He is Alpha and Omega, / He the source, the ending He, / Of the things that are, that have been, / And that future years shall see, / Evermore and evermore!"

In 1983 Brian Wren published the hymn, "Lord God, Your Love Has Called Us Here" that begins with images of creation, though marred by sin.[54] In the fourth stanza Wren writes: "Then take the towel, and break the bread, / And humble us, and call us friends. / Suffer and serve till all are fed / And show how grandly love intends / To work till all creation sings, / To fill all worlds, to crown all things." For Wren, "worlds" becomes a challenge for humans to respond to God's love with justice and mercy. As mentioned above, "worlds" is used in the Adventist hymnals in a variety of ways. Thus "worlds," made possible by post-biblical cosmology, could be filled with rich theology (God as creator), Christology (Jesus' incarnation), and ethical eschatology.


80 O World of God

JERUSALEM L.M.D.
Charles H. H. Parry (1848-1918)
Arr. by Gordon P. S. Jacob (1895-)

R. B. Y. Scott (1899-
*Introduction

Piano

Unison

1. O world of God, so vast and strange, yet-found and
2. O world of man where life is lived, so strange-ly
3. O world of time's far-stretch-ing years! there was a

won-der-ful and fair, Be-yond the ut-most reach of
min-gling joy and pain, So full of e-vil and of
day when time stood still, A cen-tral mo-ment when there

thought, but not be-yond a Fa-ther's care! We are not
good, so need-ful that the good shall reign! It is this
rose a cross up-on a cru-el hill; In pain and

*Introduction, Interlude and Postlude are optional.
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"O World of God," written in 1971 by R. B. Y. Scott, from the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, 1985 edition.

In concluding this section on Copernican cosmology, we note how Reginald Heber's stirring 1819 mission hymn, "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," could only be composed in a post-Copernican universe.[55] This hymn assumes not only the continents of post-biblical science and a Ptolemaic earth held up in space, but also an earth rotating on its axis. The Christian story is to be told "From Greenland's icy mountains, / From India's coral strand, / Where Afric's sunny fountains / Roll down their golden sands." The fourth stanza

begins: "Waft, waft, ye winds, His story, / And you, ye waters, roll, / Till, like a sea of glory, / It spreads from pole to pole."

The vastness of Copernicus' space, with its spinning earth, multiple suns, and new worlds inspired the poetry of many hymn writers. These hymns sit side by side with hymns having scriptural allusions to a three-tiered cosmos and beside hymns assuming a Ptolemaic universe. Hymns enable us to cope with scientific change while continuing to affirm faith in the creator God. Science changes; wonder remains.

Bayly has captured space and time, energy and atoms in the first two stanzas of his hymn.

An Einsteinian cosmology

In 1905 Albert Einstein (1879–1955) wrote several papers that forever changed the way scientists saw the universe. His theory of special relativity proposed that moving through space should not be thought of as moving in fixed time, like the secondary hand moving on an old wristwatch. Time was not in fact a constant. Rather, the speed of light was the constant. The speed of light was related to time in such a way that space and time should not be understood as two things, but as space-time, that is, one thing, or as two interwoven threads of the same fabric. This meant that time itself could slow down, depending on its relationship to space. He would later expand his theory to deal with gravity's effect on space-time, postulating in his theory of general relativity that space-time was curved in the presence of matter.

These insights, along with Edwin Hubble's discovery in the 1920s of innumerable galaxies spread through space, were revolutionary for cosmology, making it possible to consider both interstellar space (space within a galaxy) and intergalactic space (space between galaxies). The universe was now to be understood as flexible, dynamic, and finite. In addition, Einstein's famous equation $E = mc^2$ argued for a unity between energy, matter, and light. At their very essence, mass and energy were the same, with energy having the potential to become mass, and mass the potential to become energy. This would lead to the unlocking of the atom and nuclear research. Although Einstein resisted moving away from an unchanging universe, his own theories suggested otherwise. His physics also made possible the theory of the big bang as the beginning of an expanding and evolving universe.

In the eighth century before Christ, Homer's mythologies of the Greek gods included mention of Orion and the Pleiades.[56] The Bible also includes references to these objects in the sky (Job 9:9; 38:31; Amos 5:8). Twentieth-century hymn writer Howard C. Robbins (1876–1952), in his hymn "And Have the Bright Immensities," includes these ancient references within a contemporary scientific context.[57] "Have the bright immensities," he asks, "received our risen Lord, / Where light years frame the Pleiades / And point Orion's sword? / Do flaming suns His footsteps trace / Thro' corridors sublime, the Lord of interstellar space / And conqueror of time?" Today's science tells us that the open star cluster Pleiades, one of the nearest star clusters to earth, is measured at 424 light years from us. Robbins's hymn combines works from eighth-century BCE Homer with Ptolemy's second-century constellations and twentieth-century interstellar space! Certainly liturgical language is distinctive in its ability to bear a variety of cosmological views and be the richer for it.

In both the 1941 and the 1985 hymnals, the ninety-seventh hymn in each reflects Einsteinian cosmology. "Lord of the Ocean" in the 1941 hymnal has lyrics by Alfred Norman Harker that allude to a "glorious sun that reigns on high" (stanza 1) and "Thy vast domain" (stanza 4). Both these images reflect a Copernican cosmology. But Harker also includes this phrase in stanza 2: "Send forth Thy light in earth's dark hour; / As flashing lightning speeds through space." These words echo Einstein's "speed of light" language. A fifth stanza written by Harker that is not included in our hymnal reads: "Lord of the realms beyond the sky, / Restrain the demons with Thine eye, / So may Thy glorious love be known, / The love of Him who shares Thy

throne."[58] The phrase "realms beyond the sky" might remind us of the three-tiered cosmology, so that, once again, even within the same hymn, multiple cosmologies are present.

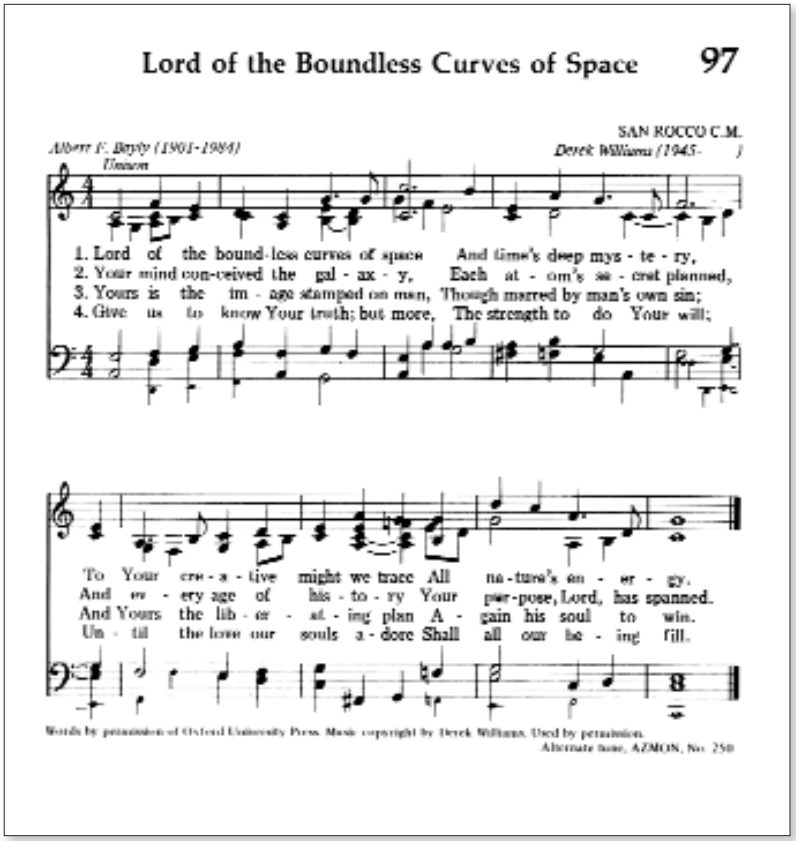
Hymn 97 in the 1985 hymnal is Albert F. Bayly's "Lord of the Boundless Curves of Space." We need not go beyond the title to recognize the influence of Einsteinian physics. The following are the first two stanzas of this 1950 hymn:

Lord of the boundless curves of space
And time's deep mystery,
To your creative might we trace
All nature's energy.

Your mind conceived the galaxy,
Each atom's secret planned,
And every age of history
Your purpose, Lord, has spanned.

Bayly has captured space and time, energy and atoms all in the first two stanzas of this hymn. Talking about the "curves of space" would not make sense prior to the beginning of the twentieth century. But with Einstein, such new language was possible for the hymn writer. Since time and space were connected, along with "deep space" came the concept of deep time—as the hymn writer expresses it, "time's deep mystery." Although terminology referring to the earth's "galaxy" had been used for generations, after the discovery of multiple galaxies (Edwin Hubble, 1929), the wonder of God's creation expanded far beyond what humans had previously ever even imagined. Bayly's lyrics also allude to the presence of "energy" in matter and the potential of "each atom's secret." The use of such language in liturgical hymns creates a sense of power unknown prior to the use of atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Bayly's world (our world) knows a science that biblical writers could not conceive of. Even Copernicus could not have imagined the size of the cosmos seen in the twentieth century, with its untold galaxies.

In 1967, Catherine Arnott Cameron wrote one of the more recent compositions in our hymnal titled, "God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens."[59] In this hymn she reflects not only on a more contemporary understanding of the universe but also the potential for creative good and devastating destruction:



"Lord of the Boundless Curves of Space," by Albert F. Bayly in 1950, from *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, 1985 edition.

God, who stretched the spangled heavens / Infinite in time and place,
Flung the suns in burning radiance / Through the silent fields of space:
We, Your children in Your likeness, / Share inventive powers with You;
Great Creator, still creating, / Show us what we yet may do.

We have ventured worlds undreamed of / Since the childhood of our race;
Known the ecstacy of winging / Through untraveled realms of space,
Probed the secrets of the atom, / Yielding unimagined power,
Facing us with life's destruction / Or our most triumphant hour.

As each far horizon beckons, / May it challenge us anew;
Children of creative purpose, / Serving others, honoring You.
May our dreams prove rich with promise; / Each endeavor well begun;
Great Creator, give us guidance / Till our goals and Yours are one.

The first stanza reflects a post-Einstein cosmology, where the heavens are "infinite in time and place," where suns burn in "silent fields of space." The second stanza makes this one of the first hymns written that reflects on the age of space travel: "We have ventured worlds undreamed of . . . winging through untraveled realms of space." Beginning in space, the stanza ends on earth as it reflects on the splitting of the atom. On her blog, scienceandbelief.org, Ruth Bancewicz, a biologist who has studied genetics, writes the following: "The writers of the Psalms wrote about stars using the most up to date science of their day. . . . But while science has moved on, the language in the songs hasn't. I'm not suggesting that we do away with the old hymns. . . . But what would it look like if we praised God in song for some of the things we have discovered in the last couple of centuries?"[60] Bancewicz then goes on to discuss Cameron's 1967 hymn with its more contemporary language and imagery. She ends her blog post with the question: "What would it look like if more writers of worship songs and hymns started to include references to slightly more contemporary science?"[61]

A fascinating second stanza emphasizes God as the focus of science but also the focus of adoration of reverent explorers.

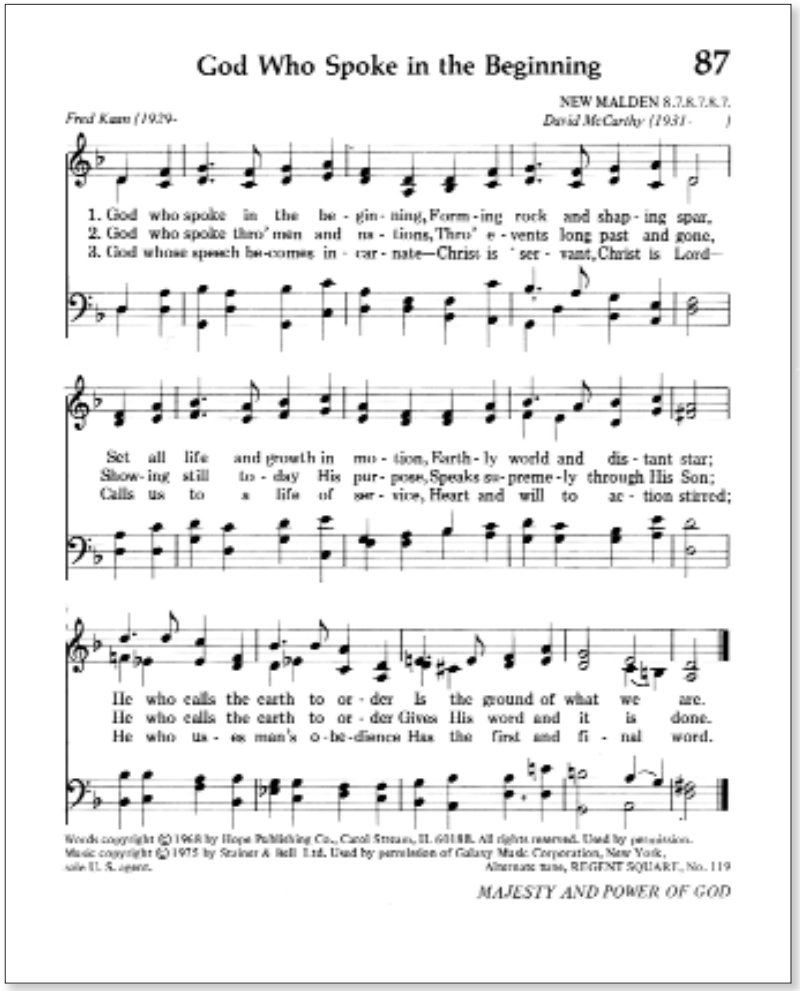
Hymn writer Fred Pratt Green (1903–2000) thought a lot about science during his prolific hymn-writing career. Fifteen of his more than three hundred hymns are included in the current Adventist hymnal.[62] His 1972 hymn "When in Our Music God Is Glorified" includes these modern descriptions in its second stanza: "How oft, in making music, we have found / A new dimension in the world of sound, / As worship moved us to a more profound Alleluia!"[63] Pratt Green's 1976 Thanksgiving hymn, "Come, Sing a Song of Harvest," expresses a danger of scientific arrogance when science and wonder do not go hand in hand: "Shall we, sometimes forgetful / Of where creation starts, / With science in our pockets / Lose wonder from our hearts?"[64] A few pages over from Pratt Green's hymn, Caryl Micklem's "Father, We Thank You" credits God for making it possible to explore science and creation: "Father, we thank you / For the lamps that lighten the way; / For human skill's exploration / Of Your creation; / Father, we thank You."[65] Henry H. Tweedy's hymn "Eternal God, Whose Power Upholds" includes a fascinating second stanza that emphasizes God as the focus of science but also the focus of adoration of reverent explorers, those seeking true wisdom: "O God of truth, whom science seeks / And reverent souls adore, / Illumine every earnest mind / Of every clime and shore: / Dispel the gloom of error's night, / Of ignorance and fear, / Until true wisdom from above / Shall make life's pathway clear."[66]

In the 1970s Pratt Green contributed to "a search for new hymns on the stewardship of the environment" sponsored by the Hymn Society of America.[67] His hymn, "God in His Love for Us" repeats the title in the first stanza and then continues: "Lent us this planet, / Gave it a purpose in time and in space; / Small as a spark from the fire of creation, / Cradle of life and the home of our race."[68] In addition to emphasizing ecology and human responsibility to God for our planet, Pratt Green mentions the "spark from the fire of creation." What is meant by this imagery? Do we have here an allusion to the contemporary big bang concept? As Pratt Green notes this planet's purpose "in time and in space," is he taking Einstein's time-space fabric back to its beginning? What exactly does Pratt Green mean when he refers to the "spark"? Caroline Noel's hymn "At the Name of Jesus" considered the voice of Jesus as causing all of creation to

spring "at once to sight."[69] Is Pratt Green's "spark" the same as Jesus' voice? Does the language of "spark" wondrously hold various possibilities including scientific understandings from the biblical world's past to future theories not yet conceived?[70]

The contemporary hymn by Fred Kaan (1929–2009) is perhaps the clearest example of the use of the challenging imagery from current cosmology and the attempt to set these in a context of affirming faith and also contemporary theological reflection. A minister of the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom, Kaan began writing hymns for his church members because much of what they sang were songs with " 'dated language, static ideas, and remote symbolism.' " He wrote instead " 'about the modern city, industrial life, human rights, war and peace; in short, about being Christians in the world today.' "[71] Kaan's hymn, "God Who Spoke in the Beginning," which Adventist compilers included in our hymnbook, reiterates the title in its first stanza. It then continues: "Forming rock and shaping spar, / Set all life and growth in motion, / Earthly world and distant star; / He who calls the earth to order / Is the ground of what we are."[72]

This hymn begins with God speaking in the beginning, as the account of creation in Genesis 1 describes. But Kaan does not assume a three-tiered cosmos with sky vault and waters above the vault. Nor does he assume the geocentric universe of Ptolemy. Rather, God forms rock and sets "all life and growth in motion." What does this motion refer to? Could it be the ever-present seasons or perhaps the on-going nature of movement of our planet and the others with which we share our solar system? Does the imagery allow for an expanding universe? Does it allow for broader understandings of how God creates? Could this 1968 hymn have been written prior to Paul Tillich's "God as the ground of being" theology? What does it mean that such allusions are present in one of our hymns?



"God Who Spoke in the Beginning," by Fred Kaan, 1968, from *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*, 1985 edition.

Conclusion

Adventists have always been a singing people. In addition to the reading of Scripture and the central place of preaching, hymn singing has been part of worship. Cherished hymns expressed the faith and hope of the community using familiar imagery that both unifies and allows for diversity.[73] There has been considerable change in the way the structure of the universe has been understood. The church through its hymnody has been able to cope with those changes even as it continues its biblically grounded faith in the creator of the universe.

In Adventist hymnals, diverse and contradictory cosmologies sit side by side, sometimes within the same hymn.[74] Hymns reflect the scientific assumptions of their authors as they seek language with which to praise the wonder of creation and its Creator.

For some, new cosmologies posed serious

Does the imagery allow for an expanding universe? Does it allow for broader understandings of how God creates?

crises of faith. How do you take your sacred texts with you on the journey to a new cosmology? It seems tensions have always existed between science and religion. Hymns help Adventists live with the tensions. In the poetry of Adventist hymnody there is a richness that is able to hold elements of continuity and change.

Adventists need the inclusive poetic language of their hymns—with its ability to hold the past as well as have room for the possibilities of future discoveries. Adventists need poetry's ability to spark human imaginations, invoking wonder and worship. Adventists need the language of liturgy, which can absorb science language in ways prose often finds problematic. Adventists need hymn language—filling the imagery with meaning while retaining humility—that reminds worshipers they only have a piece of the picture. Adventists need hymns and to keep singing them together—for a church that sings together, stays together. ■

Epilogue

After the seas are all cross'd, (as they seem already cross'd,)
After the great captains and engineers have accomplish'd their work,
After the noble inventors—after the scientists, the chemist, the geologist, ethnologist,
Finally shall come the poet worthy that name.[75]

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Her recent publications include "The Book of Revelation," in *The Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, Joel Green, ed. (Baker Academic, 2011) and *Signs to Life: Reading and Responding to John's Gospel* (Signs Publishing, 2013).

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2. *The Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1985).

3. Unless otherwise marked, all Bible quotations in this article are taken from NRSV.

4. Hymns in the 1985 hymnal without at least one scriptural allusion: 58, 75, 262, 407, 452 (written by James White), 471, 657, 689.

5. Source: Denis Lamoureux, "The Ancient Science in the Bible," in *The BioLogos Forum* (blog), Aug. 21, 2009, http://biologos.org/blog/the-ancient-science-in-the-bible.

6. See *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 1:702, 703; John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 27; Brian Bull and Fritz Guy, *God, Sky & Land: Genesis 1 as the Ancient Hebrews Heard It* (Roseville, CA: Adventist Forum, 2011), especially chapter 4, "'The Vault of the Sky': Critical for Creation," pp. 65–77. For a view that challenges aspects of this description of ancient cosmology, see Randall W. Younker and Richard M. Davidson, "The Myth of the Solid Heavenly Dome: Another Look at the Hebrew רָקִיעַ (*RĀQÎ'A'*)," in *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 49 (Spring 2011), 1:125–147.

7. See also Revelation 5:13.

8. No. 100 (*Adventist Hymnal*, 1985).

9. This term is a reminder of the assumptions and emphasis of biblical literature on the essential vault that separated the waters above from the sky beneath. Genesis 1:14–20 mentions the "dome" four times in just seven verses (NRSV).

10. No. 51 (*Adventist Hymnal*, 1941); No. 51 (1985).

11. No. 556 (1941; not included in 1985).

12. No. 645 (1941); no. 249 (1985). Charles Wesley's hymn "Our Lord Is Risen," no. 132 (1941), written in 1741, includes the phrase, "To the bright portals in the sky."

13. No. 165 (1985). Given the Hebrew word for "vault" or "dome," which is *raqia'* and comes from a verb meaning "to beat out" as in beating out bronze or gold, imagine the sound when the "vault of heaven rings"! See Bull and Guy, *God, Sky & Land*, pp. 40, 41.

14. Jesus' parable in Luke 16:19–31 suggested that people could not. In contrast, Colossians 1:15–20 claimed that Christ had been able to go from one realm to the

other bringing reconciliation between all three realms. In a fascinating article called "Hymns in Early Christian Worship," in the *Anglican Theological Review* (55 [1973], 458–472), Leonard Thompson argues that the focus of early Christian hymns was on Christ's relationship to the cosmos, not his relationship to the church. Thompson also argues that the hymns reflected corporate worship convictions rather than individual experience.

15. No. 358 (1941); no. 605 (1985).

16. Edward E. White, *Singing with Understanding* (Warburton, Australia: Signs Publishing, 1968), 257, 258.

17. No. 490 (1941).

18. No. 516 (1941).

19. No. 69 (1941). See also White, *Singing with Understanding*, 58, 481, 482.

20. No. 299 (1941).

21. Five of the eleven hymns discussed in this section are included in the 1985 hymnal.

22. Gregory J. Riley, in *The River of God: A New History of Christian Origins* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001, 38–49), discusses the shift from a three-story cosmos to a cosmology of vast space and its ramifications for understanding God. Riley argues that ideas about God cannot be expressed until the human mind has the language with which to express a new idea. In this article I am making a similar observation concerning the poets of our hymns and their understanding of God as creator of the cosmos.

23. Maltbie D. Babcock (1858–1901), no. 646 (1941); no. 92 (1985). An interesting omitted stanza reads as follows: "This is my Father's world. / On the day of its wondrous birth, / The stars of light in phalanx bright, / Sang out in heavenly mirth." See White, *Singing with Understanding*, 423, 424.

24. No. 170 (1941).

25. White, *Singing with Understanding*, 129, 130.

26. No. 156 (1941); no. 229 (1985).

27. No. 24 (1985), third stanza.

28. No. 91 (1941); no. 96 (1985).

29. In an opinion article, "Criticism on Paradise Lost," in *The Spectator*, April 5, 1712, Addison wrote: "The chief points in the Ptolemaic and Copernican hypotheses are described with great conciseness and perspicuity, and at the same time dressed in very pleasing and poetical images." See Joseph Addison and Richard Hurd, *The Works of the Right Honourable Joseph Addison*, Vol. III (London: George Bell & Sons, 1889), 249–255. This was the same year Addison wrote the hymn "The Spacious Firmament" discussed above.

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30. Amos Wilder wrote: "Before the message there must be the vision, before the sermon the hymn, before the prose the poem," in *Theopoetic: Theology and the Religious Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 1; earlier published in Wilder, *Grace Confounding: Poems* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972).

31. The new Copernican cosmology was perceived as so highly threatening to traditional theology and the usual way of understanding Scripture that it was banned by the church, and its advocates identified as heretics by both Catholics and Protestants. A helpful account of why the church found it so difficult is found in Thomas S. Kuhn, *The*

Even though science had long discarded the idea of a dome over a flat earth, this imagery continued in Christian liturgy.

Copernican Revolution: Planetary Astronomy in the Development of Western Thought (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1957), 185–199. It took five hundred years for the ideas to become fully accepted.

32. "O Worship the King" is no. 75 (1941); no. 83 (1985); "All People That on Earth Do Dwell" is no. 13 (1941); no. 16 (1985). See also, White, *Singing with Understanding*, 61, 62.

33. No. 111 (1985).

34. *Paradise Lost*, 7.89, 90; 8.15–38. From the *Online Etymological Dictionary*, s.v. "space": The "astronomical sense of 'stellar depths' apparently is first recorded 1667 in *Paradise Lost*."

35. For Milton as Henry Baker's source, I am indebted to White, *Singing with Understanding*, 14, 15. For Milton's poem in its entirety, see http://allpoetry.com/Psalm-CXXXVI.-(136).

36. Milton's work *Areopagitica* (1644) gives the account of his visit to Galileo in 1638. Milton was 30 years old when he met with the Italian astronomer. Almost 30 years passed (1667) before he wrote *Paradise Lost*. Most interpretations of Milton's lengthy poem suggest that the poet had great sympathy with Galileo and Copernicus, both of whom were considered quite heretical at the time. See especially 4.592–597; 8.15–178. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution*, 194, expresses the gradual nature of the shift by stating that while Milton discusses the opposing views (Ptolemaic and Copernican) in *Paradise Lost*, he "was compelled to use a traditional cosmological frame." Milton scholar Karen Clausen-Brown suggests: "Milton takes advantage of the poetic potential of both cosmological systems. As a poet, he especially likes the idea that the spheres make music, so he incorporates the Ptolemaic system into his poem. But also, as a curious person who was interested in the scientific findings of the day and the exciting discussions they were generated, he found a way to make those scientific discussions create some dramatic tension for him in Book 8" (personal email communication, Oct. 13, 2014).

37. No. 560 (1985). See Wayne Hooper and Edward E. White, *Companion to the Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1988), 528.

38. See *The Covenant Hymnal* (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 1996), no. 59. Emphasis mine.

39. I am grateful to my colleague Ivan Rouse, professor of physics at La Sierra University, for suggesting even further complexity by stating that this description would "fit nicely with a more contemporary understanding of the sun as orbiting around the center of the galaxy we call the Milky Way," a post-Einstein insight (personal email communication, Oct. 26, 2014).

40. No. 342 (1985). This might even suggest post Galileo. The star numbering system began to break down after Galileo found so many that could not be seen with the naked eye.

41. Hooper and White, *Companion*, 129–132.

42. No. 80 (1985).

43. Other hymns that include the use of the plural "suns" are Isaac Watts's "From All That Dwell Below the Skies" (see no. 2 [1941], stanza 2: "Thy praise shall sound from shore to shore, / Till suns shall rise and set no more"), and William How's 1871 hymn "God's Free Mercy Streameth," no. 5 (1941); no. 110 (1985), stanza 2: "Summer suns are glowing / Over land and sea . . ."

44. No. 466 (1941).

45. No. 504 (1941); No. 645 (1985).

46. No. 35 (1985). See Hooper and White, *Companion*, 81, 82.

47. Isaac Watts, *The Knowledge of the heavens and the earth made easy: or, the first principles of astronomy and geography explain'd by the use of globes and maps* (London, 1726).

48. No. 89 (1985).

49. Another Watts hymn, "'Tis by the Faith of Joys" (no. 242 [1941]) that also mentions "worlds" seems to be using it in a more metaphorical sense: "The want of sight she [faith] well supplies; / She makes the pearly gates appear; / Far into distant worlds she pries, / And brings eternal glories near."

50. No. 86 (1985). For more of the fascinating and complicated story of this hymn, see Hooper and White, *Companion*, 137, 138.

51. See no. 86 footnote in the hymnal.

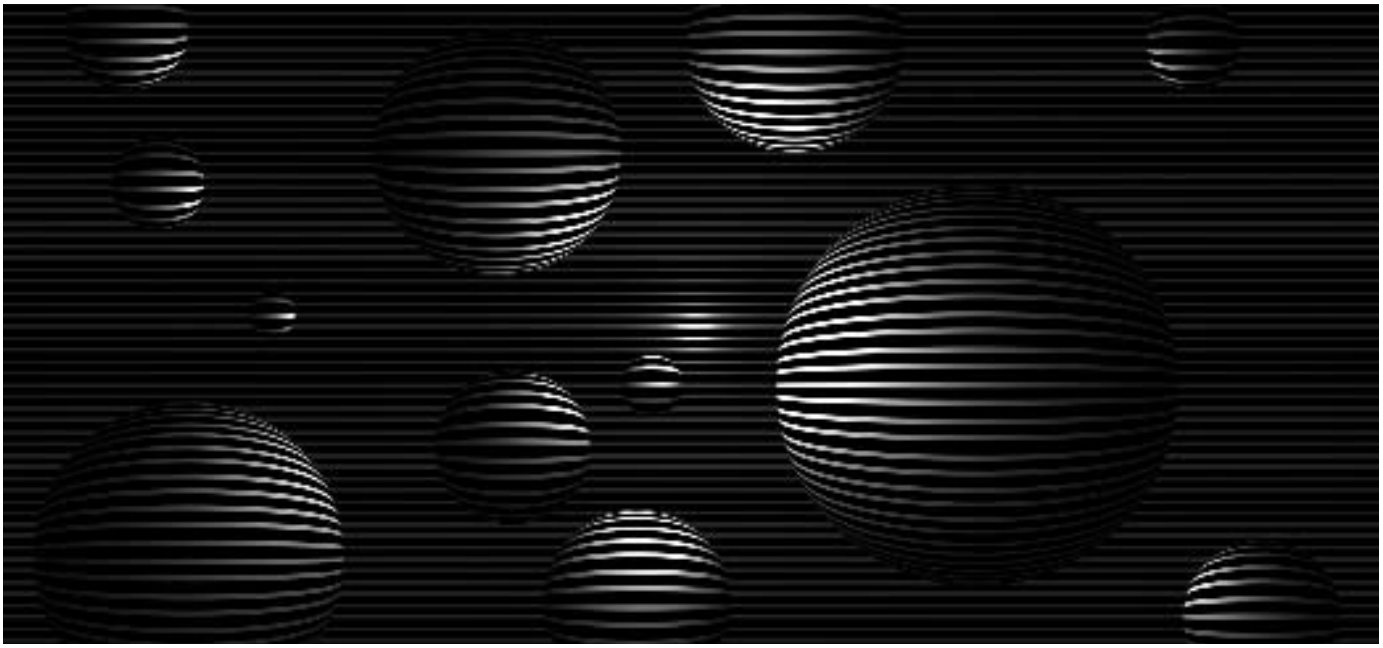
52. Nos. 115–117.

53. No. 116 (1985). See Hooper and White, *Companion*, 169.

54. No. 396 (1985). See especially stanzas 1 and 2.

55. No. 445 (1941).

56. References to Orion: Homer, *Odyssey* xi.309, v.121; Iliad 22.29. References to Pleiades: *Iliad* 18.486; *Odyssey* v.272. References to both: *Iliad* 18.486–488. Sources: Homer, *The Iliad, books I-XII* and *The Iliad, Books XIII–XXIV,*



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57. No. 168 (1985).

58. See White, *Singing with Understanding*, 78, 79.

59. No. 536 (1985).

60. Ruth Bancewicz, "Worshiping God with science," in *Science and Belief* (blog), June 16, 2011, http://scienceandbelief.org/2011/06/16/worshipping-god-with-science/.

61. Ibid.

62. See Hooper and White, *Companion*, 654–656.

63. No. 32 (1985).

64. No. 562 (1985).

65. No. 566 (1985).

66. No. 90 (1985).

67. Hooper and White, *Companion*, 587.

68. No. 641 (1985).

69. No. 232 (1985). See the first two stanzas.

70. Other hymns that include references to the coded couplet "time and space" are by Basil E. Bridge and Ottilie Stafford. Bridge's 1964 hymn, "The Son of God Proclaim," refers to "The Lord of time and space" (no. 411 [1985], first stanza). And Stafford's 1984 hymn "The Sacred Anthem" considers the Sabbath in contemporary language. Her third stanza reads: "And arching over time and space / The Lord of Sabbaths wills / Renewal for the weary earth / And healing for our ills" (no. 386, [1985]).

71. Hooper and White, *Companion*, 643. Caryl Micklem, a hymn writer mentioned earlier, wrote the following about the fifty-hymn booklet, *Pilgrim Praise*, that Kaan created for his church members in 1968: " '*Pilgrim Praise* was, and will for ever remain, epoch-making; both because it demonstrated so convincingly that hymns could be written in modern English, and because it so passionately "earthed" hymnody in the real concerns of our day. Everyone of us who has since set his or her hand to hymn-writing is indebted to him for showing us what might be done" (quoted in Fred Kaan, "My Hymn-Writing Journey," in *The Hymn* 47, no. 3 [July 1996], 15).

72. No. 87 (1985).

73. Thompson, "Hymns in Early Christian Worship," 458, 459. For a discussion of the delightful theological diversity found in the poetry of the Hebrew prophets (with roots in the Pentateuch), see Walter Brueggemann, "The Divine as the Poetic," in *Out of Babylon* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2010), 50–77.

74. For a study of the colliding and collaborating ideologies present in the book of Revelation's hymns, see Kendra Haloviak, "World at War, Nations in Song: Dialogic Imagination and Moral Vision in the Hymns of the Book of Revelation" (PhD diss., The Graduate Theological Union, 2002), forthcoming in a book to be published by Wipf and Stock.

75. Walt Whitman, "Passage to India," lines 102–106.

Even if unheard by human ears, this sound could be called "the music of the spheres."

DISCUSSED | worship music, inter-generational conflict, Seventh-day Adventists, Hillsong, screens in church, blended service

To Hymn or Not to Hymn: *A Global Church Wrestles with Worship Music*

| BY RONALD LAWSON

Seventh-day Adventism was born in mid-nineteenth-century America, and the early movement's church music reflected both its roots and beliefs (the evangelical hymns of the time leavened with a large number expressing the belief that Christ's return was imminent) and its humble origins (unpretentious buildings and musical instruments).[1] As the church's missionaries carried their message abroad, they taught the congregations they established to sing translations of their hymns, often without instrumental support, for they saw local instruments, and especially drums, as associated with animistic spirit worship.

When Adventists founded schools, their curricula included music from the beginning, for music was regarded as a useful tool in evangelistic outreach. However, their commitment to education gradually resulted in rising standards and accreditation, and thus also upward social mobility and the embrace of higher musical culture, especially in Adventist colleges in the United States and the rest of the developed world. Indeed, because Ellen White, the Adventist prophet, had rejected sports and related competition, which are used by so many other colleges and universities to establish an identity, gain publicity, attract students, and raise funds, Adventist colleges instead used music—choirs, orchestras, bands, and large, high-quality organs—for these purposes. This peaked between the close of World War II and about 1990. The G.I. Bill funneled former military band directors into Adventist colleges, who then trained music teachers for Adventist academies, where music programs also blossomed. Five American Adventist colleges qualified to be members of the National Association of Schools of Music, which sets a high entry standard.

The mood among members of music faculties at this time is exemplified by this quotation from a retrospective article by one member:

> *In 1968, when the new [Pacific Union College] church first opened its doors . . . a choir was expected to sing each Sabbath. College groups and visiting choirs from other schools and community groups were an integral part of worship. The 80- or 100-voice choir provided anthems and hymns for the church services. We musicians had visions of an increasingly sophisticated church body that would foster the arts. There were even plans to establish a national-level Adventist musical group in the Washington, D.C., area that would rival The Mormon Tabernacle Choir. We thought we were coming of age.*[2]

Meanwhile, Adventist hymnals, the first of which printed words only, had gradually improved over time from simple words, tunes, and harmonies to more

established hymns and evangelical songs. However, in 1985, a new hymnal, the first since 1941, set a new standard with a good collection of high-quality hymns. However, this hymnal was published when what would become widespread changes in Adventist worship music were already beginning to occur, starting on Adventist college campuses in the developed world. These changes would increasingly limit the use of the new hymnal.

With the passage of time, the emergence of Christian contemporary and "praise" music rooted in popular culture resulted in demand, initially from college students in the developed world, for the new music and for changes, often associated with conflict, within college-based congregations, which then spread to neighboring congregations. Meanwhile, music departments in Adventist academies (high schools) had begun to contract in the 1970s as a result of a shortage of funds. By the 1990s college administrators had felt obliged to respond to the demand among students for competitive sports, often cutting positions in music departments in order to fund the hiring of sports coaches. Concurrently, the end of colonialism and the emergence of cultural nationalism in the developing world resulted in similar conflicts and changes. Differing tastes make it difficult to cater to everyone, while many Adventists, including the current president of the world church, are inclined to see the conflicts in theological terms. This article focuses especially on the changes that have taken place in Adventist colleges and universities in the developed world over the past three decades, for these became the bellwethers of change, as pastors trained there and other graduates set out to carry the musical tastes experienced there to other congregations.

In 2012 I completed interviews with thirty-four people with long-term involvement in worship decisions at eighteen Adventist colleges and universities in the developed world—twelve in the US, one in Canada, one in Australia, and four in western Europe. I have also done a search of the publications of the International Adventist Musicians Association. Around Loma Linda University I explored the music not only at the University Church but also at two other churches attended by students, Campus Hill and Azure Hills. I also asked all interviewees about the music at other congregations situated nearby.[3]

Australia

My interest in this topic began during a visit to Australia in 2008. When I was growing up there in the 1950s and 1960s, Avondale College had a renowned choir, the Avondale Symphonic Choir, which toured annually, attracting potential students. Most of the larger churches were developing decent choirs; I started one in my home church in Toowoomba, a small city in Queensland, when I was 15 years old. And while directing another new choir at Brisbane's Central Church for seven years while at university, I came to be ambitious in our repertoire and proud of our quality, for the choir included several excellent voices.

In 1981 a new pastor, Lyell Heise, was appointed to the College Church at Avondale. He found that many students there expressed their faith through guitars and scripture songs, but there was no opportunity for them to participate in worship music since the college music department and organists controlled the music. Student attendance at Sabbath worship had fallen low, since it was no longer compulsory. Seeing these developments as problems, Heise set out to open the worship music at Avondale to students. When this resulted in conflict, he introduced two services. The music department participated in both, but ultimate control of church music eventually moved away from it. With time, and the building of a new church, contemporary music became dominant, and the practice of having a single Sabbath morning service returned.

During a Sabbath worship service I attended at the College Church in 2008, I found that the building's interior had been remodeled, creating a huge stage at the front that accommodated a large band and a large "praise group" of singers, each with a microphone. The music was incredibly loud. The songs were almost all by Hillsong, an Australian Pentecostal music publisher. The melodies were often difficult to follow even though the singers sang in unison. I noticed that the congregation was made up mostly of faculty and other adults from the community, who stood for the congregational songs but did not sing, either because it seemed useless to try to add anything to the volume of the performers or because they did not know the music and had only words on a screen available to them. This meant that even the congregational music was in fact a performance by those on the stage. I found the melodies too unpredictable to learn rapidly, and words without music were useless to me. I asked afterwards why the few students present were the performers and was told that most stu-

dents preferred to attend a much more musically radical vespers service on Friday night in a different space, where they sat on the floor and were provided with food to eat while they listened to or participated in gospel rock music.

Heise was called to be pastor at La Sierra University Church in Southern California in 1988, where he again helped to expand the repertoire of worship music in an attempt to attract students, who had largely abandoned attending Sabbath worship services there. Then, from 1997 to 1999 he filled a new administrative post, Worship Director, in the Trans-Tasman Union in Australia and New Zealand. There he trained worship leaders in congregations and helped administrators by consulting with congregations when music wars erupted. He was responsible for music at Adventist camp meetings; he utilized orchestral ensembles and was able to integrate band instruments into the mix. After a second stint as pastor at Avondale, where he adopted a contemporary culture identity in preaching, music, and audio-visual use, he, with the help of the church administration in the South Pacific Division, established an Institute of Worship at Avondale College. In this capacity he has led huge training events throughout the region, proclaiming that churches must minister to youth by including them in an expanded vision of multigenerational and multicultural worship.

We were forced to continue our meeting under a tree, though I was loath to leave the music.

The result has been a great deal of homogeneity in worship music in Australia. I attended five other Adventist services while in Australia in 2008 and found that none used the hymnal. All used a screen for the words of the songs sung, which was led by a praise team and band made up of available instruments, with quality and decibels varying considerably. Organs were not used, and some had been removed entirely. The music was again mostly Hillsong music. All the choirs that had previously flourished had disappeared. I found that I could not sing at any of these services, not knowing the songs and having no music available that I could read. Frustrated, for singing is part of my understanding of worship, I attended Anglican services on some Sundays in order to hear choirs and be able to sing.

I realized that pastors and other graduates whose taste had been shaped by the changed music program at Avondale had helped spread what they had learned there to other Adventist churches. Therefore, on returning to America, I decided to explore as objectively as possible the changes that had taken place during the last couple of decades in the worship music at the Adventist colleges in the US, Canada, and western Europe, in addition to Australia, and the impact of these changes on other churches in turn.

United States

The initial changes in worship music in the US appeared first in campus services catering only to students, which were often student-led, such as Friday-night vespers and chapel and dorm worships during the week. Hymns were replaced initially by choruses and campfire songs, and then gradually by "praise" songs heard on Christian radio stations, and ultimately Christian rock, featuring microphoned singers and bands with guitars, synthesizers, drum sets, and music with heavy rhythm. Organists and music departments fought to prevent such changes spreading to Sabbath morning worship services on several campuses. In some colleges, restless students launched their own worship services featuring popular culture; in others, pastors set out on a similar path, motivated by a wish to attract students to worship services where their absence had become notable.

Four examples

Case 1. When some students at Pacific Union College in northern California created their own service in a building separate from the campus church in 1992, attendance by their peers rose immediately, ultimately reaching seven hundred. The attendance of students there presented a stark contrast with what it had been in the PUC main sanctuary. After John McVay, chair of the theology department, who preached frequently at the student services, asked if these youth, who had segregated themselves in order to do their own thing, would be able to fit into Adventist

churches anywhere following graduation, the students ultimately voted to return to the sanctuary, where they were permitted to organize a second, later, contemporary service.[4] A new pastor, objecting to the separate services, returned to a single service that blended traditional and contemporary music, but this left most attending dissatisfied. This was eventually again replaced by segregated services: the "Majestic" service at 10.00 a.m., featuring choir, processional, orchestra, and/or other college music groups, and pipe organ, which was described to me as a "cathedral-type service." The second service, at 12:15 p.m., "The Gathering," features contemporary music and never uses the organ. Both services attract an attendance of about 450, but their demographics differ greatly: the students are still largely segregated in worship.

Case 2. Dwight Nelson, the senior pastor of Pioneer Memorial Church at Andrews University in Michigan, an influential campus because it is also the home of the Adventist seminary, changed his second service from traditional to contemporary in musical content in the early 1990s. However, he faced a crisis when one-third of his congregation threatened to create their own traditional service in a local Lutheran church. He responded by creating a task force of theologians, musicians, and students from praise bands to explore options. The outcome was to leave the first service traditional but to try to please everyone with a blended second service using the organ, at least one hymn, and a praise band with carefully chosen contemporary songs screened to omit those with "shallow words" and "un-sing-able melodies." Drum sets were banned, but ethnic drums and synthesizer rhythm were permitted if used sparingly. Student attendance was initially high, but because the blended service had limited appeal, many have recently been drained off to a new student-led rock service, where both back-to-back services are jammed. Black students have also created a full gospel music service in a chapel, which is also jammed and features a huge choir, full drums, a piano, and synthesizers.

Newbury Park Adventist Academy choir Christmas recital

Case 3. At La Sierra University in Southern California, where Heise had set out to modernize the worship service after 1988, the options have become broad: chaplains launched Friday-night student services featuring rock bands, as in many colleges; faculty members organized a liturgical service that, given its 8:00 a.m. slot, has become a refuge for a small group of musical and liturgical conservatives; a "family service" that blends different musical cultures occupies the mid-morning slot; and a contemporary service targeted at students begins shortly after noon.

Case 4. The two services at Loma Linda University Church, which serves the Adventist medical school, are now viewed around the world, and these have maintained a traditional "high church" format. However, a youth-targeted service featuring contemporary music, which was originally independent and met in another space on campus, has recently been brought under the umbrella of the church and now occupies the sanctuary during the slot between the two traditional services, displacing the adult Sabbath School from that space.

Students expressed their faith through guitars and scripture songs.

Recent data

Of the eighteen colleges and universities surveyed, sixteen have made major changes in worship music in at least one service. Some try, in a

so-called blended service, to appeal to everyone, while others have concluded that that recipe ultimately pleases no one and have established contrasting traditional and contemporary services. One (Canadian University College Church) has made less dramatic changes, and two others (Union College in Nebraska and Bogenhofen in Austria) have changed very little; another, Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church on the campus of Washington Adventist University, has returned to two traditional services, abandoning a blended model used for several years. Initial changes took place between 1981 (Avondale) and 2013 (LLU). Oakwood University, which had seen gradual, limited changes over the past two decades, has, in the past year, under a new pastor, undergone dramatic change. Yet another new pastor at Avondale led in a further radicalization of the music there in 2013, alienating some of the regularly attending adult members. Although the reason given for all changes was always an attempt to improve low student attendance, few students attend the main service at Avondale, still preferring the Friday vespers program, which has been switched to the sanctuary, and a 9:00 a.m. service that also serves breakfast in another location.

Among the churches I studied, the initiative to make the initial changes was taken by the pastor in seven cases, by students in five, and by the pastor and a committee in two.

As of the 2012–2013 year, four colleges (PUC, Southern Adventist University, Kettering, and LLU) had two contrasting services, three offered multiple choices (AU and Walla Walla University because students added their own alternatives, La Sierra because faculty sponsor the third small liturgical service), and three (Sligo, UC, and Bogenhofen) have only traditional services. Two have only blended services (CaUC, Newbold College), and one offers a choice between blended and contemporary (Southwestern Adventist University). Five churches—Avondale, Oakwood, Collonges, Friedensau, and the new University of Health Sciences at Florida Hospital (which has only a Friday vespers service, lacking a church building on campus)—offer only a contemporary service.

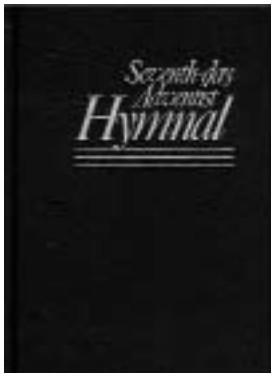
The use of screens to display the words of songs and hymns has become almost universal, leaving congregations without the option to sing in harmony, something that was common in earlier decades. Only three services do not use screens, but rather use hymnals and distributed music sheets, and two of these have very small attendance (La Sierra liturgical, SWAU Evensong); the presence of hymnals makes their use optional when hymns are sung, and hymn numbers are typically then listed in programs and/or announced. However, they are not widely utilized when the words appear on screens. Praise teams and bands are the norm at blended and contemporary services. They are absent only from the most traditional ("cathedral-like" and liturgical) services (at AU, Kettering, PUC, WWU, La Sierra, and LLU).

However, the style of music does *not* indicate which services will draw the largest attendance or the most students. The largest service is almost without exception the final service—that which allows students to sleep in late. Where a traditional service is the final service (WWU, LLU, and Kettering), that service still attracts the largest attendance. Timing, not style of music, is key. It's important to note that the musical taste of current students differs from that of the baby boomers who pioneered contemporary services: they appreciate acoustic music and want more instrumental and musical variety. Indeed, a survey of those attending the church at Andrews University found numerous requests for choir music and hymns. They may enjoy contemporary music at student services during the week but often report that they think the organ and hymns are better suited for Sabbath worship. In many cases student attendance at the services designed for them has declined: many do not want a show, but to be involved, and so often opt for small student-led services.

The fine organs in some of the sanctuaries, which are sometimes famous in the organ world (especially those at SAU and PUC, although WWU and AU also have top-rated instruments), lead the music in only the traditional services; they are also used to a lesser degree in blended services. They are typically absent from praise and contemporary services. That is, they are, on the whole, used a great deal less than in the past.

Six colleges report that they continue to have strong choral programs (AU, PUC, UC, WAU, WWU, Oakwood), though their choirs now sing for Sabbath services far less frequently that in earlier decades. However, six reported a marked decline in the quality of their choral programs. Two specialized colleges or universities without academic music programs reported having strong church choirs, while two others foster church choirs in addition to those from their college music departments.

While the initial changes sometimes created strong controversy, this diminished after different options became



available to fit the varying tastes. More members have expressed their displeasure by choosing to move to other congregations. This has been most dramatic at Australia's Avondale College Church, where students prefer their own radical services to the praise service on Sabbath morning in the sanctuary (unless they are actually performing there), and many of the adults have moved to other congregations near to the college because of the absence of choice available to them at the College Church. Nevertheless, culture wars over worship music still continue in some churches, especially those where conservative youth who regard contemporary music as deceptive and unacceptable (who are part of movements committed to restoring "historic Adventism," which have flourished especially in parts of the US and Australia in recent years) are clustered.

Reports of music at off-campus churches indicate that it differs greatly both ethnically and culturally, especially in communities where many Adventists are located. Most first-generation immigrant churches are traditional, singing hymns, sometimes with the help of an electronic organ and a piano playing together. Their larger congregations also have choirs. Some Asian congregations have traditional indigenous language services for older members and contemporary English-language services for youth concurrently. Some new congregations formed by second- and third-generation Hispanics also use contemporary music. However, ethnic churches tend to lose a lot of their youth.

African-American congregations vary, with some fostering choral ensembles and singing hymns with an organ, while others have embraced gospel choirs and songs.

Anglo-majority churches also vary. Large congregations often have two services catering to different musical tastes. Praise bands have become the norm in some areas, as pastors who became familiar with them during their college days now foster them in their churches. Many of these pastors and other college graduates are now unfamiliar with the repertoire of hymns and liturgical traditions. Other congregations, especially the many with a preponderance of older members, can be very traditional.

Lyell Heise is bothered by reports of discontents fostered by blended services, which he hoped would be the solution to cultural diversity. Most off-campus congregations have too few members to support two different services, and where they do attempt a blended service, the result is often civil war.

There is evidence of some correlation between conservative theology and commitment to using the hymnal. During my visit to Australia in 2008, feeling alienated after five weeks of being unable to participate through singing in services, I asked in Sydney for a church that used the hymnal, only to be told that there were only two, both of which had the reputation of being the most conservative theologically. However, well educated and often more liberal Adventist churches also favor "cathedral-like" services (LLU, Spencerville near Washington, DC, Green Lake near Seattle).

In areas with a high concentration of Adventists—those surrounding Adventist universities and large hospitals and some urban areas such as greater Washington, DC, each congregation can do its own thing, varying from "cathedral-like" classical music to Christian rock. Collectively, such diversity helps the church cater to the varied tastes among the Adventists there as members choose to travel to a church that fits their particular needs, oftentimes passing several others en route. The rapid growth of Spencerville church in suburban Washington, which is committed to a cathedral-like service, suggests that many of the other local congregations have adopted blended, praise, or contemporary formats, drawing those

I was told that most students preferred to attend a much more musically radical vespers service on Friday night.

who prefer hymn singing to Spencerville.

However, in other cities with many Adventists, the music offered by congregations can be remarkably similar, as all adopt a "successful" script, leaving those with differing tastes without an option. This is largely the case, for example, in New York City, where almost every congregation has an immigrant majority, and praise music with words projected on screens has become the norm, with only a few exceptions. At Ephesus Church, a large, mostly Caribbean congregation in Harlem, which has several choirs each specializing in its own kind of music, the music offered varies from week to week depending on which choir is used. The overall result is a serial blending. The Church of the Advent Hope attempts to have a blended service and has a salaried organist. However, in my experience there, the dominant presence is praise music sung with projected words. In this city which has a lively culture of classical music, with the Metropolitan Opera and the other major music venues at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, major conservatories such as the Juilliard School and Manhattan School of Music, and dozens of other locations featuring classical music, the only Adventist-connected congregation that is strongly committed to using such music in its worship is the Metro New York Adventist Forum, which is largely unknown because it is an independent congregation. Perhaps this imbalance helps explain why Adventism has been so unsuccessful at reaching out to educated New Yorkers, including the thousands who are attracted by its high culture to move to New York.

In those locations where Adventists are few, so that all must attend a single church (or perhaps two racially differentiated congregations), there is even more chance of dissatisfaction and conflict—and of choosing instead to stay home to watch the live feed from the service at an Adventist center such as Loma Linda University Church. Since such feeds also offer the opportunity to send in tithes and offerings, this can result in a flow of funds from regions where Adventists are sparse and church organizations poor to regions where members are concentrated and administrations are flush with funds.

Pros and cons

Strong academy and college choral programs in earlier years helped to create musically literate congregations, which enjoyed singing hymns in harmony. However, the use of praise and contemporary songs, which are not designed for singing in harmony, and the use of screens that show words without music is now producing musical illiteracy, so that congregations that sing together in harmony have become rare. However, vestiges of the earlier pattern can still surface: in September 2012, Walla Walla University Church hosted a camp meeting where screens were not employed, so that those present were obliged to use the hymnals in the pews. The organist reported his surprise when he realized that a goodly number were singing in harmony.

Students now enter college music departments with much less musical background, and many of those attracted to music courses as a result of participating in praise groups are musically illiterate, having learned the songs by rote. One choral director reported that some years ago, when he conducted a music festival drawing on the choral resources of all the academies in his region, they were able to present a credible performance of Vivaldi's Gloria. However, now, with so many unable to read music, such an accomplishment would be impossible.

On the other hand, the proliferation of music options can result in more students choosing to attend worship, as the recent experience of La Sierra University Church exemplifies. However, the phenomenon of several distinct services occurring in the same space or on the same campus raises the question, to what extent are these collectively the same congregation, even though in most cases they all share the same senior pastor? When student services occur that are not under the umbrella of the college church, such as the three with large student attendance at Andrews University, it seems as if they then clearly become separate entities.

The developing world

It was remarked above that first-generation immigrant churches whose members are drawn from the developing world are typically conservative in their music. This is because missionaries made the singing of Western hymns in translation a matter of principle, rejecting the music of local cultures and local instruments as rooted in heathenism. Indeed, worship music in the developing world continues to remain largely conservative, even though the end of colonialism and the rise of local nationalism might lead one to expect a demand for changes thereafter.

However, during one of my research visits to Africa in 1988–1989, I observed contrasts and emerging conflict over music, which two incidents illustrate. On the Sabbath before Christmas in 1988, I attended the early service at the

church on the campus of the church headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. I found that the congregation used English-language copies of the 1941 hymnal, singing without enthusiasm and at a much slower pace than would be usual in the United States. I then drove to a Swahili-speaking congregation in rented space in a poor section of the city's outskirts for an 11:00 a.m. service. This congregation sang translations of hymns from the 1941 hymnal, again without much enthusiasm. Their choir was not scheduled to sing that day because the director was absent, but when the members noticed that they had a foreign visitor at their service, they arranged to sing several songs near the end of the service. These were memorable because they were rooted in local culture and performed with a remarkable joy.

When I arrived in Lagos, Nigeria, later in the same research trip, a church leader at the national level told me that the church there was in the midst of a feisty controversy over worship music. The interviewee explained that many of the Adventist students at the University of Lagos had been drawn to Pentecostal services by the rhythmic music, and as a result they had led the youth to demand that drums be allowed in worship for the first time; and the administration had finally agreed to this. However, when drums appeared in services, this caused so much opposition from older members, who saw this as reversing a matter of principle, that the administration was forced to return to the earlier ban on their use.

Later I arranged to meet with some of the Adventist students at the university, where they booked a corner of the huge university chapel for our meeting. In the midst of a group interview we were suddenly interrupted by music that was amazing for both its rhythm, which was driven by varied hand clapping rather than drums, and harmony—a Pentecostal service was beginning. We were forced to continue our meeting under a tree in order to hear one another, though I was loath to leave the music. When I took the opportunity to ask the students if they ever attended the Pentecostal services, almost all said yes. Although they insisted that they remained committed Adventists, they said they attended the Pentecostal services for both the music and a preaching of the gospel that was far more compelling than what they heard in their Adventist churches. In contrast, when I visited the Adventist university in Nigeria, which was then known as the Adventist Seminary of West Africa, I found a robed choir at worship that sang hymns at the slowest pace I had ever experienced. It was as if they had been taught to sing in a manner that attempted to remove consciousness of rhythm.

It seemed to me from these experiences that conflict over music also lies ahead for the African churches. ■

Heise was responsible for music at Adventist camp meetings; he brought guitars, bands, and drums onto the stage.

Ronald Lawson was raised in a family in Australia that was heavily involved in the church. With a PhD in sociology and history from the University of Queensland, he came to New York on a Fulbright grant for post-doctoral studies at Columbia University. He taught at the City University of New York from 1971–2009, where he is now a Professor Emeritus. He has been the president of the local Adventist Forum chapter since 1974. He is working on four books on various aspects of global Adventism, following research that took him to 60 countries in all divisions of the world church, where he conducted a total of about 4,000 interviews.

References

1. This article is adapted from a paper presented to the meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, New York, August 12, 2013.

2. James A. Kempster, *Notes*, International Adventist Musicians Association, 2005.

3. Since in my research I promise most interviewees confidentiality, I do not cite particular interviews, but describe where and when and, in general terms, the kind of position held by the interviewee. Since the interviews used in this article were with persons involved with worship music choices on Adventist tertiary campuses, I make no further attempt to differentiate among them.

4. Ginger Ketting, "Crossways," *Adventist Review*, February 20, 1997.

An Exegesis of Existence: *Heschel, Schubert, and a Prophetic Voice*

| BY STEPHEN HARDIN

"Prophecy, then, may be described as exegesis of existence from a divine perspective."

—Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets: An Introduction*


Franz Schubert

The work of the Old Testament prophets was difficult, controversial, and yet with a high moral purpose. In prose and poetry, moved by divine inspiration, they spoke. The messages could be contested, confrontational, corrective, but ultimately to the benefit of the listeners. Abraham Heschel in his introduction to the prophets emphasizes the humanity of these individuals. He describes the prophet as "a man who feels fiercely."[1] In speaking of the words of a prophet, he notes, "The language is luminous and explosive, firm and contingent, harsh and compassionate, a fusion of contradictions."[2] At a fundamental level, the Old Testament prophet had to work with deep integrity and in harmony with this "divine perspective." Prophecy is more than hectored lectures; it is a lived experience.

Does a composer, like a prophet, offer a moral vision? Is there moral significance in music? Does music offer us anything more than a pleasing diversion? I think it does, and I would argue that at its deepest level, music is moral work. The composer indeed can offer a moral vision analogous to the prophet.

The moral content of music is there from the work of the composer and the performance of the composition to the reception by the listener. It can describe vast landscapes of emotion, of meaning, of existence. It can allow us to look unflinchingly at our lives and ourselves. It can comfort us, and it can confront us. Thus, the composer is like a prophet because his or her task is to reach a particular audience with a message. At the highest level, the composer can reach out to us with a vision from a "divine perspective." The composer, like the prophet, is a human with hopes, desires, strengths, and flaws. He or she does not operate as an uninflected microphone, merely transmitting what God has given him or her. The composer must call things clearly and honestly. This is the integrity of the composition.

In a sense, the performers and the listeners also have moral work to do. The performance of music requires a fidelity to the manuscript. However, the performer is also more than just a passive vessel; he or she must interpret and bring to bear his or her own experience to the music. This requires both humility and integrity—how to interpret and how to express the composer's intentions thoughtfully and honestly. Finally, great music requires more than mere passive attendance. The fullest appreciation of the music requires of the receiver an open yet critical mind. It means listening both intellectually and emotionally.

Music offers us much. Its most potent effect on us is, perhaps, emotional. It can be comforting, cathartic, and at times, confrontational. In wordless language, it can tell us deep myths that illuminate our daily lives. Music can also inspire great joy and exhilaration, and it can accomplish this in a number of ways. Besides the more overtly theological works that illustrate or convey particular messages (e.g. Bach's St. Matthew Passion, Handel's religious oratorios), there is music that can speak in other ways. The emotional range of music exceeds words. Indeed, part of music's strength is its ability to reach us without language. In confronting the listener or performer with difficult truths or realities, music can

penetrate the mind beyond literal language.

Music provides context: the "ah, now I see" experience. While much of our communication, understanding, and learning are verbal or written, music can slip in and offer deeper insights. These can be expressions of meaning that we cannot articulate. Music, certainly, can confuse and confabulate. A particular composition may emotionally lead us in a particular direction. But, on closer examination, we've arrived at a new and different understanding. The telling of musical tales can provide an illumination of truth not evident in more prosaic modes.

This leads to what might be the most important "work" of music. Just as the work of a prophet can provide an exegesis of existence (from a divine perspective), so music can do wonders for our understanding (whether we are performers or audience). Music transports us in ways other methodologies cannot. It indeed offers a lived experience.

Franz Schubert

To illustrate my assertions, I'd like to discuss the composer, Franz Schubert. He is perhaps an unlikely example of a musical prophet. He was not a conventional "church" musician as Bach was, or a heroic titan like Beethoven. However, I believe many of his works exemplify the variety of prophetic tasks of music. The moral substance of his work is perhaps more subtle.

Schubert is an archetypal composer of the early romantic period in Western music. His work is characterized by astonishing melodic variety with marked emotional intensity. The universal comforting and consoling aspects of music are demonstrated particularly in his late string quartets. The power of these compositions resides, in part, in the extraordinary vulnerability of Schubert himself. This is what the musical composer offers us in his or her work—a vulnerability that illuminates the deepest truths of our frail existence. Schubert shares the ache of his heart, his times of joy, the out-welling of his experience. His compositions can elevate and clarify life experience. Thus, Schubert writes a music that indeed offers "an exegesis of existence."

Franz Schubert was born in 1797. He lived and worked his entire life in and around Vienna, in the shadow of Beethoven. He suffered many life disappointments: many of his songs were rejected by publishers; he could not afford to marry the woman he loved; he contracted syphilis and fell into depression. He was often dependent on friends and family for basic sustenance. As he matured, Schubert recognized his musical talent and realized he was indeed a worthy successor to Beethoven. In his short life of 31 years, he composed hundreds of songs, multiple string quartets, piano sonatas, symphonies (many unfinished), and some of the most extraordinary chamber music ever written. In particular, Schubert elevated the song to the status of a major work of art and essentially invented the concept of the song cycle. His works are characterized by an emotional intensity from melancholy to great joy. And these emotional shifts frequently occur in the span of an individual phrase. Here are some examples of his "prophetic" works.

Piano Quintet in A major, D. 667 ("The Trout Quintet")

Schubert composed this quintet for piano and strings in 1819 when he was 22 years old. It was composed during a particularly happy time in his life. In the work, he expresses with great ebullience the flickering light and shadow of a trout in a rippling brook. One feels the rush of water, darting of the fish, the glory of a spring day. The effect is of unbounded optimism. Listening to the work, this expression of joy, while not overtly prophetic, is for me an exuberance of divine inspiration. It is a particularly bright "exegesis of existence." Despite the challenges and pain of life, Schubert shares an infectious joy that gives us a glimpse of divine inspiration. Perhaps it can be compared to passages in Hosea, where the prophet expresses God's desire for fullness and joy to His bride, the people:

Therefore I am now going to allure her;
I will lead her into the desert
And speak tenderly to her.
There I will give her back her vineyards;
And will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.
There she will [sing] as in the days of her youth,
As in the day she came up out of Egypt.
—Hosea 2:14, 15, NIV

Winterreise, D. 911

Winterreise ("Winter's Journey"), Schubert's second and perhaps finest song cycle, was composed in 1827. The work describes the despairing wanderings of a spurned lover. The music is of intense, brooding pathos, honestly articulating the grief of the wanderer. This music,

while expressing despair, at the same time is comforting and cathartic.

In its expression of heated emotion, *Winterreise* reminds me of this exchange between God and Jonah:

> *God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?"*
> *"It is," he said. "And I'm so angry I wish I were dead."*
> *But the LORD said, "You have been concerned about this plant, though you did not tend it or make it grow. It sprang up overnight and died overnight. And should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?"*
> *—Jonah 4:9–11, NIV*

The human and the divine. God speaks directly and compassionately. Jonah responds honestly, petulantly, humanly. As the Old Testament prophets spoke and wrote with a direct, human voice, so Schubert composes. As God allows Jonah's outbursts (treating him with respect, yet gently reproving Jonah's complaints), Schubert's *Winterreise* allows me to strike out and wallow, yet gently comforts at the same time. Are Schubert's compositions in sympathy with Heschel's notion of a "divine pathos"? I think they are.

Music does not tell me how to live. Schubert doesn't instruct me in parsing the thorny moral challenges of my life. Daily, I have mundane dilemmas; music doesn't solve them. Perhaps music doesn't really change human behavior. Art doesn't make us "better" humans. However, if we are receptive, music can both inspire and challenge us to look and move higher.

Sonata in B flat major for piano, D. 960

Music has the ability to strip away pretense. If music is played and approached with integrity, one cannot escape the truth it brings to bear. Music both exposes a reality and offers transport above and beyond. It does not leave one in a neutral state. I must listen or play either in sympathy with or react against the music.

In the final year of Schubert's life, he composed an astonishing array of works, including his final piano sonatas. These works, to my ear, suggest a composer far more mature than a mere 31 years (his age at his death). Schubert, perhaps anticipating his demise, seems to be expressing life in great depth. It's as though he is viewing existence from a great height, but with remarkable detail.

How, then, does one anticipate the winding down of life, of approaching death? This last piano sonata of Schubert is a large, sprawling work that takes us on an extended journey. The Andante (slow second movement) of the sonata simply yet profoundly answers these questions. As I listen to or play this work, I find that in the span of a few bars and with a remarkable economy of structure, Schubert takes me from gloom to optimism to a sad resignation. Yet the movement doesn't end there; rather it recapitulates and ends with an unusual harmonic shift (from minor to major), to a conclusion of acceptance and joy. Thus, this work within a work provides a remarkable vision of life and the sublime.

Is the composer a prophet? I believe so. Each composer writes as he or she is inspired. Music, as with prophecy, can provide us with great truth as well as falsehood. However, the composer who writes with integrity and humility can provide us insights above and beyond that which can be expressed in words alone. These insights, as I've argued, can go beyond the emotions to an understanding of life. This experience of living provides comfort, strength, joy, and insight. Indeed, we profoundly limit the divine if we confine our expression and our reception to words and text alone. Can music be a form of "groans too deep for words" (Romans 8:26, ISV)? The entire range of artistic expression provides a rich complement to the more prosaic forms of didactic text and language. Music does indeed offer an "exegesis of existence from a divine perspective."

Right now, you could listen to (or play) some Schubert: his piano sonatas, the quartets, the octet. Or, shut off the lights, sit, and listen deeply to Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Jörg Demus perform *Winterreise*. ■

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My Church

Or are you?
Am I proud to claim you as my own?
Or do I avoid saying your name out loud,
    and instead whisper it softly
And look the other way?
Do I want your claim on my life
Or my name in your books?
It's always been there,
At times more reluctant than others.
I love your body
And sometimes your soul,
Although that's up for debate . . .
What is your soul?

I celebrate with a friend
    whose marriage to her wife has become official
And feel a twinge of guilt;
You're looking over my shoulder.

I let the music fill my soul,
I sway to lyrics and a drumbeat.
You do not let me surrender;
I know you are watching.

I sit quietly on my bed
Practicing the art of breathing and of silence.
I hear your words of warning—
Do not empty your mind or the devil will enter.
I sit and listen as a fellow-human (not one of us)
Shares his wisdom,
And I know what you would say—
Be careful . . . or you may be deceived.
Don't eat cheese, only wear skirts,
Women should submit, beware, beware.

Are these the Holy Spirit's prompting?
Or simply the voice I am so used to hearing
That it is never far from my mind.

And does it serve me well?
Or leave me stuck here, longing for freedom.
Not freedom from God
Not freedom from rules
Not freedom to do whatever I please.
But freedom to love
Freedom to listen
Freedom to share
Freedom to welcome
And to not be afraid.

Are you my church?
Do we belong to one another still . . .
till death do us part?
Maybe that's partly up to you.
Will you still have me?

Even if I doubt you . . .
Even if I don't always fit your mold . . .
Even when I may not agree . . .

But I promise you this:
I will love with a passion that is deep
I will worship the same God as you
(though we may know him differently).
And if you can accept me
Then I can accept you.
Then I will stay
Then I will acknowledge you
    as my own.

—Somer George

See Somer's article "My Place at the Table—Thoughts on the world church's Annual Council," on page 5, inside.