



*community through conversation*

SINCE 1969

# SPECTRUM





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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 cultural growth. Although effort is made to ensure accurate 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 or as individuals.

*Spectrum* is published by Adventist Forum, a nonsubsidized, nonprofit organization for which gifts are deductible in the report of income for purposes of taxation. The publishing of *Spectrum* depends on subscriptions, gifts from individuals, and the voluntary efforts of the contributors.

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Letters to the editor may be edited for publication.

ISSN: 0890-0264

**SUBSCRIPTIONS AND ADVERTISING**

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**ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST**

Erynn Richardson was born in Fresno, California, and moved to Southern California as an adult to pursue her education. She received her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in art from California State University, Northridge, before finishing her Master of Fine Arts in 2013 at California State University, Long Beach. She currently teaches drawing and color theory at La Sierra University. She is represented by Bermudez Projects in Los Angeles.

Richardson has an indisputable love for nature and animals, which are often the subject of her works. She currently resides in Riverside, California, with her husband—fellow artist Cody Norris—and their cat, Kali.

**ABOUT THE COVER ART**

**Erynn Richardson, “Be Not Afraid,” 2022.**

“My art explores the relationship between humans and nature through the use of animals as metaphors,” said Richardson. “As a vegan and animal rights advocate, I am fascinated by our desire to be close to animals and the harm that our intervention can cause to them. Through my work, I seek to acknowledge the beauty of animals and start a gentle conversation about conservation. I hope to inspire viewers to appreciate and protect the creatures around us, and to reignite a sense of wonder for the natural world.”



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ISSUE 2 2023

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# Independent. Spirit. Adventist. Journalism. Thoughtful. Community.

Perhaps it's because the words were spoken by Robert Redford. Years later I still hear the actor and activist explaining what inspired the founding of the Sundance Film Festival. He said it would not exist without its independent spirit. Perhaps it's because I relate almost all things to *Spectrum* these days, but I feel that independent spirit deep within the founding DNA of this quinquagenarian organization.

From the beginning, *Spectrum's* independence was not self-serving. It was a deliberate choice to protect Seventh-day Adventist integrity. The founders of this association—all deeply tied to the denomination by family, belief, occupation—knew that openness and oversight requires space. Independence is not always a rejection. It's also a form of principled protection.

After the beautiful language about self-evident truths, the Declaration of Independence launches into a "history of repeated injuries and usurpations." Many an Adventist has their own personal list of these, especially if they have combined church with career,

or even volunteering. We all know the desire to love and serve despite the pain of rejection. *Spectrum* goes beyond just being a safe space because we also practice journalism. Our independent spirit inspires our investigative reporting.

We offer carefully researched stories as

honest lessons for Adventist self-improvement.

In words that sound like an Old Testament jeremiad and yet feel very relevant today, the Declaration of Independence rages against those who "have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity." That biblical idea of righteousness and blood relation gets at the work required to create thoughtful community. It takes more than conversation. The communal requires contemplative movement—forming and reforming to create the kinship bonds that God offers us all. "No daylight to separate us," writes Father Gregory Boyle in his 2010 book, *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion* (New York: Simon & Schuster). "Inching ourselves closer to creating a community of kinship such that God might recognize it. Soon we imagine, with God, this circle of compassion. Then we imagine no one standing outside of that circle, moving ourselves closer to the margins so that the margins themselves will be erased" (140). That's the Spirit of present truth!

Of course, the denotative and connotative meanings of words fall in and out of fashion. They ring true until they ring hollow. But these days, I find

**Independent. Spirit.  
Adventist. Journalism.  
Thoughtful. Community.**

helpful in describing what *Spectrum* means to me. Feel free to remix to your taste. Recombining this *Spectrum* DNA has kept us going for decades. I believe it will keep us growing strong as well.



---

Alexander Carpenter is the executive editor of *Spectrum*.





# Less Rugged, Less Individualism

Life is wired for connection. A lab mouse will not seek food if it means that a shock will be delivered to other cage mates. Two dolphins respond to an injured pod member by lifting their hurt friend together. Elephants have been observed putting food in the mouth of a deceased member of the herd. Bereaved baboons groom each other. My dog Wilson catches the emotion of whatever we are watching on TV—often times British detective shows. If the program is tense and troubling, she whines, sensing the vibe. Nerves facilitate this mimicry.

The discovery of DNA forever transformed the study of biology, and some think the discovery of mirror neurons may forever shift the study of psychology. Increasingly, science shows the interconnection of life. There is a biological basis for emotional contagion. Empathy is more than imagining what another feels. People live with embodied cognition that responds to the emotions of others, and then forms an explanation later, so that we live in synchrony. In fact, emotion, not language, may be the broader key for connection and cultural development within groups.

Loneliness, known to activate biological inflammation and undermine mental health, has become a public health problem. A recent community assessment for the area surrounding my local church revealed that the top three needs identified were related to social fracture and isolation. The person conveying this information to our congregation automatically skipped down the list, assuming our local church could not—or would not—have the courage to do anything about these needs. Ellen White, in her original listing of natural remedies, did not include an antidote to disengaged communities, but this does not mean this problem is outside the concern of the local church. If our church has nothing to say about societal needs, it is impotent.

For a while, *Spectrum* has used the motto “Community Through Conversation.” Originally, there was an

optimism that the World Wide Web would help us connect and feel supported. Many folks—including me—have found solace and kindred spirits via the platforms sponsored by *Spectrum*. Yet, this effort of community formation faces numerous limitations. Flat communication platforms lessen the social cost of being a jerk, and people often fail to realize that being a jerk is not proof of one’s courage. Irritability amplifies.

As technology rockets into the future without ethical underpinnings, society has unwittingly become a pawn in a large-scale social engineering experiment, whose end we cannot predict. For now, levels of anxiety and depression rise, and there is evidence that political players around the world seek to harness resentment and anger for nefarious ends. Transnational efforts utilize emotions to unite people, and these emotions rewire their brains. Fear of the other grows. In our attention economy, our own propensities are boomeranged back to us in order to produce maximal online engagement.

I invite you to consider what your faith has to say to our world now. Our theology must underpin our relationship to the culture wars. Here is a modest suggestion: use the healing potential of connection with another person. Have a daily 15-minute conversation with someone who does not live in your home, and make it a time when both parties listen to each other. (Functional magnetic imaging of the brain has shown the beneficial effects of such a practice.) Let us look to one another—now—as people created in God’s image. Pro-social interaction moves us away from narcissism toward a clearer picture of our culture, and it brings humility.

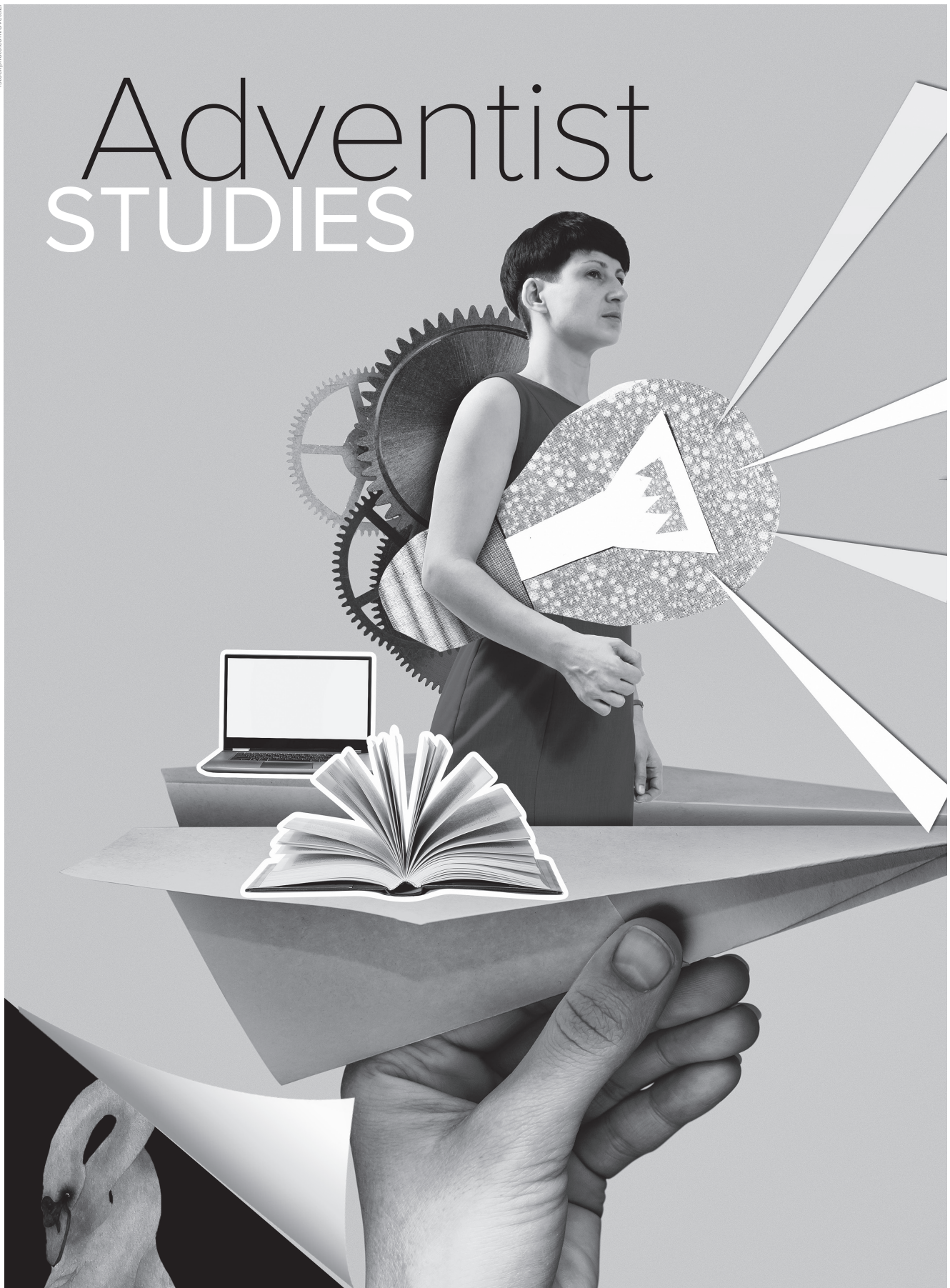
God is a healing God. Enhanced connection with others is a start toward restoration.

---

*Carmen Lau is board chair of Adventist Forum.*

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# Adventist STUDIES







# Hiram Edson

## The Man and the Myth

Many Adventists have certain preconceptions concerning Hiram Edson: that he was a simple farmer, that he had a vision in a cornfield, that he wrote articles about the heavenly sanctuary, and that he died a highly revered pioneer. The reality is more complex.

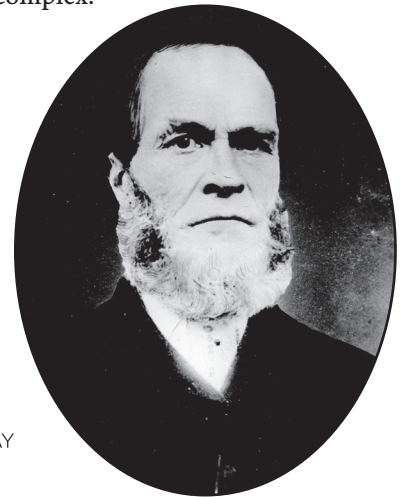
By not evaluating his life in the larger social, intellectual, and religious context of disruption and change that characterized antebellum America, we have failed to separate the man from the myth.

Except for brief preaching forays into Pennsylvania and Canada in the 1850s, Edson spent his entire life (1806-1882) in upstate New York, the heart of the Burned-over District.<sup>1</sup> His Port Gibson farm was located only a few miles east of Rochester, a hub of numerous social movements

such as women's suffrage, utopian societies, abolitionism, the Underground Railroad, dress reform, pacifism, and temperance.<sup>2</sup> The intellectual currents of Transcendentalism, evolutionism, Mesmerism, nativism, and anti-Catholicism sank deep roots in his region.<sup>3</sup> Radical religious groups, including Millerites, Mormons,

### Hiram Edson (1806-1882).

UNDATED PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS ARCHIVES.



*Brian E. Strayer, who grew up in the Finger Lakes of Upstate New York, has three degrees in history: a bachelor's degree from Southern Adventist University, a master's degree from Andrews University, and a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Iowa. He has written 12 books, 120 scholarly and professional articles, and 40 reviews and critiques on French and Adventist history. After 41 years of teaching students from seventh grade to the doctoral level, he retired in 2016. He writes a weekly column for the Berrien County, Michigan, Journal Era titled "The Past Is Always Present," and he is a frequent speaker at camp meetings, weeks of prayer, conferences, and churches. In retirement he enjoys reading, writing, leading Adventist history tours, and taking cruises.*



A portrait of Adventist pioneers in the Andrews University Heritage Room, circa 1970s. Top, from left to right: William Miller, James White, Uriah Smith, John Harvey Kellogg. Bottom, from left to right: Joseph Bates, Ellen G. White, Hiram Edson, J.N. Loughborough, S.N. Haskell, and J.N. Andrews.

COURTESY OF THE CENTER FOR ADVENTIST RESEARCH IMAGE DATABASE.

Spiritualists, Shakers, Quakers, and three Amana societies existed within a few miles of his house.<sup>4</sup> Edson's experience mirrored this larger milieu in which he lived.

From 1839 to 1843, Edson was a steward in the Port Gibson Methodist Episcopal Church, responsible for the judicious use of the funds and literature donated by the members. But after attending a three-week series of meetings led by the Millerite preacher Thomas Barry at Rochester in 1843, Hiram and Esther (his second wife) became Adventists. As zealous soul-winners, they held spirited revival meetings in their home at which many attendees experienced conversion.<sup>5</sup>

Beginning in 1843-44, this charismatic sheep farmer began having celestial encounters similar to those that Joseph Smith, who lived in Palmyra four miles away, had experienced a few years earlier with the angel Moroni (who brought the golden plates from which Smith wrote the *Book of Mormon* in 1830).<sup>6</sup> Edson called his encounters "presentments": supernatural sound-and-light shows that presented to his mind vivid images of events he anticipated would soon come to pass.<sup>7</sup> Here are three examples.

One day as Edson, alone in his barn, knelt to pray, "a personage," whom he believed to be Jesus, stood above him. Edson tried to rise but fell to his knees once again. While prostrate he witnessed a scene flash before his eyes. He saw a minister delivering a bland discourse, then calling for those who wanted special prayer to stand; the entire congregation leaped to their feet. Shortly thereafter, while his family attended meetings at their church, Edson saw this presentment fulfilled when, after the preacher's boring sermon and call for special prayer, a three-week revival followed, and members began holding prayer and song services in their homes.<sup>8</sup>

On another occasion, similar to Smith's encounter with the angel Moroni, Edson saw "a shadowy form in human shape." He then heard what he took to be an angel's voice telling him to go talk with his neighbor about his eternal salvation, which he did.<sup>9</sup>

Another time while relaxing by his fireplace, Edson heard an audible voice telling him to go and heal a deathly ill friend. When he refused the floor suddenly seemed to drop from under him, and he saw himself falling toward hell. Crying out for God to save him,



he heard the voice once again say, “Go heal thy sick neighbor.” Making his way to the man’s home that night, Edson entered and found his way by the light of a candle. After stumbling up the stairway to the sick man’s bedroom, he placed his hands upon the man’s head and cried, “*Brother*, the Lord Jesus make you *whole*.” Immediately the man opened his eyes, threw back the covers, and jumped out of bed, leaping around the room and praising God. After the man’s family rushed upstairs, Edson prayed for them, and some of them experienced conversion.

The next day as this healed man was chopping wood, his physician rode by and expressed amazement at the man’s recovery. “I expected to find you *dead!*” The man replied, “I am a well man. The *Lord* has healed me.” A great revival occurred in the church because of this faith healing. Eighty were converted at one meeting, and between three hundred and four hundred individuals experienced conversion within a few years’ time.<sup>10</sup>

As a result of this experience, Edson declared: “I also learned an additional lesson, namely, that God was ready and willing to hear and answer prayer for the sick, and to stretch forth his hand to heal and raise them up, and restore them to health. Since that time, I have shared in, and witnessed many incidents of like character.”<sup>11</sup> In fact, between 1844 and 1852, numerous cases of faith healings occurred in Rochester and its vicinity.<sup>12</sup>

Like Margaret and Kate Fox of nearby Hydesville, who in 1848 claimed to communicate with a being they called Splitfoot by means of a rapped alphabetical code,<sup>13</sup> Edson witnessed incidents of ecstatic communication among Sabbatarian Adventists. During the night of November 17-18, 1849, Edson dreamed of entering a room in which six discouraged individuals were praying. One of them said to him, “*Oh!* Brother Edson, I am in the *dark!*” Edson believed this dream was fulfilled eight days later when he attended a prayer meeting in the Harris home in Centerport with the Whites, the Beldens, and Richard Ralph. He heard Ralph express doubts regarding whether they should try to find Samuel Rhodes, a former Millerite recluse. While all knelt in prayer, Ralph asked God to pour out his Spirit upon them. Immediately, he began

speaking in an unknown language. He interpreted this as directions from God for Edson and himself to go to the Adirondacks, find Rhodes, and return him to active ministry. When they reached Rhodes, he told them that three nights earlier he had dreamed that two men were seeking him. Then Ralph once again spoke in an unknown tongue after which he assured Rhodes that God extended hope, mercy, and forgiveness to him and that he should return with them. Rhodes did so, and within weeks his preaching led to the conversion of forty souls.<sup>14</sup>

I would suggest that in order to understand Edson’s cornfield experience, it is important to consider this broader background of glossolalia, faith healings, visions, dreams, presentments, and encounters with supernatural beings among Mormons, Spiritualists, Millerites, and others who lived in Edson’s immediate vicinity. One might say that in upstate New York between 1830 and 1844, the hills were alive with the sounds of the supernatural!

Early on Wednesday morning, October 23, 1844, following breakfast in the Edson kitchen and prayers for guidance in the granary, Edson and his houseguest, Owen Russell Loomis Crosier (1820-1912) took a shortcut across a cornfield on their way to “encourage the brethren.” In Edson’s words, here’s what happened:

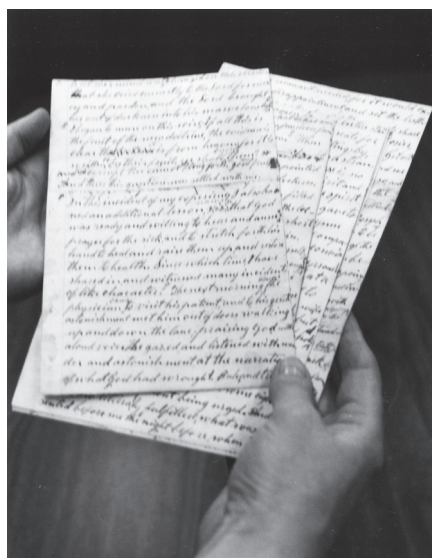
We started, and while passing through a large field I was stopped midway of the field. Heaven seemed open to my view, and I saw *distinctly*, and *clearly*, That instead of our High Priest coming out of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300 days, that he, for the *first time entered* on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary; and that he had a work to perform in the Most Holy *before* coming to this earth.<sup>15</sup>

What exactly Edson “saw *distinctly*, and *clearly*” has divided church historians, scholars, skeptics, and popular writers for nearly two centuries. As discussed

in chapter four (“Disappointed Millerite”) of my forthcoming book, *Hiram Edson, the Man and the Myth* (currently at Oak & Acorn Publishing), four distinct views exist among the fifty-three writers I have examined: Edson had a vision (twenty-five authors); he felt a flash of light (five authors); he received an impression or insight (twenty-one authors); or he experienced no supernatural illumination at all (two writers). But if Edson’s previous supernatural experiences shed any light on what happened that morning, then his words “I saw *distinctly* and *clearly*” suggest that he had another presentment, or what the French call a *son et lumière* (sound and light) show that was indeed very vivid.

So how did the citizens of Ontario and Wayne counties react when word got out that Edson was experiencing presentments and that some Adventists had been instantly healed by prayer while others were speaking in unknown tongues? As might be expected, reactions were mixed. Most people simply ignored these phenomena; several saw them as divinely inspired, while a handful reacted as violently toward Adventist charismatics as others had in attacking Quakers and Shakers in New York and Mormons in the Midwest.<sup>16</sup>

During one of Hiram and Esther’s cottage meetings in 1844, a gang of forty men, intent on tarring and feathering every Millerite leader they could catch, stormed into the house. Grabbing one Adventist man, they dragged him toward the door. When another believer tried to intervene, a member of the mob snatched a griddle iron from the wood stove and hit him hard above the eye, cutting a bloody gash in his forehead and knocking him nearly unconscious to the ground. Edson stepped between the two men and shouted, “I won’t give up my faith [even] if you cut me into inch pieces and feed my flesh to the foxes of the desert and the fowels [sic] of the air.” Surprisingly, Edson’s biblical



The Hiram Edson manuscript in the Andrews University Heritage Room, photography circa 1970s.

COURTESY OF THE CENTER FOR ADVENTIST RESEARCH IMAGE DATABASE.

allusions to Isaiah 13:21 and 1 Samuel 17:44 calmed the angry mob, and they left.<sup>17</sup>

Subsequently, the Edsons received death threats from hostile neighbors who had probably read Joseph Marsh’s slanderous charges

against Hiram Edson. In the February 24, 1847, issue of the Advent Christian newspaper, *The Voice of Truth and Glad Tidings*, editor Marsh in nearby Rochester had accused Edson of taking his fifteen-year-old son George out into the woods, removing his coat, tying his hands, and whipping him with six beech whips “so unmercifully that by the cries of murder of the son, the neighbors were called to his relief.” Marsh stated that for this offence, Edson had been arrested by the sheriff, tried before a jury, found guilty, and fined fifteen dollars for his “barbarity.”<sup>18</sup> Yet no evidence has been found in the Manchester docket books or justice books of the 1840s to support Marsh’s allegations that Edson was arrested and fined for beating George (if he indeed did so).<sup>19</sup>

One suspects, however, that it was not Edson’s alleged beating of his son that upset Marsh. Instead, he charged Edson with “receiving a *revelation from God*” to punish his son. Furthermore, Marsh accused him of teaching “the *wild delusions* of the doctrine of the shut door and its kindred absurdities.” In short, Marsh was using his newspaper to mock Edson’s claim of receiving divinely inspired presentments, including his October 23, 1844, experience in the cornfield. This may reflect widespread knowledge and, no doubt, strong disapproval of Edson’s claim of receiving celestial revelations.<sup>20</sup>

Understanding the hostile atmosphere that Hiram and Esther faced in Port Gibson places in a broader



context a strongly worded testimony that Ellen White sent them in 1850:

I saw that Brother and Sister Edson would have to move soon from the place where they now live, for there was *enmity* enough in the hearts of the wicked there to take their lives, for they *hated* them for the truths they believed and have advocated, for it *condemned* them, and a number of times the wicked had it in their hearts to take the lives of Brother and Sister Edson; but God

had defeated the wicked and guarded their lives.<sup>21</sup>

Although White occasionally employed hyperbolic prose to emphasize the points she was making, given the evidence at hand, it appears that the wisest course for the Edsons was to leave Port Gibson. Heeding her advice, they sold their farm and moved farther east, first to Oswego in 1850 and then to Port Byron in 1852.

Between 1849 and 1867, Edson wrote two pamphlets and twenty articles, and he sent twenty letters and reports to the *Present Truth* and the *Advent Review and*

*Arthur Whitefield Spalding wrote the following about Hiram Edson in Footprints of the Pioneers (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947).*

The twenty-second had dawned a day of hope on a little company in the town of Port Gibson, New York, on the Erie Canal. Hiram Edson, a farmer and lay preacher, was their leader. Although sometimes their meetings had been held in a schoolhouse up the canal, often, as on this day, they congregated at Edson's farmhouse, a mile south of town.

Through the bright shining day, until the sun went down, they watched and waited, strengthening one another in hope with a recital of the promises and the prophecies. Then with quaking hearts they watched on till midnight. The day was gone, and in apprehension they waited for the dawn. It came with clouds, but not the clouds of glory surrounding the King; they were the old drab wrappings of a desolate earth.

"What can it mean?" They looked into one another's anguished faces. "Is our Savior not coming? Are the prophecies false? Is the Bible untrue? Is there no God?"

"Not so, brethren," said Hiram Edson. "Many, many times the Lord has sent us help and light when we needed it. There is a God, and He will hear us."

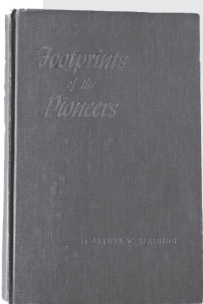
Most of the friends left with the dawn, and went back to their homes. But Edson and the few remaining went, at his suggestion, out to his barn, and entering the empty granary, they shut the door and knelt to pray. They prayed until comfort came to their hearts, and assurance that in His good time Christ would explain to them their disappointment.

One brother remained to breakfast; perhaps it was Owen Crozier. After breakfast Edson said to him, "Let us go out to comfort the brethren with the assurance we have received."

So they started, not by the road, but across the field, not wishing, I suppose, to meet any of the neighbors, who might taunt them. The field was a cornfield, in which the corn had been cut, and stood in shocks. The two men went silently, each engrossed in his own thoughts.

As they neared the middle of the field, Edson felt as if there were a hand upon his shoulder, stopping him; and looking up, he saw, as in a vision, the sanctuary in heaven, and Jesus, on that day which ended the 2300 years of the prophecy, leaving the holy place and entering into the most holy, for the "cleansing of the sanctuary."

His friend had crossed to the other side, and, stopped by the fence, he looked back and saw Edson with face uplifted, looking and listening. "Brother Edson," he called, "what are you stopping for?" And Edson replied, "He is answering our morning prayer."



*Sabbath Herald*.<sup>22</sup> Yet not a single one of these refers to his October 23 cornfield experience. More surprisingly still, not a single one of his pamphlets or articles focuses on the day of atonement, the investigative judgment, or Christ's ongoing ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. Instead, as discussed in chapter eight ("Speculative Theologian") of my forthcoming book, Edson was a numerologist and a symbologist par excellence, who enjoyed toying with type/antitype analogies. His lengthy articles mirror the concerns of previous Millerite writers such as William Miller, Charles Fitch, Josiah Litch, Joseph Marsh, and Joseph Bates.<sup>23</sup> They focus on biblical arithmetic (the 70 weeks, 1260-day, 1290-day, 1335-day, 2300-day, and 2520-day prophecies<sup>24</sup>); tenuous predictions (the end of the world in August 1845 and on May 19, 1850,<sup>25</sup> the Jews' return to Palestine in 1850<sup>26</sup>); and apocalyptic type/antitype symbols (such as the King of the North—Russia, the King of the South—Egypt,<sup>27</sup> Ahab and Jezebel—Roman



Painting by Harry Anderson, 1944.

Catholicism, Balaam—popes in Rome<sup>28</sup>) to mention only a handful.

In reality, Edson's turgid, speculative prose disqualified him in the eyes of *Review* editors James White and Uriah Smith to clearly explain the sect's views on the heavenly sanctuary. Instead, during the 1850s that task was entrusted to six other men: O. R. L. Crosier (six articles), James White (six articles), J. N. Andrews (nine articles), Uriah Smith (twenty articles), Charles Sperry (one article), and Elon Everts (two articles).<sup>29</sup> Between 1861 and 1876, at least ninety-six more articles appeared in the *Review* focusing on the heavenly sanctuary: fifty-six by Uriah Smith and forty by Joseph Waggoner—and not a single one by Hiram Edson.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, despite his dramatic cornfield experience in 1844, his role in organizing Sabbath conferences and local congregations,<sup>31</sup> his many contributions to the *Review* in the 1850s and 1860s, his receiving ordination and ministerial credentials in 1870,<sup>32</sup> and his generous financial contributions to the Advent movement<sup>33</sup> during the 1870s and early 1880s, Edson closed his career under a dark cloud of doubt and distrust. His insistence that the *Review* book committee publish his two hundred-page manuscript on England in Bible prophecy in 1874, his peddling peculiar prophetic views around the New York-Pennsylvania Conference, and his absence from Sabbath services near the close of his life<sup>34</sup> led Dudley M. Canright to call him a "confirmed crank, and a trial to the church."<sup>35</sup>

When he died on January 8, 1882, the *Review* gave him an obituary of only twenty-two lines.<sup>36</sup> Joseph Bates's obituary in 1872 had filled thirty-four lines;<sup>37</sup> even the apostate Alonzo T. Jones had received thirty-one lines in 1923.<sup>38</sup> One could argue, therefore, that the brevity of Edson's obituary indicates that at the time of his death, he was not on the best of terms with his brethren.

Not until the 1940s-1960s would his reputation be restored by Arthur W. Spalding, who in his books *Footsteps of the Pioneers* (1947), *Captains of the Host* (1949), and *Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists* (1961-62) placed Edson on a par with James and Ellen White, Joseph Bates, J. N. Andrews, and other early pioneers





Grave of Hiram Edson, Roosevelt, New York.  
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS,  
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as a key player in discovering present truth, organizing Sabbath conferences, bringing unity, and financially supporting the fledgling Sabbatarian Adventist movement.<sup>39</sup> Likewise, from 1992 to the present, Adventist Heritage Ministries—by acquiring the former Edson property and erecting upon it Luther Edson’s barn, a visitor center, and a Bible Prophecy Trail and Garden where regular “Sanctuary Festivals” are held—has burnished Edson’s reputation further.<sup>40</sup> But if he were alive today, Hiram Edson would be utterly astonished by the positive transformation of his reputation among twenty-first century Adventists.

#### ENDNOTES:

1. Whitney R. Cross, *The Burned-over District: The Social and Intellectual History of Enthusiastic Religion in Western New York, 1800-1850* (NY: Cornell University Press, 1950).
2. See Jerome L. Clark, *1844*, 3 vols. (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1968), 2:79, 141-196, 254, 273-74; 3:67-69, 78, 88-89.
3. See Clark, *1844*, 1:171-173, 203-278, 352-358, 373-380.

4. See Clark, *1844*, 1:15-83, 90-94, 103-104, 345-52, 361; 2:162-169.
5. LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 4 vols. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1982 [1954]), 4:889-890.
6. Clark, *1844*, 1:90-94, 103-104.
7. Viah Cross, “Hiram Edson’s Experience,” 1, affidavit as related to P. Z. Kinne (no original date), typed manuscript, November 11, 2002, CAR, JWJ, AU. F. W. Bartle also stated that Edson called these experiences “presentments” in a letter to W. A. Spicer, September 4, 1935, CAR, JWJ, AU.
8. Cross, “Hiram Edson’s Experience,” 1.
9. Hiram Edson, handwritten autobiographical manuscript (undated), VT000272, CAR, JWJ, AU.
10. Cross, “Hiram Edson’s Experience,” 2-3; C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Tell It to the World: The Story of Seventh-day Adventists* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1976), 48.
11. Edson, handwritten autobiographical manuscript, VT000272, CAR, JWJ, AU.
12. See, for example, Brian E. Strayer, *J. N. Loughborough: The Last of the Adventist Pioneers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2014), 68-69; J. N. Loughborough, quoted in Ellen G. White Estate, *A Critique of Prophetess of Health* (Takoma Park, MD, Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1976), 43; and Richard E. Kuykendall, *The Dreamer and the Two Men She Loved* (n.p.: Trafford Publishing, 2021), 8. Those healed included Frances Howland, William Hyde, Clarissa Bonfoey, Anna White, Luman Masten, Harvey Cottrell, and Oswald Stowell.
13. Clark, *1844*, 1:352 and Merlin D. Burt, *Adventist Pioneer Places: New York and New England* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2011), 119.
14. Hiram Edson, November 26, 1849 Letter to *Present Truth*, December 1849, 36 and D. E. Robinson, “The Gift of Tongues in Early Adventist History” (n.d.), 1-4, manuscript 032461, CAR, JWJ, AU.
15. Hiram Edson, “Description of Hiram Edson’s Experience in the Cornfield on October 23, 1844 Plus Some Other Experiences in His Life Around the Same Time,” undated manuscript VT000272, CAR, JWJ, AU.
16. See Richard Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 15-16 and Clark, *1844*, 1:159-172.
17. Viah Ophelia Cross to O. A. Olsen, September 14, 1913, manuscript VT000274, CAR, JWJ, AU. This incident, however, occurred when Viah was about a year old, so one must assume others told her about it years later.
18. Joseph Marsh, “Greatly Mistaken,” *The Voice of Truth and Glad Tidings*, February 24, 1847, 1.
19. In response to a 1997 inquiry into this matter by Robert Allen, Pauline Mitzewich, the deputy town clerk of Manchester, New York, informed him that after searching the docket books and one justice book covering the 1840s, “we cannot find anything on your request for information regarding Hiram Edson and the child abuse case against him.” Pauline Mitzewich to Robert Allen, November 17, 1997, letter in the author’s possession.
20. See Fernand Fisel, “Edson’s Cornfield ‘Vision’: Frisson or Figment?” *Adventist Currents* (July 1983):27.
21. Ellen G. White, manuscript no. 7, August 24, 1850, *Manuscript Release* 6:251.
22. See Brian E. Strayer, Selected Bibliography, in “Hiram Edson, the Man and the Myth,” book manuscript (2023).
23. See Strayer, chapter 8, “Speculative Theologian,” 126-128.
24. For a discussion of Edson’s apocalyptic time prophecies, see Strayer, chapter 8, “Speculative Theologian,” 129-130, 132, 134-138.
25. Hiram Edson, May 21, 1845 Letter to *The Jubilee Standard*, May 29, 1845, 90-91; Edson, *The Time of the End: Its Beginning, Progressive Events, and Final Termination* (Auburn, NY: Henry Oliphant, 1849), 3.
26. Hiram Edson, *An Exposition of Scripture Prophecy, Showing the Final Return of the Jews in 1850* (Canandaigua, NY: Printed at the Office of the *Ontario Messenger*, 1849), 1-41.
27. Edson, *Time of the End*, 3-8.
28. Edson, “An Appeal to the Laodicean Church,” *Advent Review Extra*, 1850, 1-16.
29. Strayer, chapter 9, “Sanctuary Expositors,” 140-149.
30. Brian E. Strayer, “Charts Analyzing the Number of Articles on the Sanctuary in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, vols. 1-15 (1850-1876),” typed manuscript (1974-1975), 49 sheets in the author’s possession.
31. See Strayer, chapter 6, “Active Layman,” 88-100.
32. Report of the ninth session of the New York-Pennsylvania Conference, *Review*, August 23, 1870, 78.
33. James White, *An Appeal to the Working Men and Women in the Ranks of the Seventh-day Adventists* (1873), 30, 79, 104 and list of donors, *Review-Supplement*, April 27, 1876, 2.
34. See Strayer, chapter 11, “Dark Days,” 168-171.
35. Dudley M. Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced* (London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell, 1905), 63.
36. Buel Whitney, obituary for Hiram Edson, *Review*, February 21, 1882, 126.
37. Obituary for Joseph Bates, *Review*, April 16, 1872, 193.
38. Obituary for A. T. Jones, *Review*, June 28, 1923, 22.
39. See Strayer, chapter 12, “Edson’s Legacy,” 182-183.
40. Strayer, chapter 12, 184-190.



By Matthew J. Korpman

# William Foy and the Apocrypha

Demonstrating Ellen White's  
Early Belief in the Authority  
of 2 Esdras

Two largely neglected areas of Adventist history continue to produce surprising results when attention is given to them: the prophetic ministry of William Foy and Adventism's relationship to the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. For both topics, one particular year proved to be a watershed moment for Adventist historians. In the case of the Apocrypha, it was Ronald Graybill's seminal 1987 article that put a spotlight on a topic no one knew existed.<sup>1</sup> That same year, studies of Foy were radically altered when Delbert Baker published a book about his discovery that one of Adventism's (or more precisely, Millerism's) first and short-lived prophets had not, as earlier apologetic history volumes concluded, rejected his prophetic ministry.<sup>2</sup>

Both of these discoveries overturned past assumptions in favor of radically new conceptions of early Adventism. The Apocrypha, rather than being antithetical to Adventism, turned out to be an integral part of its early identity. Foy, rather than being known primarily for rejecting a prophetic call, became understood to be a faithful early forebear *alongside* (not replaced by) White in

the early Millerite circles. Yet, similar to Graybill's and Fortin's early work<sup>3</sup> on the Apocrypha, which must be seen in the light of updated research,<sup>4</sup> new attention also needs to be paid to Foy. Whereas earlier scholarship focused on uplifting him into seemingly new apologetic histories, further work is

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needed to dig deeper into his visionary accounts and the connection between this literature and White.

In this article, I merge together these two fields of study and examine the question of Foy's relationship to the Apocrypha. In particular, I want to make three arguments. First, Foy based one of his visions directly on the apocryphal book of 2 Esdras (also now known to scholars today as 4 Ezra). Second, White literarily used Foy's published visions when writing her own account of her early vision, which itself was also based on 2 Esdras. Third, White gave preference to 2 Esdras over and against Foy whenever he changed things from 2 Esdras, indicating that 2 Esdras carried scriptural authority for her in a way that Foy as a Millerite prophet did not. Finally, as part of a broader analysis of practical application, I want to probe White's preference for 2 Esdras over Foy's own vision, coupled with her affirmation that Foy was a true prophet, as evidence of her own prophetic self-estimation as "a lesser light."

### **A Common Source of Visionary Inspiration**

In addition to past studies that have cited the many instances in which the young Ellen White directly or indirectly quoted from or alluded to the Apocrypha,<sup>5</sup> some may still want further evidence of her use of it. Despite the fact that she promoted the Apocrypha between 1849 and 1850, noting *in vision* that "the wise of these last days should understand it," and despite in *another vision* declaring it "the Word of God" and insistently warning Adventists to "bind it to the heart,"<sup>6</sup> many remain uncertain of how to understand her early thinking, given the unsystematic way in which she discussed the topic.

For those who are still questioning whether she truly believed and trusted in these works at a level comparable or equal to Scripture, it is helpful to return to her first visions published in the *Day-Star* Millerite paper in 1846. As has already been established by previous studies, including Graybill's, White "used its [2 Esdras] language in her early visions,"<sup>7</sup> and Denis Fortin subsequently noted in agreement: "Ellen White was likely conscious of the content and wording of 2 Esdras."<sup>8</sup> As Donald Casebolt put it, it was an established "fact" that she

"incorporated them [references to 2 Esdras] into a description of what she saw in heaven."<sup>9</sup> This in itself was something that White wasn't trying to hide, for in the pamphlet that re-published these visions, "A Word to the 'Little Flock'" (1849), James White supplied "Scripture" references to prove the authoritative sources for Ellen White's ideas, among them six citations from 2 Esdras. Further studies from Graybill and Korpman have discovered two more references that were not formally cited by James White.<sup>10</sup>

Unbeknownst to many, William Foy—a fellow Millerite prophet who published several of his visions in pamphlets—often quoted, alluded to, and based his visions on the influence of 2 Esdras.<sup>11</sup> Another less known fact is that White was a reader not only of 2 Esdras but also of Foy. She admitted in her later years to owning a copy of his printed visions, which she said she had continued to read over half a century later.<sup>12</sup> This is an important fact as it provides an opportunity to shed light on how these two Millerite prophets approached and appropriated the authority of 2 Esdras.

It is valuable to recognize that both Foy and White chose to repeat the same vision told in 2 Esdras and thus note that White's and Foy's first vision was not truly "original" to either of them at all, but instead was partially a reimagining or rewriting of the same "biblical" vision previously given in 2 Esdras. The fact that their visions stemmed from the apocryphal book indicates that the work carried authority for the communities they spoke to—a fact backed by recent research on the topic. While one might imagine it possible that both prophets simply saw something in vision that was similar to 2 Esdras, and merely used the language of the apocryphal work to fill out the details, the very fact that they cited such language demonstrates that the communities they spoke to were expected to resonate with it.

So what of those who harbor continued questions and skepticism about White's early views of the Apocrypha? The chart (on page 14) should help to settle such doubts. In the tri-part comparison, the original ancient vision of 2 Esdras is displayed along with the two "rewritten" (or

re-experienced?) accounts by Foy and White. When these three accounts are presented side by side, it becomes apparent how Foy changed 2 Esdras—and also how White subsequently changed Foy.

When White wrote down her own version of the vision, several years after Foy, she copied her language not only directly from 2 Esdras, as if citing any other book from the Bible, but also from Foy’s earlier published recounting, a detail which Casebolt’s recent article on the Apocrypha in *Spectrum* likewise noted.<sup>13</sup> Back in 1987, Tim Poirier had observed that this

2 ESDRAS 2:42-48 (KJV)	WILLIAM FOY (1842) <sup>14</sup>	ELLEN WHITE (1846) <sup>15</sup>
<p>I Esdras saw upon the mount Sion <b>a great people, whom I could not number</b>, and they all praised the Lord <b>with songs</b>. And in the midst of them there was a <b>young man</b> of a <b>high stature, taller than all the rest</b>, and <b>upon every one of their heads he set crowns</b>, and was more exalted . . . <b>These be they that have put off the mortal clothing, and put on the immortal</b>, and have confessed the name of God: now are they <b>crowned, and receive palms</b>. Then said I unto the angel, What <b>young person</b> is it that <b>crowneeth them</b>, and giveth them <b>palms</b> in their hands? So he answered and said unto me, <b>It is the Son of God</b>, whom they have confessed in the world. Then began I greatly to commend them <b>that stood so stiffly</b> for the name of the Lord. Then the angel said unto me, <b>Go thy way</b>, and <b>tell my people</b> what manner of things, and how great wonders of the Lord thy God, thou hast seen.</p>	<p>I then beheld, as it were <i>a great gate</i> before me. The gate was so tall, the height thereof I was unable to see. Before the gate stood <b>a tall and mighty angel</b> clothed in raiment pure and white; his eyes were like flaming fire and he wore a crown upon his head, which lighted up this boundless plain. <b>The angel raised his right hand</b>, and <i>laid hold upon the gate</i>, and opened it; and as it rolled upon its <i>glittering hinges</i>, he cried with a loud voice, to the heavenly host, You’r [sic] all welcome!” Then, the . . . saints, both small and great <b>sang with loud voices</b>, and passed within the gate . . . I then beheld <b>an innumerable multitude arrayed in white raiment . . . standing in a perfect square . . .</b> with cards upon their breasts; and <b>unto each was given a crown of brightness</b>. The guide spake, saying, <b>“These are they which have passed through death.”</b> . . . There was arrayed before me in the spirit <b>an innumerable multitude . . .</b> and in their right hand they held cards . . . My guide, now, informed me what I must do; saying, <b>“Thy spirit must return to yonder world, and thou must reveal those things which thou hast seen. . . .”</b></p>	<p>And the angels struck a note higher and <b>sung again</b> while the cloud drew still nearer the earth . . . We all entered the cloud together, and were seven days ascending to the sea of glass, when <b>Jesus</b> brought along the <b>crowns</b> and <b>with his own right hand placed them on our heads</b>. He gave us <b>harps</b> of gold and <b>palms of victory</b>. Here on the sea of glass <b>the 144,000 stood in a perfect square . . .</b> All were perfectly satisfied with their crowns. <i>And they were all clothed with a glorious white mantle</i> from their shoulders to their feet. Angels were all about us as we marched over the sea of glass to the gate of the City. Jesus <i>raised his mighty glorious arm, laid hold of the gate</i> and swung it back on its <i>golden hinges</i>, and said to us, You have washed your robes in my blood, <b>stood stiffly for my truth</b>, enter in . . . and we all cried out Hallelujah, heaven is cheap enough, and <b>we touched our glorious harps</b> and made heaven’s arches ring . . . and he [Jesus] said, <b>you must go back</b> to the earth again, and <b>relate to others, what I have revealed</b> to you.</p>

Statements which both Foy and White copy from 2 Esdras have been **bolded**.  
 Statements which Foy copied from 2 Esdras, but which White chose not to repeat from Foy or Esdras have been **bolded and underlined**.  
 Statements which White copied from Foy have been *italicized and underlined*.



was “one of the closest parallels between Foy’s and Ellen Harmon’s visions.”<sup>16</sup> When this fact is recognized and, more importantly, studied, we notice something else: Mrs. White valued and *preferred* 2 Esdras to Foy.

Several things are worth noting when examining the parallel columns. It is clear that Foy’s vision changes certain significant details from 2 Esdras. Most prominent of these is that Jesus, or literally “the Son of God” (2 Esd 2:47), is made to be “a tall and mighty angel” in Foy’s recounting. However, notice how White writes her own vision. Although she utilizes both Foy and 2 Esdras in her written account, whenever Foy diverges from 2 Esdras, White chooses to keep the statement as preserved in 2 Esdras, rather than retain Foy’s changes. On the other hand, whenever Foy adds something that doesn’t necessarily contradict 2 Esdras, White chooses to include these details and descriptions in addition to 2 Esdras.

### **Preferential Visions and the Authority of 2 Esdras**

In effect, Ellen White demonstrated a clear and straightforward preference and bias in favor of the apocryphal work of 2 Esdras, so that any details by Foy became subservient to the original “biblical” account. This small preference helps to underscore her comments describing the Apocrypha as “the Word of God” and “thy Word” during this same period,<sup>17</sup> illustrating that 2 Esdras for her, possibly unlike Foy,<sup>18</sup> was inspired in a *scriptural* sense (just as James White described it) and, as such, was not to be changed or tampered with. For Ellen White, there was no difference in essence between the Apocrypha and the Bible in terms of inspiration and authority. Whereas others would have deemed the Apocrypha to be of the same subservient authority as Foy and his writings, White considered both the apocryphal 2 Esdras and the Book of Revelation to be equally “thy Word.”

This distinction between Foy’s vision and the original vision of 2 Esdras stands in contrast to Casebolt, who proposed that White “conferred upon 2 Esdras, the Apocrypha in general, and William Foy in particular, genuine prophetic status” and that “Ellen Harmon was dependent on Foy, in addition to 2 Esdras.”<sup>19</sup> Rather, Foy

acted as the additional supplement to 2 Esdras, seemingly in the same way she argued to others that her visions should be used in relation to the Bible.

With this noted, it is also important to see how this discovery opens up new and important ways for us to understand White’s self-conception. For example, it is clear that White accepted Foy as a prophet and considered his visions as true (thus, she utilized his work). She noted in a 1906 interview that “Foy . . . had four visions . . . he fell to the floor [for almost an hour] . . . he had all these [visions] before I had them.”<sup>20</sup> This confirms that White herself recognized what the chart demonstrates: she and Foy shared the same vision—a vision whose common source was the “scriptural” imagery of 2 Esdras. She also noted that these visions “were written out and published” and that she retained this publication amongst “my books,” but had seemingly misplaced it somewhere because “we have moved so many times.”<sup>21</sup>

Moreover, she noted that she had, prior to seeing her own visions, already listened to Foy’s account of his vision in person and “always sat right close by the stand” when he spoke, and that “it was remarkable testimonies that he bore.”<sup>22</sup> She said that her first encounter with Foy’s visions in Portland, Maine, was only “quite a little time after the visions” had occurred. In fact, according to White, she had gone more than once to hear him, since she reported that “Father always took me with him when he went” to go listen.<sup>23</sup> She also remembered that Foy, when he later heard White’s own vision, met with her and that when he first heard it, he “jumped up and down . . . praised the Lord” and that he was excited because “it was just what he had seen, just what he had seen.”<sup>24</sup>

However, the chart also demonstrates that it is equally clear that she also saw a demarcation between Foy’s understanding and the apocryphal “text” he and she drew from. For White, Foy was a prophet who received true visions, but his prophetic abilities did not allow him to *change* “Scripture.” Moreover, it does not appear that White was bothered by the fact that Foy *did* alter “Scripture” in the retelling of his visions or that he got things wrong (such as doctrinal errors about the deity of Jesus or the state of the dead).<sup>25</sup> Foy was able to get those

things wrong—to be errant—and yet still function as a true Millerite prophet in White’s eyes. In fact, her use of “testimonies” to describe Foy’s visions, the same word she used to describe her own visions, is important in this regard for it draws our attention to how White might have understood herself in the light of Foy’s example.

She could note that “in these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the precious rays of light shining from the throne.”<sup>26</sup> Likewise, she could write that “there is one straight chain of truth, without one heretical sentence, in that which I have written”<sup>27</sup> and elsewhere state that her testimonies “never contradict His Word.”<sup>28</sup> In his study on this topic, Warren Ashworth remarked: “Ellen White must have believed that when she made statements regarding doctrine, as well as any other topic, her statements were biblically and doctrinally sound.” Yet, as he also noted, she rejected the implication of this in *practice*.

In 1910, when the church leaders were divided over the meaning of the “daily” in Daniel 8, S. N. Haskell insisted that they should come to an understanding of the term “by the aid of the Spirit of Prophecy,” because Ellen White had written regarding the “daily” in *Early Writings*, but she refused. “I entreat of Elders H, I, J and others of our leading brethren, that they make no reference to my writings to sustain their views of ‘the daily.’ . . . I cannot consent that any of my writings shall be taken as settling this matter. . . . I have had no instruction on the point under discussion.”<sup>29</sup>

This slight nuance may also help to illuminate her own self-understanding of her gift and how she understood it to differ from the inspiration of Scripture. If Foy could make errors, contradict Scripture, or add foreign ideas to it that had to be rejected—while still retaining his authenticity as a prophet—then

so too could White. If Foy had to be corrected by the Bible if ever the two even *appeared* to contradict each other—while not undermining Foy’s ability to be a true visionary of God—then so too could White be corrected by the Bible and not have her own gifts called into question. She described herself on more than one occasion as “the lesser light,”<sup>30</sup> and by studying her utilization of Foy and 2 Esdras, it may be possible to better understand what she intended.

### The Importance of a “Lesser Light”

As early as 1873, White began using the term “lesser light” to refer to the ministry of John the Baptist in comparison to Jesus Christ (“a greater light”).<sup>31</sup> In 1887, she referenced the “Jewish age” before Jesus’ birth (including the Old Testament?) as “the lesser light” in comparison to the “fuller and more glorious light” that Jesus brought.<sup>32</sup> And in 1894, she called the moon “the lesser light” in comparison to the sun.<sup>33</sup> In light of these examples, it is clear that “the lesser light” remained for her authoritative, even as it was placed in a hierarchy with the greater light. John the Baptist functioned as a prophet, but had no Scripture recorded by him. He could be wrong and even doubt Jesus as the Messiah (Matt 11:3, Luke 7:19). Yet, he remains a true and important prophet. The moon is a lesser light since it bounces the light originating from the sun (and has none of its own), but it is still a needed light. And the time before Jesus remains important and authoritative, even as it becomes re-interpreted anew through the paradigm of Jesus. From this perspective, when White appeared to use this term with reference to her own ministry, it signaled her belief in her authority, but also evinced a sense of humility: she shared a similar source of inspiration to the Bible, but not similar authority.

It would appear that, for White, Foy was also an example of such a “lesser light.” He would be considered inspired, but not authoritative enough to rewrite Scripture or, in this case, 2 Esdras. And likewise, neither was she. Because when it came to the issue of authority, there was more in common between Foy and her than Scripture and her. Thus one can conclude



that Adventists, who when faced with a contradiction between White and the Bible (such as whether Eve left Adam's side in Eden to be tempted), choose to echo White over the Bible (Genesis 3:6 states that Adam was "with" Eve), are fundamentally dishonoring her own self-understanding. Judging from this study, it would appear that, for White, someone who recognizes that she departed from the Bible and chooses to disregard her comments about it would not be practicing a wrong hermeneutic, but rather would be demonstrating the proper recognition of her position in the hierarchy between lesser lights and greater lights. Just as Foy could be wrong by depicting an active afterlife in his visions or holding a questionable Christology, but still be considered a true prophet, so too could White get things wrong and remain a true prophet in her own eyes.

## Conclusion

The seemingly obscure and interesting literary relationship between William Foy and Ellen White—who both drew upon and relied on the apocryphal work of 2 Esdras—can help us understand what White's visionary comments about the Apocrypha meant in the practice of her own exegetical and hermeneutical reading of Scripture. It sheds potential new light on her self-understanding of her prophetic ministry by contrasting her approach toward Foy and the apocryphal work of 2 Esdras contained in her Bible.

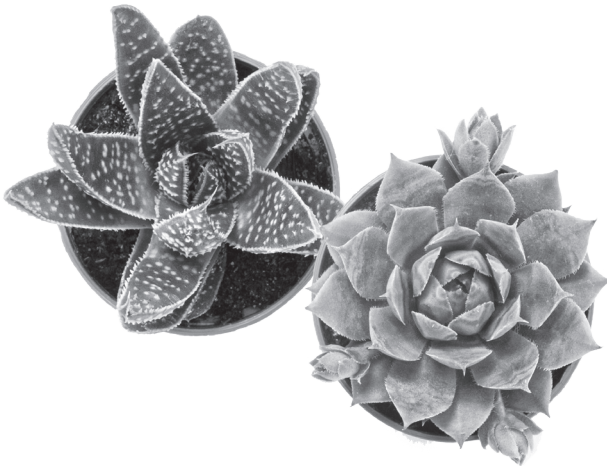
Not even a prophet like Foy (and presumably White as well) was capable of changing the truths she believed the apocryphal book and/or the rest of the Bible contained. As she warned those present during that vision in 1849, "bind it to the heart . . . bind it, bind it, bind it"! Given the evidence of how she navigated Foy and 2 Esdras, it is clear that she did in fact do just that within her own devotional practice. In the end then, any attempt by Adventist scholars to understand White's view of Scripture and biblical authority must take into account her views regarding the Apocrypha.

## ENDNOTES:

1. Ronald Graybill, "Under the Triple Eagle: Early Adventist Use of the Apocrypha," *Adventist Heritage* 12 (Winter 1987): 25-32.

2. Delbert W. Baker, *The Unknown Prophet: Revised and Updated* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013 [1987]).
3. See Denis Fortin, "Sixty-six Books or Eighty-one? Did Ellen White Recommend the Apocrypha?" *Adventist Review* 179.13 (2002): 10-13.
4. See Matthew J. Korpman, "Ellen White and the Pseudepigrapha: *Jasher*, Enoch, and the Amalgamation of Man and Beast," *Spes Christiana* 33.2 (2022); "Endorsing the Septuagint: Ellen White and Her Later Views of the Apocrypha," *Academia Letters* (2022): 1-7; "The Protestant Reception of the Apocrypha," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Apocrypha*, ed. Gerbern Oegema (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021): 74-93; "Forgotten Scriptures: Allusions and Quotations by Ellen White to the Apocrypha," *Spes Christiana* 31.2 (2020): 109-146; "Antiochus Epiphanes in 1919: Ellen White, Daniel, and the Books of the Maccabees," *Adventist Today* (2020): 30-33; "Adventism's Hidden Book: A Brief History of the Apocrypha," *Spectrum* 46.1 (2018): 56-65. See also Donald E. Casebolt, "'It Was Not Taught Me By Men': Ellen White's Visions and 2 Esdras," *Spectrum* 46.1 (2018): 66-73.
5. Korpman, "Forgotten Scriptures," 109-146.
6. Ellen White, "Remarks in Vision," Manuscript 5, 1849.
7. Graybill, "Under the Triple Eagle," 31.
8. Fortin, "Sixty-six Books or Eighty-one?" 12-13.
9. Casebolt, "'It Was Not Taught Me By Men,'" 71.
10. Graybill, "Under the Triple Eagle," 31; Korpman, "Forgotten Scriptures," 119-120.
11. For an overview of the history of Foy's and Millerism's influence by the Apocrypha, see Graybill, "Under the Triple Eagle," 25-32; Korpman, "Adventism's Hidden Book," 56-65.
12. Ellen White, "Interview with Mrs. E. G. White Regarding Early Experiences," Manuscript 131, 1906. "He had had four visions . . . They were written out and published, and it is queer that I cannot find them in any of my books. But we have moved so many times. He had four."
13. Casebolt, "'It Was Not Taught Me By Men,'" 69. White "adds elements from William Foy's vision to [her retelling of] 2 Esdras. Foy saw 'an innumerable multitude,' of little beings, the 'size of children ten years of age'; while Ellen Harmon as well saw 'an innumerable company of little ones' who may 'use their little wings and fly to the top of the mountains, and pluck the never fading flowers.'" Casebolt's parallel is different from the one which I discuss here, but demonstrates that in more than one place, White appears to draw upon Foy in relation to her utilization of 2 Esdras in her earliest days.
14. William E. Foy, *The Christian Experience of William E. Foy Together with the Two Visions* (Portland: J. C. H. Pearson, 1845), 10-11, 174, 179.
15. Ellen Harmon [White], "Letter from Sister Harmon," *The Day-Star* 9.7-8 (January 1846): 31-32.
16. Tim Poirier, "Black Forerunner to Ellen White: William E. Foy," *Spectrum* 17.5 (1987): 23-28. "Foy is important because of the significant parallels between his visions and the later ones of Ellen White," 23. Previous authors, like Poirier, have noted vaguely that they noticed parallels between Foy and White, but did not explore these implications or realize that both were reliant on 2 Esdras.
17. White, "Remarks in Vision."
18. A future study would need to determine whether Foy treated Scripture in general with an ability to change details. If so, his changes do not express a lower view of the Apocrypha, but simply a different approach toward inspiration.
19. Casebolt, "'It Was Not Taught Me By Men,'" 72.
20. Ellen White, "Interview with Mrs. E. G. White Regarding Early Experiences," Manuscript 131, 1906.
21. White, Manuscript 131, 1906.
22. White, 1906.
23. White, 1906.
24. White, 1906.
25. Although deserving of their own article, the choice of Foy to change the son of God to that of an angel, a change that White disagreed with, is worth noting in passing with regard to how it may reflect on Foy's own Christological beliefs. Likewise, Foy's published visions also depict that dead Christians are given eternal life upon death and become angels who populate heaven while the earth continues. Unfortunately, this heterodoxical aspect of Foy has largely been passed over in silence by Adventist historians and scholars until now.
26. Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1882), 67.
27. Ellen White to Mabel White, Letter 329a, 1905.
28. Ellen White to Sister Rasmussen, Letter 106, 1907.
29. Warren S. Ashworth, "The Lesser and the Greater Lights: A Re-examination of the Relationship of the Writings of Ellen White to the Bible," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 9/1-2 (1998): 20.
30. Ellen White to Brethren and Sisters, Letter 196, 1902.
31. Ellen White, "John's Mission and Death," *Review and Herald* 41.17 (1873): 130.
32. Ellen White, "Christ and the Law; or the Relations of the Jew and Gentile to the Law," *Signs of the Times* 13.33 (1887): 513.
33. Ellen White, "Sermon/Sunday Afternoon Sermon," Manuscript 43a, 1894.

istockphoto.com/Stuato Light and Shade

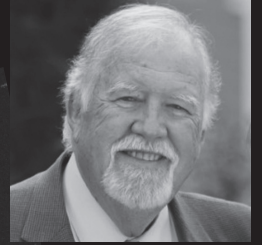


# Suite of Poems for Small Things



istockphoto.com/Yohan Dumortier

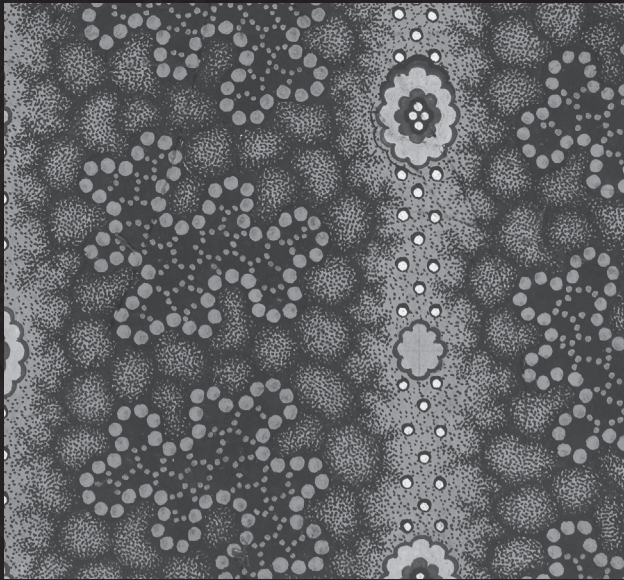
By Smuts van Rooyen



# THE Amoeba

(proteus)

TEXTILE DESIGN, 1840. THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



Ooze to move within yourself,  
squeeze your bulbous rear  
into your narrow fore.  
Flow into your liquid arm  
move around the floor.  
Inner fluid motion  
is all there is.  
There is no pivot point  
for Archimedes to lever up  
a world out there.  
Logic coherent within itself  
is all there is.  
Embrace vague shapes,  
wet them with your mime,  
conform them to yourself,  
mire them in your slime.  
Construct the jelly called reality.  
There is no meta-narrative,  
no overarching meaning,  
or lightening in the sky,  
only flashes of the inner eye.  
So ooze around the ooze  
and make out-there  
a mucous mirror of in-here.  
Liquify the truth of life  
in your own dissolving lubrication  
where endless self-revision  
is all there is.

Embrace vague shapes,  
wet them with your mime,  
conform them to yourself,  
mire them in your slime.

Smuts van Rooyen immigrated to the United States from South Africa in 1962 to complete his bachelor's degree in theology. He holds a Master of Divinity and a Doctor of Philosophy in counseling psychology from Andrews University. His ministry has been divided between teaching undergraduate religion and pastoring. He retired as the pastor of the Glendale City church in Southern California and now lives on the beautiful Central Coast of California. He has been married to Arlene for a very long time, and they have three wonderful children and six amazing grandchildren.



# THE Spider

(*Araneus diadematus*)

You sit enthroned within your cosmic dish of tensile steel  
aimed at the night.

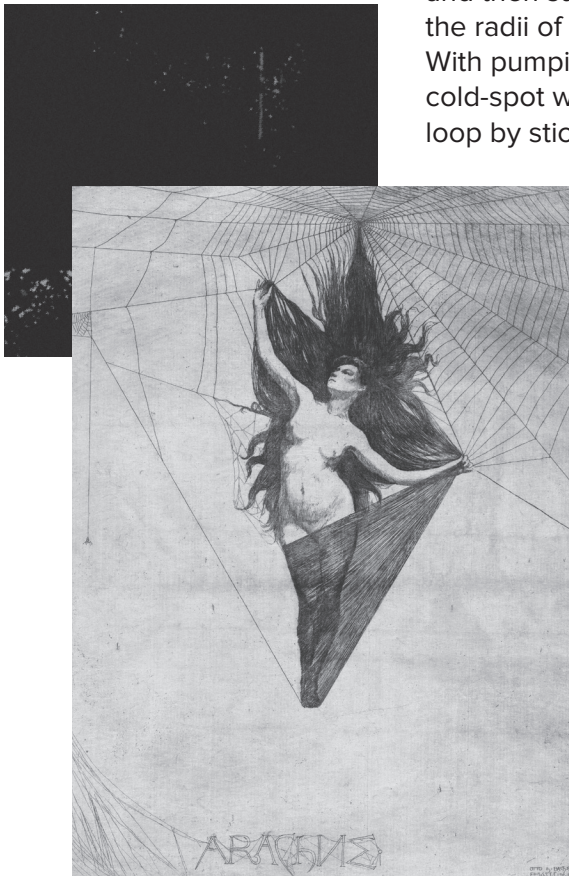
Hatched an engineer from your mother's egg  
you've cast a Blondine line  
across the gap between the trees,  
and then suspended the silken Y from which  
the radii of the wheel will hold.

With pumping spinneret you've  
cold-spot welded the deadly circles of your web,  
loop by sticky loop to make your shining disk.

Now you'll catch with instant glue the frantic moth,  
which fears your enzyme venom  
dissolving all,  
and sucks life dry of life.  
Only broken wings remain  
angled from an empty husk.

Yet when the tropic wind,  
laden with plumeria air,  
sighs among the shades of night,  
it sifts unhindered through  
your wired spokes,  
vanishing upward  
warm as lover's breath.  
Beauty and promises remain uncaught.

SMUTS VAN ROOYEN

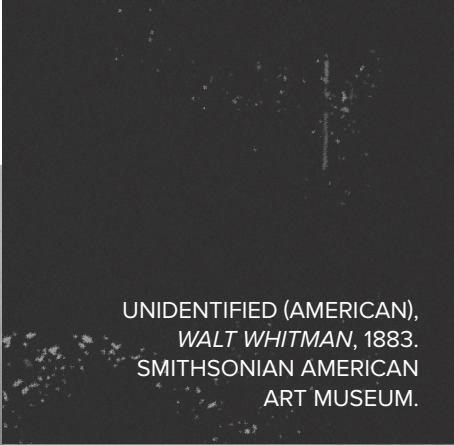


OTTO HENRY BACHER, *ARACHNE*,  
1884. GIFT OF MRS. OTTO H. BACHER,  
1938, THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM  
OF ART.

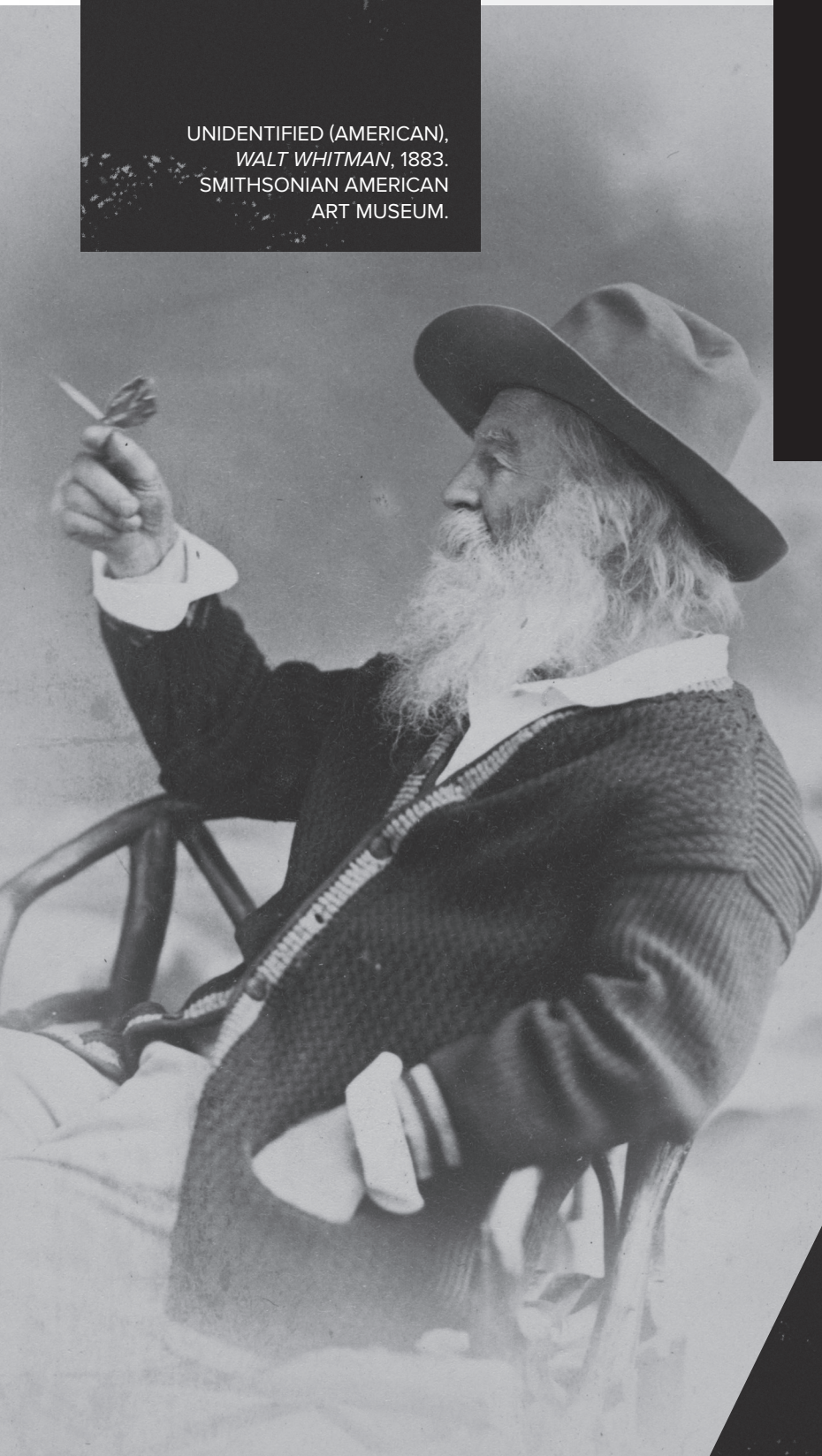
Yet when the tropic wind,  
laden with plumeria air,  
sighs among the shades of night,  
it sifts unhindered through

# THE BUTTERFLY

**(*Danaus plexippus*)**




UNIDENTIFIED (AMERICAN),  
WALT WHITMAN, 1883.  
SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN  
ART MUSEUM.



Flutterby zag zigging in dyslexic flight  
to seek the ancestral plains  
of your own deep South.  
Snap and snip your erratic trip,  
bump the head winds,  
dodge the bucking flowers,  
until you find that far off place  
of gold impala grass  
and cling again to the eternal sway.

SMUTS VAN ROOYEN



Flutterby zag  
zigging in dyslexic  
flight  
to seek the  
ancestral plains  
of your own deep  
South.



# THE FOGSTAND BEETLE

(*Stenocara gracilipes*)



DEPARTMENT  
OF MECHANICAL  
AND INDUSTRIAL  
ENGINEERING,  
UNIVERSITY  
OF ILLINOIS AT  
CHICAGO, 2019.

Headfirst  
down low,  
with back legs  
lifting her  
to match the  
dune's  
steep slope she  
takes  
a plucky fog-  
stand.

She must surely die.  
On the sand dunes  
where she lives  
the rain pretends to fall  
a fraction of an inch  
year by desperate year.  
Still she survives because  
she found the way to bow  
within the wispy fog  
that rises from the seething sea  
and lies upon the Skeleton Coast.  
Headfirst down low,  
with back legs lifting her  
to match the dune's  
steep slope she takes  
a plucky fog-stand.  
Her hard wings stretch aloft  
to form a flightless V  
until a droplet forms  
and by its silver weight  
rolls down her back  
into her thirsty mouth.  
Her prayer is heard  
and the vapor of the moody sea  
gives her living water.

SMUTS VAN ROOYEN



UNIDENTIFIED (AMERICAN), (UNTITLED), CA. 1933-1943. LITHOGRAPH ON PAPER.  
SMITHSONIAN AMERICAN ART MUSEUM.



## THE **MUSTARD SEED** Movement

She climbed the windmill's height  
pliers in hand,  
and hammer on her belt  
to fix what she could not mend.  
And after one look down  
found a rhythmic thumping behind her eyes.

Up on the third rung down she froze,  
transfixed, a hump-backed question mark,  
fear-welded to cold steel,  
shoes planted terror hard,  
and clung white-knuckled to the frame.

I am right up with you now, His voice said.  
You groan within and  
shut your eyes against the dizzy sway,  
refuse to budge,  
cling to your stable structure  
with all your faith.  
But if you stay up here you will die.  
Give up your futile tower.

My hand is on the ankle of your shoe,  
do you feel the gentle pressure I exert?  
Will you move your foot  
just the fraction of  
a tiny mustard seed for now?  
If you can trust me just that little bit,  
I will guide you slowly,  
safely rung by rung,  
down to solid earth  
where the grass moves gently in the breeze,  
and you find your feet again.

SMUTS VAN ROOYEN





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istockphoto.com/dinca

# Institutional DESIGN

PHYSICAL + SPIRITUAL + BEYOND





# The Table, the Garden, and the Storm

The J. N. Andrews  
Honors Program  
and the Future  
of Higher Education

When you enter the office of the J. N. Andrews Honors Program, the first thing you see is a small table, dominated by a hot water urn and filled to bursting with colorful packets of tea, shiny envelopes of hot chocolate, and usually at least one bowl of trail mix or pretzels. Sometimes there are sunshiny clementines, or an assortment of apples, or crackers and crumbly chunks of cheese. Chances are there's at least one student hovering at this table, an overstuffed backpack on the ground at their feet, loading up on snacks before rushing to their next class. The table is way station and welcome and destination all in one. It's by far the smallest of the three tables in the Honors office, dwarfed by the round table tucked into the back corner and the long table in the adjoining conference room, where study groups



*Melodie Roschman is a writer, public educator, and academic communicator. She has a PhD in English from the University of Colorado Boulder, where she studied identity, resistance, and community in the memoirs of progressive Christian women. She is a proud alum of the English department and J. N. Andrews Honors Program at Andrews University, where she served for two years as editor-in-chief of The Student Movement. She currently works as a communications officer for the Faculty of Mathematics at the University of Waterloo, and she lives in Guelph, Ontario, with her husband, Taylor, and cat, Minnie.*







meet and upperclassmen help freshmen with their final papers. But to me—and, I suspect, to many other past and present students in Andrews University’s Honors program—that first little table is the most important.

For Dr. L. Monique Pittman, director for the last sixteen years, the table represents the tangible, practical work of hospitality, work that for her is central, not just to the Honors program but also to the project of Adventist higher education as a whole. “We learn best when our needs are cared for,” she says. “It’s a spirit of abundance—one that says: be assured. You are loved absolutely, your needs are attended to, and I hope you will do that for others in turn.”

Pittman is also a professor in the English department, where she recently taught a class on epic. She and her students returned repeatedly to a theme that she’s now writing about in her scholarship: radical hospitality. “Our model for hospitality comes to us from Homer,” she says. When Odysseus is on his travels, she explains, people don’t meet him and immediately demand he share his story. Instead they offer him a meal, clean clothes, a place to stay. Then, and only then, once the guest feels welcome and safe, do they share their story.

“Hospitality manifests in very material ways: food and drink,” she says. Providing for students’ physical needs is a constant priority for her and the other members of the Honors team. It’s why the student officers spend hours shopping for and preparing beautiful, enormous spreads for the Agape Feast, which happens each semester and is open to everyone regardless of whether or not they’re an Honors student. It’s why Pittman keeps track of individuals’ dietary restrictions and allergies, and why she invites her entire Literature and the Arts class to her house for a dinner made with vegetables from her garden and served on painted china. It’s why, when I interviewed administrative assistant and recruiter Maxine Umana, it seemed like half of our conversation was concerned with the logistics of keeping that snack table well-stocked: acquiring lids for cups, ordering new flavors of tea, dealing with the hot water urn’s gradual breakdown. “My goal,” Umana says, “is to make the office a safe place—a welcoming place—for them.”

(Opposite page) L. Monique Pittman, professor of English and director of the J. N. Andrews Honors Program at Andrews University, with the author, Melodie Roschman, at commencement in 2015.

COURTESY OF THE J. N. ANDREWS HONORS PROGRAM.



**“We learn best when our needs are cared for. It’s a spirit of abundance—one that says: be assured. You are loved absolutely, your needs are attended to, and I hope you will do that for others in turn.”**

L. MONIQUE PITTMAN

When I ask Umana what the great challenge of her time working for the Honors program has been, she doesn't hesitate. "The pandemic changed things a lot," she says.

Pittman agrees. "The three years of COVID," she says, "attacked the core things we care about: in-person learning and belonging."



While the COVID-19 pandemic was undoubtedly a paradigm-shifting crisis for every aspect of society, it hit higher education particularly hard. Like a tide washing in and then retreating, leaving detritus scattered across the beach, the pandemic exposed problems that had been plaguing higher education for years.

For several years, experts have been warning of the looming demographic cliff: a significant decrease in university-age students starting around 2025, resulting from the permanent drop in American birth rates following the 2008 financial crisis. Economist Nathan Grawe predicts that in many states, demand for four-year universities may drop by seven to fifteen percent.<sup>1</sup> Small, liberal arts-focused universities without elite reputations will likely be the most affected.

During the pandemic, universities struggled to keep the students they did have engaged—or even enrolled. Why should students take on additional student debt and pay for expensive university educations conducted mostly through a laptop screen? If they were able to return to campus at all, what was the point, if all of the parties, extracurriculars, and general camaraderie that make university so meaningful were stripped away? Would they be better served by taking a year or two off from school—or dropping out altogether?

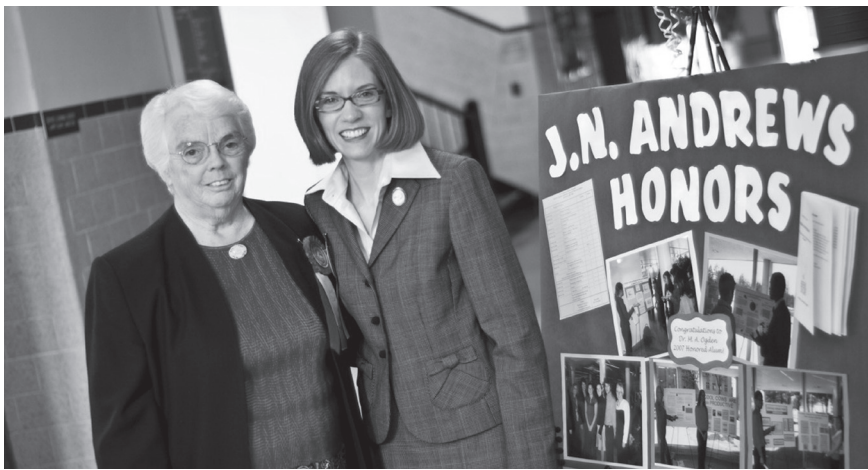
At the same time, the pandemic highlighted economic inequality. Most white-collar office workers found themselves working from home and sentenced to endless Zoom meetings, while artists and performers were suddenly out of work. For essential workers—whether they bagged groceries or performed complex brain surgeries—working from home wasn't an option.

More than ever, people questioned the value and resiliency of their chosen career path—and the steps that had brought them there.

As Nathan Heller notes in his *New Yorker* article "The End of the English Major," humanities degrees have been in crisis for a while. "Since 2013, the study of English and history has dropped by a third," he writes. "The number of STEM degrees, meanwhile, is soaring." The irony of this trend, Heller argues, is that while STEM degrees are more appealing and lucrative initially, the pandemic has only highlighted the need for more humanities-trained citizens in the future. People who can empathize with diverse groups of people, communicate ideas clearly and effectively, and think critically are incredibly important in times of prolonged social instability and crisis like the pandemic. "Career studies have shown that humanities majors, with their communication and analytical skills, often end up in leadership jobs," he writes. "To that extent, the value of the educated human touch is likely to hold in a storm of technological and cultural change."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, especially in the United States, the pandemic—concurrent as it was with the final year of the controversial presidency of Donald Trump—highlighted ever-deepening political and cultural divisions in the United States. After relative unity of opinion and action in the pandemic's early weeks, fierce debates about masking, social distancing, and vaccinations sharply divided the nation. Underlying these debates were larger questions about epistemology, expertise, and what it means to love thy neighbor. For some, the inequality and injustice thrown into sharp relief by the pandemic were calls to action. Social movements like #BlackLivesMatter led to many universities promising to diversify their curriculums and commit to improving diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) on campus. Unsurprisingly, these social movements met with swift backlash. "Critical Race Theory" became a catch-all boogeyman for many right wing politicians and pundits, and an April 2023 article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reports that twelve states have introduced legislation banning the use of diversity statements in higher education.<sup>3</sup>





Merlene A. Ogden with L. Monique Pittman, circa 2007. Ogden led the J. N. Andrews Honors Program from 1969 to 1994. The program is the oldest Honors program in Adventist education.

COURTESY OF PAT SPANGLER.

During the worst of the pandemic, I was a PhD student in English at the University of Colorado Boulder. Even at a university as large, prestigious, and wealthy as CU Boulder, we felt the pandemic's adverse effects. Outbreaks created by insufficient masking and close living quarters led to constant shifts between in-person and online instruction. Mental health was in shambles. I lost a classmate to suicide, and a mass shooting at a local grocery store in March of 2021 left ten people dead and our entire community badly shaken. As a "temporary pandemic measure," the English department saw its graduate budget permanently slashed by thirty percent.

COVID-19, and its accompanying effects, often felt like an enormous wave that crashed, and crashed, and crashed against us. During those darkest pandemic days, I spent a lot of time living in my memories. Scrolling through old photos of visits to Shakespeare plays, or texting former classmates, my thoughts often lingered on Andrews. Sometimes it barely felt like we were holding it together at CU Boulder. How was my beloved Honors program weathering this storm?



The J. N. Andrews Honors Program is the oldest honors program in Adventist higher education. For almost as long as there has been an Andrews University, there has been an Honors program in some form.

In 1960, the Berrien Springs, Michigan-based

Emmanuel Missionary College added several graduate programs and the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, becoming Andrews University. With the new name came an increased interest in research, both on the graduate and undergraduate levels. According to a 2008 *Focus* article by Dr. Meredith Jones Gray, music department chair Dr. Paul E. Hamel attended a session on honors programs at a higher education conference in Chicago.<sup>4</sup> He returned excited about the idea of undergraduate honors study—and President Richard L. Hammill agreed. After committee study, Andrews University announced the 1967-68 school year would include the possibility of honors study. Hammill later reflected that supporting the creation of an honors program was "one of the things I did at Andrews University of which I am the most proud."

Though Hamel had been the genesis of the idea, he had other commitments that prevented him from directing the newly created Honors program. Instead, the president appointed English professor Merlene A. Ogden as director of The Society of Honors Scholars. It proved to be a historic choice. Ogden was director for twenty-five years, shepherding many students through the program who would go on to teach at Andrews themselves—including, perhaps most notably, Pittman.

Under Ogden's direction, students began doing independent undergraduate research, which they then had to present to their peers. In December 1969, senior home economics major Maryellen Hutchinson surveyed

122 undergraduate women at Andrews and presented primary research titled: “A Study of the Relationship Between General Personal Values and Clothing Attitudes Within a Specific Sub-Group.”

That spring, Hutchinson and twenty of her peers graduated with Honors designations in a class of 268 undergraduates—around eight percent of the student body. In the decades that followed, that number seems to have remained remarkably steady. When I graduated from Andrews in May of 2015, I was one of twenty-one students who graduated with the Honors distinction in a total undergraduate class of 269.<sup>5</sup>

Under Ogden’s directorship, students could enroll in special Honors sections of general education courses: Honors Biology, Honors Composition, and so on. They also conducted independent research, and they took part in intellectual and social gatherings as well, including symposiums discussing music and poetry, field trips to Chicago to visit museums and attend concerts, and an Honors banquet.

Author Trudy J. Morgan-Cole attended Andrews from 1983 to 1986, where she double majored in English and history and earned a secondary teaching certification. Joining the Honors program, she says, was “a no-brainer.” “I was always up for anything that would be an interesting intellectual challenge”—and as an Honors student she got to spend months doing independent, focused research. She vividly recalls working on her capstone project in which she compared Shakespeare’s *Henry IV, Part I* to the chronicles of Henry V’s youth. “I absolutely loved that research,” she says, “and in many ways it set the pattern for a lot of my later interests. I’ve always been intrigued by the

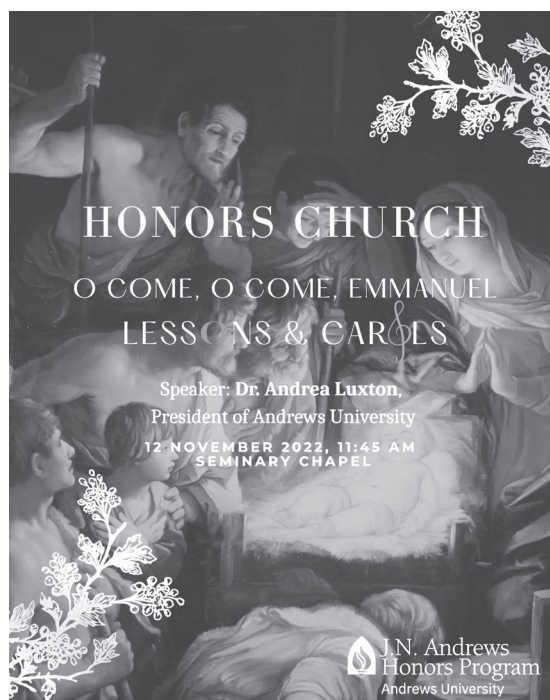
intersections between history and fiction—and I now write historical fiction.”

As the Honors program thrived, Ogden filled an incredible array of administrative roles while also working as director. Between 1977 and 1991, she served as assistant, then associate, then full dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Even in 1991, she was the only woman in Andrews University higher administration. In 1991, she left administration of the College of Arts and Sciences to become dean of the Affiliation and Extension Programs, a role she maintained until her retirement in 2004. While Ogden worked tirelessly and is consistently remembered as an incredible teacher, supporter, and cheerleader for her faculty and students, she eventually decided to cede the role of Honors director to someone who could attend to it more fully.

In 1994, economics and history professor Malcolm Russell took over as director. Russell served until 2003, when he left Andrews to accept a position at Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska. It was under Russell’s leadership that the current curriculum, the SAGES curriculum (Scholars’ Alternative General Education Studies), was developed. Russell wanted to go beyond providing a handful of Honors alternatives, imagining a program emphasizing “more discussion and writing;

more emphasis on analysis than on facts; and fewer multiple choice tests,” he says. After he served as the Walter Utt Professor at Pacific Union College from 1999-2000, “we gained the vision of a separate Honors general education track, and within two years, it was operational.”

Russell was succeeded by biology professor Dr. Gordon Atkins, who implemented the SAGES curriculum and served until 2007. The fall 2007 issue of *Focus* includes a small article announcing that





Beverly J. Matiko, now associate professor emerita of English and communication, with her 2019 *Transcribing the Self* Honors composition class.

COURTESY OF THE J. N. ANDREWS HONORS PROGRAM.

English professor Pittman, who had been teaching in the Honors program since her hiring in 1999, would be taking over as director—a role she still cherishes today.

It was this Honors program, with Pittman at the helm, that I learned about at a high school preview weekend in April 2011. In a 2020 promotional video, Pittman describes the Honors program in terms nearly identical to those I heard about that afternoon: “Honors at Andrews has three component parts: you’ve got a set of classes that you take in place of regular general education courses; we have a really robust social activities component that’s led by our student leaders; and then we have the capstone experience in Honors, which is the Honors thesis.” In other words, I would take small, discussion-based courses in a cohort system, beginning with the entire freshman Honors class journeying together through the full-year, ten-credit Western Heritage. I would get to focus on something I cared about and do real research on it myself. And I would get to do all of this surrounded by students who were as excited about learning as I was.

As soon as I found out that Andrews had an Honors program, I knew I wanted to be a part of it. I had thrived academically as a student at my Adventist high school, Kingsway College in Canada, and especially loved getting to read primary texts and analyze them in my English classes. At the same time, I often felt awkward and out of place. I had a small group of close friends, but I still remember the sting of realizing that the entire back row of classmates that I thought of as my friends made fun of me behind my back for being

enthusiastic and engaged in our 7:30 a.m. grade 12 English class. I saw Honors as a potential safe haven. I was right.

As a freshman at Andrews, I encountered some students who dismissed the Honors program as elitist or pretentious, but I didn’t care. In my Honors classes, for the first time in my life, I got to feel *normal*. I fit in. I remember calling my parents, thrilled that my friends in Honors recognized my creativity and my sense of humor, instead of stereotyping me as the nerdy kid.

I was not alone in seeing the program as a place of radical inclusion and belonging. “Students have sometimes told me they felt like ‘outcasts’ or ‘nerds’ at their former schools because they prioritized their studies,” recalls Dr. Beverly Matiko, a professor emerita of English who taught *Transcribing the Self* (Honors freshman composition) for many years. “Honors students truly love to read, write, study, and learn. How wonderful it is to discover, they say, ‘a bunch of people like me!’”

“I’ve always felt like the Lord knew who my people were,” Pittman muses. “I needed my people—and I pray they need me—because I understand the symptoms of the neurotic academic!” A highlight of everyday life in the program, she says, “is engaging with people who aren’t afraid to be nerds. I have learned so much from talking to my students.”

“Honors was the first place I felt like I belonged,” recalls Dr. Samantha Snively, a former English major who is now the associate director of advancement and executive communications at the University of Washington. “For the first time in my life I was with a



group of people who cared about the same things and to a similar degree. I realized there was a whole community of people who were interested in asking hard questions, pursuing big ideas, imagining better worlds, and thinking deeply. I got to stop worrying so much about fitting in and instead had space to flourish into my own person, within the context of a larger community.”

Snively’s former classmate Catherine Tetz puts it more colorfully. “We were little nerdy punks who thought we knew everything but also had a nervous breakdown on a biweekly basis,” she says. “Dr. Pittman loved us anyways.”

Numerous former students emphasize that the coursework was often stressful. High school French teacher Givan Hinds remembers having a “regular two a.m. bedtime to read for Western Heritage.” After making the unusual decision to join the Honors program halfway through his education, choral conductor Jonathan Doram took overloads every semester until graduation in order to balance his music education coursework with Honors classes.

Students who got top grades, whether in public school, Adventist academy, or homeschool classrooms, often found that they weren’t automatically earning As on their Honors assignments. “It was a challenge for me to redefine excellence in my own mind,” Snively recalls. “For the first time, success was dependent upon the *quality* of your thought rather than your performance or recall ability.”

For my own part, I remember spending more hours and shedding more tears over my Honors coursework than any other part of my undergraduate education. During an interview, I tease Pittman that she was one of the only professors who ever made me cry, not because of anything unkind she said or did, but because she gently but firmly pointed out all the lazy arguments and shortcuts that I took in a paper draft I threw together for her Literature and the Arts class. I was used to my large vocabulary and precocity helping me cut corners. She challenged me to do better.

That sense of challenge—to think deeper and more broadly, to grow even when that growth is



painful—was a theme mentioned by every student I interviewed, regardless of the specific professors and courses they named.

And, in each interview, I posed the same question: did you ever regret joining?

Again, the answer was unanimous: absolutely not. “I never regretted joining Honors,” says Dr. Andre Moncrieff, now an ornithology researcher. “Not for a moment.”



Returning to the Andrews campus almost eight years after I graduated, it is tempting to feel as if no time at all has passed. As I show my husband, Taylor, around, I am startled by how much is exactly as I remember it.

One wall in the rec room in the basement of the campus center is still decoupage'd with school newspapers from my years as *The Student Movement* editor. Lacy green leaves are beginning to appear on the huge willow tree in front of Pioneer Memorial Church, reminding me of the *Alice in Wonderland*-themed tea



Honors outings include cultural experiences at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater and the Art Institute of Chicago.

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party my friends once held in the secret room created by its cascading branches. I even spot a photo of my friends in a tucked-away display case in the English department, so faded by sun and time that we take on the appearance of historical figures.

Perhaps I should be surprised by how easy it all feels, but I'm not. Being here feels like the inevitable culmination of the last six weeks of emails, calls, and video interviews. Since beginning to write this story, I have interviewed forty-eight students, colleagues, and faculty members, past and present. For many of

them, our interviews have doubled as an opportunity to reminisce. Ante Jerončić teases me for calling Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist philosophy "stupid" in the first week of his Western Heritage class my freshman year. Former Honors president Dr. Randy Sanchez fondly recalls helping plan an event, and I am reminded of his telescoping selfie stick that allowed him to take pictures of the dozens of people in our group when we went on trips to see Shakespeare plays and Broadway musicals in Chicago. I was never close friends with Irene Hwang,

Thinking Theologically: Christian Life and Faith Honors students dressed as Dungeons and Dragons characters with Ante Jerončić, now professor of ethics and theology and chair of the department of theology & Christian philosophy at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.

COURTESY OF GRETCHEN BELL.







Students in Professor of Psychology Karl Bailey’s Honors Cognitive Science and Faith course.

who was a couple of years behind me in the program, but as we talk we realize we were at the same transcendent performance by legendary violinist Itzhak Perlman in 2013.

Even when I’m interviewing someone I’ve never met before, I find instant kinship. One of the current Honors

students I get to meet is senior Alexander Hess, a lanky young man with fabulous floral loafers and the same hairdo as William Shakespeare. When I briefly explain the roles I occupied as a student at Andrews— Honors scholar, English major, editor for the school newspaper, he laughs with recognition. “Same, same, same,” he says.

And yet, I have to remind myself, these graduating seniors have had a radically different university experience than I did.

Some of my most vivid memories of Honors are of the social outings to see Broadway musicals and operas, Shakespeare plays and orchestra concerts. We would dress to the nines, pile into a bus bound for Chicago, and



L. Monique Pittman is a Shakespeare in performance and adaptation scholar. She has authored 15 peer-reviewed articles, two monographs, and co-edited a collection of scholarly essays. At left, she holds her book, *Shakespeare’s Contested Nations: Race, Gender, and Multicultural Britain in Performances of the History Plays* (Routledge, 2022). Former Honors student Vanessa I. Corredera, English department chair, holds her 2022 Edinburgh University Press book, *Reanimating Shakespeare’s Othello in Post-Racial America*.

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gorge ourselves on deep-dish pizza or Thai food before that evening's performance. Many of the pre-pandemic students I interviewed mention these outings as a highlight, explaining that they helped improve their appreciation for the fine arts and gave them great opportunities to build lasting friendships.

Day-to-day life was also filled with constant socialization and camaraderie. We crowded in shoulder-to-shoulder during the first week's Honors-palooza to meet the new freshmen and get Shakespeare hand stamps. On Reformation Day, we wrote personal commitments on sticky notes to post on the office door. Musicians and orators came together to sing, play instruments, and provide readings from Scripture and poetry for the annual Honors Church. At the end of each semester, we filled Newbold Auditorium to watch that year's Western Heritage students comically perform scenes from *Richard III* and *Tartuffe* in wacky costumes.



And we shared an abundance of meals. Beyond the ubiquitous snacks on that office table, and the bountiful Agape feasts, there was always so much wonderful food. During the first couple of weeks of the semester, upperclassmen shared dinner with their newly appointed freshman Honors buddies, whom they would mentor throughout their first year. At the end of that school year, all of us crowded into the Honors office again for Worldview Extravaganza, where older students critiqued drafts of first years' capstone papers while everyone chowed down on box after box of pizza. Of course, there was free food at the research poster sessions and the final Thesis Symposium. And during finals there was always Hoagie Fest: between exams, more than a hundred students would come to the office to build enormous sandwiches and eat them, sitting cross-legged on the floor or out in the hall, reminiscing with friends before summer vacation.

The pandemic stole all of that from the students graduating this year. For most of them, the 2019-2020 school year was their freshman year. They began as a normal cohort, but finished Western Heritage and wrote their worldview papers alone in their respective



Honors students enjoying Sabbath lunch at the Pittman-Smith home.

COURTESY OF THE J. N. ANDREWS HONORS PROGRAM.

houses. That year's seniors arguably had it worse. After three-and-a-half years of anticipation, and an in-person research poster session barely two weeks before the university closed, they defended their thesis projects over Zoom.

In fall of 2020, Andrews University made the decision to return to instruction almost entirely in person—masked, socially distanced, with extensive precautions in place. No one could gather in the Honors office. There were no snacks on the table.

From the beginning, the Honors team showed an enormous commitment to simultaneously maintaining student safety while also creating a sense of community for new and returning students. In August of 2020, Pittman began releasing “Dr. Moe’s Memos”: a series of short, cheerful videos, recorded either in her book-filled home office or in various outdoor locales. In the videos, Pittman delivered words of encouragement, made announcements, and reminded students of upcoming spiritual, academic, and social events (always either masked or outdoors). In her first video, I learned that she individually met with each incoming freshman over video chat during the summer to discuss their plans for their university career. In another, she announced an upcoming movie night in Newbold Auditorium to watch the film adaptation of Angie Thomas’s novel *The Hate U Give*. “We are trying very hard this fall to have an Honors gathering each month,” she said, “so that we can build a sense of community, even if we cannot do the cultural outings that we’re accustomed to.”

And there was still food, even if the tables had moved outside. Honors buddies picnicked together on the wooden tables between Nethery Hall and Buller Hall. The fall 2020 Agape Feast was held on the grassy lawn between Pioneer Memorial Church and the James White Library. In a video announcing the spring 2021 poster session, Pittman noted regretfully that they still could not serve food, but that each attendee would leave with a special “hospitality bag” filled with treats.

Watching these videos and looking through the photos of those pandemic years, I’m struck by pangs of grief and tenderness: for the students living through

the pandemic, and for the immense cheer and bravado that Pittman and the members of the Honors team continually mustered.

I am surprised, then, when the current students I interview barely mention the pandemic. Senior biology major Lauren Butler was the Honors president during the 2020-21 school year. When I ask her what the most challenging aspect of her time in Honors was, however, she mentions grappling with heady questions around the theology of suffering. She doesn’t talk about having to wear a mask to class or plan socially distanced events. For these students—and the entire generation who studied alongside them—this is the only version of university they’ve ever known.

All those community-building efforts, at least, have worked. “I met and formed important relationships with some of my favorite people through Honors!” says senior English major Isabella Koh. “Throughout my college experience, Honors was a place of support and growth, even through the tough times that the pandemic pushed on us.”



Today, on campus for the Thesis Symposium, it’s easy to forget the pandemic ever happened. There are a few telltale signs—a couple faculty members still wear masks, and the overall number of students and guests is lower. At the 2019 Symposium, thirty students presented their research; today, twenty-three will. But the buzz of nervousness and excitement in the air is the same that I remember—and so are many of the people. Almost as soon as I enter the large atrium of Buller Hall, Pittman sees me and greets me with a shout. She races across the room to greet me with a hug, with Matiko close behind. Soon, I’m waving hello to people I’ve interviewed this month: Umana, Dr. Karl Bailey, Dr. Sonia Badenas. A couple minutes later, my former boss Jones Gray appears, and there’s more hugging and eager conversation. How long have I been here? I just got in an hour ago. What sessions am I going to attend? I haven’t decided yet; they all look so interesting.

I try to hang back and keep out of the way, but they are having none of that. When the group gathers outside in the sunshine for a photo, Matiko pulls me next to her in the second row. I try to guess, based on their formal outfits and nervous expressions, which students are presenting today. In a few short minutes, they will disperse to several classrooms to give presentations on the research projects they've been working on for the last two years.

Throughout the Symposium, Pittman is everywhere, all at once. One moment she is talking to a student's mother, asking questions about the career trajectory of an older sibling who has gone on to graduate school. Seconds later, she darts across the atrium with her camera, insisting on capturing a chemistry professor with his students. She takes photos of two outrageous best friends who have decided to swap personal styles every Friday, and then turns to make sure that a quiet volunteer isn't too overwhelmed by all the noise. Interspersed with it all are constant exclamations of delight. She laughs, shouts "huzzah!" and offers up a specific compliment or needed affirmation.

It is impossible to talk about the Honors program as it is today without talking about Pittman. "To me, Dr. Pittman was the Honors program," says Dr. Gretchen Bell, an assistant professor in the Emory University School of Medicine.

This is a common sentiment in almost every interview I conduct. She is "a rockstar," "the heart of the Honors program," "an inspiration." "She taught me not to be afraid of the strength of my own voice," "believed in me when I didn't," and "changed my life." For anyone who has had the privilege to work with her, Pittman stands out.

Dr. Douglas Jones, professor emeritus of English, remembers teaching Pittman as an undergraduate student at Andrews. "Early on I was impressed by her self-assured manner, her preparation for university study in the arts and letters, and her maturity," he says.

"It was so clear right away that she was a star student," remembers Jones Gray, who has been a professor in the English department for more than forty years. "She was diligent, vivacious, and she had this wild perm with a head of hair like this." Jones Gray holds her hands wide apart on either side of her head, and I laugh. As long as I have known her, Pittman has had a sleek bob without a single hair out of place.

Matiko just missed teaching Pittman. After teaching for nine years at Burman University (formerly Canadian Union College) and Newbold College, the Andrews alum returned to her former department shortly after Pittman graduated and left to earn an MA in English at the College of William and Mary. "I heard so much about her from her professors," Matiko says, "things like, 'she is an off-the-charts student'—definitely one of those once-in-a-career types."



Storytelling team Daneen Akers, Stephen Eyer, and daughters visit L. Monique Pittman at Andrews University.

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After she finished her MA in English, then a PhD in English at Purdue University, Pittman proved to be just as outstanding a professor as she was a student. Documentary filmmaker Daneen Akers was a student at Pacific Union College when Pittman first started teaching there. The young professor made an immediate impact on her. “My initial impression of Monique Pittman was that she couldn’t be for real. She was the most upbeat, friendly, and enthusiastic professor I’d ever encountered,” she recalls. Pittman’s classes were also the hardest that Akers took at PUC—but she found herself rising to the occasion, again and again. “Moe is a force of nature,” she says. “She believes in her subject. She believes in her students. Her vision for what is possible through literature, inquiry, and the scholarly community is beautiful—and it’s contagious.”

Though Akers graduated in 1998, and Pittman left a year later to take a job at Andrews University, the two women stayed in touch. Years later, while Akers and her husband were producing a documentary, Pittman and her husband, Paul Smith, hosted them and their daughter at

the Pittman-Smith home in Berrien Springs. “We weren’t the lightest footprint, with film gear, baby, baby gear, and so much more,” Akers says, “but they nourished us body and soul.”

At Andrews, Pittman impressed colleagues inside her department and beyond it with her thoughtfulness and her deep compassion. Dr. Rahel Wells, a professor of religious studies who now teaches bioethics in the Honors programs, remembers the first year she was a professor at Andrews. Her marriage had ended over the summer, and the grief of that experience was heavy on her as the school year began. Wells doesn’t remember exactly how she had met Pittman—she wasn’t teaching in the Honors program yet—but one afternoon, shortly after they had discussed the events of their respective summers, Pittman wrote her a letter. “In that letter,” Wells remembers, “she told me all about God’s guidance in her life, and her griefs and joys. I was so touched. I sense that’s just what she does for everyone: she makes them feel loved and cared for and like they matter.”

It is, I think, that combination of intellect and care that



Choral conductor Jonathan Doram with the first Honors choir.

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makes Pittman so universally beloved by her colleagues and students. She is also deeply, infectiously enthusiastic. When I was a student in her Literature and the Arts class, I remember learning about the elusive “Pittman hops.” Sometimes a student comment would be so brilliant that Pittman would be overtaken with excitement, laughing and hopping into the air. My greatest accomplishment that semester wasn’t the A I received in the class; it was the fact that I was rewarded with Pittman hops, not once, but twice, for my contributions.

To a stranger, this behavior might sound impossibly twee. What you have to understand, however, is that Pittman is also an incredibly rigorous, precise, brilliant scholar—one of the finest in the entire Adventist Church. With the heavy teaching load at Andrews, many professors—especially professors in the humanities—publish only a handful of articles during their entire career. Pittman has written two academic books, co-edited a third, and authored or co-authored more than fifteen articles, as well as remaining an active member of the Shakespeare Association of America.

She sets her sights just as high for her students, mentoring them through conference attendance, scholarship applications, and graduate school admissions. “Many more scholars now know about Andrews University because of Dr. Pittman,” Matiko says. “She shows Honors students that it is possible to attend a relatively small, private, church-affiliated university and still ‘play in the big leagues’ academically.”

Despite the high praise heaped on Pittman by everyone I talk to, she is remarkably humble. “I couldn’t believe that someone so gifted, passionate, diligent, disciplined, and accomplished could be totally without arrogance,” Matiko muses. “I have never seen or heard her be condescending or cruel.”

During our conversations, Pittman repeatedly emphasized the tremendous amount of work done by every member of “the Honors family”: administrative assistant and recruiter Umana, the professors who teach in the program, the governing Honors Council, and the elected student leaders who help plan and execute events.

“I am the steward of an amazing program that has a long history,” she says, but “that doesn’t happen alone. A huge team does that.”

The most visible and constant member of that team is Pittman’s right-hand woman, Umana, who stocks that beloved snack table in the Honors office, as well as planning and managing the logistics for events and trips, traveling to Adventist high schools to promote the Honors program, and providing constant support and encouragement to the endless stream of students who come through the Honors office. Umana also manages a relatively new part of the Honors program—its various social media accounts. She posts updates to Facebook, curates photos, and creates TikToks and Instagram reels following a day in the life of students or promoting upcoming events. Umana’s favorite part of her job is working with Pittman, the Honors Council members, and the professors. “I love how we collaborate with each other,” she says.

Dr. Sonia Badenas, associate professor of French, has been a member of the Honors Council since 2011. “It is a blessing to be in that circle,” she says. “You grow a lot as a scholar and as a person . . . accompanying our students in their growth.”

Numerous professors I spoke to described their own joy at getting to teach in the Honors program. Many of them had been students in the program themselves and saw it as an opportunity to give back. Dr. Vanessa Corredera, for example, took Literature and the Arts from Pittman as an Honors student in 2003. Today, she teaches the literature and fine arts component of freshman capstone Western Heritage. “I was eager to do so,” she says, “as that class was so foundational for me as an undergrad at AU. I love teaching the course because I get to spend an entire year with students, mentoring them as they tackle challenging questions about why they believe what they do. I really love helping them grow as thinkers and scholars.”

The students repay that appreciation in kind. During our interviews, they mentioned Western Heritage as taught by John Markovic, Ante Jerončić as well as by Corredera’s team; What Is Other? with Adam Fenner,

Dr. Øystein LaBianca, or Dr. Stacie Hatfield; Cosmos, with Dr. Gary Burdick and Dr. Peter Lyons; and Thinking Theologically, with Jerončić or Davide Sciarabba, to name just a few. Students and teachers alike repeatedly mention their love for classroom spaces where they can read primary sources, have intense, interdisciplinary discussions, and step outside their comfort zones. In addition to the professors who teach dedicated Honors courses, many other professors across Andrews volunteer their time and expertise to mentor Honors projects, from first idea to final thesis defense.

Above all, however, the students are what gives the Honors program its vibrancy, intellectual richness, and life. Our “great, unbelievable, talented, convicted, ethical, loving students,” as Pittman calls them.



At today’s Thesis Symposium, twenty-three students are presenting their research across five dedicated rooms. The diversity of topics, even within a single room, is impressive. In the first session I visit, behavioral sciences major Irina Gagliu explains in careful detail how she collaborated with behavioral sciences professors, a non-profit, and the county sheriff’s department to search for possible racial disparities in the county’s felony jail data. Research on this level is already rare at the undergraduate level—as is the fact that Gagliu also presented her findings at the Midwest Psychological Association’s annual conference.

Immediately following Gagliu’s presentation, we hear from Elizabeth Borton, a fine arts major who has created a series of religious icons in the Orthodox style using traditional methods. With her trendy undercut and oversized blazer, Borton looks the stereotypical artist—but alongside her discussion of mixing egg tempera paint and preparing her linen canvas, she speaks frankly and openly about how the project strengthened her relationship to God.

After Borton wraps up, I head to the biology room to catch Lauren Butler’s presentation, “Seasonal Variation in Phonotaxis of Female Cricket *Acheta Domesticus*.”

Butler is one in a long line of biology researchers at Andrews who have collaborated with professors on their entomological research into crickets.<sup>6</sup> While biology students may good-naturedly complain about having their thesis topics determined by whatever their supervisor is working on at the time, they also frequently end up as co-authors on scholarly papers before attending graduate school.

Moncrieff, a postdoctoral researcher at Louisiana State University, is one such student. His 2012 Honors thesis grew out of fieldwork he did as an undergraduate studying the breeding patterns of gulls under the direction of Andrews biology professors Dr. James L. Hayward and Dr. Shandelle Henson. “My experience in Honors directly shaped my career trajectory,” he says. “My Honors thesis, with incredible AU mentors, was the launching point for my current career studying the biology of tropical birds.”

Moncrieff and Butler’s successes as scientific researchers exemplify why, during our conversation last month, Pittman was resistant to characterizations of the Honors program as designed for humanities students, or overly focused on history, literature, and philosophy. First of all, she reminds me, Honors generally has more STEM majors in it than humanities majors—a fact that should not be that surprising, considering how many of my own classmates went on to medical school after graduation. The Honors curriculum actually includes more science coursework than the standard general education at Andrews. In addition, the undergraduate research that students like Moncrieff, Butler, and Gagliu do is rare, even at prestigious Ivy Leagues or powerful state schools.

Beyond their required Honors courses, each Honors student must propose a project to the Honors Council, conduct independent research, consult primary and secondary sources, write an analytical report, give a poster presentation of their findings to the public, and finally, defend their thesis to an audience of professors, students, and guests at the Symposium. Not only do students become comfortable with the research process and gain specialist knowledge about their particular



research topics, Pittman explains, but the process of writing their thesis hones “critical thinking, putting bodies of knowledge in dialogue, and professional articulacy . . . it allows students to practice deep work.”

“My time in Honors taught me resilience and critical thinking skills that were used throughout my entire medical education,” says Sanchez. He will start his pediatrics residency this summer after graduating with his MD from Loma Linda University. “Being able to read primary sources and extract the necessary information applicable to my patients was a skill I started practicing as I read Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave* or Augustine’s *Confessions* for our Western Heritage course. Working with an interdisciplinary team is becoming more and more common in the practice of medicine . . . and [that’s] something we experienced in Honors.”

Pittman also reminds me that the Honors program is a liberal arts education in the classical sense, incorporating both the liberal arts and the natural sciences. “I don’t see the disciplines in conflict with each other,” she says. “We are all meditating on what it means to be human.” The interdisciplinary nature of the Honors program only aids in that work. Students interact regularly with classmates from other subject areas and bring their viewpoints and research interests to classroom discussions.

The professors I spoke to who teach STEM-related

Honors courses deeply enjoy their Honors electives specifically because of that interdisciplinarity and chance to reflect. Dr. Karl Bailey, a professor of psychology, teaches the Honors elective Cognitive Science and Faith. Not only do the students produce quality work, he reflects, but “I learn a lot from the Honors students in an area of current research for me—the cognitive science of religious belief—so it is especially meaningful. This is the only class that I teach that is in that research area, so it is very important for moving my scholarship forward.”

For Wells, her Honors course is a chance to return to her roots. Before getting her PhD in Old Testament theology, she completed bachelor’s and master’s degrees in biology at Andrews. She was also a student in the Honors program herself, under the directorship of Russell. When in 2015 she was asked to teach a class on bioethics that would be cross listed in biology and Honors, she jumped at the chance to explore a lot of the ways scientists must “think and apply biblical principles.”

Wells integrates theology and science throughout her curriculum, including scriptural study, case studies, and visits from working scientists. “It’s one of my favorite courses to teach,” she says. “It’s challenging for me because I don’t feel that there are a lot of answers on these issues; there are a lot of gray areas. I’ve changed



Professor Stephen Zork conducts the choir for Honors Church 2022.

my mind on so many of these issues as the years go by.”

Students with STEM career trajectories also look back on those interdisciplinary classes fondly. “While some view physics as a subject that destroys faith in God, I found the opposite while studying it at Andrews,” recalls Michael Hess II, who is now a structural engineer for a consulting firm. “I still remember getting goosebumps one day in *Cosmos* as several topics we’d been discussing came together and I realized how many ways the properties of physical light can enrich our understanding of the biblical metaphor that “God is light.”

“I see the integration of different subjects in *Cosmos*, and in other Honors classes, as a big strength,” says biology professor Dr. Peter Lyons, who co-teaches *Cosmos*. “Seeing how knowledge of science, philosophy, religion, sociology, and history all fit together in the complex issues of today is really important for being a well-rounded contributor to society. Additionally, it is valuable to be part of a community of thinkers: those who are interested in discussing these issues, not just getting a grade.”



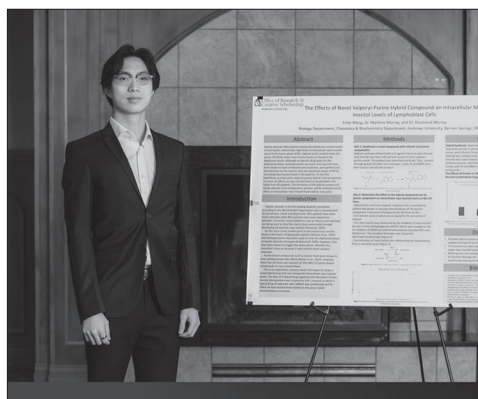
My last presentation stop is the one where I feel most at home: Buller 250, where one political science major and three English majors are presenting their work. Eight years ago almost to the day, in a room just a few feet away, I presented my own Honors thesis, an examination of autobiography and selfhood in Virginia Woolf’s


experimental stream-of-consciousness novel *The Waves*. It’s easy to forget how monumental that project felt. I spent the better part of two years researching and writing an essay that clocked in at just over twenty-five pages. A year later, while pursuing my master’s in English at McMaster University, I routinely wrote papers that long within a month for my coursework.

It was that thesis, however, that taught me how to survey existing scholarship, propose a topic, and defend my findings in front of an audience. Though seven years later, my PhD dissertation was almost twelve times the length of that Honors thesis, it wouldn’t exist without it. The ideas about autobiography, identity, and community that I explored in my study of contemporary religious memoir were ideas I first shared on that distant April day.


Once again, it’s easy to feel as if no time has passed, as if nothing has changed. Matiko, who was there for my first day of university—*Transcribing the Self*, 8:30 a.m.—supervised my final project as well, from initial idea to thesis defense. Though she retired in 2021, she’s sitting next to me at the Symposium today. She’s here to cheer on the senior English majors and sign off on the last of the projects she helped supervise.


Next to Matiko sits Jones Gray, professor of English and twice department chair. Though Jones Gray was an Honors student at Andrews in the 1970s under legendary Honors founder Ogden, and taught Honors Composition in the 90s, she was at my defense eight years ago to support me as an English major and her long-time teaching assistant. When I surprise her at



  
**Enlai Wang**

- Biology
- Minors: Chemistry and Psychology
- Working as a student missionary in Bangladesh before going to Loma Linda University School of Medicine



  
**Alexander Hess**

- English Literature
- Minor: Behavioral Sciences
- Attending the University of Maryland to pursue a fully-funded Master of Arts in English Literature, specializing in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

the beginning of the Symposium today, she greets me with a big hug, and we immediately start animatedly discussing which Symposium presentations to attend.

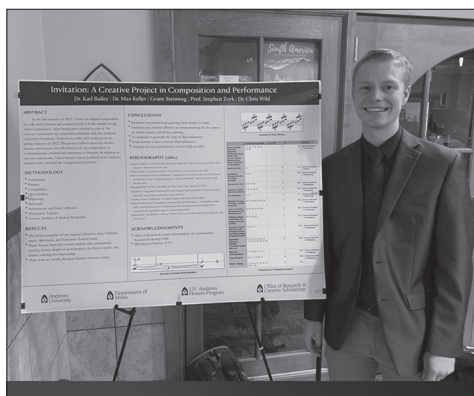
“It just felt right, seeing you standing there in the hall,” Matiko tells me later. “As if no time passed at all.”

That sense of slippage, I know, isn’t unique to me. Andrews—and in particular, the English department—is full of intergenerational relationships and connections. As noted earlier in this article, Jones Gray taught Pittman in the late 1980s. Pittman, in turn, became a professor at Andrews in 1999, and between 2002 and 2006 she taught Corredera. After pursuing a PhD at Northwestern University, Corredera returned to Andrews in 2013. She began teaching in the Honors program in 2015 and is now the chair of the English department as well. One of the first students she worked with at Andrews was Dr. Kylene Cave, who now occupies Matiko’s old office and teaches that Transcribing the Self class that I took from Matiko back in 2011.

Sitting now in this classroom, with all of these generations of brilliant women academics gathered together, I find myself getting a little emotional. In my dissertation acknowledgments, after all, I thanked “Dr. Meredith Jones Gray, Dr. L. Monique Pittman, and Dr. Beverly Matiko, the first women who told me I could do this and taught me how.”


I’m not the only person who points to these women as responsible for their career trajectory. Today, Tetz is an associate professor of English and chair of the English department at PUC. In 2008, however, she was just a high school senior visiting Andrews during a high school preview weekend. “I decided to go to Andrews,” she remembers, “because I did a campus visit and sat in on one of Dr. Meredith Jones Gray’s English classes, and I was like, ‘All college classes should be exactly like this!’ So I went to

**Sitting now in this classroom, with all of these generations of brilliant women academics gathered together, I find myself getting a little emotional.**



**Grant Steinweg**

- Music Composition
- Pursuing a Master's Degree in Composition with funding at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music



**Isabella Rappette**

- Finance
- Moving to Orlando, FL to start work as a Supply Chain Resident at AdventHealth



Andrews. I actually wasn't going to go join Honors, but I went to the orientation and Dr. Beverly Matiko talked to us about her class, *Transcribing the Self*, and I was like, "All college classes should be exactly like this!" So I joined Honors."

Tetz laughs. "In retrospect, I probably should have put a bit more thought and consideration into literally any decision I made when I was 17. But it worked out for me in the long run." The skills Tetz both uses and teaches in her classes every day are skills that she first developed in Honors, she says. "Inquiry, analysis, synthesis, communication—that ever-elusive and ever-sought-after 'critical thinking'—they were the bedrock of every Honors class. Being able to work through these foundational ways of thinking with colleagues in a variety of disciplines was really rewarding."

I am reminded of how important those skills were to my own graduate school career as I listen to Koh's

presentation on race and gender in *The Hollow Crown*. She deftly surveys existing scholarship, employs a number of theoretical lenses, and makes specific and insightful critiques of her source text—all skills that many English majors don't perfect until they're in graduate school.

"That's a great question," Koh says, when I ask her how she thinks the genre of Shakespeare's history plays in her analysis. "I wish you had been in our Shakespeare seminar with Dr. Pittman!"

"Thank you," I laugh, and glance across the aisle to where Pittman sits. "I did take her Shakespeare seminar—back in 2012!"

This kind of interconnection creates rich communities and deep institutional memory that spans generations. The Honors Facebook page regularly posts glowing updates about career achievements, marriages, and visits by "treasured Honors alumni," often accompanied by





#honorsfamily. Many of my interview subjects, students and faculty alike, refer to the people they knew in the Honors program as being like family. Corredera, who became Pittman’s close friend after returning to Andrews as a professor, says “we are like sisters.”

At the same time, institutions that are deeply steeped in tradition and memory can be troublingly resistant to change. This is especially true of higher education. Prestigious, storied schools like Harvard and Yale have come under fire in the twenty-first century for their insularity, devotion to tradition, and failure to address profound inequalities within society and among their students. Though Andrews has neither the endowment nor the prestige of an Ivy League school, in many ways it is susceptible to these same problems—problems that the Honors program, in particular, has had to grapple with.

As I read through the Symposium program and listen to the presentations, I notice one significant

change from the research my peers did. This generation of students is far more willing, and far more well-equipped, to talk about the ways that issues of diversity and inclusion affect their subject matter. Gagiou’s behavioral sciences project deftly incorporates concepts including systemic bias and colorism with a dexterity that I wouldn’t acquire until graduate school. During Borton’s presentation, an audience member asks how she decided on the appearance and racial depictions of her icons—and Borton is ready with a thoughtful, measured response. All three of the projects by English majors incorporate intersectional approaches as a matter of course, critiquing not only their texts’ treatment of race but also demonstrating sophisticated analyses of how power and meaning are affected by gender, sexual orientation, and class.

I have no doubt that the students’ increased attentiveness to race stems, in part, from the national



Honors program faculty, research mentors, staff, and graduating honors students gather before Baccalaureate on the steps of Pioneer Memorial Church.

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*Spectrum's* 2023 summer intern Isabella Koh at her graduation in May, 2023. A J. N. Andrews Honors scholar, Koh earned a Bachelor of Arts in English literature with a minor in chemistry.

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and international conversations that have taken place since I graduated in 2015. Gagiou's examination of the Berrien Springs justice system exists in the wake of the 2020 protests over the murder of George Floyd. Koh's critique of *The Hollow Crown* comes eight years after the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite brought public attention to the overwhelming whiteness of the Academy Awards and, by extension, the mainstream film industry as a whole.

This shift in content and tone is also a direct response to changes that have taken place on the Andrews campus in the last several years. In February 2017, a group of concerned students responded to sustained patterns of racism and structural inequality on campus with the "It Is Time AU" campaign, which was shared widely throughout the Church. In response, Andrews University committed to a series of policies and changes on campus meant to address unjust treatment and increase intellectual and cultural diversity in positions of leadership. Most prominently among these changes,

Andrews appointed Michael Nixon as its first-ever vice president for diversity and inclusion.<sup>7</sup> This heightened attention to racial discrimination and inequality on the broader Andrews campus paralleled a similar shift that was happening specifically in the Honors program.

Since the 1970s, academic theorists working in fields such as postcolonialism and feminist criticism have scrutinized concepts of "the canon" and critiqued the equation of texts by white men with "Western Heritage," or, indeed, equating the study of "Western Heritage" with being highly educated. Defenders of this traditional model have been equally passionate—most famously, Yale English professor Harold Bloom's *The Western Canon* (1994).

Today, some universities tout their conservative, Great Books-style programs as a point of distinction. Two hours down the road from Andrews, for example, is another Christian institution, Hillsdale College. In its mission statement, Hillsdale identifies as "a trustee of



our Western philosophical and theological inheritance tracing to Athens and Jerusalem” and notes the school maintains “a traditional liberal arts curriculum.” Hillsdale also refers derisively to the “dehumanizing, discriminatory trend of so-called ‘social justice’ and ‘multicultural diversity.’”

When I took Western Heritage, the year-long freshman Honors capstone history and philosophy class, in the 2011-2012 school year, the curriculum likely resembled that taught at Hillsdale College. We read thousands of pages of primary and secondary sources spanning over three thousand years of history. Despite the impressive scope of the class and the diversity of the student body, I don’t remember reading a single page of material by a woman or a person of color.

That all changed in 2015. Midway through the school year, history professor Markovic, one of the two professors who team-taught Western Heritage, unexpectedly received funding for a long-desired sabbatical. He decided to take the sabbatical immediately, leaving the course without a second professor to finish out the school year.

Pittman stepped in to finish the course. When she saw the syllabus, she remembers being shocked. “There’s a component to Honors education that’s always ‘Great Books, dead white men’ style,” she reflects, “but it was important to me that we engage with primary texts that represent the world more broadly.” For the remainder of the semester, she incorporated texts by women and people of color including Olaudah Equiano, Hannah Arendt, and Mary Wollstonecraft into her lesson plans. The result was a very different Western Heritage.

Jerončić is now a professor of ethics and theology and the chair of the department of theology and Christian philosophy in the Andrews University Theological Seminary. From 2007 to 2015, however, he was part of the undergraduate religion and biblical languages department, and he taught the senior Honors course, *Thinking Theologically*, as well as co-teaching Western Heritage. Jerončić got along well with Markovic and always loved watching students grow intellectually over the course of the year. Still, he remembers that

last semester of Western Heritage that he taught with Pittman as being special. Co-teaching with Pittman encouraged him to consider new perspectives and make exciting connections between philosophy, history, and literature. “It was possibly one of the greatest experiences in my teaching career,” he reflects.

Her experience teaching Western Heritage impressed upon Pittman the importance of updating the Honors curriculum. The decision was not a rash one, nor one she made alone. As director, she does not make curricular decisions on a broad level without the support of the Honors Council. As Honors director, Pittman allows Honors professors a great deal of freedom in designing their course curricula.

In the summer of 2015, however, the Honors Council reached an agreement: the curriculum needed to evolve, “to honor our students and create a better representation of the student population,” Pittman recalls.

Andrews University, after all, is ranked number one for campus ethnic diversity among national universities in the United States, according to the 2022-23 *U.S. News and World Report*—a fact that features prominently in its marketing and corporate identity. The Honors Council members and other Honors professors committed to building course content that better reflects the diversity of their students.

Today, the Honors curriculum is “absolutely unapologetic in its disruption of the Western canon as the thing that makes us educated,” Pittman says. “That disruption is present in *Kylene Cave’s Transcribing the Self*, in my *Literature and the Arts*, in our anthropology course *What Is Other?* and in the current iteration of Western Heritage taught by Vanessa Corredera, Amanda McGuire-Moushon, and Davide Sciarabba. There’s been a concentrated effort to make sure that these commitments to diversity and inclusion are expressed throughout the curriculum.”

Irene Hwang, who witnessed the curricular shift as a student in Honors from 2013-2017, attests to how the diversity of her community and her education strengthened her faith and her professional practice. After graduating from Andrews, Hwang moved to New

York City to attend Columbia University’s high-ranking College of Dental Medicine. (She is now completing a pediatric dentistry residency in the Denver, Colorado, area.) It was while living in New York City, Hwang reflects, that she truly came to appreciate her Honors education. “Every single day I was rubbing shoulders with someone who was atheist, or Muslim, or had been traumatized in a Christian setting. I had to know how to defend my own beliefs while respecting their experience. In Honors, I had to figure out my own religious beliefs using the same lens that I used to criticize other philosophers. I think that was foundational. If I hadn’t gone through [Honors], I wouldn’t be able to do that.”

The combination of cultural diversity and diversity of opinion prepared her for the thoughtful, empathetic work she does every day as a pediatric dentist. “[My professors] taught me that asking ‘why’ is a very important question, and learning how to listen is a very important skill to have.”

Not everyone appreciates that constant questioning and scrutiny that is built into Honors courses. Many Adventist Honors programs face the criticism that encouraging students to ask questions may lead to them

leave the Church. The web page for sister school Burman University’s “Scholars,” includes the following in its list of Frequently Asked Questions: “Does Scholars encourage a particular theological stance; particularly in atheism or Christianity?” “Some wish to believe that Scholars will make you an atheist,” student Jordan Southcott writes in response. “I think a few of us have left the program deeply questioning our beliefs, but that’s not because Scholars is pushing some sort of atheistic agenda. That was just the journey that person was on.”

Southcott’s description of his classmates’ experience at Burman mirrors the experience of many of my peers in the Andrews Honors program. Yes, some graduated identifying as atheists. Many others, however, found their Christian faith only deepened and strengthened. When questions arose—and in my experience, they always arise eventually—they had many intellectual tools at their disposal and thoughtful, caring Adventist mentors who were there to help them work through those questions together.

Dr. Erhard Gallos, who teaches the Honors religion course Scripture, does worry for his students whose

questioning leads to a loss of faith. “When this life is over,” he says, what is the difference between “the ash of a non-Honors student” and “a well-educated Honors student? What counts is the eternal legacy that we leave behind and the people we have influenced for eternity. That is the value of any Christian/Adventist education, be it Honors, or non-Honors.”

“Some people think that the examined life, the ‘test all things’ that Honors encourages,



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Janae Mitchell and Lauren Butler both graduated in 2023 with degrees in biology and are accepted to Loma Linda University School of Medicine.

is suspect and dangerous,” Matiko tells me in our conversation. “Just the opposite is true. I would often say to my students, ‘If you leave Andrews thinking and believing exactly as you did as a freshman, you deserve a refund.’ I want my students to discover that they are here to grow, and growth involves change. Growth and change aren’t always comfortable processes. Remember those growing pains in your limbs when you were younger? Some of that discomfort and its intellectual equivalent—uncertainty and questioning—is necessary to growth. This place and this program are safe places to do that questioning. The professors are committed members of their faith communities who model the lived reality that questioning and faith are not mutually exclusive.”

There is one other way in which the Honors program stands out as a safe place: for LGBTQ+ students. The situation for LGBTQ+ students on campus today is clearly far less hostile than when I was a student between 2011 and 2015. During my time at Andrews, I only knew three people who were openly LGBTQ+. The underground support group, AULL4One, fought for years to achieve any kind of institutional recognition, and Andrews received a flurry of negative media coverage when it elected not to let AULL4One host an official bake sale to raise money for an LGBTQ+ youth shelter.

In 2017, the Board of Trustees approved the creation of the officially sanctioned support group Haven, which maintains the Adventist Church’s teachings on gender and sexuality while also recognizing that LGBTQ+ teenagers and young adults are more likely to experience familial rejection, harassment, and depression. “The University’s goal is to engage these students spiritually and support them emotionally as they navigate their sexuality and/or gender identity,” the university noted in its official announcement. This is a life-saving intervention backed up by evidence. In a 2019 study by The Trevor Project, surveys demonstrated that LGBTQ+ youth who knew at least one supportive adult were forty percent less likely to attempt suicide.<sup>8</sup>

Many of the LGBTQ+ students who attend Andrews University today speak highly of the Honors program as a community where they always feel welcome. “Pittman

always does everything within her power to make [every student] feel safe, supported, and loved, which makes all the difference in an undergrad experience,” one student tells me. “It is hard to think of anyone on this campus I respect more than Dr. Pittman,” another says.

For Pittman, and the Honors program as a whole, radical hospitality means seeing the image of God in all students and offering them a seat at the table in the fullness of who they are. “If you’re going to teach,” she says, “that is your ethical commitment.”

Dr. Adrienne Redding, a member of the English faculty at Western Michigan University, isn’t a Seventh-day Adventist. She attended Andrews University for her English degree because it was just down the road from where she lived with her growing family. Despite not being part of the denomination, she was deeply impressed by the caliber of the education she received at Andrews—and the warmth of the community she became a part of.

“I always felt like family and I always felt beloved,” she tells me. Redding looks at the work done by professors like Pittman and Matiko and Jerončić—at the work done by Andrews University—as having “the potential to continue to be such a force for good for the Church.” As an outsider, she sees the university as facing a choice every day: “it can alienate people and hurt people,” or “it could be a real witness.”



While we’re chatting after the end of the program, Pittman introduces me to Terika Williams, a senior English and Spanish major who will be starting a master’s program in English this fall at the University of Kentucky. As the three of us discuss the importance of prioritizing mental health and the continuing challenges of the academic job market, Pittman suddenly excuses herself and swoops down to clean up an errant piece of cupcake that someone dropped in the middle of the room. Without missing a beat, she cleans up the mess and returns to the conversation, where she reassures her student that she absolutely belongs in scholarly spaces and will do fulfilling, brilliant work.



“What advice would you give your younger self who was about to start graduate school, if you could?” Williams asks me. True to form, I can’t settle on just one thing, and I offer up a variety of suggestions before I finally pause for breath. “If you’re anything like me,” I conclude, “there will no doubt be moments in grad school when you ask whether you belong there. ‘Do I really have the skills and training to compare to these brilliant people who have gone to fancy Ivy League schools?’ What I have found is yes. You absolutely do belong there. The education you’ve received in Honors here will put you on the same level as any of those students. In fact, you have an advantage. Sure, they may have gone to Yale and sat in a lecture hall with three hundred other people listening to Harold Bloom. But you spent the last four years reading and writing and talking with Dr. Bailey and Dr. Matiko and Dr. Pittman—and they all care about who you are, too.”

I would have said the same thing months ago, but now my words are backed with a certainty gained from the research I’ve done while writing this article. The majority of Honors students go on to further education in medical school or law school or graduate programs. They attend—and excel at—top-rated universities in their fields, including Ivy Leagues and top state schools. During Pittman’s tenure as director, two students have been accepted to graduate programs at Oxford University, often considered the best university in the world. The people I have interviewed for this project frequently hold impressive titles that speak to the recognition of that “Honors quality”: university professor, structural engineer, surgeon. “The care that Pittman poured into the act of grading stays with me today as an editor,” reflects Cécile Bruso Engeln, editorial director at the New England Historical Genealogical Society. “When working with a manuscript, I remember that my feedback will have an impact on the reader.”

In modern discussions about higher education, it is popular to consider results in terms of statistics. What average salary does a graduate of a program achieve? What is the placement rate in tenure-track

jobs? Who pays off their student loans the fastest?

In the face of shrinking student numbers, decreased public investment in higher education, and constant controversy over course content, universities have become more and more like businesses. Whether they’re prestigious Ivy Leagues like Harvard or giant state schools like Arizona State University, “universities increasingly depend on the markets and their short-term goals,” Nathan Heller writes in *The New Yorker*.<sup>9</sup>

By this metric, the return-on-investment of participation in the J. N. Andrews Honors Program is an impressive one. Students develop valuable hard and soft skills, go on to impressive, high-earning careers, and routinely find that their education is comparable to that earned by students at some of the top-ranked universities in the country.

“The Andrews University honors program is an outstanding example of how to model the Adventist goal of excellence in scholarship and learning while deepening students’ faith commitment,” says Dr. Andrea Luxton, the first female president of Andrews University, who retires this June. “Students leave this program outstanding scholars and professionals, as well as faithful followers of Christ.”



After the Symposium is over, I take another walk around campus to reflect on everything I’ve just seen and heard. Moving more slowly, I notice signs of wear and tear that I missed before: doors that badly need painting, outdated signage, facilities that should be renovated.

Despite the heroic efforts of its faculty and staff, I know that Andrews faces constant financial challenges, as do many other Adventist universities. “Multi-generational Adventists are often more interested in sending their kids to a ‘prestigious’ college,” Lyons reflects, “and newer and immigrant Adventists often end up going to state schools or community college for lack of money.”

“It’s very hard to compete with juggernaut institutions when you’re small, and when you’re

## **“I hope Adventist education pursues that ethic of love as part of its future, because I believe that ethic is truly what it means to ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’”**

drawing from a limited demographic,” Jones Gray says. “Adventism almost always responds to hard financial times by cutting and chasing trends that work with money-makers. We’re adding programs and degrees that are designed to get people jobs instead of educate people. That’s a trend in higher education as a whole, but it’s a shift away from the liberal arts that are at the core of Adventist education.”

Several professors have also expressed to me their particular anxieties specific to the Honors program: concerns about decreased attention spans due to social media and smartphone use, more fragile student mental health, and increased anti-intellectualism within American society as a whole.

“I am worried about what I see as a move to make a smaller SDA tent when it comes to Adventist education,” Corredera writes. “What I mean is that there used to be a general acceptance of the many ways and forms of being Adventist. That openness appears to be diminishing, which I believe harms our students, and our faculty too. As bell hooks notes, true community comes from an ethic of love that entails accepting and celebrating differences, not dominating others in hopes of eradicating those differences. I hope Adventist education pursues that ethic of love as part of its future, because I believe that ethic is truly what it means to ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’”

It is that ethic of love that lingers with me as I wander campus. The weather has been unseasonably warm this week, and campus seems lush than usual as a result. The grass is already a brilliant green, flower beds are thick with daffodils and tulips, and trees are swelling with pink and white blossoms. As I round a corner, I see to my delight that one of my favorite spots is unchanged—a weathered wooden bench swing under a blossoming arbor in the middle of a garden. I remember sitting on that swing for hours, texting with

friends, doing the reading for *What Is Other?* or just enjoying the rustle of the leaves in a slight breeze. After a moment’s hesitation, I climb onto the swing, turning so that my feet hang over the side. Just beyond my perch are the windows of the small Red Rose Chapel, where I would spend hours debating theology with my friends after Western Heritage let out on Friday afternoons.

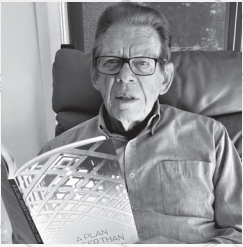
In the interviews I conducted for this project, people invoked a lot of different metaphors to explain what Honors meant to them. Snively calls it a “crucible.” To Hwang, it was a “greenhouse.” But, sitting here now surrounded by flowers and birdsong, my favorite metaphor is Pittman’s own: “This is a safe place, where you know your questions won’t be laughed at,” she says. “It is a garden.”

“In any profession—a pastor, a professor, whatever—it’s important to have these foundational experiences, where you experience how awesome your profession can be,” Jerončić tells me. “You experience it at its best. And after that, you carry that knowledge with you forever. That’s what Honors was for me.”

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### ENDNOTES:

1. Nathan D. Grawe, “Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education,” accessed 2023, <https://ngrawe.sites.carleton.edu/demographics-and-the-demand-for-higher-education/2/>.
2. Nathan Heller, “The End of the English Major,” *New Yorker*, February 27, 2023, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/03/06/the-end-of-the-english-major>.
3. Kate Marjolovic, “How Anti-DEI Bills Have Already Changed Higher Ed,” *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 13, 2023, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-anti-dei-bills-have-already-changed-higher-ed>.
4. Meredith Jones Gray, “A Commitment to Excellence,” *Focus: The Andrews University Magazine*, Winter 2008, 20.
5. Of course, because of the labor involved I have not calculated the Honors percentage of every class in the intervening years, so this data is not conclusive. It is also important to mention that in each cohort of Honors students, there are several who graduate during the summer or fall semesters.
6. Dr. Karl Bailey, an accomplished behavioral sciences and Honors professor who specializes in the cognitive science of religious belief, graduated from Andrews in 1999. His honors thesis was about neurobiology—specifically, the neurobiology of crickets.
7. The position was renamed vice president for university culture and inclusion in 2021. Nixon announced he was leaving Andrews to take a position as director for diversity, equity, and inclusion at Beacon Health System in April 2023.
8. “National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health,” *The Trevor Project*, 2019. <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/The-Trevor-Project-National-Survey-Results-2019.pdf>.
9. Nathan Heller, “The End of the English Major.”



By Neville Clouten

## A Pioneering Architect Reflects on Andrews University and Church Design

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**M**y brother and I walked home along the path from the Toronto Public School, New South Wales, and crossed the creek in front of our house. Our parents met us with excited faces and Dad was holding a letter. It was from the Sanitarium Health Food Company in response to an inquiry made a few years before. He had asked if he might be contacted should work become available at the factory.

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*Neville Clouten is an architect, award-winning academic, administrator, and artist. He was the inaugural professor of architecture at Andrews University and has also held positions at the University of Newcastle, Australia, and Lawrence Technological University, Michigan. He is a fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and was awarded the American Institute of Architects Michigan 2000 President's Award.*

*Coulten holds a Bachelor of Architecture degree from Sydney University, a Master of Architecture from the Ohio State University, and a Doctor of Philosophy from Edinburgh University.*

*He has authored more than 50 publications for architecture, science, religion, and education journals. In addition, he is an artist with watercolors in private collections and corporate offices. Clouten and his wife, Norene, have been involved in humanitarian work, including helping to establish a school for orphans and disadvantaged children in Kenya.*

The reason was education. Their two boys, then six and eight years of age, were students at the local public school but this was not our parents' dream. The plan was for Christian education and to them that meant the Seventh-day Adventist primary and high schools on the campus of Avondale College. It meant leaving our Stoney Creek address and moving to Cooranbong, where the schools and the Sanitarium factory were located.



I was reminded of this imperative for Christian education decades later while in a rural village in Kenya. As mentioned in the essay on Africa, my wife and I were there for quite another reason, but the men of the village believed their dream for a school was about to be realized. We had surely come to help them build their school.

It is not surprising that the theme of architecture runs through the essays in this book. But education has also been a significant theme in my life. It was education—both receiving and giving—that led me from Avondale Primary School in Cooranbong, Australia to be the Inaugural Professor of Architecture at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

In my high school years, the choice of subjects was actually not a choice at all. Boys took science; girls took art. I wanted to take both. A few boys were not interested in science, so a third subject was offered—technical drawing. The administration must have believed that this would solve the problem and still keep the genders separated. I wanted to take all three subjects. However, I joined the boys who enrolled in the technical drawing option. There was a new teacher, Adrian Ellison, and he became my first mentor.

Two experiences in the technical drawing class were important to me. A friend of Adrian's asked for help in designing and drawing plans for a house. This opportunity was passed on to me. Then one afternoon as the class commenced, I was told that the director of the engineering drawing office at the Sanitarium factory wanted to see me after school. The interview led to work at the drawing office for a few hours after school several

days each week and during summer vacations.

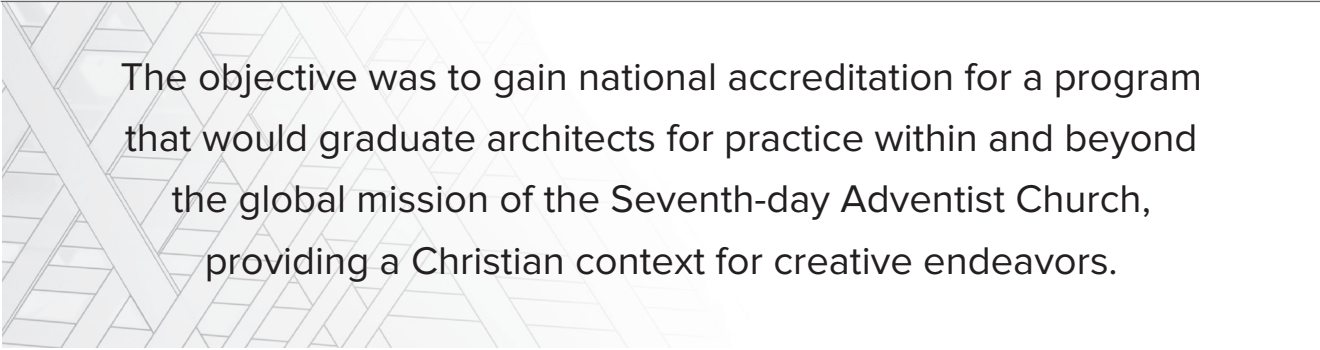
I was privileged to attend the University of Sydney under the Commonwealth Scholarship program, then to supplement the Australian professional degree in architecture with a master's degree from North America and a doctorate from Edinburgh.

This preparation through education led to Andrews University and the opportunity to create and direct the only program in architecture within the global reach of Seventh-day Adventist education.

A small group of Adventist architects came together to form the Department of Architecture in August, 1980. The objective was to gain national accreditation for a program that would graduate architects for practice within and beyond the global mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, providing a Christian context for creative endeavors.

Two innovations were introduced into the Andrews University architectural curriculum. The early years of the program were organized around integrated studies. Extensions from the arts, physics and the social sciences were team-taught in hands-on studios of discovery. The second innovation was the inclusion of artistry as a measure of professional competence, and this was introduced in the final years of the program. We used the term reflective practice for this inclusion of artistry. The focus on creativity in the program meant that studio projects were often taught with the allied disciplines of interiors and landscape design.

The National Architectural Accrediting Board accepted the validity of an architectural program with a Christian focus as part of the diversity of programs in



The objective was to gain national accreditation for a program that would graduate architects for practice within and beyond the global mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, providing a Christian context for creative endeavors.

North America. Full accreditation of five years for the Bachelor of Architecture program was granted in 1987. It was the only new architecture program accredited in the 1980s.

Andrews University enjoys a large representation of international students, and this is extremely valuable in the study of architecture. Differences in culture were celebrated in mission projects in South America and Africa. The philosophy was to bend the knee in humility and stand tall in service. The global legacy of the Department of Architecture outreach continues to this day and enriches the education of architects and designers.

The faculty of the program were mainly architectural practitioners and took every opportunity to supplement theoretical knowledge and applications in studio projects with field trips to significant examples of the built environment and to practitioners' offices.

A chapter of Tau Sigma Delta, the national honor society for architecture and the allied arts, was inaugurated. So too was a student chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Students were enthusiastic, and sometimes surprised faculty with their creativity.

### **A film promotes creativity**

To fundraise for the fledgling chapter of the American Institute of Architects, students hired a 35-mm projector and promoted a community-wide film evening in the university gymnasium. I suggested *Dersu Uzala* (1975)—a Soviet-Japanese film directed by Akira Kurosawa.

Set in Siberia, the story begins in 1909. A surveyor, who is also a captain in the Russian army, has been given the task of obtaining surveying information from landmarks near a lake in the northern reaches of the tundra. The soldiers assigned to the captain carry provisions and surveying equipment. This includes a theodolite to record angles to natural landmarks.

The film introduces a campsite in the forest. The evening meal has ended, and the group relaxes around the fire. One by one the soldiers go to sleep. Soon it is only the captain who is awake, writing in his diary, and

then he too gives in to drowsiness. Suddenly, the camp is interrupted by a sound from the forest. The soldiers reach for their guns, ready for the entry of a bear. Instead, there is a voice.

“Don't shoot!”

Into the story walks a nomadic hunter clothed in animal skins. The soldiers share the remnants of the evening's stew. Then a brief conversation begins with a question as to the visitor's identity.

He responds, “My name is Dersu. Dersu Uzala. I am a hunter.” As the captain reclines to sleep, he muses on the value of having a nomadic hunter as a member of his team. Clearly, the knowledge of the topography and landscape will be significant. The next morning an invitation to Dersu is offered and accepted. The film then presents a sequence of events in which the hunter is shown to be perceptive to the natural environment and sensitive to the needs of others. By way of contrast, the soldiers are neither.

The days become weeks, and incidents multiply. Eventually, the last base camp is established. The summer is rapidly coming to an end and the only remaining objective is to walk to the shore of a northern lake, take a survey bearing with the theodolite, and return home before winter. The Siberian excursion has taken longer than projected and, to save time, the captain and Dersu set out for the lake, leaving the soldiers and provisions at the camp. The captain leads the way and, as the afternoon progresses, Dersu shares an increasing concern for a change in the weather. He strongly urges a return to base camp. However, the captain is close to realizing the surveying objective—the main reason for the summer's expedition. They press on and finally reach the shore of the lake.

Just as they open the tripod and focus the telescope of the theodolite onto an important landmark, a first rush of wind arrives. Dersu has remained loyal to his leader all day, but now his fears for an early blizzard compel him to take control. He orders the captain to cut bundles of the reeds that define the water's edge, and by example wields his own long knife. They both work as if their lives depend on it. Dersu knows that they do.

The blizzard increases its fury and several times the film catches a glimpse of the captain falling to the ground through the driven snow. Dersu is always nearby to shout orders. The captain somehow summons the little remaining energy from his exhausted reservoir. Eventually, he fails to respond to the call.

The camera portrays the drama of the blizzard. Then, after a short pause, it reveals a northern sunrise across a tranquil landscape of soft mottled white. The beauty of the morning is revealed as the camera pans the landscape. It comes to rest at a shelter of reeds covered with windswept snow. Then a crack on the shelter's curved wall develops into a door. Dersu emerges, takes in the setting, and pokes his head back inside the shelter.

"Wake up, captain."

Opening his eyes, the captain sees the inside of a conical space made from reeds bound into sheaths. Filled with amazement, he is more appreciative of Dersu than ever. The nomadic hunter has saved his life. They stand together beside the shelter, then Dersu begins to tear it apart. He reaches into the mass of reeds and snow and extracts the surveying tripod that had provided the structural support.

The students enjoyed the film—and even more its ability to raise funds for a visit to New York City. In due course, the plans for the field trip turned into reality, and we set off early one morning shoe-horned into a university van and towing a small trailer laden with sleeping bags and sacks of various description. En route, along the Pennsylvania Turnpike, conversations ended suddenly with a flat tire on the trailer. My teaching associate and I set out in the van, leaving the group of students and the disabled trailer in a bleak and windy landscape.

Eventually a tire of the unusually small size required was found and purchased, and we began the return journey to the trailer location. As we approached, there were no students in sight. Then we saw them!

In a carefully selected place was an example of American vernacular architecture that would have warmed the heart of any teacher of art or writer on culture. A shelter had been constructed with a few

strong sticks and all manner of "trash," which had been collected from a stretch of the turnpike. Pieces of plastic, rubber, cardboard and wood were interwoven to form both windbreak and roof. The shelter's silhouette included willow sticks donned with drink cans that reached out to the sky like antennae. And there were Dersu-like bundles of grass. The students sat cross-legged beneath the structure facing the road, well pleased with their initiative to protect themselves from the wind and showers. It was a worthwhile outcome for a three-hour delay in the journey.

Another memory is from the beginning of a visit to Australia with 22 Andrews University students. We could not leave the airport at Papeete, Tahiti during a stopover of several hours in the middle of the night, so we gathered near a large tree inside the terminal. In our carry-on baggage we each had a sketchbook, and with improvised brushes and a collective cup of coffee, we added soft "sepia" washes to pen sketches of the tree. The result was a collection of fine watercolours.

The visit to Australia gave us confidence to offer a full semester of studies in Finland and to develop themes for designing a variety of building types on continents with diverse cultures and climates.





## Environments for worship

Beyond the Department of Architecture, I appreciated the opportunity to team-teach a course on “Architecture for Worship” in the Theological Seminary.

As information on the Andrews University program in architecture reached churches in North America, I received many invitations to meet with building committees and church groups. Such visits provided opportunities to hone ideas for an emerging theology of environments for worship. These ideas were discussed with faculty and honors students and shared in church publications and secular print.

I was also pleased to lead hands-on workshops for church groups who were designing new buildings. These workshops— with an architect as facilitator—can bring a congregation together in a creative endeavor. The focus is on a design journey to an outcome of meaningful worship. Activities over a weekend might include an awareness walk—even to a well-known building site—worship, then a day where a collection of everyday objects is gathered to make models. Cut-outs and color patches from magazines give mood, cereal squares become chairs, and parsley is used for vegetation. Themes develop that will lead to discussions towards possible points of consensus. There is a need, however, for church groups to follow through with a strong commitment. Prior to my years at Andrews University, I visited North America on several occasions. I was attracted to a photograph of a church model published in a journal. It was small, and the accompanying text was short. It mentioned that the church had held a design workshop with an architect to develop the plans for their new building. Although the location of this church in northern California was a day’s drive from where I was, the photograph of the model and brief information was sufficient for me to rent a car.

It was late afternoon when I arrived at the town and I chose to visit the architect’s office before it closed. As I entered the foyer, I noted that the well-crafted model of the church was on display. It was somewhat concerning that the model was there rather than on display at the new church.

The architect quickly established that the project had been shelved. A member of the church’s building committee said that he could build the church for less. And he did.

I drove to the church and, as I entered, an elderly woman came to meet me. Hearing the reason for my visit, she opened her handbag and removed a worn copy of the photograph and text I recognized.

“I don’t think we got this church here, do you?” she said.

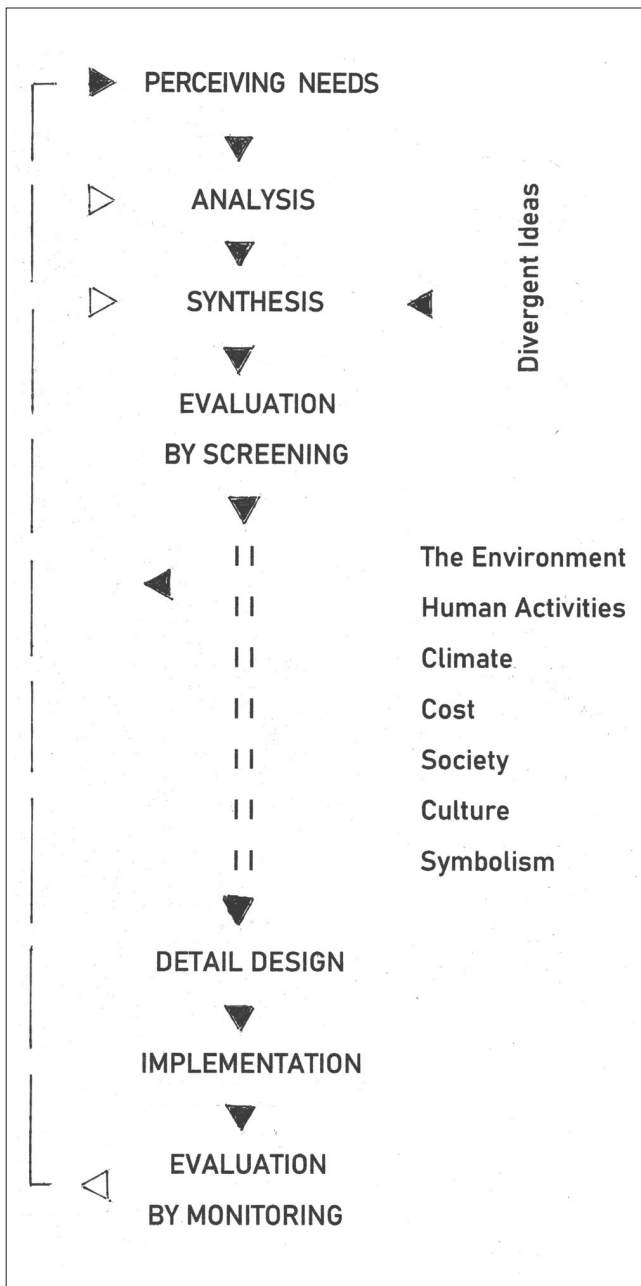
Then she put the piece of paper back in her handbag, to be again carried around as a reminder of a workshop she had enjoyed and a building that might have been.

I suggest that the first objective for designing worship spaces is to be creative; the second is to design well. When designing a building for worship, it is important to think about what it is that we want our church buildings to say. I believe they should respond uniquely to our beliefs.

Then there is the need to build well. The design quality of Shaker furniture is recognized both for the conceptual thinking that occurred in the design process and the high standard of workmanship during construction. Church buildings should do the same.

Truth can be expressed in honest and authentic ways in the choice of building materials and in craftsmanship. Harold Best, in his essay “God’s Creation and Human Creativity,” refers to the contemporary division between worth and function. In contrast, “every speck” of God’s handiwork “is lovingly made. . . . There is no model whatsoever in the Creation for a division between worth and function, or immediacy and timelessness.”<sup>1</sup>

As worshippers of a creative God, we are provided the opportunity to “imagine, to construct, to rise above our environments and to change them, to order them, to delight in their endless variety.”<sup>2</sup> These words of Otilie Stafford are offered with the idea that human participation with the Creator in the creative process “is itself a form of worship.” She goes on to say: “Worship involves experiences and expressions quite apart from the practical, utilitarian, rational expressions of our ordinary life.” The title of Otilie’s paper is appropriately



**Process for designing. Published in Neville Clouten, "Architecture of Participation," *Adventist Review*, September 22, 1988, pages 16–18.**

"The Holiness of Beauty: Why Imagination Matters." Similarly, Ed Sovik describes beauty as "the metaphor of the Holy."<sup>3</sup> Given the outcome of enrichment through wide participation that we seek in creating places of worship, everyone who is willing to participate in the process of designing a church should do so. The poet, philosopher, physicist, soup kitchen worker and high

school student—all can share visionary and most unexpected ideas in the design process.

The following approach to designing a church parallels the definition of creativity described by Paul Torrance as "the process of sensing problems or gaps in information, forming ideas and hypotheses, testing and modifying these hypotheses, and communicating the results."<sup>4</sup> It is summarized in the diagram [at left].

The process begins with perceptive inquiry—or perceiving needs. In order to find design solutions, we first need to understand what problems and needs a building should address. Following this analysis, information and postulates are brought together into synthesis proposals.

This is where the involvement of as many individuals as possible is stimulating to those who participate and potentially rewarding to the outcome. Some suggestions may appear to derive from unleashed imagination, but this divergence within the community is important to creativity. Divergence is valid providing the ideas do not go on to be built without proper evaluation.

I suggest that architects lead the way in eliminating fanciful notions—and perhaps some traditionally accepted ones—that should not be built. All synthesis proposals from the broad, turbulent ocean of ideas must be sieved as objectively as possible. Only a proposal that can pass through the filtering tests is worth developing and implementing. It is here that an unexpected idea may come through the process and lead to innovation in architecture.

The diagram suggests seven sieves—or filters—for the evaluation of proposals and as a means of identifying appropriate church architecture.<sup>5</sup> The first filter is the appropriateness of a proposed building in the context of its surrounding environment. The other filters are the human activity needs that initiated the design process, then climate, cost, society, culture and symbolism. These filters are discussed in more detail below.

The architect develops the selected proposal and uses models, drawings and specifications to refine the building's design. During implementation, the client

would expect the architect to exercise strict cost control within contractual procedures.

An important final phase is the assessment of the building in use over a period of time. User-evaluation

studies compare the actual use of space with the original objectives and client expectations. The design process then becomes circular, providing information back to the perception, analysis and synthesis proposals associated with another design project.

Creativity is a cooperative, ongoing process that is all-inclusive.

## Seven filters for identifying appropriate church architecture

### 1. The environment

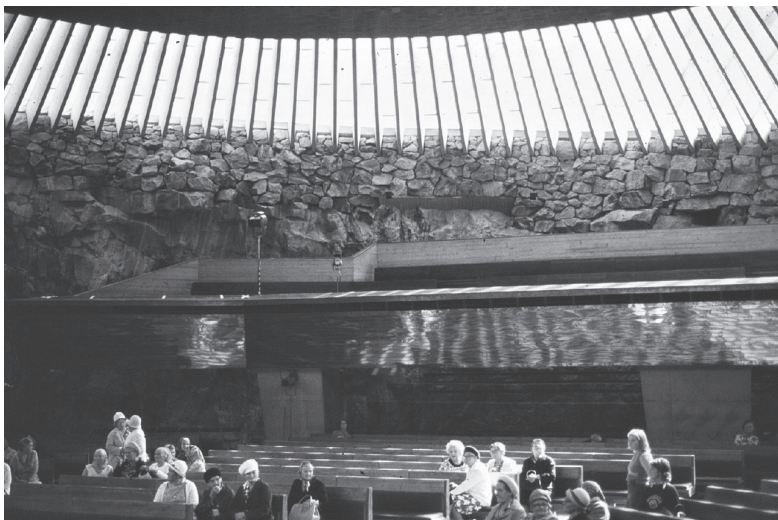
The first filter is the environment. A forest setting may lead to a building very different from one developed with sensitivity in an urban environment.

The worship space of the Temppeliaukio church in Helsinki is cut from a rock outcrop, and for generations the acropolis site has been surrounded by apartment houses. The church building, designed by Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen and completed in 1969, preserves the openness of the setting and continues the opportunities for public access onto the outcrop. A small metal cross is bolted to the rock near the church entrance.

The experience inside the church combines a sense of security in a space subtracted from the bedrock and a sense of unification under a shallow, domed ceiling. Inclined areas of roof glazing adjust the irregularities of the rock walls to the exact geometry of the dome. In winter, candles flicker on the natural rock shelves and thin

**TOP: Temppeliaukio, Helsinki, Finland. Designed by architects Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen. Completed 1969.**

**MIDDLE AND BOTTOM: Exterior cross and interior of Temppeliaukio, Helsinki, Finland. Designed by architects Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen. Completed 1969.**





copper ceiling strips reflect all available light. Imagine the voices of a male choir filling the reverberant space.

Another outstanding example is St Peter's Lutheran Church in New York City, designed by Hugh Stubbins. The church is a "good neighbor" to surrounding buildings, yet at the same time it is set apart. It holds its own on the site of the high-rise Citicorp office tower, the development of which necessitated the replacement of a church building.

The new church, while dwarfed by the tower, is in scale with a gathering place where people may stop, communicate and rest in the outdoors. From the street, the passer-by can see into the worship space.

This church is in the world and for the world, but it preserves its integrity. A change in geometric form sets it apart from the towering rectilinear buildings for banking and commerce.

## 2. Human activities

Buildings provide spatial enclosures for human activities. The Emmanuel's Church in Jönköping, Sweden, is a replacement building in a historic area of timber buildings. The limited site and a large program of community needs precluded a generous entry courtyard, so the architect Carl Nyren designed a small octagonal space next to the street. It welcomes all to enter anytime during the long hours that the building is open. Seats near the separate entrances to the church and social center are under a central tree. The emphasis on human needs continues into the foyer, where one first sees a table with provisions for hot and cold drinks. People naturally respond by placing a few kronor on the counter, taking up a cup and pastry, and moving to a nearby chair.

## 3. Climate

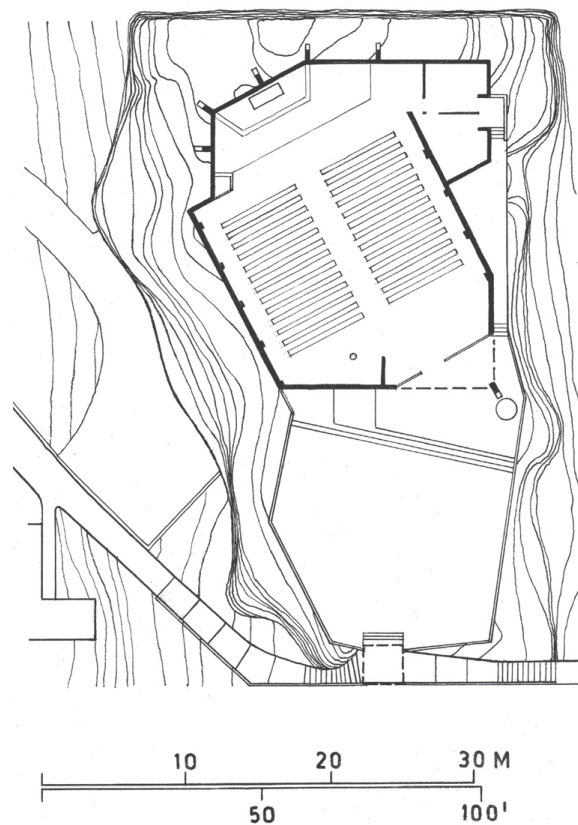
There are several principles that guide the design of churches in relation to climate. These include the selection of a site and the building's orientation, the inclusion of sun screening, lighting, ventilation and solar technologies. Locations in very cold climates require the physical separation of exterior forms from the interior building structure.

Swedish architect Ralph Erskine suggests that towns and buildings could open "like flowers to the sun of spring and summer but, also like flowers, turn their backs on the shadows and cold northern winds, offering sun-warmth and wind- protection."<sup>6</sup>

## 4. Cost

Central to the design of appropriate environments is cost. Even a building with a large budget should convey a message of accountability. Fortunately, design quality does not depend on large budgets. Low-cost churches with simplicity in plan and built with standard off-the-shelf components may include a small courtyard with a profusion of planting.

An example is a church that burned to the ground. Almost immediately a building committee was formed, and members interviewed three architects. The one chosen suggested a user-participation workshop, and



**Plan of the Wentworth Memorial Church, Vacluse, New South Wales. Designed by architect Don Gazzard. Completed 1965.**

church members met for two days in a tent on the site. An awareness walk on the first morning created real interest in a small area with shrubs that had been preserved. It was decided this would be a prayer garden and it became the center for outdoor fellowship. It provided a luxury of plants at low cost.

### 5. Society

Concern for individual and community needs and cost-accountable architecture can lead to environmental design for the whole of society. This includes all aspects of structural safety, non-toxic materials and barrier-free design. The Christian must take every opportunity to support society's health and happiness. In many ways, Christians follow the physician's diagnostic role, perceiving areas of stress and relieving tensions.

The Finnish architect Alvar Aalto suggested that "there are many situations in life in which the organization is too brutal; it is the task of the architect to give life a gentler structure."<sup>7</sup> The statement was made in 1955 and challenges us today to design churches of a gentler architecture.

### 6. Culture

Church building design should also respond to

culture. The geographic, historic and societal contexts may combine into a spirit of place, or *genius loci*, to create a distinct character. This was understood by the architect Don Gazzard in his design for the Wentworth Memorial Church in Vaucluse, close to Sydney Harbour. The elements of *genius loci*—paths and places that create domains for human interaction—are illustrated in the way the church is approached.

It is located at the end of a narrow path that climbs to a sandstone outcrop on the top of a ridge. The path ends at a threshold to a forecourt, occupying half of the small irregular site. An elevated paved area towards the church building provides a second threshold to the door of the church, located beneath an extension to the roof. In all the details, the pedestrian approach is consistent with the hillside and the houses oriented towards the harbor.

The church was completed in 1965 and was heritage-listed in 2012, both for its architecture and as a memorial to the local service men and women who served in World War II. In spite of expressions of concern, the property has been in and out of new ownership. The building remains intact. Its sales and potential sales have moved from funeral operator, to hotelier, to use as a private residence with a basement lap pool.



## 7. Symbolism

The last of the seven filters for appropriate architecture is symbolism. The Canberra National Seventh-day Adventist Church, Australia, designed by architect Ken Woolley of Ancher, Mortlock and Woolley, integrates water in its design as a symbol for baptism. Triangular buttresses rise from a large pool within the courtyard. Worshippers enter the church at a level beneath the waterline. Inside, to one side of the pulpit, a cylindrical baptismal font bathed in light further emphasizes the significance of baptism. Art and architectural history provide a vocabulary of symbolic forms and spaces. St Peters Lutheran Church, Columbus, Indiana introduces symbolism in the selection of geometries for the plan of the church. Designed in 1988 by Gunnar Birkerts, the interior plan has two circles, superimposed against a rectilinear geometry on one side. There is a sense of containment in the smaller circle, which has seating for 320 in close association with the worship center. The larger circle adds a thousand seats on a rising level around and above the inner circle.

Worshippers come together as a group within a circle, and they also seek direction by turning towards a lectern for the spoken Word. Birkerts described the

symbolism in the church plan, saying, “Togetherness and direction are in the concept of the plan.”<sup>8</sup>

Designers of contemporary churches are able to select from an array of Christian symbols to convey meaning. Common objects such as the towel, water, the cup and bread took on special meaning as they were used in New Testament times and as they pointed to a second advent. A focus on the end of the journey does not need to limit how the creative process and aesthetics can enrich the journey. We are able to do both.

Practicing architects serve on juries for student projects. Beyond this, leading practitioners join with architectural educators to serve on juries to identify examples of the built environment worthy of receiving design awards. Most of these are given by the Institute of Architects soon after the completion of a building. They can speak to a positive relationship between a client and architect. But jury comments may not be considered important to some members of a church congregation. These members may have an appreciation or otherwise for their place of worship and have no need for more than that. Other worshippers see themselves as informed clients and have insights into the design of churches that enrich their worship experience.

The commentary of design professionals, whether as jurors or written in publications, can heighten this. At the extreme, there may be theorists who use esoteric language and speak only to their own group. Hopefully, it is more common to have critiques that heighten worshippers’ awareness of why and how the experience of their church is enriching them.

The Canberra National Seventh-day Adventist Church, mentioned earlier, received a design award when completed in 1971. The Royal Australian Institute of Architects Awards Committee visited this new church and presented the award in recognition of its

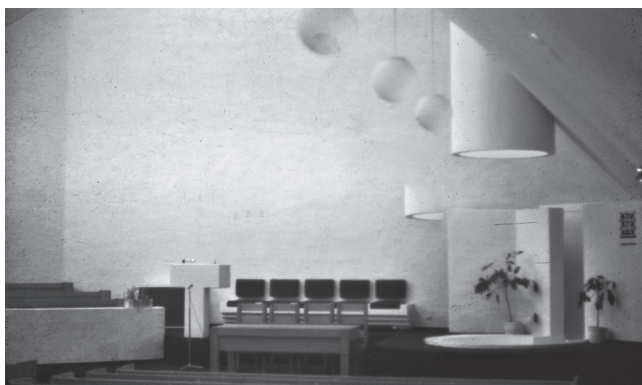
***Wentworth Memorial Church, Vauclose, New South Wales. Designed by architect Don Gazzard. Completed 1965. LEFT: Entry porch; FAR LEFT: forecourt, with the entrance to the church on the right.***





architectural significance. The jury commended the design of the entry courtyard, which includes a view of the Lutheran church tower next door. It is a good example of the Japanese principle of borrowing a landscape. Of more importance to the jury was the summary of the clients' intent and expectations. Twenty-five years later, these statements were the basis for another visit.

The most prestigious award of many architectural institutes is the 25-year award. This is the case for the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, and the award is titled the Enduring Architecture Award. A visit by the Enduring Architecture Awards committee took place in 1996. These jurors recognized the architectural significance of the building when designed, but more importantly they assessed how its continued significance had demonstrated its "enduring" qualities over the 25-year period. The jury noted:



**Canberra National Seventh-day Adventist Church, Australia. Designed by architect Ken Woolley of Anchor Mortlock Murray and Woolley. Completed 1971. Awarded the 25-year Enduring Architecture Award by Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 1996. TOP: exterior; BOTTOM: interior.**

The design of the church combines concepts in contemporary church architecture with a symbolic design which reflects the beliefs of the SDA congregation. . . . The use of light and water highlight key elements of the doctrine. Light falls from high windows, reflects into the church from a pool outside the church, is focused on the baptismal font, and is emphasized by the white of the walls.

The jury commented on the water level at the entry and how "the prominent and unusual baptismal font highlights the key role of baptism by immersion."

A citation of the Enduring Architecture Award is exhibited on a bronze plaque in the church entry. In the summary of the Statement of Significance there is this sentence:

The architecture of the church may contribute to the education of designers in their understanding of the development of Late Twentieth Century architectural styles.

It seems to me that these statements take us back to the academic setting of Andrews University. The architect at the Canberra church took the theology we wanted to communicate, and both educators and practitioners were pleased with how the building connected with the beliefs.

#### ENDNOTES:

1. Harold M Best, "God's Creation and Human Creativity," in *The Reality of Christian Learning: Strategies for Faith-Discipline Integration*, editors Harold Heie and David Wolfe (St Paul: Christian University Press, 1987), 263.
2. Otilie Stafford, "The Holiness of Beauty: Why Imagination Matters," *Spectrum*, 7(4), 1975, 10.
3. Ed Sovik, "The Mirror of the Church," *Faith and Form: Journal of the Interfaith Forum of Religion Art and Architecture*, Fall, 1988, 17.
4. Paul Torrance, *Creativity* (Washington, DC: National Education Association of the United States, 1963), 3.
5. Neville Clouten, "Architecture of Enrichment," *Adventist Review*, September 15, 1988, 18-23; and "Architecture of Participation," *Adventist Review*, September 22, 1988, 16-18.
6. Ralph Erskine, *The Polar Record* (Cambridge, England: The Scott Research Institute, 1968), quoted in Peter Collymore, *The Architecture of Ralph Erskine* (London: Granada, 1982), 26.
7. Cited in Aarno Ruusuvauro (Editor), *Alvar Aalto* (Helsinki: Museum of Finnish Architecture, 1978), 50.
8. Design statement in association with Kay Kaiser, "Another Jewel in the Crown: St Peter's Church, Columbus, Indiana," *Faith and Form: Journal of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art and Architecture*, Winter 1988-89, 9-13.



# A Peculiar People

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Night after night, at the beginning of 2020, my father—sleeping in the same bed where my mother had died—woke up to use the bathroom: to be specific, he took a Mason jar from the side of the bed and peed into it. Why not? He now lived alone, and it was a lot easier than stumbling through the dark to reach the bathroom. Afterwards, he'd peer out his window. Sometimes he'd see something flash. Sometimes he wouldn't. But most nights? The lights were there. Blinking intermittently. Announcing their presence. Causing my dad's brow to furrow. And, because I wanted to see them myself, I made the five-hour trip from Virginia to North Carolina, to the cove deep in the mountains where he lived.



As a child, I knew that my church was made up of what my fellow congregants often referred to as “a peculiar people”—a group of believers that the world didn't seem to know

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much about. Seventh-day Adventists were rarely named or alluded to in media or popular culture. Adventist characters didn't make appearances on *Gilligan's Island* or *Good Times* or *The Cosby Show* or *Family Ties* or *A Different World* or *The Andy Griffith Show* or *The Walton's* or *Happy Days*. No athlete I followed counted himself as a member of the denomination. No famous singer sang about us. No comedian poked fun at our idiosyncrasies. No famous author listed our denomination in the bio on the back of his or her book. Aside from the 1984 story about Baby Fae—the infant into which Dr. Leonard Bailey, an Adventist doctor, had transplanted a baboon heart—we didn't show up in the news. I'd never watched a single movie that made so much as a fleeting reference to Seventh-day Adventists. (Though Adventists in theory welcome any-and-everyone in the world to join the church, the kind of person who ends up converting is much more particular; for instance, according to [Malcolm] Bull and [Keith] Lockhart's theory of the "revolving door," articulated in their sociological study of the Seventh-day Adventist church in their book *Seeking a Sanctuary*, the majority of converts to Adventism worldwide exist on a lower socioeconomic scale, while those who leave tend to inhabit a higher one.) I'd heard rumors that certain celebrities—namely Prince and Little Richard and Magic Johnson and Clifton Davis, the latter of whom played the pastor on the role of the TV show *Amen*, which also featured Sherman Helmsley from *The Jeffersons*—had been raised in the church, but I'd never been able to prove whether those rumors were true, and even if they had been, it wouldn't have mattered, because nobody—except gossipy SDA kids like me—gave a hoot. I knew that many of the cereals I enjoyed bore John Harvey Kellogg's surname, and that before he'd been "disfellowshipped" for espousing so-called "pantheistic" views, he'd been a member of the Adventist church; my great-grandfather's medical diploma from a school in Battle Creek, Michigan bore Kellogg's signature. I knew that Little Debbie snack cakes, of which I'd consumed an astounding number during my childhood, were made by the McKee family, and that the McKees were Adventists, and that, years

ago, Mr. McKee had proposed to my grandmother, who—thankfully for all of us who wouldn't have existed had she said yes—turned him down. But that was it. It wasn't just that very few people knew much about Seventh-day Adventists. It was that nobody seemed to care. We weren't a mystery to be solved. We were a little strange, maybe, but not that strange. We didn't have giant polygamous families or wear magical underwear or refuse to celebrate birthdays. We didn't go out of our way to knock on people's doors. We didn't avoid doctors or medicine or blood transfusions. In fact, if you met one of us, it may very well have been at a hospital or physician's office. We may have taken a moment to pray with you. We may have given you a strange little book you never read because you found the diction archaic or the narrative kind of boring. You wouldn't have said we were pushy, though. You probably would've thought we were nice and described us as friendly. But you probably wouldn't have seen us again. And thus, we would've been almost immediately forgotten.



On only one occasion in over two decades of teaching at non-Adventist universities has a student ever admitted to having been raised in the church, and only one time out of twenty will a student have known someone who'd claimed to have been a Seventh-day Adventist, that person inevitably and tentatively raising his or her hand, while delivering an uncertain wince, saying something like "the name sounds familiar," and so then I explain, in as factual and as brief a way as possible, that the Seventh-day Adventist church was a denomination that emerged in the nineteenth century, during the Second Great Awakening, from what has been known as the Millerite Movement, when a preacher named William Miller, reading closely the books of Daniel and Revelation, and applying a sort of prophetic arithmetic to the numbers within these books, arrived at a conclusion: Jesus Christ would return to earth on October 22, 1844, a day that, for true believers, would afterwards be known as the Great Disappointment. It is here that my students—not all but



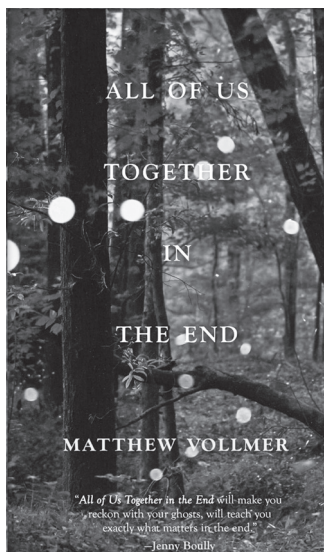


definitely more than a few—often laugh.

At this point, I might admit that, from the perspective of a twenty-first century citizen looking back upon the expectations of delusional, heaven-sick folk living in the nineteenth century, that it might seem humorous at first, though I'd never thought it was that funny. Imagine, for instance, that you'd given away all your possessions, slaughtered your livestock and distributed the meat to the poor, all with the belief that you would be leaving this earth forever, to live in a paradise characterized by its lack of pain and suffering, and where you would spend eternity with God, solving all the mysteries of human existence. And then imagine that the day passes, and that the Son of God does not appear in the heavens. And that you have to go back to your regular life, the material wealth and comforts of which you had, for all practical purposes, completely abandoned.

Whatever I say about Adventism on these occasions, I do my best to provide a basic, bare-bones description: the Seventh-day Adventist church believes that Christians ought to be honoring the Jewish Sabbath, as outlined in Exodus 20:11, and that they believe their bodies are the temple of God, and that people are best advised and will live longer and godlier lives should they abstain from flesh foods, tobacco, alcohol, and caffeine. Adventists, I may also point out, do not believe in hell—that is, they don't believe that hell exists, not yet, and that when it does it will function as a cleansing fire, wiping away sinners forever, each body burning according to the extent of his or her own evil.

I might then explain that the Seventh-day Adventists were co-founded by a young prophetess named Ellen G. White, who, at the age of nine, had been walking home from school with her twin sister. A classmate shouted her name. As Young Ellen turned around, this classmate hurled—apparently for no other reason than meanness—a rock, which struck the prophetess-to-be squarely in the nose. Ellen spent the next three weeks



unconscious. Though she would recover, she would remain ill for years and battle various health problems for the remainder of her life. At seventeen, however, she experienced the first of what would henceforth be many visions, which included a tour of heaven where she witnessed saints receiving their crowns, each of whom were pleased with whatever amount of jewels had been set within.

There are some things, however, that I tend not to mention, things that the average Adventist would

probably also keep under wraps, at least while delivering an initial introduction to the church, because these facts—taken out of their historical context, or situated outside the timetable of biblical prophecy, as it is understood by Adventists—might lead outsiders to dismiss fundamental beliefs before they've had time to digest how church founders arrived at their conclusions. For instance, I've never told my students that Ellen G. White's first book, called *An Appeal to Mothers*, catalogues the myriad evils and diseases—including "disobedience," "looks of depravity," "manifestations of ingratitude," "impatience under restraint," "morose tempers excited to jealousy," "blindness," "epilepsy," "deformity," "ill-health," "diabetes," and even "death"—that would likely result from the practice of "solitary vice," a phrase that, were I to use it in class, I would no doubt need to explain was better known in our modern era as "masturbation." I would probably not explain how many Adventists believe that, in the End of Time, the Mark of the Beast would be given to those who worship on Sunday, or that those who worship on Sunday—even now—were inadvertently bringing honor to Satan. I have never—not once, in all my years of explaining Adventism to students via these mini-lectures—included the Adventist notion that each person has a recording angel in heaven, and that a person's every deed has been committed to heavenly parchment, and that someday Jesus Christ will read this book and blot

out only the sins that you have specifically asked Him to forgive, and that Adventists believe He is—even as I type this—ministering in the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary.

I'm willing to bet if you're an Adventist, and you're reading this now, assuming you've gotten this far, you're thinking, He's *getting it wrong*. And to a certain extent I probably am. Because I know how difficult—if not impossible—it is to say “all Adventists believe,” or “all Adventists do x, y, or z.” Adventists are people, and as such, they are, as individuals, defined by their differences as much as by their similarities, no different from the members of any other religion. I have known Adventists who drink coffee and those who do not; Adventists who eat meat and those who do not; Adventists who abide by the dietary restrictions in Leviticus and those who welcome a lobster dinner or pepperoni on their pizza; Adventists who drink wine and Adventists who wouldn't take so much as a sip; Adventists who go to the movies and those who have never once stepped foot in a theater (for Sister White had warned that no Christian would want to be caught there during the Second Coming); Adventists who watch television on Sabbath, who will eat at restaurants on Sabbath, and those who, like the husband of the sister of an ex-girlfriend of mine, filled up their gas tanks in secret on Saturday, for fear that their parents would find out they'd purchased fuel on the seventh day. I have known Adventists who profess a deep and abiding love for the works of Ellen White and those who couldn't care less, as well as at least one Adventist who does not believe in God at all, but who simply loves Adventist culture and its traditions. I know lapsed Adventists—like the man who was a former president of his Adventist college's senior class, and then spent decades driving a Greyhound bus from L.A. to Las Vegas, where he lost hundreds of thousands of dollars—who believe Adventism is the truth but that living the Adventist life is simply too difficult, that the spirit might be willing but the flesh is weak, and therefore they know, even as they tip back shots of whiskey and light cigarettes, that they are doomed. I know Adventists who throw balls on Sabbath, who won't

swim (though wading is okay), who won't indulge in the playing of any games whatsoever, except those that reveal the extent of their players' knowledge of biblical trivia. I know Adventists who curse and blaspheme and those who frown upon the use of “gosh” or “gee.” I know Adventists who won't put up Christmas trees or celebrate Halloween or Easter because, they say, these holidays have pagan origins, and that those who participate in their celebration are honoring, albeit inadvertently, the devil. I know Adventists who support gay marriage and women's ordination, and those who vehemently oppose both, Adventists with tattoos and piercings and those who won't wear so much as a wedding ring, or even a friendship bracelet, for fear that said adornment would draw undue attention to their physical bodies, or make them look “worldly,” or that they were concerned with the fleeting and superficial realm of contemporary fashion. I knew those who dressed themselves in brand name clothes and those who—though not shabby—dressed plainly and conservatively; Adventists who blended in and those who embodied the teaching of 1 Peter 2:9, wherein the author, believed to be writing to the persecuted churches of Asia Minor, declared that his audience was “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people” and that they should “shew forth the praises of him” who hath called them “out of darkness” and “into his marvelous light.”



As fun as it sometimes is to observe the dumbfounded reactions I get whenever I catalog the peculiarities of Adventism, I also can't help but feel a little sheepish. It's partly because Adventism isn't all weird. And it's partly because there's no efficient way of summing it up. I know when I'm giving this little intro that I'm just scraping the surface. I'm not telling the whole story. Then again, no description I provide ends up feeling accurate enough to be true. What is absolutely, positively true, though? I loved growing up Adventist. I loved singing “Onward Christian Soldiers” and “This Little Light of Mine” and “Only a Boy Named

David.” I loved clapping my hands together to mime “shoot the artillery” and shielding my candle finger so Satan couldn’t blow it out and swinging my imaginary slingshot ’round and ’round before the stone hit Goliath in the forehead and “the giant came tumbling down.” I loved eating Worthington meat substitutes like Big Franks and Fri Chik. More than anything else, I loved my Adventist family—grandparents, great grandparents, cousins, uncles, and aunts. And most of all, I loved my Adventist parents.



I might’ve sometimes wished my parents would “lighten up”—that they would let me stay up later, eat more dessert, watch more TV—but I never once thought that any other parents were better than my own. I never once in all my years of living with them saw them fight. Never heard them argue. Never eavesdropped on a “heated conversation.” Never witnessed them raise their voices in anger or frustration at the other. Whatever conflicts or arguments my parents had, if any, they kept between themselves. I never knew why, but I assume now that it’s because they feared that somehow their children would be hurt or damaged by witnessing their parents do anything but treat one another with love and respect.

And this bothered me.

I knew other kids who had Adventist parents who could seem “cooler” than mine, but the shortcomings of these parents were obvious and, in the end, overshadowed whatever permissive tendencies I wished my own parents would emulate. One of my friend’s dads sang along to Ray Stevens songs and listened to Michael Jackson and took my friend to see Ghostbusters at the local Twin Cinema, but he also left his wife not long after she’d been diagnosed with MS and took up with another woman, who I remember as being charmingly foul-mouthed but strangely and obviously less-attractive. Another friend’s dad kept a stack of Playboy magazines in the closet of his guest bedroom; I know because my sister found them during a game of hide and seek. It

seemed like a good number of my friends’ parents were divorced, or were getting divorced, and even if the couple was still together, they were still far less appealing to me than my own parents, maybe because they were less funny, or were a little too pushy, or were unafraid of reprimanding kids who weren’t their own. How come everybody else had parents who were obviously flawed, who had hang-ups, who acted selfishly, who occasionally said and did ugly things? Why couldn’t I have parents like these, parents who said and did ugly things? Was it too much to ask, even, that they do just one ugly thing? I didn’t want them to be monsters; I just wanted them to be more human, because then I’d have less to live up to. Because when I measured myself against my parents, the distance between who I was and the kinds of people they were seemed insurmountable.

That’s not to say I couldn’t find little ways to resent them, like when my dad wanted me to help him retrieve sticks of kindling from the lumberyard, or drive out to the Land to cut wood with a motorized splitter whose hydraulic arm lowered its blade and crunched through the heart of a log like a guillotine in slow-mo. Or when my mother forced my sister and me to turn off the TV and sweep the porch or clean our rooms or go outside to play with our golden retrievers, which our mother always referred to as “those dogs,” reminding us that we were the ones who had wanted them, we had promised to love them and take care of them, and of course we had every intention of doing so, but that was before they grew up, before their fur—because they were outside dogs—got matted, and before my dog, the fat, dumb one, gave up retrieving altogether because his sister always beat him to thrown balls and so during fetch time simply let her do the retrieving while he turned over to receive a belly rub from the bottom of my tennis shoe because I couldn’t bear to touch his dirty underside with a bare hand.



The question of how I “got out of” or “left” the denomination seems to be one that I am most often called upon to answer, and I don’t know that I have



ever told the truth to anybody who's ever asked it, and that includes myself. When searching for an answer to this questions, my brain, which has been conditioned to prefer the concrete and think of time as a linear progression, automatically attempts to scroll backwards, so as to assign significance to a particular moment in time, perhaps one in which I came to some realization or experienced an epiphany. Like most humans, I imagine, I have had my share of those, and I can think now of my second semester of college, when, living in my first time in an apartment, a place where neither parent nor teacher nor resident assistant nor dean could record my comings and goings, and so for the first time in my life, I could choose whether or not I wanted to go to church and would face no immediate consequence—no parental punishment, no mark against an attendance record— and so for the first time in my life I chose not to go. Perhaps it could be said that this was the kind of moment that I consider when attempting to find an answer to the question: "When did you stop being an Adventist?" Even so, such a question seems to fail to consider the notion that a person like me—a person who was raised in the middle of nowhere, in the melancholic hollows of the mountains of Western North Carolina, in a loving and nurturing family co-captained by two parents who had also grown up in the church, attended church schools, read church books, sang church songs, listened to church music, and church story and ate Seventh-day Adventist food—could ever really leave the Seventh-day Adventist church, or that the idea of "leaving" was any more possible than changing who my parents were, that Seventh-day Adventism was as much part of who I was as any other essential element that made me who I was, and would forever influence who I would become.



On January 19, 2020, I decided to go see the lights. The air in the cove at my father's house was crisp and bracing. Streams roared. The sky had cleared itself of clouds. After the sun had gone down and the stars had come out, my father turned out all the lights in the

house. We stood in his bedroom. Stared out the windows. I can't remember how much time passed. For a long time, we didn't see anything.

"There's one," my dad finally said.

"Where?"

"Over there," he replied, pointing. "Down toward the left."

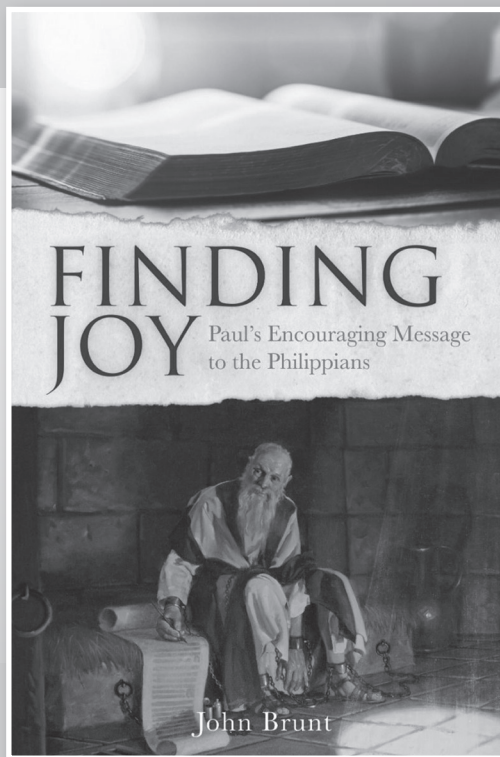
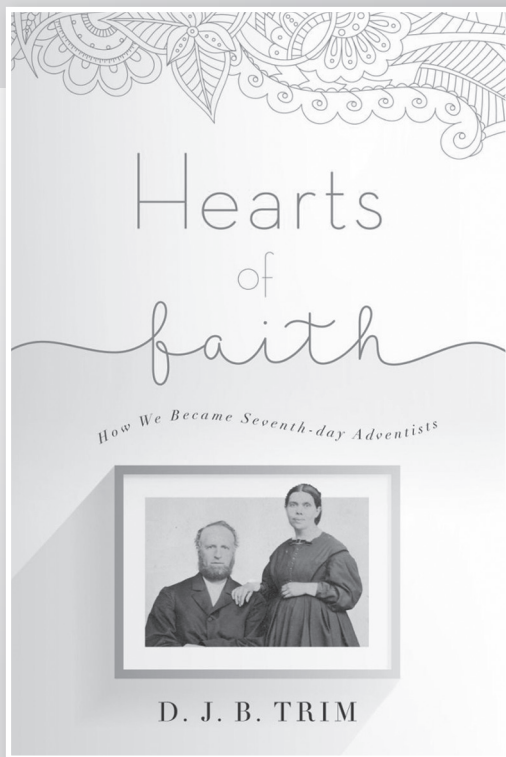
I didn't see anything.

"There's another one," he said.

Missed that one too. And the next. And the next. I thought maybe he was making them up. Or maybe his eyes—thanks to his glasses—were better than mine. Eventually, I thought I'd spotted something in my peripheral vision, which, according to my father, was where they often appeared. I was skeptical. After all, when I closed my eyes and stared into the dark, it was never dark for long: shapes would eventually begin to form and images would fade in and out, emerging and merging and submerging again; was a similar phenomenon happening now?

"They're not very active tonight," my father said. We said goodnight and I retired to my room, where I watched the slow fade of hundreds of glow-in-the-dark stars I'd stickered to the walls and ceilings two decades before. At 3 a.m., my phone rang and woke me. The screen said, Dad. I answered.

"They're going again," he said. I made my way downstairs. I stood at the window. Again, I thought I'd seen something, but wasn't sure, and said so, wondering aloud whether or not I had convinced myself that I'd somehow made up what I thought I'd seen, simply because I'd wanted to see *something*. "Think about how long we stood here tonight," Dad said. "And how for the longest time we never saw anything. So, if you think you saw something, you probably did." I couldn't argue with that. Or maybe I just didn't know how. I kind of didn't care. It was enough to stand there, next to my father, staring through those windows, into the night. It was the first time I could ever remember being in his presence for such a sustained period, experiencing something that neither of us understood, and for which we had no words to explain.



# Book REVIEWS



BY DONALD E. CASEBOLT

## True Light: Theological Software Leads to Organizational Hardware in the Formation of the Adventist Church

A review of:  
D. J. B. Trim, *Hearts of Faith: How We Became Seventh-day Adventists* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2022), 128 pages.

**H**earts of Faith: How We Became Seventh-day Adventists, by D. J. B. (David) Trim, is a condensed history of the transformation of disorganized and disappointed shut-door ex-Millerites (or proto-Seventh-day Adventists) into the organized Seventh-day Adventist Church in the period between 1844 to 1863. The book’s first five chapters describe shut-door Adventism’s earliest “software”—or theological development. Once Ellen White’s visions had “confirmed” a unique amalgamation of new doctrines, her visions advocated the necessity for organization. In his sixth and transitional chapter, Trim points out that almost a decade prior to the formal establishment of the Adventist Church, White had visions in 1854 and 1855 in which she was “shown” that the shut-door Millerite aversion for organization was ill-conceived. His remaining six chapters describe the material (hardware) consequences of the theological (software) developments of his first six chapters.

Trim describes Millerites as those who believed in Miller’s “date-setting message” (34) and admits that Miller “ignored Christ’s own words” (18), while imagining that his “date-setting message” captured “the plain meaning of scriptures” (30). This was Miller’s “one main and easily understood point” (22). He notes that Millerism attracted people who “were drawn to the fringe of organized religion” (32) and that it preferentially “attracted adherents from the excitable, extreme fringes of American Christianity,” although previous Adventist chroniclers were “keen to dismiss” this (31). He

defines the shut-door dogma as the assertion that “only those who had accepted the Millerite message before October 22, 1844, would be saved” (43) and notes that it was held by “virtually all” proto-Seventh-day Adventists. (45) He

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suggests that only as these proto-Seventh-day Adventists abandoned the shut door did they become more rational and mission-minded. He assures us that proto-Adventists left their excitable, extreme fringe posture by adopting a “rational methodology” of Bible study and a “decidedly rational approach to theology” (61, 52). However, this is more an assertion than a presentation of evidence because—via the mechanism of cognitive dissonance—the nascent Church maintained its allegorical-typological Millerite eisegesis in interpreting Daniel and Revelation.

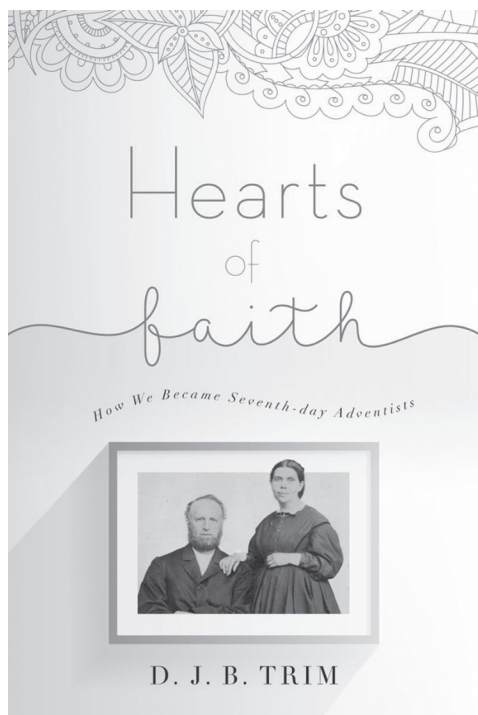
Trim shares the common contention that White did not originate any new doctrines. Yet he documents contentious doctrinal Bible discussions which only subsided when White asserted her visionary authority, after which “the matter was settled” (53). The primordial Millerite/Adventist doctrine which White’s visions “settled” was the cosmic significance of the midnight cry—October 22, 1844. In her first vision she saw that S. S. Snow’s date-setting midnight cry was indispensable for salvation. Those who disagreed before the Disappointment saying that “no man knows the day or hour” were scoffers now lost outside the shut door. The midnight cry, she saw in vision, had a divine origination directly from the glorious right hand of Jesus. After the Disappointment those who denied its significance fell off the steep heavenly pathway to share the fate of the wicked world below. Only after Joseph Turner, Apollos Hale, O. R. L. Crosier, and S. S. Snow publicized concepts which ascribed a soteriological significance to October 22, 1844, did White have visions in which she “saw” that their two-apartment, two-phased marriage of the Bridegroom, and midnight cry concepts were “true light.” White’s visions “settled” and established the cosmic significance of October 22, 1844. This primeval dogma then underwent embellishment

and evolving nomenclature: two-phased marriage of the Bridegroom, movement in a two-apartment sanctuary, investigative judgment. These hypotheses were not based on exegetical studies of the Bible. They were based on eisegesis, or what Alden Thompson labels non-contextual methods. It is true that these men, and not White, originated these interpretations. However, it was only her visions which gave them doctrinal force. Had White’s endorsement not been forthcoming, these allegorical-typological-historicist interpretations would not have crystallized into fundamental beliefs.

Trim does not address the fact that White’s visions asserted that expositors such as William Miller, S. S. Snow, and O. R. L. Crosier had been given “true light” or “glorious light” from God that justified White’s reliance upon their eisegesis of biblical texts which became the doctrinal foundation which White merely “confirmed.”

He lists seven core, distinctive beliefs around which Seventh-day Adventists gradually coalesced. Oddly, he does not explicitly count among them the belief that October 22, 1844, was an event of cosmic significance. Yet this was the sole and primordial doctrine that White insisted on between 1844 and late 1846, when the Sabbath was conjoined to the shut-door message. The “spirit of prophecy” being a trademark of the last-days,

remnant Church, Trim counts as Adventism’s sixth core belief. The seventh core belief was that White was “inspired by God.” Surprisingly, he concedes that “since it derived from experience and from her testimony, it cannot of course, be properly called a biblical doctrine” (56-57). On its face, this undermines the Church’s claim that all their doctrines are based on Scripture alone. It is not clear whose “experience” he is referring to—White’s personal experience or the Little Flock’s corporate experience. Assuming he means



White's experience, he seems to be saying that the seventh core belief is based solely on White's personal experience and testimony.

There is one critical historical gap in Trim's history. Chapter four, "The Disappointed," ends with the events of February 1845. Chapter five, "The Sabbatarian Adventists," begins in April 1848. This leaves a gap of about two and a half years. Several decisive theological and personal developments occurred during this time. White had her "new earth" vision. She met and travelled extensively with her future husband, James White. She remained convinced of the validity of the shut door and travelled to Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts relating her initial visions. The unique burden of these visions was that S. S. Snow's midnight cry was valid. She had a "time of trouble" vision at Carver, Massachusetts. She said that there would be a time of trouble prior to the second advent. Thus, a time of trouble was an explanation for the delay of the second coming which could not occur until the time of trouble ended. This became White's main argument for declining to set any more exact dates for the second coming—in contrast to Sunday-keeping ex-Millerites. But paradoxically, she also asserted that the time of trouble had already started, would only continually intensify, and would not end until the second advent. Only in 1846 would her first vision be published. In the summer of 1846, she married James White, and they began to observe the Sabbath. On April 3, 1847, she had a vision that the Sabbath had special significance. In May 1847, she and James published their seminal apology, "A Word to the 'Little Flock.'" Henry Nichols, her first son, was born on August 26, 1847. This was a critical inflection point. White became keenly aware of the impediment which children would be to her prophetic career. Thus, she reasoned that God required her to leave them with various nannies for the first five years of their lives. She believed that a jealous God would take their lives if she neglected her divine call as Messenger to stay home and be a housewife.<sup>1</sup>

There are several determinative factors resulting in the formal organization of the Adventist Church

which Trim does not discuss. While still Millerites they had repudiated both Catholicism and *all* non-Millerite Protestantism as satanic Babylon. This left only other ex-Millerites as possible communicants. Soon White's visions indicated that only Sabbath keepers and those who retained a belief in Snow's date-setting midnight cry could be saved, and her visions were considered to be authoritative by the Little Flock. Thus, when she asserted that Crosier's sanctuary doctrine was the "true light" which provided an alternative event for October 22, 1844, this left only shut-door ex-Millerites in a group which considered that their doctrines regarding the Sabbath and the "gift of Prophecy" were indispensable, core beliefs.

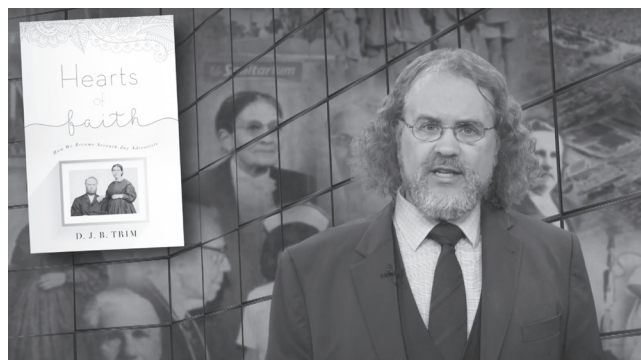
Trim's sixth chapter recounts White's counsel that now that a theological foundation (the software) had been grounded, she saw a need for organization to promulgate the three angels' messages. Just as White's vision determined the Church's suite of unique theological beliefs, she had visions that the Church should have a formal and legal structure (67-68). The remaining chapters describe the Church's burgeoning hardware, or material development. This included westward geographic expansion using modern modes of transportation and communication. Growing demographics and geographical expansion led to the establishment of *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* to connect the 3,500 Sabbatarian Adventists of 1860. The *Review and Herald* served as a surrogate ministerial entity as there was only about one minister for every 160 members. This in turn created a need for a larger, more expensive physical press. In addition to White's visions, there were practical considerations in favor of formalizing the ownership of the Church's physical assets. James White had seen other churches' disorganization result in those churches losing control of their flagship journals and houses of worship. He argued that his young heirs, who might not remain Adventists, would inherit the Church's press equipment should he die (92-93). Practical and legal considerations eventually overcame the theological resistance of those who argued that organizing and adopting a name would be just the

first step in morphing into the authoritarian Babylon that they opposed. To T. J. Butler’s anti-organizational, theological arguments, James White asserted that the New Testament made no “suggestions in regard to [the] press, running tents, or how Sabbath-keepers should hold their Office of publication” (99). In short, Adventists should use sanctified sagacity when an explicit thus saith the Lord was not existent. As the membership became more numerous and dispersed geographically, common sense dictated that this complexity be contained in a more formal association.

The first stage of organization occurred when the first six companies in Michigan adopted a “church covenant” between October 1861 and January 1863. Each local congregation within the state was encouraged to sign a very spare “covenant” in contradistinction to a “creed.” Specifically, they covenanted to “keep the commandments of God” (code for being Sabbatharians) and have the “faith of Jesus Christ” (code for White’s gift of prophecy). “The commandments of God (7th day) and the testimony of Jesus (EGW) will be the watchword and standard of the remnant” (110). Since this was presented as “the Bible plan of church organization,” it overcame an instinctual opposition to creeds.

At what stage in their evolution did ex-Millerites become Seventh-day Adventists? Ex-Millerites were “highly individualistic and instinctively suspicious of formal structures” (121), so Trim’s answer is that the transition occurred when they organized in May 1863—when the first “General Conference” of the several state conferences was held. That all the official delegates were men helps explain the entrenchment of patriarchy in today’s ecclesiological hierarchy. Organization soon helped the nascent Church launch missions to the west coast of the United States in 1867 and to Europe in 1869.

The leaders of the incipient Adventist Church had identified “the first and second angels’ messages of Revelation 14 with Millerism, lending it a prophetic luster” (124). The third angel’s message they reserved for a remnant Church distinguished from Millerism by 1) its Sabbatarianism and 2) its conviction that White’s gift of prophecy distinctly branded the pure, end-



Author D. J. B. Trim talks about his new book.

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times Church. In this they carried on the tradition of historicism. They believed that their own experience was allegorically predicted by specific verses in Revelation 14 and elsewhere. The first angel was tied to the date of 1837 in the 1850-51 White/Nichols chart; the second angel was fixed to the date 1843; and the third angel started sometime after 1844, definitely by the autumn of 1846 when the Church’s founding triumvirate—Joseph Bates, James White, and Ellen White—started observing Sabbath on Saturday. (That is to say that variant “exact” dates were given by various persons at various times.) In this they inherited the historicist mode of applying specific Old Testament verses to exact near-contemporaneous events (Lisbon Earthquake of 1755, the Dark Day of 1780, the Meteorite shower of 1833). Ezekiel 12:22-24, Jeremiah 51:45-46, and Habakkuk 2:3 all purportedly predicted the exact years (1843-1844) of the Millerite movement. The third angel’s message of Revelation merely continued in its countdown of an exact prophetic sequence of events.

By May 1863, Seventh-day Adventism and its prophetess were no longer Millerite Adventists, but they retained striking vestigial Millerite traits in their historicist DNA. The “true light” of Crosier’s, Snow’s, Turner’s, and Miller’s non-contextual method remains foundational to Adventist theology. And now there is plenty of organizational hardware to uphold the traditional intellectual software.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Timothy L. Poirier, ed. Roland Karlman, annotator, *The Ellen G. White Letters & Manuscripts with Annotations, 1845-1859*, vol. 1 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2014), 26.





BY HEROLD WEISS

# Live a Life Worthy of the Gospel

A review of:  
John Brunt, *Finding  
Joy: Paul's Encouraging  
Message to the Philippians*  
(Nampa, ID: Pacific Press,  
2023), 176 pages.

In his trail-blazing commentary on Paul's letter to the Philippians, author John Brunt is participating in a sustained conversation with other scholarly commentaries on this letter, thus opening up further avenues for interpretation. Confessing that he has spent his life—whether in a classroom or in a church—teaching, Brunt establishes an amiable dialogue with his readers, but he conducts a serious study. He instructs readers to have a notebook or a computer file and several versions of the letter at hand in order to be engaged with what they are reading.

*Finding Joy* consists of an Introduction, a section titled "Looking Back at Philippians," and sixteen chapters in each of which six or seven verses of the text are analyzed. Each chapter begins with instructions to read the section under consideration in two or three versions and write answers to several questions on the reading. Each ends with questions about how to internalize what has been learned, how to interpret it in reference to statements of Paul in his other letters, and a list of scholarly resources for further illumination.<sup>1</sup>

Given that Brunt asks his readers to read different versions of Philippians before studying a chapter of his commentary, it is somewhat surprising that he does not identify the default version he uses. In his discussion of texts, Brunt frequently makes reference to the *New International Version's* rendering in order to justify his interpretation. Behind

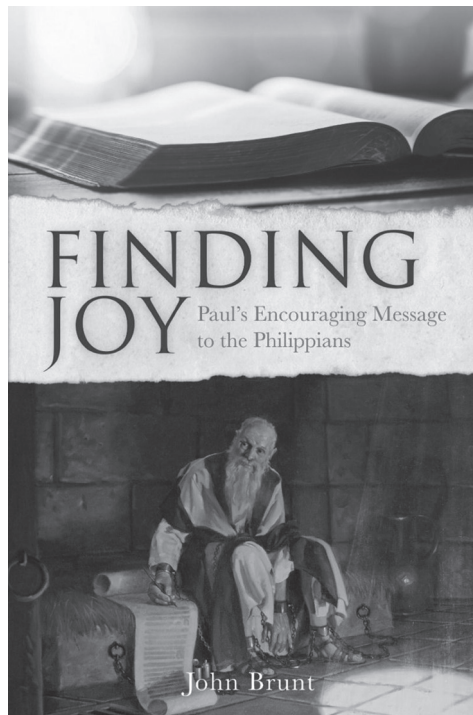
the title page, the abbreviations of various versions are identified with full bibliographical information, but throughout the commentary no biblical quotation is identified by a version's initials, with one exception (141).

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*Herold Weiss's latest books are Meditations on According to John, Meditations on the Letters of Paul, and The End of the Scroll: Biblical Apocalyptic Trajectories.*

In his doctoral dissertation for Emory University, Brunt argued that Paul should be read for his ethics, instead of his theology. The apostle's letters are pastoral and aim to instruct how to live as servants (slaves) of the Lord Jesus Christ. This commentary on Philippians gives Brunt, the pastor, ample room in which to demonstrate Paul's pastoral sensibilities. Like Paul, who was both a pastor and an intellectual, Brunt engages his readers in serious conversations, assuming and respecting their rational faculties. One of the themes he identifies both at the beginning and at the end of the book (18, 174)—and highlights throughout—is the way in which “thinking and the mind” play an important role in the Christian life. He also makes several references to Paul's sense of humor. He finds Paul frequently saying things with an ironic tongue in cheek. Without a doubt Paul was a master of the use of irony, especially in his multiple rhetorical questions. In a couple of the instances identified by Brunt, however, I did not find it.

On several occasions, Brunt takes into account different interpretations of a detail in the text or in the circumstances that may have caused Paul to write what he did. After a brief description of the arguments used to support each interpretation, Brunt regularly opts for the traditional one, with the qualification that he is doing so “in full knowledge” that there is good evidence supporting others. For example, when Paul was in chains waiting to hear the verdict of his trial, he confessed that he could not make up his mind as to whether he preferred to be condemned to death or to be set free (Phil 1:22-



23). His ambivalence has been interpreted in quite different ways. Brunt thinks that it “is one of the most difficult passages to be found in Paul's letters” (52). After a brief review of the various interpretations suggested, before giving his own interpretation, Brunt tells his readers, “[W]hat follows is one person's attempt to make sense of it. . . . [E]valuate it from your own prayerful study and try to reach your own conclusion” (55).<sup>2</sup>

At the core of Brunt's book is his interpretation of Paul's understanding of suffering and joy as conjoined experiences.

His title, *Finding Joy*, promises a solution to this puzzle. He builds on the view that on account of their faith, which he defines as “personal commitment to corporate Christian experience and belief” (67), believers are justified by God and find themselves in a close personal relationship with Christ. It is difficult for them, however, to find meaning for their suffering. Brunt argues that Paul is telling them that their suffering is a “privilege,” a “gift of God.” It is “a sign to believers of their salvation by God” (68).

As slaves spreading the gospel, they suffer “for Christ.” The gospel tells them what Christ has done for them, and this knowledge imposes on them a mission to preach it to others. Brunt writes, “[F]ew people ever have such a single vision about anything as Paul did about the gospel” (43). For him, whether the gospel is being preached by one who is ambitious for power and fame (with the intention to dishonor Paul) or by one who does it out of goodwill and love, it does not matter (Phil 1:15-18). Paul rejoices that in either case the gospel is being preached. Suffering for Christ while extending the reach of the gospel identifies Christians with the pattern of Jesus' life. Their suffering “not only assures them of His presence to help them endure but also binds



them to Him and to the pattern of death and resurrection revealed by Him. . . . It is the pattern of Christ's death and resurrection that gives meaning to suffering for Christians" (175).

Analyzing the way in which Paul changed his mind about the way humans may relate to God, Brunt points out Paul's confession that what he once considered to be assets that made him a righteous person, he now finds to have been liabilities that sidelined him. He now counts those assets as "refuse," "dung." He came to understand that what is needed is "not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ" (Phil 3:9). Brunt recognizes that when Paul refers to faith, he always uses a genitival phrase, "faith of Christ," and justifies translating it as "faith in Christ" by reading it as an objective genitive. That is, Christ is not the subject who has faith, but the object of someone's faith. Admitting that a significant number of scholars have argued that this is a theologically informed reading with no basis in the Greek, Brunt ends the discussion affirming, "Paul is speaking of a righteousness that comes through the committed trust the believer places in Christ" (124). He bases his interpretation on Philippians 1:29.

In this section of the letter, Paul is aware that his readers are facing opponents, and he instructs them to "stand firm in one spirit, as one person [*psyxé*] fighting together without fear in the faith of the gospel." In that case, what they are doing and the actions of their opponents will be public exhibitions [*éndexis*] respectively of their salvation and their opponents' destruction under the wrath of God (see Rom 1:18-3:19). The basis for Paul's advice to stand firm together and fight their opponents is that "to you it has been granted as a free favor [by God] on account of, in reference to [*hypér*] Christ not only to place faith toward [*eis*] him but also to suffer on account of, in reference to [*hypér*] him" (Phil 1:29). Note that Paul did not write "faith of Christ" but "faith toward him." Christians, who are the beneficiaries of what God did through Christ and live "in the faith of the gospel," exhibit what God did to exhibit his righteousness on account of the "faith

of Christ." Their suffering when combating opponents is not suffering "for" Christ, but suffering on account of the gospel of Christ. According to Paul, the gospel is not information that must be believed for a person to be justified before God. It is "the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith. . . . For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from [*ek*] faith toward [*eis*] faith" (Rom 1:16). In other words, the power of God's righteousness is being revealed from the faith of Jesus facing death at Pilate's court to the faith of persons who adopt the faith of Jesus and crucify themselves with him. It would seem, then, that combating opponents and suffering is not suffering "for" Christ. It is a public demonstration of their participation in the passion, the cross, and the resurrection of Christ.

Paul was a pharisaic apocalyptic Jew who became an apocalyptic slave of his new-found Lord Jesus Christ. Apocalypticism was the theological development that made it possible to defend the prophetic notion of God's retributive justice. Within the apocalyptic horizon—in which the notion of the fall of creation under the power of sin and death is basic—it seems to me that it was not necessary for Paul to find meaning for suffering. In the fallen world, the world of "the flesh," where "Satan is the god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4), suffering and eschatological death are givens. This means that Paul is not concerned with explaining how it is possible for humans who live "in the flesh" to become righteous before God. What needs to be explained is how it can be said that God is just when the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper.

Paul can affirm that God is just because of the way in which he understands what God did in the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ within an apocalyptic perspective. Of course, from the point of view of the flesh, the crucifixion was the execution of a Jewish Messiah, and all the disciples who witnessed it decided to go back to their fishing business on the Sea of Galilee. For Paul, however, Jesus was the incarnation of a spiritual being in "the form of a god" who decided to empty himself of his position in the chain of being and to take "the form of a slave" way down the chain. Living "in the



likeness of man,” he was without sin, and facing death he had faith in God. His death was not a biological death at the hands of Roman soldiers. He died the eschatological death brought about by the powers of the spheres, the principalities, powers, and dominions—“the rulers of this age,” who keep humanity in slavery to sin and death (1 Cor 2:8). The eschatological death of a sinless man caused God’s incursion into the kingdom of death to raise Christ from among the dead. Christ’s faith in God when facing crucifixion opened the door for God to fulfill his purpose to give life to his creatures and make Christ the Final, the Ultimate [ésxatos] Adam who, having been raised, “became a life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor 15:45).

This way of understanding the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ is possible only by faith. By interpreting it this way, Paul is radically revising the usual apocalyptic understanding of the fulfillment of the prophetic Day of the Lord. Instead of sending locusts, drought, or foreign armies as judgments on the Israelites, God steps in personally to judge his people. What was expected to happen at the end of the present historical timeline—God establishing his kingdom—Paul believes already happened when God revealed his justice at the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Those who by faith crucify themselves with Christ now live on account of his faith and, like Christ, they are raised by God to new life by the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead and established the new creation (Gal 6:14-15). A new condition is already available.

My reading of Paul shows him to be the apostle of the new creation. In order to receive life from God while living “in the flesh” in our world that is under the power of sin and death, it is necessary to have the faith that Christ had in God when facing death and crucify oneself with Christ. It is only those who have died with Christ that God raises by the power of the Spirit to new life in him (Rom 6:4). As Paul says, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live; but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live in the faith, that is that of [té touí] the Son of God, who loved me and entrusted himself [paradóntos eautón] to God on my behalf [hypér]” (Gal 2:20). While living “in the flesh,”

Christians live “in the faith of Jesus.” “If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. . . . The death he died, he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:8, 10-11). That is the Christian way of life: dead to sin and alive to God. By crucifying themselves with Christ, those who participate in his faith in God when facing death die, like him, to eschatological death and are raised by God to eschatological life in the eschatological Adam.

Brunt’s interpretation of Paul’s letter to the Philippians would have benefited if he had followed the instruction he gave to his readers: check your reading of Philippians with what Paul says in his other letters. He makes no reference to Paul’s apocalyptic understanding of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. In one instance, he misuses what Paul says in Romans in order to support a misreading of Philippians. By saying that Jesus had formerly existed [hypárxon] “in the form of a god” the hymn quoted as authoritative by Paul was not saying that Jesus was by his “very nature” God, but that is what Brunt claims (80). He goes on to say that the hymn says that “Jesus took ‘the very nature’ of a slave.” The hymn goes on to say that he was “made in human likeness” and was “found in appearance” as a human being. Brunt points out that the last two descriptions in the hymn have been interpreted by some to suggest that Christ was not fully human, and he counters, “that is not the intent of the hymn.” He refers to Romans 5:14 in order to prove that the word “likeness” is also used of Adam. The word “likeness,” however, serves to describe how something is perceived by an observer, not its nature. It makes it possible to distinguish different forms of a thing. In Philippians 2:7, the word *homoiómati* serves to describe what the divine being who emptied himself became like—not to describe his nature. In Romans 5:14, *homoiómati* is used to describe different types of transgressions. Those who died between Adam and Moses transgressed without a law. Adam transgressed an explicit command. Even though their transgressions were not alike, they all died.

Moreover, in Romans 5 Paul describes Adam as a *típos* of the one who was to come, that is, as being an early version of one on whom a humanity was constituted. The humanity constituted in Christ, however, was of a totally different nature from the one constituted in Adam. His was condemned to die; Christ's was empowered to live. Thus, rather than translate *morphé* as "the very nature of," as if it were a synonym for the "ideas" of Plato, it should be read in reference to the "likeness" [*homoiómati*], the "external show," the "guise" [*sxéma*], the other words used in the hymn to describe the being who, according to Paul, was "born of a woman." The same context informs the description of his existence "in the form of a god." Reading "form" as a Platonic idea, Brunt could be doing exactly what he considers unwarranted: reading the hymn for theology rather than ethics.

On the basis of his translation, Brunt describes the trajectory taken by this divine being as going "from the highest of the high to the lowest of the low and back to the highest of the high" (79). He does notice that taking him back up, God acts with exuberance, described by three superlatives: he "highly" exalted him, gave him a name "above" every other, and made every creature in heaven, earth, and under the earth subject to him. Obviously he did not have these things before. The three things God did placed him higher than where he had been before he emptied himself of his divinity. Brunt overlooks this exploding description of his exaltation. Furthermore, contrary to Brunt's interpretation, in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul points out that at the Parousia "after destroying every rule and every authority and power" having "put all things in subjection under his feet" . . . "then the Son himself will also be subjected to him . . . so that God may be everything to every one" (1 Cor 15:24-28). So neither at the beginning nor at the

end, according to Paul and the hymn, was or is the divine being used by God to give life to his creatures at "the highest of the high."

Brunt believes that Philippians provides its readers with a pattern for their lives. The suffering of Christ ended up in a glorious resurrection. Christians should understand their present suffering as something caused by their internalization of the pattern of Jesus' life. Knowledge that all the suffering in this world, particularly that connected with the spreading of the gospel to bring salvation to others, is not just experienced by one person, but is experienced by all the members of the Church. The Christian community is the body of Christ, so its members do not suffer alone. Christians suffer "surrounded by a body of believers" and therefore rejoice in their suffering (95). Besides, their suffering is a sign of their salvation by God (68). "The privilege of suffering for Christ is granted to them by God" (69). Following the pattern established by Christ in his death and resurrection, Brunt affirms, Christians who have placed their "committed trust" in Christ (124) respond to God's gift with joy. Thus the Christian ethic is an ethic of response to God's grace (67).

The hymn that serves as the basis for Paul's advice provides the pattern for his ethic. It is the pattern of one who "being in the form" of a god did not grasp for "equality with God." The temptation he faced was not to hold firmly what he had, but to reach out for what he did not have. When confronted with the temptation faced by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the divine being in "the form of a god" dismissed it. The first couple chose to reach out for something they did not have: "equality with God." They fell for the temptation. The protagonist of the hymn, instead, emptied himself of the divinity he possessed and became the lowest of the low, dying—as Paul himself adds—the most ignominious, dishonorable,

**Brunt finds joy by realizing that after rational consideration of the gospel, one comes to full conviction and makes a mental commitment to Jesus.**

cursed death, that was brought about by a cross. On account of his disinterest in climbing up the chain of being and his decision to go down the chain to the last link available to human beings, Christ was exalted by God to a position higher in the chain of being than the one he had occupied. His trajectory was exactly the opposite of Adam and Eve. They coveted “equality with God,” and God punished them by removing them from access to the tree of life. Now they no longer were just mortal. They were now condemned to die. On the basis of the pattern established by the being who was in “the form of a god,” Paul’s advice to the Philippians is “in humility count others better than yourselves” (Phil 2:3): don’t seek to be more than you are; don’t look down on your neighbors. Paul quoted the hymn as a foundation on which to advise: “don’t go after powers you don’t have. God is the source of all our strength:” “God is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil 2:13).

Brunt finds joy by realizing that after rational consideration of the gospel, one comes to full conviction and makes a mental commitment to Jesus. Those who make this commitment see that the life of Jesus presents the pattern for life, which brings about joy in suffering. This way of interpreting the text overlooks Paul’s repeated reference to the fact that those who find joy in suffering are those who have crucified themselves with Christ. They are not suffering “for” him, but because, while still living “in the flesh,” living also in Christ, and not “according to the flesh,” they are, like Christ, subjects of interest to the “rulers of the world.” They are participating in the passion of Christ, but at the same time are being empowered by the gospel to live in the new creation, in which Christ is the Final, Ultimate, *éxatos* Adam. Christian joy does not come from having found a pattern for life. It comes from the power of the Spirit that gives life to those who are crucified with Christ, and “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.” Living by the power of the Spirit is living in freedom from the power of sin and eschatological death (2 Cor 3:17; Rom 6:18). The freedom for which Christ “has set us free” is the source of unsurpassed joy in the Christian life.

Brunt is to be commended for this most welcome field guide to the letter of Paul to the Philippians. He opens up several important avenues for further exploration of the riches in the text. Among them is the way he links the Christian life to life in society. To have Christ living within does not require that a Christian be withdrawn and reclusive; it should make the believer sensitive to the needs of others. Brunt points out quite effectively that the gospel is non-hierarchical: raceless, genderless, and universal. He emphasizes that the Christian community is one in which everyone is valued and there is ample room for dialogue. Unfortunately in the Adventist Church today, those who serve as teachers in its vast educational system must exercise self-censorship in order to fulfill their vocation as servants of the young. They, at times, feel that they are passive accomplices of theological dictators who pretend to have access to the mind of God. I hope that the publication of Brunt’s book by an official Adventist publishing house signals progress toward a study of the Bible that renders its message relevant to those living in the twenty-first century. The Church’s function is not to be the custodian of the past, but the prophet of the present, opening the future for successful Christian living by the power of the gospel that brings life to God’s world. At present the Church needs to serve as a place where the joy of living in the freedom that Christ makes available is promoted by the power of the Holy Spirit. Any freedom depends on the power that supports it, and Christian joy is the result of the Spirit’s power that gives eschatological life now.

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#### ENDNOTES:

1. Brunt points out that the book owes its origin to an invitation from George Knight to write a commentary on Philippians for a series on the New Testament he was editing, and he thanks Knight for having provided him with the structure of the chapters. For some reason the projected series got scratched before it was published. The book under review is a revised version of the original written for the planned series. Brunt thanks “the editors of the Pacific Press Publishing Association for their excellent work in editing the present manuscript” (8). It is somewhat of a surprise that the short biographical sketch of the author on the back cover omits that Brunt was the senior pastor of the Azure Hills church in California for thirteen and a half years, unless the marketing department thought that information wouldn’t help sales.
2. In this same vein, Paul told the Thessalonians, “Do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good” (1 Thes 5:20-21), and to the Corinthians who had disorderly worship services, he wrote, “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said” (1 Cor 14:29). In another context he wrote to them, “I speak to you sensible men [*phronímōis*]; judge for yourselves what I say” (1 Cor 10:15). The Christian community is to be a community where the right use of the mind transformed by the Spirit (Rom 12:2) holds court, and Brunt, like Paul, is fully aware of it.



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Dear Alexander, I just received Volume 51 of *Spectrum* and have read the amazing and insightful article by Abi Doukhan on the “givenness” of God – “Receiving vs. Grasping.” Reading it brought nurture to my soul. The God who gives and just invites me to receive, and never tires of doing that, is constantly at work. It brings me an indescribable peace, in which I can rest and trust God. Anxieties are gone. Hunger for power is gone. Nights and days, pains and pleasures, tears and smiles are all components of a life in which God is the caring Giver. I was blessed to read the article.

Jan Paulsen

The article that Elder Paulsen so kindly writes about was presented at last year’s Society of Adventist Philosophers meeting.

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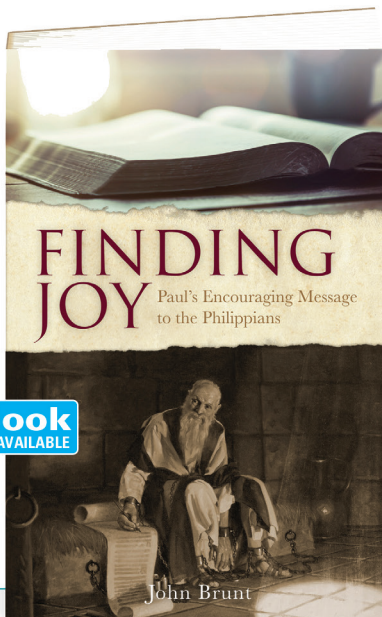
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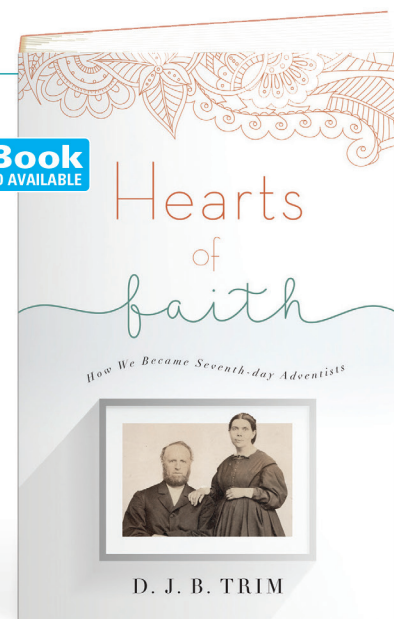
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