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Perspectives on 1844: Putting the Pieces Together

LOOKING BACK AT GLACIER VIEW: : 08 1844, A PERSONAL JOURNEY: : 18

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Editorial | John McLarty

Problems with 1844

The date, 1844, is included in Article 23 of the Adventist creed. (See box.) Religious communities add to but almost never subtract from creedal statements.

Adventist scholars who question the adequacy or accuracy of the biblical interpretation supporting this judgment chronology risk being expelled as heretics. So 1844 will likely remain the teaching of the church.

This permanence of 1844 in Adventist doctrine would not be problematic except for two other facts of Adventist life. First, Adventist pastors do not preach it. When I query Adventist pastors, they say they agree with the traditional teaching regarding Daniel 8:14. But these same preachers report they never preach on the topic.

Because they are *Adventists*, they believe what the Adventist Church teaches about this obscure Bible passage. Because they are *pastors* they do not preach on 1844, because it is not helpful in providing spiritual care for real people in the real world. In some ways 1844 functions like the appendix in the human body. We can't deny it's there, but we don't know what it's good for.

A second fact of Adventist experience vis-à-vis 1844: people who are keenly interested in 1844 tend to cause trouble in congregations. In August of this year four people showed up at my church together. They joined the "Quarterly Sabbath School Class" (the topic for that quarter was "1844"). The visitors were keen participants in class and impressed people with their knowledge of various cryptic prophecies. Some members of the class talked with me about these visitors and the fact that they never stayed for worship. I called a couple of pastors from a nearby town that the visitors had mentioned as their home. The pastors did not know the people, but immediately cautioned me to watch carefully lest they cause a lot of trouble. I called the ministerial secretary to see if he knew about our visitors. He did not, but he also cautioned me about the risk of divisiveness they posed.



» In some ways 1844 functions like the appendix in the human body. We can't deny it's there, but we don't know what it's good for.

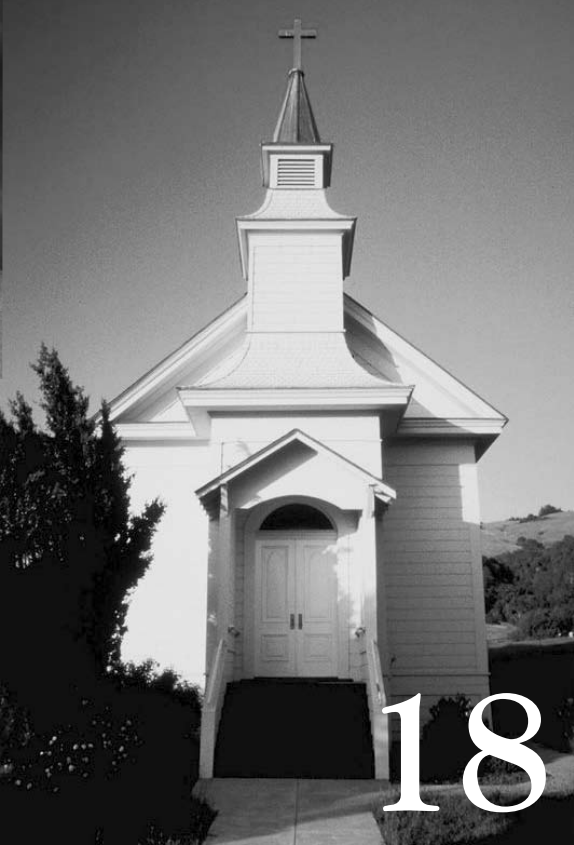
Now, it is important to note that the ministerial secretary and both pastors are devout conservatives. They believe the church's teaching about 1844. But their professional judgment was that people who show up at church showing a keen interest in 1844 must be carefully watched, lest they cause conflict and division in the congregation.

Eighteen-forty-four poses a curious problem. If you question it, you will be expelled as a heretic. If you give it much attention you will be shunned as a troublesome zealot. It is a doctrine that is best believed and ignored.

The Bible clearly teaches an end-time judgment, anchored in a profound moral realism. We do the world a disservice to obscure this behind the arcane chronological speculations of 1844. Visions of judgment in the Bible picture God acting to counter oppression, to recognize inchoate faith, to rebuke hypocritical religiosity, to bring about global harmony and peace. The process of judgment is one chapter in the story of God's love. The dates are not essential to the story.

"There is a sanctuary in heaven... In it Christ ministers on our behalf... He was inaugurated as our great High Priest and began His intercessory ministry at the time of His ascension. In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement..."

Article 23, Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists



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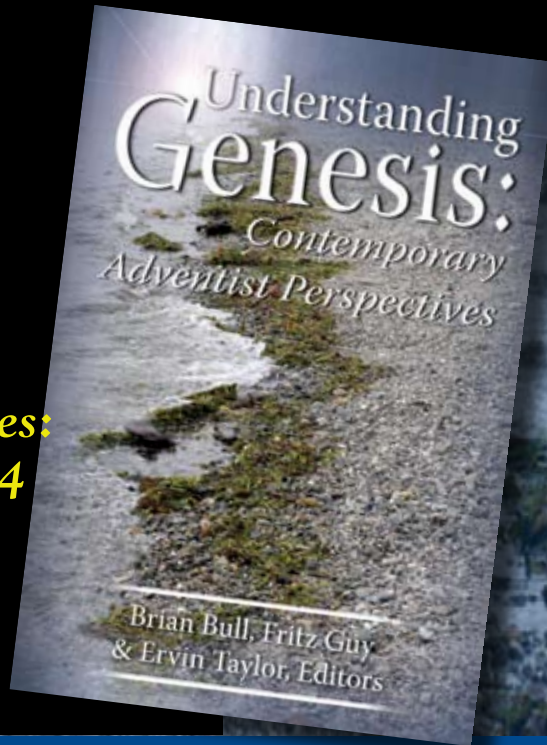
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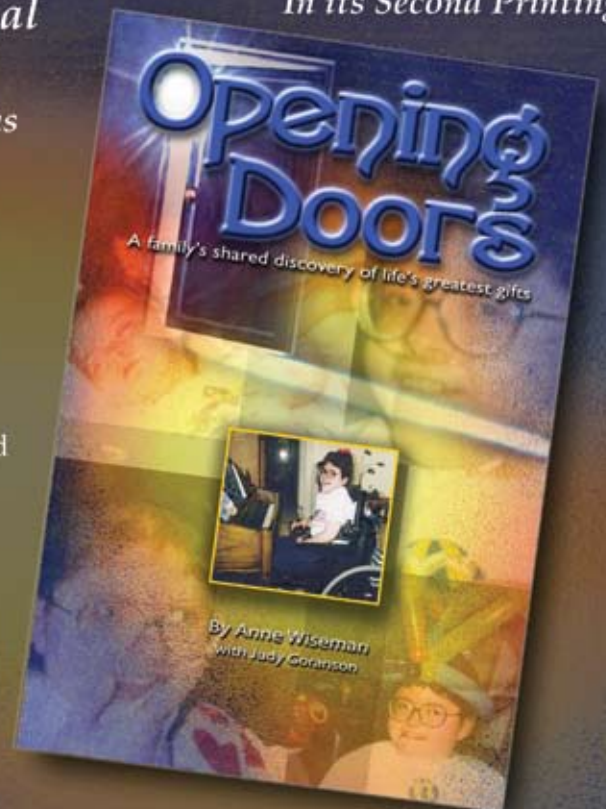
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letters

READERS RESPOND

DISBAND THE CHURCH?

If 1844 is not sound, then we might as well disband our church. The 1844 teaching is either solid or spoiled. It impacts SDA theology completely. It either supports the Great Controversy theme of Scripture or it doesn't. It will either prove EGW a true or false spokesperson for God. It either fuels our evangelism or we might as well go home and become whatever other denomination there is out there. It either informs our eschatology or it tears it down. So, if those who don't believe that 1844 is even supported in Scripture, they need to be honest and get out of Adventism. There is no middle ground on this.

Pastor Kevin James Ogden, Utah

TIME TO LEAVE

In response to Pastor Kevin James's loving, Christ-like statement, "If you don't believe in the Investigative Judgment, then leave," our church was told that two years ago. So I left.

Jim Snelling Dowling, Michigan

PROBLEM IN ADVENTISM

How dare you contradict the pioneers of this faith, this movement, and its prophet? Your problem is that you do not wish to believe; you only seek contention. Quite frankly, you are a part of the biggest problem in Adventism. You foster a sense of disbelief in the prophet, E.G. White, which, in essence, is the equivalent to the children that mocked Elisha with the chant, "Go thou up, bald head..."

P.J. Thompson Cookeville, Tennessee

THANK YOU FOR COURAGE

Thank you for having the courage to get before us these various commentaries. It is sad that the proponents of the sanctuary doctrine have only ambiguous contortions of text and EGW to fortify their theory. If one sets aside preconceived ideas and adheres to "Sola Scriptura," they will find this to be a strange gospel.

I am weary of those who "use" Jesus as a means to their end (the end being the law)—to prove that God's law is just, thus enabling them to keep the law perfectly. To hold this view is to have one's mind—as well as the easy—obscured and dimmed by a veil. Once this veil is removed, Jesus will be the focus instead of the law.

Bobbi Barlow Salem, Oregon

ACADEMICS AND CONSERVATIVES

The articles published to date by Adventist Today on the "sanctuary doctrine" have bifurcated along two predictable lines. The first, usually authored by the academics who recognize the recalcitrant illogicality of the doctrine, try to maintain its life-support systems by rendering it as a metaphor or symbol. "What the doctrine really means is . . .," or, "What the Founders were really saying was..."

The ellipses are followed by non-controversial bromides that simply demonstrate that this doctrine, to the extent it can even be considered coherent, is at best superfluous.

The other group of writers, typified by the rigid conservative Clifford Goldstein, defends what they describe as the "literal truth" of this foundation of the church. What "literal truth" could mean with respect to this most non-literal set of biblical texts is, of course, never fully explained.

The failed efforts of both classes of "defenders" underscore the urgent need for the church to toss this theological mutant into the trash bin of illogicality. These truths, like the sanctuary doctrine, were carved from the chthonic ambiguities of Daniel and Revelation, bottomless reservoirs of speculation that have fed Christianity's lunatic fringe for millennia. Yet one can hardly blame the unlettered enthusiasts of the Second Great Awakening for trying to explain away their embarrassment for having packed their bags for the trip to heaven on October 22, 1844, by asserting that something else, something theologically very important, actually "occurred" that day.

But what is surprising is that this doctrinal bag of silly anthropomorphisms still enslaves an otherwise well-educated modern church, to the point that we're still discussing it in our journals, still firing people for holding "heterodox" views, when the entire doctrine is pure piffle, and still laboring to make sense of the nonsensical.

The sanctuary doctrine is merely an embarrassing vestige of our unsophisticated past. Get rid of it. Move on. Any more paper expended in discussing its irremediable idiocies is a waste of trees, not to mention ecclesiastical energy.

Karl Kime Glendale, California

Letters policy

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INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT ON FIRM GROUND?

Thoughts after reading T. Joe Willey's essay "Prophecies Cannot and Do Not Fail for the Committed": Beliefs are important, for both organizations and individuals. If an organization that solicits voluntary financial support from its members holds to a belief so strongly that it is willing and able—even eager—to destroy the careers and/or membership of members over disagreements about that belief, then it would seem obvious that said belief should stand on firm ground.

This ongoing discussion, made possible by AT, clearly demonstrates that the idea of the Investigative Judgment does not stand on firm ground. That mainstream scholars cannot support the belief only adds to the problem. It appears to me that T. Joe's evaluation of the situation is correct.

Bob Wonderly *Via the Internet*

BOTH SIDES CANNOT BE RIGHT

It is sad that the very reason God created this church, that is, to give this Investigative Judgment message, is being lost sight of.

This is the only message that prepares people to meet a Holy God without a mediator. Why is it that conservatives are more concerned with being right and liberals are more concerned with being smart? You are entitled to your opinion, but both sides cannot be right. The gospel is the restoration of the image of God in man. The other churches have traditionally concentrated on the forgiveness part and virtually ignored, "...when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is..." 1 John 3:2. They tell us that in this life we can never be like Him. My Bible says something different, and I believe they are only giving part of the gospel. He has called this church to give a fuller gospel and may we have the courage to do it.

Pastor Winston Baldwin *Centerville, Ohio*

EXHIBIT OF ERRONEOUS EXEGESIS

I want to preserve the pamphlet [Adult Bible Study Guide, third quarter 2006] as the best exhibit of erroneous exegesis the denomination has ever produced.

Dr. Milton Hook *Via the Internet*

QUIT TALKING ABOUT IT

It is interesting that our lesson picks a topic about which preachers who comment on the topic say, "The ultimate argument in defense...has been Ellen White," and they give quotes, or, "If 1844 is not sound, then we might as well disband our church."

But there are topics that we no longer accept that Mrs. White wrote about. One topic is Amalgamation. This topic, that she was very clear on, is no longer included in our SDA publications written by EGW. It was taken out of print since preachers, especially black preachers, no longer believe that "since the flood, there has been amalgamation of man and beast, as may be seen in the almost endless varieties of species of animals, and in certain races of men" (1 Spirit of Prophecy p. 78).

There is a solution to the present dilemma, of what some view as a fundamentally flawed item of EGW/SDA theology. Do the same as what preachers have already done with the topic of Amalgamation. Quit talking about it and take it out of print. It worked before, try it again.

Robert Willett *Via the Internet*

LINGERING THOUGHT PROCESS

After reading Pastor Kevin James' comments on week two, concerning the Sabbath School lessons, I felt that I would be remiss if I did not respond to this "lingering thought process. There is no middle ground." This view ultimately prevailed at Glacier View. If I were to take Kevin's above position, by necessity EGW could have had no biblical misunderstandings or doctrinal weakness. This position would make her writings of equal authority to Scripture, in order for her to be "a true spokesperson for God," since any variation from her written or spoken thoughts would by necessity cause others to be "unbiblical." This is not Sola Scriptura! It makes "our tradition" of equal weight to Scripture, which is what we so often "lament" in other Christian faith groups. As to the proposition that if "EGW and 1844" were in error, that would invalidate any reason for the SDA church to exist, I reply, "Perhaps to some." If 1844 and EGW distinctives are the "only reasons" for the existence of the SDA church, are we indeed a cult?

Patrick A. Travis *Oviedo, Florida.*

FALSE ASSUMPTIONS AND AN INCURABLE MALADY

It is a pity to see such desperate efforts within the Adventist Church to try and support those doctrines that are falling under their own weight of false assumptions.

One must ask the question: Why such a recent "revisit" of the book of Daniel? Dr. Pfandl covered the topic not two years ago. I remember in the 1970s and '80s we would wait many years before the topic was revisited. Not so anymore.

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So what motivated Goldstein to impose his views yet again onto the minds of Adventists worldwide? And what about in a few years, when it is apparent that all that was written fell on deaf ears? Yet another SS Lesson on Daniel?

This Sabbath School lesson is, in itself, a symptom of a deeper, more serious, incurable malady. The traditional SDA interpretation on Daniel cannot stand any close exegetical rigor. It merely highlights the tenuous nature of the Adventist interpretation of Daniel.

Surely these authors cannot think that by merely repeating past assertions and assumptions, the questions and the doubts will somehow disappear.

Frank Basten Via the Internet

A Reluctant Participant *Continued from page 9* Looks Back at Glacier View

Twenty-five years after the Glacier View meeting, I wish to record that the sentence in item two of the 10-point statement commencing with a first person plural is not mine, but is the responsibility of the screening committee. Furthermore, I wish to make it clear that I was the author only of item two and had no meaningful input into the other nine contributions. Finally, I wish to say that I deeply regret my final sentence. Otherwise I feel even now that I represented my friend's view on the matter of the Day of Atonement in Hebrews rather fairly. I simply stated objectively and as succinctly as possible what Des taught on the matter of the Day of Atonement in his Glacier View manuscript.

The writers of the 10-point statement fulfilled their task successfully, for Des accepted that it accurately summarized his views. He objected to the first item on the list regarding his scholarship.

The timeframe for producing the 10-point statement was short, and very few delegates were involved in its writing or review. I wrote my piece at midnight on the Wednesday. Nor was the Consensus Statement available to us, not even in draft. But when Des on the Friday (August 15) indicated his pleasure with the Consensus Statement and that he could live within its parameters, the 10-point statement suddenly became some kind of official creedal test. This was to give it a task well beyond my understanding of its original purpose and without regard for its somewhat hasty and limited nature.

But perhaps this was the role that some administrators envisioned for it from the beginning. By the Tuesday evening it must have been obvious that the direction the SRC was taking was not likely to produce a consensus statement that could be used against Des. The terms of reference given to the 10-point committee guaranteed the production of a more definitive statement. Indeed, subsequent events proved the administrative wisdom in having the serviceable backup of the 10-point statement, even if it meant ignoring the result of the GC's own process — that is, the SRC.

The most important lesson I learned from Glacier View is the necessity of fostering open communication, conducted in the humility of the Spirit of Christ. It is just so easy to lose Christ in the midst of controversy. Differences can be opportunities for mutual learning, provided the spirit is right.

Dr. Norman Young is a New Testament specialist (Ph.D., University of Manchester, England) and a retired teacher at Avondale College, Australia. He is now a research fellow at the same school.

¹ I wrote to the other members of this committee (excluding Ferch, who is deceased) on June 7, 1993, but none of the three who replied had a certain memory of which topics they wrote. Londs believed he served as secretary.

² Some of the members of the 10-point committee were also present, though not at the same table as the screening committee, so we were more like observers than participants. I do not recall any of our committee contributing to the discussion.

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Feature | Norman H. Young

A Reluctant Participant Looks Back at Glacier View

It's more than a quarter of a century since I was a member of the Sanctuary Review Committee (SRC) that met at the Glacier View Youth Camp in Colorado, August 10-15, 1980. I was a reluctant participant.

Not even the prospect of visiting the United States for the first time in any way quelled the profound sense of foreboding that possessed me at the time. The event was worse than my fears.

» At another level we were examining the Adventist church's self-understanding; even the reason for its existence.

The SRC's role was to review the Adventist Church's teaching concerning the heavenly sanctuary and to reaffirm it in such a way as to address the challenges raised against it by Dr. Desmond Ford, a professor on Pacific Union College's Faculty of Religion. Des was one of my former teachers, a fellow doctoral student at Manchester University (U.K.), a colleague on Avondale College's Department of Theology, and a personal friend. The General Conference (GC) gave Des opportunity to nominate four persons of his own choosing to be special invitees on the SRC. I, unfortunately, was one of the four invitees that he selected. I say "unfortunately" because it set me the hopeless task of trying to be loyal to my church and to my friend at the same time. Predictably, I failed on both counts.

Des would have seen no difficulty in my role — "Just be loyal to the truth," would have been his advice. I saw the issue as somewhat more complex. To my mind the matter facing the SRC

made Pilate's famous query (John 18:38) entirely relevant. We were not looking at the embodiment of truth manifested in the person of Jesus, but at an abstract (even platonic) interpretation of an ancient Israelite sacrificial ritual. At least that was the case at one level. At another level we were examining the Adventist Church's self-understanding; even the reason for its existence. Caution and consensus rather than confrontation and conflict seemed to me to be the more sensible way forward.

That I had not entirely grasped Des's viewpoint became apparent while jogging with him on Tuesday evening (August 12). That afternoon during a plenary session, Professor Edward Heppenstall had asked Des what he believed had taken place in heaven in A.D. 1844. Des's response was prolix but avoided a direct reply. His rambling discourse was brought to an abrupt halt when the then-GC President, Elder Neal C. Wilson, challenged Des to practice what he preached — that is, to accept Ellen White's pastoral guidance to submit to the counsel of experienced brethren. As we jogged I asked Des why his apotelesmatic principle (multiple partial applications in history of an original prophecy before its final complete fulfilment at the end of time) could not embrace 1844. In reply he said, "Heppenstall said in heaven, Norm, he said in heaven." Why the locale was a problem was not then clear to me. I think it is now.

In Des's mind, if Christ is involved in a heavenly act of judging believers, then the uncertainty of process replaces the surety of a single act of completed atonement on the cross. Des could accept the providential raising up of a prophetic movement in 1844, but not the commencement of a daily act of atonement for sin. I think the consensus statement voted at Glacier View went a long way toward addressing Des's legitimate concern here.

Continued on page 9

One of the few pleasures afforded me by Glacier View was meeting some very fine and winsome scholars — for example, Professors Ivan Blazen, James Cox, Laurence Geraty, Fritz Guy, Edward Heppenstall, James Londis, and Jack Provonsa. Geraty and Heppenstall were in the same small discussion group as I. One morning, when the topic of the Epistle to the Hebrews was on the agenda, Geraty reminded me that that was my field. My Ph.D. was largely in the area of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Most of what Des said about Hebrews was consistent with my own analysis. Geraty clearly expected me to say so. However, there was little need for me to argue a case, for our group was fairly clear that Hebrews teaches that Christ entered the heavenly Most Holy Place at his ascension. I would emphasize that this is the language of metaphor and should not be read in spatial terms, which is as equally true for the apocalyptic Daniel and Revelation as it is for the didactic Hebrews.

I vividly recall G. Ralph Thompson (Secretary of the SRC) joining our small group and urging us to see Hebrews as symbolic. I had and still have no problem with that, provided we accept the fact that the symbolic language of entrance is drawn from the Old Testament ritual of the Day of Atonement, and that we also read the apocalyptic texts symbolically (failure to do so would have us teaching a symbolic entrance [Hebrews] into a physical two-part heavenly sanctuary [Revelation], which is an odd mixture).

In reading the lengthy manuscript that Des prepared for the SRC, I found he expressed rather diverse opinions regarding the Investigative Judgment. On the one hand he accepted a pre-advent judgment, while on the other he denied there was any investigation of the sins of believers. It was widely perceived that for Des, believers did not come into judgment. I made a failed attempt to modify this perception, but to no avail.

The most lamentable episode for me during the SRC was my involvement in the drafting of the so-called 10-point statement. Elder Neal Wilson invited me to be part of a group (six in number) with the task of clarifying for the benefit of the administrators where Des differed from the orthodox positions of the church. The purpose of this committee, as I understood it, was to point out the issues for the non-academic participants.

The members of the 10-point committee were Raoul Dederen, Herbert Douglass, the late Arthur Ferch, James Londis, and I. The late Robert Spangler chaired the committee. We met on only two occasions: first to assign the topics and, secondly, to react to each other's effort. As I recall it, the topics were assigned as follows:

1. Methodology Londis and/or Spangler
2. The Day of Atonement in the Book of Hebrews Young
3. The phrase "within the veil" Dederen
4. The year-day principle Ferch
5. The apotelesmatic principle Douglass
6. The use of *adaq* in Daniel 8:14 Ferch
7. The relationship of Daniel 7, 8, and 9 Ferch
8. Antiochus Epiphanes Dederen
9. Saints in judgment Ferch
10. The role of Ellen White in doctrinal understanding Londis (or Douglass)

We made little or no change to each other's contribution, so the 10-point statement was really a multi-authored collection of individual essays. I do not wish to comment on my colleagues' analyses (with one exception), but some remarks about my own solitary contribution might be relevant.

With Spangler's approval, I had Des read my statement prior to submitting it to the other members of the committee. I made one minor adjustment on the basis of his reaction. However, I convinced Des that the final sentence ("This is an unwarranted reduction of Adventist belief") was necessary if my fairly positive statement was to survive the review process. On the Thursday night (August 14) a screening committee of 28 members (of whom 20 were present) reviewed the 10-point statement. My contribution went through with some additions, but I immediately regretted the strength of the final sentence. I therefore approached Spangler on the Friday morning and requested that he change the word "unwarranted" to "considerable," but he declined, considering that the process was too far advanced to allow such editorial adjustments. If I had my way now, I'd delete the whole ill-conceived sentence.

When several of us who were present at Glacier View gave an account of its conclusions to the workers of the South Australian Conference in Adelaide, one pastor or teacher perceptively asked me why my statement about the Day of Atonement in the Book of Hebrews switched suddenly from the third person singular to the creedal first person plural. It was, of course, an addition made by the screening committee and reads as follows: "But we do deny that His entrance into the presence of God (1) precludes a first-apartment phase of ministry or (2) marks the beginning of the second phase of His ministry." What that actually means may need some considerable elucidation. It could easily be taken to infer the oddity of a symbolic entrance into a literal two-part heavenly sanctuary.

...the 10-point statement suddenly became some kind of official creedal test. This was to give it a task well beyond my understanding of its original purpose and without regard for its somewhat hasty and limited nature.

The Doctrine of the Sanctuary as an Adventist Philosophy of History

Introduction

The Adventist Church's doctrine of the Sanctuary and its self-identification as the Remnant are a heritage from the time of William Miller. He had interpreted biblical prophetic texts to mean that the earth was the sanctuary, to be cleansed by fire in the fall of 1844, at the Second Coming of Christ. When that didn't happen there was a Great Disappointment; but shortly thereafter Hiram Edson

identified the sanctuary, not as the earth itself, but as one in heaven. To the thinking of church scholars, 1844 was not the end of the world, but the beginning of the cleansing of the sanctuary and the Investigative Judgment. After this judgment was completed, the Second Coming of Christ would occur. The entire process would be short, and the Second Coming would be soon. This expectation has also seen a sequence of "lesser failures," resulting in a general unease in the church and an ongoing discussion of the meaning of "soon," within the context of God's timetable.

The Need for a Different Interpretation

Students of the Bible now know a lot more about texts, the history of interpretation, and the nature of time and reality than did our theological ancestors. I suggest that work go forward on novel reconstructions of Adventist doctrines, especially the doctrine of the sanctuary, in the light of the new information. The following is a proposal based on our acceptance of an analytical approach to the biblical text. This will depart from traditional ideas of being "biblical" and the sectarian understanding of prophecy as having one intentional referent (us). It will entertain the idea of doctrine as "myth," in the sense that myth is the ideology, or story, we live by in our attempt to be true to God, ourselves, and reality. A powerful myth of this type we are all familiar with is: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." Destroy this myth, and our democracy goes down with it. Retain it, and reinterpret it, and our democracy becomes more inclusive and vital.

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Presuppositions

This defense of the sanctuary doctrine presupposes a second-century B.C. date for the Book of Daniel, thus that the doctrine is without critical textual support. That is to say, the doctrine was created by someone's misunderstanding of a biblical text as it was written by its author. But being "strictly" biblical has seldom, if ever, been the major moving force in the creation of a biblical religion. An argument may be made that the New Testament is not "biblical," in the sense of its arising of necessity from the explicit prophetic and historical expectations of the Old Testament text. Judaism also has a claim on the understanding of these texts. The early Christian church appropriated these texts for themselves by claiming that Jesus was the expected messiah. "Out of Egypt I have called my son" (Hosea 11:1), is a historical reference to Israel, not Jesus. Similarly, "Yahweh says to my lord: 'sit at my right hand' until I make your enemies your footstool (Ps. 110:1), refers historically to David and Israelite kings, not Jesus (Matthew 2:15). The reinterpretation depends on a community that is creating its living mythology.

But once a text is considered central to the identity and life of a group, it appropriates the text, and that group, within ethical and experiential boundaries, may be considered a privileged community in the interpretation of that text. African American experiential identity with the Hebrew slaves delivered from Egyptian bondage is a case in point. The interpreted text begins to function as a myth by which the community lives and understands itself in relation to God and other human beings. In the sense of community myth, the text means exactly what the community says it means. However, the traditional defense of the Adventist exegesis of texts in Daniel that insists that our understanding of the text has to be exactly what the author meant in writing it amounts, at best, to ignorance of the history of hermeneutics, or, at worst, to a kind of self-righteous deception.

A Proposal

That being said, our denomination's ancestors gave us a doctrine that was crucial to their call and identity; and it is up to later Seventh-day Adventists to decide what to do with it: abandon it, or keep it and reinterpret it in ways that go beyond its external-literal history-like meaning and give it a positive contemporary mythological or theological significance. This approach justifies the doctrine by looking at it as an expression of the Adventist self-understanding of its mission, not by insisting on the infallibility of the traditional exegesis and interpretation of the text.

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There may be more than one way of reconsidering the meaning of the doctrine of the sanctuary. What I am proposing is that the doctrine may basically be understood as an Adventist philosophy of history, or if it is preferred, a theology of history. In this context it is important to recognize that history is a "vehicle" for the gospel, not the gospel itself. In an ontological sense, the gospel is more important than history, the vehicle that conveys it.

To understand the full implications of the following statements, it is helpful to have some understanding of the philosophy of history and some of the philosophical structures that have been created to give interpretations of history. For instance, what factors account for the rise and fall of nations? There is no space for answering that here. But, however one looks at the question, history, despite its interest in initial cause, and serial cause and effect, appears like a humanly created construct of certain selected events and series of events, because of the interest a person or group of persons has in them. This interest merits someone's remembering the events, recording them, and living by them. It is from these events that a group or nation creates its story or myth.

An Adventist Philosophy of History

In developing an Adventist philosophy of history, we may look at *The Great Controversy*, by Ellen G. White. In this book we see how early Adventists understood themselves to be the culmination of a long history with God, especially detailed in relating to the history of the Reformation. They created a contemporary history of salvation, in which they were the final, time-specific agents of proclamation. This attaches to the biblical history of salvation in which Christ became the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.



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The Doctrine of the Sanctuary as an Adventist Philosophy of History

Thus, the doctrine of the sanctuary, with its temporal components, commits Adventists to history in order to further the will of God in the world, as contained in the gospel. This is a very dangerous admission. Nevertheless, it is one that I believe must be affirmed with great humility.

The Adventist confrontation with history began with the Great Disappointment. After the failure of prophecy, Adventists found themselves, not in a timeless heaven, but on earth and facing the implications of the continued existence of time. This situation still confronts the church.

The church has always affirmed that the first angel's message of Revelation 14 took place within the general understanding of the rise of the Advent Movement. The text states that the preaching of the everlasting gospel brings the world into judgment. But while it is under judgment the world is also given the offer of salvation. It is from this point that we may understand the peculiar characteristics of the Adventist commission, expressed by the doctrine of the sanctuary, and the church's understanding of the historical process, and the church's place in history.

History does not merely happen! By this I mean cosmic as well as social history. It is created by observant human minds interacting with raw data. Thus, history is not a structure in which the events of salvation merely occur, but, and primarily for the Christian, history is created by events of salvation. History is created by human beings who perceive significance in an event or a series of events that they somehow string together into a meaningful story. The central event in the Christian story is the Incarnation, the most important element in the series. If events can differ from one another in importance and some be selected from others, then one event may be deemed more important than all the others. The meaning of all the other events may even be concentrated in this single event. Thus, Christians affirm that the meaning of all history lies in the story of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, which may be subsumed under the idea of the Incarnation.

Ideas like the Incarnation, or the cleansing of the sanctuary, have elements that are not strictly historical. There are metaphysical, or suprahistorical elements present, and they cannot be the condition of their own historicity. Thus, when speaking of the Incarnation we say that God sent his Son into the world, it is only the presence of the person of

Jesus, which may be thought of as strictly historical. The idea that "God sent" is suprahistorical. If we have a broad grasp of the function of myth, we need not avoid using the word "myth" in the place of suprahistorical. Both Jesus and the church happened and meet the conditions of historical entities, or at least the raw materials of such entities. Thus, we have historical entities that possess both historical and suprahistorical elements. But suprahistorical elements have no meaning except as they are rooted in the historical — in existing historical realities. But grounding them in this way results in the suprahistorical elements being responsible for the "historical nature" of the historical events, entities, and institutions. The existence and activity of the historical Christian church is possible only because of the suprahistorical elements in that historical entity. From the perspective of analytical history, it is the history of the church that is critical. One may argue that the presence of the church in history is responsible to a colossal misunderstanding of reality, thus illegitimate. But that criticism is dependent on a particular kind of metaphysics, and although it is an issue we need to come to grips with, we need not tackle that problem here.

Coming to the Question of the Heavenly

Sanctuary, the historical elements of that idea are not found in affirming their historical existence in time and space, or from the idea of Christ moving from one compartment to another, or in the idea of cleansing the sanctuary. Those are suprahistorical elements, are highly symbolic, and under other circumstance might have taken different symbolic forms. The historical is found in the existence of early Adventists and their activity as the result of progressively formulating the doctrine of the sanctuary. The movement of Christ from one compartment of the sanctuary to another in 1844 is an exegetical or interpretive movement, not a physical or historical movement in time and space that would be the condition of its own historicity. Its historicity is the result of its being grounded in the historical Advent Movement. Eighteen-forty-four happened on earth, not in heaven. The core suprahistorical element in this doctrine is that Christ, through the Holy Spirit, is "presently" at work bringing judgment and salvation to the creation through the historical agents of gospel proclamation — in this case, Adventists. This

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suprahistorical element gave rise to the “historical nature” of the Adventist Church, and in my opinion, the mythological embedding of its mission in the sanctuary doctrine.

Historically, Adventists created that doctrine from an understanding of the text in a way similar to the manner in which the followers of Christ came to declare his messianic and divine identity. Thus the text (or its interpretation) and the church mutually created each other. In the case of both Jesus and Adventism, the historical elements achieve their historical “significance” from the unhistorical suprahistorical. At this point one may cut and run, or live by faith that despite our flawed understanding of reality and God, we are not put on this earth in vain.

Early Adventists “believed” they were the remnant church, that the Advent Message was the culminating word of the gospel that was to bring the world into judgment. And it was in response to that word of judgment that salvation or damnation would come to humankind. But like the early church, they learned that it is not the nature of time to come to an end with the fulfillment of prophecy.

But the preaching of that message also moved history in the direction of God’s purpose (admittedly a difficult concept). In this sense, even though early Adventists thought time would end, all Adventists after the Great Disappointment must be committed to preaching the gospel to create history as a history of salvation, for as long as that history lasts.

Interpreting Other Difficult Concepts

A. Judgment on the Dead: The rest of this defense of the sanctuary doctrine is in interpreting some of its components to bring it in line with this philosophical historical understanding. For instance, the preaching of the gospel changes our views of, or our perspective on, the past. Thus, the Incarnation actually changes past history, although it cannot undo base occurrences. We can find many instances in both ancient and modern history where new evaluations have turned saints into sinners and sinners into saints, written into history persons who had been ignored, and purged history of undesirable figures. So too, the judgment on the dead may be understood as a judgment on the past in light of the gospel, which has nuances that come from the time in which it is preached and from the subject matter it integrates into its preaching.

B. Judgment on the Living: If this idea has merit, then the question of when the judgment on the living begins is transparent. It is at this moment, at all moments, in time and history, and always has been, that the gospel as present truth brings us into judgment. Thus, these judgments are always going on simultaneously.

» The dangers of sectarian and political malfeasance are always issues in such an interpretation of a person’s or institution’s interfacing with the world in which they live. We must exercise humility...

C. Close of Probation: The idea of the close of probation is a reality and reminder of our brief sinful, self-serving, lives that do have an end, although the life of the church does not. “The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.” One must surrender to the will of God.

D. Standing Before God Without a Mediator: Even the idea of standing before God without a mediator may make sense when, in light of the gospel, we abandon the idea of absolute perfection, and modify our ideas of, and relationship to, God because of developing ethical sensitivity. In my Christian experience, I have at times stood before God without a mediator, each time with the intention of unmasking him. And each time I “dare” to draw near (Jeremiah 30:21), I bow to the divine majesty revealed behind the mask. This, I believe, is the divine charge of an investigative faith.

It is this investigative and progressive understanding of doctrine — in this case the sanctuary message — that obligates Adventists to confront contemporary issues within their philosophy of history; issues that affect the well-being of the world in time and space — for example, gender equality and the environment. The preaching of the gospel must include all God’s creation in the message of judgment and salvation.

The dangers of sectarian and political malfeasance are always issues in such an interpretation of a person’s or institution’s interfacing with the world in which they live. We must exercise humility, recognizing that in relation to present truth, no sooner are we declared righteous than God turns our righteousness into filthy rags. But it would seem that a church that is not bold enough to be concerned with living in time and space, that has no understanding of present truth, and that is unconcerned about moving the historical process in the direction of God’s purpose, however difficult that purpose is to understand, is a church that is in danger of forsaking its call, thus losing its legitimacy for existence.

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Feature | James H. Stirling

Raymond F. Cottrell's Discussion of the Adventist "Sanctuary Doctrine"

Cottrell was unhappy with the "investigative judgment" feature of the traditional phrasing in the document, with its suggestion that between the close of probation and the coming of Christ people will have to stand in their own righteousness without a mediator. This teaching, unsupported in Daniel or anywhere else in the Bible, has been a source of anxiety to countless people.

Raymond Cottrell is remembered by his friends as gentle and kindly, except when he felt injustice was being committed. He was also a keen scholar and a prolific writer.

He loved his church. He came from a long line of Adventist missionaries, pastors, and teachers and spent many years himself in the editorial service of the church. Though dedicated to his church, when he saw flaws in its doctrine and practice he courageously spoke out against them.

One of his principal objections was what he saw as the narrow vision of church leaders about the significance of the "sanctuary doctrine." He was proud to belong to a church that stood by the Bible — that proclaimed itself to be in the true Protestant tradition of adhering to "Sola Scriptura." For the most part Adventism is a Bible-based community of believers — except, he began to see, for this doctrine.

In a significant paper, "The 'Sanctuary Doctrine' — Asset or Liability?" Cottrell laid out his convictions that the doctrine as promulgated was a liability to the church, a compromise from its "Sola Scriptura" stand — an attempt to explain away the Great Disappointment of 1844. Instead, he saw possibilities in the biblical teaching on the heavenly ministry of Christ and suggested a way for the church to advance its understanding of the subject and make it an asset, not a liability. He felt that too many good people had been hurt by the church's ongoing course of action on it.

To a stranger looking on, this doctrine would seem to be merely an interesting figment of theological imagination, about things long gone and far away. But it took on more serious implications when it appeared in the writings of Ellen G. White, a prominent figure in the development of the church, whose writings were looked upon as normative for the faith. She devoted an entire chapter to it in *The Great Controversy*. That apparent official

endorsement made clergy and administrators alike put their full energies into preserving the doctrine as a hallmark of the church. Cottrell regards the chapter as a recounting of the theological ideas held among the early Adventist theologians.

Through his early years in the church, Cottrell had accepted the traditional interpretation, until, as one of the editors of the Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, in 1955 he began editing comments on the Book of Daniel. He said, "As a work intended to meet the most exacting scholarly standards, we intended our comment to reflect the meaning obviously intended by the Bible writers. As an Adventist commentary it must also reflect, as accurately as possible, what Adventists believe and teach. But in Daniel 8 and 9 we found it hopelessly impossible to comply with both of these requirements." For one thing, the King James translation of the Hebrew word *nitsdaq* as "cleanse" was not supported; the word meant "restore to its rightful state." The "2,300 days," in King James should have read "2,300 evenings and mornings," referring to a temple sacrificial schedule. And others, like the "day for a year" dating principle, had very weak support. A few years later, in 1958, he was stimulated by a request to revise the classic book *Bible Readings* to bring it into agreement with the Commentary, including the doctrine of the sanctuary, and he met the same problems. This time he formulated a list of six questions regarding the Hebrew text of Daniel 8:14 and its context and sent it to every Adventist college teacher versed in Hebrew and to every head of the religion department in all of the Adventist colleges in North America. Without exception, they replied that there is no linguistic or contextual basis for the traditional Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14.

The surprising results of the survey got the attention of church administrators. They quietly appointed a committee of scholars, including Cottrell, which had several meetings and produced 48 papers. But in the spring of 1966 the committee adjourned sine die, unable to reach a consensus.

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Cottrell was spurred by these events to study even more deeply into the original languages and other matters relating to the problem. He concluded at last that the Article 23 of the “Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists,” relating to the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, needed revising. He offered a “composite summary” as a starting point for such revision: “The author of Hebrews presents Christ’s ministry in heaven, on our behalf, by analogy with the role of the high priest in the ancient sanctuary ritual: On the cross Jesus offered himself as a single sacrifice for all time that atoned for the sins of those who draw near to God through him. That one sacrifice qualified him to serve as our great high priest in heaven, perpetually. Having made that sacrifice, Christ entered the Most Holy Place — ‘heaven itself’ — to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. He invites us to come boldly to him, by faith, to find mercy and grace in our time of need. He will soon appear, a second time, ‘to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.’”

Cottrell was unhappy with the “Investigative Judgment” feature of the traditional phrasing in the document, with its suggestion that between the close of probation and the coming of Christ people will have to stand in their own righteousness without a mediator. This teaching, unsupported in Daniel or anywhere else in the Bible, has been a source of anxiety to countless people. Since according to this teaching no warning will be given of that “close” — it could come at any time — people living now must ponder whether they are so perfect in their life that God could accept them if Christ should come tomorrow.

Another concern of Cottrell was the faulty method of biblical study and interpretation that led early Adventist theologians to adopt their interpretation of Daniel. He distinguished three methods: the proof text method, the historical method, and the hybrid historical-grammatical method.

The first of these, the proof text method, construes Bible passages in terms of what a modern reader thinks to be their import. Cottrell says it is highly subjective; understands the Bible from the modern reader’s cultural, historical, and salvation-history perspective; accepts the Bible in translation (e.g., King James Version) as authoritative; and makes the reader’s personal and group-think presuppositions normative for evaluating data and drawing conclusions. This method does not require special training or experience and is followed by a majority of untutored Bible readers. The traditional Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14 was formulated on the basis of this method, and most Adventists have continued to follow it. But Cottrell says no reputable Bible scholar does so today.

» He [Cottrell] says it is highly subjective, aspires to dominate and eventually control all official Adventist study of the Bible, and has more or less controlled General Conference doctrinal policy for the past thirty years.

The second, the historical method, aspires to be as objective as possible; endeavors to understand the Bible as the various writers intended what they wrote to be understood and as their original reading audience would have understood it from their cultural, historical, and salvation-history perspective; it considers words, literary forms, and statements according to their meaning in the original language as normative; endeavors to evaluate data objectively; and bases its conclusions on the weight of evidence. Cottrell says this method requires either special training in biblical languages and the history and milieu of antiquity, or reliance on source material prepared by persons with such training. Since about 1940 most Adventist Bible scholars have followed this method, and it has revealed serious flaws in the traditional interpretation of Daniel 8:14.

The historical-grammatical method is a hybrid of the previous two that has attained limited popularity among Adventist Bible scholars and lay people, and it has achieved major support among church administrators. Cottrell explains this popularity as owing to its use of historical method procedures under the control of proof text presuppositions and principles, which enable it to provide apparent scholarly support for traditional conclusions. He says it is highly subjective, aspires to dominate and eventually control all official Adventist study of the Bible, and has more or less controlled General Conference doctrinal policy for the past thirty years. Because church authority figures have insisted on full compliance with it by pastors and teachers in both public presentations and even private opinions, a great many members have been driven from office or stepped out of their own accord.

Recent church publications have suggested that there is an “easy way” to resolve the problem—just accept the historical-grammatical formula. But an even simpler way is to concentrate one’s attention on what the heavenly sanctuary really means for assuring people that they have a living and forgiving Savior who is always available for their needs. The numerology is for a time long past, a footnote in Adventist history.

James Stirling serves as senior associate editor of Adventist Today.



Feature | Kenneth E. H. Richards

Daniel 8 and 9: The Way I See Them Now

It used to be that when I read Daniel 8 and 9, I saw all the support I needed to propagate the standard views of my church regarding those chapters. The little horn could not have anything to do with Antiochus Epiphanes. The 70 weeks began in 457 B.C. and ended in A.D. 34. The 2300 days also began in 457 B.C. but ended in October of 1844. The main event of 1844 was the moving of Christ into the Most Holy Place, or second apartment, of the heavenly sanctuary in sync with the beginning of the antitypical Day of Atonement and the Investigative Judgment.

The more I prayed, read my Bible, and thought, the more this picture of things diminished, and the more it began to take on a different shape. This process of reshaping speeded up after I retired and had more time to study.

Let me give you an overview of where I'm at today when it comes to Daniel 8 and 9. I'll deal, due to space constraints, with just a few aspects of my present viewpoint.

The symbols of the ram and the he-goat still speak to me of Medo-Persia and Greece (the Greco-Macedonian kingdom). But the little horn has taken on some additional meaning. The Bible speaks of its rising at a time when all four Grecian kingdoms were still in existence. It even specifies that the rising of this horn is to occur in the "latter time of their kingdom" (Daniel 8:23), that is, toward the end of that period during which the four Greek kingdoms were still in existence. When did Antiochus come to power? In 175 B.C. The four Greek states ceased to exist as a foursome in 168 B.C., when the Romans took over Greece. So it was that Antiochus came on the scene at precisely the time predicted in 8:23. He killed thousands of Jews, confiscated their holy writings, forbade the practice of their religion, desecrated the temple in Jerusalem, and stopped the offering of sacrifices, as required by the laws of Leviticus (cf. Daniel 8:9-12). No wonder the Jews still continue, from early times (cf. John 10:22), to celebrate Hanukkah in memory of the purification and rededication of the temple, which Antiochus had polluted. I'm persuaded that had Antiochus succeeded in eradicating God's people (and their

» Does this period end 1260 literal years after the ascension? My Bible gently forces me to say no.

religion), there would not have been a covenant people for the Christ to come from or to come to.

Of course, Antiochus did not fulfill all that was predicted of the little horn. That horn symbolizes more than just one man or one kingdom, but Antiochus IV was the first in the line of those powers who would do the work of the little horn.

For me the 2300 days of Daniel 8:14 began in c.538 B.C. I agree that Daniel 9:25 gives us the beginning point of the 2300 day prophecy. That point in time is when the word would go forth "to restore and to build Jerusalem...." Those words used to remind me of the decree of Artaxerxes, issued about 457 B.C. But his decree was the third in a series of decrees that God used to promote the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple. Daniel 9:25 did not specify a decree that, among others, would afford God's people the greatest degree of autonomy, nor did it necessarily speak of a decree that would be most helpful to later interpreters in constructing a precise calculation of the year in which Messiah would appear. When "the" word would go forth to rebuild — that's when the prophetic period in view was to begin.

Through His prophet God said of king Cyrus, "He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid" (Isaiah 44:28).

So, now, when I read Daniel 9:25, I think of the decree of Cyrus (538 B.C.) as the beginning point of the 2300 day (actually "evening-morning") prophecy. It was Cyrus whom God used (Ezra 1:1-3) to set His people free, to loose them from exile, and to start the whole process of rebuilding both city and temple. Later decrees (including that of Artaxerxes) only promoted a process already initiated by the word that had been issued by Cyrus.

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For me the 2300 days and the 70 weeks start at the same time. But many reject 538 B.C. as a starting point, even though it seems, in my view at least, to be the natural choice. One reason for this rejection is that it wrecks the timing of the 70-week prophecy concerning Messiah. If we start at 457 B.C. things work out “well”—the Messiah’s anointing takes place at the “right” time (A.D. 27). And the crucifixion takes place at the “right” time (A.D. 31). So the argument goes, “Don’t wreck these beautiful calculations that work so well!” As far as I’m concerned these last two dates are close enough, but it’s using the Artaxerxes decree as a starting point in arriving at them that bothers me.

Underlying this “It works better starting at 457” attitude is the assumption that in apocalyptic prophecy a “day” stands for a literal “year.” But this is not what I find in such prophecies. For example, when I read Revelation 12:1-6 I get the distinct impression that the 1260 day prophetic period begins around the time of Christ’s ascension. Maybe that’s because I don’t want to place a multi-century gap between verses 5 and 6, when my Bible doesn’t. Maybe it’s also because I remember that, according to the book of Acts, the dragon (Satan, 12:9) began persecuting the woman (church) right away. So I end up with a starting point for the 1260 days—the time of Christ (ascension).

Does this period end 1260 literal years after the ascension? My Bible gently forces me to say no. It does this in Revelation 11. Verse 3 brings to view the “two witnesses” who are to prophesy “a thousand two hundred and threescore days....” That sounds to me like 1260 days. Now, I keep on reading and come to verse 7, where I learn that when these two witnesses finish their testimony—that is, when the 1260 days they were to prophesy come to an end—“the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them,” and even “kill them.” This reminds me of Revelation 13:7, where the “beast” is predicted to “make war with the saints and to overcome them....” So I ask myself, “Has this happened yet?” My answer is no.

I have a beginning point (ascension) for the 1260 days, but I think of its endpoint as still in the future—at a time when God’s people appear to have been vanquished by Satan’s agents (cf. Daniel 12:7). The book of Revelation does not supply me with a beginning point and an endpoint that fits the year-day idea. The “days” (of the 1260) do not represent literal years to me. They start too early and end far too late for that. So I’m unable to affirm that a “day” stands for a literal “year” in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation (for information on the symbolic meaning of the 1260, please visit the Web site mentioned further on).

If the year-day notion does not apply to the prophecies of Daniel, when do the 2300 days and

the 70 weeks end? Here’s what makes sense to me at the present time. In Daniel 8, the angel explains the meaning of the symbols—the ram, he-goat, great horn, four horns, and little horn, but not much is explained about the 2300 days. Gabriel just affirms that the part of the vision about those 2300 evenings and mornings “is true.” I imagine that Daniel was a bit frustrated by the lack of information offered. But years later Gabriel comes to Daniel and invites him to “consider the vision” (Daniel 9:23). I take this to mean the “vision” of Daniel 8.

Someone had asked in that chapter, “How long shall be the vision,...” that had information about Medo-Persia and Greece, but especially the activities of the little horn. The answer was: “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed (Daniel 8:14).” But, as I noted a moment ago, Gabriel just didn’t explain the 2300 days or the cleansing in Chapter 8. Now, in Chapter 9, he visits Daniel to provide information about those two items. He begins his explanation in 9:24. His first statement provides some information about the 2300 days: “Seventy weeks are determined* upon thy people and upon thy holy city....”

“Seventy weeks” is another way of speaking of the 2300 days. Since I’m reading a book loaded with symbolism, I take these numbers to be symbols (just as were the ram, the goat, the horns, etc.). There’s not enough space here to discuss this numerical symbolism, but I’ll have more to say in the article on Daniel 8:14, soon to be posted at the Web site of the Jesus Institute Forum (jesusinstituteforum.org).

» Don’t worry too much if my present views are not in harmony with yours (which you may consider to be more biblical). I’m still pursuing knowledge and understanding.

In the last part of 9:24 Gabriel explains the meaning of “then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” That is, as I understand it—to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy and to anoint the most Holy....is Gabriel’s description of the cleansing/making right/restoring of the sanctuary. This restorative process is completed at the end of the 2300 day (70 weeks) period. This process was, as I see it, completed in the Christ event inaugurally, but is yet to be completed consummatively—when sin and the unrepentant are finally eliminated.

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1844, a Personal Journey

But no one today outside the Adventist orbit — not a single human being out six billion — would go to the Bible for answers and come away with the answer, “1844.”

Evangelists were my first teachers of prophetic interpretation. They were superb, blending vivid slides with the emotion of stories and music to present a compelling interpretation of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. We went to every evangelistic series that came through Memphis. I believed it all, as did my parents and teachers.

The first cracks in this secure world came during high school. In 10th grade the teacher taught that Jesus would return to earth precisely at midnight. I argued that Jesus said no one knows the day or the hour of his return. Others in class joined my argument. (We had years of solidarity in ganging up on teachers.) The teacher was adamant.

Mother always sided with teachers. This time, however, she agreed with me and helped me find relevant Ellen White passages. The next day at the end of a very tumultuous Bible class the teacher finally capitulated. As a teenager, I relished the battle. It confirmed a general suspicion I had picked up at home about the intellectual competence of professional religious people.

The next year I went to boarding school. Early in the year the Bible teacher noted that the sun was the center of our galaxy and then began spinning theological implications of this fact. I raised my hand. “Don’t you mean, the center of the solar system?”

No, the Bible teacher responded. It was no slip of the tongue. The sun was the center of the galaxy. Scientists might offer all kinds of strange theories about the universe, but it was important for us to ground our understanding in the words of Scripture. I sat there in stunned incredulity. For the rest of that year and the next, I learned what was required for



tests. But I didn’t believe another thing the Bible teacher said.

By now I could, on my own, without notes, present the traditional Adventist interpretation of the major prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, including Daniel 8:14, complete with supporting texts. I “got” the system. It made sense. There were a few places in the system where one had to ignore part of a text to make the rest of it fit the scheme or one had to explain away the plain meaning of a text in favor of a strained construction. But on the whole, the system worked. It held together.

I headed off to what was then Southern Missionary College. I took Revelation during my junior year. I enjoyed the rich spiritual content of the messages to the churches in Revelation 2 and 3, but found myself puzzling over the historicist interpretation. I could see how these prophecies regarding the Seven Churches might be matched up with historical periods, but the connections seemed suggestive rather than coercive. I was reminded of the allegorical approach to Scripture that saw the red record in Rahab’s window as a sign of the gospel and interpreted Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac and the lives of kings and priests and the rituals of the temple as “types” of the work of Christ. This method worked well in the artistry of preaching, but it did not fit the norms of contemporary Bible scholarship. It appealed to my artistic bent, but seemed weak as exegesis.

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My senior year – now at Pacific Union College – I studied the interpretation of Daniel 7 and 8 on my own in preparation for the religion department's comprehensive exam. I read Adventist and non-Adventist scholars. The standard non-Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14 pointed to Antiochus Epiphanes. But this interpretation required too many approximations. It “almost” fit. But if the passage had been written late – after the fact, according to liberal scholars – then why didn't the writer get it “just right”? The Adventist position was complicated, but certainly no more problematic than the alternative.

A year later I headed off to seminary – supported by my dad (Thanks, Dad). That was 1976. Seminary was abuzz with arguments about the age of the earth and huge questions about the way of salvation. I got into hot water for starting a church to reach out to students who weren't going to church. But 1844 was not yet a hot-button issue.

Following graduation I moved to New York City and was immediately engulfed in the great debate sparked by Des Ford's Forum presentation. Many of my friends from seminary left the Adventist Church. All the books they were reading were by critics. Of course they couldn't believe in 1844, they were not reading anything that supported it. In the library of the church where I was working, there were a number of books by early Adventists – Loughborough and James White, Uriah Smith, Spicer, and others.

As I read these early Adventists, I could follow their logic. Their use of Scripture rang true. Given the world they lived in and the questions they were asking, their study of the Bible naturally led them to answers they found, answers that fit their needs and were rooted in the Bible. As I read, looking through their eyes I found their answers believable. But their questions had no connection with the world I lived in.

I then read the work of Ferch, Shea, Holbrook and Hasel defending the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14, using the tools of Old Testament scholarship. At that time, Hebrew was still fresh enough in my mind that I fancied I was intelligently following their esoteric jargon. I came away convinced that the Adventist position could be defended from Scripture.

On the other hand, it appeared there was no clear, compelling interpretation of this very obscure Bible passage. We could defend our position using scholarship. But the level of specialization required meant no one outside a tiny fraternity of Old Testament scholars could ever hope to understand the arguments, much less come to a confident conclusion.

I could be a confident Adventist – my church's position could be defended from Scripture, using

» We could defend our position using scholarship. But the level of specialization required meant no one outside a tiny fraternity of Old Testament scholars could ever hope to understand the arguments, much less come to a confident conclusion.

the tools of the early Adventists or contemporary scholarship. But my confidence as an Adventist could not be built on the shaky foundation of 1844.

My first assignment as a solo pastor was to the Babylon and Huntington churches on Long Island. During my four years there I was brought back to some of the debates that had raged at Andrews. What about a last-day perfect generation? What about living on earth after the close of probation? These were the existential questions linked to the debates about the judgment. The chronological scheme was way too complicated for ordinary people to have real arguments about. But we could argue about perfection and the close of probation!

I had developed my own theories about these matters in the context of theological debate. But after several years as a pastor, theological conviction was usurped by pastoral concerns. My church was a living laboratory, demonstrating the effect of doctrines in people's lives. Church members who gave much attention to theories about the close of probation and perfection were always troubled by anxiety and fear. Always. No exceptions. They might be sweet and gracious to others, but they trembled with fear for themselves.

So where did this leave 1844? I simply ignored it, as did nearly everyone else around me. To the extent it prompted members to think about the *chronology* of judgment and related end-time scenarios, I was convinced it was damaging.

After four years in Babylon I returned to Manhattan. There I rediscovered the Adventist doctrine of judgment. The doctrine of judgment became a powerful pastoral tool. But all of this had nothing to do with Daniel 8:14 or 1844.

Our church began to attract young adults – many new to the city in pursuit of careers, some immigrants from disparate places far away, and a few from Harlem. And these young people told me story after story of abuse. Abuse by clergy fathers and Marxist idealists, by powerful landlords and church elders, secular counselors and violent husbands.

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The Adventist Birthday Party



Parties are supposed to be fun, especially birthday parties. So why is ours such a pain? I'm talking here about our 1844 birthday party. Like all birthdays, it rolls around every year. Why can't we just make peace with it and get on with life? It's as if a woman were facing her 29th birthday every year.

Our annual October 22 anguish cannot be resolved in just one short column. Several tensions "natural" to our human condition are at work here, tensions heightened as a result of sin. But those tensions help explain why we choose up sides with such intensity. If we could recognize them without hostility or condescension, our autumn shudders might be less severe. But even recognizing the inevitability of these tensions is only a small first step toward a more harmonious community. How many of us have traits of character, habits, ways of thinking that we have "recognized" and would give almost anything to change — but seem almost powerless to do so? We need a more compassionate awareness of each other's inherited and cultivated impulses.

Ellen White could point us to the experience of the 12 apostles as a model. She notes that Jesus brought them together "with their different faults, all with inherited and cultivated tendencies to evil; but in and through Christ they were to dwell in the family of God, learning to become one in faith, in doctrine, in spirit. They would have their tests, their grievances, their differences of opinion; but while Christ was abiding in the heart, there could be no dissension" (*Desire of Ages*, 296). That's heady idealism. But it's worth a try.

Do we have permission? A pointed, indeed, a revolutionary word from Ellen White gives us just that: The opening lines of *The Ministry of Healing* chapter, "In Contact with Others," bluntly state that "our understanding of truth, our ideas in regard to the conduct of life are not in all respects the same" (MH 483). In other words, we can disagree on some things and still be good Adventists.

As important as it might be to address a full list of the "natural" tensions tagging along at our 1844

birthday party, here I will focus on just one, the tension between concrete and abstract thinking. That, I suspect, is a major factor in the discussion, with the polar positions illustrated by these two quotes:

"If 1844 is not sound, then we might as well disband our church."

"Nothing happened in 1844."

And this is where birthday party language becomes important, for grumblers can claim that "nothing happened" in heaven in 1844, but they can't say that about planet earth. In pain and agony, that's when the Adventist church was born. Since that's something on which we can all agree, that's where we should start to explore our differences.

So let's begin with the Adventist claim that an event of great significance happened in heaven in 1844. In one sense, that's a safe claim, because we can't head there with our cameras to bring back the proof. Is it not remarkable that we can argue so vehemently over what happens in a place we are forbidden to enter? When we are granted the privilege of entrance, I suspect we'll all be able to chuckle over our differences. But we're not there yet.

It is helpful to note here that our modern culture privileges the abstract thinkers. Whether they have snatched it for themselves or have been given that "honor" by others is debatable. But the stereotype is confirmed by no less an authority than the popular 16 PF personality test. In its description of "reasoning," one of the 16 personality factors in that test, the test results has concrete thinkers as "less intelligent," and abstract thinkers as "more intelligent." It was printed out in those very words on my test results in 1965 when I first took the test; it was still that way in 1981 when I took it again. And it's still there on-line in 2006. Those are not happy thoughts for concrete-thinking conservatives.

But now let me confess my own concrete-thinking impulses before we go further. I still "see" the angels in heaven entering their data with quill pens; I still "see" the open ark of God in heaven with the halo over the fourth command — compliments of Ellen White's vision. And I still "see" death and hell being cast into the lake of fire. Those three examples are

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How many of us have traits of character, habits, ways of thinking that we have "recognized" and would give almost anything to change — but seem almost powerless to do so? We need a more compassionate awareness of each other's inherited and cultivated impulses.

all significant because I remember being surprised in each case when I realized that my pictures probably did not reflect the heavenly reality. Still, the pictures are important for pointing me to a greater reality.

Abstract-thinking people are much quicker to abandon the images, and may be tempted to snatch them away from those who need them. And that's what makes concrete-thinking people so uneasy. If you take the 1844 event in strictly concrete terms, you can end up following all kinds of silly dead-end trails: If Jesus entered the Most Holy Place in 1844, is he still there today? When does he take a lunch break? Are the angels still poring over the books? But let's be very careful with each other's pictures. We need them to make sense out of our world.

Quite frankly, I much prefer the Myers-Briggs temperament test, for it describes our differences without the nasty, judgmental language. Myers-Briggs seeks to demonstrate that there are many different kinds of "intelligence." The world needs them all. Abstract thinkers, in particular, can be very impractical. Popular anti-intellectual stereotypes make that point. Shortly after I returned to the college classroom after completing my Ph.D., I was erasing the board at the end of class one day. A student who remained behind commented: "I didn't know Ph.D.'s knew how to erase the board." He probably intended it to be funny rather than malicious. Still, I recognized the uncomfortable insight that his words conveyed.

Concrete thinkers tend to be on the "conservative" side of the theological spectrum and often are showered with inordinate levels of scorn by their "liberal" counterparts. It's hardly a two-way street, for liberals can wear the epithets hurled their way by conservatives much more easily, even with pride. *Newsweek*, for example, quoted a movie critic's comment on his round with a devout young conservative: "Feeling like a toxic waste dump (and feeling good about it, mind you), I turned away."

A liberal may feel good about being "wicked," but no one, not a single soul on earth, liberal or conservative, ever wants to feel stupid. Not ever. If only we could learn that and remember that within the church....

Several personal experiences have shaped my own convictions about the need to nurture the full spectrum of concrete-abstract thinking within the church, most of them growing out of "sanctuary" conversations. In 1981, for example, as an exchange-teacher at Seminar Marienhöhe in Darmstadt, Germany, I was discussing the Adventist sanctuary doctrine with a small class of graduating ministerial students. After we had read Fritz Guy's article, "Confidence in Salvation: The Meaning of the Sanctuary" (*Spectrum* 11:2 [Nov. 1980], 44-53), I had noted this statement from early in his essay:

» If you take the 1844 event in strictly concrete terms, you can end up following all kinds of silly dead-end trails: If Jesus entered the Most Holy Place in 1844, is he still there today? When does he take a lunch break? Are the angels still poring over the books? But let's be very careful with each other's pictures. We need them to make sense out of our world.

We are almost wholly ignorant of the nature of heaven; all we know about it is that it is the transcendent reality where the presence of God is "centered" or "most readily perceived," and that the difference between earthly and heavenly reality is not absolute, for that would make it impossible for us to understand anything at all about it (p. 45).

After making that qualification, however, Guy simply uses the biblical imagery in good American fashion without apology or excuse. But that is not a happy proposition for the abstract-thinking Germans. The more concrete American style tends to be both puzzling and troubling on German soil. *The Bible Story*, by Uncle Arthur (Maxwell), for example, has been standard fare in American Adventism for decades. But in Germany, I discovered, its many pictures were a source of German discontent. I found the abstract thinking impulse to be so strong in Germany that I began to think that one of the highest forms of German entertainment must surely be to see how many words can be tucked in between the two parts of the verb!

The students reading Guy's article were cut from that kind of cloth. What that meant in actual practice was that as we worked our way through the article, virtually at every paragraph (or so it seemed to me), they would interrupt with the reminder, "That's only symbolic; it's only symbolic." Agreed. Agreed. Agreed. But.... It was a remarkable dialogue.

Then one day in conversations at home, I made a comment to my wife that suggested to her that I, too, was moving into a world of high abstraction. When she questioned me, I suddenly realized what was happening. By constant association with abstract-thinking people, I was being nudged in their direction more than I realized.

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The Adventist Birthday Party

I don't know how this American-German dialog ultimately played out in the lives of my German students. I suspect that they didn't realize how much I was in awe of their mental capabilities and their finely tuned abstract logic. In the end, I gained a deeper appreciation of how abstract thinking and concrete thinking could be both a blessing and a threat. I learned to value their abstract thinking, both in its own right and as a corrective to my concrete way of thinking. I hope they gained a corresponding appreciation for the concrete. The opportunity for such mutually corrective experiences is one of the great blessings of belonging to a world church.

A year or so later, I was giving a preview series in the Walla Walla College Church of my "Sinai to Golgotha" series, forthcoming in the *Adventist Review* (December, 1981), and decided to explore the thinking of those attending the series. I had come to suspect that at least a part of our difficulty with 1844 and the Investigative Judgment lay in the impulse of some, perhaps even many, to view heavenly things in very concrete and earthy terms. So at the end of my presentation on the Investigative Judgment I passed out slips of paper and asked the believers to indicate on a scale of 1 to 10 how closely they saw their own mental picture of the judgment scene mirroring the actual event in heaven. An exact match would be 1; 10 would be virtually no match at all. Of the some 250 believers in attendance, most put themselves closer to the concrete end of the scale (1 to 3), though there was a generous sprinkling across the full spectrum, with some putting themselves at 10, maximum abstraction.

But I was struck by the fact that while some 46 percent put down a 1, indicating a straight one-to-one equivalent between their thinking and the heavenly realm, 54 percent put down something other than 1. I found that encouraging. Since then, my goal in teaching has been to preserve the abstract-concrete spectrum, while hoping to move the "conservatives" to at least a 2 (at least a small gap between their view and ultimate reality) – and the "liberals" to at least a 9 (at least some contact between our thinking and the heavenly realm). Some months later I was pleased when a devout student in my sanctuary class wrote this note on her final assignment for the term: "Thank you, Dr. T. for letting me keep my pictures."

I wish I could hit a home run like that every time.

Finally, if I could speak one more word at our 1844 party, I would say that the Adventist sanctuary message is not a unique "truth" that gives us our reason for existence. Rather, it is a unique story,

pointing to common truths that have always been important to God and his people. Paul asked the Corinthian believers: "Am I to come to you with a stick or with love in a spirit of gentleness?" (1 Corinthians 4:21, NRSV). In short, shall I frighten you or reassure you? In sanctuary language, that would be: Am I to frighten the careless among you with the threat of judgment? Or shall I reassure the conscientious among you with the promise of Jesus' eternal ministry on our behalf?

In other words, 1844 may simply be another version of that modern aphorism that describes the pastor's work as "Afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted." Could 1844 be as simple as that? I'd love to explore that option at our next 1844 birthday party.

Alden Thompson, Ph.D., teaches religion at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

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Daniel 8 and 9: The Way I See Them Now

In studying and thinking about 9:24 (and the following verses of Daniel 9) I think I am coming to a much more biblical understanding of Daniel 8 and 9. As I continue to pray, study, and think, it may be that my views will take on more contours that have not yet developed in my mind.

Don't worry too much if my present views are not in harmony with yours (which you may consider to be more biblical). I'm still pursuing knowledge and understanding. There's still hope that my views will become more biblical in the future than they are today.

*"Determined" is a good translation of *nechtak*, which is a passive form of its root *hatak*. The meaning of this root can be either "cut" or "determine." So *nechtak* can be expected to reflect one of these meanings. But context is the final arbiter.

Kenneth E. H. Richards is a retired pastor living in Southern California. He formerly was associated with the Adventist Media Center in Thousand Oaks and pastored, among other churches, the Burbank SDA Church. He is a son of the founder of the Voice of Prophecy radio program and well-known Adventist evangelist, H.M.S. Richards, Sr.



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1844, a Personal Journey

As I groped about for some way to respond to the horror of these stories, I came again to the doctrine of judgment. In most instances, the abusers in these stories gave no sign they felt the least guilt for their actions. Their positions gave them the right... The victims could not move forward with their lives unless they forgave their abusers. But how do you forgive someone who is monstrously unrepentant?

The Bible says God is watching, that God will demand an accounting from people for their use of the power that comes with being a parent, pastor, landlord, or husband. God is not fooled by the aura of holiness or entitlement abusers often wrap themselves in. God will see justice done. This is the central meaning of judgment.

Through confession and repentance these evildoers may find redemption, but the doctrine of judgment assures their victims that no amount of minimizing or blame-shifting or clever posturing fools the Judge of All the Earth. Because God is watching, because God makes himself responsible for justice through judgment, victims can let go of their outrage against their abusers and get on with building a life beyond the abuse.

Early Adventists arrived at “1844” as they desperately searched the Bible for answers in their crisis of faith. It served them well. But no one today outside the Adventist orbit — not a single human being out six billion — would go to the Bible for answers and come away with the answer, “1844.” In today’s world, God does not respond to the desperate spiritual hunger of our world by whispering “1844.”

Daniel 8:14 and “1844” are a part of our denomination’s history. We should not be embarrassed by it. But we should be embarrassed to continue pushing it as though it is the answer God has for people with contemporary questions and genuine spiritual hunger.

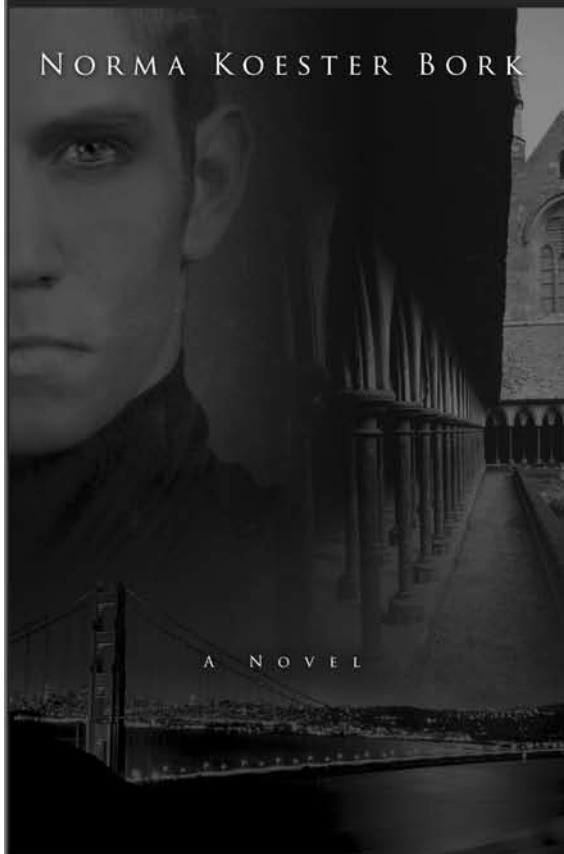
The Bible study that gave us “1844” also gave us the Sabbath, a better understanding of the grief of God in the face of human death, some distinctive insights into the character of God, a special call to care for broken bodies as well as wounded spirits, and a powerful vision of a watching God who will rescue the oppressed and extinguish the defiant. The prophetic study of our pioneers was as messy as any birthing process. And it produced a rich spiritual harvest. Now, it is time to let “1844” fade into the background of our history and give our full attention and commitment to what God has to say today.

John McLarty has served as editor of Adventist Today since 1998 and is pastor of North Hill SDA Church in Federal Way, Washington.

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By Edwin A. & Edwin D. Schwisow

Survey Indicates Strong Support for AT's Financial Autonomy, Newsgathering

The survey results are in, and *Adventist Today* (AT) subscribers appear exceedingly supportive of the direction of the magazine.

In response to a July survey distributed by the AT development department to every current AT subscriber, more than 98 percent of the magazine's subscribers who responded gave their unqualified support for the magazine's lack of financial indebtedness to special and corporate interests.

They also gave the magazine top marks (97.5 percent support) for its reporting on the use of funds donated to Adventist ministries, as well as its role as a check and balance for the Adventist culture (96.7 percent support) and a source of hard news (95 percent support).

AT's readers appear to know precisely why they subscribe to and support the magazine and seem to value its priorities. This bodes extremely well for the magazine's viability and growth, according to Ervin Taylor, executive editor.

More than 92 percent of respondents supported the idea that intelligent discussion of controversies in the Adventist church is a key role for the magazine and also supported AT's goal of "advancing the best in Adventist culture."

Question 19 of the survey encouraged subscribers to make "a summer donation" to support the magazine. Sixty subscribers accepted this invitation, to the tune of \$15,000 of pledged or donated funds. Thank-you, Readers!

One other encouraging result of the surveys was the 46 subscribers who sent in funds to renew their subscriptions, either for themselves or as gifts. Twenty-five of these persons subscribed for one year, while the other 21 indicated their desire to subscribe for two. Total funds received through subscriptions were \$1,787.50.

This income is proving invaluable in helping to maintain printing and publication deadlines on schedule and in procuring and promoting coverage of higher-cost research and writing, according to Taylor, who expresses his deep thanks to all who included "summer donations" with their returned survey.

More than half (52 percent) of those surveyed said they noticed AT's recent efforts to publish each issue on schedule. Thirty-two percent said they had not noticed AT's renewed commitment to punctuality, while 15.6 percent were unsure if there had been any change.

The idea of publishing AT in languages other than English via the Internet drew majority support (55.6 percent) and the concept of putting in the effort to raise current paid subscriptions to 5,000 by 2010 drew overwhelming approval (87.7 percent).

Support for publication of NewsBreak (news stories distributed by AT via e-mail) was strong (78.8 percent), though several subscribers mentioned their lack of Internet access. Only 3.5 percent of respondents did not favor NewsBreak, and 17.7 percent were unsure whether they did or not.

The 19-question survey was distributed to all current and recent AT subscribers. Approximately 10 percent—considered a highly credible mathematical representation of the whole group—had returned surveys by Sept. 10.

Edwin A. Schwisow serves as development director of Adventist Today and president of Lifescape Publishing. He is assisted by his writer-son, Edwin D., a recent graduate of Walla Walla College in communication and former editor of the Walla Walla College Collegian.