

 *community through conversation*

SPECTRUM

SINCE 1969



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community through conversation

SPECTRUM

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ABOUT THE COVER ART

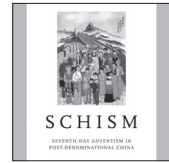
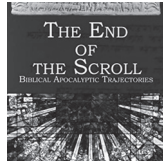
Brian Kyle, *Glare* (from the series Murmurations), 2018.

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EDITORIALS

Since 1969

BY ALEXANDER CARPENTER

On day one in the office, I took time to reread the first *Spectrum* editorial by the scholar-physician Molleurus Couperus. He wrote in the winter of 1969 that,

few if any periods in human history can equal ours in the magnitude of change to which we are subjected or in the degree of tension and chaos that are interwoven. These disjunctions and alterations are evident in the political, economic, and ideological struggles that tear at the very roots of man's existence. Science, technology, philosophy, and religion, all, are involved in our feverish striving for change.

Sound familiar? The players differ; the issues have shifted, but the radical tension remains. The institutions modern humanity planted as a hedge against the subjective hordes of chaos now, too, often appear to be withering in the lukewarm winds of popular opinion and mission drift.

Fifty-three years later, *Spectrum* remains. Why has it survived? The short answer is Bonnie Dwyer, my friend and mentor for two decades. I dedicate this issue to her. When I first read the journal in the library at Andrews University, I knew it represented "my people." Not everyone gets it and not everyone needs it. But many of us do. For growing that vision through generous support, I am eternally grateful to you all, dear readers.

Over two hundred issues of the journal exist since Dr. Couperus wrote. And who would have imagined that last year the *Spectrum* website would receive 1.9 million pageviews by hundreds of thousands of readers around the world? How *does* it hold on through the turmoil?

Couperus bookends that first editorial with the following:

Discussion of the important issues of our time ought to be frank, sincere, tolerant, and charitable. As much as we are able, we hope to look without prejudice at all sides of a subject, to evaluate the merits of diverse views, to be critical only if we can do so constructively, and to stimulate discursive interchange among readers. In all this, our purpose is to promote growth and development.

Is that purpose the secret? I do know that those values are the seed of *Spectrum*, implanted at the start. Its genesis supports change, the adaptive flexibility that's needed for growth and development. Whatever people think of *Spectrum*, it's not a hedge, stuck in the mud, to be pruned and protective. *Spectrum* evolves through living beings who seek abundant life through spiritual growth. But this active faith moves beyond the personal. *Spectrum's* collective witness publicly represents the natural power of variation and liberation. We move from where we were planted, finding again and again the hard truth that intellectual honesty does uproot. But we dig deep to rise again beyond the horizon.

Perhaps that's why *Spectrum* persists. It's more like a murmuration, a group of living beings holding together for a higher purpose. Together, we fly above the *hortus conclusus*. The leap of faith that *Spectrum* took in 1969 turned out to be gravity defying. History and the scientific method matter. Principles are prologue. Now we orbit Adventism and beyond, independent, open, critically engaged, and charitable to all.



ALEXANDER CARPENTER is executive editor of *Spectrum*.

Perpetual Renewal

BY CARMEN LAU

When Jesus says He is the truth (John 14:6), He elaborates to describe His relationship with Father and Spirit, teaching us that truth is situated in relationship. The faces of others can transform a person, adding facets to one's own identity. Conversation can lead to renewal. In a changing world, the Adventist Forum Board embraces God's fixed love and grace by the practice of fearless learning and boundless curiosity.

Renewal creates a path for individuals and groups to live an abundant life undergirded by an abundant theology. Volf and Croasman assert, in *For the Life of the World*, that a successful life attends to justice that results in peace and leads to a joyful existence. This will be a justice bathed in loving-kindness, that heals sin's imprint on humanity and cultivates empathy, removing a person from a pervasively selfish, competitive milieu. The peaceful life features careful attention to signs of God's transformative presence in all circumstances. Volf and Croasman envision a fully consummated joy that will be emotionally present in the world, grounded in love, but attentive to a truthful construction of the surrounding world. Indeed, Christ followers will have times of lament, but "in fixing the community's gaze on God, joy can become a collective practice of *resistance*."¹

Spectrum's ethos features audacious listening; we know that each person was created in the image of God. An Adventist Voice need not be weird or cloistered. We are



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Spectrum's ethos features audacious listening; we know that each person was created in the image of God.

mindful to the cultivation of the fruits of the Spirit, as we strive to showcase ways that the Spirit is, indeed, alive and at work among all sorts of people who are unafraid to live outside the dictates of the dominant-popular, or dominant-church, culture.

On behalf of the Adventist Forum Board, I wish you a just, peaceful, and joyful year of renewal.

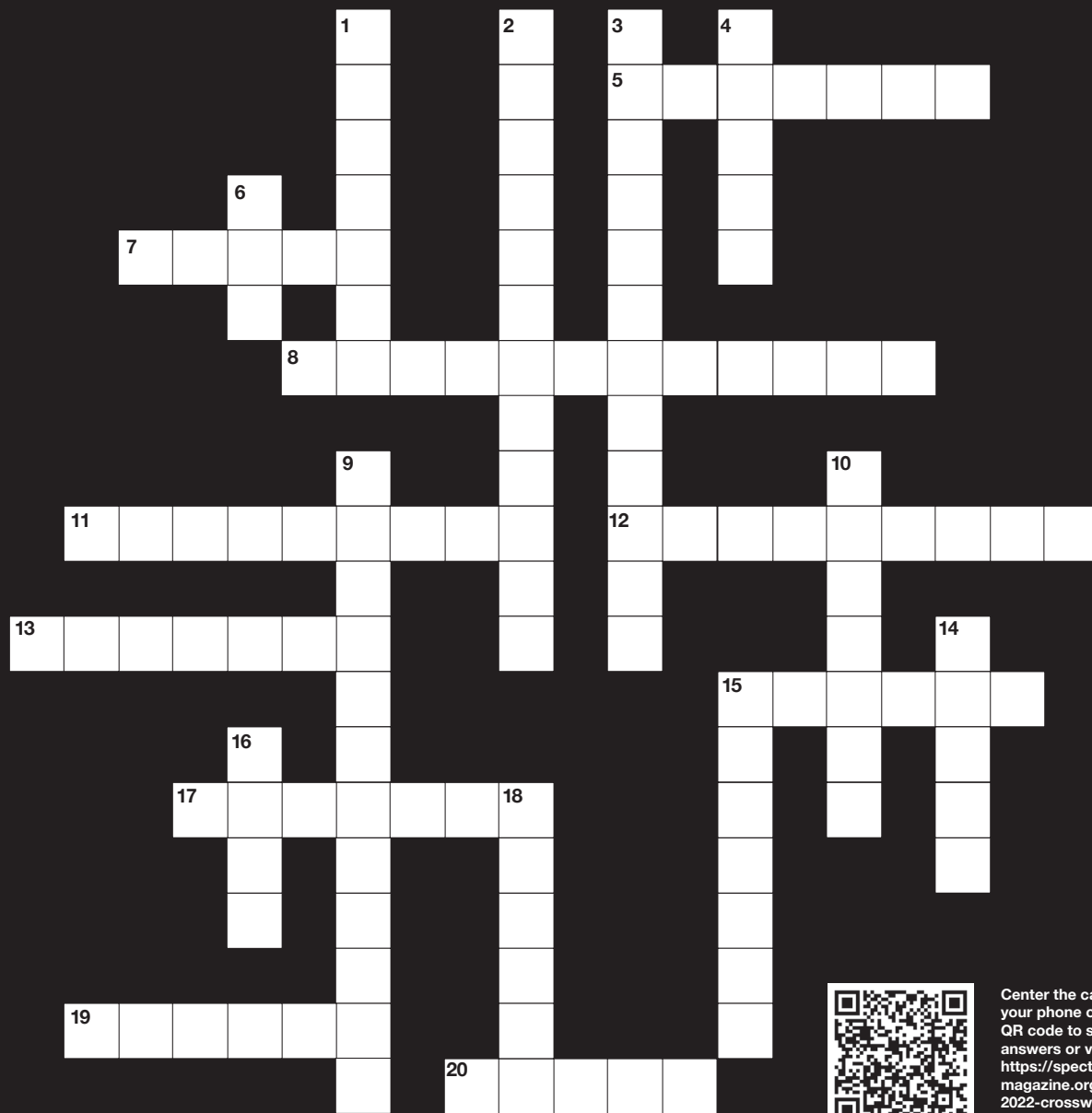
Endnotes

1. Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasman, *For the Life of the World: Theology that Makes a Difference* (Ada, MI: Brazos Press, 2019), 179.



CARMEN LAU is board chair of Adventist Forum.

Interesting Time, Times, & Half a Time



Center the camera on your phone on this QR code to see answers or visit <https://spectrummagazine.org/february-2022-crossword-answer-key>

DOWN

1. Viral church in more ways than one
2. A stormy creation account
3. Capitol attack
4. Editor emerita
6. Division in the church
9. First time GC Session not this since 1970
10. Unromantic spark for vaccine resistance
14. The concierge minister
15. Editor and *Faith for Today* actor
16. A virtual SS room
18. Slow chain of being

ACROSS

5. Shrinking to grow
7. Signifies the end
8. Only "her" BRI likes
11. A Spectrum first
12. A costly rise
13. A variant of no small concern
15. Most Adventists
17. She rose from president to secretary
19. Newest Forum chapter
20. Hospital portrait recalls racism

SCRIPTURE

STUDY

What Does Revelation Reveal?

BY HEROLD WEISS

Revelation continues to capture the Christian imagination because it addresses the tension inherent in having faith in God in an imperfect world. Its placement as the last book in the New Testament, even though it was not the last one written, may be due to its powerful admonition to remain faithful even unto death in an unjust world. Given the apocalyptic atmosphere in which Adventism came into being, it has been at the forefront of Adventist identity. It is often said that Daniel and Revelation are the Adventist canon within the canon. Given the importance of the book throughout Adventist history, I propose to take another look at its message.

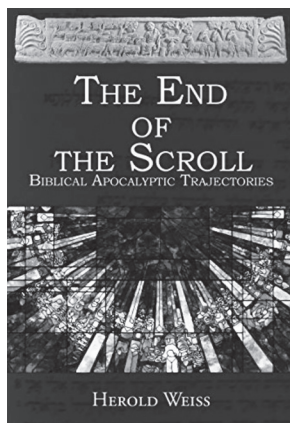
A recent issue of *Spectrum* contained a review by Reinder Bruinsma of three books on Revelation written by Adventists.¹ My book, *The End of the Scroll: Biblical Apocalyptic Trajectories*,² which is not a book about the last book of the Bible but about the rise and development of an apocalyptic theological vision within the Bible, is one of them. The objective of its chapter on Revelation is to show that it cannot be understood apart from the apocalyptic vision to which it contributes. One of the ways in which I demonstrate this is by listing thirty-three instances in which the author recycles details from previous apocalyptic texts to give them a contemporary application. In this short essay I will explore what Adventists have been proposing as the message of Revelation.

When I was a student at the

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Takoma Park, Maryland, in 1956–58, Roland E. Loasby, the inimitable professor of New Testament exegesis, got into trouble with the ecclesiastical authorities in the building next door. Trying to move away from the view that Revelation gives a blow-by-blow account of last-day events, which had been preached by Adventist evangelists for over a hundred years without any of the predicted events ever becoming the last one, he taught us that the book was about Jesus Christ. The *apparatchiks* at the General Conference could not accept Loasby's teaching that Revelation was about Christ, not about last-day events. Apparently, the passage of sixty-four years has now made such interpretation of the text a viable alternative within Adventism. In *Plain Revelation*,³ one of the other two books reviewed by Bruinsma, Ranko Stefanović follows Loasby's lead.

When I took the class on Revelation from Loasby, he pointed out that the book opens with the words, "The revelation of Jesus Christ." This is indeed so and

Stefanovic, like Loasby, finds in this the clue to the subject of the book. Back then, when Loasby argued that the words announced the subject of the book, that was all for the best, but reading the rest of the preface of the book (Rev. 1:1–3) already made me doubt the validity of this claim. John the Prophet claims to have received a message about "what must soon take place." Then he offers a blessing to all those who read the words of the book



aloud and to those who listen to the reading because “the time is near.” (Rev. 1:3). The listeners are told also that the Devil “knows that his time is short” (Rev. 12:12); therefore, the Devil’s efforts to deceive the elect have been increased. In turn, John testifies that his agency did not affect the message. At the end of the book, John reports that the angel that has been showing him the new earth told him, “the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place” (Rev. 22:6). The angel then instructed him, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near” (Rev. 22:10). Then Jesus himself is quoted, saying, “I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches” (Rev. 22:16).

When the angel began to deliver the message, John the prophet heard a voice “like a trumpet,” which said to him, “write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches” (Rev. 1:11). More specifically he is told, “Now write what you see, what is and what is to take place hereafter” (Rev. 1:19). Then, after John had written the letters to the seven churches, he saw “in heaven

an open door! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, ‘Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this’” (Rev. 4:1). In other words, John was told what was going on at the time and what was required of the elect under the present circumstances by Jesus Christ’s dictation of the letters to the seven churches. He learned what will take place “after this” when he was in heaven before the throne of God and was shown by an angel what God had in store for the future.

The members of these churches are admonished to listen carefully to the reading and to refrain from adding or subtracting to what the book says under penalty of being excluded from access to the tree of life (Rev. 22:18). After this dire warning against abusing the integrity of the book, Jesus Christ, the one who testifies to the authenticity of what the book contains, repeats again the announcement, “I am coming soon” (Rev. 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20). To underline the urgency of his warning, he tells the Christians of Asia, “Lo, I am coming like a thief!” (Rev. 16:15). To say that the subject



Fresco inside an Orthodox church on Patmos island, Greece

While Jesus Christ is the indispensable agent and guarantor of the message and the one who is to come soon, he is not the subject matter of the book.

of the book is Jesus Christ is to discard the words of John the prophet, who is eager to make the elect aware that “the time is near” (Rev. 1:3; 22:10), and that they need to take seriously the message God is sending to them about “what must soon take place.” While Jesus Christ is the indispensable agent and guarantor of the message and the one who is to come soon, he is not the subject matter of the book.

Ever since Joseph Battistone identified the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan as the core of the message of Ellen G. White in his 1978 book,⁴ it has become *the* theme of Adventist theological study.⁵ It had not been so before. In his doctoral dissertation for a degree in theology at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, Sigve Tonstad argued for the notion that the cosmic conflict is the subject of Revelation. His recent commentary on the book makes a full display of his argument for it.⁶ This claim, like the claim that Jesus Christ is the subject of the book, seems to counter John’s description of his message. This proposal faces serious difficulties given the way in which Revelation describes the contenders in this alleged combat and the way the cosmos in which it is supposed to be taking place is conceived.

We could turn to other authors to support this claim. Paul recognizes that the “principalities and powers of the air” have at the moment free rein in the cosmos, and he describes Satan as “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4). According to Paul, since God raised Christ from the dead, he has been engaged in the subjection of the evil powers who are his “enemies.” Only after he has succeeded in putting all of them “under his feet” will God have regained dominion over all of his creation. “When all things are subjected to him [God], then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him [God had actually subjected the ‘enemies’ through Christ], that God may be everything to every one” (1 Cor. 15:25–28). In Paul’s scenario, Christ and the powers of the air are engaged in a current conflict, according to God’s designs.

But this is not at all the universe of John of Patmos. According to him, since the resurrection, God and Jesus Christ sit together on the Father’s throne (Rev. 3:21), and they have the key to Death and Hades (Rev. 1:18), and the key to the bottomless pit (Rev. 9:1; 20:1). Jesus Christ also has the key that makes possible whatever happens. No one can shut what he opens, and no one can open what he shuts; he has the key of paradigmatic king David (Rev. 3:7). According to Revelation, as in the letters of Paul, everything takes place according to the will of God. If evil forces do bad things, it is because God allows it (Rev. 13:7, 14–15). God is the one who “put it into their [the vassal kings of the harlot] hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and giving over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled” (Rev. 17:17). In this, John takes up Ezekiel’s view that God brings about both good and evil according to his purpose (Ez. 20:25–26; 29:20). As the description of the contents of the prophecy says, what will happen is “what *must* take place,” because God and Jesus Christ already control everything that happens. If God is the one who manipulates the displays of both good and evil in the cosmos that he created and is under his full control, there is no room for a cosmic conflict.

After having been summoned to ascend to heaven to see what must “take place hereafter [or “after this]” (Rev. 1:19; 4:1), John weeps because the information is sealed in a scroll that no one is able to open. One of the twenty-four elders consoles him, saying, “Weep not; lo, The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals” (Rev. 5:5). Are we to understand that the scroll’s content is a cosmic conflict of which the outcome is already known? Not at all. What must take place hereafter can now be revealed because Satan has been defeated and Jesus Christ *has conquered!* As he dictates the letters to the churches of Asia describing what is going on at the time, Jesus Christ claims, “I myself conquered” (Rev. 3:21). As the narration of what must take place “after this” continues, it is affirmed that Jesus Christ,

the 144,000, and a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue, who are also before the throne and worship God in the temple, have conquered (Rev. 4:6; 7:4, 9, 13; 14:1, 3; 17:14). Before the vision of the seven plagues, which are the last, ultimate expression of God's wrath, John sees those "who have conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name standing beside the sea of glass" (Rev. 15:2). This leaves no doubt about the status of one of the contenders in the alleged contemporary conflict. Christ has been victorious over the dragon and has been empowering others to also conquer him. There is no drama in a struggle in which the winner has already been declared.

When John is shown the dragon waiting for the child of the woman clothed with the sun to be born in order to devour him, the child is taken up to God and to his throne (Rev. 12:5). Frustrated, the dragon went on the warpath, and Michael and his angels went out to fight against the dragon. "The dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven" (Rev. 12:7–8). The defeat of the dragon and his angels has already taken place. Does this suggest an ongoing cosmic war in heaven?

As the result of the expulsion of the dragon and his angels from heaven after his unsuccessful attempt to devour the son of the woman clothed with the sun, a loud voice proclaims, "Now the salvation and the power of the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:10–11). These are again referred to as "the martyrs of Jesus" (Rev. 17:6). The one who had brought about the death of martyrs (martyr = one who testifies) was defeated by Michael and expelled from heaven. In heaven, his opposition took the form of accusations against the righteous (Zech. 3:1; Job 1:9). As a result of his defeat by Michael, he has become "the deceiver

of the whole world" (Rev. 12:9; 20:10). As such, he has been confined to the earth, and once on earth he went after the woman who had given birth. Being unable to get hold of the woman, he "went off to make war on the rest of her offspring," but the only place on which he could stand was "the sand of the sea" (Rev. 12:17). The war against the offspring of the woman is not a cosmic conflict but a conflict in the minds of "the elect," who must be conquerors over the deceptions of "that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan" (Rev. 12:9).

In other words, once cast down to earth, the dragon wished to make war on the human offspring of the woman, but he could stand only on no-man's land, the seashore between the realm of life (the land) and the realm of death (the sea). This is in stark contrast with the mighty angel who came down from heaven "wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring" (Rev. 10:1–3). Now, this angel, who looks like the Danielic Son of Man, has control of the two realms in which the dragon could not stand, the sea and the land, and the open scroll gave him knowledge of what "must soon take place." Eventually, the dragon is taken out of no-man's land and thrown further down into the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:2–3).

Unable to function, the dragon gave "his power and his throne and great authority" to a ferocious beast coming out of the realm of evil, the sea. This beast now takes over the task the dragon could no longer perform. He becomes the deceiver (Rev. 13:14). For the rest of the narration, deceit, the only weapon left to those who have been defeated, is the one being used by both the beast from the sea that was given power by the dragon and by Babylon (Rev. 18:23; 19:20; 20:2, 8, 10). In Revelation, Satan is not a cosmic warrior, but a defeated warrior who stands on no-man's land and has to use surrogates in order to do what defeated warriors are left to do, deceive

This book reveals how things
are seen from a divine perspective.

those who do not listen to warnings and believe lies.

So, what does Revelation reveal? When seen from a human point of view, the world seems to be under the power of Satan, and those who worship God end up dead for their loyalty. John the prophet was chosen to give a message to the elect whose names were written in the book of life before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8; 17:8). This book reveals how things are seen from a divine perspective. Paradoxically, God knows exactly what is going on, and he is in complete control of his creation. The future is totally in his hands; what must happen will happen. This should be the determining factor in the minds of the members of the church. They should not think that the world is spinning out of control and Satan is winning. Christ is sitting with his Father in his Father's throne; he has already conquered Satan, and has empowered many of the elect to conquer as well.

Satan is a defeated has-been who is now in no-man's land. This should give the elect the strength to conquer the deceptions of those who offer opportunities to belong to the social and economic elites of this world. The idols offered by deceivers are not to become their gods. Under pressure, they need to have "patient endurance" (Rev. 1:9; 2:2; 3:19; 13:10; 14:12) and resist the deceptions of the promoters of idols. The name of anyone who succumbs to idolatry and worships anything other than the God who created and controls the cosmos will be blotted out of the book of life in which it was written before the foundation of the world (Rev. 3:5). Only the names of the conquerors will remain written in the book of life. They will inherit the land (Rev. 21:7, 27).

Some of what Revelation describes is culturally dated. It displays God as a sadistic enforcer of vengeance (Rev. 6:10; 19:2) and this gives twenty-first-century readers reason to be cautious:

1. When the shaft of the bottomless pit is open and out come locusts with smoke from the fire below, God gives them the power of scorpions. This means that instead of normally eating living plants, they torture non-worshippers of God for five months. Their torture is so severe that the victims eagerly desire to die, but God makes death unavailable to them (Rev. 9:3–6).
2. When the Faithful and True, who rides before his

army of white-horse riders, defeats the beast and the false prophet, who had deceived those who worship the beast and its image, he throws them "alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone." Their army is then "slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse, the sword of his mouth." An angel already had issued an invitation to "all the birds that fly in mid heaven, 'Come, gather for the great supper of God' . . . and all the birds were gorged with their flesh," that of the army killed by the sword of the Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11–21).

3. When all the wicked who have been defeated and are dead are later raised in the second resurrection, they are resurrected just to be killed again with fire that "[comes] down from heaven and consumed them." A special destiny, however, is reserved for the Devil. He is "thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet were; and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:9–10).
4. Even more disturbing, when the third angel of Revelation 14 delivers his message, he says that every idolater "shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. . . . their torment goes up for ever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night" (Rev. 14:10–11).

That God denies access to death so that torments may continue, provides a banquet of human corpses to birds, resurrects people only to kill them a second time, and that the Lamb and his angels wish to watch how idolaters are tormented forever is beyond today's reasonable moral parameters.

Revelation also describes a cosmos consisting of three stories, with traffic moving freely between the different levels. Besides the heaven above, the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth, there is a chamber below. It is a bottomless pit with a furnace and a shaft from which smoke comes out when the lid is opened with a key. Whether the lake of fire and brimstone is another name for the furnace of the bottomless pit cannot quite be determined. Since the key to Death and Hades is distinct from the key to the bottomless pit, and is also kept in heaven, this realm



The Last Judgment. Gothic portal of the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp, Belgium

could be the lake of fire or a separate subterranean chamber altogether. Such a cosmos is not compatible with what is known today about the universe.⁷

Most significantly, however, Revelation reveals the path to salvation. It portrays Jesus Christ among the Christian churches, and he knows exactly what is going on in the world. Jesus Christ wishes to inform the elect what they need to do to conquer over the deceptions of the surrogates of the dragon (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). If they conquer and testify, worshiping only the Creator God, they will have the future of Jesus who had faith in God when he faced an unmerited death. That was his testimony. As a result, God raised him from the dead and sat him with himself in his throne. Those who, by the way they live and die, testify of their faith and worship only God shall have the same future with God. The descriptions of “what must soon take place” are there to give an emotional boost to the warning and advice of Jesus. It’s encouragement for the elect to remain firm in their resistance to the deceptions of the surrogates of Satan.

Revelation reveals that idolatry is the unpardonable sin. No message could be more relevant in our time. The temptations to idolatry put forward by the surrogates of the dragon are everywhere. The gods of the state and the markets who enforce the oppressive power of sin are quite active, offering guidance, success, and security through economic and political power. The temptations to idolatry are found both outside and inside the church and this takes away from the church the ability to faithfully represent something other than the gods of the fallen world. Those whose names are found in the book of life must resist and condemn torture, war, racism, nationalism, consumerism, and the economic monopolies that promote deceptions and produce injustices, ills that are rampant in the new millennium.

Making individuals stand alone in a broken society, without any institution between them and the state and the markets, is the way in which the powers of the political and economic oligarchies sap the energies of the people. The church should be the bulwark where the power of the Holy Spirit is manifest, rather than the

The worship of wealth has become the driver of a new “prosperity gospel,” one which Paul surely would have declared “accursed” (Gal. 1:8–9).

exhibitor of worldly abuses of power. Everyone worships, and many worship idols. Tragically, the idols of the state and the market are also at times worshiped at church.

Writing as a naturalized citizen of the United States of America, I would first of all point out the nationalism that now pervades Christian churches in this country, to the astonishment of the rest of the world. The exaltation of firepower as the only source of safety, and of unlimited freedom to do what one wishes, has blinded many Christians to worship their national sovereignty without regard to the effects interference and abuses in other nations have on their neighbors. Often they worship their denominational identity, or parade their personal freedoms, without regard to the effect they have on their neighbors.

The worship of wealth has become the driver of a new “prosperity gospel,” one which Paul surely would have declared “accursed” (Gal. 1:8–9). According to it, being a good Christian will make you wealthy, and wealth is the source of happiness. Making the Creator God into the idol of good fortune is a deceptive device used by unscrupulous merchants of selfish ambitions who benefit from the greed and idolatry they promote (Rev. 18:3).

Most subtly, the worship of the Bible has made belief in the Bible a precondition for faith in God.⁸ Bibliolatry is the abuse of the testimony of the many authors of the books in the Bible, based on the claim that God is its sole author.⁹ Labeling the Bible as the written, inerrant, or infallible Word of God is the lazy way to dismiss the evidence and unload the burden of proof, but not the way to establish what is the case.

Warning against idolatry and emphasizing the requirement to worship the Creator God is what Revelation is all about. Given the choice between idolatry and death, death is the better option. The judgment of God is going to be severe on idolaters.

The example to be followed is that of those who “have conquered him [the dragon] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death” (Rev. 12:11).

Endnotes

1. Reinder Bruinsma, “What Do Recent Books on The Revelation Reveal?” *Spectrum* 49, no. 2 (2021): 17–23. According to Bruinsma, they reveal that financial dependence on a denominational salary seems to affect the degree to which the authors agree with the official interpretation of Revelation. He advises future readers to choose the book that best fits their thinking about the purpose of Revelation.
2. Herold Weiss, *The End of the Scroll: Biblical Apocalyptic Trajectories* (Gonzalez, FL: Energion Publications, 2020).
3. Ranko Stefanović, *Plain Revelation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2013). It is a concise version of his 654-page commentary titled *Revelation of Jesus*.
4. Joseph Battistone, *The Great Controversy Theme in E. G. White Writings* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978).
5. See, for example, Richard M. Davidson, “Cosmic Metanarrative for the Coming Millennium,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 11, no. 1–2 (2000): 102–119.
6. *Revelation*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2019).
7. See, Fernando Canale, “Importance of our Worldview,” *Ministry* 68, no. 11 (Dec. 1995) for a defense of the so-called biblical one. Herold Weiss, *Creation in Scripture* (Gonzalez, FL: Energion Publications, 2012) for a description of the biblical ones.
8. It is now Fundamental Belief # 1. See, Herold Weiss, “Reflecting on San Antonio: Or, Hermeneutics or Humility or What’s the Bible Really Got to Do With It,” *Spectrum* 43, no. 3 (Summer 2015), 80–84.
9. See Norman R. Gulley, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 1: Prolegomena* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2003).



HEROLD WEISS’S latest books are *Meditations on According to John*, *Meditations on the Letters of Paul*, and *The End of the Scroll: Biblical Apocalyptic Trajectories*.



SOCIAL REALITIES



Seventh-day Adventists, Fundamentalism, and the Second Wave of the Ku Klux Klan

BY MICHAEL W. CAMPBELL

During the 1967–1968 school year, Billy Wright, a young Black man, decided to attend Southwestern Junior College in Keene, Texas.¹ His family had recently converted to Seventh-day Adventism and Wright had felt a distinct call to ministry. He chose this historically White Adventist school because he wanted to be closer to home. In spite of a series of roadblocks, he was able to tenaciously hold on and academically outperform his White peers. An intrepid individual, Wright persevered despite counsel from the religion department, which discouraged him from pursuing a theology degree. When these tactics to discourage him did not work, a mob at the furniture manufacturing plant tried to prevent him from earning money to pay his bill. When even this, too, failed to discourage Wright, the local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan, held a cross burning outside his dormitory window. Subsequently, someone attempted, unsuccessfully, to set pipe bombs in the dormitory. Wright believed that it was God’s providence that he survived as one of four African American students to integrate this historically White Adventist school.²

Wright’s courage and tenacity were certainly not unique in the wake of the Civil Rights era. Students at other Christian colleges and universities also

challenged administrations determined to preserve White supremacy.³ Most White southern evangelicals defended segregation as hermeneutically correct and biblically sound.⁴ Once the IRS in the 1970s revoked Bob Jones University’s tax-exempt status because it failed to integrate, political operatives including Jerry Falwell (1933–2007), James Robison (b. 1943), and Tim LaHaye (1926–2016) morphed the issues from race by shifting to abortion in the formation of the Christian Coalition.⁵ What is not as well known, but should probably not be surprising, is that the majority of Adventist colleges and universities in North America similarly resisted integration. Interviews suggest that there were active Klan chapters and cross burnings on other Adventist college campuses. The lack of faculty diversity, segregated cafeterias, and the proscription against interracial dating were further indications of segregation. At the same time, denominational leaders at the General Conference held on as long as they possibly could to a racially segregated cafeteria, and discouraged Adventist clergy from participating in Civil Rights marches.⁷ This did not stop some from participating, as has been documented by several denominational historians.⁷ This legacy would loom large, and some Adventist congregations in the American South continued to

provide monthly payments to local Klan chapters into the 1980s.⁸

Seventh-day Adventism, as a movement on the margins of American society, came a long way from its abolitionist beginnings. The earliest Sabbatarian Adventists (those who formed the core of the denomination that officially organized in 1863) were born and bred on anti-slavery rhetoric. Both James White and Ellen White denounced slavery in the strongest possible terms, with Ellen White writing to believers, for example, to break the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law. The first General Conference president, John Byington (elected in 1863 in the midst of the Civil War) was well-known for his abolitionism, and historian Brian Strayer has gone to great lengths to uncover his participation on the Underground Railroad.⁹ On the eve of the Civil War, James boldly proclaimed that “to a man” they voted for Abraham Lincoln and remained united in their opposition to slavery and that to retain slaves was cause for disfellowship.¹⁰ One can understand why, even during the heyday of the Millerite revival of the 1840s, the news about Christ’s Second Advent freeing the slaves was not well received in the American South.¹¹

Adventist historiography has in recent years contextualized some of this radical resistance in light of the wider social and political milieu. Kevin Burton, in his doctoral work, for example, has shown that early Millerite and Sabbatarian Adventist leaders were quite radical. Even during the Millerite revival of the 1840s there were a number of Black preachers who boldly proclaimed Christ’s imminent return. A Free Will Baptist preacher, William Foy’s visionary ministry was witnessed and appreciated by then Ellen Harmon (later White). Ellen, for her part, expressed significant appreciation for Foy’s ministry. Each on different occasions escaped mob violence as Advent visionaries. Other Black Millerites, such as Eri L. Barr, traveled with White ministers—a fact only relatively recently noticed.¹² Contemporary Millerites seemed not to be concerned that a Black and a White minister held evangelistic meetings together, and no one within Adventism discussed the color of their skin. Even the first issues of *The Present Truth* (first published in 1849), the founding periodical of Sabbatarian Adventism, were printed on an abolitionist press.

A century later, Seventh-day Adventism, a movement cradled in abolitionism, would become recalcitrant toward the Civil Rights Movement. So, how did a movement founded by ardent abolitionist leaders so transform in a century to the point where some leaders, at least, were actively involved in the Ku Klux Klan and inciting racial violence?

While this reversal in race relations has been ably documented by a number of Adventist historians, most notably Calvin B. Rock in *Protest and Progress* (Andrews University Press, 2018), this article seeks to problematize this narrative by looking at a rather overlooked chapter of Seventh-day Adventist history from 1915 to 1925, during the heyday of what I describe as *Adventist Fundamentalism*. Such broad cultural shifts were not unique to Adventism. Mark A. Noll would furthermore describe this as a time when “In the lower Midwest and upper South, this same hereditary religion supported the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and its desire to keep American power in white Protestant hands.”¹³ In this way, the rise of the second wave of the Klan coincided with increased racial tensions. “Racial attitudes gathered strength in the churches through the 1920s,” writes Philip Jenkins.¹⁴ In this way, the second



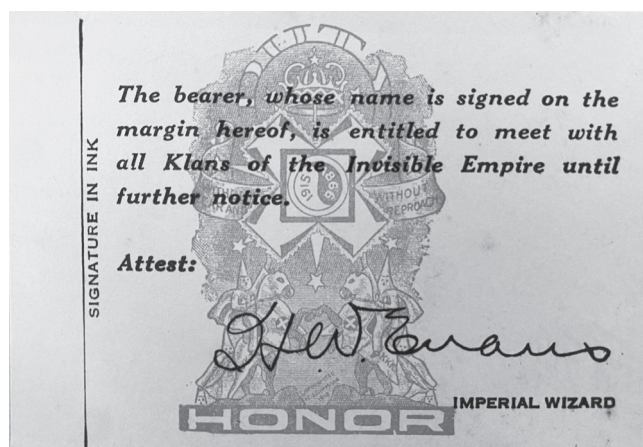
Recruitment poster for the Ku Klux Klan.
Courtesy of The Texas Collection, Baylor University

wave of the Ku Klux Klan, during the late 1910s and early 1920s, showcases this same kind of tipping point in Adventist race relations. Just as some Fundamentalists (ostensibly the outspoken J. Frank Norris would become a particularly outspoken supporter of the Klan), in a similar way, some Adventists would become swept up in this movement of Christian nationalism.

Adventist Fundamentalism

The historical Fundamentalist movement has been variously defined and contested. For the purposes of this article, I've utilized George Marsden's definition of it being militantly anti-modernism. Or, as he has quipped, an "evangelical who is mad about something." Other historians have variously built on, and critiqued, this definition, noting that it is as much a broad attitude or outlook, as anything else. More recent scholarship by Matthew Avery Sutton has revived Ernest R. Sandeen's thesis about premillennial apocalypticism as the driving force behind Fundamentalism. And of course, several individuals, including Nancy Murphey and B. M. Pietsch have noted the irony that these historical Fundamentalists were using the same modernist epistemological foundations to reconcile themselves to the world around them that was indeed changing. For the sake of this article, I argue that Seventh-day Adventists were very much a part of these very lively debates as they happened and, for better or worse, saw themselves as Fundamentalists in this warfare against theological modernism.

A central motif linking Adventism and Fundamentalism would in fact be eschatological. During World War I, Adventist denominational leaders attended all the prophetic conferences held by those who would later become known as the Fundamentalists and reported about them as some of the most significant events in Christian history—ranked in importance with Luther's *Ninety-five Theses*. Their reports in the *Review and Herald* are tinged with a bit of jealousy as they wondered why these conservative Christians were doing so well at attracting the attention of "the world" to Christ's eminent return. Yet this was a one-sided love affair. As I have documented elsewhere, the editors of *The Fundamentals: A Testimony for the Truth* (1910–15) had debated among themselves about whether to include



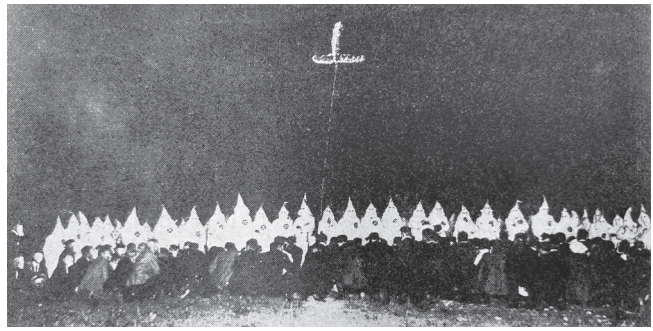
An original membership card for the Ku Klux Klan, ca. 1920s. Courtesy of the Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin

Seventh-day Adventists with Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses in their tract against cults. In the end, they opted to not mention them at all (largely due to the intervention of Lyman and Milton Stewart, the brothers who financed the project). Despite such reservations on the part of these Fundamentalists, A. G. Daniells, organizer of the Adventist 1919 Bible Conference (modeled after these prophetic conferences), would state that Adventists are the "Fundamentalists of the Fundamentalists." Adventists began to adopt these ideas from the Fundamentalists into their own unique variety of Adventist Fundamentalism.

Adventists who sought social respectability on the margins of American religion turned to another pan-denominational group, the Fundamentalists, who were themselves losing space in the American religious marketplace. Their increasingly shrill denunciations of modernism, along with internecine warfare in various denominations, would not split the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the same way that other denominations split apart. A decade earlier, those with a more independent (and at times liberal) theological bent, such as Dr. John Harvey Kellogg among others, found themselves pushed outside the denomination. Adventists were spared a church split because Adventist thought leaders, especially as evidenced after Ellen White's death in 1915, up through the 1919 Bible Conference and beyond into the 1920s, saw themselves as Fundamentalist. A helpful interpretative lens for understanding Adventist Fundamentalism is perhaps that of a continuum between those who saw themselves

as more open to change, versus those traditionalists who embraced a much more conservative mindset that included a push toward inerrancy.¹⁵ This continuum is helpful for understanding Adventism because Adventist Fundamentalism was far from monolithic. Adventism paralleled the wider Fundamentalist movement by having a common enemy, theological modernism; much of the internal strife centers upon the nature, inspiration, and authority of Ellen G. White's writings. Now that she was no longer alive, Adventist hermeneutical debates centered upon the interpretation of her writings.

Adventism embraced a militant Fundamentalism from World War I up through the 1920s. This linkage in reaction to modernism profoundly impacted Seventh-day Adventism in terms of its attitude to both race and gender. In 1910 there were close to 1,000 female church workers, including some pastors, but by 1930 there were only a handful left.¹⁶ During this period Adventists also began to selectively use a few quotations by Ellen White at the end of her life, dealing with racial strife in the American South and the need to not inflame the situation by allowing temporarily for segregation, as becoming normative for Adventist race relations in the twentieth century. Some of the most militant and conservative Adventist Fundamentalists began to articulate a new theology of segregation. Most notably, J. S. Washburn, who was a White evangelist in Washington, DC, was pitted against the much more popular Black preacher, Lewis C. Sheafe. Church president, A. G. Daniells led the way by using these two pastors as role models for twentieth-century Adventism. Daniells's policies resulted in the breakup of a racially integrated church in Washington, DC, which created new racial tensions. The General Conference poured money into Washburn's evangelism and church, giving only a pittance to the work of Sheafe and his congregation. Ultimately Sheafe would leave Adventism, and the pain caused paved the way for later regional conferences that began within Seventh-day Adventism in the 1940s.¹⁷ Washburn, who saw himself as a hardline conservative and guardian of Ellen White's inerrant writings, produced some of the most racist and vitriolic rhetoric in Adventist history. In the midst of this debate, Arthur W. Spalding wrote his manuscript, *Lights and Shades in the Black Belt*, describing in detail the benefits of



This photograph of a Klan cross burning appears at least five different times in Seventh-day Adventist publications between 1918 and 1924.

segregation. This recasting of Ellen White can be seen in the portrayal of Jesus by Ellen White. As Edward J. Blum and Paul Harvey argue in *The Color of Christ* (2012), Ellen White was a holdout in the nineteenth century in describing Jesus as “light,” not white.¹⁸ But, by the early twentieth-century, new traditions emerged claiming that Ellen White regarded a painting of a White Jesus as the most exact likeness to the image of Jesus she had seen in vision.¹⁹ This recasting of Jesus as White, through Ellen White, is indicative of this same kind of transformation in terms of race and gender that occurred during the decade after her death.

This article furthermore argues that it was a militant and selective reading of Ellen White, reinforced by an inerrantist view of her authority, that made it possible for her writings to be used effectively to suppress Blacks and women, especially during the 1920s, the heyday of Adventist Fundamentalism. This can be seen in clearer relief by Adventist interactions with the second wave of the Ku Klux Klan, with special focus on 1920–25.

Seventh-day Adventist Interactions with the Klan

Seventh-day Adventist interactions with the second wave of the Ku Klux Klan were mixed. While there is extensive documentation of both abolitionist activity in early Adventism, and strong reactions against integration during the Civil Rights Movement, there was a far more fluid time in racial views in between. Interactions between Seventh-day Adventists and the Klan varied—from church leaders speaking at Klan rallies to open suspicion of a secret society with violent tendencies. While it is difficult to trace with any certainty how many Adventists were part of the Klan (due to limited extant records), both Adventist and Klan sources offer

numerous examples that Adventist church members did participate in Klan activities. For example, at a Klan meeting in North Dakota featuring the Grand Cyclops of the Grand Forks Klan, Rev. F. Halsey Ambrose, the presence of a number of denominations was noted, including Seventh-day Adventists.²⁰ Another interesting example of participation involved a Seventh-day Adventist church member in Oklahoma whose funeral was attended by twelve Klansmen, “clad in the regalia of their order,” after which they passed in single file, each leaving “a green fern leaf on the coffin” and the leader placing a “cross of red roses at the head of the grave.”²¹

A few pre-1915 references to the Klan give some indication about initial predilections toward the Klan and secret societies. The earliest reference to the Ku Klux Klan actually comes from 1904, when there is an opaque reference to the Ku Klux Klan (referencing the first iteration during the Civil War) as among those “secret societies” that Adventists should avoid.²² Similarly, an Adventist periodical devoted to educating Adventist young people, *The Youth’s Instructor*, provided a review in 1909 of lessons learned from the American Civil War. This included avoiding the “lawless methods of the Ku-Klux-Klan [*sic*], a secret, oath-bound order, [that] terrorized the superstitious negro, spreading such anarchy and violence in various sections that the better classes of the Southern people themselves united to re-establish order.”²³ At least up until World War I, Adventists were consistent that during the original iteration of the Reconstruction period, the Klan was to be avoided due to its association with being secretive or potentially violent.

After 1918, through the early 1920s, there is a decided shift in rhetoric in how Adventists viewed the second wave of the Klan in America. While Adventists continued to maintain that secret societies should be avoided, or to be leery about money-making schemes, the Adventist rhetoric

does not mention the Klan’s association with the Civil War or suppression of the rights of formerly enslaved people.²⁴ At this point, the Klan is featured as a positive group rather than reprehensible, attesting to a broad rehabilitation of the second wave of the Klan following D. W. Griffith’s 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation*.

The most striking feature of the shift is that Adventists appreciated the Klan’s anti-Roman Catholic rhetoric. Alonzo Baker, associate editor of *Signs of the Times*, noted that “anti-Romanism” is one of the “biggest planks” in their “platform.”²⁵ Adventists were enchanted with the anti-Catholic composition of the organization,²⁶ and, ironically, at least one Adventist minister gave a presentation at a Klan meeting to promote *Liberty Magazine*, the signature Adventist publication promoting religious liberty.²⁷ The first published reference to the Klan in the denomination’s flagship periodical, the *Review and Herald*, is in an article about “Practising [*sic*] What We Preach.” The article featured recent news coverage from the Catholic weekly, *America*, responding to anti-Catholic rhetoric made by William Joseph Simmons, alleging that the Catholic Church “owes an allegiance that is foreign to the government of the United States.” He added: “These also I am earnestly striving for.”²⁸ Similarly, another article provided news coverage on the



This photograph, originally published in *Signs of the Times*, features the racial turmoil in America during the 1920s.

Council of Catholic Men that fought against the Klan and sought to limit the distribution of Protestant literature in the Philippines.²⁹ Clearly Adventists and the Klan had a common enemy in Catholicism—which Adventists identified as the mark of the beast that would bring about the final eschaton. This would be characterized by a distinctive threefold union between modern spiritualism, apostate Protestantism, and Roman Catholicism—an eschatological framework that would be unique to Seventh-day Adventists. The Klan warning about any potential “union” between Protestantism and Catholicism “is right in line of fulfilling prophecy as every Seventh-day Adventist well knows.”³⁰ More than anything else, Adventists during the 1920s noted with appreciation how the Klan stood against the infiltration of Roman Catholicism within American culture and society. This nativism, coupled with Adventist eschatology, turned out to be an irresistible combination for Adventists who wanted to believe so badly that they were willing to support a group that, prior to this, they would never have countenanced.

In another clear sign that Adventist rhetoric had changed about the Klan, an Adventist minister, W. E. Barr, described how twenty-five Klansmen had showed up at an Adventist evangelistic meeting in Oklahoma. The Klan donated \$25 to the Adventists to help with their evangelistic meetings and invited members to join their Klan chapter. Barr added a public note of appreciation for the work of the Klan, especially their efforts to uphold the American constitution and to promote a “clean community.”³¹ It is not known whether any Adventists joined, but if Barr’s evangelistic efforts



This Klan manual provides important details about what the Klan stands for, including the ABCs of Klan membership: America First, Benevolence, and Clanishness. Courtesy of the Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin

are any indication, his positive rapport with the Klan certainly did not hurt. When he was done, he raised up a congregation of over 100 members and built the Ardmore Seventh-day Adventist Church.³² Barr’s evangelistic techniques, and these meetings, would be upheld as a model for aspiring young pastors. Some Adventist evangelists treated the Klan as a potentially valuable ally, particularly when discussing the Roman Catholic Church as the mark of the beast.

Perhaps the most startling example is C. S. Longacre, the head of the religious liberty department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and one of the most prominent leaders in the denomination at the time, who spoke for a robed Klan convention in Charleston, West Virginia. He recounted that he was blindfolded at the train station and taken “to an audience robed in ghostly white and hooded so you could see nothing except two sparkling eyes through two small holes.” He expressed his apprehension at first but shared that his audience was “composed of the leading business men [*sic*] of that city who, it is said, stand for true American principles.” The next day, he met some of these people in broad daylight, who shared with him how much they appreciated his talk.³³ The most extensive description by an Adventist of the work of the Ku Klux Klan is a manuscript by A. W. Spalding, who would become prominent in the 1930s and 1940s as an Adventist historian, in the work already mentioned, *Lights and Shades*.³⁴ While noting the excesses at times of the Klan, Spalding argues that things could have been much worse. Thus “God was overruling,” noting some positive aspects of the Klan to maintain racial segregation. Spalding added that due to sin, racial segregation was necessary, and that mixed marriages caused confusion and a weakening of the races. J. S. Washburn, who has also already been mentioned, affirmed that ultimately heaven itself would be segregated. The 1920s also became notable for a resurgence of interest in the “amalgamation” statements by Ellen White, with decidedly racist interpretations. For both Spalding and Washburn, racial ideology and literalistic readings of Ellen White would complement one another and reify their racist theology.

One final point of alignment was that Adventists noted with glowing admiration support by the Klan for

private parochial school systems.³⁵ This at times could be mixed, as when the Klan fought against Roman Catholics having their own schools. While Adventists had a common enemy, and therefore at least some Adventists saw themselves in alignment with the Klan (and some actively participated), obviously this did not represent all of Adventists at this time. Yet it does show that clearly times had changed and that, at least within a new era of Adventist Fundamentalism, such efforts reflected new mores and values about race, gender, immigration, and even lingering biases against Roman Catholicism.

Critiquing the Klan

Other than initial concerns about the Klan being secretive or potentially violent, after 1920 the primary critique of the Klan came from Seventh-day Adventists beyond North America. During the mid-1920s, Adventist membership outside of North America eclipsed that of the membership in the home base of America. This shift reflected the fact that Adventism was beginning



Photograph courtesy of the author featuring a 1920s Klan robe on exhibit at the collection of the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum

to become a global movement. Adventists were driven by a sense of mission to warn the world about Christ's impending return, and interestingly, it was Adventists living overseas who saw most clearly the dangers of the Ku Klux Klan, especially the implications for race relations, as illustrated by the next two examples.

The most outspoken opposition to the Klan in print by an Adventist appears in a Canadian Adventist periodical, *The Canadian Watchman*. The article, written presumably by editor C. F. McVagh, warned that a revival of the Ku Klux Klan on any "extended scale" was not just a "negro problem" but a problem for all "races and religions." He believed that Americans were vulnerable to this due to patriotic vigilance efforts creating a "bad" situation. He worried lest this "disease . . . jump national boundaries" so that what "they have in the United States today, we may have in Canada tomorrow." He compared the "masked terrorism and mob law" of the Klan to "a fearful reminder of the satanic methods of the Dark Ages." A "revival of the Ku-Klux-Klan ought to make us think seriously" about what we believe. He attributed Griffith's movie *The Birth of a Nation* as largely responsible for "popular sentiment."³⁶

Another outspoken group of Adventist critics came from Australia and New Zealand. C. M. Snow, editor of the Australian *Signs of the Times*, for example, expressed concern about "hearing much concerning the work of the Ku Klux Klan in the United States and Canada." The Klan, he protested, "set itself with fierce determination to rob of their rights the Jews, the Roman Catholics, and the negroes, the first two on account of their religion, and the last on account of their racial characteristics."³⁷

Both Canadian and Australian Adventists saw what apparently few American Adventists recognized at the time—the implications of the second wave of the Klan for Adventist race relations. As Philip Jenkins has observed, the rise of the second wave of the Klan



Photograph as published in the 1922 *General Conference Bulletin*. The Canadian McVagh, was a particularly vocal critic of the Klan.

coincided with increased racial tensions. “Racial attitudes gathered strength in the churches through the 1920s.”³⁸

One other dimension of the intersection between Adventism and the Klan is that regional aspects most certainly played a part in Adventist participation in the Klan. As several historians have noted, the Klan faded in influence within American society in the latter 1920s, especially in late 1925 and 1926. Similarly, in the latter part of the 1920s, at least in Adventist print, references to the Klan similarly disappear. In 1925, as the Klan was waning, a group of Adventist clergy in California coalesced to publicly condemn the Klan.³⁹ This suggests that not only were Adventists outside of the United States concerned about race relations, but that there were regional variations within Adventism as well. The Klan would live on in some circles of Seventh-day Adventism, and reappear during the third wave of the Klan during the Civil Rights Era as mentioned at the outset of this article. Yet the challenges created by Adventist Fundamentalism, particularly for race relations, would leave scars and challenge Adventism for much of the twentieth century (a topic beyond the scope of this article).

Conclusions

Several recent scholars have pointed out the theological underpinnings behind the Klan.⁴⁰ Despite this, a lacuna exists both within Adventist and Klan scholarship about interactions between these two groups. Such religious underpinnings are thereby illuminating, making this a helpful case study about a religious group on the margins of American religion, as a new religious movement, as it sought to widen its own influence through the wave of populism and nationalism. In the bid from sect to denomination, during its formative years the denomination had created a liminal space in which women and Blacks could actively participate and even provide leadership. Yet, in the early twentieth century, with the rise of Adventist Fundamentalism, this space eroded away.

Rawlings, in his *Second Coming of the Invisible Empire*, notes how the second wave of the Klan was really “one of the most successful marketing efforts in American history.”⁴¹ Klan recruiters, known as Kleagles, as

they transformed the movement from nearly 100,000 members at the close of the war to some 5 million members by 1925, drew upon and attracted some Adventists. The combination of Christianity, patriotism, White supremacy, rule of law, and anti-Catholicism was an irresistible mix. And while not all Christians, Fundamentalists, or Adventists supported the Klan, it was supported by some. Perhaps more important is to notice these shared common concerns that created crossings, in ways that perhaps should not be surprising. What appears to have especially attracted those Adventists who did interact with the Klan centered on their anti-Catholic, pro-private education, and pro-religious liberty (albeit only for Protestants) stances. Some Adventists found themselves predisposed to like and constructively engage with the Klan, even sharing some of their racial biases about segregation, which would be amplified in new directions through a proof-text and re-interpretation of Ellen White’s writings that emphasized a new “White” Jesus and a segregated heaven. Some Adventist evangelists found themselves protected by the Klan and at least one General Conference leader was featured at a Klan rally. This would have been unimaginable to the founders a generation earlier, during the first wave of the Klan. Yet times had changed. And now the Klan was fulfilling Bible prophecy by warning about changes they believed were bringing about the eschaton.

As pointed out by several other recent scholars, there are some important regional variations to Adventism that are important to note, and where points of resistance arose. While southern, midwestern, and eastern American Adventists appear to be where all of the examples of Klan interaction happen, it would be Adventists in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and California who would express significant concerns, warning adherents about the racial and xenophobic implications of the Klan.

Yet, as American Adventism embraced its own unique variety of Fundamentalism, Adventism itself had profoundly changed. And whereas the reasons for this are no doubt complex, at the very least, Adventist Fundamentalism would be a significant conduit in helping to attract some Adventists to the second wave of the Klan.

Endnotes

1. An earlier version of this article was presented to the American Society of Church History, January 9, 2022. I'm grateful to a variety of scholars who have provided input and enriched this article. I'm especially indebted to several Adventist scholars, Gilbert M. Valentine, Jonathan Butler, Ron Graybill, and Lawrence Geraty, for their input as part of their reading group. Special thanks to Matthew J. Lucio of the *Adventist History Podcast* for constructive feedback. Additional thanks to Benjamin Baker and Kevin M. Burton for assistance in locating sources. I'm also grateful to the staff of the archives at the Baylor University Texas History Collection and the special collections at Austin for assistance in locating Ku Klux Klan materials in their collections. Special thanks to the Southwestern Adventist University Sicher Faculty Development Grant that made travel to these archives possible.

2. Based upon an interview by Buster Swoopes, Jr., with Billy Wright, Southwestern Adventist University Martin Luther King, Jr., Day Assembly, Jan. 20, 2020.

3. Cf. J. Russell Hawkins, *The Bible Told Them So: How Southern Evangelicals Fought to Preserve White Supremacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

4. Hawkins, *The Bible Told Them So*, 5.

5. For a helpful overview showing this development, see Randall Balmer, *Bad Faith: Race and the Rise of the Religious Right* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2021).

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Regional Conferences and the Seventh-day Adventist Church

BY ISAAC R. PALMER, SR.

In June of 2015, in a speech that celebrated the seventieth anniversary of the Lake Region Conference, Don Livesay, president of the Lake Union Conference, made a heartfelt apology for the racism within the Seventh-day Adventist Church that had led to the formation of regional conferences in 1945–46. Elder Livesay’s sentiment that an apology was needed suggests that the formation of these conferences was somehow inappropriate or harmful to Black members and churches.

The apology for *racism* is welcomed, but no apology is needed for the creation of the regional conferences. The statistical evidence shows that the creation of regional conferences was a godsend to thousands of Blacks within the urban communities of America. Table 1 shows the spectacular success of the regional conferences.

Not included in the apology was any regret for the continued wrong impression that separate conferences were the request of Blacks in the 1940s. To this day it is widely believed that Blacks demanded regional conferences so that they could hold leadership positions. However, the truth is that White leadership of the

General Conference, the division, and the unions initiated the offer of regional conferences to Blacks. They offered Blacks their own conferences because they knew their own members and because of racial tensions within their constituencies they could not deliver on any commitment to integration that the Blacks were asking for. Their recommendation was precipitated when Lucille Byard, a 66-year-old Black Seventh-day Adventist woman, died a month after being refused admittance on the basis of her race into Washington Sanitarium (now Adventist HealthCare White Oak Medical Center in Silver Spring, MD).

Before and after the creation of regional conferences, Black members were specifically and unfortunately unwelcome in White churches. As late as the 1960s, many White churches were choosing to turn off the lights and shut down their sanctuaries rather than to accept Black worshippers. By accommodating the prevailing racial attitudes of the rest of America in the 1940s, White Adventism missed a great opportunity to show themselves to be a “peculiar people.”

America, a nation built on the backs of an enslaved

70 Years of Membership Growth				
Entities	1948 Members	2018 Members	Times Growth	Percent Growth
Regional Conferences	20,561	321,359	16	1563%
NAD sans Regionals	214,908	928,334	4	432%
Regional Percent to NAD	10%	35%		
<i>Regional Conferences outgrew the rest of the NAD 16 times to 4: 1,563% to 432%</i>				

Table 1 Regional and North American Division growth

people, with its DNA steeped in racism, was the birthplace and host of Seventh-day Adventism. The Church was infected by nature and nurture with an implicit bias and natural proclivity toward race-based discrimination. The Adventist Church is not to blame for racism, except in its failure, in a land consumed in racial bias, to distinguish itself as a “peculiar people.” The Church cannot deny the cultural cues of its host nation. The earnings differential between Blacks and Whites has forever been an intended byproduct of America’s systemic racism: racism that has outlived Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, Martin Luther King’s Dream, the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, and Lyndon Johnson’s Civil Rights Act of 1964. And the three angels’ messages have not been a cure for the Church’s inherited racial attitudes and behaviors.

How the regional conferences were financially launched is the problem being addressed in this paper—the disparate earnings of Blacks and Whites and the resultant tithe in North America’s Church.

Low Giving Begins with Low Earnings

In the 1940s, per the US Bureau of Labor, the median Black household income was approximately 50% of the earnings of White households. The main difficulty in the formation of the regional conferences was in how they were brought into the unions and the sisterhood of conferences under the same policies that governed the state conferences. This, despite the huge difference in member earnings and the resultant tithe from that income. And the 50% earnings difference, which was based on America’s racial biases, manifested itself in Black conferences and churches as 50% tithe and 50% local offerings.¹

The same set of numbers can be viewed from two perspectives. If person A has \$40 and person B has \$80, person A has 50% as much money as person B. From an alternative perspective, you can say, person B has 100% more money than person A (person B’s extra \$40 ÷ person A’s \$40 = 100%).

For seventy-plus years, the regional conferences’ tithe per capita (tithe per member) has hovered around 60% of the tithe per capita of the state conferences. Using the 60% to 100% ratios and applying the formula above, this means that the state conferences

had 66.6% more tithe than the regional conferences. The formula reads: the state conferences’ extra 40% ÷ the regional conferences 60% = 66.6% more tithe. That’s 66.6% more tithe with which to operate their conferences. And those extra dollars are why a group of cohort state conferences with the same membership as the regional conferences, has 76% more churches, 42% more pastors, and 213% more schools than the regional conference with the same number of members. More on the cohort conferences coming up.

Tithe Per Capita Shows the Real Disparity

The tithe differential is best expressed in the tithe-per-capita numbers for the different groups of conferences. The tithe per capita is a group’s tithe divided by its membership. Table 2 shows a partial listing of the tithe per capita of the conferences in the North American Division. Ranked from highest to lowest, the highest per capita is Michigan Conference at \$1,354. Illinois is ranked thirty-sixth with a per capita of \$863. The first regional conference is Allegheny East at thirty-seventh, with a per capita of \$862, and Northeastern is at forty-fourth. Most telling

2019 NAD Conferences Ranked by Tithe Per Capita

Rank of	Per	% NAD
58 NAD Conferences	Capita	Average
1 Michigan.....	\$1,354.....	129%
36 Illinois.....	\$863.....	83%
37 Allegheny East.....	\$862.....	82%
44 Northeastern.....	\$806.....	77%
52 South Central.....	\$581.....	56%
53 Central States.....	\$555.....	53%
54 South Atlantic.....	\$506.....	48%
55 Southeastern.....	\$482.....	46%
56 Southwest Region.....	\$464.....	44%
57 Allegheny West.....	\$427.....	41%
58 Lake Region.....	\$349.....	33%
<hr/>		
NAD Average.....	\$1,046.....	108%
Regional Average.....	\$591.....	61%

Table 2 Rank of 58 NAD conferences. Regional conferences are at the bottom.

Regional and State Conferences Paired by Membership Size

These conferences are paired on combined membership of each group. In 1948 the 7 regional conferences had 20,561 members. The 15 paired State Conferences had 89,871 members.

Regional Conferences	2018 Members	Paired State	2018 Members
1 Allegheny East	41,163	1 GA Cum.	40,613
2 Allegheny West	16,773	2 Chesapeake	15,758
3 Central States	8,593	3 Indiana	8,720
4 Lake Region	31,427	4 Rocky Mountain	18,227
5 Northeastern	58,322	Kentucky-Tennessee	15,305
6 South Alantic	49,287	5 Texas	58,980
8 Southeastern	53,078	6 Southern New England	18,950
7 South Central	36,575	Greater New York	30,622
9 Southwest	26,719	7 Minnesota	10,101
		Ohio	11,856
		Illinois	13,767
		8 Gulf States	12,780
		New Jersey	16,774
		Carolina	23,235
		9 Michigan	26,738
Members	321,359	Members	322,426
Tithe	\$192,950,000	Tithe	\$337,298,000

Table 3 The conferences were equal in members but widely separated in tithe in 2018.

is that the other seven regional conferences bring up the last seven rankings (52–58) with per capita of 56% to 33% of the NAD average. Note that only when Allegheny East and Northeastern are added to the other regional conferences do they together reach the 60% ratio. Allegheny East is an outlier because twelve of the fifteen highest income counties in America are in their territory.

The importance of per capita as a financial analysis tool is that it levels the dollars and allows comparisons of other statistics. Tithe per capita (tithe per member) says that if South Central Conference hired a pastor in 2019, at a total salary cost of \$100,000, with a per capita of \$581, the conference would have had to use tithe of 172 members ($\$100,000 \div \581). But Michigan Conference would only have to expend the tithe per capita of seventy-three members to hire the same pastor ($\$100,000 \div \$1,354$).

In each of the six unions with regional conferences, the regional conferences have the smallest per capita. Note the ranking within each union in Table 3.

Is Tithe Low or Membership Too High?

An exhaustive study of the division’s members added, and members removed from their rolls over the

last twenty years, shows that the regional conferences added 287,644 members, and they “subtracted” 183,855 members, which was 64% of the total members added. This percentage is comparable with the paired cohort state conferences over the same twenty years. These findings refute the accusation by some that the regional conferences’ memberships are intentionally left overstated, because the churches and conferences are not as disciplined in dropping non-attending members from the rolls. The accusation of inflated membership is used with malicious intent to explain the low per-capita numbers in the regional conferences, allowing them to ignore the earnings differential.

Cohort Conferences Paired by Membership for Comparison.

For comparison purposes, the now-nine regional conferences (two of the original seven divided in subsequent years) were paired with fifteen cohort state conferences in 2018; both groups collectively had nearly identical membership totals of approximately 322,000 (Table 4). The tithe from the 321,000 regional members was \$192 million. The tithe from the 322,000 cohort state members was \$337 million. The same-size paired

2018 Institutional Comparisons

	Paired State Conferences	Regional Conferences	Difference	Regional % to State
Members.....	322,424	321,359	1,065	100%
Tithe.....	\$337,000,000	\$192,000,000	\$145,000,000	57%
Tithe Per Capita.....	\$1,046	\$600	\$446	57%
Churches.....	1,767	1,048	719	59%
Pastors.....	1,062	683	379	64%
Schools.....	243	88	155	36%
Teachers.....	877	333	544	38%
Students.....	10,550	3,450	7,100	33%
Boarding.....	16	1	15	6%
All Employees.....	2,918	1,280	1,638	44%

Table 4 Numbers for regional and paired state conferences and percent regional to state conferences

state conferences had \$145 million more to service their members than the regional conferences. And the tithe per capita for the regional conferences was 57% (\$600 ÷ \$1,046) of the per capita of the paired state conferences.

By contrast, the fifteen cohort state conferences paired with the same-size membership have 247 schools: thirty-one with grades through twelfth, which includes sixteen boarding academies. The regional conferences have seventy-nine schools, only seven through grade twelve, and one boarding academy. In fact, four of the nine regional conferences don't have a single school that goes to the twelfth grade. So important is the Adventist school system to the conferences and the churches that the General Conference Education Department states, "Christian Education is the most-effective Evangelism for second generation Adventist youth." This is truly a crisis for the nine regional conferences.

The lack of church schools and boarding academies in the regional conferences is not a lack of commitment to Christian education—it is a shortage that begins with the Black family's weekly paycheck, and then tithe and offerings. Over the last seventy-plus years, the 66.6% additional earnings in the White family's paycheck contributed a lot of tithe and local offerings; that bought a lot of schools and paid a lot of tuition. The state conferences and churches have cashed in on the monetized dividends of White privilege.²

Tithe Percentages Policy

The Church's tithe percentage policy requires each NAD conference to remit a percentage of their tithe to support the unions, division, and General Conference. This amount is approximately 25%.³ The lack of responsiveness to the earnings/tithe disparity and the consequential "haves versus have nots" in resources have been most harmful to the Black work since the 1940s. In 2019, for the paired conferences, after remitting the tithe percentages of 25% the state conferences were left with \$255 million; this is \$63 million more than the nine regional conferences' gross tithe *before* paying tithe percentages on \$193 million. The failure by the Church to factor this disparity into operating policies over the last seventy years has brought no statement of remorse, no offer of apology, nor thought of now considering these daunting factors and seeking to address them in a meaningful and impactful way. In 2019, on \$193 million in tithe, \$48 million was sent from the regional conferences in compliance with the tithe percentages policy (Table 5).

Is the Tithe Percentages Policy Egalitarian?

This *equal* application of policies and assessed tithe percentages was not done out of malice. In fact, it was likely initiated and continued to this day without thinking through the reality of race-based earnings in America. And because it did not impact the White congregations, it simply was not on the minds of the union, division, and GC leadership. Why would it be? It is easy to

2019 Tithe Percentages Remitted to Unions, Division and GC

Paired Conferences	2019 Tithe	Less 25% Tithe Percentages	After Tithe Percentages
Paired State.....	\$341,326,000.....	\$85,331,500.....	\$255,994,500
Regionals.....	\$193,166,000.....	\$48,291,500.....	\$144,874,500
Difference.....	\$148,160,000.....	\$37,040,000.....	\$111,120,000

Table 5 Tithe less tithe percentages. Paired states have more after tithe percentages than regional conferences began with.

believe that fairness is being practiced when all parties are assessed equally: *equality gives the illusion of equity and fairness*. But when the regional conferences are already shorted to 60% in tithe, anything taken from them effectively deepens their deficit in purchasing power and is therefore non-egalitarian.

Church leadership will claim that it is egalitarian because each conference is required to remit an equal percentage of their tithe income. But when one group is already standing in a 60% earnings/tithe hole, determined by America’s social economic system of racism, it is not egalitarian to now ask everyone to dig down another 25%. This merely extends and perpetuates America’s most enduring manifestation of systemic racism—opportunity and earnings disparity between Blacks and Whites—which was the intended result of public policy. Some national laws, policies, and practices may have been reworked, but the results continue with full intentionality.

Using a foot-race metaphor: if America’s racist behavior in the workplace puts you ten yards behind in the starting blocks, the race does not become egalitarian just because you both had to run the same 100 yards. If your starting position is unequal, the whole of the

disparate starting position and the race must be seen together as unfair. Subsequent equality cannot overtake situations that begin with racist imposed inequality.

The egalitarian action would be to 1) insist that every runner be allowed to begin from the same starting blocks, or 2) shorten the race to ninety yards for the person starting the race ten yards behind. The Church did not grant the ten-yards privilege to the White runner, nor did it impose the deficit starting position on the Black runner, but neither did it confront the disparity by changing the distance of the race for the disadvantaged runner. Since the Church has absolutely no capacity to change the starting positions, its only egalitarian action is to shorten the race for the disadvantaged runner.

Billions With a “B”

Per the chart in Table 6, it took forty-one years (1948–1989) for the fifteen paired state conferences to receipt a billion dollars *more* than the regional conferences. But it only took fifteen years (1990–2004) to receipt an additional billion dollars tithe over the regionals. The last *extra* billion dollars in tithe over regional conferences was achieved in just ten years (2010–2019).

It can be projected that from this point forward, the

Years for Paired Conferences to Reciept a Billion Dollars More than Regionals

Years	Number of Years	Tithe (Paired State)	Tithe (Regional)	Paired State Over Regional
1948 - 1989.....	First 42.....	\$1,773,740,697.....	\$749,890,053.....	\$1,023,850,644
1990 - 2004.....	Next 15.....	\$2,578,344,415.....	\$1,500,340,888.....	\$1,078,003,527
2005 - 2014.....	Next 10.....	\$2,698,058,355.....	\$1,622,939,287.....	\$1,075,119,068
2015 - 2020.....	Last 6.....	\$1,656,697,299.....	\$938,146,518.....	\$718,550,781
1948 - 2020.....	72.....	\$8,706,840,766.....	\$4,811,316,746.....	\$3,895,524,020

Table 6 Years it took for the paired state conferences to exceed the regional conferences’ tithe by a billion dollars

. . . denominational policies cannot force tithe parity, but the policies can be made to do no further harm.

fifteen state conferences currently paired in 2018, based on having the same number of members, will receipt an extra billion dollars in tithe over the regional conferences every five to seven years. This is not just a billion dollars—it is a billion dollars *more* than all the regional conferences together. And this is not the entire NAD receipting an extra billion dollars. It is just the fifteen cohort state conferences paired with the same number of members as the regionals. That buys a lot of pastors, churches, teachers, schools, and evangelism.

Over the full seventy-plus years between 1948 and 2020, the fifteen paired state conferences (322,000 members) receipted \$8.7 billion tithe, compared to the regional conferences' (321,000 members) \$4.8 billion. That's \$4 billion over the regional conferences with equal memberships to the paired state conferences.

The apology for the racial attitudes within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the 1940s has been sincerely given and genuinely accepted (at least within the Lake Union territory). But *no* apology has been offered for forcing the regional conferences to operate on the limited resources available to the conferences whose Black members earn only 60% on the dollar of that earned by Whites in America.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America needs policies that will allow “have-not” conferences to maximize their own resources for parity in their capacity to support and afford Christian education, as well as to level the cost of hiring pastors

and conducting aggressive evangelism efforts in our urban communities. *Given the family earnings reality in America, denominational policies cannot force tithe parity, but the policies can be made to do no further harm.* The Church must recognize that in America, being Black or White matters.

The Adventist Funding Triad

Adventism is funded by its members' earnings. Starting with the family paychecks, the dollars are filtered through a triad that consists of tithe from the conference, offerings from the local church, and another portion of the family budget that pays tuition and other special projects (Figure 1). In the regional conferences and churches, all three components come from the same 60% deficient family paychecks. So, when comparing the resources that built up the regional conferences and those that built up the state conferences—their churches, schools, pastors, and teachers—the entire triad must be looked at over the last seventy-plus years. Table 7 shows what the regional and paired state conferences triads totaled in just 2019. Considering the full triad, the paired state conferences had a \$268 million advantage in 2020 alone (Table 8). Using the above formula, an amount close to that is repeated year after year for a total of billions of dollars since the 1940s. Those dollar differentials serve the same size memberships. In looking at the funding triad in Christian education, the low earnings of Black families are a triple jeopardy. It is that family's 60% paycheck

Regional and Paired State Conferences in 1948 and 2019							
Year	Entities	1948			2019		
		Members	Tithe	Per Capita	Members	Tithe	Per Capita
Regional Conferences	20,561	\$1,097,938	\$53.40	327,000	\$193,166,000	\$590.72
Paired State Conferences	68,711	\$6,296,623	\$91.64	326,000	\$342,640,038	\$1,051.04
Regional % of Paired State	29.9%	17.4%	58.3%	100.3%	56.4%	56.2%

Table 7 Members, tithe, and per capita: 1948 and 2018

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The Adventist Funding Triad

The 60% Black Family Paycheck Funds it all at 60%



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1. **60% Tithe:** 10% to conference for pastors, teachers, evangelism and share up to Unions, NAD, and GC
2. **60% Donations:** 5% to local church for operating cost
3. **60% Family Budget:** 2% church school tuition and special church and conference projects

Figure 1 All funds come from the paychecks of members as tithe, donations, and family budgets that support projects and tuition.

that funds all three of the entities that finance Christian education—the conference, the local church, and of course the family budget. From the 60% paycheck, the conference gets 60% tithe, the local church offering plate gets 60% donations, and the family pays tuition from their 60% family budget.

If the Church wants to realize any semblance of parity of opportunity and resources between the conferences, it is now time to consider the necessity of resetting or eliminating the tithe percentages being remitted from the regional conferences to the unions, the division, and the General Conference. This is not a call for a welfare system that would transfer resources from the state conferences to the regional conferences. But just as the unions and the division have recently reviewed and adjusted the percentages *they share*

with the General Conference—adjusting downward from 8% to 6%—adjustment should be made to accommodate the earnings/tithe realities of Black America.

Not included in the triad are funds resulting from the enormous wealth gap between Blacks and Whites in America—Black wealth is 7% of White wealth—Whites’ \$130,800 to Blacks’ \$9,595. Wealth is the net of all personal property, real estate, cars, and stocks and bonds, less any debt leveraged against those holdings. The wealth dollars come into play through Planned Giving and Trust Services. Planned Giving and Trust Services activities are lucrative in many state conferences and totally anemic in the regional conferences. Both the earnings disparity and the wealth gap are the result of *White privilege* and *Black deprivation*

2020 Adventist Funding Triad — Conferences Paired by Membership				
2020 Triad Sources	Percent of Family Paycheck	Paired State Conferences	Regional Conferences	Difference (Amount State over Regional)
Tithe	10%	\$349,244,804	\$191,015,422	\$158,229,382
Local Offerings	5%	\$174,622,402	\$95,507,711	\$79,114,691
Family Budger	2%	\$69,848,961	\$38,203,084	\$31,645,876
Triad Total	17%	\$593,716,167	\$324,726,217	\$268,989,949

Table 8 All figures are dependent on the family’s earnings.



This debate over parity in accessing mission-critical resources is not just about dollars and cents. It is about doing what makes sense when we embrace as truth that Black *Eternal* Lives Matter.

in America. In earnings and wealth, America's racism is monetized and generously flows into the treasury of the state conferences and churches.

This debate over parity in accessing mission-critical resources is not just about dollars and cents. It is about doing what makes sense when we embrace as truth that Black *Eternal* Lives Matter.

The Unrequested but Well-Used Privilege

Though not of its own making and completely unsolicited, White Adventism has benefited from the privilege gifted it by America's structural racism: a bankable privilege that converts to more tithes, offerings, and family budgets—the full Adventist funding triad. That privilege has been used over the last seventy years to amass a disparate accumulation of more churches and pastors, along with more schools and teachers. Unlike the law's doctrine of “fruit from a poisonous tree,” the privileged get to keep, with full impunity, this legally begotten fruit from a racist tree.

But does an apology justify keeping the dollars layered onto America's racialized, systemic earning disparity inflicted on Black Adventists and regional conferences?

At the time of his apology, Elder Livesay had more to apologize for than just the events of the 1940s. By 2015, he and the Church had nearly seventy years of experiences with the disparate finances between the regional and state conferences. The Church merely layered on its own financial policies that further defined economic stratification between the Black and White conferences. At the national and church level, *White privilege* and *Black deprivation* have been on full display for seventy years.

In the final analysis, if one wanted to be especially cynical, the 2015 apology could be seen as hypocritical

and duplicitous. The tithes percentages policy continues to deepen the financial hole that deprives the regional conferences of the opportunity to stand operationally on level ground with the state conferences in meeting the needs of their members and churches. A more generous position is to wait to see how the Church continues its current post-apology enlightenment.

Endnotes

1. Between their origins in 1948 and 2019, the regional conferences as a group have consistently shown a tithes per capita of between 55% and 63% of the state conferences' tithes per capita every year. Some individual regional conferences' numbers are higher and some lower. For purposes of uniformity, a per capita differential of 60% is used throughout this document—which fairly represents their collective average over the last seventy years. This 60% average is almost identical to the earnings differential between the median Black and White household income over the same time period.
2. The timing and urgency of this discussion about parity is especially relevant in 2022. State conferences are flexing their financial advantage and are aggressively reaching out to Black Adventists to leave their regional pews and join the churches they are intentionally setting up with Black pastors: churches in cities the state conferences abandoned years ago. The lure is no non-constituency fees charged for access to their schools, dollars to purchase church facilities, and higher pay for pastors.
3. While additional percentages are remitted for higher education and worker retirement. Throughout, this paper references just the approximate percentages that go to the higher Church structure.



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The Contemporary Challenge of Adventist Whiteness

BY GREGORY L. HOENES

Diversity Worth Celebrating

The 2021 Pacific Union Conference (PUC) constituency session was historic.¹ For the first time in the union’s history, gender diversity was realized as Elder Sandra Roberts, DMin, the first woman conference president in denominational history, was voted in as an executive officer. The women now newly represented make up a majority of Pacific Union Conference Adventist membership and attendance, suggesting an even broader interest in representational and embodied diversity.

Likewise, ethnic diversity is not just a reflection of constituent demographics in the Pacific Union, it is a much-touted *value*. This has been demonstrated through the years in the selection of officers and coordinators (Asian Pacific, African American,² and Hispanic) with ethnicity in mind. The extant coordinator positions—Asian Pacific, African American, and Hispanic ministries—were voted into vice-presidencies. No new positions of specialization were formed.

Discussion on the floor of the constituency session about the motion to recast “coordinators” as “VPs” yielded to an unanticipated conversation about nomenclature and a telling movement away from the use of “African American” in favor of the use of “Black.” The latter change of ethnic linguistic identifier doesn’t deny the African American experience, while still being inclusive of people of African, Afro-Caribbean, or

Afro-Latino identity.³ The change reflects a nuanced sense of ethnic inclusion, though it’s not clear if the newly adopted language will be adequate in light of the ongoing socio-political significance of skin tone. “Colorism” wasn’t reflected in the discourse, neither in the Bylaws pre-session, nor in the session itself.⁴ The complexity of nomenclature for identities that encompass two or more ethnicities didn’t arise either.

Whatever the challenges of inclusion might be within Black identities and whatever the future of the use of the use of “Black” as an identifier might be, one appreciates that there’s been some serious reflection within the Adventist community on what these identifying terms mean. There’s been movement on how to organize the conference in response to the specific identifiable ethnic needs represented within. It was marvelous to behold. Unfortunately, such reflection and movement aren’t obvious with White American identity or nomenclature within the Church.⁵

The Challenge of “Whiteness” as Nomenclature

The first challenge is in identifying nomenclature to use in light of the strains of racism particularly virulent and endemic in White America, both historic and present-day. Whiteness is not just a racialized construct, it’s a cultural one: an American identity that represents a contextualized melding of European peoples with all attending virtues and values represented in each European linguistic/cultural group, which is also deeply

hegemonic, militaristic, violent, imperialistic, colonizing, extractive, exploitive, and capitalistic. Whiteness encompasses White Supremacy culture.

The use of “Anglo” is rejected for its connections to the nineteenth-century project of racial construction. Staff writer Adam Serwer of *The Atlantic* notes, “‘Anglo-Saxon’ is what you say when ‘Whites Only’ is too inclusive.”⁶ That’s pretty damning. Reginald Horsman provides an outstanding background and history on this truth. He writes: “The term ‘Anglo-Saxon’ has a long history of misuse. Bluntly, there was never a specific Anglo-Saxon people in England. . . . When in the nineteenth century the English began writing ‘Anglo-Saxon’ in a racial sense, they . . . used it to describe English speaking peoples throughout the British Isles and the world.”⁷ In short, Anglo-Saxons never existed.

The identifier “Caucasian” isn’t actually much better. Even the Census Bureau seems to have lately abandoned the term. It, too, was a product of the new racial scientism of the very late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The term was coined by John Friedrich Blumenbach in 1795, based on notions of biological race.⁸ The identifier has geographical connections, yes, but it’s primarily tied to hierarchies of racial beauty exemplified in the exotification of the White female slave that came out of what is now Georgia and Chechnya, serving the harems of Turkey and the Ottoman and Russian empires.⁹ It’s a classification based upon Germanic ideals of beauty, separating “white people into better and lesser breeds.”¹⁰

The use of “White” is objectionable to some who prefer “American of European descent,” a term less tainted. True, “Whiteness” as a construct misses the distinctions in varied European languages, religions, institutions, politics, values, foods, and aesthetics. I’m not suggesting the remnants of these are altogether gone in White American culture. To borrow from Indigenous wisdom, the cultural “cup” from which I drink my life is broken.¹¹ Even so, it’s not without virtues and graces.

While alternative nomenclature is more affirming of European virtues, it importantly lacks recognition of the ways in which White Americans are a melded blend of dominantly European ancestry and cultures in a specific historic and social context that “Whiteness” more faithfully names. As White culture

is tantamount to White Supremacy Culture (WSM), White Americans (and Adventists) face a real challenge in terms of identifiers. For purposes here, “White American” will have to suffice. Problematic as it is, it’s the least objectionable, most honest, and demonstrably representative term available.

Southern California Conference: Whiteness in Diversity

The Southern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (SCC) also values diversity. It recognizes the same ethnic divisions that the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (PUC) does, through a mixed system of regional governance incorporating cultural and linguistic groups, while designating geographical boundaries for two of the five regions.

The African American Region has abandoned ethnicity-specific titling and is known as the “Greater Los Angeles Region” or GLAR.¹² The primary language is English. The focus is on culture, particularly related to the African American experience and worship culture. The pastorate is all Black and primarily African American. Few White persons or representatives of other ethnic minorities attend worship regularly.

The Asian-Pacific Region, also territorially ubiquitous, focuses on both languages and cultures. The most complex of SCC’s regions, languages spoken include Tagalog, Cebuano, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Indonesian, and more. Ethnicity is important as it is related to linguistic and cultural needs within homogeneous subgroups. For example, few non-Koreans speak Korean and choose to worship in Korean-language/culture contexts. Korean pastors are inevitably selected to pastor Korean churches. There’s not much internal diversity within these subgroups.

The Hispanic Region linguistically works primarily with Spanish-language churches, although there are Brazilian (hence Portuguese-speaking) groups. Second- and third-generation Hispanic ministries also use English. Culturally diverse (Dominican culture is quite different from Mexican, etc.), pastors in this region speak Spanish and English (often as a second language) and are overwhelmingly Latino. This region too is territorially ubiquitous.

In 1996, when this system of governance was

adopted in SCC, the remaining two regions were ethnically designated “Anglo/Other Regions,” divided between east and west, though they now primarily operate as multi-ethnic, territorial fields. What was the “East Anglo/Other Region” is now the “Los Angeles Metropolitan Region” (LAM). I serve as director of the west territory, the “West Anglo/Other Region,” now known simply as the “West Region” (WR). Both originally “Anglo/Other” regions are presently the most diverse in the ethnic and gender makeup of our pastoral teams, church staffing, and membership, while primarily using the English language and American-culture-based modes of communication, organization, and worship.

The West Region (SCC) has rejected and abandoned the “Anglo/Other” designation it was born with for myriad reasons, despite its marker as a missional objective.¹³ “Anglo” isn’t representative, and “Other” connotes an outgroup, “otherized” in ways that never allow for full inclusion. We continue to struggle to find appropriate nomenclature and a mission that includes White people for a now very diverse territory and membership.

The Challenge of the Mission to “Whiteness”

Imagine planting or declaring an extant church for “Whites only.” Absurd, right? We would all recoil at the inappropriateness and insensitivity of such a racist project! A present-day White church that actively discriminated against non-White persons, or allowed for ethnic membership/participation only on a quota basis, would be immediately repudiated and universally condemned in church and society. The SCC region system referenced above works well in representation for ethnic persons and groups. It doesn’t work for White constituents. This is because, in practice, no region/conference can operate in today’s diverse political and social climates with an explicit mission to White persons.

To complicate things, Adventism in the Pacific Union has tacitly fostered a minority culture of reverse “take over” tactics over the last forty years or so. Pastor Manual Avitia, a twenty-three-year veteran of the West Region’s Oxnard All Nations Church, remembers a time when he served under Hispanic coordinators who actively encouraged Hispanic members to transfer to weak “White” churches to ultimately facilitate takeover

by Hispanic ministries. Such has been the story in multiple conferences. When these venue transfers happen, as White people leave a neighborhood and/or age out, no money changes hands. Those White members who leave one neighborhood simply have to start over by reinvesting in another locale.

A very current SCC example: though Pasadena Church sits in a now multi-ethnic city, what had been a historically White church was turned over to the Asian-Pacific Region, despite the fact that city demographics show the resident White population at 51% as of 2019, and Asian at just 17.2 %. It’s now a Filipino church with a Black pastor, unlikely to culturally draw White or other ethnic worshippers. Certainly, the demographics and the makeup of neighborhoods change and shift, necessitating a rethinking of the ministry and target market of a particular building, or location. The problem is, it’s not clear where White Adventist worshippers go when displaced, or there’s not a church close by that they feel comfortable in.

This, then, is the dilemma: White Americans, though class conscious, as well as politically and socio-economically divided, do have remnants of shared culture and a common language.¹⁴ Unlike their ethnic Filipino, Tongan, Latinx, and particularly Black American counterparts, there’s no moral or cultural space for ethnic or cultural exclusivity. This deserved and historically based handicap makes the idea of “White” ministries initially sound ridiculous, a furthering of privilege. It’s one of the more obvious reasons a new position for the “Vice-President for White Ministries” hasn’t been established anywhere.

Such is the unintended consequence of ethnic-White national numerical superiority; histories of colonial domination; military and economic complicity with empire; ongoing exploitation of indigenous peoples and lands both foreign and domestic; and more than a century of setting agendas and dictating denominational structure, culture, doctrinal frames, and naming the terms of belonging. It’s ultimately the price of endemic racism, displays of which are the unwitting end of cultural vitality and viability.

Even so, White people have disappeared and are disappearing from Southern California Conference at a remarkable rate. The demographics of the Pacific Union

and its territories tell a story of White population decline, an emergent minority status. White people are now the second-largest demographic in Los Angeles County.¹⁵ With the recent exodus of Californians to the Northwest, Arizona, and Texas, particularly since COVID-19, this is increasingly so. The Pacific Union Conference website features pie charts that graphically demonstrate PUC diversity as reflected in census data for each major metropolitan area.¹⁶ As of 2014, Bakersfield, Fresno, Los Angeles, and Stockton/Lodi were all classified as dominantly Hispanic. Thousand Oaks was divided between “Caucasians” and Hispanics, and Honolulu and San Jose were dominantly classified as Asian.¹⁷

Adventists are *diverse*. In 2015, The Pew Research Center recognized Seventh-day Adventists as the *most* racially diverse religious group in the United States.¹⁸ While the number of represented linguistic, culture, and gender groups may or may not have increased in the last seven years, the percentage of “minority” (non-White) persons definitely has.

A cursory look at the student body of almost any SCC school illustrates the reality, though the underlying story is very complex. Reasons why White children are a minority include 1) movement out of SCC territory and California in general; 2) lack of affordability for poor/middle-class Whites in the absence of scholarships;¹⁹ 3) a middle-class preference for classical academies and other Christian schools that have momentum/critical mass evidenced in waiting lists, strong academics, and sports programs; 4) wealthy White Adventists with their sights on the Ivy League who prefer the elite preparatory schools, and often don’t want to send their children into environments in which they would be a small minority of the student body; 5) trends in homeschooling; and 6) changing views around Sabbath-keeping practices that make quality local public schools highly desirable for their advanced academic options and especially sports programs.

As for churches, all West Region churches are more ethnically diverse than the cities they are situated in or around.²⁰ That’s worth celebrating! We’re the envy of many dominantly White denominations. Even so, the powers of homophily are strong. While White people seem to value diversity, the net effect is still not equality or integration.²¹ Emily Walton asserts that

many White people living in multiethnic neighborhoods are “ambivalent,” interacting “minimally with their nonwhite neighbors, and are often, in fact, uncomfortable with cultural differences. They don’t recognize the role they must play in social change.”²² Walton observes that “diversity is passive and connotes living alongside, but not with, one another. Integration requires active engagement.”²³ She’s talking about communities, but multiethnic churches fit this dilemma too. Seemingly unimportant acts of hospitality, or even the programming funded and supported in a Board meeting, send important messages about how ethnicity is defined, and power is distributed, in the context of church.

The Challenge of Adventism as an American Sect

Key to understanding present challenges is the fact that Adventism is a uniquely *American* sect. Its founders were of European descent. When questions arose as to Ellen White’s ethnicity, the White Estate did her genealogy twice, and declared her to be “Anglo-Saxon.”²⁴

Adventists were also more anxious than most sects or new denominations to enact Israel-like identities. LaRondelle wrote on the subject for *Ministry* in 1981. In answer to the question “Is the church spiritual Israel?” he wrote,

the church of Christ now occupies the place of unbelieving Israel (the lopped-off branches) and is therefore endowed with Israel’s covenant blessings and responsibilities. On the other hand, because God’s original redemptive intentions with Israel are irrevocable, the church is called to arouse natural Israel to envy God’s mercy to the Gentiles.²⁵

This softer shading of supersessionism becomes more concrete in the adoption of the Seventh-day Sabbath and the partial acceptance of kosher dietary laws that do set Adventism apart. There are a growing number of scholars who see replacement theology as the root of what would become virulent anti-Semitism, though there’s not universal agreement on this.

Just as importantly, Adventism is completely embedded and complicit in the larger American project. Adventist manifest destiny as the “chosen remnant”

mirrored American manifest destiny as “light bearers to the world.” Westward movement involved war with Mexico and the eradication of indigenous peoples. Adventists were complicit in the American annexation of both continental territories and places as far off as Hawaii and the Philippines. The Church grew with the empire, an empire created to produce wealth, and to expand economic opportunity.²⁶

The Challenge of Adventist Foreign Missions in a White Racist Frame

It’s not a surprise, then, that the Adventist mission project conflated the gospel of Jesus Christ with Western culture.²⁷ Products of culture included the veneration of written text, foods, modes of dress, technologies, medicines, economics, morals and mores, and the spread of the English language. Adventism added layers: ideals about clean living, Sabbath-keeping, modesty in dress and adornment, and more. To become an Adventist was not only a spiritual shift, but a religious change impacting every aspect of living.

Many Americans came to believe in two views of the indigenous person: “noble savage,” as mythologized by Rousseau, and ignoble “savage,” meaning evil or fiendish warrior. Neither were ultimately deemed fit for citizenship or equipped to contribute to a western economy and democracy. Cultural erasure and domestication or decimation were the chosen paths to fulfilling American destiny. Seen from the critical lenses of our times, this explicitly articulated point of view stands as a deep cultural current, shaping implicit assumptions regarding the savage or heathen encountered in mission. In Christ, all would be made new. The light of democracy and capitalism and the light of Christ were conflated as a singular project. In some respects, people were colonized as Adventists, another layer added to Western, and specifically American, expansionism.

Adventist missions succeeded globally starting in Europe in 1874, Australia in 1885, Africa and South America in 1895, and China and the Philippines in 1905. In places like South America and China, this was made possible in part because of existing colonial structures, or resource-extraction points. An interesting story involves Huldreich Graf, the first GC-sent pastor to Brazil

(1895). He was reported to have befriended Henry Ford when they were children. After Ford Motor Company launched, and a rubber plant was established in the Brazilian Amazon, the story goes that Henry sought to locate Huldreich there, though they never did reunite.²⁸ The fact is that many German immigrants were already settling in Brazil, and the early Adventist work there in both education and ministry was German.²⁹ European influences were long established.

Michael Scofield’s fascinating study of Adventist missions revealed that British colonists were the ones who granted land to Adventists for the East China Union mission compound in Shanghai.³⁰ Large, multi-story, Western-style houses were occupied by missionaries of European ancestry. Locals were used as servants. It was many years before ideals of contextualization began to take root and a sort of nativism brought impetus to change out White (often American) administrative leadership for local indigenous leadership. Adventists weren’t early adopters of contextualism.

The power differential is crucial. White missionaries didn’t go out into a world of peoples perceived as equals. The artifacts of a rapidly developing and industrializing culture, as well as advancements in western medicine, were key components to successful penetration of dark territories.³¹ Racist America formed a uniquely American denomination, whose story is not divergent from, but rather parallel to, the American story. The mission movement was to faith what the explorations for natural resources were for industry. While the intention for mission was eternal reward, the subaltern status so often assigned to converted indigenous peoples (whether encountered and described as primitive, exotic, savage, or as cannibal; or written off as “quaint but loveable” in patronizing saccharin condescension; or in the segregation that went with mission-compound life and operations) emphasized differences in power relationships that matter.

The Challenge of Adventist Whiteness in Postcolonial Context

For more than a century, through the success of the mission movement, Adventists could experience the joyful anticipation of a second coming based upon a soon-to-be fulfilled “Gospel Commission.” General

Conference sessions were exciting, filled with “natives” in the “costumes” of their homelands. The Western gaze on the exotic was a spectacle, a prize. But as the diversity of immigrants greatly increased when the National Origins Formula was done away with, as Johnson signed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, so too did the diversity of Adventist churches. Now, rather than an occasional spectacle, those who had been converted as Adventists presented a reflection of Western American culture, an image of Adventist polity and belief that’s close to the original, but not quite right.

Postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha used the word “mimicry” to describe the phenomenon whereby the adoption of the colonizer’s religious and cultural frames by the colonized presents an image that is close to the colonizer’s, but never exact. The net result is “ambivalence,” a kind of knowing, having been successful in producing in others mimetic representations, and the simultaneous destabilization of the authority of the colonizer over the other. In other words, the presence of the previously missionized subaltern “other” now in Western dress, speaking English, sharing aspects of western culture and Adventist religion, can be disruptive, exposing the shallowness of some standards or beliefs. Additionally, “mimicry” may entail expertise such that the colonized can successfully work the system by which he/she was colonized. Such a person reminds the colonizer both of what they were, and the distance from what was in what presently is constitutive, particularly of faith and practice. What was once forced upon the “other” now presents a kind of imposed religious reversion.

While there was a time when Adventists boasted a universal worship culture and theology (a form of colonizing), the contemporary cultural White American Adventist doesn’t necessarily share the worship styles, textual orientation, religious language, nor likely the same standards, once universally accepted and imposed but now largely outmoded. The rise of non-White persons to the majority in the world field and in urban centers in the United States creates a dissonance that sits just beneath the surface.

Whiteness and America’s (Hence Adventism’s) “Culture War”

America precariously stands divided in myriad and

complex ways: socially, economically, educationally, politically, religiously, and primarily epistemologically. The now rapidly escalating American “culture war” pits the expansion of enlightenment through education (the products of which are both liberalization and secularization) against the deep practices and values of a religious and moral culture that defines middle America. As Zack Stanton noted in a recent article in *Politico*,

What happened in the post-World War II period was a massive expansion of higher education and the knowledge-based economy. And with that came a larger cultural shift: What used to be the province of intellectuals now became the province of anyone who had access to higher education, and higher education became one of the gates through which the move to middle class or upper middle class life was made.³²

While this speaks of the democratization of knowledge, it also suggests that broadening access to education has shifted culture and increased affluence. The Adventism created by economic opportunity and advancement through education (particularly within medicine and the “Adventist ghettos” created around institutions of higher learning and health care) predate the post-war expansion referenced above but peaked during this same period. Adventist culture shifted along with American culture.

Adventist post-war religious progressivism looked like a movement away from sectarian/cultic identities to mainstream evangelicalism. As has been widely argued, the year of the publication of *Questions on Doctrine* (1957) was a watershed moment for Adventism. To follow the logic of the culture war, “liberalization” (such as it was in the Adventist Church) was represented in opening to religious influences outside scripture and Ellen G. White, and challenges to traditional standards, which arose from emergent consumerism, urbanization, and adoption of epistemologies beyond authority.

One doesn’t have to be *White* to be caught up in this war—Adventism is rife with White culture, playing itself out religiously/theologically in the Adventist context, though historically speaking, “Progressive” and “Historic”

Adventists are rooted in the same social phenomena. Even so, the culture war plays itself out in our churches again and again, with destructive and devastating consequences, particularly for our young people.

The national schism impacts churches, for the way in which the national debate currently happens is mirrored in the church. Hermeneutics are the witting (if silent) culprit. For new generations of would-be critically engaged Adventists, the burden of being progressive within the Adventist Church is profound and can be overwhelming. For example, the fundamentalist need only cite Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 to resolve the complex question of homosexuality and the Church. Such persons know how the Lord feels and what God thinks on the subject. It's right there in plain English in The Word. Just ask!

A Progressive or "liberal," on the other hand, must move through myriad texts and hermeneutical maneuverings, as well as historical, cultural, literary, linguistic, and ethical analyses, in order to biblically and religiously justify basic inclusivity and acceptance, something secularism and humanism hold as foundational *without* mental gymnastics and religious contortionism. The reward is not commensurate with the work! It's easier to fall into literalism and false certainty, or to walk away. Both of these are what so many young people have done, White young people among them.

The cyclical resurgence of perfectionism (such as seen in Last Generation theology), and the ongoing presence of church standards that are neither biblical nor relevant, create a culture of either legalism or hypocrisy. This is, in part, the culture war at play. Immigration/ethnicity plays a role here.

The ethnic convert will likely have been taught these standards and has no frame of reference for adjudicating variance from these standards, particularly when observing generational White Adventists who have rebelled, or perhaps thoughtfully reframed these standards. The lack of synchronicity between cultures creates tensions that make corporate life a challenge. The tendency when seeking not to offend (Romans 14:21) is to acquiesce to the most "conservative" or restrictive behaviors. Freedom is contextualized by this responsibility but has the unintended effect of making ideological progress nearly impossible.

The Challenge of White Representation in Light of Decline

In terms of representation, the historic reality of a White majority carries forward as a presumption in many geographies where it's not a present reality. The assumption of White executive leadership, as well as White demographic and economic dominance, has led to the foregone conclusion that White Adventists need no specific representation, targeted resources, or specialized ministries.³³ There's representation at "the top." This raises interesting questions, particularly in light of the documentable decline in church attendance and membership of White people across the Pacific Union, particularly in urban and inner-city areas;³⁴ the disproportionate effect of immigration on these areas; and so-called "White flight."³⁵

The future of American Adventism is the present reality of English Adventism. There's still a thriving Adventist presence in England. Many of those who attend are British citizens. Even so, you won't find the Anglo-English there. The Church is now formed out of the historic remnants of the British empire, the colonies.

Presently, in 2021, Whites make up about 26% of the population in Los Angeles County. In 2030, just eight years from now, demographic trends suggest there will still be White people in Los Angeles County, as much as 25% of the total county population. While the West Region has approximately 5,800 members as of this writing, an optimistic estimate of White attendance any given week is only 10% of that, or as many as 580, though probably less. I forecast that in Adventist churches in Los Angeles County in 2030, less than 5% of membership (or at least *attending* membership) will be White. We've explored only some of the reasons this might be. The question is, does it or will it matter? As Love L. Sechrest, Johnny Ramirez-Johnson, and Amos Yong's book title asks, "Can White People Be Saved?"³⁷

It's not clear what "White" ministries might look like. Perhaps the primary need is a deep processing of embedded and endemic racism through anti-racist materials and workshops, and participation in anti-racist conferences and social justice efforts, as well as small-group ministries. There's a need to awaken White Adventists to the key role they must play in changing society, particularly in relation to a true embrace of

community in diversity. The secondary need is to identify felt needs and ways to speak to White people that build trust and a readiness to embrace a gospel that's genuinely good news. Outrageous as it may seem, the day may already be upon us when we need a Vice-President for Specialized Ministries for White persons, particularly in urban areas.

Endnotes

1. Monday, August 16, 2021, Tucson, AZ.
2. I've chosen not to use the hyphen here, though it has been used historically by many Adventist entities in North America. The Associated Press (AP) Stylebook avoids hyphens altogether in identifying Americans ethnically by area, continent, or country of origin.
3. See "The Washington Post Announces Writing Style Changes for Racial and Ethnic Identifiers," *WashPost PR Blog*, July 29, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/pr/2020/07/29/washington-post-announces-writing-style-changes-racial-ethnic-identifiers/>. The specific term "Afro-Latino" was used as a sub-identifier, specific to those who may wish to make this distinction.
4. See Ellis P. Monk, Jr., "The Unceasing Significance of Colorism: Skin Tone Stratification in the United States," *Dadalus, the Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Science* 150, no. 2 (Spring 2021): 76–90.
5. *WashPost PR Blog*, "Writing Style Changes" says that capitalization is correct when "white" is used to identify a people group.
6. Adam Serwer, "'Anglo-Saxon' Is What You Say When 'Whites Only' Is Too Inclusive," *The Atlantic*, April 20, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/04/anglo-saxon-what-you-say-when-whites-only-too-inclusive/618646/>.
7. Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 4.
8. Nell Irvin Painter, "Why White People Are Called 'Caucasian?'" in *Collective Degradation: Slavery and the Construction of Race* (Fifth Annual Gilder Lehrman Center International Conference, Yale University, New Haven, CT, 2003), 2, <https://glc.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/events/race/Painter.pdf>.
9. Painter, "Why White People Are Called 'Caucasian?'" 4–7.
10. Painter, "Why White People Are Called 'Caucasian?'" 9.
11. See Theodora Kroeber's famous 1961 book *Ishi in Two Worlds*, written about the last known surviving member of the Yahi people of Northern California after the massacre of the Native Americans in California. Ishi voices an existential problem, observing that his "cup" is broken. He wonders from what, now, will he drink his life?
12. SCC nomenclature hasn't yet officially caught up with the Pacific Union's use of "Black" in the place of African American.
13. Regretfully, both "Anglo" and "Other" were used though their dubious validities had been noted in academic circles long before the adoption of the regional structure.
14. "White collar" vs. "blue collar," and of course the stratifications along the lines of "lower class," "upper middle-class," and "lower upper-class," etc.
15. See <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/los-angeles-county-ca#demographics>.
16. The chart on the Pacific Union's website is based upon the American Community Survey (ACS) 2014 Census.
17. See <https://adventistfaith.com/about-the-pacific-union/>.
18. Michael Lipka, "The Most and Least Racially Diverse U.S. Religious Groups," Pew Research Center, July 27, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/27/the-most-and-least-racially-diverse-u-s-religious-groups/>.
19. Pacific Union Conference and NAD reversions provide funds back to conferences for scholarships for would-be Black and Hispanic students. These reversion monies are not available to the WR, or White families in general. It's hoped that funding for scholarships for White students will be budgeted for 2022. As it stands, occasional union three-way matching fund requests are generously granted, amounting to a couple thousand dollars for WR families annually.
20. This likely holds for Los Angeles Metro Region (LAM) churches, though a survey would need to be conducted to verify the universality of this claim for the two regions.
21. Andy Olin, "America Is More Diverse Than Ever, But Diversity Doesn't Equal Equality," Rice/Kinder Institute for Urban Research, November 23, 2020, <https://kinder.rice.edu/urbanedge/2020/11/23/america-racial-inequality-diversity-does-not-equal-equality>.

22. Emily Walton, "Dear White People: Moving to a Diverse Neighborhood Isn't Enough," National Public Radio, WBUR in Boston, *Cognoscenti* (blog), June 7, 2019, <https://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2019/06/07/boston-inclusion-diverse-neighborhood-emily-walton>.

23. Walton, "Dear White People."

24. See The Ellen G. White Estate, "The Genealogy of Ellen G. White: An Update," Ellen G. White Estate, April 2003, <https://whiteestate.org/legacy/issues-genealogy-html/>.

25. Hans K. LaRondelle, "Is the Church Spiritual Israel?" *Ministry*, September 1981: 19.

26. As Timothy Golden pointed out at the Isaac Backus American Freedoms Lecture at La Sierra University, February 13, 2018, Adventism opposed slavery, only to quit activism and fall into line with the North and South when it came to the era of Jim Crow.

27. This is not unique to Adventists but has been a common issue across missional denominations.

28. Renato Gross and Ivan Gross, "Pieces of Memory: Pioneers of Adventist Education in Brazil," *The Journal of Adventist Education* 80, no. 4 (December 2018): 9.

29. Gross and Gross, "Pieces of Memory," 9–14. This article mentions the Grafts, Steins, Westphals, Stauffers, Ehlers, Hoylers, and Webers: all German surnames.

30. Michael Scofield, "Understanding the 'Golden Age' of Foreign Missionary Activity," (Lecture, Association of Adventist Forums, Glendale City Church, Glendale, CA, January 24, 2020), PowerPoint Slide 94.

31. I've used this term intentionally, as it is the language of conquest, and the language of the times.

32. Zack Stanton, "How the 'Culture War' Could Break Democracy," *Politico*, May 20, 2021, <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2021/05/20/culture-war-politics-2021-democracy-analysis-489900>.

33. Pacific Union's constituency confirmed a dominantly White team as part of an exchange for gender diversity.

34. And likely elsewhere too. The demographics of small rural churches in the Central Valley has been shifting for decades.

35. William Voegeli, "The Truth About White Flight," *City Journal*, 2020, <https://www.city-journal.org/truth-about-white-flight-from-cities>. Voegeli, a Senior Fellow of The Claremont Institute, complexifies "white flight" in ways that are insightful, balanced, and helpful. It isn't all about racism.

36. See <http://www.laalmanac.com/population/po39.php>.

37. For a far more eloquent and comprehensive treatment of these questions from a non-White point of view, see Love L. Sechrest, Johnny Ramirez-Johnson, and Amos Yong, eds., *Can "White" People Be Saved? Triangulating Race, Theology, and Mission, Missiological Engagements* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018).



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And an Algorithm Shall Lead Them?

The Rise of AI, Machine Learning, Robotics, and Christian Hope

BY JEFFREY A. GANG

Introduction

Our world is experiencing exponential advancements in artificial intelligence and the automation of society. We are in a “Fourth Industrial Revolution” a term attributed to Klaus Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum, to describe our turn to smart technology. Schwab sees this revolution as fundamentally different from previous technological revolutions, with significant consequences for the Earth.¹ Technology is altering life on our planet, from working and interacting with one another to understanding what it means to be human. Many of these advancements are full of promise. Proponents of AI hope these technologies will solve humanity’s most challenging problems, ending extreme poverty and solving economic disparity, eradicating diseases and preventing global pandemics, even slowing climate change and saving us from ecological disaster.

Some fear the worst from artificial intelligence. While every age of technological advancement has brought forms of prosperity to humanity, our advancements have also unleashed unforeseen consequences. Artificial intelligence may cure disease, lift billions out of poverty, and prevent environmental collapse, or AI may lead to global dictatorships,

worldwide surveillance states, and levels of inequality and suffering beyond our imaginations. As Max Tegmark, a leading researcher in artificial intelligence and professor at MIT, states in the film *iHuman*, “AI will ultimately be either the best thing ever to happen to humanity or the worst thing ever to happen. . . . That’s why this is the most important conversation of our time.”²

In this essay, I want to discuss the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) and its import for Seventh-day Adventists. If Max Tegmark is correct, our society’s growing dependence on AI is a critical issue we must recognize as a church. My essay seeks to begin a discussion in our denomination about the efficacy of artificial intelligence. Unfortunately, the limitations of the essay prevent a lengthy discussion on such a far-reaching issue as artificial intelligence. I hope to raise more questions than provide answers, as the increasing influence of AI is one of the most critical issues facing humanity.

I am using the term artificial intelligence broadly here to describe smart technologies that utilize deep, structured learning through static, rule-based algorithms, crucial to various types of automation.³ For example, in *AI in the Wild: Sustainability in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, Peter Dauvergne describes these technologies as follows:

Very broadly, artificial intelligence is the ability of machines to mimic human thinking, learning, reasoning, planning, communication, and decision making. One day, this will reach a point where a machine equals and then likely exceeds in short order the intellectual ability of the brightest human on the planet—what some call human-level AI and others artificial general intelligence. But that day is still a ways off.

What we have now, as with the AlphaZero chess engine, is an expanding constellation of narrow, domain-specific cognitive technologies, such as computer vision, natural language processing, virtual agents, recommendation engines, decision management software, predictive analytics, intelligent automation, and machine learning models.⁴

There is both promise and peril for our planet in these algorithm-driven technologies. In what follows, I question these technologies' effect on humanity. In doing so, I recognize two anthropological concerns. The first concern is formational: In what ways does technology form us as human beings? The second concern is ontological: What does our use of technology imply about the nature of humanity? Both concerns challenge our understanding of the *imago dei*. I conclude with some theological and ethical postures framed within Christian hope that may help us embrace AI both individually and communally as a church.

The Promise and Peril of AI, Machine Learning, and Robotics

Will machines be our salvation? Or should machines be feared, a common theme in science fiction films such as *The Matrix*? For better or worse, the machines are here to stay. In *Scary Smart: The Future of Artificial Intelligence and How You Can Save Our World*, Mo Gawdat, the former chief business officer of Google X, now called X Development, LLC, warns, “Three inevitables await us: 1. AI will happen, there is no stopping it. 2. The machines will become smarter than humans, sooner rather than later. 3. Mistakes will happen. Bad things will happen.”⁵ However, Gawdat is hopeful. The former Google X leader believes that humanity can create AI for good. He argues

we should approach artificial intelligence as a parent approaches their children, seeing AI as “intelligent infants.”⁶ They will become smarter than us, so we need to raise them well.

Kevin Roose, a technology journalist for the *New York Times*, describes himself as a “suboptimist”: a term he created to express how he feels about the future of AI.⁷ Although, on the one hand, Roose is optimistic about the benefits of artificial intelligence for humanity, on the other hand, he is pessimistic about humanity's ability to use AI for good.

There are many reasons for optimism. For example, healthcare, a sector of the economy that is adopting forms of artificial intelligence the fastest, is already employing AI to save lives, like technologies that can find previously undetectable heart arrhythmia or diagnose breast cancer more accurately. Another example is the efforts to slow global warming, from AI's ability to help increase the utilization of renewable energies to finding creative ways to protect wildlife from poachers in the rainforests of Africa. Ada is a machine-learning robotic platform created to mitigate climate change by a team of researchers in Canada. The robot can work ten times faster than human researchers, performing experiments, analyzing data, developing hypotheses, and pursuing new directions for environmental research. Ada's creators claim the robot is “alive and training itself.”⁸

However, despite the potential benefits AI offers humanity, there are reasons to be pessimistic, especially when considering the observations of leading thinkers in artificial intelligence, like Ben Goertzel, an AI researcher and the CEO and founder of SingularityNET, a company that is seeking to democratize AI technologies. Goertzel says, “Almost all the AI development on the planet today is done by a handful of big technology companies or by a few large governments. If we look at what AI is mostly being developed for,” he says, “I would say it's killing, spying, and brainwashing.”⁹

Formed by Technology? Our Algorithms and the Imago Dei

While artificial intelligence presents humanity with many questions, some of the most significant questions are anthropological. The first question I will explore here is formational: How does technology form us as human

beings? Most of us own one of the most advanced forms of AI on earth—our smartphones, the predominant form of AI we experience on a daily basis. These supercomputers have the power to harness more data than required to land on the moon. They are not passive forms of technology. Intelligent algorithms control our phones. These algorithms are designed to seek our full attention, to keep us evermore beholden to our devices, to mine our data, the new gold, all the while leading us, shaping us, forming us, into a particular kind of human being.

We tend to think of AI more like the sentient computer HAL in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, when in reality, most forms of artificial intelligence are lines of computer code that exist as algorithms, beyond our sight, often unnoticed, as Lisa Kinstler observes in her recent essay in the *New York Times* on AI and religion, "Can Silicon Valley Find God?". Kinstler, who writes about culture and technology, reminds us that,

A.I. is already embedded in our everyday lives: It influences which streets we walk down, which clothes we buy, which articles we read, who we date and where and how we choose to live. It is ubiquitous, yet it remains obscured, invoked all too often as an otherworldly, almost godlike invention, rather than the product of an iterative series of mathematical equations.¹⁰

Many are growing concerned about our dependence on these algorithms embedded in every area of our lives, questioning what these technologies are doing to humanity, such as Kevin Roose in *Futureproof: 9 Rules for Humans in the Age of Automation*, who writes, "If we consider how many of our daily decisions we outsource to machines, it's hard not to think that a historic, species-level transformation is taking place."¹¹

Artificial intelligence was originally designed to read our minds, but now AI is designed to change our minds. Technology scholar Christian Sandvig refers AI's shift to persuasion as "corrupt personalization."¹² How am I making my choices? Am I choosing to watch that Netflix movie because I want to or am persuaded to for reasons I am not fully aware? Kevin Roose warns us of machine

drift, allowing technology to shape our identities incrementally, without our full awareness, and he warns,

It is not enough to accompany us to the store, whispering into our ears about which brand of toothpaste or toilet paper we should buy. In the eyes of engineers and executives who use recommendation algorithms to steer our choices, all of our actions must be part of the machine's model. There is no space, in this vision of the automated future, for developing new tastes, or starting over with a clean slate. Who you are is who the machines think you are, which is also who they want you to be.¹³

Ironically, Netflix is among those raising concerns about the effects of artificial intelligence on humanity in their recent docudrama, *The Social Dilemma*.¹⁴ The film attempts to show how smart technologies, primarily through social media, have led to a mental health crisis around the world. Fear, anxiety, and depression have increased significantly, especially among adolescents, evidenced by rising suicide rates among teens. *The Social Dilemma* features interviews with many individuals who have worked in technology companies such as Facebook, Google, and Twitter. Mostly former employees of these social media companies, they claim the algorithms employed to increase users nurture our addictions and manipulate the ways we see the world, our emotional states, and our behaviors. The film also features addiction specialist Anna Lembke, a physician who serves as Stanford University's director of addiction medicine. Lembke believes that we can become addicted to technology in the same way we can become addicted to drugs or alcohol. Since the release of *The Social Dilemma*, Lembke has written *Dopamine Nation: Finding Balance in an Age of Indulgence*, in which she argues that our understanding of addiction needs to be broadened. As Lembke writes,

we've transformed the world from a place of scarcity to a place of overwhelming abundance: Drugs, food, news, gambling, shopping, gaming, texting, sexting, Facebooking, Instagramming, YouTubeing, tweeting . . . the increased

numbers, variety, and potency of highly rewarding stimuli today is staggering. The smartphone is the modern-day hypodermic needle, delivering digital dopamine 24/7 for a wired generation. If you haven't met your drug of choice yet, it's coming soon to a website near you.¹⁵

A few years ago, *Spectrum* hosted an online discussion of James Williams's book, *Stand Out of Our Light: Freedom and Resistance in the Attention Economy*. *Spectrum's* discussion of *Stand Out of Our Light* is one of the most significant discussions to date among Seventh-day Adventists about the effects of technology. Williams joins a growing body of work questioning what technology is doing to humanity, such as Nicholas Carr's, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*, written over a decade ago. Williams, a former Google advertising strategist, is concerned with AI's growing influence and its impact on our humanity, warning, "these new attentional adversaries threaten not only the success but even the integrity of the human will, at both individual and collective levels."¹⁶ Zane Yi, Associate Dean, School of Religion, Loma Linda University, discussed Williams's concerns in his essay, "Dis-ordered and Re-ordered Loves," recognizing how the influence of artificial intelligence extends beyond the ability to affect our attention.¹⁷ The threat of AI, Yi suggests, is existential, lying below the surface of every issue confronting humanity's existence, calling into question what it means to be human. Summarizing one of Williams's key arguments, Yi writes that, "the stakes in question are the fundamental capacities—beyond our actions—that make us distinctively human; the constant connection and information technology offers us, disrupts and disorders our lives at deep levels, both individually and collectively."¹⁸

The Rabbit Hole, a *New York Times* podcast, also by Kevin Roose, provides a chilling example of the ways technology "disrupts and disorders our lives."¹⁹ We are introduced to a young man radicalized to the alt-right while viewing YouTube content about his favorite video games. Consequently, he is led down a dark hole of misinformation and hate-filled content, exposing him to ever more fanciful conspiracy theories, including QAnon. Who is leading him? A form of AI, a Google algorithm,

designed to keep him viewing more content on YouTube. The story is illustrative for all of us. We may not be the lonely, isolated adolescent who spends hours a day locked in their bedroom binge-watching YouTube videos, but are we entirely aware of the ways technology is forming us?

In *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*, Christian philosopher James K. A. Smith refers to humans as "liturgical animals" because we are "embodied, practicing creatures, whose love/desire is aimed at something ultimate."²⁰ "We are what we love," writes Smith, "and our love is shaped, primed and aimed by liturgical practices that take hold of our gut and our heart to certain ends."²¹ Smith sees our most significant practices as thick or meaningful, observing,

These are habits that play a significant role in shaping our identity, who we are. Engaging in these habit-forming practices not only says something about us, but also keeps shaping us into that kind of person. So habits often both signal and shape our core values or our most significant desires.²²

One may recognize the influence of Augustine's anthropology of desire in Smith's argument: "You rouse them to take delight in praising you: for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it comes to rest in you."²³ Following Smith's line of thought, how does our use of technology function as liturgical practice, often without our full awareness, luring us away from being formed by our Creator and diminishing the *imago dei* in us?

Felicia Wu Song, a cultural sociologist of media and digital technologies, also draws on Smith's notion of habit-forming liturgies in her recent book, *Restless Devices: Recovering Personhood, Presence, and Place in the Digital Age*, where she makes a similar connection to how technology forms us. Wu Song sees the ways we interact with technology as "embodied practices that possess the power to cultivate the stuff of our imaginations and the very longings of our being."²⁴ She argues that "our digital routines and habits—so pervasive in their range—are no longer merely matters of incidental preference or personal inclination"; as we see in the story of the young

man above who is led down a rabbit hole of hatred and conspiracy theories, “the lens of liturgy reveals our digital routines to be the consequential matters of personal and soul formation that they actually are.”²⁵ Wu Song sees a “deeply embodied anthropology” here, and we often fail to see how our daily activities and routines shape us bodily. Drawing on the Aristotelian notion that we are morally developed not only by ideas and beliefs, she argues that we are also formed by “the cumulative manifestation of our corporeal actions and behaviors.”²⁶

How then does technology form us as human beings? In seeking to answer the question, Wu Song contends that “the actions we take with our bodies—what we say, what we wear, how we behave—have the steady effect of ever shaping our imaginations, our very understanding and experience of reality.” She asserts,

It may well be the case that our body’s routine behaviors and actions not only reveal our deepest desires but also regularly shape our taste for where we want to go. If we begin to pay attention to not only the cerebral and cognitive content of our lived experience but also the visceral and bodily, we might begin to see how our mundane digital practices are hardly docile or inconsequential. They are in fact doing a work on us, developing in us capacities, desires, and longings for a particular version of the good life. Any liturgy, whatever its content or intention, functions to shape us. It just depends on whether it points us toward the kingdom of God or something else in which we are resting our security and hope.²⁷

Here we may recall Ellen White’s oft-cited statement from her book *Patriarchs and Prophets*: “It is a law of the human mind that by beholding we become changed.”²⁸ Jeffrey Schwarz, a research psychiatrist for the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, who often writes about the intersection of neuroscience and spiritual formation, may agree with White. Schwarz contends, “there is significant experimental evidence that directing your attention towards spiritual growth

changes your brain.”²⁹ However, he also warns the opposite is true. Our brains can become increasingly controlled by what he calls the “animal brain mechanisms,” forming us in undesirable ways. In other words, Schwarz is suggesting the things we give our attention to have the potential to dehumanize us, often without our conscious awareness.

Useless People? The Automation of Society and Human Worth

Another question for artificial intelligence is ontological. What do AI-driven technologies mean for the nature of humanity? As Kevin Kelly, one of the co-founders of *Wired* magazine, has observed in his book, *The Inevitable: Understanding the 12 Technological Forces that Will Shape Our Future*, artificial intelligence is going to redefine what it means to be human. While Kelly is optimistic about the future, believing AI will level the playing field, essentially democratizing every aspect of life, creating a new kind of “socialism,” he poignantly observes what advances in AI will mean for humanity.³⁰

Over the past 60 years, as mechanical processes have replicated behaviors and talents we thought were unique to humans, we’ve had to change our minds about what sets us apart. As we invent more species of AI, we will be forced to surrender more of what is supposedly unique about humans. Each step of surrender—we are not the only mind that can play chess, fly a plane, make music, or invent a mathematical law—will be painful and sad. We’ll spend the next three decades—indeed, perhaps the next century—in a permanent identity crisis, continually asking ourselves what humans are good for. If we aren’t unique toolmakers, or artists, or moral ethicists, then what, if anything, makes us special? In the grandest irony of all, the greatest benefit of an everyday, utilitarian AI will not be increased productivity or an economics of abundance or a new way of doing science—although all those will happen. *The greatest benefit of the arrival of artificial intelligence is that AIs will help define humanity. We need AIs to tell us who we are.*³¹

Whether we remain optimistic about the future of AI or not, our growing dependence on artificial intelligence challenges our understanding of what it means to be human. Transhumanists like Ray Kurzweil believe we will eventually become a posthuman species.³² The term transhumanism was originated by Max Moore over thirty years ago. Moore defined transhumanism as,

the intellectual and cultural movement that affirms the possibility and desirability of fundamentally improving the human condition through applied reason, especially by developing and making widely available technologies to eliminate aging and to greatly enhance human intellectual, physical, and psychological capacities.³³

In his book, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, Yuval Noah Harari, one of the most prominent transhumanists today, takes a more pessimistic view of the future. Harari describes a future where only highly qualified specialists are useful to society.³⁴ In an article written several years ago, titled “Will People Still be Useful in the 21st Century?”, Harari envisions a future where,

Economic and political power might be concentrated in the hands of a tiny elite. Most people might become economically useless and politically powerless. As biotechnology improves moreover, it will be possible to extend human lifespans and to upgrade human abilities, but the new wonder treatments might be expensive, and might not be freely available for everybody. Therefore human society in the 21st century may be the most unequal in history since the upper classes will not only be richer than the rest of humankind, but will also live much longer and be far more talented. For the first time in history, economic inequality will be translated into biological inequality. Hence humankind will split into biological castes—an upper caste of upgraded superhumans, and a massive lower class of useless people.³⁵

Such predictions about transhumanism can sound

like science fiction. However, there are more pressing concerns about how AI is impacting humanity, mainly through automation. In his book *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*, Kurzweil predicts that “over the next couple of decades, virtually all routine physical and mental work will be automated.”³⁶ More recently, Harari predicted that automation would impact every level of society. For example, even medical doctors, once believed to be an automation-proof profession, could see a decline in general practitioners, favoring more specialized forms of medicine.³⁷ These types of predictions about automation inevitably lead to fears of technological unemployment, an idea first developed by the economist John Maynard Keynes in the 1930s, where advances in technology would replace many forms of labor, leading to mass unemployment. Keynes described this as “Unemployment due to the discovery of means of economising the use of labour outrunning the pace at which we can find new uses for labour.”³⁸

The British economist Daniel Susskind believes many of the predictions about automation will never be realized. Yet, there are still reasons for concern about AI-driven technologies and our increasing dependence on automation. In his recent book, *A World Without Work: Technology, Automation, and How We Should Respond*, Susskind asserts, “It is not a coincidence that, today, worries about economic inequality are intensifying at the exact same time that anxiety about automation is growing.”³⁹ Susskind argues that fears about the inequality of society and technological unemployment are related. He claims that:

The vast inequalities we already see in the labor market, with some workers receiving far less for their efforts than others, show that this approach is already creaking. Technological unemployment is simply a more extreme version of that story, but one that ends with some workers receiving nothing at all.⁴⁰

For Susskind, an underlying concern is what these economic trends say about human worth and value. He contends that “These problems will require us to engage with some of the most difficult questions we can ask . . . about the nature of our obligations to our fellow human beings, about what it means to live a meaningful life.”⁴¹

We do not need to imagine Yuval Noah Harari's dystopian future of "useless people" described above to understand the dehumanizing effects automation can have on people. In *Futureproof*, Kevin Roose warns us that AI-driven technologies, like automation, already "disproportionately affect people in low-income occupations, and exacerbate existing racial and gender disparities."⁴² Roose believes most of the discussion around AI and automation is farsighted, focusing on the effects of technology decades from now, when in reality, it is already present in our lives. These technologies exist in the form of algorithms,

that rank our social media feeds and power our interactions with virtual assistants like Alexa and Siri, the dynamic pricing software that determines how much we pay for hotel rooms and airline tickets, the opaque algorithms that are used to determine eligibility for government benefits, the predictive policing algorithms that law enforcement agencies use to patrol our neighborhoods.⁴³

Our current AI-driven technologies, Roose states,

harm vulnerable and marginalized groups even when it "works," by subjecting them to new forms of data-gathering and surveillance and encoding historical patterns of discrimination into automated systems. This harm can take many forms—a résumé-screening algorithm that learns to prefer men's qualifications to women's, a facial-recognition system that has a hard time correctly identifying gender nonconforming people, a predictive risk modeling system that learns to charge higher interest rates to Black loan applicants—and any responsible discussion of AI and automation needs to grapple with these issues, too.⁴⁴

Mo Gawdat believes the kind of dystopian future imagined by Harari and others is speculative. Rather, Gawdat imagines a series of milder dystopias based on the ways society is already using AI-driven technologies, primarily through automation.⁴⁵ Gawdat

argues that some of the artificially intelligent machines we are building are "good machines" contributing to human flourishing. However, we are also building "bad machines," meant for "killing, cyber theft or for other forms of crime," or they are just "built with good intentions but with bugs and mistakes left in the core code."⁴⁶ His point is that machines reflect the nature of their masters. They are either being built by "good masters, who want to succeed at their intentions while doing good, or evil masters, who just want to succeed regardless."⁴⁷ Machines reflect the views and biases of their creators for better or worse. We get out of our machines what we put into our machines.

In their book *The Ethical Algorithm: The Science of Socially Aware Algorithm Design*, Michael Kerns and Aaron Roth discuss how "blind, data-driven algorithmic optimization of a seemingly sensible objective can lead to unexpected and undesirable side effects."⁴⁸ For example, when AI algorithms are used for predictability, we should not be surprised "when it produces a model that has wildly different false positive rates when applied to different demographic groups."⁴⁹ Nor should we be surprised, they assert, when our algorithms encode the "identities of the individuals whose data was used for training, when it incentivizes people to misreport their data, or when it turns out to be gameable by data analysts seeking to make their research findings look more significant than they are."⁵⁰ Kerns and Roth see these issues as part of the same problem—the attempt to optimize procedures across complicated domains, often lead to dehumanizing outcomes. "While mathematicians debate the effects of tweaking the error statistics of machine learning algorithms," they assert, "real injustice is being done by the very use of those algorithms in the first place."⁵¹ This compounds injustice, they conclude: "What might appear fair from a myopic point of view is seen to be unfair when one takes into account the societal context: a lending algorithm designed like this would be part of a larger system that further punishes people for being poor, resulting in a feedback loop."⁵²

Becoming Human: Christian Hope

In light of the concerns about artificial intelligence in this essay, how might we respond as a church? To begin, we need to recognize that AI will only become

more ubiquitous in our lives, and frankly, very few of us want to return to the way things used to be. I personally appreciate the benefit of many of the algorithms in my life, especially the new music or podcasts Spotify often recommends to me. So, I am not one to suggest we join the nineteenth-century Luddites.⁵³ Rather, I offer a few ethical postures framed within the lens of Christian hope, seeking a third way for the Church to approach these ever-present forms of technology in our lives.

In their book *Humility Is the New Smart: Rethinking Human Excellence in the Smart Machine Age*, Edward Hess and Katherine Ludwig suggest that we need to embrace a different kind of intelligence to confront the ways technology challenges our humanness by seeking “behaviors that enable the highest levels of human thinking, learning, emotionally engaging with others, and making meaning together.”⁵⁴ For Hess and Ludwig, this begins with identifying what humans can do that machines cannot do, at least right now. These “smart machine age” skills include “critical thinking, innovative thinking, creativity, and high emotional engagement with others that fosters relationship building and collaboration.”⁵⁵ One of the most significant skills we can embrace is our humanity. In other words, we must become more human. Hess and Ludwig believe embracing our humanness begins with humility, which they define as “a mindset about oneself that is open-minded, self-accurate, and ‘not all about me,’ and that enables one to embrace the world as it ‘is’ in the pursuit of human excellence.”⁵⁶

When I first read *Humility Is the New Smart*, Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) came to mind. Jesus offers an “alternative intelligence,” a radically different approach to life, based on the gracious invitation to participate in the Kingdom of God. In *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, Glenn Stassen and David Gushee see an alternative intelligence in God’s gracious deliverance, especially in the Beatitudes where, “those who mourn will be comforted, the humble will inherit the earth, those who hunger for righteousness will be filled, mercy will be shown, people will see God, peacemakers will be called children of God, and the faithful will be members of the kingdom of God.”⁵⁷

Perhaps humility, suggested by Hess and Ludwig above, is one of the most essential Kingdom virtues as we think about an ethical posture toward artificial intelligence.

Here we may think of Jesus’s very first beatitude, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3). Or, as Luke says, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20). As Stassen and Gushee remind us, “Followers of Jesus participate in God’s reign by humbling themselves before God, giving themselves over to God, depending on God’s deliverance, and following God in caring for the poor and oppressed.”⁵⁸

Jacob Shatzer also sees humility as an important virtue in the age of AI. In his book *Transhumanism and the Image of God: Today’s Technology and the Future of Christian Discipleship*, Shatzer writes,

While our technologies encourage liturgies of power and control, tempting us to consider moving beyond the human altogether, Jesus’s words point in a very different direction. Pursuing salvation, pursuing the kingdom of heaven, does not mean evolving beyond what we are. It means becoming like little children. . . . The transhuman self is one that has pursued physical transformation, overcoming physical limitations in order to open up new intellectual and spiritual possibilities. The new self of Christianity, however, is one that has been given new spiritual life, having been made righteous and being renewed in knowledge. This reshapes the new human in a much deeper and profound sense than changing biological elements can hope to do.⁵⁹

In *Futurepoof*, Kevin Roose cites Frank Chen, a venture capitalist who invests in AI start-ups. Chen believes we must return to analog ethics, the skills celebrated in Robert Fulghum’s classic book, *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, “the elementary, pre-literate skills of treating other people well, acting ethically, and behaving in prosocial ways.”⁶⁰ In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus offers an ultimate analog ethic, based on the hope of God’s “grace and deliverance, justice and righteousness, peace and presence,” the source of our true worth. Here is where we discover what it means to be truly human. “People should be treated with love and justice,” Stassen and Gushee remind us in *Kingdom Ethics*, “because they

are sacred in God's sight; other creatures (even 'the birds of the air') also should be treated with appropriate respect because these created beings also have a share in divinely given sacred worth."⁶¹ David Gushee later expounds on this concept of human worth by citing his book, *Sacredness of Human Life*, where he explains,

Human life is sacred: this means that God has consecrated each and every human being—without exception and in all circumstances—as a unique, incalculably precious being of elevated status and dignity. Through God's revelation in Scripture and incarnation in Jesus Christ, God has declared and demonstrated the sacred worth of human beings and will hold us accountable for responding appropriately. Such a response begins by adopting a posture of reverence and by accepting responsibility for the sacred gift that is a human life. It includes offering due respect and care to each human being that we encounter. It extends to an obligation to protect human life from wanton destruction, desecration, or the violation of human rights. A full embrace of the sacredness of human life leads to a full-hearted commitment to foster human flourishing.⁶²

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer was writing *Discipleship* in 1936, his nation was consumed with progress. At the time, most Christians in Germany saw the rise of National Socialism and the Nazi Party as good for their nation.⁶³ Except for a minority of Christians like Bonhoeffer, most failed to care about the useless people left in the wake of Nazi progress. No doubt this weighed on Bonhoeffer as he reflected on the meaning of Jesus's Sermon on the Mount and God's gracious invitation to participate in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. For Bonhoeffer, to participate in the life of Christ meant there was another way to be human—a participatory ontology.⁶⁴ In an oft-cited passage on the incarnation from *Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer writes,

In Christ's incarnation all of humanity regains the dignity of bearing the image of God. Whoever from now on attacks the least of the people attacks Christ, who took on human form and who in

himself has restored the image of God for all who bear a human countenance.

. . . In as much as we participate in Christ, the incarnate one, we also have a part in all of humanity, which is borne by him. Since we know ourselves to be accepted and borne within the humanity of Jesus, our new humanity now also consists in bearing the troubles and the sins of all others. The incarnate one transforms his disciples into brothers and sisters of all human beings.⁶⁵

Conclusion

In this essay, I have considered the promise and peril in the rise of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and robotics. The emergence of AI is one of the most critical issues of our time. I have only been able to explore two crucial questions related to artificial intelligence; both are anthropological. A formational question: how is our technology shaping us as human beings? And an ontological question: what does our technology say about our value as human beings and what it means to be human? AI is only becoming more ubiquitous in our world. We cannot avoid these technologies. Therefore, we must continue to ask ourselves how artificial intelligence is shaping us. Are we being led by algorithms with the power to change our minds by appealing to our base emotions, dehumanizing us, dividing us into tribes, preventing us from seeing one another as neighbors, decreasing our capacity for empathy, and inhibiting our ability to treat one another with compassion? Or are we being led by the One who truly knows us, the One who calls us by name, the true source of our worth? The One who truly makes us human, Jesus Christ.

Endnotes

1. According to Klaus Schwab, "The fourth industrial revolution, however, is not only about smart and connected machines and systems. Its scope is much wider. Occurring simultaneously are waves of further breakthroughs in areas ranging from gene sequencing to nanotechnology, from renewables to quantum computing. It is the fusion of these technologies and their interaction across the physical, digital and biological domains that make the fourth industrial revolution fundamentally different from previous revolutions." Cf. Klaus Schwab, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum, 2016), <https://perma.cc/Z7ZL-26NN>.

2. Tonje Hessen Schei, et. al., *iHuman* (UpNorth, 2019). The 2019 film *iHuman* provides a helpful overview of the issues raised by the advancement of AI. *iHuman* is produced, directed and written by Schei, a Norwegian film maker who focuses much of her work on technology and human rights.

3. Any discussion about artificial intelligence is challenging, due in part to the complexity of the topic. There are currently three types of AI: Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI), Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), and Artificial Super Intelligence (ASI). We are currently in the Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI) stage of AI, sometimes referred to as Weak AI, where technology is limited to a narrow set of specific tasks, e.g., Siri, Alexa, self-driving cars, Alpha-Go, Sophia the humanoid, The

Internet of Things, etc. AI still cannot make decisions like humans, as in AGI or ASI. Cf. Zulaikha Lateef, "Types of Artificial Intelligence You Should Know," *Edureaka* blog, July 29, 2021, <https://perma.cc/YM6Q-NFGZ>.

4. Peter Dauvergne, *AI in the Wild: Sustainability in the Age of Artificial Intelligence* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), XII.

5. Mo Gawdat, *Scary Smart: The Future of Artificial Intelligence and How You Can Save Our World* (London: Bluebird, 2021), "Summary of the Scary Part," Kindle.

6. Gawdat, *Scary Smart*, "A Change of Heart," Kindle.

7. Kevin Roose, *Futureproof: 9 Rules for Humans in the Age of Automation* (New York: Random House, 2021), "Birth of a Suboptimist," Kindle.

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15. Anna Lembke, *Dopamine Nation: Finding Balance in an Age of Indulgence* (New York: Dutton, 2021), "The Problem," Kindle.

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18. Yi, "Summer Reading Group."

19. Kevin Roose, "One: Wonderland," *Rabbit Hole* podcast, April 16, 2020, <https://perma.cc/PRY9-D6Y7>.

20. James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom (Cultural Liturgies): Worship, Worldviews, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2009), 40.

21. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 40.

22. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 82.

23. Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Thomas Williams, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2019), "Book 1," Kindle.

24. Felicia Wu Song, *Restless Devices: Recovering Personhood, Presence, and Place in the Digital Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2021), 128.

25. Wu Song, *Restless Devices* 128.

26. Wu Song, *Restless Devices*, 130.

27. Wu Song, *Restless Devices*, 133–134.

28. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1890), 91.

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30. Kevin Kelly, *The Inevitable: Understanding the 12 Technological Forces that Will Shape Our Future* (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), "Sharing," Kindle.

31. Kelly, *The Inevitable*, "Better Algorithms," Kindle. (Emphasis mine).

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33. G. Katja, et al., "When Will AI Exceed Human Performance? Evidence from AI Experts," *Journal of Artificial Intelligence Research* 62 (2018): 729–54.

34. Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* (New York: Harper, 2015), 320.

35. Yuval Noah Harari, "Will People Still be Useful in the 21st Century?," CNN, September 18, 2014, <https://perma.cc/89BY-3LJS>.

36. Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Near*, 290.

37. Harari, *Sapiens*, 320.

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39. Daniel Susskind, *A World Without Work: Technology, Automation, and How We Should Respond* (New York: Henry and Holt, 2020), "Introduction," Kindle.

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42. Roose, *Futureproof*, "Chap. 1."

43. Roose, *Futureproof*, "Introduction."

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53. Cf. Luddite is a blanket term we now use to describe someone who is anti-technology (i.e., a "technophobe"). The Luddites were a nineteenth-century labor movement in England that opposed advances in manufacturing that they felt were undermining skilled craftsmen of their day. For more see Evan Andrews, "Who Were the Luddites?" *History* website, August 7, 2015 (updated Jun 26, 2019), <https://perma.cc/88NC-RVLT>.

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55. Hess and Ludwig, *Humility Is the New Smart*, 22.

56. Hess and Ludwig, *Humility Is the New Smart*, 8.

57. David P. Gushee and Glenn H. Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), "Chapter 2," Kindle.

58. Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*.

59. Jacob Shatzer, *Transhumanism and the Image of God: Today's Technology and the Future of Christian Discipleship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 2019), 168–169.

60. Roose, *Futureproof*, "Rule 8"; Cf. Frank Chen, "Humanity + AI: Better Together," *Andressen Horowitz* blog, February 22, 2019, <https://perma.cc/44JU-WK6T>.

61. Gushee and Stassen, *Kingdom Ethics*, "Chap. 2."

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63. Bonhoeffer reflected on the rise of technology in his time. For example, while writing the "Heritage and Decay" chapter for his *Ethics* manuscript in 1940, Bonhoeffer reflected on the advances of technology in the West, concluding, "It is the liberation of reason for dominance over creation that has led to the triumph of technology. The technological age is a true heritage of our Western history, with which we must grapple, and which we cannot reverse." (Emphasis mine). Cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, ed. by Ilse Tödt, et. al., trans. by Reinhard Krauss, et. al., Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English Edition (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), VI, 117.

64. Jens Zimmermann, "Being Human, Becoming Human: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christological Humanism," in *Being Human, Becoming Human: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Social Thought*, eds. Jens Zimmermann and Brian Gregor (Cambridge: James Clark & Co, 2010), 33.

65. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, eds. Martin Kuske, et. al., trans. Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works English Edition (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), IV, 285. For Bonhoeffer, God's gracious invitation is patterned after the entire Christ event; just prior to this statement, he writes, "It is Christ's own form which seeks to manifest itself in us. Christ does not cease working in us until he has changed us into Christ's own image. Our goal is to be shaped into the entire form of the incarnate, the crucified, and the risen one."



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EXPRESSIONS

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Creating a Graphic Novel: What I Learned

BY KAMILA J. OSTER

When the different options for the final project were presented for this class, I knew right away that I wanted to draw a graphic novel. As a young child, I spent most of my free time drawing and would create my own books, even though I could not yet read or write. I would first illustrate the pages and then would have my mother fill in the words and read back the stories to me. I even wanted to be a children's book author for a while, so when I heard about this project, I was very excited. Despite my overall enthusiasm, I did at first have trouble deciding what to make my comic about. At first, I wanted to write about my grandparents. My mother's parents immigrated from Puerto Rico, and my dad's parents came to the US from Denmark after World War II. However, after some thought I decided I wanted the story to be about something I had experienced first-hand. Eventually, I decided to focus my project on several social justice issues I faced after moving to Maryland and attending John Nevins Andrews School.

While making this project, I realized just how time consuming it is to make a graphic novel. My talents as an artist have definitely improved from when I was younger; therefore, it took much more time to create a story than when I was five. However, getting to learn about a new art style was a very interesting experience. Although I

still draw to this day, it is usually not in a cartoon-like style, so there was a significant learning curve I had to go through, especially when making sure my characters looked consistent. I also found it interesting just how much a slant or curve of a line can impact how a character looks and what emotion they are portraying. I really enjoyed creating different emotions for my characters and, due to the comic book style, also being able to include a character's thoughts or word bubbles.


In addition to art, I also got to learn more about the story I was writing about. While I knew most of what had happened, there were many specifics I had to fill in by doing my own research on the topic and by talking with my mom. Due to my young age while the events in my story were occurring, I did not fully understand everything that was happening at the time. Thus, it was nice to be able to develop a better understanding of why my experience at JNA was the way it was, now that I am older. In fact, if I were to do this project again, I would want to add more of these experiences and create an overall longer piece that does not include as many time jumps. Despite this, I am glad I chose to do a graphic novel for my project, as it not only taught me about how to create a comic book, but also about myself and how my time at JNA shaped me as a person.

I decided to focus my project on several social justice issues I faced after moving to Maryland and attending John Nevins Andrews School.

THE PICTURES ON THE WALLS

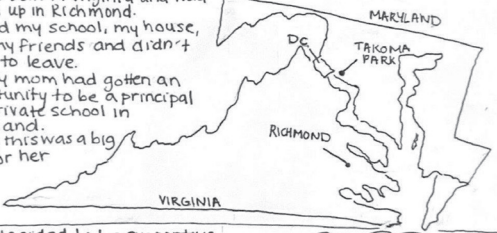
• Kamila J. Oster.

The summer before I started 7th grade, my mom told my brother, sister and I that we were moving to Maryland.




We did not have the best reactions

I was born in Virginia and had grown up in Richmond. I liked my school, my house, and my friends and didn't want to leave. But my mom had gotten an opportunity to be a principal at a private school in Maryland. I knew this was a big deal for her



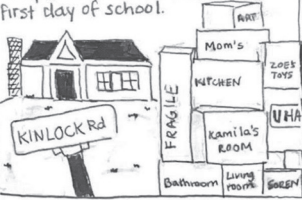
So I decided to be supportive




I asked my mom what school she'd be working at. I was hoping it'd be Spencerville. My cousins went there and had told me how big, new, and cool it was. My excitement was crushed when she responded:

Well, it's not Spencerville. It's a very small school in Takoma Park called **JOHN NEVINS ANDREWS**... It's different, but I'm sure you all will love it.

We moved to our new house a couple days before the first day of school.



The day before the first day of school my cousins came over to help unpack. Eventually the subject of school came up.



Kamila, are you excited for your first day of school tomorrow?

Um, well I—

Yeah 7th grade! That's a big deal! You're so grown up. I remember when I was in 7th.


Angie, you're only one year older than her! 7th grade was last year.

Ang! Stop it! We don't want to scare her before her first day.


Whatever, Joanna. So, are you nervous? I know I would be if I was going to the bully school!

wait... what do you mean? I'm going to the bully school?!

Despite hearing this, I decided to be positive, though I was a little nervous.



Oh, you know, it's just something people say. Like, Spencerville has the rich kids; Olney has the weird kids and John has the bullies. You'll see tomorrow, they're huge! We played them in basketball last year, and I heard one of the girls punched a tree.



Hi, I'm Kamila. Wait, no Hi, I'm Kami. Nice to meet you!

That night I practiced introducing myself and smiling in the mirror.

August 2013

The morning of the first day of school, my brother, sister and I lined up in front of my mom's office for a picture and then headed off to our classrooms.

As I walked to class I noticed that JNA was very old. There were pictures on the walls of kids that had graduated over 100 years ago. JNA also wasn't as nice as my old school and a lot of things were broken and worn out.

As the bell rang, Ruth and I asked Isabelle about our homeroom teacher, Mrs. Howard.

She's really strict, people say she might be... well, you'll see. Just try to stay on her good side. She likes the quiet, smart kids.

When I arrived at my locker, I met two girls who had lockers next to mine. Ruth and Isabelle. Ruth was new, like me, but Isabelle had been at JNA since Pre-K.

As soon as I walked into class, I noticed that the kids looked so old. Some even had mustaches!

I thought I had walked into the wrong classroom, but sure enough Ruth and Isabelle were right behind me, so this had to be 7th grade.

The bell rang and we took our seats. Mrs. Howard began introducing herself and going over the class procedures.

Good Morning 7th grade! My name is Mrs. Howard. Welcome to the first day.

Mrs. Howard then began introducing the new students. Eventually she got to me.

And this is Kami Ostor our new Principal, Ms. Rivera's daughter!

After homeroom, we had Bible and History with Mrs. Howard, and then it was time for lunch.

At JNA, we had lunch in the gym which was also the cafeteria and auditorium.

THE GYM CAFETERIA

Lunch Table # 1
For [scary] 7th graders

Lunch Table # 2
For [even scarier] 8th graders

Lunch table # 3
6th graders

me, Isabelle and Ruth

I sat down at the 7th grade table with my new friends and the rest of my classmates. Though I was a bit scared at first, after a while I relaxed and we all began sharing about summer, classes and teachers.

So Kami, what do you think of Mrs. Howard?

Um, well she seems nice.

Well of course you think that because I'm quiet and smart.

Well she's gonna like you. Look around you're the only white kid in the whole school!

What do you mean?

The rest of the students began to laugh and affirm what Zephy had said, some even adding their own thoughts.

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

Are you like adopted or something?

Yeah, you look nothing like Principal Rivera! You don't even have her last name.

The subject soon changed but I spent the rest of the day thinking.

It is true that I am white. My dad is Danish, however, I was raised primarily by my mom and her family and identified more with my Puerto Rican heritage at the time.

In fact, it hadn't ever really occurred to me that I didn't look like my mom or brother and sister. The schools and neighborhoods I had grown up in, in Virginia, were primarily white with some Latinos.

RECIPE

- 2 Puerto Rican Mom
- 1 Danish Dad
- Mix together
- Bake for 9 months
- Yields 3 biracial kids

• straight hair • tall • pale

• curly hair • short • tan

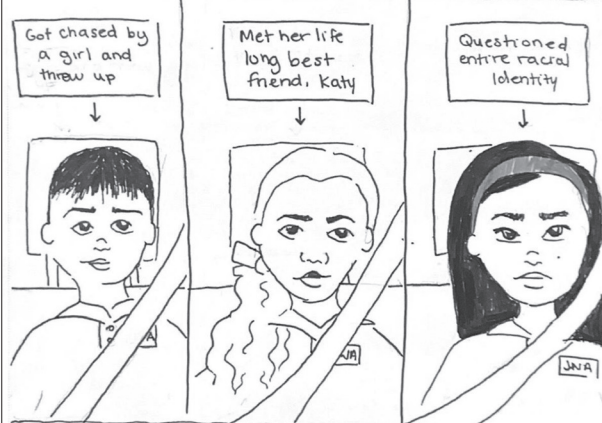
• dark eyes • short • tan

So, I had never really felt different and my comparative whiteness hadn't been pointed out. To be honest, I had never really noticed race, so realizing no one at JNA looked like me was a jarring experience.

That day, as we drove home from school, my mom asked us how our days went and what we thought of JNA.



We each took turns sharing and when it was my turn I decided to ask my mom the question that had been on my mind since lunch.



Hey mom, why aren't there any white kids at JNA?

well, Kami, in 1904 a hub of Seventh-day Adventist institutions were created in Takoma Park. These included the General Conference, a University, the Review and Herald and a hospital.



As a result, several families moved to this area to work here and they needed a place to send their kids to school.



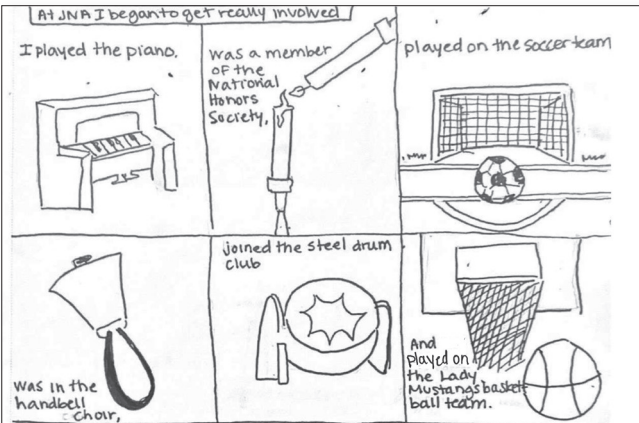
They opened a high school, Takoma Academy, and two K-8 academies, Sligo and JNA. Each school had hundreds of white students, in fact some of your dad's sisters went to Takoma Academy.

But as Takoma Park began to diversify, many white families left. They began attending different schools and churches, like Spencerville and Olney. Eventually Takoma Park began to be viewed as unsafe, as more minorities moved in and several white families fled to more rural areas. Then the General Conference and Review and Herald moved. As soon as they finish building the new hospital, it will too.

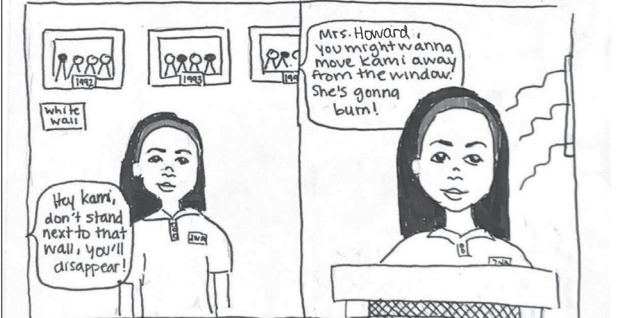


That's why, if you look at the graduating class pictures in the hallways, you can see the gradual change of which races were represented.

Eventually, we arrived home and continued on with going to school and adjusting to our new lives. Little did we know how much our mom's brief history lesson would later impact us.



The more involved I got, the more friends I made, and my classmates didn't seem so big and scary anymore.



Although, they would still tease me about my skin color from time to time, I usually just brushed it off. This was middle school after all, and every one got teased for something.

Even though I had learned to no longer be threatened by my classmates, I couldn't say the same for everyone. Every year, all of the SPA Academies neatly would play against each other at the Maryland Excel tournament.



The Lady Mustangs were undefeated and had been for years, but that didn't stop the negative treatment we received at most games.

Often times the girls on the other teams would push and trip us or, a girl on another team would fake an injury and be given an extra attempt to make her missed free throw.



And it seemed like the referees didn't even notice. We always ignored everything and despite the obstacles, we won first place that year.

Coordinator of the tournament giving us our trophy. (Also ended up being my step-dad)



Mom on the phone being supportive while working.

My mom eventually got off the phone and told me she had to go back to JNA for an important meeting. She always had meetings, so I didn't think much of it and continued celebrating with my teammates.



That night my mom came to my room, clearly upset. I asked her if she was okay and she told me what had been bothering her.

They want to shut down JNA...

Is there anything we can do?


The conference wasn't giving JNA any money. They wanted to shut it down and merge it with Sligo. They said we needed more students, since most of the kids attending Sligo were on a scholarship, in order to stay open. So we got to work.

But it seemed like no matter how hard we worked and prayed, the conference didn't care.

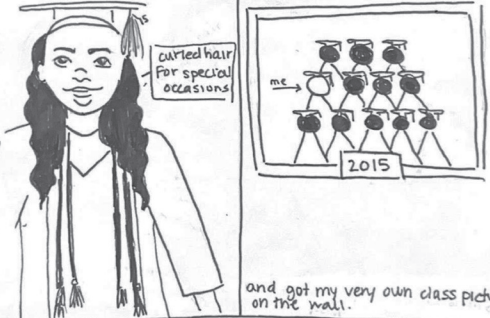


We hosted fundraisers and went door to door looking for donors and new students. They even sold the land, our playground was on...

However, more students did end up coming and for a while we thought JNA might get to stay open.




These were very hopeful and exciting times — my mom even got remarried at the start of my eighth-grade year. I ended up getting to graduate from JNA.



curled hair for special occasions

and got my very own class picture on the wall.

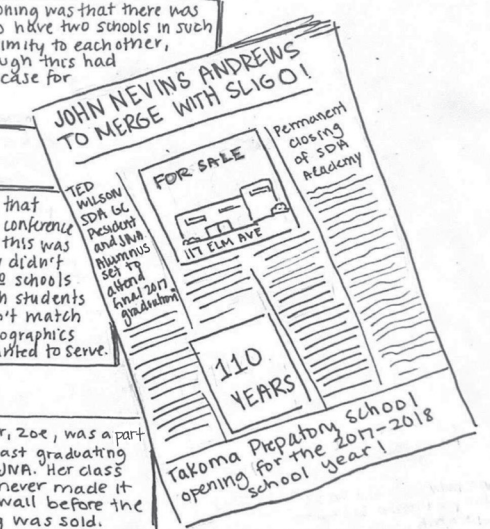
For high school, my mom sent me to Spencerville. My step-siblings went to school there and it was right next to our new house.



It was my second year there when the conference announced it

John Nevins Andrews would be shut down the following school year and the building would be sold. The students from JNA would be expected to go to Sligo, which they would rename Takoma Preparatory School. This building was much too small to accommodate such a large influx of students and half of the staff from both schools would be let go.

Their reasoning was that there was no need to have two schools in such close proximity to each other, even though this had been the case for the last century.



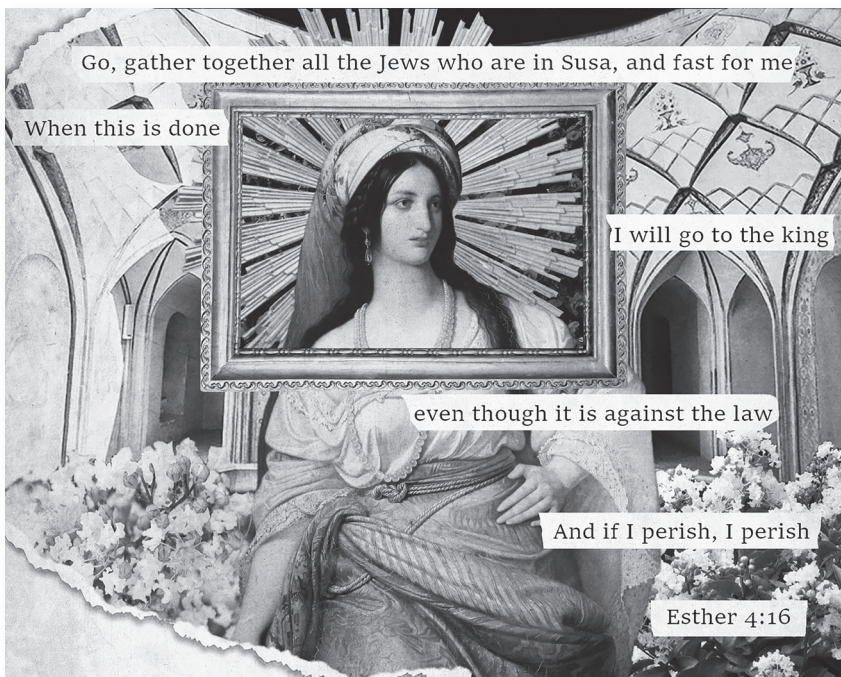
We all felt that what the conference meant by this was that they didn't want two schools filled with students that didn't match the demographics they wanted to serve.

My sister, Zoe, was a part of the last graduating class of JNA. Her class picture never made it on the wall before the building was sold.

The memory of JNA lives on with those of us that were lucky enough to attend this school. I know that I, personally, would not be who I am today had my mom not enrolled us there, and I'm very grateful to have had this unique experience.

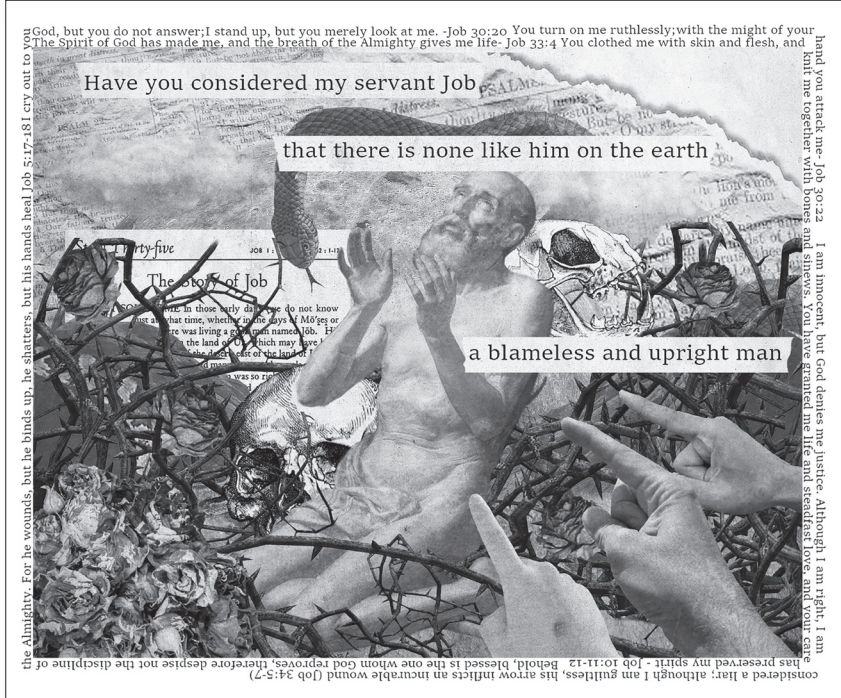


KAMILA J. OSTER, originally from Richmond, Virginia, but raised in Silver Spring, Maryland, is a student at Andrews University. She is currently in her third year and is studying English and pre-medicine, with a writing emphasis. After graduation, she hopes to attend medical school and continue pursuing art and writing.



Esther

The Collage of Esther portrays her image. She is described as beautiful and obedient in the book of Esther. She was put into the mold of an obedient woman but, looking outside of the frame, shows herself as a Jewish woman.



Job

The Collage of Job is the depiction of two views, with Job both praising and struggling with God on the thorny path that he went down. The wilting flowers growing on the thorns show that there is still hope on the painful path, and the collage shows Job's struggle. Around Job is the misfortune of events he went through in the book of Job.



ALLISON WONG is a graphic design artist who specializes in illustrations and other graphic works. Based in California, they are currently a student at La Sierra University, where they have had the opportunity to experience different art styles, as well as familiarize themselves with the Adventist institution. Taking inspiration from the stories told in different religious texts, they created art pieces that reflect on them.

young graveyard

it's humbling to be vibrantly alive
in the midst of those we have lost so young
i just want to be able to survive
whereas their heads have already been hung

mourning those who were of my own stature
standing in the field, eyes of quiet tears
silently hoping their souls were captured
i'm crying to God praying for more years

still not certain if i truly mean it
i want it more for them than for myself
the sad wishes for death causes conflict
how can i want to be dead and alive, hell

how can i be sad about their too soon death
when i pray for my own shaky last breath



KYARA FOLLETTE attends Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama. She is a junior studying English professional writing. She wants to go on to study speech language pathology and become a pediatric speech language pathologist.

Soldiers

Soldiers lined up in a row
Not knowing what lies ahead
But one thing they do know
They would risk it all, no matter how much they bled.

Terror was at every corner
People were cowering in fear
Their lives were saved by foreigners
That traveled far and near.

Eventually, the soldiers' mission was a success
But not all of them survive
While some soldiers feel regrets
Of even being alive.

As they stare at their fallen friends
They remember they were a part of the injustice reaching its end.



PATRICIA MIRANDA is currently a senior at Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama studying broadcast journalism and minoring in English. She's also a member of the university's media team, helping with the filming of various media projects. In addition, she is an online content creator, writing blogs, hosting and producing podcasts, and writing, editing, and presenting videos for her website Old School Lane.

“Death and Swan”

By quiet lake does Death sit solemnly,
Perched on the bench of strict eternity.
Alone is Death, surrounded by the stones,
Of those who once were flesh and now are bones.

A child who knew not life past three days whole,
A friend, a father, gone from days of old.
Death met them all, and here by lake they lay,
Despite all hopes to see another day.

But on this Lake, Death feels the stare of eyes
And at the end of stare Death is surprised
To find a living swan with nest of eggs
Look pointedly at Death as if to beg.

Though Death knows Swan and Eggs
will meet their fate,
For now, Death watches bird,
content, and waits.



WANÉA ALLEN is an English major at Oakwood University pursuing a career in professional writing. Originally from Maryland, her passions include singing, drawing, writing, and storytelling. She hopes to one day become an editor and best-selling author, and inspire readers around the world.

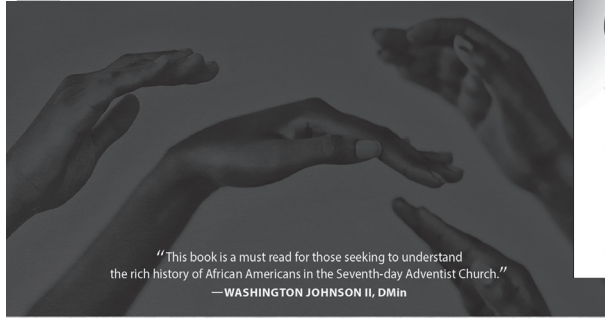




SCHISM

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM IN
POST-DENOMINATIONAL CHINA

CHRISTIE CHUI-SHAN CHOW



"This book is a must read for those seeking to understand
the rich history of African Americans in the Seventh-day Adventist Church."
—WASHINGTON JOHNSON II, DMin

Child of the Apocalypse

Ellen G. White

DONALD EDWARD CASEBOLT

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SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST HEALERS
IN A MULTICULTURAL NATION

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Excerpt from *Schism: Seventh-day Adventism in Post-Denominational China*

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Chinese Adventism from the 1940s to the 1970s

The establishment of the China Division (*Zhonghua zonghui*) in Shanghai in the 1930s marked a milestone of Adventist work in the China mission. Yet, it was not until January 1941 that the missionaries appointed a team of Chinese workers to lead the China Division,⁴⁴ and then only out of necessity, in response to the Japanese occupation. After the Second World War, and by November 1945, missionaries returned to resume control of the mission.⁴⁵ With “one and a half million dollars in gold” from the GC, the China Division quickly restored the denominational properties that were destroyed during the war.⁴⁶ Reestablishing sanitariums, schools, and the printing press reflected the priority the GC gave to institutional evangelistic methods of education, medicine, and literature. Meanwhile, native frontline evangelists worked on the ground to gain new converts during the Chinese Civil War (1945–1949). Once again, Adventist end-time messages did their job. Through visual devices such as charts, pictures, slides, and stereopticons, the fascinating prophecies about the end of the world captivated ordinary minds. Combining new technology and traditional preaching, the Adventists walked the faith inquirers through basic gospel messages and Adventist denominational doctrines. In one meeting, after an audience member remarked that he had already

learned the doctrine of salvation elsewhere, an Adventist preacher urged him to come to the remaining meetings for another “seventy-odd topics.” An evangelist boasted on another occasion about how his presentation of “the depth of Christian doctrines” had amazed a local magistrate.⁴⁷

In the latter period of the civil war, the new bilingual (English and Chinese) gospel radio stood out as an effective evangelistic tool. Originally an independent ministry founded by the American Adventist pastor Harold Marshall Sylvester Richards, Sr. (1894–1985), in 1942 the Voice of Prophecy radio broadcast grew to have national distribution in the United States under the sponsorship of the GC.⁴⁸ Fordyce W. Detamore, who joined the Voice of Prophecy in 1941, later launched the Bible Correspondence School, to which listeners could write letters to request Bible lessons.⁴⁹ When David Lin (Lin Yaoxi)⁵⁰ (whom we will encounter with regard to the two Adventist schisms to be discussed in the next two chapters) was pursuing theological degrees in the United States, he joined this new evangelistic ministry and translated some of the English Bible courses into Chinese. This work provided him with the opportunity to understand how the combination of radio broadcasting and Bible correspondence courses had been an effective evangelist tool in Africa.⁵¹ One month after the Allies’ victory over the Japanese in the Battle of Guadalcanal



SCHISM

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM IN
POST-DENOMINATIONAL CHINA

CHRISTIE CHUI-SHAN CHOW

(August 1942–February 1943), the GC voted for Lin’s departure for China. With his experience working in the Adventist “North American Radio Commission,” the GC appointed Lin as the China Division’s first radio secretary.⁵² He left America with twenty-six Chinese Bible lessons and went back to Shanghai. Lin was later joined by the veteran bilingual American missionary Milton Lee.⁵³ In combination called the Voice of Prophecy Bible Correspondence School, the bilingual Adventist radio broadcast and the Bible correspondence course extended the Adventist messages far beyond metropolitan Shanghai. Within one year, the number of local stations that were picking up the Voice of Prophecy

program rose from nine to twenty.⁵⁴ Three more stations joined after the radio work was moved to the south to escape the Communist troops. By 1949, the station had added a Chinese musical voice to the program by replacing an album by an American a cappella quartet, the King’s Heralds, with a live broadcast of a Chinese quartet and organ music.⁵⁵

The Chinese Voice of Prophecy broadened the scope of evangelism by penetrating into areas that colporteurs and mail were unable to reach. Specifically, the English radio program and English Bible courses drew listeners and students from the middle and upper classes.⁵⁶ The Bible Correspondence School’s enrollment depended on student introductions, advertisements in denominational magazines and other periodicals, and radio logs with application blanks attached. Thus, by February 1948, many listeners connected to Adventism through programs such as *Present Truth Lectures* and *Spirit of Prophecy*, all with the denomination’s unique messages. One example of the popularity of the Adventist radio programs was when radio station XNRA asked the Voice of Prophecy to broadcast an English-Chinese translated program entitled *Our Time* each Sabbath.⁵⁷ In the spring of 1949, when several radio stations in the Communist-controlled northern cities were being shut down, feeling that “our days are numbered,” David Lin directed the radio ministry team taking refuge in Canton to transcribe the programs speedily. These transcriptions were then sent out to regions that had lost access to the radio programs.⁵⁸

However effective the evangelistic methods were, they required local workers on the ground to reap the results. And indeed, even during the civil war local lay leaders delivered gospel tracts and the Bible Correspondence School enrollment blanks, led Bible studies in their homes, and rallied hundreds of students to come to month-long evangelistic meetings.⁵⁹ They raised funds for local evangelistic meetings, diligently

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visited their neighbors, and invited potential converts to meetings. The China Division used *Training Light Bearers* and Ellen White's *Gospel Workers* to train the laity in evangelistic skills. Both works gave guidance on basic Bible study, denominational history, the GC organization, and simple missionary work. Ten thousand copies of the Chinese song book were published to support newly established Sabbath meetings.⁶⁰

Though the Chinese proved themselves to be capable evangelists, they did not gain full leadership of the denomination until the missionaries were forced to leave China in the 1950s. The China Division's secretary, Nathan Falcon Brewer (1891–1959), did call for more Chinese workers to be ordained as pastors after the civil war. Comparing the seventy-six ordained Chinese ministers to the twenty-six foreign missionaries, Brewer commented in 1948 that, "Many of our workers have been in the work for years and have received ministerial licenses for ten to twenty years. It would seem that a number of these workers should be ready for ordination if they are ever to be ordained. I believe that the council should give definite study to this item." With a national membership of 21,769 people, Brewer's call for empowering more native agents through ordination reflects a pragmatic concern for growing the China mission, whose political future was increasingly uncertain.⁶¹ And indeed, from 1947 to 1950, over thirty Chinese workers were ordained.⁶² In the past, it might have taken years for a worker to become qualified for ordination. But it soon became clear to the missionaries that field experience was less relevant and could be gained after ordination. David Lin, for example, accomplished much in the radio department but lacked frontline experience in pastoral ministry. Yet Lin was fast-tracked to become an ordained pastor on January 24, 1948, less than two years after his return to Shanghai.⁶³ Another similar case was that of Xu Hua (Hsu Hua 1906–1995). Xu was more experienced in the printing and editing ministry than the grassroots ministry but was ordained in 1950 nonetheless.⁶⁴ In Wenzhou, the first Chinese president of the South Chekiang Mission was Pastor Chen Youshi (1900–1974).⁶⁵ These precipitous ordinations prepared the Chinese to fill the leadership void after the missionaries left China.

When Ezra L. Longway, John Oss, and their families

departed China in 1950,⁶⁶ for the first time in Chinese Adventist history "the leadership of the work was entirely in Chinese hands,"⁶⁷ with Xu Hua as China Division's president, David Lin as secretary, and Li Chengzhang (S. J. Lee 1908–1987) as treasurer.⁶⁸ The denomination's national membership had grown from just ninety-five baptized members in 1909 to 22,994 in 1950.⁶⁹ Despite the small membership in comparison with other denominations,⁷⁰ and despite the uncertainty under the new regime, the Chinese leadership encouraged the church "to be courageous and strong, and not to 'draw back' in their work for God."⁷¹

Yet the missionary-appointed Chinese leadership was short-lived. For in the following months, the regime imposed strict control over the Christian population. Both Catholic and Protestant churches were demanded to demonstrate patriotism by breaking their financial and organizational ties with foreign missionaries. The Communists used the bureaucratic framework of the Three-Self Reform Movement (later renamed the Three-Self Patriotic Movement [TSPM]) to place all Christians under official control.⁷² Some politically progressive Protestants responded favorably to the new state,⁷³ others were suspicious of the communist government, and still others were defiant. The Adventist leaders responded with considerable caution. David Lin reminded the churches that despite being under the Three-Self Movement, Chinese Adventists continued to be "members of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists." Lin wrote, "Neither China nor the United States owns the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Church has its own integrity. It is an organization for all nations." The theology undergirding Lin's statement is unmistakably a global Adventist one. Referring to the first angel's proclamation in Revelation 14:6, which the Adventists interpret as the Church's unique mission to spread the gospel to "every nation and tribe and language and people," Lin called on Adventists to embrace the "world mission" instead of narrowly focusing on evangelizing China. He criticized some politically active Adventists, who quickly embraced the ideological rhetoric of the state and sought to nationalize the churches. Any ecclesiastical reform, according to Lin, should be guided by the "spirit of cooperation, brotherly trust, and mutual love," not by any ideological agenda.⁷⁴

Lin's statements express his worries about the politicized environment that Adventist churches were facing. He published these remarks in 1950, when the Communists had already infiltrated the Adventist mission's school, the China Training Institute, and its printing press, the Signs of the Times Publishing House. The new Chinese leadership headed by Xu Hua strove to resist the disruption of these infiltrations. A heightened sentiment invoking divine intervention to counter the Communist challenges was captured in the June 1951 issue of the denominational magazine cover that urged the Adventists to "Hold high the torch of truth!" and defiantly quoted Paul's epistle to the Hebrews (13:6): "The Lord will help me—I will not fear. What can people do to me?"⁷⁵ The infiltrators destabilized these institutions by creating pro-government student and labor unions to undermine the existing Adventist leadership.⁷⁶

Pressure on Chinese Christians to support China's confrontation with the United State intensified during the Korean War (1950–1953). In the name of purging Western imperialism, the Communists launched countless mass denunciations of Christian leaders, forcing them to accuse and demonize the foreign missionaries. This development was a continuation of the contentious church-state relationship from the 1920s, when the Soviet-supported nationalists and communists launched a series of anti-Christian campaigns to foment violence in coastal China. The party activists co-opted those pro-government Chinese church leaders and mission school students to challenge foreign missionaries, exploiting one political crisis after another to bring the idealistic Christians closer to their revolutionary agenda. The radicalization of the Christian youths became part of a broader Communist mobilizing strategy to expand the revolutionary movement and to gain popular support for an imagined Chinese nation-state. This secular state-building process intensified in the

government-controlled patriotic churches after 1949. In particular, the outbreak of the Korean War on June 25, 1950 worsened the situation for Chinese churches. The Communist government expelled Western Catholic and Protestant missionaries from China, confiscated mission church properties, and forced Chinese Christians to cut ties with foreigners. It was nationalistic and symbolized the end of foreign imperialism in China. The TSPM was launched to politicize religious doctrines and practices. The movement subordinated the religious mission of the church to the political agenda of the Communist Party. The Christian ideas of pacifism, universal love, and salvation by faith were dismissed as imperialist opiates, while anti-imperialism and class struggle were glorified as Christian virtues. The persistent wave of party propaganda against US military intervention in Korea incited anti-foreign sentiments. Under this sort of everyday clamor, the TSPM became linked to official xenophobia, and as a result, the state went after the Euro- and US-centric Protestant denominations. This kind of war psychology convinced many Christians that the days of missionary work were over, and that any links with foreigners would be unpatriotic.

In 1951, the Adventists in Shanghai were the first group in the denomination to accuse the missionaries.⁷⁷ The procedure for setting up the accusation committee was dictated by the Communist officials in charge of religious affairs and by the leaders of the TSPM. The state's agents decided which Adventists to accuse, who should make the accusations, and what content was to be included in the accusation materials. During the accusation meeting, they manipulated the Adventist participants' anti-foreign sentiments and emotions; afterwards, they replaced the existing church leaders with their own protégés and completely integrated the Adventist institutions into the socialist order.⁷⁸ A similar model of top-down infiltration was later applied to other Protestant and Catholic groups. The

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accusation campaign was a calculated tactic to expel existing church leaders and put pro-government agents in charge of former mission churches. After three accusation meetings, the government formed the Seventh-day Adventist Preparatory Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement in 1951 to take over all Adventist religious, medical, and educational institutions. Adventists could keep only a few of the mission properties for religious purposes and were forced to surrender the rest to the state.

When American mission funds stopped pouring in, the China Division faced a serious crisis, for Adventist clergymen left the ministry when they did not receive their salaries. As the division was under the control of pro-regime Adventists, and as government agenda dictated evangelization, dedicated local believers strived to keep the ministry going. In Wenzhou, Adventist ministers and elders decentralized the ecclesiastical structure by dividing South Zhejiang into seven subdivisions, with each unit headed by one young worker.⁷⁹ The devolution of church authority gave individual workers greater freedom to move around, bringing them closer to congregants in rural areas, which in turn meant they could better cater to their spiritual needs, and which made intimate pastoral care possible. Reflecting on China's new challenges in the early Maoist era, David Lin appraises South Zhejiang's decentralization model as "the best case" of coping with extreme pressures "under the most difficult circumstances."⁸⁰ Lack of mission funds sharply reduced the number of full-time workers from sixty to less than twenty.⁸¹

Though they struggled, the churches survived and continued to function without much outside help. Local members kept the churches going with regular tithes; they repaired old churches and even built new ones. David Lin reports that in the midst of frenzied socioeconomic changes such as the Land Reform and Collectivization (1950–1953), the total Adventist membership in Wenzhou grew from 1,048 in 1949 to more than 2,000 in 1956, with another 2,000 adherents awaiting baptism. The local workers sent regular reports of church revival to other Adventist national leaders.⁸² Daniel Bays traced this mode of decentralized and autonomous house gatherings back to 1955 when Beijing Protestant preacher Wang Mingdao and Shanghai's



Chinese Adventist evangelist interpreting the prophecies of Daniel.
Credit: Center for Adventist Research, Andrews University,
courtesy of University of Notre Dame Press

Catholic bishop Gong Pinmei (1901–2000) were arrested.⁸³ In such cases of ordained leadership absence, laity and dedicated former church leaders often played key roles in rural and urban house churches. By relying on family and peer networks, local house meetings existed outside the control of the religious patriotic institutions and helped sustain many believers.

Amid these church structural changes emerged an important development in the Chinese Adventist literature: the translation and dissemination of Ellen White's writings. Although many of White's works had previously and sporadically been published in Adventist magazines and in book form, it was during the 1950s, when the mission structure was disintegrating, that the indigenous leaders determined systematically to translate and retranslate some of White's key works. The leading figures in this endeavor were David Lin, Chen Min, and Xu Hua. Young Adventists from the Huzhong Church in central Shanghai hand-copied, studied, and circulated these works. This Adventist literature standardized the denominational doctrines and instilled a sense of spiritual identity among believers. They managed to promote and sustain a version of "orthodox" Adventism based exclusively on Ellen White's teachings. Lin's role in this translation project made him an authoritative commentator on White's works, and he would later fight the Adventist schisms by referring to them exclusively to attack those with whom he disagreed.⁸⁴

During the peak of the anti-Christian denunciation campaign, many former mission church workers and ordained pastors were stripped of their ecclesiastical leadership. Even though they were barred from officially

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ministering to the churches, they conducted frontline ministry as “free evangelists,” whom the TSPM labeled as “self-styled evangelists” (*zifeng chuandao ren*). They held house gatherings outside the government-run patriotic churches. The many episodes of struggle had estranged the believers from the pro-government church leaders, and the politicized patriotic churches had failed to function as a spiritual body. Those TSPM churches that lacked capable pastors also invited these free evangelists to preach and lead Bible studies occasionally. In Shanghai, David Lin and other Adventist pastors, who were accused of being “imperialists” and therefore “excommunicated” from the church, were some of these “free evangelists” carrying on clandestine meetings at home in 1953 and 1954.⁸⁵

National conditions for Chinese Christians deteriorated between 1958 and 1962, and they referred to this period as the beginning of the “elimination of Christianity” (*miejiao*). Because rural communities had been organized into mutual aid teams with militarized discipline during the campaign of agricultural collectivization in 1953, the redrawing of village boundaries merged Christian households with their non-Christian neighbors. This, in turn, put non-Christian cadres in charge of Catholic and Protestant villagers, and replaced the existing Christian power structure with a socialist one.⁸⁶ When Mao Zedong launched the Great Leap Forward (1958–1962), a mass campaign designed to mobilize all citizens to participate in collective economic production to compete in short order with Western modern nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States, it established the people’s commune system in the countryside.⁸⁷ The communes further divided into production brigands and production

teams, thereby setting specific targets to maximize productivity. The campaign exacerbated an inherent tension between religious practice and pursuit of modernization at multiple levels. Whenever the collective production activities conflicted with Christians’ weekly congregational activities, non-Christian cadres often accused the former of not doing their share to support the Great Leap campaign but reaping the same benefits and consuming the same amount of food as everyone else.

Another level of tension arose from the different understanding of work and labor. The socialist idea of work, labor, and remuneration was a communal one, in which all the outcomes of physical labor were handed over to the local state agents and distributed collectively. But the Christians believed that labor and time should be at their own disposal with regard to church ministry, and that they should be allowed to set aside some of their earnings as tithes to support local ministers. Whenever local pastors received donations from congregants, cadres criticized them as lazy parasites, and as draining resources from the communes. Throughout the Great Leap Forward, local Christian leaders were pressurized to submit public statements in support of the collective production targets, and to urge their congregants to focus on production activities. Even when village cadres turned a blind eye to any clandestine church activities in 1958 and 1959, local pastors had to ensure that the Christians would meet the production quotas.⁸⁸ In a subsequent 1960 campaign called “Handing the Heart to the Party Movement,” the pastors were finally forced to abandon the ministry, to join in economic production, and to hand over their church properties to the production teams.⁸⁹

The nightmare for the denominational churches

came in the united worship (*lianhe chongbai*) campaign in the late summer of 1958. In supporting the Great Leap Forward, this campaign called for churches of all denominational stripes to support unanimously the socialist construction of the nation. The discourse of “imperialism” was a powerful rhetorical device to justify this top-down, forceful strategy of church unification.⁹⁰ Launching a renewed attack on Protestant denominationalism, the official propaganda condemned the multiplicity of Protestant churches as a mirror of Western Christendom, which deliberately fragmented the Chinese Church with competing denominational structures, practices, and beliefs. The state called on Chinese Protestants to be free from imperialism by forming a unified church body. Therefore, unified worship services signified a unified China, and all churches had to join together—without a denominational name—to reflect this nationalistic sentiment.⁹¹ In Wenzhou, the coercion to eliminate denominations happened step by step. Early on, the Protestants were permitted to keep different forms of baptism and Saturday Sabbath observance, and women followers of the Christian Assembly were allowed to practice head-veiling.⁹² In May 1958, six Protestant denominations in the downtown were forced to merge and hold only one Sunday morning service at the Chengxi Church. During the week, the church was forced to be used as a theater to show propaganda movies.⁹³ Likewise, many church premises were turned over to the state as sites of production. Meanwhile, numerous “struggle sessions” (*pidou hui*) against the “rightists” and “counter-revolutionists” were held throughout Zhejiang Province, and in December 1957, nineteen evangelists, including the seminary-educated Adventists Wu Huanwen and Zhao Dianlai,⁹⁴ were arrested and condemned as rightists.⁹⁵ Wenzhou was chosen as a laboratory for eliminating all religious activities (*wuzongjiao qu shiyan*). In May 1959, the Wenzhou municipal authorities touted the region as the country’s first site without any organized religion. Clergymen were forced to leave the ministry, church properties were surrendered to the local production brigades, and Christians were forbidden to take a day off for worship. Intimidated believers renounced their faith publicly. Those Christians who refused to do so

suffered humiliation and torture. The people’s commune system eviscerated the organic family units in rural Wenzhou, separating parents and children, husbands and wives. Anyone physically capable was assigned to the production teams, and the strict demand on meeting the mandatory quotas prohibited regular family and religious life. The socialist education campaign (1962–1965), which followed the Great Leap campaign, inculcated the young minds with atheism. Local church leaders and Christian parents found it immensely difficult to pass on the faith to their children.

As Mao’s collectivization efforts encountered serious setbacks, house church activities gradually resurfaced in Wenzhou. One source suggests that the first house meeting since the 1958 ban on religion was established in the centrally located Wuma Street in 1960.⁹⁶ Official statistics show that the total number of house churches grew from eight in 1960 to eighty in 1962—a tenfold increase over two years.⁹⁷ In Ruian, over seven hundred Christians conducted worship in homes,⁹⁸ and a few Adventist families began to hold regular house gatherings in 1962. Liang Yizhen (b. 1940), father of Liang Shihuan,⁹⁹ who would later launch the factional “Wheatfield Ministry,” resumed worship at home in Zhangpu Village, Lingxi Town, Pingyang County. Clandestine house gatherings challenged government surveillance. In Wenzhou, the local authorities imposed eighteen prohibitions to constrain evangelistic activities. The prohibitions confined evangelists’ mobility and their communication with outsiders and potential converts, and tried to ban all kinds of Christian activities.¹⁰⁰ Given such restrictions, it was indeed difficult for the pastors to conduct clandestine ministry.

During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the Red Guards attacked religious activities in the name of destroying the four olds (old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas). As with the Nationalist-run anti-superstition campaign in the 1930s, the Red Guards strove to eradicate violently any remnants of Western and Chinese religious symbols. In September 1966, the Red Guards shut down the Chengxi Church,¹⁰¹ virtually paralyzing the Three-Self patriotic institution. One byproduct of this brutal repression was that it advanced the rise of lay-led evangelism and the proliferation of clandestine printing activities.¹⁰²

The Adventist-led Phoenix-Mound-Tower Church (*Fenggangta jiaohui*) in Pingyang is an example of this. Widely renowned as the Adventists' mother church in South Zhejiang and the "cradle of Adventist revival" in Wenzhou, the church survived and was revived by Adventists in the region in the mid-1960s. The church building was completely demolished during the Great Leap Forward. Nevertheless, the laity met in secret for Saturday Sabbath. Without any professional ministers to nurture their faith, these Adventists received no formal theological training or doctrinal instruction. What nurtured their Adventist knowledge was the Chinese translation of Ellen White's literature. The Phoenix-Mound-Tower Adventists distributed copies of these mimeographed materials to nearby house gatherings. Together with hand-copied portions of the Bible and the Adventist hymnals, these materials permitted the continuation of Adventism when churches were shut down and when professional ministers were locked up or withdrew themselves from the public. In the mid-1960s, eight heads of households organized themselves to form a preaching band. To avoid surveillance, they took turns giving sermons at different venues. In 1969, over a thousand Adventists from South Zhejiang, Suzhou, and Fujian Province participated in a revival meeting. Local Adventists remember this remarkable gathering as the beginning of the Adventist revival.¹⁰³

Factional rivalries among the Red Guards, workers, students, and armies paralyzed the operation of provincial and county authorities, and this made it difficult for the local state to enforce effective



The two Adventist church buildings at Horizontal Dyke Village: the reformist church (right) and the conservative church (left). Credit: Christie Chui-Shan Chow, courtesy of University of Notre Dame Press

control over the populace. The attacks of religious suppression decreased, and some Christians resumed covert church activities during the early 1970s. While political relaxation enabled some urban Adventists to connect with the Phoenix-Mound-Tower congregation and proselytize in the interior, years of their exposure to abuses at the hands of the Red Guards resulted in widespread revulsion and hatred in the events of disagreement and conflict. Without a national Adventist hierarchical body to mediate intra-church disputes and formulate the rules of nonviolent conflict resolution, rival Adventists often appropriated the correlative discourse of class struggle to attack each other. Public shaming and denunciation got into the pulpits and circulated in writings. This became particularly troublesome for the young Wenzhou Adventists and other like-minded brethren and sisters in Ruian and Cangnan when they were confronted with the problem of sharing power with the older professional clergymen and church workers, who were released from prisons and labor camps to resume leadership in the newly opened patriotic churches.

Reviving Adventism in Post-Maoist Era

With the deaths of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai in 1976, the new leader, Deng Xiaoping, gradually launched economic modernization programs to make the socialist state capable of global competition. To strengthen internal stability, Deng emphasized upholding the party-state's laws and regulations in the private domain. In the religious sphere, the state set out to govern religious activities in the name of "respecting and protecting the freedom of religious belief." The ban on public religious activities was gradually loosened, and a spirit of religious tolerance was institutionalized in a policy statement known as Document 19 in March 1982.¹⁰⁴ The new era, which came to be known as "reform and open," witnessed an influx of overseas Christian visitors seeking to reconnect with the mainland believers. These visitors brought religious literature, visual and audio materials, and financial assistance. There were also new international mission groups who saw China as a promising field in the global East. On the other hand, former mission organizations sought to regain lost ground, and Adventists were among them.

The earliest effort to organize the China ministries by the GC was the formation of the China Evangelism Committee (*Zhonghua shenggong weiyuanhui*) in the mid-1970s in Hong Kong.¹⁰⁵ This indigenous operation, under the leadership of Samuel Young (Yang Jiansheng 1928–2018),¹⁰⁶ the newly appointed president of Hong Kong-Macau Mission, was effective in reinitiating the work in China. Its first order of business was to establish an Adventist radio program targeting the mainland audiences. Regular gospel radio programs began on February 1, 1977 in Hong Kong, with the intention of spreading their ministry in South China.¹⁰⁷ Samuel Young reported that by 1989 Adventist organizations such as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Christian Record Services, Pacific Union College, and other Adventist-run ministries, including Eden Valley Institute and Weimar Institute, had started various kinds of works in China.¹⁰⁸ After the United States and European countries ordered arms and economic sanctions on the Chinese government to punish its brutal suppression of the Tiananmen pro-democratic movement, Adventist organizations such as the Loma Linda University Medical Center and ADRA contacted local Chinese authorities to expand Adventist medical and relief ministries there.¹⁰⁹ Meanwhile, the GC's East Asia Committee took advantage of the British colony's location and set up a branch in Hong Kong. Adventists who emigrated from China to work for the Hong Kong-based East Asian Committee (EAC) supplied the needed workforce to produce Mandarin radio programs. Experienced mainland Chinese immigrant church workers and pastors wrote gospel literature and training materials. Bibles, Adventist hymnals, Sabbath school lessons, and Chinese versions of Ellen White's books were smuggled from Hong Kong to nearby Guangdong and Fujian provinces, and from there to other parts of China. In 1999, the EAC merged with the South China Islands Union Mission to form the Chinese Union Mission (CHUM), signaling the global Church's

more progressive effort to organize the Adventist work in China.¹¹⁰ The reconnection with global Adventist communities, however, complicated local Adventist divisions in Wenzhou. Interaction between global and local Adventists produced events that took the schisms on a totally unpredictable trajectory.

The reintroductions of peoples, funding, and religious materials aroused the Communist regime's reactions. Beginning in the late 1980s, the government widened its control on religious printing,¹¹¹ church-based Bible training, and the circulation of imported literature. Listening to gospel radio broadcasts or any audiovisual programs and receiving funding from overseas religious bodies were all prohibited activities.¹¹² Despite these constraints, Chinese believers were relatively free to gather at one another's houses until the 1990s. For since there was no national policy to regulate religious gatherings outside designated venues,¹¹³ the status of house churches was ambiguous and was tacitly approved. Nonetheless, to maintain control over Christianity, the regime rebuilt the TSPM system and later created the China Christian Council (hereafter CCC). Both religious associations, jointly called the "two associations" (*lianghui*, hereafter TSPM/CCC), were tasked with rebuilding a Christian organization the regime could trust. In the following decades, the TSPM/CCC reinstated the former TSPM leaders of the 1950s (*lao sanzhi*), elected and ordained new TSPM pastors, rebuilt the regime-sponsored theological seminaries, and reclaimed the numerous confiscated missionary properties. Under the banner of the three-selves, these endeavors had crucial implications for the denominational believers. Denominations had ceased to exist, the TSPM/CCC asserts, and consequently no claim based on a denominational need was legitimated. In the Adventist case, pastoral ordination has to gain formal recognition, Adventists are forbidden to open their own theological seminaries, nor can they reclaim any church property in the denomination's name.

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Statistically, Chinese Adventists have been part of the religious revival in post-Mao China. The national membership has increased from nearly 250,000 in 1998 to 451,070 in 2017,¹¹⁴ with churches in coastal cities like Wenzhou being one of the major contributors to this growth, even though my informants cautioned that membership growth seems to have stagnated in the past few years. In the midst of sociopolitical upheavals during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Adventism's deep spiritual commitment has sustained the group, enabling its members to continue their faith journeys. What the figures do not reveal is that along with revival there are enough intra-group disagreements, disputes, and divisions to cause rivalries that continue to this day. How the schisms happened is the subject of the next chapters.

Endnotes

43. S. J. Lee, "Adventism in China: The Communist Takeover," *Spectrum* 7, no. 3 (1976): 16–22.
44. Samuel Young, ed., *Zhonghua shengongshi* [Chinese Seventh-day Adventist History] (Hong Kong: Chinese Union Mission, 2002), 88.
45. General Conference committee minutes, November 1945, 2103–2104, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1945-11.pdf>.
46. W. H. Branson, "Rebuilding," *The China Division Reporter* 12, no. 2 (October 1947): 1–8. Figure is taken from p. 1.
47. Wang Fu-Yuan, "Reports of the 1948 Evangelistic Efforts in China: Northwest China Union," *The China Division Reporter* 14, no. 2 (February 1949): 34.
48. Gary Land, *Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventists*, 2d ed. (Lanham, New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 279.
49. "Evangelist-Pastor Fordyce W. Detamore Dies," *Northern Union Outlook* 44, no. 17 (August 18, 1980): 22. Detamore spent a short time evangelizing in Shanghai. Between 1949 and 1950, he held many evangelistic meetings in English, and at one meeting Detamore collaborated with the gospel music evangelist Henry Meissner, attracting a Russian audience. The meetings inspired a Chinese female participant, who later donated \$7,300 to the Shanghai English Adventist Church. See C. B. Miller, "East China Union," *The China Division Reporter* 14, no. 2 (February 1949): 4–5; Young, *Zhonghua shengongshi*, 739.
50. See Appendix A.
51. One study on the Adventist radio work in Africa is Desrene L. Vernon, "A Historical Analysis of Adventist World Radio's Impact in the East Central Africa Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church: A Case Study of Tanzania" (PhD thesis, Howard University, Washington, DC, 2011).
52. General Conference committee minutes, November 1945, 2013–14, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCC/GCC1945-11.pdf>.
53. Young, *Zhonghua shengongshi*, 776.
54. David Lin, "The Voice of Prophecy: A Scrap of Paper," *The China Division Reporter* 12, no. 4 (December 1947): 8; David Lin, "The Voice of Prophecy in China," *The China Division Reporter* 13, no. 1 (January 1948): 7.
55. David Lin, "The Voice of Prophecy Moves South," *The China Division Reporter* 14, no. 3 (March 1949): 7; David Lin, "Voice of Prophecy News," *The China Division Reporter* 14, no. 9 (September 1949): 8; David Lin, "The Voice of Prophecy: Recommendations—V.O.P. Workers," *The China Division Reporter* 15, no. 2 (February 1950): 1–8.
56. David Lin, "Forward to Faith," *The China Division Reporter* 12, no. 2 (October 1947): 4; Lin, "The Voice of Prophecy in China," 7; Milton Lee, "Report of Signs Bible Correspondence School," *The China Division Reporter* 13, no. 3 (March 1948): 14.
57. Bessie Mount, "With Our Workers in Lanchow," *The China Division Reporter* 12, no. 4 (December 1947): 6; Milton Lee, "First Fruits from Shanghai Effort," *The China Division Reporter* 13, no. 5 (May 1948): 5.
58. Lin, "The Voice of Prophecy Moves South," 7; Paul Wickman, "Adventist Radio Message Circles the World," *Review and Herald* 126, no. 39 (September 29, 1949): 12–13. Quotation is taken from p. 13.
59. E. H. James, "North China Union," *The China Division Reporter* 14, no. 4 (April 1949): 6.
60. Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1892), <https://egwwritings.org>; Home Missionary Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Training Light Bearers: How to Give Bible Readings* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1945); John Oss, "With Our Department and Institutions," *The China Division Reporter* 15, no. 5 (Fourth Quarter 1950): 4–5.
61. N. F. Brewer, "China Division Secretary's Report," *The China Division Reporter* 13, no. 3 (March 1948): 2–3.
62. See C. H. Davis, "South China Union," *The China Division Reporter* 14, no. 4 (April 1949): 6; "Ordination Services," *The China Division Reporter* 13, no. 3 (March 1948): 16; "Division Notes," *The China Division Reporter* 15, no. 3 (May 1950): 8.
63. "Ordination Services," 16.
64. Xu Hua was ordained in Hong Kong after returning from the 1950 General Conference Session in San Francisco, CA. See Young, *Zhonghua shengongshi*, 667.
65. Claud Conard, comp., *1950 Yearbook of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1950), 99–100, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1950.pdf>. For a biography of Chen Youshi, see Young, *Zhonghua shengongshi*, 471–73.
66. "New Notes," *The China Division Reporter* 15, no. 5 (Fourth Quarter 1950): 8.
67. Hsu Hwa (Xu Hua), "Let Us Hold Fast the Profession of Our Faith," *The China Division Reporter* 15, no. 3 (May 1950): 1.
68. See some of the photos of the Chinese leadership on the front page of *The China Division Reporter* 15, no. 5 (Fourth Quarter 1950): 1–8.
69. Figures were drawn from *1909 Year Book of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination—The Official Directories* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1909), 134, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1909.pdf>; *1950 Yearbook*, 98.
70. This is in comparison to other large denominations. For instance, see figures collected by the Religious Affairs Bureau in 1950: Church of Christ in China (176,988), Bethel Mission (125,000), True Jesus Church (125,000), China Baptist Convention (65,000), Christian Assembly (80,000), and Methodist Church (102,693). Cited in Fuk-tsang Ying, "The Regional Development of Protestant Christianity in China: 1919, 1949 and 2004," *The China Review* 9, no. 2 (2009): 77.
71. Hsu Hwa, "Let Us Hold Fast."
72. The term "Three-Self" was coined by Rufus Anderson of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission and Henry Venn of the Church Missionary Society in the nineteenth century. It describes a mission policy that organized native Christians in Africa and Asia into self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating churches.
73. Daniel H. Bays, *A New History of Christianity* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 159.
74. Lin Yaoxi, "Wo dui musheng de qi wang [My Expectation of the 'Shepherd's Call]," *Musheng* 5 (1950): 1.
75. Cited in Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye, "Speaking in the Devil's Tongue? The True Jesus Church's Uneasy Rhetorical Accommodation to Maoism, 1948–1958," *Modern China* 44, no. 6 (2018): 652–82. Quotation is on p. 657.
76. For the Adventists who were active collaborators in denouncing the Adventist church leaders, see Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, "Co-optation and Its Discontents: Seventh-day Adventism in 1950s China," *Frontiers of History in China* 7, no. 4 (2012): 582–607. See also Ying Fuk-tsang, *Jidujiao zai zhongguo de shibai? Zhongguo gongchan yundong yu jidujiao shilun* [Christianity's Failure in China? Essays on the History of Chinese Communist Movement and Christianity] (Hong Kong: The Logos and Pneuma Press, 2008), 111–15. Notably, Gu Changsheng, author of *Chuanjiaoshi yu jindai zongguo* [Missionaries and Modern China], was one of these collaborators. Gu grew up an Adventist and left the denomination in 1956. For Gu's own account of his involvement in the denunciation campaign in Chinese, see his *Yesu kuliao: Gu Changsheng huiyilu, 1945–1984* [Jesus Wept: Memoir of Gu Changsheng, 1945–1984], Yale Divinity School Library, The China Records Project Miscellaneous Personal Papers Collections, Record Group 8, Box 244. See also his English memoir, *Awaken: Memoirs of a Chinese Historian* (Bloomington, IN: Authorhouse, 2009), 61–68.
77. Lee, "Adventism in China," 16–22.
78. The YMCA general secretary Liu Liangmo laid down these procedures in his article, "How to Hold a Successful Accusation." The article was originally released by the New China News Agency of Shanghai on May 15, 1951. An English translation can be found in Wallace C. Merwin and Francis Price Jones, comps., *Documents of the Three-Self Movement: Source Materials for Study of the Protestant Church in China* (New York: National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, 1963), 49–51.

79. Young, *Zhonghua shengongshi*, 163.

80. David Lin, "An Appraisal of Administrative Policy and Practice in S.D.A. Mission," December 12, 1956. Document File 3901.8, Heritage Research Center, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, CA.

81. Young, *Zhonghua shengongshi*, 163.

82. David Lin was the national leader of the Adventists at the time and local congregations continued to submit reports to him. Therefore, these statistical figures are credible.

83. Bays, *A New History*, 176–77; Paul Philip Mariani, *Church Militant: Bishop Kung and Catholic Resistance in Communist Shanghai* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

84. Christie Chui-Shan Chow, "Indigenizing the Prophetess: Toward a Chinese Denominational Practice," in *China's Christianity: From Missionary to Indigenous Church*, ed. Anthony E. Clark (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 219–46.

85. Shan Yingmin, "Jielu yincang zai anxirihui nei de yige fandong heibang [Exposing a Gang of Reactionaries Hidden in the Adventist Church]," *Tianfeng* no. 559 (August 25, 1958): 31–32.

86. Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, "Politics of Faith: Christian Activism and the Maoist State in Chaozhou, Guangdong Province," *The China Review* 9, no. 2 (2009): 17–39.

87. For the impact of the Great Leap Forward on local communities, see Ralph A. Thaxton, Jr., *Catastrophe and Contention in Rural China: Mao's Great Leap Forward: Famine and the Origins of Righteous Resistance in Da Fo Village* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Frank Dikotter, *Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958–1962* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, Inc., 2010).

88. *Tianfeng* no. 549 (June 1958): 3–13; no. 551 (August 1958): 20–21.

89. *Zhongguo gongchandang zhejiangsheng wenzhou difang weiyuanhui tongzhanbu zhongqiaowei* [The Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee of the United Front Department of the Wenzhou Municipality of the Chinese Party], comp., "Shengwei tongzhanbu guanyu qiaowu, zongjiao gongzuo de tongxun 1960 [Circulars Collected by the Provincial United Front about Religions and Overseas Chinese 1960]." Tongzhanbu [The United Front] Archives. Call No.: 92-8-11, Wenzhou Municipal Archives, Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, China, 1960.

90. Numerous reports in the 1958 *Tianfeng* discuss the church's positive responses to the united worship, two of which are Zhi Xing, "Chedi gaibian zhongguo jidujiao de ban zhimindi mianmao [A Fundamental Change on the Semi-Colonial Outlook of Chinese Christianity]," *Tianfeng* 16, no. 599 (August 25, 1958): 15–16; Dun Yan, "Chedi gaibian shanghai jidujiao de ban zhimindi mianmao [A Fundamental Change on the Semi-Colonial Outlook of Christianity in Shanghai]," *Tianfeng* 18, no. 561 (September 22, 1958): 18–19.

91. In some regions, Seventh-day Adventists were allowed to worship in their own churches. The Nanguan Church in Guangzhou was one of these churches. See *Guangzhoushi Jiu-zhutang Jidufulin anxirihui* [Guangzhou Savior Church of Seventh-day Adventists], *Jiaohui lishi* [A Church History], <http://www.gzsda.net/sub/jhjs-31.html>.

92. Ye Guoqi, "Wenzhou ge jiaohui shixing hebing [The Merging of Churches in Wenzhou]," *Tianfeng* no. 561 (September 22, 1958): 20–21.

93. Chen Fengsheng, "Wenzhou jiaohui yigong fazhan licheng [The Development of Lay Evangelism in the Wenzhou Churches]," *Nanjing Theological Review* 3 (2010): 32.

94. See Appendix A.

95. *Zhongguo gongchandang Zhejiangsheng Wenzhou difang weiyuanhui* [Local Party Committee of the Chinese Communist Party in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province], "Diwei tongzhanbu guanyu zongjiao, qiaowu gongzuo de baogao, tongbao [Reports and Circulars Collected by the Municipal United Front about Religions and Overseas Chinese in Wenzhou]," Tongzhanbu [The United Front] Archives. Call No.: 92-6-1, Wenzhou Municipal Archives, Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province, China, 1958.

96. Ezra Pan, *Zhongguo de yelusang: Wenzhou jidujiao lishi* [An Introduction to Protestantism of Contemporary Wenzhou, China, vol. 1] (Taipei: Taiwan jidujiao wenyi chubanshe youxian gongsi, 2017), 70–71.

97. Zhu Yujing, "Guojia tongzhi, difang zhengzhi yu Wenzhou de jidujiao [State Rule, Local Politics and Christianity in Wenzhou]," (PhD thesis, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2011), 96.

98. Wang Xiaoxuan, "The Dilemma of Implementation: The State and Religion in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1990," in *Maoism at the Grassroots: Everyday Life in China's Era of High Socialism*, eds. Jeremy Brown and Matthew D. Johnson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 272.

99. See Appendix A.

100. The eighteen prohibitions were: (1) Clergy must adhere to the Three-Self principles; Clergy are not allowed to: (2) accept overseas funds; (3) receive books from abroad; (4) communicate with non-local clergy and invite them to preach in local areas; (5) evangelize outside church premises; (6) use visitation as an excuse to hold a fellowship meeting; (7) engage in superstitious activities, such as exorcism and spiritual healing; (8) conduct wedding ceremonies for Christians; (9) use religion as a means to

swindle; (10) hold house gatherings or subvert public order by gathering together; (11) fellowship with church members; (12) emphasize worship on Sunday; (13) convert any individuals; (14) compel others to believe in Christianity; (15) convert people under 18 years old or invite young people to the church; (16) print the Bible in secret; (17) or hold prayer meetings; (18) Clergy must strictly obey the Three-Self principles; otherwise they will be severely punished. Cited in Zhu, "Guojia tongzhi," footnote no. 117, p. 96.

101. Zhi, *Wenzhou jidujiao*, 42.

102. Chen, "Wenzhou jiaohui"; Kao Chen-yang, "The Cultural Revolution and the Post-Missionary Transformation of Protestantism in China," (PhD thesis, University of Lancaster, 2009).

103. Miao Changyun, ed., *Bashi zhounian jinian, 1928–2008* [The Eightieth Anniversary, 1928–2008] (Cangnan: Jidufulin anxirihui Fengangta jiaohui, November 8, 2008), 12–15.

104. A copy of Document 19 in English may be found in Donald E. MacInnis, ed., *Religion in China Today: Policy and Practice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 8–26.

105. Samuel Chien-Sheng Young, "The China Evangelism Committee: Its Formation, Organization, and Scope of Work," *China Evangelism Quarterly*, Summer 1977: 2–4.

106. For Young's autobiography, see Young, *Zhonghua shengongshi*, 677–80.

107. Hong Kong-Macao Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, "Triennial Report 1975–77 Hong Kong-Macao Mission of Seventh-Day Adventists," Hong Kong, 1978.

108. Samuel C. Young, "China, part II: What Adventists Can Do to Help?" *Adventist Review* 166, no. 37 (1989): 9.

109. "LLUMC to Staff Hospital in China," *Adventist Review* 167, no. 41 (September 6, 1990): 25–26; Elwyn Platner, "Adventists Conduct Hospital Seminars in Shanghai, Beijing," *Adventist Review* 167, no. 42 (September 13, 1990): 21.

110. Before the merger, the South China Islands Union Mission was responsible for Adventist ministries in Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan.

111. "Yanli daji feifa chubanshe huodong de tongzhi [Crackdown on Illegal Publishing Activities]," circular of the State Council, July 6, 1987. Further regulations on publication administrations were issued in 1997 and revised in 2002.

112. "Guanyu zhizhi he chuli liyong jidujiao jinxing feifa weifa huodong de tongzhi [Concerning the Prohibition of and the Dealings with Using Christianity to Engage in Illegal Activities]," circular issued by Religious Affairs Bureau and Public Security Bureau, State Council of People's Republic of China, October 18, 1988. A copy of this circular in Chinese may be found in Luo Guangwu, ed. *Xinzhongguo zongjiao gongzuo dashi gailan, 1949–1999* [New China's Major Events of Religious Work, 1949–1999] (Beijing: Huawen chubanshe, 2001), 391–93.

113. Some regions, such as the provinces of Sichuan, Guangdong, and Xinjiang, did regulate private gatherings. See Human Rights Watch, *Freedom of Religion in China* (New York: Human Rights Watch/Asia Watch, 1992), 55–67.

114. Statistical data is available at Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research website, <http://www.adventiststatistics.org>.



A native of Hong Kong, CHRISTIE CHUI-SHAN CHOW earned her PhD at Princeton Theological Seminary. Her research interests include World Christianity, Chinese Religions, gender, and church-state relations. She is the first female Seventh-day Adventist researcher who combines ethnography and history to investigate the Seventh-day Adventist movement in contemporary China. She has written a number of book chapters and her work also appears in the *Journal of World Christianity*, *Social Sciences and Missions*, and *Exchange*. More recently, she is co-editor of the *Oxford Handbook of Seventh-day Adventism*.

Insights from China that Illuminate Global Adventism

BY GILBERT M. VALENTINE

Christie Chui-Shan Chow’s recent book, *Schism: Seventh-day Adventism in Post-Denominational China*, provides a rewarding study rich with insights and provocative analysis that will undoubtedly set new benchmarks and a fresh new paradigm for the study of the denomination. It sets out a new pathway for understanding church dynamics that other students of the movement will want to follow for other geographic regions of the Church and for the Church as a whole.

Chow is an Adventist scholar. She was baptized at the Kowloon Church in Hong Kong during her high school years. She earned a Bachelor of Social Sciences from the Hong Kong Baptist University, majoring in journalism, and then secured a position as a journalist with a Hong Kong newspaper for almost a decade before joining the Hong Kong-Macau Conference as an editor. She then transitioned to executive editor of the Seventh-day Adventist Chinese Church paper, *The Last Day Shepherd’s Call*, published in Hong Kong by the China Union Mission, the entity which is entrusted with oversight of the Church in China but has no formal links with it. Chow moved to Scotland to attend the University of St. Andrews for theological studies and completed her PhD in religion and society at Princeton Theological Seminary in 2019. The fieldwork for her doctoral study necessitated repeated visits to mainland China between 2012 and 2019.

Although Chow may be unfamiliar to western Adventist readers, she already has an established scholarly record in her field, with articles published in peer-reviewed journals such as *Social Sciences and Missions*,

the *Journal of World Christianity*, and the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, along with book chapters in volumes published by Brill and by Routledge. She has also jointly authored reports on research on Christianity in China with her historian husband, Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, for various books and a paper in *Frontiers of History in China* (310, 316).

In *Schism*, Chow sets out to try and understand how the Chinese Adventist Church has adjusted to the forceful attempts by the Chinese Government during the post-Mao era to dismantle the structures of protestant “denominationalism” in China. State authorities implemented this policy by replacing denominations with a monolithic generic form of Christianity under the umbrella of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). Protestants in China were to be self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing, with no ties at all to religious organizations outside the country. Chow focuses on the Adventist experience and observes that a non-formal *de facto* pattern of denominationalism, in fact, continues in China, with Adventist members perceiving themselves as “a unique ecclesial entity,” in spite of state efforts to eliminate such thinking and in spite of numerous distinct Adventist factions that have emerged in recent decades. The book claims to be “the first monograph that documents the life of the Chinese Adventist denomination from the mid-1970s to the 2010s.” Insights about the distinctive Adventist experience, Chow suggests, could be informative for understanding the wider phenomenon of Chinese Christianity. Cover blurbs indicate that non-Adventist scholars agree.

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Schism looks in detail at the factions that have emerged in Chinese Adventism. It is a fascinating sociological study of the complex phenomenon of schism and how it led to the factionalism. Schism in this context is seen as “sacred schism” and yet it needs to be understood as much more than just theological development. It involves recognition of cultural, social, and political dynamics as well. Chow constructs a careful, rigorous ethnographic study of four factions that have emerged in Adventism in the city of Wenzhou and its surrounding districts and counties in southeastern Zhejiang Province in East China. She seeks to understand the “lived experience” of the faction members.¹ As a respected and respectful participant-observer, Chow assembles her data from direct interviews with faction leaders and representative faction members and from other church officials. She participates in the various worship services and social meetings, making personal observations informed by her discipline, and she collects, analyzes, and evaluates historical documents, liturgical materials, correspondence, government submissions, agreements, and much else besides. The study is interdisciplinary but solidly grounded in its sociological analysis.

According to Chow, four major factions have emerged in Adventism in this region of China since 1978, when the first division occurred over differences in worship patterns. Clear identity markers involving distinctive liturgy, hymnbooks, kinship networks among faction leaders, property ownership, and sources of pastoral and ecclesial authority serve to create distinct boundaries between the groups. Chow identifies the factions as:

- The “Conservative Faction” or the “Old Faction,” which believes its task to be safeguarding the Adventist tradition in the form it was introduced to China by American missionaries at the beginning of the twentieth century.
- The “New Faction” or “Reformist” faction, which sees itself as revitalizing Adventism during the 1970s, even as it borrows from other religious traditions.
- The “Wilderness Faction,” which is a breakaway group from the conservatives and looks further back to the past, refusing to link itself with the TSPM. This is an unregistered group who sees itself as the only “authentic” Adventism.
- The “Wheatfield Faction,” which is a splinter group from the reformists—“a neo-new” faction critical of traditional Adventist legalism and of its un-Protestant authority of Ellen White over scripture.

Chow’s book, which is an adaptation of her Princeton doctoral dissertation, is published by the University of Notre Dame Press and is part of a series sponsored by the Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies located at Notre Dame. The volume is organized as seven chapters, bookended by an introduction and conclusion, with a helpful appendix providing mini biographies of the faction leaders and other significant personnel involved in the developments. The introduction sets out the historical context of the Adventist Church in China and briefly reviews the existing literature on the topic, before proceeding to a very helpful framing discussion of the terminology used in the study. The sensitivity of the topic, both

socially and politically, has necessitated the author's careful, nuanced use of language. This discussion reveals the depth and rigor of Chow's scholarship, her familiarity with the discipline, and for this reviewer it was exceptionally helpful. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the establishment of Seventh-day Adventism in China and its difficult experience during the communist revolution and the subsequent Maoist era. The chapter focuses on the Adventist experience in and around Wenzhou. Chapters 2 through 4 discuss the complexities of the three schisms that led to the formation of the four groups. These discussions consider the historical context of each rival group and include a highly illuminating, empathetic analysis of the social and political dynamics involved and the underlying theological perspectives. The remaining three chapters take up specific case studies of how the factionalism occurred and how it shaped Adventism in three village and urban settings: Horizontal Dyke Village, Stone Ground Village, and South Pond in Wenzhou City.

Chow argues that schism, while it has its downside in terms of fractured human relationships, can be viewed as positive from a wider perspective. Reports and interpretations of Chow's field work interviews, for example, are replete with descriptors such as "enemies," "chaos," "antagonism," "rivals," "accusations," "denunciation," and more.

Yet, on the upside, she asserts, the impetus for schism demonstrates vitality and adaption to environmental pressures, changing contexts, and human need. Her assessment of schism is therefore quite creatively counter-intuitive. Schism provided a tool for both "permitting and blocking change" for Adventists. It "allowed Adventists to respond creatively and innovatively when internal and external pressures threatened their denominational existence." (2) This analysis of

the factions and the processes that formed them, using the lens of history, social psychology, and anthropology, performs a valuable service to the rest of Adventism as a way of understanding the rich and clearly identifiable diversity within the denomination, which she argues contributes to its vitality and strong sense of identity. What Christie Chow has done in the study of Adventism in Wenzhou, China, sets out an example and a methodology that will be extremely helpful in the study of global Adventism. As I read of the four factions in Wenzhou, I could not refrain from thinking of the numerous distinct strains of Adventism that coexist and characterize the Church in North America and in the rest of the Western world.

Chow's inclusion of photographs enhances the book. The photograph of two independent factional churches right next door to each other, cheek by jowl in Horizontal Dyke village (164), is rather startling. Another photograph of two factional church buildings in close proximity in Stone Ground Village, another rural community, is also intriguing (162). But then, as Chow describes the three factions of Adventism in this latter village, each located in their impressive, independently owned, multi-storied church buildings, with their separate liturgies, pastoral staffing, kinship connections and outreach programs, all within five minutes walking



Gospel Chapel, the oldest Seventh-day Adventist church building in Stone Ground Township.
Credit: Christie Chui-Shan Chow, courtesy of University of Notre Dame Press

distance of each other, I kept thinking of a place like Loma Linda, California, and realized things were not much different. At the university church, an expansive facility serves the needs of a strand of Adventism that is professional, rather wealthy, media savvy, and middle of the road, if not progressive, in theological conviction. The Advent Hope congregation meets in the Damazio Theatre in the Centennial building in another part of the same university campus—a group following a very traditional style of worship, and which emphasizes eschatology and traditional evangelism. Right next to the university church, a congregation meets in a state-of-the-art meeting venue with a contemporary worship style, with music and visual effects that some think would turn James White in his grave. But at least these are all under one cohesive pastoral team. Across the street, prominently situated on “Campus Hill,” a more conservative congregation with its own pastoral team finds a home. North America is really not that different from China.

And Adventists are not the only ones with clustered competing buildings and congregations. I could not help thinking also of the Anglicans. In Binfield village, for example, just across the road from Newbold College in England, sits St. Marks Church, with All Saints Church down at the far end of the same little village, each with their impressive architecture. St. Marks was built as a “chapel of ease,” explained my good friend Helen Pearson, because as the village grew it became a bit too far for the older folk to walk to All Saints, which is now less than a four-minute drive away. She reported that whether the congregations observe high or low church liturgy really depends on the minister. When I was pastoring the Newbold College Church, conveniently located between the two Anglican congregations, I marveled at how Owen Blatchley, then the kindly rector and a good friend of Adventists, expertly served as pastor to the two distinct congregations and quite openly claimed himself to be the pastoral host to Newbold’s

lately arrived Adventists as well. Adventists were sure glad for the use of his church graveyard.

Highlights

There are a number of highlights in Christie Chow’s study that for me really enhanced the value of her work and the reading experience. First, her evident literary skill provides delightful reading pleasure. The skill is evident in the creative, engaging way in which she introduces each of her chapters. Anecdotes or reported conversations immediately entice the reader and subtly convey the essence of the discussion to follow. Furthermore, her narrative sections, which trace the history and development of the four factions, are empathetic, eloquently capturing the emotion and conviction of her interlocutors. She enriches her accounts with intriguing and illuminating detail and insightful personal observation, yet she carefully and sensitively maintains scholarly distance. One has the sense of sitting in a Chinese church, observing worship in process, and catching glimpses of what it really means to be a Chinese Adventist. In addition, in numerous places, Chow’s prose glistens with delightful alliterative phraseology. Speaking of the “Wheatfield” faction, for example, she sees a group of Chinese Adventists who have found “freedom and confidence to choose, challenge, and change.” (162)

Second, Chow has also developed the skill of articulating Adventist theology, its history, and the lived experience of believers, in explanatory language for non-Adventist scholars that avoids patronizing oversimplification. She is the master of the language and theoretical concepts of her discipline, and this allows subtle insightful observation and insight. In a way, she has helped provide an additional rich vocabulary with which to discuss Adventist ideas and which communicates readily across both faith and discipline barriers. In seeking to explain the developments that led to the formation of the four factions and the role

Chow notes that each of the factional leaders self-consciously cite Ellen White’s words “to create a repertoire of references and strategies to pursue their independent agendas.”

they now play in Chinese Adventism, for example, Chow identifies numerous factors in terms that all can understand. She speaks of the way in which ties to missionary roots are understood and reframed as “narratives of identity” by each of the rival groups. She speaks of “identity markers,” such as the kind of hymn books used, and forms of prayer and food laws. For one faction, borrowing a slogan from the Maoist era, food laws, tithing, and sabbath keeping were the “three red banners” of authentic Chinese Adventism. These and other such behaviors serve as powerful boundary markers between the factions.

A third highlight glowed for this reader as Chow explained her study and as allusions and comparisons began to resonate strongly with the Adventist worlds with which I am familiar. At times it seemed that Chow was describing West Coast American Adventism when she sketched the background and the contours of the Wheatfield faction, for example. The reality is that differences in liturgy, music styles, theological emphases, views of the nature of ministry, and of the role and authority of Ellen White are a feature of contemporary Adventism both in North America and across Global Adventism. There are clearly identifiable strands in the community, each with their own identity markers that define their boundaries. Despite their differences, they all consider themselves integrally part of Seventh-day Adventism and, at least at present, they cohere somewhat harmoniously together. Financial cohesion and long-established structural ties in global Adventism currently keep the groups united solidly as one Adventism, but in reality the strands are different Adventisms—as different as the Chinese factions.

A fourth notable observation by Chow suggested a question that I am still pondering. In a remarkable and very helpful analysis of the place of Ellen White in the factional Adventism of Wenzhou, Chow notes that each of the factional leaders self-consciously cite Ellen White’s words “to create a repertoire of references and strategies to pursue their independent agendas” (219). In this way, the agency of Ellen White clearly serves as a divisive factor in the denomination in China, quite contrary to the way in which her role has traditionally been portrayed—that of a strongly unifying influence. Adventism would not have survived as a movement if

Ellen White had not been at its center to keep it unified is how the story line runs in the traditional Adventist narrative of identity. This was most clearly evident during her lifetime. But have other factors been operative since her death? The phenomenon of the Adventist experience in China might suggest the question—has it really been Ellen White in her own right whose influence has continued to unify the Adventist Church in the post-1915 era? Or has it been the Church leadership’s ability to commandeer her influence to drive their agenda—through publications, manuscript releases, and selective appropriation of materials judged by the leadership to be relevant? Has it been the utilization of her authority by leadership that has been perhaps more effective as an agency of unity in the long term than the original Ellen White herself? But then, on the other hand, perhaps one of the strengths of Ellen White’s ministry, and a distinctive quality of her charisma, has been that in spite of pressures toward uniformity, she has been able to be a voice for the many different strands of thought in the Church.

Christie Chow’s pathbreaking study prompts many other questions about how we might understand the Adventism of the past. Its greater value may be the way it helps us envisage an Adventism of the future. As well as providing helpful insights into Christianity in China for the wider world of scholarship, this is an exceedingly valuable study for Adventists and a contribution to the emerging discipline of Adventist Studies.

Endnote

1. The city of Wenzhou embraces three districts, two county-level cities, and six rural counties.



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The Lost 1,335-Year Prophecy:

A Case Study of an Erroneous William Miller Interpretation

BY DONALD E. CASEBOLT

Personal Quest for Truth

My quest to comprehend the historical and empirical facts about Ellen White began about fifty years ago. Shortly after being baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church at age twelve, (Ellen Harmon’s age when she personally encountered William Miller and his fifteen biblical proofs), I vaguely sensed that the community consensus concerning White’s “Gift of Prophecy” that I had unconsciously absorbed seemed “not quite right.” Then, in undergraduate and graduate education I encountered historical, empirical, and scientific facts which could not be harmonized with (seemingly authoritative) White assertions. In contrast, I had also been greatly influenced by White statements that truth could stand rigorous examination; that individuals should not be reflectors of other men’s thoughts; and that the greatest need of the world was for persons who would stand for the truth regardless of circumstances. But what was the truth? I suspected that the creedal, old-time religion truth of what morphed into the 28 Fundamental Beliefs was not “present truth.”

Although White formally disavowed being inerrant, she also made statements claiming immense authority. She was more than a prophet. She was eyewitness to pre-Creation events in heaven, the Creation, and Noah’s Flood. She not only claimed to “see” the hue of Adam’s skin, she claimed she was “shown” the evolution of Satan’s skull bones. Before he rebelled, his “forehead was high and broad” but centuries later the frontal bone

of his cranium had changed in shape. “His forehead commenced from his eyes to recede backward.” All his previously good qualities had become “debased.”¹ This meticulous, eyewitness quality of her visions led the Adventist community to accord her an authority that rivaled that of the canonical prophets. Simultaneously, these very “I saw” assertions are sometimes contradicted by biblical texts and empirical and historical facts.

Eventually, by the time I had spent about five years of post-graduate education in theology and biblical languages, I could not harmonize the then currently reigning orthodoxy with empirical truths. Thus, I relinquished my goal of teaching Semitic languages in a Seventh-day Adventist higher education institution, changed careers, and became a Family Nurse Practitioner. Then, after an hiatus of about thirty years, I returned to the question: What are the historical and empirical facts concerning White? Or, to put it in another way: *Did Ellen G. White always see what she thought she saw?*

The answer to this question cannot properly be based on *a priori* theological lenses through which the empirical facts must be interpreted. Rather, empirical facts must be analyzed on their intrinsic merits, and the relative weight of the evidence should determine the conclusions reached. In the case of “the daily sacrifice” and the 1,335-day-year prophetic period, there is no reasonable doubt that she derived her “I saw” information from William Miller, and that the 1,335-day-year calculation was not fulfilled in 1844 because the

Resurrection simply did not occur—as Millerites had so confidently announced to the world.

The Authority of Ellen G. White’s “I Saw” Statements

Ellen G. White made frequent use of the literary form “I was shown” or “I saw.” It implied that she had special eyewitness insight. Her 1858 *Spiritual Gifts* is chock-full with scores of “I saw” statements. She begins chapter one, “The Fall of Satan” with: “The Lord has shown me that Satan[s] . . . forehead was high and broad.” She begins chapter two with “I saw.” “I saw” begins chapter five. “I saw,” “I was shown,” “I then viewed,” and other equivalents such as “I then viewed that” recur with monotonous predictability.² She presented herself as an eyewitness to the Creation and claimed to know Adam’s height. She even “saw” the hue of his skin, which was “neither white, nor sallow, but ruddy.”³ Adam may not have been white, but Ellen White claimed that in heaven “all will be as white as Christ himself.”⁴ The dominant interpretation of such statements within the Seventh-day Adventist community is that they are not only reliable, factual, and true assertions, but that they are a distinctive mark of her prophetic authority, no matter what the topic might be, whether historical, biological, geological, physiological, hermeneutical, or exegetical. For many scholars, White’s “I saw” statements have been considered authoritative despite empirical or historical evidence to the contrary. Their default position is that these “I saw” statements should be presumed to have more epistemological value than scientific evidence. Such consensus is illustrated in the article “Twelve Controversial Statements,” in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, specifically White statements “largely or wholly rejected by current scientific opinion.”⁵ The consensus of “orthodox” Seventh-day Adventist scholars and administrators is that when Ellen White says “I saw,” she is speaking analogously to the pope in the Catholic Church when he speaks *ex cathedra* on doctrine and morals. Twenty essays produced in a collective work demonstrate this. For example, Mueller concedes that although White may have made some trivial “historical inaccuracies,” these are insignificant because they are all trifling.⁶ Rodriguez argues that Ellen White’s assertions exhibit only “some minor discrepancies and difficulties.”⁷ Lake asserts that White’s Gift of Prophecy equipped her

with a filter that screened out errors. He asserts that she was not really dependent on fallible, extrabiblical sources for “getting information and ideas.”

When Ellen White read her sources, she was not dependent on them for getting information and ideas as in reading-directed thinking. Rather, she came to her sources with a preunderstanding as in thinking-directed reading. . . . The common knowledge Ellen White obtained from reading the Protestant religious authors was always subordinate to her inspired understanding.⁸

Moskala rhetorically asks: “Can a biblical author mislead in doctrine . . .? My answer is categorically no; prophets do not make doctrinal mistakes. . . . there are no examples that would convincingly demonstrate that prophets made mistakes in doctrines.”⁹ This essay will demonstrate the contrary. Ellen White did make a significant error in regard to a purportedly key, divinely revealed eschatological prophecy; one that in 1844 was on a par with the 2,300-day-year prophecy. She had no filter that eliminated erroneous concepts; she did not have an accurate “preunderstanding as in thinking-directed reading”; she was literarily and intellectually dependent on the fallible William Miller for erroneous assertions that she *thought* she “saw” in vision. This is the case concerning White’s explanation of “the daily” in conjunction with the 1,335-year prophecy of Daniel 12:12. “Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.” (KJV)

This paper will offer unambiguous textual and historical evidence that when Ellen White reports that she “saw” an explanation concerning a “Midnight Cry” prophetic interpretation, what she “saw” actually originated from a textually and historically erroneous teaching of William Miller. The New York farmer had convinced himself that he was merely allowing the Bible to interpret itself. He had not consulted any commentary or other interpreter. He had just used a concordance.¹⁰ The implicit inference was that Miller’s interpretation was not merely *his* interpretation; it was *the* Bible interpretation. White reinforced Miller’s authority and endorsed his method of studying the Bible when she

A Multi-Layered Calculation

The 1,335-day-year prophecy, like the 2,300-day-year prophecy, was one of nine mathematical-biblical calculations that Miller had figured would all end in 1843, which he took to be the year of the Second Coming. Miller had six other “prophetic periods” with their calculations ending on exact dates, like 1798. This made up a total of “fifteen proofs.”¹⁴ The fact that “prophetic periods” like $508+1,290 = 1798$ and $538+1,260 = 1798$ had allegedly already been fulfilled with exactitude, proved to him that the 1,335-year and 2,300-year would also end exactly in 1843–44. Even the respected dean of Seventh-day Adventist apologists, Francis D. Nichol, concluded that several of these “so-called proofs that 1843 was the climax year of prophecy are plainly fanciful.” He also characterizes them as “begging the question,” “hoary with age,” and “farfetched.” Nichol believed that Miller started with 1843 and arbitrarily back-dated events to commence his prophetic intervals.¹⁵ Two of the most fanciful were where Miller applied his rule that a day equals a thousand years in Hosea 6:2 and Luke 13:32–33.¹⁶ Miller’s “farfetched” reasoning can also be seen in his use of the KJV language of Hosea 6:2—“After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.” Miller asserts that the “two days” equal 2,000 years, beginning 158 BC with the Roman-Jewish league and reaching to 1842; then the “third day” will start the Seventh Millennium, when Christ “will raise us up” in the First Resurrection. The identical methodology was the foundation for all Miller’s fifteen proofs. It was known as the historicist method but is a system more accurately designated as the allegorical-typological-historicist method.

To appreciate the significance of the 1,335-year proof, it is helpful to have a general conception of Miller’s other “biblical” proofs that so impressed Ellen White. Miller’s fifteen proofs included the claim that exactly 6,000 years after creation, (which he dated to the year 4157 BC), Christ’s Second Coming would commence the seventh millennium. Subtracting 4,157 years from 6,000 equaled 1843 exactly. This was his Millennial Sabbath proof. A second of Miller’s biblical proofs was his Seven Times of the Gentiles, which he asserted lasted 2,520 years (7×360 , assuming a day

for a year and that each “time” contained a 360-day year.) He started this in 677 BC and ended it precisely in 1843. A third Miller proof was his Jubilee prophecy, which lasted 2,450 years (49×50 , or 50 Jubilees, each of 49 years) from exactly 607 BC to 1843. A fourth Millerite prediction was a 1,290 day-year interval that he derived from references to the “daily sacrifice” in Daniel 8:11–13; 11:31; and 12:11. These dates all featured on the complex 1843 chart, which pictorially summed up Miller’s theories concerning “definite time.”¹⁷

Ellen White Encounters William Miller

During William Miller’s March 11–23, 1840 lecture series in Portland, Maine, Ellen Harmon’s hometown, Miller convinced the twelve-year-old Ellen Harmon that he had discovered fifteen mathematical-biblical proofs that Christ’s Second Coming would occur “about 1843.”¹⁸ By January 1843, he announced that he had evidence of a precise date, no later than March 21, 1844.¹⁹ When this date failed, S. S. Snow reinterpreted Miller’s predictions, and surpassed Miller in influence, in a date-setting movement known as The Midnight Cry. Ellen Harmon characterized Miller’s period of leadership as fulfilling the first two angels of Revelation 14, considered that God was “in” Snow’s Midnight Cry, and “saw” that God repeatedly and angelically guided Miller’s mind to novel insights into prophetic periods.

I saw that God sent his angel to move upon the heart of a farmer who had not believed the Bible, and led him to search the prophecies. Angels of God repeatedly visited that chosen one, and guided his mind, and opened his understanding to prophecies which had ever been dark to God’s people.²⁰

However, Miller’s interpretive method and results have been demonstrably falsified. The more well-known 2,300-year prediction from Daniel 8:14 was merely one alongside fourteen other proofs. It was the multiple, simultaneously ending calculations that indelibly impressed Ellen Harmon. When nine of them concerning 1843–44 failed on March 21, 1844, a Millerite lay-preacher, Samuel S. Snow, argued that Christ’s Second Coming was still very near, that Christ

was merely “tarrying” for a short but *indefinite* period, and that Miller’s failed March 21, 1844 date had also actually been predicted. Snow stated that Miller’s March 21, 1844 date had to fail in order to fulfill prophecies in Habakkuk 2, Ezekiel 12:22–24, and Jeremiah 51:45–46.²¹ In the summer of 1844, Snow originated and promoted the “Midnight Cry,” which reasserted a new definite date of October 22, 1844, replacing the indefinite, and less motivating, “tarrying time.” But when October 22, 1844 also passed without a Second Coming, Millerism suffered its greatest crisis. The movement split into two broad opposing camps: the “open-door” Adventists, including Miller and Joshua V. Himes, and the “shut-door” Adventists, whose most influential adherent was Ellen Harmon. Within this group, Joseph Turner and O. R. L. Crosier originated a new explanation for Christ’s delay, which Ellen Harmon said her visions endorsed. Then, in late 1850, Harmon, now married to James White, claimed divine inspiration for a new and improved chart that incorporated Miller’s and Snow’s revised prophetic intervals.²²

It was in connection with this new chart that Ellen White “saw” in a vision an explanation of the biblical expression “the daily.” She understood that the phrase referred to pagan Rome. In her vision she claimed to have seen that in the KJV’s translation of the expression “the daily sacrifice” in Daniel 8.13, the word “sacrifice” had been incorrectly *supplied* by the translators.

Miller’s Problem with “The Daily”

William Miller originated the confusion regarding “the daily.” He stated that he could not find the term “daily” in his concordance outside of Daniel, and that it was not until he read through his Bible and reached Thessalonians that its true meaning dawned on him in a divine eureka moment. After puzzling over the term “the daily” in Daniel 8:11–13, Miller recounted:

I read on and could find no other case in which it [the daily] was found, but in Daniel.²³ I then [by the aid of a concordance] took those words which stood in connection with it, “take away;” he shall take away, “the daily”; “from the time the daily shall be taken away, &c.” I read on, and thought I should find no light on the text; finally, I came to 2 Thess. 2:7, 8. “For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way, and then shall that wicked be revealed,” &c. And when I had come to that text, oh! how clear and glorious the truth appeared! There it is! That is “the daily!” Well now, what does Paul mean by “he who now letteth,” or hindereth? By “the man of sin,” and the “wicked,” popery is meant. Well what is it which hinders popery from being revealed? Why, it is paganism; well, then, “the daily” must mean paganism.²⁴

Miller, however, was factually incorrect in his concordance research. (Uriah Smith himself noted that the “word here rendered daily, occurs in the Old Testament, according to the Hebrew concordance, one hundred and two times.” Smith still asserted that “sacrifice is a word erroneously supplied.”²⁵)

The original historical and biblical context of Daniel reveals a fatal flaw in Miller’s interpretation. Daniel was deeply concerned about a literal Jewish people, a literal Jerusalem, a literal Temple, and a literal divinely prescribed system of sacrifices that had been outlined in Numbers 28 to 29. The Jerusalem location of these sacrifices had been desecrated and destroyed. Daniel was most anxious to learn when these literal entities would be restored or cleansed. “The daily sacrifice” was actually the *cornerstone* of the entire Old Testament sacrificial system.

It was crucial to Miller’s calculations that “the daily” have nothing to do with the literal Jewish sacrifices that

The Millerites here were breaking their critical principle of presuming that a commonsense, literal interpretation is preferred.

so vitally concerned Daniel and his readers. It especially could not refer to the literal actions of Antiochus Epiphanes, who captured Jerusalem in 167 BC and desecrated the Temple by offering the sacrifice of a pig on an altar to Zeus. Miller assumed, by a process of circular reasoning, that the “the daily” was not “taken away” until well into the Christian Era, in 508–538. In short, Miller’s interpretation was fatally flawed because the original context of Daniel clearly indicated a literal “sacrifice,” and because the textual evidence of Numbers 28–29 and Exodus 29:38–39 demonstrates that the word “sacrifice” was appropriately supplied by the KJV translators. Thus, we come to White’s two “I saw” assertions concerning the identity of “the daily” as pagan Rome.

“I Saw the ‘Daily’”

In an October 23, 1850, vision, White made the first of her celebrated assertions:

Then I saw the “daily,” that the Lord gave the correct view of it to those who gave the first angel’s message. When union existed before 1844, nearly all were united on the correct view of the “daily,” but since, in the confusion, other views have been embraced and darkness has followed. I saw that God had not made a test of time since 1844, and that time never again will be a test.²⁶

Writing out the same material in a variant wording a few weeks later, Ellen White says:

Then I saw in relation to the “daily,” that the word “sacrifice” *was supplied by man’s wisdom, and does not belong to the text*; and that the Lord gave the correct view of it to those who gave the judgment hour cry. When union existed, before 1844, nearly all were united on the correct view of the “daily”; but since 1844, in the confusion, other views have been embraced, and darkness and confusion has followed.²⁷

But Millerites manifestly did not have a “correct view” of “the daily.”

In 1850, some of White’s associates recalled that the 1,335-year period had been predicted to close with the First Resurrection, which had not yet occurred; therefore, they concluded, it must be future and imminent. White insisted that its fulfillment was past.

White twice repeated her assertion that she “saw” the “correct view” of the daily. She asserted that 1) prior to October 22, 1844 the Millerites had been unanimous in their interpretation of the daily, and 2) the word “sacrifice” was a translation error “supplied by man’s wisdom.” Indeed, the Millerites were unanimous in their assertion that the “daily” represented pagan Rome. They asserted that the last pagan rituals took place in Rome in 508 and that two exact prophetic periods began in 508. The first was the 1,290-year prophecy, which extended to the “time of the end,” defined as lasting from 1798–1843; the second was the 1,335-year prophecy, which reached “to the resurrection.”

Miller described how he concluded that the “daily” must be pagan Rome that was replaced by Papal Rome in 508. He then said to himself, “well, then, ‘the daily’ must mean paganism.”²⁸ In contrast, he concluded that the KJV translation “daily sacrifice” “cannot mean the Jewish sacrifices.” However, the KJV translators had translated the Hebrew term (*hatamid*) in question as “daily sacrifice” and thus he was obligated to deny that they had accurately translated it passages in Daniel.²⁹ Miller buttressed his interpretation of “the daily” by linking it to actions of the ten kings of Revelation. He believed that “the daily” prophecies could not be fulfilled until *after* “the conversion of the pagan kings to Christianity, which happened as soon as A. D. 508.”³⁰

On January 1, 1843, in “Synopsis of Miller’s Views,” Miller summarized his interpretation, emphasizing that it was “exactly fulfilled,” as follows:

The number 1335 days, from the taking away of Rome Pagan, A. D. 508, to set up Rome Papal, and the reign of Papacy, is 1290 days, which was *exactly* fulfilled in 1290 years, being fulfilled in 1798. This *proves*, the 1335 *days to be years*, and that Daniel will stand in his lot in A. D. 1843. For proof texts, see Dan. xi. 31.³¹

An Overwhelming Millerite Consensus: “Sacrifice” Not in the Original

White was correct when she wrote that before 1844 the Millerites were unanimous in asserting that “sacrifice” was illegitimately “supplied by man’s wisdom and does not belong to the text.” Indeed, her literary and intellectual dependence on their writings for this view is overwhelming. The Millerites here were breaking their critical principle of presuming that a commonsense, literal interpretation is preferred. A literal equivalent to “the daily sacrifice” is roasted lamb, not pagan Rome.

In about a dozen Millerite books and periodicals, such as *The Second Advent Manual*, *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, *The Midnight Cry*, and others, Millerite stalwarts such as S. S. Snow, J. V. Himes, Apollos Hale, Charles Fitch, George Storrs, Sylvester Bliss, and others, claimed that the word “sacrifice” was “supplied by man’s wisdom,” and that “the daily” referred to pagan Rome. Several went farther and charged their opponents with dishonesty and using “a species of deception to represent this word in either of these passages [of Daniel] as referring to Jewish sacrifice at all, for the original Hebrew makes no illusion to sacrifices of any sort.” The word sacrifice “is only the unreal offspring of the translators’ imagination.” They all linked the 1,335-day prophecy to the 2,300-day prophecy and said they expected “a perfect fulfillment” of all their details [plural] in 1843. They insisted that “The daily refers to Pagan Rome.” N. Hervey, for example, cited Gibbon as his authority for claiming that the “altar of paganism” was “taken away in 508 by Vitalian, with an army of Huns and Bulgarians.” Josiah Litch said papal Rome could not become supreme “until the conversion of the Ostrogoths to Christianity, about A. D. 508.” Charles Fitch and Apollos Hale wrote that the conversion of Clovis in 496 was critical. They wrote that the conversion of the remainder of the ten kings happened shortly thereafter. They reckoned “from the year 508, 1335 years, and [said] we are brought again to the year 1843, the precise point to which we are brought by reckoning 2300 years.” George Storrs wrote that adding 1,335 to 508 carries “us [the Millerites] down to 1843, when Daniel, with all the saints, will stand in their lot, i.e., will be raised from the dead.” J. V. Himes concluded, “The 1335 days commenced A. D. 508, and

will end in 1843. We are therefore on the threshold of eternity.” However, the 1,335-day as well as the 2,300-day prophecy both failed.³²

S. S. Snow originated the “Midnight Cry” movement, which in mid-1844 focused attention on the date of October 22. This was a date and a movement that Ellen Harmon explicitly endorsed in her First Vision. Thus, it is highly significant that, included in Snow’s series of articles outlining his autumn dating for the “Midnight Cry,” he also included the 1,335-year prophetic interval in his series of proofs. In his February 22, 1844 letter to *The Midnight Cry*, he asserted that the “1290 and 1335 days of Daniel 12” must “of course begin together.” He dated the first period from 509 to 1799. He dated the 1,335 period as “ending in the autumn of 1844,” simultaneously with the 2,300-day prophetic interval.³³

1851 White/Nichols Chart Predicted in the Bible

White claimed an “I saw” basis for a new and improved 1851 White/Nichols chart to replace the 1843 Millerite chart. White wrote in a June 2, 1853 letter a vision given at Jackson, Michigan:

I saw that God was in the publishment of the chart by Brother [Otis] Nichols. I saw that there was a prophecy of this chart in the Bible.³⁴

This is a *stunning* claim that the 1851 White/Nichols chart was foreseen and predicted in the Bible. Remarkable as this may be, it is consistent with the historicist Millerite mentality. Virtually every symbol in Revelation is chronologically linked to a historical event—thus the label historicist. Critically, Millerites envisioned themselves in the years 1837–1844 as being exactly predicted. They claimed that Revelation 14:6–9’s three angels predicted three exact dates for three phases of Millerism. The Nichols/Ellen White 1851 chart perpetuates this historicist method by positing three specific dates for the three angels. The first angel on the 1851 chart was dated 1837; the second angel was dated 1843; and the third angel was dated 1844. Writing on November 27, 1850, to the Hastings’s house she also asserted:

On our return to Brother Nichols', the Lord gave me a vision and shewed me that the truth must be made plain upon tables and it would cause many to decide for the truth by the three angels' message with the two former being made plain upon tables.³⁵

Just a few days earlier, November 1, 1850, she had written:

There [in Dorchester Massachusetts where Nichols lived] in the night God gave me a very interesting vision, the most of which you will see in the paper. God shewed me the necessity of getting out a chart.³⁶

Similarly striking, she endorsed the 1843 and 1851 charts in their smallest detail, said the figures were exactly as God wished them, and that “not a peg” of them “should be altered without [presumably her] inspiration.” White’s intimate involvement in the 1851 chart is evidenced by her criticism of the artwork of “other charts” as compared to her own. She criticized other charts because she believed they depicted their angels “more like fiends than beings of heaven,” whereas she found that her chart’s angels were “light, lovely, and heavenly in the representation of the angels.”³⁷ In this new chart “the daily” is explicitly linked to pagan Rome and to the dates 508–509. Both Daniel 8 and 11 are cited in favor of this interpretation, and pagan Rome is said to rule from 457 BC to 508 AD, or 965 years. Ten kings must precede (ending about 490 AD) papal Rome’s suppression of pagan Rome. The league with Rome and the Jewish state is still dated to 158 BC. In short, *multiple* elements of the 666-year calculation, the 1,335-year calculation, and the 2,520-year prophetic period are still endorsed as late as this 1851 chart. For a number of years thereafter this chart served as the foundation for Seventh-day Adventist evangelism, much like the 1843 Millerite chart had summed up Millerism.³⁸

I saw that the truth should be made plain on tables, that the earth and the fullness thereof is the Lord’s, and that necessary means

should not be spared to make it plain. I saw that the angels’ messages, made plain, would have effect. I saw that the old [1843] chart was directed by the Lord, and that not a peg of it should be altered without inspiration. I saw that the figures [plural] on the chart were as God wanted them, and that His hand was over and hid a mistake in some of the figures so that none could see it until His hand was removed.³⁹

EGW Asserted That “1335 Days Were Ended” in 1844—Yet No Resurrection Had Occurred

The 1851 White/Nichols chart expresses various key Millerite dates, such as 508–509, 538–9, and 1798–1799.⁴⁰ With the delay in the Second Coming from 1843 to 1844, White’s new and improved chart attempted to adjust some ambiguous dates by one year. The centrality of the 1,335-year prediction is made manifest by the fact that White’s endorsement of Snow’s date-setting “Midnight Cry” included the 1,335-year calculation. On November 17, 1850 she states she had a vision correcting a Brother Hewitt from Dead River, Maine, informing him that the “1335 days were ended” in 1844, and could not be future.⁴¹

With this literary and historical context, let us review what White wrote:

Then I saw in relation to the “daily,” that the word “sacrifice” was supplied by man’s wisdom, and does not belong to the text; and that the Lord gave the correct view of it to those who gave the judgment hour cry. When union existed, before 1844, nearly all were united on the correct view of the “daily”; but since 1844, in the confusion, other views have been embraced, and darkness and confusion has followed.⁴²

The phraseology here clearly shows a literary and intellectual dependence on the many Millerite theorists who claimed that the translation “daily *sacrifice*” was a deceptive, illegitimate translation “supplied by man’s wisdom, and does not belong to the text.”

“The Daily Sacrifice” the Foundation of Jewish Temple Worship

To the contrary, the Hebrew term “the daily” is a noun preceded by a definite article and occurs in this form many times in the Old Testament. This noun preceded by a definite article is the typical form.⁴³ Numbers 29:6 uses the phrase “the daily burnt offering,” directly juxtaposing “daily” and “burnt offering.”

Numbers 28 begins a section regulating routine “daily sacrifices,” followed by stipulations for specific annual feast sacrifices. It is clear from this organization of the text that in addition to the “daily sacrifices,” each special feast day has its own supplementary sacrifices.

1. According to the KJV of Numbers 28:3, “two lambs of the first year without spot *day by day [daily]*, for a *continual burnt offering*⁴⁴ [*sacrifice*]” are demanded by Yahweh. One lamb in the morning and the second lamb in the evening. Numbers 28:6 specifies that this daily sacrifice is to be “a continual burnt offering . . . a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD.”
2. Numbers 28:9–10 specifies supplemental stipulations for *Sabbath* sacrifices.
3. Numbers 28:11–15 specifies the additional sacrifices for the *New Moon* holiday.
4. Numbers 28:16–25 outlines the supplemental sacrifices for the *Passover* holiday.
5. Numbers 28:26–31 regulates the sacrifices that are to supplement the routine daily sacrifices for the *First-fruits holiday*.
6. Numbers 29:1–6 regulates the sacrifices that are to supplement the *Feast of Acclamation*.
7. Numbers 29:7–11 regulates the sacrifices that are to supplement *continual burnt offering* made during the *Day of Atonement*.
8. Numbers 29:12–39 regulates the sacrifices that are to supplement the *Feast of Tabernacles*. The term *continual burnt offering* is used with monotonous repetition throughout. Or, as in Numbers 29:6, the phrase “the daily burnt offering” is utilized.

In short, the biblical text demonstrates that Miller, his associates, and White were mistaken when they asserted that the Hebrew term translated “daily sacrifice” in Daniel had nothing to do with Jewish sacrifices, was “supplied” in error by the KJV translators, and did

not occur outside of Daniel. It is ironic that Miller, who theoretically depended only on the Bible and a concordance, originated the erroneous teaching based on faulty concordance work. Yet, *after* reading the Millerite mistranslation meta-narrative in scores of articles, Ellen (Harmon) White adopted this meta-narrative and subsequently claimed that she “saw” it in visions. This raises the question: *Did Ellen G. White always see what she thought she saw?*

Implications of Erroneous “I Saw” Statements

The fact that White’s “I saw” statements regarding “the daily” and the 1,335-day-year interval are erroneous augurs poorly for her other assertions that are “largely or wholly rejected by current scientific opinion.” A particularly salient example is her repeated statements that life on earth must only be about 6,000 years old. One reason that she repeatedly insisted on a 6,000-year chronology was that Miller’s Millennial Sabbath prediction asserted that Creation occurred in 4157 BC and the Seventh Millennium would start in 1843–44.⁴⁵ Snow, in the February 22, 1844 *The Midnight Cry*, went so far as to assert that Creation must have begun in autumn of 4157 because fruit in Eden would be ripe at this season for Adam’s consumption.⁴⁶

Seventh-day Adventist young-earth creationists are critically dependent on Ussher’s, Miller’s, and White’s chronological assertions, presuming that because of White’s direct revelations, Genesis must be interpreted literally as a scientific and historical account. This is their *a priori*, major premise. Thus, they conclude that multiple, independent, scientific data that demonstrate life on earth to have been much older must be false because Genesis is literal.⁴⁷

Indeed, it could be argued that White, via the medium of George McCready Price, is responsible for the current popularity of young-earth creationism.⁴⁸ In any case, the predominate, authoritative view of White’s authority has functioned as a theological, hermeneutical, historical, and scientific straight jacket on Seventh-day Adventist thinkers. Like the Pope when speaking *ex cathedra*, when White speaks in her “I saw” mode, church administrators like Arthur White and scientists like Leonard Brandt consider her to be practically infallible, even if not formally

innocent. Apologists like this presume that White's statements regarding everything from masturbation, amalgamation, the nature of volcanos, the history of the French Revolution, the exegesis of eschatological biblical passages, and the development and chronology of life on earth must be completely reliable. Only scientific and historical data that fit this presumption can be considered. Overwhelming scientific evidence contrary to whatever White "saw" must be rejected or, at best, indefinitely held in abeyance until future data, presumably, confirms whatever she "saw."

For over a century, Seventh-day Adventist apologists have been in an analogous position to the historical role played by Jesuits in regard to the discoveries and writings of Galileo and Copernicus. For centuries they defended what they imagined to be a literal (geocentric) interpretation of the Bible and insisted that special revelation ruled out the new heliocentric model of the solar system. In so doing, the Catholic Church inflicted an almost "deadly wound" to the intellectual credibility of Christianity. By defending the thesis that anything which Ellen White "saw" is authoritative, Seventh-day Adventist apologists risk defending the indefensible today.

Endnotes

1. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 3 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishers Association, 1864), i-v of preface and 17, 27: The "great facts of faith . . . have been opened to me in vision." When Ellen White wrote this description, "scientific" craniology considered that the more intelligent Caucasians had skulls with Satan's prelapsarian form while the less intelligent Negroid skulls had Satan's fallen, receding frontal bone. See Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996) and Stephen Jay Gould, *The Flamingo's Smile: Reflections in Natural History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985), 187–190 for a brief discussion of polygeny and monogeny. Furthermore, women had brains smaller and inferior to men. Paul Broca (1824–1880), a famous French physician who in 1861 discovered Broca's area, said: "Men of the black races have a brain scarcely heavier than that of white woman," according to Stephen Jay Gould, *The Panda's Thumb* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980), 158.
2. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Review & Herald, 1858). "I saw" occurs 108 times, "I was shown" occurs 15 times, "shown me" occurs 2 times.
3. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, 34.
4. Ellen G. White, "Trust in God," *The Gospel Herald*, March 1901: 22.
5. Jud Lake and Jerry Moon, "Current Science and Ellen White: Twelve Controversial Statements," in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013), 214–240. For a similar apologetic, see Alberto Timm and Dwain N. Esmond, eds., *The Gift of Prophecy in Scripture and History* (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015).
6. Ekkehardt Mueller, "The Prophetic Voice in the New Testament: An Overview," in *The Gift of Prophecy*, eds. Alberto R. Timm and Dwain N. Esmond (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015), 36.
7. Angel M. Rodriguez, "Revelation/Inspiration and the Witness of Scripture," in *The Gift of Prophecy*, eds. Alberto R. Timm and Dwain N. Esmond (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015), 84–104.
8. Jud Lake, "Ellen G. White's Use of Extrabiblical Sources," in *The Gift of Prophecy*, eds. Alberto R. Timm and Dwain N. Esmond (Silver Spring, MD: Review and

Herald Publishing Association, 2015), 326.

9. Jiri Moskala, "The Prophetic Voice in the Old Testament," in *The Gift of Prophecy*, eds. Alberto R. Timm and Dwain N. Esmond (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015), 40.

10. Miller, followed by White, believed that in the "time of the end," defined as starting in 1798, biblical knowledge would increase, and "the wise," the Millerites, would be privy to eschatological, apocalyptic truths regarding "definite time" that were never revealed to previous generations. Therefore, although in 1845 Miller acknowledged his error, he could comprehend how and why he had erred.

11. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, 128–29, 131, 133–35.

12. See Alden Thompson's *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers*, 2nd ed. (Gonzalez, FL: Energion Publications, 2016), 50–53 for a discussion of special and general revelation.

13. In Ellen G. White, *Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts With Annotations: 1845–1859* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2014), 242–244, she asserted: "I saw that the old [1843] chart was directed by the Lord," and "I saw that the figures on the chart were as God wanted them."

14. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, 128, 132, 133, 135, 137, 138, 139. There are seven references to "prophecies" or "prophetic periods" [plural] that Miller claimed would be fulfilled in 1844—not merely a single 2,300-year period. These "prophetic periods" refer to Miller's fifteen proofs, one of which was the 1,335-year period.

15. Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry*, facsimile reproduction, (Ringgold, GA: Teach Services, 2013), 507–510 and Appendix L. He made an exception for the 2,300-day interval but not the 1,335-day interval.

16. This was his tenth rule, on a par with his day = year rule. Miller wrote: "Figures sometimes have two or more different significations; as day is used in a figurative sense to represent three different periods of time. 1. Indefinite. 2. Definite, a day for a year. 3. Day for a thousand years [emphasis added] (Ecclesiastes 7:14; Ezekiel 4:6; 2 Peter 3:8)." Miller only gives a short list of three citations here—without the actual texts. He and Snow regularly fortified their assertions with *wholesale catalogues of citations*, often without the actual text. For example, see "Synopsis of Miller's Views," cited elsewhere. This wholesale citation of scripture "proof-texts" made an immense impression on Ellen Harmon, even when the cited texts had little or no relationship to their assertions.

17. Exceptionally, the 4157 BC creation date is not on the 1843 chart.

18. See Kai Arasola, *The End of Historicism* (Siguna, Sweden: Datem Publishing, 1990) for a description of Miller's fifteen proofs and his textual and historical basis for these intervals.

19. William Miller, "A Synopsis of Miller's Views," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy* 4, no. 19, (January 25, 1843): 145–150.

20. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, 128. How God guided Miller's mind to the wrong conclusions on multiple "lost" prophecies while "opening his understanding" accurately to only the 2,300-year prediction is a conundrum.

21. See Theodore Turner, *The Three Angels' Messages Source Book*, n.d., 72–86 https://www.academia.edu/34595991/The_Three_Angels_Messages_Source_Book.pdf for a series of letters by S. S. Snow. In his June 27, 1844 letter Snow states: "I had been previously quite strong in the belief with Adventists generally, that the 6000 years of this world or age—the 7 times of the Gentiles, the 2300 days of Dan. 8, and the 1335 days of Dan. 12, must end within the Jewish year 1843." This is an internet compilation of Millerite documents whose table of contents on pages iii and iv includes about twenty articles concerning "the correct view of the daily" on pages 137–172, https://www.academia.edu/34595991/The_Three_Angels_Messages_Source_Book.pdf.

22. Ellen G. White, *The Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts*, 253–54, 358.

23. This is Miller's fatal, factual error. It is an inexplicable mystery as to how and why Miller missed such obvious evidence. Additionally, Exodus 29: 38–39 (KJV) refers to the same sacrifices: "Thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even."

24. Apollon Hale, *The Second Advent Manual* (Boston: J. V. Himes, 1843), 66. Brackets in original and in J. N. Andrews's citation of the same text. See J. N. Andrews, *The Sanctuary and the 2300 Days* (San Bernardino, CA: Waymark Press, 2012), 40.

25. Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Company, 1897), 156, 254.

26. White, *Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts*, 246–47. Gilbert M. Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005), 215, documents that the "old view" of the "daily" around which "nearly all were united" was the assertion that the "daily" was a prophetic symbol for pagan Rome. He states that "Joseph Bates, J. N. Andrews, and James White had all followed Miller in adopting the view [that the 'daily' was pagan Rome], and Uriah Smith had set the interpretation in concrete . . . in his book *Daniel and Revelation*."

27. White, *Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts*, 246, footnote 17. Note below that this italicized phrase [emphasis not original] is almost copied verbatim from multiple Millerite commentators. It is clear that Nichols took White's comment seriously in constructing the 1850–1851 chart. He eliminated the word "sacrifice" when quoting the KJV text. What would later be called the "old" view of "the daily" was concretized in this chart.

28. Hale, *The Second Advent Manual*, 66.

29. Several independent indications that this is not merely an English or King James Version mistranslation is the fact that scores of English translations also supply the word sacrifice. Not only this but French, German, and Spanish translations also translate the Hebrew with their equivalent of sacrifice. For example, French is "le sacrifice perpétuel," German is "das tägliche Opfer," and Spanish is "el continuo sacrificio."

30. Theodore Turner, *The Three Angels' Messages Source Book*, 141–42.

31. Emphasis added. Turner, *Three Angels' Messages*, 143. This is an example of Miller's extensive biblical citations that so impressed Ellen Harmon. S. S. Snow's "Behold The Bridegroom Cometh: Go Ye Out to Meet Him," *True Midnight Cry*, August 22, 1844, was also replete with biblical citations, but they were largely irrelevant to his argument.

32. Turner, *Three Angels' Messages*, 144–160.

33. Turner, *Three Angels' Messages*, 76–77. Note that in the 1851 White/Nichols chart, 509–1799 is also given as an equal alternative to 508–1798.

34. White, *Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts*, 358. Roland Karlman, the annotator of these documents, notes that this chart "depicted prophetic symbols from Daniel and Revelation together with time calculations. In October 1850 Ellen White had received instruction in vision that a prophetic chart should be published. During the next few months Otis Nichols supervised the publication of a chart that was advertised for distribution and sale in January 1851." This chart is often entitled the Nichols chart. It might better be labelled the 1851 Nichols/White chart since it was her inspiration that prompted it. Ellen White was its intellectual author; Nichols was the engraver.

35. White, *Ellen G. White Letters*, 253–254.

36. White, *Ellen G. White Letters*, 249.

37. White, *Ellen G. White Letters*, 358–59.

38. White, *Ellen G. White Letters*, 358–59.

39. White, *Ellen G. White Letters*, 242–244. It was not merely a singular figure or prophetic period such as 2,300-years that "were as God wanted" it, but multiple

"figures," including 1,335-years, 1,290-years, and 2,520-years that "were as God wanted them." This White assertion is the basis of the concept that God deliberately obscured from everyone's view their error in not accounting for the fact that there was no zero year in the transition from BC to AD. This is the basis for the fact that in the 1851 White/Nichols chart in the lower right corner's "Explanation of the Time," White and Nichols have equivocated on many of the "figures." Mrs. White said not a "peg" of the 1843 chart should be changed without "inspiration." Thus, Nichols does not engrave simply 508, 538, or 1798 but rather 508–9, 538–9, and 1798–9. This reveals some uncertainty about the exact dates and events that were to have occurred on these dates. Was the "daily" removed in 509, the papacy set up in 539, and did the "time of the end" begin in 1799?

40. I strongly recommend that interested readers obtain a copy from <https://adventistheritage.org/heritage-shoppe/bible-church-history/1850-prophetic-chart/>. This is really a case when a picture is worth a thousand words.

41. White, *Ellen G. White Letters*, 252–255.

42. White, *Ellen G. White Letters*, footnote 17.

43. It occurs in Numbers 4:7; 4:16; 9:16; 28:3; 28:6; 28:10; 28:15; 28:23–24; 28:31; 29:6; 29:11; 29:16; 29:19; 29:22; 29:25; 29:28; 29:31; 29:34; and 29:38. William Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 556 specifically notes that this means a "daily (morning and evening) burnt-offering," citing the five instances in Daniel, and taking notice of those in Numbers, as well as a Talmudic use of the plural form.

44. The English phrase "continual burnt offering" is a regular KJV translation for the Hebrew term translated "daily sacrifice" in Daniel.

45. To obtain 4157 BC, Miller had to dispute Ussher's date of 4001 BC. Yet this arcane and convoluted chronological dispute with the world-renowned chronologist did nothing to shake Ellen Harmon's assurance that even a child could easily follow Miller's calculations.

46. Turner, *The Three Angels' Messages*, 211. Snow wrote: "Man at his creation was to subsist upon the fruits and seeds. Gen. 1:29. It does not appear reasonable that these were ripe at any other season than autumn."

47. Leonard Brandt and Arthur Chadwick, *Faith, Reason, & Earth History: A Paradigm of Earth and Biological Origins by Intelligent Design* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2016), chapter 12. Brandt and Chadwick prefer biblical interpretations to scientific evidence because "The Bible long ago predicted that certain things would happen. When the predictions of the prophecy are fulfilled, our confidence in biblical reliability is strengthened." "We can check whether the events occurred as the prophecy declared." As demonstrated here, the 1,335-year prophecy, (and about a dozen others), were not fulfilled as predicted.

48. Ronald Numbers, *The Creationists: From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2006).

49. See a version of *The Book of Jasher* (New York: M. M. Noah & A. S. Gould, 1840), particularly chapters three and four, which have parallels with White's extrabiblical description of Enoch and Noah. In 4:18, in a reference to amalgamation, it is said of the antediluvians, "the sons of men in those days took from the cattle of the earth, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, and taught the mixture of animals of one species with the other, in order therewith to provoke the Lord." This was the crime that caused Noah's Flood.

50. Recently, Terrie Dopp Aamodt, "The Hardest Question," *Spectrum* 49, no. 2: 63–72, published an excellent analysis of White's assertions concerning the "base crime of amalgamation of man and beast."

51. See an accessible copy at <https://whiteestate.org/legacy/issues-shutdoor-html/>, where on April 11, 1982, Robert Olson, Secretary of the White Estate conceded this. He stated that after her First Vision, "She concluded incorrectly that the door of mercy was closed on that day [October 22, 1844] for everyone in the world." Nonetheless, Olson concludes: "While Ellen White's personal beliefs underwent a gradual modification during this period, I find no evidence that she at any time taught theological error in her shut door writings." She is incorrect but not in error?

52. Ron Graybill, "The Last Secrets of The White Estate," *Spectrum* 49, no. 2: 75–76.

53. Graybill, "The Last Secrets," 75–76.



DONALD E. CASEBOLT has written three articles for *Spectrum*. The latest was: "It Was Not Taught Me by Man": Ellen White's Visions and 2 Esdras," in Volume 46, Issue 1 of 2018. He recently published a book entitled *Child of the Apocalypse: Ellen G. White*, reviewed in this *Spectrum*. A second book, *Father Miller's Daughter*, will be published by Wipf & Stock in 2022.

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Revisions of the Adolescent Ellen Harmon:

A Review of Donald Casebolt's *Child of the Apocalypse: Ellen G. White*

BY DENIS FORTIN

Donald Edward Casebolt, *Child of the Apocalypse: Ellen G. White*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2021. xx + 98 pp.

Attempts at understanding Ellen Harmon's youth, her adolescent years before her marriage to James White in August 1846 (at age 18 and 9 months), are not new, but two books published in the last twelve months are creating a new interest in this fairly neglected period of her life. The two books are challenging the traditional consensus to postulate new theories of her spiritual development in a religious context prone to apocalyptic fervor and ecstatic experiences. The result is a revisionist perspective of Ellen White's early religious experience.

Ellen White herself sought to explain to others her prophetic ministry through autobiographies of her early religious experiences. The first such autobiography appeared in *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (1851) and covered the years from her conversion at age 11 to 1850. The second autobiographical account was published in *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 2 (1860), and gives an account of her life from her accident at age 9 to 1858. The third one was part of James White's *Life Incidents* (1868). Then came a series of editions of *Life Sketches*, each one adding information of recent years (1880, 1888, 1915). In all of these autobiographies, Ellen White presented the facts

of her early religious life as she recalled experiencing them many years later. There is no attempt at evaluating whether what she experienced was good or less good, but she sought to convince her readers that her experiences were genuine, led by God, and prepared her for a life-long prophetic ministry.

Denominational biographies have basically followed the same presentation of the young Ellen Harmon's religious life and have not given much emphasis to its socio-religious context. At times, these biographies have been somewhat hagiographic commentaries on her own autobiographies, as with her grandson Arthur White's biography, *Ellen G. White*, vol. 1, *The Early Years: 1827 to 1862*.¹ There have been a few attempts at providing the historical and socio-religious context of her early life. Woodrow Whidden provided an analysis of the implications of her Methodist roots on her views of the doctrine of salvation in his *Ellen White on Salvation: A Chronological Study*.² Likewise, Merlin Burt gave an analysis of her Methodist conversion in a brief article in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*.³ Also providing some historical context for her youth is Jerry Moon and Denis Kaiser's biographical essay "For Jesus and Scripture: The Life of Ellen G. White," also in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*.⁴

The two books are challenging the traditional consensus to postulate new theories of her spiritual development in a religious context prone to apocalyptic fervor and ecstatic experiences.

These attempts have been helpful and relied mainly on Ellen White's source materials.

During the last few decades, the need for further analysis of young Ellen Harmon's early religious experience has been felt in a number of ways. The ecstatic and charismatic experiences among Millerites and early Sabbatarian Adventists have been known for a long time and have generated some interest. We have known that young Ellen Harmon participated in such experiences, as many expressions she used in her autobiographies indicate her familiarity with religious "enthusiasm." We know that she came from a branch of Methodism called the "shouting Methodists," admittedly a branch more prone to emotional demonstrations. Also, a resurgence of interest in the Israel Dammon trial in early 1845, and Ellen Harmon's presence during these events, cannot be dismissed easily.⁵

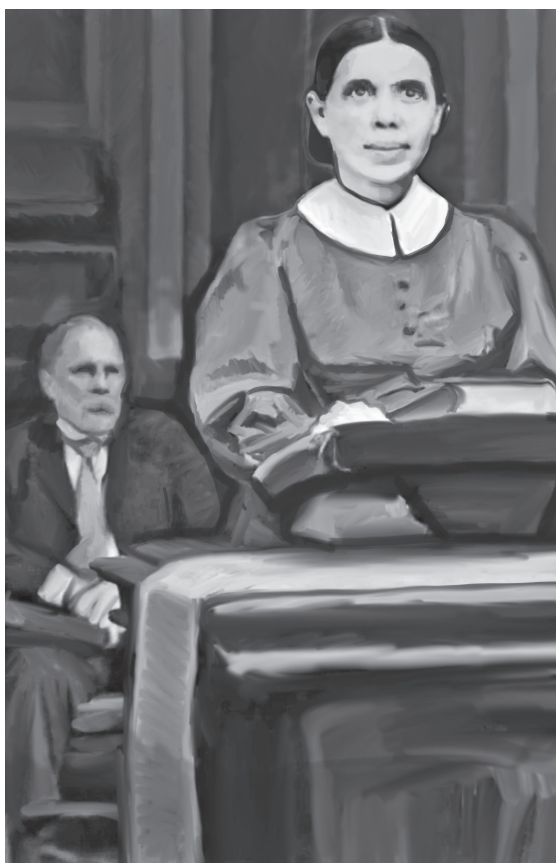
The historiography of Ellen Harmon's early life has been an area of research waiting to be addressed. And, in the last year, two such studies have been published.

Many reviews have already addressed Steve Daily's contribution and its strengths and weaknesses.⁶ His *Ellen G. White: A Psychobiography* disturbed the traditional Adventist interpretation of Ellen White's religious experience by postulating that her family of origin, her traumatic head injury, her Methodist upbringing, and her connection with the

Millerite movement give sufficient evidence to conclude that her psychological personality was narcissistic and domineering. In my opinion, Daily's historical reconstructions of some events are often lacking adequate support and make wrong assumptions, but his analysis of Ellen Harmon's adolescence is presenting some perceptions that have not been discussed before. The impact of her accident, her fear of damnation and of God, her puzzling relationship with her twin sister, and the influence of Millerite apocalypticism on her psychological personality bring together an assessment that deserves attention. Adventist readers must ask themselves whether this revisionist portrait paints a more authentic Ellen White.

Donald Casebolt's new book, *Child of the Apocalypse:*

Ellen G. White, on the other hand, offers a reconstruction of the socio-religious context in and around Portland, Maine, during Ellen Harmon's youth, to better understand her autobiographical statements.⁷ He also sets her religious experience within the historical context of Methodism and Millerism. His incisive analysis provides another revisionist perspective that is also bound to cause some discomfort. In a way that I don't think has been done before, Casebolt presents a time correlation between Ellen White's autobiographical statements and events of the Millerite movement she participated in. As he does this correlation, Casebolt comes to



Credit: Jared Wright

some startling conclusions. Overall, he claims that young Ellen Harmon received such a social imprinting on her religious experience at her young age that it made her a “child of the Apocalypse”; that she became the Ellen G. White of later years because she was raised and came of age in a socio-religious context at once millenarian, apocalyptic, and religiously ecstatic. A quote from Oliver Wendell Holmes sets the theme of the book: “We are all tattooed in our cradles with the beliefs of our tribe; the record may seem superficial, but it is indelible”. I find this book offers three major revisionist arguments worth some attention.

Casebolt claims that Ellen Harmon as a youth of 11 years old, barely two years after her traumatic head injury, and a few months after dropping out of school for the last time because of the added mental strain it caused her, could not have understood the detailed meaning and implications of William Miller’s complicated time prophecies and fifteen mathematical proofs of the second coming of Christ when she first heard him in March 1840. What she accepted was an apocalyptic message that her weak mind could only grasp in general terms. Here, Casebolt follows Daily’s argument that her deep psychological fear of God and of death disposed her to accept Miller’s apocalyptic scenario (14–15). Therefore, he claims that what she accepted could not have been adequately and critically processed in her mind. She was after all only a sick and impressionable 11-year-old child. Her religious context and personal experiences, not a voice from heaven, facilitated her acceptance of Miller’s message. Then, according to Casebolt, White’s autobiographies give evidence of confabulation, the creation of false memories to explain or embellish the experiences of her youth. These arguments put serious doubt on the authenticity or accuracy of Ellen White’s biographical records.

Casebolt’s book also challenges Ellen White’s assertion that God somehow had hidden or covered the

mistakes that William Miller and his colleagues made in concluding that Jesus would return on successive dates, ending with October 22, 1844 (see *The Great Controversy*, 353). He contends that this argument (God hiding the mistake) originated with Samuel Snow in his allegorical-typological-historicist interpretation of passages in Ezekiel (12:22), Habakkuk (2:2, 3), Jeremiah (51:45–46) and 2 Esdras, an interpretation known as the “tarrying time” (30–33).⁸ While a plain and common-sense reading of Matthew 24:36 (“nobody knows the day or the hour”) would conclude that the precise day of the Second Coming of Christ could not be known, only an allegorical and typological interpretation of many passages taken out of context and strung together could sustain the interpretation that people could know the exact day of the Second Coming. Casebolt argues that both William Miller and S. S. Snow used this allegorical methodology to sustain all their farfetched mathematical calculations and interpretations. In a general sense, Ellen Harmon accepted Snow’s conclusion without really understanding its substance. Casebolt’s arguments seriously weaken Ellen White’s foundational interpretation of the end of the Millerite movement, and without this interpretation, is there a foundation to the original Sabbatarian Adventist movement she helped establish?

Another conclusion from Casebolt’s book is his interpretation of how Ellen Harmon came to have a prophetic ministry. The usual Adventist narrative insists “that she rocketed from total obscurity on October 21, 1844 to public prophetess by January 1, 1845” (50). Rather, Casebolt argues that the accounts of her early religious awakening and her Millerite experience show that she progressed through several phases of development from the early days of her conversion at age 11 to her first post-disappointment visions in 1844 and 1845. By the time the Millerite movement collapsed on October 23, 1844, she was already an

According to Casebolt, White’s autobiographies give evidence of confabulation, the creation of false memories to explain or embellish the experiences of her youth.



Credit: Jared Wright

influential voice in her social context, acquired through visions and ecstatic experiences, public prayers, and some attempts at exhortation (50–51). By then, some Methodist pastors had affirmed her early influence (56–57). He also offers some examples of other religious figures who had similar experiences: William Foy, Caleb Rich, Richard Randel, and even a Catholic visionary in France, Bernadette Soubirous. Casebolt challenges the traditional understanding of Ellen Harmon’s “first” vision in December 1844 by arguing that she already was perceived as a visionary youth by then.

These recent books create a similar discomfort in the minds of many Adventist readers. In part, the discomfort is the result of a revisionist interpretation of Ellen White’s life that removes perceptions of supernatural intervention and guidance. Biographical facts and events are interpreted in psychological and historical terms without references to divine intervention. But to be fair, many biographies of Ellen White, including her own autobiographies, have mostly downplayed or simply avoided any impressions of her fallible humanity that could have tampered with the supernatural guidance and inspiration she claimed. Traditionally, what Ellen White wrote about her own biographical impressions and perspectives have not been questioned or interpreted in their historical context. Her biblical, historical, and theological interpretations have usually not been corrected, even if perceived as less than accurate today. As George Knight has shown, the Church created a mythology around her life and writings after she died.⁹ Hence, a real discomfort happens when this mythology is challenged, and Daily and Casebolt’s books upset the

comfort zones, as did books by Walter Rea and Ron Numbers two generations ago. These recent books should not be summarily dismissed, however, but should be responded to with scholarly and honest research.

Those interested in the Millerite movement, early Adventist studies, and Ellen White’s biography will have to read and interact with this new book. Casebolt mentions that he is finishing a second book, *Father Miller’s Daughter: Ellen Harmon White*, in which he will study more closely Ellen White’s relationship to William Miller’s apocalyptic message and allegorical methodology. This will undoubtedly be another interesting contribution.

Endnotes

1. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, vol. 1: *The Early Years (1827–1862)* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985).
2. Woodrow W. Whidden, *Ellen White on Salvation: A Chronological Study* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1995).
3. Merlin D. Burt, “Conversion, Ellen G. White’s,” in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, eds. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013), 734–736.
4. Jerry Moon and Denis Kaiser, “For Jesus and Scripture: The Life of Ellen G. White,” in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 18–95.
5. See a brief survey of the trial and its issues as pertaining to Ellen Harmon in James R. Nix, “Dammon, Israel,” in *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, 358–360.
6. Alberto R. Timm, “Steve Daily on Ellen G. White,” *BRI Reflections*, May 2021, <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/Reflections-74-April-June-2021.pdf>; Hans Gutierrez, “The Embarrassment of Having a Prophet: On Steve Daily’s Ellen White Psychobiography,” *Spectrum* online, June 10, 2021, <https://spectrummagazine.org/views/2021/embarrassment-having-prophet-steve-dailys-ellen-white-psychobiography>; Jonathan Butler, “Ellen G. White: All or Nothing?,” *Spectrum* online, June 30, 2021, <https://spectrummagazine.org/arts-essays/2021/ellen-g-white-all-or-nothing>; Hans Gutierrez, “How Historically Embodied Is a Prophet? On Steve Daily’s ‘Ellen G. White: A Psychobiography,’” *Spectrum* online, July 8, 2021, <https://spectrummagazine.org/views/2021/how-historically-embodied-prophet-steve-dailys-ellen-g-white-psychobiography>; Hans Gutierrez, “How Biblical Is Ellen White? On Steve Daily’s ‘Ellen G. White: A Psychobiography,’” *Spectrum* online, August 12, 2021, <https://spectrummagazine.org/views/2021/how-biblical-ellen-white-steve-dailys-ellen-g-white-psychobiography>.
7. Donald Edward Casebolt, *Child of the Apocalypse: Ellen G. White* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2021).
8. See Samuel S. Snow, *The True Midnight Cry* 1, no. 1, August 22, 1844.
9. George R. Knight, *Ellen White’s Afterlife: Delightful Fictions, Troubling Facts, Enlightening Research* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2019).



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We, Too, Sing America:

African American Seventh-day Adventist Healers in a Multicultural Nation

BY ANDREA KING

Excerpt from the book: *African American Seventh-day Adventist Healers in a Multicultural Nation*, edited by Ramona L. Hyman and Andy Lampkin, Pacific Press, 2021.

There are things that make me proud to be an African American Seventh-day Adventist Christian. I am proud to say that the first president of the General Conference, John Byington, was a staunch abolitionist. He used his Bucks Bridge home as a stop for the Underground Railroad, and he often hosted fugitive slaves and Native Americans at his own table.¹ John P. Kellogg, another Adventist pioneer, and father of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, also ran an Underground Railroad station on his farm in Michigan.² Perhaps it was such forward-thinking people, in addition to their rightly dividing the Word of God, that attracted women like Sojourner Truth, an itinerant preacher, abolitionist, activist, and healer to the Advent movement.

Originally named Isabella Baumfree, Sojourner Truth was bounced from plantation to plantation until she decided to escape with her infant child one year before slavery was abolished in New York. Of her escape she recalled, “I did not run off, for I thought that wicked, but I walked off, believing that to be all right.”³ After slavery had been abolished in New York, her son was sold to a slave owner in Alabama. She fought to get him freed by suing the owner. She won the case, becoming the first Black woman to win a court case against a White man.⁴

She refused to settle merely for her own freedom or the freedom of her children. She went on to fight for the freedom of both women and Blacks. She gave herself the

name Sojourner Truth, for she believed that this name encapsulated the calling God had placed on her life to preach against slavery. Like Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth made several trips to the South to free slaves through the Underground Railroad.⁵

Sojourner Truth was an encourager and liberator of both great and small. When Frederick Douglass was speaking of the horrors of slavery in Boston, it appeared that he was quite discouraged. Hopelessness was beginning to creep into his speech and his heart. Sojourner Truth yelled from the front row, “Frederick, is God dead?”⁶ This inspired and invigorated the whole audience. Her influence also earned her an invitation to the White House, where she met President Abraham Lincoln.⁷

She spoke at least twice at Millerite camp meetings in 1843.⁸ She chronicles in her narrative how, upon her arrival, everyone seemed to be so agitated and excitable—stricken with fear. This was understandable because, according to their calculations, the world was very soon to end. She’d speak to them to calm their minds, sing to them to give peace. She was a healer. This African American healer was able to operate with ease in various circles—from the Battle Creek Sanitarium to the White House; from the circles of Black Frederick Douglass to Ellen Gould White. She was a healer.

In 1851, Sojourner Truth attended the Women’s

Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. Watching this “tall, gaunt black woman in a gray dress and white turban, surmounted with an uncouth sunbonnet, march deliberately into the church, walk with the air of a queen up the aisle, and take her seat upon the pulpit steps” caused quite a stir in the convention.⁹ Throughout the sessions, she perched herself like a statue, leaning against the wall while sitting on the steps.¹⁰ As an entrepreneur, Sojourner Truth would sell her book, *Life of Sojourner Truth*, during intermission—an awesome feat because she could neither read nor write. When she wasn’t selling, she was back on her step.¹¹

While listening to the presentations, she heard how women were dainty and should be helped into carriages and lifted over ditches. A man announced at the convention that women should have the best place. Other speakers and women had choice seats, yet she was seated on the steps. The irony and hypocrisy of this moment were not lost on her. Her life as a woman included none of the womanly amenities.

Francis Gage, the president in charge of the convention, was warned not to let Truth speak. The organizers for women’s rights did not want their cause muddied with abolition. Gage recalls, “Again and again, timorous and trembling ones came to me and said, with earnestness, ‘Don’t let her speak, Mrs. Gage, it will ruin us. Every newspaper in the land will have our cause mixed up with abolition and niggers, and we shall be utterly denounced.’”¹²

Gage was still undecided on whether she would allow Truth to speak. But after some male preachers from several denominations came and made light of the women’s cause, Sojourner Truth could scarcely hold her seat. The men asserted that women were weak and that men had superior intellect. Furthermore, Jesus Christ, the Savior, was a man, and Eve, the first sinner, was a woman. No one wanted to rebut what was being said. Most women were too timid to speak out in the meetings. Sojourner Truth, however, was not afraid.

She rose and made her way to the front, exciting quite a commotion. People continued to beg Gage to not allow her to speak. Gage, too, arose and quieted the audience. She then announced Sojourner Truth. Truth’s speech was masterful and memorable and

arguably the only reason we remember the Akron, Ohio, Women’s Rights Convention of 1851.

Truth would address women’s rights, but her immediate priority was to let her hearers know that she was included in this category. It became clear to Sojourner Truth that they had no intention of offering her, a Black woman, the rights they were fighting to gain for themselves. Thus, her first order of business was to remind them that she was a woman too:

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain’t I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain’t I a woman? I have borne thirteen children and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain’t I a woman?¹³

After first establishing her right to be there as a woman, she then tackled the task at hand and provided an adept rebuttal for women’s rights. Equipped with a brilliant mind, she turned every point used against women’s rights on its head and used it in their favor. “If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone,” she proclaimed, “these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.”¹⁴

Sojourner Truth was just one of many exceptional African American women healers. Women like Anna Knight, the first female missionary to India and also the first Black female employee of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, were also healers.¹⁵ Anna Knight learned about Seventh-day Adventists through mail correspondence as a young teenager. Because there were no schools in Mississippi for Blacks, she devoured any reading material she could get her hands on. As Knight learned more

about the Bible, she found that local pastors and the itinerant preachers who would come through her town knew so little of the Bible that she made a commitment to herself to get a formal education.¹⁶ Knight eventually ended up at Battle Creek College, where she studied to be a nurse. There Knight took an oath before John Harvey Kellogg, the director of the Battle Creek Sanitarium, that she would use her training to serve others and not to make money. Upon completion of her nursing degree, Knight went back to Mississippi to start a school for African American children. There were many who were less than excited about her teaching Blacks, and she often had to go to and from the school with a pistol for her safety.¹⁷ Kellogg had invited Knight to be a delegate for the General Conference session in Battle Creek. There she heard of the need for nurses to go to India as missionaries. Knight decided to go if the denomination would send two people to continue the work at her school in Gitano, Mississippi. She made the thirty-day journey to India and worked tirelessly teaching, selling books, and working in the fields to raise money for the school. Knight worked so hard in the field one day that she fainted and did not wake up for three days.¹⁸ While in India, Knight got word that the work in Mississippi had been abandoned. The school had been burned down, and everyone who tried to continue the work in the Black school was threatened. When Knight received a letter from one of her former students asking why she was in India trying to convert the heathen when her own people were growing up in Mississippi as heathens, her heart was broken. Knight wrote to the General Conference pleading for them to send someone to Mississippi to work with the students there. If they would not, she requested a furlough so that she could do it herself. They decided to grant her a furlough.¹⁹ When her furlough came, Knight made her way back to Mississippi. Almost immediately, she started a school with twenty-two students. Knight organized the first Seventh-day Adventist group in south-central Mississippi.

After holding services on Saturday in her home, she would walk six miles to Soso, Mississippi, and teach a Sabbath School class of fifty to eighty adults. Knight would teach them the Sabbath School lesson from *Our Little Friend*, and they loved it.²⁰

Some in the town thought a woman shouldn't



Anna Knight, 1874-1972 Credit; Seventh-day Adventist History Photo Archive; Dept. of Archives and Special Collections, Loma Linda University.

preach. Knight recalls their threats: “This here woman has gone up North and got all these Northern ideas, and is bringing all this in here and getting these people stuck up, and trying to preach, going from one place to another holding meetings there and here. We will fix her.”²¹ They threatened to catch her on the road and kill her. This was not the first time Knight was threatened, nor was it the first time she refused to back down. Knight (with her pistol) had an undying commitment to God and healing, whether in the fields of India, the schools of Mississippi, or the sanitariums of the South.

Anna Knight is an inspiration to women in ministry. Although she is hailed as an educator, she was a minister and a preacher. Knight pastored and organized churches even though she was not recognized formally by the denomination for doing so. Anna Knight is a predecessor for women in ministry who now release healing to this new generation. She was the first African American woman to be hired by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Knight was a sought-after speaker in churches and universities across denominational lines and trained

pastors at union workers' meetings.²²

Anna Knight served in the Southeastern Union, which covered Florida, Georgia, North and South Carolina, and eastern Tennessee, as the associate Home Missionary secretary, Missionary Volunteer secretary, and educational secretary for the union. She was charged with "looking after the work in the colored churches and schools." Knight later served in the Southern Union, which covered Kentucky, western Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and western Florida. When the two unions combined, she was called to the same positions over the entire territory and was again tasked with looking after the work of the colored people.²³

What Anna Knight did for the colored work, a corresponding male was doing for the White work. She had a clergy pass for her travel, by which some could conclude that the transportation industry recognized her as clergy—although her own denomination did not. Knight was not ordained but carried a missionary's license.²⁴ This was because she was a woman. As Josephine Benton points out, "Any man carrying her responsibilities year after year would surely have been designated a minister and would have been ordained."²⁵

Knight was no stranger to sexism and racism in the Church. Though she did not often talk about it publicly, Knight lived with this bitter reality from childhood. She recalls, "I had thought Adventists were saints. When I found they were real human beings, it was an awful disappointment. But I believed the truth nevertheless."²⁶

Anna Knight worked in the Southern Union with Black churches and schools. When regional conferences (Black conferences organized by regions) were instituted in 1945, her office was eliminated. Knight was offered a job in both the South Atlantic and the South Central Conferences. Although she did serve in interim positions in both conferences as they were getting started, Knight decided that it was a good time to retire. She had worked tirelessly for the Lord and for the Church for decades and was already in her seventies.

Anna Knight placed her commitment to God first and foremost in her life. She also honored the commitment she made before Kellogg to help people instead of making money. While doing union work, Knight would make sure that she personally gave an annual physical exam to each Black student attending Adventist schools in the

Southern Union—an admirable feat and a much-needed one because many African Americans had no other health care. When Knight retired in 1946, she reported that she had attended 9,388 meetings, made 11,344 missionary visits, written 48,918 letters, and traveled 554,439 miles.²⁷ A building named after Knight stands on the Oakwood University campus in her honor—as a monument to her work as a missionary, an educator, and a nurse. Anna Knight was a healer.

Others, such as a young, Black Seventh-day Adventist woman named Irene Morgan, were looking for healing. She had recently suffered a miscarriage and had been visiting with her mother. Morgan was returning home on the Greyhound bus to Baltimore to see her doctor. She was seated in the last four rows of the bus, which were designated for Blacks. The bus was filling up, and the driver told the Blacks to go to the back. Thirty minutes into the ride, a White couple boarded, and the driver told Morgan and her seatmate to go to the back of the bus. She refused. A mother with an infant in her arms, seated next to Morgan, stood to go to the back. Morgan snatched her back to her seat. Infuriated, the bus driver drove straight to the jail in Saluda, Virginia. The driver got the sheriff, who threatened to arrest Morgan—to which she replied, "That's perfectly all right."²⁸ The sheriff produced a warrant for her arrest. Morgan took the "warrant," tore it up, and threw it out the window. She knew it was fraudulent because they didn't even know her name.

At this blatant disregard for his authority, the sheriff tried to physically remove Morgan from the bus. She kicked him in the genitals. In a *Washington Post* interview, she recalls: "He touched me. That's when I kicked him in a very bad place. He hobbled off, and another one came on. He was trying to put his hands on me to get me off. I was going to bite him, but he was dirty, so I clawed him instead. I ripped his shirt. We were both pulling at each other. He said he'd use his nightstick. I said, 'We'll whip each other.'"²⁹

Eventually, the two men were able to get Morgan off the bus and into the jail. She pled guilty to resisting arrest and paid the one-hundred-dollar fine but refused to plead guilty for violating the segregation law or pay the ten-dollar fine. The Constitution forbade segregation in interstate commerce. Virginia and other southern states

had long ignored the “commerce clause” and enforced racial segregation. Morgan’s case went all the way to the United States Supreme Court and was argued by NAACP lawyers Thurgood Marshall and William Hastie. She won the case, and her victory became the catalyst for the freedom rides of 1947. The freedom riders would be heard shouting, “Get on the bus, sit any place / ’Cause Irene Morgan won her case!”³⁰

Over a decade before Rosa Parks was thrown off the bus in 1955, Irene Morgan fought and won against segregation in interstate travel. In 2001, Morgan was awarded the Presidential Citizen’s Medal by Bill Clinton. In the president’s speech, he recognized her for her “quiet and brave fight for freedom.” She fought “with dignity and determination.”³¹ The citation for her medal read, “When Irene Morgan boarded a bus for Baltimore in the summer of 1944, she took the first step on a journey that would change America forever.”³² She was on her way to a doctor’s appointment, seeking healing. Little did she know that day, that she would be transformed into a healer.

When Lucille Byard, another Black Adventist woman from New York, needed healing, her story did not have such a happy ending. She had been ill, but as a loyal Seventh-day Adventist, she wanted to be treated in an Adventist facility, for she believed its care would be superior to the New York hospitals. She made prior arrangements and took a train from New York to Maryland and then a taxi to the Washington Sanitarium. Upon arrival, Mrs. Byard filled out her paperwork and was admitted. She and her husband were both mixed with Black and White parentage and were often mistaken for White.³³

When the hospital workers saw that her paperwork said she was Black, she was refused treatment. She was rolled out into a drafty corridor in the dead of winter. Her husband was told she needed to go across state lines to the Freedman’s Hospital at Howard University, where Blacks were treated. He begged for his wife to be treated at

Washington Sanitarium because she was deathly ill and might not live through the transfer to another hospital. His plea fell on deaf ears. He called Freedman’s Hospital and talked with J. Mark Cox, a Black Adventist physician interning there, who was also barred from Adventist institutions because of his race.³⁴ He said they had the space at Freedman’s and would be happy to help. The Byards traveled by taxi into the District of Columbia, but it was too late. By the time they made it to the hospital, Mrs. Byard had suffered too much. Despite valiant efforts to save her, she died shortly after her arrival.³⁵

The death of Lucille Byard became a turning point in the Adventist Church. Although she did not receive healing, her death launched a string of events that eventually led to the healing of many in the African American community. Namely, it was the catalyst for regional conferences that would tend to the needs of African Americans. Of course, this was not what African Americans wanted. They wanted an immediate end to segregation and institutionalized racism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Elder W. G. Turner, the North American Division president, came to pacify the members of the Black church in Washington, DC, shortly after Byard’s death. He preached the following Saturday morning from 1 Peter 4:12, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” Turner had scarcely sat down from



Artist Simmie Knox and Lisa Sweeney-Walker, great, great grandniece of Lucy Byard, unveil the portrait during the Dec. 10, 2021, recognition. Photo by Adventist HealthCare.

Looking at their track record of selfless service, I have become convinced that African American women will be great in the kingdom because, for centuries, they have been least of all.

preaching his sermon before a member rebutted: “Think it not strange? Yes, I think it very strange that there is an Adventist college [Washington Missionary College, now Washington Adventist University] nearby to which I cannot send my children. Yes, I think it is strange! A denominational cafeteria [Review and Herald] in which I cannot be served, and now—this incident. I think it mighty strange! I’m not prepared to hear you say, ‘Servants, obey your masters,’ meaning the General Conference is our master.”³⁶

African Americans were offended that denominational leaders would try to refer to racism and segregation as something they should accept. Blacks were outraged that policies of the Church would have them die rather than break racist protocols. They were upset their children could not be educated in the schools of their choice and that many of the policies of the Church communicated to African Americans that they were inferior. The Black constituency of the Seventh-day Adventist Church had had enough. Regional conferences were neither their desire nor plea, but it became clear that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was simply not willing to integrate, to treat all of its members with love, dignity, and respect as Christ had commanded. Thus, regional conferences became what W. L. Cheatham called the “next best plan.”³⁷

The birth of regional conferences, although not ideal, did much in the way of providing ministry to African Americans. In a 2008 demographic study by the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, the diversity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was attributed in part to “the success of the regional conferences. The Adventist presence in the Black population in the United States is two or three times greater than in other ethnic groups. It is not by accident that the most visible Seventh-day Adventists in American society are Blacks.”³⁸

Another benefit of regional conferences is that

they have provided leadership positions for Blacks in the Church. Because of these conferences, African Americans who normally would not be able to sit at the table now have a place. Heretofore, the sentiments of African Americans in the Seventh-day Adventist Church were encapsulated well in Langston Hughes’s poem, “I, Too, Sing America”:

I, Too, Sing America

I am the darker brother.

They send me to eat in the kitchen

When company comes,

But I laugh,

And eat well,

And grow strong.

Tomorrow,

I’ll be at the table

When company comes.

Nobody’ll dare

Say to me,

“Eat in the kitchen,”

Then.

Besides,

They’ll see how beautiful I am

And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.³⁹

As African American Seventh-day Adventist women, we wanted to see our darker brothers have a seat at the table. We worked tirelessly to make it happen. Although African American men are not where they would like to be in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, they are not where they would be in the Seventh-day Adventist Church if African American women did not support and fight for them.

Still, the fight for rights for African Americans in the

Seventh-day Adventist Church has been primarily for African American men. Seventy years after the inception of regional conferences, most of the representation and leadership has gone to African American men. No one decries the fact that Black women have been left in the kitchen. After all, many think that is her place.

Consequently, African American Seventh-day Adventist women have held a peculiar place in history. We have often found ourselves at the intersection of racism and sexism. Being African American and female is what Francis Beale calls a “double jeopardy.”⁴⁰ It is as if we live and serve in a denomination where “all the women are white and all the Blacks are men.”⁴¹ Although there are fights for the rights of women and the rights of African Americans, change and progress for the African American woman has been slow. It seems we have been excluded from both categories. We have seen firsthand what scholars call the “invisibility of black women.” This is not a superpower implying literal invisibility but, rather, the fact that Black women continue to go unnoticed and unheard.⁴²

When the story is told of the women’s struggle in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, there is little, if anything, said about the contributions of Black women in ministry. In the lists detailing significant women in Adventist history, the names of African American women are strangely absent. I have been to many conferences and meetings on women in ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and it was not until I was preparing this chapter that I learned of the ministerial contributions of Anna Knight, how her life was threatened because she was a Black woman preacher. She had to travel with her Bible and her pistol. When the story is told of the struggle of African Americans in this denomination, we often hear of E. E. Cleveland, who traveled around the globe winning thousands of souls for Christ, but little is said of Celia Cleveland, his wife, who won over three thousand souls for Christ herself.⁴³ Women like Dr. Lottie Blake, the first Black Adventist physician, seldom have their stories told. In 1904, she was the only Black female physician with a private practice in Birmingham. Dr. Eva B. Dykes, the first Black woman to complete a PhD degree, was also a phenomenal Seventh-day Adventist woman. Mary Stovall broke barriers for African American Adventist

women by being the first Black and the first female mayor of Hurtsboro, Alabama.

There are others whose stories have gone untold—thousands in the shadows and behind the scenes. From Edgefield Junction, Tennessee, where the first African American Seventh-day Adventist Church was organized in 1886, women who healed were there. Women such as Jennie Allison, who was one of the first Black women to join the Seventh-day Adventist Church back in 1883, and one of the charter members of the Edgefield Junction Church. There were teachers who taught little Black children when no one else would. Bible instructors like Ola Mae Harris and Ida Hanks have worked alongside evangelists for decades, winning souls for Christ. These were, indeed, healers.

Today, we are blessed with trailblazers. Dr. Hyveth Williams was the first Black female pastor and the first female senior pastor in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Dr. Rosa Banks has embodied a long list of firsts: the first female vice president of Oakwood College (now Oakwood University), the first female general field secretary for the North American Division and for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and the first female associate secretary for the General Conference. She, Dr. Williams, and others like them, are healers.

Nevertheless, as African American women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we are still in a precarious position—because of both our race and our gender. Our race sometimes puts us out of step with our denomination, and our gender puts us at odds with our race. And nobody decries the fact that we are neither in the dining room with company nor sitting at the table with our darker brother but, rather, serving in both arenas quietly as we always have.

I spoke at a North American Division Fall Council meeting, and afterward, someone came to me and said, “Thank you. Thank you for not being an angry Black woman.” Being angry is definitely a warranted option—but not one that many Black women have chosen, because we are healers. Maya Angelou said, “You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them.”⁴⁴ Harboring sickness, anger, resentment, and bitterness is debilitating and belittling, to say the least. These negative behaviors inhibit one’s ability to bring healing and exhibit one’s necessity to

receive healing. There is a healing power that flows from service. When one releases healing, it is returned, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. This is what African American Seventh-day Adventist women have done for well over a century. Looking at their track record of selfless service, I have become convinced that African American women will be great in the kingdom because, for centuries, they have been least of all. But until then:

We laugh,
 And eat well,
 And grow strong
 Tomorrow,
 We'll be at the table
 When company comes.
 Nobody'll dare
 Say to us,
 "Eat in the kitchen,"
 Then.
 Besides,
 They'll see how beautiful we are
 And be ashamed—
 We, too, are America.⁴⁵

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Review of *African American Seventh-day Adventist Healers in a Multicultural Nation*

BY SCOTT MONCRIEFF

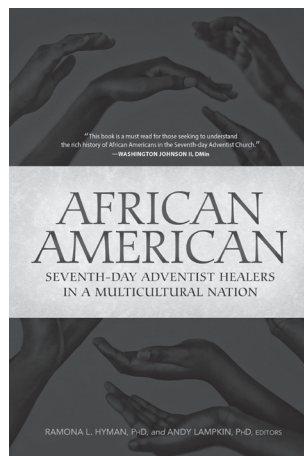
African American Seventh-day Adventist Healers in a Multicultural Nation,
edited by Ramona L. Hyman and Andy Lampkin, Pacific Press, 2021.

As we begin a new year, it seems like a good time to say a few words in praise of reading. I love to read books I can hold in my hands and put bookmarks in and underline, reading where I don't have to plug in or recharge or wade through advertisements. Yes, I read electronic books too, and any format of book is better than no book. Reading is a great activity for cultivating focus, at-one-ness—or at-two-ness, since you're in the intimate company of the author. I love C. S. Lewis's remark in *An Experiment in Criticism*: "the question 'What is the good of reading what anyone writes?' is very like the question 'What is the good of listening to what anyone says?' Unless you contain in yourself sources that can supply all the information, entertainment, advice, rebuke and merriment that you want, the answer is obvious." So, let's make 2022 a year in which we read more good books and extend our understanding of this world, the people in it, and even the world to

come.

African American Seventh-day Adventist Healers in a Multicultural Nation is a collection of essays and inspirational messages that looks at Black Adventist history and theology. While acknowledging a history of racist treatment of persons of color within the Adventist Church, the primary focus is on the positive impact of Black Adventists as "healers" within a fractured country. Although the book was published in December of 2021, its contents come out of papers and sermons originally

delivered at a conference in 2013. There is some recognition of the (ongoing) Trump era, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the disproportionate effect of COVID on Black communities in Carl McRoy's brief afterword, but the rest of the writing seems set prior to those important contexts on the understanding of race in America. The distinguished contributors include professors, pastors, administrators, evangelists, and a medical doctor, with many of the writers wearing several of



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these hats at different points in their careers.

In the forward to the book, Jon Paulien states, “To be a Seventh-day Adventist and not know the black Adventist story is to be incomplete” (10). You won’t know the story in depth after reading this just-under-200-page volume, but you will likely learn quite a bit, as I did, and have your appetite stimulated for more. According to co-editor Ramona Hyman, a professor of English at Oakwood University, “The purpose of this collection is to examine, highlight, and share the contributions and questions people of the African diaspora have gifted to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, America, and the world” (16).

With two “Forewords” plus an “Introduction,” an “Afterword” and a “Postscript,” it is abundantly framed. Within the framework are eight pieces, ranging from relatively short sermons to full-blown academic essays. Although there is material of interest in all the contributions, I will focus on three.

“Repairers of the Breach: The Social Role of Black Religion,” by co-editor Andy Lampkin, professor of religion and bioethics at AdventHealth University, recounts some highlights of the larger Black church’s development in the United States, as a background to other essays that focus more specifically on Black Adventism. Lampkin notes how “The nascent Black Church emerged at the intersection of spirituality and systemic oppression to attend to the spiritual and existential needs of black people. The Black church became an important place of worship, social empowerment, self-help, and racial uplift.” Although White ministers in the antebellum era used the Bible to preach “the virtues of meekness, docility, obeying one’s master, and doing good work,” says Lampkin, Black people found sustenance and encouragement in identification with the Hebrew slaves whom God freed from their Egyptian masters.

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out in a telling phrase, “Egypt was on both sides of the Red Sea,” referring to the Jim Crow segregation that replaced chattel slavery after the Emancipation Proclamation. Lampkin notes how the Black church was central to the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and how many civil rights leaders, from Martin Luther King Jr. to Rosa Parks, John Lewis, Ralph Abernathy, and Barbara Jordan were “all active members of the Black Church and were motivated by its values” (32).

Lampkin also has an interesting section on the influence of Black theology and womanist theology and emphasizes how keen awareness of earthly oppression has led to a Black religion which “has not, and cannot be, focused solely on issues of transcendence and otherworldliness to the neglect of the real-life experience of black people or of what is actually happening in black communities” (45).

Andrea Trusty King, DMin, a well-traveled speaker, pastor, and author, contributes “We, Too, Sing America,” with the title acknowledging a well-known Langston Hughes poem (“I, Too, Sing America”). King recounts brief histories of notable Black Adventist women, including Anna Knight (1874–1972), “the first female missionary to India and also the first Black female employee of the Seventh-day Adventist Church” (51–52); Irene Morgan (1917–2007), whose case helped pave the way for non-segregated seating on interstate buses; Lucille Byard (1877–1943), whose death sparked the creation of regional conferences; Mary Kate Stovall-Tapley (1921–); Dr. Lottie Blake (1876–1976); Dr. Eva B. Dykes (1893–1986); Dr. Rosa Taylor Banks (1942–), and other extremely interesting and accomplished persons. I found myself wanting to read full length biographies of each of these persons and was pleased to find additional articles about a number of them online.

A third of the entire book is taken up by Leslie

N. Pollard's sixty-three-page treatise, "Conference Mission, Structure, and Function," which discusses the sometimes-controversial continued existence of Seventh-day Adventist regional conferences. For those new to the subject, these are conferences that were established in the 1940's with the primary purpose of ministering to Black Americans, with Black leadership. Over the last twenty or thirty years, I have heard and read a number of discussions about whether regional conferences are continuing to effectively serve the Church or whether they serve only as an embarrassing reminder of Adventist Apartheid. Previous discussions of the issue appearing in *Spectrum* online include contributions by Henry Felder (2010), Clifford Owusu-Gyamfi (2015), Meade Adams (2017), Donald L. Bedney II (2017), Kim Allan Johnson (2019), Ed McField (2020).

The issue is complicated, and any well-meaning White (or Black) person jumping on the bandwagon to disband the conferences would be well-served by giving careful ear to what numerous, thoughtful, Black church leaders have to say about the matter. You might as well start with Leslie N. Pollard's essay in the present volume, a carefully and thoughtfully worked out analysis of the issue that comes squarely down in favor of maintaining regional conferences.

Pollard, the president of Oakwood University and previously vice president for diversity at Loma Linda University, with pastoral experience, a DMin from Claremont School of Theology, and a PhD in New Testament from Andrews University, is particularly well-positioned to write on this topic. Some high points of his argument include a helpful glossary of terms such as "desegregation," "integration," "segregation," "diversity," "unity," and "mission particularity." I found his use of "affinity grouping" especially helpful: "The practice of voluntarily affiliating around shared national, cultural, racial, linguistic, or gender commonalities," which he uses to describe Black churches, as well as Korean-, Chinese-, Filipino-, or Latino-oriented ministries, men's or women's groups, and so on. With the language and "racial" groupings, he makes the point that these are voluntary associations and that people not originally from that grouping are welcome to participate and join the fellowship, unlike in the segregated White churches of the past.

Pollard examines the Old and New Testaments to see what prescriptions or suggestions there are for church structure and whether those should apply to the contemporary church or not. He extracts principles, including that structures vary across time and structure "expands, contracts, and/or adapts based on the scope and focus of the mission," and that "mission should be the primary shaper of structural form." As Pollard sees it, "the Regional conference structure appears to be a highly effective method of deploying human, financial, technological, and physical resources in maximizing the Adventist effort to reach the African American people group in the NAD with the SDA message." Pollard makes extensive use of the term "mission particularity" to identify an evangelistic goal of working for a primary group, while welcoming one and all.

Pollard acknowledges the racist background of the origin of regional conferences, and "The regretful history of the Adventist Church's treatment of blacks between 1890 and 1965." However, he argues that "history does not have to be perfect to be purposeful," and makes a connection between regional conferences and the history of Joseph in Egypt, where Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, but God worked this in the end to both Joseph's and his brothers' advantage. Similarly, says Pollard, regional conferences, though born in a racist environment, grew up to serve the Black community very well and should be continued as long as they are fulfilling a valuable service.

I am thankful for this book, and for all the recent work by other Adventist scholars, such as Benjamin Baker, who are bringing to light forgotten but important parts of Adventist history and identity. This would be an excellent book to add to your new year's reading list.



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