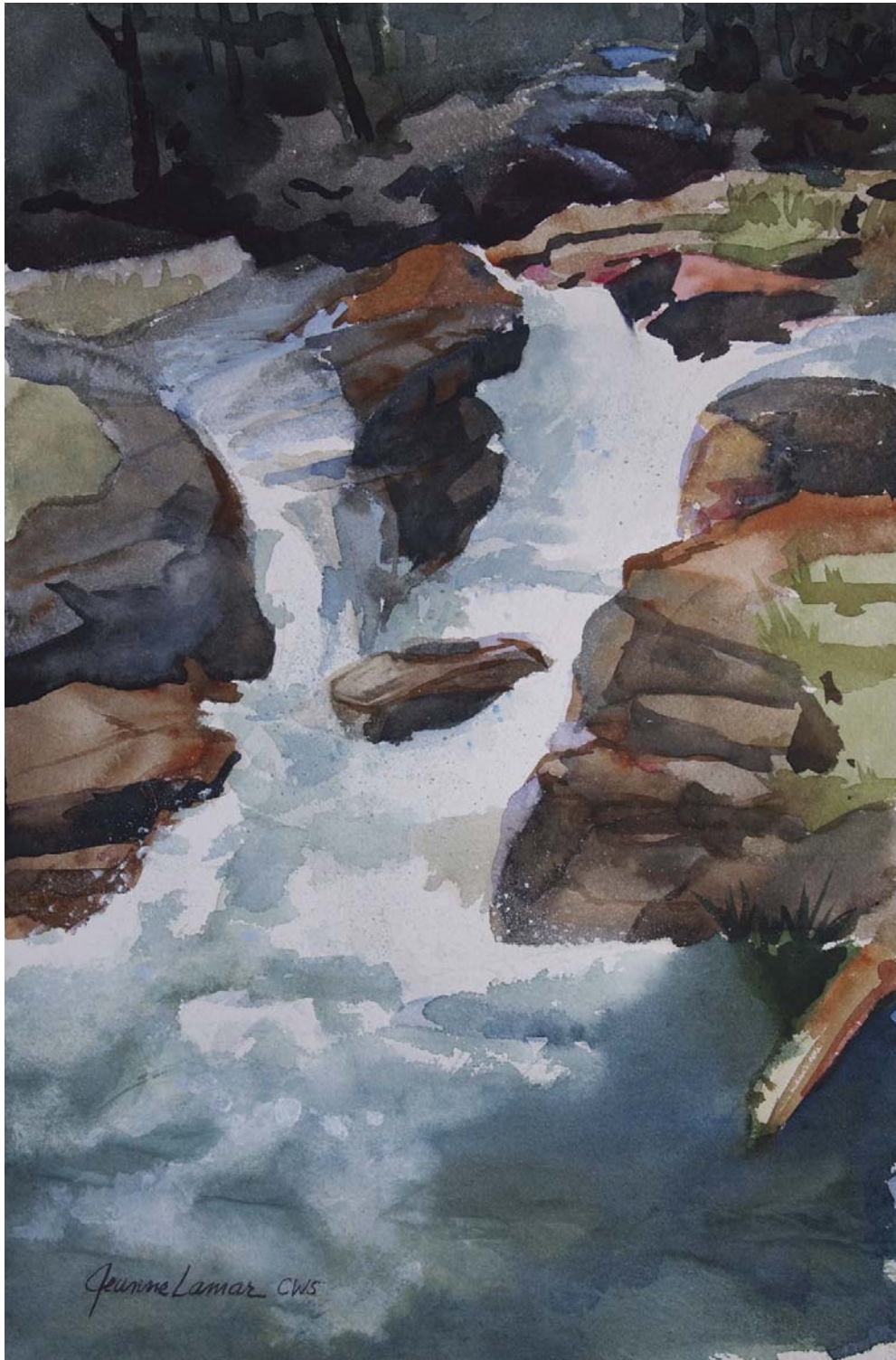


 community through conversation

SPECTRUM



Women Delegates, Geography, and the 14th Division

*Reading Genesis after
San Antonio*

Recapturing the Dream: Adventists and the Future

*Fundamental Beliefs:
Curse or Blessing?*

Noah's Flood, or God's? Why the Biblical Narrative is a Major Challenge

*When President Wilson
Changed His
Mind About Policy
for Women*

A River Flows From It

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About the Cover Art:
"Convergence" (watercolor).

About the Artist:

Jeanne Lamar was born in Southern California and attributed her early interest in art to the beauty of the beaches and forests she enjoyed as a girl. A passionate artist, Jeanne was best known for her distinctive still-lives, figure studies, landscapes, mountains, vineyards, and blooms from her own garden. She attended the Pasadena School of Fine Arts and the Art Institute of Southern California in Laguna Beach. She was a signature member of the Colorado Watercolor Society, the California Watercolor Society, the American Watercolor Association, the Watercolor Artists of Sonoma County, and the Santa Rosa Arts Guild; her talent being recognized on numerous occasions with frequent gold and silver medal awards in local, state, and national art shows. She was equally proficient in watercolors, oils, acrylics, and oil pastels. She painted prolifically until just a few years before her death in the spring of 2015. She wryly said, "I consider myself to be a serious artist without taking myself too seriously," and "I dream in color, no black and white allowed!" Her colorful work continues to exude her passion for life, her faith, and her love for the beauty of the earth.

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Women Delegates, Geography, and the 14th Division | BY BONNIE DWYER

For the Seventh-day Adventist Church's quinquennial session in July 2015, when more than a hundred General Conference officials are elected, a voting body of 2,566 delegates is created to handle the election and other church business.

In a recent story about how the delegates are picked, Adventist News Network reported that 83 percent of the delegates are male and 17 percent female.

"A question that is certain to be asked when reading statistics on gender representation is why is the percentage of female delegates so small when it is perceived that women are in the majority as pertains to Church membership?" the article says.¹

Then it answers its own question: "While efforts are continually made to ensure that the entire delegation shall be comprised [sic] of both genders, currently the positions from which these delegates are named and that generate the majority of delegates for the Session are held by males. This will change over time as more women are elected to leadership positions and Conference or Union executive committee membership."

Yes, this will change over time—if women are allowed to be ordained and thus can be eligible for positions that require an ordained individual to be chosen for the offices such as Conference and Union presidents. Examination of the delegate numbers, and the three ways delegate quotas are established, demonstrates why this is so important. *Delegates with administrative positions are the majority of the delegates.* According to the Constitution of the General Conference, delegates are drawn from

- employees of organizational units such as Unions and Conferences
- Division membership based on each Division's ratio to total world membership
- the General Conference itself and its institutions.

Division officers and Union presidents are delegates by

constitutional requirement. Invariably, other Union officers and Conference presidents, a group of about 800 more people, generally make the list of delegates too. So, without ordination, women essentially do not qualify for hundreds of delegate positions.

There is a formula for the inclusion of pastors and the laity that is supposed to be half of the delegate slots left after the administrative delegates are selected. Technically, though, only 400 delegates are allocated based on church membership. The other delegates—more than 2,000—are apportioned according to structural administrative units.

Another way to look at the spread of delegates is geographically (see chart to the right). This, too, shows great disparity in the representation according to membership.

The number of delegates per member is not the same for every Division. The SID has one delegate for every 15,836 members, while the TED has one delegate per every 767 members. The South Pacific Division has more delegates but less members than Northern Asia Pacific Division. Having more Unions, Conferences, and institutions affects the number of delegates in a Division. Also, notice that the unit with the third largest number of delegates is the General Conference itself. It functions like a 14th Division in spite of the fact that it has no membership base other than the approximately 4,000 members who live in the fields that were recently attached to it in the Middle East and Israel.

Who is included in that General Conference delegation? Members of the General Conference Executive Committee, associate department directors, representatives of GC institutions, 20 GC staff members, plus a list of about 70 former leaders and selected individuals traditionally nominated by the president and approved by the Administrative Committee.

If we were to compare the Adventist system to the US Congress, where the section of governance with the greatest numbers is in the House because representatives are apportioned based on population, we see that the Adventist

Delegates by Division, their membership, and the ratio of members per delegate²

| Number of Delegates | Division | | Membership | Ratio: Delegates to Membership |
|---------------------|----------|---|------------|--------------------------------|
| 213 | ECD | East Central Africa Division | 2,856,708 | 1:13,412 |
| 112 | ESD | Euro-Asia Division | 116,013 | 1:1,036 |
| 118 | EUD | Inter-European Division | 178,199 | 1:1,510 |
| 392 | IAD | Inter-American Division | 3,686,255 | 1:9,404 |
| 241 | NAD | North American Division | 1,184,395 | 1:4,915 |
| 81 | NSD | Northern Asia-Pacific Division | 679,907 | 1:8,393 |
| 272 | SAD | South American Division | 2,263,194 | 1:8,320 |
| 200 | SID | Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division | 3,167,259 | 1:15,836 |
| 95 | SPD | South Pacific Division | 420,936 | 1:4,431 |
| 161 | SSD | Southern Asia-Pacific Division | 1,222,546 | 1:7,593 |
| 143 | SUD | Southern Asia Division | 1,520,326 | 1:10,631 |
| 110 | TED | Trans-European Division | 84,428 | 1:767 |
| 168 | WAD | West Central Africa Division | 769,609 | 1:4,581 |
| 10 | MENA | GC Attached Territories MENA & Israel Field | 3,946 | 1:395 |
| 250 | GC | General Conference | 0 | |

system is reversed. The largest number of delegates is based on church structural units rather than membership.

There is nothing inherently wrong with preference being given to administrators, since they are the people responsible for running the church organization. But some might argue that a system based more equally on membership would be more fair.

What is also problematic is barring women, who are half of the church membership, from holding hundreds of top administrative offices, such as Conference and Union presidencies. There are approximately 750 of these positions in the church, and they all require ordination. Almost all of those people become delegates to the General Conference, effectively locking women out of those delegate slots.

In the recent discussion of women's ordination, the tie of administrative offices to ordained positions has not been a major factor in the conversation. It was not discussed in the Theology of Ordination Study Committee (TOSC), for instance. The ascension of one woman to the presidency of

the Southeastern California Conference helped nudge the women's ordination conversation along, but that was all.

Whatever the outcome of the vote on women's ordination, these issues of delegate disparity in representation of membership—geographically and by gender—need to be faced and fixed. ■

Bonnie Dwyer is editor of *Spectrum* magazine.

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2. Membership numbers published in the official delegate brochure of the 2015 Session, http://2015.gcsession.org/fileadmin/gcsession.adventist.org/files/gallery/GCS2015_DelegatesBro_WEB_041315.pdf.



Reading Genesis After San Antonio | BY CHARLES SCRIVEN

**Insisting
on exactitude
with respect
to matters
we cannot
fathom in
any case
amounts
to a refusal
of love.**

The idea of women as permanent outsiders appears to be losing ground among Adventists. Delegates to the 2015 General Conference session in San Antonio will consider whether to allow the ordination of women where “division executive committees” deem it “appropriate.” Although a Yes vote seems uncertain, or even unlikely, hopes for such an outcome have continued to galvanize advocates of gender equity, and their energy will doubtless be evident in San Antonio.

Another set of outsiders, Adventist scientists, will also be watching the goings-on in San Antonio. But they will do so without substantial coalescing of Adventist energy in their support.

The church’s current leadership is proposing changes to the official statement of Adventist belief concerning the doctrine of creation, and these changes would disturb not only Adventist scientists but anyone with the barest minimum of scientific literacy. Already deeply conservative, the present statement declares: “In six days the Lord made ‘the heaven and the earth’ and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week.” But top administrators worry that these words (taken more or less directly from Scripture) may lend themselves to non-literalistic interpretation. They know that the reigning scientific consensus posits a long-developing natural (and human!) world, and that this consensus cannot be squared with a straightforwardly historical reading of the biblical creation

accounts. So these administrators, as fearful of mystery and metaphor as of science itself, want to rigidify the biblical literalism they find consoling.

The key proposed changes to the sixth of Adventism’s 28 Fundamental Beliefs are as follows: “authentic account” becomes “authentic and historical account,” “six days” becomes “a recent six-day creation” and “performed and completed creative work” becomes a work “performed and completed during six literal days that together with the Sabbath constituted a week as we experience it today.”

All this is laughably mindless, not least because none of us can experience a week in which the sun, moon, and stars do not even exist for the first several days. In one way, of course, it is quite irrelevant. Referring to controversy that surrounded Galileo, Albert Camus, in his famous essay, “The Myth of Sisyphus,” remarked: “Whether the earth or the sun revolves around the other is a matter of profound indifference.” He meant that the essential questions involve life or death and the dulling or intensification of human passion. Conviction as to whether a loving God is our maker does touch on these things: God’s creative work matters, and how we feel about it may certainly dull or intensify our passion for life. The manner and timing of that work, on the other hand, seems less important.

But what cannot be unimportant—for Christians—is loving the Lord with our “minds,” a key aspect, according to Jesus, of

what he calls “the first and great commandment.” Nor can it be unimportant that the full meaning of love—love for neighbor as well as love for God—leads Paul to say that it relativizes all prophecy and knowledge. As humans, we know in part, we see dimly. So insisting on exactitude with respect to matters we cannot fathom in any case (Isaiah 55:8, 9) amounts to a *refusal of love*. A large part of loving God with our minds is embrace of due humility, and determination not to exclude others just because we think we know more than they do. Willful mindlessness is not mere ignorance; it is moral failure—a kind of arrogance, a callous and corrupting blight.

Whatever happens in San Antonio, Adventist energy is slowly empowering women. But that seems not yet to be the case for our scientists. They will likely continue to be outsiders, and so continue to suffer. For it is a kind of suffering—mark this well—to feel that you have to hide or deny what you believe in your heart to be true.

In light of all this, it’s good to remember that no one now admires the bureaucrats who made life miserable for Galileo. It’s even better to remember that the Bible’s creation perspective is a profound affirmation of hope, and that we need not despise science or deny mystery and metaphor in order to appreciate and affirm what the Bible says. A revised Belief Number Six will be a kind of political platform, at once imperfect and temporary. It cannot be—it must not be—a brake we put on our obligation to love God with our minds as well as with our hearts and souls. ■

Charles Scriven chairs Adventist Forum.

FEEDBACK

■ *letters, e-mails, and comments*



A Big Amen

I just want to take a moment to shout my “AMEN” over Elder James Londis’s article about the delay of Jesus’ coming. It is so encouraging to find another who shares the same views on Matthew 24–25 in addressing Adventism’s persistent fascination with “signs of the times” as I have held for many years. Indeed, we as a people eschew time setting, but we embrace fervently “sign-setting,” and it has only increased the bewilderment and questioning over the disappointment of delay. Jesus was concerned about His disciples’ focus on the “sign” of His coming, suggested in the first words out of His mouth in response to their query, “Let no man deceive you.” Yet, due to the makeup of Adventist spiritual DNA, our church has sought to read the signs in hopes of discerning a clear progression toward that great event that all of God’s people wish to see, Jesus’ second coming.

The six parables Jesus leaves His disciples are what will keep us from being deceived. It will get us off the signs and busy about the commission we have all been given: go into all the world. The parables are about a faithful people doing what God has called them to do, being about their Father’s business. The time of His coming is not for us to know. Jesus Himself emphasized we are not going anywhere until the gospel goes everywhere. Our task, then, is to be faithful meeting Jesus in those we serve in this life that now is. The sooner we can realize this clear biblical truth, the sooner we will be relieved of disappointment-delay anxieties and empowered with a clear mission of taking the gospel to the world.

KEVIN JAMES

NORCROSS, GEORGIA

Our task,

then, is

to be faithful

meeting

Jesus in those

we serve

in this life

that now is.



2015 *Church Manual* Amendments: GC Proposes Substantive Changes | BY JOHN BRUNT

AS MOST ADVENTISTS ON THE PLANET KNOW, the primary buzz about the 2015 General Conference in San Antonio focuses on women's ordination. There is also considerable conversation about proposed changes to the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. However, the many Facebook and blog posts about the upcoming session have given little attention to the proposed changes in the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*. Yet the agenda for the San Antonio session lists forty-two pages of proposed changes to the *Church Manual*. Many of these are editorial and insignificant.

Since it is only the General Conference in session that can change the *Church Manual*, many items that seem unimportant come to the Session. This time, some interesting and significant amendments have been proposed, however. Here is an overview of some proposed changes. Page numbers indicate the location of the proposed changes in the 2015 General Conference Session General Agenda, available as a download on the 2015 Session Web site.

Nomenclature

Several pages of changes have to do with nomenclature for youth ministries. The Adventist Youth Society is becoming "Adventist Youth Ministries." The reworking of this section

includes the addition or reworking of sections on public college ministry and the coordination of ministries such as Adventurers and Pathfinders. The changes, however, are not significant.

Another nomenclature issue is a change throughout from "licensed ministers" to "licensed pastors."

Structural and organizational issues

Of somewhat more significance is the addition of a statement on the function of the church manual vis-à-vis working policy. After stating that the Adventist Church has a representative form of government, the new statement reads:

The Church Manual applies this principle of representation to the operations of the local congregation. General Conference Working Policy addresses how this principle functions in the rest of denominational structure [p. 91].

A proposed change also clarifies that when a dispute arises between churches and conferences or institutions, the next organization which is not directly involved has final authority unless the organization itself chooses to take the matter to GC Executive Committee at Annual Council or to General Conference Session (p. 92).

There is also a change in the name of the church business meeting. Previously it was called the "governing

body" of the local church. It is now proposed to be called the "constituency meeting" of the local church (p. 123).

The manual currently states that deacons, though ordained, may not lead out in the communion service. Now that deaconesses may be ordained as well, they too are specifically excluded from leading out in communion (p. 102).

Another structural issue is the duty of nominating committee, when the church at large objects to a portion of its report and sends it back (p. 119). The current manual reads:

The committee should give due consideration to the objections presented. If they are found to be justified, the committee should substitute new names for those to which objection was made.

The proposed wording is:

After giving due consideration to the objections presented, the committee will exercise its judgment as to whether or not any change is warranted in the committee's recommendation to the church business meeting.

Who may speak in Adventist pulpits

The issue of who may speak in Adventist pulpits is addressed by another proposal. Previously the manual stated that one must present a current

denominational credential or license. It is now proposed that no one should be allowed to speak to any congregation unless he/she has been invited by the church in harmony with guidelines given by the Conference (pp. 94, 120). This recognizes the fact that in some churches, especially university churches, guest speakers preach for special occasions such as graduations who are not employed by the church.

Discipline regarding sexual misconduct

Perhaps the most significant and potentially controversial change involves reasons for discipline with regard to sexual conduct. Currently two statements address the reason people may be disciplined for sexual misconduct (p. 95). One says:

Violation of the seventh commandment of the law of God as it relates to the marriage institution, the Christian home, and biblical standards of moral conduct.

The other states:

Sexual abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults, fornication, promiscuity, incest, homosexual practice.

These are being replaced by a more specific statement that reads:

Violation of the commandment of the law of God, which reads, "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14, Matt. 5:28), as it relates to the marriage institution and the Christian home, biblical standards of moral conduct, and any act of sexual intimacy outside of a marriage relationship and/or non-consensual acts of sexual conduct within a marriage whether those acts are legal or illegal. Such acts include but are not limited to child sexual abuse, including

abuse of the vulnerable. Marriage is defined as a public, lawfully binding, monogamous, heterosexual relationship between one man and one woman.

Later in the document, the present statement that marriage is a "lifelong commitment of husband and wife" is replaced by the words:

Marriage is a public, lawfully binding lifelong commitment of a man and a woman [p. 134].

Church membership issues

Another proposed change has to do with church membership. At present, if a member wishes to resign from church membership their request must be voted by a church business meeting and is recorded as being dropped for apostasy. The new proposal would allow the church board to receive the letter and simply record it, adding that efforts should be made to restore the individual (p. 99; in addition, the wording of several other sections is changed because of this proposal).

Also with regard to membership, currently a business meeting can specify a period of time before a person can be reinstated after discipline, but a new proposal simply leaves the time open to a point where there is confession and evidence of change (p. 101).

Local church committees and functions

Finally, there are new functions specified for the local church. Every church is to have a discipleship plan. In fact, the proposed wording states that the chief concern of the board is to have an active discipleship plan in place that includes both spiritual nurture and evangelism. It also states that the primary function of church is making

disciples, which includes baptizing and teaching (p. 124).

A new proposal adds the finance committee to the functioning committees of the local church. The proposal reads:

Each church should have a mission-driven, broadly-based consultative financial planning and budgeting process with a committee structure that can give detailed review to the ongoing financial planning and budgeting. In some cases, this may take the form of a finance committee. In other cases, in smaller churches, this process may be handled directly by the church board. If the church establishes a separate committee for this purpose, the responsibilities should include reviewing budget requests and the review of the annual operating budget as well as a review of the financial position of the church as reflected in the financial statements. The approval of the budget and the review of the financial statement shall then be recommended to the church board and onward to the business meeting of the church for action [p. 128].

Conclusion

In light of the major discussions on women's ordination and fundamental belief changes, it remains to be seen whether these changes will create enough interest among the delegates to generate floor discussion or whether they will simply be rubber stamped. It is hard to predict how they will be received, discussed, and/or voted. ■

John Brunt is the senior pastor of the Azure Hills Seventh-day Adventist Church in Grand Terrace, California. He taught in the School of Theology at Walla Walla University for 19 years and was the Vice President of Academic Administration for 12 years. He and his wife, Ione, have two grown children and three grandsons.

The Bible: SANCTUARY

A River Flows From It: *The Sanctuary Doctrine and the Hydrological Ecclesiology of the Temple* | BY ROSS E. WINKLE

Within Seventh-day Adventism, what is known as the sanctuary doctrine or sanctuary truth has been central to its historical and theological self-identity.

Deriving largely from the eschatological prophecy of Daniel 8:14, yet including other texts in Daniel as well as in Leviticus, Hebrews, and Revelation, it has focused on such concepts as Jesus Christ's two-phase, high-priestly ministry in heaven, the antitypical Day of Atonement, the investigative or pre-Advent judgment, and the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. After the Great Disappointment of October 22, 1844, in which the Adventist hope of Jesus Christ's second coming was dashed, those that kept their belief in the calendrical fulfillment of Daniel 8:14 in 1844, while revising their understanding of what took place in that year, saw that text and the related sanctuary concepts become central to their belief system and a major component of their ecclesiological identity.¹

From the earliest post-Disappointment years, the sanctuary doctrine has been viewed as foundational and fundamental to Seventh-day Adventism,² despite its controverted and turbulent history. It has been variously called the "outstanding truth of Seventh-day Adventists,"³ the doctrine that has "distinguished Seventh-day Adventism from nearly every belief system on earth"⁴ and through which all other doctrines can be taught,⁵ and the "very heart of [the Seventh-day Adventist] message."⁶

Currently the sanctuary doctrine, subsumed under the concept of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, remains the 24th in a list of Adventism's 28 Fundamental

Beliefs.⁷ Nevertheless, even some of Adventism's foremost critics have agreed that the fundamental centrality of the sanctuary doctrine is more substantial than just one out of 28 beliefs. For instance, former Seventh-day Adventist minister and Bible teacher Dale Ratzlaff wrote in 2013 that "the Seventh-day Adventist doctrine of the investigative judgment and cleansing of the heavenly Sanctuary based upon Daniel 8:14 is indeed the central pillar of the Adventist faith. Some Adventists may disagree; however, it is."⁸

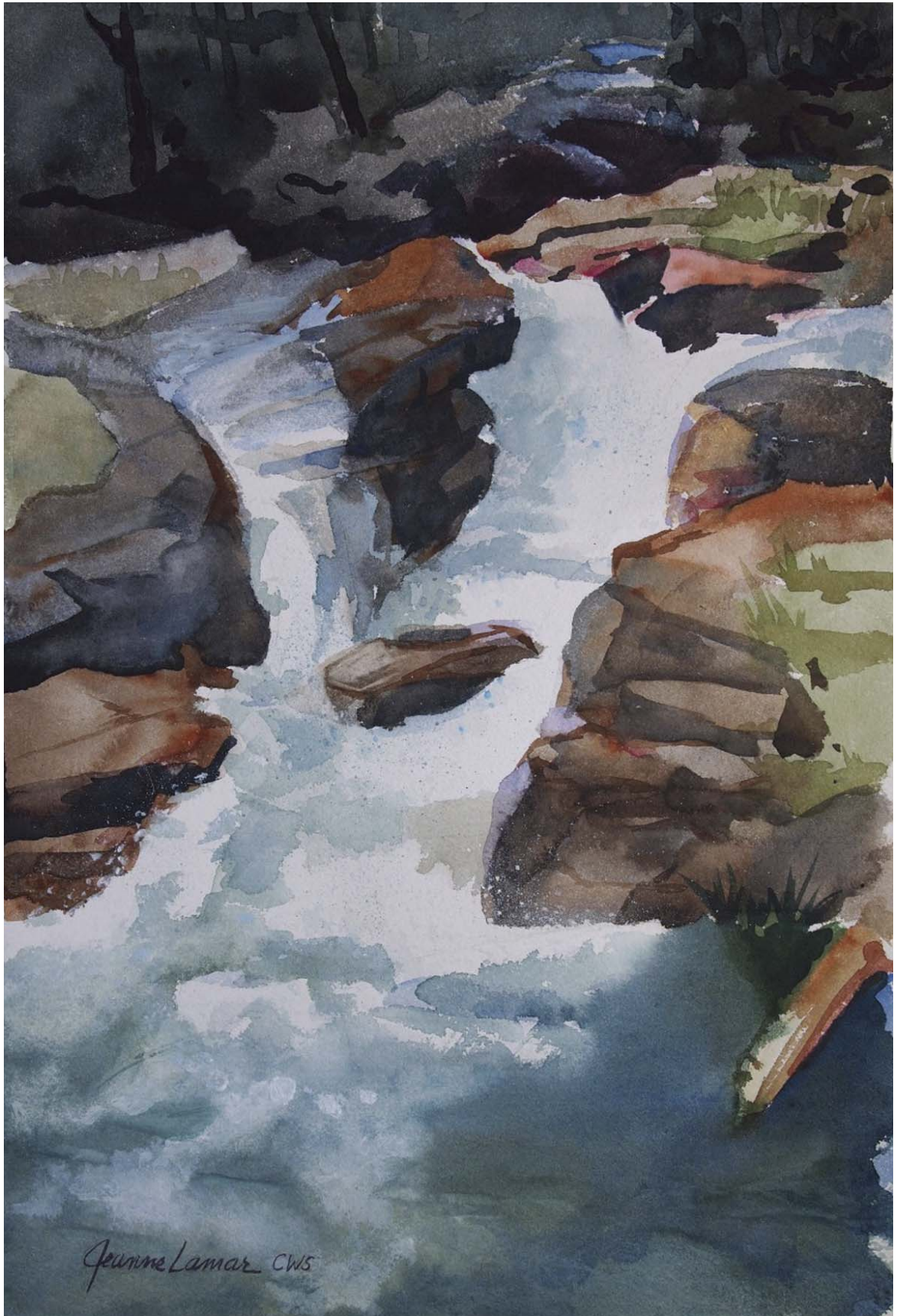
Seventh-day Adventism has never engaged ecclesiology with as much fervor as it has eschatology. Nevertheless, it is striking that of the various biblical metaphors for the church (e.g., corporal, familial, agricultural, architectural),⁹ the ecclesiological image of the church as a temple (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21),¹⁰ while certainly not ignored, has never found a similarly resounding or pivotal level of interest as Adventism's eschatological interest in the heavenly temple has. In this article I intend to sketch how a renewed study of the ecclesiological temple can reinvigorate Adventism's understanding of the sanctuary, expanding its horizons to include the life-giving, healing, and nourishing presence of the Spirit of Jesus, biblically symbolized as water flowing from the temple.

Water flowing from the temple

Numerous biblical texts describe water, streams, or rivers flowing from the earthly temple and its heavenly analog. For instance, Psalm 36:7–9 describes humans dwelling in the shadow of God's wings (a reference to the cherubim in the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary), feasting on the

DISCUSSED | sanctuary doctrine, the temple, high priest's robe, river and stream, the Holy Spirit, literary symbolism

Convergence | by Jeanne Lamar | watercolor



**A renewed
study of the
ecclesiological
temple can
reinvigorate
Adventism's
understanding
of the
sanctuary.**

abundance of his house (the same sanctuary), and drinking from the stream or river of his delights¹¹ that must originate within that same sacred structure. In Joel 3:18 (Masoretic Text [MT] 4:18) God promises Judah that its glorious future will include mountains dripping with new wine, hills flowing with milk, stream beds (or, “ravines”) flowing with water, and a fountain or spring flowing from the house of YHWH—the temple—and watering the Valley of Acacias.

In Ezekiel 47:1–12 the prophet Ezekiel describes water flowing east from the south side of the altar within the visionary temple complex. That flow of water becomes progressively deeper and deeper until it is higher than one’s waist, and one can swim in the deepening river. The river flows east from the temple toward the Jordan Valley and enters the Dead Sea, where it “heals” or makes fresh its salt water (47:8, 9). Everything—in particular, a variety of fish—lives where the healing water flows; the marshes and swamps, however, remain salty. All kinds of trees grow along the riverbank where the water flows from the temple, and they provide fruit every month as food and leaves for healing. In this utopian, visionary portrayal, the river from the temple thus brings life, healing, and fertility to virtually everything it touches.

In Psalm 46:4 the psalmist declares that a river exists whose streams bring gladness to Jerusalem, the city of God. In a cosmic judgment scene in Daniel 7:10, a fiery river surges forward from the heavenly throne of the Ancient of Days.¹² And Zechariah 14:8 prophesies that living waters will flow out from Jerusalem—half to the eastern sea (i.e., the Dead Sea), and half to the western sea (i.e., the Mediterranean), both in summer as well as in winter.¹³ These texts assume a motif of water flowing from the temple—whether earthly or heavenly.

A river flows from the temple, yet where does one find a river or a stream actually—historically, physically—emanating from the Jerusalem temple and providing life, fertility, and healing for the thirsty and dehydrated land and people? Sev-

enth-day Adventist depictions of the temple rarely—if ever—illustrate this. It is missing, it is unknown, it is forgotten, it is unimportant, it is confusing, or it is inconvenient. It is an impossible river, since neither Solomon’s temple complex nor the Second Temple complex actually had a river flowing from the sanctuary.

Flowing water, flowing Spirit

But it is clear that the literary world of the sanctuary did have a place for a river flowing from the sanctuary. Since it is a literary construct rather than a physical, historical reality, such water flowing from the sanctuary could be termed, in the words of Francis Landy, a “fluvial fantasy.”¹⁴ But of what was such fantastic fluid a symbol?

Jewish interpreters understood that there was water imagery associated with various aspects of the sanctuary. For example, the laver in the courtyard of Solomon’s temple was explicitly called the Sea (1 Kings 7:23s–25, 39, 44). Furthermore, the historian Josephus (37 CE–c. 100 CE) saw the purple color embroidered into the temple veil representing the sea.¹⁵ He noted that this same color (along with gold, scarlet, and hyacinth) was part of the high priest’s sash.¹⁶

The latter point brings us to the subject of the high priest’s dress. Within the Israelite cult, there was no statue or image within the Most Holy Place of the sanctuary. There was an image, however, and that image was the high priest. The high priest was dressed like the idols and images of the gods of other religions,¹⁷ and his typical daily regalia replicated material found on the inside of the sanctuary.¹⁸ As such, he, as the Image of YHWH, imaged, replicated, and mirrored aspects of the interior of the sanctuary—where YHWH resided.

In the literary symbolism of the sanctuary cult, if one read about water flowing from the sanctuary, one might thus assume there might be water imagery associated with the dress of the high priest. And, as indicated earlier, there was. Philo of Alexandria (c. 25 BCE–c. 50 CE)

understood the purple dye utilized in the sanctuary fabrics to symbolize water, since the dye was derived from a sea snail.¹⁹ Furthermore, in contradistinction to the Hebrew Bible, which indicated that the pomegranate figures attached to the hem of the foot-length, hyacinthine robe of the high priest were made out of blue, purple, and scarlet material (Exod. 28:33, 34; 39:24–26 [LXX 36:31–33]), he instead indicated that these were golden in fabrication.²⁰ But what is of interest here is that he understood these pomegranates to be symbolic of water.²¹ In *De Vita Mosis* 2.121 he understood that the hyacinthine robe, symbolizing the element of the air, was the chariot from which was suspended both the earth (symbolized by floral imagery on the hem of the robe) and water (symbolized by the pomegranates). But the water Philo was thinking of was not just water but flowing—or “living”—water. Philo further solidified his conclusion regarding the pomegranates symbolizing water based on linguistic considerations: the Greek word for pomegranate, *rhoiskos*, was etymologically derived from the “flowing” (*rhysis*) of water.²² These are but a few examples that demonstrate that liquid imagery was associated with the dress of the high priest, and thus the temple.

Within the New Testament, the book of Revelation portrays the “one like a son of man” wearing the foot-length, hyacinthine robe of the high priest (1:13, NASB) while standing in a sanctuary setting signified by the seven golden lampstands (1:12) and walking around in the midst of the seven churches of Asia Minor (2:1).²³ This assumes that his foot-length robe implicitly has the pomegranate figures hanging from it. There is no indication, however, that any symbolic reference to flowing water is being communicated with the assumed aspect of this high priestly garment.

Nevertheless, after the initial description of the one like a son of man dressed in the high priestly robe and sash, a further seven-part description ensues two verses later (1:14–16).

John describes the voice of the one dressed in this high priestly robe and sash as sounding like “many waters” (1:15, NASB)—an allusion to Ezekiel 43:2, which described the return of the glory of God from the east, the glory sounding like “many waters.”²⁴ The noisy, roaring reference to his voice is the exact center and the only audible aspect of this detailed, seven-part description.²⁵ As the visionary narrative flows into chapters 2 and 3, the voice of “many waters” becomes the voice of the Spirit of Jesus²⁶ that speaks (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). In a sanctuary setting, the “many waters” flow from the mouth of the high priestly Jesus in messages of love, encouragement, warning, and rebuke to the seven churches of Asia Minor—encompassing both the refreshing river of life and the fiery river of judgment (cf. Dan. 7:10). Thus in John’s inaugural vision and the subsequent messages to the seven churches, the motif of flowing water in a sanctuary setting is associated with—and is a symbol of—the Spirit. This would not be unusual, since there are a number of references in the Hebrew Bible, Jewish writings, and the New Testament that symbolize the Spirit by water.²⁷

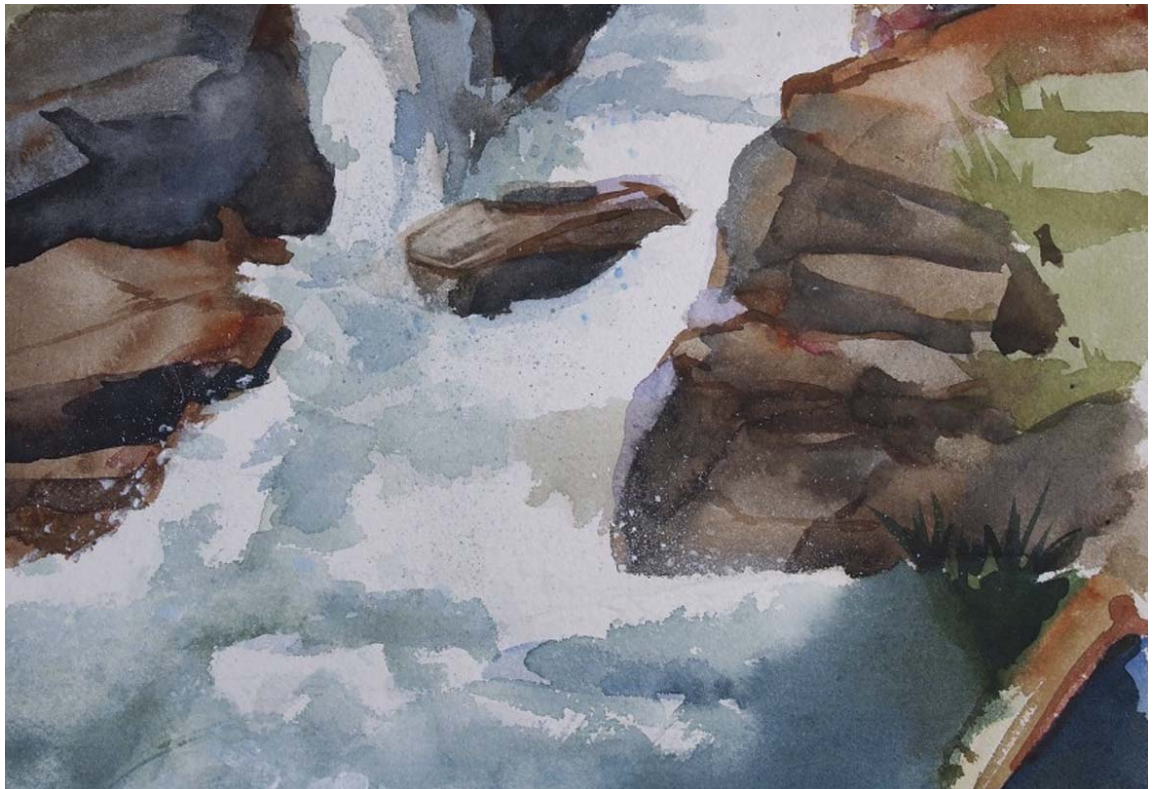
Revelation 7:17 describes Jesus, the Lamb, guiding the “great multitude” of God’s people to fountains/springs of living water. The eternal culmination of the flowing river is envisioned in John’s description of the New Jerusalem, where the Alpha and Omega promises that he will give water from the fountain/spring of living water as a gift (21:6; cf. 22:17). The New Jerusalem itself is where the river of living water flows from the throne of God and the Lamb, providing water to the paradisaical tree of life that produces fruit each month and has leaves that heal the nations (22:1, 2).²⁸ There is no temple in the New Jerusalem, since God and the Lamb are its ultimate, eschatological temple (Rev. 21:22). Consequently, the river of living water that flows from the throne of God and the Lamb essentially flows from the “temple” that is God and the Lamb.

**The sanctuary
doctrine has
been viewed as
foundational
and fundamental
to Seventh-day
Adventism.**

While many Christians see Revelation's New Jerusalem in fairly literal terms, it is essential to see John's description as containing symbolic meaning. For instance, the Lamb marrying its bride, the city, cannot be taken literally (21:2, 9), and neither can the measurements be taken literally (21:16, 17).²⁹ Such being the case, the river of living water would make coherent sense as a liquid symbol of the

references to luxuriant trees in the sanctuary, flourishing implicitly because of irrigation (e.g., Ps. 52:8; 92:12–15); the repeated water imagery in the Gospel of John (e.g., 4:4–15; 6:35; 19:34),³³ particularly the rivers of living water that Jesus asserts will later flow in the outpouring of the Spirit (14:16–18, 26; 15:26; 20:21, 22; cf. Acts 2:1–18)—arguably flowing from Jesus, the temple (7:37–39; cf.

It is an impossible river, since neither Solomon's temple nor the Second Temple actually had a river flowing from the sanctuary.



Spirit, flowing from the temple—from God and the Lamb—and bringing life, healing, and blessing to all.³⁰

In the words of Hebrews 11:32 (NASB), “What more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of” texts in which God is described as a fountain/spring of water (Jer. 2:12, 13; 17:12, 13; cf. 15:18); texts explicitly or implicitly associating the outpouring of the Spirit with water (e.g., Isa. 11:2, 9; 32:14, 15; 44:3, 4); the archetypal sanctuary in the story of Eden, with the river watering the Garden and then dividing into four rivers (Gen. 2:10–14)³¹; Creation and Edenic imagery in the tabernacle and Solomon's temple, in which the associated hydrological awareness would resonate³²;

2:19–21),³⁴ and yet in probable Johannine ambiguity, also understood to be flowing out from the believer³⁵; Paul's references to drinking the liquid Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 5:18–20; cf. 1 Cor. 10:1–4); and much, much more. In all of these portrayals, the overall imagery finds coherence in the water, fountains, springs, and rivers streaming, flowing, gurgling, and gushing from the sanctuary, bringing nourishment, life, freshness, healing, blessing, and abundance.

Ripples to torrents

I would like to briefly suggest just three areas in which an enriched understanding and appreciation of the imagery of water flowing from the

sanctuary into and through the temple of the community of believers could positively impact Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. First, just as the Spirit of God was associated with Jesus' baptism in the waters of the Jordan River (Matt. 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21, 22), so could we conceptualize the waters of the Spirit of Jesus flowing from the heavenly temple when people are baptized, symbolizing their Spirit-immersion, new life, and fruitfulness to the church community and the world beyond.

Second, as disciples of Jesus we are compared to branches on Jesus, the vine (John 15:1–8). We can only bear “fruit” by being connected to the vine (15:4), and producing fruit is the evidence and proof of our discipleship (15:8). But such “fruit” comes from the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23), even as fruit grows on vines and fruit trees not only because of good soil but also because of water irrigation (Jer. 17:8; 47:1–12; Rev. 22:1, 2). The fruit of the Spirit, consisting in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal. 5:22, 23), and every other spiritual gift, derives from the river of the Spirit flowing from the temple of Christ's heavenly intercession into the lives of disciples.

And third, as the waters of the Spirit flow from the heavenly temple where Jesus intercedes into the human temple of his church, they cannot be constrained, stopped up, or held back unless we resist.³⁶ They continue to ripple and flow outward from us into the world around us, bringing the possibilities of life and healing to others. As the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness (Mark 1:12), so the rivers of the Spirit compellingly move us into mission to bring the refreshing water of the Spirit to those who thirst—knowingly or not—for Jesus.³⁷

Conclusion

A much subdued—if not mostly missing—element in the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the sanctuary doctrine is the dynamic ministry of the Spirit in bringing life, healing, nourishment, and blessing (cf. Ezek. 47:1–12; Rev. 21, 22). I have attempted to

suggest in this sketch that a renewed interest in, understanding of, and appreciation for the imagery of the Spirit of Jesus flowing from the heavenly temple into and through the temple of the community of believers and out into the world would greatly enrich Seventh-day Adventism's understanding of the sanctuary, the ecclesiological concepts of baptism, discipleship and spiritual gifts, and mission, and enhance its contemporary relevance to a world that is spiritually dehydrated and thirsty. In biblical terms, the river(s) would flow, the desolate wilderness would bloom and blossom, the fruitless trees would repeatedly bear fruit, and people would be not only refreshed but healed.³⁸ It is time for Seventh-day Adventists to irrigate and rehydrate our understanding of and appreciation for the truths conveyed by the sanctuary, emphasizing that the sanctuary paradigm includes the streaming, flowing, surging, cascading, splashing, and gushing work of the Spirit of Jesus in bringing new life, radical healing, flourishing nourishment, and rich blessing to those who drink its thirst-quenching waters. ■

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References

1. An earlier version of this article was presented as a paper on November 22, 2014, at the annual meeting of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies in San Diego, California.
2. Cf. James White, who in 1850 confidently claimed that “the subject of the sanctuary . . . lies at the foundation of our faith and hope” (*The Advent Review* [special combined number, 1850], quoted in Ellen G. White, *Christ in His Sanctuary* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1969], 8); Ellen White, who in 1906 asserted that “the correct understanding of the ministration in the heavenly sanctuary is the foundation of our faith” (Ellen White, Letter 208, 1906), and who in 1911 emphasized the importance of Daniel 8:14 when she wrote that “the scripture which above all others

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had been both the foundation and central pillar of the Advent faith was the declaration, 'Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed' " (*The Great Controversy* [Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911], 409); and LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of Destiny* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1971), 77.

3. Louise Kleuser, *The Bible Instructor in Personal and Public Evangelism*, reprint ed. (Brushton, NY: TEACH Services, 2007), 107.

4. Chris Blake, *Swimming Against the Current: Living for the God You Love* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2006), 79. Cf. Froom: "The one distinctive, separative, structural truth—the sole doctrinal teaching that identifies and sets Seventh-day Adventists apart from all other Christian bodies past and present—is what we have always designated the 'Sanctuary truth.' 'This truth' was the earliest post-Disappointment position to be discerned and taught," and "it has never lost that pivotal position" (*Movement of Destiny*, 541); and Richard M. Davidson: "For a century and a half the doctrine of the sanctuary has continued to lie at the foundation of Adventist theology and mission and has remained the most distinctive contribution of Adventism to Christian thought" ("In Confirmation of the Sanctuary Message," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 2, no. 1 [1991]: 93).

5. Kleuser, *The Bible Instructor*, 108. Cf. C. Mervyn Maxwell, "Sanctuary and Atonement in SDA Theology: An Historical Survey," in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, Arnold V. Walenkampf and W. Richard Leshar, eds. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981), 516.

6. Kleuser, *The Bible Instructor*, 108. Cf. Froom, *Movement of Destiny*, 542, and the title of Roy Adams' book, *The Sanctuary: Understanding the Heart of Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1993).

7. See *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: An Exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, 2nd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 347–69.

8. Dale Ratzlaff, "No Reason to Exist Without the Central Pillar," *Proclamation Magazine* 14 (Spring 2013): 6.

9. Cf. such images as the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12–27), branches of a vine (John 15:1–8), a chosen race (1 Pet. 2:9), a flock (1 Pet. 5:1–3), a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9), the household of God (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 4:17), and a pillar

(1 Tim. 3:15). See, e.g., Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960).

10. This image derives from the Second Temple, Solomon's temple, and the wilderness tabernacle.

11. The Hebrew word for "delights" is the plural of the same word translated in Genesis 2 as "Eden."

12. Cf. Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, "The High Priest as Divine Mediator in the Hebrew Bible: Dan 7:13 as a Test Case," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1997 Seminar Papers*, Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers 36 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1998), 174 (Daniel 7 "is ultimately Temple centered"); André Lacocque, *The Book of Daniel*, trans. David Pellauer (Atlanta: John Knox, 1979), 124, 125 ("The vision in chapter 7 has the Temple as its framework"); and Marvin A. Sweeney, "The End of Eschatology in Daniel? Theological and Socio-Political Ramifications of the Changing Contexts of Interpretation," in *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature*, *Forschungen zum Alten Testament* 45 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 256–60 ("the visions of Daniel 7–12 are permeated with priestly imagery, symbolism, and concepts" [260]).

13. Grant Macaskill states that this text thematically parallels the image of the life-giving river in Ezekiel 47:1–12 ("Paradise in the New Testament," in *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 76).

14. Cf. Francis Landy, "Fluvial Fantasies," in *Thinking of Water in the Early Second Temple Period*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Christoph Levin, *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 461 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 437–55.

15. Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* (A.J.) 3.183; *The Jewish War* (J.W.) 5.213.

16. Josephus, A.J. 3.154; J.W. 5.213, 232.

17. See Fletcher-Louis, "God's Image, His Cosmic Temple and the High Priest: Towards an Historical and Theological Account of the Incarnation," in *Heaven on Earth*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2004), 85–91.

18. Cf. Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, reprint ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999), 42–47, 52.

19. Philo of Alexandria, *De Congressu Quærendæ Eruditionis Gratia* (Congr.) 1.117; cf. *De Vita Mosis* (Mos.) 2.88. On this color as well as on the blue and the scarlet, see Ross

E. Winkle, " 'Clothes Make the (One Like a Son of) Man': Dress Imagery in Revelation 1 as an Indicator of High Priestly Status" (PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 2012), 93, n. 50. The "blue" is hyacinth or bluish purple, while the "purple" is reddish or Tyrian purple.

20. Philo, *Mos.* 2.110.

21. Philo, *Mos.* 2.118–21, 133; *De Specialibus Legibus* (*Spec.*) 1.93, 94; cf. Gert Steyn, "Elements of the Universe in Philo's *De Vita Mosis*: Cosmological Theology or Theological Cosmology?" *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 47, no. 2 (2013): 2–5.

22. Philo, *Mos.* 2.119; *Spec.* 1.93. This connection between "pomegranate" and "flowing" is linguistically possible: *rhoa*, a word related to *rhoiskos* and also meaning pomegranate, may have derived from the term *rhous*, which means stream (Robert Beekes, with Lucien van Beek, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* [Leiden: Brill, 2010], s.v. *rhoa*).

23. See the discussion in Winkle, "Dress Imagery in Revelation 1," particularly pp. 152–98 and 277–306.

24. Cf. LXX Ezek. 43:2; also Ezek. 1:24, where the sound of the wings of the four living creatures is like the sound of many waters, which there is also compared to the voice of YHWH, or the sound of a tumult (or rainstorm), or that of an army.

25. Cf. Ganoune Diop, "Jesus Christ in the Midst of His People: A Study of Revelation 1:9–22," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 8 (1997): 42; he takes it as a chiasmic structure.

26. It is Jesus, since the "one like a son of man" in 1:13 indicates that he was dead but is alive (1:18).

27. See G. K. Beale in *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 1105, who lists such texts as Ezek. 36:25–27; John 3:5; 4:10–24; *Pesikta Rabbati* 1.2; and *Odes of Solomon* 6:7–18.

28. This alludes to the liquid imagery in Ezek. 47:1–12, Joel 4:18, Zech. 14:8, and Gen. 2:10 (cf. Beale, *Revelation*, 1103).

29. The measurements and numbers associated with the city are multiples of the number twelve (21:16, 17), associated with the tribes of Israel and the apostles (21:12–14). Moreover, the city is a golden cube (21:16, 18, 21), like the Most Holy Place of the temple. The city's foundations are made out of twelve precious stones similar to the twelve stones of the high priest's breastpiece (21:19–21). The city has gigantic gates made out of pearls (21:21), yet the gates

are never closed (21:25). The river of living water flows from the throne of God and the Lamb (22:1). The inhabitants will have the name of God and the Lamb on their foreheads (22:4; cf. 14:1). Taking these literally can create interpretive problems.

30. Cf. Beale, *Revelation*, 1104; Macaskill, "Paradise," 77, 78.

31. On this and much more, see, e.g., G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 17 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004); L. Michael Morales, *The Tabernacle Pre-Figured: Cosmic Mountain Ideology in Genesis and Exodus*, *Biblical Tools and Studies* 15 (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 76–91; and T. Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden: Genesis 2–3 and Symbolism of the Eden Garden in Biblical Hebrew Literature*, *Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology* 25 (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 2000).

32. The literature is vast; see, e.g., William P. Brown, *The Ethos of the Cosmos: The Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 73–89.

33. See, e.g., Larry Paul Jones, *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series* 145 (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); and Wai-yee Ng, *Water Symbolism in John: An Eschatological Interpretation*, *Studies in Biblical Literature* 15 (New York: Peter Lang, 2001).

34. On the difficulties in John 7:37–39, again, the literature is vast. See, e.g., D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 321–29; and Joseph R. Greene, "Integrating Interpretations of John 7:37–39 into the Temple Theme: The Spirit as Efflux from the New Temple," *Neotestamentica* 47, no. 2 (2013): 333–53.

35. On this, see Thomas L. Brodie, *The Gospel According to John: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 318, 319.

36. Cf. Acts 7:51; 1 Thess. 5:19; Eph. 4:30.

37. See, e.g., Acts 4:8–31; 8:26–29, 39, 40; 10:19, 20, 38, 44–47; 11:12; 13:4.

38. Cf., e.g., Isa. 35:1, 2 and Ezek. 47:1–12.

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Adventism and the Future:
WHAT WILL BE



Moon Rivers (The Next Visit) | by Jeanne Lamar | watercolor

Recapturing the Dream

Adventists and the Future | BY WILLIAM G. JOHANSSON

The organizers of this event suggested that in my remarks today I address the future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I am happy to do so; I love this church, even though at times it disappoints and frustrates me. If I have any quarrel with the Seventh-day Adventist Church—and I do—I think of it as a lover's quarrel.¹

Now, it has often been said that it is dangerous to prophesy, especially about the future. So I will resist the temptation to predict the future of the church. Instead I will confine my remarks to what I would like that future to look like.

The Adventist Church—where does one begin? So diverse, so far-flung, so fractured and yet so unified, so wonderful but so flawed: how to talk about what lies ahead?

I will focus on only one aspect, but it is one that I think crucial: the Adventist dream: *Can we still dream? Or have we become too cynical, too jaded, too disappointed?*

Then, if we can still dream, if in fact we *must* dream, what *might* be, what *should* be the Adventist dream as we move into the future?

And along with that, how does the dream arise? What factors, what conditions encourage it?

Can we still dream?

Some 170 years ago a group of men and women in America banded together in quest of a dream. They believed that they would see Jesus Christ coming in the clouds. They were absolutely sure that they were correct. Some abandoned all plans for the future, some left their crops to rot in the ground, all were convinced that the world was about to end.

They were wrong.

Out of that band of broken men and women arose the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Seventh-day

Adventist Church—no longer setting a date for Jesus to appear, but convinced that the big event would take place soon, during their lifetime.

It did not.

Not in their lifetime.

Not in their children's lifetime.

Not in their grandchildren's lifetime.

Not in their great-grandchildren's lifetime.

Can we still dream the dream of Jesus' soon return? Or has the cognitive dissonance reached a degree where we must, in all honesty, step back and reevaluate?

This church, springing from a dream, has grown and flourished on dreams. In this respect it is by no means unique: back of every enterprise that has left its mark on the world—be it a business, university, a hospital, a church—search and you will find that someone or some group had a dream.

So Adventists, dreaming the impossible dream of the imminent Parousia, dreamed other dreams, related dreams:

- of the gospel going to all the world
- of clinics and hospitals and medical and dental schools
- of elementary schools, and academies, and colleges and universities.

We were, we are, the doers. We are, as H. Richard Monroe, former chair of Time Inc., described us, the over-achievers. We have never had enough money to start up, never enough to keep going, but we do anyway. We have brought into being a global network of educational and health-care institutions.

What dreamers we have been!

- John Harvey Kellogg, eccentric genius
- Fernando and Ana Stahl, changing the society for the Altiplano peoples of Peru
- Harry Miller, physician extraordinary, establishing

hospital after hospital in China and developing life-saving soy milk

- Ellen White, recognized by *Smithsonian* magazine as one of the hundred most significant Americans of all time
- W. W. Prescott, educator extraordinary, founding Union College and Walla Walla College, and serving as president of both simultaneously, along with Battle Creek College as well
- Barry Black, former rear admiral of the United States Navy, shattering racial stereotypes, chaplain of the US Senate.

And so on and on. Women and men of courage, of determination, of vision.

Dreamers all.

Like John Burden and Anna Knight and Ben Carson and Leonard Bailey, H. M. S. Richards, and Bill Loveless.

And Charles Weniger.

But can we still dream?

"We are all of us dreamers of dreams;

On visions our childhood is fed;

And the heart of the child is unhaunted, it seems,

By the ghosts of dreams that are dead.

From childhood to youth's but a span

And the years of our life are soon sped;

But the youth is no longer a youth, but a man,

When the first of his dreams is dead. . . .

He may live on by compact and plan

When the fine bloom of living is shed,

But God pity the little that's left of a man

When the last of his dreams is dead.

Let him show a brave face if he can,

Let him woo fame or fortune instead,

Yet there's not much to do but bury a man

When the last of his dreams is dead.²

And there's not much to do but to bury a church when the last of its dreams is dead.

As churches age, the dreams of the founders leak away. Gradually the conviction and the passion die. More and more churches lose their edge as they blend into the world around them.

Would John Wesley today recognize the Methodist Church he founded? Would Martin Luther, his movement?

Would James and Ellen recognize today's Seventh-day Adventist Church?

The second tendency as churches age is a rearguard action, an attempt to lock history and doctrine into a fortress where they will be safe from the corrosive influence of the world.

And the Adventist Church? We see both of these developments: a loss of conviction, a loss of certainty. The relentless passage of the years has caused us, I think, to lose our nerve. On the other hand, we see a tendency to play it safe by building an ever-growing bureaucracy and a network of committees; by distrust of new ideas and labeling others as "safe" or "unsafe," by the subtle inroads of groupthink and "groupthink."

For 24 years I was part of the General Conference structure. As editor of *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World*, my boss was the president of the world church; I reported directly to, first, Neal C. Wilson, and later to Robert S. Folkenberg, then finally to Jan Paulsen. It was a heady, fulfilling, privileged position. I was at the very heart of the Adventist Church, able to observe its inner workings, able to impact decisions.

The General Conference is a place where the men and women work hard, travel much, and love the Adventist Church. It is a place of ideas and programs—but, for the most part, not a place of dreams.

Life at the General Conference revolves around travel and committees. I was a member of 40 committees—others in the building served on many more. We didn't have time to dream.

So, as we lean into the future, can Adventists still dream? And if so, what would those dreams be like?

The Adventist dream today

In his book *Under the Mercy*,³ Sheldon Vanauken describes why, as a teenager, he abandoned Christianity. The formal religion he grew up with was too dull, too petty, too divorced from the real world, too stifling. "Who could believe that here in this stuffiness, with all the beauty and laughter and pain of life held at bay outside the church—who could believe that here were the truths of life and death? I could not and I doubted whether anyone else did," he wrote. "I turned away from this religion and declared for

atheism.” Later, of course, at Oxford University, under the influence of C. S. Lewis, he and his wife found faith again.

Many former Adventists would echo Vanauken’s words. They don’t want to belong to a church that expects them to check their minds at the door or that acts as though it is the only body through whom the Lord is working.

If we are to retain our brightest and best, the Adventist Church must again be a place where they can dream big dreams, exciting dreams, dreams connected with this wonderful, broken world.

What about the really big dream, the primary dream, the dream that gave birth to this movement, the dream that Jesus will come back? Is that *passé*, ruled out of court by the relentless passage of the years?

Not at all. We must not, cannot abandon that dream.

Without it, where will we turn to find hope? It alone is “the blessed hope,” and it becomes more precious and more needed than ever before in human history.

One month ago—on January 22, 2015—scientists moved the hands of the Doomsday Clock two minutes closer to midnight. That puts us at three minutes before the stroke of doom. At a news conference in Washington, D.C., Kennette Benedict, executive director and publisher of the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, cited the unchecked climate change and the ongoing threat of nuclear weapons, and said at a news conference: “The probability of global catastrophe is very high. This is about the end of civilization as we know it.”⁴

When I think how much is messed up in our world—the pain and poverty, the greed and gross wealth, the starving children, the orphans and refugees, ISIS and the scourges of Ebola and new resistant bacteria, the breakdown of government and the breakdown of society—I can only cling with hope to the prayer: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

But, let me be clear, this will not be simply a return to William Miller. He emphasized the

when of the Second Coming rather than *Who* is coming. For most of our history we have done the same. We have raided the news to find clues that enable us to tell the world that Jesus’ coming is about to happen. We have made unwise predictions that have been falsified by the passing of time, such as the assertion that God would not permit humans to walk on the surface of the moon because He wouldn’t permit sin to be transferred beyond this planet. The editor of a leading Adventist magazine confidently made this assertion. I read it, and then Neal Armstrong walked on the moon. I waited to see how the editor would respond. I waited for a correction, an apology. I waited in vain.

Along with preoccupation with signs of the end came a rash of “explanations” as to why Jesus hasn’t come back, why His coming has been “delayed.” Often these theological attempts have put a guilt trip on us all: it’s because we haven’t done our job of preaching the gospel to the world, or because of our failure to attain perfection.

Enough of these guilt trips! The Lord has given us a task to do, and part of it involves telling others about Jesus and personal preparation for eternity, but in the final analysis the Second Coming is *His* event, not something to be put at risk by our failure to perform.

Throughout the Scriptures, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, God takes the initiative. Human beings may choose to cooperate with His purposes or they may not; but they cannot frustrate them. So it is with the return of Jesus: the Bible tells us that “God will bring [it] about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (1 Tim. 6:15, NIV).

So, resting in the assurance that our times are in God’s hand, there is a life to live, a work to do. We are called to live in such a way that “whatever we do, whether in word or deed, [we] do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17, NIV).

My friends, I give you my dream for the

**This church,
springing
from a dream,
has grown
and flourished
on dreams.**

future of the church.

God in Jesus gave us His best; surely we can return to Him nothing less. That means that each of us in our chosen sphere must strive for a life of excellence and compassion. Let everything that bears the Adventist brand—be it an individual or an institution—be marked by two qualities—*integrity and grace*.

It is

time to give

Adventist

scholars fresh

air to do

constructive

work.

Let every Adventist church, every school, every institution be a place of bigness of spirit, a place of generosity, a place of acceptance, a place of love.

Let every classroom be a dream factory, where young minds catch a glimpse of greatness, where the impossible suddenly becomes doable.

Has not Ellen White, Ellen White the visionary, called us to such dreams?

“Are you ambitious for education that you may have a name and position in the world?” she wrote to young people.

Have you thoughts that you dare not express, that you may one day stand upon the summit of intellectual greatness; that you may sit in deliberative and legislative councils, and help to enact laws for the nation? There is nothing wrong in these aspirations. You may every one of you make your mark. You should be content with no mean attainments. Aim high, and spare no pains to reach the standard.⁵

One day we may have an Adventist at the highest levels of government in the United States (and I am not making any prediction for 2016!). That has already happened in other countries, where Adventists serve as prime ministers, governors general, and cabinet members. It is likely to happen here also.

Now let me focus for a moment on two groups where the cold wind of suspicion has an especially chilling effect—Adventist scientists and Adventist theologians.

Some Adventists harbor doubts about the scientific enterprise. They forget that our heritage teaches that God reveals Himself

through two principal means—the Scriptures and the book of nature. We should welcome knowledge, from whatever source, without fearing or denying it.

We ought to affirm Adventist scientists, not be suspicious of them. We should encourage them to stretch for the highest. That means a Nobel Prize. I am confident that one day a Seventh-day Adventist will be awarded a Nobel Prize for their research. That day may be much nearer than we expect. Already an Adventist is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and a Fellow of the European Academy of Sciences. In the United States, two Adventists are members of the prestigious Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences.

Theology: The church now can count several hundred men and women who have obtained from respectable universities doctoral degrees in theology, ethics, Biblical studies, philosophy, and church history. What will the church do with this resource? Will we welcome their contribution to the life of the community and beyond it, or will we continually be on guard to determine whether they have been “contaminated” by their advanced studies?

Listen again to the words of Ellen White:

We must not think, “Well, we have all the truth, we understand the main pillars of our faith, and we may rest on this knowledge.” The truth is an advancing truth. And we must walk in the increasing light. . . .

We have many lessons to learn, and many to unlearn. God and heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed.

It is time to give Adventist scholars fresh air—oxygen—to do constructive work, not only for the church but for the larger society. In the Sabbath. In ethics, where already we have had significant impact. In the sanctuary doctrine. In the nature of man, in life and death—to name but a few areas.

When Jesus is at the center of our thinking, we grasp that to ease the pain of a suffering soul or to teach a child to read, or to give a teen's "buried flower a dream" (wrote Robert Frost) is more important than to serve as President of the United States.

Despite our oft-times foolishness, narrowness, pettiness, and small-mindedness, the Lord has given to Adventists a magnificent dream. It is to carry on the ministry of Jesus Christ in all its aspects, not only preaching the good news about God and salvation but—where Jesus spent most of His time—in bringing relief to suffering men and women.

Jesus calls us to a ministry of hope and healing. He calls us, in the words of this great institution, Loma Linda University and Medical Center, to make man whole.

A dream to serve

Far from the city lights, far from a paved road, far from plumbing and power lines, a young Adventist couple run a 100-bed hospital. The country is Chad, and it is desperately poor and backward. It has been

*named the most corrupt country in the world, the worst place in the world to be a woman, the worst place in the world for a child to fall ill, the country with the shortest life expectancy, the worst maternal mortality rate, the worst neonatal mortality rate, and the worst under-five mortality rate. Only 10 percent of Chadians are literate, 85 percent live hand-to-mouth as farmers and 65 percent live on less than a dollar a day.*⁷

Dr. Olen Netteburg and Dr. Danae Netteburg are recent graduates of Loma Linda University. They have three young children. They could have embarked on medical careers in America that would have brought them prestige and wealth. Instead they went to the end of the earth to bring hope and healing to those who are indeed "the least of these my brethren."

In a recent interview they said,

*"Honestly, though we work hard, we still have time for family, we still have a roof over our heads and food [beans and rice!] on our table, and we know we are exactly where God wants us to be right now. What more could we ask for? That, and our medical cases are insanely cool. Practicing medicine in America will be extremely boring after this."*⁸

This, my friends, is the spirit that has propelled the Adventist Church into all the world. This is the Adventist dream today. ■

William Johnsson, former editor of *Adventist Review*, is retired in Loma Linda, California, and enjoys walking, gardening, travel, writing, teaching occasional classes in the School of Religion at Loma Linda University, and spending lots of time with his wife, Noelene.



Footnotes

1. This article was originally presented as a speech at the Charles E. Weniger Society for Excellence Fortieth Annual Awards, Loma Linda University Church, Loma Linda, California, February 21, 2015, where Dr. Johnsson was one of three award recipients.

2. William Herbert Carruth, "Ghosts of Dreams," in *Each in His Own Tongue and Other Poems* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), 10, 11.

3. Sheldon Vanauken, *Under the Mercy* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985).

4. Eric Krupke, "Climate change and nuclear weapons push Doomsday Clock closer to midnight," *PBS Newshour*, January 23, 2015, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/citing-weapons-modernization-climate-change-scientists-move-doomsday-clock-closer-midnight/>.

5. Ellen G. White, *Messages to Young People*, 36.

6. Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 33, 37.

7. Charles Scriven, "The Ear: A Physician Couple Living an Amazing Mission," *Spectrum* online, 9 January 2015, <http://spectrummagazine.org/article/2015/01/09/ear-physician-couple-living-amazing-mission>.

8. Ibid.

Let every
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Rowboat or Kayak? | BY CHRIS BLAKE

Imagine you are on a pristine Alaskan lake, as I was this past summer, and you're in a rowboat. As you row, you pull past magnificent scenery—snow-capped peaks and cascading waterfalls, roaming blond grizzlies and soaring bald eagles. The entire time, you are looking backward to what you have passed. You may look over your shoulder briefly to correct course, to look ahead. But you're not going to do it that much. After all, you're in a rowboat.¹

Now, imagine you are in a kayak. You paddle forward, enjoying the same scenery, but looking ahead to what's coming, finding it easy to steer toward your destination. After all, you're in a kayak.

The Adventist Church has been traveling in a rowboat most of its existence, as has every other Christian denomination. Of the three primary existential questions—"Where did we come from?" "Who are we?" and "Where are we headed?"—Adventism has spent incalculable energy on "Where did we come from?" We talk about and write about origins, we gather people from around the world for "Faith and Science" conferences that nearly always are about Genesis—the beginning. *What happened there, exactly?*

But how much do we think and write and argue about life's goal, life's purpose, life's unending ending? As Stephen Covey wrote, "Begin with the end in mind."

To be clear, I find history and archeology—what Larry Geraty does so nobly and well—to be fascinating and essential. The problem is one of degree. *Must our direction be always looking back?* At present, the ratio in favor of the time we spend on origins versus the future is at least 99:1—which may be one reason so many become weary and wary when the topic of origins arises.

I became an Adventist convert at the tender age of 24. What kept me from becoming a Christian were primarily the three Hs: hypocrites, hell, and heaven. I didn't wish to traffic with any of them. Later, though, I took another look. In particular I became intrigued by the Adventist version of hell and of heaven. According to Revelation 21:

Heaven
is where we'll
unlearn
much of what
we know.



Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea [the author's prison] was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away."

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new."¹²

In the history of humankind, are those not the most beautiful, most hopeful words ever written?

Unfortunately, we've allowed discussion of endings to be sensationalized, truncated, and absurdly depicted. Armageddon scenarios of horrific destruction or tales of raptured escapism regress to images of the saved strumming harps on cumulous couches.

Actually, I don't want people to talk more about heaven. Heaven is freshman orientation. Nobody spends years preparing for and talk-

ing about freshman orientation. Heaven is a celestial boot camp to get us ready for our true home—the new earth. Heaven is where we'll unlearn much of what we know, to be retrofitted for an eternal community.

We don't leave here and go home to heaven. We leave heaven and come home to the new earth. The difference is infinite, as much as is looking backward and looking ahead.

I want people to talk more about the new earth. In particular, here are two quick considerations.

First, universal laws will remain in effect. We must adjust to the universe. Otherwise we fall prey to the sort of self-indulgent, solipsistic nonsense spouted by Last Generation Theology. If there's one thing we should have learned on this old earth, it's that universal laws remain in effect even if we're a "believer." If you jump off a bridge and land on your head, you will die. Also, if you jump off a bridge and land on someone else, they will die.

We have discovered that consciousness is somehow linked to the behavior of the quantum world. Even our thoughts affect others. Moreover, gravity, naturally, will still be in place. (Once I saw a bumper sticker that read, "Gravity sucks.") But as we find the Gospels describing Jesus in His resurrected body, we will also have

You paddle

forward,

enjoying the

same scenery,

but looking

ahead to what's

coming.



**“Don’t practice
missing,”
my father said.
“You might
get good at it.”**

exquisite traveling visas.

The new earth is a mystery, but a mystery isn’t something we know nothing about. A mystery is something we don’t know everything about. Jesus Himself said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven.”³

That’s why on the new earth the universal laws of relationships will apply. In an eternal community we will need to forgive, accept, and share—just as God does with us. This is more than “a sense of community.” I don’t want a sense of community—I want actual community. On the new earth I believe we will be more similar and more different from one another because we’ll be free to forever pursue our interests. But the new earth motto will be, “I like you *because you’re different.*” Of course, that should be our motto now. God isn’t just making up this grace stuff; we’ll need to use it forever. Grace is as much a universal law as is gravity.

The documentary film *I Am* points out that when Charles Darwin wrote in 1871 *The Descent of Man*, he wrote the phrase “survival of the fittest” twice—95 times he wrote “love.” What we have, realistically, is the ability to take care of others. Sympathy is the strongest instinct. That’s why a wildebeest knocks a predator cheetah off a fallen wildebeest.

However, humans deviate from that instinct. In the human body, when something takes more than it needs, we call that “cancer.” In the United States we call it “capitalism.”

Second, what we practice now matters. Many years ago, my father watched from the sidelines while I shot baskets in an empty gym. I was feeling lazy, enjoying the echoing thud of my dribble and the squeals from my shoes, and I began carelessly, haphazardly

flinging the ball at the hoop.

My father, a superb basketball coach, observed a few moments before giving me advice that left a lasting impression. “Don’t practice missing,” he said. “You might get good at it.”

As human beings we practice missing far too often. For example, environmentalism and peacekeeping matter infinitely. This is our home—it’s not in the end a disposable planet. Adventist Christians ought to be the best environmentalist peacekeepers on the planet. All of the world’s religions carry a circular motif, following the seasons, from birth to death to rebirth. We call it Eden to Eden. The poet Arundhati Roy writes:

*Another world is not only possible, she’s on her way.
Maybe many of us won’t be here to greet her, but on a
quiet day, if I listen very carefully, I can hear her
breathing.*⁴

Practicing creativity and good humor and courage matter infinitely. The question is, *Who would you want to live next door to forever?* In her interview in *The Paris Review*, author Marilynne Robinson comments, “There’s no reason to imagine that God would choose to surround Himself into infinite time with people whose only distinction is that they fail to transgress.”⁵

When the Association of Adventist Forums conference met in Chicago in 2011, I led a discussion of what the new earth could be like. We divided out tables into these topics: new earth theology; new earth social sciences (education, history, law, sociology); new earth business and technology; new earth sexuality (that was a popular one); new earth life sciences (biology, ecology, physiology); new



earth rhetoric and communication; new earth physical sciences; and new earth music, art, literature, and drama. For example, all drama on earth is based in conflict. No one goes to see the film *The Village of the Happy People*. How will drama play out on the new earth?

One participant, who has written extensively on origins, growled to me, "So you want us to guess, is that it?"

I wanted to say, "Yes, just as we guess in discussing origins. However, that discussion has had the benefit of centuries of discourse." Fortunately, I kept my mouth shut.

The discussion in Chicago was lively, and spokespeople reported on each table's conversation. Here's one sample from the visioning report on new earth rhetoric and communication:

"More poetry—things said in beautiful ways. Theater, musicals, oratorios. (No more PowerPoint.)"

"Delightfully passionate descriptions of new experiences as children first experience them."

"We'll understand each other more deeply and fully."

"At last we will have the time and freedom to explore a topic without limit—and to share that."

"We'll understand the animals, even minute ones."

"Allen: 'Sometimes the universe will fall silent as I tell them my experience.' Jack: 'Out of pure sympathy!'"

"No cell phones at the table! No ear cell phones anywhere north of hell!"

When talk turns to dogmatic and increasingly creedal views about evolution, we can flip the conversation. We can turn around in our linguistic vessels. Two of the most winsome words in the English language are, "What if." Try asking how we will become fit for the evolution of new earth. Really, what will it be like? What does a new earth person look like today?

One reason young adults flee Adventism is they believe everything has already been worked out. They yearn to forge their own paths. They understand the adage, "If you're not the lead dog, the view never changes."

Providentially, a stimulating new horizon stretches ahead.

In his poem "Little Gidding," T. S. Eliot wrote,

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*⁶

Rowboat or kayak? My hope is that we'll climb into conversational kayaks to start looking *beyond* Revelation. That we'll explore the mysteries of life as it will be, as it was meant to be. That we'll dedicate, say, 25 percent of our discussion to the new earth. That leaves 75 percent for origins—a 3:1 ratio instead of 99:1. Fair enough?

The future lies in front of us, after all. ■

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numerous national awards for writing and editing and is the author of hundreds of published articles and many books, including *Searching for a God to Love* and *Swimming Against the Current*.

Footnotes

1. This article was originally presented as a talk at the Association of Adventist Forums annual conference, San Diego, California, October 5, 2014.

2. Revelation 21:1–5. All Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

3. Matthew 13:11.

4. Arundhati Roy, "Come September," transcript of a speech given at Lensic Performing Arts Center, Santa Fe, New Mexico, September 29, 2002.

5. Sarah Fay, "Interviews: Marilynne Robinson, The Art of Fiction No. 198," *The Paris Review*, Fall 2008, <http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/5863/the-art-of-fiction-no-198-marilynne-robinson>.

6. T. S. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays, 1909–1950* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 145.

God isn't

just making

up this

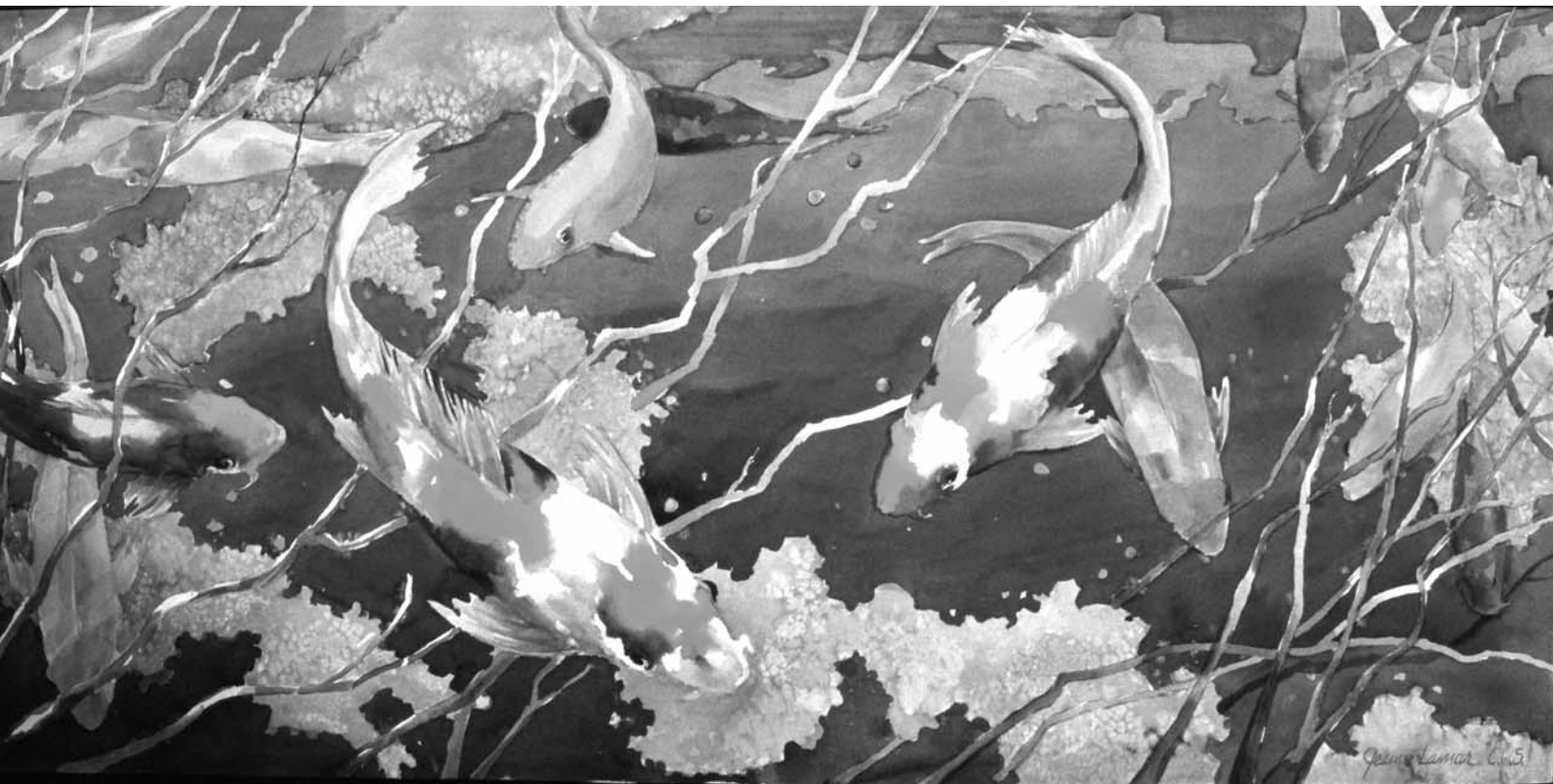
grace stuff;

we'll need

to use it

forever.

Adventism and the Present:
**BELIEVING
AND
BELONGING**



Koi | by Jeanne Lamar | watercolor

Fundamental Beliefs: Curse or Blessing? *On the Pros and Cons of Adventist Confessional Statements* | BY ROLF J. PÖHLER

From their beginnings in the late 1840s until today, Seventh-day Adventists have denied the need for a creed, believing it would hamper the continuous exploration of the Scriptures in search of “present truth.” In recent decades, however, the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs have gradually assumed the function of a creedal statement that is being used to define the boundaries of the Adventist faith for converts and members alike. This is a noticeable departure from the traditional Adventist view.

What are the reasons for this development? Where will it lead? I suggest in this article that, on the one hand, a common confession of faith is essential to the Christian faith and indispensable for the Adventist witness in the world. And on the other hand, a creedal set of beliefs that serves as a binding rule of faith, minutely defines doctrines, and is used for disciplining members is ill-advised and should be avoided.

Do Seventh-day Adventists have a creed?

One of the ancient Christian confessions simply says: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37, NKJV).¹ What the first Christians expressed in a few words was later replaced by carefully formed statements that expressed the principal teachings of the Christian church and churches.

Thus, creeds (from the Latin *credo*—“I believe”) became the common foundation of Christian faith and teaching. They are still regarded as foundational to the Christian church and recited week by week in Catholic and Protestant worship services around the world. Nearly half a century ago, Seventh-day Adventists expressed their basic approval of the Apostles’ Creed, though it is not recited in Adventist worship services.²

During the time of the Protestant Reformation, a number of new confessions were written up that expressed the

biblically grounded teachings of the Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed churches. In them, Protestants took pains to explain and defend their disagreement with some of the traditional doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church.

Adventists do not claim to have a creed or “confession of faith”; instead, they have created expressions called Fundamental Beliefs, brief articles of faith geared to the general public that present the teachings of the Adventist denomination. Whether or to what extent this distinction is important remains to be seen.

Historical position toward church confessions

Early Sabbath-keeping Adventists were strong and united in their rejection of any creed having binding authority on believers. In their view, “The Bible, and the Bible alone, is to be our creed, the sole bond of union.”³ Repeatedly, the pioneers of the church—first and foremost James and Ellen White—emphasized the unique role of the Scriptures as “the only rule of faith and practice.”⁴ Nothing should hamper the progressive understanding of the Word of God, and no compulsory church confession should hinder believers from discovering truth for themselves and following the dictates of their own conscience.

Sabbatarian Adventists were not alone in this stance. Many of them had come from, or were influenced by, the Restoration Movement, which wanted to overcome the divisions of Christianity by returning to the “primitive” (original) faith as set forth in the New Testament, uniting believers on the plain teachings of the Bible as the norm of all Christian faith and practice. The slogan, “No creed but the Bible!” was expressive of this view.⁵

In the light of an inglorious Christian history, where often an oppressive state church had forced its dogmas on believers, denying their right to study the Bible for themselves and follow their own insights, early Adventists saw in church creeds an instrument of control by which the

church exerted her abusive power. Thus, to them, creeds were an unmistakable sign of Babylonian confusion and apostasy—Catholic and Protestants alike (see Rev. 12–18).

When, in the early 1860s, James White began to organize the Sabbatarian movement into a Christian denomination, there was widespread fear that, in spite of the best intentions, such a move would lead to the establishment of another church that one day would become just as intolerant and oppressive as others had been before. This fear of a gradual relapse into Babylonian structures was most forcefully expressed by John Loughborough in 1861:

*The first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is, to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth [is] to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And, fifth, to commence persecution against such.*⁶

In 1883, when the adoption of a church manual containing “simple rules” and “suggestions only” was proposed, it was opposed by a majority of the delegates of the General Conference as being unnecessary and potentially dangerous. A major reason for its rejection was the fear of a growing uniformity and a gradual fixing of the Adventist faith.⁷ However, only two years later, the mood was beginning to change as doctrinal controversies arose, causing some to look for other means than the Bible of keeping the church united in faith.

Changing attitudes toward creedal statements⁸

After the mid-1880s, new and conflicting views on exegetical and doctrinal matters were troubling the church. They involved the function of the law in the process of salvation and the interpretation of apocalyptic symbols (10 horns, Dan. 7). To counter such divergent views, ministers were expected to adhere to all the fundamental doctrines of the church. Several articles in the *Review and Herald* argued that some kind of creed was necessary in order to prevent errors from creeping into the church and to teach the true faith. While the term *creed* was freely used, it was not understood in the sense of a fixed rule of faith. It was also emphasized that the Bible remained the ultimate source of appeal.⁹

The ambiguity arising from the continuing opposition

to the formation of a creed and the simultaneous affirmation of a creedal statement persisted and increased in the 20th century. While doctrinal rigidity and stagnation were opposed, the need for certain non-negotiable points of faith was upheld. The Fundamental Beliefs published in the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* since 1932 were looked upon as the official statement of the Adventist faith, and assent to it was regarded as a condition of church membership. In this way, differing interpretations of Bible teachings could be prevented, erroneous views and heresies be opposed, and non-negotiable teachings be defined. In other words, the Fundamental Beliefs statement served both to present the established faith of the church and to prevent opposing views from within.¹⁰

In his book on the Apostles' Creed, W. R. Beach defended church creeds as a means of bringing about unity of faith, securing uniformity of teaching, and protecting against errors—benefits that Adventists had previously ascribed to the Bible and the prophetic gift (i.e., Ellen White). Thus, in the 1970s, the Adventist Church came closer than ever to attributing to their Fundamental Beliefs a criteriological function, ideally surpassed only by the Scriptures.

When, in the late 1970s, church leaders proposed a set of explanatory statements on certain controversial teachings—like revelation/inspiration and creation/creationism—they evoked a heavy controversy in North America. Reactions were both supportive and critical. Opposition came particularly from the academic community, which felt strongly inhibited by this move, which would enable administrators, leaders, and controlling boards to evaluate the commitment to Adventism of current and prospective employees.¹¹ While many church members were supportive of the move to protect the faith against erosion, others were concerned that it would bring the church dangerously close to becoming a creedal church.

With the acceptance of a newly written statement of Fundamental Beliefs at the General Conference Session in Dallas in 1980, the Adventist Church entered a new phase in its attitude toward a creed. The strong opposition of the past had given way to a positive appreciation, with a growing regard for the Fundamental Beliefs as the criterion of church membership and reference point for defining Adventist faith. Since that time, adherence to Adventism was more and more measured by someone's agreement, or lack of it, to the 28 Fundamental Beliefs. The latter serve

as the benchmark of orthodoxy and the precondition of employment by church entities. Loyalty to the church is equated with full agreement with the 28 “points.”

This has led to a somewhat paradoxical situation. In order to be regarded as “orthodox,” one must not question what is explicitly stated in the 28 points of faith. On the other hand, what remains unsaid in that statement is regarded as non-binding. Thus, certain traditional teachings, such as the view on apocalyptic Babylon, the mark of the beast, and other end-time events, which are regarded by many as “present truth,” have actually become *adiaphora*. On the other hand, any deviation from the officially voted text is viewed with suspicion.

Do Seventh-day Adventists have a binding, authoritative creed after all? Many in the church, including theologians, will affirm this and, beyond that, defend the importance of having such a declaration of faith. The question, therefore, is not so much whether Adventists have, or need, a creedal statement but rather how detailed and explicit it should be and how it is actually being used by the church. A survey of Adventism’s doctrinal history reveals a variety of confessional statements, differing from each other with respect to style (form), emphasis (content), and authority (function).

How did the Adventist Fundamental Beliefs develop?

The historical development of Adventists doctrines has been described in detail elsewhere.¹² Here the focus will be limited to the general direction these developments have taken and the diverse manner in which Adventists have expressed the central points of their faith. There are at least five major trends.¹³

From simple and concise statements to detailed and sophisticated texts. From 1850 until 1938, the *Review and Herald* printed on its masthead the text of Rev. 14:12 in order to express the Adventist faith in a nutshell. To the earliest Sabbatarian Adventists, this required obedience to the law of God and the teachings of Jesus,

meaning the Old and New Testament in toto (*sola scriptura*). More specifically, they focused on two doctrines, the Sabbath and the second Advent (including the sanctuary teaching). When local congregations were organized in the 1860s, members signed a pledge “covenanting to keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus Christ.”

In 1872, Uriah Smith wrote and published a 2,500-word “Declaration” containing 25 “Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists.” Major texts of a similar kind were published in 1931/1932 and in 1980. The latter is the longest and most sophisticated creedal statement the church has produced thus far. Its 27 (now 28) articles of faith reflect the expertise of the theologians that drafted the text.

From non-binding and flexible to authoritative and precisely worded texts. In the preface to his “Fundamental Principles,” Uriah Smith emphasized that they were not “articles of faith” or “creed” having “any authority” and were not “designed to secure uniformity.” They merely stated what Adventists believed “with great unanimity,” providing a synopsis of the Adventist faith, the “only object” of which was to accurately inform the public, correct erroneous views and prejudices, and distinguish Seventh-day Adventists from other Adventist groups. Even the 1931/1932 statement of Fundamental Beliefs was published without being officially voted by the church.

However, in 1946, any future revisions of this text were made dependent on a formal vote by a General Conference session. The declaration of 1980 in turn went through a long process of preparation, discussion, and revision before it was voted at a plenary session. The proposed changes of 2015, while consisting of minor restatements only, went through an even more extended and elaborate process than that.¹⁴ The revised Fundamental Beliefs statement will likely be considered more official, binding, and authoritative than ever.

From Adventist distinctives to Christian fundamentals. If one compares the synopsis of Uriah Smith with later summary statements, the change

Nearly half
a century ago,
Seventh-day
Adventists
expressed
their basic
approval of
the Apostles’
Creed.

from heterodox to orthodox teachings is evident. While Smith rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, the classical Christian teaching on the nature of Christ and the atonement, and also proposed a heterodox view on the “new birth,” later statements reflected some noteworthy changes in Adventist beliefs. In addition, recent confessional statements reveal a shift from an earlier emphasis on distinctive doctrines (law, judgment) to an accentuation of basic Christian teachings (salvation by grace through faith). Closely related to this is the move away from the law-centered (and even legalistic) thinking of the early decades to a more Christ-centered approach, focusing on the gospel and offering believers assurance of salvation—even in view of the pre-Advent judgment.

From focusing on the future to paying attention to the present. One significant side effect of the increasing concentration on the gospel message was a decreasing emphasis on the apocalyptic focus of Millerite Adventism. It resulted from a deeper understanding of New Testament eschatology, which is characterized by a tension between the completed salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus (“already”) and the final consummation of the kingdom of God at the coming of Christ (“not yet”). While upholding the future-oriented teachings of the church (final events, millennium, new earth), the 1980 declaration gives increased attention to the present time and its challenges—care for the environment, stewardship of the earth, marriage and family, healthful living, social relations, and so on. The traditional emphasis on the “last things” has been supplemented by a growing concern for the penultimate things.

From an apologetic and polemical approach to a positive Christian stance. When Uriah Smith wrote his synopsis, the church was engaged in theological debates with Christians of other denominations. It is no surprise, therefore, that the “Declaration” of 1872 was also engaged in opposing erroneous views and even attacking other denominations, while presenting the Sabbath-keepers as the only true Adventists who are being faithful to the teachings of the Bible. In the spirit of his time, Smith polemicized against the “the papal power, with all its abominations” (#8) and noted that the “the man of sin, the papacy . . . has misled almost all Christendom” (#13).

In the 1931/1932 “Declaration,” no accusations were raised against other denominations. Later, L. E. Froom noted that “the old largely negative approach—emphasizing chiefly the things wherein we differ from all other

religious groups—is past, definitely past. And that is as it should be.”¹⁵ Likewise, the 1980 Statement of Fundamental Beliefs is free from any polemical and apologetic overtones, presenting Adventist beliefs on the basis of biblical and theological reasoning alone. While this may be seen as evidence of the progressive maturing of Adventism, others may look upon it as a sign of the gradual loss of distinctive Adventist identity.

In looking upon these developments it becomes clear that Seventh-day Adventism is sharing in the same processes that other Christian churches have experienced in the past. Beginning as a small movement with loose structures and beliefs still in the making, they gradually grow into large and well-organized denominations that find it judicious and even indispensable to more narrowly define and minutely refine their beliefs until they become settled teachings cast in theological concrete.

It seems that this process is for the most part inescapable. The very success of the movement—its constant growth, its worldwide expansion, and its increasing diversification—calls for a clear profile that helps preserve the group’s identity. The homogeneous character of the incipient movement gradually gives way to a heterogeneous and pluriform body of believers who no longer share the same intellectual framework, social imprint, cultural context, or behavior and lifestyle. In order to keep their church united in the faith, leaders tend to resort to creeds or confessional statements that define the boundaries of the community and thus strengthen its cohesiveness.

Benefits and ill effects of creedal statements

Obviously, there are benefits in having a creed. On the other hand, there also seem to be serious risks in producing such statements, as John Loughborough forcibly argued in 1861. We look next at the advantages and disadvantages of creedal statements from an Adventist viewpoint, using a SWOT analysis¹⁶—an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats—that lists the benefits and drawbacks of such authoritative texts. To keep the survey brief, only a listing of the “boon and bane” of church creeds will be provided here.

Strengths and opportunities

1. A neatly arranged summary of the core beliefs of the community, thereby explaining them to insiders and outsiders alike.

2. A united and uniting expression of the community's faith convictions, which strengthens its identity and "the unity in the faith" (Eph. 4:13). A common confession belongs to the very essence of the believing church.
3. A clear and concise testimony to the world about the beliefs of the church and an answer to the call of the apostle Peter, who admonished the Christians of his time: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Pet. 3:15).¹⁷
4. Protection for the church against misinterpretations and misrepresentations of its beliefs within and without and saving it from being "blown here and there by every wind of teaching" (Eph. 4:14).

Weaknesses and threats

1. Reflect a particular phase, level, or degree of understanding that tends to be canonized and consequently impedes and stifles further growth and future advancement or correction of the understanding and expression of the faith. In this way, today's present truth may become an impediment to "new light."
2. Are treated as the criterion of orthodoxy/heresy and as an instrument to marginalize non-conformist members. Rather than serving as a descriptive tool, they are used prescriptively to ostracize and eventually expel dissidents.
3. May gradually lose their timeliness in a constantly changing world, having been formulated in a specific historical, religious, and cultural context, and become unsuitable in different religious and cultural environments.
4. For all intents and purposes, take the place of the Scriptures, which ostensibly is "the only rule of faith and practice" for Adventist Christians. This stands in sharp contrast to the conviction of the pioneers of the church.

What should an Adventist "Confession of Faith" look like?

On the assumption that some kind of creedal statement is useful and actually desirable, the question needs to be asked, What characteristics should such a statement of belief possess? Rather than proposing or enumerating particular points of faith, we should be concerned with the properties of a meaningful and consistent "creed" that is suitable for confessing the Adventist Christian faith in today's multicultural and pluriform world. After proposing ten features of such a creedal statement, we will look at some sample texts before turning our attention to the upcoming revision of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs.

Desirable features of an Adventist "creed"

The following enumeration is a kind of "wish list" that can be used as criteria for evaluating creedal statements.

"Brevity is the soul of wit." A confession of faith should be as brief and concise as possible. A handful of paragraphs or articles fitting on a single page would suffice. The current Adventist Statement of Fundamental Beliefs encompasses a whopping 4,200 words, making it far too cumbersome for being memorized or recited in public.

Focus on essentials. A Christian confession should focus on weighty matters, leaving less important issues aside. Points of faith need to be weighed, not merely counted. This calls for a deliberate distinction between central and peripheral issues. This is not to argue for a "low-calorie" creed that waters down the harder points of faith. Adventist faith is holistic, encompassing all aspects of life. Still, there are essentials and non-essentials (cf. Matt. 23:23; Rom. 14:17).

Trinitarian structure. The ancient Christian creeds are characterized by a Trinitarian structure. While Adventist declarations of Fundamental Beliefs do not, until now, follow a Trinitarian outline, still such an approach would be quite appropriate. Traditional Christian creeds attach

**Repeatedly,
the pioneers of
the church
emphasized the
unique role of
the Scriptures
as "the only
rule of faith
and practice."**

such crucial topics as the church, forgiveness of sin, resurrection, and eternal life to the third article on the Holy Spirit, while omitting the question of Christian discipleship. Thus, a Trinitarian structure necessitates careful thinking and drafting so that nothing of importance is left out, while allocating everything that is said to the triune God.

Christ-centeredness. Undoubtedly of greater importance than a Trinitarian structure is the Christ-centeredness of an Adventist statement of faith. According to the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, all Adventist doctrines are Christ-centered and should be understood in relationship to Him.¹⁸ It is one thing to make this claim and another to answer it. A Christian creed is essentially a confession of faith in Christ, the living Word of God. Therefore, every doctrine should contribute to a better understanding of the meaning of our confession to Christ as Lord.¹⁹

Testimonial character. A confession is a personal or shared affirmation of faith most properly expressed in the first-person singular or plural. While neutral language in the third person has the ring of objectivity and factuality ("There will be a resurrection of the dead"), the subjective form ("I/we believe in the resurrection of the dead") more closely corresponds to the nature of a confession. The church may *teach* doctrines, but only people can *believe* and *confess* them. In other words, a confession is not an incontestable line of argument but the act of professing one's faith. While "fundamental principles of faith" refers to a written statement, "confession" denotes the act of acknowledging Christ. Only in a secondary sense does it refer to the content of the "confession."

Biblical terminology. In order to remain true to the biblical testimony, it is judicious to follow the language of the Scriptures closely in presenting the truths of faith. This reduces the risk of deviating from the intended meaning of biblical teachings and misinterpreting their message. It is the strength of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs that the theologians who wrote them followed this principle. In addition, using biblical terminology is a tacit acknowledgment of the *sola scriptura* principle.

Scripture-boundedness (scripturality). For a church that upholds the *sola scriptura* principle, it goes without saying that its credo will submit to the final authority of the Word of God. This is the unquestioned position of Seventh-day Adventists and is clearly expressed in the Preamble of the Fundamental Beliefs.²⁰ However, to consider the Fundamental Beliefs also binding and authoritative may lead to

a conflict between these two authorities.

This is not just a hypothetical risk, as can be illustrated from the *Church Manual*. The alternative baptismal vow contains only three questions, the second of which reads as follows: "Do you accept the *teachings of the Bible* as expressed in the *Statement of Fundamental Beliefs* of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and do you pledge by God's grace to live your life in harmony with *these teachings*?"²¹ It is not clear whether *these teachings* refer to the Bible or the Fundamental Beliefs. It is even less certain that those who answer in the affirmative have a clear understanding of the crucial difference between the two. It would therefore be judicious to reword this sentence in order to make its meaning clear to all.²²

Identity markers (traditionality). If a denomination desires to retain its unique identity, its credo must express the distinctive teachings of the group. These distinctives are part of the denomination's collective memory and form its special tradition. In the case of Seventh-day Adventists, three such experiences stand out and are even reflected in the church's name: the Millerite movement, the "remnant" experience, and the rediscovery of the Sabbath. The distinctive teachings that grew out of these experiences have been developed further and constitute crucial identity markers for an Adventist credo: the Sabbath as a divine gift for mankind, the Advent hope as an energizing force, and the Adventist Church as a worldwide family of faith. With these core beliefs, an Adventist credo may indeed have a unifying effect on the church.

Cultural relevance (contemporaneity). A creedal statement must be relevant and applicable to the society in which the believers are living. It is not enough to repeat the fundamental teachings of the Bible and to keep the distinctive insights of previous generations alive. A credo must also relate to the intellectual and practical challenges of living in the here and now. The Statement of 1980 and its later addendum reveal a growing awareness of the need to address actual life questions that have a direct bearing on the faith.²³

Open-endedness. Finally, a creed should never be written in stone but always on paper. This is to say, it should remain open for change, improvement, and correction. While the historic Christian creeds constitute fixed declarations that are not subject to changes, the Adventist credo may be revised if the need arises. After all, a confession of faith is not the ultimate truth but merely an

authentic witness to it. As such, it should be treated as descriptive and informative rather than as prescriptive and normative. How else could the Bible, *de facto*, be “the only creed”?

Quo vadis, Adventism?

Regardless of how the delegates to the 2015 General Conference Session respond to the proposed revisions, it is likely that they will follow the tendency of the present leadership to codify the more traditional Adventist language and teaching in order to protect the exclusive identity and mission of the Adventist Church. This explains the restrictive language of several of the proposed changes. If this trend continues, it will increasingly polarize the church and lead to the marginalization of more open-minded and critical church members. It is to be feared that this will cause quite a few to leave the church or go into internal exile. It will also deter others from joining in the first place. An outward and/or inward differentiation may strengthen the unity of the “remnant,” but it entails the risk of the church regressing into a more sectarian mode of thought.

The future will show which trend will prevail in the long run and how the Seventh-day Adventist Church—particularly its younger generations—will react to the challenges of the postmodern world. The mission of the church is clear: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Pet. 3:15, NIV). Much will depend, however, on how the church understands the authority and function of its Fundamental Beliefs—as an established “creed” that protects the doctrinal traditions from challenges from without or within, or as an expression of the community’s dynamic faith that remains open to new insights coming from biblical studies, theological reflection, and contemporary world experience.

To opt for “present truth” entails the challenge to avoid both rigid dogmatism (where all believe what is prescribed) as much as indifferent relativism (where all believe what they like).

Adventists should resist the temptation to codify their beliefs in a way that stifles growth while learning to express their faith in ways that appeal to people with different intellectual, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Then an Adventist “creed” will truly become a confession of faith: “*credo*—I believe.” ■

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References

1. While this verse is not found in the oldest manuscripts, it seems to reflect an ancient Christian practice.
2. See W. R. Beach, *The Creed That Changed the World* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1971). This book appeared in the wake of Vatican Council II, in which Adventists participated as observers.
3. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 1:416.
4. *A Word to the “Little Flock”* (Brunswick, ME: James White, 1847), 13. For more such quotations, see Rolf J. Pöhler, “Adventisten, Ellen White und das Sola-Scriptura-Prinzip,” *Spes Christiana* 17 (2006): 45–48.
5. On Christian Restorationism in 19th-century North America and its impact on Adventism, see Rolf J. Pöhler, *Continuity and Change in Adventist Teaching*, Friedensauer Schriftenreihe A. Theologie, Bd. 3 (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2000), 27–30.
6. “Doings of the Battle Creek Conference, Oct. 5 & 6, 1861,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 8, 1861, 148 (emphasis supplied).
7. “General Conference Proceedings,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 20, 1883, 732–733.
8. For details and references, see Pöhler, *Continuity and Change*, 191–196.
9. “If in anything it can be shown that what we hold in faith and practice is not according to the Bible, we are ready to modify it accordingly” (Uriah Smith, “In the Question Chair,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 20, 1892, 600).

**In the 1970s,
the Adventist
Church came
closer than ever
to attributing
to their Funda-
mental Beliefs
a criteriological
function.**



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10. According to the *Church Manual*, "Denial of faith in the fundamentals of the gospel and in the cardinal doctrines of the church or teaching doctrines contrary to the same" is a sufficient reason for disfellowshipping (1951 ed., 224).

11. W. J. Hackett, "Preserve the Landmarks," *Review and Herald*, May 26, 1977, 2.

12. See George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000); and Pöhler, *Continuity and Change*.

13. For more details, see Pöhler, *Continuity and Change*, 123–134.

14. The procedure started in 2010 and gave all church members an opportunity to make suggestions regarding the rewording of the 28 articles. See "Statement of Fundamental Beliefs—A Living Document," *Reflections – The BRI Newsletter*, October 2011, 2; and "Listening, Studying, and Sharing," *Adventist World*, April 2012, 6.

15. L. E. Froom, "New Approaches Imperative for a New Day," *Ministry*, March 1966, 10–13.

16. The SWOT analysis was developed in the 1960s by the Harvard Business School and is widely used as an instrument of strategic management and development.

17. It was a request from the African Union for an official statement that could be used in talking to state authorities that prompted the drafting and publishing of the 1931/1932 Statement of Fundamental Beliefs.

18. *Seventh-day Adventists Believe* (Silver Spring, MD: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), vii–ix.

19. In 1905, at a conference of the German Union, an unusual set of Fundamental Beliefs was printed in the conference brochure. It relates practically all doctrinal assertions to Christ himself by using phrases like "his glorious gospel [atonement, life in Christ]," "his law of love [Decalogue]," "his day of rest [Sabbath]," "his gifts of the holy Spirit," "his divine plan [tithing]," "his counsel as the true physician [health, abstinence]," "his attitude towards authorities [state, taxes]" and "his prophetic word." In this way, the Christ-centered nature of the Adventist faith is very conspicuous. To my knowledge, this was a singular approach.

20. "Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teachings of the Holy Scriptures" (cf. #1 and #18).

21. *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 18th ed. (2010), 47 (emphasis supplied).

22. The German *Church Manual* has clarified the meaning of the sentence in this way: ". . . and do you want to live according to *the teachings of the Bible*" (emphasis supplied).

23. For example, responsibility for the environment is addressed in #6 and #7, the question of non-discrimination is treated in #14, while marriage/family and child education are discussed in #23.

Proposed Changes to the Fundamental Beliefs

From the Proceedings of Annual Council 2014 in Preparation for the 2015 General Conference Session

ADCOM/ADCOM/PREXAD/GCDO13AC/13AC/133-13GS/BRI/ADCOM/ADCOM/PreC/
SecC/TrEC/GCDO14AC to AAS-14AC+15GCS*

124-14GS FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS - AMENDMENT

RECOMMENDED, To amend the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, to read as follows:

Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists

Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference Session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word.

1. The Holy Scriptures

The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy ~~men~~ persons of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to ~~man~~ humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the final, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history. (Ps. 119:105; Prov 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.) (2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Ps. 119:105; Prov. 30:5, 6; Isa. 8:20; John 17:17; 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 4:12.)

2. The Trinity

There is one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a unity of three coeternal Persons. God is immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, and ever present. He is infinite and beyond human comprehension, yet known through His self-revelation. He God, who is love, is forever worthy of worship, adoration, and service by the whole creation. (Gen. 1:26; Deut. 6:4; Isa. 6:8; Matt. 28:19; John 3:16 2 Cor. 1:21, 22; 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2.) (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 14:7.)

3. The Father

God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also those ~~revelations~~ of the Father. (Gen. 1:1; Exod. 34:6, 7; Deut. 4:35; Ps. 110:1, 4; John 3:16; 14:9;

Comment [TKB1]: Inclusive language

Comment [TKB2]: Inclusive language

Comment [TKB3]: This addition aims to make explicit the principle of *sola scriptura*.

Comment [TKB4]: To avoid a repetitive use of "authoritative" The word "definitive" establishes an understanding of the Bible as its own standard, without implying that we evaluate the Bible's role relative to a human assessment of rationality.

Comment [TKB5]: There is no reference to divine love in this statement about the Godhead. The character of God is at the heart of the cosmic conflict and the work of Christ.

Comment [TKB6]: This addition emphasizes the three persons and avoids reading the statement along the lines of modalism (the idea that there is one God who revealed Himself in three different ways; there are not three persons).

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*These acronyms stand for the committees that have reviewed the proposed changes.

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1 1 Cor. 15:28; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 John 4:8; Rev. 4:11.) Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 15:28; John 3:16; 1 John
2 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:17; Ex. 34:6, 7; John 14:9.)

4. The Son

6 God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were
7 created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the
8 world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly human, ~~man~~, Jesus the Christ. He was
9 conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation
10 as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles
11 He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died
12 voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to
13 heaven to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the
14 final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things. (Isa. 53:4-6; Dan. 9:25-27; Luke
15 1:35; John 1:1-3, 14; 5:22; 10:30; 14:1-3, 9; Rom. 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17-19;
16 Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 2:9-18; Heb. 8:1, 2.) (John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:15-19; John 10:30;
17 14:9; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:17-19; John 5:22; Luke 1:35; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:9-18; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4;
18 Heb. 8:1, 2; John 14:13.)

5. The Holy Spirit

22 God the eternal Spirit was active with the Father and the Son in Creation, incarnation,
23 and redemption. He is as much a person as are the Father and the Son. He inspired the writers of
24 Scripture. He filled Christ's life with power. He draws and convicts human beings; and those
25 who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God. Sent by the Father and the Son to
26 be always with His children, He extends spiritual gifts to the church, empowers it to bear witness
27 to Christ, and in harmony with the Scriptures leads it into all truth. (Gen. 1:1, 2; 2 Sam. 23:2; Ps.
28 51:11; Isa. 61:1; Luke 1:35; 4:18; John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26; 16:7-13; Acts 1:8; 5:3; 10:38; 1 Cor.
29 12:7-11; 2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Peter 1:21.) (Gen. 1:1, 2; Luke 1:35; 4:18; Acts 10:38; 2 Peter 1:21; 2
30 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:11, 12; Acts 1:8; John 14:16-18, 26; 15:26, 27; 16:7-13.)

6. Creation

34 God is the Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic and historical
35 account of His creative activity. In six days a recent six-day creation the Lord made "the heavens
36 and the earth, the sea and all that is in them" and rested on the seventh day. "the heaven and the
37 earth" and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus
38 He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His creative work performed and
39 completed during six literal days that together with the Sabbath constituted a week as we
40 experience it today. ~~completed creative work.~~ The first man and woman were made in the image
41 of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with
42 responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was "very good," declaring the glory

Comment [TKB7]: Inclusive language

Comment [TKB8]: The addition provides consistency in the use of prepositional phrases in the sentence. It also includes the ascension among the events in the life of Jesus listed in the previous sentences.

Comment [TKB9]: The addition makes explicit what is implied in the Statement (the personhood of the Son and the Spirit) and thus removes any possible ambiguity.

Comment [TKB10]: The article was added for consistency; see # 3.

Comment [TKB11]: This may be the best place to incorporate the historicity of the narrative. We can explore other possibilities, but the impression we have is that if we place it somewhere else within the Statement, we may have to elaborate on it.

Comment [TKB12]: This is the best place to introduce the idea of a recent creation.

Comment [TKB13]: The quote is not from Genesis 1:1, but from Exodus 20:11. The reason is that terminology used in Exodus seems to restrict the creative act to what took place during the six days of creation and is not necessarily dealing with the creation of the cosmos. The Bible makes clear that during the creation of the earth, other intelligent beings already existed in the cosmos (Job 38:7). We also believe that sin originated in heaven among the angels before the creation of humans. Therefore our creation statement should reflect this biblical information without developing it. By quoting Exodus instead of Genesis, we leave open the possibility that Genesis 1:1 is dealing with the creation of the cosmos and the creation week is about life on the planet.

Comment [TKB14]: This is already included in the biblical quotation from Exodus.

Comment [TKB15]: We retain the verb "completed" to indicate that the biblical creation account is not describing a still ongoing process.

Comment [TKB16]: The question of a real week is considered to be important, but it is difficult to find a proper place for it and to express it in language that is clear and that does not add too much to the text.

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of God. (Gen. 1-2; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Isa. 45:12; Acts 17:24; Col. 1:16; Heb. 11:3; Rev. 10:6; 14:7.) (Gen. 1; 2; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 11:3.)

7. The Nature of ~~Humanity~~ ~~Man~~

Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position. ~~position under God.~~ The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7, 15; 3; Ps. 8:4-8; 51:5, 10; 58:3; Jer. 17:9; Acts 17:24-28; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Eph. 2:3; 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20.) (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7; Ps. 8:4-8; Acts 17:24-28; Gen. 3; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12-17; 2 Cor. 5:19, 20; Ps. 51:10; 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20; Gen. 2:15.)

8. The Great Controversy

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

9. The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ

In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness.

Comment [TKB17]: Inclusive language

Comment [TKB18]: This short phrase is redundant. It could also be misunderstood in its present context as suggesting that it was under God that Adam and Eve fell into sin.

Comment [TKB19]: There are a couple of reasons for placing this sentence here. First, this is the only place in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs in which the flood is mentioned; second, the phrase "worldwide flood" is the equivalent of the originally suggested reading ("and that the flood was global in nature"); and third, Statement #8 takes us back to creation and the fall making it possible to make a reference to Genesis 1-11 and not only to chapters dealing with the flood.

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124-14GS FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS -
AMENDMENT - 4

1 The death of Christ is substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming. The bodily
2 resurrection of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept
3 the atonement assures their final victory over sin and death. It declares the Lordship of Jesus
4 Christ, before whom every knee in heaven and on earth will bow. (Gen. 3:15; Ps. 22:1; Isa. 53;
5 John 3:16; 14:30; Rom. 1:4; 3:25; 4:25; 8:3, 4; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4, 20-22; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 19-21;
6 Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 2:15; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; 1 John 2:2; 4:10.) (John 3:16; Isa. 53; 1 Peter 2:21, 22;
7 1 Cor. 15:3, 4, 20-22; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 19-21; Rom. 1:4; 3:25; 4:25; 8:3, 4; 1 John 2:2; 4:10;
8 Col. 2:15; Phil. 2:6-11.)

10. The Experience of Salvation

11 In infinite love and mercy God made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, so that in
12 Him we might be made the righteousness of God. Led by the Holy Spirit we sense our need,
13 acknowledge our sinfulness, repent of our transgressions, and exercise faith in Jesus as Saviour
14 and Lord, Lord and Christ, as Substitute and Example. This faith, which receives salvation, faith
15 which receives salvation comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God's
16 grace. Through Christ we are justified, adopted as God's sons and daughters, and delivered from
17 the lordship of sin. Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our
18 minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life.
19 Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation
20 now and in the judgment. (Gen. 3:15; Isa. 45:22; 53; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 33:11; 36:25-27; Hab.
21 2:4; Mark 9:23, 24; John 3:3-8, 16; 16:8; Rom. 3:21-26; 8:1-4, 14-17; 5:6-10; 10:17; 12:2;
22 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Gal. 1:4; 3:13, 14, 26; 4:4-7; Eph. 2:4-10; Col. 1:13, 14; Titus 3:3-7;
23 Heb. 8:7-12; 1 Peter 1:23; 2:21, 22; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rev. 13:8.) (2 Cor. 5:17-21; John 3:16;
24 Gal. 1:4; 4:4-7; Titus 3:3-7; John 16:8; Gal. 3:13, 14; 1 Peter 2:21, 22; Rom. 10:17; Luke 17:5;
25 Mark 9:23, 24; Eph. 2:5-10; Rom. 3:21-26; Col. 1:13, 14; Rom. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26; John 3:3-8;
26 1 Peter 1:23; Rom. 12:2; Heb. 8:7-12; Eze. 36:25-27; 2 Peter 1:3, 4; Rom. 8:1-4; 5:6-10.)

11. Growing in Christ

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

Comment [TKB20]: This makes explicit what is already implicit in the statement.

Comment [TKB21]: The reason for using the title "Christ" is not clear. The connection between the two Christological titles and the final clause in the sentence ("as Substitute and Example") also needs clarification. The suggested changes resolve both items.

Comment [TKB22]: Proper English punctuation.

Comment [TKB23]: This addition summarizes a genuine Seventh-day Adventist concern for service to suffering human beings that is not emphasized in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs and will make it unnecessary to add a new statement of faith on Christian Social Responsibility.

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AMENDMENT - 5

1 to His salvation, His constant presence with us through the Spirit transforms every moment and
2 every task into a spiritual experience. (1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 1:1, 2; 23:4; 77:11, 12;
3 Matt. 20:25-28; 25:31-46; Luke 10:17-20; John 20:21; Rom. 8:38, 39; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18;
4 Gal. 5:22-25; Eph. 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; Phil. 3:7-14; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15;
5 1 Thess. 5:16-18, 23; Heb. 10:25; James 1:27; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 1 John 4:4.) (Ps. 1:1, 2; 23:4;
6 77:11, 12; Col. 1:13, 14; 2:6, 14, 15; Luke 10:17-20; Eph. 5:19, 20; 6:12-18; 1 Thess. 5:23;
7 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Phil. 3:7-14; 1 Thess. 5:16-18; Matt. 20:25-28; John 20:21;
8 Gal. 5:22-25; Rom. 8:38, 39; 1 John 4:4; Heb. 10:25.)

12. The Church

12 The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.
13 In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world;
14 and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration
15 of the Lord's Supper, for service to humanity, ~~all mankind~~, and for the worldwide proclamation
16 of the gospel. The church derives its authority from Christ, who is the incarnate Word revealed in
17 the Scriptures, ~~Word, and from the Scriptures, which are the written Word~~. The church is God's
18 family; adopted by Him as children, its members live on the basis of the new covenant. The
19 church is the body of Christ, a community of faith of which Christ Himself is the Head. The
20 church is the bride for whom Christ died that He might sanctify and cleanse her. At His return in
21 triumph, He will present her to Himself a glorious church, the faithful of all the ages, the
22 purchase of His blood, not having spot or wrinkle, but holy and without blemish. (Gen. 12:1-3;
23 Exod. 19:3-7; Matt. 16:13-20; 18:18; 28:19, 20; Acts 2:38-42; 7:38; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:22, 23;
24 2:19-22; 3:8-11; 5:23-27; Col. 1:17, 18; 1 Peter 2:9.) (~~Gen. 12:3; Acts 7:38; Eph. 4:11-15; 3:8-~~
25 ~~11; Matt. 28:19, 20; 16:13-20; 18:18; Eph. 2:19-22; 1:22, 23; 5:23-27; Col. 1:17, 18.)~~)

13. The Remnant and Its Mission

28 The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a
29 time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God
30 and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims
31 salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is
32 symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in
33 heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have
34 a personal part in this worldwide witness. (Dan. 7:9-14; Isa. 1:9; 11:11; Jer. 23:3; Mic. 2:12;
35 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Peter 1:16-19; 4:17; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Jude 3, 14; Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4.)
36 (~~Rev. 12:17; 14:6-12; 18:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:10; Jude 3, 14; 1 Peter 1:16-19; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Rev.~~
37 ~~21:1-14.)~~)

Comment [TKB24]: Inclusive language

Comment [TKB25]: The sentence implies that there are two sources of authority for the Church, namely Christ and the Scripture. But what we know about Christ is what the Scripture says or has revealed to us. The revision seeks to clarify this point.

Comment [TKB26]: This clause is now redundant.

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AMENDMENT - 6

14. Unity in the Body of Christ

The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children. (Ps. 133:1; Matt. 28:19, 20; John 17:20-23; Acts 17:26, 27; Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Gal. 3:27-29; Eph. 2:13-16; 4:3-6, 11-16; Col. 3:10-15.) (~~Rom. 12:4, 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-14; Matt. 28:19, 20; Ps. 133:1; 2 Cor. 5:16, 17; Acts 17:26, 27; Gal. 3:27, 29; Col. 3:10-15; Eph. 4:14-16; 4:1-6; John 17:20-23.~~)

15. Baptism

By baptism we confess our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and testify of our death to sin and of our purpose to walk in newness of life. Thus we acknowledge Christ as Lord and Saviour, become His people, and are received as members by His church. Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, and our reception of the Holy Spirit. It is by immersion in water and is contingent on an affirmation of faith in Jesus and evidence of repentance of sin. It follows instruction in the Holy Scriptures and acceptance of their teachings. (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 2:38; 16:30-33; 22:16; Rom. 6:1-6; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12, 13.) (~~Rom. 6:1-6; Col. 2:12, 13; Acts 16:30-33; 22:16; 2:38; Matt. 28:19, 20.~~)

16. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a participation in the emblems of the body and blood of Jesus as an expression of faith in Him, our Lord and Saviour. In this experience of communion Christ is present to meet and strengthen His people. As we partake, we joyfully proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again. Preparation for the Supper includes self-examination, repentance, and confession. The Master ordained the service of foot-washing to signify renewed cleansing, to express a willingness to serve one another in Christlike humility, and to unite our hearts in love. The communion service is open to all believing Christians. (Matt. 26:17-30; John 6:48-63; 13:1-17; 1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:23-30; Rev. 3:20.) (~~1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:23-30; Matt. 26:17-30; Rev. 3:20; John 6:48-63; 13:1-17.~~)

17. Spiritual Gifts and Ministries

God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts ~~which~~ that each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts

Comment [TKB27]: Editorial change based on English usage.

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AMENDMENT - 7

1 provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions.
2 According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy,
3 proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service
4 and charity for the help and encouragement of people. Some members are called of God and
5 endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, ~~apostolic~~,
6 and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the
7 church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God. When
8 members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied grace, the church is
9 protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God,
10 and is built up in faith and love. (Acts 6:1-7; Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-
11 16; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.) (~~Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:9-11, 27, 28; Eph. 4:8, 11-16;~~
12 ~~Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.)~~)

14 18. The Gift of Prophecy

16 One ~~The Scriptures testify that one~~ of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is
17 an identifying mark of the remnant church and ~~we believe it~~ was manifested in the ministry of
18 Ellen G. White. ~~As the Lord's messenger, her~~ Her writings speak with prophetic authority and
19 provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church. ~~are a continuing and~~
20 ~~authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction, and~~
21 ~~correction.~~ They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and
22 experience must be tested. (Num. 12:6; 2 Chron. 20:20; Amos 3:7; Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21;
23 Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17; 19:10; 22:8, 9.) (Joel 2:28, 29; Acts 2:14-21; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 12:17;
24 19:10.)

26 19. The Law of God

28 The great principles of God's law are embodied in the Ten Commandments and
29 exemplified in the life of Christ. They express God's love, will, and purposes concerning human
30 conduct and relationships and are binding upon all people in every age. These precepts are the
31 basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the
32 agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Saviour. Salvation
33 is all of grace and not of works, ~~but its fruitage~~ and its fruit is obedience to the Commandments.
34 This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is an
35 evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow ~~human beings, men.~~ The
36 obedience of faith demonstrates the power of Christ to transform lives, and therefore strengthens
37 Christian witness. (Exod. 20:1-17; Deut. 28:1-14; Ps. 19:7-14; 40:7, 8; Matt. 5:17-20; 22:36-40;
38 John 14:15; 15:7-10; Rom. 8:3, 4; Eph. 2:8-10; Heb. 8:8-10; 1 John 2:3; 5:3; Rev. 12:17; 14:12.)
39 (Ex. 20:1-17; Ps. 40:7, 8; Matt. 22:36-40; Deut. 28:1-14; Matt. 5:17-20; Heb. 8:8-10; John 15:7-
40 10; Eph. 2:8-10; 1 John 5:3; Rom. 8:3, 4; Ps. 19:7-14.)

Comment [TKB28]: If this term is retained, it would need to be clearly defined or it could be misunderstood.

Comment [TKB29]: This addition makes clear that the Church has recognized the manifestation of the biblical gift of prophecy in the ministry of Ellen G White.

Comment [TKB30]: This addition makes clear that the church has recognized the manifestation of the biblical gift of prophecy in the ministry of Ellen G White.

Comment [TKB31]: The suggested changes seek to avoid giving the impression that Ellen G White and the Bible are equivalent sources of truth. It has also been indicated that the term "source" is difficult to translate into some languages without conveying that idea that her writings are like the Bible.

Comment [TKB32]: The preposition "but" could be understood as antithetical (as expressing an idea that is fundamentally the opposite of the previous one). The conjunction "and" indicates complementarity (obedience is the evidence/fruit of salvation).

Comment [TKB33]: Upgrading language

Comment [TKB34]: Inclusive language

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124-14GS FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS -
AMENDMENT - 8

20. The Sabbath

The ~~beneficent~~ gracious Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of this holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts. (Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 20:8-11; 31:13-17; Lev. 23:32; Deut. 5:12-15; Isa. 56:5, 6; 58:13, 14; Ezek. 20:12, 20; Matt. 12:1-12; Mark 1:32; Luke 4:16; Heb. 4:1-11.) (~~Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Luke 4:16; Isa. 56:5, 6; 58:13, 14; Matt. 12:1-12; Ex. 31:13-17; Eze. 20:12, 20; Deut. 5:12-15; Heb. 4:1-11; Lev. 23:32; Mark 1:32.~~)

Comment [TKB35]: Upgrading language

21. Stewardship

We are God's stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities and possessions, and the blessings of the earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use. We acknowledge God's ownership by faithful service to Him and our fellow human beings, men, and by returning ~~tithes~~ tithe and giving offerings for the proclamation of His gospel and the support and growth of His church. Stewardship is a privilege given to us by God for nurture in love and the victory over selfishness and covetousness. ~~The steward rejoices~~ Stewards rejoice in the blessings that come to others as a result of ~~his~~ their faithfulness. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15; 1 Chron. 29:14; Haggai 1:3-11; Mal. 3:8-12; Matt. 23:23; Rom. 15:26, 27; 1 Cor. 9:9-14; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; 9:7.) (~~Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15; 1 Chron. 29:14; Haggai 1:3-11; Mal. 3:8-12; 1 Cor. 9:9-14; Matt. 23:23; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; Rom. 15:26, 27.~~)

Comment [TKB36]: Inclusive language

Comment [TKB37]: The plural "tithes" could be read as including the second tithe.

Comment [TKB38]: Inclusive language and consistence of using the plural in the Fundamental Beliefs.

22. Christian Behavior

We are called to be a godly people who think, feel, and act in harmony with ~~the biblical principles in all aspects of personal and social life.~~ principles of heaven. For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things ~~which that~~ will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives. This means that our amusement and entertainment should meet the highest standards of Christian taste and beauty. While recognizing cultural differences, our dress is to be simple, modest, and neat, befitting those whose true beauty does not consist of outward adornment but in the imperishable ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit. It also means that because our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to care for them intelligently. Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures. Since alcoholic beverages, tobacco, and the irresponsible use of drugs and narcotics are harmful to our bodies,

Comment [TKB39]: Questions have been raised about the meaning of the phrase "principles of heaven" the change underlines the biblical foundation of the Statement and removes unnecessary ambiguities.

Comment [TKB40]: This addition seeks to clarify that Christian behavior does not only have to do with health, dressing, and adornment but also with our interaction with others in the market place, in business, etc., thus promoting honesty, integrity, fairness in all we do.

Comment [TKB41]: Editorial change based on English usage.

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AMENDMENT - 9

1 we are to abstain from them as well. Instead, we are to engage in whatever brings our thoughts
2 and bodies into the discipline of Christ, who desires our wholeness, joy, and goodness.
3 (Gen. 7:2; Lev. 11:1-47; Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; 2 Cor. 10:5; 6:14-7:1; Eph. 5:1-
4 21; Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 2:9, 10; 1 Peter 3:1-4; 1 John 2:6; 3 John 2.) (Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 John 2:6; Eph.
5 5:1-21; Phil. 4:8; 2 Cor. 10:5; 6:14-7:1; 1 Peter 3:1-4; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31; Lev. 11:1-47; 3
6 John 2.))

23. Marriage and the Family

10 Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union
11 between a man and a woman in loving companionship. For the Christian a marriage commitment
12 is to God as well as to the spouse, and should be entered into only between a man and woman
13 partners who share a common faith. Mutual love, honor, respect, and responsibility are the fabric
14 of this relationship, which is to reflect the love, sanctity, closeness, and permanence of the
15 relationship between Christ and His church. Regarding divorce, Jesus taught that the person who
16 divorces a spouse, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery. Although some
17 family relationships may fall short of the ideal, marriage partners a man and a woman who fully
18 commit themselves to each other in Christ through marriage may achieve loving unity through
19 the guidance of the Spirit and the nurture of the church. God blesses the family and intends that
20 its members shall assist each other toward complete maturity. Increasing family closeness is one
21 of the earmarks of the final gospel message. Parents are to bring up their children to love and
22 obey the Lord. By their example and their words they are to teach them that Christ is a loving,
23 tender, and caring counselor loving disciplinarian, ever tender and caring, who wants them to
24 become members of His body, the family of God which embraces both single and married
25 persons. God. Increasing family closeness is one of the earmarks of the final gospel message.
26 (Gen. 2:18-25; Exod. 20:12; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6; Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:3-9; Mark
27 10:11, 12; John 2:1-11; 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; 6:1-4.) (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt.
28 19:3-9; John 2:1-11; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:21-33; Matt. 5:31, 32; Mark 10:11, 12; Luke 16:18;
29 1 Cor. 7:10, 11; Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:5-9; Prov. 22:6; Mal. 4:5, 6.))

24. Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary

33 There is a sanctuary in heaven, the true tabernacle which that the Lord set up and not
34 humans. man. In it Christ ministers on our behalf, making available to believers the benefits of
35 His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross. He was inaugurated as our great High
36 Priest and and, at the time of His ascension, He began His intercessory ministry at the time of
37 His ministry, which was symbolized by the work of the high priest in the holy place of the
38 earthly sanctuary. ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered
39 the second and last phase of His atoning ministry, which was symbolized by the work of the high
40 priest in the most holy place of the earthly sanctuary. ministry. It is a work of investigative
41 judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the
42 ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. In that typical service the sanctuary was

Comment [TKB42]: The term "partners" and the phrase "marriage partners" could be misused by those promoting homosexuality. The revision removes any ambiguity.

Comment [TKB43]: The term "partners" and the phrase "marriage partners" could be misused by those promoting homosexuality. The revision removes any ambiguity.

Comment [TKB44]: The phrase "through marriage" reintroduced the term "marriage" deleted from the previous line.

Comment [TKB45]: Used to be the last sentence.

Comment [TKB46]: The English term "disciplinarian" has undergone some change in meaning, giving to the sentence a negative tone. The additions aim at correcting this.

Comment [TKB47]: This addition acknowledges that single church members are part of the family of God and as valuable to the church as married couples.

Comment [TKB48]: The addition made in the previous sentence closes well the paragraph making it necessary to move the last sentence earlier in the paragraph, where it seems to fit better.

Comment [TKB49]: Editorial change based on English usage.

Comment [TKB50]: Inclusive language

Comment [TKB51]: The statement does not mention the typological significance of the work of the high priest in the holy and most holy places of the earthly sanctuary. These additions make the connections clear.

Comment [TKB52]: The statement does not mention the typological significance of the work of the high priest in the holy and most holy places of the earthly sanctuary. These additions make the connections clear.

Contd

Revised 10-07-14—2tkb

124-14GS FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS -
AMENDMENT - 10

1 cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the heavenly things are purified with the perfect
2 sacrifice of the blood of Jesus. The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who
3 among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the
4 first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the
5 commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation
6 into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who
7 believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the
8 kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation
9 before the Second Advent. (Lev. 16; Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-27;
10 Heb. 1:3; 2:16, 17; 4:14-16; 8:1-5; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; Rev. 8:3-5; 11:19; 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12;
11 22:11, 12.) (Heb. 8:1-5; 4:14-16; 9:11-28; 10:19-22; 1:3; 2:16, 17; Dan. 7:9-27; 8:13, 14; 9:24-
12 27; Num. 14:34; Eze. 4:6; Lev. 16; Rev. 14:6, 7; 20:12; 14:12; 22:12.)
13

14 25. The Second Coming of Christ
15

16 The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of the church, the grand climax of the
17 gospel. The Saviour's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide. When He returns,
18 the righteous dead will be resurrected, and together with the righteous living will be glorified and
19 taken to heaven, but the unrighteous will die. The almost complete fulfillment of most lines of
20 prophecy, together with the present condition of the world, indicates that Christ is coming soon.
21 Christ's coming is imminent. The time of that event has not been revealed, and we are therefore
22 exhorted to be ready at all times. (Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor.
23 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-6; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28;
24 Rev. 1:7; 14:14-20; 19:11-21.) (Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; Matt. 24:14;
25 Rev. 1:7; Matt. 24:43, 44; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2:8; Rev. 14:14-
26 20; 19:11-21; Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 1 Thess. 5:1-6.)
27

28 26. Death and Resurrection
29

30 The wages of sin is death. But God, who alone is immortal, will grant eternal life to His
31 redeemed. Until that day death is an unconscious state for all people. When Christ, who is our
32 life, appears, the resurrected righteous and the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to
33 meet their Lord. The second resurrection, the resurrection of the unrighteous, will take place a
34 thousand years later. (Job 19:25-27; Ps. 146:3, 4; Eccl. 9:5, 6; Dan. 12:2, 13; Isa. 25:8;
35 John 5:28, 29; 11:11-14; Rom. 6:23; 16; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1
36 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 20:1-10.) (Rom. 6:23; 1 Tim. 6:15, 16; Eccl. 9:5, 6; Ps. 146:3, 4; John 11:11-14;
37 Col. 3:4; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 4:13-17; John 5:28, 29; Rev. 20:1-10.)
38
39

Comment [TKB53]: It is better to use the biblical term "soon."

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124-14GS FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS -
AMENDMENT - 11

1 27. The Millennium and the End of Sin
2

3 The millennium is the thousand-year reign of Christ with His saints in heaven between
4 the first and second resurrections. During this time the wicked dead will be judged; the earth will
5 be utterly desolate, without living human inhabitants, but occupied by Satan and his angels. At
6 its close Christ with His saints and the Holy City will descend from heaven to earth. The
7 unrighteous dead will then be resurrected, and with Satan and his angels will surround the city;
8 but fire from God will consume them and cleanse the earth. The universe will thus be freed of sin
9 and sinners forever. (Jer. 4:23-26; Ezek. 28:18, 19; Mal. 4:1; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Rev. 20; 21:1-5.)
10 (~~Rev. 20; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Jer. 4:23-26; Rev. 21:1-5; Mal. 4:1; Eze. 28:18, 19.~~)
11

12 28. The New Earth
13

14 On the new earth, in which righteousness dwells, God will provide an eternal home for
15 the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life, love, joy, and learning in His
16 presence. For here God Himself will dwell with His people, and suffering and death will have
17 passed away. The great controversy will be ended, and sin will be no more. All things, animate
18 and inanimate, will declare that God is love; and He shall reign forever. Amen. (Isa. 35;
19 65:17-25; Matt. 5:5; 2 Peter 3:13; Rev. 11:15; 21:1-7; 22:1-5.) (~~2 Peter 3:13; Isa. 35; 65:17-25;~~
20 ~~Matt. 5:5; Rev. 21:1-7; 22:1-5; 11:15.~~)

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Revised 10-07-14—2tkb

Changing the Creation Fundamental: *The Possible Effects of Proposed Changes* | BY TREVOR LLOYD

This is a reflection on some possible repercussions for the Seventh-day Adventist Church if things continue in the present direction regarding the rewording of the Creation Fundamental Belief. Five areas of concern are raised for the future well-being of the church.

The limitation of our field of mission

There is concern that future generations will look back on the year 2015 and regard it as one in which the church chose to limit its mission to a shrinking part of the global population. The world to which we have

been called to carry the gospel is becoming progressively better informed. In choosing to include non-scriptural terminology in the Creation Fundamental, we may find ourselves making both God's Word and the church appear less and less relevant to the continually expanding body of even moderately well-educated persons in both the developed and the developing world.

It is one thing to defend biblically based doctrines in the face of determined opposition, and quite another to cut ourselves off from untold numbers around the globe who are both well informed and honest in heart.

Here is a question awaiting our prayerful considera-



"THE MENDOCINO COAST" BY JEANNE LAMAR / WATERCOLOR

tion: Is the acceptance of a recent creation, for example, essential for salvation? To this we might add: Must we leave to other church bodies the evangelization of those whose education and training have led them to believe that the earth and life on it are not recent? Should we conclude that, so long as they persist in such a belief, these persons are forever beyond hope? Such questions have serious implications for our evangelistic role and should be honestly faced.

The timing of the present urge for change

There is a further concern that coming generations will ask what it was that led to the new direction in 2015 and why we appeared to be intent on dismissing from our institutions some of our most talented and committed scientists. Do we really want to lose them? Many of these have responded to their church's call to study for and obtain advanced qualifications so that our colleges and universities might gain registration and recognition. They have followed the church's time-honored bidding that in education they are to "go as far and as fast as possible." Shall we desert them now and usher them out? Or shall we, with them, prayerfully work toward discovering how best we can be faithful to Scripture and, at the same time, give suitable recognition to what they see as well-established findings in their various disciplines?

In seeking to meet the needs of their church, many of these scientists have struggled with the challenge of reconciling these findings with Scripture. Still they have stayed on, willing to work in faith and hope within their church family toward a resolution, meanwhile taking care to be discreet in commenting on the church's stated positions. Let us keep in mind that they are best equipped to guide our Adventist students in retaining confidence in God's Word despite the emerging contrary scientific evidence that they are bound to face as they advance in their chosen academic fields. In the critical years ahead, do we want these church-employed scientists

excluded from the deliberations that their church is conducting to find resolution between faith and science in the face of many admitted unanswered challenges from current scientific research?

There has not always been an attitude of impending exclusion. Back in 2004, at the last of three Faith and Science conferences, there were Adventist scientists present and there were those of a more conservative turn of mind. At the time, it was made clear that the church was not about to be swayed in its understanding of Scripture by positions taken by contemporary science; however, the then General Conference president included the scientists and relevant others in the mission of the church with the words: "The church needs you. Please do not walk away." As we would expect, during that third conference, our time-honored position was upheld that the way is left open for reconsideration, in view of further light, of the wording of any of our doctrinal statements.

In the past, the church in its wisdom has resisted calls from its more conservative wing to use non-scriptural terminology in referring to the Creation record in its statements of belief. As well, it has maintained its Protestant position of requiring that these statements be specifically supported by Scripture alone. And this attitude has been totally consistent with the fact, alluded to above, that there are a number of serious and well-recognized unanswered questions we have to face.

The effect on Adventist scientists

Does the church have a responsibility toward those honest-hearted Adventist scientists and others employed outside the church's institutions who are aware of the challenges to be faced in, for example, maintaining a recent Creation? Many of these were already members under the earlier (1980) Creation statement—or have joined this fellowship over the past thirty years. Countless thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, of them around the globe

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have given wholehearted support to God's Word and have gladly helped to maintain the life and mission of our local congregations in faithful leadership in the various departments. They have served as models for the academically minded young people growing up in their local churches and have urged them to stay by the gospel and by Adventism.

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In all of this, these Adventist scientists working in non-Adventist universities and laboratories have been willing to accommodate their scientific views to the pre-2015 Creation statement. Shall we tell them they must now subscribe to the new statement or resign their church membership? Though they hold positively and totally to the creatorship of God and to the inviolability of the Sabbath, if they cannot now accept the specific wording of the new version, shall we tell them they should leave?

These well-educated Adventist professionals know the challenges to faith which are presently circulating in their special fields. Yet they faithfully maintain their membership and look forward to the day when the scientific difficulties may be ameliorated or their church finds its way to adjusting its interpretations of Scripture.

They may shortly have to face a cruel awakening. If things continue as anticipated, these committed church members are due to wake one morning during the coming General Conference Session to find themselves heretics to the faith they have long loved and supported—with the fundamental belief under which they were baptized now changed into one which, to the best of their knowledge, they could never subscribe to and that would rule them out.

As well, this newly stated fundamental belief appears to be in a form many of these professionals could never recommend to their work colleagues. Under these conditions, we may discover we have lost our foremost means of witness to the bulk of the professional world, for this valiant band has prime access to the vast majority of educated mankind to

whom we are commissioned to take the gospel and from whom we appear bent upon cutting ourselves off.

Holding academically minded young people

Many of the academically minded young people, growing up from early to late teens in our Adventist homes and churches are attending non-Adventist high schools and universities and are being introduced to the latest scientific research by non-Adventist teachers.

Already, we are losing vast numbers of this age group while still in the formative stages of faith development. Should the proposed changes to the Creation statement go through, it may well be expected that their position will be made still more precarious. The more non-scriptural specifics that are brought in, the more likely those specifics are to be adversely compared with commonly held scientific positions. Under such conditions, these young people may be seen as likely to dismiss the church or God's Word—or both.

Here is an appeal to the supporters of a more specifically conservative Creation statement: You may find the proposed changes comforting and reassuring (and this is certainly important); however, these young people may find these changes to be a fatal stumbling block. If your faith can be maintained with the well-accepted, non-divisive 1980 wording, we may find that it will hold many of these young folk within our nurturing church circle. They are growing up in a new day with challenges to faith that some of us never knew, and they deserve our loving consideration and support.

The threat to progress

The church has long hoped for harmony amongst those with advanced qualifications in both Old Testament studies and the sciences. Giving the more conservative wing total say and, meanwhile, silencing or eliminating many of those who have come, in good conscience, to see the situation differently, may give a semblance of unity; however, it may be at the cost of

creating tragic division and fragmentation across the global church. On the other hand, having both branches listen to each other may open up the most promising lead yet toward a representative Creation statement that will win the respect of those who hear it. Meanwhile, it can be anticipated that, at the coming General Conference Session, leaving the Creation statement as it is (pre-2015) could provide the calmest and most productive atmosphere for a genuine meeting of minds led by God's Spirit.

In the context of the foregoing discussion, it is appealing to look for study groups made up of Adventist personnel representing a wide range of gifts and expertise within the church. Those included might be drawn from biblical scholars, linguists with understanding of the contemporary writings of other ancient cultures, and a good number of scientists from a range of disciplines, including archaeology, both from within our church institutions and beyond.

However, right now we have the prospect in view of a vote shortly to be taken that will affect the global church and its worldwide mission. In this context, here is a further appeal to the advocates of the new Creation statement: Before pushing ahead with and supporting the proposed changes, would you sit down and listen to some of the challenges our dedicated scientists have to face every day of their professional lives? They, too, love this church and are committed to its mission. They need our understanding and heartfelt support if they are to be effective in fulfilling their role both within our institutions and beyond. And let us never forget, we need their support if we are to gain the respect of a better and better informed global audience. The coming General Conference Session is our opportunity, with God's leading, to work toward that goal.

Some conclusions

There is still considerable work to be done before the Creation statement is ready to be changed. We are in need of a statement that truly reflects our commitment to the eternal

creatorship of God as was achieved by our spiritual forebears in their day—and, at the same time, that makes plain to a well-informed global community that we are aware of and prepared to face the needs and challenges confronting the generation of our own day.

For the days ahead, the net for the selection of personnel to prepare future recommendations for the wording of the Creation statement should be cast widely and include theologians, scientists, and linguists, with significant lay representation.

The remaining time leading up to and including the General Conference Session offer us an ideal time to pray and work in several ways—for the avoidance of fragmentation and division in the church; for the bringing together of hearts and minds committed to honoring the creatorship of God and to upholding the inviolability of the Sabbath and salvation doctrines; and for listening to, and working with, those who best understand the challenges we face in honoring the creatorship of God as we reach out to the present generation. ■

Trevor Lloyd is a consultant in literacy and the teaching of English as a foreign language, taking on assignments in Europe, South Africa, South Korea, and with indigenous groups in the Western Desert of Australia and in regional New South Wales. He completed doctoral studies in teacher education with the University of Newcastle (New South



Wales) and post-graduate studies in linguistics at Macquarie University. Amongst his sideline interests are Christian apologetics and Ancient Near Eastern cosmogony.

Footnotes

1. See the specific wording changes to be voted on for the Fundamental Belief on Creation on p. 36.
2. John McLarty, "Report of the International Faith and Science Conference," *Adventist Today*, August/September, 2004.

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Noah’s Flood, or God’s? *Why the Biblical Narrative Is a Major Challenge* | BY BRIAN BULL AND FRITZ GUY

Few parts of the Bible are more widely and seriously misunderstood than the narrative of the Great Flood (Gen. 5:32–9:17). To begin with, it is almost always regarded as a story about Noah¹; indeed, the event is regularly called “Noah’s Flood.” But this designation reflects a literary mistake and a theological blunder. From the beginning to the end of the entire narrative the primary figure is *God*, who does most of the acting and all of the talking; Noah mostly (and properly) does what he is told to do, but he does not utter a single word.

So the Biblical narrative of the Flood demands and deserves intellectual effort on the part of 21st-century readers—and not just because of the various scientific and practical questions that inevitably arise:

- Did it actually happen?
- Was it really worldwide?
- How could all the animals and birds fit into the ark?
- How could kangaroos get there from Australia?
- How were the problems of food and sanitation solved?

Far more important than these questions is the overarching theological challenge: If we believe that the character of God—revealed definitively in Jesus the Messiah—is unconditional, universal, and unending love, how are we to understand a picture of God committing the greatest genocide in human history?

One could try to make the problem go away by simply denying that God’s love is truly universal. This was the view of Augustine of Hippo (354–430), who regarded humanity as a *massa damnata* (literally, a “damned mass”) that deserved its ultimate fate in hell, but out of which God chose to save some. Since in this scenario no one actually deserved to be saved, no one was treated unfairly and no one could justly complain.

Fortunately there is a better way to address the theological question about the Flood—a way that involves a

twofold strategy. First, it recognizes a profound difference between the world picture of the ancient Hebrews (the people who composed, heard, recorded, and transmitted the Biblical narrative) and ours—a difference that is generally overlooked because of the changing meaning (and consequent misunderstanding) of the English word *earth* and its corresponding terms in other modern languages. The Hebrew *’erets*, usually translated “land” later in the Old Testament, is unfortunately still translated “earth” (in 82 of 85 occurrences) in most modern English versions of Genesis 1–11. This is the case even though the most common meaning of the word *earth* today is a planetary sphere circling the sun—a meaning it could not have had when it was first used in Genesis 1–11. For any clarification of the extent of a flood of “Biblical proportions,” the English word *land*, meaning surrounding territory, is much truer to the original Hebrew meaning.

Second, and even more important, the better way to address the theological challenge of the Biblical narrative of the Flood recognizes the decisive difference between the conceptual awareness with which the original audience heard the narrative then and the awareness with which we hear the narrative now. An explication of this second issue is the principal concern of this essay, which leads to the conclusion that the Flood narrative is not primarily a story about divine punishment but a story about divine rescue.

“Explanaccepts” are the key

A distinguishing characteristic of humanness is our fundamental need to explain things—first to ourselves (as “understanding”) and then to others (as “explanation”). We want explanations for every thing that exists and every event that happens. These understandings and explanations have two objectives: we want to know the *processes* by which things come to be what they are and by which events occur; and



There has
never been a
time or culture
in which
a significant
section of
reality was left
without any
explanation.

we also want to know the *purposes* of things and events. In other words, we want to know both causes and meanings. So we have the intellectual projects of science and theology.

Not so obvious but just as important is the fact that the tools we use in the process of explaining are *concepts*—more precisely, *explanatory concepts*—with which we understand and explain why there is something rather than nothing, how that “something” functions, and what it all means. In this essay, for reasons of linguistic convenience and verbal economy, we refer to explanatory concepts as *explanacepts*. These are the tools with which we think, and because they function “behind the scenes” as presuppositions, it is difficult (and very

unusual) to step back and think about them.

But in order to understand the Biblical description of God’s activity in relation to the Flood, we must think about how we think—and about how the original author(s) and audience thought, for in that audience were the ones who first comprehended, recorded, and preserved the narrative we read now. As we explore the relation of the Flood narrative to the ancient Hebrew understanding of reality, we need to deal with explanacepts—both theirs and ours. This, unfortunately, is not only an unusual activity; it is also a very difficult one.

An explanacept, a concept that enables us to account for some part or aspect of reality, functions in conjunction with our other explana-

cepts; and this set of explanaccepts functions as a whole to explain all the reality we know. Because explanaccepts emerge and develop over time, the way modern readers hear the Flood narrative is inevitably very different from the way the ancient Hebrews heard it.

To clarify this difference, we can try to think (temporarily) with only the explanaccepts available to the Hebrew slaves as they fled from Egypt. Judging from the account of their journey in Exodus and Numbers, they had in their mental toolkit two explanaccepts with which they understood everything they experienced. For them, every event, situation, or thing was the result of action by either *humans*² or *God*. If one was not responsible, the other was; it was as simple as that. There was no concept of *nature* as something other than humans or God. While it is certainly true that in the Flood narrative God was described as using what we regard as elements of nature—rain (Gen. 7:4, 12; 8:2), “the fountains of the great deep . . . and the windows of the heavens” (7:11; 8:2), and “wind” (8:1), God was understood as directly determining what, when, and how everything happened.

As the migrating Hebrew slaves journeyed through the wilderness, one evening “quails came up and covered the camp” (Exod. 16:13).³ This occurred after the migrants had complained about their lack of food in the desert, and Moses and Aaron had told them that the LORD had heard their complaints and would soon send them both meat and bread (16:2–12). In the Biblical narrative there is no reference to *nature*; instead, *God* acted, and the Hebrews had food. Then, several weeks later,

a wind went out from the LORD, and it brought quails from the sea and let them fall beside the camp. . . . The people worked all that day and night and all the next day gathering the quails. . . . But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it was consumed, the anger of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague (Num. 11:31–33).

In this account the LORD again got credit for the quails, but this time there was a problem. A God who answered prayer for food by sending in quail meat was very much in tune with the idea of a providential God that was developing in the Hebrew consciousness. It fit in well with their growing understanding of “what God does.” However, the idea of a God who sent quails a second time but arbitrarily rendered the meat lethally

toxic did not fit at all. The Hebrews had only one way out of the dilemma. They processed the event according to the only other explanaccept they had—*humans*—and interpreted it as the result of some of their number having an unbridled craving for quail meat. Although craving food was something they had experienced a few weeks earlier and often experienced later, with just two explanaccepts they could only conclude that the visitation of death was the result of something that *humans* had done that caused *God* in turn to make poisonous the meat that previously had been safe to eat.

By contrast, if we were in a modern group traveling through a desert and some members of the group suddenly died after eating quail meat—something they had often eaten before—we would immediately wonder why it had suddenly become lethal. We would not think of attributing the toxicity to God; instead we would check Wikipedia or the relevant scientific literature. In the scientific literature we would discover that in the autumn, flocks of European migratory quails cross the Mediterranean en route to their winter home in sub-Saharan Africa, and that a portion of a flock sometimes stops for several days to feed in a group of Greek islands, of which the best known is Lesbos. If the quails happen to stop in mid-September, they may gorge themselves on the ripe seeds of a plant known as red hemp-nettle,⁴ which contains an alkaloid that is harmless to avian muscle but highly toxic to mammalian muscle. In humans, the alkaloid causes the muscle cells to dissolve and discharge their contents (myoglobin) into the bloodstream. If myoglobin is present in the blood in large enough amounts, it plugs the kidney tubules; and if kidney dialysis is not available, the result is almost always fatal.

Quails still migrate in the fall of the year and are still sometimes toxic to people who kill and eat them.⁵ Now, however, most of the people along the route know to avoid eating quail meat at the critical time in autumn; and for those unlucky ones who do kill and eat toxic quails, life-saving dialysis is available at a nearby hospital.

Our very different modern assessment of a very similar ancient event diverges drastically from the original Hebrew assessment because our mental toolkit contains an additional explanaccept, *nature*, accounting for events that are not caused directly by either *God* or *humans*. This third explanaccept, furthermore, has two subcategories—*natural law* (explaining events that are predictable), and



God did not
always rely on
the passage
of time for the
development
of theological
understanding.

chance or *randomness* (explaining events that aren't). Similarly, for modern theistic believers the explanaccept *God* also has two subcategories, *preservation* (explaining the continuation and regularity of nature), and *miracle* (explaining events that are unusual, unexplainable by natural law, and spiritually significant). Or, in simpler terms, *preservation* is God's regular activity; *miracle* is God's extraordinary activity.⁶

The Biblical narrative of the Flood comes from a time at least as early as the stories of the nutritious and toxic quails. If the mental toolkit of the Hebrews then contained only the explanaccepts *humans* and *God*, it is surely appropriate—even necessary—for us to understand the Flood narrative in terms of the

same two explanaccepts.

We need to recognize, however, that at the time the Flood narrative was composed and originally heard, perhaps around 1,300 BCE, the explanaccept *God* included actions of angels, who in Biblical narratives are always portrayed as agents of *God*. So we might call this explanaccept *suprabuman*. Similarly, the action of *humans* included the actions of non-human animals. But for convenience and simplicity we continue to refer to the two ancient Hebrew explanaccepts as *God* and *humans*, giving these terms slightly broader content than is common practice.

Unless we try to think (temporarily) without our explanaccept *nature*, we will not hear the

Thomas Prince
distinguished
between the
“first cause”
of the earth-
quakes—God’s
judgment—
and the “second
cause”—
natural law.

Flood narrative as it was originally intended to be heard as the Word—but not the “words”—of God.⁷ This original articulation and understanding of the ancient Hebrew narratives is where their authenticity and authority reside, and this is where we must begin in order to understand properly what God is communicating to *us* by first communicating to *them*.

A story of what God does

We have considered the challenge that our modern explanaccept *nature* and our sub-category *miracle* create for us in reading ancient Hebrew narratives. We regularly think with these concepts, and we can hardly think at all without them. The original author and audience, of course, could not think *with* these concepts, because they didn’t exist.

At the very beginning of the narrative, however, the situation seems to be reversed, as we encounter language that does not make sense to us:

When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. . . . The sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown (Gen. 6:1, 2, 4b).

To us this reference to misbehaving “sons of God” does not explain anything at all, because we cannot place them in our mental landscape. Our explanaccept *nature* does not allow for celestial beings to mate with human women and produce offspring, and our sub-category *miracle* is excluded by the requirement that such an event be appropriate to the character of *God*. As a result, we have no satisfactory way of understanding this particular Biblical text, so we usually ignore it.⁸

The point at issue here is the identity of the “sons of God,” for which three principal alternatives have been proposed—all with Biblical and traditional support. The earliest interpretation we have (although still about a thou-

sand years later than the original account) holds that the “sons of God” are heavenly beings who “defied God by moving out of their appointed realm and marrying (molesting?) human ‘daughters.’” In this interpretation *’elohim* is taken as a proper noun (‘God’) or as a genitive of attribute (indicating quality), where it refers to a class of beings, giving the sense of ‘divine beings.’⁹ This view is the oldest of the three, appearing by the second century BCE, and it is supported by the expression “the sons of God” referring to heavenly beings in Job 1:6 and 2:1 (NKJV), as well as the fact that it is the interpretation chronologically closest to the original narrative.

Another, much later interpretation, advocated by Augustine (354–430), Luther (1483–1546), and Calvin (1509–64), holds that the expression “sons of God” refers to godly humans—namely, the descendants of Seth in contrast to the descendants of Cain. This view is supported by Old Testament references to the Israelites as the “children” [literally “sons”] of God” (as in Deut. 14:1; 32:5, 6; Psalm 73:15). Proponents of this view sometimes hold that the phrase “daughters of men” refers to Cainite women and the sin of intermarriage, or to women in general and the sin of promiscuity. In either case, the assertion “the sons of God saw that they were fair” and “took wives for themselves” is strikingly similar to the earlier description of Eve’s response on encountering the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:6).

A third view, proposed by some Jewish interpreters, holds that “the sons of God” were human judges or rulers. Indeed, the word *’elohim* sometimes did have a broader meaning than “God”; it could refer to humans in authority, particularly those who administered justice (Ps. 82). Relevant to our present concern with the meaning of “the sons of God” is the address, “You are gods, children of the Most High, all of you” (82:6). Like the other interpretations, this one has both Biblical and traditional support.

In considering this puzzling text, we must



not forget that the account was originally heard and understood by minds equipped with only two explanaccepts, *God* and *humans*, with which to understand everything that existed or happened. Clearly the catastrophe of the Flood was not caused by any known *humans*, so it had to have been caused by *God*. But that resulted in a picture of a deity without foresight, who regretted creating the earth's inhabitants in the first place (Gen. 6:6, 7). Such a deity might have been acceptable to the Hebrews' pagan neighbors, and to later Greeks and Romans, but it did not fit into the Hebrews' own explanaccept *God*, which entailed ethical, providential monotheism. To address their dilemma, the Hebrews

had to utilize their only other explanaccept, *humans*, in one way or another. Thus they achieved with their available mental explanatory tools the best picture of God possible at that time and place.

So our interpretative task is complicated. First we have to determine (as best we can) the original ancient Hebrew understanding of the event according to *their* explanaccepts and their theology. Then we have to determine (again, as best we can) the actuality of the narrated event according to our explanaccepts and the available archaeological and geological evidence. Finally, we have to determine (as best we can) the *meaning*—the theological significance—of the event. (The repeated “as

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best we can" with every step in the process acknowledges that our scenario is never more than probable and warrants intellectual humility.)

A non-natural catastrophe occurring in nature?

Near the beginning of the description of the Flood itself, God said, "Every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground" (Gen. 7:4b); and with the Flood at its height the narrative declared that God "blotted out every living that was on the face of the ground, human beings and animals and creeping things and birds of the air" (7:23). Unless we carefully note this affirmation and its reiteration, we may understand this event as a catastrophe in the realm of *nature*, and probably say that this extraordinary *natural* event had a *supernatural* cause, failing to notice that this is not (and could not have been) what the narrative said to its original hearers. Bookended by God's pronouncement that He would "blot out," and the confirmation that God had indeed "blotted out every living thing," the scenario between these statements was not understood as a catastrophe of *nature*. It was, from start to finish, an act of God.

The Flood could not have been understood as a *natural* catastrophe with a supernatural cause because the explanacept *nature* had not yet come into human consciousness. So, even though the LORD took full responsibility for sending the Flood, our modern concept of *supernatural* causation is of no use whatever in understanding the Biblical text as it was originally composed and understood. Indeed, the idea of supernatural causation is misleading, for it draws our minds down a pathway of interpretation that did not exist until many hundreds of years later. The Great Flood was understood as the direct action of God, for that was the only explanacept then available that could effectively deal with an event of such magnitude.

Genesis 7:11b might seem to refer to *natural* factors in the narrative: "All the fountains of the great deep [*tehom*] burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened." But, given the "bookends" of the passage, both "the fountains of the great deep" and "the windows of heaven," while obviously not part of the reality of God, were most probably understood as tools used by God rather than independent causal agents.

The catastrophe that God brought about was, however, neither the end nor the main point of the narrative. Indeed, when the water was at its height and the disaster

was at its worst, "God remembered Noah and all the wild animals and all the domestic animals that were with him in the ark" (Gen. 8:1). This is the decisive moment, the high point in the narrative: "But God remembered Noah." Here, however, the Hebrew conjunction *w'*, is better translated "and" than "but," in accord with the fact that the narrative is most of all a story of divine rescue, not punishment. The end of the story reaffirms this fact with God's covenant promise that "the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh" (9:15).

A developing understanding of what God does

In the narrative of God's flood we have a glimpse into the process by which the content of the Old Testament came to be. At its inception the process involved an understanding of God creating a world in which humans could thrive, but which became so disrupted by human sin that God blotted out everything alive. As the process continued, a diverse nation of farmers, visionaries, scholars and leaders developed, under divine guidance, an increasingly adequate understanding of who God is, what God does, and what God wants for us—a clearer understanding of what the explanacept God actually meant.

Developing by fits and starts, the understanding of God grew clearer and richer as time passed, preparing the Israelites for the Christ event—in which God took the form of humanity to give the world its best picture of the values, motivations, and goals of the God who notices the fall of a single sparrow (Matt. 10:29; Luke 12:6). The Judeo-Christian Scriptures are in large part a record of this long and tortuous process.

An example of one stage in the process was documented in the Old Testament book of Proverbs in the time of the Hebrew monarchy: "The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is the LORD's alone" (16:33). God was understood to control the outcome of the casting of lots—"rolling dice" in our terminology. In the 21st century we can understand the words, but their meaning is literally incredible. In order to make any sense of this assertion, we have to remember that the concept of *chance* or *randomness* is relatively modern. For the ancient Hebrews, on the other hand, since the way the lots landed was obviously beyond the control of *humans*, the only reasonable explanation was that God did it: "the decision is the LORD's alone." This understanding of what God does persisted for centuries; when the disciples of Jesus wanted divine guidance in choosing a replacement



When the
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and “cast
lots.”

for Judas Iscariot, they prayed and “cast lots . . . and the lot fell on Matthias” (Acts 1:26).

Biblical incidents like these suggest two insights into the process by which the understanding of God developed and matured.

First, in every human mind the explanaccept set is bounded; that is, everything that exists or happens must be accounted for by the available explanaccepts. There are no loose ends. When the set consisted of only two explanaccepts, *humans* and *God*, an event that could not be explained by the first defaulted to the second. Despite the fact that our explanaccepts now include *nature*, it is still the case that everything that exists or happens is understood or explained by one of them—as an action of

humans, *God*, or *nature*—or by some combination of them. Since the explanaccept *nature* includes the categories of both *natural law* and *chance* or *randomness*, it can, in principle, explain absolutely everything—without the need to invoke *God*. This is the ideology of “scientism.”

Of course, it is often the case that we do not know the precise means leading to a particular event; but we can designate the general category into which it fits. Today we confidently understand earthquakes by the explanaccept *nature*, attributing most of them to the movement of the earth’s tectonic plates against each other as they float on the viscous magma between the plates and the earth’s core. We are reasonably confident that the magma is

kept liquid because of the heat released by radioactivity. All this is clearly the activity of *nature*.

In 1727 and 1755, moderate earthquakes rocked Boston and nearby regions of New England, resulting in many sermons in local churches. Most preachers attributed the tremors to God's wrath and left the matter there. A sermon by Thomas Prince (1687–1758), however, distinguished between the "first cause" of the earthquakes—God's judgment—and the "second cause"—natural law. The natural cause Prince favored was vapors expanding in caverns deep underground and thus disturbing the earth's surface.¹⁰ Here, as in the Flood accounts, was a moment in explanaccept development that was captured in a written document. In this case earthquakes were caught (in 1755) in the process of being transferred from the explanaccept *God* to the explanaccept *nature*.

Second, as an explanaccept changes, it affects the other explanaccepts in the bounded set. Separating earthquakes from the explanaccept *God* could not occur until the explanaccept *nature* had arisen and developed enough to take over "earthquake responsibility." For this reason, simply assigning a difference in the understanding of *God* to a "different culture" and/or "different time" seriously understates the magnitude of the differences between the ancient Hebrews and us. New Englanders of Prince's time could accept a tentative proposal that earthquakes might not be simply be an expression of God's wrath precisely because other intellectual aspects of the late 17th and early 18th centuries had made it possible to understand the idea of "first" (ultimate) and "second" (natural) causes. A few decades earlier, this attribution of meaning to these terms was not possible.

As the explanaccept *God* developed through the Biblical and post-Biblical centuries, it off-loaded some of its functions to the developing explanaccept *nature*. Processes like this take time; and a gracious God allowed the ancient Hebrews and early Christians plenty of it. It is clear from the record, however, that God did not always rely on the passage of time for the development of theological understanding. God often accelerated the process by inspiring individuals (we call them "prophets") and having them pass on their insights. This too is part of the Biblical record.

A final question involving the Flood accounts can now be answered: Why are the Flood accounts a part of the Bible if what they document is a very early and incom-

plete stage of theological understanding—a less-than-optimal theology? The answer is that the explanaccept *God* could develop only as rapidly as the development of the explanaccept *nature* allowed. *Human, theological, and natural* explanations have all changed and developed over time, but there has never been a time or culture in which a significant section of reality was left without any explanation. This is true today: everything that exists or happens is explained by the causal activity of *humans, God, or nature*. At the time when the Flood narrative originated, and later even to the time of Jesus, everything that existed or happened (including the casting of lots) was understood to be caused by either *humans* or *God*.

The refinement of the explanaccept *God* could only occur when the rest of the explanaccept set was understood well enough to allow for development in the understanding of who God is, what God does, and what God wants for us. An indication of the need for this development is evident in the Biblical narrative of the Great Flood, which is one step on the way to a better understanding of God. The message of the narrative is that God's ultimate aim is not to punish for sin but to rescue from destruction. ■

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1. A recent example is the epic movie *Noah* (Paramount, 2014).
2. The word *man* in its generic anthropological sense (compare the Greek *anthropos*) would be stylistically preferable were it not for the sexist baggage it has acquired.
3. Biblical quotations in this article are from the New Revised Stan-



This is
the decisive
moment, the
high point in
the narrative:
“But God
remembered
Noah.”

dard Version (NRSV).

4. “Red hemp-nettle” is the common name; the scientific name is *Galeopsis ladanum*.

5. A. G. Billis, S. Kathanakis, H. Giamarellou, G. K. Daikos, “Acute Renal Failure after a Meal of Quail,” *The Lancet*, Sept. 25, 1971, 702.

6. Contrary to the insistence of David Hume (1711–1776) and many others since, a *miracle* is not a “violation of natural law,” but instead, analogous to the exercise of human will, the introduction of additional causal factors into the natural order.

7. See Ellen G. White, Manuscript 24, 1886, in *Selected Messages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 1:20, 21: “The Bible is not given to us in grand superhuman language. . . . The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect. . . . The Bible was given

for practical purposes. . . . The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God’s mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. . . . God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God’s penmen, not His pen.”

8. Some readers of Scripture seem to think that ignoring difficult issues of interpretation is more respectful of the sacred text than investing time and effort in struggling to understand the text. This reasoning is, of course, fallacious.

9. Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, The New American Commentary, Vol. 1A (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 325.

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From Adventist Anthropology to Adventist Ecclesiology

The Importance of Community | BY RICHARD RICE

When Seventh-day Adventists speak of the church—of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, to be specific—we typically describe it in global and historical terms. We view it as a worldwide movement with a distinctive message and a specific role to play within the course of human history. Note the titles of two recent publications from the Biblical Research Institute on the topic of Adventist ecclesiology: *Toward a Theology of the Remnant*¹ and *Message, Mission, and Unity of the Church*.² When it comes to the more particular aspects of Christian existence, we typically turn our attention to the experience of the individual Christian. We focus on the elements of a personal devotional life and various standards of behavior, or aspects of the Christian lifestyle. What gets lost, relatively speaking, in our preoccupation with the global and the individual is the importance of the local Christian community. In his 44-page essay on the church in the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, for example, Raoul Dederen devotes approximately one-half page to the topic of “fellowship” within a local congregation.³

This relative lack of attention to the corporate Christian life stands in striking contrast to what we find in the New Testament. Paul's letters, in particular, devote as much attention to the church local as the church global, and arguably pay far more attention to the life of Christians in close community than the lives of Christians as private individuals. As we shall also see, another reason for us to refocus our attention on the dynamics of congregational life is the wholistic view of humanity that has always played a central role in Adventist doctrines.

Paul's letters to first-century Christian groups in various cities around the Mediterranean Sea indicate that when it came to the church, the apostle wanted to cultivate among his fellow Christians not only a sense of solidarity with Christians everywhere but also an intimate

connection with one another within the specific locale where they lived. And even though he wanted “the intimate, close-knit life of the local groups [to be] seen . . . simultaneously [as] part of a much larger, indeed ultimately worldwide, movement or entity,”⁴ it was, as Wayne Meeks observes, “concern about the internal life of the Christian groups in each city that prompted most of the correspondence.”⁵ In other words, the principal object of Paul's concern was the way Christians interacted with each other within their small local communities.

Though no model from their contemporary society perfectly fits these early Christian congregations, the closest social correlate was “the intimacy of the local household assembly.”⁶ Within these communities, as Meeks describes them, “a high level of commitment is demanded, the degree of direct interpersonal engagement is strong, the authority structure is fluid and charismatic . . . , and internal boundaries are weak.”⁷ Moreover, each congregation brought into “intimate fellowship persons of a wide mix of social levels.”⁸ And each congregation “enjoyed an unusual degree of intimacy, high levels of interaction among members, and a very strong sense of internal cohesion and of distinction both from outsiders and from ‘the world.’”⁹ In his earlier letters, Robert Banks observes, the apostle only uses the word *church*, or *ekklesia*, to refer to specific groups of people, probably never more than thirty or so, who met together on a regular basis.¹⁰

Because the Christian life as Paul envisioned it is essentially life together, life characterized by close relations with other Christians, the apostle was distressed when he received reports that there was disharmony among them, or that some members were slighting those who had less wealth or worldly status. He was dismayed, for example, to learn that there was jealousy and quarreling among the Christians in Corinth (1 Cor. 3:3), along with divisions and factions (11:18, 19), and that

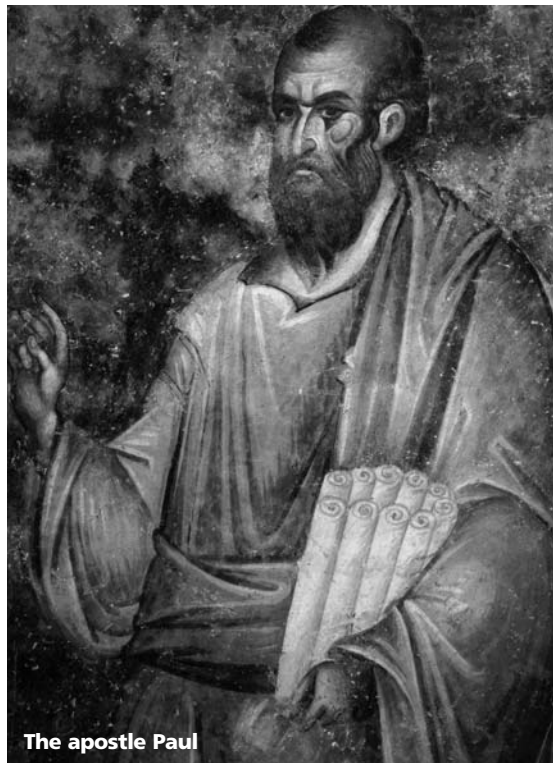
some disregarded the needs of others when they had their communal meals. Indeed, his beautiful description of love appears within an extended appeal to the Christians in that city to care for, rather than elevate themselves above, one another (1 Cor. 12–14).

We find even more striking evidence of the importance Paul attached to the internal life of the community in the fact that his letters say little about the relationships of Christians to those outside the community and next to nothing about sharing their faith with non-Christians. According to Robert Banks, “Nothing in Paul’s writings suggests that the gathering of believers has a *direct* function vis-à-vis the world.” The “body” metaphor “basically refers to the interaction of the members with one another, not with outsiders.”¹¹ And a careful analysis of Paul’s letters leads Terence Donaldson to reject the popular notion that Paul saw the churches he helped to establish as centers for further proselytizing. To the contrary, there is a striking absence from Paul’s letters of any attempt to mobilize his congregations for ongoing evangelistic activity.¹² “Nowhere,” he exclaims, “do we find [in Paul’s letters] a single injunction to evangelize!”¹³ So it was not the relation between the church and the world, not the way Christians treated people outside the community, that occupied Paul, but relations within the community, the way Christians treated each other.

Indeed, in the judgment of various New Testament scholars, Paul’s profound concern for harmony within these early Christian communities not only appears in the parenetic portions of his letters; it was also the motivating factor behind his theology. For Gunther Bornkamm, for example, the gospel of justification by faith alone was a “specifically Pauline creation,” and it was this doctrine that “gave the unity of the church composed of Jews and Gentiles its first real theological basis.”¹⁴ And according to Rudolf Bultmann, Paul used the metaphor “the body of Christ” to express “the unity of the Church and the foundation of this unity in an origin transcen-

dent to the will and deed of individuals.”^{15,16}

In Paul’s writings, then, the life Christ makes available takes its primary form in the fellowship of local Christian congregations. And when he gave practical spiritual advice, he was thinking primarily of the way people interacted with the fellow believers whom they knew well and frequently associated with. The central object of concern that comes to expression in Paul’s letters was the life Christians shared



The apostle Paul

within small, concrete communities of faith.

Besides the apostolic emphasis on the importance of congregational life, there is another reason for Adventists to give more attention to the cultivation of close, nurturing relationships. And that is the wholistic, or non-dualistic, anthropology that has always been a central Adventist doctrine.

Though Adventists have not, to my knowledge, taken wholistic anthropology in this direction, there are scholars who have, and their conclusions have important implications for our understanding of the church. Two of them are Warren S. Brown and Brad D. Strawn, authors of *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, and the Church*.¹⁷

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—Terence Donaldson

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This study further develops the position presented in *Whatever Happened to the Soul?* which Brown coedited with Nancey Murphy and H. Newton Maloney. This earlier work makes a case for “non-reductive physicalism,” as the contributors call it, the view that human beings are not incidentally but essentially physical in nature. They conclude from neurological phenomena such as localization—the intimate connection between various human experiences and specific regions of the brain—that while a human being cannot be reduced to a mere sequence of neurochemical events, human existence necessarily requires a physical form of some sort, that is, a body. And since body and person are intimately connected, one’s physical state or condition exerts an important influence on all aspects of one’s experience—intellectual, emotional, social, and so on.¹⁸

In this more recent work, Brown and Strawn argue that human beings are not only embodied in physical forms but embedded in a physical world surrounded by other embodied human beings, and that the formative factors in our personal development are almost exclusively interpersonal. To explain how relationships shape us, the authors appeal to the theory of complex dynamical systems, according to which complex characteristics like minds and personalities can emerge from ongoing interactions involving millions of parts. A collection forms a “system” when the individual parts function as a unity. And a system is “dynamical” in the technical sense when it has the capacity to reorganize in response to changes in the environment. Physically embodied and socially embedded in the world, and participating in various dynamical systems, the human self or person is subject to continual growth and transformation.

Closely connected

If we bring these insights to bear on religious experience, they lead to significant conclusions. One is the realization that wholistic anthropology and spiritual individualism are incompatible. According to Brown and Strawn, the familiar notion that authentic spirituality is intensely pri-

vate is the consequence of the anthropological dualism that dominated Christian thought through much of its history. For those who conceive the soul as an immaterial reality distinct from the body, it is natural to regard one’s spiritual life as basically individual and inward and to view the relationships Christians have with one another as incidental to their spiritual identity. Connecting with other church members has no vital role to play in one’s spiritual life, and participating with others in worship and service is reduced to a matter of personal preference. Such an outlook makes genuine Christian community impossible. A mere collection of people who “swarm” at the same time and place could never become more than a loose association of the independently spiritual. It could never become a body in any significant sense, let alone “the Body of Christ.”¹⁹

Viewed from the perspective of wholistic anthropology, however, personal spirituality is not only closely connected to community, but personal growth is actually a by-product of congregational growth. Because the processes of human formation in general are primarily social, spiritual growth as well is social and interpersonal. So, if human beings are both physically embodied and socially embedded, spiritual growth can only occur within community—indeed, within close-knit communities comprising highly interactive constituents. An important element in personal growth, say Brown and Strawn, including spiritual growth, is the development of “secure attachments,” and this can only occur within groups of people who spend significant time together and learn to trust one another. It cannot happen when groups are too large or when members meet together only sporadically. Other elements include imitation, shared attention, and empathy, as well as language and story.²⁰

Furthermore, in a dynamical system, that is, one in which significant growth can take place, there is reciprocal interaction between the individuals and the group. In a family, for instance—a good example of such a system—

group, and from the group back to the individual. As a result of these interactions, the roles family members play will be flexible, and the group as a whole proves to be more than the sum of its individual parts. "Families and churches develop capacities that go well beyond the singular capacities of any of the individuals in the family or church."²¹ Dynamical systems are formed and reformed by "catastrophes," that is, changes in situations in which the self or group is no longer able to deal adequately with the circumstances at hand.²² So, the church is not a vague collective, the sum total of the members' individual experiences. Rather, the experience of the individual members is a reflection of, indeed a product of, the corporate experience of the community.

Brown and Strawn consider another factor that has important implications for our views of the church. From the study of primate communities, scientists have concluded that the size of an ideal group is related to the brain size of the species. The greater a species' brain size, they have discovered, the larger the typical group its members form. Anthropologist Robert Dunbar compared the typical size of a stable and flourishing group in 36 primate species with the average size of the cerebral cortex of the brain of each species and found a significant linear relationship—the larger the brain, the larger the typical group. If we project the maximum size of a stable and flourishing group of humans given the size of the human brain, we reach what is known as the "Dunbar number." According to Dunbar, "The cognitive limit to the number of individuals with whom any one person can maintain stable relationships is a direct function of relative neocortex size," and that number is 150 persons.²³

Although the ideal number of persons who can form an effectively functioning community is around 150, this is too large a group for truly effective interaction. In contrast, the size of an "optimally meshed network," one in which there are at most two relational steps between each member, is 50 persons. And the

size of a "totally meshed network," one in which members have direct connections with each other, is about twelve people.²⁴

Brown and Strawn's observations are both informative and provocative. For one thing, they challenge a great deal of conventional thinking about the nature of Christian spirituality. If human beings are indeed physically embodied and socially embedded, there is something profoundly mistaken about the religious individualism that is so pervasive today.²⁵ If interpersonal relationships are not incidental to human identity, but constitutive of it, then we can be fully spiritual, as we can be fully human, only in community. And if the church is to be a body in any significant sense, if it is to function as a "dynamical system," to use their terminology, it will take shape in relatively small communities—communities, that is, whose limited size enables their members to interact with one another in sustained and profoundly personal ways.

These observations also challenge a good deal of our conventional thinking about the Adventist Church, including such things as congregational size, the measure of denominational success, and the nature of the church's mission. If an essential purpose of the church is to cultivate significant interpersonal relationships, and this can only happen in relatively small groups, then the formation of such groups should be a high priority. In the case of large churches, those with hundreds or thousands of members, church can happen, or the body of Christ can be realized, one could argue—dynamical systems can exist—only within small groups, or "churches within the church."

A new vision of mission

The conclusions presented in *The Physical Nature of Christian Life* also suggest an adjustment in our vision of the church's mission. Seventh-day Adventists have a strong sense of global identity. We are eager to learn about our fellow believers in various parts of the world, especially in places where church membership is growing remarkably or where church members are facing serious

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challenges. We are regularly reminded of the important role that church officials play in coordinating the church's various activities, clarifying its doctrines, and establishing uniform policies for the entire membership. The world church is waiting, with anticipation and concern, for the General Conference to make official pronouncements on a number of pressing questions. We value our denominational institutions, which only a strong, well-integrated organization could create—in particular, our extensive educational system, our well-known medical facilities. We are pleased to hear that our numbers are increasing and our various institutions are thriving.²⁶

What does not get much attention by comparison is just what Brown and Strawn maintain is vital to the church conceived as the body of Christ, namely, the deliberate cultivation of strong relationships within local congregations. If these scholars are on the right track, something more is needed than the concept that the church is primarily a worldwide movement identified by a message that is conceived as a set of doctrinal convictions. A collection of individuals does not constitute the church if it is defined only by a unified organization, commonly held beliefs, and similar religious practices. Church truly exists, their observations indicate, and the church's mission finds fulfillment, only where there is genuine community, that is, only when relatively small groups of Christians join together to form close, caring relationships of the sort that the apostle Paul earnestly encouraged in the letters he addressed to various groups of believers in the world of late antiquity. ■

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2. Angel Manuel Rodriguez, ed., *Message, Mission, and Unity of the Church*, Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology-2 (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2013).
3. Raoul Dederen, ed., *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 561, 562. There are, of course, other aspects of the article that apply to the local church, such as baptism and the Lord's Supper.
4. Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 75. In a later work, Meeks identifies "the formation of the Christian groups as house-based communities" (*The Origins of Christian Morality: The First Two Centuries* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993], 45), noting that the household was one of the "constituent structures" of the city (*ibid.*, 38). The urban household, Meeks observes, which was viewed as "the microcosm of the city" in Greco-Roman thought and culture, became the " 'basic cell' " of the early Christian movement (*ibid.*, 49).
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10. According to Robert Banks, "In these early letters of Paul [1, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans], the term *ekklesia* consistently refers to actual gatherings of Christians as such, or to Christians in a local area conceived or defined as a regularly assembling community. . . . The word does not describe all the Christians who live in a particular locality if they do not gather. Nor does it refer to the sum total of Christians in a region or scattered throughout the world at any a particular time." *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Cultural Setting*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 35.
11. Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community*, 64.

Rice ➔ continued on page 80 . . .

Adventism and the Past:
**WOMEN AND
LEADERSHIP**



The Marketplace | by Jeanne Lamar | watercolor

“Quench not the Spirit” *Early Adventist Hermeneutics and Women’s Spiritual Leadership* | BY GINGER HANKS HARWOOD AND BEVERLY BEEM

The Seventh-day Adventist Church identifies itself with the tradition of bold Christians who have always endeavored to follow Jesus’ teachings. In many ways, the Sabbatarian Adventism that emerged as a remnant of the Millerite movement views itself as an extension of the Protestant Reformation, with its emphasis on Scripture and the faith that God provides ongoing spiritual guidance.

During Adventism’s earliest years, believers were at odds with their larger religious and social communities on a number of theological issues. They repudiated popular understandings of the millennium, the state of the dead, the Sabbath, and the place of women in the mission of the church. Even as Millerite women had defied convention by preaching, despite opposition, certain Sabbatarian Advent women braved public censure and evangelized publicly. In the March 7, 1871, edition of the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, a short editorial comment appears with an advertisement for a monthly journal, *Woman and Her Work*. The editors noted, “We are not among those who would hedge up before woman any avenue of labor or usefulness. . . . Let woman work in public, and in private, in whatever position her varied capacities may render her efficient.”¹

How, then, did Adventist pioneers, as people of the book, respond to women as spiritual leaders? Given their commitment to Scripture, what did they say about the commonly held conviction that “the” biblical stance was that women should be silent in the church? Prominent Adventist leader David Hewitt noted in an 1857 *Review* article titled “Let your Women keep Silence in the Churches” that “many sincere and honest souls have been very much perplexed respecting this declaration of the apostle Paul.”² How did they understand the Scriptures that were then, and are today, applied to limit the roles women may perform within the church community? As Adventist women were licensed to preach in the 19th century, and

Ellen White served in a public role of ministry and leadership, Adventists had to address the issue of women in ministry. The *Review*, as the community’s official voice, provides a significant guide as to how early Adventist leaders read and understood biblical guidance on this topic.

Historic Adventist hermeneutics

The Adventists who eventually became the Seventh-day Adventist Church retained the characteristic Millerite regard for systematic study of Scripture even as their study widened beyond the topic of Christ’s return. They began the ambitious task of reevaluating what the Bible said on various topics, searching for truths that furthered their spiritual quest to “draw near to God.”³ In preparation for life in the kingdom of God, they sought to purify their minds: to strip away the dogma, creeds, and social conventions that distorted their perception of God’s Word. For them, the question was not only a matter of what the Bible said but also how to understand what it meant in their time and place. The meaning of gender for religious life provides an excellent case study on how early Adventists grappled with biblical texts and applied them to their own context.

As William Miller expounded his beliefs concerning the Second Advent, he modeled a process for biblical study and exploration. His method contained several points eventually adopted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church: (1) lay aside preconceptions concerning meaning of a text or biblical teaching on a particular subject; (2) compare scripture to scripture; (3) intentionally pursue a topic in a regular and methodical manner; (4) do word study; and (5) harmonize all collateral texts. The role of reason was central. His method rejected the absolutist literalism that comes from looking only at the surface meaning of any particular text. In Miller’s model, the intellect was employed to judge evidence, test logic, and reach conclusions.

“Despise not prophesying”

In their approach to Bible study, the Advent community embodied Paul’s advice to earlier Christians awaiting Christ’s return: “Quench not the Spirit; despise not prophesying. Prove all things. Hold fast that which is good.”⁴ The process of discernment required both humility and faith that God would increase understanding. The hermeneutic required the recognition of individual spiritual freedom and responsibility, respect and tolerance for others’ views, and willingness to privilege study over tradition or creed.

Respect for the Holy Spirit’s leading mandated a spirit of continued openness and a willingness to abandon previously held positions when they came into conflict with new evidence. The emphasis on honest and open inquiry yielded the concept of “progressive revelation”: the idea that God would impress believers as they studied together to better understand Scripture. The pioneers believed that both the corporate church community and individual believers must stay engaged in a quest for truth. Congregants were seen as active participants rather than passive recipients of traditions and predetermined “truth” supplied by religious leaders.

The search for truth included wrestling with questions of application, as application is the point of interpretation. James White observed that discerning God’s revealed will was more than simply following a list of biblical dos and don’ts. When R. F. Cottrell wrote a letter to the *Review* decrying the danger of becoming Babylon, claiming that the church should not be taking a name and owning property because there were no instructions to do so in the New Testament, James White responded, “In all this where is the proof that it is wrong to take those steps necessary to legally hold church property? Where are the strong reasons? Where are the plain texts from the Book?” White extended his reply to the question, answering unapologetically: there is no such text for that or many of the other practices that Adventists have used to spread the gospel, including publishing the

Review or using a printing press. He rested his defense on Jesus’ command to “‘let your light so shine before men,’ ” but he [Jesus] “does not give all the particulars how this shall be done. The church is left to move forward in the great work, praying for divine guidance, acting upon the most efficient plans for its accomplishment.” White then proposed a general rule for determining the right course of action: “All means which, according to sound judgment, will advance the cause of truth, and are not forbidden by plain scripture declarations, should be employed.”⁵ This was the principle the pioneers applied to the question of discipleship and women’s responsibility to exercise their gifts of leadership: it was not forbidden by Scripture, and it advanced the gospel work.

Early Adventist leaders utilized the entire Scripture to illuminate their stance on women as disciples, not just those passages that addressed women. They saw the gospel commission as inclusive and binding: every disciple was needed to carry the last warning to a perishing world. The belief that they were living in the last days brought urgency to the task, and they were convicted that Joel’s prophecy, “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy” (Joel 2:28, NKJV), applied directly to them.

The promise of the Father to bestow the gifts of the Holy Spirit on both sons and daughters became an essential component of the early Adventist vision of the church and proof that they were God’s last-day people. Though their numbers and financial resources were few, they trusted that they could accomplish their task by utilizing the gifts of the Spirit, particularly the gift of prophecy. This necessary gift was poured out on the disciples without regard to status or gender, simply according to the will of the Spirit. It is significant to note that they repeatedly defined the gift of prophecy as speaking to the church for “edification and exhortation and comfort” (1 Cor. 14:3, NKJV).

Grave responsibility rested on the church to use and to honor the spiritual gifts that God

Certain

Sabbatarian

Advent women

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provided: to neglect these gifts risked their withdrawal. James White located the resistance to women's gifts in personal prejudice ("they do not like to hear the Marys preach a risen or coming Saviour"⁶), while other noteworthies, such as B. F. Robbins, pinpointed the problem as the "defective" teaching of the churches to which they previously belonged.⁷ Adventists concluded that even without specific scriptural instruction to recognize women's spiritual leadership, an analysis of the message of the gospel and the prophecies concerning the last days provided sufficient warrant for the endorsement of women's spiritual leadership when it was accompanied by clear signs of God's Spirit. To fail to do so would be to despise the good gifts God was sending and to quench the presence of the Holy Spirit among them.

Dealing with the Pauline texts

As time tarried, Adventists needed to explain their practice of inclusive ministry to converts who had not been part of the Millerite movement. As believers joined, questions concerning the propriety of women spiritual leaders increased, as most were recruited from religious groups that taught that Paul commanded women's silence.⁸ The *Review* received an ever-increasing number of inquiries: what about Paul? They were a people of the book, so how did their inclusive ministry harmonize with particular Bible statements?

Women's leadership in the religious context defied social mores and was generally assumed to be contrary to Scripture. Adventist leaders used Miller's methods of biblical interpretation to address the topic, exegeting the Pauline verses most frequently cited as obstacles to women's full participation. David Hewitt's article in 1857 summarized both the questions of readers and the Adventist position. Hewitt invited readers to move their understanding from that of relying on isolated texts to considering the larger context of Scripture. He stated:

Many sincere and honest souls have been very much perplexed respecting this declaration of the apostle Paul. Many have inferred from this that women professing godliness should keep silent and not speak in prayer and social meetings for religious worship. But the candid reader of the sacred pages will find other declarations of the same apostle that must be brought to harmonize with this in order to get a clear understanding of the Apostle's meaning in 1 Cor. xiv.⁹

Hewitt's article was one of 15 major *Review and Herald* articles in the last half of the 19th century designed to help individuals resolve the tension between specific Pauline admonitions and the church practice of licensing women as preachers and evangelists.¹⁰

The need to harmonize Adventist ministry practices for newcomers led church leaders to publish some of their clearest and most explicit examples of how to approach biblical interpretation. Each of these major articles, as well as numerous lesser articles, utilized established Adventist hermeneutics to defend women's spiritual leadership. The various articles enjoined readers to set aside their preconceived ideas and study the issue carefully, remembering that their conclusion needed to "harmonize with both revelation and reason."

Various authors acknowledged that the most difficult parts of the hermeneutical process were to put aside personal prejudice and also the expectation that scriptural meaning was transparent without study. James White's article, "Paul Says So,"¹¹ provides an example of an appeal to push beyond facile assumptions: he asked the reader to examine what he or she thought they knew about Paul's teaching on women and the church. He queried the reader as to "what is it that Paul actually says?" The premise of his article was that Christ's followers needed to have answers that were based on careful study. This required the use of scholarly tools to investigate the topic, a review of the Pauline verses in their social and historical context, comparison with Paul's other writings on the same and related subjects, consideration of the text in its context (the meaning of the entire passage and the book), and Paul's general teachings and practice. Additionally, the interpretation of the verses studied needed to be congruent with the rest of scriptural teaching.

In short, a biblical answer on any topic demanded far more than accepting the meaning of a text "just as it reads." Adventists were expected to be familiar with basic tools for biblical study, such as commentaries and concordances. Scholarly works were consulted to provide additional information where the original meaning of a passage was obscured by translation choice, alternative renderings, or cultural and textual contexts. Complex questions were sometimes referred to J. N. Andrews, a scholar who could read the Bible in seven languages. Adventist leaders did not hesitate to use scholarly resources and cite them for the light they shed on biblical texts.

Isolated verses, even several of them combined, were not accepted as a solid basis for establishing a position

on questions of doctrine or practice. The process demanded more than a compilation. Hewitt explained the dangers of the simple proof-text approach:

It is a custom with all Bible students to find all the important texts that bear on any one subject, and compare them together until they come to a satisfactory understanding of what the inspired penman means. No one should found a theory on one single isolated passage, for this mode of proving things has produced many discordant theories in the world.¹²

Nineteenth-century Adventist leaders maintained that a position on a topic (including women's leadership) had to be based on all the information on the subject from the entire Bible. Even then, before a verse could be vetted as speaking to or definitive of an issue, it had to be examined in the flow of the larger argument in the passage and connected with the author's intent. Apparent meaning was compared with other statements a biblical author had made on the same point or related issues. Assuming authorial consistency, they insisted that everything an author said must be reviewed and "harmonized" with the author's overall teachings. They felt the responsibility to "harmonize" apparently conflicting texts to find their consistency and obtain fuller understanding of the Word. Failure to wrestle with "problematic" texts would result in the "discordant theories" that Hewitt warned against.

In this case, they insisted that serious study had to place Paul's counsels on women's public speaking alongside the information given on his recorded practice as he spread the gospel and commended women as co-workers. I. Fetterhoof, in a detailed article entitled "Women Laboring in Public," asked,

What did those women do, of whom Paul said that they labored with him in the gospel? How could they have labored with him in the gospel, if they did not join in the same work that he was engaged in, that is, urging the people to leave their sins, and receive Christ?¹³

Fetterhoof insisted, "We learn from this that Christian women, as well as men, labored in the ministry of the word." This ministry of the word was the "duty of the preacher, to teach, exhort, edify, and comfort," the same descriptors used to define the gift of prophecy. Clearly Paul's command to keep silent did not apply to the teaching and preaching ministry of the church. "Would Paul contradict himself thus?" he asks, and then answers, "No."¹⁴

Where apparent discrepancies between texts surfaced, the cultural contexts of the verses were considered to determine if certain instructions were location or situation specific. Early Adventist leaders incorporated the investigation of the cultural context as a necessary step in understanding the Pauline verses and used contextual arguments to explain the biblical soundness of women's spiritual leadership. One clear example of this practice appeared in an 1879 article, "May Women Speak in Meeting?" where J. N. Andrews explained the Corinthian text used against women's public speaking, asserting vigorously that the text "can have no such application." He demonstrated that the careful scrutiny of both letters to the Corinthians established that the counsel was given to address the "state of great disorder" in the Corinthian church, and thus was situation specific. "So that what the apostle says to women in such a church as this, and in such a state of things, is not to be taken as directions to all Christian women in other churches and in other times, when and where such disorders do not exist."¹⁵ The *Review* also published other articles addressing the contextual specificity of Paul's statements.¹⁶

Andrews harmonized "restrictive" verses with other statements Paul made concerning women in the worship context. He noted that in 1 Corinthians 11:5 Paul instructed women how to dress when praying and prophesying, which he presented as "positive proof" that Paul did not countermand women's public work. He cited Paul's definition of prophecy, "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men, to edification, exhorta-

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tion, and comfort" (1 Cor. 14:3, KJV) and concluded, "It was not a shame for women to do this work. Therefore Paul did not refer to such acts when he said, 'It is a shame for women to speak in the church.'"¹⁷ Andrews was not alone in this effort: several authors asked if Paul were inconsistent in either his thought or the application of his teachings to his practice ("Does Paul contradict Paul?").¹⁸ As it could not be assumed that Paul contradicted himself, the reader had to read Paul's instructions as nuanced by the whole picture: women's worship leadership did not violate the orderly speech that Paul sought for the church. Nor did it violate Paul's command that women not usurp authority over men (another text used to silence women), as study showed the instruction to refer to disruptive "loquacity, impertinence, arrogance" that worked against gospel order, "but that does not prove it improper to speak in a proper manner."¹⁹

After identifying an author's particular stance on a topic, that view was then compared with the guidance offered by other biblical writers. Statements from one author could not be privileged to support a position that contradicted the general trend of the biblical writings. The tentative conclusion from the study of biblical statements had to be scrutinized for consistency with the picture of God's redemptive plan, the records of his past actions, and promises for "the last days." The articles frequently cited examples of women's leadership roles throughout Scripture as evidence that God chose women to lead his people consistently throughout salvation history. After a thorough review of women's effective witness in Scripture, S. C. Welcome concluded,

*Seeing that females were admitted to the high office of prophecy under the old dispensation, and in the promise of the more general effusion of this gift, the daughters and handmaidens were equally included with the other sex, that they were among the first messengers of the gospel, and after the churches were formed and settled received particular instruction how to conduct themselves in the church, in exercise of their gifts, it is strange that the privilege should have ever been called in question.*²⁰

Finally, numerous articles noted the negative effect of restricting the gifts women could exercise in church. Appeals were made to stimulate readers to examine the ways these restrictions hindered both the functioning and spiritual development of God's people. In his 1860 article, S. C. Welcome compared this enforced silence to

bondage, an image that created a strong response in the paper's predominately Northern readers. Adventists were abolitionists and understood slavery to be unbiblical, immoral, and harmful to all parties involved. His conclusion: the restrictive texts "had no relation to the exercise of a gift which God had given them [women] to use for the advancement of his cause." He observed that select women have the same God-given abilities as do men to preach the gospel, and appealed to the church to

*let no stumbling-block be thrown in their way, but let them fill the place that God calls them to fill, let them not be bound down to silence by church rules, but let their tongues speak forth the praises of God, and let them point sinners to the Lamb of God, and grieve not the holy Spirit by silence in the congregation.*²¹

Hold fast to the good: The future of Adventism

A review of the writings of the church founders adds clarity concerning the roots and practices of our church: their concerns, intentions, and understandings need to be recognized. We do well to "hold fast to that which is good" in the theological and practical legacy left for us. The positions they adopted were the result of careful study and prayerful dialog. When we disregard their wisdom, we discard our own rich heritage.

The early expositions on women in ministry remain helpful as we formulate our response to the same questions that emerge today from those from other religious traditions, especially so where traditional social contexts have limited women's public and religious roles. As we review our predecessors' conclusions, however, we must carefully distinguish their issues from our own. Each historic era produces its own questions out of its own challenges and context. The 19th-century discussion of women's spiritual leadership centered on the propriety of women speaking publicly, as it was counter-cultural. The writings in the *Review* addressed the questions as they were shaped during that period. This means that early Adventist practices cannot be used as the final answer for questions they were not designed to address.

This leaves many with two significant questions: Do our church founders have useful counsel for us today as we meet the challenges of a diverse, worldwide church? Is the work that Adventist pioneers did on the issue of

women in ministry, even though the principle of progressive revelation demands that we scrutinize their answers and move beyond them where further “light” has emerged, applicable to our situation today?

The answer to these questions is affirmative for at least three reasons: (1) the Pauline passages that troubled Adventist converts earlier still trouble many today. The work our founders did on the topic can clear up much confusion on Paul’s view of women and spiritual leadership; (2) the misunderstanding of Paul’s writings also complicates our 21st-century question: is it proper (“permitted”) for the church to ordain women in ministry? Until individuals are familiar with the trajectory our founders set and their advocacy for women in ministry, the discussion of this question will create great angst for those who wish to be faithful to Scripture and our heritage and not compromise with “secular” influences on the church; and (3) the Adventist heritage is as much in the method of procedure as in the final “answer” produced by the deliberations. The careful hermeneutic used by the Adventist pioneers prevented a method of reading Scripture that settled for wooden literalism and promoted engaged, careful study. Early Adventists did not pretend to fully comprehend every passage in Scripture or the changes that might yet be asked of them as they continued their pilgrimage, but they had faith that God would continue to lead them into further truth that would change the way they understood and lived their lives. Perhaps this faith was the most significant legacy that they left for their spiritual heirs. Whether or not we hold fast to that heritage may be the most critical element in the shaping of the future of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. ■

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When President Wilson Changed His Mind About Policy for Women | BY GILBERT M. VALENTINE



Dr. Margaret Caro | dentist

The role of women in public life has changed slowly but remarkably over recent generations. In past times, the “proper” role for women was considered to be confinement to the home—the domestic sphere. Girls were not permitted to be educated or to work beyond the home. A woman’s identity was linked exclusively to a husband, father, or brothers. But because of rampant abuses and injustices under this patriarchal subordination system, laws were eventually changed to allow women to hold property, sign documents for themselves, and have the same right as their husbands to conclude a failed marriage. Eventually they were able to seek an education.

In the English-speaking part of the world, the state of affairs began to change slowly during the Georgian era (1714–1837), with social reformers like Hannah More (1745–1833), Elizabeth Fry (1780–1845) and Florence Nightingale (1820–1910) breaking out of the traditional mold.

The legal and social reforms were accompanied by expanding opportunities for women in community activities outside the home, in roles like teaching and welfare endeavors for the poor. Then, as the great Protestant world missionary movement expanded during the 1800s, the recruitment of

women into public work in overseas missions became increasingly important. By 1900, for example, there were more single women and missionary wives on formal overseas appointment for the Church Missionary Society than there were men.¹ From the mid-19th century on, women also slowly found their way into higher education and the professions like pharmacy, dentistry, medicine, law, and academics. These had all been exclusively male preserves.

The wider involvement of women in all of these endeavors was resisted by good conservative church people on the basis that it was not right. Scripture had assigned a different place to women that did not allow their public participation in either the church or wider society. But others read the same Scripture and perceived that the gospel of Jesus removed distinctions in worship and gender barriers and to public service in the kingdom of God. Participation no longer required that a woman first be either attached to or represented by a male. In this regard there is “neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female” (Gal. 3:28, NIV). In fact, the gospel necessitated the welcome of women into the wider public sphere of God’s work with their spirit-given gifts and abilities and their distinctive perspectives.

These social reforms, informed by reflection on the gospel, eventually extended in our modern democracies to allowing women, on an equal basis with men, to participate in choosing national and local leaders. This granting of voting rights to women has been a fairly recent development. It too was resisted by good church people, who thought Scripture did not permit such a role to women. Other good church people, however, saw things differently, and today women in most societies are able to participate in the election of their civic leaders.

Women’s right to vote is of special interest because that social reform occurred during a critical time in Adventist history. Dramatic civic developments were achieved in particular while Ellen White was working in Australia and New Zealand. Reflection on the unfolding

of the women’s suffrage movement and Ellen White’s encounter with it may provide insights for the Adventist Church today that may help us work our way through current decisions concerning the nature of the public role of women in ministry.

Ellen White herself, of course, had a very public role in the development of the Adventist Church. Was this simply because the church recognized in her a unique, distinctive prophetic voice that set her apart from all others and allowed her to go against the social expectations of her time? Or was it rather that changes already taking place in society gave her space to exercise her unique gift, and that her call, and the church’s recognition of it, could become a model for others in public ministry?

For the most part, Ellen White’s own stance toward engaging her culture fitted into the category that H. Richard Niebuhr describes as “‘Christ-against-culture.’”² Adventists, she taught, were not to participate in the evil world but to withdraw from it, distinguishing themselves from it in attitudes and by the adoption of distinctive ascetic lifestyle practices. Her cataclysmic, apocalyptic millenarianism so suffused her own life and thought and that of the movement she nurtured that any effort for civil and social reform was viewed as a waste of time and resources. Adventists’ preoccupation with apocalyptic imminence focused their attention almost totally on personal regeneration as the ultimate solution to the ills and injustices of society, for such regeneration would presage the return of Christ. It was much better than seeking any legislative reforms that, no matter how well framed, could not change human hearts.³ Furthermore, legislative effort to reform society and achieve a moral order would risk compromising church-state separation. Adventists were hypersensitive about avoiding anything that might be perceived as compromising individual liberty and the ability to keep the Sabbath.

In two areas, a restrained engagement with the ideals and activities of social reform movements could be undertaken with some safety:

**He cautioned
that any
public role
should not
separate women
from the
powerful
influence they
exercised
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and blessed
homes.”**

temperance and women's rights. While Ellen White herself did not engage directly or formally with the organizational activities of these movements, her encounter with them and her implicit support of them while she was in the South Pacific was at much closer quarters than church members today might assume. The encounter is instructive.

Encountering temperance and women's voting rights in New Zealand

When Ellen White went to assist in the establishing of the Adventist Church in Australia and New Zealand in 1891, she arrived at a significant time in the social development of these countries. We do not know a lot about Ellen White's private attitude to the question of whether women should be allowed to vote, but she certainly knew about it. She gave distinctive and rather provocative advice to Adventist church leaders in the mid-1890s about including women in public ministry, and about paying them fair wages, which was surprisingly radical for the Adventist Church and even for her era. It is counsel more easily understood against the background of her personal experience and in the context of the needs of the church in Australia and New Zealand at the time.

Adventist work was established in Australia and New Zealand with the arrival of American missionaries in 1885. In the same year, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) movement made its way to New Zealand as the result of the efforts of Baptist American WCTU missionary Mary Leavitt. By the next year, 1886, Adventists had established two churches in New Zealand. The WCTU, on the other hand, had established 15 branches around the colony. It became the first national women's organization and found in the deeply religious Kate Sheppard of Christchurch, a New Zealander of Congregational persuasion, a highly effective and respected advocate and organizer.⁴ The movement believed in the vital importance of the Christian home and in the need for improving the welfare of women and children. It asserted that the cause of temperance was critical to improving the welfare of families because it was a way of curbing the curse of alcohol abuse. During its first year the WCTU also developed the conviction that women should be allowed to vote for political leaders, by which means a better quality of politician would be elected. The two causes were closely linked.

During the next seven years in New Zealand, the WCTU, and other groups it inspired, worked relentlessly

to educate the public and to promote women's welfare by pressing for both liquor law reform and for extending to women the right to vote in national elections. It was intensive work—convening temperance lectures and conventions all around the country and submitting an increasing number of petitions to parliament. In 1893, the WCTU presented a total of 13 petitions inscribed with almost 32,000 signatures. The women captured headlines when they wheeled the massive pile of documents into parliament in a wheelbarrow.⁵ That was the year Ellen White spent 10 months in New Zealand. During the entire year, women's suffrage issues and temperance were the great social issues of the time, constantly in the news and on everyone's lips.

Ellen White arrived in New Zealand on February 8, 1893, and quickly became involved in public evangelistic meetings in Auckland and then further north in Kaeo. After a six-week stay in the north, she stayed for a month in the large, comfortable home of Dr. Margaret Caro, a dentist who, although 21 years her junior, soon became a very close friend. Ellen White referred to her a decade later as "a precious friend and helper."⁶

Margaret Caro, a distinctive New Zealander whom Ellen White described as a "tall queenly looking woman,"⁷ was the daughter of Scottish Presbyterian immigrants. Born in 1848 in Richmond, she was educated in a select school for young women. In 1864 Margaret married Jacob Selig Caro, a Polish Jew who had trained as a physician in Berlin, Germany and then in Melbourne. Following their marriage, the couple had worked in a number of places in New Zealand's south island before finally settling in Napier, where Margaret, having trained as a dentist (it seems, under her husband's tutelage), set up her own practice and soon became widely respected for her dental skills. In 1881 she was the first and only woman dentist to be listed on the newly established government register of dentists. In 1890 she was the only woman to attend the first conference of the New Zealand Dental Association held in Dunedin. As a professional woman, she worked throughout her married life, succeeded financially against the odds, and made her mark in a male-dominated occupation.

Margaret Caro had developed a quiet but strong reputation as a social reformer. She actively supported women's suffrage and the work of the WCTU, and later she joined other progressive women's reform organizations such as the National Council of Women of New Zealand, where she advocated her views on diet.⁸ Margaret Caro had become

an Adventist in 1888 when she attended evangelistic meetings conducted by A. G. Daniells in Napier. During Ellen White's time in New Zealand, Dr. Caro was also granted a ministerial license by the New Zealand Conference, authorizing the exercise of her pastoral gifts and her involvement in public preaching and ministry.⁹ Ellen White noted that "she speaks to the people, is intelligent and [is in] every way capable."¹⁰

Following her April 1893 stay with Margaret Caro, Ellen White travelled to Wellington, the nation's capital. With Elder George B. Starr she helped launch an evangelistic campaign. A classified advertisement announced that "Mrs. Ellen G. White of California USA" would speak on "Jesus Christ and Temperance Reform."¹¹ The topic of temperance, large in the public mind, was code language for liquor reform. As a highly charged political topic being debated hotly around the entire country, the theme was tied up in one piece with the issue of women's suffrage. Nationwide agitation soon led to the introduction of two highly contentious bills into parliament that would be debated for weeks, finally receiving passage in September 1893. One bill was for the radical reform of liquor laws and the other for extending the vote to women. In her evangelistic endeavor Ellen White had indeed capitalized on a live current issue. Her title would have been understood implicitly in the public mind as being in favor of the liquor reform legislation and its companion legislation, the bill for women's suffrage. But these initial evangelistic meetings in Wellington, in spite of the bold temperance launching platform, were not successful. There was too much else going on that occupied the interest of Wellingtonians.

The windy and wet weather for which the city is notorious set in during Ellen White's winter stay in the capital. The women's franchise issue remained a hot topic, however. On July 4 the Electoral Reform bill came before the House of Representatives for its second reading and was sent off to committee hearings. But on this date Ellen White was distracted by another concern—her teeth had decayed so badly that they were causing her unbearable pain. She made arrangements to have her dentist friend come to her apartment not far from the parliament building on July 5. Dr. Caro traveled ten uncomfortable hours by train to Wellington to attend to her prophet patient. In a chair in the kitchen, the only professionally licensed woman dentist in New Zealand extracted eight teeth from Ellen White's jaws—without any aid of chloroform. (Ellen

White did not react well to pain relievers.) At the end of the ordeal, the exhausted women comforted each other. Ellen White was glad that Margaret Caro was a "thorough master of her business." She noted that "the muscles of her arms are like steel. She can go through all the disagreeable performances firm and composed," although on this occasion Ellen White knew that the doctor herself was distressed that she had to cause her patient so much pain.¹²

The women's suffrage bill finally received passage in September 1893. In early October, just two weeks after that momentous parliamentary victory, the highly contentious liquor bill received its final reading and was signed into law. These two related events caused a national stir. The temperance people throughout the colony were jubilant.¹³ Even the Adventist Church paper in Australia, the *Bible Echo*, although it chose not to report the momentous women's suffrage bill, noted in its columns that the "New Zealand Legislative Council has passed a drastic Liquor Bill."¹⁴

Local newspapers heralded the voting rights bill as "the most important Parliamentary event in the history of New Zealand."¹⁵ The bill had the effect of "practically doubling the electorates," and was considered an event of "the most portentous import."¹⁶ The editor of the capital's *Evening Post* hoped that now "there will be a higher class of men in the Parliament of the colony, and more just and equitable laws will be passed there, when women have a voice in the choice of legislators."¹⁷ It was also a historic day for the world community. New Zealand had laid down a new path, and many other nations would follow.

On October 10 Ellen White travelled to the city of Gisborne to again assist in evangelistic meetings. The traditional approach of starting with an exposition of Daniel 2 was not working well, and so the leadership decided that Ellen White would speak on temperance because, as she herself reported, this was "a living question here at this time."¹⁸ The Liquor Bill having just been passed, now each local electoral district was beginning to grapple with the issues of how to implement it.

Hundreds of townspeople attended, among them the mayor, the local police sergeant, and "some of the first people of Gisborne." Ellen White was delighted. The next Sunday afternoon they ran a similar meeting, and it too was "a decided success." Prejudice had been broken down, and the meetings soon moved into the local theater and then the church. Local Adventists saw the meetings "as

the best advertisement of our people they have ever had in Gisborne.”¹⁹ The church had witnessed a breakthrough. And at least partially, the women’s franchise issue and the national temperance debates had made it possible.

With the Gisborne meetings showing such encouraging results, it was time to turn back to the difficult capital city of Wellington to try evangelism there once more. Ellen White was one of the featured speakers. At first the meeting planners feared “a slim attendance,” but as it turned out, a good many Adventists came from other towns around the colony to stay at the camp and to loyally support the meetings. And reassuringly there was also “a good-sized congregation of outsiders.” Nevertheless, it was a difficult time to run evangelistic meetings simply because the competition for attention was so intense. The national general election that now involved women had been scheduled for November 28, just four days after the evangelistic meetings started, and many election campaign meetings were scheduled. Temperance issues and women’s participation in the election occupied center stage in the public mind.

On polling day, Tuesday, November 28, it seemed the whole colony stopped work for what was trumpeted as “one of the most momentous elections in its history.”²⁰ Everywhere “the contest rages” reported the *Evening Post*, “business is practically suspended, and politics and electioneering are on every tongue. In the City the streets are full of people, a large proportion of them being women.” Traps and conveyances of every kind carried voters to the polls, young women and men side by side with “old dames who are probably registering their first and last vote.”²¹ The whole country was in a buoyant mood, and the women in particular appeared “to be thoroughly enjoying the exercise of their new power, and fully alive to their own importance.”²²

As it turned out, after the convulsions of the election passed, the camp meeting, in Ellen White’s words, was “a marvel of wonders,” a great witness to Wellington and a success. Twenty-four people were baptized at its conclusion.

Temperance and women’s voting rights in Australia

The causes of temperance and women’s suffrage were also being agitated in the various colonies in Australia during Ellen White’s 1890s sojourn. Huge petitions had been organized both in Victoria in 1891 and in South Australia

on the issue. While the topic appeared not to be as all-consuming an issue as it had been in New Zealand, nevertheless, in South Australia it had achieved considerable momentum. While the agitation in South Australia had stronger ties to social justice issues of working women, nevertheless the temperance issue was still prominent, and the two issues were intertwined and the arguments being made were the same. Campaign literature from New Zealand was used widely. Vigorous agitation continued all during 1894 until, in the dying weeks of that year, the South Australian legislature followed the example of New Zealand and gave women the franchise.

But they went even further. Not only could women vote, but they could also stand for the parliament in their own right. Newspapers throughout all six Australian colonies reported heavily on the news. These were stirring times in the lands down under, where Ellen White, as a woman in a man’s world, was more than holding her own, setting a pattern and firmly planting a church to herald the Advent.

While Adventists lauded the work of the WCTU and the general temperance reform, they did not look favorably on political involvement or on the strident public campaigns.²³ The *Bible Echo* commented on the voting issue after the public initiation of what became known as the “monster petition” in Victoria in May 1891,²⁴ and although clearly sympathetic, the journal, on behalf of the young church, tried to take a neutral stand. “For our own part,” observed the unnamed author (possibly the editor, George Tenney), “we would not take extreme grounds on either side, and shall hope to survive whatever the issue may be.” He affirmed that “the power for good which womankind possesses” was indisputable and “must be given a foremost place amongst all the moral forces of the world.” He cautioned, however, that any public role should not separate women from or lead to a decline in the powerful influence they exercised in “peaceful and blessed homes.” He felt that many good women might decline the opportunity to vote should it be offered them, while doubtless others “see in it a means of exerting a wider influence for good.” If good women really wished to vote, he concluded, “we wish they might,” although he was glad his wife had not authorized him to campaign on her behalf.²⁵ The paper’s editor would also vigorously deny that when it came to leadership in the church, the apostle Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 14:34 about women keeping silence should not be interpreted in a way that prevented women from serving as

spiritual leaders. To do so was the result of an inadequate hermeneutic, he asserted.²⁶

Nevertheless, as Arthur Patrick has noted in his study of Ellen White's sojourn in Australia, strong convictions about the imminence of the return of Christ and the coming Day of Judgment kept church members focused strictly on religious and doctrinal issues. They were preoccupied with establishing the claims of the commandments and the obligation to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. The plight of a few church members imprisoned briefly or fined in Parramatta and at Kellyville on the outskirts of Sydney for working on the first day so they could keep Sabbath registered more keenly in the denominational consciousness than anything else. In mid-1894, Adventists' sense of eschatological crisis became acute, because these events resonated so strongly as a threat to religious liberty and were interpreted as a striking harbinger of the approaching end of all things.

If 1894 was a year of temperance reform and women's suffrage agitation in South Australia, it was noted even more across all the colonies as the beginning of an extended period of immense economic hardship. The desperate struggle with poverty that women faced became an issue of much community discussion, along with calls to ameliorate it. Ellen White and her church colleagues themselves, impacted severely by the economic distress, became deeply involved in helping destitute families in the church and also in the community via the establishment of effective "Helping Hand" ministries. Bert Haloviak, in his excellent study of the church in Australia in the 1890s, documents Ellen White's extensive involvement in this poverty-relief effort and her repeated calls for church members to see it as evangelistic outreach for the church.²⁷

Wider aspects of basic justice were also involved in the poverty women experienced. As the widely read *Australian Home Journal* pointed out in 1894, the fact that women were not paid for their work on the farm, in the shops and offices, alongside their husbands, was a serious inequality and amounted to exploitation. Women needed to

have money of their own to spend and should be remunerated for their labor.²⁸ This was an issue that Ellen White could speak about, and she did. In this context of linking social welfare work with evangelistic endeavor and pastoral care, and against the background of the exploitation of women, Ellen White made some of her most provocative observations about the need for women to become involved in preaching and public ministry and that they should be employed on equal terms as male pastors and remunerated accordingly as workers in their own right.²⁹

Women leading in ministry

Ellen White had seen Margaret Caro involved in church leadership and community work in New Zealand. She had seen New Zealand church president George Wilson's wife, Jenny, actively involved in ministry in Hawkes Bay. She had seen Julia Corliss tirelessly involved in public work alongside her minister husband, John, in Melbourne. Carrie Hickox, a gifted contralto soloist, ministered effectively beside her husband in Sydney and Queensland. Mary Daniells had sometimes preached when her evangelist husband, A. G. Daniells, could not be present. Ellen White had also spoken of a Sister Walker and a Sister Edwards leading out in home-to-home Bible study work and church leadership and preaching in Sydney. It was undoubtedly in the light of this involvement of women in "public work" that she issued her call in the pages of the *Review* in 1895 for a wider role for women in ministry.

*Women who are willing to consecrate some of their time to the service of the Lord should be appointed to visit the sick, look after the young, and minister to the necessities of the poor. They should be set apart to this work by prayer and laying on of hands. In some cases they will need to counsel with the church officers or the minister; but if they are devoted women, maintaining a vital connection with God, they will be a power for good in the church. This is another means of strengthening and building up the church. We need to branch out more in our methods of labor.*³⁰

**By 1900,
there were
more single
women and
missionary
wives on formal
overseas
appointment
for the Church
Missionary
Society than
there were
men.**

Three years later, Ellen White was even more assertive in her call for a wider role for women when she wrote,

Seventh-day Adventists are not in any way to belittle woman's work. If a woman puts her housework in the hands of a faithful, prudent helper, and leaves her children in good care, while she engages in the work, the Conference should have wisdom to understand the justice of her receiving wages.³¹

If women do the work that is not the most agreeable to many of those who labor in word and doctrine, and if their works testify that they are accomplishing a work that has been manifestly neglected, should not such labor be looked upon as being as rich in results as the work of the ordained ministers? Should it not command the hire of the laborer? Would not such workers be defrauded if they were not paid? This question is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled it.³²

Ellen White believed so strongly that women should be remunerated for their labor as individual workers in ministry in their own right that on occasion she would feel it her duty to “create a fund from my tithe money” to ensure that they would be paid. And she used it to support women ministers.³³ As Arthur Patrick has noted insightfully, only the conviction that such men and women had the call “to preach and teach the word” could enable a Seventh-day Adventist to so use the sacred tithe.³⁴ This helps us to understand the nature of the ministry Ellen White meant.

Ellen White concluded in her 1895 counsel,

Not a hand should be bound, not a soul discouraged, not a voice should be bushed; let every individual labor, privately or publicly, to help forward this grand work.³⁵

Postscript: Why President Wilson changed his mind about policy for women

In the United States, the path to women's full participation in the electoral process was a much more tortuous and complicated process. Because conservative attitudes favoring the status quo were more deeply rooted, activists adopted more radical measures to bring about change. During the years before Ellen White's death, the cause of women's greater participation in the public sphere continued on the slow burner, with agitation of women's political action groups steadily working at raising public awareness at the state level, and during the 1910–1914 period, several states granted suffrage for state elections. Ellen White herself was granted the right

to participate in California state elections (if she should ever have decided to do so) in 1911.

The entry of the United States into the First World War in November 1917 changed the calculus for women's participation in the political process. The call for women to support the war effort was answered by women in a wide variety of ways. The demands of the war increasingly involved American women in the public sphere.

Although President Woodrow Wilson was sympathetic to the cause of women's franchise, at first he tried to deflect the contentious issue by insisting that it was one for the states to resolve. But only a handful of states had taken the step. Frustration was building.

During 1917, women activists aware of what had been granted to women in New Zealand, Australia, and Finland brought the issue closer to home by picketing the White House. Some activists chained themselves to the front fence. Wilson did not like these radical tactics, but the vigils continued. When newspaper reports exposed the savage mistreatment and abuse of some of the women arrested, the nation was shocked and the president keenly embarrassed that this was happening at his front gate.

Eventually one of the moderate advocates won the confidence of the president. Carrie Chapman Catt of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, together with Helen Hamilton Gardener, persuaded the President of the importance of dealing with the issue by constitutional amendment. They suggested he explain his new advocacy of the cause by recognizing the contribution women were making to the success of the war effort. By January 1918 Wilson had given women's suffrage his support, arguing it as “an act of right and justice to the women of the country and the world.”

It was not until the early summer of 1919, however, that Congress in both houses voted to approve universal suffrage, and not until 1920 that the amendment was finally ratified.

President Woodrow Wilson changed his mind on policy concerning the women's issue not only because of the embarrassing mistreatment of the women along his front fence, but, as he explained to the nation, because women across the nation had participated wholeheartedly in the critical mission of supporting and winning a war. Recognizing their right to vote was a way of recognizing that contribution and of the critical need for their continuing full participation in the life of the community.

The Advent cause is still as much in need of the contribution and full participation of women as it was in the 1890s

when Ellen White asserted, "This question is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled it."³⁶ Might that be a good enough reason for any president to change his mind? ■

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3. Arthur Patrick thoroughly documents these attitudes for Ellen White's Australian years in *Christianity and Culture in Colonial Australia: Selected Catholic, Anglican, Wesleyan and Adventist Perspectives* (PhD dissertation, University of Newcastle, 1991), 210–247. See also his *Ellen Gould White and the Australian Woman, 1891–1900* (MLitt thesis, University of New England, 1984), 91–111.
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5. "Women's suffrage milestones: Women and the vote," New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/politics/womens-suffrage/suffrage-milestones>. See also *Te Ara: the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, s.v. "Voting rights," <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/voting-rights>.
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21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. See, for example, W. A. Colcord, "That World's W. C. T. U. Petition," *Bible Echo*, May 7, 1894, 138, 139. Arthur Patrick's thesis, *Ellen Gould White and the Australian Woman, 1891–1900*, has an extensive discussion of this Adventist response. Ellen White had an open attitude toward cooperation with the WCTU. In New Zealand for most of the late 19th century, Adventist women occupied high leadership positions in the WCTU.
24. The largest petition gathered by the WCTU was launched May 6, 1891. The more than 30,000 signatures were collected over the next two months and the petition presented to parliament on September 29.
25. "Woman Suffrage," *Bible Echo*, June 15, 1891, 181.
26. George C. Tenney, "Woman's Relation to the Cause of Christ," *Bible Echo*, March 15, 1892, 90. The piece so impressed Uriah Smith that he reprinted it in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 24, 1892, 328, 329.
27. Bert Haloviak, "Ellen White and the Australasian Ministers, 1893 to 1901."
28. "Earning Money," *Australian Home Journal*, 1 August 1894, 61, 62.
29. See Arthur Patrick, *Ellen Gould White and the Australian Woman*, 84, 85.
30. Ellen G. White, "The Duty of the Minister and the People," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 9, 1895, 433, 434.
31. Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 452, 453.
32. Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 5:324, 325.
33. Ellen G. White letter to Uriah Smith and A. T. Jones, April 21/22, 1898, 9, 10.
34. Patrick, *Ellen Gould White and the Australian Woman*, 85.
35. Ellen G. White, "The Duty of the Minister and the People."
36. Ellen G. White, "The Laborer Is Worthy of His Hire," *Manuscript* 43a, 1898.

**Church can
happen, or
the body of
Christ can
be realized,
one could
argue, only
within small
groups, or
“churches
within the
church.”**

Rice ➔ *continued from page 65 . . .*

12. Terence L. Donaldson, “ ‘The Field God Has Assigned’: Geography and Mission in Paul,” in *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity*, Leif E. Vaage, ed. (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 112. Donaldson takes exception to some of the prevalent views of Paul’s ministry and its intended results. He argues that it was not the apostle’s conscious strategy to plant churches around the Roman Empire with the intention that they would extend a program of evangelization. Nor was the eventual success of Christianity the result of a deliberate and organized program of mission (109). See also Donaldson’s paper, “The Absence from Paul’s Letters of Any Injunction to Evangelize,” presented at the Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting, Nashville, Tenn., November 19, 2000.

13. Donaldson, in *Religious Rivalries in the Early Roman Empire*, 118.

14. Gunther Bornkamm, *Paul*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 115.

15. “The ecclesia,” says Bultmann, “is not a club in which like-minded individuals have banded together . . . ; [nor] a conglomeration of the Spirit-endowed, each of whom has and enjoys his private relationship to Christ.” Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (New York: Scribner’s, 1951, 1955), 1:310.

16. If we follow the lead of these scholars, it may be possible for us to view the elevated themes presented in Ephesians 1–3, for example, as a theological preface to what lay most heavily on the apostle’s mind, namely, the concrete lives of his readers (or hearers), especially the quality of their relationships to one another. Note this pivotal text—Ephesians 4:1: “I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (NRSV). Read this way, the trajectory of Paul’s communication reaches its apex in the second three chapters of the letter, where his thought moves not from primary to secondary concerns, but from theological premise to concrete, practical conclusion. Similarly, Paul’s insistence on grace rather than works in Galatians was prompted by a breakdown in Christian fellowship, viz. Peter and Barnabas’s withdrawal from table fellowship with Gentiles (Gal. 2:11, 12). And a clear understanding of the doctrine leads to the recognition that in Christ, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28,

NRSV)—a belief that has profound implications for the concrete way Christians treat one another.

17. Warren S. Brown and Brad D. Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, and the Church* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

18. *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*, ed. Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Malony (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998). Nancey Murphy presents further neurological evidence for “physicalism” in *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Joel B. Green argues that a careful consideration of both biblical and scientific evidence supports a wholistic view of humanity in *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008).

19. Brown and Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life*, 120.

20. *Ibid.*, 101.

21. *Ibid.*, 129.

22. *Ibid.*, 112.

23. Quoted in Brown and Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life*, 136. In an op-ed piece in the *Los Angeles Times*, Amy Alkon uses Dunbar’s conclusions to explain why people are rude to one another. The reason, she argues, is that we are forced to interact with far too many people. “We are rude because we are now living in societies too big for our brains” (“In Battle Against Rude People, Kindness Is Powerful Weapon,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 25, 2014, A15).

24. Brown and Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life*, 137. It’s hard not to think of the number of Jesus’ disciples in this connection!

25. Cf. the popular mantra, “I’m spiritual, but I’m not religious.”

26. Since my grandparents on both sides left the United States to serve as overseas Adventist missionaries, and since the Adventist Church is the only employer I have ever worked for, I am naturally grateful for the global vision and integrated organization for which Adventists are well known.

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Name for an Edgeless God

The mustard is a yellow winter carpet
rolled out for spring's sudden entry
my feet stir the clustered blossoms
and when I look behind me I can see
the grass bending greenly under
the feet of one who follows me

I don't know what to do with you,
unseen essence
I have no name for, no category
wide enough to contain
your edglessness as you stir
the grass beneath the brown-armed vines.

The hawk feels your presence, yet
she doesn't know the word for "name"—
let alone the letters that might express
you who are invisible beauty.

and yet there you are and I suppose
I will keep walking
among these slowly budding arms
and damp, dark earth still full
of winter's rain

and wonder why
you haunt my steps so faithfully.

Lainey S. Cronk writes among the old oaks and
winding roads of Northern California and the
unpredictable declarations of elementary-school kids.

