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ABOUT THE COVER ART

Cliff Rusch, Branson, 2022

ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST

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ABOUT SPECTRUM

Spectrum is a journal established in 1969 to encourage Seventh-day Adventist participation in the discussion of contemporary issues from a Christian viewpoint, to look without prejudice at all sides of a subject, to evaluate the merits of diverse views, and to foster intellectual and cultu growth. Although effort is made to ensure accura scholarship and critical judgment, the statements of fact are the responsibility of contributors, and the views individual authors express are not necessarily those of the editorial staff as a whole as individuals.

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MOVEMENT

VIBRATIONS

Throughout this year, I have planned for each issue of the journal to draw inspiration from the previous editors' first issues.

onsidering the stir" opens the editorial in the July 1978 issue of *Spectrum*—the first that Roy Branson solely edited. He goes on to introduce the journal's response to a major book of that time, *The Shaking of Adventism*, by Geoffrey Paxton. Some of those aftershocks continue in another tome creating a stir today, historian Gil Valentine's *Ostriches and Canaries: Coping with Change in Adventism*, 1966-1979. An excerpt from the book detailing the founding of the Association of Adventist Forums and *Spectrum* appears in this issue. In the first of two reviews of the book, Eric Anderson offers a contrarian jiggle to the usage of "fundamentalist" and asks a provocative question: in what ways were the anti-intellectuals right? In his review of Valentine's book, Scott Moncrieff reflects on the battles that administrators picked—from beards to beliefs—and asks the question: who gets to define Adventism?

Turning to Scripture, Matthew Korpman searches it—canonical and apocryphal—while exploring the paradox of breaking the Sabbath in order to keep it relevant for Adventist mission. For those craving more Adventist vibrations, Warren Trenchard draws on Fred Veltman's Full Report of the Life of Christ Research Project and takes a very deep dive into portions of Ellen G. White's Spiritual Gifts and The Desire of Ages. Finding echoes of her work elsewhere, he thoughtfully calls it biblical fiction.

Shaking can be a good thing, too. It releases tension and prevents breaking. A man whose career—authorial and administrative—embodies gentle agitation, Reinder Bruinsma writes about his life and books. In honor of his 80th birthday, a dozen friends in our community

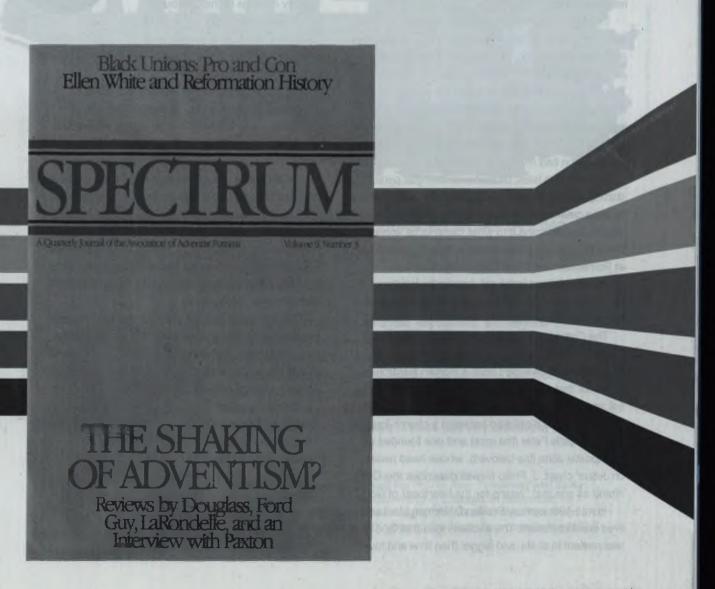
Alexander Carpenter is executive editor of Spectrum.

have contributed brief reflections on their relationship with Reinder and the concept of thoughtful leadership. Former General Conference President Jan Paulsen writes:

Do we always see eye-to-eye or agree in our analysis of the life, mission, and values of our Church? Of course not. "Of course not" because the conversation is with Reinder! These conversations have taught me the importance of talking, honestly and earnestly-especially with those with whom you do not agree. Genuine conversation does not require an agreement point of arrival. But it does require a shared care, or it becomes guite pointless.

Like many, I first met Roy Branson on the campus of Andrews University. I was an undergrad attending a weekend ethics symposium. As Roy took the stage, the apologetically inclined professor sitting next to me leaned over and warned, "He's a maverick." I liked Roy immediately. But not because he represented difference. Instead, Roy took what we shared - Adventism - and offered a hopeful vision for its application beyond our borders. In this case, Roy extended a classic anti-tobacco personal belief into a campaign for legislation to keep kids from becoming addicted through corporate manipulation. Thanks to him I continue to ask myself: what changes for me when I view the body politic also as the temple of the Holy Spirit?

One person's earthquake is another's energetic expansion. As this movement continues, Roy's holy public spiritedness stirs among us today.



Creative issent

In any endeavor, the existence of a variety of thought yields tension.

tarting in ancient Hebrew Scriptures, we find no perfectly moral people. We read of a back-and-forth dialogue of assertions and dissents. A big part of those ancient stories reflects the Jewish people's choice to feature harsh, big-headed kings and censorious prophets. The stories do not serve to remind the Jewish people of their greatness; instead we hear of their group's limitations and of God's faithfulness. These writings break ground for self-assessment within a religious group.

The New Testament continues the trajectory. The early Christians could not claim the triumphant victory of having all things figured out. For starters, consider Jesus' critique of the religious context of His time. Then, Paul's pointed words called the early Christians to cohesive discipleship despite a plethora of local leadership strategists. We see a multiplicity of ways to join *The Way*. Paul met with Roman leaders. Dorcas sewed. John had mystical experiences.

In the British Isles, dissent and dialogue persisted, starting with St. Patrick's evangelism in Ireland, where he led a creative encounter with pre-Christian Druidic religion, transforming it to what came to be known as Celtic Christianity. Later, during a time of dissension as Romanism met Celtic Christianity, Cuthbert of Lindisfarne lived in the struggle as he led the Northumberland Church at the border of what is now England and Scotland.

The Celtic habits of searching for the good in all nature and appreciating the presence of God in all situations were divergent from a Roman hierarchical endeavor that prioritized categorization of good and evil and demarcation of sacred and profane. This can be described as a collision between a church founded on the Apostle Peter (the rock) and one founded on the Apostle John (the beloved), whose head rested on Jesus' chest. J. Philip Newell describes this Celtic strand as one that "listens for the heartbeat of God." 1

In mid-19th-century Scotland, Norman MacLeod lived creative dissent. The wholistic idea that God was present in all life, and bigger than time and four

Carmen Lau is board chair of Adventist Forum.

church walls, provided a basis
for MacLeod's objection to a
legalistic Sabbatarianism that
included such things as mandatory
Sunday closings of the Edinburgh
Botanical Gardens. For some Scottish
Christians, all life was sacred, and
draconian government interventions seemed counter to
the heart of Christianity.

A Christianity without questions is one that is disembodied from the way of Jesus. The team at *Spectrum* seeks to spring out of settled, established stagnation. Could the meaning of worship on a seventh-day Sabbath be transformed to be more than merely a matter of correct timing? What if worship on the seventh day was brought into a present truth that recalibrated back to the Hebrew meaning of Sabbath as shalom? What if the Church considered Amy Sherman's new book, *Agents of Flourishing*, to help unfold meanings of Sabbath/shalom relevance that would provide heft to the notion that Sabbath keeping is relevant and more than a badge of morality?²

Dissent makes way for positive change. A heretic may simply be one who speaks truth earlier than the dominant group. Self-criticism in a religious group is rare but powerful, especially now when many display veneers of shiny pseudo-perfection.

Here's my prayer: God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change and the courage to offer creative dissent for things that we can. Remove our obtuse certitude. Keep us humble.

Endnotes

- J. Philip Newell, Listening for the Heartbeat of God: A Celtic Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1997).
- Amy Sherman, Agents of Flourishing: Pursuing Shalom in Every Corner of Society (Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2022).

THE BIBLICAL FICTION



Among the hundreds of published works by Ellen White, 1 her writings on parts of the Bible are probably the best known and the most beloved by those devoted to her work.

> Although she often wrote biblical narratives, expositions, and religious materials in periodical articles and special-purpose manuscripts, she is most recognized in this regard for her books that explore large swaths of the Old and New Testaments. She published such books throughout her long career, starting with Spiritual Gifts, vol. 12 in 1858 and concluding with Prophets and Kings,3 posthumously4 published in 1917.5 The earliest of these was very selective in

Warren C. Trenchard received his PhD in New Testament and Early Christian Literature from the University of Chicago. In retirement, he continues to serve La Sierra University as Professor of New Testament and Early Christian Literature and Director of Graduate Programs for the H.M.S. Richards Divinity School.

its biblical topics; the subsequent volumes became increasingly more comprehensive.

Despite White's cautionary warnings,⁶ many who read these works consider them to be divinely inspired commentaries on the biblical texts and materials they explore and take her interpretations and applications to be authoritative. Although it contains a similar disclaimer, Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief 18, "Gift of Prophecy," seems to provide support for this common assessment of White's biblical interpretations:

The Scriptures testify that one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is prophecy. This gift is an identifying mark of the remnant church and we believe it was manifested in the ministry of Ellen G. White. Her writings speak with prophetic authority and provide comfort, guidance, instruction, and correction to the church. They also make clear that the Bible is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested.⁷

Notwithstanding common Adventist practices or official credal statements, how should we assess White's writings on biblical materials? Let us first examine the self-understanding of those who worked on these writings or, at least, one of the most cherished of them, *The Desire of Ages (DA)*.8

While working on *DA*, White's literary assistants discussed the plan and challenges of the project, including this from Marion Davis:

Whatever plan we follow, there is much work to be done if the book [Desire of Ages] is finished at all as it should be. Considering that the very cream has been taken from a large part of the old book [The Spirit of Prophecy], and has been put into everybody's hands, it seems a pity that this new work should have nothing fresh for many of its most important chapters. It seems a pity too, that the most important part of the book should be the part to be hurried and slighted. Again, the chapters as they stand in the old book need a thorough revision and rearrangement for the new. You know what criticisms this will excite. If we can add fresh matter it will help the case. I do not write these things to complain of difficulties, but because I think, so far as possible, we should understand the situation just as it is.9

This recommenced model prevailed in the final assembling and publication of *DA*, as acknowledged in the Preface by the "Publishers":

In the following pages the author, a woman of large and deep and long experience in the things of God, has set forth new beauties from the life of Jesus. She has brought many new gems from the precious casket. She opens before the reader undreamed-of riches from this infinite treasure house. New and glorious light flashes forth from many a familiar passage, the depth of which the reader supposed he had long before fathomed.¹⁰

This begs the question: what do these recommendations and post-publication descriptions mean? No doubt, both refer only to the addition of "fresh" and "new" ideas, insights, and observations not found in the immediately preceding volumes in White's "life of Christ" published material, i.e., *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vols. 2-3. (The 4-volume set covered the Gospels in all of vol. 2 and part of vol. 3, the first 18 of 36 chapters.) To determine if the author and her editors achieved this objective and for other reasons that will emerge below, I have randomly selected one of the chapters of *DA* that Fred Veltman analyzed in his massive study of literary dependency in White's writings on the life of Christ: 11 chapter 46, "He Was Transfigured."

This chapter exhibits evidence of "fresh" and "new" material compared to the comparable material in *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 2 (*2SP*). ¹² DA's chapter with 1,846 words is 10.87 percent longer than the 1,665-word Transfiguration material in *2SP*. More importantly, *DA*, ch. 46 includes some specific "fresh" and "new" material not found in *2SP*. Although many of these additions are relatively unimportant, ¹³ I consider some to be significant, including:

- · An allusion to Enoch is included in material about Elijah.
- The understanding of Michael as Christ is evident in the story of Moses' resurrection.
- The disciples longed to stay in the glorious presence of the special visitors, leading Peter to propose setting up the three tents.
- Jesus' divinity flashed though his humanity.
- · Moses and Elijah are called heavenly beings.
- Jesus is said to be clothed with heaven's light as he will be in the Parousia.
- · Only the three disciples who were later afforded the

most intimate roles in Gethsemane were permitted to participate in the Transfiguration.

- Through the Transfiguration, Jesus was seeking to gain a fresh hold on his omnipotence.
- Included are long expansions and exhortations on the disciples' ignorance and the ancient roles of Moses and Elijah.
- In addition, some changes in DA, ch. 46 involve removing things found in 2SP.14

The recommendations and comments by those involved in the production of DA and the evidence of their impact on the final product may lead one to think that this additive approach was unique to that book in the trajectory of White's writing on "the life of Christ." Nothing could be further from the truth. The first volume in this development, Spiritual Gifts, vol. 1 (1SG), has a chapter titled "The Transfiguration." Veltman rightly determined that only 11 of its 51 sentences¹⁵ directly concern the related biblical narrative in the Synoptic Gospels. The other 40 sentences consist of background information

about the prior experiences of Moses and Elijah.

As we noted, the Transfiguration material in 2SP consists of 1.665 words. The comparable material in 1SG is 957 words. However, the word count of the Transfiguration material in 2SP is not only 73.98 percent longer than that of 1SG, but the later volume also has an enormous amount of material not found in the earlier book. Therefore, the plan for DA to include "fresh" and "new" material was not new. Even if it was not stated as such, the result was the same with 2SP vs. 1SG. In fact, this expansion was far more extensive and significant than that of DA vs. 2SP. However, this claim has much more to do with other data, as we shall see.

Thus far, we have examined the size of the narrative coverage among the three books in White's trajectory of the life of Christ, through the evidence of her writing on the Synoptic Gospels' story of the Transfiguration. We found that there was a massive expansion between 1SG and 2SP and a modest expansion between 2SP and DA. However, to really understand the nature of White's writing on the life of Christ we must explore the

Mark 9:2-8

²And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. ³And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. 4And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. 5And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias, ⁶For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. 7And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. 8And suddenly. when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves.

Matthew 17:1-8

¹And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, ²And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. 3And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. 4Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 5While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. ⁶And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. 7And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. ⁸And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.

Luke 9:28-36

28 And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. ²⁹And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering. 30And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and . Elias: 31Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. 32But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. 33And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. 34While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. 35And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. 36And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

relationship of her writing in the three books to the biblical narratives in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.16 To facilitate this, I first provide these three Synoptic accounts according to the King James Version (KJV),17 with Mark's account listed first.18 [See previous page.]

Here is Mark's account—the earliest version of the story-according to the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), a modern translation, with my notes on the differences in Matthew and Luke:19

Six days later,20 Jesus took with him Peter and James and John,21 and led them up a high mountain²² apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them,23 and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them.24 And25 there appeared to them²⁶ Elijah with Moses,²⁷ who were talking with Jesus.28 Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi,29 it is good for us to be here;30 let us31 make three dwellings,32 one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He did not know what to say,33 for they were terrified. Then a cloud³⁴ overshadowed them,³⁵

and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved;36 listen to him!"37 Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.38

Most of the variations in Matthew and Luke are minor and not significant to the meaning of the narrative. However, several are noteworthy. Some of Luke's edits are especially important as reflections of his understanding of the event:

- Jesus' reason for the mountain hike was to pray.
- Moses and Elijah spoke to Jesus about the latter's forthcoming experience in Jerusalem.

Others are interesting but less important:

- The disciples were sleepy but stayed awake and saw the two visitors.
- As the visitors were leaving, Peter suggested building the dwellings.
- The disciples told no one about this at the time.

Some of Matthew's edits are also significant, especially concerning his assessment of Peter's importance:39



Pietro Perugino, Transfiguration of Christ, 1496-1500. Wood engraving after a fresco, in Collegio del Cambio, Perugia, Italy.

- Peter declared that he would build the dwellings.40
- Matthew leaves out the reference to Peter not knowing what to say.

Also note these additions that seem to feature Jesus' kind concern for the disciples:41

- After hearing the voice from the cloud, the disciples fell to the ground from fear.
- Jesus touched the prostrate disciples and told them to get up and to not be afraid.

Let us examine the integrity of White's three portrayals and discussions of the Transfiguration narrative in the Synoptic Gospels. The first, 1SG, as we noted above, devotes only 11 sentences (237 words) to this specific narrative. This is so brief that we can include it here in its entirety:

I saw that the faith of the disciples was greatly strengthened at the transfiguration. God chose to give the followers of Jesus strong proof that he was the promised Messiah, that in their bitter sorrow and disappointment they should

not entirely cast away their confidence. At the transfiguration the Lord sent Moses and Elias to talk with Jesus concerning his sufferings and death. Instead of choosing angels to converse with his Son, God chose those who had an experience in the trials of earth. A few of his followers were permitted to be with him and behold his face lighted up with divine glory, and witness his raiment white and glistening, and hear the voice of God, in fearful majesty, saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him.42

At the transfiguration this promise was fulfilled. The fashion of Jesus' countenance was changed, and shone like the sun. His raiment was white and glistening. Moses was present, and represented those who will be raised from the dead at the second appearing of Jesus. And Elias, who was translated without seeing death, represented those who will be changed to immortality at Christ's second coming, and without seeing death will be translated to heaven. The disciples beheld with fear and astonishment the excellent majesty of Jesus, and the cloud that overshadowed them, and heard the voice of God in terrible majesty; saying, This is my beloved Son, hear him.

Despite the brevity of White's initial account of the Transfiguration, there are already abundant examples in 1SG of her departure from the biblical account, loosely understood as material found in Matthew, Mark, or Luke. These extrabiblical additions include:

- The disciples' faith was strengthened at the Transfiguration.
- God gave proof of Jesus as the Messiah.
- The Lord sent Moses and Elijah.
- God chose those with trial experiences.
- God's promise was fulfilled at the Transfiguration.
- Moses represented the raised dead at the Parousia.
- Elijah represented the translated ones at the Parousia.

All of this occurs in 11 sentences! Furthermore, her 40 sentences on Moses and Elijah also constitute a major addition to the Transfiguration narrative.

White's practice of augmenting the biblical account(s) of the Transfiguration exhibited in 1SG is dwarfed by her widespread, wholesale expansion of narrative details in 2SP's corresponding material. Word count alone shows this: 1,665 words (2SP) vs. 957 (1SG).43

Of course, I will not reproduce this extensive 2SP material here. Instead, I provide a list of the extrabiblical details added to the account of the Transfiguration in 2SP:

- · The event occurred as the sun was setting, fading on the mountain tops.
- Jesus and the disciples left a noisy town, went across the fields, and traveled up the steep side of the mountain.
- Jesus sought the high elevation to get away from the crowds.
- He went not only to pray but also to meditate.
- He and the disciples were tired.
- The disciples wondered what was happening but asked no questions.
- The event occurred in the darkness of night.
- Jesus spent hours in prayer with tears.
- He prayed for grace on his disciples.
- The dew of heaven was on his bowed form.
- The night shadows were around him.
- At first the disciples also prayed.
- Jesus had warned them of his future sufferings.
- He prayed that the disciples would see his divinity.
- God heard his prayer.
- The golden gates of the City of God were thrown open.
- Jesus displayed God-like majesty.
- His garments were coarse and soiled.
- The disciples believed that Elijah's presence signaled the nearness of Jesus' earthly kingdom.
- Peter had forgotten Jesus' frequent explanations of the plan of salvation.
- The cloud was brighter than the one that led Israel.
- The voice from the cloud caused the mountain to tremble.

This list represents the state of Ellen White's trajectory in writing on the life of Christ in general and specifically on the Transfiguration story. As we noted above, she and her editors were contemplating the final stage in the trajectory-The Desire of Ages-with a plan to add "fresh" and "new" ideas, insights, and observations not found in 2SP.

We have already reviewed examples of such material in DA compared to 2SP. We must now examine the extrabiblical material in DA, ch. 46, "He Was Transfigured," that was not in the massive amount of such material already in 2SP. In other words, what "fresh" and "new" extrabiblical material does this chapter include?

As this chapter is also too large to reproduce, here is a list of the unique, extrabiblical details in the *DA* Transfiguration chapter that I have selected from the larger list of additions provided above:

- The disciples longed to stay in the glorious presence of the special visitors, leading Peter to propose setting up the three tents.
- · Jesus' divinity flashed though his humanity.
- · Moses and Elijah are called heavenly beings.
- Jesus is said to be clothed with heaven's light as he will be in the Parousia.
- Only the three disciples who were later afforded the most intimate roles in Gethsemane were permitted to participate in the Transfiguration.
- Through the Transfiguration, Jesus was seeking to gain a fresh hold on his omnipotence.

This shows that, while *DA* continued to add extrabiblical details to White's narration of the Transfiguration story, it did so far more limitedly than did *2SP*. However, her whole trajectory of writing on this story exhibits a massive amount of expansionary details added to the biblical account(s).

What was Ellen White's authority for doing this? The simple answer is that she never addressed this question. However, we may observe a few things from the material itself. In 1SG she used the expression "I saw" three times in the chapter on the Transfigurationonce in the 11 sentences on the event itself and twice when ruminating on the earlier experiences of Moses and Elijah. She seems, thereby, to imply that she "saw" these things in vision. The one use of "I saw" in the specific Transfiguration material is in the first sentence of the chapter: "I saw that the faith of the disciples was greatly strengthened at the transfiguration." Although this is the first sentence and may be argued to reference the whole chapter, it more likely seems limited to the immediate observation that follows; she claims that she simply "saw" something about the disciple's faith being strengthened through this event. The fact that she used the expression "I saw" twice when discussing Moses and Elijah suggests that her use of the expression in this context must be read in close connection to what immediately follows and not as a comprehensive remark relating to the whole paragraph, section, or chapter.44

More significantly, we learn from Veltman's monumental study of White's writing on the life of Christ that she extensively incorporated extrabiblical, narrative, and devotional material from contemporary "lives of Christ" commentaries, and other works available to her.

Although Veltman focused on a selection of chapters in *DA*, he extended his investigation to include her internal source materials—her earlier books and other writings on the life of Christ. He often found that her literary dependence was more extensive in these earlier, internal sources than in *DA*.

Fortunately, we do not have to speculate about this for chapter 46 because this was one of the chapters that Veltman analyzed. Just as the above findings show, he concluded, "The question of expansion is more aptly applied to the enlarged <u>SP</u> text over the former <u>SG</u> text, than to the <u>DA</u> text." Veltman found that 38 of the 88 sentences (42.7 percent) in this <u>DA</u> chapter exhibited "some degree of literary dependency." Most of this dependence was already evident in the corresponding chapter in <u>2SP</u>. In Veltman's words, "Since the content of the <u>DA</u> text is for the most part a revision of the <u>SP</u> account it is not surprising to find the same sources being used in generally the same way. The earlier text is often found to be either equal to or more dependent than the later <u>DA</u> text."

Veltman found that 48 of the 88 sentences (53.94 percent) in this DA chapter were "independent," 48 (did not exhibit literary dependency). I examined these 48 sentences and concluded that 24 of them (50 percent) included additions to the biblical narrative. I also looked at Veltman's 38 "dependent" sentences and found that 26 of these (68.4 percent) showed evidence of additions to the biblical narrative. When combined, these 50 independent and dependent sentences that include additions to the narrative amount to 56.82 percent of the 88 sentences in the chapter. Of course, as we have seen, many of Veltman's dependent sentences reflect the dependence already established in 2SP. Nevertheless, these findings demonstrate that White was engaged in a massive inflation of extrabiblical, narrative details in her multi-decade, published discussion of the Synoptic Gospels' story of the Transfiguration.

In addition to the above 50 narrative expansions, in this chapter White also adds background details outside the narrative in five dependent and 18 independent sentences, as well as devotional or homiletical details outside the narrative in five dependent and six independent sentences. Together with the 50 sentences of narrative additions, the total number of sentences that involve all types of expansions to the biblical narrative of the Transfiguration amounts to 84 of the 88 sentences in this *DA* chapter. However, Veltman identified the Bible as the source of three dependent sentences in this chapter.

I found that one of these provided added background material. In sum, I found that of the 88 sentences in this chapter, 82 (93.18 percent) exhibit some type of expansion of the biblical text-narrative additions, background items, or devotional material.

After reviewing and analyzing the evidence concerning DA, the best-known example of Ellen White's biblical writings, how should we understand the classification and literary genre of these writings?

Especially regarding DA and her other writings on Jesus, we should locate her writings within the context of the 19th century. That century saw an explosion of writing about Jesus, especially in Europe. Many of the resultant books were attempts to understand Jesus as a figure in history. Looking back on this monumental output, Albert Schweitzer⁴⁹ not only critically examined the scholarly endeavors but also effectively wrote the books' obituaries as failed efforts that were overly influenced by their authors' various theological, social, and political perspectives.50 These scholarly works, classified as "lives of Jesus," including Schwietzer's own take on the subject, have been characterized ever since as the "first quest for the historical Jesus."

Mark Allan Powell identifies three defining characteristics of these 19th-century "lives of Jesus":51

- 1. They impose a grand scheme that dictates the theme of the work and through which the Gospels are interpreted.
- 2. They exclude parts of the Gospel accounts that do not fit the scheme.
- 3. They add new material not found in any of the Gospels to fill gaps in the story.

Veltman provided no evidence that in writing on the life and teachings of Jesus, Ellen White read or used any of the scholarly publications that Schweitzer reviewed. Although DA focused on Jesus in the context of the Gospels, it certainly did not do so as critical, historical scholarship, It was not part of the "first quest of the historical Jesus" and was never listed or reviewed as such by scholars like Schweitzer or Powell. DA was not "a life of Jesus."

However, besides these scholarly publications, many other books that appeared during the 19th century were more general and devotional surveys on Jesus' life and teachings. The most systematically biblical of these were the so-called "lives of Christ" that purported to tell the story of Jesus as found in the narratives and teaching units of the Gospels. Others were

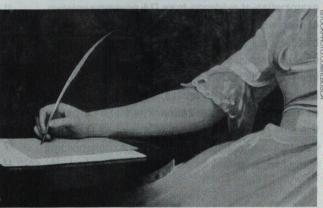
collections of sermons and devotional materials on aspects of Jesus' life and teachings.

Although Powell's criteria for "lives of Jesus" refer to the scholarly writings associated with the 19th-century "quest for the historical Jesus," they can reasonably be extended to define the many general and devotional "lives of Christ" that White read and incorporated in her own writings. So, by this definition, is DA a typical, 19thcentury "life of Christ"?

- 1. DA is the culmination of White's writing on the life and teachings of Jesus from the perspective of the so-called "Great Controversy" theme-clearly a defining, grand scheme.52
- 2. DA excludes material that does not fit the scheme, e.g., Matthew 9:18-26 (especially the content of verse 18 and the absence of corresponding material found in Mark 8:35-36 and Luke 8:49-50); Luke 22:35-38.
- 3. DA adds material to fill gaps in the stories, as seen in the above example of the Transfiguration story.

The publishers of DA clearly identified it with the "lives of Christ," writing: "There is many a 'Life of Christ' written, excellent books, large funds of information, elaborate essays on chronology and contemporaneous history, customs, and events, with much of the teaching and many glimpses of the many-sided life of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet it may be truly said, 'the half has never been told."53 Their implication is that DA fills the void.

Accordingly, Ellen White was the author of what can reasonably be classified as a 19th-century "life of Christ." In fact, she clearly valued and used many of the "lives of Christ" written by her contemporaries, incorporating vast amounts of their extrabiblical details, observations, and devotional ideas in her own "Christ" books. Veltman's important research demonstrated that her frequent literary dependence was limited to the authors of "lives of Christ"54 and collections of



Ellen White was the author of what can reasonably be classified as a 19th-century "life of Christ."

sermons and devotional materials.⁵⁵ These volumes not only contemplated the spiritual meanings of the narratives and teaching units in the Gospels but also regularly augmented and inflated the biblical narratives. White not only incorporated in her own writings many examples of this type of literary inflation from the contemporary "lives of Christ," but also added her own devotional material and narrative extensions.

One article on *DA* notes that it is part of a five-volume collection of White's books known as the "Conflict of the Ages," a series which the article describes as "a devotional commentary spanning Bible history from Genesis to the second coming of Christ." That this series, which includes *DA*, is "devotional" is without question. That it is a "commentary"—not so much. One would not expect a genuine commentary to harmonistically pick and choose the biblical texts on which to comment; to ignore contexts, linguistics, OT settings of NT quotes, author tendencies, original languages, etc.; to leave out problematic or challenging material; or to regularly add details to the narratives. *DA* does all of this. It is devotional literature but not a commentary.

What, then, is the literary genre of Ellen White's writings on the Bible? First, let me say what it is not. It is not scholarship, exegesis, or the product of or a contribution to biblical studies. Rather, from my examination of evidence from *DA* as representative of such writing, I conclude that it is biblical fiction—biblical, because it is based on underlying, although often-harmonized, biblical texts; fiction, because it freely amends, deletes, enhances, rearranges, and applies the biblical narratives. This should not be seen as a negative characterization. The usual purpose of this type of writing is to motivate spirituality, stimulate devotion, and enhance the religious experience and faith of readers.

Endnotes

- One bibliography of her works includes more than 600 titles. Marilyn Crane, "EGW Bibliography," Loma Linda University: University Libraries, https://library.llu.edu/heritage-research-center/egw-estate-branch-office/egw-bibliography. According to Arthur Patrick, White wrote about 26 books, 200 tracts, and 5,000 articles. Patrick, "Author," in Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet, eds. Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 91. The most definitive book list contains about 155 titles. "EGW Writings book list," Ellen G. White Estate, https://whiteestate.org/books/booklist/. Cf. "List of Ellen G. White Writings," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Ellen_G._White_writings.
- 2. The title of the original, individual volume was *The Great Controversy Between Christ and His Angels and Satan and His Angels*.
- Story of Prophets and Kings As Illustrated in the Captivity and Restoration of Israel. Originally published as The Captivity and Restoration of Israel.
- 4. The manuscript was unfinished at the time of her death, July 16, 1915.
- The main collections of books on biblical materials were The Spirit of Prophecy, 3 or 4 vols. (1874-1878) and the so-called "Conflict of the Ages" series, 4 of 5 vols. (1888-1917).
- 6. E.g., Early Writings, 78; Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, 663-665.
- "Official Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church," Seventh-day Adventist Church, https://www.adventist.org/beliefs/.
- Published in 1898, DA expanded parts of The Spirit of Prophecy, vols. 2-3 (1877-1878), which itself enlarged sections of Spiritual Gifts, vol. 1 (1858).
- 9. Marian Davis letter to W. C. White, August 9,1897, quoted by Fred Veltman, Full Report of the Life of Christ Research Project (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: Life of Christ Research Project Review Committee, November 1988). 431. The bracketed, underlined clarifications are in Veltman's quotations. He does not indicate whether they are in the original. On the same page, Veltman provided his own summary of the situation: "It is clear from this comment of Marian Davis and from the general introduction to this investigation that the objectives in producing this new life of Christ included both the necessities of including the old material and adding 'fresh matter.' The writers also recognized the need for a 'rearrangement' of the chapters."
- DA, 17. For a description of the DA project and the role of Marian Davis in it. see Patrick. 94-96.
- For summaries of Veltman's work, see Patrick, 106 and Gary Land, "Biographies," in *Ellen Harmon White: American Prophet*, eds. Terrie Dopp Aamodt, Gary Land, and Ronald L. Numbers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 332-333.
- Ch. 28, "The Transfiguration," in 2SP contains a significant amount of material before and after the biblical narrative of the Transfiguration. In DA, this additional material is covered in separate chapters.
- 13. E.g., Jesus described as the "Man of Sorrows"; reference to the "rugged path" and "lonely mountainside"; the Savior seeing the gloom of his disciples; the introduction of more modern spelling and the capitalization of divine pronouns; the change of SP's historical present verbs to past
- 14. E.g., God the Father had chosen Moses and Elijah; the disciples did not hear Jesus' conversation with Moses and Elijah; the reference to Jesus' coarse, soiled garments; mention of Jesus' interest in meditation in addition to prayer; Jesus' not being clothed with divine radiance at

- the end; some "Moses" material; minor deletions like descriptions of the mountain, trail, and cloud,
- 15. Veltman, Life of Christ Project, 406. These were the first five and the last six sentences of the chapter. As for the word count of these materials, only 237 of the 957 total words in this chapter deal directly with the
- 16. White and her editors were aware of the biblical material that lay behind DA, ch. 46. Following the title, "He Was Transfigured," the reader is informed, "This chapter is based on Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36 "
- 17. White used the KJV in her material on the Transfiguration.
- 18. Most scholars of the Gospels now understand this unit to be an example of the Triple Tradition, i.e., common material in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, where Mark is thought to be the earliest account and used as the main source for the other two.
- 19. The symbols below mean the following: " is a substitution; "+" is an addition: " is a deletion.
- 20. Luke: about eight days after these sayings.
- 21. Luke: Peter and John and James.
- 22. Luke + to pray.
- 23. Matt + and his face shone like the sun; Luke: and while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed.
- 24. Matt/Luke such as no one on earth could bleach them.
- 25. Matt/Luke + suddenly.
- 26. Luke: they saw two men.
- 27. Matt/Luke: Moses and Elijah.
- 28. Luke: They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him.
- 29. Matt: κύριε "lord"; Luke: επιστάτα "master."
- 30. Matt + if you wish.
- 31. Matt: I will (ποιήσω ὧδε). This reading is based on the strong evidence of x B C 700*, supported by NA28, UBS5, and most modern English versions (e.g., ASV, ERV, ESV, GNT, NASB, NET, NIV, RSV). The late, Majority Text, followed by the KJV (see above) and its modern derivatives read "let us make here" (ποιησωμεν ὧδε). Bruce M. Metzger (A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament [2nd ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994], 34-35) concludes that the Majority reading of Matt was assimilated to the readings of Mark 9:5 and Luke 9:33. I would add that, on internal grounds, the reading ποιήσω ὧδε more easily accounts for the change to ποιήσωμεν ὧδε than the reverse. Therefore, based on external and internal evidence, the reading ποιήσω ώδε is preferred, validating at least the {B} rating-that the supported reading "is almost certain" (Metzger 14).
- 32. Matt + here.
- 33. Matt He did not know what to say, for they were terrified; Luke: not knowing what he said.
- 34. Matt: while he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud; Luke: while he was saying this a cloud came and.
- 35. Luke + and they were terrified as they entered the cloud.
- 36. Luke: ὁ εκλελεγμένος "my chosen" (lit. "the chosen one")
- 37. Matt + When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid."
- 38. Luke: When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had
- 39. Some other examples of Matt's unique, generous treatment of Peter, compared to Mark and Luke, include: the designation "first" regarding Peter when listing the names of the Twelve (10:2; contra Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14); Peter walking on the water (14:28-31; missing in Mark and Luke); Jesus' extensive, positive response to Peter after his "confession" (16:17-19; missing in Mark and Luke); Matt's unique story of Peter being sent to catch a fish and extract the temple tax from its mouth (17:24-27).

- 40. See note 31 for the textual evidence.
- 41. Two examples of Matt's more positive assessment of the disciples compared to Mark, his source, are the Stilling of the Storm, where Matt renders Jesus' response to the fearful disciples in Mark, "have you still no faith?" (4:40) with "you of little faith" (8:26); and the Request Concerning the Sons of Zebedee, where Matt has the mother of James and John make the unfortunate request (20:20-21) rather than the disciples themselves, as in Mark 10:35-36.
- 42. At this point in the chapter, White departed from specifically discussing the Transfiguration and inserted 40 sentences (720 words) that explore the prior experiences of Moses and Elijah.
- 43. These word count numbers include not only her discussion of the Transfiguration itself but also the extensive considerations of Moses and Elijah.
- 44. However, White's language "I saw" or "I was shown" is no guarantee that she saw these things in vision or dream. As Ron Graybill, then associate secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, acknowledged in 1981, her books contain literary "borrowings" that "appear in descriptions of the content of specific visions to Mrs. White." He further advised, "It would be unwise at this point to assert that there is any particular book written by Mrs. White or any type of writing from her pen in which literary borrowing will not be found." Ron Graybill, "E. G. White's Literary Work: An Update," Ellen White Investigation, https://www.nonsda.org/egw/ graybill.shtml.
- 45. Veltman, 437.
- 46. Veltman, 437.
- 47. Veltman, 438.
- 48. Veltman, 438.
- 49. Albert Schweitzer, The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress From Reimarus to Wrede (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1911).
- 50. Schweitzer reviewed the writings of about 50 who wrote "lives of Jesus" during the late 18th century and the 19th century, including the following: Bruno Bauer, Wilhelm Bousset, Gustaf Dalman, Karl August Hase, Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, Adolf Julicher, Hans Lietzmann, Hermann Samuel Reimarus, Ernest Renan, Friedrich Ernst Daniel Schleiermacher, David Friedrich Strauss, Johannes Weiss, Christian Hermann Weisse, A. Wünsche
- 51. Mark Allan Powell, Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013), 12-15. Powell's volume is a history of the "quest for the historical Jesus" - from the first quest in the 19th century, through the new quest in the middle of the 20th century, to the third quest from the end of the 20th century to early 21st century.
- 52. The continuity of the "Great Controversy" theme through the trajectory of White's books on Christ is clear from the following: 1SG was originally published in 1858 as The Great Controversy, Between Christ and His Angels, and Satan and His Angels. 2SP was originally published in 1877 as The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan. Life, Teachings and Miracles of Our Lord Jesus Christ. 3SP (1878) was originally published in 1878 as The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan. The Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ. 2-3SP were "Later expanded as The Desire of Ages." See "EGW Writings book list."
- 54. According to Veltman, White was dependent on "lives of Christ" by the following: John Cumming, Alfred Edersheim, Frederic W. Farrar, John Fleetwood, Cunningham Geikie, William Hanna, John Harris, J. H. Ingraham, George Jones, John Ross Macduff, Daniel March, James A. Wylie. These were uncritical works, none of which were reviewed by Schweitzer. Veltman (Appendix E:1-10) provides short biographical sketches for most of these writers, virtually all of whom were pastors who wrote for general, non-scholarly Christian readers.
- 55. White also used devotional material from the writings of: John Cumming, Daniel March, Henry Melvill, Francis Wayland, Octavius Winslow.
- 56. "The Desire of Ages," Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_ Desire_of_Ages.

HOLY TRANSGRESSION

Breaking the

in Order to Keep It

n his New Testament letter, James says that "whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it" (2:10).1 He follows this claim with an example, citing two of the Ten Commandments, noting that "if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law" (2:11). In other words, to break one commandment breaks them all. It is not hard to see why early Seventh-day Adventists relished this text so much, for it gave them the ability to claim to other Christian groups that by "breaking" the fourth commandment regarding the Sabbath (worshiping on Sunday rather than Saturday), they

were guilty of transgressing the Law entirely. Thus, in their logic, Christians had to care about

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the issue of the Sabbath since it was paramount that it be kept in order to be found right with God.

But did these early Adventists provide a too-naïve reading of Scripture - which many conservativeleaning Adventists still repeat? There are several questions that they typically never asked: what defines a "transgression" for James, and whether a person's beliefs about the Law affect how they are judged according to his letter? At first glance these questions might seem superfluous. Adventists typically believe that sin is the "transgression of the law" and that a person's beliefs do not affect the objective truth of God's judgment against lawbreakers. Yet, both of these classic answers are at odds with James's message.

For the very same passage warns: "For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment" (James 2:13). God will judge transgressors of the Law with mercy if they themselves, regardless of their transgressions, are merciful to others because we are under "the law of liberty" (2:12). This is the same author who defines sin/ lawbreaking as being when someone "knows the right thing to do [has embodied convictions] and fails to do it" (4:17). Equally shocking, James notes that sin itself, following temptation, does not cause someone to suffer the penalty of death, but

rather sin must be allowed to build, and only when it is "fully grown" can it reap deadly consequences (1:14-15).

In other words, according to James, transgressing the Law can only be done if someone is convicted that they purposefully transgressed the Law (including, if not specifically, the Ten Commandments). Likewise, while the purposeful transgression of one law means the transgression of the entire Law as a superstructure, the transgression, although a sin, does not bring death by merely the single transgression. In fact, it will be met with mercy at the judgment as long as the person who transgressed has been merciful to others. Contrary to the knee-ierk reactions of some, this isn't some relativistic postmodern ethic, but a perspective found in Scripture from nearly 2,000 years ago. Truly, as the postmodern-esque book of Ecclesiastes says, "there is nothing new under the sun" (1:9).

Putting aside the fact that a close reading of James reveals a completely different message than classical Adventism once assumed, the better question is this: where did James get these ideas? Do these radical views suggest that Martin Luther was right to desire that the book be de-canonized and thrown out of the Bible? Is James promoting rebellion and a lax view of God's Law? Or, quite the opposite, does James express here the deepest truths of the Gospels?

1. Paul and James: On the Same Page

Although it is a common refrain to emphasize the supposed rivalry between the apostle Paul and the leader of the Jerusalem church, there are reasons to suspect that the rumors are overblown. Traditionally, we focus on the emphasis James gives to good works being necessary for faith versus statements by Paul that seem to suggest the opposite. Yet, as many have noted, the distinction is more of emphasis than quality. Even in his letter to the Galatians, Paul never condemns James, only some men claiming to come from him.

In truth, we have no ability to confirm whether the letter of James was written by the same James "the Just" who led the church in Jerusalem. It could be from another early Christian with the same name (there were many), or it could be a compilation of various writers from the circle of James, representing a sort of Christian version of Proverbs. In any case, the book's view of the Law's transgression and personal conviction match Paul's own articulations in Romans 14.

There and in his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul reacts to and rejects part of the first decision made by the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:28-29), arguing that the prohibition against eating meats offered to idols does not, as the council had said, stem from the Holy Spirit, but simply human superstition (1 Cor. 8:1-11). He argues later in another letter that "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean" (Rom. 14:14). He goes on to note: "The faith that you have, have as your own conviction before God. Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves because of what they approve. But those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:22-23).

For Paul, the rules regarding unclean and clean animals found in Leviticus and ancient Israelite tradition are not an objective issue. The Israelites obeyed them because they were convicted that they should. Paul and other Christians, on the other hand, came to lose this conviction. As such, both were right. As he notes, "some believe in eating anything" (Rom. 14:2),2 and these people, he says, are not judged by God negatively, despite the fact that they are seemingly disregarding or breaking the laws in the Torah to do so. "Those who eat must not despise those who abstain [despise here means judge them as inferior], and those who abstain [i.e., those who are convicted they should observe those laws] must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them" (Rom. 14:3).3

Expounding on this idea, Paul notes one more example which is of particular importance; holy days. "Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds" (Rom. 14:5). Despite efforts from Adventists to disconnect this statement from the issue of the Sabbath, it is clear that one cannot do so. Those who "judge all days to be alike" by logical necessity must ignore the peculiarity of the seventh-day Sabbath (as well, we might add, any claim for the Lord's Day on Sunday!). This text clearly does not deny the Sabbath's continued observance in early Christianity, nor does it advocate for its end. In fact, we could even guess that since in verse 2 Paul lists the position he favors first, that the same might be true here: Paul himself is one of those who believes that some days are more holy than others.

The bigger point is not what Paul personally believes about the issue but the fact that he notes: "Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord" (14:6a). Likewise, with regard to the foods eaten: "those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks

to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God" (14:6b). In other words, Paul's message is that the legalistic concern of whether to honor a holy day is less important than whether you have a conviction about it and how you treat others who have different convictions about it.

For some more conservative-leaning Adventists, this may sound absurd. Most of the rhetoric about the Sabbath in our denomination has revolved around the idea that the Sabbath was not changed. Since the Law of God is eternal, we are

required to observe it and tell others to do so, too, Yet. according to Romans 14, Paul doesn't believe that such issues should spark "quarreling over opinions" (14:1) but instead create a space of love and mutual respect between believers where all can worship together in peace and harmony.

Intriguingly, we run into the same issue with Paul that we find in James: sin is defined not as an objective standard which condemns you whether you know it or not, but rather as a judgment by God toward your subjective convictions and how you act based upon them. As Paul makes clear elsewhere, "if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin ... Apart from the law sin lies dead. I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died, and the very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me" (Rom. 7:7-10). The issue is not that the Law is flawed, as some erroneously have understood Paul; it's that sin for Paul is only possible if you believe that something you do is forbidden and then continue to do it.

As he states, "I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness" (7:7-8). If Paul covets before believing that the Law represents God's true will, then he does not sin. But if he is



St. John the Evangelist as a young man without a beard and St. Paul with a book, 1100s in Ovraby church, Sweden

convicted that God's commandment is true and he shouldn't covet, his covetousness now produces abundant transgressions. The issue for Paul isn't the Law itself, but our convictions about it. So where does this idea (shared by Paul and James) that defines sin based on our convictions about the Law or sin come from? How are they able to connect it to the Ten Commandments, and even by implication for Paul, specifically the fourth?

2. Jesus Redefines the Sabbath

In the end, almost everything always comes back to Jesus. Or, at least, it's supposed to, according to Jesus himself (Luke 24:25-27; John 5:39). When Jesus appears on the Mount of Transfiguration, flanked on either side by Moses and Elijah, the point isn't that Jesus is authorized by or equal to those others (such as Peter may mistakenly assume at first). Rather, the message for the disciples arrives when Moses and Elijah disappear and only Jesus is left. "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" (Mark 9:7). As Zane Yi noted in a recent study on the conflict of hermeneutics, when it came to questions of whether and how to obey the laws of Moses, or to apply the counsel of Israel's prophets, Mark's message is that it is to Jesus alone that we should turn.4

With that in mind, let us look at one of the aspects

of Jesus' ministry that early Christians remembered the most: his conflicts with the religious leaders over the Sabbath. It's also an issue that many Christian potentially misunderstand. When discussing these texts, most Adventists spend their time defending Jesus from the charge that he broke the Sabbath. The argument usually focuses on passages like Matthew 12:9-14 where Jesus debates with the Pharisees as to whether it is legal to do healing work on the Sabbath. Obviously, there's no passage in the Torah that forbids this, and so, Adventists point out that Jesus is breaking the interpretation of the Pentateuchal Law, not the Law itself. Those arguments are certainly valid for passages such as those, but they generally ignore the passages where arguably, Jesus does break the Sabbath, at least according to the first five books of the Bible.

Perhaps the single most important passage for understanding Jesus' perspective on the Sabbath is Mark 2:23-28. Jesus' disciples have been picking grain on the Sabbath, an act forbidden by God in Exodus 16:27-30. God describes anyone seeking to gather food on the Sabbath as "refus[ing] to keep my commandments and instructions" (16:28). In the Book of Numbers, the Israelites stone a man to death (supposedly by God's direct order) because he is seen picking up sticks he needs during the Sabbath hours (15:32-36). Thus, when the disciples of Jesus gather grain on the Sabbath, they are intentionally breaking the same prohibition.

This is why the Pharisees are so incensed. This isn't just breaking the interpretation of the Sabbath that men had come up with through tradition, but also the interpretation that God supposedly gave in the Scriptures. What is Jesus' response? Well, he admits that they are breaking the Sabbath. In his response, Jesus cites a story about David who "entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions" (Mark 2:26). Why did David, a "man after [God's] own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14), break the Law given by God in the Pentateuch? Because "he and his companions were hungry and in need of food" (2:25).

The argument Jesus gives is stunning in its hermeneutical simplicity: if David broke God's Law and was never punished or reprimanded by God because of his human need (and because to observe the Law would have harmed his livelihood), then my disciples can break the Sabbath-gathering law in order to feed themselves with God's approval. As if that isn't shocking enough,

Jesus redefines the Sabbath: "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man [or: humanity] is lord [master] even of the sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28). Jesus claims that the Sabbath's purpose is to bless human beings (it was made only for their benefit), and it was not intended as a rule to be followed to the detriment of human blessing.

Ellen White commented on the passage in 1877:

If excessive hunger excused David for violating even the holiness of the sanctuary, and made his act guiltless, how much more excusable was the simple act of the disciples in plucking the grain and eating it upon the Sabbath day. Jesus would teach his disciples and his enemies that the service of God was first of all; and, if fatigue and hunger attended the work, it was right to satisfy the wants of humanity, even upon the Sabbath day. That holy institution was not given to interfere with the needs of our being, bringing pain, and discomfort, instead of blessings... [The Sabbath was] not to be a grievous burden.5

When combined with the disciples' actions and the citation of David, this statement ends up presenting the following argument: the law (whether the Sabbath or priestly restrictions) is contingent on its original intention of blessing. In other words, if the Sabbath was made in order to bless humans, but keeping it perfectly under specific conditions causes harm to life, then it is not transgressing the Sabbath when you don't keep it, but actually honoring its original intention when you alter it. In order to keep the Sabbath, Jesus says, sometimes you must be willing to break it. Alternatively, keeping the Sabbath so that it becomes a curse or non-blessing for you means betraying and sinning against the Sabbath's original purpose.

Jesus defends this paradoxical idea in his claim that "the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath" (Mark 2:28). On one level, Jesus is stating that as Son of Man (a messianic title), he is free as a representative of God to interpret the Sabbath as he sees fit. This is certainly the way Matthew and Luke understand it, for when they copied this statement from Mark's Gospel, they left out the other part of the quotation. But on another level, it potentially proclaims that humanity is lord of the Sabbath as well. Jesus originally spoke Aramaic and in that language "son of man" can either mean "human being" or the messianic title. It may well be that Jesus is aware of this wordplay and intends a double meaning.

Notice that the text of Mark (and Matthew and Luke) never claims that Jesus instructed his disciples to pick the grain. A close reading leads one to assume that they pick it according to their own judgment.

Jesus' statement then suggests that if the Sabbath is meant for human blessing, it is also human beings who must determine when keeping the Sabbath strictly or liberally provides that blessing. They must, on their own conviction (do you hear Paul?), determine when to break the specific articulation of the Law so as to ensure they are still keeping the underlying principle. Jesus, as the perfect human (1 Cor. 15:45; 1 Pet. 2:22), represents not only the authority of the Messiah to interpret the Sabbath, but God's intention for any human being to do so (Mark 2:27).

As one discovers with much of Jesus' teaching, this isn't entirely original to him. In the second century (B.C.E.) Maccabean rebellion against Antiochus IV Epiphanes (the victory which is now celebrated as Hanukkah), a similar issue arose. As told in 1 Maccabees 2:27-41, some Jews believe that they are required not to work on the Sabbath and so, though they are fighting a war, they refuse to move or fight on their weekly holy day. Knowing this, Antiochus waits until Sabbath and then murders them all while they pray.

The passage states that when the Jews saw their enemies coming, "they did not answer them or hurl a stone at them or block up their hiding places, for they said, 'Let us all die in our innocence'... So they attacked them on the sabbath, and they died, with their wives and children and livestock, to the number of a thousand persons" (1 Macc. 2:36-38). The Sabbath killed them.

Those who would become the later (and successful) Maccabean kings took note: "If we all do as our kindred have done and refuse to fight with the Gentiles for our lives and for our ordinances, they will quickly destroy us from the earth" (2:40). And so a decision was reached: "Let us fight against anyone who comes to attack us on the sabbath day; let us not all die as our kindred died in their hiding places" (2:41). The point Jesus is making to the Pharisees is a reminder of a principle established during the Maccabean rebellion: in order to keep the Sabbath, sometimes you may need to break it.

Like Paul, the issues for the Maccabees and Jesus are *intention* and *conviction*. This is illustrated beautifully by an agrapha or oral tradition about Jesus recorded in *Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis*, an early copy of the New Testament. According to the story, right after the Sabbath controversy with the Pharisees, "[Jesus] saw

someone working on the sabbath and said to him, 'Mister, if you know what you're doing, congratulations to you, but if you don't, to hell with you, you are nothing but a lawbreaker.'" The language is stark, but the message is in line with Jesus, Paul, and James. It all comes down to whether "you know what you're doing." Like Paul, the issue is about where one's heart is and how that affects one's interpretation of Scripture.

3. Lifting the Burdens of Scripture

This creates an interesting question about Jesus' hermeneutics of Scripture. Is there anything he taught that reinforces this idea that the Sabbath and the Law in general must be evaluated contextually and individually? In the Gospel of Matthew (and in a leaner version in Mark 10:1-12), some Pharisees confront Jesus, asking him whether it is lawful to divorce a woman "for any cause" (Matt. 19:5). While it is possible to imagine that they are only focused on the issue of limitations, the second part of their question in verse 7 appears to presume that they already understood Moses to allow it when they asked. In other words, this situation appears analogous to the other attempts by the Sadducees or Pharisees to trap Jesus by provoking him to say something heretical or politically incorect, such as when he is asked about whether to pay taxes (Matt. 22:15-22).

Jesus' answer to their inquiry is both surprising and in line with his approach toward the Sabbath. He begins to answer their question, rooted in the final book of the Pentateuch (Deuteronomy), by citing the first book in it (Genesis). He pits the scriptural principles for human marriage outlined at the beginning of the Torah against the conditioned specific instructions from Sinai delivered to the Israelites. In other words, it appears that he is arguing that there is a contradiction within the Pentateuch regarding marriage and that the Pharisees should dismiss Deuteronomy's instructions.

Clearly sensing the problem, they respond: "Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal to divorce her?" (Matt. 19:7). Jesus' response is even more surprising the second time. Instead of defending some sort of harmony between the two, or reaffirming the inerrancy of God's words, Jesus dismisses them with the flick of his hand (or rather, an argument). He replies: "It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (19:8). To the horror of fundamentalists, Jesus is practicing and promoting the "historical critical method" of biblical interpretation. Not only is he arguing that the laws of the

Bible were given in conditional and contextual times, limited in their use and utility, and that this specific command was given due to human desire (rather than God's), but he is also claiming that the very words themselves are not from God but Moses. (Contrary to Jesus, the book of Deuteronomy is clear that the Law comes from the eternal edict of God, Deut. 24:1-4)!

Putting aside the implications of Jesus' inclination for "higher criticism" (a subject worthy of its own study), what is perhaps most stunning about his reply is that Jesus does not negate the Mosaic Law as part of Scripture. Although he dismisses the passage and argues it is contradictory to the principles in Genesis, he does not argue like Marcion or others that it must not be part of the true Scripture. Rather, Jesus' vision of the Torah allows it to be incorrect in parts or requires human logic to sort through it. This does not, for him, invalidate it. As Jesus notes elsewhere in Matthew: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill" (5:17). But what are we to do with the fact that the book of Deuteronomy itself gives no hint of what Jesus said? Is this a revelation that could only come from Jesus? No.

In fact, Jesus appears to condemn the Pharisees for not already figuring it out. "Have you not read?" he asks them incredulously. In short, Jesus expects that even when the text of Deuteronomy says God said something that contradicted his earlier purposes, we will know God well enough through Scripture to recognize the contradiction, correct or balance it out (such as citing Genesis), and even speculate whether the "divine" words betray historical human motivations. The fact that they didn't have a prophet or the Messiah to confirm those things is no excuse for their lack of spiritual courage to do so themselves earlier.

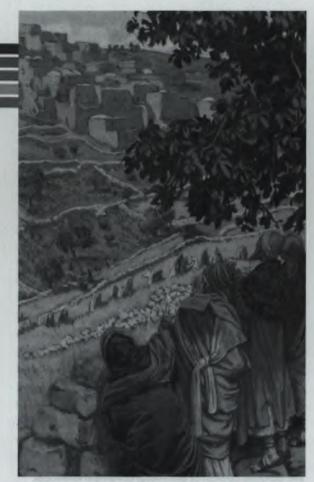
As if that isn't enough, Jesus proceeds to speak to his disciples, who are in shock from what they have heard. Some of them are in doubt as to whether marriage is even worth pursuing. In response, Jesus takes aim at the very book that he used to combat Deuteronomy's rule on divorce. "For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth ... for the sake of the kingdom of heaven," he tells them (Matt. 19:12). In the first century, a eunuch was a person who did not share the typical sexuality of the majority (such as being asexual or some other way that would not lead to procreation). Thus, what Jesus claims—about some eunuchs being born the way they are and intended as such by God for his kingdom purposes—flies in the face of God's words in Genesis 1:28 where he directly

commands *all* humans: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." Jesus is an equal opportunity offender for Scripture: using Genesis to push back against Deuteronomy and perhaps drawing on Isaiah 56:3-8 to push against Genesis (and Deut. 23:1).

As the consensus among scholars has long recognized: "certain teachings of the Bible were clearly more significant to Jesus than others." Watching Jesus perform these exegetical jumps is certainly fascinating, but what is the underlying principle that undergirds these hermeneutical moves? On the one hand, we notice that Jesus argues that "in the beginning it was not so," suggesting that the *original intention* or *foundation* of a law or command from God *overrules* the specific adapted applications of that principle in Israel's history. However, what defends the eunuch argument? For that we have to turn to another passage in Matthew.

Later in that Gospel, Jesus, noting that "the scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat," warns that the disciples are not to copy how they interpret Scripture. Moses' seat is a place of authority in which the community grants them the ability to read and interpret the Torah and explain it to the people. Jesus cautions: "They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them" (Matt. 23:1-4). The burdens spoken of are interpretive/hermeneutical. Jesus is accusing them of *choosing* to interpret the laws of Scripture in such a way that they always make them more difficult for peoples' lives. Jesus is not saving that their burdens are not defensible, but rather that they have a choice to be either more conservative (adding burdens) or liberal (lifting the burdens). Their choice to add more complicated interpretations, but not to choose to be more liberal and take away burdens, is condemnable because their interpretive choices are not aligned with the intention of God.

In short, Jesus argues that his disciples and the Christian community are to utilize the opposite hermeneutic of the Pharisees. They are always to interpret Scripture in a way that is more liberal or liberating, a way in which the Bible is respected as authoritative, but the choice of interpretation by humans is recognized and harnessed for the benefit of others. (Hear echoes of his teaching about the Sabbath?) In Luke's Gospel, it is "the lawyers" who are singled out in this regard (to make the point about hermeneutics equally clear), and Jesus simply notes: "Woe also to you lawyers! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not lift a finger to ease them" and



James Tissot, The Disciples Eat Wheat on the Sabbath, 1886-1894. Brooklyn Museum, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

argues that "you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering" (Luke 11:45-46, 52).

What we discover through a close reading of the New Testament is that this hermeneutical orientation of Jesus is central to his understanding of Scripture and how it is to shape and be shaped by Christians. As Jesus notes elsewhere in Matthew: "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (13:52). Interpreting the Scriptures for the sake of the Kingdom is like being master or lord of a house and includes the ability to add new ideas to the old so that the old is transformed. Sounds a lot like what Jesus says in Mark 2:27-28.

As we saw in Romans 14, Paul is such a scribe. Yet that isn't the only time. Paul even applies Jesus' hermeneutics to Christ's own words, the incarnate Word of God. In his first letter to the Corinthians, when repeating Jesus' teaching about divorce, Paul argues

that his churches are "not bound" to those historical words because: "It is to peace that God has called you" (1 Cor. 7:15). His argument is that if Jesus' overall trajectory and underlying principle are to develop and further the peace of God, then if a spouse wants a divorce, we should not deny him or her that possibility because we feel bound to obey Jesus' historical teachings (7:13, 15). Paul's argument is this: to be bound to Jesus' teaching and not grant divorce to a spouse would create the opposite of peace in the household. and this would betray the very reason that Jesus gave the divorce teaching in the first place. Furthermore, Paul can say this unapologetically, "I say-I and not the Lord," (7:12) because as a scribe of the Kingdom, he can add new treasures to the old. Whereas Chak Him Chow argues that "Paul's divergence from Jesus' absolute prohibition of divorce should already indicate that Paul's position ... is so extraordinary as to rival that of Jesus,"8 a closer examination of the context reveals that there is no rivalry at work, for Paul is simply imitating what Jesus himself did.

4. Transgressing the Law in Order to Honor It

This idea might even be more paradoxical. What if the idea of transgressing the commandments of God is not merely a result of the sinful conditions of the world, but an intrinsic quality of their very intention? The philosopher Slavoj Zizek notes that human rights are, at their core, the right to transgress the Ten Commandments. It is simultaneously true that the Law of God implores the Israelites to love their neighbor (Lev. 19:17-18), which in order to do so "calls for an activity beyond the confines of the Law, enjoining us always to do more and more." He argues, "one can see how human rights and 'love for thy neighbour' qua Real are the two aspects of the same gesture of going beyond the Decalogue." But he also carefully notes that "human rights are not simply opposed to the Ten Commandments, but are the 'inherent transgression' generated by those Commandments." In other words, he argues, "there is no space for human rights outside the terrain of the Decalogue."9 The Law of God, as Jesus appears to demonstrate, works in just this way: it encourages the transgression when transgression itself fulfills the Law's purpose to love one's neighbor.

From a Jewish perspective, Rabbi Daniel Hartman notes a similar idea in his book Putting God Second, arguing that "by putting God second, we put God's will first."10 The idea stems from his conviction that much of the world's religious fundamentalism stems from

"God intoxication," in which a person becomes blind to the lives and needs of others and only sees people in relationship to religious demands. Reclaiming the true message of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible, he argues. "requires rediscovering a religious system that does not merely attempt to balance love of God with love of neighbor but that clearly prioritizes love of neighbor over love of God."11 Paradoxically, in putting God first above our neighbor, we actually fail God's purposes and desires for us and our worship. However, when we place the neighbor before us and our religious beliefs, we act in harmony with God's purposes to bless humanity. "Thus, truly to walk with God is to walk with human beings through all of our shared struggles and needs."12 We put God second for the sake of our neighbor, but in so doing, we lift God through our neighbor to the most exalted and highest position.

When applied to the Law of God in Scripture, Hartman argues (utilizing the Jewish philosopher Maimonides) that "we must in essence make going beyond the requirement of the law the ultimate law" and it is by going "beyond" that "pushes those who follow the tradition not to feel religiously satisfied by merely doing what is written, creating a space for the ethical in instances where the law itself fails." In short, "it demands a redefinition of what constitutes the law." 13 As Hartman notes, the Jewish Talmud argues in one particular passage that the temple of Jesus' day wasn't destroyed because the people failed to keep the Law, but "because they only followed the law, and did not go beyond it" (b. B. Mes. 2:8, VI.7.K).14

For many more conservative-leaning individuals (especially Adventists), this may come across as frightening in its implications. Didn't Ellen White warn that "to knowingly transgress the holy commandment forbidding labor upon the seventh day is a crime in the sight of Heaven which was of such magnitude under the Mosaic law as to require the death of the offender" and that not only that, but it was such a sin that "God would not take a transgressor of His law to heaven," but he must instead "suffer the second death, which was full and final penalty of the transgressor"?15 With those words of warning echoing in our minds (and the fear and dread they bring), it is understandable that we might believe that this way of thinking leads us to eternal perdition.

And yet, however strange to many Adventist ears, this way of thinking does not violate Ellen White's warning. When commenting on the Sabbath in The Desire of Ages (1898), she reflects on Mark 2:27-28:

"The object of God's work in this world is the redemption of man: therefore that which is necessary to be done on the Sabbath in the accomplishment of this work is in accord with the Sabbath law."16 In more modern language: If the intention of God is the blessing of man, anything that needs to be done for that purpose, even if it is "work" (transgressing the words of the fourth commandment but not the spirit of the law), is not only acceptable to God, but necessary.

5. Jesus, Saturday, and Perceiving God Correctly

Unbeknownst to many, the early Christians did in fact preserve a tradition of Jesus encouraging Sabbath observance. The recently discovered Gospel of Thomas reports one previously unknown statement attributed to Jesus regarding the Sabbath. The Gospel, first unburied in a few Greek fragments at Oxyrhynchus in the 1890s and then fully in a Coptic manuscript discovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, Egypt, consists of 114 sayings of Jesus (a good half of which are alternative versions of the same sayings we have in the canonical Gospels. The book, which was not actually written by the apostle Thomas and probably stems from the early second century, records various oral traditions Christians remembered about Jesus' teachings.

In saying 27, it reports: "Jesus said, 'If you do not fast to the world, you will not find the kingdom. If you do not keep the Sabbath as a Sabbath, you will not see the Father."17 Here, Jesus is remembered for having taught Sabbath observance. However, the authenticity of the statement is questionable. Would Jesus teach Sabbathobserving Jews about the Kingdom? It seems strange to imagine him teaching them to do something they already know how to do. On the other hand, during the second century there were Jewish Christian groups that defended a law-observant Christianity against Christian groups represented by Ignatius of Antioch or the Letter of Barnabas, which asserted that Christians shouldn't "Judaize" or celebrate the Sabbath. Could this "saving" of Jesus have been invented in order to combat such assertions? It's certainly possible.

On the other hand, the statement in the Gospel of Thomas about the Sabbath doesn't engage in any debate about whether to keep the Sabbath or the date upon which to keep it, both being the sorts of concerns that were present in the second century debates. Instead, it is focused on how to keep the Sabbath: "as a Sabbath." It assumes that the audience does keep the Sabbath already, which in the second century would still refer to the seventh day of the week, not the

Lord's Day tradition on the first. In other words, Jesus is presented as teaching that if you don't keep the Sabbath appropriately, as a fast from the world (perhaps as a rest), than you will "not see the Father." The latter statement need not necessarily reference salvation, but could use "see" as a synonym for "perceive," suggesting that those who honor the Sabbath with rest are able to gain an understanding of God that others do not have.

If this is the intended meaning, then it becomes at least possible that the saying *might* echo the authentic memories of Jesus' teachings. While it's certainly possible that a Jewish-Christian group came up with this statement to argue why Sabbath observance is still good for Christians, the idea that Jesus may have encouraged Christians to "keep the Sabbath as a Sabbath" in order to perceive the love of God also makes sense. If the statement is seen in the light of Jesus' other teachings, it would seek to redirect Jesus' audiences to return to the original purpose of Sabbath in the way they keep it, one which would invite them to understand God differently. That would certainly match the historical Jesus.

Regardless of whether the statement in the *Gospel of Thomas* records an echo of forgotten tradition about Jesus or reflects the habit of Christians to creatively invent new sayings of Jesus to fit their evolving circumstances, it presents to modern Christians a portrait of Jesus that is in accordance with his teachings and helpful to our faithful orientation. Jesus's intention was never to get rid of the Sabbath, to denigrate it, or to dismiss its role in faith. He wanted to get his audience to return to the core principle of the Sabbath, and in so doing, discover the love of a God who welcomes faithful disobedience, such as Jacob or Jesus' own disciples

exhibited. By understanding the Sabbath controversies, one discovers the Law anew.

6. Conclusion

In the end, a review of Jesus' teachings about the Sabbath, both canonical and apocryphal, reveals a surprising consistency and emphasis on the same paradox: the Law of God will not pass away, but it will indeed at times be broken out of faith, a faith that fulfills its original purposes. That the Sabbath is, as Adventists have long argued, unchanged in Scripture from Saturday to Sunday is as demonstrable as it is passe. The Sabbath's date is only important in so far as it helps to serve our understanding of the Sabbath's intended blessing. To quote the conclusion of Zane Yi's study on Jesus and the Law:

Is it possible, to quote the great theologian Bono, who in "11 O'Clock Tick Tock," sings: "We thought that we had the answers, it was the questions we had wrong." Is it possible there are better questions we could have been and could be asking? What if we seriously started asking a different question as individuals and a community—How did, and would, Jesus interpret the Bible?¹⁸

In answer to Yi's prompt, this article has attempted to answer that question within the context of our very identity as Seventh-day Adventists. A theology of the Sabbath, if it is to serve God's desire in Scripture, must focus on the why of Sabbath, not the when. It cannot rely on arguments from authority or the Law as a cheap excuse for not engaging in arguments regarding Christ's

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emphasis on its utility. For as Jesus makes clear: the Sabbath is almost all about utility. This is even made clear in both versions of the Ten Commandments. In the version in Deuteronomy, the reason for the Sabbath is simply stated: "you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day" (Deut. 5:15). In other words: God gave you the Sabbath as a rest from the unceasing 24/7 work schedule Egypt oppressed you with and to remind you that God wishes you rest and well-being.

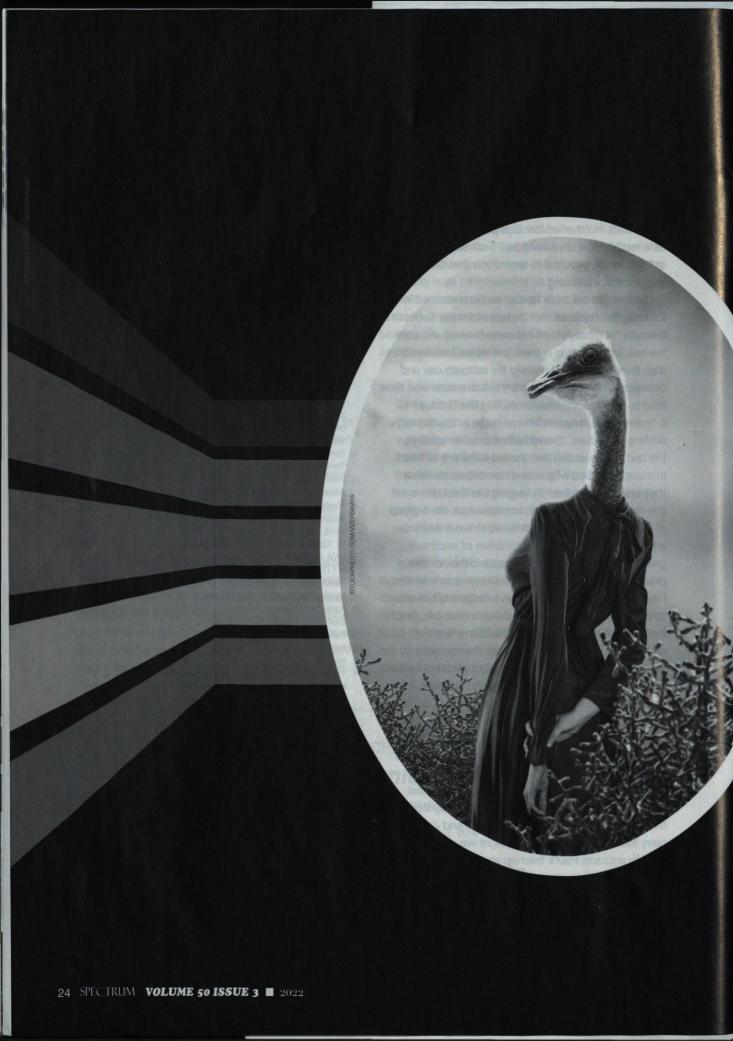
Similarly, in the more familiar version recorded in Exodus, God declares that the reason for the Sabbath is because "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth." the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it" (20:11). Contrary to Adventists who have tried to read this verse as promoting the Sabbath as a "memorial of creation," the passage in Exodus says nothing of the sort. Though it strikes us as strange, the text literally states that the Israelites are to "rest" in imitation of God who rested from his work. What they are to "remember" in keeping the Sabbath is not the creation, but God's rest from his work. As a group of foreign slaves from Egypt raised to work every day and hurt themselves in the promotion of another's greed, they are not to continue such behavior (nor practice it themselves against their own communities). Like a parent asking his children to copy his behavior, or a teacher instructing a student to imitate her, God instructs the Israelites to copy the divine habit of resting after work as a way to teach them a habit they themselves are unaccustomed to. And unlike the version in Deuteronomy that is specific to Israel, this "rest" is implied by Exodus to be desired by God for all of humanity.

As Jesus said from the beginning: the Sabbath was made for humanity's benefit. He simply read the Bible better than many Christians often have, Adventists included. Reflecting on this hermeneutic that Christ puts forward, which is attested to consistently through the Gospels, and which writers like Paul and James carry forward and expand, how might we as Adventists learn to embrace Paul's teaching about holy days? How might we proudly embrace, like Paul likely does, the celebration of the Sabbath, while not judging others who are convicted that every day is alike? I don't propose to have all the answers, only the desire to provoke our

Church (and others) to start thinking about what they might be. In short, I'm asking how we can embrace the seventh day and its blessing personally and corporately, but evangelize about the Sabbath to others in a way that focuses not on the day but the purpose of that day? That sounds like a purpose worthy of the Three Angels' Messages in our hyper-capitalist, consumerdriven, overworked, and underpaid world. Come out of Babylon, come out of Egypt: "a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9)!

Endnotes

- 1. All quotations of the Bible come from the New Revised Standard Version
- 2. Any words italicized in quotations are not original to the author, but added by me for emphasis.
- 3. It is possible that Paul was a hypocrite himself for warning others not to judge those with different beliefs (since he calls those who abstain "weak in faith" in Rom. 14:1), or perhaps he is actually quoting what he believes is a statement of Jesus that was not recorded in the Gospels (compare Jesus's words in Mark 7:19). There is no way to prove the last idea, but the inconsistency between the statement and Paul's actual practice in the passage is intriguing, as is the fact that the statement appears related to a saying of Jesus already known.
- 4. Zani Yi, "Christ and the Conflict of Interpretations: Hermeneutics Transfigured," Spectrum 45:4 (2017): 16-18.
- 5. Ellen White, The Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 2 (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assoc., 1877), 196.
- 6. Stephen J. Patterson, "Orphan Sayings and Stories," in The Complete Gospels, 4th ed., ed. Robert J. Miller (Salem, OR; Polebridge Press, 2010), 459.
- 7. Yi, "Christ and the Conflict of Interpretations," 19.
- 8. Chak Him Chow, "Paul's Divergence from Jesus' Prohibition of Divorce in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16," Open Theology 7 (2021): 176.
- 9. Slavoj Zizek, The Fragile Absolute: Or, Why is the Christian Legacy Worth Fighting For? (New York: Verso Books, 2000), 110-113.
- 10. Rabbi Daniel Hartman, Putting God Second: How to Save Religion From Itself (Boston: Beacon Press, 2016), 170.
- 11. Hartman, Putting God Second, 69.
- 12. Ibid., 88.
- 13. Ibid., 80.
- 14. The quotation is from Hartman, and he gives the citation as BT Baba Metzia 30b. I have provided instead the citation from Jacob Neusner's academic translation. The alternative translation provided by Neusner is: "For R. Yohanan said, "Jerusalem was destroyed only because the rule that applied there was the strict rule of the Torah. ... Rather, frame the matter in this way: 'because the rule that applied there [Jerusalem] was only the strict rule of the Torah, and they did not go beyond the strict requirement of the law." Jacob Neusner, The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2011), 143.
- 15. Ellen White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1868), 533. The original manuscript, from which that particular chapter was taken, was dated Christmas Day, 1866. You can only imagine how festive and full of holiday cheer Mrs. White must have
- 16. Ellen White, The Desire of Ages (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), 285.
- 17. Thomas O. Lambdin, "The Coptic Gospel of Thomas," in Lost Scriptures: Books That Did Not Make It Into the New Testament, ed. Bart Ehrman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 22.
- 18. Yi, "Christ and the Conflict of Interpretations," 21.

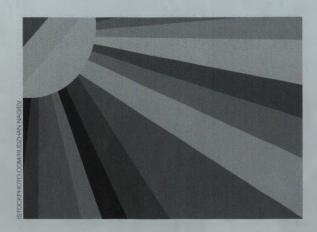




Coping with Change in Adventism, 1966-1979

by Gil M. Valentine

"In surprising ways, the establishment of Spectrum was already quietly influencing decisions being made by the General Conference without hardly anyone noticing."



SPECTRUM and the Association of Adventist Forums

An excerpt from Ostriches and Canaries: Coping with Change in Adventism, 1966–1979, 2022, courtesy of Oak and Acorn Publishing.

By Gil Valentine

he proposal for the organization of an Association of Adventist Forums had been thoroughly vetted by General Conference officials in late 1967 and, although not considering it wise to formally approve or authorize the venture, the North American Division at its year-end meeting had given it a green light and agreed to appoint consultants and advisors to the group. Its birth had nevertheless been anticipated with nervous apprehension.

Forum chapters were soon organized around apprehension accompanying the birth of the forum groups had led to significant unease, by the time the journal was put together 15 months later, magazine had been expected to appear in late 1968, but its first quarterly issue did not come off the press until March 1969. Pierson revealed his nervousness about the publication by his unwillingness to write a sentence or two in support of either the journal or the association when invited to by officers who were preparing a prospectus to help get the journal off the ground. Harvard University chemistry professor Alvin the Association of Adventist Forums (AAF), had mentioned in his letter of solicitation to Pierson that he had "sensed a fairly extensive feeling of hostility on the part of ministers and workers alike toward the entire Forum project." Kwiram was saddened and discouraged at this. Someone from the General www.spectrummagazine.org 27

Molleurus Couperus, founding editor of Spectrum

Conference had spoken publicly against the group and was fanning up a "psychology of fear." That individual, reflecting some "unfounded" fear, had made false accusations that were calculated to damage the cause of the organization. Kwiram reminded the president of his speeches in favor of the group in the meeting of college presidents, one of the groups that had reviewed and endorsed the proposal for an association of forums. Would Pierson be prepared to say something similar now? Kwiram sought to persuade him that such a statement would help to counteract the false information and also indicate to the church's "creative and educated" young folk that they were valued.1 Pierson declined. He had not yet seen a copy of Spectrum (it was still at press), and he would want to evaluate it first. He was aware, he said in his reply, that some around him had "definitely voiced concern" over some of the discussions already taking place in forum meetings, although personally he had "not detected hostility." He hoped that the association would follow the



pattern of the Adventist students he had met recently at the University of Sydney in Australia who gave "major emphasis" to witnessing to non-Adventist students. "We do not want hostility," he assured Kwiram.2 Sixteen months later, the General Conference indicated to forum leaders that they would be willing to send out a promotional item for the journal to ministers and educators on their mailing lists if Spectrum reimbursed the expense, but the offer had not been taken up.3

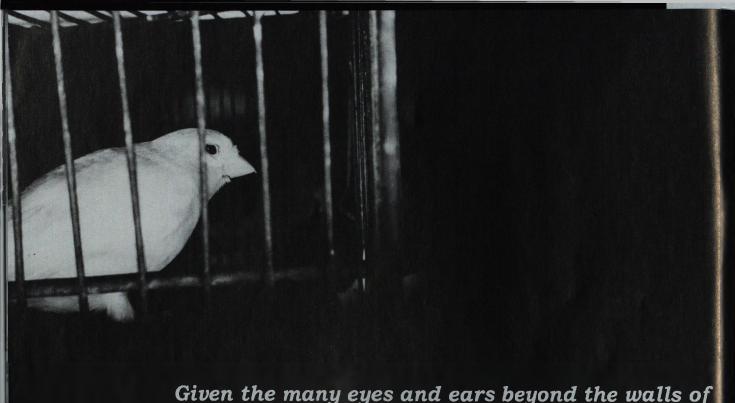
Pierson also manifested his nervousness about the forum enterprise in the reminders to two of his colleagues who advised the forum organization. He wanted them to keep very close to it. In May, he wanted to know how close education director Charles

Hirsch and Neal Wilson were keeping to the group. Hirsch had written an article for the first issue, the only one of the General Conference staff to write for the journal during the first few years. By the time Pierson wrote to enquire of Hirsch, he had read the first issue and had noted with alarm his perception that it had "intimated that there will be articles opposed to Seventh-day Adventist doctrine," suggesting that the journal would be a good place to air such positions."4 The first issue had not, in fact, said it would oppose doctrines. Loma Linda University professor Molleurus Couperus, who served as editor, had spoken in his first editorial of the "search for new visions and better answers" and of the concern to "speak the truth" about God "in language that is

fresh and pertinent to today," but there was no indication of opposing doctrines.5 Kwiram, in his introductory statement for the first issue, spoke of rapidly changing times, the church finding itself having moved almost imperceptibly "into a new era" that called for "present truth," but he had not spoken of challenging doctrines.6 Pierson's "intimation" apparently reflected a deep-seated fear. A month later, he wrote to Hirsch again seeking "further suggestions on what we might do to bridge the gap with our intellectuals." Forsaking his military metaphors for more pastoral ones, he said that these folks were a group "that really weighs heavily on my heart." He was anxious "not to shut them out" but to "open ways and means of taking them in."7 Several General Conference Union Conference officers would speak to the 15 local chapter forum groups, and several even wrote for the new journal with its 1,600 subscribers.8 Pierson would eventually bring himself to make a couple of presentations at Adventist forum meetings as a gesture of good will, but he would never write for Spectrum.

Neal Wilson, who appears to have been more at ease with forum people than Pierson, wrote to conservative Charles Cottrell in September 1969 to answer his anxious questions about the new developments. He sought to correct Cottrell's perception that the association was a self-appointed group "set up in anger" against the church "to be a pressure group." Rather, it was an attempt to meet needs that had "grown out of our very complex society." He explained the origins of the organization and its status. The General Conference felt it could not officially "authorize such an organization" nor, on the other hand, could it "turn a deaf ear." Realizing that they could not "prevent" it and encouraged by the desire of the students to work with the church, they had officially agreed to offer them advice and counsel. Wilson reported that he had attended a number of the group's public meetings in various places around the country and that about 90% of the people involved were very supportive of the church. There were some folks from Burbank, California, who were more radical, and even though some of these were also involved in forum, their Burbank-sponsored organization and magazine Perspective were not formally linked to the forums. He knew that Burbank member Wesley Nash, a banker, had spoken on church finance, and Ervin Taylor, an Adventist professor of anthropology at the University of California, Riverside, had spoken on the problem of the age of the earth at a forum meeting in San Bernardino,

The General Conference felt it could not officially "authorize such an organization" nor, on the other hand, could it "turn a deaf ear."



meeting places, it was often a hazardous exercise for church employees to speak at a forum event.

California. Wilson knew also that these talks had been reported in the local press, and he regretted this. But there was no reason to repudiate the group yet, he argued. Speakers like Nash and Taylor did more to damage the forum than to help it, he thought, and the strength of the forums depended on local chapter leaders.

For the most part, Wilson was very confident of the forum leaders, he told Cottrell. Church leaders were aware of the "risks" and "dangers" and were watching closely. If it became "necessary to do something drastic," he assured Cottrell, the church "would not lack for courage to take the matter in hand." Wilson felt that he could shape and influence the organization to keep it on track. In fact, in surprising ways, the establishment of *Spectrum* was already quietly influencing decisions being made by the General Conference without hardly anyone noticing. When Dr. Herbert Douglass was called from the presidency of AUC to serve as associate editor of the *Review*, Carcich observed that one of the objectives of the appointment was to give credibility to the *Review* team in a way that would "do much to blunt the cutting edge of the critical publications that have sprung up during the past few years." Subconsciously, church leadership was already shaping its decision-making with *Spectrum* and the church's intellectuals in mind.

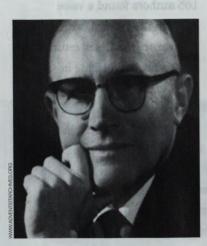
Given the many eyes and ears beyond the walls of meeting places, it was

often a hazardous exercise for church employees to speak at a forum event. The celebrated Voice of Prophecy speaker H.M.S. Richards, for example, found himself having to give an account to the General Conference president for what he ventured to say at a forum meeting at Andrews in November 1969. Richards had spoken for a forum in the seminary chapel on how the church had changed in the previous 40 years. He said he saw danger in a drift to "institutionalism" and the problem of investing more finances overseas than in the homeland. He had advocated for a strong and separate North American Division. In answering questions, he had imagined some changes in church structure that would free up more resources for evangelism. The talk had been reported in a front-page article in the Student Movement, which is how it came

to the notice of Pierson. He wrote to Richards from India, where he was travelling, expressing his worry and concern that Richards should say such things in public.11 Pierson wondered if the "young zealots" who edited the Student Movement (history major undergraduate Eric Anderson and math major undergraduate Roy Benton) may have given a particular slant to the story more than was warranted. When the story was picked up in the La Sierra Student Criterion, the editor had commented that Richards was "the first major denominational leader [who] openly supported the progressive movement for change in the church." It particularly disturbed Pierson that Richards would be thus identified. A short time later, Pierson would confide to a close colleague that he was very strongly opposed to any idea of more "autonomy for North

America." In his view this was "the wrong direction," although he did not want to be quoted publicly on the matter. He apparently realized it was a sensitive issue.12 In his reply, Richards assured the president that he was not finding fault with him personally or with anybody but himself and sought to clarify and defend what he had said and explained why. He expressed "deepest regret" that his words may have been misunderstood and that the matter had brought worry and concern to the president.13

The risk of speaking at forums had heightened as 1970 unfolded. Late in the year, Miriam Wood, columnist for the Review and spouse to its editor, agreed to speak for the forum meeting in Boston on the topic "Discrimination and the Adventist Woman Employee." Two months prior to the November event, she felt it necessary to



Robert H. Pierson General Conference President June 16, 1966 to January 3, 1979



H.M.S. Richards Voice of Prophecy Founder/Speaker October 19, 1929 to 1969



Neal C. Wilson General Conference President January 3, 1979 to July 5, 1990

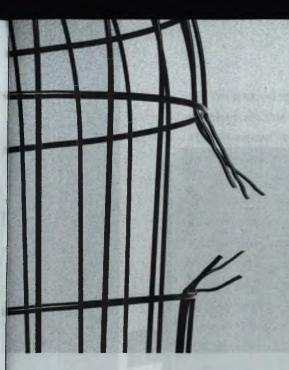
alert Pierson to her acceptance of the invitation and to try and avert misunderstanding. "I am writing this letter," she explained, "to affirm my loyalty to the SDA church and my confidence in your administration lest either of these attitudes be called into question."14 She was "not a member of Women's Liberation," she explained, and, though her paper would be critical of employment practices, she did not think it would make Pierson's responsibilities "more onerous." She had received her husband's permission to speak, and he had "ruthlessly edited" her paper. Pierson could read a copy in advance if he wished. She wanted to cover all her bases and knew that forum environments could be radioactive. Pierson appreciated the heads up. "It was thoughtful of you to clue me in," he noted in his reply. He was sure that Mrs. Wood "would not be a protagonist for the Women's lib agitation that is receiving so much attention in the papers these days." Such a presentation "at this juncture," he noted, "probably would not be helpful," but he was confident that she would "use discretion and much wisdom" in her talk.15

Some of the apprehension about forum activities arose because in some locations meetings were planned during the worship hour and on other occasions the topics were not considered suitable for Sabbath

discussion. Local conference presidents channeled these concerns back to forum leaders through Neal Wilson. 16 Part of the heightened sense of risk speakers felt exposed to when they addressed a forum group, as already noted, arose from hostility generated by Burbank church's Ervin Taylor, who not only presented on the highly provocative age-of-the-earth problem but also published copies of his talks or had reports on them published in the local press. This made him "far more dangerous" than Brinsmead in the eyes of vice president Bietz. Wilson considered Taylor to have "abused the purpose of the Association" and brought it "discredit."17 Pierson, even more disturbed, would have liked to see Taylor disfellowshipped for his attitudes and activities, but local conference president Helmuth Retzer considered that "the cause" would be even more damaged by such an attempt. Bietz doubted whether it would even be possible, given the general attitudes of members at the Burbank church. Fundamentalist church member Henry Pearl of the Glendale church interpreted Taylor's publishing of his forum talks in the local press as having a Machiavellian purpose. Getting the "intellectualism and liberalism" abroad into the public notice and having it become a matter of record that church

leaders had not responded with discipline, he believed, would eventually help protect teachers in denominational employment from the reach of their governing boards on a technical and legal basis, should their employment ever become a matter of dispute. Pearl was fearful for the future and felt that church leaders should not fail to take disciplinary action. 18 Pierson, although naturally reactionary, nevertheless felt constrained in what could be done, and he declined to follow the path that Pearl had intimated.

During the first five years Spectrum was published (1969-1974), it made a significant contribution to the church even as it deeply distressed the General Conference president. Approximately 175 major articles were published across 15 broad topic areas, as detailed in the table on page 34. All together, 165 authors found a voice through the journal, with some of them several times returning to a theme or engaging in dialogue with respondents over several issues of the journal. Several poets were published repeatedly, and occasionally the journal featured the work of accomplished Adventist artists. Encouraging expression through the creative arts was part of the mission of Spectrum from the beginning. As might be expected, Spectrum's most





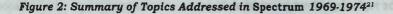
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> frequently addressed topic area was Adventist theology-sometimes from a broad and philosophical perspective and sometimes from a more specific doctrinal perspective highlighting particular themes like the Sabbath or the Second Advent. The most troubling topics for Elder Pierson were those that addressed the age of the earth and the work of Ellen White. In both areas, the journal featured articles challenging the church's traditional ways of expressing its understanding. New data and its implications for the traditional positions were carefully analyzed and solutions proposed. Church specialists and authorities who were well-versed in the traditional viewpoints also presented responses and defenses of the traditional positions. In introducing a cluster of unsolicited articles on the age of the earth in 1971, the editor, Molleurus Couperus, acknowledged that this was a highly sensitive area and that "some readers may feel threatened by discussions on the subject." His careful setting out of the historical context for the discussion and its importance reflected a conscientious sense of pastoral responsibility. The "almost complete unanimity about the age of our earth" that had "developed among scientists" in recent times, however, was based on many lines of evidence, and the topic should not be avoided.19

The first edition of Spectrum was published in the winter of 1969.

SPECTRUM

Topic Frequency Adventist Theology - Doctrines - Philosophy Ellen G. White Studies 19 Adventist and General Church History 17 Adventist Mission - Philosophy and Practice 16 14 Age of Earth/Life - Creation Issues SDA Higher Education Policy & Practice - Finance 14 Church Organization Structure - Finance - Salaries 10 Church-State Relations - Federal Aid 9 Ethics - Abortion - Moral Issues Military Service - Morality of War Race Health - Medical Outreach - Social Welfare Science and Religion - Philosophy Equality of Women Biblical Studies - Archaeology Total Major Articles & Responses to Articles Book Reviews²⁰ Poetry - Photographs - Featured Art



The most celebrated discussion Spectrum featured during its earliest years that unnerved General Conference leaders was perhaps the one initiated by Andrews University English professor William Peterson in the last issue of the second year of publication, Fall 1970. Peterson had become an Adventist as a young person after reading The Great Controversy. In a later re-reading of Chapter 15 on the French Revolution, Peterson noted strikingly close parallels between Ellen White's writing and that of several historians from the 19thcentury romantic historical school whose writings had generally been discredited, even at the time she was writing. His article in Spectrum documented the extent of Ellen White's literary borrowing, which set out the basis for his conclusion that the historical material used and discussed had not been derived from visions but exclusively from the historical sources.²² The borrowing included not just facts and sequences of events but the assumptions of the historians and their entire anti-Catholic interpretive schema. Siegfried Horn had attended a seminary faculty colloquium eight months earlier in 1970 when Peterson had first publicly presented his paper, and he found its argument compelling. He noted in his diary two days later, "The trouble is that our leaders have put Ellen White on such a high pedestal as authority on history, chronology, science, diet, health, social life & what have you, that they would wreck the church if they would dare to admit that she was wrong in any of these disciplines. So, they go on muddling until a catastrophe occurs, hoping that the good Lord will soon come to solve their problems, which for them are unsolvable. A real revolution could come one of these days."23

As Horn had suspected, Peterson's Spectrum article generated huge shock waves among the leadership and more broadly in the church. Arthur White xeroxed a copy to Pierson and to all the members of the White Estate board immediately upon reading it—even before he had read the rest of the journal or even the accompanying article by Branson and Weiss arguing that Ellen White was a proper subject of historical inquiry. He intimated a sense of offense that none of the White Estate personnel had been approached by either the editor or the author for consultation or for a response. Just what the trustees would feel their responsibility to be in the matter he did not know, but the intimation of his letter is that he thought they should make some response.24 Seminary dean Murdoch also wrote to Pierson after reading the autumn issue of Spectrum, expressing concern that readers would assume that the sentiments of the Peterson article would be attributed more broadly to the seminary faculty.25 In damage control mode, he sought to distance the seminary

from the piece by observing that some of Peterson's statements about Ellen White's writing of history were "very unfortunate," and he noted several of these to indicate that he disagreed with these parts of the article. He reminded Pierson that Weiss had not been with the seminary now for two years. Clearly the seminary administration (Murdoch spoke of "we" and "us") felt under siege, and he needed to defend the seminary's reputation to Pierson.26 The sense of siege is also illustrated by Murdoch including in his letter a report to Pierson that seminary students like Raymond Dabrowski and Tom Dybdahl were insisting on being allowed to wear beards. They were "particularly vocal" and "quite critical" against seminary regulations and procedures on the matter. The students were sons of denominational workers, one of whom was a physician, another a union president. What was the seminary to do? Pierson set up a consultation with the anxious dean to discuss the problems.27

Peterson's ideas generated responses from a number of authors, including an extensive reply from Paul Bradley, then chairperson of the White Estate Trustees. Two years after Peterson's 1970 piece, Ron Graybill provided a rather amusing postscript to the extensive exchange when he reported that he had discovered

that Ellen White had not been using the 19th-century historians directly after all.28 Instead, she had borrowed directly and extensively from Uriah Smith's treatment of the French Revolution in his Thoughts on Daniel, and Smith himself may well have been badly using a secondary source for his sources as well.29 Literary borrowing there certainly was, but the sources were more indirect than at first realized. The real problem, however, was how to understand the authority resident in The Great Controversy, given what was now known about the sources used. Theological questions such as these unnerved Pierson and other General Conference officials.

Probing questions and criticism of the church's organizational structure in the pages of Spectrum vexed Pierson even more, it seems. After articles of this kind appeared in two consecutive issues in early 1972, he worried to a colleague that "our intellectuals are asserting themselves." On a theoretical basis he had "no objection to this," he observed, but he was anxious that "they are going to create some problems that are going to be very real" in the church.30 Two months later, to the two colleagues whom he trusted were keeping an eye on the forums, he confided, "There still lurks in the dark recesses of my heart, some concerns regarding

the operations of our Adventist
Forums and the publication of
Spectrum." He was constantly
hearing remarks that were
"not very complementary."³¹ He
needed to know that the two
advisors were still working closely
with the association people.
Intellectuals, he feared, would
damage the church.

Seminary archaeology professor Lawrence (Larry) Geraty reluctantly conceded to lead the Association of Adventist Forums in 1972, and he wrote a courtesy letter to inform Pierson of the change and ask advice on how to improve the relationship of AAF with the General Conference officials. Geraty diplomatically acknowledged that the forum had made "its share of mistakes" and he wanted to ensure a "positive future" for AAF. Pierson read Geraty's letter with "considerable interest." His "main counsel." he said, was that Geraty should work "to keep the Forum, truly Seventh-day Adventist." The General Conference president considered that when other Christian churches had "turned their backs on the basics of the gospel," they had lost their way. He was "uneasy" when the forum moved into areas that had proved "the undoing of other churches." Pierson did not specify what these topics were, but behind the vague references it seems that matters of the age of the earth and creation loomed large. "We simply must

not let Seventh-day Adventists follow a similar course," Pierson stressed to Geraty.32 The threat to employment for anyone associated with leadership in the forum was sufficiently strong and compromising

to the independence of AAF that, 12 months later, Geraty resigned from the presidency with the strong recommendation that future presidents not be employees of the church.33 Tolerated with the greatest of

reluctance, AAF and Spectrum provided a medium for "intellectuals" to influence the church, and this was a serious threat to Robert Pierson and his colleagues in church leadership.

ENDNOTES

- 1. A. Kwiram to R.H. Pierson, Jan. 27, 1969. RG11, Fld: K54 (1969), GCArch.
- 2. R.H. Pierson to A. Kwiram, Feb. 14, 1969. RG11, Fld: K54 (1969), GCArch.
- 3. N.C. Wilson to R.E. Taylor, May 5, 1970. RG11, Fld: T-106 (1970), GCArch.
- 4. R.H. Pierson to C.B. Hirsch, May 5, 1969. RG11, Fld: NAD-Wilson (1969), GCArch.
- 5. Molleurus Couperus, "Challenge," Spectrum 1.1 (Winter 1969), p. 77.
- 6. A. Kwiram, "Introduction," Spectrum 1.1. (Winter 1969), p. 4.
- 7. R.H. Pierson to C.B. Hirsh, June 27, 1969. RFG 11, Fld: Education-Hirsch (1969), GCArch.
- 8. Roy Branson, "Adventist Forums: another bulwark against indifference and apostasy," Review and Herald, May 14, 1970, pp. 16-17. Branson's report provides a helpful overview of the launch of the new organization and its journal.
- 9. N.C. Wilson to C.M. Cottrell, Sept. 8, 1969. RG11, Fld: Co-22 (1969), GCArch.
- 10. T. Carcich to R.H. Pierson, Nov. 10, 1969. RG11, Fld: Carcich (1969), GCArch.
- 11. "Richards Speaks for Change in SDA Church," Student Movement, Nov. 13, 1969, p. 1. Pierson's initial letter of complaint appears not to be extant.
- 12. R.H. Pierson to R.R. Bietz, April 20, 1970. RG11, Fld: Bietz (1970) GCArch. Pierson asked Bietz to not quote him on this view but to "keep in mind my feeling." He had then underlined the last part of his sentence, "for I feel very strongly on this."
- 13. H.M.S. Richards to R.H. Pierson, Jan. 5, 1970; R.H. Pierson to H.M.S. Richards, Jan. 13, 1970. RG11, Fld: VOP-Richards (1970), GCArch. Richards' reply is copied to K.H. Wood, which suggests that concerns may have been shared more widely.
- 14. Miriam Wood to R.H. Pierson, Sept. 20, 1970. RG11, Fld: Wo-118 (1970), GCArch.
- 15. R.H. Pierson to Mrs. K.H. Wood, Sept. 28, 1970. RG11, Fld: Wo-118 (1970), GCArch.
- 16. N.C. Wilson to A. Kwiram, R. Branson, and T.

- Walters, March 24, 1970. RG11, Fld: NAD-Wilson (1970), GCArch.
- 17. N.C. Wilson to R.E. Taylor, May 5, 1970. RG11, Fld: T-106 (1970), GCArch.
- 18. R.R. Bietz to R.H. Pierson, May 13,1970. RG11, Fld: Bietz (1970), GCArch.
- 19. M. Couperus, "Earth's History," Spectrum 3.1 (Winter 1971), pp. 4-5.
- 20. Book Reviews covered a wide range of topics and varied in length. Reviews of books on the creation and the age of the earth appeared with the greatest frequency. Four of the book reviews were of such length they are included in the total for articles on creation and the age of the earth.
- 21. The summary provides approximate totals.
- 22. William S. Peterson, "A Textual and Historical Study of Ellen G. White's Account of the French Revolution," Spectrum 2.4 (Autumn 1970), pp. 57-69. See also Peterson, "Ellen White's Literary Indebtedness," Spectrum 3.4 (Autumn 1971). p. 78.
- 23. SHHD, April 11, 1970.
- 24. A.L. White to R.H. Pierson, Dec. 24, 1970. RG11, Fld: White Estate (1970), GCArch. Roy Branson and Herold Weiss, "Ellen White: A Subject for Adventist Scholarship," Spectrum, 2.4 (Autumn 1970), pp. 30-34.
- 25. W.G.C. Murdoch to R.H. Pierson, Dec. 22, 1970. RG11, Fld: Andrews U-Murdoch (1971), GCArch.
- 27. R.H. Pierson to W.G.C. Murdoch, Jan. 11, 1971. RG11, Fld: Andrews U-Murdoch (1971), GCArch.
- 28. Ron Graybill, "How Did Ellen White Choose and Use Historical Sources?" Spectrum, 4.3 (Summer 1972), pp. 49-
- 29. Uriah Smith, Thoughts, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Daniel (Battle Creek, Michigan: Steam Press of the Seventhday Adventist Publishing Association, 1873).
- 30. R.H. Pierson to D.K. Short, April 6, 1972. RG11, Fld: Short (1972), GCArch.
- 31. R.H. Pierson to N.C. Wilson and C.B. Hirsch, June 1, 1972. RG11, Fld: NAD-Wilson (1972), GCArch.
- 32. L. Geraty to R.H. Pierson, Oct. 3, 1972; R.H. Pierson to L. Geraty, Oct. 25, 1972. RG11, Fld: AU-2 (1972), GCArch.
- 33. L. Geraty email to the author, Dec. 21, 2020.

GILS FALE



Retired historian

Eric Anderson,

PhD, served as the president of both

Southwestern

Adventist University and Pacific Union

College. He also had a distinguished teaching career of more than 30 years.

He served as the

to Progress

ohn Stuart Mill is credited with saying that conservatives are "the stupid party." Never mind that he did not say it quite that way, and, in any case, he was talking about Britain's Tories. The dictum seems to fit many of the events described in Gilbert M. Valentine's brilliant new book, Ostriches and Canaries: Coping with Change in Adventism, 1966-1979.

What else can you say when an Adventist educator praises a Christian university's "search for truth" and the leader of the denomination anxiously asks his wise men: "Is this liberalism?" ("Not exactly," most of them respond in essence.) "Simply stupid" was the phrase Siegfried Horn, the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary's distinguished archaeologist, used in his diary after a visiting evangelist attacked him for raising questions in class about the specific numbers involved in the Exodus. Stupidity, or at least smug ignorance, explains the necessity of the learned president of Andrews University having to defend himself to an ill-educated church leader for referring in a devotional article to "the author of the book of Hebrews" instead of "the Apostle Paul."

Given the facts of natural history, was it smart to invest spiritual resources in defending the dogma that life on earth is sixty centuries old and not a century more? Though Valentine never does so, it is tempting to describe some of those "coping with change" as just plain dumb.

On the other hand, I remember a statement that Arthur Mann used to make regularly in his lectures at the University of Chicago.

"The conservatives are always right," he would say with a provocative smirk. For example, those reactionaries who warned that flooding the United States with immigrants from places like Ireland or Italy would change the nation's culture were prescient. When they said, "You might even get a Catholic president," they were accurate, Mann noted. Those men (and women) who feared that extending the vote to females would take ladies "off the pedestal" had a point-though we may no longer agree with them about that pedestal. The people who predicted "unintended consequences" for the destruction of vibrant, yet shabby neighborhoods turned out to be clearsighted about "urban renewal."

A careful reader of Valentine's book is forced, I believe, to consider some of the ways in which Robert Pierson, Willis Hackett, and other leaders of the "stupid party" in the Adventist church were right. If these men were resurrected in 2022 and invited to visit Adventist university campuses or to peruse recent issues of

Spectrum, wouldn't they say, "We told you so"?



Professor emeritus of archaeology and history of antiquity, Siegfried Horn taught at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary from 1951-1976.

Elder Pierson might say: "You don't need a PhD to notice that there is an articulate minority determined to substitute the social gospel for the apocalyptic message of historic Adventism." Elder Hackett could observe: "It appears to me that some people among us are completely reconciled to the sexual revolution and determined to reject the idea that male and female are rooted in nature or nature's God." Either man might notice how seldom Ellen White is invoked on campus and observe: "We feared that was coming."

But I may be getting ahead of myself here, leaping straight to the ultimate implications of Valentine's book before some

readers have finished unwrapping that package from Amazon or Oak & Acorn Publishing. As someone who lived through the years 1966 to 1979, I have had a hard time resisting the urge to draw conclusions from the first chapter onward.

I am exhilarated, I admit, by Valentine's work. Using sources ranging from official correspondence to a confidential diary to candid interviews, he moves beyond rumor and speculation to describe what the key historical actors said and did behind the scenes. This is a "now-it-can-be-told" book with the highest scholarly standards, something like an outstanding military history that clears away the fog of battle, showing what the rival strategists were planning, despite the incomplete information available to them.

Valentine carefully describes the context for the Pierson era, with its characteristic commitment to the authority and accuracy of Ellen White's writings. Almost as soon as the Adventist prophet was buried in 1915, he notes, Adventist leaders were struggling to define the appropriate use of the Spirit of Prophecy. The scholarly W. W. Prescott told the prophet's son: "We are drifting toward a crisis which will come sooner or later." Attempts to present a more accurate picture of White's work, recognizing context and imperfections, repeatedly failedbeginning with the 1919 Bible Conference and continuing in periodic purges of religion teachers in denominational colleges. Adventist scholars found it difficult to explain that Ellen White was not inerrant or verbally inspired, especially in a climate in which the infallibility of the Bible was regularly affirmed.

Still, there was a time in which Adventists seemed poised to reach a new consensus.

In the decade and a half before the election of Robert Pierson,



Richard Hammill, president of Andrews University (1963-1976), met informally with President Gerald Ford. Robert H. Pierson, president of the General Conference, is center. The college presidents and other church leaders were in Washington, D.C., for the Annual Council of the General Conference. The meeting with President Ford was arranged under the auspices of the American Council of Education on October 13, 1975.

Seventh-day Adventists repeatedly sought to explain themselves to other conservative Christians, especially during the presidency of Reuben Figuhr (1954-1966). The denomination created a committee on "Biblical Study and Research" (1952), held a Churchwide Bible Conference, and issued Francis Nichol's comprehensive response to non-Adventist (or ex-Adventist) critics of Ellen White (1951). Thirty-six Adventist

scholars created a seven-volume Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (1953-57) and a wellreceived Bible Dictionary (1960), all respectful of Ellen White, but not as an authority equal to the Bible. Questions on Doctrine (1957), which grew out of carefully constructed conversations with wary evangelicals, restated Adventist doctrines in language calculated to make sense to conservative Christians and to

demonstrate a solely biblical basis for Adventist teachings. All these apologetic enterprises were made possible by the accreditation of Adventist colleges in the United States in the 1930s and 1940s (which entailed more teachers with graduate training), the founding and expansion of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, and a generation of outward-looking Adventist writers, best exemplified, perhaps,

by Arthur S. Maxwell and his 10-volume, lavishly illustrated children's book, The Bible Story (1953-57), which sold far beyond Adventist circles.

In the Pierson years, by contrast, the focus was inwardlooking. Under his leadership, Adventists were more committed to avoiding error than winning the understanding or approval of other Christians, even "fundamentalists." The creativity of the 1950s was replaced by a period of consolidation and centralization. As Valentine shows in fascinating detail, Pierson was concerned that Adventist teachers and writers—sometimes simply "the intellectuals"—were smuggling false ideas into their proclamation of the Adventist message. He and his closest colleagues were determined to appoint reliable men to positions of influence. Building on long years of experience in the mission field, his priority was evangelism, not nurture or education.

Pierson believed that "a wave of liberalism was sweeping over the church," writes Valentine. A few months after taking office, he received a confidential letter from Arthur White, grandson of the prophet and executive secretary of the White Estate: "We are all concerned relative to the influence of Andrews University, and particularly the Seminary," White wrote. "There is a liberal element at work which we should recognize as we steer the course for the future."

Over the next dozen years, Pierson and his advisors were able to reshape the Seminary, as several controversial teachers were forced out and others accepted non-teaching assignments. They also made sure that trustworthy academics were given increased authority in running the Seminary and identifying "heretics." In addition, Pierson and Gordon Hyde reorganized the General Conference's Biblical Research Institute (as the committee was now called), changing the balance of administrators and academics, and ensuring that scholars would have less voice in articulating denominational teachings. A comparable GC-funded group studying issues of creation and evolution (the Geoscience Research Institute) was transformed under Pierson's direction into an organization tasked with defending the denomination's understanding of creation, with new personnel and a sharply restricted research role.

In these and other matters, ranging from a disputed manuscript by medical school professor Jack Provonsha, to the drafting of creedal statements, to official responses to historical work on Ellen White, the denominational leadership was haunted by the idea that they were surrounded by people who were untrustworthy, deceptive, or, at the very least, utterly disingenuous. They were quick to use metaphors like "Trojan horse" or "fifth column" to describe certain Adventist academics. As Pierson explained to one division president considering hiring a certain Seminary

professor: "Remember, sometimes these intellectuals may reply in an affirmative way to your question, and they will mean something quite different from what

"Remember, sometimes these intellectuals may reply in an affirmative way to your question, and they will mean something quite different from what you have in mind."

you have in mind." As a specific example, Pierson added, "You can ask some of these men if they believe in Sister White, and they answer very convincingly 'yes.' But when you really question them thoroughly and carefully you will discover that their idea of inspiration is something very different than you may have thought."

If Pierson had the opportunity to eavesdrop on the private conversations of Richard Hammill, president of Andrews

University, or read the carefully guarded private diary of Siegfried Horn, Seminary dean, he would have found confirmation for his suspicions. "I am too old to fight for a liberalization of Adventist doctrines," Horn confided in 1970, "but the process of liberalization will go on. It cannot be stopped." He commented several times on the value of keeping quiet on controversial matters: "It is too bad he could not keep his mouth shut," he said of a former student, "but had to speak his (liberal) mind even when his opinion was not asked." On another occasion he commented that "much of our prophetic interpretation is quite untenable" though he would not even "breathe" the thought "for fear someone will hear it."

Hammill was an even more unlikely defender of inflexible "historic Adventism." As a student at Walla Walla College, he had been close to Frederick Schilling, the chairman of the theology department who was forced to resign in 1938 for alleged heresy. (Within a week, Schilling had accepted a position as the pastor of a nearby Episcopal church.) He was a good friend of Earle Hilgert, distinguished New Testament scholar, who resigned as Andrews University vice president of academic administration in 1970, accepting a position at McCormick Theological Seminary, and eventually becoming a Presbyterian clergyman. In

retirement, Hammill admitted to holding a range of positions inconsistent with Pierson's views. He found the denomination's interpretation of the sanctuary to be weak and confessed that his version of creationism assumed God's repeated creative acts "over long ages." (A long, long way from Ussher's chronology as a test of loyalty!)

Valentine chooses his words carefully, but he speaks of issues that "posed a dilemma for [Hammill's] personal integrity" and notes that some people thought his role in preparing creedal statements was hypocritical. He notes mildly: "It is a worrying characteristic" that "only in retirement" can Adventist scholars and administrators "safely dissent" from "inadequate formulas." He might have been harsher. A few readers might even accept a slightly revised title to the book: Ostriches, Canaries, and Chameleons.

In any case, the Pierson years were as important for the battles that did not take place as for the controversies that did happen.

Time and again, one well-informed group declined to be candid, failed to argue for change, refused to try to persuade their critics.

They preferred covert resistance to honorable confrontation, a predilection that continued after Pierson had been replaced by Neal Wilson.

Hammill might remind us, of

course, that he was dealing with a leader who could not understand the most cautious dissent. When one colleague urged Pierson to "face up to problems and to explore alternative points of view in a fair and open manner," applying the golden rule by listening "with respect to "the other side," his response was revealing. He said some truths were already "settled." He was "not at all certain" there was an "other side" on these issues.

I closed Valentine's book deeply impressed. This remarkably productive scholar, who has repeatedly written books that break new ground, has done it again. Every future historian of modern Adventism will recognize the importance of the Pierson administration, and no one will write about these years without first consulting Valentine. Still, as I put my battered, marked-up copy of Ostriches and Canaries back on the shelf, I have a modest proposal.

I am ready to demand a five-year moratorium on the word "fundamentalist." (Mind you, I might be willing to allow limited exemptions for bona fide scholars writing on such topics as the Scopes Trial or the life of Aimee Semple McPherson.)

Valentine, it should be noted, seeks to be precise. He goes to great lengths to define terms, charting a spectrum of positions from a small group





of "ultra-fundamentalists" to open devotees of "higher criticism." He also separates his terminology from present-day politics, recognizing that an Adventist "liberal" could well be a political "conservative."

I have three problems with the word "fundamentalist," even when used with care. First, who now identifies as a fundamentalist? The word had a very clear meaning to Adventists in the 1920s, but do the members of the Adventist Theological Society march under that banner today? Does Ted Wilson send out rallying cries to "fundamentalists of the world"? Or has "fundamentalist" become in this century a question-begging label like "isolationist" or "science denier," more likely to close discussion than to stimulate it?

If, as a matter of courtesy, we accept the names that people call themselves, what name do "fundamentalists" use to describe their comrades and their agenda? Are they "traditional Adventists" or "Preservation Theology, Incorporated"? Are they "pragmatic Adventists" struggling against "ideologues"? Do they see their opponents as "radicals" or "modernists" or "mainstream Protestants" or simply unbelievers?

Second, the word "fundamentalist" is often imprecise, drawing into its net almost every fish in the Adventist pond. Historians have learned a great deal, for example, about the 1919 Bible Conference and its aftermath. But the difference between A. G. Daniells and his most vehement critics was not a difference between liberal and conservative Protestants. Theologically speaking, Daniells was deeply conservative, with no sympathy for higher criticism, theistic evolution, or naturalistic explanations of the Resurrection and lesser miracles.

(To be fair to Valentine, he warns us right at the beginning that Pierson was more likely



to see "liberalism" manifesting itself in "General Conference women wearing wedding rings," bearded students, or teachers extending the 6,000-year history of the earth than in crypto-Unitarian theologians believing, as an old joke asserted, in "one God—at most.")

In the later 20th century, most of the people studied so carefully by Valentine, would look like fundamentalists of some sort to the denizens of Union Theological Seminary or admirers of Paul Tillich. Despite crucial differences, Reuben Figuhr and Robert Pierson were both missionary-minded millennialists. The people who helped Figuhr explain Adventism to the wider Christian world, men such as Francis Nichol and Ray Cottrell and LeRoy Froom, were as "liberal" as the editors and readers of Christianity Today—which is to say, not "liberal" at all. At the same time, the leaders who joined Pierson's

inward-looking campaign of defense probably knew better than to claim that Scripture was dictated by God. They were certainly less worried about the good opinion of evangelicals than Figuhr and his associates.

My moratorium might force historians to use better words. Or to change the metaphor, we might find some tool more accurate than a blunderbuss. To cite an example from my own specialty, historians have learned that we cannot adequately explain the Lincoln-Douglas debates by simply announcing: "they were both racists." Indeed, promiscuous invocation of "racism" leaves us in the dark about the deep differences between Lincoln and Douglas. We may miss Lincoln's central argument about the moral evil of slavery—and its threat to the American experiment. After we have dismissed Lincoln as a "racist," we have run out

of useful words to describe
Douglas's shocking argument
that the United States could, in
fact, remain forever half slave
and half free. We are likely to
overlook his assertion that the
Declaration of Independence
made no claims about the Godgiven rights of "all men." In much
the same way, "fundamentalist"
usually explains too much or too

Finally, the word "fundamentalist" can distract us from more important issues. The people who identify themselves as opponents of fundamentalism—say, stereotypical readers of Spectrum—can become so absorbed in combating this peril that they forget the weakness of the other side of the controversy.

H. Richard Niebuhr, no fundamentalist by any definition, long ago saw the shallowness of liberal Protestantism and the social gospel, and his deflating description is still accurate: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross."

Seventh-day Adventist intellectuals would do well to spend more time engaging thinkers who are neither liberals nor fundamentalists by the battle lines of 1930. Anglican N. T. Wright shows us that the historical-critical method does not necessarily undermine faith. Orthodox David Bentley Hart can critique postmodernists and refute New Atheists with insights that are neither Catholic nor Protestant, modernist nor reactionary. Conservative Presbyterian Tim Keller, to name one more example, is an effective apologist for traditional Christianity by engaging contemporary doubts, using far more effective language than either Adventist evangelists or the spokesmen of mainstream Protestantism.

If they are to thrive, "Progressive Adventists," despite their distaste for the "stupid party," may themselves have to wrestle with matters of loyalty and creeds. Moving beyond affirming change and openness, they will have to define the boundaries of their reform agenda, skillfully identifying ideas that must be preserved at all costs, as well as dogmas that demand reinterpretation or even rejection. George Knight is right when he warns that Adventism without apocalypticism is an animal unable to reproduce itself. Present-day critics of Adventist narrowness must find traditions they can wholeheartedly affirm, much as the Branson-era Association of Adventist Forums creatively affirmed the Sabbath. (Indeed, the Sabbath as a living ritual and reality is weakening even among many non-liberal Adventists.)

Ostriches and Canaries is felicitously written, richly documented, and thought-provoking. My criticisms are quibbles, not revelations of major flaws or improbable judgments. Here and there, Valentine's prose gives off a faint whiff of an Adventist version of the "Whig interpretation of history"—the confident assumption that history is steadily evolving toward our current assumptions and values. As Valentine writes in his introduction, "Time has not stood still, and the church must make its way into the future" endowed with a "progressive, forward-looking vision." Theological "development," he comments elsewhere, is "inevitable and could be a blessing." The existence of a group of "Progressive Adventists," Valentine concludes, suggests that Adventism may "both cherish its past and adapt to a more complex world."

But it is not clear, more than a century after the 1919 Bible Conference, that the kind of changes which Valentine sees as inevitable are, in fact, likely to transform Adventism any time soon. Outside of enclaves in California, Australia, and Western Europe, where do ordinary believers support the changes sought by "progressive" Adventists? Or, to rephrase the question, is the next president of the General Conference likely to have a view of Ellen White's work and authority as nuanced as that of A. G. Daniells a century ago? And even if



a person with Daniells-like insight were to be elected, is it likely that he would risk valuable political capital to promote his understanding to the general Adventist public? In short, as much as the denomination has changed since 1978, Valentine's ostriches still outnumber his canaries (and his chameleons).

Who defines ADVENTIVM?

By Scott Moncrieff

Who gets to define what Adventism is or what it should be?

hat's one of the core questions I asked myself as I read Gilbert Valentine's new book, *Ostriches and Canaries*, which recounts dozens of interactions between conservatives (or fundamentalists) and "progressives" during the General Conference presidency of Robert Pierson, 1966–79. Valentine uses the label "ostriches" to represent hiding one's head in the sand as a metaphor for denying reality, associated

with Pierson and the fundamentalist/
conservatives; and "canaries" to represent
liberal/progressive Adventists who were
trying to adjust church paradigms
to accommodate new data, in the
way that canaries in the coal mines
helped miners to know if dangerous

gas was present—mostly by dying, sadly. This imagery "naturally" presents

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conservatives as the problem and progressives as the answer. I wouldn't want to go so far, and Valentine himself adds nuance to this binary by acknowledging the inadequacy of labels, especially "conservative" and "liberal," because people who are conservative on one issue might be liberal on another, and there may be multiple positions on any particular issue, not just the two the labels provide. Though not without problems, these labels provide a useful framework for his narrative.

It's a lot of book, with an introduction, 13 chapters, a conclusion and an epilogue, and about 450 content pages. But I think the reader's labor will be well-rewarded. The first two chapters give background regarding fundamentalist elements in Adventism in the 19th century, a discussion of textual authority issues regarding the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, and how the 1919 Bible Conference shaped fundamentalism in the Adventist Church for the next several decades, a topic more fully developed in Michael Campbell's recent books 1919: The Untold Story of Adventism's Struggle With Fundamentalism and 1922: The Rise of Adventist Fundamentalism.

I found chapter three, "A Tale of Two Presidents," especially interesting. In it, Valentine

Reuben Figuhr (1954-66) with that of Robert Pierson (1966-79). Under Figuhr's presidency, editor Francis D. Nichol and a team of scholars wrote the multivolume Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, which gave the church, in Valentine's words, "a much more securely grounded understanding of Scripture, anchored in the study of language, literature, and history" (65). Figuhr, writes Valentine, was "progressively minded and committed to the pursuit of knowledge and truth" (66). Valentine quotes a tribute to Figuhr by Walter Beach, saying Figuhr "could see many tints and shades between the black and white of life," and that he had the ability "to concentrate on the essential rather than the trivial" (70-71). Valentine quotes Andrews University President Richard Hammill as saying that although Figuhr was not a trained scholar, he was "much interested in intellectual matters and was a strong supporter of Adventist educators" (72), as demonstrated by the development of graduate education under the Figuhr presidency, including the launching of Potomac University, the move of Potomac University to become Andrews University, and the formation of Loma Linda University. Figuhr also supported the development of the Geoscience Research Institute

contrasts the presidency of



(GRI) and, according to Hammill, the scholars Figuhr helped appoint to the GRI staff showed "the openness of his mind to new ideas and approaches" (82). Valentine concludes his section on Figuhr by stating: "He had committed to growth in understanding and was not threatened by the findings of science and the ongoing work of scholarship" (83). In a June 1966 Review article at the end of his presidency, as Valentine points out, Figuhr recommended "the middle of the road" as "the place where constructive work is done, not on the side of extremes or of liberalism, but in the middle of the road."

Pierson, Valentine says, "was not a deeply thoughtful youth given to intellectual pursuits. Rather, he was a doer, an activist, a promoter and organizer, and a keen sports enthusiast" (84-85). He was described by a Review

writer as having a "warmhearted, friendly, approachable manner" (87). Pierson attended Southern Junior College (now Southern Adventist University) for a twoyear ministerial course that "focused primarily on Bible courses with a large component of pastoral training and field placement activities" (86). Figuhr graduated from Walla Walla College (now University) with a BA in history, a four-year degree. Pierson's talents and passion lay in the area of evangelism and church planting, according to Valentine. He is described by Chuck Sandefur as being "a much-loved pastor, deeply appreciated for his compassion and spiritual nature" (87). In contrast to Figuhr, Valentine says, Pierson was troubled by problems identified by church scholars, and "many of the church's theologians would see Pierson not as staying by the middle of the road but veering off to the right and adopting a reactionary stance that would seriously retard the church in its theological development" (99).

The heart of the book, chapters 4 through 13, contains a more detailed look into various episodes of the Pierson presidency. There is a pattern to the chapters: Pierson and his associates become anxious about some problem or problems with the liberals; he writes letters, applies pressure, asks

his associates what can be done; he writes articles, gives speeches, convenes meetings, maneuvers behind the scenes. and meets with failure or temporary success at ousting a "liberal" individual or progressive practice, at the cost of the longterm health of the denomination. Again, one must remember that this book focuses on Pierson's interactions with progressives, not a general review of his presidency, which might lead a reader to different perceptions.

It seems that the core issue of contention is the nature and comprehensiveness of Ellen White's authority, with Pierson's camp upholding her as basically inerrant and verbally inspired, the final authority on every subject she addressed, in contrast to the "progressive" thinkers, who tended to see her as an inspired gift to the Church but also fallible in the composing process of her books, sometimes incorrect in her representations of history and science, and valuable but not complete in the interpretation of Scripture. To the conservatives, these limitations rob Ellen White of her authoritative power; to the progressives, using Ellen White as the last word on some matters requires closing one's eyes to plentiful alternative evidence.

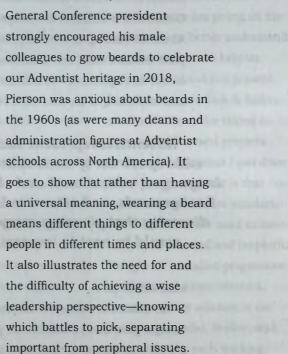
One of the issues that most troubled Pierson was the evidence for a long earth chronology. He held strongly to the 6,000-year figure, originally derived from Ussher's chronology and supported by multiple confirmations from Ellen White and a few conservative Adventist scientists, such as Frank Marsh. Meanwhile, progressive Adventist physicists, paleontologists, geologists, biologists, and historians of the 1960s and 1970s seriously considered data that supported a much longer chronology and a different paradigm. Pierson felt that to accept any longearth data undermined the authority of Ellen White and was a direct challenge to the Church. However, that didn't make alternative forms of evidence and the questions they raised disappear. There was no resolution to the problem during his presidency—or in Adventism during the present time.

Other questions of contention included:

- Was Paul the author of Hebrews?
- Did fewer than two million Israelites cross the Red Sea?
- Does Daniel 8, properly interpreted, support the Church's sanctuary position?
- Did Jesus create fermented wine at Cana?
- What methodology or methodologies of Bible scholarship should be utilized?
- Should Loma Linda University

- Should non-Adventist speakers be invited to speak to Adventist audiences?
- Is there ever a situation in which "situational ethics" are appropriate?
- Should Adventist educational institutions accept government funds and thus be liable to some level of government regulation?
- To be appropriately modest, how long do women's skirts have to be?
- Should seminary students (or faculty) be allowed to wear beards?

Taking that last question for a moment, it's ironic that while many of our male Adventist pioneers wore beards, and our current



Valentine's book is exceptionally educational because we are privy to key resources that weren't publicly available at the time: the correspondence of Pierson and those who wrote to him, personal interviews with some of the

protagonists conducted by the author, and the diary of Andrews University professor and pioneering archaeologist Siegfried Horn. Valentine also draws from extensive writing in Spectrum, which published many more scholarly examinations of Adventist history,





science, and theology in the decades following its first issue in 1969.

Valentine has done a very considerable work to locate—and in some cases create—all these resources and weave them into a coherent narrative. For instance, I learned a considerable amount about the desire of the General Conference to influence the composition of faculty for the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, and in particular, the strong pressure to push Gerhard Hasel into a leadership position specifically because of his conservative positions—in addition to his recognized scholarly ability. It was also interesting to see that when Pierson worked to remove Roy Branson

Adventists represent such a wide spectrum of nationalities, languages, educational and class backgrounds, and other kinds of diversity that pleasing everyone would be next to impossible.

from the Seminary, one of six graduate students who signed a letter to President Hammill supporting Branson's orthodoxy and loyalty to the Seventhday Adventist Church was Ted Wilson, the son of then-North American Division President

Neal Wilson (371).

In defense of Pierson, I can imagine few jobs more difficult than being a good General Conference president. Adventists represent such a wide spectrum of nationalities, languages, educational and class backgrounds, and other kinds of diversity that pleasing everyone would



be next to impossible. With such diversity of backgrounds, there is considerable diversity of perspective. Of course, this great diversity can be a tremendous strength in Adventism—as long as it is so recognized. But, sadly, a surprising number of Adventists have trouble acknowledging, respecting, and welcoming other Adventists who think differently from them. Pierson got regular signed—and anonymous—letters from possibly well-meaning Adventists complaining about supposed liberal practices at this or that Adventist college or university. Some such letters were grossly inaccurate. Many had an incomplete or unbalanced perspective. In almost all cases, the writer had ignored the suggested procedure of Matthew 18: going directly to the brother or sister in question instead of badtalking them behind their back. Of course, the advice in Matthew is for "if your brother sins against you" (my emphasis), but if anything, the response should be milder for "if you disagree with your brother or sister."

With so many sources to weave into a coherent narrative. Valentine definitely had his work cut out for him, and in my estimation, he did an excellent job. There are occasional editing errors, such as referring to James Hayward as "Haywood" (341), Herold Weiss as "Weis"

(102), and, in a section about the Wedgwood Trio, we are told that before the group played on the It Is Written telecast, "the bass player, Bob Summerour, had to shave off his beard" (275). As far as I know, Jerry Hoyle was the bass player. While on the subject of sources, Valentine necessarily uses brief excerpts of letters and other documents in order to make his work as efficient as possible. I was curious as to the overall tone of some of the letters, from which I read tiny excerpts. It would be interesting to include at least one or two full Pierson letters in an appendix to see how a Valentine excerpt appears in context.

I'm a natural audience for this book because I feel very personally involved in the story. I have heard many of the protagonists speak in public-Jack Provonsha, William Peterson, Frank Knittel, Herold Weiss, Gerhard Hasel, Arthur White, Robert Pierson, Roy Branson, Leona Running, and others. I have served as a longtime faculty advisor for the Student Movement, the Andrews University student newspaper, which figures prominently in the book. As a faculty member at Andrews, I have seen many points of contention from the era of this book pop up, during my 30-plus years as an educator. With so many points of contact and investment in the issues Valentine is discussing, I couldn't put the book down, and sadly, I unintentionally broke a

long Wordle streak because I was so engrossed. B-l-a-s-t!

That said, I think this would be an excellent book for any Adventist who desires a greater understanding of recurrent issues in our church and how they have been handled. It's quite helpful to see how issues Adventism faced in the 1920s came back in the 1960s and 1970s, and how many of them are cycling back again. Thank God for dedicated Adventist historians who are giving us the opportunity to better understand our past, which can help us better understand our present. And thank you to Oak & Acorn and Pacific Press for taking on these vital historical projects.

One of the lessons I can draw from Valentine's book is that so-called conservative scholars and administrators need to have more open-minded and respectful dialog with so-called progressive scholars and administrators. To carry out its mission, a car needs a gas pedal, brakes, and a neutral gear, each working together; the Church needs broad judgment and perspective in discovering present truth, retaining that which is vital, and accepting that some issues are presently unresolvable and that's okay. We don't have to have all the answers, and it is important to our humility to accept this. Yes, it can be difficult to work with those who have strong

differences with us on specific matters of faith, but many of us don't even try. We just huddle closer within the comfortable circle of the like-minded and take potshots at the other side. We can and must do better. We are informed by yesterday's and today's experiences, but tomorrow's challenges will inevitably be a bit different. Accommodating to a changing environment is a necessary feature of a living organism. Our institutions of higher learning are the front lines for critical (rigorous) thinking, knowledge creation and innovation within the Church, and the training of future leaders. They need to be valued and supported.

Richard Ritland, a biology professor at Andrews University at the time, wrote a 1968 letter of concern to Andrews President Richard Hammill in the aftermath of one Seminary professor being told he wouldn't be rehired. He sent a copy of the letter to North American Division President Neal Wilson, along with a handwritten note. In part, the handwritten note reads: "It worries me if we begin a heretic purge that might become general, when indeed, we may discover too late and to our chagrin that the heretics were closer to the truth than we" (201). Our Church needs a broad spectrum of thinkers respectfully working together. What a sign of God's grace that will be.



Our church needs a broad spectrum of thinkers respectfully working together. What a sign of God's grace that will be.

Who gets to define what Adventism is or should be? Certainly, General Conference presidents and other leaders will and should have a strong influence. But it's also up to

every individual church member, you and me, to shape the future definition of the Church, to help it fulfill its mission, and to model the love that should be our calling card.

CORRECTIONS

Vol. 50, no. 1:

arolyn Winchell writes, "Thank you for the informative and fascinating article, "We, Too, Sing America: African American Seventh-day Adventist Healers in a Multicultural Nation." Growing up in the home of my grandparents, the I.F. (Irvin) Blues (who served in India from 1914-1939), I often heard of early Adventist missionaries to India. I met a number of them and heard many wonderful stories, especially over Sabbath dinner.

I was puzzled when the article stated that Anna Knight was the first female missionary to India. Indeed she was a missionary, and I remember hearing stories of her time there. Upon checking with the SDA Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists, I found two entries of interest. The Encyclopedia states that in 1895, Georgia Burrus Burgess sailed for India, where she (and later her husband) served until 1934 (aside from some time in the U.S. due to health issues the couple encountered.)

The SDA Encyclopedia states:

Georgia will be remembered as the first Adventist missionary to the Indian subcontinent, and the first single Adventist woman to venture into a non-Christian country.

The SDA Encyclopedia also states:

In the fall of 1901, Knight and her fellow workers set sail for Calcutta. She thus became not only the first African-American female Seventh-day Adventist missionary sent anywhere but also the "first black woman to be sent to India by a mission board of any denomination."

Thank you for the excellent article.

Vol. 50, no. 2:

ary Fordham corrects a photo caption in Sari Fordham's "Arriving in Uganda." It states my father's students at Bugema Missionary Training School." The institution's name should read, Bugema Adventist College.

Spectrum welcomes all correspondence, especially grammar and fact corrections.

Thoughtful

MY PILGRIMAGE OF THEOLOGY AND FAITH:

"What Remains"



A native of the Netherlands, Reinder Bruinsma retired in 2007 after a long career in pastoral, editorial, teaching, and church leadership assignments in Europe, the United States, and West Africa. After receiving a BA from Newbold College and an MA from Andrews University, he earned a BDiv with honors and a doctorate in church history from the University of London. Before retiring, he was president of the Netherlands Union.

n June 1996 a group of theologians gathered at the initiative of German Reformed theologian Jürgen Moltmann in the university city of Tübingen. The occasion was Moltmann's 70th birthday. The group discussed their theological pilgrimage during the past three decades, which resulted in a modest, but most interesting, publication: How I Have Changed: Reflections on Thirty Years of Theology.¹ Some of the participants said they had altered very little, but most—Moltmann among them—shared with the group how many of their ideas had developed during that time.

Toward the end of his life, Hans Kung, a great thinker and prolific writer, wanted to arrange a compilation from his extensive writings of what he felt had real significance. He gave his publication the telling title: Was Bleibt (What Remains).² Other theologians have done something similar: making an inventory of where their theological explorations have taken them. At the end of the day, what convictions had lost their power, and what did they still believe?

I do not suggest that I rank with any of the great theologians of our time, outside or within our own faith community. But as I turn 80 this September, I believe it is meaningful to take the time to retrace my own theological steps. It is significant for myself, using the words of Küng, to review "what remains," and I hope it may inspire some others to do the same. This process seems to be in line with the admonition of the apostle Peter: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15, NIV).



My Roots

Today, less than 50 percent of the people in the Netherlands identify themselves as religious, a dramatic change from my childhood. When I was growing up, about 30 percent of the population was Roman Catholic (predominantly in the southern provinces), while most of the others belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church or one of many other Protestant denominations. When I was five, our family moved from Amsterdam to a village some 20 miles north of the capital city. Part of our village was solidly Catholic, and the rest was split between two Protestant denominations—one rather strict and the other more lenient. But we were different: Seventh-day Adventists. People did not know what that meant, but most saw us as a special kind of Calvinist: rather strict, but for some strange reason, attending church on Saturday. My mother had converted to Adventism around age 16. She remained a committed church member until she died in her late seventies. My father joined the Church after he married my mother. He died young (age 50), and I have never quite figured out how much his faith meant to him.

At first, we were isolated church members, only

occasionally able to travel to Amsterdam and attend church. Then an evangelistic series in a nearby town resulted in a small congregation of which we became members. Our Adventist connection did not prevent my parents from sending my sister and me to the Dutch Reformed Sunday school. The fact that our grandfather (who lived with us) was a member of the Dutch Reformed Church might have had something to do with that. At the time of our move from Amsterdam to the village, I had not yet started elementary school. In a somewhat unexpected ecumenical spirit, my mother enrolled me in the Catholic kindergarten - the only one available. When we were ready to enter the elementary grades, our parents did not send my siblings and me to the public school, but to the "Christian" school, which was strictly Calvinistic.

The death of my brother at age eight (two years younger than I) and the passing of our father were, of course, devastating events, but I cannot say they increased or diminished my childlike faith.3 From my childhood on, I was interested in religion, more so than my siblings. Our weekly attendance in the small congregation (where we were the only youth) was more of a challenge for my sister than for me. I discovered





that the most unpleasant aspect of being an Adventist was that it made me "different" when I went on to the secondary school in the nearby city of Alkmaar. I had to be absent from class on Saturday morning. But this apparently did not lead to any discrimination, as I was twice elected as the representative of my class and for some time served as the editor of the school journal.

On April 29, 1956, I was baptized by immersion in a swimming hall in the city of Alkmaar after the local pastor gave me a short series of Bible studies. At my mother's suggestion, I had also enrolled in a Bible correspondence course. All in all, I think I knew at least as much of Adventist doctrines as an average baptismal candidate. How I experienced my baptism is hard to describe. It was not a deep, emotional experience. Although I was acquainted with the main Adventist doctrines and could defend them quite well with a number of proof texts, I did not yet have a faith in the sense of a deep, personal relationship with God. That came later in a gradual, almost imperceptible, but no less meaningful, process.

Adventist doctrine made sense to me: the Sabbath, the second coming, the state of the dead, baptism, tithing, clean and unclean food, the avoidance of smoking and alcohol. I understood that particular prophecies in the Bible would soon be fulfilled, as we were living at the end of time! But such topics as the

heavenly sanctuary and the rationale behind the plan of salvation still remained under my Adventist radar. One of the baptismal questions was whether I believed that the Adventist Church was God's true church. I must admit that, even at that time, I wondered whether our denomination offered the only gateway to salvation. Just suppose there were things we got wrong ... what consequences would that have?

Beginning My Theology Study

A number of problematic circumstances at home led to my decision to leave the secondary school prematurely at age 16. But what to do? I had heard of Dutch Adventist young people who had gone to Sweden to earn good money by selling Adventist books. I contacted the Swedish Adventist publishing house and was accepted as a student colporteur although I had no clear idea where any future education might take place and what I would study. I spent six months selling Adventist books in Sweden with reasonable success, but I hated every minute of it. After coming home I took a temporary job at a poultry farm. It did not require a surgeon's brain to conclude that I did not want that kind of future. I had made a wrong decision to quit school and needed somehow to continue my education. Returning to my old school would be problematic. University was out of the question. However, there was one opportunity that I wanted to explore. At that time the Adventist Church in the Netherlands operated a junior college

with emphasis on theological study. Through Newbold College it was accredited with Columbia Union College (CUC) in Washington, D.C. (now Washington Adventist University), and my unfinished secondary education happened to be equivalent to CUC's entrance requirement. This opened the possibility to enroll in the theology course of Oud Zandbergen, the Dutch Adventist junior college.

Was this a calling or rather a matter of choosing from very limited options? In some sense it was both. I was looking for a possibility for further study, and this option presented itself. But I also felt a growing sense of wanting to choose something that would be meaningful and would satisfy my religious interest. Increasingly, I was looking for answers to a number of questions about my own faith and about the Adventist Church. The three years that I spent as a theology student at the Dutch junior college were formative in many ways.

The arrival of the small cohort of students to which I belonged coincided with the start of Pastor Nico Heijkoop as the new rector of the junior college. He was one of the prominent Dutch pastors with a successful history of pastoral ministry and evangelism. Heijkoop was around 40 and radiated a great deal of energy and self-confidence. Without any formal teaching experience, he began his new career with gusto. He taught virtually all Bible subjects as well as psychology. His considerable knowledge of the Bible and the flair with which he delivered his classes intrigued us. Especially impressive, at least to me, was the fact - which he reported with some regularity-that he had worked through The Seventhday Adventist Bible Commentary from cover to cover. He knew how to inspire his students and how to present pastoral ministry as a fascinating career that, while it had its challenges, also offered much fulfillment. In doing so, he certainly reinforced in me a slowly growing sense of vocation.

During the three years I spent at Oud Zandbergen, I had classes in dogmatics, Daniel and Revelation, and the Pauline epistles, among other things. That last subject was perhaps a bit over-ambitious, and when I now pull out the books we read and see what I underlined, I wonder how much I really understood at the time. I found the class in Daniel and Revelation fascinating. What stuck with me most of all was that Heijkoop left room for alternative approaches and did not pin us down to a particular explanation. In that respect he probably had a decisive influence on me as I was taking my first tentative steps on the path of theology.

Being systematically engaged with the Bible made me realize that, while I knew the basics of the teachings of the Church and was reasonably familiar with the stories in the Old and New Testament, I hardly knew large sections of the Bible. That made me decide to read systematically through the entire Bible. That I had an intense spiritual life in those days would be overstating it. But, unmistakably, the awareness grew that I was in the right place, and the sense of "vocation" became gradually stronger. The fact that some pastors whom I knew well regularly encouraged me certainly contributed to that.

Newbold College

Theology students were expected to move on from Oud Zandbergen to Newbold College in Great Britain. When I attended Newbold College (1963-1965), it was not yet the quality institution it would later become. When I arrived, the most prominent theology professor was Dr. Leslie Hardinge, an American who had been "loaned" to Newbold for several years by CUC. His lectures showed an impressive knowledge of the Bible, and with his boundless imagination he often managed to make them extremely exciting. He was also so well versed in the books of Ellen White that he always knew of a quotation to reinforce his explanation of a biblical passage. However, he approached the Bible in a literalistic way that gave me a sense of unease and from which I later firmly distanced myself.

The subject of the sanctuary service was an important part of the Newbold curriculum, and Hardinge was a sanctuary specialist. In the United States he was a much sought-after speaker at Bible conferences and other events. He gave a deep meaning to every part of the sanctuary, every piece of clothing worn by the priests, and every detail of the sacrifices and other sacred rituals. At times his explanations sounded (at least to me) quite bizarre or at least artificial. With other themes, too, he sometimes came up with startling statements. I especially questioned his approach to the Old Testament prophets. Hardinge was convinced that those books should not be studied primarily in their historical context, but for their direct (and often allegorical) application to concrete situations in our present time.

Another key lecturer was Ernest Marter. He was a completely different type of teacher-much more predictable but also much more boring. He taught, among other things, the Harmony of the Gospels course. Ignoring all the theories that exist about the relationships between the Gospels - and especially between the three Synoptics (Matthew, Mark, and Luke)-he instructed us to cut up two old Bibles and paste all separate paragraphs of the Gospels in such a way that one continuous story would emerge. I still had so little theological background that it seemed a reasonable and useful activity. It would not take long, however, for me to understand that such a simplistic approach to the so-called Synoptic problem was not worthy of a true theological educational institution.

My two years at Newbold were especially important in confronting me with the role of Ellen White in Adventism. In the Dutch Adventist Church of those days, she played a limited role. Only a few of her books had been translated into Dutch, and most members had read little of her material. Moreover. most of the older pastors had been educated in Germany, where the Church had paid relatively little attention to her. Many considered the vegetarian lifestyle she promoted as rather odd. Newbold, however, emphasized Ellen White much more, and I was forced to read extensively in her writings. My reaction to them was somewhat ambivalent.

MA at Andrews

Arriving at Andrews in 1965, I felt that at long last I was really beginning my theological studies. One of the teachers who immediately made a deep impression on me was Dr. Siegfried Horn, from whom I took the class, Introduction to the Old Testament, He regularly participated in excavations in the Middle East led by the almost legendary Professor William Albright. As a result, he would be away for a good part of the first semester of the 1965-1966 academic year, so he had to squeeze three months' worth of lectures into six weeks. For Horn, it was no problem at all to start his lectures at 7:00 in the morning and then talk non-stop until about 10:00. Although always very diplomatic about the origins of the Old Testament,

he did say enough about major issues to arouse my curiosity, giving me the idea that there were serious problems that one could not just dismiss. Still, he left the area of so-called "higher criticism" largely unexplored. At one time

during a private discussion, he mentioned that he knew there were many problems, in particular with regard to chronology. He remained silent about these issues in public, he said, because he owed much to his Church and therefore did not want to create any trouble.

Introduction to the New Testament did, however, bring out the "critical" theories much more clearly. The class was taught by a team of three professors-Earl Hilgert, Sakae Kubo, and Herold Weiss. I was lucky enough to enjoy their expertise. Within a few years after I graduated, the Seminary discontinued them as teachers.

Among my other favorite professors were Dr. Raoul Dederen, a systematic theologian, with whom I took the Christology course, and especially Dr. Edward Vick. Dederen, who grew up in the French speaking part of Belgium, had recently come to Andrews, and his heavy French accent would always betray his origins, Vick came from England and was a maverick within the faculty. Many viewed him with suspicion because he not only avoided Adventist jargon, but also refused to give ready-made answers to his students' questions. That was especially evident in his lectures on Contemporary Theology, which provided an overview of what was then available on the theological market. I still have my class notes!

Because I had chosen a major in church history, I had intensive contact with Dr. Kenneth Strand, from whom I took classes in the history of the early church and of the Reformation period, and with Dr. Daniel Walther, who among other things guided me in writing my master's thesis about the role of the Calvinist theological and political views that inspired William of Orange to assume leadership in the 16th-century Dutch revolt against Spain.

Because my wife Aafje and I were struggling for financial survival, I did not have time to read much else besides the required material for my classes. But every now and then I managed to delve into something extra. It would be true to say that I had come to Andrews as a fundamentalist, but the class of Hilgert, Kubo,

The leaders of the Dutch Church were surprised to see us come back. When I had continued my education in the United States, they considered us "lost" for the work in the Netherlands.

and Weiss, in particular, opened my eyes. Dr. Kubo encouraged me to read some specific books about the dangers of fundamentalism, which further helped me to turn away from my fundamentalist outlook.

I graduated magna cum laude, but in retrospect my wife and I wonder how we managed to complete the academic year at Andrews so successfully. We had \$1,000 in our pockets when we arrived. By the end, our total assets had shrunk to less than \$100. Dr. Kubo, who strongly urged me to continue my studies, made contacts for me at the prestigious Divinity School of the University of Chicago. When I went there for an interview. I was told that I could be admitted to the doctoral program. But our money had run out. Our only option was to return to the Netherlands and seek Church employment

Back to the Netherlands

The leaders of the Dutch Church were surprised to see us come back. When I had continued my education in the United States, they considered us "lost" for the work in the Netherlands. We had not received any monetary support from the Church while at Newbold or at Andrews. Aafje worked full time in the Andrews book bindery, and I put in some 20 hours a week in the university maintenance department. In order to finance our return trip to the Netherlands and have some money for basic furniture, we remained in the United States for another three months while I was employed as a painter in the nearby city of Benton Harbor. The Dutch "brethren" graciously decided to subsidize our return journey to the Netherlands with the equivalent of what the travel from England would have cost!

The Church leaders were rather suspicious that I had academic ambitions, and my placement as an assistant pastor in the northern part of the country may well have partly been inspired by the comforting idea that no theological educational institutions existed in the area! During the nearly two years I worked there, I read widely but had no chance to engage in any serious academic work. However, things changed when I received an invitation to join the staff of the Church's small junior college as the dean of boys. My job description also included some teaching: New Testament Greek, doctrines, and Old Testament backgrounds. At first I combined my half-time teaching load with my duties as dean of boys. After about three years, the school board appointed me as the head of the institution, and my teaching continued.

Since my move to the college, I was in a

much better situation as far as further study was concerned. After all, it was difficult to discourage an employee of an educational institution from further professional development. The board did not object when I suggested that I would enroll in the theology department of the University of Utrecht. I believed that on the basis of my master's degree I would receive a good amount of academic credit. It was a major disappointment to hear that I would first have to take an advanced course in Latin and classical Greek. Following their successful completion, I would have to take classes in Hebrew and philosophy. At that stage I might receive some credit for work done at Andrews.

I decided to take the Latin and Greek classes. After a year I passed the exams and enrolled in theological studies. I started with the Hebrew classes, but I began to doubt more and more whether Utrecht University was my best option. Dr. Roy Graham, whom I knew from my Andrews period (and who had received his master's degree simultaneously with me), had returned to Britain and assumed a leadership post in the British Union. He suggested the possibility of enrolling as an external student at the University of London. He also told me about Wolseley Hall, an institute in Oxford that offered various facilities to assist the so-called "external students" of the University of London by means of syllabi, reading schedules, examination examples, etc.

University of London

I was able to enroll in the "external" Bachelor of Divinity program of the University of London. The first period of three years would conclude with the so-called preliminary exam, and the entire study was then, if all went well, completed after the fifth year with the final exam. Based on what I had already done, the only course remaining for me prior to the preliminary exam was an exegesis of the Gospel of Mark from the Greek text. Soon enough the way was now open for an intensive study program that required two years for "normal" students. I was determined to do it in that same time period, even though I had a full-time job. This time my employing organization was prepared to foot the bill!

The study focused on nine subjects divided among Old Testament and New Testament backgrounds and exegesis, dogmatics, philosophy, and church history. The coursework especially focused on church history, particularly that of the early church. In addition to the "ordinary" church history of the first five centuries, I



had to do a course that explored the history of dogma of that period, as well as one that analyzed Latin and Greek liturgical texts of the same period.

I sat for the final exams in London, hoping that I would be successful. The university has a series of classifications in its grading system. Students can fail or they can pass in several ways. One can pass with "first class honors," "second class honors (upper)," "second class honors (lower)," or "third class honors." Those who pass with "first class" or "second class (upper)" can proceed directly to work on a doctorate, while those who pass with a lower classification must take additional studies before being admitted to PhD studies.

Weeks of tense waiting followed, but at last I received word that I had passed with the classification "second class (upper)" - sufficient to start working on a PhD dissertation. Not wasting any time, I began exploring how I could best go about this. I was advised to contact Dr. S. J. Murray, who was associated with Heythrop College. Also part of the University of London, it functions as the Catholic Theological Faculty. Murray, a Jesuit and expert in the history of early Christianity, received me in his simple living, sleeping, cum study room. He was immediately willing to be my supervisor. After some further correspondence, we agreed that I would study the theme of "rest" as it had developed in Syriac Christianity during the early centuries. Murray recommended that theme to me, believing that a Sabbath-keeper like myself would be especially fascinated by what I was likely to discover in such a study. I would do well, he said in passing, to learn the ancient Syriac language in order to be able to work from the original sources! However, an unexpected career switch meant that I would have little time to proceed with a dissertation.

Management and Writing

Although I had not continued in pastoral ministry, I had been ordained. While one or two of the senior Church leaders had questions about my orthodoxy, apparently those objections were not shared by others and did not impede or delay my ordination. My promotion at the junior college to be the head of the institution, with a place on the union committee, indicated that I was considered "in good and regular standing."

While I was still working at the college, the Dutch Adventist publishing house began looking for a new

director. The union leadership asked me to combine my work at the school with serving part time at the publishing house as its director and editor-in-chief. They had noted that I had some writing skills. I soon saw my first small book published, which was about our denominational history.⁴

The years which followed were hectic, to say the least. After about two years, Church leadership released me from my job at the college so that I could devote all my time to managing the publishing house and editing its publications. I still did some occasional teaching and preached weekly. For the time being, my writing was mostly limited to articles for denominational journals. Throughout the 10 years that I was connected with the publishing branch of the Church, my byline appeared embarrassingly frequently. I tried to act responsibly and steer our publications away from topics I considered dubious. The content of what I wrote was perhaps more noteworthy for what I did not write than for what I did!

My period as an editor of the Dutch Adventist publications coincided with the activities of Robert Brinsmead and the tumultuous events around Desmond Ford. The ideas of Brinsmead circulated mostly at the right-wing fringes of the Dutch Church, and I felt an almost immediate aversion toward them. I was determined to give the Brinsmead teachings no visibility in our publications. The issues around Dr. Ford-even when they reached their climax at Glacier View - did not arouse a major interest among Dutch Adventists. At the time, I did not follow all the arguments. Unaware of most of the political intrigues at higher Church levels, I wondered why the Church was giving Ford such a hard time. I had read his book on Daniel⁵ and had learned about the "apotelesmatic principle," concluding that it was very similar to what I had been thinking myself for quite some time.

In 1978, Church leadership in the Netherlands asked me to write a "missionary book" presenting the main points of the Adventist faith. I gave it a title which translates as: It Does Make a Difference What You Believe! Some 20,000 copies were distributed, and in 1995 it was reprinted. Translations appeared in German, Swedish, and Danish. I tried to be balanced in my approach to our doctrines. It was definitely not fundamentalist, and I stayed away from topics that were increasingly subject to doubt in my own mind. While I underlined that God is the Creator, I remained silent about a creation of everything in six 24-hour days. I stressed both the divine and human elements in

the inspiration of the Bible, but chose to say very little about a heavenly sanctuary. I only touched (in a short footnote) upon the idea that "days" in biblical time prophecies might refer to actual years since I could not see any clear biblical proof for this. It was gratifying to see that the book was generally well received.

During this period the only articles from my pen that caused a significant stir involved a four-part series in the Dutch Union journal about the inspiration of Ellen White.6 It must be remembered that in the 1970s a number of scholars published their findings about the inspiration of White's writings that were in tension (to say it kindly) with the official viewpoint of the denomination. In 1978, Ronald Numbers released his bombshell book, which made a tremendous impact on my thinking concerning White.7 I had never put her on a pedestal, but I saw how many church members did, and this was a good reason to give the Church some balanced information. The reactions to the articles were quite diverse. For some, reading them was a liberating experience. For others, it confirmed their suspicions that I was no longer a bona fide Adventist. Letters went to Dr. Jan Paulsen, the division president at that time. He asked for more information from the union president, who assured Paulsen that he had no reason to be concerned.

Throughout these years Spectrum was a source of inspiration for me and an eye-opener with regard to many important issues. I first heard about the journal during my brief pastoral assignment in the north of the Netherlands. A few times I had the good fortune

to meet Dr. Molleurus Couperus, one of the initiators of the journal, when he visited his elderly mother. She lived in a care home in my territory and enjoyed my visits, especially when I took the time to play a game of chess with her. In the years yet to come, I greatly appreciated my encounters with the longtime editor of Spectrum, Dr. Roy Branson. As time went on, I saw him as an inspiring role model, and eventually we became good friends.

Africa

After 10 tough years at the Dutch publishing house, I was looking for a change. Within days after I made it known that I was eager to accept an invitation to serve elsewhere, I received a call from the General Conference for a post in the West African country of Cameroon. For a little more than six years, I remained connected to the publishing branch of the Church, first as the manager of the publishing/printing house in Yaounde in Cameroon and then as a consultant for publishing activities on the entire African continent, with my office in the division headquarters in Abidjan (Ivory Coast). I had the opportunity to travel widely in both West and East Africa. If it did anything for my perspective on the Adventist faith, it strengthened my growing conviction that unity in the Church must manifest itself in a colorful cultural diversity. saw firsthand how a colonial attitude had shaped the Adventist Church in Africa and became convinced that Adventism in Africa should strive for a kind of church that culturally - but also theologically - would make African

Adventism "present truth."

During my African years, my workload was not as heavy as it had been in the previous decade, and I had more time for study. I found time for more writing and published three books in the Dutch language. A book about the Sabbath published by the Netherlands Union8 appeared subsequently in English, German, and Latvian. One of the major Christian publishers in the Netherlands accepted two other books.9 One dealt with financial stewardship,



Bruisma with the staff at the Adventist Publishing House in Yaounde, Cameroon, in 1985.

with a special focus on the responsibility of affluent Christians for people in the underdeveloped parts of the world. The other was about the realm of the miraculous. I constantly heard stories about miraculous events and often wondered what I was to make of these. In this volume I tried to approach miracles from a biblical perspective. In my reading and writing in Africa, I was severely limited by the absence of theological bookshops and easily accessible theological libraries.

During a visit to Nairobi in Kenya, I was delighted to find a good theological bookstore, where I came upon the book African Religions and Philosophy by the African theologian John S. Mbiti. It proved to be nothing less than a revelation for me. His explanation of the African understanding of time especially got me thinking. On the basis of his analysis of a number of local (Nilotic) languages in East Africa, Mbiti developed his thesis that Africans deal with time very differently from Europeans. He explained that these languages have different tenses to refer to stages of the past, as well as to the present, and to the immediate future. But they do not have a real future tense as in Western languages. They, therefore, lack the ability to pinpoint anything beyond a year or two in the future. The concept stimulated the more academically inclined cells of my brain. When I had been in Cameroon for more than a year, and felt that I was functioning reasonably well, the thought of resuming my studies gradually re-emerged. Would it be possible to work on a PhD through the theological faculty of the University of Yaounde? And how about testing Mbiti's thesis in the Adventist Church in West Africa. Did local languages of Cameroon resemble those of East Africa with regard to the future tense?

A superficial inquiry among my staff members led me to conclude that this was indeed the case. That raised the question: How does this affect the way African fellow believers experience their faith? Adventists have a religion that is strongly future-oriented, with a focus on end-time events and the subsequent return of Jesus. How do people who are much less future-oriented in their thinking view these things? I decided to start by reading more about African religious experience and African ways of

thinking as well as exploring the type of interview that I would use to collect my data.

I soon found it was not easy to pick up the thread of my studies at the University of Yaounde. The French system used in Cameroon differed too much from the Anglo-American system to allow for an easy transition. But the main reason I had to abandon this plan was my rather sudden transfer to the Ivory Coast.

Dissertation

At long last the opportunity to obtain a PhD degree did come. When in early 1991 my six-year term as a "missionary" ended, I was inclined to offer my continued services in Africa. However, Jan Paulsen, the president of my home division, strongly urged me to ask for "permanent return" and finally work on my doctorate. The division was willing to allow for a creative application of the policies that govern the financial aspects of a missionary's homecoming. It meant that I could get a one-year leave to work on my dissertation.

The University of London accepted me as a doctoral candidate, and Dr. Judith Champs, a professor in church history in the Catholic section of the theological department, was prepared to act as my advisor. This time around I wanted to make sure that I had a topic that did not require any further language study and would be relevant for my Church and my role in it. And so I embarked on a study of "Seventh-day Adventist Attitudes towards Roman Catholicism, 1844-1965."

The question of why Adventists were (and often still are) so fervently anti-Catholic had long fascinated me. Of course, certain interpretations of the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation led to this, but to what extent

were other important factors at play?
Since the Adventist Church emerged in the United States, what impact did the American context have? What was the influence of the various key figures in the early years of Adventism, especially of Ellen White? What later developments had taken place?

We moved to Andrews University and were able to rent a student apartment on campus. The James White Library at Andrews University was an excellent basis for my research. The nearby library at Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana,



was especially useful for finding resources on aspects of anti-Catholicism in America, I also spent several weeks in the archives of the General Conference in Silver Spring, Maryland. At one point, Bert Haloviak, then head of the statistics and archives department, placed a box in front of me. "This is the 666 box," he said. It contained a collection of documents that needed further sorting and cataloguing. The material made it abundantly clear

that, for a long time, considerable doubt had existed among Church leadership as to whether the traditional Adventist interpretation of the "number of the beast" was in fact defensible. Among other things, I found the minutes of two committees charged with investigating this issue in the 1920s and 1930s. Both commissions concluded that the traditional Adventist position—that the number 666 referred to a Latin title of the popewas not tenable!

My research showed that the Adventist view of the Roman Catholic Church did not differ much from that of many other American Protestants in the 19th century. Anti-Catholicism rose and fell in response to important political developments and events. In The Great Controversy, Ellen White's language regarding Roman Catholics was actually quite mild compared to that of many other Protestant voices of the period. However, because most Adventists considered White inspired, her views on Catholicism attained the status of an official teaching. And because she had written that the Roman Catholic Church would never change. the undeniable changes for the better (as a result of the Second Vatican Council, for example) would subsequently be dismissed as tactical maneuvers to gain more favor with other Christians.

Work on the dissertation went well, and my supervisor was very pleased with the progress. I completed most of the work during the year of my study leave. Dr. Champs arranged for the examination in London well before the normal timeframe had elapsed. The certificate signed on August 1993 by the vice chancellor of the University of London stated: "Reinder Bruinsma, having passed the approved examinations as an External Student in the Faculty of Theology, has this day been admitted by the Senate to the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy." To my surprise and delight, Andrews University Press was interested in



publishing the dissertation as a book. I expected the book to stir up some controversy, but heavy criticism did not erupt until a few years later when I summarized my findings in a Spectrum article.10 The negative reaction came from various right-wing "independent ministries" as well as from the Biblical Research Institute, which officially rebuked me. Nowadays, the thesis is still occasionally cited, both by those who appreciate it as a welldocumented study and by those who

see it as clear evidence of my highly questionable ideas. But so far, no one in the latter category has offered a well-reasoned critique that refutes my findings and arguments.

Mission Institute and Church Administration

We remained longer in Michigan than we had anticipated and even bought a house some eight miles from the Andrews University campus because the Mission Institute asked me to join their staff. Then located at the university,11 but also directly linked to the secretariat of the General Conference, this small organization is responsible for the cross-cultural training of new missionary families. My Africa experience supplemented the qualifications of other staff members, who received an academic ranking in the theology department of the university. To my surprise, Andrews appointed me as an associate professor, even though I had no teaching experience at the university level. I owed it to my new employer and to those I was to instruct (and to myself) to systematically devote a lot of my time to mission studies, which gave a new dimension to my academic development.

After just three years, my time at the Mission Institute came to an end. The Trans-European Division wanted me to join their staff, and going back to Europe appealed to us. I became a departmental directorcommunications and public affairs and religious liberty (PARL)—and a field secretary, but during the 1995 General Conference in Utrecht, I was elected as the general secretary of the division. Even though my work was mainly of an administrative nature, I not only preached very regularly but also frequently lectured on various topics and taught intensive courses at Newbold College and elsewhere.

My work during these years involved a lot of traveling. A side benefit was that I had a fair amount of time to read and write in airport lounges and especially early in the mornings and during evenings in the hotels

where I stayed. In terms of my production of books, therefore, my division period was quite fruitful I wrote two small books about Geloven in Amerika our Adventist denomination for a publisher in the Netherlands and a small book about the second coming and related topics for the church members in the Netherlands. A more ambitious writing project was a book on religion in America. For many years I had a great fascination with the history of Christianity in North America and with its current state in America. I approached a Dutch publisher and found that they were interested in a book manuscript. In 1998 they published Believing in America: Churches, History and Faith of Christians in the United States. 12 I consider it one of my best books, and it is nice to see it quoted from time to time.

During the time I worked for the Trans-European Division, Pacific Press Publishing Association published three of Reinder Bruinsma my books. In It's Time to Stop Rehearsing What We Believe and Start Looking at What Difference it Makes (1998), I tried to approach the fundamental beliefs of the Adventist Church in a somewhat different way than is usually done. Instead of going into the theological details for each point of belief, I asked several questions. What difference does it actually make that I believe

this? How does what I believe make me a better, more balanced, happier, and more pleasant person?

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The book received many positive comments. A reprint came off the press in 2017. In Our Awesome God (2000), my focus was on the question of who and what our God is, and in Matters of Life and Death (2000), I dealt with a range of ethical issues, such as euthanasia, abortion, suicide, capital punishment, and so on.

One manuscript that I wrote during this period has so far remained unpublished. When I submitted The Challenge of Change, in which I

> pleaded for change in the Church in a number of areas, Pacific Press at first reacted very positively. However, when they checked with a few Church leaders. they decided that perhaps the book would bring trouble. The manuscript therefore remained in one of the drawers in my study. Its topic, however, surfaced at the 2000 General Conference Session in Toronto when some questioned the wisdom of my re-election as division secretary. I was reelected in spite of the argument that the content of some of my

publications made me unsuitable for the office. Besides the Spectrum article about Adventism and Catholicism, critics mentioned the manuscript about change as an example of my lack of loyalty to my Church. Recently, when I looked at the manuscript again, I wondered if I might update it and still find a publisher for it somewhere. The changes I identified at the time are, in my opinion, still necessary-only even more so.

During this period, I developed a particular interest in the topic of postmodernism. I lectured on it at numerous pastoral conventions throughout Europe and on many other occasions. For a number of years, I presented an annual "intensive" at Newbold College on postmodernism and its impact on the Church,13 which inspired me to write something that I hoped would appeal to postmodern people. This resulted in a book published simultaneously in English and Dutch by Stanborough Press in Britain. In Dutch it was titled: A Life-time Adventure: In Search of God and Yourself

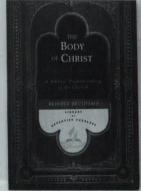


and in English: Faith: Step by Step. Finding God and Yourself. The book has since appeared in six other languages. To what extent it succeeded in appealing to a truly postmodern audience I am not sure.

I summarized my lectures on postmodernism in a book titled Present Truth Revisited: An Adventist Perspective on Postmodernism. I first submitted it to the two official Adventist publishers in the United States, and their responses were almost identical: "We would love to publish it, but we must be careful. The top leaders of the Church will most likely object to your book, and that would be very inconvenient for us." Other Adventist publishers in the Englishspeaking world also found it impossible to accept the manuscript. Eventually, I submitted it to Amazon as an e-book, but due to a lack of promotional channels. sales remained disappointing.

In the years that I worked as the secretary of the division and (later) as the president of the Netherlands Union, my teaching activities were limited, but once I officially retired, I could accept invitations from many places in Europe and beyond, including Bugema University in Uganda. The Adventist college (now university) in Florence, Italy, also invited me several times to teach there for a week. And it was a pleasant surprise in 2014 when Loma Linda University invited me to be a guest lecturer for a quarter. Invitations to give lectures at pastors' meetings came from France, the Baltic countries, Hungary, the United Kingdom, and especially Germany, and I was invited to present seminars for groups of church members in the United States, Germany, Sweden, Lithuania, and numerous other countries.

Shortly before my retirement, I first came into contact with Kinship, the Adventist organization for the LGBTQIA+ community. They invited me to present the worships during an international Kinship conference





The Body of Christ, English and Russian editions.

in the Netherlands. In retrospect, I can say that listening to the stories of people who discovered that they are "different," and who often had very dramatic experiences with the Adventist Church, was nothing less than a shock to me. Since then I have studied this topic. I have attended conferences on the subject, at which I have also made presentations, and I have written about the issues. I have concluded that the Bible actually says very little about homosexuality and other gender issues as we know them today. Some texts are definitely misinterpreted, and I have become convinced that the Bible is silent about permanent, exclusive love relationships between people of the same sex.

Writing Projects14

Since my retirement in 2007, writing and translating books has occupied a large part of my time. I wrote the adult Sabbath school quarterly-Religion in Relationships—for the third quarter of 2004. Five years later I was once again asked to produce a quarterly, this time dealing with 13 key words of the Christian faith. The so-called "companion book" appeared in English, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, and Japanese. A substantial amount of time went into organizing and editing a Festschrift for Dr. Jan Paulsen (2008) and one for Dr. Bertil Wiklander (2014), who was president of the Trans-European Division from 1995 to 2014.

In 2009, the Review and Herald Publishing Association published my book, The Body of Christ: A Biblical Understanding of the Church. It was the first substantial volume in our Church on ecclesiology. i.e., the doctrine of the church. Besides working on some smaller publications, a lot of time and energy went into two devotional books with daily messages. Unfortunately, they never made it to the Adventist public in the United States, as American denominational publishers are extremely protective of this lucrative segment of the Adventist book market. In addition, I also translated a dozen or so books from English into Dutch and vice versa. The Dutch Adventist Church published some, and a few scholarly books by Dutch theologians were published by Eerdmans Publishers in the United States. I especially enjoyed translating the 700-page Introduction to Christian Doctrine by Kees van der Kooi and Gijsbert van den Brink, two professors at the Free University in Amsterdam.15

Leaving or Staying?

In August 2016 my book, Facing Doubt: A Book for Adventist Believers "on the Margins" came off the press in English, simultaneously with a Dutch version. Subsequent translations appeared in French, Danish, Russian, German, and Portuguese. What prompted me to write this book?

I met more and more people who told me that they had left the Adventist Church or had serious doubts about whether they wanted to remain in it. I was also aware of many people in my circle of friends and acquaintances who were slowly but surely abandoning the Church, sometimes after having been active church members for many years. In conversations they told me that they had begun to doubt several Adventist views and had sometimes even lost their certainty that God exists. In many cases people expressed great concern about recent trends in the Church. I decided that I would try to engage with those Adventists "on the margins." At the same time, I also tried to deal with my own doubts and questions. Why did I want to remain an Adventist Christian? A book that was of enormous help to me in my own quest was Alvin Plantinga's Warranted Christian Belief. 16 This Reformed theologian argues that although we have no absolute proof for all tenets of the Christian faith, we have enough evidence that "warrants" belief.

Earlier, I realized no Adventist publisher would want to publish my book about doubt, but a friend in Britain with a start-up publishing company was keen to assist. A generous donor in the Netherlands took care of the initial costs for the English and Dutch editions and later also for editions in other languages. In the book I first dealt briefly with the major issues in the crisis of present-day Western Christianity before focusing on Adventism. Many fellow Adventists, like other Christians, have questions about the existence of God and especially wonder why the world has so much suffering. Many also doubt some of the official beliefs of our Church. Was the world really created in six literal days, some 6,000-or at most-10,000 years ago? Do we have to take everything in the Bible literally? Many, lots of pastors included, are not so sure about the traditional view of the heavenly sanctuary, the arithmetic that leads to 1844, and the historicist interpretation of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. In addition, many are wondering where the Church is heading. For many leaders, unity seems to require strict uniformity, in particular when it comes to the Church's theology. Anyone who wants to be a true Adventist must conform to the small print of the 28 Fundamental Beliefs. Two additional points also cause much controversy: the ordination of female pastors and the status of gays and lesbians in the Church.

Most of the issues that I mentioned in the previous paragraph were (and are) also of great concern to me. In this book I tried to claim the space that I need for myself and that I want for others. I asked the readers not to abandon the Church because of these and other doubts and objections. I sought to convince them that we need the Church, even if it is far from ideal. Also, I defended the proposition that not all points of faith are equally important¹⁷ and that we do not have to think alike about everything to qualify as "real" Adventists. And, finally, I wrote about how, in my opinion, we can deal with our basic doubts in a positive and healing way.

Immediately after its publication, the *Spectrum* website reviewed the book. Clifford Goldstein, the editor of the Sabbath school quarterlies, tore it to pieces. He later admitted he had only read part of the book, but he failed to apologize publicly for his unwarranted accusations. However, most reactions were very positive. Over time, I received hundreds of letters, emails, and other communications from readers all around the world, who told me that the book had helped them to remain in the Church and to look at Adventism from a more positive perspective. Among those who thanked me for the book were some leaders in the General Conference and a few theology professors at Andrews!

In Recent Years

After Facing Doubt, some other topics surfaced that I wanted to pay attention to. I was still doing a substantial amount of traveling in connection with seminars for pastors and local churches, Adventist Forum meetings, study conferences, etc. I continued



Different editions of Facing Doubt: A Book for Adventist Believers "on the Margins."

My main survival strategy has been to be selective in what I say in my preaching and writing and to focus on things that I could say without having to go against my inner beliefs.

to write a weekly blog-a practice I started when I was president of the Netherlands Union. 18 As I visited places in Europe and elsewhere, I noticed the increasing influence of the heresy of the so-called Last Generation Theology. Oak & Acorn, the new publishing venture of the Pacific Union Conference, published my book about this topic in both English and Spanish. 19 The COVID-19 pandemic put a temporary stop to many of my activities, even though the Zoom technology created new possibilities. In addition to preaching and some distance teaching, I was able to make presentations for virtual Sabbath schools in the United States.

As age was beginning to creep up on me, the topics of death, resurrection, and eternal life attained a definite urgency. More and more they were no longer primarily of intellectual interest but of existential concern. Reading and thinking about such things

helped me find answers to several questions that had long occupied me. All this led to the book that Stanborough Press published in 2019: / Have a Future: Christ's Resurrection and Mine. It has since also appeared in Dutch and Norwegian.

It surprised me greatly to discover that Adventist authors have written so little lately about the state of the dead and the resurrection. And then I also realized how little Adventist authors have written in recent decades about the second coming of Christ. Prompted to deal with this topic in what I hoped would be a fresh way, I completed my latest book: He Comes: Why, When and How Jesus Will Return.20

I Have Survived While I Have Changed

From time to time, colleagues and other church member have asked me how I could possibly survive as a church worker-even in leadership roles-saying and writing many things that were often considered unorthodox. More recently I hear such comments as: "Yes, now that you are retired, you feel free to criticize Church leadership and to urge doctrinal change." I recognize that there are many colleagues who are reticent to be outspoken as long as they are employed by the denomination for fear of losing their church employment. I empathize with them, but I have always tried to remain authentic and to be open about what I think and believe. It may well be (in fact,



I know this has been the case) that I missed certain denominational career opportunities because of my perceived liberalism. On the other hand, I believe my experiences in Church employment show that there may, in fact, be more freedom to express oneself in the Church than is often thought.

My main survival strategy has been to be selective in what I say in my preaching and writing and to focus on things that I could say without having to go against my inner beliefs. Yet, when asked, I always tried to respond truthfully and not defend standpoints I seriously doubted. I always kept in mind that one does not, on every occasion and before any audience. have to outline all objections one might have regarding particular doctrines and practices. Honesty and courage must be combined with tact and pastoral care, and it also helps if they are accompanied by a sense of humor. I know that many in my own country and elsewhere see me as rather liberal, while some others regard me as totally apostate. Some, on the other hand, would classify me as "progressive," and that is an epithet I prefer. Such terms are, however, subjective and relative. I am grateful that I have been able to function in the Church, even in leadership positions, and that many of my articles have appeared in Adventist journals and that Adventist publishing houses have accepted many of my books.

At the end of this autobiographical article, I need to return to the question I posed at the beginning: have I changed during my theological and ecclesial pilgrimage? The answer is definitively in the affirmative. I have changed with regard to many of my theological ideas and in my attitude toward various traditions and views of the Adventist Church. I do not feel I have to offer any apologies. On the contrary, I am grateful for my journey of faith and for clearer insights into what is vital for a life of faith and service to others. Some of my earlier convictions have faded away, but what I consider the essentials of my faith constitute was bleibt (to use the words of Hans Kung).

I have remained a Christian. More and more my being a Christian, rather than being an Adventist, has come first. However, being a Christian always implies a certain packaging. One is always a Christian within a particular tradition. Although there are things in the Adventist tradition that I do not appreciate, there is enough of substance left in my Adventist tradition to keep me connected with the Seventh-day Adventist Church as my spiritual home.

As I am about to turn 80, I do not know how much



time the good Lord will yet extend to me. I hope He will be generous to me. In fact, I can think of a few more books I would like to write! If there are a few more years, I hope I can continue to contribute to the life and mission of my Church!

Endnotes

- 1. Jürgen Moltmann, ed., How I Have Changed: Reflections on Thirty Years of Theology (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press Int., 1997).
- 2. Hans Kung, Was Bleibt (Munich: Piper Verlag GmbH, 2013).
- 3. At that time our family consisted of grandfather, father, mother, my 10-year-older sister from my father's first marriage, my sister who is about one and a half year older than I am, and two sisters, respectively seven and eight years younger.
- 4. Ontstaan en Groei van de Adventbeweging (The Hague, the Netherlands: Boekenhuis Veritas, 1973).
- 5. Desmond Ford, Daniel (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1978)
- 6. ADVENT, November 1982, December 1982, January 1983, and February
- 7. Ronald Numbers, Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978).
- 8. De Dag die God Schiep (Bosch en Duin, Netherlands: Uitgeverij Veritas, 1988 and 1990).
- 9. De Christen en zijn Geld: Rentmeesterschap Vandaag (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1990); and Wonderen: Wat kunnen christenen daar nog mee? (Kampen, the Netherlands: J.H. Kok. 1991).
- 10. "Adventists and Catholics: Prophetic Preview or Prejudice" (Spectrum, vol. 27, no. 3, Summer 1999), 45-52.
- 11. It has since been moved to the headquarters building of the Church in Silver Spring, Maryland.
- 12. Published by Uitgeverij Boekencentrum in the Dutch town of Zoetermeer, 1998.
- 13. These lectures form the basis for the e-book that was published in 2014 and is since then available through Amazon: Present Truth Revisited: An Adventist Perspective on Postmodernism.
- 14. For a list of my publications, see my website: www.reinderbruinsma.com and choose: main publications.
- 15. Christian Dogmatics: An Introduction (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2017).
- 16. New York/Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- 17. See also my contribution "Are All Truths Truth?", in Rudi Maier, ed.: Encountering God in Life and Mission: A Festschrift Honoring Jon Dybdahl (Department of World Mission, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI, 2010), 174-189.
- 18. www.reinderbruinsma.com
- 19. In All Humility: Saying No to Last Generation Theology (Westlake Village, CA: Oak & Acorn, 2018).
- 20. Published by Stanborough Press (Grantham, UK, 2021). I also prepared a Dutch edition (2022), and a German translation is under way.

TRIBUTES

TO REINDER BRUINSMA

What I Like

By Andreas Bochman

n 1986 George E. Vandeman published a little book with a title "What I like about ...the Lutherans, the Baptists, the Methodists, the Charismatics, the Catholics, Our Jewish Friends, the Adventists," adding as a kind of punchline or subtitle: "Rescuers of Neglected Truth" (or was it a qualifier of Adventists?). The idea, of course, had been to dialogue in a kind and friendly manner with believers of other faiths about the superiority of Adventism, a somewhat ambivalent motivation.

When I think about Reinder Bruinsma, I first and foremost perceive him as a Dutch neighbor. Historically, the relationship between Germans and the Dutch has been a tense one. During World War II, the Germans attacked and occupied the neutral Netherlands, bringing terror to its peace-loving citizens (think Corrie ten Boom and Anne Frank). Thus, from a historical perspective my title may serve a similar purpose as the evangelistic booklet from the 70s or 80s—tongue in cheek, though, for this piece is not about superiority, but deep respect and admiration.

When Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands intended to marry the German Klaus von Amsberg, strong opposition ensued. Well, he changed his name to Claus (Dutch spelling), converted from the Lutheran to the Reformed Church, and they did get married—despite public protests. The couple worked hard to earn the trust of the Dutch people and succeeded. As history somewhat repeated itself with Máxima of the Netherlands, it may be fair to assume that there is something "typical" Dutch here. And that is indeed what I like about the Dutch. They stand up for what they believe in with great frankness, yet tolerate opposition, even to the point of changing their minds once they are convinced. They like to laugh a lot, and at times laugh problems off, but can be quite determined when it matters, even though the endearing sound of their language never appears to be dead serious.

For a long time, the Dutch were admired for their robust and lasting bicycles (in fact, the Nazis confiscated this national symbol). In current Germany they are known for their caravans with which they like to travel on the German Autobahn, slowing things down for the fast and furious (there still is no universal speed limit on German highways). If, however, the Dutch don't pull a caravan, you can be sure to be overtaken by them.

Sounds too much like a cliché? Fair enough. Testing my description against the life and work of Reinder Bruinsma, please, indulge with me in clichés: a fellow sojourner, sometimes cautioning us to slow down with all our (denominational) baggage, at other times overtaking reservations with mind-boggling speed, demonstrating a robust and lasting intellect, a high level of tolerance, an amazing sense of humor, a willingness to adjust when needed, and a passion to "stand for the right though the heavens fall." Adventism needs more of the Dutch. Reinder, van harte gefeliciteerd!

By Denis Fortin

have known Reinder for many years, but it is only during the last 15 years or so that I have become better acquainted with his writings and insights on Adventism.

I remember a delightful conversation we had in a little cafe in Germany during a conference some years ago. While listening to him, I sensed that his many years of experience as a pastor, teacher, and church administrator had given him perspectives on human life and our Church like few people have.

Anyone who follows Reinder's "(almost) weekly"



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blog (reinderbruinsma.com) can see how prolific a writer he has become and that he is able to write knowledgeably on many, many topics. Whether he writes about tulips in Holland, or the latest decisions of an administrative council of our church, or the discoveries of science, he is able to discern some helpful observations about life. And this is what I have particularly appreciated about Reinder's blogs, books, and articles - his ability to explain Adventism and make it relevant, not only to Adventist believers, but also to people living in a very secular context, such as the one he knows in the Netherlands and one that America will one day know. Many of these insights have arisen from knowing and realizing the complexities of human life in a sinful world and our limitations on really understanding this world or making sense of it.

Dear friend, I wish you a happy 80th birthday. Thank you for your gift of insights and for sharing your experience with us.



y close personal journey with Reinder has been short, but I have known him for almost

25 years through his books. I think I first saw his name when reading his book It's Time to Stop Rehearsing What We Believe and Start Looking at What Difference It Makes. The title alone is worth buying it!

From 2006 onward, his dissertation, Seventh-day Adventist Attitudes on Roman Catholicism, was a frequent reference in classes I taught and research that I did (on Adventist interchurch relations in general, for my habilitation thesis to be published next month). It was good to know that at least one person had walked on paths similar to mine-actually quite a minefield! Well, he defused the explosives rather than blowing them up.

Since 2020, I have had the privilege of cooperating closely with Reinder in publishing the theological journal Spes Christiana (www.eastrs.org/spes-christiana) for EASTRS, the European Adventist Society of Theology and Religious Studies. Reinder serves as the editor. (I am just a volunteer looking at articles before publication.) When I look at the amount of his own published writings, it is simply overwhelming!

By Stefan Höschele

First page of Reinder Bruinsma's editorial that appears in Spes Christiana, volume 33 issue 1, July 2022 (first published in December 2021).

Thank you, Reinder, for surprising us again and again with wise words on almost all significant topics in the denominational sphere - and for supporting Adventist academia in so many ways. May many leaders like you bless the Church with their presence and their encouragement of research, discussion, and ministry that reaches beyond the traditional.

By Robert Johnston

first became acquainted with Reinder Bruinsma when he came to the Andrews University campus as a guest lecturer for the Institute of World Mission. We became friends, and since that time we have had a number of interchanges that were edifying, at least to me. We have similar interests and outlooks. I have made his book The Body of Christ: A Biblical Understanding of the Church recommended reading for my class in New Testament ecclesiology.

Dr. Bruinsma loves the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but it is not a blind love. Like many of us, he wants it to learn to be better, a better servant of our Lord. But Reinder is no sour complainer, no disillusioned idealist; he is always positive and sensible. His example encourages us not to give up on the Church but to serve our Master where we are, as He enables us. Narrow triumphalists may not find this sufficient, and some may even think him dangerous. But it is a good danger, faithfulness in the highest sense. May his tribe increase.



By David Larson

rotective of the past, some leaders are steady, stable, and cautious. Leaning into the future, others are willing to risk new ideas and new ways of doing things. Reinder Bruinsma is both. "Balanced" is the word which best summarizes him to me.

He is a balanced leader who has served in many different ways in Europe, Africa, and North America. Although she is perhaps a bit more exuberant, his wife is also a balanced person. Her name is Aafje, and she is an editor, translator, and artist. Their lives began in the Netherlands, where they are now enjoying an active retirement.

In addition to translating many things for others, he has published 20 books and hundreds of articles. At this time, he is preaching, teaching, writing, posting a weekly blog, and editing a scholarly journal.

Bruinsma's publications are as balanced as he is. They evenhandedly address controversial issues from abortion to Last Generation Theology and many things in between. He has views of his own on all these controversial matters, which he shares after he has surveyed the options. Yet he does so in a way that enables others to have their own views, too.

Bruinsma's balanced approach is especially evident in a book which deserves more attention than it has received so far. Its title is The Body of Christ: A Biblical Understanding of the Church. The Review and Herald published it in 2010 as part of The Library of Adventist Theology which George Knight and Woodrow Whidden Il edited. Although it consists of 222 pages in 13 chapters-more scholarly than most of his other books-it is easy to read.

Its first and last chapters are about the present. They examine contemporary Christianity and its prospects and perils. Four of its chapters look to the past. They retrieve relevant materials from the Old Testament, New Testament, biblical metaphors, and Christian history. Seven of its chapters are about the future. Some are about the Church's inner life: structure, governance, spirituality, and ordination. Others are about the Church's relationships with the world: ecumenism, mission, and social justice. That this book about the doctrines of the Church includes a chapter on social justice is just one reason why we should read it!

His chapter on ecumenism is my favorite. He begins with the claim that Christian diversity is not necessarily "a sin." He reviews the ecumenical movement and its fading energy. He traces Adventist attitudes toward interacting with other religious groups, especially Roman Catholicism, and he explains how they move in positive and negative directions. Here was yet another opportunity for him to side entirely with one way of looking at things or the other. He doesn't. Splitting the difference, he (1) looks with favor on such interactions, (2) but only if they are in harmony with six principles which he articulates.

Typical Reinder Bruinsma. Typically balanced!

By Johannes Naether

n recent years Reinder Bruinsma and I have had many encounters from which I have benefited greatly. In Germany he was and is a very appreciated speaker and discussion partner. It makes no difference whether he is speaking to an academic audience or discussing with church members on Sabbath afternoon-Reinder always builds a bridge to his counterpart. It is his warm and approachable manner that puts people at the center and makes them feel: here is someone who is genuinely interested in me. In addition, Reinder has the gift of always combining deep thoughts with a bit of humor, which is simply pleasant.

With Reinder, I always sense a deep love for the Adventist Church. That is precisely why he is passionate about justice and open and honest dialogue in the Church. What will our Church look like in the next five to 10 years, and what changes do we need to be a relevant church in the 21st century? Reinder often focuses on these important questions, and the answers will contribute to the survival of our Church. He may sound radical in places, but Reinder rightly states that with the Holy Spirit we can take bold steps forward. In doing so, he strengthens trust in God.

I am impressed by the variety of topics he deals

with. Yet he is not superficial; he is truly a wise man who immerses himself in life with all his senses. As a leader of a church, I am fascinated that Reinder still credibly conveys his loyalty to the Church while dealing with critical topics that are not always in the mainstream of the Church. He has his own profile, so he comes across as very authentic when he speaks up for minorities. especially his courageous commitment to the LGBTQ issue. By doing so, he creates trust among those who have already distanced themselves from our Church and need good words to stay.

Throughout his life Reinder has become a role model. He has a deep Advent faith and a firm trust in God. He is hardworking, and he sees possibilities and opportunities which encourages many to continue to stay and get involved in the Church. If you want change, you have to contribute. Thinking outside the box is worthwhile. Creativity is rewarded.

What do I wish Reinder? Lots of time with Aafje, his dear wife, who supports him so valuably. I wish him good health and a lot of inspiration for further topics.

A special wish from me as a German: Dear Reinder. maybe we will have the opportunity to watch a soccer match sometime: Netherlands vs. Germany. We will eat good Gouda, matjes, and German bread. That will be a feast, wonderful!

By Helen Pearson

first became aware of a bespectacled Dutch theology student called Reinder Bruinsma in the Newbold College school year 1964-65. He was a senior student, often seen in serious discussion with other budding theologians. I had newly arrived for a pre-university year. Junior females were mostly invisible as equal conversation partners for these serious young men. But I associate one sentence with him: "Dutch," he asserted, "is the language they speak in heaven!"

With typical Bruinsma humour—a vital asset for any successful church leader—he expressed the serious concerns that have marked his work. Words and language, culture and identity-all of these matter to him. Reinder has always been a proud Dutchman and an equally proud European. Unlike many of his theological colleagues, few of his ideas about God or his Church come from a disembodied perspective. They are profoundly and knowingly rooted in an awareness of the motherland that nurtured him and of his own culture.

His perspective as a European Adventist has always been deeply grounded in a recognition that both the language and the style of faith expressions vary culturally. European Adventists, frustrated by the ethno-centrism of some Church leaders, have found in him a champion who understands the value and values of European history and culture. In every sense, he speaks his people's language.

Reinder's popular contributions to Newbold Diversity Lectures offered reliably straight speaking on language, culture, and identity. In 2000, in his lecture on "Adventism and Fundamentalism," he looked at

ur paths first crossed some 50 years ago. Reinder was principal of our school in the Netherlands (Oud Zandbergen), established primarily to train workers for service in the Church. I taught then at Newbold College in England, and he invited me to come to his school and conduct a week of prayer for the students. I remember it well because it started a stimulating conversation that we have never finished. Whenever we have met since, whether in passing or working together, the conversation picks up and continues.

Do we always see eye-to-eye or agree in our analysis of the life, mission, and values of our Church? Of course not. "Of course not" because the conversation is with Reinder! These conversations have taught me the importance of talking, honestly and earnestly—especially with those with whom you do not agree. Genuine conversation does not require an agreement point of arrival. But it does require a shared care, or it becomes quite pointless. In the midst of our differences, Reinder and I share a deep, unqualified passion and love for the Church and her mission. Right or wrong, we know that the Lord expects loyalty of us. Reinder never gave me cause to question his loyalty to the Lord-including, or maybe particularly,

> at moments when I felt he should back off a bit and give it a second thought.

Around 1990, while I was president of the Trans-European Division, a departmental position became vacant at the division office, and I felt that Reinder should come home to Europe. He had by then spent many years in international service, and our Church and mission in Europe could benefit from his calling and skills. He came, and he stayed on at the division office after I had left, as one of the executive officers.

Reinder cares. He cares about the Church, about his colleagues, his friends, and his family. Reinder has the mind of a thinker and the heart of a caring person.



Adventists' attitudes to biblical language. In 2005, recognising the deepening cultural rifts in the Church, his topic was "Diversity in Adventism: Boon or Bane?"

His leadership is marked by an ongoing pastoral concern for dialogue and growing understanding between the differing groups in the Church and beyond. In 2016, his topic was "Difficult Conversations between Adventists." His words speak for themselves: "Ideally, the enormous diversity among Adventists should make conversations rich and rewarding, and should provide a continuous learning experience. But ... our diversity, more often than not, changes open and constructive discussion into scenes of hostility, mistrust and polarization."

Rifts between dogmatic groups both in and between Christian churches often make dialogue impossible. But not for Reinder. I've lost count of the number of times I've heard him verbally attacked by those who disagree with him face to face. He gently holds his ground - always with a fraternal reconciling spirit.

Reinder and Aafje, his gifted and artistic wife, do more than "talk the talk" of concern for different groups elbowed out of the Church by exclusive power-based theologies. They also "walk the walk"regularly spending social time with those in the LGBTQ+ community and ministering to those whom he has christened "the alphabet people."

Reinder's approach has come a long way since he discussed his ideas only with other theologians. If his brand of honesty, justice, and inclusivity is an echo of the language of heaven, I long to be there!

einder Bruinsma has spoken and written many wise words. But these are the ones that I remember most readily: "A day without potatoes is a day wasted." Not profound, it is true, but certainly memorable. I very much share Reinder's views on potatoes-and much else besides.

Reinder has been able to communicate these shared views on a very broad platform. Hearing another express such views about Scripture and the Church has reduced that sense of isolation that I have sometimes experienced—and still do. It's helpful that they are views expressed not just by anyone, but by somebody with authority and influence in the Church. His very broad experience as an administrator and a pastor means that his words cannot be summarily dismissed as the irregular musings of a mere academic. I owe him a debt of gratitude.

Reinder has the common touch, as the popularity of his many books demonstrates. He is a popularizer of difficult ideas without being a populist. He does not seek to divide. His criticisms of the Church are never mere carping. They derive from a deep and thoughtful loyalty to his Church, that is, from loyal opposition. He seeks to dissolve that complacency which too often characterizes the thinking of the Church's leaders.

There's a breadth to Reinder's world. He knows a lot about Adventist faith and work but also about secular history and modern social political contexts. He knows and loves a great deal about his native Netherlands, but his knowledge is complemented by the life he has led in a number of other countries. This has fed his natural curiosity and readiness to listen to ideas different from his own.

Thus he has been able to champion the interests of those who have been treated with suspicion by Church hierarchies-LGBT people, women, and academics among them. His labors have sometimes required a measure of courage. He also has huge energy for preaching, writing, and teaching-and a certain relish for life. He knows that the kingdom is now.

Unusually perhaps, this openness lives together with a grasp of detail. He has been able to master policy without obsessing about it. Because the bigger picture is always in view.

Credit for some of this is due to his artist wife, Aafje. She has helped him to see that truth and beauty often take different shapes. Reinder would not be who he is without her, and he is big enough to admit it. Every leader needs someone who will tell them privately and firmly about their misjudgments, their conceits, and their foolishness.

Above all, every church leader needs to be clear that they are promoting neither a religious brand nor themselves. They are inviting needy human beings into a closeness with the Living God, fierce and tender-and into a community which will support them in love.

> Reinder can talk with a passion about potatoes, the Church, and the Living God. That's the best qualification for Adventist leadership I know.

without potatoes is a day wasted.



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Thoughtful Leadership

in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

By Rolf Pohler

hat makes a good leader? Countless books have been written on this topic, and many more will yet come out. I am not going to add another sample to an impressive array of good advice and best practice. I just want to share my personal top-three leadership traits, which I consider vital for those in leading positions, including in the Church. I am not talking of professional competencies and social skills, which are indispensable prerequisites for any leader. Rather, what I have in mind are certain personal attitudes that become apparent, especially when a leader is faced with challenges and pushbacks.

No. 1: Congruity between the inner and outer self - I vividly remember a conversation with a seasoned elder and experienced conference committee member who advised me to hold back on sharing unfamiliar views to avoid criticism. "Wait until you have made some headway; then you can speak more freely." Was this the prompting of the Spirit or the voice of the tempter? In any case. I consider authenticity and candor crucial character traits - all the more if there is pressure to conform to strong leaders and weak committees. Some of my international students have made me aware of the severity of this problem.

No. 2: Standing up for one's convictions - Good leaders have a backbone—they do not need a corset. Nor do they let others squeeze them into one. Balanced education, intellectual acumen, personal faith, a mature conscience, and a portion of courage enable them to stand up for what they believe to be right and true. If we admire Martin Luther for his courageous demeanor at the Diet of Worms, we must not reprimand and sanction leaders who take a stand for biblically grounded convictions and values. Submission to the Church does not trump intellectual honesty and conscientious objection.

No. 3: Balancing loyalty and criticism - Leaders owe loyalty to the organization they serve. This does not mean condoning misconduct and maldevelopment or relinquishing the right to call things as they are. In fact, criticism is an expression of loyalty when the good of the Church is in view. On the other hand, criticism without constructive participation is disloyal. Good leaders display both critical loyalty and loyal criticism. This same approach also applies to the doctrinal heritage of the Church. Holding the faith of our fathers in high esteem and reviewing it in the light of Scripture and the present go hand in hand.

Reinder Bruinsma has long embodied these attitudes. Having served the Church in many capacities for many years, he has managed to remain authentic, stand up for his convictions, and stay loyal, while speaking frankly on debated issues. Inevitably, he suffered some bruises along the way, which did not deter him from his course. His perseverance far beyond retirement and his unabated fervor for the Church he loves and suffers from is admirable and worth emulating. The Church needs more people like him on all levels and in all age groups - people who deeply care with heart and mind.



Dr. Reinder Bruinsma presents "Dangers and Blessings of Postmodernism" in a YouTube video posted in 2018.

By Laurence Turner

einder Bruinsma has spent decades as a leader in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He has done so with distinction in a tradition that operates with a task-based theology and mission-to take the gospel to the world so that Christ may return. This stance runs the risk of emphasizing doing (quantifiable performance) rather than being (spiritual depth). Reinder's leadership style, research, and publications have provided a wholesome corrective to that, and a model worthy of emulation. Like the Book of Psalms, thoughtful and relevant Church leadership needs to encompass diversity in thought, life situation, spiritual experience, and expression-from doubting and questioning, through honest differences of opinion and reassessments of tradition, to affirmation and celebration. We find evidence of these virtues in Reinder's contributions, such as Facing Doubt: A Book for Adventist Believers "on the Margins"; Matters of Life and Death; and I Have a Future: Christ's Resurrection and Mine.

Thoughtful leadership in the Adventist Church needs to identify what is worth preserving from the past and what is not. Also, it needs to recognize what is worthwhile adopting from the present and what is not. The wisdom to tell the difference is nurtured by responsible biblical exegesis, serious theology, and reflective movement from theory to practice. Without these commitments, the Church becomes increasingly marginalised in the contemporary world, a trend gathering pace in some demographics. No Adventist doubts the significance of our Reformation heritage nor the contribution of our 19th-century pioneers. But if these become fossilised and immovable commitments in every detail, then in the 21st-century we will find ourselves providing 19th-century answers to 16th-century questions. Examples could be given.

Thoughtful Church leadership is also aware of how to foster a healthy relationship between leaders and the Church at large. Too frequently, and perhaps increasingly in recent years, some leadership can aim to produce a compliant Church. But a greater virtue than compliance to a system or institution is faithfulness to the radical demands and joys of the gospel, which do not always sit comfortably with bureaucracy. Being primarily faithful, rather than compliant, results in a Church membership encouraged to constructively challenge leadership, leading to a greater sense of ownership and partnership.

Reinder's leadership style and his thoughtful publications reveal a mind that moves beyond administrative pragmatism. If the Adventism of the present and future is to flourish in a gospel-oriented manner, his is a voice worth listening to.

"Thoughtful leadership in the Adventist Church needs to identify what is worth preserving from the past and what is not."

hat kind of thoughtful leader is Reinder Bruinsma? What are the ideal characteristics of a Seventh-day Adventist scholar for the 21st century? The answer to those questions lies in Reinder's bibliography. From the tremendous variety of books he has published and public presentations he has made in Europe, America, and beyond, significant features emerge.

This scholar is highly responsive and sensitive.

Reinder finds that the Seventh-day Adventist traditional interpretation of Bible prophecies is challenging, so then comes his study in which he reconsiders the role and place of Catholicism in Christian history and in Adventist eschatology.1

Reinder finds that many church members are desperate when discovering that the Bible writers did not address present-day questions such as euthanasia, capital punishment, cloning, abortion, and contraception. Reinder is bold enough to tackle these difficult issues in a balanced way.2

Reinder discovers that a significant group of Seventh-day Adventist believers are facing doubts, so he starts a conversation with them, acknowledging that doubts are part of his own faith. He is honest to the point that he admits he could have left the boat, but he stayed onboard: "If I remain, it is for you."3

When postmodernism started to raise fears among Church leaders, Reinder took on the challenge of teaching a class on the risks and opportunities this new trend of thought could bring to the Church. Hundreds of Newboldeans benefited from this class.

Regarding COVID-19, Reinder could not remain silent. See his presentation "The Eschatology of Pandemics & Pestilence" and his article in a recent issue of Spes Christiana.4

The list could go on and on ...

He approaches issues with humility.

In one of his recent publications, Reinder addressed the hot topic of Last Generation Theology. The full title of the book is telling: In All Humility, Saying No to Last Generation Theology.5 It is clear from the title what Reinder's position is. The author does not claim he alone has the truth and that if you do not accept his views, you do not deserve to be called a Seventh-day Adventist. Reinder is never bombastic or pontificating. Rather, he puts all arguments on the table and then trusts your wisdom will lead you to make informed choices.

He is always sharing knowledge.

When Reinder reads a book not initially published either in English or in Dutch, his concern is to make it available for the largest possible audience. Translation is another gift he has been granted.6 When he reads a good book, he will let you know that you should read it

To sum up, not an egocentric or boasting author, not an outdated scholar with a 16th-century bibliography, not an old man with irrelevant or meaningless concerns, but a curious scholar, knowledgeable, sensitive to human beings, with an alert mind, always on the go, and, in addition, a 21st-century citizen of the world.

Luther's Tishreden ("table talk") are famous, but it is not known whether coffee was part of the meals. When Reinder misses a friend, he sometimes ends his email with the following: "I hope we will soon have the opportunity to share a cup of coffee." If this happens, don't expect a trivial conversation. The topics are always the same: the Church, its hermeneutics, its future, and books or articles aimed to enlighten, to inform, to open new tracks.

Endnotes

- 1. Reinder Bruinsma, Seventh-day Adventist Attitudes Toward Roman Catholicism, 1844-1965 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1994).
- Reinder Bruinsma, Matters of Life and Death (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2000).
- Reinder Bruinsma, Facing Doubt: A Book for Adventist Believers 'on the Margins' (London: Flanko Press, 2016).
- Reinder Bruinsma, "The Eschatology of Pandemics & Pestilence" (presentation, Adventist Today Sabbath Seminar, online, April 17, 2021), https://atoday.org/atss-04-17-2021/; Reinder Bruinsma, "God and Pandemics: The Impact of 'Pestilences' on Christian Believers in General and, in Particular, on Seventh-day Adventists," Spes Christiana 33, no. 1 (July 2022): 7-30, https://doi.org/10.17613/q228-7r14.
- Reinder Bruinsma, In All Humility: Saying No to Last Generation Theology (Westlake Village, CA: Oak & Acorn, 2018).
- 6. See one of his major works of English translation: Christian Dogmatics: An Introduction by Cornelis van der Kooi and Gijsbert van den Brink (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017). Dutch original published in 2012.



Reinder Bruinsma (second from left) was one of four recipients of the 2020 Charles Weniger Award.

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