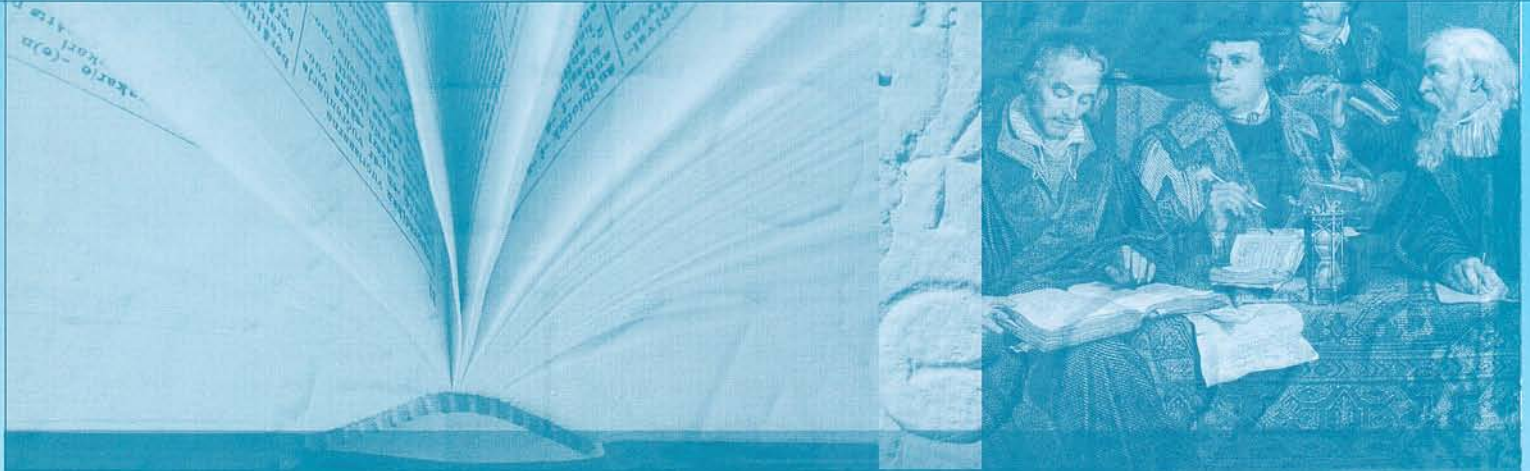


# adventist today

NEWS  
ANALYSIS  
OPINION

volume eleven | number five | september, october 2003



**"What do the  
Scriptures say?  
How do you  
interpret them?"**

**Luke 10:26**

**BIBLIA.**  
De gantche H. Schryffture, vervattende alle de  
Boeken des  
OUDE en de NIEUWEN  
TESTAMENTS;  
Na  
Van nouwe uyt D. M. LUTHERS Hoofdwerk Byzel in onze  
Nederlandsche Taal getrouwelyc overgezet,  
En nu uyt de  
CHRISTELYKE GEMEYNTEN.  
Amsterdam, by de W. J. van der Meer, Boekverkooper, in de Nieuwe Kerk.  
MDCCLXXII.



from the editor



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# Humbly Reading All God's Books

JOHN MCLARTY

**I** pray you and others with your perspective will somehow find it possible to humble your intellect in the presence of a greater Mind than your own, and simply say, "The Bible says it; I believe it."

This appeal comes from an eloquent letter we received in response to our reporting on the 2003 North American Division Conference on Faith and Science. Humility is a cardinal virtue, but it will not resolve the questions confronting the church. Once I have humbled myself before the Mind of God, I must then discern what God thinks.

The standard Adventist and Evangelical slogan "the Bible and the Bible only" (BBO) obfuscates as much as clarifies. A dramatic illustration of the problems with BBO is the list of those who say it will solve our theological dilemmas. The list includes people who are adamantly opposed to each other—who even in some cases anathematize each other. (See "Lesson from History" in this issue.) Names that might be familiar to our readers include Samuel Koranteng-Pipim and Dale Ratzlaff, John McArthur and Jack Hayford. If we agree to settle our arguments using BBO, we will discover that the arguments simply become sharper and more acrimonious. A commitment to BBO does not always lead to theological convergence.

"The Bible says it; I believe it." But what does it mean? There is no such thing as receiving the Bible without interpretation. We always have to trust someone's mind. My own? A scholar's? The prophet's? The church's? If I never trust my own mind over the minds of others, I will be gullible and contribute to the careers of con artists, arrogant educators, narcissistic religious leaders and abusive spouses. On the other hand, if I always trust my own mind over the mind of others, I will be socially dysfunctional, if not dangerous. Health is a balance of self-confidence and respect for others.

A case in point: Traditionally, Adventists have believed that earth's ecosystem was naturally deathless before Adam and Eve sinned. However, according to Genesis 1-3, had Adam and Eve

continued to eat from the Tree of Life after they sinned, they would have continued to enjoy immortality. Death did not come as a natural consequence of sinning but as a result of the direct action of God in stationing an angel to prevent them from approaching the Tree of Life. The converse of this is that before the Fall, people were not naturally deathless, but were supernaturally sustained by eating from the Tree of Life.

We can explain the text in ways that are congruent with our traditional interpretation, but the plain meaning of the text, at the very least, allows other interpretations. This raises the question, where did our traditional understanding come from? That is not an unanswerable question. We can trace the historical and cultural roots of our standard interpretation of Genesis.

*Humility increases our receptivity and capacity to learn, but we still have to do the hard work of studying and thinking.*

Recognizing that our version of the Creation story is not a simple restatement of the unfiltered, self-evident meaning of Genesis does not invalidate our traditional understanding. It does call for humility when we are disputing with someone who assigns greater verisimilitude to different parts of the text than we do.

Classic Christian spirituality has long promoted humility by counseling submission to one's spiritual superiors. The third monastic vow was obedience. However, humility alone cannot tell us the truth. It increases our receptivity and capacity to learn, but we still have to do the hard work of studying and thinking. Adventist theology is not the inevitable outgrowth of the plain meaning of the Bible. It is a creatively constructed, divinely inspired, pastorally effective theological system with roots in at least five "books." (See the accompanying article, "The Five Books of Adventism.") Genuine humility will prompt us to attend to the Mind of God in all the books he has inspired. ■



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## Resistance to Change

Good luck to my old friend and former colleague George Knight (book review: "Organizing to Beat the Devil," AT May/June 2003). May he succeed and not merely tilt at windmills. There's a lot of inertia and resistance to change in any established order, and I'm sure the SDA Church is not immune.... There are many who have vested interests in resisting change.... I believe to truly understand Adventism today, one must understand the role that institutions play in the church's self-identity and perhaps even survival. Cases in point are communities where major Adventist employers moved on—Takoma Park, Mountain View, Skogsborg and so forth. Knight does well to focus on mission, but perhaps he doesn't understand the real SDA mission, which may merely be to preserve itself and its organizations in the face of changes in its environment.

**Harvey Brenneise, East Lansing, Michigan**

## Salvation and Grace

I should think articles concerning salvation, grace, faith, the death and resurrection of our Lord should appear in *Adventist Today*.... There are Adventists who are not Christians.... So many believe they are on target knowing Adventist distinctives without knowing him personally.

**Paul Jackson, Wallingford, Pennsylvania**

## Faith Enough Not to Be Healed

I just read your article given to me by a friend (AT Sept/Oct 2000). My father is dying of cancer—lymphoma which has metastasized to his lungs. He is a Christian, and we know we will see him again. Seeing him suffer has been very difficult for me and my siblings. This article was such a comfort. I am traveling to see him this weekend and will take this article with me to share with him. I'm sure it will bring him comfort also.

**Carolyn Milnikoff, via e-mail**

## Religious and Spiritual Abuse

The article that was written by Cheryl Cooney (AT Jan/Feb 2003) was done in such a direct, specific manner that it means to me that she has carried this painful experience very close to her heart for many long years. I am proud that you are willing to be transparent enough to allow Cheryl to share the truth about an issue of religious and spiritual abuse that has been hushed by too many at the higher levels of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

**Phyllis E. Peck, Oswego, New York**

## Issues at Glacier View

I wanted to comment on an article that my father forwarded to me called "The Issues Going In" and relating to the 2003 Faith and Science Conference at Glacier View, dated Aug. 12, about the church's stand on creation, age of the earth, etc. (AT July/August 2003). I was an Adventist until about 20 years ago and continue to watch the internal workings of the church with some interest. I especially liked the points you made as to how a change would affect four fundamental beliefs that are the reason for Adventists to exist—Death before sin, Sabbath and Creation, Beginnings and Endings, and the Bible as infallible. I wanted to say that I thought your (and E. Taylor's) article was stimulating and very well written; both my husband (not ever associated with Adventism except through me) and I enjoyed reading it and I would like to continue to be on an e-mail list....

**Teriz Mosley, via e-mail**

## Discussing the Issues

I still think it would be a great thing to have the supporters of *Adventist Today*, in each major metropolitan area, get together to discuss the most recent issue (and the issues in the issue). Coffeehouse? Restaurant? Public facility? What about a Friday night at sundown?

**Darrell Willis, via e-mail**

## Two Authorities, or One?

In AT March/April 2003, Ken Richards sets up a typical though fallacious dilemma between the canonical writings of Scripture and other prophetic testimonies which the Scriptures both acknowledge and authorize.

The Bible not only places the gift of prophecy in the church (I Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11-14) and declares it will function till the coming of Christ (I Cor 1:6-7; Rev 12:17; 19:10; 22:9); it also records the labors and witness of prophets who, though not canonical, could hardly be viewed as less than fully authoritative. Certainly we all remember Elijah, Elisha, Deborah, Huldah, John the Baptist and countless others. Who, when studying the Biblical record, could honestly conclude that these prophets wielded less authority in the faith community than such as Isaiah, Jeremiah or Ezekiel?

The Bible even speaks of books written by such prophets, like those of Nathan and Gad (I Chron 29:29), both of whom—though non-canonical—offered guidance and correction to a canonical prophet: King David (II Sam 3:7-17; 12:1-14; 24:11-19). This helps us understand a simple rule: A prophet is not authoritative because he or she is canonical. Rather, a prophet is canonical because he or she is authoritative.

Richards' position seems confusing at best, since at one point he says he had "no problem with the writings of Ellen White being considered an 'authoritative source of

### Send Letters to the Editor:

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truth,” then later objects to those writings being used either as an “additional” or a “lesser” authority. Which in fact is his position regarding Ellen White? Does he view her as a subordinate authority, or as no authority at all?

Nothing in Ellen White’s writings lends credence to the theory that her statement about her writings being the “lesser light” in relation to the Greater Light of Scripture (3SM 30) in any way implies some lesser degree of prophetic authority or reliability. Such statements simply affirm that no doctrine or lifestyle principle taught in Ellen White’s writings is original with her. In her own words: “Additional truth is not brought out, but God has through the Testimonies simplified the great truths already given” (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5, page 665)...

Non-canonical prophetic authority presents no challenge to the authority of Scripture, since—as noted earlier—Scripture presents numerous examples of such authority. So long as a prophet’s testimony agrees with Scripture, the authority of Scripture is not in question.... But if, as claimed by some, Ellen White ever disagrees with Scripture, she can have no more authority for Christians than Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, David Koresh or Marshall Applewhite.

No middle ground is possible on this issue. God does not have junior prophets. According to Ellen White’s own testimony, if her writings ever disagree with the Bible, they must be wholly rejected (page 691), not accorded some partial degree of devotional, historical or sentimental respect. For those who believe Ellen White contradicts the Bible, the question of finding for her writings some lesser status in the church makes no sense. If she ever disagrees with the Bible, her authoritative role should not be reduced, but eliminated.

But if, as I firmly believe, her writings stand in full ac-

cord with Scripture, the record of Scripture itself gives the church no option other than viewing her writings as possessing full prophetic authority.

**Kevin D. Paulson, New York, New York**

### Editorial response:

Kevin Paulson gives expression to a sentiment held by many Adventists, who feel that anything Ellen White ever wrote in letters, spoke in sermons, or put into print in pamphlets or books was given by direct inspiration from God. Certainly she prayed over her work and studied her Bible diligently, and God spoke through her. Her writings have indeed helped many millions of people gain deeper insight into the Word of God than they might have had otherwise.

However, a primary proposition of the Reformation was “Sola Scriptura,” the Bible only as final authority. There were saintly people through the centuries who had written religious messages that the Reformists felt were not supported by the Bible, and therefore were not to be followed. Adventist pioneers aligned themselves with this stance. Thus now where there is question regarding the biblical basis for proposed church doctrines or practices, some Adventists advocate that where Ellen White has written on the topic, her word must be taken to clarify the uncertainty. Even where modern scholarship and translating of the Bible has established better understanding of the problems involved, if White’s word does not conform to this improved view of truth, they insist on rejecting it.

Such a view was not held by Ellen White herself; on numerous occasions she changed her views as she got better information or engaged in conversations with colleagues. These changes did not tarnish her image as a spokeswoman for God; rather they confirmed her as one who sought to know and promote present truth.

## Reports on Glacier View

DALE WOLCOTT

I’ve been grateful for your reports on the Glacier View conference.... If your view prevails, we’ll have gone the way of so many other denominations before us. Christianity in Europe languishes because the Bible’s authority was overridden by the “scientific” worldview. Can you point me to any robustly growing Christian group in which the Bible’s authority has been subjected to the “higher authority” of “science”?... But the slow death of European Christianity, and the stagnation of mainline American Protestantism, is certainly a guarantee that something has gone wrong! I, for one, am not willing to stand by and let that happen to God’s remnant church!

Below are some further comments from my perspective, which I have shared with the lay leaders of my congregations:

“Here is another report from the very important Glacier View Faith and Science Conference.... Please keep in mind that the authors of these reports are very sympathetic toward

the “liberal” or pro-evolution side of these discussions. You will notice that they are essentially appealing for the privilege of continuing to be Seventh-day Adventists even though they no longer believe the Seventh-day Adventist message. They envision an SDA “community of faith” that no longer has either message or mission—only lots of warm fuzzies.... God calls us to nurture loving, warm relationships with Methodists, Catholics, charismatics and, yes, evolutionary scientists.... At the end of the report,... the authors refer to faith, hope and love as primary.... Tragically, evolution destroys all three: faith, by removing the trustworthiness of the foundational divine account about where we came from; hope, because without a divine beginning we can expect no divine ending to human history; love, because if God invented survival of the fittest He is, at best, a yin-yang sort of being who may still be seen as powerful, but can no longer be defined as purely love.” ■



## A Lesson from History

ADVENTIST TODAY EDITORS

**I**n the fourth and fifth centuries, the Christian church fiercely debated the nature of Christ. At the Council of Ephesus, 431 A.D., a series of statements was voted to eliminate any ambiguity in the church's teaching on this vital subject. Early in the conference, a letter was read into the minutes: "We have in our hands the letter of the most holy and most reverend archbishop

Cyril, which he wrote to the most reverend Nestorius, filled with counsel and advice, on account of his aberration from the right faith." The letter follows:

"To the most religious and beloved of God, fellow minister Nestorius, Cyril sends greeting in the Lord.... I urge you, as a brother in the Lord, to propose the word of teaching and the doctrine of the faith with all accuracy to the people, and to consider that the giving of scandal to one even of the least of those who believe in Christ, exposes a body to the unbearable indignation of God.... We shall do most excellently if we shall turn to the words of the holy Fathers, and are zealous to obey their commands, proving ourselves, whether we be in the faith according to that which is written, and conform our thoughts to their upright and irreprehensible teaching."

The letter goes on to spell out the truth that Nestorius ought to teach. Then, wanting to avoid any ambiguity, Cyril gives a list of 12 errors so dangerous that anyone who believes them deserves a curse. These "anathemas" included the following:

"If anyone shall not confess that the Word of God the Father is united hypostatically to flesh, and that with that flesh of his own, he is one only Christ both God and man at the same time: let him be anathema.

"If any one asserts that, at the union of the Logos with the flesh, the divine Essence moved from one place to another; or says that the flesh is capable of receiving the divine nature, and that it has been partially united with the flesh; or

ascribes to the flesh, by reason of its reception of God, an extension to the infinite and boundless; and says that God and man are one and the same in nature; let him be anathema.

"If anyone shall after the [hypostatic] union divide the hypostases in the one Christ, joining them by that connection alone, which happens according to worthiness, or even authority and power, and not rather by a coming together which is made by natural union, let him be anathema.

"If any one says that Christ, who is also Emmanuel, is One, not [merely] in consequence of connection, but [also] in nature, and does not acknowledge the connection of the two natures, that of the Logos and of the assumed manhood, in one Son, as still continuing without mingling; let him be anathema."

Cyril ended his letter to "the most religious and beloved of God, fellow minister Nestorius," by writing, "These things, therefore, I now write unto you for the love of Christ, beseeching you as a brother, and testifying to you before Christ and the elect angels, that you would both think and teach these things with us, that the peace of the Churches may be preserved and the bond of concord and love continue unbroken amongst the Priests of God."

"All the bishops cried out together: Whoever does not anathematize Nestorius let him be anathema. Such an one the right faith anathematizes; such an one the holy Synod anathematizes. Whoever communicates with Nestorius let him be anathema! We anathematize all the apostles of Nestorius: we all anathematize Nestorius as a heretic: let all such as communicate with Nestorius be anathema, etc., etc." ■

*From The Nicene and Post-nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers, "Vol. 14: The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church." Philip Schaff, D.D., L.L.D., and Henry Wace, D.D., editors. Online version at Christian Classics Ethereal Library (ccel.org). Public domain.*

We leave it  
to the reader  
to make  
appropriate  
application.

## news

### Jensen Case at WWC

A story printed in AT Jan/Feb 2001, "Turmoil and Turf Wars," reported the dismissal (or nonrenewal of contract) of Dr. Richard Jensen from the history department at Walla Walla College. Jensen was described as a popular philosophy teacher, but one who stirred the ire of students for his insistence on failing some whom he suspected of plagiarizing sources for term papers. Jensen objected to the termination of his position and threatened to sue the school. According to Rosa Jimenez, director of College Relations, Jensen's case was filed with the Walla Walla County Superior Court, charging breach of contract and defamation. The court finally handed down a summary judgment on July 3, 2002. It said, "The court finds that there are no genuine issues of material fact to allow the case to proceed to trial."

Jensen took his case to the Court of Appeals, and it upheld the Superior Court's finding, issuing its opinion on June 19, 2003. Jensen did not take his case further.

Faculty members at WWC tend to regard the case as simply another indication of the school's right to hire and fire for reasons known to the administration and department chairpersons. According to sources close to the college, two more contracts were terminated in 2002, but without lawsuits. Some of the faculty, aware of the emotional energy and financial outlay represented in the recruiting process, have expressed regret at the departure of people they had barely come to know as colleagues. Administrators at most of the Adventist colleges, including WWC, may not be fully satisfied with rank and tenure policies which have to account for many variables, including personality conflicts among staff members, but they keep trying. ■



# Seventh-day Darwinians

CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN

This opinion piece appeared in the *Adventist Review* at the same time that the North American Division Faith and Science Conference was being held.

**R**arely has there been a belief so ridiculous or contrary to the Scriptures that, once it becomes popular, some Christians haven't attempted to incorporate it into the faith. In its long and often crude lust for cultural and intellectual correctness, the church has become what Jacques Ellul called "an empty bottle that the successive cultures fill with all kinds of things." Roman paganism, Platonism, Marxism, even Nazism have all had baptized aficionados struggling to cram these "things" into the bottle, now so warped and piecemeal it resembles a kaleidoscope image inspired by someone needing Prozac. Of all the bizarre mismatches, though, none's worse than the attempt to harmonize evolution with Christianity. Evolution? Please! Nazism's a snugger fit.

Though raised on evolution, I one day found myself a born-again Christian who saw, immediately, an impossible conundrum between what I was taught my whole life and my new worldview. Within the first few days, someone gave me the book *The Genesis Flood*, by Henry Morris, and for the first time I realized that the "proof" I was dogmatically given for evolution wasn't as solid as I had been led to believe from grade school through college. Over time, and after more reading, I was soon purged of all macroevolutionary presuppositions. In fact, if (heaven forbid) I ever lost my faith, I could never go back to evolution. Alien seeding or the Babylonian creation story seems more plausible than the standard scientific paradigm of origins.

"But," someone would say, "it's science." Exactly. And science is still only a human endeavor, and as such it comes burdened with all the prejudices, foibles, fears and presuppositions of anything human. However much I respect science and stand in awe of its achievements, scientists can be as bigoted and dogmatic as historical critics (well, almost).

Now, it used to be that, for Adventists, evolutionary theory was a threat from without; as unbelievable as it seems, some among us have now accepted theistic evolution—the idea that God used the process of evolution, over millions of years, to create humanity.

These folks, though, don't worship the God of the Bible, for that God didn't use a long, protracted and vicious dog-eat-dog, survival-of-the-fittest paradigm—

one that goes against everything He has taught us about love and self-sacrifice—and then lie to us about it by claiming He created life here in six days when He didn't. Plus, that God didn't ask us to keep the seventh day as a memorial, not to the six days of Creation as He explicitly told us in His Word, but to a brutal, hateful, merciless process that took millions of years.

What amazes me isn't so much that people can believe in evolution (after all, I used to), but that those who do still want to be Seventh-day Adventists. I can respect someone who, believing in evolutionary theory, rejects the Adventist church entirely. I have no respect for those who think they can meld the two.

For anyone, especially our young people, struggling

*If you honestly reject a literal six-day creation in favor of theistic macroevolution...go somewhere where you won't have to cloak your views under the anfractuositities of language...you'll have to fight us for every extra minute...*

with these issues, I say: Keep seeking with a fervent and honest heart. As long as you stick to the Bible (and Ellen White's books and articles), you will not go wrong. For those among us who have already decided—despite the Bible and Ellen White—on evolution, there are plenty of other churches for you. Ours isn't one. And to those teaching in our schools who believe in evolution and yet take a paycheck from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I say: If you honestly reject a literal six-day creation in favor of theistic macroevolution, fine; now turn that honesty into integrity and go somewhere where you won't have to cloak your views under the anfractuositities of language.

I speak, I believe, for millions of Seventh-day Adventists when I declare that whatever the age of the earth itself, we will never make room for anything other than a literal six-day creation for life here—never. And for those who want more, you'll have to fight us for every extra minute—much less your millions of mythological years beyond—of which the Word of God knows nothing and with its first verses utterly denies. ■

*Clifford Goldstein is editor of the Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide. This article was reprinted with permission from Adventist Review, July 24, 2003.*



# Goldstein Declares War:

## An Adventist Fundamentalist Ultimatum

ERVIN TAYLOR

**T**In May 1922, the pastor of the New York City First Presbyterian Church, Harry Emerson Fosdick, preached what would become his most famous sermon: "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" This one sermon created a major firestorm within the Presbyterian Church as it was then constituted in North America. In part this was because of the intense conflict between "fundamentalist" and "modernist" elements in the Presbyterian Church and a number of other American denominations at that time.

Because of the subsequent bitter controversies and the schisms that they produced in a number of American mainline Protestant denominations over the next half-century, the

focus of Fosdick's sermon has sometimes been neglected. The basic theme was that both true liberals and true conservatives should seek common ground. Fosdick pointed to the counsel of Gamaliel to the Jewish leadership as recorded in Acts 5. Gamaliel's advice was to exercise tolerance toward Peter and the other apostles who were advancing their conviction that Jesus was the Messiah.

Fosdick's commentary on this episode is that "We know now that they [the Jewish religious leadership] were mistaken. Christianity, starting within Judaism, was not an innovation to be dreaded; it was the finest flowering out that Judaism ever had... Jesus believed in the progressiveness of revelation, and these Jewish leaders did not understand that. Was this new gospel a real development which they might welcome, or was it an enemy to be cast out? They called it an enemy and excluded it.

One does wonder what might have happened had Gamaliel's wise tolerance been in control."

Fosdick noted the similarities between the views of the Jewish religious establishment of Jesus' time and the views of the "people who call themselves the Fundamentalists. Their apparent intention is to drive out of the evangelical churches men and women of liberal opinions... We should not identify the Fundamentalists with the conservatives. All Fundamentalists are conservatives, but not all conservatives are Fundamentalists."

The following portions of Fosdick's sermon are quoted at length to allow the reader to reflect on how much is applicable to the current situation in First World Adventism:

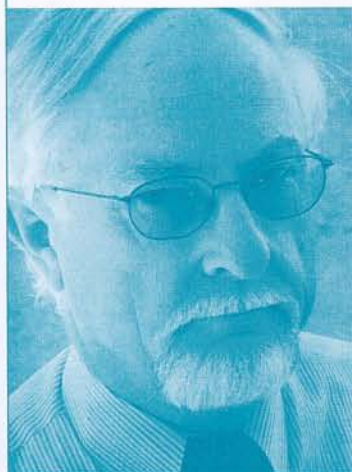
The best conservatives can often give lessons to the

liberals in true liberality of spirit, but the Fundamentalist program is essentially illiberal and intolerant. The Fundamentalists see... a great mass of new knowledge has come into [our] possession: new knowledge about the physical universe, its origin, its forces, its laws; new knowledge about human history and in particular about the ways in which the ancient peoples used to think in matters of religion and the methods by which they phrased and explained their spiritual experiences; and new knowledge, also, about other religions and the strangely similar ways in which men's faiths and religious practices have developed everywhere....

We must be able to think our modern life clear through in Christian terms. There is nothing new about the situation. It has happened again and again in history, as, for example, when the stationary earth suddenly began to move, and the universe that had been centered in this planet was centered in the sun around which the planets whirled. Whenever such a situation has arisen, there has been only one way out: the new knowledge and the old faith had to be blended in a new combination. Now the people in this generation who are trying to do this are the liberals, and the Fundamentalists are out on a campaign to shut against them the doors of the Christian fellowship. Shall they be allowed to succeed?...

Consider a matter on which there is a sincere difference of opinion among evangelical Christians: the inspiration of the Bible. One point of view is that the original documents of the scripture were inerrantly dictated by God to men. Whether we deal with the story of creation or... the Sermon on the Mount or the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians, they all came in the same way and they all came as no other book ever came.... Everything there—scientific opinions, medical theories, historical judgments, as well as spiritual insight—is infallible. That is one idea of the Bible's inspiration. But side by side with those who hold it, lovers of the Book as much as they, are multitudes of people who never think about the Bible so. Indeed, that static and mechanical theory of inspiration seems to them a positive peril to the spiritual life....

Here in the Christian church today are these two groups, and the question the Fundamentalists have



Ervin Taylor



raised is this: Shall one of them drive the other out? Do we think the cause of Jesus Christ will be furthered by that? If he should walk through the ranks of this congregation this morning, can we imagine him claiming as his own those who hold one idea of inspiration, and sending from him into outer darkness those who hold another? You cannot fit the Lord Christ into that Fundamentalist mold.

Fosdick concluded his sermon with a prayer that: "God keep us...intellectually hospitable, open-minded, liberty-loving, fair, tolerant, not because the tolerance of indifference [is] as though we did not care about the faith, but because always our major emphasis is upon the weightier matters of the law."

In the 80 years that have elapsed since that sermon was preached, fundamentalism has been a major factor in forcing schisms and divisions within a number of mainline Protestant denominations. It has also been a potent force within the Adventist church. For the first half of the 20th century, traditional Adventism was dominated by a fundamentalist ethos. Adventist historian George Knight dates the period during which Adventist fundamentalism was clearly dominant as 1919 to 1950. Since the middle of the 20th century, fundamentalists have had to wage an active campaign to maintain control of a church body they think it is their God-given right and duty to control. This is one factor involved in Dr. Knight's characterization of our current period as "Adventism in Theological Tension." At many large centers of North American institutional Adventism, the traditional Adventist fundamentalist ethos and its theological underpinnings no longer hold absolute sway.

It was in this context that the Adventist Theological Society (ATS) was formed to defend a fundamentalist Adventism, which their founding members felt was under siege. The *Adventist Review*, the "official organ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church," currently has as regular columnists two effective spokesmen for the ATS perspective, one the current editor of the ATS journal, and a second, the most visible and vocal exponent of the ATS agenda, Clifford Goldstein.

Goldstein's most notorious recent declaration in the *Adventist Review* was "Seventh-day Darwinians." In this article he calls for the effective excommunication of all Adventists who "attempt to harmonize evolution and Christianity." One assumes that even he would agree that there are serious and difficult theological problems raised by the results of scientific approaches to the study of the natural world. Many of these problems are much more intractable to a fundamentalist understanding of the world than was ever envisioned in Fosdick's day.

However, Goldstein's approach to addressing these complex issues is to insist that anyone who does not hold to a literal, six-day creation does not "worship the God of the Bible." Furthermore, if someone might dare to accept the validity of well-documented scientific explanations for the course of biological change over geological time, Goldstein expresses his utter disdain and amazement that he or she

would "still want to be Seventh-day Adventists." He has "no respect for those" who have not compartmentalized their theological and scientific understandings, deriding those who think that they "can meld the two."

His agenda was openly expressed when he concludes by insisting that "if you honestly reject a literal six-day creation... turn that honesty into integrity and go somewhere where you won't have to cloak your views under the anfractuosities [devious or tortuous argumentation] of language." Interestingly his column was published at the same time the North American Division was holding its Faith and Science Conference at Glacier View. One might wonder if this was a coincidence.

In a sense Goldstein is right to be worried. His fundamentalist views are no longer instinctively seconded by the readers of the *Adventist Review*. If the opinions expressed in the small selection of letters that were actually published to any degree reflects accurately the range of views that were expressed in the letters received, those expressing objections to Goldstein's opinions and tone outnumbered those supporting his position and combative style by a decisive margin. However, most interesting was an unprecedented comment by the *Adventist Review* editor introducing the letters. He apparently felt it important to distance himself from Goldstein, stating that "Goldstein's view and tone represented himself only, not the editors or the church."

Shall the Adventist fundamentalists win? One of the most fundamental objections to Goldstein's approach is his use of "war" language and conflict imagery. Goldstein's column was, in many respects, a declaration of war. He states that "you'll have to fight us for every extra minute, much less your millions of mythological years." This is what fundamentalism usually creates—warfare and conflict. In the theological wars that they foment, sides are drawn and polarization takes place. Churches are split. What Goldstein does not realize is that, under these circumstances, no one ever really "wins."

There are other ways of working through the critical theological differences that characterize the contemporary Adventist faith community in the First World. One non-fundamentalist approach is the one proposed two millennia ago by Gamaliel. Another has been recently espoused by the current General Conference president, Dr. Jan Paulsen. His 2002 essay on "Theological Unity in a Growing World Church" noted that "the church works best when unity and diversity coexist in nonhostile tension." In a later comment, he expanded that view to suggest that we can create a church "where people can communicate, understand each other, [and] respect each other's space." The contrast between this vision and the vision of Goldstein is stark. Hopefully, the realization that Goldstein's agenda will lead only to conflict and hostility will inspire those with a broader vision to move the Adventist church forward to a situation in which it will not be necessary for any "side" to seek to "win" by annihilating the "enemy." ■

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# A Six-day Creation: Erecting a Wall

## What We Believe Is at Stake

CLIFFORD GOLDSTEIN

I've always been amazed at the similarities between the Adventist "left" and "right." While those to my right everywhere see Jesuits, my good friend Erv—decidedly to my left—everywhere sees the ATS. For the record (and to help prove my point), I am not a member of ATS, have never been a member of ATS, don't subscribe to ATS publications, don't generally read them, and don't go to ATS meetings—yet according to Erv, I am "the most visible and vocal exponent of the ATS agenda." Sounds a bit paranoid to me. (Reminds me of Voltaire's quip that he had been arrested over a pamphlet he didn't write, penned by a man he didn't know, and which expressed views he didn't hold.)

All that aside, I thank Erv for sending me his article prior to publication and giving me a chance to respond. Erv wrote that in my "most notorious recent declaration" I

I never said a word about excommunicating anyone. All I did was try to get people to be honest, to take their premises to their logical conclusions, and to ask themselves this question: Should those who believe in evolution ... belong to a church that keeps a literal seventh day as a weekly reminder of the literal six days of creation? ... a six-day creation is one place where not a line, but a wall, needs to be erected.

pushed for the "effective excommunication" of anyone who tries to harmonize Christianity with evolution. That's quite dramatic but a distortion of my piece. I never said a word about excommunicating anyone. All I did was try to get people to be honest, to take their premises to their logical conclusions, and to ask themselves this question: Should those who believe in evolution (i.e., billions of years, natural selection, punctuated equilibrium, whatever the fad) choose to belong to a church that keeps a literal seventh day as a weekly reminder of the literal six days of creation? That's a fair enough question, is it not? Asking

people to be honest is not the same as demanding their "effective excommunication."

If one thinks that it makes no difference what anyone who professes to be an Adventist believes, then there's no discussion. If, though, one agrees that it does make a difference (especially for our preachers and teachers), then we have grounds for debate about where the line regarding those beliefs should be drawn. For me, a six-day creation is one place where not a line, but a wall, needs to be erected.

I grew up in Miami Beach. It wasn't until I was 17 years old and found myself hitchhiking one night on a lightless country road in France that it suddenly hit me that most of the world wasn't an endless stream of hotels, motels, restaurants and bars. In the same way, so long in his Southern California cloister, Erv is totally out of touch with the rest of the church. The vast, vast majority of the SDA church today, as it has from the beginning, holds positions much closer to my "fundamentalist" view of creation than they do to his position. To think anything else is to be blindly naïve.

The only way to be even more naïve would be to think that we who hold these views are going to sit idly by while they are under assault. Erv chided me on what he called my "war" rhetoric. Well (whether he believes it or not), we are in the midst of a great controversy, and a point that the majority of Adventists deem crucial in this great controversy is the six-day creation. Undermine that and you undermine what it means for us to be Adventists. That's what we believe is at stake here.

Finally, Erv makes a big deal out of the *Review's* disclaimer. Though I do not profess to speak for the editors, I believe that they were distancing themselves from the my-way-or-the-highway tone of the column, and not from its position against evolution.

To conclude, a personal thanks to Erv for his openness in sharing with me his article and for giving me an invitation to respond. He's done that before with other things written in opposition to me, and I appreciate it. It's a mark of a gentleman. Though I might not learn much cosmogony from him, I can learn from his graciousness. ■



# The 5 Books of Adventist Theology

JOHN THOMAS MCLARTY

In debates over women's ordination, the date of creation and slavery, some Adventists seek to simplify and focus the matter by insisting that the only data worthy of consideration are the words in the Bible. The Bible plus nothing is presented as the historical foundation of Adventist thought. Adventism does, indeed, do a superior job of "whole Bible" theology. However, Adventist theology is not the inevitable outgrowth of the plain meaning of the Bible. It is a creatively constructed, divinely inspired, pastorally effective theological system with roots in at least five "books."

It is dishonest to minimize the dominance of biblical interpretation in the development and defense of Adventist beliefs. It is significant that in several areas where Adventists have dissented from common Protestant viewpoints, biblical scholarship has moved conspicuously toward the Adventist interpretations of Scripture (for example, the nature of death, apostolic Sabbath-keeping and the absence of biblical warrant for Sunday-sacredness).

It is also inaccurate, if not dishonest, to claim that our theology comes from the Bible plus nothing. We have been people of The Book, but also people of the "red books"—Ellen White—and people of "God's Second Book." In addition, we have been informed by the books of the work of the Holy Spirit in our denominational life and in the broad sweep of Christian history. These four additional books have shaped our theology and biblical interpretation.

## Book 1: The Bible

The Bible is preeminent among us. Always has been; always will be. It has demonstrated its effectiveness in life-change and solace. In many instances its historical veracity has been confirmed after decades of scholarly cavil. We are confident that God has spoken in the Book and that it is the authoritative revelation of Jesus, who is himself the Divine Word. However, Adventists have strongly dissented from the conservative Protestant teaching of inerrancy.

"The Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testaments, are the written Word of God, given by divine inspiration through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. In this Word, God has committed to man the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the authoritative revealer of doctrines, and

the trustworthy record of God's acts in history" (Doctrine One). But having said all that, Adventists still insist that the social standing, career, education and spirituality of the Bible writers affected what they wrote. There is a "perfect harmony" in the Bible resulting from the operation of the Holy Spirit, but the surface of the text can present discrepancies or contradictions (*The Great Controversy*, page iv). "The underlying harmony" can be discerned by "the thoughtful, reverent student."

Every system of Biblical interpretation requires the use of rationality and discrimination. In every system, readers have to weigh the relative merit of divergent emphases. Believers will rightly look for an underlying harmony. But thinkers will acknowledge that the discernment of that harmony is not wholly objective. Thoughtful, reverent Christians will discern different harmonies depending on their temperament, education, personal history and social setting.

Every theology—Adventism, evangelicalism, Catholicism, the religion of the Quakers, Pentecostalism—represents a choice among biblically rooted options. Some emphasize Paul over Matthew, Daniel and Revelation over the Gospels, the ongoing work of the Spirit over the authority of the written text, the corporate understanding of the Bible over individual conviction. Every one of these theologies claims to represent the real underlying harmony of Scripture.

Fundamentalists insist that these differences are rooted in our sinfulness, not in the text. There are no significant differences within or among the Bible writers. They quote Ellen White: "There may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony." Then they point to liberals as "superficial, careless or prejudiced" because we notice the discrepancies and contradictions. They see themselves as the "thoughtful, reverent student[s] with clearer insight."

Maybe they are right. But it seems wiser and more honest to make sure that the underlying harmony we claim to discern accounts for, or at least accommodates, the superficial discrepancies rather than ignoring them or insisting they aren't real. Our theology will be stronger and more persuasive if it comfortably accounts for the obvious narrative differences of Genesis 1 and 2 and the theological differences between Galatians and

**Continued on page 12**



The welter of voices and disciplines means that no matter what you believe, you can find persons and evidence to support it.



# The 5 Books of Adventist Theology

Continued from page 11

James. The fundamentalist approach is to come up with the one "true" perspective and to explain away any divergence as merely "apparent." The problem with skeptical scholarship is that it fails to see the underlying harmony. The problem with fundamentalism is that it pretends there are no discrepancies. A mature approach will allow each story, each writer to speak clearly in its own voice while recognizing their place in single community.

## Book 2: Creation

We are people of the Book, but we are not people "only of the Book." Adventists are creationists. More than any other denomination, we worship God as Creator. The universe was created by God and, except for sin-blighted Earth, continues to perfectly reflect his creative intention. And even Earth, however marred by sin, still reveals God. We affirm our appreciation of Earth as a revelation of God every Sabbath. We reinforce it by our deep involvement in the health sciences. Perhaps our boldest affirmation of nature as a valuable source of significant and reliable information is our confident use of the phrase "God's Second Book." The second Book includes information from the natural sciences, social sciences and our own experience. It reinforces the Bible's use of anthropomorphism as a model for God.

Nature does more than testify to the truth of the Bible; it serves as an independent vehicle of divine communication. The Bible is not simply a redundant system

nature regarding the age of terrestrial life, their work is affirmed by our historical affirmation of the world as the handiwork of God.

There are fundamentalists among Adventists who insist that information from science is hopelessly corrupted by the sinfulness of humanity. They derisively dismiss any statements of science that appear to undermine the plenary authority of traditional understandings of the Bible. This applies primarily to historical rather than empirical sciences. But the same human corruption that distorts our reading of nature also distorts their reading of the Bible.

Our experience of nature teaches us a number of things: Wife-beating is evil, no matter what Paul writes about submissive wives. A steady diet of beef is bad for you, no matter what Moses said. We don't just call the elders when someone is sick. We prohibit tobacco use in spite of its absence from biblical mention. We don't really believe God stores rain in jars in the sky. We don't classify bats as birds. We don't believe the sun was created on the fourth day. We don't execute recalcitrant children. We disagree with Paul's declaration that single life is better than married life. We prohibit slavery despite the Bible's accommodation of the practice.

Adventist reading of the Bible is strongly influenced by our reverence for and involvement in the Book of Nature.

## Book 3: Ellen White

While Ellen White's writings have not been foundational for our doctrine, they have been enormously influential. She has shaped every aspect of Adventist life, from our prophetic interpretation to our health message to education to ecclesiastical structure to theology. Adventism in its present form would not exist apart from the influence of Ellen White.

Some Adventists are very wary of admitting this. They are afraid we will be labeled cultic by conservative Protestants. They are afraid Luther and Calvin or Walter Martin would disapprove. (Of course, both Luther and Calvin have literal blood on their hands from the killings they approved. So, I'm not sure why we pick them as our touchstones.) But get over it. Ellen White is a major authority in the Adventist church and always will be.

In our doctrinal statement about the Bible, we very carefully avoid the use of the word *only*. "The Holy Scriptures are the *only* infallible revelation of His will. They are the *only* standard of character, the *only* test of experience, the *only* authoritative revealer of doctrines, and the *only* trustworthy record of God's acts in history"

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saying the same things as the Bible. God says things in nature that he does not communicate through the Bible. While Adventists have not formally recognized "natural theology," our work in creation science and our teachings regarding the connection between the "laws of health" and moral law evince the authority we ascribe to nature as a source of religiously significant information.

When Adventist astronomers present evidence that the universe is 14 billion years old, they are working outside biblical categories but not outside Adventist theology. When Adventist geologists work to read the evidence in





The omission of the word *only* is necessary to accommodate our doctrinal statement about Ellen White, which states, "As the Lord's messenger, her writings are a continuing and authoritative source of truth which provide for the church comfort, guidance, instruction and correction" (Doctrine 17).

For a liberal like myself to affirm Ellen White as an inspired authority says as much about my understanding of inspiration as it does about my views on Ellen White. In addition to recognizing the wonderful and formative influence she has had on the church, we can identify in her personal work dishonesty, plagiarism, and historical and scientific inaccuracy. In short, the fact that she was inspired means that God used her to shape the church but does not mean she was/is infallible. On occasion, we have to correct her. But even in this correcting, we have to remain open to her corrective role toward us personally and corporately.

If Bible inspiration worked anything like inspiration for Ellen White, then rather than tying ourselves to the scientific and historical content of Scripture, we should look more to its theological and moral intent. (That is not to deny all historicity to the Bible. I am convinced it has far more historicity than liberal orthodoxy asserts and far more ahistorical poetry than literalism allows.)

## Book 4: Holy Spirit

The fourth Book is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the church. We believe our church has been brought into existence by the deliberate activity of God. We trust that the Holy Spirit is active among us to bring us into an ever-increasing understanding of truth. The preamble of our statement of beliefs reads, "Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word." While I envision a more active role for the Spirit than most Adventists would allow, we can at least agree that the Holy Spirit's role is not limited to empowering us to say more loudly and persuasively what we have already said. We may have to learn something new. We may even have to unlearn a few things. The daunting challenge is to distinguish the voice of the Spirit from all the other voices. The corporate church responds to the Holy Spirit; it also responds to economic, cultural, geopolitical and racial forces. Hardly any decision is ever purely "spiritual." Yet a believer trusts that somewhere in the crosscurrents, the Holy Spirit is actually able to guide the church in making decisions that reflect the will of heaven. We believe things because the church believes them.

## Book 5: Christian History

The fifth Book is what God has written and is writing in the history of all Christians. A hundred years ago, the Adventist church was reshaping its understanding of the Trinity. Under the influence of Ellen White and Christian history, it moved away from the views of James White and Uriah Smith, the two most influential men in the

None of these books is flawless. And our reading of all of them is affected by our prejudices, pride, culture, personal history, education, intellectual ability, humility, etc. By consciously honoring all of these books as the writings of God, our misreading of any one of them is more likely to be corrected.

church. We came into line with the orthodox views developed in the first 500 years of Christianity. Over time, we are gradually "reverting to the mean" of classic, orthodox Christianity. Some may lament this movement. But it is inexorable. We still bring a distinctive voice to the table of Christian conversation. But we understand that our identity cannot be derived straight from the Bible without giving any attention to the way the Bible has been read by other Christians around the world and across history.

None of these books is flawless. And our reading of all of them is affected by our prejudices, pride, culture, personal history, education, intellectual ability, humility, etc. By consciously honoring all of these books as the writings of God, we lessen the risk of misreading any one of them. Honoring what God is saying through all of them may keep us from using traditional readings of the Bible to justify long-practiced oppression like the racial segregation of the American South of my childhood, the culturally-sanctioned mistreatment of women, the work-related abuse of children in American-owned, foreign-situated factories. Reading all the books will keep us from uncritically adopting the "assured results of scholarship" as the touchstone for reading the stories of Jesus. It will allow us to receive the wisdom God has planted in the Christian church during the past two millennia without being enslaved by the limitations of medieval or Reformation culture. It will keep us from closing our minds to what God reveals through science.

While there is no single, infallible point of contact with God, we live in the full assurance that he is not far from every one of us (Acts 17:27). If we will seek the Lord with all our hearts, we will find him. Behold, he stands at the door and knocks. If we will open the door, he will come in and share dinner with us. His ultimate intention is to give us a place on his throne (Jer 29:13; Rev 3:20-21). This is the deepest harmony in Scripture. It is the central meaning of Nature, the climax of Ellen White's theology, the goal of the Holy Spirit and history. It is the theology that makes the books worth reading. ■





# "I Was Blind, But Now I See"

STEVE DAILY

Try to picture yourself as young, attractive, and the owner of your own growing business in Jamaica, with the potential for fabulous success. Then suddenly you are attacked, blinded, and left with your face disfigured beyond recognition.

In the days and weeks that follow you ask yourself why God should allow all your dreams to be dashed and your very identity as a human being to be devastated. *How do you trust him under such circumstances? What do his biblical promises for protection mean in the context of such continual suffering? And where do you turn to find strength to choose life when everything around you appears to be darkness and death?*

When Carol entered my Sabbath School class in Garden Grove, Calif., for the first time, she was led in by a friend. As I encountered her appearance I felt a



Steve Daily

rush of deep emotion, shock and horror that I tried not to show. The scarring and disfigurement of her face were overwhelming. I calmly welcomed her with a smile and asked if she had any words she'd like to share. The brief testimony that followed was so riveting that we all longed to hear more of her story. Carol made it clear that she was there to glorify God, but that it had been a long journey for her. In 1994, two men had entered her place of business with the look of revenge in their eyes. They had threat-

ened her a few days earlier for refusing to buy inferior lumber from them.

Cornering her with a knife, they tied her up and then poured acid in her eyes and over her face and body. She said the pain was so excruciating that she screamed for God to take her life. When the landlord next door discovered her, he rushed her to the hospital, where she was expected to die. After four months of continual treatments she finally left the hospital, grossly scarred beyond recognition and totally blind, but she was still determined to live.

Carol had survived her journey into the valley of the shadow of death and emerged seeking to fulfill God's purpose in bringing her through this terrible tragedy. Through her grief, depression and pain, Carol had still managed to discover that nothing happens to us in this life without God's permission or apart from his purposes.



Pictured from left to right: Rudy Torres, Carol Guscott, Dr. Robert Herrick, and Steve Daily

Before her attack, Carol had been driven by a desire to succeed in business and fulfill material ambitions. She now prayed that the rest of her life would be an unfolding miracle in God's hands, but little did she anticipate the strange path this miracle would take.

Carol longed to go to America, where she could receive more advanced medical care, but she had no money left after her expensive treatments. Yet, this was the beginning of God's plan to bring light out of darkness. A friend of Carol's helped to organize a fund-raising program that distributed flyers throughout the community, making people aware of Carol's plight. Hundreds of people began to donate small amounts that ultimately were enough to send Carol to the United States for more medical attention. After spending six months in Florida, however, she found her money was gone and her sight was still not restored. Through church connections Carol was invited to come to Southern California, and once in Orange County she attended our Garden Grove Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A whole new set of miracles began to unfold. As I got to know this remarkable woman through her testimony and numerous conversations, I was deeply impressed with the depth of her love for God. Before long, she asked to join our Adventist church. I had the privilege of baptizing her on a Sabbath, during which she shared her testimony with the entire congregation. People were so moved by Carol's story that she became an important focus of interest for the whole church. Her need for further surgeries and her desire to have her story published became an object of special prayer in our church staff meetings, our Wednesday night prayer meetings, and the growing small groups that were part of our church ministry.

But prayers were not the only path we wanted to pursue. On the publication front, both Rudy Torres, our senior pastor, and I had worked with Kit Watts, a public



relations specialist. So we contacted her and she interviewed Carol to see how her story might be published in book form, a project still in process. I contacted Stephen Chavez, managing editor of the *Adventist Review*, an old friend of mine, about the possibility of the *Review's* running an article on Carol's story as well. Steve came and interviewed Carol about her experience and wrote a feature story that appeared in December 2002.

This article got the attention of many Adventists as well as others. We decided to see what we could do to help Carol pay for the expensive surgeries that could potentially restore her sight. This endeavor was no "sure thing," for Carol had already spent approximately \$100,000 in donated monies for reconstructive surgeries, to no avail. These donations had not only come from some Adventists, but from sources as diverse as the Lions Club in Fullerton and a group of caring prisoners in New York who heard her story through a prison ministry. Her benefactors had also included celebrities such as Pat Boone, Helen Hunt and Lily Tomlin. But through our KEYS Family Resource Center, the community service wing of our Garden Grove church, we decided to try to access any possible grants that might be available for such a humanitarian cause.

Working on several fronts, we helped Carol find top surgical specialists at the University of California, Irvine Medical Center, who expressed confidence that sight could be restored in Carol's left eye, given the right set of surgeries. One surgeon in particular, Dr. Robert Herrick, took such an interest in Carol's case that he offered to help dramatically reduce the expenses for such surgeries through pro bono and significant individual efforts, so that the procedures could be done outside of a hospital setting. But, even with these contributions, we anticipated that costs would run into the \$20,000 to \$30,000 range, far more than our KEYS Center could afford. However, God wasn't done with this project. Right when we were desperate for money, we heard from the VersaCare Foundation in Corona, Calif., promising that they would seriously consider our application for a grant on Carol's behalf. Two months later we were informed that our application had been accepted for an amount that would make it possible for Carol's surgeries to proceed.

After months of our praying and hoping, as Carol progressed through a number of painful preparatory surgeries and waited for just the right cornea donor, the big day came. Our prayer groups and prayer meeting warriors went into overdrive, as we anticipated the results of this final surgery. Then the eventful news came—Carol's sight had been restored. We celebrated this miracle with great joy, not only because the long

process was over, but because God had used so many different people, means and methods to accomplish his purposes.

As I talked with Carol after her sight had been restored she acknowledged that the method and process God had used to answer her prayers through this collaborative miracle had affected her more powerfully than an immediate miracle would have done. And her answers to the three questions that opened this article were clear and profound. "I learned to trust God in the midst of my pain," she said, "knowing that he had a calling for my life. In the context of this calling his promises became more powerful for me than they had ever been before. And though I shed many tears as I experienced repeated trials and failures in the darkness, the reality of his light would never allow my hope to die."

God could have intervened miraculously to restore Carol's sight directly, without making this such a drawn-out ordeal, for I have seen comparable miracles in the past. But in this case I can see how God's purposes were played out through a process of networking and cooperation that was a miracle of its own. We have just had a churchwide celebration of Carol's restored

God could have intervened miraculously to restore Carol's sight directly, without making this such a drawn-out ordeal, for I have seen comparable miracles in the past. But in this case I can see how God's purposes were played out through a process of networking and cooperation that was a miracle of its own.

sight in our Garden Grove church. It included Dr. Robert Herrick, the surgeon who gave Carol her vision and the agency that made the major grant available to our KEYS Family Resource Center to pay for the surgeries. It has been a faith-building experience that may well rival the marvelous miracle that John describes in the ninth chapter of his Gospel, for there are few testimonies more powerful than the words, "I was blind, but now I see." ■

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#### Notes

See Stephen Chavez, "She Refused to Die," *Adventist Review*, December 2002.

KEYS is to the Adventist church in Orange County what Lutheran Social Services is to the Lutheran church. In its three years of existence the KEYS Center has received more than half a million dollars in grant monies from government agencies and private foundations not connected to the Adventist church, for various community service programs.



# The Reality of Change

## In Seventh-day Adventist Doctrine

ARTHUR PATRICK

Since the year 2001 many Seventh-day Adventist pastors, teachers and lay members throughout Australia have engaged in intense discussions about the need to resolve conflicts relating to church doctrine. Between the years 1950 and 1980 many Adventists in the United States, Australia and elsewhere became involved in sharp controversies regarding some of the church's core concepts, almost to the point of battle. But during the following 20 years, many believe, the heat of the arguments had subsided in the light of new understandings, so that the church might now facilitate reconciliation. To some observers, however, a proposal of reconciliation seemed to suggest that the church might be tempted to give up some of its

longstanding doctrinal positions, and they raised their voices in protest. Some of these people declared that "the pioneers" had formulated the distinctive doctrines under divine inspiration and that none of their ideas could be wrong.

Such critics may be unaware of the constructive doctrinal change that has occurred within the church during recent decades. For one to appreciate how this can be, it helps to understand the kind of dynamic changes that have characterized Sabbatarian Adventism since its birth. While all Christians may be concerned about the twin themes of doctrinal continuity and change, these possess particular relevance for Adventism,

a movement with a mission for the entire world.

### Typical Examples of Change

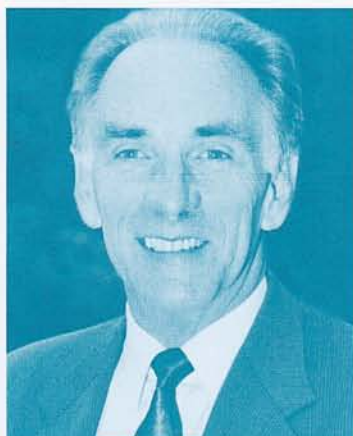
Francis Nichol published a landmark book in 1944, marking the centennial of Sabbatarian Adventism. Nichol affirmed that "Seventh-day Adventists, as a distinct religious body" began on the morning of Oct. 23, 1844. We recall that the fledgling movement was named in 1860 and its basic organization was developed by 1863; therefore, the early period is fraught with particular significance. This article will cite brief examples of change relating mainly to Fundamental Beliefs 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 17 and 23, beginning with the formative early years but continuing into the

present. (Clearly, similar observations could be made about the other 20 fundamentals.) Further, it will cite only authors or documents at the center of the movement, bearing in mind that any religious group may attract fringe dwellers who do not well represent its core beliefs.

A first example may be drawn from the earliest accounts of Ellen White's first vision, experienced during December 1844. This vision offered the disappointed Adventists a powerful new metaphor, that of a pilgrimage or a journey, "the travels of the Advent people to the Holy City" along a straight and narrow path, with the light of the Millerite movement behind them and Jesus in front of them. Denial of the light behind them, symbolic of divine illumination of the 1844 movement, was declared to bring dire consequences: "The light behind them went out leaving their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and got their eyes off the mark and lost sight of Jesus, and fell off the path down in the dark and wicked world below." The next sentence reinforced and extended this warning: "It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again and go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected."

Now, it may be debatable whether or not "fallen" Millerites could be restored to saving faith, but the idea that all the rest of the world was rejected of God is so clearly expressed and so pervasively reinforced by related statements that its meaning is beyond question. However, by 1851, this antission stance of emergent Sabbatarian Adventism was radically reformulated; by 1874 the church sent its first official missionary overseas. In 1885 the "first fleet" of Adventist missionaries arrived in Australia, as another step in a process that established missions on every continent. Looking back, we notice that during the 1850s the key sentence indicating God had rejected the non-Millerite world was deleted from Ellen White's accounts of her first vision. In the 1870s she specifically acknowledged that she shared this erroneous belief that was pervasive amongst the pioneers of the early years. Here, then, is an example of change that occurred at the center of the church's belief system.

More evidence of change accumulates when the earliest accounts of Ellen White's first vision are considered carefully. For instance, on five occasions she reports that the Advent band "shouted Hallelujah" and on a sixth occasion they "cried out Hallelujah." More recent versions of this experience are apt to soften the charismatic "Hallelujah"



Arthur Patrick



to a more sedate "Allelujah." However, such revised reporting is only one tiny indication of pervasive change: the documents of early Adventist history demonstrate clearly an ethos of "enthusiastic religion," with manifest evidences of the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. More than that, our pioneers characteristically understood the Holy Spirit as an influence. Such experiences and perspectives are not at home in the church of 2003.

The memories of some contemporary Adventists reach back a half-century or more to an era in which church publications usually protected Ellen White from suggestions of doctrinal change during her 70-year ministry. It is fair to note that the church long lived in partial ignorance of her participation in such processes, because scholars lacked access to primary sources. As new evidence came to light, in particular from 1970 onwards, many people denied its actuality. The Shut Door issue was considerably resolved by 1982 when, at the first International Prophetic Guidance Workshop, Robert Olson tabled a 58-page document that included 84 pioneer statements on the topic. Since that time, respected authors such as George Knight have located the Shut Door doctrine and Ellen White's role in its development within a comprehensive understanding of early Adventism. In similar fashion, the church's understanding of the doctrine and work of the Holy Spirit has moved to include recognition of the "enthusiasm" so obvious in the early period, as well as the significant doctrinal change from a perception of the Holy Spirit as an influence to embracing him as a Divine Person.

The Adventist perception of the relationship between faith and science is now quite different from what it was in the 19th century. In the 1860s, Uriah Smith could claim, with James White's evident approval, that to observe the races of human beings then present on the earth was to find evidence of the interbreeding of humans and animals. The church was told in 1864 that "large quantities of coal and oil ignite and burn," heating rocks intensely and burning limestone. When fire and water meet under the earth, "the action of water upon limestone adds fury to the intense heat, and causes earthquakes, volcanoes and fiery issues." During the 1870s, it was acceptable to warn Adventists that to lace a woman's waist tightly might cause her offspring to inherit a wasp waist, and for anyone to wear a headpiece might heat their blood and result in immoral behavior. None of these concepts seem to be promulgated in Century 21. In the 20th century, George McCready Price (1870-1963) spent decades, with the support of the church, proving in many volumes that there is no such thing as a geological column. Since Price's death the church has spent similar energy explaining the data derived from the geological evidence clearly present in the earth's crust.

During the 1870s and 1880s, within Adventism the doctrine of salvation underwent important change. This fact is illustrated graphically by the "Way of Life" illustrations that portray the central focus of the church as moving from the tree of life to the cross of Christ.

The doctrine of the Trinity was often berated in early Adventism, whereas by 1898 it was embraced in principle within Ellen White's classic volume, *The Desire of Ages*. In 1980 it was winsomely expressed in the first set of Fundamental Beliefs voted by a General Conference session. In a similar way, Adventists changed from a "young" Christ to One in whom life is "original, unborrowed, underived."

When we compare Adventist expressions of belief written in the 1850s, 1870s, 1890s, and 1930s with the 1980 statement of Fundamental Beliefs, we can see that the doctrine of the sanctuary has experienced constant and constructive development since the early period.

### Some Implications

In light of this discussion it is both responsible and imperative for us to note that Adventists now better understand the theme of Righteousness by Faith. They more faithfully interpret the writings of Ellen White in the light of crucial evidence almost unknown before the 1970s. Adventists now exegete Daniel 8:14 more cogently in linguistic terms (especially in view of the meaning of the word translated "cleansed" in the King James Version); they have looked more closely at the contextual issues; they have probed more thoroughly the thought of related biblical passages; they have pondered further the evidence from Scripture about the "true tabernacle" in heaven; and they

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have more carefully articulated their sanctuary teaching and their theology of judgment to better express the doctrine of Christian assurance.

We need to recognize publicly that the church in its growth and maturation has moved beyond the early formulations of the founders to more gospel-centered and biblically faithful understandings. It is time for all who have debated the "fundamentals" of our belief to accept the reality of this change and engage in more fruitful "dialogue and dialectic" of the community. The "war" must end if we are to be faithful representatives of the Prince of Peace. ■

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*This article summarizes some of the data presented under the title "Continuity and Change in Seventh-day Adventist Doctrine and Practice" at the San Diego Chapter of the Association of Adventist Forums on July 12, 2003. The Forum distributed 1,600 copies of the script; it may also be consulted on sdanet.org in the At Issue section.*



# The Secret Walk of the Teenage Christian

TAMARA JAYNES

The secret walk that teenagers have with God is something that many young people experience, and their parents don't know about it. It is hidden from most worried and concerned parents. As an experienced "secret walker," I know my mother frets over my relationship with God, because she thinks I don't have one. Little does she know that beyond my vacant expressions is a mind that ponders the secrets of the universe, far enough to reach the thought of, "Is there a God, and does he care about me?" I've been told all my life, "Yes, of course, there is a God, and certainly he cares for you." But a person can be told this daily and still not grasp the truth in it. No, each of us must pick up these thoughts on our own and dust off the familiarity, digging into the truth hidden beneath the layers of repeated Sabbath lessons.

*It's between me and God and nobody else...  
So, don't try to get me talking with you about it.  
It's mine, and when I'm ready I'll tell you about  
my Savior*

What could spark these thoughts into being? What can an adult say that will trigger an explosion of mind-boggling proportions in a teenage mind? In some cases, that can be triggered only by another teenager, or someone close to it. (For example, a teenager who is trapped in an adult's body.) This was the case for me. I had already been baptized, and, yes, I did believe that there was a God who cared about me and sent his Son to die for me. But did I have a relationship with this God? I mean an intimate relationship, one that I can say really meant something to me. No, not really. In fact, it wasn't until I had a real heart-to-heart session with one of my dear friends this last school year that I even began to ponder the theories behind my personal relationship. From there on out God placed several influential people into my life. And slowly but surely my personal relationship grew and grew.

But I jealously held it within myself, hoarding it and letting it grow by itself. Like what I suspect other teenagers the world over feel, I was afraid of ridicule and mocking. Satan has made this world a cruel and harsh place to live in, especially as a strong Christian. I even

hid it from my family and friends, those I trusted, because this was a treasure far too precious to risk being shattered. It was in essence my "baby," my small child growing and learning. As I went on with daily life, acting in the public eye as if it weren't happening, God worked at my heart helping me become closer to him. At times I wished I could tell some of the people around me what I felt and what God was doing in my life, but I held my tongue every time.

Eventually toward the end of the school year I began to ask my close friends about their spiritual walks. I didn't really expect an answer, knowing that I myself would never give a straight one, but surprisingly I was met with open minds. The open mind is one of the qualities I love most in what God has given me. It didn't matter if my friends weren't where I was with God, and I didn't hold it against them. I just wanted to know where the people I knew stood with all of this. Naturally, I never mentioned what I felt; I was still too secretive with my relationship.

All the way through this entire ordeal, I had my mom telling me that she was praying that I would come to know God in a personal relationship. I knew I could tell her that I had one, but I was still private with my walk. I hadn't explored every root yet, and I just didn't feel ready to talk shop with people about how I felt. There was no way that I was going to proclaim, "Here I am, world, a strong and firm warrior for my Lord God Almighty!" My love and faith had grown, but not that much.

My relationship is still my own, even now partly a secret, though I wonder how much. But I don't go around talking about it with people and I don't really plan to for awhile. I know there are others out there like me, with their own secret walk, who have the seed of an intimate relationship with God and who don't want to let it out to the world yet. I understand that, I feel that way too; it's between me and God and nobody else, yet. So, don't try to get me talking with you about it. It's mine, and when I'm ready I'll tell you about my Savior. Don't give up on us just because we're teenagers. ■

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# Confessions of a Trueborn Liberal

TIMOTHY G. STANDISH

*Editorial preface: The writer speaks metaphorically, so we will offer a possible interpretation to his figures of speech: He speaks of the "ocean" of general scientists (a place, he maintains, in which believing in macroevolution and an old earth represents orthodox conformity), compared with the "little pond" of Seventh-day Adventists who disbelieve in the prevailing views of these scientists, specifically on the matters of macroevolution and old-earth and/or old-life chronology.*

I'm a liberal. I realize that publicly "outing" myself like this could mean that I will be labeled and marginalized by conservatives, but I can't help it—I was born this way. I'm incapable of leaving the prevailing dogma unquestioned; I'm skeptical of the pronouncements of leaders and, frankly, hope that they are wrong.

Being a true liberal means that I am frustrated by conservatives who masquerade as liberals; I call them pseudo-liberals. These pseudo-liberals give us real liberals a bad name. The problem with pseudo-liberals is that they live in very small ponds. Within the pond, a different orthodoxy may be held than in the big, bad ocean. Pseudo-liberals think they are being true liberals when questioning the orthodoxy in the little pond by simply presenting the orthodoxy out in the "ocean." In other words, they are not questioning the real orthodoxy; they are piling on against the unorthodox little-pond view. A true liberal honors little-pond views. That does not mean accepting every detail, but it does mean embracing the fact that differing views exist and should be respected as a challenge to any hegemony of the real majority. Pseudo-liberals are simply devious bullies when they cloak themselves in the garment of a minority while fighting to impose the majority view on real minorities.

While proudly wearing the liberal badge, pseudo-liberals may argue enthusiastically, and sometimes incoherently, for trendy ideas in both science and theology. How is this liberal? In the context of science, there is little doubt that evolution is the prevailing orthodoxy. In addition, the minority who question this orthodoxy out in the "ocean" may be subject to withering hyperbole, find their employment and social status threatened and—even worse—they may be labeled as conservatives! It seems strange to hear people calling themselves "liberals" while kowtowing to the majority and attacking free thinking about evolution.

I am a scientist who is open to questioning current scientific dogma; thus I am a true liberal. The same would be

true of liberal theologians; they would be willing to question popular ideas in theology: things like the higher critical approach to understanding scripture or the flawed idea of theistic evolution. It is pseudo-liberal theologians who simply embrace these currently popular views and act as if they are introducing new ideas for those of us in the little pond of Seventh-day Adventism to embrace. It is embarrassing to see pseudo-liberal theologians join hands with their close cousins, the pseudo-intellectuals, contorting their theology in an effort to cloak fuzzy thinking in the weighty mantle of modern science. This wholesale surrender of one academic discipline, theology, to another, science, is both humiliating and unwarranted.

The Adventist church needs more liberals like me and you—if you are willing to join me—liberals who em-

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brace different ideas because they are better; liberals who reject conservative pseudo-liberal parroting of old ideas trawled from the great big intellectual ocean. Those ideas were long ago evaluated and rejected. Imagine the positive change our church would see if there were more real liberals, people with the intellectual confidence to question prevailing ideas in the fallen world where we live and work. I believe that it will be a fully liberal church that sees the ultimate liberal, Jesus Christ, returning in clouds of glory. ■

*Dr. Timothy Standish is a research scientist at the Geoscience Research Institute who submitted this essay to Adventist Today.*

*Editor's comment: In the context of Christian belief, the generally accepted meaning of the term "liberal" is that it describes someone who has not ruled out opposing views; he or she is willing to remain open to truth from any source. "Orthodoxy" generally refers to inflexible attitudes regarding revealed "truth." Evolutionists and Fundamentalist Christians generally differ on the problem of origins, though both can agree that philosophy and worldview play an important role in creating different views. The problem of chronology leaves much more room for disagreement, though in this arena liberal thinkers may be willing to stay in conversation on the important things. The week-long session at Glacier View last August was such a continuing conversation.*



## The Need For Spiritual Term Limits

STEVE DAILY

Even though I've never met him, I'm sure Jere Patzer must be very talented and gifted and have powerful people skills and political instincts. One cannot survive as a conference and union president for long without them. However, such characteristics do not qualify Patzer to be a spiritual visionary.

He presents himself in *The Road Ahead* primarily as a visionary, drawing on his training (D.Min. and MBA) and years of administrative experience to provide a vision of what true spiritual leadership should be in the future of Adventism. In fact, his subtitle is "A Vision for Spiritual Leadership in the 21st Century." In this regard I found the book disappointing.



Steve Daily reviews *The Road Ahead* by Jere Patzer, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2003, 128 pages.

A true spiritual visionary would not see and experience the prophetic Spirit as a thing of the past. Patzer quotes Ellen G. White and argues that other spiritual leaders should publicly quote her as well (page 17). I have always been blessed by Mrs. White's writings, but Patzer seems to think the prophetic Spirit died in 1915. Jesus told the Pharisees of his day that they

elevated and glorified the prophets of the past while they were blind and hostile to the prophetic Spirit in the present (Matt 23:29, 30). Why do so many modern-day Pharisees love, protect and promote a prophet from our past while they have little or no tolerance for the prophetic Spirit in the present?

Dead prophets can be made to say whatever the religious establishment wants them to say. Patzer believes that Ellen White needs to be quoted more in public by Adventist leaders today, so

long as he can pick and choose the quotes. For an example of what he wouldn't quote, what does she say about conference and union presidents who have served for many years in the same position or capacity? She doesn't condone the practice. In fact, she was a major advocate of spiritual term limits; she said they should rotate back into field and become pastors again. Here is just one of her many quotes on the subject:

"Should the same man continue as president of a conference year after year, his defects would be reproduced in the churches under his labors. But one laborer may be strong where his brother is weak, and so by exchanging fields of labor, one may, to some extent, supply the deficiencies of another. If all were fully consecrated to God, these marked imperfections of character would not exist; but since the laborers do not meet the divine standard, since they weave self into all their work, the best thing, both for themselves and for the churches, is to make frequent changes" (*Gospel Workers*, page 421).

Patzer also doesn't mention how important it is for a spiritual leader to be anointed and baptized by the Holy Spirit, as called for by Ellen White. In her view, real spiritual leadership required such spiritual bap-

Dead prophets can be made to say whatever the religious establishment wants them to say. Patzer believes that Ellen White needs to be quoted more in public by Adventist leaders, so long as he can pick and choose the quotes.

tism, first for church leaders and then for their members. Here are a few of her statements on this important topic:



"Daily [Christ] received a fresh baptism of the Holy Spirit" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 139). "God's faithful messengers are to wrestle with God in earnest prayer for the baptism of the Holy Spirit" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, page 459). "We must be daily controlled by the Spirit of God" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, page 102). "The Holy Spirit has often come to our schools and has not been recognized.... Every teacher should know and welcome the heavenly Guest" (*Counsels to Teachers*, page 68). "It is the efficiency of the Holy Spirit that makes the ministry of the Word effective" (*Gospel Workers*, page 155).

Another area that deeply disturbs me in this book is Patzer's presumption that we as Adventists are, or are rapidly becoming, the only "remnant" denomination of God. He says, "God didn't just arbitrarily label us the 'remnant.' We have become the remnant by the fact that virtually all other evangelical denominations have either embraced or are in the process of embracing...modernism, postmodernism, and neoorthodoxy. At the risk of sounding arrogant, the Seventh-day Adventist Church may soon be positioned as the only one left to guard the precious truths of the Scriptures" (page 23).

This goes way beyond arrogance! It is blind, presumptive arrogance, based on unfortunate ignorance. It is ignorant to assume that the remnant people of God identified in Scripture can be equated in any way with institutional churches or denominations. When Revelation 13 is fulfilled, every institutional church or denomination will be forced to worship the beast or cease to exist. This is why God is working within all organized religions today to prepare a Spirit-filled group of individuals to whom he can say, "Come out of her [Babylon-compromised religions], my people" (Rev 18:4).

It is also ignorant to assume that Adventists have been less compromised or influenced by postmodern thought than all the other evangelical churches. (It is a stretch to call the Adventist denomination evangelical today.) I can name numerous churches that have been less contaminated by postmodernism than Adventism. Calvary Chapel (Harvest), the Vineyard, Southern Baptists and charismatic churches are just the beginning of the list. In fact, the power struggle in the leadership of North American Adventism today is largely between old-guard administrators (like Patzer) who defend a sectarian self-glorifying denominationalism, and a new subtle, shrewd group of leaders who have strong postmodern leanings and are more identified with liberal Protestantism than evangelicalism. Evangelical Adventists have largely been marginalized from leadership positions in the church, because they

are more concerned with building the kingdom of God than striving for political power.

Some outside observers of the Adventist church are aware of this trend toward postmodernism and have commented on it. In his revised and updated *Kingdom of the Cults* (1997) Walter Martin included a special appendix on Adventism in which he identified this fast-growing segment of our church in these words:

"There is a third growing faction within Seventh-day Adventism that is much more theologically liberal

Evangelical Adventists have largely been marginalized from leadership positions in the church, because they are more concerned with building the kingdom of God than striving for political power.

than either the traditionalists or the evangelicals, and the future may even bring three [major] Adventist groups, one aligning itself roughly with mainstream, theologically liberal Protestantism, one with sectarian or cultic groups, and one with mainstream evangelicalism" (page 519).

Patzer also warns against spiritual leaders who advocate the trend toward "postdenominationalism" (page 24). I could see his point, if he were protesting the pluralistic universalism found in postmodernism. But Patzer attacks people like Max Lucado and Peter Wagner, who are Bible-believing leaders and who simply follow Christ's teaching that the kingdom of God transcends all manmade religions. God is not concerned with denominational labels, but only whether we "worship him in Spirit and in truth." Patzer's arrogant claims for Adventism's special remnant status belie his observation that a leader's first lesson must be that "pride is the root of almost all our problems" (page 36).

Finally, throughout the book Patzer quotes from a host of business gurus and secular leaders such as Peter Drucker, Bill Gates, Tom Peters, Philip Crosby, Bill Clinton, etc., to supplement the statements he draws from Ellen White. His book seems to be an odd blend of 19th-century prophecy and 21st-century business theory, but it is certainly not a visionary volume on spiritual leadership. It does not compare with John Maxwell's *Partners in Prayer* or *Developing the Leader Within You*, or *Living the Spirit-Filled Life* by Jack Hayford.

God calls us all to be spiritual leaders, and if we let him, he will appoint us and anoint us through his Holy Spirit. ■

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# Beauty and the Apocalypse

GLEN GREENWALT

Today was a particularly beautiful day in New York City. After a week of cold, damp weather, which had driven everyone inside as if to announce the presence of fall, today the sun broke through the clouds and invited people back outside—despite the chill in the air.

I spent most of the morning painting at the New York Academy of Art, and then I had lunch outside at a French café near the school. It is hard for me to imagine how life could be much better. Perhaps a morning spent painting in the French countryside and eating in a French café in a small village might top today, but New York has charms of its own. The sun reflecting off the wall whereby I sat kept me warm. The mushroom omelet, salad and coffee were *tres bon*. At a nearby table, I listened in on a wonderful conversation by a particularly handsome family. The daughter offered as profound a critique of the Iraqi war as I have heard. She contended that “the fundamental requirement of

a democracy is that it gives people the information they need to make fair decisions; this the Bush administration failed to do by withholding information.”

I like collecting such bits of wisdom in the way some people like collecting stamps or teacups.

After eating I went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to drop by and look in on some of the special friends I have made since moving to New York—Edouard Vuillard’s *The Album*, Paul Cezanne’s *The Card Players*, Pierre-Auguste Cot’s *The Storm* and Rosa Bonheur’s *The Horse Fair*, to name a few. I had planned to start writing this article as soon as I made a quick round of visits, but a special exhibit of El Greco and his deeply mystical paintings of the life of Christ and the Vir-

gin Mary held my attention most of the afternoon. Before I knew it, the museum was closing and I was back out on the street.

Now it was dark and cold. I found a restaurant that served soup to warm me up. Two elderly women were the only other occupants. The one was unusually ugly and the other disturbingly bossy—sending the bent woman with her large nose and severe overbite on one errand after another for her, while refusing to allow the servile woman to look at her magazines. The women wore expensive clothes but seemed alone and cut off from life, except for their strange dependency upon each other. The ugly woman finally left to buy fruit across the street despite the sharp objections of the bossy woman, who trailed off after her.

By now I was beginning to feel that my day of satiation

with beauty represented a particularly pernicious pleasure. My personal quest for beauty seemed at odds with loneliness and misery I had just witnessed. However poor I am monetarily, my own life seemed decadent in the face not only of two lonely old ladies, but of the beggars I ignore on the subway, the soldiers and civilians dying in Iraq, not to mention all the misery and sickness that is hidden from view. Perhaps the responsible life is one that takes upon itself the ugliness, brokenness and pain of life. Is that not the call to take up one’s cross and follow him who had no comeliness or beauty?

Forced back onto the street because the restaurant was closing, I was mulling in mind the question of the moral responsibility of beauty, when I noticed an odd sight of a well-dressed man in a black suit wearing what appeared to be brand-new black high-top tennis shoes. The look was definitely not *haute couture*. The man was Jewish, wearing a yarmulke. I might have dismissed the incident as an example of poor aesthetic taste, but as I continued down the street, the sidewalk was populated with more and more similarly attired people, all hurrying in the same direction. My curiosity was piqued by the sight of so many badly dressed people, all almost running in the same direction. I felt like I was in the middle of a Hitchcock movie. The tennis shoe wearers all converged on a synagogue, where they were searched with a metal detector. Talking to someone in line, I discovered the reason for the bad taste in footwear. It was Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, and the wearing of tennis shoes was a sign of penitence.

Perhaps the wearing of tennis shoes once a year to the synagogue cannot dispel evil from the world, but the question of identifying with the broken and outcast still stands. Perhaps rather than painting pictures or spending years learning how to play musical instruments or write literature, we should make a more frontal attack on evil by staffing soup kitchens, establishing medical clinics, serving as legal counsel to the poor, building shelters for the homeless, or hastening the end of suffering by preaching a last-day message to a dying world. Perhaps we have reached a point in the world’s history at which the pursuit of beauty is irresponsible.

To frame the issue in terms of the title of this article, can an apocalyptic sensibility celebrate the beautiful without doing injustice to the misery of the world?

After several days of mulling over this question, my answer is not just yes, but a determinate yes. A Christian apocalyptic is not only compatible with beauty. It demands beauty.

Most of the 20th century represented a long exile from beauty in the arts. Pablo Picasso’s two great masterpieces, *Guernica* and *Les Femmes d’Alger*, set the stage for what followed. In *Guernica*, Picasso reacted to the German



Glen Greenwalt



bombing of the Spanish town of Guernica in 1937 by restricting his palette to black, gray and white—the tones of newspaper photographs that publicized the world's first bombing of civilians. Picasso's images of a woman holding a dead child, another trapped in a burning house, and the screams of men and animal alike became a prophetic warning of the horrors of war that have followed to this day. In his other painting, Picasso followed a long tradition in Western art of painting female nudes as objects of beauty and desire. In *Les Femmes d'Alger*, however, Picasso's women wear masks with hard, piercing stares. Here again, Picasso set the stage for a century of critique in which sex seemed cut off from the affection and love that was idealized in Western romance.

Today Picasso's art, which at first shocked his contemporaries, seems tame and even beautiful. Twentieth-century art is full of masks, dismembered bodies, fractured objects, empty landscapes, flat or blank surfaces. In an endeavor to speak the truth, it has had little room for beauty, which is dismissed as sentimental (the merely pretty), economic pandering (it sells things), or irresponsible (it is at odds with misery and ugliness). Yet without some point of reference that stands outside of the postmodern critique, the critique itself has become meaningless. We have criticism without standards of criticism, irony without any real difference to serve as a foil for the irony, fragmentation with no hope of restoration, ugliness with no contrasting beauty to expose its ugliness. The result is a flatness of life—a dulling of the senses. In a word, we have come to live in an anesthetic (nonsensory) society. Without an aesthetic of beauty, the world indeed becomes nonsensical. Beauty serves as the final critique of criticism. Beauty prevents the creation of a religion made out of negativity.

Unlike much of modern art and criticism, biblical faith is not merely a religion made out of negative criticism or ironic numbness. The book of Revelation is a book of praise. After every major section of the book, there is an anthem of praise (4:11; 5:9-14; 11:16-18; 15:3,4; 18:20; 19:6-8). In the very act of singing, the darkness is driven back. Theatrically, through song and visual representation, a clearing is made in the midst of the congregation's suffering, where at least for the time of their celebration, all suffering and evil is driven from the world.

Personally, I am musically challenged. I could not even recognize the music to "Happy Birthday" once when it was played on the radio. But when I listen to Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*, or Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus*, I am transported in the way that early Christians must have been transported into the heavenly realm when they came together to sing the hymns of Revelation. More often I become transported into a world of redemption through the visual arts, where I lose all sense of time painting or going to a museum. I think this sense of transporting beauty must be also what the Psalmist celebrates when he praises the beauty of entering into the sanctuary to worship. Kant described beauty as a pleasure that has no immediate practical end. It is a

pleasure that opens on eternity. Such is the worship described in the book of Revelation.

Secondly, beauty itself serves as a critique of the rude, the ugly and the cruel. Throughout the book of Revelation we find this ironic twist whereby a lamb conquers vile beasts and demons. We also find contrast between the rest offered by God to the saints, and threats and fiery destruction breathed by the Dragon and those who carry his identity. In the end, God, the lamb and the saints enter into a paradise devoid of crying and sorrow, whereas the dragon, the beast, and their bullies are tormented in a lake of fire.

Bear with me for just one more point. The Greek philosopher Plotinus defined the ugly as that which makes soul "shrink within itself." We call those things ugly that we turn away from in disgust or alienation. James Hillman, in an essay titled "The Practice of Beauty," has suggested if the ugly are those things we turn away from, then perhaps what we turn toward may become beautiful. We often find those things beautiful

upon which we focus attentive care. The whole history of art is comprised of

Theology functions best as an art—rather than as a code of law, an empirical science or a philosophical proof.

taking the ordinary, the everyday, and even the cruel and ugly and by care and attentive empathy transforming such into objects of great beauty. Here images not only of martyred saints, crucifixes and heroic battle scenes, but also Vincent Van Gogh's painting of a pair of muddy peasant boots, comes to mind. Van Gogh's careful attention to a worn pair of muddy boots transformed them into iconic images as rich in symbolism of faith and perseverance as any painting of the saints or apostles.

Theology, likewise, functions best as an art—rather than as a code of law, an empirical science or a philosophical proof. Discord, violence and even the ugly are seldom overcome by direct assault. Liberal churches for the last 20 years have led the way in social reform, but their pews are largely empty. Conservative churches are packed, but the world is little served by their battles over truth. Adventism, with its central doctrines of Sabbath, Sanctuary, and Second Coming, could offer the world an open space in an otherwise dark and gray landscape where glory and beauty might shine through. In the art of caring, rather than in preaching or arguing, the ugly can become beautiful, caring for the hurting can become a sacred sacrament, and providing sanctuary for the outcast can become an act of worship. With such attention, no man or woman is finally ugly. No loss is finally lasting. And no fracture is finally irreparable. That is the beauty of beauty. That is why we need more than a theology of truth. We need as well a theology of beauty. ■

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## Ellen G. White Updated?

JAMES STIRLING

Jerry Thomas has done something that would have been unthinkable 40 years ago—he has re-edited one of Ellen White's books. First produced in 1898 primarily to serve colporteurs who went door-to-door with the message, *The Desire of Ages* remained the flagship of our "missionary" publications. Church members grew up memorizing the sentences and paragraphs. It was inspired, sacred writing, introducing readers to the life and teachings of Jesus. Somehow the sonorous phrases blended in with the many quotations from the good old King James Version of the Bible.

But now Thomas has boldly gone where no other dared tread. After honing his editorial skills as book editor at Pacific Press for 10 years, he turned to Ellen G. White's classic work and was able to shorten it by almost half. An example is the

following passage, taken from the concluding paragraphs of chapter 8 in each of the two books.

First, from *The Desire of Ages*: "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.

"As we associate together, we may be a blessing to one another. If we are Christ's, our sweetest thoughts will be of Him. We shall love to talk of Him; and as we speak to one another of His love, our hearts will be softened by divine influences. Beholding the beauty of His character, we shall be 'changed into the same image from glory to glory.'" 2 Cor. 3:18 (*Desire of Ages*, page 83).

Then here is the same passage by Thomas: "It would be good for us to spend an hour every day thinking about the life of Jesus. We should use our imagination to put ourselves in each story, especially the stories from the last week of his life. The more we think about His great sacrifice for us, the more confidence we'll have in Him, and the more love we will feel. The more we study and think and talk about Jesus, the more like Him we will become" (*Messiah*, page 54).

There you have it—two paragraphs, eight sentences, trimmed down to one paragraph, four sentences. Throughout the book, 835 pages condensed to 447.

Thomas deleted many of the allusions to Scripture, and

where Ellen White quoted biblical passages using the King James Version, Thomas uses a modern one, the New Century Version.

What was wrong with the classic *Desire of Ages* that it should need any changes? For one thing, it was written in a day when people were used to sonorous phrases. In fact, as a major colporteur book, the more pages it had, the better bargain it looked to the prospective buyer. People today are used to more direct writing, and the phrasing in the book seems to take too long to "get to the point." The newer version updates the style.

What is most significant about this book is that it represents an official permit for someone to change the wording of a prominent White publication. Years ago, when foreign translations of the *Testimonies to the Church* series were being considered, a condensed form in English called *Testimony Treasures* was produced to aid the translators. These books were never promoted to English speakers, however. There have been innumerable reprints of books like *Steps to Christ* and *The Great Controversy* with different formats, type styles and illustrations, even titles; but always the wording has remained the same. This book, *Messiah*, is being heavily promoted by Pacific Press in all the local churches of the nation, with videotaped endorsements from recognized denominational leaders and with featured "camp meeting" discounts. This is done to reassure the faithful that the revision is indeed OK.

But some thoughtful readers ask if this represents a retreat of sorts from the concept of "inspiration." If Ellen White was an inspired writer, then why were not her very words sacred?

If we can rewrite this book, what about her other books? Furthermore, does this admission that her writing style was affected by her environment suggest that some of her ideas were likewise influenced by the intellectual and theological outlook of her time?

It will be interesting to see how the book is received by church members. Some who have been brought up on *The Desire of Ages* may think this version sounds too matter-of-fact, lacking in majestic overtones; it doesn't "sound like" Ellen White, quite. Some, on the other hand, will appreciate the added readability. And, of course, any who are involved in translating the book to another language will find this particularly useful. Those who found resemblances in phrasing to other writers contemporary with Ellen White may find that these presumed "borrowings" are harder to trace. Perhaps the passing of a century is not too soon for rethinking the way we present our story of the life of Christ. ■



James Stirling reviews Jerry D. Thomas's *Messiah*, a Contemporary Adaptation of the Classic Work on Jesus' Life, *The Desire of Ages*. Pacific Press, 2003.