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Emily

TOMMY SHELTON RETIRES FROM 3ABN: 06 ON BEING CERTAIN - ALDEN THOMPSON: 18

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Editorial | John McLarty

Sabbatical Bliss

On Thursday I left my car with a light pack for what I thought would be a long, but straightforward, hike to Old Woman Statue, a curious granite formation southwest of Needles, California. Instead I took a long, unintentional detour and didn't make it to the statue until 10:30 on Friday morning. From there I hiked northeast in search of Sunflower Spring.

When I finally found the spring, I still had a liter of water left, but I was dehydrated from two days of severe rationing. I filtered and drank 40 ounces before hitting the trail again. It was nearly sundown when I reached my car, where I had water enough to bathe.

» I preach incessantly about God's grace and the pleasure he takes in his creatures. I tell others God would rather die than live without us. But I had allowed stress to reduce these truths to mere bits of religious information shelved in my mental library.

Sabbath morning, at the first hint of light, I moved from lying on my pad to sitting in my chair, still wrapped in my sleeping bag. I saw the stars dim and a finger's width of the eastern horizon begin to glow orange, yellow, and red. An hour and a half after the first hint of light, the sun peeked above the horizon, then kept climbing till it was clear of the ragged peaks to the east.

With sunrise came warmth. I crawled out of my sleeping bag and pulled off my down coat. I ate

breakfast, then again sat for hours to savor the quiet and stillness. A perfect Sabbath antidote for the crazy-making stress in my head.

Sabbath-keeping is valuable. It is a model of the gospel — we stop working because God finished his work and directed us to join him in his rest. The routine of our lives is enriched by regularly taking time to give extraordinary attention to God's grace. But sometimes the weekly Sabbath is not enough.

In each of the past four years I attended a major church conference in late summer when many pastors ordinarily take a couple weeks off. Then in October 2005, our church broke ground for a new building. From January through May I scarcely took a day off. (How could I when my church members were working at full-time jobs and volunteering every spare minute to help with construction?) By May the building was finished, and I was near collapse.

Fortunately the Washington Conference offers a three-month sabbatical to its pastors after seven years of service. I had been in my church for eight years and was given three months off. The highlight of my sabbatical was a couple of weeks alone in the desert.

I had hoped to encounter a burning bush where God would give me a dramatic new assignment or offer a commanding affirmation of my current work. Alas. I found no burning bush, had no visions, received no groundbreaking revelations. But every morning, wrapped in my coat and sleeping bag, I watched the sky for an hour and a half. I saw the stars fade and the sun rise. I felt the day grow warm. And sitting there in that great stillness, I was increasingly aware of God's smile.

I preach incessantly about God's grace and the pleasure he takes in his creatures. I tell others that God would rather die than live without us. But I had allowed stress to reduce these truths to mere bits of religious information shelved in my mental library. They no longer touched the core of my being. But sitting there in the desert, in the quiet, in the dawning light, I had a fresh experience of the old truth. I enjoyed again the smile of God — the supreme purpose of Sabbath and sabbaticals.



Contents

Vol. 15, issue 2

04 | Letters | AT Readers

06 | Tommy Shelton Retires From 3ABN: Virginia Church Meets to Address Allegations of Sexual Misconduct | *Edwin D. Schwisow*

09 | When the Elephant Got Thirsty | *James Stirling*

Features

10 | Emily | *John Thomas McLarty*

14 | Loving Others: When Pride of Peculiarity Gets in the Way | *Anita Strawn de Ojeda*

16 | How I learned to Know God's Word: Why Do We Think and Act the Way We Do When Conflict Arises? | *Richard L. Noel*

18 | On Being Certain | *Alden Thompson*

20 | Recent Publications in Adventist Creationism | *Ervin Taylor*

22 | A Little Girl Who Had a Little Curl: Coming to Terms with the Prophet Ellen | *Max Gordon Phillips*

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READERS RESPOND

letters

GREIG GOES TOO FAR

Dr. Joe Greig's article, "The Doctrine of the Sanctuary as an Adventist Philosophy of History" (AT Nov/Dec 2006) is quite interesting. Greig's "defense," which he calls a "philosophical historical understanding," has to be one of the most "novel reconstructions" anyone has proposed to date!

In his unusual "defense" of the traditional founding "myths" of Seventh-day Adventism, Dr. Greig has created an even more "mythical" interpretation than "Father Miller's" original time-setting "theory or system," or the reinterpretations of Snow and Edson, or the additions of Bates, the Whites, and the other "founding Fathers," and even the reinterpretations and accretions of later modern "defenders" of Adventism!

It is not likely that Dr. Greig's "novel reconstructions" will find many supporters, either among "traditional Adventists," or even among "progressive Adventists." They involve rarified "mythical" views that few other Christians can biblically, logically or faithfully share!

Arlin Baldwin — Coarsegold, Calif.

BELIEVING IN 1844

Pastor Kevin James' invitation to those who "don't believe that 1844 is even supported in Scripture, . . . need to be honest and get out of Adventism" (AT Nov/Dec 2006) reflects an attitude similar to that of Jesus' disciples who wanted to call fire from heaven on those who failed to offer food and shelter to them. Tell Pastor James that if all those who do not interpret Scripture the way he does were to leave the church, half of the seats in the SDA Church might be empty. Jesus warned us not to try to pull the weeds before the wheat is ready for harvest, lest we pull the good plants as well.

The Bible is full of predictions that have met multiple fulfillment throughout history. I see no reason for asking those who apply the same principle of Biblical interpretation to Daniel 8:14 to abandon Adventism. A local and partial fulfillment took place when the Holy Temple was cleansed after it had been desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes. Our SDA pioneers managed to find another application of Daniel 8:14 to the Adventist movement in 1844.

Fanaticism is as dangerous as unbelief, perhaps even more so. We need to follow the example of the noble Bereans, who searched the Scriptures in order to discover whether Paul's teaching was in agreement.

Nic Samojluk — Loma Linda, Calif.

INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT AND THE UNIVERSE

The Sanctuary doctrine (AT Nov/Dec 2006) gives a reasonable answer to the question "How and when do humans stop sinning?" For every human, character is formed as the sum total of the decisions made from childhood throughout life. At some point each person's character reaches a completion point, a fix, a set, a settling in. After that the character is no longer subject to change. God, who knows all and reads the heart, knows when the character is forever "fixed." If the person has accepted Jesus and the character is fixed in obedience, that person is marked for salvation. If the character is "fixed" in rebellion, that person is marked for destruction. However, the rest of the intelligent beings in the universe are not able to "see" what God sees. In order to satisfy every demand for justice, God must "reveal" to the rest of his creatures the basis of his decision. This process is the investigative judgment. In 1844 Christ began the process. When he is finished with each case, the universe is comfortable that his decision was both totally loving and totally just.

Probation is the time when a person's character is forming. Once the character is formed, a person's probation has closed. Once a person's character is "fixed," that person lives without an intercessor. No intercessor is needed, for it is as impossible for that person to change as it is for concrete to be shaped once it has set. The time of the Sabbath test brings the final "set" to the character of all people alive on planet earth. The Sanctuary doctrine is the glue that holds all the last-day teachings into a complete, beautiful picture of a God doing everything possible to demonstrate his fairness and love to a universe of free moral agents.

John Martin, Lay Pastor — Windsor, Colo.

CARTOONS AND REALITY

An e-mail showed up in my in-basket recently with the following tag line:

"Reality is what refuses to go away when you do not believe in it." (Steven Pinker)

Subsequently I remembered the great cartoon in the latest Adventist Today (AT Jan/Feb 2007) and realized that the above quote could also have been used as its caption.

No matter how much we don't like it, no matter how much we pontificate against it in the *Review*, those creatures are always right there walking behind

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

us. Surely we owe them a debt of gratitude for their having survived and passed on so many of their genes to us.

Bob Wonderly — Loma Linda, Calif.

WILLEY ON EVOLUTION AND THE CHURCH

Contrary to T. Joe Willey's assertion (Evolution is a Lie! AT Jan/Feb 07 issue), the statement voted by the Annual Council in October 2004 said nothing about 6,000 years in its affirmation of the literal creation week of Genesis 1.

Perhaps, in the interest of accuracy in reporting, AT should publish the statement in its entirety.

Cindy Tutsch — Silver Spring, Md.

Editorial Note - Here's a reply from T. Joe Willey: There is little to be gained where the less ambiguous use of "6,000 years" does battle with the statement in the church's historic affirmation; "that life on earth ... is of recent origin." Pew-sitting SDA faithful know that "recent origin" equals 6,000 years. Non-Adventists would have to guess what the "historic" affirmation means. Using Oliver Wendell Holmes to buttress my opinion — "I know there are professors in this country who 'ligate' arteries. Other surgeons only tie them. Both stop the bleeding just as well." Much more important would be a discussion on the half-life of such a "historic" concept. As Dr. Francis Collins, head of the Human Genome Project, a leading evangelical scientist working on the cutting edge of life writes, "from the study of genomes, plus others that could fill hundreds of books of this length, provide the kind of molecular support for the theory of evolution that has convinced virtually all working biologists that Darwin's framework of variation and natural selection is unquestionably correct." Thus the bleeding might appear to stop for young-earth creationism in the Faith and Science Conference, but can you imagine scientific revelations quick-frozen under a "historic" concept or a God who created a universe and then endowed human beings with intellectual abilities "to discern its workings? Would he want us to disregard those abilities? Would he be diminished or threatened by what we are discovering about his creation?" Francis S. Collins. *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*. NY: Free Press. 2006. p. 141 & 153.

DREAMS AND VISIONS

It is a very sad state of affairs when I read of the bold attacks on our church's key biblical beliefs on Daniel, Ezekiel, and Hebrews. These articles (AT Nov/Dec 2006) attack the very core beliefs of our early church and the sanctuary doctrine we have known for 160 years.

I truly wonder, does God really need deep abstract thinkers and scholars to guide his church in a new way today? Has not God lovingly guided His church for over 160 years by the true, divine dreams and visions given to His humble people? Yes, through a humble farmer named Hiram Edson and a young teenager named Ellen G. White. He did this for us! (Joel 2:28) Would God now change directions to guide us another way?

I pose one last question to all deep abstract thinkers and scholars. Has God given any of you new light with dreams and visions on Daniel chapters 8 and 9 lately? I would venture you would say, "No"! So let us stay with God's earliest guidance in these important matters. For God truly used the humblest of people, which were lesser lights to the greater light, the Bible.

R. Snider (Retired SDA teacher) — Hopewell, Ohio

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PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

The cover of your 1844 issue (AT Nov/Dec 2006) tells it all. We dropped Humpty Dumpty and he is in bits, but your writers haven't "put all of the pieces together again." Your issue is mostly opinion, not exegesis. Until we have "read, heard, and kept" what God says to us in Revelation we will remain "poor, blind and naked." The pre-advent judgment is only Step 1 in God's extensive final judgment — when angels and saints voice their testimonies in behalf of God — not God merely doing for us. God is Revelation's Alpha and Omega. He foresaw our mid-nineteenth century as the start of the time of the end, a time when "The nations were angry, and your wrath has come, and the time of the dead that they should be judged... and should destroy those who destroy the earth." Rev. 11:18.

Continued on page 13

Letters policy

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

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

Tommy Shelton Retires From 3ABN

In a telephone interview with a representative of *Adventist Today*, Danny Shelton confirmed that his brother had left the employ of 3ABN for health reasons.

VIRGINIA CHURCH MEETS TO ADDRESS ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Facing multiple allegations of sexual misconduct, Tommy Shelton, production manager at Three Angels Broadcasting Network (3ABN) and brother of 3ABN President Danny

Shelton, announced his retirement in a December 31, 2006, broadcast of *3ABN Live*.

Although not owned or operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, many of 3ABN's employees and volunteers are Adventist church members.

In a telephone interview with a representative of *Adventist Today*, Danny Shelton confirmed that his brother had left the employ of 3ABN for "health reasons."

Virginia Church Allegations

Tommy Shelton's retirement comes just four weeks after the Community Church of God in Dunn Loring, Virginia, held a December 3, 2006, business meeting to address accusations made by several young men that Tommy had molested them while he was pastor of the church.

Following the meeting, church leaders read a carefully worded statement, apprising the congregation of the accusations against Shelton and how they, as parishioners, should best respond. The church leaders prepared the statement under the advisement of their insurance carrier, Brotherhood Mutual, which had become involved after a young man came to the church with allegations that Tommy, during his pastorate, had molested him. The youth was a minor when he says he was abused.

He is the third in recent months to come forward to Community Church of God leaders, accusing Shelton of making inappropriate sexual advances, according to Glenn Dryden, current pastor of the church.

A History of Allegations

This is not the first time Tommy has been accused of inappropriate sexual activity with underage males.

During much of the 1980s, Tommy pastored the Ezra Church of God in his hometown of West Frankfort, Illinois. While there, he worked closely with a 12-grade school, whose property bordered the church. During this time, a teenaged boy enrolled at the school accused Tommy of soliciting him for a sexual relationship. According to Dryden, who pastored the West Frankfort church in the 1990s, three other boys also made similar allegations, prompting civil authorities to become involved.

Following a police investigation, Tommy was not charged with a crime, but the allegations were serious enough to prompt Church of God officials to intervene. In a letter dated October 25, 1985, the General Assembly of the Church of God in Illinois revoked Tommy's ordination. Listed as reasons for doing so were "improper counseling procedures," "numerous charges of misconduct," a criminal investigation into sexual abuse charges by the local police, and controversy surrounding Tommy's ministry and lifestyle.

Ultimately Tommy's lack of cooperation in the disciplinary process, Dryden says, led the Church of God in Illinois to drop the Ezra Church of God from its roster of affiliated congregations.

In the early 1990s further allegations of sexual misconduct were brought against Tommy; and in 1991 Tommy resigned as pastor of the Ezra Church of God, citing health concerns.

Allegations at 3ABN

Shortly after Tommy resigned his post as pastor, his brother Danny invited him to join 3ABN as production manager.

During his time at 3ABN, a member of Tommy's production staff, who was in his early twenties at the time, says Tommy made a sexual advance to him. Shortly after what he calls his "uncomfortable situation," the former employee says he confronted Danny Shelton with what had happened. In response, Danny assured the young man that he would no longer have to answer to Tommy and that 3ABN administrators would "work things out."

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

In late 1992, Elder Bjarne “Bj” Christensen, then president of the Illinois Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, approached two members of Danny’s family, asking them to make a statement in regard to improprieties they had observed in Tommy’s behavior. Elder Christensen transcribed the statement and brought it to the attention of the 3ABN board, on which he then sat.

At a subsequent 3ABN board meeting, Tommy was terminated as production manager. But shortly thereafter, 3ABN outfitted him with a touring bus and sent him out as a 3ABN representative, giving gospel concerts and promoting 3ABN to cable companies throughout the United States.

Connections in Virginia

During the time Tommy was promoting 3ABN, he visited the Community Church of God in Dunn Loring. After learning that he had experience with media ministry, the church offered him a position as a media consultant. Later he was hired as assistant pastor for media ministries. When the church’s senior pastor left for missionary service in March 1996, Tommy was named as his replacement.

Further allegations of sexual misconduct surfaced during his tenure in Dunn Loring, and in 2000, members of Tommy’s own family confronted him about what they saw as inappropriate activities between him and his adopted son. His family also shared their concerns about his relationship with an underage male from the church.

In the face of the new allegations, Tommy once again announced that he was having medical problems in 2002 and resigned as pastor of the Community Church of God, moving with his wife and family to Marion, Kentucky, an hour-and-a-half drive from 3ABN.

Later that year, Tommy was hired as 3ABN tape and masters archive librarian, without the formal approval of the 3ABN board of directors, a group that had fired him just 10 years before.

Pastor Contacts 3ABN

In the spring of 2003, Dryden, then pastor of the Ezra Church of God in West Frankfort, penned a letter outlining his concerns about Tommy Shelton. He distributed it to a handful of leaders of Church of God camp meeting associations, whom he knew, in the past, had invited Tommy to speak at their church meetings.

He later sent the letter to Walter Thompson, M.D., 3ABN board chairman, advising him that “at least six boys in our community were sexually abused” by Tommy. He told Thompson that Tommy’s ordination was not in good standing with either the

Church of God in Illinois or Virginia and offered to give Thompson the phone numbers of the family members of Tommy’s purported victims, so that 3ABN could follow up on the situation.

Thompson spoke with Dryden and then brought the letter to the attention of Danny Shelton. Danny brushed the letter off as 30-year-old news, attributing it to a long-standing feud between Dryden and Tommy. After the meeting with Danny, Thompson brought the letter to the full 3ABN board at its June 2003 meeting. The board, due to its belief that the events had happened many years before; Tommy’s assurance that he had attempted to make things right; and the fact that no legal action had been taken against Tommy, allowed Tommy’s relationship with 3ABN to continue.

Further Allegations

In the spring of 2004, Roger W. Clem, a 32-year-old man who had attended the Ezra Church of God during his teenage years, released a letter he had written to Tommy, accusing him of sexual abuse. In his letter, which he later posted on the Internet, Clem claims Tommy has ruined 15 years of his life. He says that he is sick of Tommy’s manipulative behavior, including Tommy’s claims of illness whenever he feels the need to divert attention away from allegations of sexual misconduct.

On June 4, 2004, Linda Shelton signed a Separation Agreement with 3ABN, ending her employment with the ministry. Later that year, Tommy moved into her old office at 3ABN and assumed her role as programming director. During his time at 3ABN he traveled with his brother to 3ABN gatherings around the world, many times playing the piano as Danny sang. He also began playing the piano for the Kids Time show on 3ABN.

Early in 2007, Duane Clem, Roger’s brother, told close associates that Tommy had molested him, as well. In a statement released in January 2007, Clem accused Tommy of initiating a sexual relationship with him when he was 19, at times using 3ABN buildings for their assignations. Clem says the growing number of allegations against Tommy prompted him to come forward with his claims.

SDA Investigators

Much of the pressure that Tommy Shelton now faces has come from the efforts of a small, informal network of Seventh-day Adventist individuals. Many in the group categorize themselves as conservative Adventists, a constituency 3ABN has long relied on for key support.

For the past several months, this unpaid volunteer group has investigated a number of allegations

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

Tommy Shelton Retires From 3ABN

» Further allegations of sexual misconduct surfaced during his tenure in Dunn Loring, and in 2000, members of Tommy's own family confronted him about what they saw as inappropriate activities between him and his adopted son. His family also shared their concerns about his relationship with an underage male from the church.

against Danny Shelton and 3ABN. Some they have found to be true, while others proved to be false. Doing their work primarily via telephone and e-mail, the group has interviewed dozens of people who have had connections with 3ABN and the Shelton family over the last 20 years.

Two members of the network — Gailon Arthur Joy, a loan officer trainer from Sterling, Massachusetts, and Bob Pickle, a Webmaster and Adventist apologist from Halstad, Minnesota — have posted the findings of their investigation on the Internet. Both men espouse belief in a historical, conservative Adventist theology, including the traditional church teachings about 1844 and Ellen G. White, and say that before starting their investigation, they had positive feelings toward 3ABN and its ministry.

"3ABN was an integral part of our home TV viewing for more than a decade. My family members have contributed heavily to 3ABN (financially)," says Joy.

Joy spearheaded an effort as late as May 2006 to distribute more than 6,000 copies of Danny Shelton's book *Ten Commandments Twice Removed*.

Joy and Pickle say they only began investigating when concerned Adventist friends urged them to help them verify or dismiss rumors of misconduct at the 3ABN. As they conducted their initial investigation, both men became impressed that what was happening behind the scenes at 3ABN didn't mesh with the rosy picture they had seen on their television screens.

In late 2006, Joy, who has experience as a legal clerk, was asked by Linda Shelton to represent her as she negotiated the ground rules for an inquiry by Adventist-laymen's Services and Industries (ASI) into the propriety of her divorce from Danny Shelton. Harold Lance, a retired attorney and former president of the self-supporting organization Outpost Centers Incorporated, led the inquiry. In January 2007, the ASI-brokered negotiations fell apart early,

due in part to the inability of the two parties to reach an understanding on the manner or scope of the inquiry.

Lance, who had been asked to head up the inquiry by the ASI Executive Committee in October, summarized the dissolution of the inquiry in an e-mail statement on January 5.

"For approximately three months ASI has deeply considered its involvement in issues involving 3ABN in three special Executive Committee meetings called for that purpose and multiple other contacts," Lance wrote. "It now appears that it is not appropriate for ASI to be involved."

Joy has registered a Web site at save3abn.com that contains documents and statements from various sources involved in the group's investigation of Tommy Shelton. As of press time, the site had received more than 36,000 hits.

Joy and Pickle have a growing list of e-mail contacts, many in church leadership, to whom they plan to send periodic communication, chronicling what they see as areas in which 3ABN must be held to higher accountability.

Adventist Today offered Dr. Thompson, in his capacity as 3ABN Board Chairman, an opportunity to confirm, disconfirm, or provide additional information concerning the accuracy of the parts of this report that cover areas about which he had direct, personal knowledge.

In an e-mail to the Executive Editor of *Adventist Today*, he stated that in view of a conversation he had had with Danny Shelton, he would "withhold further comment at present."

Edwin D. Schwisow is an editor and writer who markets his work primarily through LifeScape Publishing in Sandy, Ore. He can be reached by e-mail at edschwisow@hotmail.com.

When the Elephant Got Thirsty

A century ago, in 1904, Ellen G. White surveyed a site in National City, California, near San Diego, and exclaimed over its potential for an Adventist health center. An abandoned health resort on the property had experienced a prolonged drought and was up for sale. But Ellen White was sure the Lord wanted the church to get the property.

Responding to her enthusiasm, others came forward with means to buy the land and the health resort. They contracted for a well-digging crew led by Salem Hamilton, an Adventist. Some 80 feet down, using pick and shovel, the diggers were discouraged. Hamilton asked Mrs. White, “Did the Lord tell you to buy this property?”

“Yes! Yes!” she replied emphatically. “Three times I was shown we should secure this particular property.”

“All right,” Hamilton answered. “The Lord would not give us an elephant without providing water for it to drink.” And as the crew continued they broke at last into a spring with water enough for all the needs of the fledgling sanitarium.

So with that beginning Paradise Valley Sanitarium, now Hospital, has served as a haven of spiritual and physical healing to the people of the San Diego area ever since. It has been part of the Adventist Health System since the early 1980s.

But now the hospital seems about to pass out of Adventist hands. In November 2006, hospital officials signed a letter of intent to sell it to Prime Healthcare Services, a growing for-profit hospital chain in Southern California. The proposed transfer was expected to get review and approval from the California State Attorney General’s office by early 2007.

The decision to sell was not easy. The hospital has grown through the years and now has 300 beds, up-to-date facilities for surgery, imaging, and emergency, and a network of physicians capable of providing quality health care to the people of Paradise Valley and the entire South Bay area to the border with Mexico. There is an Adventist

church near the hospital campus, many of whose members work for the hospital. There is also a church academy, providing Christian education to families of hospital employees. Paradise Valley Hospital (PVH) has been a beacon of hope for thousands of sufferers and a strong witness for the church.

But the hospital industry has changed drastically since the days of Ellen White. Her vision of small rural health centers has given way to the fiercely competitive health care world of high-tech and expensive diagnostic tools and managed-care institutions like Medicare and MediCal, and also Health Maintenance Organizations, (HMOs), which are insurance corporations. The government and health insurance companies play an increasingly dominant role in the provision and financing of medical care. Immigrants in the communities near Paradise Valley, often lacking health insurance, make use of the government’s mandate that emergency room treatment be offered to people regardless of ability to pay; and many who come cannot pay. Uninsured and underinsured patients represent costly problems for a hospital. Adding to the strain on the hospital finances was the deadline imposed by the government for seismic retrofitting of the main buildings.

Despite the efforts of the financial planners at the hospital and the umbrella Adventist Health System West, over several years the PVH began to rack up steep losses — \$7.5 million between January 2005 and June 2006 alone. When offered a price from the new hospital chain, hospital directors saw it as a promising way out. The Adventist Health management and the church’s Pacific Union Conference leadership concurred that the time had come to give up their beloved hospital.

According to newspaper reports, the prospective buyer has developed a turnaround system that has brought other struggling hospitals into profitable operation, eliciting praise from some observers and criticism from others. The owner “plays hardball” with insurance companies in ways the church could

Despite the efforts of the financial planners at the hospital and the umbrella Adventist Health System West, over several years PVH began to rack up steep losses — \$7.5 million between January 2005 and June 2006 alone.

Continued on page 17

Emily

If Emily didn't snare you with her grin, she would poke you with her cane. You were not allowed to escape church without saying hi. She was parked in a metal folding chair in the tiny lobby of the church, waiting for the Pauliens, who usually drove her home.

I was fresh out of seminary, employed by Metro Ministries at the New York Center in Times Square, and quasi-officially assigned as assistant pastor at the German New York Seventh-day Adventist Church on Manhattan's upper east side. I was an easy mark, a brand new pastor eager to do pastoral work. Emily wanted attention. My third week at church, she invited me for supper.

Her apartment was on the second floor of a dilapidated, six-floor walk-up on East 85th near Third Avenue. When she opened the door, I looked over her head into what had been a sitting room. The furniture was piled with nondescript stuff, barely visible in the dark. She greeted me with her characteristic cackling laugh. "Ach, mein lieblich, come in, come in." She pulled me down and gave me a wet kiss on the cheek. Then, hobbling on her walker, she headed into the kitchen.

The glare of the light bulb hanging in the center of the room highlighted the water stains on the ceiling and upper wall on the far side of the room. Below the stains was a grimy window, too deep in the window well between buildings for sunlight to reach even if it had been clean. Every horizontal surface was piled with empty plastic containers, pots and pans and papers, especially papers. The yellow linoleum-topped kitchen table was completely buried. Where the table abutted the corner, the drift of church papers, boxes, empty containers, expired coupons for cat food, canning lids and letters approached 18 inches deep.

When it was time to eat, Emily cleared two spaces on the table for plates and served us from the stove. She asked me to say grace and we ate. The dishes were cracked and stained, but not visibly dirty. The spaetzle and boiled cabbage was edible. For dessert, she served a berry-filled pastry with ersatz coffee made from grain.

Supper over, she had a favor to ask. She had a small house upstate. She had bought it with her husband Albert. They used to have such wonderful times there. Could I possibly drive her up to the house sometime? She would pay for gas. The teenager she had hired in the past had moved.

What could I say?

She talked about her Albertli. And laughed and cried. "Ach, mein Albert!" And her eyes glowed with distant, dreamy fire.

The next Sunday, I pulled into 85th Street, hoping to find a parking place near Emily's apartment. But this was Manhattan on Sunday morning. Across the street was a fire station. No parking there. Next to the fire station, on the corner of Third Avenue, was a luxury high rise. No parking anytime in front of it. The rest of the street was parked bumper to bumper, except for the fire hydrants. I drove around the block a couple of times. Finally, I double-parked in front of Emily's building. She buzzed me in and I raced up the stairs.

She was at the door. Before she shut it behind her, she talked to her two cats. "I'll be gone for a few hours, my dears. Don't worry. I'll be back. I'll get your dinner. Don't worry."

She turned, "Ach. How are you?" she giggled. "Come here, let me give you a kiss."

"We need to hurry." I said. "I'm double-parked."

"Oh! That's bad." Her face was a storm of indignation and worry.

She gave me her cane and put both hands on the railing, then lowered herself one step at a time. Every

Continued on page 11

Continued from page 10

step, I worried about my double-parked car. But I was amazed to watch her negotiate the steps. She was less than five feet tall and appeared to be three feet wide.

Finally, we were on the ground floor. Then out the door, down the front steps. No ticket. Whew!

She called to a couple of firemen outside the station across the street. "This is my pastor," she called. "We are going to my house in the country." They waved. I helped her into my gold 1974 Volkswagen Beetle with a sunroof and stereo.

As we drove north, she told me more about Albertli. She had fallen in love with him when she was 10 years old. He was 17. She followed him everywhere in the small agricultural village where they lived. She had made him promise he would wait for her to grow up so she could marry him. That was before the war.

Then the war came. She lost track of everyone in the village, and after the war she ended up in New York City by herself. She found work as a gem polisher in the diamond district in midtown Manhattan. Her boss always said he appreciated her work. And he was nice to her. But he refused to pay her what she was worth. Once she worked on the Hope Diamond. The guards had orders not to let it out of their sight. They hovered over her until she demanded they get out or she wouldn't work. They stood against the back wall. She loved telling that story.

Then when she was 50, she got on the Lexington Avenue local at 86th Street headed to work. The train stopped at 77th Street, and Albert got on the train! She stared. It couldn't be. Finally, he noticed her staring. He looked again. He came over.

"Are you Emily?"

She said nothing. She giggled. She couldn't stop looking at him. Then she threw her arms around him.

He met her after work that evening, and they talked half the night. And the next night and the next. During her days at work she struggled to persuade herself it wasn't a dream. Her Albert. He had married during the war. But after they moved to New York, his wife died. So he hadn't exactly waited, but here he was, hers. He started coming to church with her. Eventually, he joined the church and they married. Nineteen years of happiness.

The small, two-story frame house was on a corner. A detached garage was back of the house on the right. Albert and Emily had come up every weekend during the summer. There was a large garden, grassed over now but still fenced, where they had grown food for themselves and the raccoons, deer, skunks, and squirrels. Albert had an uncanny way with animals. Once they found a skunk in the basement. He had walked downstairs, picked it up by the tail and carried it outside, where he set it down gently. It

» I didn't visit Emily as often as I should. It was painful. What do you say to someone who has been fiercely independent her whole life, who loves trees and sunshine and flowers and sky . . . and now lives on the fourth floor of an ugly institution, with no window in her room?

never sprayed. Albert talked with the deer. He made friends with a raccoon that visited at the back door frequently.

She wiped tears as she talked about those days. After Albert died, she couldn't get up here very often. She kept their car for a while, but after a few years she had so much trouble with her leg, she couldn't drive any more. Their house in the country was too far from the doctor and the bank and store to manage without a car. So she had to move back to an apartment in the city.

I mowed the lawn. That was the real reason for our trip. For lunch she opened some canned blueberries to go with the sandwiches she brought. I couldn't tell how old the jar was. The berries were dark. The jar was half juice. But it didn't taste too bad.

We went another time or two that summer. I had thought I might use my time with Emily to help me learn German. I figured learning a bit of the language would show respect for the congregation's heritage. But other Germans at the church had cautioned me not to learn German from Emily. Her German was "redneck German," they explained. Emily's English was none too polished either, but her voice danced with laughter and mischief and life. She was loud and half deaf and irrepressible.

I left Manhattan for four years to pastor on Long Island before returning to the German Church as their official pastor. In the years I was away, Emily sold her house in the country, had been taken advantage of in the process. I hated to hear her tell the story.

A couple of months after I had returned to the city, I got a call. Emily was in the hospital. When I visited her, she asked me in a conspiratorial voice to help her escape. She had to get back home to take care of her cats. I tried to explain she wasn't strong enough to return home. But I would check on the cats.

Continued on page 12

Continued from page 11

Emily

It took effort to restrain my rage, when I looked at her in that bed and listened to her plaintive question, “Why did they do that?”

A couple of teenage girls had jumped her in the hall just outside the door of her apartment. They grabbed her purse, then shoved her down the stairs. She broke her right arm and right leg in several places. Her ribs hurt.

Every time I visited her in the hospital, she would ask in her comic, pouty voice, “When can I go home? Why won’t they let me go home? Can’t you sneak me out of here? I’ll pay you.”

I would mumble something. I couldn’t see how, at 82, given her weight and her injuries she would ever get back on her feet. But I couldn’t bring myself to say so.

Then I visited her in her new place, a room on the fourth floor of the Metropolitan Nursing Home on 98th Street. Her roommate, Lucy, appeared to be mildly retarded, but she was fully ambulatory and waited on Emily hand and foot. Lucy would smile at me shyly when I greeted her. She would let me hug her, but she never looked up, never looked me squarely in the face. She would nod her head when I asked her a question, but she didn’t talk. She seemed lost and disoriented.

Emily talked. About Albert. About animals. About people back in her neighborhood. About the firemen across the street and the garbagemen and the guy who ran the fruit and vegetable store around the corner on Third Avenue. About the nasty people who lived in this nursing home with her. About mean staff.

On one of my visits Emily was carrying on with her usual raucous banter when suddenly she turned sober.

“John, I have a question.”

“Yes.”

“You know my Albertli?”

“Yes.”

“You know I fell in love with him when I was 10 years old, and then didn’t see him again for 40 years until we met on the subway?”

“Yes, I remember.”

She lowered her voice and looked at the floor. She looked up at me again, then back at the floor. “Do you think Jesus can forgive me?”

“Sure, Emily. But what are you talking about?”

“My Albert and me. We were so crazy in love, we couldn’t wait. We couldn’t wait till we were married. I had waited 40 years. He had to take Bible studies and join the church. It took too much time. And we couldn’t wait.” She paused.

“I asked Jesus to forgive me.”

She paused again, a long time for Emily.



“It was a miracle. After 40 years. Do you think Jesus can forgive me?”

“Emily, look at me.”

She looked up, her face a crumpled mixture of tears and remembered delight.

“I’m sure Jesus has forgiven you.”

“You think so?” She grinned at me, then she was no longer looking at me, she was dreaming again of Albert, her Albertli. A minute later she reached over, tugged me toward her and opened her arms. We hugged and she kissed me, a wet kiss on my cheek.

I didn’t visit Emily as often as I should. It was painful. What do you say to someone who has been fiercely independent her whole life, who loves trees and sunshine and flowers and sky ... and now lives on the fourth floor of an ugly institution, with no window in her room? Her only escape from her room was a wheelchair that Lucy would push down to the dayroom.

The dayroom was brighter than her room, but still sterile looking. And noisy in unhappy ways, with the blaring TV and quarreling residents.

On one of my visits, Emily showed me red marks on her wrists. That was where the woman grabbed her, she said.

“Who?”

“The nurse. She pulls me out of bed at two in the morning and makes me go take a shower. Why can’t they let me take a shower in the daytime? Why do they have to wake me up at night and scream at me?”

She sounded like a lost little girl who needed Daddy or big brother to protect her. But I didn’t know how. Back then I didn’t know about elder

Continued on page 13

Continued from page 12

abuse. I didn't know if what she was telling me really happened. I didn't know how to find out. Was she messing her bed at night and only remembering the efforts to clean her up? Was someone deliberately targeting her for mistreatment? I couldn't ask Lucy. If I complained to the management, might it make things even worse for Emily? I felt helpless.

The next time I visited Emily, she was in the dayroom when I arrived. She asked me to wheel her down to her room so we could talk without all the distractions.

"How are you?" she asked in her characteristic loud, sweet-talking voice. I never tired of hearing Emily talk. Her German might be crude. Her entire demeanor evinced a cheerful disregard for niceties and proper manners. But her voice bubbled with laughter, affection and life.

"I'm fine," I said. "How are you?" It seemed impolite to even ask. What could she say? She was in prison for no crime of her own.

"Come," she motioned. "Sit down."

I sat directly in front of her, beside the small round table in her end of the room. She dropped her head, then covered her face with her hands and began to cry softly.

I let her cry for a minute, then asked. "What is it, Emily? What did they do to you now?"

She didn't answer at first. She just shook her head. Then she looked up at me, trying to force a smile through her tears. "To think they did worse than that to my Jesus."

"What do you mean, Emily?"

"You know. Last night when they got me up for my shower at two in the morning, the lady slapped me. Why did she do that? But they did much worse to my Jesus. They slapped him and pulled his beard and beat him."

She buried her face in her hands again and cried silently for her Jesus.

I wondered what kind of saint I was sitting with. A nurse's aid was pulling her out of her bed at two in the morning. Yanking her around and slapping her, and Emily was crying for her Jesus. They slapped him worse.

I preached Emily's graveside service in February. There was slushy snow on the ground. Her nephew and his wife and their two sons were there. The Pauliens came and brought two other old German women from church. The Feyls, another old German couple from church, came. I talked about Emily's love for animals and for firemen and the garbagemen on her block and for the kids in her apartment building. I talked about the promise of resurrection. I didn't know how to talk about her crying for Jesus, so I didn't.

I hope Jesus will forgive me.

John Thomas McLarty is the editor of Adventist Today. This article is adapted from John Thomas McLarty's current "book-in-progress."

Letters

Continued from page 5

Seriously, isn't this pre-advent judgment issue really a non-issue, not aware that billions are doomed to perish at the hands of angels? See Rev. 14:14-20.

Norm Meager — Dayton, Ohio

INTELLECTUAL ADVENTISM

The articles (AT July/Aug 2006) concerning Intellectual Adventism were fine examples of journalism. The need for this dimension in our educational system cannot logically be questioned. Too often, well intentioned members of the clergy, and our evangelists, are found to be wanting — lacking in knowledge of what they have presented.

There is one caveat I must mention: this intellectualism is often wanting in what the Christian has been ordered to do, to preach the gospel. This was primary in St. Paul's ministry as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4. He was indeed an intellectual. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ was No. 1 on his agenda. This should be a challenge to those claiming to be the remnant, since a remnant must be identical to the original.

Intellectual pursuit, viva! But not at the expense of the gospel that saves a lost soul. As a physician caring for a seriously ill patient, what is truly relevant is the gospel.

Paul W. Jackson, M.D. — Wallingsford, Pa.



I admit —
I'm a cynic,
trapped in
the body
of a lifelong
Adventist
who's not ready
to throw the
baby out
with the
bathwater.
I love the
church, but
not her pride
nor the ways
I've seen that
pride wound
people.

Feature | Anita Strawn de Ojeda

Loving Others: When Pride of Peculiarity Gets in the Way

I walked right over to them and said, 'You must be Seventh-day Adventists!' These words by my pastor made me cringe. It was another of his infamous "I-could-tell-they-were-Adventists-by-the-way-they-dressed"

stories. I looked around the church and sighed to myself. What was the point of those stories, anyway?

If a stranger walked into our church right now, he'd have a hard time identifying the denomination.

Of course, if he walked to the front of the church, he'd know for sure what church he'd stumbled into. Especially if he were wearing blue jeans and a flashy shirt unbuttoned halfway down his chest with a few gold chains peeking out. The dour expressions of disapproval would be a dead giveaway.

I laughed silently to myself, imagining the visitor in various outfits and the congregation's reaction. My husband nudged me. Everyone around me stood for the closing hymn. Oops. I admit — I'm a cynic, trapped in the body of a lifelong Adventist who's not ready to throw the baby out with the bathwater. I love the church, but not her pride or the ways I've seen that pride wound people.

My struggles with institutional pridefulness started long ago. During the NET '98 series my mom was overjoyed that my brother and sisters faithfully attended the meetings. As the series drew to its conclusion, my mom called with the wonderful news: My sister and brother had requested baptism during Christmas vacation.

My husband and I made plans to travel 1,500 miles to witness the baptisms. Unfortunately, the pastor of the small church where my sister attended meetings wanted to sort the fish he'd caught in the NET rather than nurture newcomers.

Even though my sister wanted to have a forever friendship with Jesus, the pastor wanted proof. My sister lived in sin (well, don't we all?). My sister had a horrible habit she couldn't break; her habit just happened to be more visible (or should I say 'smellable') than most bad habits. To top it all off, my sister wore earrings to church and a diamond promise ring. No, according to that pastor, my sister was the wrong-size fish for NET '98.

It's time someone stopped the insanity. Oh, I realize that one who travels around the United States will find pockets of loving and accepting congregations whose mission it is to spread the good news of God's lavish love for mankind. Unfortunately, the prideful prejudice of being a peculiar people persists. It's still wounding members, this institutionalized attitude to which members, pastors, and even conference presidents cling.

The glamour of being a peculiar people that can be recognized from 50 yards because they don't wear makeup or jewelry is clouding the goal of the church — namely, to spread the gospel to all mankind.

According to my dictionary, the word "gospel" comes from the Greek word *evangelion*, which can be translated as "good message." Acts 20:24 shows that the gospel is the good news of the grace of God. Mathew 4:23 talks about the "gospel of the kingdom." Romans 1:16 refers to the gospel as "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." Paul calls it "the gospel of peace" in Ephesians 6:15.

None of these refer to the gospel as the "good news about rule-keeping," or the gospel of "you-need-to-be-like-me-to-be-accepted." Satan is playing on our pride of peculiarity and encouraging us to focus on outward matters such as jewelry, makeup, dress, and vegetarianism rather than on the inward condition of our hearts.

All four Gospels record Jesus' command to love. We are to love our God (Matthew. 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27), our enemies (Matthew 5:44, Luke 6:35), our neighbors (Matthew 19:19, 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27), ourselves (Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27) and each other (John 13:34, 15:12). We aren't given the option of withholding our love until our neighbor looks and acts like us.

Our church has lost sight of the gospel but did a wonderful job training people in what not to do/wear/listen to. A case in point involves my mother, who grew up in the great era of "don'ts." For years she was a "good Adventist" but unable to share her faith with others. She teaches a developmental kindergarten at a public school and last February her assistant gave her a beaded necklace with a huge crystal heart on it. My mom struggled with what to

Continued on page 15

Continued from page 14

do — offend an unbeliever over a gaudy gift and never wear the necklace, or stamp out those residual feelings of guilt about wearing jewelry around her neck. She chose to wear the necklace to work on Valentine's Day.

At the end of the school year her assistant had another package for her, this time with a delicate necklace inside. "I thought you might need some real jewelry," her assistant said, with a beaming smile, "since you've been wearing for a necklace that car dangle I gave you!"

The heart of the matter is love. Are we too prideful to release those things that were never intended to be a test of fellowship and focus on mentoring and nurturing hurting people? (Ellen G. White, in *The Review and Herald*, Aug. 27, 1889, p. 530. See endnote 1 for Web reference.)

Diamonds are a litmus test for love — and I'm not talking about the jewelry store's ad campaigns, either. In today's fragmented society, people crave intimacy — the feeling of belonging. Researchers have identified the top 10 intimacy needs, and high on most people's list is the need for acceptance. (David Ferguson and Don McMinn, *The Pursuit of Intimacy*, Thomas Nelson Publishers: Nashville, 1993.) In fact, acceptance is biblical: "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (Romans 15:7 NIV). Christ accepted us while we were still sinners.

If we wrongly withhold acceptance based on a person's failure to follow the rules, we deny Christ and bring praise to our rule keeping rather than to our Redeemer.

It's time to face reality. Those things we hold so dear, that make us a peculiar people — such as vegetarianism and Sabbath-keeping — are being embraced by the world, and not because of us. We don't run the majority of health-food stores in this country. We aren't the only ones publishing vegan cookbooks. We aren't the only ones advocating a healthy lifestyle or offering smoking-cessation classes. We don't manufacture all of the good soy products or the fake coffee.

The biggest shock of all is the fact that we aren't the only ones advocating a Sabbath rest! A recent magazine article with advice on dealing with stress recommends that everyone enjoy a "Sabbath rest" once a week.²

The challenge for our church today is to acknowledge that our rigid adherence to rules is not what should make us peculiar. Of course, seeing life beyond a series of black-and-white absolutes is difficult for many of us. Most adults are stuck in Lawrence Kohlberg's conventional stage of moral development.³ In other words, people want law and order and figure that if they themselves abide by the rules, everyone else ought to as well.

» The heart of the matter is love. Are we too prideful to release those things that were never intended to be a test of fellowship and focus on mentoring and nurturing hurting people?

For example, if Sister B had to take off her wedding ring to be baptized into the church 30 years ago, then she will feel outraged that nowadays pastors are baptizing young people who wear earrings to their baptism. The sad fact is that Sister B's moral outrage overshadows her ability to love. Today's young people are questioning the comfortable cloak of rules that make the church feel like home to the older generation.

The world today cries out for love, and our collective ears only hear the beat of the music (which we disapprove of). We aren't very good at lip reading, either, because the flash of gold and diamonds blinds our eyes. I overheard a conversation at a recent school board meeting where a young man's employment was being considered. After the chairperson read the résumé, someone asked, "Are you sure he doesn't have his ears pierced?" What a shame. Not, "Is he filled with enthusiasm for Jesus?" or "How does he relate to school kids?" Are his ears pierced!

Jesus was pierced for our transgressions. Our job is to accept everyone he sends our way and to love them into the church, nurture them in their newborn relationship with God, and say "No" to the devil's distractions. To be like Christ, to have good news to share, we must obey God's command to love. We must love the sinner and not love gossiping about his sin.

Anita Strawn de Ojeda teaches English and Spanish in Bozeman, Mont. When she's not teaching, Anita spends her time camping, motorcycle riding, skiing or bicycling with her husband and two daughters.

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Feature | Richard L. Noel

How I Learned to Know God's Word

WHY DO WE THINK AND ACT THE WAY WE DO WHEN CONFLICT ARISES?

I did not go to others to ask for their explanations, but prayed daily for God to teach me. I started, not with doctrinal research, but just reading the Word slowly and prayerfully. I had to ask, "What does the Word actually say?"

As a child growing up in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I was introduced early to conflict among church members over doctrine. I saw people at the entrance to camp meeting handing out papers denouncing the errors of the church, from which they wanted to "rescue" us. My family called them an "offshoot" of the church. While a few onlookers would try to argue with the newcomers, most simply ignored them. Nobody engaged them in open discussion.

When I was a theology student at Walla Walla College (WWC) in the 1960s, another group was trying to promote the teachings of certain ministers from outside the United States. They became the target of heated comments by some of the church members. The content of their message was not clear to me, so I stayed out of the conflict. I was a student trying to learn my class work. I also wanted to avoid the emotion of the debate, because I sensed that somehow people were not showing the right spirit.

As I neared graduation, I sought clear statements of belief and teaching so that as I entered the ministry I could be confident that I would be teaching truth. Some of the church teachings are quite complicated, so I carefully followed the evangelists I worked with. I learned the phrases they used to explain subjects such as the Sanctuary, the 2300 days and the Mark of the Beast. Then I used the same phrases when I preached these subjects.

For years I was too busy to do the research and careful Bible study necessary to find out for myself a more biblical way of teaching these subjects. I was like Apollos, who needed to have a more "perfect" understanding of the way. Later in my life God gave me the opportunity to let him teach me. I did not go to others to ask for their explanations, but prayed daily for God to teach me. I started, not with

doctrinal research, but by reading just the Word, slowly and prayerfully. I had to ask, "What does the Word actually say?" This question, and a spirit of humility, showed me that some of the explanations I had relied on for years were not really accurate.

This discovery led me into a prayerful, cautious, meticulous study that is still in progress. The focus of my study is to follow the Word of God, not traditions of the church. It has nothing to do with what others believe or with correcting others. Therefore, when asked regarding a subject, "What does someone else say about this?" I say, "What does that matter? This is what the Word of God says." Some people are upset that I am so direct in my response. Until we are able to separate our opinions from the facts of the Word, we will never be sure of what to believe. After the Word is saturated into our lives we then can begin to discuss the opinions of other people in a proper manner.

The apostle Paul was called by God and taken out of circulation for three years in Arabia, so God could teach him directly (Galatians 1). When he went to Jerusalem 14 years later, the church leaders had nothing new to add to what he had been teaching. His experience may tell us something about setting aside time for direct learning from God's Word.

It has been uncomfortable for me to discover that what I have taught and believed is in some respects incorrect. I always wanted to be right and anyone with conflicting opinions to be wrong. I was a debater. Unfortunately, the church has sometimes become a debating society rather than a safe haven for healing from sin. True searching for truth cannot happen in an atmosphere of debate and recrimination.

Probably the most difficult teaching of Christ for me to accept was the idea that the Holy Spirit actually will guide each individual into all truth (John 16:13). I used to believe that it was the job of the church to do this, and that I should try to correct or chase away anyone who might hold different views. Many religious people believe they must be "defenders of the faith." Truth needs no defenders; it

Continued on page 17

Continued from page 16

can stand on its own. Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life, has already defeated Satan and offers that same victory to us.

Many pastors and teachers in the Adventist Church are afraid of their leaders. They are like the parents of the blind man who was healed by Jesus, when they were asked if they supported their son's confession of Jesus. They begged off, because they didn't want to be thrown out of the synagogue (John 9:22). I am like the blind man who can now see. I am not an employee risking his job. This political situation in our church is destructive to honest Bible study.

The spirit of rock-throwing and demanding is simply the spirit of Satan. We must learn to have open, humble discussions among ourselves, if we are to be true disciples of Jesus. The Word teaches us to guard our "heart," not "God's truth." The armor of God is to protect us from Satan's arrows, not to embolden us to attack other people. When I learned that my battle is not against flesh and blood, I quit trying to force others to accept decisions on issues that are important to me (Ephesians 6:12).

Dr. Richard L. Noel is a dentist in Harrisonburg, Va.

Until we are able to separate our opinions from the facts of the Word, we will never be sure of what to believe

When the Elephant Got Thirsty

Continued from page 9

not, but every hospital in the new chain becomes a profit center. If the government gives its approval, Paradise Valley Hospital will become another such business.

When the news came out that the hospital was considering the sale, church members made it a subject of earnest and concerted prayer. They asked why an institution like this, owing its beginnings to the inspired counsel of Ellen White, should fall on such hard times. If the Lord worked a miracle to start the institution, why should he not work one now to keep it going? They feared that the sale would also have a disastrous effect on the church and school. On the eve of the Attorney General's public hearing in January the church and the community participated in a "Prayer Vigil for Healthcare Justice" on the sidewalk in front of the hospital. They had not given up, but were petitioning the Attorney General and State legislators to reject the for-profit bid. According to sources close to the scene, they saw a gleam of hope in a "solid, viable offer" put forth by a consortium of physicians called the "Paradise Preservation Group," led by Fred Harder, a former CEO of PVH. The Attorney General responded to the petitions by setting a date, February 20, for the Adventist Health officers to meet with this consortium group to discuss the alternative offer. Harder has pointed out that the hospital has been run for a hundred years as a not-for-profit charitable trust. According to the law, if there is a conversion the value of the trust assets must be retained for charitable purposes in the same community. He hopes the Adventist Health officers will concur and allow them to continue the PVH tradition.

Of course, PVH would not be the first Adventist hospital to fail; even hospitals not connected with the church have at times given up the struggle. The church's Boston Regional Medical Center, in Stoneham, Massachusetts, gave up in

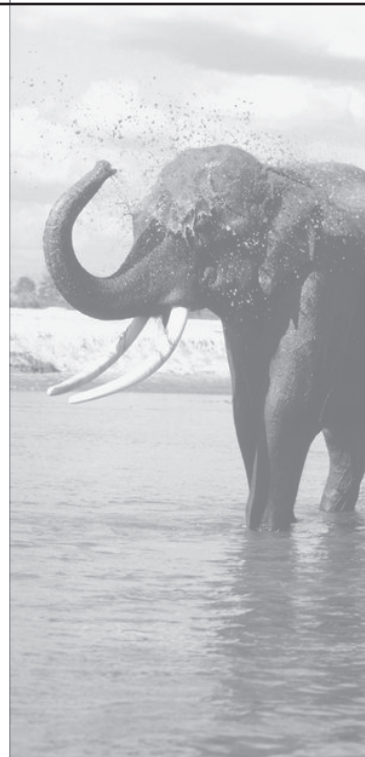
1997, and others have come close to bankruptcy. The Adventist Health System has helped many hospitals succeed by bringing them greater expertise and purchasing power. A hospital that so far has weathered difficult times is the White Memorial Medical Center in Los Angeles, California. Under the 17-year administration of Beth Zachary, president, it has succeeded in getting government recognition and financial help for its proximity to a major earthquake zone and for its service to low-income residents in its service area. It has a dynamic plan for expansion and enlarged services to its community.

Ellen White was a visionary who helped get several institutions off the ground, and many of them flourish today. But she was also a pragmatist. She recognized that different circumstances sometimes call for more than simply earnest prayer and stronger commitment; sometimes they call for reconsideration of the elements in a situation.

James Coffin, writing for Spectrum's Web site, tells about a missionary in the Arctic who suffered because he took her counsel on diet literally. Although Ellen White had promoted the vegetarian diet over one using meat products, when she heard that this man had been starving because he refused to eat reindeer meat and fish, the only available foods, she said, "Why don't people use common sense? Why don't they know that we are to be governed by the places [where] we are located?"

So what would Ellen White say of the thirsty elephant now? Lacking a prophetic voice, hospital officers have to be governed by the best light they can summon.

James H. Stirling is Senior Associate Editor of Adventist Today.





Feature | Alden Thompson

On Being Certain

In the 1970s I contracted the “disease” of quote collecting. I put the quotes on 4”-by-6” cards, alphabetizing them under key words or ideas. Finding a quote was quick and easy.

In time, sheer bulk became a problem. But even more troubling were those moments when I would reach for a quote that wasn’t there. Panic. Called into active duty by a sermon or an article, the quote hadn’t found its way home again.

In 1990 I switched to a small notebook (my second one is now almost full). The quotes never go missing now; they just hide — easy enough, since I haven’t made an index yet. I’ve thought about a Palm Pilot. But that would feel almost sacrilegious.

For years I collected only quotes from other people. But recently I broke through a psychological barrier and wrote out some lines of my own that I wanted to polish and remember. Writing out that first quote from myself felt so arrogant, so sinful. But having seared my conscience, I am now ready to put two of them into print. They represent strong convictions. But you will have to judge if they are true:

“If we know that we don’t have to know everything, then the things that we can know, we can know with greater certainty.”

“If we are certain that we don’t have to be certain about everything, then we can be certain about those things that really are certain. But if we are certain that we have to be certain about everything, we will have great difficulty being certain about anything else.”

Before arguing my case more fully, I want to tuck in a couple of related quotes from two quite different sources, one from the 17th Century Puritan divine, Richard Baxter, and one from the 20th Century theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr.

I’ll start with Baxter, for the stereotypical view of Puritans makes his position all the more startling. Here is the line that caught my eye: “My certainty that I am a man is before my certainty that there is a God.”

Putting man before God? How could he? But I decided he was right. After all, Baxter wasn’t claiming that man is more important than God, just that he was more certain of his own existence than of God’s. Certainty and importance are not the same.

He introduced his claim with these quaint words: “It is a marvelous great help to my faith to find it built on so sure foundations and so consonant to the law of nature. I am not so foolish as to pretend my certainty to be greater than it is merely because it is a dishonor to be less certain, nor will I by shame be kept from confessing those infirmities which those have as much as I who hypocritically reproach me with them.”

Then come those striking words: “My certainty that I am a man is before my certainty that there is a God.” But that’s just a start. He gives a whole list of decreasing “certainties”: “My certainty that there is a God is greater than my certainty that he requires love and holiness of his creature; my certainty of this is greater than my certainty of the future life of reward and punishment; my certainty of that is greater than my certainty of the endless duration of it and of the immortality of individual souls; my certainty of the Deity is greater than my certainty of the Christian Faith; my certainty of the Christian Faith in its essentials is greater than my certainty of the perfection and infallibility of all the Holy Scriptures; my certainty of that is greater than my certainty of the meaning of many particular texts, and so of the truth of certain books. So that you can see by what gradations my understanding proceeds, so also that my certainty differs as the evidences differ.”

Baxter knew his words would alarm some. But he appeals to them with a twinkle in his eye: “They that have attained to greater perfection and higher degree of certainty than I should pity me and produce their evidence to help me.” He asks the same of those who take the “truth of Scripture” as the starting point for all their certainty. “But,” he adds politely, “they must give me leave to undertake to prove to a heathen or infidel the Being of a God, and the necessity of holiness, and the certainty of a reward or punishment” while such a one still denies the truth of Scripture!”

Baxter’s hierarchy of certainties clearly enabled him to sleep better at night. It’s less clear how his logic might have enabled his detractors to sleep more peacefully. Nor is it clear that his logic would help today’s frightened believers. And they are indeed frightened, judging from the intensity of the rhetoric. And here is where Niebuhr’s quote comes in, a reference to “frantic orthodoxy” that suggests an intensification of the need for certainty in our day:

Continued on page 19

» If we know that we don't have to know everything, then the things that we can know, we can know with greater certainty.

"Frantic orthodoxy is never rooted in faith but in doubt. It is when we are not sure that we are doubly sure.... Fundamentalism is, therefore, inevitable in an age which has destroyed so many certainties by which faith once expressed itself and upon which it relied."

Do Adventists have anything to say to these frightened believers? Indeed we do! In fact, I really get excited about the "Adventist Advantage," if I could use the phrase with confidence (instead of mere arrogance). The short version is that our commitment to the Decalogue, combined with Jesus' two great commands (Matthew 22:35-40) provides an anchor that never moves. Such an anchor is far superior to the (often) more flashy but more fragile external proofs drawn from archaeology, science, or prophecy.

Several years ago I stumbled onto a ringing confirmation of our Adventist anchor from an unlikely source, an Old Testament professor at the University of Edinburgh. We fell into conversation at the end of a sabbatical in which I had put the finishing touches on my book *Inspiration* (Review and Herald, 1991). When he asked me what I was doing, I frankly told him I was writing a book to help my students see more clearly what never changes in Scripture. I said I was sick and tired of seeing them lose their faith when they discovered things in the Bible they didn't think were supposed to be there.

The unchanging anchor, I told him, consists of the great principle of love, its more specific definition through Jesus' two great commands, and their even more specific application in the Ten Commandments. The double line comes after the ten. Everything else in Scripture simply illustrates and applies the two and the ten in particular times and places.

So, I thought to myself, that's my good Adventist Bible study on the law — I didn't tell him that the concept had been bequeathed to me by Ellen White's commentary on law in *Patriarchs and Prophets* (pp. 303-314, 363-373).

To my surprise, he replied immediately: "Of course, that's where the Bible draws the double line. Look at Deuteronomy 4:13-14." And for the next few minutes he gave me an old-fashioned Adventist Bible study on the law!

"Note the difference between verses 13 and 14," he said. "In verse 13, God is addressing Israel directly, not speaking through Moses. According to this text, God gave the people 'his covenant,' describing what he gave them as 'ten commandments.' Furthermore, the text states that God himself wrote the commandments on two stone tablets."

"But," my professor friend continued, "note the changes in verse 14. First, God is addressing Moses, not the people. Second, to Moses he gave 'statutes and ordinances,' not 'his covenant' or the 'Ten Commandments.'"

"In short," he concluded, "you're quite right. The double line comes after the Ten Commandments. That's where the Bible itself puts it."

I was astounded at his spontaneous "Adventist" exposition. It's not just Adventist, of course. It's simply a straightforward reading of the Bible, a reading that should be evident to any honest person.

For a complete "Bible study" we would simply need to add two additional points: First, that the "statutes and ordinances" were written down by Moses in a book and placed beside the ark, not in the ark (Deuteronomy 31:26); second, that the penalties for breaking the Ten Commandments are not included in the Decalogue itself but in the additional legislation, thus giving the Decalogue a more enduring quality.

When Jesus came, he confirmed the simple biblical certainty: "Treat others as you want them to treat you. This is what the Law and the Prophets are all about" (Matthew. 7:12, CEV). The Bible and the world are full of mysteries and puzzles. But we don't have to solve them all if we are certain about the things that really are certain.

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¹ "The Reliquiae Baxterianae," cited (slightly modernized) from *The English Spirit* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), pp. 106-107.

Recent Publications in Adventist Creationism

Book Title: *Adventist Creationism: An Enlightened Non-apologetic Approach*. Ben Clausen and Gerald Wheeler. *The Book of Beginnings: Creation and the Promise of Redemption*. Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2006

The part of this volume written by Dr. Ben Clausen, dealing with the opening chapters of Genesis, is a unique Adventist publication. It is the one of the few book-length

treatments published over the last three decades by a denominationally sponsored Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) press that approaches the topic of the SDA version of biblical creationism with such a high degree of scientific integrity and intellectual honesty.

Even more amazing is the fact that this author is a senior research scientist at the SDA General Conference-sponsored Geoscience Research Institute (GRI). The GRI is an organization now almost entirely dedicated to providing an apologetic defense of traditional SDA young-life creationism and a recent (<10,000 year) worldwide flood. A reader's amazement is heightened when he or she realizes that this book was promoted and sold widely in Adventist Book Centers as the official companion to the Fourth Quarter 2006 SDA Senior Sabbath School Lessons on Genesis.

In 82 pages, divided into six chapters (out of the 13 chapters in the book), Clausen seeks to provide to nonscientific readers (most of the individuals who will read this volume) what he calls a "balanced presentation, laying out a range of data along with various possible interpretations" (p. 8). He seeks to communicate an appreciation of the extremely difficult task confronting SDA scientists who are Christian believers within the Adventist faith tradition, when they try to reconcile a largely literalistic reading of the Genesis narratives with the vast corpus of scientific data that directly contradicts traditional SDA teachings on creationism.

At the same time, the author is respectful of those individuals who may not be able to confront directly the difficult problems, because of the impact that this might have on where they are now on their personal faith journey. His own view is that while the "Seventh-day Adventist position [on origins] has its share of problems," to him "it is better than the alternatives." (p. 8).

SUMMARY

Early in the book, the author makes a critical declaration: "I do not believe that the Bible presents the best scientific model for origins or even a scientific model." (p. 8). He also declares that "it is well to remember that people are more important than facts, doctrines, or being 'right' . . . [Christ avoided] controversy, as we are also to do. He spoke to the heart more than to the reason." (p. 9).

Clausen notes that creation accounts from the Near East "often parallel the [creation] stories of the Bible" since "Biblical writers expressed God's story in familiar words and images" (p. 12, 14). The creation narrative employs "themes, metaphors, and symbolism" familiar to the original readers but used "these themes to assert its own monotheistic theology." (p. 14). The writers of the biblical narrative, including Genesis, used ". . . [the] language of appearance, intended its descriptions for the average person [and] . . . did not bother to correct every cultural misunderstanding." (p. 15). For example, he later suggests that "modern scientific definitions of death are not always equivalent to those of Bible writers . . . No clear answer as to exactly what kind of death sin brought into the world exists, so perhaps different individuals can reasonably have different opinions." (p. 47, 48)

He considers the data that "science regards as evidence of uniformitarian geological activity lasting billions of years" and then considers "short time" alternatives that attempt to fit the entire geologic column "into a few thousand years, with most geologic activity occurring during Noah's unique one-year flood." Since he finds neither of these approaches satisfactory, he summarizes several "intermediate models" (p. 57). These models include a "Seven-day Creation and Local Flood, but Life before the Genesis Creation," and "God as Creator, but Working During Long Time Periods." (pp. 63-64). He concludes that it "is as difficult to stretch biblical teaching into a long time frame as it is to fit geology into a short time frame. Both can be forced, but neither flows naturally from the data." (p. 64)

Continued on page 21

"It is difficult to characterize Clausen's approach to this topic as being either 'liberal' or 'conservative' within the current spectrum of Adventist thought. Perhaps it might be best described as defining an authentic middle or 'moderate' position."

Continued from page 20

To this reviewer, Clausen's most interesting discussion is presented in the context of the constant human search for certainty (Chapter 6). There are, he notes, the "self-assured, dogmatic teachers [who] with an air of infallibility attract those who want certainty." (p. 73). He prefers to consider the possibility that there may be no answer to the types of origins questions that are typically asked. In his view, perhaps a "solution" would be to "[think] outside the box." (p. 75). His ideal would be to be able to "accept the evidence from revelation and the evidence from nature and . . . have compatibility between them." He suggests that there is usually a problem doing this because the "the naturalist [i.e., scientist] soon gives up on revelation (i.e., presumably, the biblical narratives) and the 'supernaturalist' [soon gives up] on nature" (i.e., presumably, the scientific data) . . . Too many intellectually responsible academics give up on the church. Other Christians are zealous for God, but unenlightened." (p. 76).

He prefers the "middle road," a "third way" or "third option." He wishes that "we could put aside the search for compatibility for now. Instead, accepting both revelation and nature, we will be willing to take as long as it needs to work toward compatibility. Above all, we must emphasize honesty over coherence and easy solutions. . . . Conservatives are too often afraid of questions, and liberals may fear answers, but hopefully we do not need to be terrified of either. . . . Perhaps a humble, unifying attitude is more important for everyone than a preference for a specific scientific model" (p. 76-77).

Clausen says that he has "wondered for many years what my church has to offer those with an academic, particularly a scientific, mind-set." He notes that the "church can carefully define its doctrinal position about origins, but theological pronouncements do not solve scientific issues, so doctrinal affirmations do little to meet the needs of the cultural scientific mind-set. Academics are interested in an intellectually coherent worldview—one that fits with their firsthand intellectual experience." (p. 77)

COMMENTARY

The first six-chapter portion of this book that deals with Genesis 1-6 reflects positively on the intellectual honesty of its author. Other former and current members of the GRI staff have written books and many articles arguing how scientific evidence supports the current traditional Adventist position that holds to a literal six-day creation a few thousand years ago and a recent worldwide flood. This author is much more respectful and realistic in discussing the major scientific problems that confront the conventional SDA understandings and teachings concerning the opening chapters of Genesis.

» Dr. Clausen . . . seeks to communicate an appreciation of the extremely difficult task confronting SDA scientists . . . when they try to reconcile a largely literalistic reading of the Genesis narratives with the vast corpus of scientific data that directly contradicts traditional SDA teachings on creationism.

Two surveys of SDA scientists teaching at denominational universities and colleges in North America conducted by *Adventist Today* in 1994 and 2004 revealed that a majority of them do not accept central elements of traditional SDA teaching on this topic. In light of these facts, parts of Dr. Clausen's discussion might be viewed as providing some of the reasons why a majority of his scientific colleagues have so much trouble believing in young-life creationism and a recent worldwide flood.

For his honesty and commitment to providing a balanced discussion, does Dr. Clausen receive praise from ecclesiastical officials in the SDA General Conference-sponsored Biblical Research Institute (BRI)? Regretfully, the answer to that question is no! In a review of this book by Ekkehardt Mueller of the BRI, the approach of Clausen is said to raise "serious questions among the readers and keep them puzzled." Among views expressed in the book that would, according to this BRI staff member, cause "serious questions" is the "repeated affirmation [of Clausen] that persons are more important than doctrines and 'being right,' and that winning people is more important than winning arguments." The review concludes by arguing that the "problem is not only with what the book says, but also with how it is said, what is not said, and the underlying philosophical approach." Since Clausen's book does not "sufficiently reaffirm faith and may create an atmosphere of uncertainty" the BRI staff member recommends two other books as being "more helpful." One of these books is by a former director of the GRI. [*Adventist Today* requested permission to reprint the text of this BRI review in its entirety but this request was denied by the BRI director.]

Continued on page 24

Feature | Max Gordon Phillips

A Little Girl Who Had a Little Curl: Coming to Terms with the Prophet Ellen

Simply stated:
In her life
on earth,
true prophet
Ellen G. White
was an
imperfect
human
being.

It shocked me when I first saw it. The White family obelisk. I was a PK (preacher's kid), and I knew enough about religion to wonder, "Isn't that an obelisk? A symbol of paganism? Heathenism? Idolatry?"

The imposing granite monument with WHITE embossed in large letters on its base stood over the headstones, inside the enclosed burial plot in Battle Creek, Michigan. Dad pastored "The Tab" (Battle Creek Tabernacle). And we lived but a pleasant walk from the Oak Hill Cemetery where James and Ellen White slumbered.

But, being a kid, I soon forgot "the paganism question."

I didn't realize how crucial an issue it is to many traditionalist/conservative Adventists. These are those sincere, goodhearted, well-meaning folk who invite you to Sabbath afternoon potluck with a generous, "Don't bring a dish," and who tend to "think mystified."

Mystified thinking believes an obelisk guarding a gravesite is as unsettling as a church steeple surmounted by a cross. Since in ancient Rome and Egypt the obelisk stood for idolatry, anyone who has one is an idolater. And since evil emperor Caligula's colossal obelisk — the one that dominates St. Peter's Piazza (Square) in Vatican City, Italy — stands for Roman Catholicism, crowned by the papacy, any family that allows one inside the family burial plot is bowing down to the beast.

Mystified logic can't believe Sister White could ever have approved one. Such a choice, even by a distraught, grieving widow, would be sinful. Therefore, she couldn't have approved it.

But there it stands. When James died at age 60 in 1881, his wife, Ellen, was 53 and fully capable of making informed and responsible decisions. Therefore, she must have approved it.

Some people (including many bloggers) who "think mystified" have rejected Ellen's prophetic gift entirely — on this and similar grounds.

Others (also prominent on the Internet), who also "think mystified," are self-styled White-defenders who pretend that the White family obelisk just doesn't exist. They ignore the issue the better to

argue such softball — no, Nerf Ball — issues as church steeples!

In fact, no pro-White Web site that I could locate deigns even to acknowledge the existence of the White family obelisk. Not even "The Official Ellen G. White Website."

This despite the fact that over many decades Oak Hill Cemetery has been "the" must-see stop on every Adventist heritage tour of Battle Creek. And 91 years after the prophet Ellen approved the stone pillar, you can visit it, and you can view photos of it on at least three Web sites.

Straightforward logic says the obelisk in no way compromises her gift of prophecy: the widow Ellen's choice approving the obelisk constituted no more of a moral lapse than did her choice approving Christmas trees in churches (*Adventist Home*, page 482).

But even if it did, her gift would still remain uncompromised. True prophets — and this is the main point here — are mistake-prone, imperfect, and sinfully in need of Jesus Christ, just like all the rest of us.

How do we know? Because there simply is no biblical evidence that God's criteria for selecting prophets include sinless perfection, whereas there is more-than-sufficient biblical evidence that biblically recognized prophets were both imperfect and sinful. But before we look at it, we need to define the term "prophet."

- Etymologically, the English word "prophet" means "for-speaker" (Latin *pro-* "for" + *phanai* "to speak") or "one who speaks for [God]." Note the absence of necessity for any requisite perfection or sinlessness.

- The first four definitions for "prophet" listed in Webster's 11th Collegiate include: (1) "one who utters divinely inspired revelations;" (2) "one gifted with more than ordinary spiritual and moral insight;" (3) "one who foretells future events" (predictor or fortuneteller); and (4) "an effective or leading spokesman for a cause, doctrine, or group."

Of these four definitions, the third one — "predictor" — is the least important. Biblical prophets did not generally make specific predictions of the future. The "predictor" denotation is plainly

Continued on page 23

Continued from page 22

secondary to the primary one — “spokesperson.” And therefore it serves only a derivative function.

This observation tells us that true prophets, whether biblical or modern, are not to be reduced to the level of fortuneteller. It also tells us that the “predictor” definition, even if overwhelmingly popular, ill-befits the biblical data.

Unlike many mystified White-defenders, the Bible does not try to hide the truth about the imperfect, sinful nature of its prophets. Think of Adam, Noah, Jonah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David.

David. Take that one, “the sweet singer of Israel.” If you use the true biblical definition, “one who speaks for [God],” then David absolutely qualifies as a true prophet, since the Bible attributes so many of the Psalms to him. Yet, as you know, he was also a blatant sinner, right in God’s face. For, from his position of high trust as Israel’s God-ordained king, he masterminded the murder of Uriah and committed adultery with Uriah’s wife, Bathsheba.

If David could be thus imperfect and sinful while remaining a true prophet of God (albeit in need of repentance), then Ellen White — committing nothing so heinous as murder or adultery — could also. The point: reasonable Adventist people can indeed accept her as a prophet without going into or remaining in a state of mystified denial about her all-too-human condition.

Simply stated: In her life on earth, true prophet Ellen G. White was an imperfect human being. Case in point: To “Brother and Sister H,” she wrote, “You have flesh, but it is not good material [meaning it is adipose tissue]. You are worse off for this amount of flesh. If you should each come down to a more spare diet, which would take from you twenty-five or thirty pounds of your gross flesh, you would be much less liable to disease” (*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 61). And yet she herself — as all published full-length photographs of her reveal — was overweight, and by quite noticeable amounts.

Let’s be real here. It’s just human nature to project our own problems onto others. Everybody does it to one degree or another. In her own private thoughts she was probably just as hard on herself as she was on others. Harder even, since her high calling as God’s messenger undoubtedly sensitized her to a higher personal standard.

In a critically important sense, Ellen was like the “Jemima” of the nursery rhyme of the same name attributed to Sister White’s fellow Victorian, poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow: “There was a little girl, who had a little curl, Right in the middle of her forehead. And when she was good, she was very very good, And when she was bad, she was horrid.

“She stood on her head, on her little truckle bed, With nobody by for to hinder; She screamed and she squalled,

she yelled and she bawled, And drummed her little heels against the winder.

“Her mother heard the noise and thought it was the boys, A-kicking up a rumpus in the attic; But when she climbed the stair, and saw Jemima there, She took her and did whip her most emphatic.”

This swath of light verse is more sophisticated than you think. If you thought — as I did initially — that Longfellow meant to justify the Victorian practice of allowing, even encouraging, aggressive behavior in little boys while suppressing it in little girls, read it again: the poet is actually criticizing that discriminatory tendency of Victorian society. Here’s why I think so:

- The work’s whimsical nature — rhyming “hinder” with “winder,” for instance — is a time-honored, highly effective literary device. The cunning Longfellow lures you on with his faux frivolity till, before you can put the poem down, you’ve already finished reading it, the sting of the social criticism has already set in, and it’s too late to pull out the stinger.

- The descriptor verbs “screamed,” “squalled,” “yelled,” and “bawled” function collectively as hyperbolic irony. The mother obviously did not think “it was the boys.” No natural mother would mistake the voice of her daughter for the voices of her sons. The poet is relying on the old apothegm, “Things are seldom what they seem.”

- The adjective “horrid” (meaning hideous enough to make your hair bristle) is also hyperbole, hinting that maybe little curly head wasn’t really so bad after all, certainly not bad enough to be whipped “most emphatic” just for testing her decibel capacity and drumming “her little heels against the winder.” I mean, she wasn’t exactly burning down the house.

- The purposeful repetition of the trite intensive “very” may be the most telling clue of all. For if she — even if in her “terrible twos” — was never truly “horrid,” then (by dint of poetic parallelism) she was never truly “very very good” either.

The correspondences are apt: Both Jemima and Ellen were Victorians. Both had signature gifts: Jemima her forehead curl, Ellen her prophecy. Neither was “horrid,” and neither was “very very good.” Both were victims of the kind of rigid, discriminatory, either/or, mystified thinking that continues to this day. Both were normal human beings.

And both were precious.

Max Gordon Phillips is a science and medical writer living in Southern California.

Let’s be real here. It’s just human nature to project our own problems onto others. Everybody does it to one degree or another. In her [White’s] own private thoughts she was probably just as hard on herself as she was on others.



Continued from page 21

Book Review | Ervin Taylor

Recent Publications in Adventist Creationism

It is difficult to characterize Clausen's approach to this topic as being either "liberal" or "conservative" within the current spectrum of Adventist thought. Perhaps it might be best described as defining an authentic middle or "moderate" position. Moderate positions have advantages but also downsides, since they displease those on both the "left" and "right" of them. Perhaps that is where Clausen wishes to position himself.

The overall thrust of his narrative is focused on what the author calls a "balanced approach" which "combines both certainty and flexibility, both the authority of the corporate body and the uniqueness of individual beliefs, and both the firm foundation and landmarks on the one hand and growth, progress, and new light on the other." (p. 37). In principle this is a laudatory approach. However, he must know that this is an ideal rarely, if ever, achieved. He does not address how this approach would function in the real world of how institutionalized churches actually operate. In this world, power politics exercised by church officials in the name of God almost always prevails over any kind of "balance."

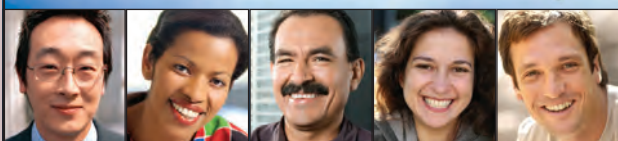
In conclusion, the first six chapters of this volume address a very contentious topic in contemporary Adventism. It presents the point of view of an intellectually honest and serious Adventist Christian who is facing a dilemma — how to maintain integrity

as a conscientious scientist while working within an institution dedicated to a largely fundamentalist agenda and for a church institution headed by members and leaders who want certainty and definitive answers — not probing questions. Galileo would have understood Clausen's problem.

Even if a reader might not agree with all that the author affirms, one must nevertheless greatly admire the author's personal commitment to discovering the truth of God's creation, wherever that truth might lead him. He seems to manifest something of a cheery optimism that the institutional church of which he is a member can follow him there. Time will tell. In the meantime, one hopes that Dr. Clausen will regard it as a badge of personal honor that a member of the Biblical Research Institute of his denomination — the current equivalent of the SDA "Holy Office" — does not approve of his part in this book.

Ervin Taylor, Ph.D., is professor emeritus of anthropology at the University of California, Riverside and Executive Editor of Adventist Today.

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