

The Roles of Women



Intelligent Design  
Response

The Last Warning Message  
Is Not What You Think

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# Adventist *Today*

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ANGER  
HEALS**



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## Nicer Than God?

Guest Editorial by John McLarty

In Jesus' story about the shepherd and the flock, one sheep was lost, not ninety-nine. It's common for commentators to suggest that actually all one hundred were lost, so the "one" was actually the best of the lot because it recognized its lostness. But that is not what Jesus said. Ninety-nine were safe. One was in peril. The shepherd refused rest until he brought that one home.

In Jesus' story about a woman's coins (the jewels of her dowry), one was lost, nine were securely in place. The lost coin did not have any awareness of being lost (since it was, after all, a coin!). But not to worry, the woman was driven and competent. Not surprisingly, she was successful. She found it.

In Jesus' story of the two brothers, one was a jerk, one was responsible. The jerk eventually crawled home hoping for a meager welcome, given his memory of his dad's fundamental generosity. He was enveloped in astonishing affection. The responsible brother revealed himself as a grumpy, unaware drudge. He insulted his father and scorned his loser brother. The final scene in this story portrays the father declaring his affection for his "responsible" son and assuring him that everything the father owns is co-owned by the son.

We expect shepherds to be generally successful in their efforts to provide adequate pasturage, fend off coyotes, and find wayward sheep. We expect women to hang on to their jewels and to successfully search for them if they get lost. We are not surprised when good fathers manage to restore relationships with wayward sons and go to great lengths to reach even sons who are not affectionate, grateful, or gracious.

During my first three or four decades, I thought of myself as the son of my father. I admired him, was afraid of his disapproval, and doubted I could ever measure up to either his achievements or his expectations. In the last couple of decades, my identity has dramatically shifted. I no longer think of myself primarily as the son of my father. Instead, I think of myself as the father of my children. The question of what a child must do to earn approval is now turned on its head. The relevant question is:

What could my children possibly do to cause me to cut them off? The answer is that nothing comes to mind. I suppose you could come up with some horrific hypothetical. If one of my children adopted Hitler or Pol Pot as a model and worked energetically to wreak havoc comparable to the Holocaust or the Killing Fields, then maybe. But I don't imagine my children going there.

The dominant metaphor for God in Scripture is Father. If I, as an ordinary father of ordinary children, cannot imagine cutting off my kids, why would I imagine God cutting off his kids? I do not think I am nicer than God.

The Bible speaks of God enjoying the smell of burning animals. We explain this as culturally appropriate for a society long ago and far away but completely irrelevant for our contemporary understanding of God. The Bible talks of eternal torment (the smoke of their torment . . . forever). We wisely explain this away. A loving God wouldn't do that. Still, many Christians think most of humanity will be damned. Would a loving God, a just God, allow the evolution of a humanity that was largely doomed to damnation? We can't escape this question by blaming Adam and Eve. They did not create their world. God did. Who would send his kids to play in a garden with a hazard so monstrous that all of the resources of heaven would be largely ineffective as remedy? Was God really so reckless as to give naifs "freedom" to make a choice that would lead to the damnation of the majority of their progeny? I don't think so.

If damnation were actually more probable than salvation, what would this say about God's competence as a shepherd, a searching woman, a father? We are not better shepherds or coin keepers. I don't expect many people to be lost. We are not nicer than God.

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**Who would send his kids to play in a garden with a hazard so monstrous that all of the resources of heaven would be largely ineffective as remedy?**







# WHEN ANGER HEALS

**A Christian Response to the  
Global Healthcare Debate<sup>1</sup>**

**BY MAURY JACKSON**

WHEN COMMUNITIES EMBARK UPON SHAPING A VISION OF healthcare, such a task requires hearing more than the voice of financial decision makers. T.R. Reid argues for other voices when he writes that “the primary issue for any health care system is a moral one.”<sup>2</sup> While the 2012 U.S. presidential race resulted in the re-election of president Obama, one may be mistaken to suppose that healthcare reform is secure. Legislators who opposed so-called “Obamacare” voice fierce determination to continue the fight through budgetary maneuvers. For people of faith, economic and ethical issues address only part of their concerns. Because human beings are children of God, there are matters of the sacred to be considered. How might Adventists listen, rethink, and reimagine the ministry of healing in light of contemporary voices that speak with a trio of theological, economic, and ethical concerns? How might Adventist voices today retell the story of the healer from Galilee?

When the adolescent Jesus heard the baritone voice of a moaning leper singing his warning approach—“unclean, unclean” (Lev. 13:45, NRSV)—did he become hardened to the sound? And if so, what later awakened in Jesus a firm tenderness for the Galilean leper described in Mark’s Gospel? Might Jesus have developed a sense that all suffer for having lost compassion for lepers? Did he discern that with a lost compassion, all risk losing passion for the lepers’ justice?<sup>3</sup>

In what follows, where the text is silent and compels me to do so, I will draw inferences from the key passage in Mark 1:40-45. I will also exercise theological imagination in order to fill in parts of the story as it might apply to a contemporary Christian reflection on healthcare. After all, Gordon Kaufman in his book *An Essay on Theological Method* reminds us that the enterprise of theological craft remains ultimately an exercise in imaginative construction.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, as to the strident tone of the title for this essay, let the reader be warned that this practical-theological reflection draws out of the Gospel text a rally for global healing through anger. Yes, anger is rallied as an emotion that leads to healing.<sup>5</sup>

## Can a Healed Leper Be Pro-Leper Colonies?

Mark's passage begins a series of miracle stories. We learn of a leprous Galilean man who hungers for community—with a hunger that drove him from a leper colony, a hunger that drove him beyond the law's ability to zone. He seeks a community that allows for "the dignity of a family-centered death."<sup>6</sup> He seeks community not pampered by leper workshop groups, leper commune health clubs, or leper small-group Torah studies.<sup>7</sup> He did not feel the pain, but he was sick. Because leprosy robbed him of the gift of pain,<sup>8</sup> his

**To simply preach the gospel is not workable in the face of grotesque human suffering. So I side with those commentators who say that Jesus was angry.**

body deteriorated in leaps. Although he was sick, the healthcare system of first-century Palestine proved to be sicker.

Ancient Bible manuscripts leave us with two different readings of this text; thereby, those sources also leave us with the task of deciding whether or not Jesus' emotion was pity (*splagchnistheis*) or anger (*orgistheis*).<sup>9</sup> I will leave it for you to decide. You tell me what is the proper response to diseases that lead people to socially ostracize the sick; the proper response to a sick man flagrantly breaking preventive health codes;<sup>10</sup> the proper response to a person who doesn't question Jesus' ability, but does question Jesus' desire to heal disease; you tell me the proper response when one recognizes that religion has added insult to the sick man's injury—claiming that God determined Israel to treat its lepers this way (Lev. 13:1ff, 46)? Is the proper response pity, or is it anger?

First, notice that Jesus' emotion comes early in the pericope; that is, it comes immediately after the kneeling, begging leper cries out: "If you choose, you can make me clean" (Mark 1:40, NRSV). And second, notice that while public health concerns at times require justifiable draconian methods (in order to contain a contagious disease), the idea of leper colonies itself concedes to

a view of the world that envisions healthcare in terms of medical apartheid.<sup>11</sup>

Both the historical stage of medical diagnosis and the logic of *iatrophobia* (fear of the healer<sup>12</sup>) together challenge the Mosaic quarantine approach to infectious disease, in that: (1) diagnosis in the Mosaic health codes recognized that many skin eruptions were not contagious (Lev. 13:18-23); (2) reasonable persons would be skeptical of the idea that God acted as an agent who caused leprosy to come about: "When you come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put a leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession" (Lev. 14:34, NRSV, cf. 2 Chron. 26:16ff; Num. 12:1ff), (3) containment strategies, more often than not, give a false sense of public safety and abandon preventative public health measures, particularly hygienic steps,<sup>13</sup> (4) confinement does not address access to care, poverty, and homelessness—which themselves might be the cause of the disease in the first place,<sup>14</sup> and finally, (5) the possibility of confinement might well lead persons to avoid diagnosis (fearing moral judgmentalism) and thereby spreading the infection all the more.<sup>15</sup>

Leprosy causes suffering to the leper, but nothing needed healing more than the religious-legal healthcare system that added humiliation to his suffering. Every Thomas, David, and Haggai seemed to know this—except the rulers, the priests, and the guardians of the city. Lepers in the leper-colony knew. Family members of those who contracted leprosy knew. Friends of family members knew. Those who lived in the districts zoned to have leper-colonies knew. Healthcare workers knew.

So Mark tells the story of a leper who comes to Jesus for healing. This threw a monkey wrench in Jesus' plan to conquer the world through preaching the gospel. Without a doubt, we can harmonize Jesus' preaching and healing ministry as one and the same, but that is because stories like these force us to do so. To simply preach the gospel is not workable in the face of grotesque human suffering.<sup>16</sup> So I side with those commentators who say that Jesus was angry. And he was angry enough to become a partner in crime with this leper (by touching him).<sup>17</sup> Ouch! The strident voice appears.

Jesus' anger went beyond the Galilean healthcare system's treatment of lepers. The passage in the Gospel of Mark tells us that Jesus was moved with anger before he stretched out his hand and healed the leper. But I imagine that in this story, Jesus

became doubly angry. The man failed to follow Jesus' imperative. As all partners involved in unlawful exploits, Jesus told his accomplice (there we go, again) to keep quiet about what had just taken place; "See that you say nothing to anyone" (Mark 1:44, NRSV). Instead, this former leper sang like a canary; "he went out and began to proclaim it freely, and to spread the word" (verse 45, NRSV), providing another reason for Jesus' anger. Jesus' urban ministry had now become shortchanged because of this man's disobedience; "Jesus could no longer go into town openly" (verse 45, NRSV, emphasis mine). What if Jesus had an urban strategy of healthcare for all Galileans? What if Jesus was less interested in that one leper's healing than he was in getting the rulers to rethink the public health policy that allowed for leper colonies?

Many times human actions restrict or limit God's ability to act, and yet God respects human decisions enough to allow us to live by the results.<sup>18</sup> Mosaic strategy to deal with leprosy presupposed medical apartheid: a kind of national security strategy to isolate, quarantine, construct leper colonies (Lev. 13:46). The Mosaic era did not envision a pan-population healing.<sup>19</sup> But in the face of the incarnate Son of God, this strategy was now unworkable. Jesus called for "healthcare that is service-oriented"<sup>20</sup> and not healthcare that was temple-centered. Jesus' healing power inaugurated a new healthcare age. But because his crime partner could not keep his mouth shut, Jesus had to revise his vision for Galilean healthcare. What workable strategy could now be put in place?

### **Is the Crisis in Healthcare Institutions Really About Birth Control?**

I remember once being told that anyone who does not get angry is morally bankrupt.<sup>21</sup> In the American context, there is a struggle to determine whether or not the European style of healthcare is more humane or a morass of bureaucratic waste. News talk shows may lead some to believe that the urgent crisis facing religious-based healthcare institutions is government-mandated healthcare insurance coverage. When enacted, these laws require Catholic and Adventist hospital employers to provide healthcare coverage that includes preventive care like birth control/contraceptives. So I ask: is denying a female healthcare worker access to free contraception the most pressing issue for religiously owned healthcare policy decision makers? This issue doesn't make me angry; it makes me laugh.

But what does make me angry is that access to healthcare is out of reach for the poor: "rationed by the ability to pay."<sup>22</sup> Christians should be angry at the slow pace of nationally integrated healthcare planning within their nations—due to partisan politics that lead's religious-based hospitals to compete with each other for market share.<sup>23</sup> We should be angry that hospital administrators can talk of the sick in terms of "market share." We should be angry because

**In Jesus' directive to this healed unnamed leper, he sends a warning that ministries of religious institutions must transform into ministries of sacred healing communities: communities angered by the conditions of unmet broken needs; communities angry enough to heal.**

of the high cost of healthcare, which seduces many to forget that "health service [is] a ministry rather than a business."<sup>24</sup> We should be angry at the unhealthy environmental conditions that cause disease;<sup>25</sup> angry because crime and drugs have become a public health problem; angry because of poor nutrition and lack of early intervention programs.<sup>26</sup> Today it is not the leprosy person who is untouchable. The problem with healthcare today is that the market is untouchable.<sup>27</sup>

At a time when publicly-subsidized systems of healthcare are routinely defunded and the costs in terms of equipment, medicine, and supplies rise, the religious alternative is so dependent on insurers that it is less able to care for the poor.<sup>28</sup> In such a context, is it possible to transform Christian healthcare



“from a ministry of religious institutes into a ministry of Christian communities”?<sup>29</sup> Today, once again, the risen Jesus calls for “healthcare that is service-oriented” and not “healthcare that is market-centered.”<sup>30</sup> The gospel era envisions the healing of all nations. Yet can Christian communities influence the healthcare system? What workable strategies can be put in place?

### Jesus' Fallback Strategy for Public Health Reform

In Mark's Gospel, “contact with Jesus makes the leper clean.”<sup>31</sup> Jesus, a man possessed by the Spirit of God, is able to transgress

## God will be made manifest in our public health. There remain communities of angry healers.

boundaries as “God breaks through the barricade segregating human history.”<sup>32</sup> Jesus has healing power, and this healing is not only for human bodies, but also for human communities. This truth comes as good news to the evangelist's suffering community.<sup>33</sup>

A story about a leper's healing struck a note of interest in Mark's outcast community of Jesus followers. Mark's community had already broken with the worshipers at the synagogue.<sup>34</sup> Mark's community existed as a colony of untouchables. Mark's community filled up daily with folk who had come to know what it feels like for Jesus to “get under your skin.”<sup>35</sup> So it is good to know that Jesus operates on authority that runs crossways with other religious and legal authorities.<sup>36</sup> Mark's community was a fellowship of sinners in the hands of an angry God.<sup>37</sup>

Jesus' anger is a human anger. Jesus' anger is a healing anger.<sup>38</sup> Jesus' anger is a holy anger. Jesus offered the formula of the new kingdom when he told John's disciples to measure it by his indiscriminate healing—a passage (Matt. 11:1-6, NRSV) that ends with a foreboding warning, “And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.” Jesus directed the leper to go to the priests and offer the offering as a testimony against them. Jesus put the priests on notice that it was not they, but he who declares the unclean clean. Legal and civil structures move aside for the will and work of God. And this leper spread the word that the true healer had come.

Wherever word spreads of his wonderworking life, Jesus has a backup plan. A clandestine Jesus outfit will work the urban places (the text does not say that Jesus no longer went into the towns, but rather that “Jesus could no longer go into a town *openly*,” emphasis mine). Jesus comes to serve undercover.<sup>39</sup> A Jesus fellowship forms from every quarter to celebrate the gift of his life-giving spirit. Mark writes that “people came to him from every quarter” (Mark 1:45, NRSV). Sometimes Jesus comes undercover to his clandestine outfits. Other times his clandestine comrades go undercover from all directions to find Jesus.

This is the prestige of the gospel message in Mark. Jesus planned a surprise attack on the so-called authorities. When Jesus told the leper to “go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as a testimony to them” (Mark 1:44, NRSV), he was not endorsing Mosaic Law without qualification. He was declaring the arrival of a new order. Jesus' presence brought about a new age. And to put this in the language of my colleague Wonil Kim: “Jesus is not envisioning some dream world. He is building a world on his political action.” Jesus sends this smooth-skinned, former leper to the priest because God desires that the powerful (those who control the keys to the city and religious centers) be the first to hear of and the ones to certify his healing acts in this world.<sup>40</sup> In Jesus' directive to this healed unnamed leper, he sends a warning that ministries of religious institutions must transform into ministries of sacred healing communities: communities angered by the conditions of unmet broken needs; communities angry enough to heal.

### A World of Angry Healers

Today contact with Jesus can once again make visions of public healthcare more noble and honorable. This very day public, private, corporate, and volunteer groups collaborate with healthcare professionals to model ministries of Christian community. And as it was in Mark's day, Jesus still comes undercover. Jesus' healing anger touches people even in organizations not called by his name.

Not long ago, Inmed started a “non-profit organization that works to enable disadvantaged people worldwide to improve the health of families and communities.”<sup>41</sup> The healing anger of Jesus awakens in this world apart from religious healthcare institutions: Jesus the undercover brother. The reign of God will not be stopped. In the South American country of Colombia, *The Foundation for Higher Education* recruited volunteer health workers to visit 60 families two times a month in order to provide




health education and update medical records.<sup>42</sup>

And in Philadelphia, there emerged a *Franciscan AIDS/Drug Baby Home* that provided urban sanctuary. It was run by three sisters who legally foster more than two dozen infants at a time: infants born to parents with AIDS or drug addiction.<sup>43</sup> Across the street from my university, our own La Sierra University Church meets the nutritional and clothing needs for hundreds of people each quarter through a food bank and clothing giveaway.

God will be made manifest in our public health. There remain communities of angry healers. Yes, sinners are in the hands of an angry God. God is angry because health systems hurt rather than heal. God is angry because too many health structures bind instead of liberate. Sinners are in the hands of an angry God. And that is good news.

## The Song of the Canary

I think there is great wisdom in those faithful disciples who shape the lectionary readings. The reading for the Psalm is coupled with the Gospel passage from Mark chapter one. Psalm 30 captures the end of this story so well. I can imagine that leprous man: steeped in the musical tradition of the ancient Hebrews, leaping from Jesus' touch, singing this Psalm. And the baritone voice that once moaned the mantra "unclean, unclean" now breaks forth in a soprano shout of verses 4 and 5 (NRSV): "Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning." 

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<sup>1</sup> For a good book to introduce readers to this discussion—comparing France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Canada with the United States—see T.R. Reid, *The Healing of America: A Global Quest for Better, Cheaper, and Fairer Health Care* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Catherine M. Harmer, *The Compassionate Community: Strategies That Work for the Third Millennium* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2005), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Gordon Kaufman, *An Essay on Theological Method* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995), xviii. (See also James H. Cone, "Certainly it takes a special kind of imagination to understand the truth of the cross." *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2011), p. 36.)

<sup>5</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr illuminates the healthy role that tempered anger plays in political imagination: "no one will suffer the perils and pains involved in the process of radical social change, if he cannot believe in the possibility of a purer and fairer society than will ever be established. These illusions are dangerous because they justify fanaticism; but their abandonment is perilous because it inclines to inertia." From Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man & Immoral Society*:

*A Study in Ethics and Politics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 221.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Philip Yancey, *Soul Survivor: How My Faith Survived the Church* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), p. 62.

<sup>9</sup> Walter P. Weaver, *Basic Bible Commentary: Mark* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1988), p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> A sermon preached by Sharon Nearhoof May on March 5, 2000, at Mack Memorial Church of the Brethren in Dayton, Ohio, *Jesus' Life and Ministry*, "Healing Anger," p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> Harriet A. Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Anchor Books, 2008), pp. 146-156.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> Washington, *Medical Apartheid*, pp. 326-327.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 329.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p. 330.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>18</sup> Bonnie Bowman Thurston, *Preaching Mark* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> This language of "pan-population" referring to the healing of all-populations emerged from a luncheon conversation with my colleague and friend, Dr. Wonil Kim, Old Testament professor, HMS Divinity School at La Sierra University.

<sup>20</sup> Harmer, *The Compassionate Community*, p. 113.

<sup>21</sup> "Resentment is...merely the egoistic side of the sense of injustice. Its complete absence simply means lack of social intelligence or moral vigor." Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man & Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 249.

<sup>22</sup> Harmer, *The Compassionate Community*, p. 115.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, p. 125.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>31</sup> Thurston, *Preaching Mark*, p. 27.

<sup>32</sup> Brian K. Blount and Gary W. Charles, *Preaching Mark in Two Voices* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), p. 20.

<sup>33</sup> Garry Wills, *What the Gospel Meant* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), pp. 11-30.

<sup>34</sup> Thurston, *Preaching Mark*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>35</sup> Sharon Nearhoof May, "Healing Anger," *Brethren Life and Thought*, Vol. 50, No. 1-2, Winter-Spring 2005, p. 35.

<sup>36</sup> Thurston, *Preaching Mark*, p. 24.

<sup>37</sup> May, "Healing Anger," p. 35.

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 30-35. Throughout this article I used the phrase "healing anger," which was the title of a sermon Sharon Nearhoof May preached on March 5, 2000, at Mack Memorial Church of the Brethren in Dayton, Ohio.

<sup>39</sup> My friend Paul Mugane offered me this language of "undercover."

<sup>40</sup> May, "Healing Anger," p. 34.

<sup>41</sup> Harmer, *The Compassionate Community*, p. 126.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 130.

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# The Last Warning Message is Not What You Think

BY J. DAVID NEWMAN

MY PICTURE OF GOD IS VERY DIFFERENT NOW THAN WHEN I WAS a child. I was raised in a conservative Adventist minister's home in Africa. My view of God back then is best explained by the following story.

My mother taught us at home, and we loved it when it rained. The noise of the rain on our corrugated iron roof made it impossible to hear, and school was dismissed during the storm. My sister and I would joke about the storm. The thunder was the sound of God throwing naughty children down the stairs. The rain was their tears.

## Living in Fear

I lived in fear of the judgment, because my mother would tell me that I had to treat my sister well and that an angel in heaven was writing down in my heavenly account every bad deed, every wrong word.

I also learned that God had raised up the Adventist church to tell people about the Sabbath and to warn them about the mark of the beast. Whenever an evangelist was holding meetings, the big night was when he preached on the Sabbath and the mark of the beast. On one occasion the evangelist told stories of people who did not accept the Sabbath on the night when he preached on this subject, and then they got killed in a car accident on the way home. The implication was crystal clear. You had better make your decision tonight, or else.

I began pastoring in Scotland, not really sure if I wanted to be a pastor. I had gone to college and seminary because I didn't know what else to do. Although I had received an A in Righteousness by Faith class at the seminary at Andrews University, I had no experience of grace or the love of God in my heart.

## Knowing Jesus

One Sabbath a visitor from the Caribbean showed up at church. She gave me a copy of *Present Truth*, a new magazine edited by Robert Brimsmead. He had discovered the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith. As I read and thought about these ideas,

grace suddenly became real to me. I entered into a personal relationship with Jesus and have never looked back.

But I was still haunted by the Sabbath and the mark of the beast. I married a young woman who had converted to Adventism at the age of 17. She had been taught the same truths about the sanctuary, Sabbath, mark of the beast, and the need to be perfect in order for Jesus to come again. My wife told me that she would pray for God to let her die before the close of probation, because she knew she could not make it through without failing.

We moved to the United States, and then one day while reading one of George Knight's books, I found this statement from Ellen White: "Those who wait for the Bridegroom's coming are to say to the people, 'Behold your God.' The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them."<sup>1</sup>

I shook my head in wonder. What was Ellen White saying? Where was the Sabbath? Where was the mark of the beast? The last message to be given to the world is a revelation of God's character of love? That realization was another pivotal moment in my life.

## The Role of Relationships

Suddenly all kinds of texts in the Bible began to make sense. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35, NIV). I had understood that the way the world knew who God's people were was by the day they kept, the seventh day. But here Jesus said that how we treat one another reveals whether or not we are God's people.

Immediately another important verse leapt to mind. One of the Pharisees, a learned expert in the law, had asked Jesus which was the most important of the commandments. The Pharisees loved to rearrange the Ten Commandments in the order of their importance, and they wanted to see how Jesus ranked them. But Jesus did not play their game.

He replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt. 22:37-40, NIV ©1984).

What was Jesus saying? He was saying that relationships trump behavior. The Ten Commandments are all about behavior. Now behavior is important; after all, it was Jesus who said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15, NRSV).

But correct behavior does not get us into heaven. Paul says, “Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, ‘The righteous will live by faith’” (Gal. 3:11, NIV ©1984). Law is a behavior. Faith is a relationship.

And what is our relationship based on? It is based on Jesus Christ, on a living experience with him.

Ellen White reminds us where Jesus should be in our witness to the world. “Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world. The proclamation of the third angel’s message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath truth. This truth, with others included in the message, is to be proclaimed; but the great center of attraction, Christ Jesus, must not be left out.”<sup>2</sup>

But when you ask the average person on the street what they know about Adventists, they reply, “You worship on a different day.” Or,

“You don’t eat pork.” Or, “You don’t wear jewelry.” Or, “You run those wonderful hospitals.” I have never heard anyone say, “Oh, you are the people who love Jesus more than anything else. You are the people who help in the community more than anyone else.”

I believe it is time for a major paradigm shift in how Adventism looks at itself. On the one hand, we hear wonderful reports about the growth of the Adventist church around the world; but is that what we are really here for? Are we, by ourselves, trying to tell the world about Jesus? What does God really want from us?

### The Adventist Emphasis

It is now more than 160 years since 1844. Why are we still here? I am not going to try to answer that question now. I want to get back to the key issue of what the last warning message is. Take a look at two important pictures in the history of the Adventist church.

The picture below was produced by James White in 1876. It illustrates the plan of salvation from Eden lost to Eden regained. You see from Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel all the way through to the time of Jesus, the last supper, and his second coming. The center of the picture is dominated by the law tree, made up of 10 branches. Jesus on the cross is under the law tree. This is what I call the behavioral picture. It is all about law and the keeping of the law. It emphasizes the specialness of Adventism.





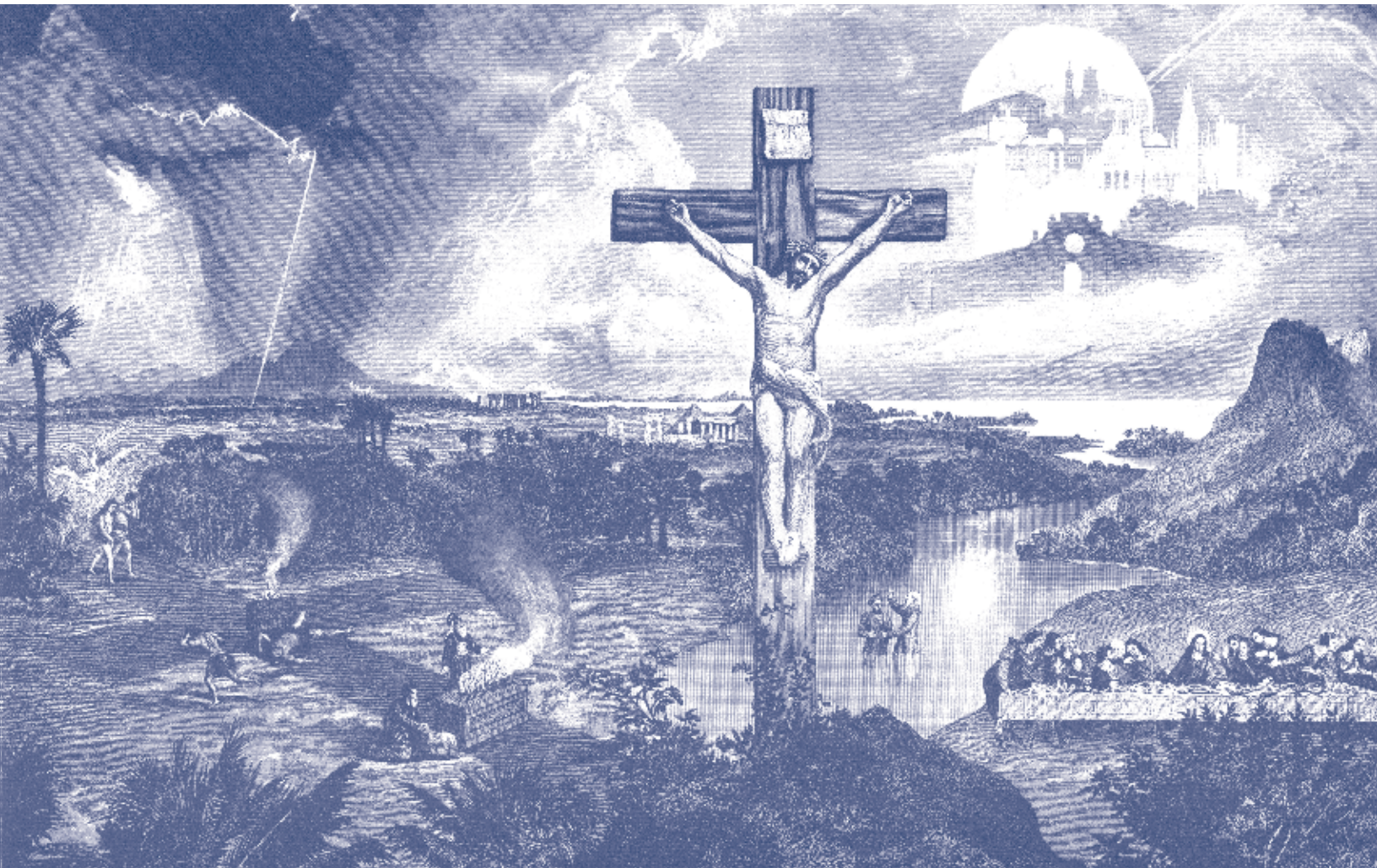
But our focus on behavior led Ellen White to say, March 11, 1890, where she was talking about the need to preach Jesus more. “As a people, we have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain.”<sup>3</sup>

However, Ellen White had been feeling for some years that we had preached the law too much, and she tried to convince her husband to change the picture. James White died in 1881, but in 1883 Ellen White brought out a revision of the picture.

Look at this second picture and see its startling difference. All of the same elements are there as in the first picture. It is still Eden to Eden. But what has happened to the tree and to the law? They have disappeared. Instead, Jesus on the cross is now the focus of this picture. Incidentally, the law is still there. In the upper-left section of the picture, you see Mt. Sinai in the background.

This is what I call the relational picture. Adventism has a choice. Do we make the James White picture, the emphasis on behavior, our continual emphasis? Or do we make the Ellen White picture, the emphasis on relationship, our emphasis? My thesis is that most Adventist churches are still in the James White picture.

Now let's return to what the last warning message is: God's character of love. What did Ellen White mean when she wrote: “The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them”?<sup>4</sup> She says, “A loving, lovable Christian is the most powerful argument in favor of the truth.”<sup>5</sup> What is a lovable Christian? Certainly, it would seem, not those from a certain church in Kansas who picket the funerals of gay persons and hold up banners saying they are going to hell.





There is a favorite quotation from Ellen White that has been much misused. “Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.”<sup>6</sup>

This quotation has been used to emphasize behavior, getting rid of all sin in one’s life. What we have not read is how Ellen White interprets herself. Here is how she defines perfection of character later in the same book. “The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance.”<sup>7</sup>

When do we attain the completeness of Christian character? “When the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance.”<sup>8</sup>

## The Love of God

Love does not sit back and do nothing. Love reveals itself in behavior. Behavior and relationship are both necessary. But what we need to understand is the motivation with which we come to the behavior. Paul explains to us in the great love chapter of 1 Corinthians 13 that we can have a faith that moves mountains, give everything we have to the poor, even sacrifice our own lives—but without love, all we have done means nothing as far as God is concerned.

Then Paul defines love: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (1 Cor. 13:4-7, NIV ©1984).

## Is this how you live? Is this how I live?

One of the most puzzling texts in the Bible, from an Adventist perspective, is the passage in Matthew 25 where Jesus is pronouncing judgment on the sheep and the goats. “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me’” (Matt. 25:34-36, NIV ©1984).

Notice what is absent. The saved people, the remnant, are praised for what? There is no mention of how many Bible studies

given, how many people baptized. No one is commended for faithfulness in giving tithes and offerings. Church attendance is absent. There is nothing about keeping the Sabbath. In fact, there is nothing there that we cherish as Adventists concerning what makes us so special.

**Then I went a step further. I stopped sending a note every day, but I began to call people on their birthday. I called everyone age 18 and older. I would wish each person a happy birthday, talk about his or her life for a moment, and then pray for that individual. I only had one person refuse to let me pray during the call.**

Jesus is telling us that the right relationship with God will result in the right relationship with others. And when we have the right relationship with others then we will want to help, support, and encourage, the most disadvantaged in society.

Paul describes the kind of people living in the last days. “And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here.” (Rom. 13:11-12, NIV ©1984). This is an end-time text. The second coming is very close, says Paul. In fact, the whole New Testament lived in the expectation of Jesus returning in their day.

Notice that he begins this passage with these words, “And do this.” What is “this”? He tells us in the verses just before. “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (verses 8-10, NIV ©1984).

What is our greatest debt? To love one another. Love is the fulfillment of the law.

## Practice What You Preach

As I have grown and matured in Jesus, I have tried to practice this kind of love. Early in my ministry, my wife and I invited a pregnant Indian woman into our home in Scotland to live for five

*Continued on page 29*



# THE ROLES OF WOMEN

BY GORDON M. HYDE

THE BIBLICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE (BRI) OF THE GENERAL Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has been involved since 1972 with committees, councils, and research papers on the roles of women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. At times they were encouraged to believe that the papers written on the subject

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *This article gives one of the best summaries of the ordination of women debate. It was published in 1984 by the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) as the lead article in Symposium on the Role of Women in the Church. Gordon Hyde was the director of the BRI at this time. The articles in this symposium were mostly written by 1975 as a result of the Camp Mohaven Study, but they were not made available until nine years later. References are made in this article to other articles in the symposium. All of the articles may be found at: [www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/Books/role%20of%20women%20in%20the%20church.pdf](http://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/Books/role%20of%20women%20in%20the%20church.pdf).*

could be published for the benefit of concerned individuals within the church and the information of similar persons outside the membership of the church.<sup>1</sup>

Until the present time, there have been various factors that have led the administrative leadership of the church to postpone such publication. The general reason given for the reluctance to publish was the fear that certain countries in the world family of Adventist churches would be embarrassed,

if not offended, by actions that could result in placing women in leadership roles in the church, the home, the school, or the family.

Persons or organizations hearing of the existence of these papers could purchase copies from the Biblical Research office.

Some copies have been distributed under these terms. Now the BRI's Administrative Committee has voted to publish this set of papers. The following provides an overview of them so that the reader may better anticipate their contents.

## A Tradition of Exclusion

One of the issues receiving the attention of Christian churches in the past 15 years has been the roles that the women of these churches can best fulfill. This subject is of particular concern to those women who feel that they have been, or are, prevented from carrying out certain roles in the church, for which they believe they have a competency or a potential capacity. Others share their concern.

It is of interest also to those—both men and women—who are aroused by present-day agitation in society for women to be freely admitted to those areas from which custom and tradition have hitherto excluded them. Such persons want to know whether and how the church is affected by, and is relating to, this general movement in society—how it is treating its women. For many, the church's profession of Christ is judged on this issue.

It is also of interest to those in the church—both the leadership and the general membership—who have a genuine interest in all those elements making up the total church, and who sincerely desire and urge that such shall have every opportunity to contribute their full potential to the completion of the church's mission in the world. Discerning leaders who believe in the New Testament concept of the "priesthood of all believers" have been asking themselves if they have adequately sensed and thoughtfully related to the fact that at least 60 percent of those "believers" are women—and in many local and smaller congregations they may make up 75 to 90 percent of the membership.<sup>2</sup>

### A Focus on Family

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has always seen itself as a reforming body, one that is interested in the fullest potential of men and women, boys and girls, everywhere. It has had a worldwide vision that has courageously leaped many barriers to the communication of the gospel message. It is encouraged by its outreach to more races, tribes, and languages than possibly any other single Protestant body in the world.

It has traditionally carried a great burden for the health of the family as an institution—the foundation unit of society and the church. This is reflected in its system of weekly Sabbath Schools, and its complete system of day schools (many K-12) and other aspects of its educational outreach. Those women who have opportunity for marriage, home, and family, and desire its joys and responsibilities, have always been urged by Adventists to consider that sphere the most sacred and influential that they could occupy.<sup>3</sup>

Some demographic factors of today, however, challenge the church to reassess the family situation and reconsider the roles that the women of the church might fulfill. For example, within the membership of the Adventist Church—for a number of reasons—outnumbering of men by women in the general population is particularly marked. Unfortunately, no available demographic studies provide statistics; but a fair estimate might be, as mentioned above, that there could be twice as many women as men in the church. The disproportion could be even more marked away from the large denominational centers.<sup>4</sup>

Marriage and family within their own faith are therefore not available to thousands of Adventist women. This fact needs to be considered by those who note that the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy both stress woman's calling in the home and family—that there she is queen. One has neither to deny nor diminish the sacredness of the role of wife and mother when admitting the plain, undeniable fact that this particular calling is available to only a limited proportion of Adventist women, especially in some countries, and more particularly in some areas of those countries.<sup>5</sup>

It is a fact, also, in the industrialized nations at least, that women complete their family role much earlier in life than ever before, and yet they are living longer than ever before—outliving men in general almost everywhere. So it is not uncommon today—with the diminishing number of children whom parents find that they can adequately support and educate—for the wife to have 20 to 30 years between the close of her child-rearing responsibilities and her years of complete retirement. And for the

most conscientious, it is a serious and significant issue as to what they shall do with these afternoon and evening years of life. There is so much that they could and would like to do in the church.<sup>6</sup>

It is likewise a fact today that wage scales virtually assume that the wives in families will be wage earners in addition to the husbands. The relentless pressures of high interest rates and other economic factors give little prospect of relief in the foreseeable future to the need for wives to work, if a reasonable standard of living is to be maintained.

Thus the church of today should take measure of the fact that women in general are thinking more and more in terms of a career, with marriage and family as a possible element or interlude in that career. The church may need to be more aware of this fact and consider how best to use this new situation to the better fulfillment of the church's urgent mission.

There may be some Adventist women caught up in the strong feelings of certain segments of the women's liberation movement in some countries (and again there are no valid studies to cite), but it does not *seem* as though the majority are directly involved or more than mildly concerned from a personal point of view. This may not be as true for those under 30, and that could be a factor in the near future.

There was a persistently voiced conviction—even on the part of non-supporters of “liberation”—that wage discrimination (overt or covert) against women in the church's employ constituted a denial of the basic sense of justice and fairness which should mark all Christian transactions. But the church has taken steps to bring itself into line with national wage policy. Discrimination that is based on sex alone never enhances the church's image.

### Decision-making in the Church

It remains an indisputable fact, however, that women have had little or no role in the decision-making functions of the church. There are those also (some women as outspoken as some men) who declare that this is as it should be because, they say, it is just not in a woman's nature to weigh matters objectively and to be able to reason and debate without deep emotion and personal involvement.

Then a whole battery of premises begins to be invoked at this point—the woman is supposed to be subservient to the man; no woman was ever called to be a priest, nor head of a tribe in Israel, nor an apostle of Jesus Christ; nor were they to speak out in church; therefore!—and the conclusions drawn have been interesting both for content and variety. Even the fact that all three Persons of the Godhead are spoken of in the masculine



gender in the Scriptures is seen to have some bearing on the limitations of what a woman can do in the service of God (although no one quite wants to attribute “maleness” to the Persons of the Godhead).

There is a factor that needs to be considered carefully by the church as it continues to study the whole question of women’s roles—that is that the leadership of the worldwide church tends

in Christ “there is neither male nor female” (Gal. 3:28, RSV).<sup>9</sup> The fuller development of this concept had yet to be fulfilled—as with “neither Jew nor Greek, ... neither slave nor free.” These were then ideals, not realities, even “in Christ Jesus.” But they pointed toward a goal. For in Christ Jesus, “you are *all* sons of God, through faith” (verse 26, RSV, emphasis added). Perhaps the full weight of these words has yet to be perceived and translated into

# IT REMAINS AN **INDISPUTABLE FACT** HOWEVER THAT **WOMEN** HAVE HAD LITTLE OR NO ROLE IN THE **DECISION MAKING** FUNCTIONS OF THE CHURCH

to run in the 45-65 age bracket, and that factor governs the background against which leadership attitudes toward the roles of women have developed. To fail to be appropriately responsive, however, to reasonable concerns of women is to risk a deepening loss of credibility in church leadership on the part of the “under-thirties.”<sup>7</sup>

So where does this leave us in the search for legitimate, scriptural, appropriate, permissible, or tolerated roles for women in the church? If we survey the Old Testament, we find a mixed status for women after Eden. A Hebrew woman had some rights to call her own (she fared better than her contemporary “Gentile” woman). She was under the jurisdiction, and therefore protection, of her father or husband (and possibly her owner in some cases). Given a bill of divorcement even for a trivial reason, she was returned to her father’s jurisdiction unless marriage should come again.<sup>8</sup>

It is Graeco-Roman world against which the times of Jesus and the apostles must be seen. Jewish women may have been better off in some respects, but the way Jesus related to women was quietly revolutionary—likewise for Paul, even in declaring that

the restored partnership not only of husbands and wives, but of men and women.<sup>10</sup>

## **Subordination and Emancipation**

Could it be then that the message and the example of Jesus were intended to restore the partnership of man and woman as it was before sin? Genesis 1:27 and 5:1-2 declare the unity, the oneness, the partnership of the male and female within generic mankind. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” “When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created” (RSV).<sup>11</sup>

Adam and Eve were first male and female, then husband and wife. It was after sin that the woman as wife was told, “he shall rule over you” (Gen. 3:16, RSV). In the biblical picture of the man-woman relationship, it is significant that most often the subordination factor was presented in the context of the marriage relationship. It is illuminating to see how often God called a woman to sacred leadership—interestingly in the prophetic

role more than others. What Jesus did for women and allowed them to do for Him (Paul likewise) is highly challenging. One could justifiably see in these relationships a pointing toward a greater partnership relationship between men and women in the Lord, just as there was also a pointing to a diminution of the distinctions between Jew and Gentile, slave and master, in Christ.

Here it could be highly informative to note in what ways the apostolic church dealt with these three relationships and what their vicissitudes have been since. Has the worldwide Christian church really emancipated the slave? What is the tolerance quotient of Christians toward Jews? And how far has the church come from more primitive attitudes toward women?

It is the writings of Paul that are invoked most by those

church life without modification? Is the man-woman relationship in the church identical to the husband-wife relationship?

There were some problems in the Corinthian church in general and some especially involving women. They were departing in some particular ways from the acceptable patterns of womanly conduct in the Christian assemblies, and Paul was addressing the problems without describing them exactly. He was answering some inquiries from anxious people in the Corinthian church; but we do not have their questions, and it is hazardous to generalize from an attempted assessment of the answers only.

We *can* read Paul as silencing women in the assembly forever and everywhere (1 Cor. 14:34-36; Eph. 2:11-15). But if we will be fair to Paul, we must also point in the Corinthian letter to

# THIS CHURCH HAS BEEN TAKING VARIOUS READINGS ON THIS QUESTION OF THE ROLES OF WOMEN DURING THE PAST FIVE OR 10 YEARS

who feel that the limited role a woman plays in the church is a matter of divine commandment. And it is true that some strong prohibitions are laid upon the woman in a few Pauline expressions, especially if taken in isolation from context, or generalized without consideration of other relevant statements. One has to consider also whether prohibitions called for in the New Testament setting were intended to be universal principles. Frequently there are time and place factors that demand consideration.

How carefully, then, are *all* the words of Paul concerning women considered? For example, if Christ declared of Himself, “But I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:27, RSV), and Paul states that a husband is to love his wife the way Christ loves the church, who really is subservient to whom in the marriage? Are the constraints in the marriage relationship to be carried into

chapter 11:13-16, where he is reminding the Corinthians of the conditions and/or customs to be met by a woman who would pray or prophesy (verse 5) in the assembly of the saints. And that is not only the same apostle writing to the same church, but it is testimony within one letter.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from scriptural injunction (to which only elementary allusion has been made here), it is extremely difficult to filter out all the sociological influences that have affected the thinking and attitudes of each human being—of each church member. What impact do all these strands of influence from the past have on our reading the Bible?

## What Women Have to Offer

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church organization, women have served effectively in such roles as nurses, secretaries, and teachers.

Bible instructors, welfare leaders, Sabbath School teachers, literature evangelists—no question. But in management, as members of boards or commissions—seldom. On local, union, or General Conference committees—a sprinkling. One may wonder why. Has the womanly approach to issues nothing to offer? Should her difference from man be seen as inferiority? Is that Christ's view? The "priesthood of the believer" concept is limited, in women, to the more supportive roles. Where leadership roles are concerned, the priesthood of all believers is limited to males. And yet Peter gives no intimation of such a limitation. (See 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.)

In this respect it is interesting to contemplate denominational history. Women were quite frequently treasurers and departmental leaders in conferences—local, union, and general—more so than today. Not a few carried a fruitful pastoral and evangelistic role—short of conducting a baptism—even though they labored under some other designation. One wonders why the retrogression since then. Were there problems, or was it just that more men were getting theological training?

It is pertinent to consider the role of the best-known woman among Seventh-day Adventists—Mrs. Ellen G. White. Some might wish to minimize the significance of her being a woman, since the call to a prophetic ministry among us was first given to two men—one of them "a mulatto"—before Ellen Harmon was called. Should this fact be understood to show that God would have preferred a man? Or should it be presented to show that God was *equally* willing to call a woman? Might it even be used to show the greater willingness of a woman to bear the cross involved?

## Official Position

Be that as it may, this church has been taking various readings on this question of the roles of women during the past five or 10 years. And invariably the question of ordaining women to the ministry seems to become the focal point at issue. And what the church, through the Annual Councils of 1973 and 1974 and the Spring Meeting of 1975, has so far decided on that question is "indicated" in the following:

VOTED, 1. That we continue to recognize "the primacy of the married woman's role in the home and family, as repeatedly emphasized in the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy. . . ." (1974 Annual Council actions, page 13, paragraph 5), and that

We also recognize that there are many women in the church without family responsibilities who are capable and free to dedicate their full time to the service of the church in many spheres and on many levels.

2. That we agree that potential leadership roles, on all levels of

administration not requiring ordination to the gospel ministry, be open to suitably qualified women whose home and family responsibilities make this possible.

3. That, therefore, we request church and institutional administrators on all levels to make continuing efforts to place qualified women, as well as men, in the categories of work referred to in the preceding paragraph.

4. That the way be opened for women elected to serve as deaconesses in our churches to be ordained to this office and that the Church Manual Committee be requested to give study to a statement of the qualifications of deaconesses and suggestions in regard to a suitable ordination service.

5. That in harmony with the spirit and intent of paragraph 3 of the Annual Council 1974 action (pages 12-14) the greatest discretion and caution be exercised in the ordaining of women to the office of local elder, counsel being sought in all cases by the local conference/mission from the union and division committees before proceeding.

6. That we recognize that the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church provides precedents for women to fill roles of leadership. However, on the matter of the ordination of women to the gospel ministry we believe that the world church is not yet ready to move forward. Therefore, until this question becomes clearer we recommend that every endeavor be made to use women in the numerous positions many of them are well qualified to fill.

7. That we further recognize the considerable contribution that women have made to the church as Bible instructors and in other soul-winning capacities, and recommend that where Bible instructors or other women with suitable qualifications and experience are able to fill ministerial roles, they be assigned as assistant pastors, their credentials being missionary license or missionary credential. (1975 Spring Meeting actions, p. 153.)

## Inspired Counsel

As the church looks at the broader aspects of the roles of women, it is interesting to contemplate that for nearly 90 years the church has had inspired counsel to set apart by prayer and the laying on of hands selected women who could give leadership in a type of welfare-deaconess lay role.<sup>13</sup> The church has yet to implement this counsel.

In 1898 and 1899 the church was counseled that (a) a woman who engaged in soul-winning work, and (b) a minister's wife working with her husband (making satisfactory arrangements for the care of their children) should be paid separately in addition to the salary of her husband.<sup>14</sup> This counsel, generally, has yet to be implemented.

The church was instructed that women, as well as men, were to be called as physician-pastors or pastor-physicians. In fact, women were to be preferred as physicians ministering to women.<sup>15</sup> Physicians showing the Lord's call to medical missionary work in soul winning and spiritual responsibility were to be ordained as ministers (no exclusion of women ever implied).<sup>16</sup> But Adventists have apparently no greater proportion of female physicians than the world around them.

Is it conceivable that if Adventists had followed the inspired

prohibition or endorsement today. There are favorable arguments that some would deduce from certain considerations, but there are countering arguments.<sup>18</sup>

It is, however, a serious matter for the church to consider that able, humble, and earnest young women present themselves as college or seminary candidates for degrees in theological and ministerial training and some of them claim to have heard the call of the Lord to the ministry. As with all callings, the church has to weigh such a conviction most carefully, lest it be out of

# AT THE SAME TIME, AS WITH MEN, THE CHURCH HAS BEEN ABLE TO RECOGNIZE THE CALL OF THE LORD THAT THE MINISTERIAL CANDIDATE CLAIMS

counsel on the roles of women in these three areas 85 years ago, they might have been led into further areas during the remaining 20 years of Mrs. White's life? In any case, had they been obedient to the light given, would they not have been so far in advance of the "liberation" movement that it could have lost its appeal? There might well have been no basis for government agencies to accuse Adventists of discrimination.<sup>17</sup>

## Recognizing the Call of God

The ordination of women to the ministry is an integral part of the present context, even if an individual's personal preferences would not include it. Let it be noted at the outset that inspired writers, ancient and modern, nowhere *explicitly* discuss the matter of ordination of women. Neither are there examples or principles that would have the same weight as explicit divine

touch with leadings of the Holy Spirit.

At the same time, as with men, the church has to be able to recognize the call of the Lord that the ministerial candidate claims. A conference committee has to be able to extend a call. Churches or institutions have to be ready to welcome the candidate. There would need to be additional General Conference internships available to young women, or at least discrimination removed from present general practice.

Annual Council actions have taken the position that the whole world field should be open to calling women as ministers before they could be called to any part of the field. Who could not agree that it would be ideal for the world field to be united on the proposal at the outset? On the other hand, we make regional or divisional distinctions on other matters of church polity. (The position on the wedding ring is an example.)



Some might ask why anyone should have to contend his or her way into the ministry. It does not seem ideal to think of urging one's way into the ministry; but, on reflection, one must note that men now in church leadership may have done so. Since history is replete with accounts of the struggles of women to break into male-dominated callings and professions, the ministry might be no exception.

### Questions to Consider

But again—why women in the ministry? Perhaps it is because women sense that, in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, acceptance to the ministry of even a few women would symbolize their complete acceptance to partnership with the men of the church.

But today it is asked, Should we risk splitting the church over the question of ordination of women? Or even splitting a few congregations? These are solemn questions. Unity is the supreme evidence to the world of the reality of the church's spiritual contact with Jesus Christ (John 17:21) and should be of the highest priority in church objectives. But is the unity of the Adventist Church fragile enough to be shattered by this matter?


With all the hurdles between women and the ministry, perhaps only a handful of candidates would even wish to make the attempt to gain acceptance (especially if as many as 100 men were waiting to be placed after all regular quotas had been filled). They could be placed only when a combination of persons would be willing to provide the necessary openings.

In other areas and on other issues the church has been willing to conduct a pilot program, to experiment. This particular experiment would be quite involved and could be fraught with disappointment. (Many men, however, have found that the call to the ministry did not work out for them, and they had to adapt to a different vocation.) But one wonders, Could the church consider a pilot program for women in the ministry? If it were tried for five years, there could then be presented to an Annual Council a realistic recommendation on this subject. A door of opportunity could thus be opened without leaving it untended.

The above observations, tied to the work done over a period of several years by the BRI and an associated study committee, provide the consensus of those involved that there is neither theological mandate for nor objection to ordination of women to any level of responsibility for which ordination is indicated. At the same time, it is recognized that the church has to be led of

the Spirit into such new areas and the BRI has neither desire nor intention to become the prime or sole advocate. The BRI sees its responsibility to be that of giving church leadership the benefit of the trained scholarship of the church. How to share such knowledge with the church at large and how and when to move is seen as the responsibility of church leaders at all levels.

There is a factor that carries weight with all followers of Jesus Christ. It is that while each member of the church has freedom in Jesus Christ, he or she will be willing to restrict that freedom in the interest of the mission and unity of the church, which is Christ's body. So personal preferences and viewpoints will always be held in subservience to the goals of the gospel commission.

On one other aspect of the matter the BRI and its standing committees have been clear, and that is that the full potential of the women and the men of this church for a finished task has yet to be harnessed and endowed with "latter rain" power. For that climactic development, we work and pray. 

<sup>1</sup> Although this set of papers was basically completed in 1975, it is felt that their publication has value for the church living in the 1980s.

<sup>2</sup> See LaVonne Neff, "The Role of Women in American Protestantism, 1975" (chap. 9 in this volume).

<sup>3</sup> See Betty Stirling, "Society, Women, and the Church" (chap. 10 in this volume); Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 3, p. 483; White, *Welfare Ministry*, p. 158.

<sup>4</sup> See E. Marcella Anderson, "The Roles of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church: Significance of Ellen G. White Counsels" (chap. 8 in this volume).

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> See Kenneth Vine, "The Legal and Social Status of Women in the Pentateuch" (chap. 2 in this volume); Jerry Gladson, "The Role of Women in the Old Testament Outside the Pentateuch" (chap. 3 in this volume).

<sup>9</sup> See Julia Neuffer, "First-Century Cultural Backgrounds in the Greco-Roman Empire" (chap. 4 in this volume); Walter F. Specht, "Jesus and Women" (chap. 5 in this volume).

<sup>10</sup> See Frank B. Holbrook, "A Brief Analysis and Interpretation of the Biblical Data Regarding the Role of Woman" (chap. 7 in this volume).

<sup>11</sup> See Gerhard F. Hasel, "Man and Woman in Genesis 1-3" (chap. 1 in this volume); Fritz Guy, "Differently But Equally the Image of God" (chap. 11 in this volume).

<sup>12</sup> See Sakae Kubo, "An Exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and Its Implications" (chap. 6 in this volume); also Holbrook; Specht.

<sup>13</sup> *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 9, 1895.

<sup>14</sup> See White, *Evangelism*, pp. 491-493.

<sup>15</sup> See White, *Medical Ministry*, p. 246.

<sup>16</sup> See White, *Counsels on Health*, p. 524.

<sup>17</sup> See Anderson.

<sup>18</sup> See Raoul Dederen, "A Theology of Ordination" (chap. 12 in this volume).

# Does God Always Answer Prayers?

BY RICHARD W. COFFEN

SEVEN-YEAR-OLD FRIENDS KURT AND KENT had some idle time while at the Southern New England Conference camp meeting. So they ran down the steps leading into the valley and slipped into the adjacent woods, where they tossed pine cones at each other, picked some tall ferns, and raced twig “boats” in the stream.

Tiring of such antics, they decided that this was the perfect time for baptism. Kurt would baptize Kent in the stream, and Kent would return the favor. Quickly removing their jeans and shirts, they proceeded with the rite. Afterward, they wriggled their sopping bodies back into their clothing and headed back to their tents.

Upon reaching the edge of the woods, Kurt and Kent decided to do something additional that was spiritual—pray. Shouldn’t the newly baptized be people of prayer? And because of the occasion, this prayer should request something special. After some bantering, they decided they’d ask God to strike dead the next person who, while descending the steps leading into the valley, would grasp the handrail.

Each prayed with childlike faith and said “Amen,” waiting expectantly. Sure enough, an elderly lady began descending the stairs. Alarmed, Kurt and Kent shouted out, “Don’t touch the railing!”

Sister Brown squinted at them with a puzzled look, grasped the handrail to steady herself, and arrived safely at the bottom. The boys stared in terror. Surely she’d drop dead any moment. But she didn’t. And two very confused lads proceeded to their tents. On the one hand, they felt quite relieved that Sister Brown hadn’t died instantaneously. On the other hand, they were troubled that God hadn’t

answered their earnest prayers.

The lady relating this experience during the children’s “sermon” at church concluded, “Boys and girls, did God answer Kurt’s and Kent’s prayers?”

The children chorused, “No.”

But the storyteller begged to differ. “*Of course* God answered their prayers,” she countered. “Sometimes he says, ‘Yes.’ Sometimes he says, ‘No.’ And sometimes he says, ‘Wait.’”

The children wore puzzled expressions as they returned to their pews. And I don’t blame them. It seemed to me that they’d responded with the correct answer and that the storyteller had it wrong!

Christians commonly repeat the storyteller’s words. But I think such a perspective is misguided, doing God an injustice by trivializing prayer—answered prayer. According to this theology, maybe God said neither “Yes” nor “No” but “Wait,” because 18 months later elderly Sister Brown did die. But there’s more to my quibble. Why? Let me refer to a familiar Bible story.

After three-and-a-half years of drought, Elijah told King Ahab to “summon ... Israel to ... Mount Carmel” (1 Kings 18:19, NIV ©1984) for a showdown between Baal and YHWH. Elijah ordered that two altars be used along with two bulls. He proposed that each god—Baal and YHWH—be invoked. “The god who answers by fire—he is God” (verse 24, NIV ©1984).

All morning Baal’s prophets danced, sang, and cut themselves, pleading, “O Baal, answer us!” (verse 26, NIV, ©1984). At noon Elijah mocked them because of Baal’s silence, urging, “Shout louder!” and “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping” (verse 27, NIV ©1984).<sup>1</sup>

“But there was *no response, no one answered, no one paid attention*” (verse 29, NIV ©1984, emphasis added).

Finally, at the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah took his turn. Before asking YHWH to answer his prayer, Elijah had the slain bull and entire altar drenched with water. Then with a short, no-nonsense prayer, he prayed, “Answer me, O LORD, answer me” (verse 37, NIV, ©1984). And YHWH did answer Elijah’s prayer, sending fire that “burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also ... the water in the trench” (verse 38, NIV ©1984).

This is probably the most dramatic answer to prayer in Scripture, but let’s assume that the earlier storyteller was correct—that God always answers prayer but sometimes says “No” or “Wait” rather than “Yes.”

If that were true, then we could acknowledge that Baal *did* answer the prayers of his 450 prophets when they prayed. He wasn’t busy or deep in thought or sleeping, as Elijah jested. Baal was answering their earnest petitions. (And the prophets of Baal were obviously more fervent than Elijah because they prayed the longest, even physically cutting themselves to demonstrate their sincerity!) Baal’s answer was simply, “No!” So the Bible writer got it wrong when he stated that “there was *no response, no one answered*” (verse 26, NIV ©1984; cf. verse 29)! Or maybe he said, “Wait,” but impatient Elijah refused to wait any longer—when the evening sacrifice was traditionally offered.<sup>2</sup>

Baal said, “No.” YHWH said, “Yes.” All of the prayers would have been answered on Mount Carmel—if one accepts the reasoning of the theological position told to those children at church!

Perhaps you’ve heard a mutated version. God basically has two answers, one of which he always gives. Sometimes he’ll say, “Wait.” But most of the time he’ll say, “Yes, but ...” As a result, God will answer your prayer but not your specific request. It

sounds pious to say, “I prayed for wealth, but God answered by giving me poverty so that I might be less materialistic.” However, it appears that Jesus wouldn’t have found such explanations satisfying. He said: “Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? ... how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!” (Matt. 7:9-11, NIV ©1984).

Although these contemporary expressions of piety sound spiritual, they make nonsense out of answered prayer. If God truly answers prayer, we should have some objective way of knowing that he did so. That’s why the late Roger Morneau’s books on answered prayer became bestsellers. Roger would offer a prayer for a specific person with a specific need, and God would respond with a specific answer that fit that specific request.

The popular theology expressed in the children’s story is absurd because it makes certifiable answers to prayer impossible. Anything that happens—or doesn’t happen—is twisted into an “answer.” It turns God’s response to prayer into a situation of “Tails I win; heads you lose.” It makes a mockery of answered prayer.

If we believe that prayer genuinely makes a difference, then we should have compelling confirmation for that belief. That’s why many Christians keep a prayer journal. They write down the particular request made and the date. Later they inscribe the date when that request met with a specifically verifiable answer. Such prayer journals help augment faith—if the entries for requests and those for answers dovetail.

The writer of 1 Kings makes the point that Baal did *not* answer the prayers of his 450 prophets, whereas YHWH did indeed answer Elijah’s prayer—directly and unambiguously. Elijah got what he prayed for. The prophets of Baal didn’t.

Let’s not hesitate to admit it. Sometimes God doesn’t answer our prayers. Sometimes we pray foolishly or childishly or selfishly. The Bible isn’t afraid to admit the possibility of unanswered prayer: “Ye ask, and *receive not*” (James 4:3, KJV). No wonder Paul explained that although we don’t know what to pray for, the Holy Spirit prays for us (Rom. 8:26-27). Jesus, despite his sinlessness and sincerity, wrestled with the cognitive dissonance of unanswered prayer when he agonized, “*Abba, Father, ... Take this cup from me*” (Mark 14:36, NIV ©1984).

Let’s not undermine the efficacy of prayer through inane religious platitudes that make no sense. Otherwise, we do God an injustice and nudge thoughtful people toward skepticism. 🚫

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<sup>1</sup> Ever since Jonah Ibn-Janah, a medieval Hebrew grammarian, some translators regard the Hebrew as a euphemism for defecating. Hence, translations such as “Maybe ... he’s on the potty” (*The Complete Jewish Bible*). See also the *English Revised Version*, *God’s Word to the Nations Version*, *New International Reader’s Version*, and *New Living Translation*.

<sup>2</sup> The time for the evening sacrifice (Hebrew: “between the two evenings”) remains debatable. Possibilities include: (1) just after noontime, (2) between 2:30 and 3:00 p.m., and (3) after sunset but during twilight.

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# INTELLIGENT DESIGN: Whatever It Is, It's Not Science

By Mailen Kootsey and Ervin Taylor



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## Review of the Article “Aesthetics and Intelligent Design” (November-December 2012) by Bernard Brandstater

DR. BRANDSTATER BEGINS HIS ARTICLE with a brief and glowing review of the history of the Intelligent Design (ID) movement. As a basis for our critique of his article, we begin by summarizing the logical steps and assumptions that comprise ID:

1. A mathematical description of “design” is given, associating it with information needed to distinguish design from randomness.

2. Biological systems, as examples of design, could not have originated by evolutionary processes because the chance and selection mechanisms of evolution cannot generate the required information.

3. Because there is therefore no natural mechanism that could account for the origin of life, life must have been the result of fiat creation by a designer (God).

Mainstream scientists have little disagreement with ID Step 1 in the above sequence, primarily because it is a *definition* and not a *mechanism*. “Complexity” is, however, the descriptor preferred by scientists rather than “design.”

Early in the development of evolutionary theory, random modifications were the only assumed sources of new biological structures; hence the origin of ID Step 2. Unfortunately for ID proponents, in recent decades it has become evident that there are natural mechanisms that can generate information and complexity<sup>1,2</sup>. Much remains to be

learned about these mechanisms, and they have not totally replaced random modifications and selection in evolution, but their existence invalidates ID Step 2 as a scientific argument.

ID Step 3 is a disguised version of the god-of-the-gaps argument: since the chance and selection mechanism is not adequate to generate life, therefore a supernatural origin is indicated. Note that ID proponents have not presented a proof that it is not possible for a natural mechanism to generate complexity, only that the single assumed mechanism is not adequate. Current science shows the opposite—that information generation and self-organization are possible through natural, repeatable, and testable mechanisms. The unsupported insertion of supernatural creation in ID Step 3 thus identifies Intelligent Design as religion and not science, in spite of the decoration of mathematics in ID Step 1. In the Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District trial, after listening to presentations for and against ID, a conservative judge came to the same conclusion in December 2005, that ID is religion and not science.

## Mainline Science Is Not Atheistic!

Regretfully, while commenting on his reasons for his endorsement of ID, Dr. Brandstater reveals what appears to be his profound misunderstanding of the nature of the modern scientific enterprise. He states that ID was designed to combat “the dogmatic atheism of today’s mainstream science.” In his opinion, the accomplishment of 20 years of ID is that “[w]e are enabled to see God’s fingerprints



in nature and to take heart in resisting the arrogant godlessness of a scientism that seeks to rule our culture.” ID has accomplished this even if, according to him, “elites, like the National Science Foundation, still voice atheism or agnosticism.”

These statements strongly suggest to us that Dr. Brandstater either has never learned of or, more likely, wishes to ignore or dispute what is widely understood as a key distinction that has always stood at the core of the worldview of the modern scientific enterprise. This is that mainline science operates employing methodological naturalism and takes no position concerning ontological naturalism. Dr. Brandstater reveals his intellectual myopia by his confusion of *science* and essentially a straw-man concept of *scientism*.

So that we can be clear concerning this critical distinction, methodological naturalism undertakes the study of the physical world *as if* there is no reality other than a physical reality, (i.e., no supernatural explanations are allowed). Methodological naturalism is not based on a proof or assumption that the supernatural does not exist or that God does not exist. Rather, it is based on the experience of history (many failed predictions of the limits of technology) and recent theory (emergence<sup>3</sup>) showing that scientists are not good at predicting the limits of what can be accomplished within natural laws. Who could have guessed a century ago, for example, that we would be able to speak to and see anyone on Earth live through a device fitting in the palm of our hand!

Ontological naturalism, sometimes also referred to as existential or philosophical naturalism, advances the claim that there is, in fact, no reality other than a physical reality. Mainline science makes no such claim about other realities. If scientism is defined as espousing a belief in ontological naturalism, then by definition that belief places it *outside* the boundaries of mainline science.

It is Dr. Brandstater’s profound lack of appreciation for the distinction between methodological and ontological naturalism that, in our view, undermines his intellectual credibility. He relates that his introduction to ID was at a conference of those involved in the early development of the ID movement. In doing so, he clearly states the nature of his own interest in and reaction to ID. To him, “[t]heir papers and their arguments were new and engaging, and to a Christian like me, they were faith-affirming. It was good to feel intellectually respectable as a Bible-adhering Christian.” The attractiveness of ID is not that it is scientifically engaging but that it is “faith-affirming ... as a Bible-adhering Christian.” Dr. Brandstater correctly puts his finger on exactly why ID was created.

### Science and Belief Together

Dr. Brandstater’s statement that mainline science espouses a “dogmatic atheism” is profoundly misleading and radically misrepresents the current reality of the nature of the scientific impulse. What is true is that some scientists in their private lives are atheists, some of them are agnostics, while others are devout

adherents of a wide spectrum of religious traditions. Vocal proponents of scientism include Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and others. Prominent scientists who are also religious believers include Francis Collins, John Polkinghorne, and Paul Davies. However, when these believing scientists and many thousands of others are engaged in doing science, they operate on the basis of methodological naturalism.

If ID is not science, how do scientist-believers hold both their scientific thinking and their religious beliefs in their minds? Stephen Jay Gould (not a scientist-believer) has suggested that the two areas cannot be linked, that they should be considered as separate “magisterial.” While many agree with Gould, many scientist-believers do not. They have found ways to link concepts in the two areas in ways that do not violate the basic assumptions of either. An example, pertinent to this review, is to contrast “Intelligent Design” and “intelligent design.” The first refers specifically to the recent movement described by Dr. Brandstater in his introduction and critiqued earlier in this review. Essential to this view is the conclusion, supposedly by scientific reasoning, that design in the universe proves the existence of supernatural creation by a divine Creator.

In contrast, “intelligent design” is an alternative to the opposing views of ID and atheistic scientism. This view combines a scientific recognition of design and complexity in the universe with belief in a Creator God arrived at from theological sources. Scientific methods



and conclusions are accepted within the philosophy of methodological naturalism. The origins of matter and natural laws are attributed to a Creator God because that belief is an essential part of a system of religious beliefs involving ultimate origins, how to live in the present, and the possibility of future existence. There is no scientific attempt to *prove* the existence of God, the supernatural, or that God originated the universe and natural laws. There is room in this view for a divine Creator to act in ways that are beyond the understanding and capability of humans, but such acts are not assumed to be supernatural because even when (or if) natural laws are known completely, all possible results that can be achieved by applying these laws in a complex system cannot be predicted.

If ID is not good science, how well does ID support biblically-based religious belief? Superficially, as Dr. Brandstater has indicated, ID appears to be both scientifically sound and supportive of belief in God. However, more careful reasoning shows that the theology of ID is questionable as well as the science. Many contemporary Christians confess the belief that the Old Testament is a record of God's attempts to communicate his purpose to his chosen people, in contrast with the prevalent local religions and deities. The reader could focus on the specific worship practices of each, but the real distinction was in the character of the contrasting deities. The local deities were characterized as demanding, unpredictable, subject to whims, and having little respect for human life.

The One God of the Hebrews, on the other hand, emphasized dependability, regularity, and enhancement of human life. Repeatedly, the promise was made that if you do ..., good things will happen. ID, with its assumption of fiat creation, gives an incorrect message about God. While there is a background assumption that God created everything, many conclude that God is specifically identified in the universe by fiat creation acts—the supernatural or not-natural. This identification by the supernatural is made even more prominent by the popular emphasis on miracles (also supernatural) in religion as evidence for God. Together, ID and miracles characterize God as more like the unpredictable Canaanite deities than the dependable, regular God of the Old Testament.

### Science and Aesthetics

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy and is a subjective concept without a unique definition. On that basis, a reader of Dr. Brandstater's piece might reasonably assume that he would never advance ID as a *scientifically valid option* of explaining why the natural world has the characteristics it does. That assumption would be reinforced by Dr. Brandstater's clear exposition that ID was initially advanced by someone who was not a scientist. As Dr. Brandstater correctly comments, ID was first widely popularized by a law professor, Philip Johnson.

Dr. Brandstater might have made a credible association between design and aesthetics if he had omitted the ID insertion of the supernatural. The

believer's reaction of inspiration by beauty, whether of natural or human origin, is understandable even without a clear definition or neural mechanism. Scientists can be inspired as well by the beauty of mechanism and complexity. However, the association with fiat or supernatural creation is unfortunate. Creating complex creatures and ecological groupings within a fixed system of natural laws is much more impressive as "creativity" than someone, even with immense power, who creates without respect to natural mechanisms. The aesthetic feelings of inspiration could be subjectively linked to belief in a divine Creator to create an "intelligent aesthetics" in analogy with "intelligent design," as described earlier. Both are believer's associations and are questionable only when proof of the supernatural is implied.

In conclusion, scientific and religious or aesthetic thoughts can be held within the same mind, if one area is not expected to be the basis of proof for the other. Each person has to arrive at a balance of emphasis they find comfortable, but hopefully without violating the principles of either.

<sup>1</sup> Peter A. Corning, "Synergy and self-organization in the evolution of complex systems," *Systems Research*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1995, pp. 89-121.

<sup>2</sup> See the December 2011 issue of the journal *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, a special issue on Information, Intelligence, and Origins.

<sup>3</sup> Harold J. Morowitz, *The Emergence of Everything: How the World Became Complex* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).



## Response to Kootsey and Taylor

### BERNARD BRANDSTATER

I am somewhat perplexed by the review published here by Drs. Kootsey and Taylor. My article dealt with aesthetics, with beauty, and how it sheds light on our view of Earth and heaven and even some characteristics of the God who created this cosmos and put us here. My writing was directed mainly at confessing Adventist Christians. But my reviewers have largely ignored my main theme, the powerful message from beauty that confronts us with an Artist-Creator. Instead they have attacked intelligent design with tired arguments about its status as a scientific pursuit. Is intelligent design (ID) science, or is it religion?

That is truly a wearisome debate about competing definitions. Philosophers have come up with several meanings for the word *science*. My high school Latin teacher would have insisted on seeking the word's linguistic roots, where *scientia* referred to what we can know, to understanding. But what does science mean today? Well, there is no undisputed consensus. I agree with Larry Laudan, a respected professor of philosophy and epistemology, who wrote about current philosophy of science: "There is no demarcation between science and non-science, or between science and pseudo-science, which would win assent from a majority of philosophers."<sup>1</sup>

So definitions are arguable, and they were not a central issue in my article. They were important, however, in the *Kitzmiller v. Dover* court ruling to which Drs. Kootsey and Taylor refer. In that case the

key issue was the constitutionality of what was taught in public schools. Judge Jones ruled that ID is religion, not science. But some analysts have judged his ruling to be flawed by an inadequate understanding of ID. It is derived not from religious texts, but from applying the "scientific method." If science is a process of searching for knowledge that uses the "scientific method" (observation, hypothesis, testing, conclusion), then a study of intelligence and design can certainly invoke these steps. So ID does qualify as science. Some persons may see religious implications in ID, but they are consequences, not the steps of research and discovery. They should not invalidate the process by which ID is developed.

In any case, what do definitions matter to us? What we seek is a satisfying explanation for a quality we call beauty, which is observable and real and must have a cause beyond random chance. If you want a tightly-reasoned treatment of ID, I recommend William Dembski's book *The Design Revolution*. Reviewer Norman Geisler says: "This is the most brilliant defense of the intelligent design movement in print." For me, Dembski's exposition of complex specified information (CSI) as a reliable sign of intelligence is a *tour de force*.

With a breathtaking sweep, my reviewers claim that, contrary to ID's assertions, "natural mechanisms" *have been revealed* which, without intelligent guidance, can generate the complex information and body forms that are present in living things. That is a huge claim that I have seen from only the most

dogmatic materialists, who must explain everything by natural law. My reviewers seem to have joined them, ruling out divine intervention.

Yet some of the greatest minds in science have disputed the claim that Drs. Kootsey and Taylor have embraced. Francis Crick, co-discoverer of DNA and a Nobel laureate with a vast knowledge of physical chemistry, decided that life could never arise spontaneously in the environment of planet Earth. As an alternative, he fell back on "directed panspermia" and wrote a book that describes a seeding of the universe with particles that carried primordial life from galactic sources elsewhere. At one time I invited Crick to lecture on panspermia in Loma Linda; but he politely declined, citing his age and his reluctance to travel.

Sir Frederick Hoyle of Cambridge University, considered in the United Kingdom to be the most brilliant mathematical physicist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, brought his intellect to bear upon known natural laws. He concluded that life could never have originated in planet Earth without intelligent guidance, and he wrote his conclusions boldly in his book *The Intelligent Universe*.

Crick and Hoyle were not middle-class scholars. They were the most formidable minds in all of science. While these two academics were analyzing the barriers to forming the first life, others sought for mechanisms for development of new macromolecules, new biochemical systems, and new body forms. These are the mechanisms essential for evolution, and in today's science mechanisms are


a huge stumbling block. Some proposed mechanisms give support to Drs. Kootsey and Taylor. Amongst proponents are University of Calgary's Stuart Kauffman and New York Medical College's Stuart Newman. They have written hopefully about "self-organization" and "emergence" and "plasticity," as if these processes and qualities are not just hopeful ideas, but accomplished realities. The evidences

mechanisms, built-in from earliest life; yet they are struggling to identify even one. Here is no pathway to beauty.

A telling event questioning naturalist theory was the convocation in July 2008 of the "Altenberg 16," an assembly behind closed doors of 16 of the world's foremost evolutionary scientists and philosophers in Austria's Konrad Lorenz Institute in Altenberg. No journalists were admitted,

where the evidence leads. Her book is a fascinating read for anyone who has a stomach for the insider disagreements and rivalries among some of the world's top scientists.

The review to which I am responding touches upon a wide range of ideas. But sadly, my main theme, the reality that has moved me deeply—what the beautiful order in the cosmos tells us about its Creator—is not significantly discussed by Drs. Kootsey and Taylor. They are good men whom I know personally, and I respect their honest scholarship. But they must be aware that their readings of science are far removed from the understandings of most readers of *Adventist Today*. What are their conclusions? That exquisite order appeared in the cosmos by chance?

One morning years ago, while I was sharing a fine breakfast with Dr. Taylor, he gently accused me of possessing "a God gene." Perhaps that's true, because I do have a reverence for the Bible text that was guarded so bravely by the Waldensians. And it happens that I am a direct descendant from them. But I continue to read widely in the science of origins, believing it to be foundational to faith. Like Paul on Mars Hill, I worship "God that made the world and all things therein." But thanks to the aesthetics in nature, and the experiencing of beauty that enriches our lives, he is not an Unknown God. He has become for me a more generous, a more real, and, marvelously, a more knowable God. 

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<sup>1</sup> Larry Laudan, *Beyond Positivism and Relativism* (New York: Westview Press, 1996), p. 210.

## To produce structural change in our vast array of living things, Darwin-style evolution would require numerous intricate biochemical mechanisms, built-in from earliest life; yet they are struggling to identify even one.

are thin, but the theories get a reception because, without God, such processes are demanded by the life forms we see. Evolution itself is not questioned.

But by what demonstrable mechanisms did complex new information and new life forms appear? Suggested answers offer no proof; they are given as possibilities. But to my reading and to many skeptics, they are unconvincing; the theories are stronger in their eloquence than in detailed believable mechanisms. Yet our reviewers have embraced them as proven. They do admit that "Much remains to be learned about these mechanisms" but hold that "their existence invalidates ID..." I protest that such "existence" has not been demonstrated. To produce structural change in our vast array of living things, Darwin-style evolution would require numerous intricate biochemical

but Suzan Mazur, a trusted evolutionary reporter with an extensive publishing record, was able to interview most of the scholars. They openly revealed their doubts about the received consensus on evolution and the explanatory failure of the modern Darwinian synthesis. Mazur's plain conclusion is that, based on statements quoted from top-class scientists, classic neo-Darwinism is being quietly abandoned in some high circles, and a difficult search is under way for a replacement framework. That's why self-organization has gained an audience: it's a potential replacement paradigm. It's far from proved, but is desperately needed. Mazur put the story together, and in 2010 she published her book *The Altenberg 16: An Exposé of the Evolution Industry*. Not religious herself, Mazur remains an evolutionist, but she is honest in going



## Some Very Good Points

Thank you for printing Alden Thompson's article (November-December 2012) on the 1901 General Conference Session. I appreciated the points he makes—that when applying prophecy, we should ask a few questions. Toward whom was the prophecy directed? What were the circumstances surrounding this person or people group at the time of the prophecy? In what cultural environment were the people living? Have the circumstances changed? He quotes Ellen White discounting one of her own prophecies now because the prophecy had already stimulated the needed corrections and no longer applied.

As I was reading the article, someone handed me a copy of a will I had written at least 10 years ago—a prophecy of sorts, however perhaps not divinely inspired. I read again my desires for who would raise my daughter should I die and how to provide for her education. She has been educated and recently got married. None of the “prophecy” I had made applied to present circumstances. Thanks to Alden for making some very good points.

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*Adventist Today* welcomes your letters on material published in the magazine. Short, timely letters have the best chance at publication. They may be edited for grammar and content. Please include your name and address. Send to: [adventisttoday1966@gmail.com](mailto:adventisttoday1966@gmail.com).

**Adventist**Today

*Newman from page 13*

months—until her baby was born and we could find her accommodations that she could call home. And over the years we have helped people by sharing money, time, and our home.

When I came to pastor the New Hope church, I began to send a note of encouragement to a different family each day. I took the church directory and worked my way through the alphabet, beginning with the letter A. I used my computer to create my own cards, which had a picture of the cross on the front and a Bible text inside. Then I wrote a personal note to the family.

I would visit homes, and the family would show me the note I had sent pinned to a board in the kitchen. They had saved it. People really appreciated that personal touch.

Then I went a step further. I stopped sending a note every day, but I began to call people on their birthday. I called everyone age 18 and older. I would wish each person a happy birthday, talk about his or her life for a moment, and then pray for that individual. I only had one person refuse to let me pray during the call.


Whenever I would call and get no answer, I would leave a message and a prayer. I tried to call people on their cell phones, because I discovered that some home answering machines had very short recordings. I learned to really shorten my prayers.

Over and over people would tell me, “I have never had a pastor call me before on my birthday.” And they would say: “That was a wonderful prayer. I saved it on my phone, and I go back and listen to it over and over again.”

People are longing for the personal touch. People want to know that they are loved and accepted just as they are. We display the character of God though our loving interaction with each other. The

way we treat each other.

You see, you can argue over a doctrine. We can divide over the Bible and science. We can try and convince people that we are the correct church. And argument flows backward and forward. But no one argues over love. People stop in wonder and amazement when you treat them not as they deserve. People cannot argue against someone loving the unlovely, refusing to get angry with the angry person. When you accept people as they are, just as God accepts us as we are, any resistance they might have melts away.

Which picture represents you: the one by James White or the one by Ellen White? Which comes first: growing relationships or correcting behaviors? It was Jesus himself who said, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32, NRSV). Are you known for lifting Jesus up by your loving relationships with those you meet? 

*J. David Newman, D.Min., is editor of Adventist Today.*

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1900), p. 415.

<sup>2</sup> White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1915), p. 156.

<sup>3</sup> White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 11, 1890, para. 13; also in *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), p. 560.

<sup>4</sup> White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 415.

<sup>5</sup> White, *Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 21 (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1993), p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 384.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

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## Waiting, Waiting, Waiting...Reflections on John 5:1-18

By Alden Thompson

It was feast time in Jerusalem again. Jesus was there. But as he stood by the famous pool at the sheep gate, he gazed on a less-than-festal sight: a seething mass of imperfect bodies, writhing, moaning, whimpering. They had not come here to die, but to live. Drawn by a persistent rumor, the blind, the crippled, and the diseased waited for an angel to stir the waters and heal the first one in.

Jesus' eye fell on a man who had waited 38 years for his turn to come. It never had.

How did the sick man know it had been 38 years? Had he kept a diary? Or had he, with shaky hand, chiseled notches from the side of his bed: one for each day, one for each month, one for each year?

Thirty-eight years of chiseling and notches as bed after bed collapsed into sawdust. Thirty-eight years of helplessness, of watching his lonely piles of splinters being kicked into the dust by feet that could still dance and run.

Giving no details, Scripture simply says that the man's own sin had triggered his plight. Had he been a wild and undisciplined youth, flaunting the laws of health and safety until his body rebelled? Had he nurtured some master passion, leaving his body exhausted and defenseless before the onslaught of an insidious infection? Or had the tension between a careful upbringing and a reckless life so brutalized his conscience to the point where a relentless sense of guilt reduced his body to a quivering mass of nerves and flesh?

Guesses. Only guesses. Jesus knew the reason but didn't tell us. All we know is that the man had been paying the price for his sin for 38 years.

His body had once been robust and alive. But his monster sin kept stalking its prey, playing a deadly game of tag with each new set of stoutly-proclaimed

resolutions. The monster was winning. It had longer arms. It could run faster. Chortles, grunts, and sneers drowned out every cry for help.

Jesus didn't tell us how the game had ended 38 years before. It may have been a swift, quick blow. Or the monster could have toyed with its victim, letting him scamper toward freedom, only to snatch him back again for more "play."

But such play has its limits. Having extracted every wiggle and squeak from the limp body, the monster left its mangled victim and wandered off in search of livelier playmates.

Apparently the man was now a believer. Why else would he come for healing to a place of miracles? He may have been a believer all along. That would have meant even deeper remorse for his sin, for his flaunting of God's command. Deliberate rebellion receives its just reward—or so he must have thought.

He had had 38 years to repent, to ask for forgiveness and health. A sick man can pack a lot of praying into 38 years. And this man had plenty of time. From sunrise to sunset he lay on his mat; and in the dark night he waited, restless and fearful of yet one more day like the thousands already passed.

Back and forth he would waver between two kinds of prayers: the prayer of resignation—"Not my will, but yours, Lord"—and the desperate prayer of unshakable confidence and high demand, the prayer for healing.

Confidence? How could a man have faith after 38 years?

Then Jesus came. Someday we'll have to ask him why he didn't heal everyone at the pool. That's a mystery we can't solve yet. In any event, it must have been exciting for him to know that he would be able to say

"Yes!" to 38 years of praying.

Burying his emotions for the moment, Jesus innocently asked the man, "Would you like to be healed?"

**He had had 38 years to repent, to ask for forgiveness and health. A sick man can pack a lot of praying into 38 years.**

If Jesus was looking for obvious faith as the precondition for healing, he didn't find it here. The man's answer was cautious, tinged with despair: "I don't have anyone to help me into the water. Someone else always gets there first."

Jesus couldn't resist a moment longer: "Get up! Pick up your bed! Walk!" he urged. Then slipping quickly back into the crowd, Jesus watched, out of sight.

It worked. Springing to his feet, the man grabbed up his bed and headed out—home presumably, if he still had one—whistling and singing, performing handstands and cartwheels, juggling his bed along the way.

But now Jesus was in trouble, for he had healed the man on the Sabbath day. Carrying a burden on Sabbath was forbidden. Jesus' act of compassion had forged one more link in that tragic chain of circumstances that would lead to his death.

But how could this man's bed have been a burden detracting from the beauty of sacred time? It was a burden he had longed to carry for 38 years, a symbol of healing and forgiveness.

God created the Sabbath for burdens like that.



# Adventist Man

## A SATIRICAL LOOK AT ADVENTIST LIFE

### Just Tell Me What To Think!

As you'll see, this month's column will be "correspondence rich." First comes an email from an *Adventist Today* reader, then a communication from one of my relatives, and finally a couple of terse messages from beyond the grave. And they all tie together.

First let's look at the reader's email, sent to the address in the box at the bottom of this column:

Dear Adventist Man,  
In academy and college, I was taught that Mrs. White was not only a real person, but downright liberal at times! Yet, she gets used time and again by the conservatives to prove that the "liberals" are taking the church to hell in a handbasket! Didn't she ever say anything about the church needing to take risks and try new things, or that as culture changes, so must the church, or that—even if rarely—conservative minds can be wrong too?

I long for the day when I can sneak around the church parking lot during the sermon (and without official permission) and put little pamphlets full of LIBERAL Mrs. White quotes under windshield wipers! Please tell me there is hope.

Jerry

Jerry, there is indeed hope. But first let's listen to a related heartcry. My uncle Feldspar Ffarrowmere, late in life, has just completed his Master of Fine Arts with an emphasis in poetry. His thesis title is: "The Irish Seven-stress Bar-room Ballad, 1780-1820: Can It Speak to the Modern Milieu?"

Uncle Feldspar's answer to that pregnant question is a crisp "you betcha," and he proves it by submitting his own alcohol-free bar-room

ballad. He also suggests that, to get into the spirit of the thing, the chorus should be sung to the accompaniment of root beer tankards slammed on oaken tables in seven-stress meter.

#### Just Tell Me What to Think

I've always figured I could think  
As well as other folk.  
But all the screams of partisans  
Make reasoning a joke.  
So more and more I worry that  
My brain's gone down the sink.  
Should I depend on someone else  
To tell me how to think?

#### Chorus (remember to bang those tankards):

*Tell me what to think, boys,  
Tell me what to think!  
Life's so complicated that  
My brain is on the brink  
Of going pure bananas!  
So, before I take to drink,  
Just tell me what to think, boys,  
Tell me what to think!*

Now, here's a question I am asked:  
"Should women be ordained?"  
Though all the facts say guys and gals  
Are similarly brained,  
A lot of earnest folks say "No,"  
With voice and blog and ink.  
I'll never sort this out, so please  
Just tell me what to think!

#### (Chorus, grimly)

And when it comes to politics,  
My friends enjoy a fight.  
Some liberally lean to Left,  
Some adamantly Right.  
And though I wish them lots of luck,  
From squabbling I shrink.  
I'll never sort this out, so please  
Just tell me what to think!

#### (Chorus, ironically)

My Bible says God made the world  
In six quite standard days.  
But even some within my faith,

With patronizing gaze,  
Regard me as a dinosaur,  
And give my friends a wink.  
So I give up! Just go ahead  
And tell me what to think!

#### (Chorus, with a note of mock desperation)

—Feldspar Ffarrowmere, MFA

Uncle Feldspar is admittedly eccentric—for years he's been rewriting Sabbath School quarterlies into heroic couplets and coercing his class into performing them in the costume of a Greek chorus—but I think his ballad hits the Zeitgeist right on the nose. Should we allow ourselves to buckle under the rhetoric of those who are loud of voice but light on logic?

Which leads perfectly into our messages from beyond the grave. Jerry, Ellen White was of course *both* a liberal *and* a conservative. In fact, in view of America's recent political horrors, Adventism may need a new map color—Red states, Blue states, *and* White states.

Anyway, take a listen to this very sensible counsel. (My thanks to editor David Newman for these quotes, part of a much larger collection he provided me):

"Allow no one to be brains for you, allow no one to do your thinking, your investigating, and your praying." (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Sept. 11, 1894, para. 1; also in *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 1923, p. 307)

"We must study the truth for ourselves. No man should be relied upon to think for us. No matter who he is, or in what position he may be placed, we are not to look upon any man as a criterion for us. We are to counsel together, and to be subject one to another; but at the same time we are to exercise the ability God has given us, in order to learn what is truth." (*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 1923, p. 109)

**Do you have a tough question? Adventist Man has "the answer." As a former member of "the remnant of the remnant," Adventist Man was ranked 8,391 of the 144,000—and working his way up. Now he relies solely on grace and friendship with Jesus. You can email him at [atoday@atoday.org](mailto:atoday@atoday.org).**

# **Update**



## TOO MUCH “SPIN” CAN RUIN ANY GREAT MAGAZINE

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