

\$5.00

# adventist today

january | february 2007

volume 15 issue 1



## Genesis: the beginning

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF LIFE: 08    ADVENTIST PASTORS AND 1844: 24



## Foundation Board

Elvin Dunn—Board Chair  
Ervin Taylor—Board Vice-Chair  
Eugene Platt—Treasurer  
Keith Colburn  
Diana Fisher  
Edmund Jones  
John McLarty  
Chuck Mitchell  
Jim Nelson  
Randy Roberts  
Nate Schilt  
Dan Smith  
Eldon Stratton  
James Stirling  
John Vogt  
James Walters  
Kit Watts

## Raymond F. Cottrell Endowment Board

James Walters—Board Chair  
Douglass Ewing  
James Nelson  
Nate Schilt  
Ervin Taylor

## Advisory Council

### SENIOR LIFETIME ADVISORS\*

Beth and Elvin Dunn  
Kathi and Richard Guth  
Mari Lynn and Ervin Taylor  
Priscilla and James Walters

### LIFETIME ADVISORS\*\*

Betty and Al Koppel  
Joan Ogden  
Judy and Gordon Rick  
J. Gordon Short

### UNDERWRITING ADVISORS\*\*

Kelli and Robert Black  
Mari Lynn and Edwin Hill  
Thaine Price  
William Sandborn  
Tracy and R. Craig Reynolds

### GENERAL ADVISORS\*

Diana and Ken Bauer  
Kelli and Robert Black  
Jeanne and Gary Bogle  
Lilia and Antonius Brandon  
Ginny and Todd Burley  
Charlotte and John Cassell  
Ruth L. Christensen  
Judy and Keith Colburn  
Patricia and Ronald Cople  
James and Kathryn Dexter  
Merlyn and Rosemary Duerksen  
James Dunn  
H.O. Engen  
Patricia and Douglass Ewing  
Jack and Elsie Facundus  
Gary and Sharon Fraser  
Gary and Annette Frykman  
Brent and Karen Gardner  
Patricia Hare  
Lyndon and Linda Harder  
Jim and Jackie Henneberg  
Dennis and Jolene Hilliard  
Sally and Russell Hoenes  
Susan Jacobsen  
Wayne Jacobsen  
Judy and John Jacobson  
Virginia and Donald Jeffries  
Erika and Brian Johnson  
Marga and Elton Kerr  
Dolores and Dean Kinsey  
Helen and Frank Knittel  
Doreen and Irvin Kuhn  
Yung Lau  
Ralph and Beryl Longway  
Felix Lorenz  
Ken and Florence Lorenz  
Adele and James Nelson  
Elaine and T. Clint Nelson  
David T. Person II  
Eugene Platt  
Thaine Price  
Ruthe-Marina and Gary Raines  
Judith Rausch  
Joyce and Phil Reiswig  
Maryann and James Stirling  
Nancy and John Vogt  
Betty and James Webster  
Stephanie and Tim Welebir  
Anne and Ralph Wiseman

\*Senior Lifetime Advisors: \$25,000 +

\*\*Lifetime Advisors: \$10,000+

+Sustaining Advisors: \$5,000+

++Underwriting Advisors: \$2,500+  
during last two years

#General Advisors: \$500+/year plan



Editorial | John McLarty

# The Adventist Underground

In the denominational culture of my early years, everybody knew creation happened about 6,000 years ago. The most daring innovators suggested that maybe the pre-biotic rocky material of earth was older. This is still the dominant perspective in our church. For most Adventists, the notion of a long history for life on earth is unthinkable. Evolution is not simply erroneous; it is preposterous.

» The church needs the Underground to extend its ministry to people who may be too controversial for the church to publicly embrace, but who are too precious to ignore or turn away.

But occasionally Adventists are forced to change their minds. After growing up confident that a young creation is the clear teaching of both the Bible and science, these Adventists now struggle to make sense of compelling, contrary evidence. These people did not set out to investigate earth history. Rather, their professional work involved the use of biological methods rooted in the theory of evolution — methods that worked and made sense only from an evolutionary framework. Or their recreation repeatedly brought them face to face with field evidence of glaciation. The particular phenomena they were seeing did not require millions of years, but neither could they fit it into 6,000 years. And this was just one small piece of the geologic puzzle. For others it was simply reading — reading about ice cores from Greenland and Antarctica or plate tectonics or biogeography or Egyptian archaeology or the Ogallala aquifer. In every case, 6,000 years just didn't work.

What does an Adventist do with this kind of evidence and the spiritual questions it raises? Bring it up in Sabbath School? Ask her pastor? Probably not.

Often, when Adventists first question a brief earth history, they imagine that they are the only ones in

the world with such questions. Reading *The Adventist Review* or *Ministry* offers hardly a hint that reputable Adventist scientists have the slightest question about the rock-solid certainty of our traditional view. So the person goes underground. But it is a miserable, lonely underground.

They continue to serve in church, to pray, read their Bibles, keep Sabbath, and eat vegetarian. But they wonder if they really belong. They try not to react when they hear jokes in the lobby about credulous evolutionists and godless geologists. They keep quiet when other church members say things like, "I don't see how anyone in their right mind could believe that stuff." ("Stuff" being the content of a newspaper or *National Geographic* article on evolution or a news report on the estimated age of the universe, based on Hubble observations.)

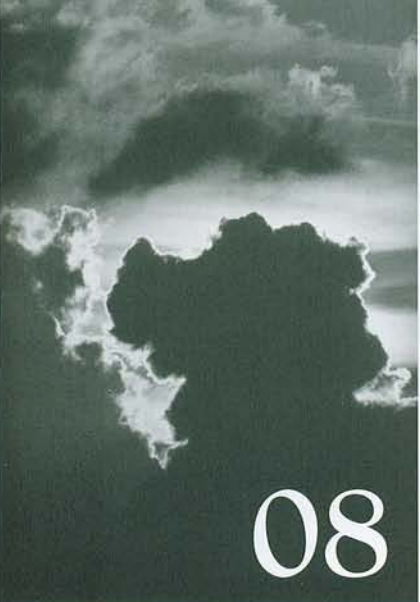
Then this isolated member of the Adventist Underground discovers someone else at church who understands the questions. They talk, tentatively, almost furtively, at first. But soon, the Adventist Underground has a new center, a place where people can be honest about both their questions and their convictions, a place where science is honored without having to affirm tradition, where the Bible is read with fresh eyes.

The views of those in the Underground are not mainstream. Church papers and church institutions are not going to agree with them. But in the Underground, they discover that church is more than a formal structure — even more than a 28-point creed. It is a family, with all the connections, tensions, and complexity that implies.

The Underground needs the church. It needs the church's confidence and certainty. And the church needs the Underground to minister to the children and grandchildren of converts who have questions their forebears never dreamed of. The church needs the Underground to extend its ministry to people who may be too controversial for the church to publicly embrace, but who are too precious to ignore or turn away.

For one way a person might organize an Adventist Underground, see "The Friends of St. Thomas" in the July/August, 2001, issue of AT. (Online at [www.atoday.com/magazine/archive/2001/julaug2001/articles/FriendsThomas.shtml](http://www.atoday.com/magazine/archive/2001/julaug2001/articles/FriendsThomas.shtml))





# Contents

Vol. 15,  
issue 1

04 | Letters | AT Readers

07 | Response to Burrill (*Adventist Today*: Sept/Oct 2006, p. 12)  
| Robert T. Johnston

## Features

08 | The Truth About the Origin of Life | Lester N. Wright, M.D.

10 | "Evolution Is a Lie! What Kind of Christian Are You?"  
| T. Joe Willey

11 | Did You Really Create the World In Six Days?  
| Wayne Collins

12 | A Geologist's Journey from Naïve Certainty to Informed Faith  
| Gary A. Nowlan

16 | Where You and I Have Never Been | Alden Thompson

## Opinion

18 | Adventist Apathy Toward the Plight of the Unborn  
| Nic Samojluk

20 | The Appropriateness of the Adventist Position on  
Abortion | Jim Walters

22 | Hope for Hope Street: A Case Study in Community  
Engagement | Ron Graybill

## Special AT Survey

24 | Adventist Pastors and 1844: An *Adventist Today* Survey  
| John Thomas McLarty

## EDITORIAL STAFF

Publisher  
Elwin Dunn

Co-Founding Editor  
Raymond Cottrell, 1911- 2003

Co-Founding Editor/Publisher  
Jim Walters

Director of Development  
Edwin A. Schwisow

Editor  
John McLarty

Executive Editor  
Ervin Taylor

Associate Executive Editor  
Lee F. Greer

Senior Associate Editor  
James H. Stirling

Managing Editor  
Diana Fisher

Editorial Advisor  
Steve Daily

Office Manager  
Hanan Sadek

**Adventist Today** reports on contemporary issues of importance to Adventist Church members. Following basic principles of ethics and canons of journalism, this publication strives for fairness, candor and good taste. Unsolicited submissions are encouraged. Payment is competitive. Send an e-mail to [editor@atoday.com](mailto:editor@atoday.com) for writer's guidelines. Annual subscriptions \$29.50 (\$50/2 years) for individuals, \$18 for students, \$40 for institutions. (Payment by check or credit card. Add \$10 for address outside North America.) Voice: (800) 236-3641 or (951) 785-1295 Fax: (951) 785-1595 E-mail: [atoday@atoday.com](mailto:atoday@atoday.com) Web site: [www.atoday.com](http://www.atoday.com).

*Adventist Today* (ISSN 1079-5499) is published bimonthly by Adventist Today Foundation, P.O. Box 8026 Riverside, CA 92515-8026. Periodical postage paid at Riverside, California, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Adventist Today*, Box 8026, Riverside, CA 92515-8026. Copyright© 2006 by Adventist Today Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering open dialogue in the Adventist community.





## READERS RESPOND

# letters

### CHURCH PLANTING PROBLEM

I am not sure which interpretation of statistical evidence presented by your two authors on the pros and cons of church planting (*AT* Sept/Oct 2006) is more accurate. Actually, I don't care; anecdotal experience and my heart tell me that church planting is not without problems.

Three years ago I enthusiastically participated in church planting group sessions: reading Ron Gladden's book *Plant the Future*, viewing the video series, and discussing grandiose plans. The details of underlying problems at the church could fill a three-volume novel, but suffice it to say, conflict between the two pastors led into not one healthy church plant, but a three-way split, with most members taking sides, wounded souls and resentment, and a resulting sense of competition and distrust between the groups. All three of my children were in their teenage years when this happened; the timing couldn't have been worse. A once active and vibrant youth group was shattered. It was particularly difficult for my 13-year-old daughter, who watched her two older siblings enjoy a great youth program, only to have it fall apart just as she was old enough to participate, just when she needed the support of her lifelong church friends the most. Some mothers who felt and lived the pain of their children tried to get some joint youth activities among the three "plants" going, only to be rebuffed by pastors citing "joint youth activities don't build church loyalty to \_\_\_\_\_ (name of individual church)."

I was left with the impression that pastors were more interested in the success of their individual enterprises than commitment to the overall support of the Adventist Church (or compassion for our hurting children). While all three of the plants are growing, mostly because our county here is one of the fastest growing in the entire nation, there have been many casualties as a result of our church planting efforts. I know many formerly committed and active Adventist families who no longer attend any Adventist church, families have been split apart (my husband and I sided with different pastors and have been attending different Adventist churches on Sabbath mornings for two years!). While each church tries valiantly to put on some type of youth program, I hear complaints from teens and their parents because of one irrefutable fact: teenagers want more than anything to be with their friends. In the Gladden video series a couple is featured discussing how planting a church is similar to the decision to have a baby; that it adds new "life." That analogy is true, but to carry it further: no responsible couple would make the decision to have another child without considering the impact on the children they already have. If church planting is not done carefully, while God can and will bring something good out of any endeavor, it can have unintended casualties.

Denise Graves — Hayden Lake, Idaho

### GERHARD HASSEL DEFENDED

I have read some of the articles of Dr. Raymond Cottrell, and his virulent comments about Dr. Gerhard Hasel, who was a true servant of the Lord. His writings meant a great treasure to the church. I think that Dr. Cottrell did not have in mind Dr. Hasel's relatives, when he spoke of him as "Torquemada." A true Christian does not have to refer to a brother that way, and a true scholar knows how to manage different points of view with a colleague. I think that Dr. Cottrell's article is doing much more to generate divisions in the church than any other thing. He does not construct or contribute with any original or helpful insights, but only denigrates people. Finally, I have to say that my surprise was great when I found that an Adventist institution was behind those opinions. I think they are mistaking the right way.

Gonzalo Pita — Córdoba, Argentina

### In Coming Issues of *Adventist Today*:



#### Book Reviews of

- ~ Fernando Canale. *Creation, Evolution, and Theology: The Role of Method in Theological Accommodation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University LithoTech, 2005)
- ~ Ben Clausen and Gerald Wheeler. *The Book of Beginnings* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2006)



#### Future Topics of *Adventist Today*:

- ~ "The Best of Adventist Theology"
- ~ "The Future of Adventism in North America"

If you have suggestions for articles and/or topics, please write to us at: [editor@atoday.com](mailto:editor@atoday.com).

*Continued on page 5*



Continued from page 4

**Adventist Today Comment:** Dr. Raymond Cottrell, the founding editor of *Adventist Today*, passed to his rest in 2004, after serving his church faithfully in many responsible positions for more than 60 years. His views concerning the baleful legacy that the late Dr. Gerhard Hasel left the Adventist Church, one of which is the Adventist Theological Society, are widely shared by many Adventist theologians and other academics.

» Why do we need the convoluted reasoning of the Sanctuary Doctrine and the Investigative Judgment when we have the entire gospel spelled out directly from the “horse’s mouth”?

### CONVOLUTED REASONING

Why do we need the convoluted reasoning of the Sanctuary Doctrine and the Investigative Judgment when we have the entire gospel spelled out directly from the “horse’s mouth”? We are judged by our response to the gospel—belief in Jesus Christ + nothing—as spoken by Christ Himself in John 3:14-18. “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Gibby Muth — Angwin, California

### THEODICY: THE VINDICATION OF GOD

Among the many theories used to support the doctrine of the Investigative Judgment, theodicy, or the vindication of God, is deemed as central.

In fact, quoting from the July-September 2006 adult Sabbath School lesson study guide, we read, “Here is the foundation of the great controversy: God’s goodness and His justice will be revealed not just before human beings but before all [of] the onlooking universe” Pg. 11, *Adult Lesson Study Guide*, third quarter.

We hear such statements as, “God is on trial,” “The judgment of God,” and the like, giving the impression that the Sovereign of the universe needs to be cleared of charges brought against Him. Nowhere does the Bible teach that God needs or is seeking to clear His name of Satan’s lies. One can hardly doubt that our little planet is indeed the “lesson book” for all created intelligences, but the

Bible teaches that Satan and his angels already know their judged fate (Matthew 8:29). Hence there is no need for God to “prove” or “vindicate” anything in the light of “charges” brought against Him by Lucifer. To ignore this fact is not simply naïve and erroneous, but it leads to casting distortions on God’s sovereignty. In the Bible there is not a single reference to anyone in this “onlooking universe” questioning the fairness or justice of God. Turning again to the words of Christ, we find that it was from the “beginning” that Satan has been deemed a “murderer” and a “liar.” The Cross of Christ only sealed Satan’s fate as “finished.”

Dexter Phillips — Via the Internet

### GOOD AND LOYAL ADVENTIST

It needs to be very strongly affirmed that a person can be a good and loyal Adventist without belief in an 1844 fulfillment of Leviticus 16 — for three very good reasons.

First, they will find themselves in the company of a galaxy of Adventist scholars, ministers, and thinking members who don’t subscribe to that belief, but who still hold true to the church. Our church is still big enough for all.

Second, what is currently defined in our church’s *Fundamental Beliefs* concerning 1844 is not a pillar of our faith, and never has been. As previously mentioned on this site, it is correction Number Four since William Miller’s catastrophic error. Our pioneers would not recognize our current concept of 1844, and could well be so outraged as to resign their membership.

But, third, the most important reason for continuing allegiance is that “renegades,” subscribing to the supremacy of Calvary, are today more in line with our church than is generally understood by traditionalists, and even themselves. Listen to Fundamental Number 9: “In Christ’s life of perfect obedience to God’s will, his suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life.... This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God’s law and the graciousness of His character.” Where does any hint of further atonement in 1844 fit into those words? And again in Fundamental 23 it refers to Christ’s heavenly ministry on our behalf as “making available to believers the benefits of His atoning sacrifice offered once for all on the cross.” Then it states that in 1844 Christ commenced a work of investigative judgment. But notice very carefully how we as a church now define this judgment — in a way our forebears never could. It is described as “revelatory” rather than investigative:

Continued on page 6

## 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](mailto: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.



» *Adventist Today's* attempts at "putting the pieces together" might just be a waste of valuable time. Some might be too stubborn. There may be a better way. If we were to look into the book of Revelation and find that John "saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" Revelation 21:22, KJV. The stubborn would say, "That's symbolic," or, "Certain personalities need pictures."

"The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ, and therefore in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom." This doctrinal sea-change from judgment-based atonement to atonement-based judgment established on Christ's work at Calvary and through His covering righteousness has never exactly been proclaimed from the roof-tops. If it had, our lesson topic might never have seen the light of day and all those espousing works-based atonement – the endemic premise of our historical 1844 doctrine – should technically be the ones having their membership on the line! In this current controversy it is vital for all to discover just whose head has been severed, but who don't yet know it!

Kevin Ferris — Via e-mail

## INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT

*Adventist Today's* attempts at "putting the pieces together" might just be a waste of valuable time. Some might be too stubborn. There may be a better way. If we were to look into the book of Revelation and find that John "saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Revelation 21:22 KJV. The stubborn would say, "That's symbolic," or, "Certain personalities need pictures." There is something more important than

setting the whole church right on the Investigative Judgment. Find a good book by Spurgeon or Luther, or start on Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. If we do this individually we will find justification, a message for the world, and the date will be 2007.

Ed Tomczek — Milton-Freewater, Oregon

## 1844 ENTHUSIASTS DEFENDED

John McLarty stated the following in regards to 1844 (AT Nov/Dec 2006): "A second fact of Adventist experience vis-à-vis 1844: people who are keenly interested in 1844 tend to cause trouble in congregations."

The unique Seventh-day Adventist message is about a great controversy over the character of God. There are many like me who would say that they are "keenly interested" in 1844, yet are helpful and supportive of the church in fulfilling its mission. This is our mission: "It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy and truth.... The last message of mercy to be given to the world is the revelation of His character of love" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, page 415).

Brad Cole — Via the Internet  
brad@heavenlysanctuary.com



# Response to Burrill (*Adventist Today*: Sept/Oct 2006, p. 12)

While space limitations prevent a full response to Russell Burrill, I encourage readers to examine my article in the same issue and determine whether it is mostly based on my observations (as Burrill charges) or on statistical data from the General Conference (GC) archives (which carry no church planting bias, as some studies may). Burrill accuses me of making an “apples and oranges” comparison. He is correct in just one instance, but that was where I accepted his own statistic, since it wasn’t available from the GC archives. In his original article Burrill referred to “1,374 new churches” started in the North American Division (NAD), while in his response to my article he clarified that these were “1,374 groups started”—quite a difference! I regret that his imprecise use of “church” led to this unfortunate comparison.

All the other statistical data in my article, however, were from GC archives. If one examines the trends there, these key points remain: (1) NAD and Texas statistics fail to demonstrate a cause-and-effect relation between church planting and membership growth; (2) an itinerant preacher model is not attractive; (3) since SEEDS and Texas Conference church planting programs started, membership growth has not accelerated (which it should have, regardless of lag in church growth, if there is “kingdom growth” in groups and companies); (4) more study is needed to identify cause-and-effect relationships associated with observed correlations.

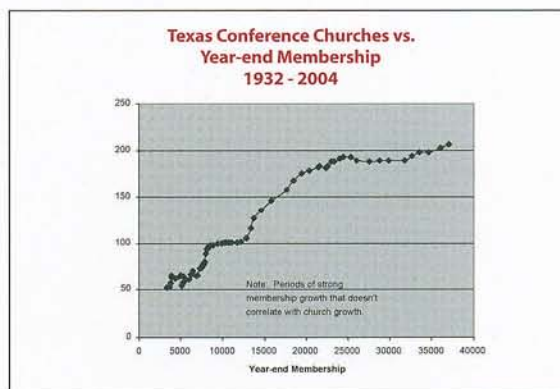
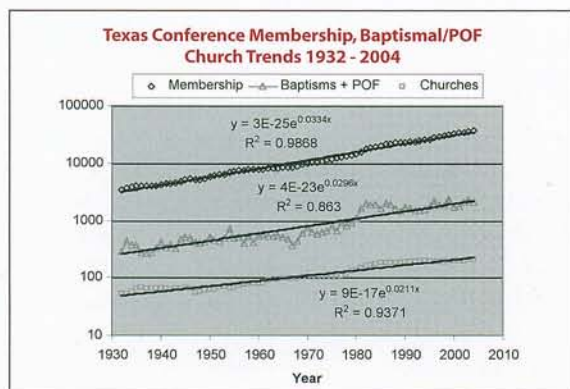
The third point is clearly demonstrated for Texas by the following figure, which shows the lack of significant deviation of membership, church, or baptismal rates from long-term trends, despite recent planting emphasis. Furthermore, the second figure shows that since 1932, there was one period of significant church growth, without much

» Burrill argues that, “Whether church planting follows membership growth or growth accompanies church planting is really immaterial.” This may be at the heart of our disagreement. I hypothesize that church planting should result primarily (with exceptions for strategically targeted “dark” areas) from membership growth, not vice versa.

membership growth; one period of simultaneous church and membership growth; and *three* periods of extensive membership growth, without major church growth.

Due to space limitations, the editors removed from my article a statement of support for church planting (obviously, we can’t all squeeze into one building!). Burrill argues that, “Whether church planting follows membership growth or growth accompanies church planting is really immaterial.” This may be at the heart of our disagreement. I hypothesize that church planting should result primarily (with exceptions for strategically targeted “dark” areas) from membership growth, not vice versa. Understanding cause and effect is *not* immaterial, since it directly affects how conferences allocate limited resources — toward start-ups or toward nurturing existing churches.

Robert T. Johnston — Lake Jackson, Texas





# The Truth About the Origin of Life

How can one who believes in a Creator reconcile his or her faith in the Bible with the findings of modern science, when they seem to conflict?

**M**any of us have seen the Brooklyn Bridge. How would you describe it? Let's say we asked a good photographer to photograph it at night, at high noon, and then on a foggy morning. Next, let's say we asked Picasso to create a painting of the Brooklyn Bridge. Or we asked an impressionist painter to portray the Bridge in daylight and again on a foggy morning. Finally, let's say we consulted the engineering drawings used in construction of the Bridge. Each of the illustrations and paintings would certainly differ. Which of them would be the real Brooklyn Bridge? (Obviously, none would be the Bridge itself; each would be an attempt to describe it realistically, by whatever means.)

How, then, can one who believes in a Creator reconcile his or her faith in the Bible with the findings of modern science, when they seem to conflict?

There are several ways to approach a discussion of the origins of life. We can make the assumption that there never was a beginning — that things and life have always been. Or we can try to explain how we think life might have begun, using our experience and observation of natural processes — science — as the basis for our explanation. But let's assume another approach and look for some explanation from the One who caused life to begin. It is an article of faith held by many believers that Moses, and perhaps other writers of the Book of Genesis, were somehow inspired by God to tell how he made the cosmos and started the first forms of life on earth. How could God describe to those humans long ago how that happened, using their language,

experience, and understanding, and do it in a way that would be understandable to us today? Though their portrayal may have spoken intelligibly to people in the long ago, the passing of long ages has brought us new experiences and changed our perceptions and vocabulary.

Even in the memory of people living today there have been great changes in our perceptions of the world and its neighbors. In the early part of the Twentieth Century, only science fiction writers imagined that humans could fly to the moon, but now we regard lunar exploration as commonplace historical fact. Even so, people today may have differing perceptions of how it happened. Those who watched the first moonwalk on television may have one perception, and the Apollo astronauts who took the trip have another. The physicists and engineers who designed the project and produced the equipment have still other perceptions. Each of these will likely use different expressions to describe how it happened.

It was relatively easy to say (in the understanding of people to whom the Bible was first given) that God stooped down and sculpted Adam out of damp clay. But to us, that may seem an unlikely medium for producing any kind of life (clay is too coarse a material from which to make one- or two-cell-thick tissue or organ linings); we interpret it to mean that he used the common elements represented in the ground — carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, and all the rest. What good would it have done for those early writers to try to describe the Periodic Table of the Elements? This would have been unimaginable to the ancients. Yet, what should we think now about their descriptions of things, using the concepts they had then? Wouldn't God have inspired

*Continued on page 9*



humans to describe things in language they and/or their audience could relate with, even though the description would be “through a glass darkly”?

Genesis seems to credit divine intervention for physical and linguistic differences among population groups, where today we recognize the effects of humans adapting physically to contrasting ecological surroundings, in skin and eye color, blood types, stature, and many other features. Language forms change in response to differing cultural pressures and barriers to communication between groups. Genetics has thrown open the mechanics of physical change in all forms of life. In every branch of science we see deeper and farther than ever before — in astronomy we see a cosmos of illimitable space, filled with growing and dying stars; in biology we see complex life forms in the tiniest of microscopic creatures. Archaeology has revealed a prehistoric world peopled by hunters and gatherers, whereas Genesis points to the first people as agriculturists and city builders.

Yet for all these advances in areas unknown to the Bible writers, scientists cannot point to a physical cause for the beginning of life itself, nor for the driving force that sustains life and allows life forms to adapt to changing environments. These remain as much a mystery as ever.

For Bible believers, however, the source is named — “In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth.” God, the Creator of all that is, the creationists say, should be recognized and revered. But creation has problems. Among many diverse religious faith groups, which one has the right picture of that God? And how far can religious belief promote the effort of scientists to pursue their quest for truth, rather than impede it by proscriptions and ready-made answers?

Scientists have become leery of religious people who seek to impose their sectarian views on the direction of scientific inquiry, in public discourse and education. In recent years creationists have proposed the concept of “intelligent design,” pointing to complexities in life forms that seem to defy evolutionary processes as explanation for their origins. Of course, if you have a design, then there must have been a designer. Who could that be but the God of Genesis? This seems like an attempt to promote a scientific-sounding approach to creationism, without naming the Creator. It is dishonest.

The theory of evolution, positing change in life forms resulting from environmental pressures that selected for favorable variations, has proved to be a powerful organizing principle in many of the sciences. It, too, has its limitations. From whence did the first spark of life come? Where did the physical elements and energy represented

in the “big bang” originate? And just how did the principle of increasing complexity come to be? For all these questions there is no answer. There were no eyewitnesses.

One outcome of scientific observation is the ability of researchers to explain happenings that in older times were thought to be acts of God — earthquakes, floods, famines, eclipses, even illnesses like stroke and leprosy. Some people fear that as science broadens the range of explanation for natural events it also narrows the range of man’s faith in God’s providence. Some Bible believers may even feel that God is becoming less important in modern world thinking, and they feel compelled to counter the trend. Sometimes people who are insecure in their belief in God may feel that they are challenged to fight more vigorously to defend it.

But should the expanding boundaries of science really pose a challenge to Bible believers? Has God been diminished by our increased knowledge of his creation? I think not. A common denominator for religious people and scientists alike is a sense of wonder about nature. Yes, animal life has adapted amazingly in every corner of the globe; yes, God had the foresight to prepare his creation to meet the challenges that could and did occur. His was not a static world or even universe that would simply grow old; it was and is full of dynamic energy that continually changes and rejuvenates itself. Whatever the original earth was like, and whatever has resulted from the activities of people, God’s plan took into account the need to keep it going.

It should not be surprising that neither scientists nor creationists have explanations for some of the most basic questions. If God is bigger than the universe he created, how can his creatures understand him? If the Bible in certain details seems to contradict the findings of natural scientists, may it be that we should look as well for the broader principles of faith represented in the Bible passages, things pertinent to everyday living now?

None of the descriptions of the beginning is the beginning, anymore than an artist’s depiction can be an actual bridge. But each of them can provide useful insight to God’s work in the beginning.


*Lester N. Wright, M.D., M.P.H.,  
is Deputy Commissioner/Chief  
Medical Officer of the New York State  
Department of Correctional Services  
and Associate Clinical Professor of  
Health Administration at Loma Linda  
University School of Public Health.*

But should the expanding boundaries of science really pose a challenge to Bible believers? Has God been diminished by our increased knowledge of his creation? I think not. A common denominator for religious people and scientists alike is a sense of wonder about nature.



# Evolution is a Lie! What Kind of Christian Are You?

“AND EVEN IN OUR SLEEP FALLS DROP BY DROP UPON THE HEART, AND IN OUR DESPAIR, AGAINST OUR WILL COMES WISDOM TO US BY THE AWFUL GRACE OF GOD” AESCHYLUS.



**I**ntelligent design (ID) has become the battle cry of the Christian Right and endorsed by President Bush. Bush said both sides (referring to evolution and ID) ought to be taught, so people can understand what the debate is about.<sup>2</sup> The ambition of getting ID into the classroom is to push the curriculum toward the Judeo-Christian viewpoint that human beings were created by God and not by the random sweep of chance and error. The ID movement largely springs from a reaction against philosophical materialism and is a “new form of antievolutionism.”<sup>3</sup>

The lines are drawn. “By one count there are some 700 out of a total of 480,000 scientists with respectable academic credentials who give credence to creation-science.” Over against the nonscientific ropes, “Two-thirds of those surveyed favored teaching creationism along with evolution in public schools.”<sup>4</sup>

One might presume that this is a nonissue for the Adventist Church, since ID has a steadfast history of acceptance. Recently the General Conference affirmed the church’s belief in creation as indissolubly linked with the authority of Scripture, which interlocks with the Sabbath and the atonement, and a call to worship God as Creator and lawgiver. Creation of the plants, animals, and man occurred literally approximately 6,000 years ago, as described in Genesis during a seven-day (24-hour periods) week; Adam and Eve were real people, and the biblical deluge was global and accounts for the tangled fossil record. The church called on all academic boards and educators at church institutions to continue upholding and advocating its position on origins.<sup>5</sup>

Adventists virtually place ID and God on equal footing. Other Christians use ID as a politically correct way to refer to God and appeal to supernatural causation. The design entity in the

antievolutionary debate could be any of these: “The God of Christianity; an angel — fallen or not; Plato’s demi-urge; some mystical New Age force; space aliens from Alpha Centauri; time travelers; or some utterly unknown intelligent being.”<sup>6</sup> The “design issue” is an old one. In 1860 Charles Darwin asked geologist Charles Lyell: “Will you honestly tell me (and I should be really much obliged) whether you believe that the shape of my nose was ordained and guided by an intelligent cause?”<sup>7</sup>

The use of the ID hypothesis in the laboratory originated with Michael J. Behe, a Catholic biochemist and creationist at Lehigh University (Pennsylvania). In his book *Darwin’s Black Box*, he argued that cellular machinery cannot operate in simple form and therefore could not have evolved by natural selection. Instead, it must have arisen by the creation of an intelligent designer (he says, perhaps billions of years ago). Life scientists reject Behe’s “irreducible complexity” as unproven. Given time there are many examples in biochemistry where an “irreducible complexity” becomes understood through accumulated research. Behe jettisoned science with the sweep of his hand by failing to account for how the designer works, a method for detecting intelligence, who it is, or where the supernatural agency came from.<sup>7</sup>

Evolutionary biologists recognize some form of design in nature. It is the specific role of a designer as a substantive argument that cannot be verified by scientific inquiry. This point is often misunderstood or overlooked by non-scientists. Reading a biology textbook for college students shows massive amounts of data that support evolutionary questions. For example, nature appears to be a creative scavenger and the recycling of available parts at the molecular level (genes, amino acids, and proteins) is one of nature’s most enduring design features. A gene complex controlling insect segmentation also assists in the development of the mammalian hindbrain.

*Continued on page 14*



# Did You Really Create the World in Six Days?

**D**uring one of the panel discussions at the Faith and Science Conference, the question was asked, "If Jesus were on the platform with us, how would he answer the question, 'Did you really make the world in six days?'"

I asked Jesus, "Did you really create the world in six days?" He gently looked at me and quietly said, "You already know the answer."

"Then why," said I, "did you not tell the true story in Genesis 1?"

A distant look came into his eyes, as if he was looking back across the millennia, and a sadness came across his face as he said, "I gave my people all the truth they could handle. If I had told them that I created the universe in an instant 14 billion years before, my people would have worshiped the 'Big Bang,' as the source of the universe, and would have forgotten me.

"If I had told them that I established the laws of mathematics to order the universe, and determined

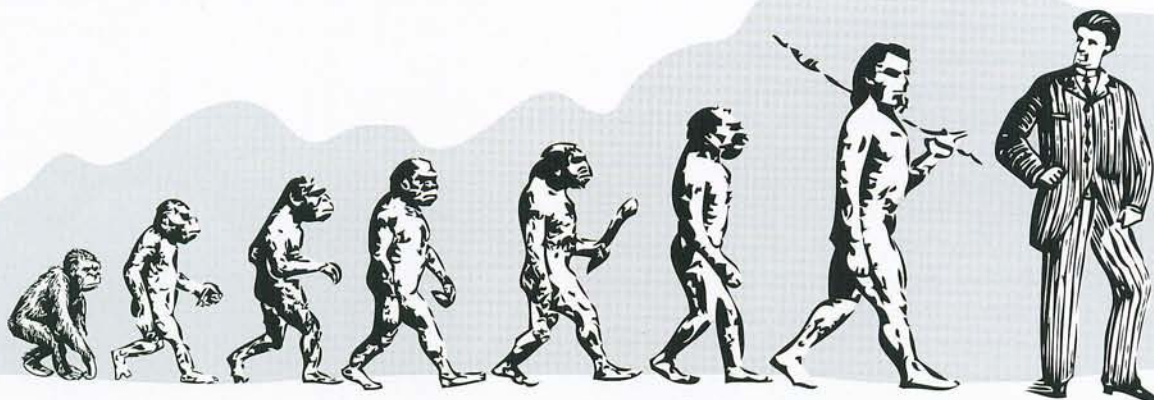
the laws of physics and the physical constants to govern the universe, then my people would have worshiped Mathematics and Physical Law as the orderer of the universe, and would have forgotten me.

"If I had told them that I gathered hydrogen together into nuclear furnaces that seeded the universe with all the elements needful to life, then my people would have worshiped the stars as the source of the elements, and would have forgotten me.

"Instead, I told my people everything that was needful for them. I told them that I created the whole universe for their enjoyment. I told them that I created them for relationship with me. And so they wouldn't forget, I gave them my Sabbath to keep as a memorial of my creative work and a time for relationship with me.

"Yet even so, my people turned away from me to worship the trees and animals that I created, and forgot me. They made my Sabbath burdensome and forgot me, the Lord of the Sabbath.

"Yet in every generation, some kept my Sabbath rightly and remembered that 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.'"




© Adventist Today, 2006

**"Quit Following Me! I'm a Strict, Young Earth/Young Life Creationist!"**



# A Geologist's Journey from Naïve Certainty to Informed Faith



One might assume that because I live in the university town of Boulder, Colorado, I should be expected to have a liberal outlook on earth history. But my eventful journey to where I am today began with a conservative Christian upbringing in rural northwestern Nebraska, attending Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) schools. Here's the story of my journey as a committed SDA for more than 50 years and an earth scientist for 34 years.

In 1961, a few months post graduation from Union College, I found a part-time position as an analytical chemist at the United States Geological Survey (USGS) and also spent a year taking graduate courses in chemistry. I knew little about geology, although I had definite ideas about earth history.

During my early years at USGS, I was exposed to increasing amounts of geology and came to understand the complexity of the earth's crust, as I listened to geologists discuss their findings. My SDA views on earth history did not change, but I became aware of problems.

For several years I worked at the USGS as a chemist and then began a graduate program in geology at the University of Colorado, while continuing work at the USGS. Issues of creation/evolution seldom came up in graduate school, and when they did, the professors made it clear that what we *knew* was what was important — not what our belief systems were. As I learned more geology, I continually tried to apply the principles to a young-age scenario. Before the geology graduate program began, I determined I would not attend classes or field trips on Sabbath. The professors honored that decision.

After more than four years of intensive studies in geology, I had little doubt about the veracity of the orthodox SDA position I had always held. I resumed a fulltime career at the USGS, where I conducted studies for the agency and researched the formation of manganese/iron oxides in streams of Maine for the dissertation. In 1977 I received a Ph.D. in geology. Studies at the USGS for the rest of my career focused on regional geochemistry of a great variety of geologic environments.

As I worked on the dissertation, events began to take place that would shake the naïve certainty I had held since my youth about the age of the earth, creation, and a worldwide flood. I increasingly realized that whether the earth was very old or only a few thousand years old, it *looked* very old. My geology exposure had moved me from naïve certainty to unresolved uncertainty.

I found a promise that seemed to fit my situation exactly and I claimed it in my prayers: "Thus says the Lord who made the earth, the Lord who formed it to establish it — the Lord is his name: Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things which you have not known" (Jeremiah 33:2, 3, RSV).

That promise became part of my prayers. I hoped for something that would confirm my long-held beliefs and negate the overwhelming evidence of a very old earth. An unexpected answer came in the form of an article about fossil forests (Ritland, Richard M., and Ritland, Stephen L., 1974, "The Fossil Forests of the Yellowstone Region": *Spectrum*, v. 6, nos. 1/2, p. 19-66). The interpretations presented would have been no surprise if the article had come from a colleague at the USGS. But these were SDA scientists reporting evidence of a long period of repeated deposition and tree growth. Their observations and conclusions were compelling.

Long before this time I had concluded that much of the surface of the earth reflects events related to the flood, rather than pre-flood conditions. I was aware that SDA archeologists had presented evidence for the existence of civilization for considerably longer periods than the traditional 4,500 years or so between Noah's Flood and the present. SDA scholars had concluded that the Bible text did not necessarily limit the time since creation week to about 6,000 years, but that statements by Ellen White did.

Many geologic examples increasingly convinced me from about the late 1970s and on into the 1980s that the earth as we see it is very old, or at least looks very old, but generally I did not publicly speak up. After all, most church members wanted confirmation, not doubts, that the biblical accounts are literal.

*Continued on page 13*

As I worked  
on the  
dissertation,  
events began  
to take place  
that would  
shake the  
naïve certainty  
I had held  
since my youth  
about the age  
of the earth,  
creation,  
and a  
worldwide  
flood.



## Continued from page 12

As I became more knowledgeable about geology, I needed to discuss the issues with those who would not view hard questions as an attack on traditional beliefs. I thought the best forum for my questions was Sabbath School Teachers' Meeting. It took only one meeting to show this forum would be unproductive, because long-time teachers became upset. I stopped attending Teachers' Meeting, thinking to myself, "If I cannot discuss these issues in this setting, where can I discuss them?" Even pastors did not seem to understand how important it was to be scientifically honest, even when that honesty ran counter to traditional beliefs.

I am grateful for those years in the late 1980s and early 1990s when good friends who are now associated with geology programs at SDA institutions were members of the Boulder SDA church. I pray that the open discussions we had then about earth history will be encouraged within the SDA Church today.

As time passed, I increasingly felt that to be intellectually honest I must publicly state, "The evidence overwhelmingly supports the thesis that the earth we see is very old." A heavy load was lifted when I was able to express my convictions as part of a panel discussing issues of faith and science at an area meeting of the Association of Adventist Forums in the late 1980s.

An earlier event, in 1967, took on added importance in my change from a naïve and confident believer to an informed but less confident believer with respect to earth history. I read a passage in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 686, where Ellen White quoted 2 Thessalonians 2:9 from the King James Version to establish the sequence of events at the Second Advent. While the passage was fresh in my mind, I later read a passage in *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, page 226, which quoted the same verse from the American Revised Version.

In the passage from *Patriarchs and Prophets*, she used the King James text to show that *Christ* is coming after a certain event. In *Testimonies* the one who is coming is not Christ but the *lawless one*. Not only did she quote the Bible passage in *Testimonies*, but also she said, "I am instructed" to. "How can this be?" I thought. "How can she use the same text in one place to say that the coming one is *Christ* and in another place state that she had been instructed to say that the coming one is the *lawless one*?"

With my understanding of inspiration, the contradiction loomed large. I had no inclination to reject her writings. They had changed my life! By reading *Steps to Christ* I felt the forgiveness and acceptance of God, rather than guilt and condemnation. Coming to terms with the nature of inspiration would be important to my later finding resolution to the conflict between earth history and faith.

I followed the published debates in the 1970s and 1980s about literary indebtedness and other issues. I concluded that inspired writers should be allowed to speak for themselves. Therefore, if I allowed Ellen White to tell me what the Scriptures said, I was making her a greater authority than the Bible. I came to believe that, while inspired and the recipient of special insights, she was a product of her times and her understanding of Scripture would reflect those times to a greater or lesser extent.

» As time passed, I increasingly felt that to be intellectually honest I must publicly state, "The evidence overwhelmingly supports the thesis that the earth we see is very old."

Therefore, being constrained to a span of 6,000 years since creation was no longer necessary. However, stretching the time to 10,000 or even 1,000,000 years would not solve the problem of harmonizing Scripture with evidence of a very old world. Despite serious conflicts, my faith meant too much to discard. The Sabbath had become very precious as a result of time spent in the field in Maine, working on my dissertation and carrying out geological projects.

Resolution came in a moment when I was with a group of geologists on a field trip in New England and adjacent Québec. We were deep in the woods, examining bedrock and one of my colleagues was explaining the scene. He was an excellent Harvard-trained geologist who had been mapping the geology of Maine and New Hampshire for many years. He believed this had been a site of a spreading sea floor, almost 500 million years before. As I listened to the story, the thought came to me, "What a great God to worship! If He did this in an instant, He is worthy of worship. If it really did take place 500 million years ago, he was here and is also worthy of worship." Since that time I have been content to live with ambiguity about creation and a worldwide flood.

Accepting the possibility that the Bible stories of creation and the flood may not be literal brings its own set of problems. The bottom line for me, however, is that God accomplished the creation of the world and did it as a God of love. As much as the natural world is marred by sin, it is beautiful and very interesting. I retired from the USGS in 1995 and spend much time outdoors observing and recording.

Regarding faith and science as two separate realms that overlap in some way is a philosophy I strongly opposed in the past. Now I am content to keep them largely separate until I am convinced of a better way.

*Gary A. Nowlan, Ph.D., is a retired geologist and writes from Boulder, Colorado. He spent 34 years working in earth science for the United States Geological Survey in Denver, Colorado.*

Editor's note: This article is adapted from Dr. Nowlan's presentation at the Faith & Science Conference, 2003, Glacier View Camp, Boulder, Colorado.



*Continued from page 10*

## Evolution Is a Lie! What Kind of Christian Are You?

» The “design issue” is an old one. In 1860 Charles Darwin posed this problem to Charles Lyell: “Will you honestly tell me whether you believe that the shape of my nose was ordained and guided by an intelligent cause?”

The human and the chimpanzee genome share 98.5 percent of the same genes in the DNA. These observations do not establish that there was not a designer behind the observed mechanisms.

Scientists follow resolute standards and methods in testing observations, comparing data, and publishing their findings. Every scientific idea can be destroyed by “a single, ugly little fact!” That is one difference between religious belief systems and scientific inquiry. Nevertheless, there are scientists who are sympathetic to ID, although it is not clear whether they are convinced that Darwin is false or whether they believe that it is important for other people to believe it is false.<sup>8</sup>

Chemists determine atomic structure and investigate how chemical reactions occur. They use instruments, sophisticated tools, and complex methodologies and create elaborate theories that take students years to comprehend. Physicists rarely generate controversy, because their theories require mathematics — calculus and statistics. None of the other physical sciences, including geology and astronomy, advance ID in theory structures. These scientific disciplines are not receiving the brunt of attack from American fundamentalists. It is in the biology-related disciplines where the controversy is most vigorously expressed. Life sciences stand on the shoreline of a vast ocean between origin, the nature of man and afterlife notions. Why would God want to resurrect “evolved” human beings who share their genome (genetic engines) with the chimpanzee or the mouse and which, it turned out, came about by “chance?”

Despite this theological question, when one becomes ill and requires a physician or hospitalization, even a hard-core creationist is more likely to seek relief or a cure through evidence-based medicine than ID. Much of modern medicine sits on a platform of successful scientific assumptions that animals and man are more than related — that there is an unambiguous evolutionary relationship.

Life scientists present the case that evolution, if not certain, is as certain as any scientific hypothesis can be. To them it makes as little sense to doubt the factuality of evolution as to doubt the factuality of gravity or the theory of the atom. They argue that bringing in faith-based skepticism runs the risk of marginalizing science and impeding students from enthusiastically adopting what Richard Feynmann (Nobel prizewinner) famously called, “Learning how not to fool ourselves.” For this reason scientists point out that conversations about ID should gain spiritual shelter in theology or philosophy classes. This would allow accredited scientific hypotheses to remain central to the intellectual debate that keeps clear and distinct ideas and theories within science. A sign in a grocery store seems apropos: “We have come to an understanding with the local banks. They don’t sell groceries and we don’t cash checks!”

The Adventist creation doctrine is shaped by a desire to live out a faith within ID and enjoy a life of meaning and belief in the true God of Abraham. For Adventist science teachers, this could create a supposed flaw in the way they teach and conduct their research while employed by the church — the world where Adventist biologists adopt the countervailing evolution metaphor to explain foundational concepts or characterize metabolic pathways (whatever it is that biologists study). In the past this has occasionally provoked some students (or parents) to point a finger at an Adventist biology teacher and accuse the professor of presenting Darwin.<sup>9</sup> Because of this, some Adventist biologists withhold information, become timid, or decide it is not worth presenting important discoveries because they fear being labeled as infidels. I recently asked an Adventist biology chairman how certain ideas were taught in his school — for instance, the Cambrian explosion when a legion of new animal phyla appeared an estimated 530 million years ago. He said, “We avoid sensitive issues because we don’t want to be treated like the theology faculty a few years ago.” After the Scopes trial American high schools skirted biology controversies for decades. Then along came the Russian Sputnik, and suddenly there was a new urgency: America had fallen behind. That could happen in science at an Adventist institution.

In effect, ID proponents have created a reverse condition in religious-affiliated schools. In the South Pacific, where Adventist education receives funding from the government, the church’s leadership quickly balanced the curriculum to include evolution in the classroom. Dr. John Hammond, the National Director of Adventist Schools in Australia,

*Continued on page 15*



promised, “It is a perfectly legitimate viewpoint (evolution) and we believe that our students are entitled to getting both sides of the debate.”<sup>10</sup>

Enlightened Adventist biologists (and other scientists) are probably bemused by the ID controversy (although obviously some are not). Teaching biology is a thrilling scientific endeavor, which can be done without compromising doctrines and ideals. It is one of the best places in the learning experience where young people can acquire knowledge, using authentic scientific standards. This requires care. The worldview boundaries in science — how researchers gather data and analyze observations within scientific constraints and then unify knowledge through reliable theory constructs — needs to be better communicated to administrators, students, and parents that make up the Adventist non-scientific community. Science is like a mountain brook — it is always changing. Facts and data are modified and enlarged. But if science is not taught properly, students will recognize that there is something wrong with being ignorant, with being idle with the facts, with being exploited, in learning marginal ideas, or being fouled by misinformation.

*T. Joe Willey received his doctorate in neuroscience from the University of California, Berkeley and taught at Loma Linda University School of Medicine and at Walla Walla and La Sierra universities. He was a fellow with Sir John Eccles (Nobel Prize winner) at the University of New York, Buffalo, and research fellow at the Brain Research Institute at UCLA, Los Angeles.*

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> “Darwin on Trial.” *The New Yorker*. December 12, 2005. (In *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*) Plaintiff testified that her teenage daughter came home from school and demanded “What kind of Christian are you?” In Judge Jones’ Dover decision in December 2005 he “rejected as utterly false the assumption that evolutionary theory is antithetical to a belief in the existence of a supreme being and to religion in general.”

<sup>2</sup> Promoters of ID are using it as an entering wedge into public instruction to substitute theistic science for natural science. Those who oppose

» Adventists virtually place ID and God on equal footing. Other Christians use ID as a politically correct way to refer to God and appeal to supernatural causation.

this movement say that after a decade-long public relations campaign to implement strategy, the most notable feature of its purportedly new scientific paradigm is the failure of its creators to produce either a scientific research program or any original scientific data to support their claims. (See Forrest, Barbara and Paul R. Gross. *Creationism’s Trojan Horse*. NY: Oxford University Press. 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Ronald L. Numbers. *The Creationists: >From Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 2006. p. 373.

<sup>4</sup> “Intelligent Design: The New Creationism Threatens All of Science and Society.” APS News Online. October, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> *Adventist Review*. August, 2005. p. 11. “Action taken October 13, 2004 at Annual Council recapping a three-year dialogue with Adventist scientists and theologians.”

<sup>6</sup> The very features of the biochemical systems that Behe points to cannot be simply viewed as either the trademark, or the fingerprints of an intelligent designer. For these features, the inference to design cannot be separated from the provision of evidence about the designer and its methods. Behe has made an extraordinary claim, and its validation will require extraordinary evidence. Behe makes no attempt to meet this essential, evidential requirement. (Shanks, Niall and Karl Joplin. “Behe, Biochemistry, and the Invisible Hand.” Philo. 4:1) During the recent Dover trial testimony Behe told the court his definition of a theory would allow Astrology as science and that God could be an alien.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Dorit. “A Review of Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution by Michael J. Behe.” *American Scientist*. September-October, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Pinker, Stephen. *The Blank Slate*. NY: Viking Press. 2002. p. 130.

<sup>9</sup> Evolutionary language and assumptions are embedded in every journal, textbooks, laboratory manuals, etc., in biology.

<sup>10</sup> “Adventist Schools Support Intelligent Design.” Seventh-day Adventist Church South Pacific. Press Release on [www.adventist.org.au](http://www.adventist.org.au).





Feature | Alden Thompson

# Where You and I Have Never Been

**T**he most serious quarrels in religion and theology are often over questions for which there are no final answers. The answers elude us because we can't grasp

the evidence in our hands or see it with our eyes.

That wasn't the case with the apostle John. He wrote with confidence about Jesus because he had heard him, seen him with his own eyes, and touched him with his own hands (cf. 1 John 1:1). But in our day, if we want to share John's confidence, we must trust the witnesses who recorded his words and passed them down to us. In short, we must first trust the Bible if we are going to trust John and then trust in Jesus because of John's testimony.

But the question of whether or not Jesus was who he claimed to be and whether John's testimony is believable, is usually an issue between believers and nonbelievers. That was as true in John's day as it is in ours.

Here, however, I want to look at those tussles that pit believers against believers, split churches, divide families, separate good friends. The questions are raised by believers who fully accept the Bible but differ on what the Bible says or means. That spells trouble if one is reluctant to admit to "contradictions" in the Bible. And many believers are indeed shy about such an admission, lest they give aid to the enemy. Critics do not hesitate to criticize the Bible for its contradictions, and believers don't want to play into their hands.

I think it's time we got brave and claimed that the Bible belongs to us, not to the critics. It's our Bible, not theirs. And if the Bible is to do what God intended it to do, it will bristle with "contradictions." Note, for example this striking quote from Ellen White, one of the rare instances in which she used the word "contradiction" in a positive sense. Speaking of Jesus, she wrote, "Great contradictions presented themselves in Jesus. He was the divine Son of God, and yet a helpless child. The Creator of the worlds, the earth was his possession and yet poverty marked his life experience at every step" — *Desire of Ages*, 87. In short, some truths can best be illumined through contradictions.

» The questions are raised by believers who fully accept the Bible, but differ on what the Bible says or means. That spells trouble if one is reluctant to admit to "contradictions" in the Bible.

If we reflect on the everyday challenges of dealing with all kinds of people, we can begin to see why contradictions are so necessary and so helpful. This quotation from the British classicist Richard Livingston (1880-1960) illustrates the point:

Any attempt to train character is dangerous and must be undertaken with full perception of its danger. Many notes must be harmonized if the full music of the human instrument is to sound: gentleness and courage, boldness and prudence, inquisitiveness and reverence, tolerance and firmness, confidence and humility, stability and freedom. It is a difficult and risky attempt to make a man, and it is tempting to turn aside from the task. But we have only to look round to see the disastrous results of declining it, as, for the most part, we have hitherto done."

Livingston's matched sets of opposite traits are tantalizingly suggestive when transposed to matters of religion: Should one stand boldly before God or prudently? Which issues must be challenged with confidence and which with humility? The results will often appear contradictory — but necessarily so.

And here is where I would like to interject a short list of questions that divide Christians, often with great intensity: Where is the line between providential intervention and demonic intrigue? I know of no one who knows confidently where to

*Continued on page 17*



draw the line. What is the nature of the heavenly sanctuary? We don't know, for none of us has ever been there. Was Jesus' nature like Adam's before the Fall, or after? "Inspired" writings can be cited on both sides of the question. But no one can claim victory because the witnesses themselves are divided. They haven't been there, nor have we! And so we quarrel on....

So here is a modest proposal to help us live together, vibrantly, energetically, but at peace with each other and with God. In short, where the Bible gives seemingly opposite explanations for the same phenomenon, let us allow both to stand their ground rather than trying to harmonize them by arguing away one of the "opposite" explanations.

The story of David's census can provide us with a good "test" case to illustrate the method. The story is told in both 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21, with 2 Samuel 24:1 stating that God made David number the people and 1 Chronicles 21:1 stating that it was Satan who did it. Our traditional response had been to say that God allowed Satan to do it — thus we take elements from both solutions. And if you pushed me hard enough, I would probably opt for something like that solution.

But note that such a solution is not being completely faithful to either biblical account. The Bible does not attempt to harmonize them. It simply leaves the contradictions standing in all their stark reality. Could we allow believers to look at troublesome events and adopt a solution at either end of the spectrum or at any point in between? Why not? The single-car accident that took my parents' lives has left me forever puzzled as to where to draw the line between providence and the demonic.

When I touched on this issue in our Sabbath School class one day, I was startled to see both "extremes" represented by devout Adventists. One took the position that God destroys no man; another took the position that Satan can destroy no one, for taking life is a prerogative that belongs only to God!

Maybe such an approach could help solve our tussles over creation. In Genesis 1, for example, God's creative act is strictly hands off. God creates by the spoken word. But in Genesis 2 God tenderly forms man from dust and breathes into his nostrils the breath of life. In Genesis 2 God also "forms" the animals. All scholars agree that Genesis 1 is a polemic against pagan creation stories that describe the created order as emerging from a cosmic battle of the great chaos monsters. Genesis 1 effectively puts that picture to rest by presenting the picture of a sovereign God who stands over all creation.

But such a sovereign God lacks warmth. So God has given us another account that brings him down to earth and into close contact with his children.

» So here is a modest proposal to help us live together, vibrantly, energetically, but at peace with each other and with God. In short, where the Bible gives seemingly opposite explanations for the same phenomenon, let us allow both to stand their ground rather than trying to harmonize them by arguing away one of the "opposite" explanations.

Which account is right? They both are. But attempting to fuse them into one story robs both of their power and beauty.

So why not let all the biblical accounts stand in all their glorious contradictory details? The things that really matter in Scripture are embarrassingly clear. When it comes to creation, God is everywhere pictured as our Creator. And any way you look at the Bible, it is also clear that he has given us the seven-day week to structure our daily lives. Those are biblical facts no one can deny.

But if you ask just how God accomplished his creative acts, we will need a generous touch of humility. For Adventists, a comment from Ellen White here may be as helpful as any: "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" *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 113.

When it comes to places where we have never been and can never go until the earth is restored, let us be cautious about resolving contradictions that God has given to us to illumine our path on earth and enrich our walk with him.

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



# Adventist Apathy Toward the Plight of the Unborn



» The first step toward the enslavement or extermination of certain groups of human beings has been to deprive them of personhood.

**T**he Plight of the Unborn. Never have the lives of the unborn been at risk on such a massive scale as now. There is no question but that the womb is today the most dangerous place on earth. According to statistics provided by the Alan Guttmacher Institute [Planned Parenthood], the number of abortions performed per year in the U.S. since 1973 averages more than 1.5 million. The statistics for the entire world are even scarier: approximately 46 million abortions per year.

**Evidence of Our Apathy.** Considering the fact that Adventists claim to be “God’s remnant church on earth,” possessing the “last message for a perishing world” and keeping God’s commandments, it would be natural to expect that we would be in the forefront of the pro-life movement. One of those commandments prohibits the taking of human life, and the Bible contains many similar injunctions prohibiting the “shedding of innocent blood.” Yet we do not.

**Our Puzzling Inconsistency.** We have invested much time and money through the years in defense of the Fourth Commandment, and we have had an impressive health program and have helped thousands of smokers quit the habit that shortens their lives by four or five years. Well, abortion deprives the unborn of their entire life. Yet our preachers do not present pro-life sermons nor our writers produce pro-life articles in our publications.

Pastors avoid the subject, lest members get offended. The message we send to the world is: The Sabbath and extending the life of smokers by four or five years are important. The untimely death of our children before birth is not. Can you imagine John the Baptist, the prophet Elijah, Jesus, or Paul saying that?

**The Role of Our Guidelines on Abortion.** The official Adventist “Guidelines on Abortion” includes many lofty pro-life statements such as “Prenatal human life is a magnificent gift of God. God’s ideal for human beings affirms the sanctity of human life, in God’s image, and requires respect for prenatal life;” “Abortions for reasons of birth control, gender selection, or convenience are not condoned by the Church;” “God calls for the protection of human life and holds humanity accountable for its destruction;” and “God is especially concerned for the protection of the weak, the defenseless, and the oppressed.” (See the Web site [Adventist.org/beliefs/guidelines](http://Adventist.org/beliefs/guidelines).)

This is great! The problem is that these wonderful pro-life statements are neutralized by others like: “Seventh-day Adventists want to relate to the question of abortion in ways that ... reflect Christian responsibility and freedom;” “God gives humanity the freedom of choice, even if it leads to abuse and tragic consequences. His unwillingness to coerce human obedience necessitated the sacrifice of His Son.” Does the fact that we have freedom of choice mean that we can take the life of the unborn with impunity?

*Continued on page 19*



This emphasis on our freedom of choice places us as a church on the side of the pro-choice/pro-abortion group. On August 20, 1990, the *Pacific Union Recorder* published an article written by John V. Stevens, defending women's moral right to abortion. His main argument was that Jesus died to give us freedom of choice, and by submitting to the cross, "Christ valued choice over life."

If that is the case, then perhaps Jesus also died to give rapists, burglars, child abusers, terrorists, and murderers their freedom of choice! Contrast these statements with what James White wrote about abortion: "Few are aware of the fearful extent to which this nefarious business, this worse than devilish practice, is carried on in all classes of society! Many a woman determines that she will not become a mother, and subjects herself to the vilest treatment, committing the basest crime to carry out her purpose." (Solemn Appeal, 1870.) Some argue that Ellen White never wrote about abortion. After reading what her husband wrote, do you think she needed to add anything else?

The defenders of abortion also argue that the Bible is silent on abortion. However, the Bible is also silent about slavery, genocide, and polygamy. Am I morally free to enslave others or take another wife? The "Guidelines on Abortion" call for the "protection of human life," but "the church has chosen not to define the precise moment human life begins." Science does know when human life begins, and other church organizations and political groups know this as well, but our church has chosen to ignore this! I ask: What is the good of calling for the protection of human life if we ignore when said life begins?

**The Question of Personhood.** In 1973 the U.S. Supreme Court deprived the unborn of personhood, thus making the way clear for their merciless treatment. More recently James W. Walters, a Loma Linda University professor, published a book titled *What Is a Person?*, questioning the personhood of the unborn. What does the Bible say about this personhood? In Isaiah 49:1 we find the following statement: "The Lord called me from the womb." How can God call a nonperson to be his prophet? We have a similar statement regarding Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." Jeremiah 1:5. Regarding John the Baptist, Luke said: "He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother's womb." Luke 1:15. Is this applicable to a nonperson? A similar statement is made by Paul: "But when he who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb..." Galatians 1:15. Does the Lord consecrate nonpersons as his representatives on earth?

» The defenders of abortion also argue that the Bible is silent on abortion. However, the Bible is also silent about slavery, genocide, and polygamy. Am I morally free to enslave others or take another wife?

The deprivation of personhood on a selective basis has been practiced since the dawn of civilization. For many centuries women, slaves, and members of specific ethnic groups have been legally stripped of personhood and subjected to abuse, torture, and even death. The first step toward the enslavement or extermination of certain groups of human beings has been to deprive them of personhood. It took a civil war to restore personhood to the American slaves, and a world war to restore the right to life of Jews. Do we need another civil war to restore the unborn's right to life? The defenders of abortion emphasize women's right to freedom. How about the unborn's right to freedom?

**Are We Repeating History?** By looking the other way while millions of unborn are deprived of life we are repeating history. Recently, the German and Austrian Adventist leaders issued a public apology for our cooperation with the Hitler Nazi regime, while the slaughter of the Jews was taking place. Unless we alter our indifference towards the unborn, I predict that we are doomed to apologize again at some time in the future for our apathy toward the plight of the unborn.

*Nic Samojluk is a second-generation Seventh-day Adventist and is writing a doctoral dissertation in religion. He has been a teacher and real estate broker and maintains a Web site, [sdaforum.com](http://sdaforum.com).*



# The Appropriateness of the Adventist Position on Abortion

**T**he Seventh-day Adventist denomination's position on abortion tilts toward a pro-choice stance (as opposed to pro-life).

The church fathers might not appreciate this classification, as they'd likely point to the document's balance. For instance, on the one hand, there is, "God's ideal for human beings affirms the sanctity of human life, in God's image, and requires respect for prenatal life." Also, "Prenatal human life is a magnificent gift of God." But on the other hand, consider this unequivocal statement: "(A)ny attempts to coerce women either to remain pregnant or to terminate pregnancy should be rejected as infringements on personal freedom."

However, why does Adventism portray such balance on this controversial moral issue? Most doctrinally conservative denominations don't harbor such equipoise. And further, given that the vast majority of the church's membership is socially conservative, most Adventist members likely oppose abortion — not even knowing that their church has spoken on the issue, much less what it says. Regardless, Adventism does have a very carefully crafted position, written by a duly appointed international committee set up by the General Conference in the early 1990s.

Adventism's 15-year-old abortion statement is quintessentially Adventist in at least four regards, the first being the most prominent:

**Personal Religious Liberty.** This traditional emphasis — not a doctrine as such, but an indelible part of the Adventist ethos — interlaces the Guidelines. There are six references to such notions as "respecting individual conscience," "freedom," and "individual liberty." In this document of a mere 750 words, some 50 are in freedom-references, thus comprising about 7 percent of the entire text. However, undergirding this illuminating statistic are substantive reasons for the Guidelines' focus on freedom.

The denomination's deepest roots are in the soil of individual religious liberty. Many of the pioneers had been thrust from their Sunday-keeping congregations because they conscientiously followed their personal understanding of Scripture, and they initially resisted organization out of fear that they too could become intolerant of believers' treasured personal religious liberty (see LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Movement of*

*Destiny*, Review and Herald, 1971). This sentiment, at least in part, later gave birth to *Liberty* magazine.

Further, it's not coincidental that our denomination, made in America, would imbibe of our new country's appreciation for religious freedom. Accordingly, we read Ellen White praising America for its constitutional protection of "liberal and peaceful" principles that are the "genius of its free institutions." She viewed civil and religious liberty as the Republic's "foundation principles" (*Great Controversy*, 295, 442).

**Non-immortality of the Soul.** Interestingly, this doctrinal position of Adventism is generally expressed in its negative form (it's not "belief in the mortal soul"). That's because this doctrine came as a direct reaction against the idea that humans possess "souls," that God imbues humans with souls at conception that will exist throughout eternity. The Adventist belief is that we don't have souls — we are souls. To be a bodily spiritual being is to be a soul. Fetuses, as such, are not souls, and thus antiabortion Adventists are deprived of a potent argument that's available to many other Christians.

Belief in a prenatal immortal soul logically fits with a ban on abortion, such as found in the teachings of the Vatican. Roman Catholicism calls the conceptus a "person" who shares identical sanctity with fully conscious adult individuals (*Respect for Human Life in Its Origins and on the Dignity of Procreation*, 1987). However, Adventism teaches that human embryos don't possess discrete and separate immortal souls, but that we grow into robust mortal human souls — who are ever dependent on God for our "conditional immortality" (LeRoy Edwin Froom, *Conditional Faith of Our Fathers*, Review and Herald, 1966).

**Image of God.** Rather than human dignity coming from possession of an immortal soul, Adventist tradition sees human specialness derived from our creation in the "image" of God (Gen. 1:26). Adventism founded its extensive educational system, in part, to develop its youth's unique human abilities of the mind, which are "akin to that of the Creator." These special capacities are defined as "individuality — the power to think and to do" (Ellen White, *Education*, 17). Obviously, fetal human life has not yet developed the capacity to think, and thus the Adventist focus on what it means to be in God's image has direct implications for the moral status of fetal human life.

*Continued on page 21*

...given that the vast majority of the church's membership is socially conservative, most Adventist members likely oppose abortion — not even knowing that their church has spoken on the issue, much less what it says.



## Continued from page 20

**Lack of an Inspired Mandate.** Significantly, neither the biblical writers nor Ellen White condemn or even discuss abortion — and it's not that the idea was foreign to these writers. The closest that the Bible comes to mentioning the issue is a short passage in Exodus (21:22-25) in which the scene is two scuffling men, one of whom accidentally strikes a pregnant bystander who suffers a miscarriage. The point of the story is to raise the question of punishment: a simple miscarriage carries a modest fine, whereas if bodily harm to the woman herself also occurs, the principle of *lex talionis* (eye-for-eye) applies.

Several Bible writers make allusions to individuals in a pre-born state. Unlike today, with our analytical assessment of stages in a human's life span, the ancients' thoughts were less systematic and their generalizations about God's involvement more sweeping and grandiose. For example, Jeremiah's prophetic appointment was made before his conception (see Jeremiah 1:5). Hence this supposedly antiabortion statement is more about divine predestination than about the value of prenatal life. Other writers allude to God calling prophets in their fetal states, or of fetuses being filled with the Holy Spirit. Such graphic language is best viewed as indications of God's power and control of his chosen agents, rather than as serious commentary on the moral status of prenatal human life (See James W. Walters, "Moral Status," *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*, Macmillan, 2004).

Regardless of the above reasons for my church's tilting toward pro-choice, neither Adventism nor I favor abortion. This tragic choice should only be considered in exceptional circumstances. The Guidelines explicitly cite threats to the pregnant woman's life or health, severe congenital fetal defects, and pregnancy due to rape or incest.

I appreciate my friend Nic Samojluk's passion for prenatal life, as it powerfully symbolizes all life, and for many it so personifies all human life that they are seen morally as one and the same. Regardless, I have two basic problems with Samojluk's reasoning:

**A Flat View of Human Life.** Samojluk fails to see any difference in the moral standing of a single-celled concept and that of the reader of this page. This, I suggest, is a flat view of human life. Thus, in terms of moral worth, stem cells = normal adults = Terri Schiavo. Human life is human life, period; it's all equally sacred. This view adamantly opposes our society's moral gradation of human life, as articulated in *Roe v. Wade*, in which fetal gestation is divided into trimesters, with abortion difficult to justify. It sounds nice, Christian, and conserving of sacred values to say that every moment of every life is of equal moral value. However, in real life it's not so simple. Hence we don't use all available technology to ensure that every embryo is born, for if this type of thinking were taken to its logical conclusion (and no one does!), it would mean a massive program to

stop the billions of spontaneous abortions of "human beings" that naturally occur annually to more than 50 percent of all embryos. Further, the flat view, if logically extended at life's other edge, would see every elderly patient's existence extended as long as technologically possible. And the state would then criminalize the way hospitals now allow three out of four patients to die — by the withdrawing of artificial forms of life support (e.g., tubal feedings and ventilators) which allows nature to take its course.

**A Contrived View of Scripture.** Nic wrests passages from their context and marshals them to provide biblical supports for his unnuanced antiabortion stance. For example, his citing of the passage that criticizes the "shedding of innocent blood" is a part of an explicit, larger directive establishing Cities of Refuge to limit the ancient tribal law of blood revenge. And he cites several biblical allusions to prenatal human life, drawing from these passages that the Bible is antiabortion. These passages — all associated with esteemed biblical characters such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, and Paul — allow for other explanations, as indicated earlier, rather than viewing them as addressing abortion. If biblical writers possessed a burden for this issue, the writer of the Exodus 21 passage cited above could have easily uttered a few clear words. But the Bible is silent on what we call "abortion." But contra Samojluk, the Bible is not silent on "slavery, genocide, and polygamy." Genocide was at times commanded, and slavery and polygamy were explicitly acknowledged and unchallenged. Yet today the civilized world does not tolerate such immoral practices. These examples amply demonstrate the need for open, responsible use of Scripture, and the use of cogent reasoning in articulating defensible Christian moral positions for today. Jesus set the paradigm for us: when asked about the great commandment, he pointed to love of God and neighbor as self — leaving its application to his faithful followers.

Samojluk may be right about the future of our society — implying that future civil society will ban abortion as barbaric. And although he didn't say it, I am sure that abortion will not be a part of the ultimate human future — heaven. Abortion of human fetuses is not a good; it is merely a lesser evil in certain circumstances.

In this fallen life — of human finitude, faulty judgment, limited resources, and tragic choices — my Christian ethical moral calculation is this: Far greater evil would result from an outright ban on abortion than allowing it under our circumscribed Adventist guidelines.

*Jim Walters teaches at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, Calif., in the department of religion. He is a founding member of Adventist Today.*

Samojluk fails to see any difference in the moral standing of a single-celled concept and that of the reader of this page. This, I suggest, is a flat view of human life. Thus, in terms of moral worth, stem cells = normal adults = Terri Schiavo.





# Hope for Hope Street: A Case Study in Community Engagement

True, poverty, drugs and disgrace stalk the neighborhood. But we're focused on the neighborhood's assets — not its pathology.

The Norton Neighborhoods of San Bernardino, California, lie almost literally in the shadow of Loma Linda University Medical Center. In those neighborhoods around the former Norton Air Force Base, the hospital's after-school site, The Gardens, sits near the end of one of the city's most blighted streets. From the front yard one can see the towers of the Medical Center. The next street over, Hope Street, provides a fitting suggestion of what we're trying to do in the Norton Neighborhoods: provide hope.

True, poverty, drugs and disgrace stalk the neighborhood. But we're focused on the neighborhood's assets — not its pathology. There's Mr. Hanga, the Romanian master gardener, who keeps his yard immaculate despite the flagrant code violations in the junkyard next door. There's Mr. Guerrero, a city bus driver, our neighborhood association president, whose family has lived in the neighborhood for more than 50 years. We even have a millionaire — a Native American and his wife who worked hard all their lives, but now, with profits from the tribal casino, could live anywhere they want. But no, they've stayed right there, where the wife has lived since she was 10 months old, in 1945. Their acre is now beautifully landscaped, but the house is still simple.

And what about Andrea? Her family was poor enough before her father had a stroke. But Andrea was determined to succeed. I wrote recommendations for her and she was awarded a full scholarship to attend University of California at Irvine.

Of course there are tragedies too — Jamel and Brian were killed in street racing accidents. Tony has failed the eighth grade twice — but they're sending him on to high school anyway. Monica, at age 13, ran away with a 21-year old man. But she came back, fortunately without a baby, and she'll make another run at the seventh grade next year.

It all started when I read in the newspaper that \$1 million had been set aside to complete a walking/biking trail along the Santa Ana River in San Bernardino. It so happens that the part of the Santa Ana River nearest LLUMC flows (during those parts of the year when it isn't a dry wash) through some of the poorest nearby neighborhoods. So, as

director of Community Outreach for the hospital, I attended a meeting with the president of the city's neighborhood associations. I wanted to see if we could help get the neighborhood involved in this valuable asset.

"Ron," said Rudy, who was then president of the neighborhood association, "I already walk along the river every morning with my dog Rex. Why don't you come and join me?"

So I did. Then, just as we were thinking about how to get started in that neighborhood, I got a phone call.

"I have some property in San Bernardino," the caller said, "I'd like to have it used as a community garden." Incredibly, the one-acre lot, including a house, was right on the river, convenient to the whole neighborhood where we wanted to serve.

"How much could you rent that place for?" I asked.

"Oh, probably \$1,000 or more," she replied.

"Tell you what," I said, "rent it to us for \$500 a month and we'll put graduate students in the house who will repay their rental advantage by helping out with after-school programs there — and we'll include gardening."

And so we began, first by clearing away the tumbleweeds and the puncture vines. We built garden boxes from lumber discarded at a recycling plant nearby. We made tables out of doors donated by a local factory. We made stools by fastening together empty five-gallon sour-cream buckets, discarded from the hospital cafeteria.

Small grants helped us buy supplies and tools, and before long the pediatric residents from the School of Medicine were teaching nutrition as part of their community pediatric rotation.

It was an "incarnational" model of community development: we lived in the neighborhood and the children and youth walked to the site. Yes, it has its risks — but in our four years of living there, the worst that has happened was paint sprayed on the car of one of our live-in graduate student helpers. We know who did it — he's new to the program. We're taking him and some of his friends to dinner next week so he can get acquainted with the people he so thoughtlessly harmed.

We picked up surplus government food from the local food bank and sent the children home with it. We rented a portable office, put it next to the house, and acquired half a dozen Internet-connected

*Continued on page 23*





**Dr. Debbie Demos, a pediatric neurologist at LLU Children's Hospital, is volunteering to teach music at the Children's Learning Gardens. The first Wednesday in May, she taught the children to play the recorder. Next time they want to see and hear her violin, one of 14 instrument the doctor can play. She'll also be introducing them to music composition, using computer software in our portable office to help them write and record their own tunes.**

computers, due to the kindness of the hospital's Information Systems Department. We bought state-of-the-art language software and started teaching English to the moms of the kids who attended.

Then some medical students launched a tutoring and mentoring program. The Gardens became one of half a dozen sites where more than 150 university student volunteers served weekly. For the older kids, we made attendance at tutoring sessions the key to other privileges. Middle- and high-school students who attended mentoring could come later in the week for "Job Scouts," a work education program where 90 minutes of service (together with their participation in tutoring) was rewarded with \$10 from grant funds.

These Job Scouts also paid visits to local businesses, not to seek work, but to learn about the world of work — each student asking a set question and all students recording the answers the business leader gave: How many people work here? What are some of the common jobs, some of the unusual ones? How do you decide who gets the top pay? How do you decide when you have to fire someone?

But not all the activities were centered on the after-school site. We fostered neighborhood associations in four of the eight Norton Neighborhoods.

As the program grew, we acquired an office and classroom in the hospital's warehouse, just across the river from the after-school site. Then, when the school district's English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) classes for parents had no suitable place to meet, we offered our classroom. When students from the SIFE (Students in Free Enterprise) program at La Sierra University's School of Business wanted a group of adults from an economically challenged neighborhood whom they could help with a micro-lending and family budgeting project, the ESL class was ready to participate.

Now the week at "The Gardens" begins on Monday with "Project Lean," an exercise program for teen girls, run by the county's Public Health Department and the computer-based ESL class

for the parents. Tuesday is mentoring day for K-12 students. Wednesday is Children's Learning Gardens for elementary children to learn nutrition from the doctors in the pediatric residency program and gardening from volunteer Master Gardeners. A few teens also participate, preparing the healthy fruit or vegetable snack of the item they've just learned about.

Then Thursday is crafts and counseling for the girls, environmental education for the boys — although all the teens often participate in the latter.

Along the way, we were impressed more and more with the need for character education and with the almost total lack of biblical literacy among the youth of the neighborhood. So, reading the Bible aloud together in simple English not only improved their reading skills, but also offered an opportunity for them to reflect on religious, moral, and spiritual themes.

Why should a hospital be supporting all this? For one thing, hospitals in California (and many other states) are required to provide community benefits to justify their tax-exempt status. But for us, our motto, "To Make Man Whole," demands that we not always wait till people get sick. We want to preserve and protect health and wholeness at every stage of life.

Doctors and nurses, in our economy at least, rarely have time to create health with adequate emphasis on prevention and lifestyle change. They are too busy relieving pain and postponing death. But the whole hospital community, as well as local churches, public service agencies, and altruistic volunteers can all work together to create and preserve health and wholeness in the neighborhoods nearby.

See more about the Norton Neighborhoods at <http://www.healthycities.com>

*Ron Graybill, Ph.D., is Director of Community Outreach at the Loma Linda University Medical Center, Loma Linda, California. His e-mail is [ron@healthycities.com](mailto:ron@healthycities.com).*

...our motto,  
"To Make  
Man Whole,"  
demands  
that we  
not always  
wait till people  
get sick.  
We want to  
preserve and  
protect  
health and  
wholeness  
at every  
stage of  
life.



» *Adventist Today* designed a survey and sent it to the approximately 5,000 pastors in North America.

# Adventist Pastors and 1844: An Adventist Today Survey

**E**arly this year, the editors of *Adventist Today* heard emphatically contradictory statements about the beliefs of Adventist pastors regarding 1844. In an attempt to discover the truth, we mailed a survey to the approximately 5,000

pastors in North America. The completed forms were returned to our office, then professionally tallied and analyzed. The final report looked impressive with numbers and colorful graphs.

I had predicted that 80 percent of pastors would report that they believed the church's teaching. I estimated a similarly high percentage would report they seldom, if ever, preached on the doctrine. But these were mere guesses, based on random conversations. I hoped the survey would give us solid information. Unfortunately, the beautifully prepared report included the following statement: "It would not be responsible journalism to publish any of these results without a clear statement that this is not a scientific survey or poll."

Of the 5,100 surveys mailed, only 194 completed forms (3 to 4 percent) were returned to us. The minimum number of returns required for a survey like this to have any validity is 30 percent. The results did not vary wildly from my earlier estimates, though I was surprised at the claimed frequency of preaching on the topic. However, the survey has no statistical validity. You can get just as reliable information by questioning a few pastors, as long as you include in your sample a person or two you suspect thinks differently from you.

The survey examined the beliefs of Adventist pastors about the date, 1844. Comments on returned surveys expressed a high level of concern about the nature and meaning of the judgment. Are people on trial? Is God on trial? Is the judgment cautionary bad news or encouraging good news? These kinds of questions were not addressed in the survey.

The professional who worked with us on this survey has suggested alternative survey methods that might well produce statistically valid results. As funds become available we intend to make further efforts to measure the views and practices of Adventist pastors. For most members, pastors are the face of the church.

This survey was a bold, expensive experiment. We still believe that the potential benefits to the church were worth the risk, even though, naturally, we wish there had been a much greater response. We thank the donors who participated with us in a groundbreaking effort and look forward to future cooperative ventures. We hope our work will spur others also to take seriously the views and practices of pastors through research and news reporting. With the help of our readers and donors, we will continue working to make the wisdom and convictions of pastors more formative for the entire church.

» We hope our work will spur others to take seriously the views and practices of pastors.