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GENERAL CONFERENCE 2005

A report from St. Louis

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Editorial | John McLarty

What's in it for me?

I was talking with a minister friend of mine who is a subscriber to *Adventist Today*. He talked about the cost. "Thirty dollars is a lot of money in my budget. But I need to know what is going on in the church, so I pay my money and get my magazine."

I answered with a long speech: Bill, you get a whole lot more than a magazine for your 30 dollars. That 30 dollars is an investment in the future of your church—the church your children and grandchildren will grow up in. When you subscribe to *Adventist Today*, you are voting for the free flow of information from the denominational system back to the people who fund it and for a forum in which the concerns and perspectives of pastors and laity can be voiced to and heard by church leaders.

In addition to our journal, *Adventist Today* maintains a Web site. Thousands of Adventists and non-Adventists visit our Web site every month for information. When they hear rumors about a possible bankruptcy in the Adventist Health System, they go to atoday.com to find out if it's true. When they want to know the latest about 3ABN and Danny and Linda Shelton, many people go to atoday.com. When they want to know the behind-the-scenes maneuvering at the GC Session, they turn to our reports.

Running a Web site costs money, but visiting our Web site is free. Your subscription dollars help fund our Web site as a source of information for Adventists all around the world, many of whom truly cannot afford the cost of the magazine, especially given the cost of overseas postage.

Every Adventist journal is subsidized—The *Adventist Review*, *Signs of the Times*, *Ministry*,

Spectrum, *The Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*. None of these journals survives on subscription income. The denominational journals require massive support from the church. The independent journals depend on benefactors who go beyond subscribing to generous support. The "free press" in Adventism could not survive without the friends who believe in us enough to send money. In addition, *Adventist Today* depends on the sacrifice of an essentially volunteer staff.

Your subscription covers about half the cost of producing your copy of *Adventist Today*, so when you subscribe you are receiving a gift from the benefactors of *Adventist Today*. You are telling

» Come join us. We invite you to join us on New Years weekend, at the Spiritual Renaissance Retreat in Monterrey, California. The presentations will be stimulating, the conversation warm and relaxed.

them their sacrifice is worthwhile. So keep up your subscription. And purchase subscriptions for your children and grandchildren. And if you really believe the church needs a free press, talk with us about a major gift. Every dollar you invest in *Adventist Today* is a contribution to an open, honest, moral church.

To all our friends: Thank you for your support.

As much as we enjoy preparing the pages of *Adventist Today* for you to read, we'd enjoy even more visiting with you in person. Come and talk to us about your spiritual journey. Let us hear what church is like in your neighborhood. Share with us some of what you have learned in your life as a believer.

We'll be there. We hope you will, too.

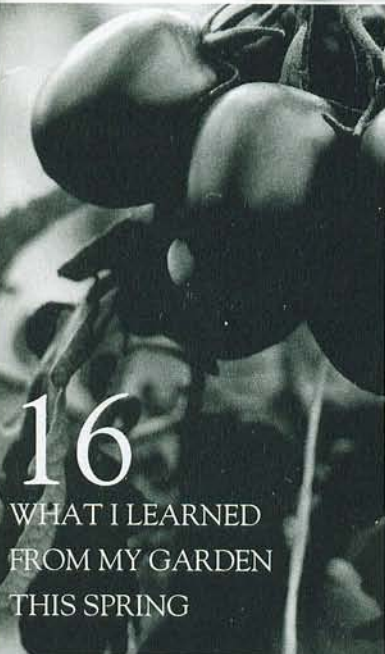
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THIS SPRING



Source: Adventist News Network

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letters

READERS RESPOND

ADVENTISM THROUGH FEMININE EYES

We have just finished reading your *Adventist Today* issue entitled "Adventism Through Feminine Eyes" (AT May/June 2005) and thought it was wonderful! Can we get permission to reprint the article "In Need of Our Mother in Heaven" for distribution to TEAM (Time for Equality in Adventist Ministry) supporters?

**Beverly Habada, Executive Director
TEAM Washington, D.C.**

GENERAL CONFERENCE REPORTS

I want to thank you for your General Conference Reports. I find your articles to be more believable than the "rosy peach" versions of other Adventist publications. It is said that the decision to elect Elder Paulsen was unanimous, but I have my doubts. I am of the opinion that as long as there is the structure of hierarchy in the church, there will always be an undercurrent of bureaucracy and politics...and nothing in politics is ever unanimous. I really enjoy reading your thought-provoking articles.

Hester L. Griffin | St. Thomas, Virgin Islands

Editors note: The unanimous vote was on the floor of the general assembly. The vote in the nominating committee was close.

REFLECTIONS ON THE ST. LOUIS GENERAL CONFERENCE

The church faces the challenges of secularism and the task of evangelizing in an ever-increasing urban environment, as well as the challenge of attracting youth to, and keeping them in, the church. We can no longer sit on our laurels and quote scripture, endeavoring to convert and inspire through traditional means. The world has changed. The question is, will the church?

For the first time, Adventists have voted in a woman as a vice president. This, for most, is seen as a step forward, the first of many changes to ensure that Adventists remain relevant. Yet at the same time, unordained individuals have been denied the ability to take up the position of conference president. It seems the fairer sex may have been shown the way to the future, but denied passage through it.

With 60 percent of the church demographic now under 30 it is inevitable that changes brought about by new attitudes, interests and worldviews will occur.

While the representatives of this age group were noticeably lacking in the delegate body, it has been refreshing to see a renewed interest in rectifying this phenomenon and encouraging young people to take up leadership positions.

Brian Blyde | Via e-mail

TERM LIMITS AND NEPOTISM

I am concerned at the apparent acts of nepotism that are taking place in the SDA church organization. I am sure there are some family-financial reasons as well as a desire to be with one's spouse. And I think that campaigning for a member of one's own family is not appropriate in the SDA setting. I certainly appreciate the suggestion to limit terms of office in conference leadership.

**Richard L. McCluskey | Via e-mail
mare@cniemail.com**

SABBATH IN ZION

"The Sabbath in Zion" and "A Park in Time" in the Mar/April issue were quite thoughtful and avoided the conflict of opinions on the subject throughout Christendom or the dogmatic approach to how we observe the designated day.

I liked the statement in "The Sabbath in Zion," "We don't pretend our way of life is the only way to be authentically Christian. But we unabashedly claim this way as . . . an authentic form of Christian practice."

The Sabbath is part of God's law, so to be authentically Christian would hardly include breaking the Law. "The Sabbath as a Park in Time" is, as the Bible points out, a park with zoning regulations. Those who attempt to do as the law demands must preserve their little space in the park as they choose to keep it, but life must go on about them irrespective of their practice of park preservation. At the same time we do not express our appreciation for those who do not keep the Sabbath as Exodus 20:8-11 outlines, we depend on some of those not keeping the Sabbath to control those who do bad things on it. We should be thankful for our military and law enforcement particularly.

Joe Scrannage | Via e-mail, jwscran@aol.com

TROUBLED 3ABN?

I am not sure why folks keep speculating on what happened with Linda and Danny at 3ABN. Is there

trouble at 3ABN? You make it sound like Danny and others wanted Linda out for personal recognition and fame. Linda offered a whole lot to 3ABN and did a great job, but something happened and in my opinion she got involved in something personal and it was not appropriate. Can we not just let this personal thing between Danny and Linda rest? God is blessing her, at least according to what she says. The fact that all reminders of Linda were removed from 3ABN does not mean she is forgotten or that she did not contribute greatly to the programming. I will remember as well as many others what she contributed and did. She is not forgotten or not loved, but the mentality of “right to know” nonsense is getting to be same as worldly to me. Can we put it to rest and let the Lord handle it?

Loye Carmoney | Via e-mail

QUESTION ABOUT CHALLENGES TO THE SDA VIEW ON CREATION

I found an article by John Rosier published in the first 2004 edition of *AT* and would like to discuss what seem to be two issues at point. The first is the consistency of stating positions from inside Adventism on origins that are not compatible with Adventist current doctrinal positions (given our Bible-based worldview). In other words, the issue is more along the lines of two contradictory models or worldviews rather than an actual lab experiment contradicting Genesis. Of course, one might argue that worldview-A was influenced heavily by simply exegeting the text of Genesis, whereas worldview-B was influenced primarily by evolutionist proposals framed within a more scientific medium to make their argument. The ethical question in the first debate is simply whether opposing worldviews should be allowed in an organization whose purpose is to promote a single worldview based on the model for origins in Genesis 1-2.

My question to you on the first part of the debate is whether people are clear on the need to exegete the text of scripture (in all cases) rather than simply eisegeting what they think well-meaning scientists “need” to find in Genesis. In other words—is it agreed that the ability to know the meaning of scripture is independent of the relative state of confusion in science over origins? I should hope that one can allow science to work its way through the mire of uncertainty and lack of data—without having to change doctrinal views at every twist and turn of scientific speculation.

The second part of the debate appears to be on the relative scientific merits of the humanist model for evolutionism vs. the Christian model of Creationism based on Genesis 1-2. There is currently a debate

being carried forward in an Australian newspaper between Creationists and Evolutionists, and in part 2 of that debate the Christian point was that evolutionism and Creationism are not in themselves “science” but rather worldviews for origins. They both “appeal to science” and both have their own “need” to find a certain set of confirming facts. The evolutionist tries to reframe the debate as IF evolutionism IS science rather than admitting that devotees to evolutionism “need science” as the medium in which to tell their story.

A case in point for how “the story” is told, when telling the story of Evolutionism, is that much-touted “perfect example” of smooth transitional forms—the horse series (at least while it lasted). It “appears” that the story told seemed to have life as long as there was a compelling lack of data to confirm or reject it. From this perspective, evolutionism appears to thrive in the void of “what we don’t know” in science. As Collin Patterson observed, these evolutionist sequences are “stories easy enough to tell but they are not science.” My point is that evolutionism is predominantly the work of those who have a humanist worldview required in the context of atheism to explain the unlikely phenomenon—life. They have “a need” for the story of a non-theistic

» We can no longer sit on our laurels and quote scripture, endeavoring to convert and inspire through traditional means. The world has changed. The question is, will the church?

origin of life as a basic requirement for their worldview. The adherents to evolutionism have a bias that favors the story in spite of inconvenient facts to the contrary or the level of speculation needed to sustain it. (I suppose the same might be said of the adherents to Creationism.)

My question is whether Adventist educators see this same need among atheists to reframe the discussion “as if” it is a case of “science” vs. “faith” when evolutionism is contrasted to creationism. Or are they clear that this is a case of “faith” vs. “faith,” where both have the option of making appeals to science—selecting in favor of some findings and holding reservations on other findings as though they are “temporary.”

As a side note—because evolutionism can tell its story only within the context of science—it needs a kind of pliable junk-science community willing to be

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letters +

READERS RESPOND

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a servant to its usages. A clear case of this is found in Isaac Asimov's statements on entropy, where he shows how it is seen in real life, and the fact that evolutionism "needs" a "massive decrease" in entropy to go from molecule to human brain.

If that level of compromise is at the heart of evolutionism, then where is the "incentive" to portray it as "science" within Adventism? (These questions probably reflect the fact that I am more of an outsider looking in at the debate within Adventism, since I have no real role in either our educational system or the administration; but I would guess that this is the view of more than one person on the outside looking in.)

Bob Strom | via the Internet

JIM BRAUER'S LETTER

I read the letters in the May/June 2005 issue of *AT* responding to the statement by Jim Brauer [President of the Colorado Conference] with a great deal of surprise. I can understand how Elder Brauer's comments could be misunderstood, but I can't help but think that the misunderstandings result from the writers' not knowing Jim Brauer. I am a member in Elder Brauer's conference. I have never known a conference president who is more open to discussion and new ideas than is Jim Brauer. I am getting on towards the old geezer category and have known several conference presidents. He has gone to great lengths to involve the conference membership in the decision-making process.

I am the secretary-treasurer of a group called Members for Church Accountability, which works toward greater accountability, transparency and fairness in the SDA church (see our Web site at www.advmca.org). Elder Brauer is one of only two conference presidents who has shown an inclination to be helpful in working toward these goals. Also, his conference was one of only two conferences that responded positively to our survey of which conferences would be willing to share financial information with the general church membership. One letter in *AT* states that he indicates that "Conferences

are not the channel for congregations to access the General Conference." Interestingly, Elder Brauer was instrumental in the adoption of a resolution in the Colorado conference specifically pledging conference help in getting answers to member questions from the higher conferences.

I have spent a number of years working toward change in the practices of the SDA church, but yet I can understand Elder Brauer's comments. I work for Lockheed Martin, a large defense contractor. Every year some minor stockholder brings a resolution to the stockholders meeting that Lockheed Martin should get out of the defense business. I think that it is appropriate to suggest that it would be reasonable for such a person to buy stock in another company. To suggest change in church tithe policy seems like a reasonable notion. To insist that there be means in place to bring such notions forward for consideration by the whole church body also seems reasonable. However, to insist on such a change to the extent of locally defying general church policies is to change the way the church is glued together. It is saying

» For the first time Adventists have voted in a woman as a vice president. This, for most, is seen as a step forward, the first of many changes to ensure that Adventists remain relevant.

that every church entity has the prerogative to set its own policies independently of the larger church group. If one wants to change the church structure so fundamentally as to go to complete congregational independence, then why is the suggestion so offensive that one might as well join a church that already has congregational independence?

Rather than insisting that their conference unilaterally change their tithe policies, the folk in Minnesota might do better if they so choose, to direct their executive committee to work with other conference executive committees in insisting that there be a church-wide reconsideration of tithe distribution.

Norm Smith | Buena Vista, Colorado

Letters policy

**WE WANT
TO HEAR
FROM YOU**

Adventist Today welcomes letters to the editor. Short, timely letters that relate to articles appearing in the journal have the best chance at being published. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. In publishing letters, *AT* does not necessarily endorse the views represented, but believes in giving voice to differing viewpoints. We prefer messages sent by e-mail, addressed to atoday@atoday.com. Please include your complete address and telephone number—even with e-mail messages. Send postal correspondence to Letters to the Editor, *Adventist Today*, P.O. Box 8026, Riverside, CA 92515-8026.

GENERAL CONFERENCE

The Search for NAD's Youngest Delegate

Who was the North American Division's (NAD's) youngest delegate? The official final NAD delegate count, which *Adventist Today* obtained from Ted Jones III, GC Associate Secretary, through his assistant Ana Fiagao, was 195. But perhaps this number needs an asterisk, because 17 of those delegates are members of the General Conference Executive Committee who also happen to be from the NAD. Without these, the NAD delegate total was 178.¹

It is important to note that these 195 NAD delegates did not include the delegates from the GC ADCOM/Institutions/Services, and among the GC Institutions sending delegates were three Adventist universities in North America. Neal Johnson, Mark Howard², and Guillermo Magana were student delegates representing Loma Linda University, Oakwood College, and Andrews University, respectively. We did not learn of any other church entity with a delegate selection policy that effectively guarantees "under 30s" in the delegate pool.

After the keynote address of GC President Jan Paulsen, which emphasized the necessity of getting the youth of the church involved, there was a scramble to show off young delegates. When it was announced there would be a "Let's Talk" session in which President Paulsen would interact with "under 30" delegates, some world divisions were embarrassed they had no delegates young enough to qualify for inclusion in the program. According to Ray Dabrowski, director of the communication department for the GC, these divisions promised that they would do better next time. The only reason the NAD was able to avoid embarrassment in this area was the decision to classify the young people holding GC ADCOM/Institutions/Services credentials as NAD delegates.

Early in the GC session, Wendi Rogers, editorial coordinator of Adventist News Network, put a table online showing the delegates of every world division broken down by age category. Since it was put online early and was based on delegates who had already registered, some of the final counts varied slightly from this list. This list was eventually taken offline, however, it did give a helpful picture of the age of the delegates.³

What caught AT's interest was that without "dual-classified" delegates selected by ADCOM, the NAD had only one delegate in the "under 30" category. Identifying that delegate was not easy because Ms. Fiagao was initially more concerned with protecting the privacy of the delegate than she was with proving that such an improbable creature as an "under 30" NAD delegate actually existed. But eventually she showed AT the actual form on which an NAD delegate had marked the box "under 30." Her name was Jaylene Monterio, from New Jersey.

With the help of Phil Hiroshima, a lay delegate, and Harold Lee, President of the Columbia Union



Source: Adventist News Network

▲ Jaylene Monteiro. The only under-age-30 delegates from the North American Division to the 58th Adventist church world session, were from the Columbia Union Conference.

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GENERAL CONFERENCE SESSION DELEGATION AGE-GROUP REPORT

Entity Name	Under 30	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+	Total
East-Central Africa Division	2	18	59	47	17	3	146
Euro-Africa Division	2	14	23	19	7	0	65
Euro-Asia Division	4	23	32	15	1	3	78
Gen Conf ADCOM/Instns/Services	7	3	12	20	12	9	63
Gen Conf Dept Assoc Directors	0	0	1	14	6	2	23
Gen Conf Executive Committee	2	11	64	113	61	17	268
Gen Conf Office Appointed Staff	0	1	3	9	7	0	20
Inter-American Division	8	40	86	58	18	3	213
North American Division	1	4	34	70	51	4	164
Northern Asia-Pacific Division	2	0	11	24	18	2	57
South American Division	1	32	71	52	21	8	185
South Pacific Division	3	14	28	24	4	0	73
Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division	1	16	67	26	13	1	124
Southern Asia Division	0	3	33	49	8	1	94
Southern Asia-Pacific Division	0	8	37	53	12	3	113
Trans-European Division	2	16	19	27	6	2	72
West-Central Africa Division	0	11	36	41	13	0	101
Total	35	214	616	661	275	58	1,859

Man “Suing” Adventist Health Lands in Jail

News releases placed on the Internet in mid-July, 2005, declared that a massive lawsuit of billions of dollars was about to be levied against various components of the Adventist Health System, and with it the Adventist church, enough to bankrupt the whole organization.

The plaintiff in this looming lawsuit was to be TMA International Trusts (TMAIT). This organization claimed it had found flaws in the way the health system, working with the federal Medicare program, has collected information from millions of clients. The results, supposedly, were that the government has somehow been defrauded of billions of dollars. TMAIT claimed it was operating as a private attorney general and was a plaintiff in actions against not only the Adventist system but against health-care providers run by other churches, as well as by corporations and local governments. The boldness of the claims stirred anxiety among church members and health-care workers.

The only personal name associated with TMAIT on the Internet was William (Bill) Lovern, Sr. He accompanied his extravagant claims with personal letters and telephone calls to targeted hospitals,

offering to let them off the hook if they would settle financially with him. When *Adventist Today* posted on their Web site a statement about Lovern's activities, he called and threatened legal action against them as well. But before he could make good on his threats, he was sent to prison for his behavior. *Adventist Today* called Stacey Green, Assistant States Attorney for Anne Arundel County, Maryland, and confirmed that Lovern had been convicted in early July on two counts of telephone misuse and was sentenced Thursday, July 28, 2005, to three years in prison by the District Court of Maryland for that county. Lovern will serve two years, with one year's sentence suspended. Following his release he will serve three years of supervised probation. If he violates his probation, he can serve up to an additional three years in prison.

Lovern's efforts earlier in the year to create profitable lawsuits against hospitals had finally come to the attention of the American Hospital Association. Administrators there asked the Federal Bureau of Investigation to open an investigation of Lovern based on his pattern of threatening phone calls. The investigation was prompt and resulted in his conviction.

The Search for NAD's Youngest Delegate

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Conference, AT was able to get an introduction to Jaylene on the delegate floor on Monday, July 4, and she agreed to an interview later that day at the AT booth in the exhibit hall.

Jaylene Monteiro is a pretty, bubbly, enthusiastic young woman who was visibly excited and awed just to be at the GC session. Recently married, she was born and raised an Adventist in the New Jersey area by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jardinico, who emigrated from the Philippines in the early 1970s and are now members of the Jersey City Heights English Church. When asked her age, Jaylene is a little coy, but admits she just made it “under the wire,” which implies 29.

At the time of our interview, Mrs. Monteiro was the business manager at Garden State Academy, which is scheduled to shut down in August of this year. She graduated from college in 1999 with a degree in business administration with an emphasis in

international business and management information systems. Her first job was in private business as a consultant, but after a year, she agreed to join Garden State Academy as the sole computer teacher and computer department chairperson. She was appointed to the New Jersey Conference Executive Committee in 2002-3. In 2002, she was also elected to the Columbia Union Conference Executive Committee for a five-year term.

When asked about her impressions of her first General Conference, she said she was really excited, but expressed concern that there were only 35 delegates under 30, despite the fact that 70 percent of the world church membership is under 30. Unless we can change that, she said, the future of the church is in jeopardy.

AT wishes Jaylene well, and is confident that this enthusiastic and optimistic young woman will have exciting opportunities to continue serving the church when her current assignment ends.

References

¹ The list of 178 was published in the July, NAD edition of the Review.

² This name, obtained from Ana Fiagao, does not match the ADCOM list. I called Oakwood College once but was not able to get clarification. The name could be Mark Thomas.

³ Note for example, that NAD shows only 164 delegates, rather than 178.



Source: Adventist News Network | photographer: Lee Bennett

News | Ervin Taylor

Notes on the General Conference Session, 2005

The Absolute Power of GC Nominating Committee

Every five years, the ministerial elite assemble at the GC Session to decide who will lead the Adventist Church for the next five-year term. The GC By-Laws and "Rules of Order" prohibit any nominations from the floor of the GC session, so no individual can be retained in or proposed for high GC office unless that he (or she) is vetted through this committee. This makes the penta-annual GC Nominating Committee the most powerful political entity in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The Election of the General Conference President

After preliminary discussions concerning procedure, the General Conference (GC) Nominating Committee focused its attention on four serious candidates: Jere Patzer (North Pacific Union President), who was the chair of the Nominating Committee, Lowell Cooper (GC Vice President), Ted Wilson (GC Vice President), and Jan Paulsen (incumbent GC President). One of the major questions addressed was whether Dr. Paulsen, if reelected, would serve out his entire five-year term. In the first round of voting, Cooper and Patzer each received in the low 20s, with the majority of votes going to Wilson and Paulsen. In the second round, Wilson received 91 and Paulsen 98 votes. It is suspected that all of Cooper's votes went to Paulsen and most of Patzer's votes went to Wilson. The Nominating Committee's report was then ratified by a non-secret vote of the assembled delegates. (Since we first published this online, we have received slightly varying reports on the exact numbers received by the various candidates for president. These reported variances were all in the single digits.)

Black Caucus on Nominating Committee Outmaneuvered by GC President

In the Nominating Committee, the African-American members argued that their community had not been adequately represented at the

high levels of the General Conference since the retirement of former Vice President Calvin Rock. The response by Dr. Paulsen was to suggest an African-American woman as GC Vice President. The African-American caucus had several other individuals in mind, but immediately realized that they had been outfoxed by a very politically astute GC President with a politically-correct proposal that could not be opposed.

Costs of Holding General Conference Exceeds \$10,000,000

The General Conference publicly states that it allocates about \$1 million per year for the costs of holding a General Conference session every five years. For the total costs, the following data was obtained from a "reliable source."

Audio Visual/Staging	\$ 2,000,000
Stadium Rental	\$ 400,000
Delegate Expenses —Non-GC staff	\$ 480,000
Programming	\$ 200,000
Supplies, Shipping, Security, Secretariat and Services	\$ 400,000
<i>Adventist Review</i> Bulletins	\$ 1,520,000
GC Staff Travel and Booths	\$ 1,000,000

Estimated Total Expenses Borne by the Various Divisions: Travel, Booths, Video Reports
\$5,000,000-\$6,000,000

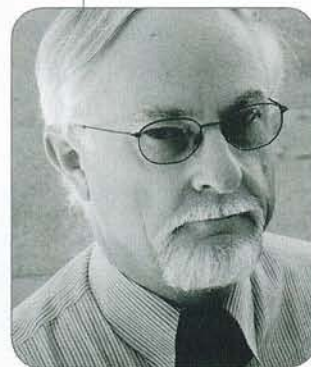
Estimated Total Expense to the Church:
\$ 11,000,000-\$12,000,000.

Not included in these figures are the salaries of church employees for the time spent at the GC.

[Ten years ago at the General Conference session in Utrecht, *Adventist Today* requested information on how much the session was costing the denomination. The answer then was: we are not sure, and anyway it's none of your business! But there are many, even in the church hierarchy, who favor greater openness.]

Ervin Taylor is professor of anthropology, University of California, Riverside and Executive Editor of Adventist Today.

▲ An estimated 40,000 people flowed into the Edward Jones Dome on Saturday, July 9, for the final day of the 58th Adventist church world session in St. Louis, Missouri.



Ervin Taylor

The Accuracy of the GC Bulletins:

Is It Close Enough for Church Government Work?

How accurate are the minutes of the proceedings of a General Conference in session, which is, according to Ellen White, “God’s highest authority on earth?” Are the General Conference Bulletins, which contain the official minutes of the General Conference business sessions, complete and accurate accounts of the business sessions, or are they tidy abridgments, edited for

political correctness? These questions emerged from my pursuit of four stories arising out of the floor discussions during the 2005 General Conference business sessions. Up in the press room, I was assured by Ray Dabrowski, GC Director of Communications, that “every word” heard on the floor should be in the Bulletin. This assumption seemed to be shared by everyone I asked in the pressroom, including Bonnie Dwyer of *Spectrum*, making me feel like the odd man out.



Dennis Hokama

The Review Versus the GC Bulletins

Before going any further, a distinction needs to be made between the *Adventist Review* and the GC Bulletins it publishes. According to William Johnsson, *Review* editor, who was interviewed by phone on July 13, the *Review* publishes, word for word, whatever Bulletin text is supplied to them by the GC Secretariat. The *Review* is not authorized to make any unilateral changes, except perhaps for correcting spelling errors. The only changes that might be negotiated with the secretariat would be for condensing, due to space limitations. For further information on what the secretariat’s criteria for accuracy were, he referred me to Claude Sabot, GC Associate Secretary and Director of the Secretariat.

Claude Sabot, also interviewed by phone on July 13, explained that when the *Review* makes a request for condensation due to space limitations, they try

to accommodate them by condensing procedural data that is redundant in other reports, rather than abridging or deleting delegate comments. The secretariat’s intent, he explained, is to preserve as much of what was said on the floor in the very words that were spoken, so that readers can capture as much of the spirit and flavoring of the proceedings as possible.

He did concede that in some cases, when a delegate makes an exceptionally long speech, they might condense it, especially if there are redundancies. If it is a short statement, it would be left intact. The other case of omission would be when what is said is judged to be incoherent. He specifically denied making any editorial deletions or changes on the basis of political incorrectness of the content. When asked if the *Review* had made any requests for condensation in the most recent General Conference session, he replied that they had not (The *Review* had published up to Bulletin #7, covering proceedings through Tuesday, July 5, at the time of the interview.)

I also asked him whether the pre-edited text produced by the pool of typists was preserved so it would be available for researchers. He could not answer that question, he said; he would need to do some checking. I called back the next day, thinking he had had enough time to check, but had to leave a message. He did return that call and requested I be patient because he needed to check with others who had not yet returned from the GC. He promised to give me the answer by e-mail or phone when he found it (I have had no response from him since that day, but he did say he was going on vacation.).

I called Bert Haloviak, Director of the GC Archives on the morning of July 27 to get a different perspective. Cautioning me that he was speaking on his own, rather than officially, and without direct personal knowledge, he believed that the pre-edited transcripts were in the archives, but that they did not reach the archives until the next GC session. Thus they probably had the 2000 session pre-edit transcripts, but would not expect to get the 2005 pre-edit transcripts until after the 2010 GC

session. As far as the actual production of the GC Bulletins, and the specific people who did the editing for the Secretariat, he recommended I call James Cavil, a *Review* editor who worked closely with the secretariat in the production of the Bulletins.

Later that morning, I spoke with James Cavil, who explained that even though he was a book editor of the *Review and Herald*, he is borrowed by the secretariat for a few weeks during the General Conference session to help them edit the Bulletin. The secretariat editors, he said, decide what to delete and what to include in the Bulletin, and his role was to make the remaining text read coherently. He readily admitted that the GC Bulletin was only an abridgment of the proceedings. The secretariat editors calling the shots this time, he said, were Claude Sabot, Bill Bothe, Athal Tolhurst, and Fred Thomas. Cavil stated that Paulsen's decision to declare the spiritual growth segments in the morning and afternoon to be part of the business session presented the secretariat with some challenges with regard to space for the hard copy.

Three Protests Against the Passage of the 28th Fundamental Belief

My first encounter with the secretariat came on the afternoon of Monday, July 4. During the Monday morning session during which the 28th amendment had been passed, two men had made three trips to the mike to challenge its passage on the basis of points of order due to the chair's failure to recognize them prior to the motion to move the question.

Sensing this was the beginning of an important development, I had tried but failed in the early afternoon to find the names of either of these men by asking around. Back up in the press room, Lynn Friday, administrative assistant to Ray Dabrowski, was able to provide me with the phone number of the secretariat. When I placed the call, I was astonished to have a woman ask me which of the two meetings I was interested in. The implication was that, had I asked for a name from the afternoon session, that too might already be available. I explained that my interest was in the morning session, and detailed the approximate time, content, and context in which the speech was made, as well as the accent and appearance of the person speaking.

The young woman said that she would do some checking and call me back. She called me back on my cell phone only a few minutes later to announce that the speaker in whom I was interested was listed as an "unknown male." Her quote from the speech attributed to him seemed accurate, so I was convinced that the secretariat had found the correct person. She also said there were three similar challenges to the vote, just as I had documented in my personal notes.

The GC Bulletin (#5) for this business session was published in the July 6 *Review*. When I got around

to reading the *Review*, I discovered that according to the Bulletin, there had been no challenges at all to the vote adopting the 28th fundamental belief.

Since I knew for a virtual fact that the three challenges had been faithfully transcribed by the secretariat's pool of typists within hours of the floor action, their complete absence implied an initiative to delete them by secretariat editors. What was deleted was not redundant, incoherent, nor lengthy, but was politically significant because it implied procedural bungling and undermined the legitimacy and dignity of the 28th fundamental belief.

The last of the three objections that Monday morning was caught on my camcorder from the delegate floor, as I had already made my way down there in pursuit of another story. Since it was entirely unexpected, I did not turn my camera on in time to catch the beginning of the statement. Since I was recording from the giant screen and the floor was poorly lit, I was unable to see where the speaker came from or to where he returned. This was his second appearance at the mike that morning speaking to the same issue:

Asian man with heavy foreign accent: "I made a motion...I will move for a reconsideration of the previous vote...Brother Chairman."

Chairman Hsu: "OK, after consultation with the parliamentary person, we will entertain the motion. But please have it in writing. Then we will take that up later. Please bring it up to the front so that we can see it in writing."

The absence of this and two other challenges to the already-adopted 28th fundamental belief in the GC Bulletins during that morning's business session would leave a reader who was dependent on the text without a clue as to the gathering storm of protest that would build up in the next few days regarding the initial adoption (and subsequent reconsideration) of this fundamental belief. The exclusion of these three challenges seems contrary to Claude Sabot's assertion that the Bulletins preserve as much as possible of the original words of the delegates, enabling the reader to experience the flavor and spirit of the proceedings.

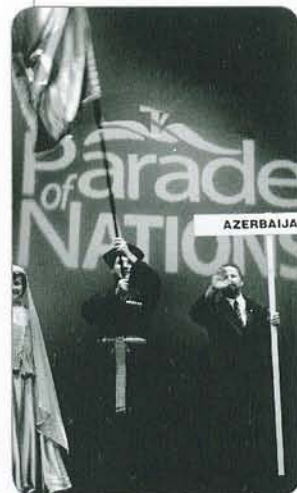
The Electrifying Magana-Ryan Exchange

My second encounter with the Secretariat as a resource happened late in the afternoon of July 5. I was completely unprepared for arguably the most dramatic and spectacular moments of the entire General Conference.

The matter under consideration was "Item #302," a simple housekeeping change in the bylaws that aligned the minimum requirement for General Conference President with the requirements for division and union presidents.

Larry Evans, G.C. Undersecretary, moved that the GC adopt the following policy:

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▲ *Parade of Nations, the grand finale and highlight of the Saturday evening program featuring representatives from divisions throughout the world dressed in native costume and waving national flags to an appreciative audience, at the 58th Adventist church world session in St. Louis, Missouri, July 9.*



Source: Adventist News Network
Photographer: Richard Dower

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Source: Adventist News Network
Photographer: Adam Burjk



▲ Crowds gathered to watch the taping of the fourth installment of the "Let's Talk" series with Jan Paulsen. "Let's Talk" is an unscripted, live-to-tape TV program that was being taped in the exhibit hall during the 58th Adventist church world session in St. Louis, Missouri.

"The General Conference president shall be an ordained minister of experience."

Lisa Beardsley came to the mike with what appeared to be a prepared speech in which she gave the intention behind the proposal a lengthy backhanded compliment before opposing the motion on the basis of the specific language of "ordained minister" which excluded women from eligibility. She therefore moved it be sent back to committee for a rewording that would include "credentialed employees of experience."

Her motion to refer the matter back to the bylaws committee was seconded and then voted down, at least according to the judgment of the chairman Michael Ryan. But it was what happened next that was astonishing.

I was startled to hear the casual "Yeah..." as the first word of the next speaker that came to the mike on a point of order concerning the previous vote.

"Yeah...I thought that was pretty close. Is there any type of system that we have that would count and see how many of the majority voted?"

When the floor camera finally showed us the image of the speaker, I was even more astonished. He was a young man who looked Hispanic wearing a baseball cap, a baseball jersey and jeans. The youth used the word "yea" at least two and probably three times in his dialogue with Ryan in his search for the proper language to get a recount of the vote. What was impressive was his total lack of fear or nervousness in his challenge of the vote.

Almost as memorable was Michael Ryan's bemused response to the kid before him wearing a baseball cap who had just challenged his judgement in deciding that the vote had been lost. I do not have his exact words, but in my notes have the following:

"I am going to coach you. If you wish to challenge, call for a division of the house."

This particular exchange and poignant confrontation of informal youth against the formal might of the General Conference was over in the blink of an eye, but I had not been following it from the beginning, so I began scrambling to recover the details that set up the confrontation. (The other details of this intriguing story are told more fully elsewhere in "A 20-year-old in a Baseball Cap Challenges a GC Vote," so I will here focus only on what happened to the language of this remarkable exchange in the GC Bulletin.)

Since I did not note the name of the woman (Beardsley) who had made the speech and the

original motion, I called down to the secretariat again for help. The young woman who answered, replied that hard copy of that afternoon's meeting was available, but that there was nobody there to search through and find what I wanted. Then she added that I could send somebody down to room 173 to look through the hard copy for that portion of the proceedings in which I was interested. An invitation to witness the GC Bulletins coming into being was hardly an invitation I could refuse.

The Secretariat's office was in room 173, directly below the press room. The young woman escorted me into a large room full of computer screens and a number of typists at work. I was shown a stack of transcripts, each stapled clump representing eight minutes worth of transcribed business session dialogue. I quickly thumbed through one set and recognized the speech given by a woman the document labeled as Dr. Lisa Beardsley. I was impressed by the beauty of the documents that had been produced less than two hours after the words had been uttered on the floor. I was about to look for Magana's exchange with Ryan, when the young woman asked me if I wished to have a copy of it.

I was startled by the offer but said, "Yes," and when she left to get permission, I decided to film the room instead of spending that minute reading the document. I never got to read the rest of that document, because a few seconds later, my presence was urgently requested in Elaine Robinson's office, where the GC assistant secretary explained that the Secretariat cannot allow anyone to have these transcripts before they are sent to the *Review*. Robinson also advised me a little frostily that the next time I did any videotaping in their office, I must get her permission first.

The minutes I briefly glimpsed that Tuesday afternoon are finally published in GC Bulletin #7, in the *Review* of July 8, Friday. When I finally got around to looking at the Magana-Ryan exchange, I discovered that all the "Yeas" had been omitted, as well as Ryan's whole sentence offering to coach Magana. The Bulletin version of this exchange is shown below:

GUILLERMO MAGANA: That was pretty close. Is there any type of system that we have that would count and see how many of the majority voted?

MICHAEL L. RYAN: Yes, there is a provision that we can do that. You would need to call for a division of the house.

GUILLERMO MAGANA: I call for a division of the house.

All of the flavor and spirit of that moment had been completely lost. Instead of the high drama

of informal youth fearlessly challenging a general conference vote, we might as well have had two robots talking to each other.

The Phantom Resurrection Argument

The third instance in which my pursuit of a story intersected with the GC Bulletin began on Friday afternoon, July 8, when I ran into John Testerman, who had made a belated but futile attempt on the floor to get the word “resurrection” inserted into the 28th fundamental belief on Thursday morning. This was the day after the writing committee had already revised the document once to accommodate those who had objected to its passage strongly enough to have it recalled and brought back for revision.

What had intrigued me at the time was why Testerman hadn’t raised that issue before Thursday morning, when the body was in no mood to tolerate further delays or complications. John then explained that the Resurrection issue had indeed been argued previously by another speaker, and therefore he felt no need to raise it again himself. Thus, it was only after he saw it had been ignored by the writing committee’s revisions that he felt justified in bringing up that issue again.

This was perplexing, because I highly respected John’s memory and integrity, but I had not noticed anyone arguing previously for the inclusion of the Resurrection. Thus, in my Web piece describing the final passage of the 28th amendment entitled, “The Bedeviled 28th Fundamental Belief Is Finally Adopted,” which I had approved for publication earlier that day, I had written of John’s Thursday morning trip to the mike, “John Testerman of GC/ADCOM came up to open a new can of worms.” If John was right, then it may have been a can of worms, but it was not new.

On Friday night, I downloaded all the published GC Bulletins (1-7) and arranged them in chronological order. When I did a word search for “resurrection” in connection with the discussion on the 28th fundamental belief, the word does not appear until Angel Rodriguez uses that word in his rebuttal to Richli’s arguments on Monday morning, just prior to the passage of the vote. However, the GC Bulletin makes no mention of Richli having made such an argument on behalf of the inclusion of the Resurrection.

Did the GC Bulletin omit an argument of Richli’s, or did Rodriguez attempt to rebut a phantom argument that Richli never made? In my July 13 conversation with Johnsson, I raised this as an example of the kind of contradictions in the record which gave me reason to wonder how accurate the Bulletin really was. Johnsson replied that he was previously unaware of that, and thought it intriguing, but offered no solutions.

I also put a call in to BRI on July 13 and left a message for Angel Rodriguez, as well as sending him an e-mail requesting an explanation as to whom he

was responding to when he argued against the idea of substituting “the Resurrection” for “the cross.” (His secretary returned my call on July 19, by which time I had solved the mystery.)

An Unexpected Evidentiary Windfall

On the evening of July 18, after having had my video converted to CD, I decided to see what I had captured in my July 5 recordings. I was astonished to discover that I had left my camera on during the entire Richli-Rodriguez exchange, even though I had put the camera down and can be heard talking in the background with an AT associate about other matters.

Here is my verbatim transcription of the crucial portion of that audio alongside the GC Bulletin for the same conversation.

Actual floor text (as per AT camcorder)

CLAUDE RICHLI:

“We are not talking about the cross as a symbol or as an amulet just as Christians use and just as Muslims use the magic eye or some other amulets to ward off the powers of evil. We are using, we are talking about the death of Christ on the cross, and his resurrection as what frees us from the powers of evil.

And so, whereas I know Mr. Chairman, that we are not here to make some editing work, I would still like to make a motion to amend those first words to just include the words “death on the cross and the resurrection of Christ” to alleviate the burden that is now placed on the church seeking to reach out the Muslim population at an opportune time in history when the church for the first time in history is able to reach out to those populations.

GC Bulletin

CLAUDE RICHLI:

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I know, Mr. Chairman, that while we are not here to edit, I would still want to make a motion to amend those first words, to alleviate the burden that is now placed on the church, which is seeking to reach out to the Muslim population at an opportune time in history.

The GC Bulletin Mangles Richli’s Motion

Based on the camcorder, it turns out that Testerman was quite right. The GC Bulletin omitted “death on the cross and the resurrection of Christ” completely. What is disturbing is that “death on the cross and the resurrection of Christ” was not just a talking point, or argument, but the central point of Richli’s official motion. Without this phrase, Richli’s motion is empty and completely meaningless. It is

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one thing for an official record not to include all discussion, but to mutilate an official motion on a critical subject seems a bit much.

Also, the reduction of Richli's sentence regarding the cross to merely, "We are not talking about the cross as a symbol" is brutal. If the cross is not a symbol, and one stops with that, then one might infer that Richli meant to say the cross was not "merely" symbolic, but that it had intrinsic value.

Then there is the question of how and why such a mangled version could have gotten into the official records. Richli's speech was not long, redundant, trivial, nor incoherent. The audio tape made by my camcorder from the press room is not particularly hard to decipher, though the echoing has to make it less clear than the floor mikes from which the secretariat presumably gets its audio feed. It is virtually impossible for me to believe that the typist pool was this incompetent, sloppy, or lazy because of the excellent and rapid work they had done in the two other instances I had checked on earlier. If it was not the transcribers, then that appears to leave only the secretariat editors as an explanation.

It occurred to me that it would be interesting to see how these same editors handled the speech given by Angel Rodriguez. This might give us an indication if the editors are equal opportunity manglers or whether they favor the house theologian.

Actual floor text (as per AT camcorder) Response by Angel Rodriguez:

So the basic question here is the question of how you handle a misuse of a Christian image.

Because it is misused, should we ignore it?

Or should we place it where it should be? And it seems to me that the death of Christ on the cross is at the very heart of the Christian gospel, and the statement is placing the cross in its proper perspective. And it's telling us that the cross as a symbol has been misused throughout Christian history, but it has nothing to do with an instrument of torture to other human beings.

It has to do with the place where Christ defeated, not other human beings, but evil powers. And the power of the cross makes us, should free us, to make us loving people. So that the message that we are communicating with this statement is precisely a message of hope to the Islamic people, to my good friends the Jewish people. We're telling them the symbol has been misused.

This is the way that we as Adventists read it; it has

nothing to do with attacking other human beings. The cross was the place where Christ defeated evil powers and freed us in order to love Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, every human being on planet Earth.

By trying to correct that perception, the wrong perception of the meaning of the cross, we are at the same time affirming the theological significance of this phrase in the Bible.

Now, the other question has to do with substituting it with the Resurrection, because it is with the Resurrection that Christ defeated the evil powers. If you read the Bible, and as you do, and as you remember the Adventist understanding of the cosmic conflict, Christ's defeat of evil powers began in heaven.

It took place also through his earthly life. It took place at the cross, the Resurrection.

It takes place in our lives, and the work of the spirit in our lives.

It will take place also at the Second Coming and at the millennium, finally, the evil forces are going to disappear. So we do have this wide range of moments when evil forces were overcome—by Christ.

So the question is at which moment that victory was final? And it seems to me that the biblical emphasis, the core, the heart of the conflict was on the cross, and everything else from that point on depended on what happened on the cross.

Had Christ not defeated evil powers on the cross, one has to wonder whether the Resurrection would have been possible.

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This is the way that we as Adventists read it; it has nothing to do with attacking other human beings. The cross was where Christ defeated evil powers and freed us in order to love Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, every human being on Planet Earth.

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Source: Adventist News Network
Photographer: Melita Pujic



▲ Riane Junqueira and Laura Soures (from Brazil) dancing to the Caribbean Steel Orchestra at Keimer Plaza, music festival.

Source: Adventist News Network
Photographer: Melita Pujic



▲ A little girl from the Southern Asia group peeks out at the audience during their report to the delegates of the 58th Adventist Church World Session in St. Louis, Missouri, Wednesday, July 6.

substituting it with the Resurrection, because it is with the Resurrection that Christ defeated the evil powers. If you read the Bible, you remember the Adventist understanding of the cosmic conflict. Christ's defeat of evil powers began in heaven.

It took place also throughout His earthly life. At the cross, at the Resurrection, in our own lives.

It will take place also at the Second Coming and at the end of the millennium.

So the question is, at which moment was that victory final? And it seems to me that the heart of the conflict was on the cross, and everything from that point on is dependent on what happened on the cross.

The GC Bulletin Enhances Rodriguez' Presentation

Leaving aside the merits of Rodriguez' arguments, it appears to me that the editors have exercised much greater care in editing the text, and have considerably enhanced Rodriguez' arguments as well as syntax by their editorial decisions.

For example, the omitted paragraph (beginning with "It has to do with the place where Christ defeated") is actually an embarrassing contradiction that is only making Richli's point that the cross is only a location rather than an instrument of salvation. The rest of the paragraph seems logically incoherent in that it makes arbitrary assertions that do not appear to follow from the specific wording of the text under discussion. So its omission only helps Rodriguez.

Likewise, the deletion of the last sentence ("Had Christ not defeated") also seems to benefit Rodriguez, because it only tends to advance Richli's argument that it was not until the Resurrection that there was proof that the evil powers had indeed been defeated.

All things considered, it seems difficult for me to avoid the conclusion that at least in this particular instance, the secretariat editors had a different attitude in dealing with the Richli text than with the Rodriguez text.

A 61 Percent Accuracy Rate for Announced Delegate Numbers

When there was a reading of the delegate numbers at the beginning of the session, I completely ignored them until much later in the session when youth representation emerged as an issue. When I finally got around to comparing the text of the floor session in GC Bulletin #1 with the tables provided in the July 3 issue of the *Review*, I was astonished at the number of discrepancies between delegate numbers provided in the table and the officially announced numbers of delegates from each world division.

The numbers provided in the tables are presumably accurate because their total is the required 1,240, whereas the officially-announced

numbers add up to only 1,180. I also made the assumption that it was more likely that the correct numbers were read by Matthew Bediako than that the typists correctly recorded his mistakes. According to these assumptions, of the 13 world divisions, five of them had an incorrect number of delegates announced, providing an accuracy index for numbers of 8/13, or 61 percent. Commenting on these inaccuracies, Cavil stated that whatever was heard in the audiotape was final, and that no attempt at independent verifying was done.

These discrepancies are not important in themselves, but they might provide a useful baseline for the GC Bulletin's accuracy on non-controversial matters. However, all five of the mistakes were due to a presumed inability to consistently distinguish the "th" "f" and "s" (50 vs. 30; 50 vs. 60) sounds. Had these numbers not been involved, the accuracy rate might have been higher.

Conclusions

What generalizations can we responsibly make based on these four incidents, which are an admittedly small sample? The most conservative

» Then there is the question of how and why such a mangled version could have gotten into the official records. Richli's speech was not long, redundant, trivial, nor incoherent.

finding would be the recognition that the GC Bulletin does not preserve "every word" of the GC business sessions. It is also readily apparent that even if the Bulletins preserved most of the "content" of delegates' speeches, they cannot reflect the full range of social dynamics exhibited in the session.

There may actually come a day when scholars can actually depend on the GC Bulletin as an authoritative source for discovering what was actually said and argued on the floor of the General Conference in session. But at present, it is not a fully reliable historical record. Those who wish to get an accurate account of what happens on the floor must still be there to take their own notes, make their own recordings, or go the archives in search of audio tapes of past GC sessions.

That does not imply that any change is called for. Who knows but that such editorial control by secretariat editors over what gets reported in the official minutes is regarded as a good thing by those who actually control the church? In that case, they needn't change a thing, because what isn't broken ought not be fixed.

What I Learned in My Garden This Spring



This spring added another chapter to my collection of “bad” hawk stories, each one vividly illustrated by a powerful predator snuffing out the life of an innocent victim.

The featured villain in the first chapter was a sparrow hawk, sitting in a tree outside my study window in Scotland, munching on one of “our” blue tits. I remember the hot flash of anger, the sense of outrage that such an evil could happen on planet Earth.

The villain in the second chapter was even more wicked, leisurely picking off five helpless baby swallows—one by one—from the nest we had been watching on our back patio. In that case, my anger even yielded a passionate short article in the *Adventist Review*.

In this third and most-recent chapter, the hawk carried off one of “our” ground squirrels that had been partying with his mates on our back lawn. We watched it all happen from our dinner table. As I focused our binoculars on the event, I saw one little paw helplessly flailing away at the enemy. But it was too little, too late. The struggling victim, the firmly gripping talons, the curved beak, indeed virtually every aspect of that picture, forced an involuntary exclamation from my lips, “The very face of Satan!”

After I shared this last event with our Sabbath School class, a neighbor expressed surprise at my anger. Having grown up on a turkey ranch, she was not surprised by food-chain killing. Besides, the ground squirrels had generously helped themselves to her garden plants without her permission. For her, a reduction in the squirrel population was a rather welcome event.

As I worked in my garden over the next few days, I had the opportunity to reflect further on “the face of Satan.” Since all the plants on the

land adjoining our property had been sprayed by the developer, our vegetarian field friends found the greenery in our garden increasingly attractive. I tried to protect our melons and tomatoes with chicken wire; I even contacted our county agricultural extension agent to see if there were any proven non-violent methods for controlling what was becoming a plague of squirrels.

No luck. Indeed, enthusiastic environmentalists in our state had even persuaded our legislature to prohibit the use of “body-gripping” traps for anything larger than a mouse. Why it would be humane to grip a mouse to death but not a gopher or a squirrel, I don’t know. But with the notable exception of a few heroic souls like Albert Schweitzer, most of us make such accommodations at some level: the spider and the fly are more at risk in our homes than Fido the dog or Mitzi the cat. And most of us value the quail and the warbler ahead of the sparrow and the starling, though mercifully, such rankings typically are not matters of life and death.

In my case, however, I caught myself wishing that our squirrels were carnivores instead of vegetarians. And I found that I would not be reluctant to return to the use of body-gripping devices.

And where do God and the devil fit into this picture? Why am I horrified and angered at the hawks but quite willing myself to intervene in life-threatening ways?

I found myself pondering such questions as I worked in my garden this spring. My at-risk plants called forth my best pastoral instincts. I marvelled at their ability to surge back with new life after an unauthorized trimming; but I also noted with sadness when the villains took too many liberties, pushing some plants to the point of no return.

From a biblical and Christian perspective, I found

myself tucking my reflections under three headings: Realism, Idealism, and Ignorance, perhaps qualifying the last one to read "The Humility of Ignorance. A brief summary follows.

Realism

Scripture knows that this world is not what God created it to be. Without explaining just how sin brought about the dramatic changes in our earth, Genesis 3 still dramatically depicts the tragic events that led to those changes. The point is clear: The evil in our world did not come directly from God's good hand, but was triggered by the perverted will of good creatures gone astray. And in the New Testament Paul candidly speaks of a whole creation "groaning in labor pains until now" (Rom. 8:22). Yes, the Bible is realistic about our troubled world.

Idealism

If Scripture tells us of a creation longing to be renewed (Rom. 8:18-25), it also points to a mysterious world where all the hawks are vegetarian and where none of God's creatures feasts on any other. The New Testament vision banishes all death (Rev. 21:4). And though the Old Testament is not quite that tidy (cf. Isaiah 65:20), it still dreams about a kingdom where the wolf and lamb are best friends, where the lion eats straw like the ox, and where a child can safely play in the presence of all the wild creatures. It is a world in which no one will "hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord

as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:6-9). The Bible writers had never seen such a world except in their dreams. But they could dream about it, and they shared their dreams with us.

Humility of Ignorance

Perhaps the most important lesson I learned from my garden this spring is how much I do not and cannot understand. Adventists have rightly defended the vision of a physically renewed and restored universe. But I would hope that we could be appropriately humble about our ability to understand all the mysteries of our marvelous but twisted world.

Indeed, in that very connection, a remarkably candid quotation from the pen of Ellen White came to my attention at the often contentious faith/science conference, the third installment of which was held in Denver in the summer of 2004. As a brother addressed the assembled delegates on the importance of preserving the biblical account of creation, I was startled to hear him read the following words from the chapter, "The Literal Week" in *Patriarchs and Prophets*. "Just how God accomplished the work of creation He has never revealed to men; human science cannot search out the secrets of the Most High. His creative power is as incomprehensible as His existence" (PP 113).

That's exactly what I learned in my garden this spring. I hope I remember.

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- If a prophet is growing, maturing and changing—what do we do with the immature stuff?
- Can the Adventist church afford to lose Ellen White?
- What religious legacy do we have to pass on to our children?
- How do you handle fear of end time events and fears of not being saved?
- How do you respond with grace when your daughter wants to marry a nice Catholic attorney and she's thinking of converting?

Ellen White & Adventism:

BEYOND THE TRUE/FALSE PROPHET DEBATE



Like the fortuitous fit between Luther's solution to his inner conflicts and the challenges facing Western civilization in his time, Mrs. White's solution to personal difficulties meshed well with the plight of the disappointed Millerites who came together under her leadership.

There is nothing more central, or controversial, in the Seventh-day Adventist Church than the role of Ellen G. White. From the very beginning of the movement there has been heated debate about the nature of her revelations and their place in the church. Most of the questions raised have never really been resolved and are ongoing sources of contention both within the church and in dialogue with other Christians. Officially, the church teaches that White's writings, while inspired, are not to be considered equal in authority to the Bible. Yet in practice this fine, and confusing, distinction is often disregarded.

A great many Adventists, regardless of the official pronouncements of the church hierarchy, consider White's writings to be an infallible authority in which there is no error, a view that has come under increasing challenge in the past few decades. Much of the current debate about White takes place between staunch traditionalist Adventists who believe her to have been a genuine messenger of God, and critics who question her claimed possession of the gift of prophecy. Many holding the latter view condemn White as a false prophet, a charlatan, or mentally ill. Attempts have been made to explain her visions as the result of some pathological process, most often the head trauma she suffered in the famous childhood rock throwing incident. On the other side of the debate, Adventist "church apologist" Clifford Goldstein (borrowing from C. S. Lewis' argument about Jesus) has countered in *Graffiti In The Holy of Holies* (2003) that White must either be accepted for what she claimed to be or rejected as a liar, mentally unbalanced, or an agent of Satan.

As someone trained in clinical psychology as well as the history of religion, much of the argument coming from both sides strikes me as simplistic. Religious behavior is an extremely complex phenomena having multiple dimensions which must be taken into consideration if we are to have any hope of arriving at an adequate explanation.

Psychological understanding of religious experience has in the past few decades become more sophisticated in understanding religion as something that cannot be reduced to "just" some form of psychopathology. Even if her visions could be traced to some neurological or mental dysfunction, such a reductive explanation has little to offer in the way of a useful understanding of Ellen White's complex role in establishing and furthering the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Supporters and detractors of Ellen White alike have largely ignored the role of the highly charged religious milieu that surrounded her from an early age in shaping her sense of self and her mission. Ellen Harmon (later White) grew up in an unsophisticated, religiously preoccupied culture where visionary experience and prophetic proclamations were relatively common. Historian of religion, Ann Taves in her 1999 book, *Fits, Trances, & Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James*, situates the Harmon family in the "shouting Methodist" tradition characterized by ecstatic religious experience. Contemporary observers of the Millerite movement described something very much like modern charismatic church services. A newspaper account of the 1845 trial of Israel Damon, a Millerite elder arrested for disturbing the peace with disorderly meetings held in his house, places Ellen Harmon in the midst of a veritable bedlam of religious "enthusiasm" during a gathering of several days duration. According to testimony, she lay on the floor in a trance state from which she would periodically arise to "point to someone and tell them their case, which she said was from the Lord." While such goings-on were regarded by Damon's complaining neighbors as an extraordinary nuisance and were later condemned as "fanaticism" by an older Ellen White, who sought to distance herself from such practices, they were, for a while at least, apparently normative within the little group of Millerites who after the Great Disappointment regarded her visions as a source of divine guidance.

Ellen White's Creative Malady

In the afterword to the revised and enlarged edition of his *Prophetess of Health* (1992), Ronald L. Numbers along with his wife, Janet S. Numbers, a clinical psychologist, examines White's many recorded statements about her own health, and conclude that "from youth onward she suffered from recurrent episodes of depression and anxiety to which she responded with somatizing defenses and a histrionic personality style. These allowed her to transform debilitating and destructive forces into creative and productive ones" in what they describe as a "creative malady." (p. 201)

"Rather than falling victim to illness, she used it to escape anxiety-provoking or unwanted tasks, to elicit sympathy and support, to fashion a rewarding career, and to construct a religious system that prominently featured the ministry of healing" (p. 223).

Converging individual and societal needs often lie behind the lasting impact of individuals on their world. In his study of Martin Luther, *Young Man Luther* (1962), Erik H. Erikson writes, "Luther, so it seems, at one time was a rather endangered young man, beset with a syndrome of conflicts. . . . He found a spiritual solution... [that] bridged a political and psychological vacuum which history had created in a significant portion of Western Christendom" (p. 15).

Like the fortuitous fit between Luther's solution to his inner conflicts and the challenges facing Western civilization in his time, Mrs. White's solution to personal difficulties meshed well with the plight of the disappointed Millerites who came together under her leadership. Her "messages" provided reassurance that their beliefs were not in vain, they were in fact on the road to eventual salvation, and, more immediately, that there were remedies for their physical as well as spiritual ailments. In a process that was largely if not entirely unconscious, experiences that had initially provided comfort for an adolescent overwhelmed with inner conflicts and debilitating illness became visions providing guidance for a small group of confused people struggling to come to terms with their apparently failed beliefs.

The Place of Ellen White in the Church

Ellen White's authority as the Lord's messenger provided a stable, central source of support and authority for the Seventh-day Adventist Church as it grew from fringe sect to a worldwide organization. As the carrier of the Gift of Prophecy, White became an institution to which she herself perhaps became somewhat of a captive. Adventists expected her to continue to provide words of divine guidance on a regular basis, even when, as she confessed in regard to the late nineteenth century controversy over legalism, she found some issues difficult to understand. That she should, under pressure to produce more writings, turn to other, non-revelatory

sources to supplement the messages brought by her angel companion is understandable if not entirely excusable.

Despite official statements to the contrary, on a practical level Ellen White's writings came to be revered as supplemental scriptures. As Adventist scholar Arthur N. Patrick puts it, "Instead of a signpost, many in the church seemed to demand that she become a road. Instead of a sketch map, she was expected to be a contour map. Instead of a descriptive dictionary she was pressed to be an all-encompassing encyclopedia of truth and duty. In place of a blazed trail, the church appeared to want her to give it a highway" ("Ellen White and Adventists in the 1990's," available online at: <http://www.sdanet.org/atissue/white/patrick/egw1990.htm>). Patrick, along with many other contemporary Adventists, urges a re-evaluation of Ellen White's place in the church in the light of historical research. At the same time he acknowledges that "many leaders and members are either unaware of the relevant data or resistant to taking action in view of it."

It is probably safe to say that the majority of Adventist church members are not very much

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interested in data, no matter how relevant, that challenges traditional Adventist views. Religion, like many other facets of human culture, is not based on "relevant data" but comes from a basic human desire to "know" things that cannot be definitely known, for hard and final answers to what the Russian writer Dostoevsky called the "accursed questions" that incessantly trouble humanity. Yet religions that survive for more than a few generations must be flexible enough to be able to gradually adapt established beliefs to accommodate new data. Adventists claim theirs is a religion based not on a fixed creed, but in ongoing revelation and an ever-evolving understanding of divine purpose. It remains to be seen how Adventist understanding of Ellen G. White will evolve in light of ongoing, sometimes disconcerting revelations about her life and work.

This is a condensation of an article that is available on the Internet at <http://home.earthlink.net/~jcmmsm/EGW.html>.

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ELLEN WHITE, Mary Baker Eddy, & Mesmerism

Both White and Eddy began their ministry by virtually rejecting the “regular” medicine of their day. Mary Baker Eddy, of course, developed her elaborate substitute for medicine by working out the basic principles of Christian Science in various editions of Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures.

In 1836 a Frenchman named Charles Poyen, a disciple of the famous Dr. Franz Anton Mesmer of Vienna, began a lecture tour in New England on mesmerism. This new field of healing using electricity and “animal magnetism” drew crowds of listeners and spawned an industry of “magnetizer” healers. One of these, Dr. Robert Collyer from Boston, came to Ellen’s home town of Portland, Maine, in 1841 and lectured on animal magnetism, clairvoyance, somnambulism, and the mysterious “vital principle.” At first the draw was mainly curiosity, and crowds found the demonstrations on magnetic-induced sleep and clairvoyance entertaining. But within the next two years practitioners began to emphasize healing of a variety of diseased conditions.

One of these healers was Phineas Parkhurst Quimby, of Belfast, Maine. In 1845 he was called upon to help a young woman who had become a Millerite after listening to William Miller’s warnings of the imminent end of the world. She had felt a “strange dizziness in her head,” had lost her appetite, and over several months had become very weak. She attributed her troubles to her acceptance of Millerism. Quimby confirmed her self-diagnosis and proclaimed that her Millerite preachers had put her under the control of a corrupt form of mesmerism. Under his care with proper mesmerism, she recovered and then renounced Millerism. The Millerites denounced Quimby as using unholy means to exorcise the “evil spirit;” they called him Beelzebub.

Quimby’s most famous patient was Mary Baker Eddy, who founded Christian Science. She had suffered a long time from a variety of chronic illnesses that forced her to consult with “orthodox” physicians, one of whom had attempted to mesmerize her. She had also tried phrenology, had experimented with Grahamism and its vegetarian-whole-grain diet, had practiced homeopathy,

and even tried hydropathy at Vail’s Hydropathic Institute in New Hampshire. She had heard about Quimby’s unique healing system, and in 1862 sought him out in Portland, Maine. Her health improved dramatically, and she returned home to Lynn, Massachusetts, to be with her dentist husband Daniel Patterson. But her old sickness came back, so she went back to see Quimby and spent another year in Portland. With her health temporarily restored, she went back to her husband. After only a few months her health declined again, and she returned to see Quimby. This oscillation between health and illness was abruptly cut short by the death of Quimby in 1866. His passing left her feeling very alone.

In the meantime Mary had started the Christian Science movement. Though she taught her students the principles of Christian Science, she continued to the end of her life to fear the malevolent forces of mesmerism directed against her and her family. She was convinced her third husband, Gilbert Eddy, had died from a “mental assault” launched by a backslidden former disciple, Edward J. Arens. She said he had poisoned her husband with “mesmeric poison.” To the end of her life she was dominated by fear of mesmerism, or “malicious animal magnetism,” and she posted mental workers to stand a 24-hour daily watch over her room. Even while in her country home in New Hampshire she was certain that mental thoughts could be sent through the telephone wires to commit “mental murder.” (Robert David Thomas, *With Bleeding Footsteps: Mary Baker Eddy’s Path to Religious Leadership*, pp. 173, 178).

The waves of mesmerism that swept across Maine also affected another woman. Growing up in Portland, Maine, in the 1840s, young Ellen Gould Harmon was exposed to the same mesmeric influences as Mary Baker Eddy but was less affected by it. In a magisterial six-volume biography, Arthur White relates his revered grandmother’s most dramatic encounter with mesmerism. Joseph Turner, a “leader of the Adventists in the Portland area and an important Millerite editor” who was “involved in fanaticism” as a “spiritualizer,” claimed that as a “sanctified” person he could “have a spiritual wife.”

Ellen Harmon was shown in vision “the ungodly course of Joseph Turner, who had been swept off his feet by fanaticism.” She admitted that Turner had “labored with some success to turn my friends and even my relatives against me,” because she “had faithfully related that which was shown me respecting his unchristian course. He circulated falsehoods to destroy my influence and to justify himself.” Her reaction was understandable: “My lot

seemed hard.”

The climax to this growing menace to young Ellen’s authority came in in 1845 when “she attended a meeting also attended by Joseph Turner.” By then some people were attributing her increasingly frequent visions to mesmerism (“if it pleased the Lord to give me a vision in meeting, some would say that it was excitement and mesmerism”). Turner was “boasting that he could mesmerize her and could prevent her from having or relating a vision.”

Ellen Harmon describes this critical meeting:

“I arose in the congregation. My visions came up fresh before me, and I commenced relating them, when I felt a human influence being exerted against me. . . . I then turned to this man [Turner], and related what the Lord had shown me in Portland; and, raising my hands to heaven, earnestly cried, “Another angel, Father! Another angel!”

“I knew that my request was granted. I felt shielded by the strong Spirit of the Lord, and was borne above every earthly influence, and with freedom finished my testimony. The friends were comforted, and rejoiced in the Lord.

“Joseph Turner was asked why he had not stopped my relating the vision. He answered, ‘Oh, some of you would have her talk.’”

After this dramatic incident, Arthur White has little more to say about mesmerism and its effect on Ellen’s life and ministry. Turner, however, continued his attacks on Ellen and her visions. He proclaimed “that the visions were of the devil, that James White mesmerized her, and that she could not have a vision if he was not present.”

More than 20 years later, Uriah Smith, editor of the church’s general paper, the *Review and Herald*, wrote in the June 16, 1868, issue about a meeting the previous Friday evening at Battle Creek. A “large congregation assembled at the house of worship.” Following “some timely and close remarks by Brother [James] White, Sister [Ellen] White arose to free her mind from a great burden resting upon it for this people.”

“Wrongs were faithfully pointed out and reproofed. Two personal testimonies for persons in the congregation were read [sic], followed by most stirring appeals and exhortations. And while Sister White was thus speaking, reaching a point in her remarks of most intense solemnity, instantly, and unexpectedly to all present, she was taken off in vision, and fell to the floor [sic].

“Judging from her appearance and occasional expressions while in vision, scenes of a different character, some terrible to behold and others of surpassing glory, passed before her. The scene was most impressive. Many were present who had never before had the privilege of witnessing a manifestation of this kind; and to those the privilege was given of coming forward and beholding for

themselves the various phenomena attending it.”

Commenting on this service, Smith wrote, “People may talk of mesmerism, clairvoyants, and spirit mediums; but this has nothing in common with them. It is something else entirely, as different from anything of that kind, as the heavens are higher than the earth; and those who attribute the visions to any of those sources are only suffering the devil to deceive them.”

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Although early Adventists were probably quite eclectic in selecting from all brands of medicine, James and Ellen White rather quickly developed an active “faith healing” ministry. The first instance of

such faith healing occurred in Topsham, Maine, early in 1845, when two men were healed, one of rheumatic fever and the other of dysentery. Similar accounts of their praying for the sick—including themselves—continued often for the next several years, with resultant miraculous healing from a variety of diseases, including tuberculosis, various fevers, whooping cough, tetanus, cholera, colic, rheumatism, and pleurisy. After 1852 instances of faith healing pertained only to James and Ellen and their children. Then following the departure of their children and the death of James in 1881, faith healing is reported solely for Ellen White.

Even well before Ellen White’s major “health reform” vision of 1863, Adventists were heavily influenced by a whole series of reforming innovations in American medicine and hygiene. These ranged from John Wesley’s teachings about proper living, including water treatments and vegetarianism, to Sylvester Graham’s crusade for whole-grain bread, proper diet, and to national crusades against alcohol, tobacco and caffeine, all soon followed by a veritable tidal wave of elaborate water cure (hydropathy) institutes.

This volatile medical/life-style ferment became a permanent and essential ingredient in Adventism down to the present day, serving the dual purposes of improving the health and efficiency of members and



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The Lost Manuscript: A Dream

I had a dream last night. I seemed to be in an office. A sign on the wall said the Ellen G. White estate. I looked across the room and saw Julio, the White Estate researcher with the highest level research clearance ever known, examining files that he was pulling from stacks of dusty boxes labeled “burn.” As I watched, he opened another of the boxes and pulled out a yellowing manuscript. The handwriting was difficult to read, but the words had a familiar ring: “I was shown,” “I saw,” “The angel showed me.”

A short time later, I watched as the manuscript and a typed copy were placed on President Paulsen’s desk. He read it with amazement. It appeared to have been written by Ellen White on her death bed. As a scholar, Paulsen immediately questioned its authenticity, but he was struck by the force and clarity of the vision it voiced for the church. And as he questioned Julio repeatedly about the circumstances of the find, he could not escape the conviction that the words he held in his hand were indeed the prophet’s final will and testament to the church she had loved and served.

He called together the entire GC/NAD staff and related the circumstances of the finding of the manuscript as a preamble to reading the entire document. A time of spontaneous praise and prayer ensued as staff members felt the inspiration of the call for commitment and dedication.

As soon as it was over, Elder William Johnsson presented plans to Elder Paulsen for the immediate publication of a summary in *The Adventist Review*, suggesting this prompt and bold move would help atone for *Spectrum*’s publishing of the 1919 Bible Conference minutes in 1979. (Johnsson also suspected there were moles in Dr. Paulsen’s office and among his own staff who would report any interesting developments to *Adventist Today*. He did not want to be scooped on a matter of such vital interest to the church.)

In my dream, I saw the magic of the Adventist

grapevine. Through phone calls and e-mail, news of the manuscript circumnavigated the globe within hours.

One of the NAD departments most galvanized by the manuscript was the Women’s Ministry Department. They believed statements by White could be interpreted as calling for the formal ordination of women:

“I was shown that the time will come when the Holy Spirit will do a mighty work upon godly women, calling them to the ministry and positions of leadership. As the brethren laid hands upon me in confirmation of my ministry, so will leaders around the world honor the gifts and ministry of humble women through whom the church has been signally blessed.

“For too long, men of experience and standing in the church have limited the service of others in their zeal to protect the church. The angels grieve when they see human barriers thrown up to hinder the work of women and youth here at home and in lands across the seas. Men have thought that God could not work as effectively today through the sons and daughters of China and Africa and the Spanish lands of the south as he has did in the early years of our movement through the sons of America, England and Germany. It is time for those who think themselves leaders to get out of the way and cease to trouble those God has called into ministry.

“There are some, who in their zeal for unity in the church, labor to retard the advance of God’s work in one field to keep it line with what God is doing elsewhere in His vineyard. These err because they do not trust the Master to direct His workers according to His wisdom and will. They make an idol of uniformity and bind up the work of God. Never hinder God’s work for the sake of preserving a merely human order.”

In another section the wording was no less revolutionary:

“The leading of the Lord has been evident from the beginning of this great advent movement. Though painful at the time, his leading in the 1901 reorganization was much in evidence as the brethren pleaded for guidance. We had thought to be in the kingdom ere this, but time has tarried. Oh that the great work of revival and reformation could take place in our midst. Then like streams of light, the three angels’ message could spread abroad. I pray that it will soon be done. Yet I have been shown that as knowledge increases and men run to and fro, new methods of travel and communication will call for new methods of organization. Our present structure, developed under divine guidance, will prove insufficient for the work God has in mind. When this time comes, none is to say: ‘This is the organization that God gave us, and it must not be changed.’ The time may well come when the Lord will choose to empower the laity, freeing the ministers from the burdens of leadership as he did the apostles of old.”

While the denominational leaders struggled to

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find the proper response to the startling revelations in this document, the lay organizations of the church immediately reacted. Given the strong affirmation of the ministry of women and minorities and White's call for both women and people of color to have hands laid on them and to be encouraged in ministry and leadership, *Adventist Today* and *Spectrum* naturally hailed the document. Here was confirmation that the prophet was more concerned with the future of God's work than preserving some fossilized past.

JATS, the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, on the other hand, published a strong critique of the document. They suggested that it might be a pious fraud like the false decretals and the Donation of Constantine. They took the strongest exception to some of the theological statements in the document which clearly corrected some of White's statements in *Early Writings*.

"While God calls people ever higher in knowledge and holiness, he accepts their worship now as they offer it in sincerity. In churches all across the land are those who with imperfect understanding and a deep longing for God lift their voices and faces to heaven in supplication and praise. God takes delight in their praises. In our work of gospel education let us never scorn those who worship God according to their best lights."

JATS published one article which argued that even if the document were authentic, even if Ellen White had written it, the fact that it had been placed in a burn barrel was conclusive proof that God did not want the church to receive it. God would not allow important truth to be hidden away like that. In the same way that scholars recognize that at least one of Paul's letters to the Corinthian church has been lost "under the sovereignty of God" so God had clearly

intended that this epistle of Ellen White not be distributed to his church. Another JATS article cited parallels between this document and the Mormon forgeries and murders in October, 1985.

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In her summary statement, Ellen White turned to the words of Isaiah: "Look not on the things that are old." She pleads with the brethren not to stand in the way of growth, not to use their office to control, not to hold up their petty standards as the rule of faith, not to allow their fears to hinder the progress of the work of God.

Just before I woke up I heard these words: "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Marred by sin and weakened by abuse and disuse, the God-given gift of intellect is still evident in humanity. God has called us to think, to reason, to employ the powers of the mind in the noblest pursuits. "Yield your members as instruments of righteousness." Place yourself and every faculty at the disposal of God. Honor him by cultivating every gift. Do not allow any man, no matter how exalted his station or imposing his title, in the church or in the world, to discourage you from the wholehearted pursuit of every excellence, mentally, physically or spiritually. It is for such glorious service here in this world and in the world to come that God has saved you. Higher than any human thought is God's ideal for his people. Let no one aim for less. To God alone pledge eternal fealty and supreme allegiance.

Rick Williams is the pseudonym of an Adventist scholar.

Ellen White, Mary Baker Eddy, & Mesmerism

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providing a strong cultural bond among members of "God's remnant church."

While Adventists flourished with these constantly evolving programs and philosophies, Christian Science steadily ossified into a rigid metaphysical program that appealed mainly to neurotic older women and lacked a viable missionary program, especially of an international character. Today, Seventh-day Adventists are approaching 15 million members worldwide, while Christian Scientists number somewhere between 400 and 700 thousand (this is only a guess, since the Mother Church in Boston refuses to release membership figures; but the unanimous opinion among outsiders who study such matters is that they have been suffering sharply declining membership).

These two remarkable American women began

their vocations battling a nefarious power called mesmerism and became the key actors in founding two new American churches—Christian Science and Seventh-day Adventists. Mary Baker Eddy continually battled the satanic forces represented by mesmerism and its synonymous phenomena until her death. Ellen G. White came to understand this menace early in her ministry, warned others concerning its dangers and obtained complete personal victory over it. She ended her life with a remarkable series of more than a 100 personal confirmatory visits from Christ himself. Her long and productive life ended quietly with these confident words of faith and victory: "I know in whom I have believed."

Frederick G. Hoyt, Ph.D., is an Emeritus Professor of History at La Sierra University, Riverside, California. His original manuscript, "The Menace of Mesmerism in Maine: Its Impact on Two American Religions," can be read in its entirety on Adventist Today's Web site, www.atoday.com.



Fifth Generation: Spiritual Treasures of Mature Adventism

BY JOHN MCLARTY, EDITOR
OF ADVENTIST TODAY

It's easy to say what you don't believe, what you aren't sure of, what you have questions about. But have you found a gracious, winsome way of talking about what you do believe? Can you describe to friends in a way that they will understand, just what it is about this quirky thing called Adventism that has such a hold on your life?

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