

Is There a Place
For Me in the Church?

A.G. Daniells and
Lessons of Leadership

Am I Not Actually
an Adventist?

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**TODAY'S
FACES OF
ADVENTISM**



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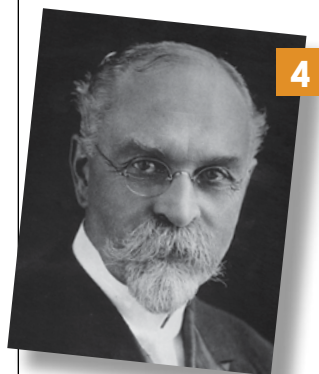
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Is There a Place for Me in the Church?

By John McLarty

A few months ago, a young pastor called. “Is there a place for me in the church? According to Ted Wilson, I’m not a Seventh-day Adventist. Is he right? Should I resign?” A couple of years earlier, it was a science student. After Ted Wilson and Dwight Nelson shared the pulpit at Pioneer Memorial Church, she called me in tears. “According to what I heard today, the church has no need for me. Is that true?” Once or twice a month, I hear the same question from a scientist or pastor. *Is there still a place for me in the Adventist church?*

Usually it is clear that these questioners do belong inside the church—spiritually, socially, and even theologically. Their dissent from Adventist certainties is specific and limited. Their identification with Adventism is pervasive and deep. As a pastor, it is my privilege to help them find renewed confidence in that identity. I flatly contradict the president’s claim that no one is a real Adventist except those who believe in 6 days/6000 years. In support of my assertion, I cite two radically different cases.

First, a highly exceptional case: Decades ago, a parishioner asked if I would baptize her 20-year-old daughter. I was new in the church and had not met the young woman, so I offered to set up Bible studies. The mother demurred. Her daughter was retarded, she said. (That’s the language we used in those days.) “No problem,” I said. “I’ll make the studies really simple.” Not even that would do. The 20-year-old was developmentally about a 2-year-old. She was completely nonverbal.

The daughter could not affirm 6 days/6000 years. Baptizing her would be a violation of our prophetically delineated mission. But guided by Jesus’ response to the Syrophoenician woman, we baptized that daughter and welcomed her into the Adventist church.

Second, a fairly common case: In 2004, the General Conference convened a weeklong Faith and Science Conference in Denver. This was the final assembly in a three-year process exploring the doctrine of creation. As was true this past fall in Utah, the Denver conference was tightly controlled. Everyone stayed on message: 6 days/6000 years is the only legitimate way to read the Bible and the rocks; the denomination waffles on this conviction at the peril of its theology and very existence.

Friday afternoon, a panel led by Fernando Canale took the stage. After a few softball questions, a pastor stood. “At the close of evangelistic meetings, a man asked to be baptized. He was already attending church, keeping Sabbath, and paying tithe. There was one problem. He was a geologist. He could not believe in a short chronology. My question to you: Would you baptize him?”

Canale protested: “That is not the question before us. We are here to debate the official doctrine of the church. On that we must be crystal clear. We are talking about what is to be taught and preached in our church.”

The pastor pushed back: “We are a church, not a theological society. This conference is not merely a discussion of employment policies and doctrinal statements. You have made emphatic declarations about the boundaries of acceptable thought. You’ve drawn lines and excluded people. I want to know, would you have baptized that scientist who came to my meetings?”

Canale hemmed and hawed. “The actual decision about baptism is a pastoral decision based on full knowledge of the person.”

“But this case is not complicated,” the pastor said. “The geologist did not have secret problems. He had a limited, but definite, disagreement with our doctrine. He did not believe 6 days/6000 years. Would you baptize him?”

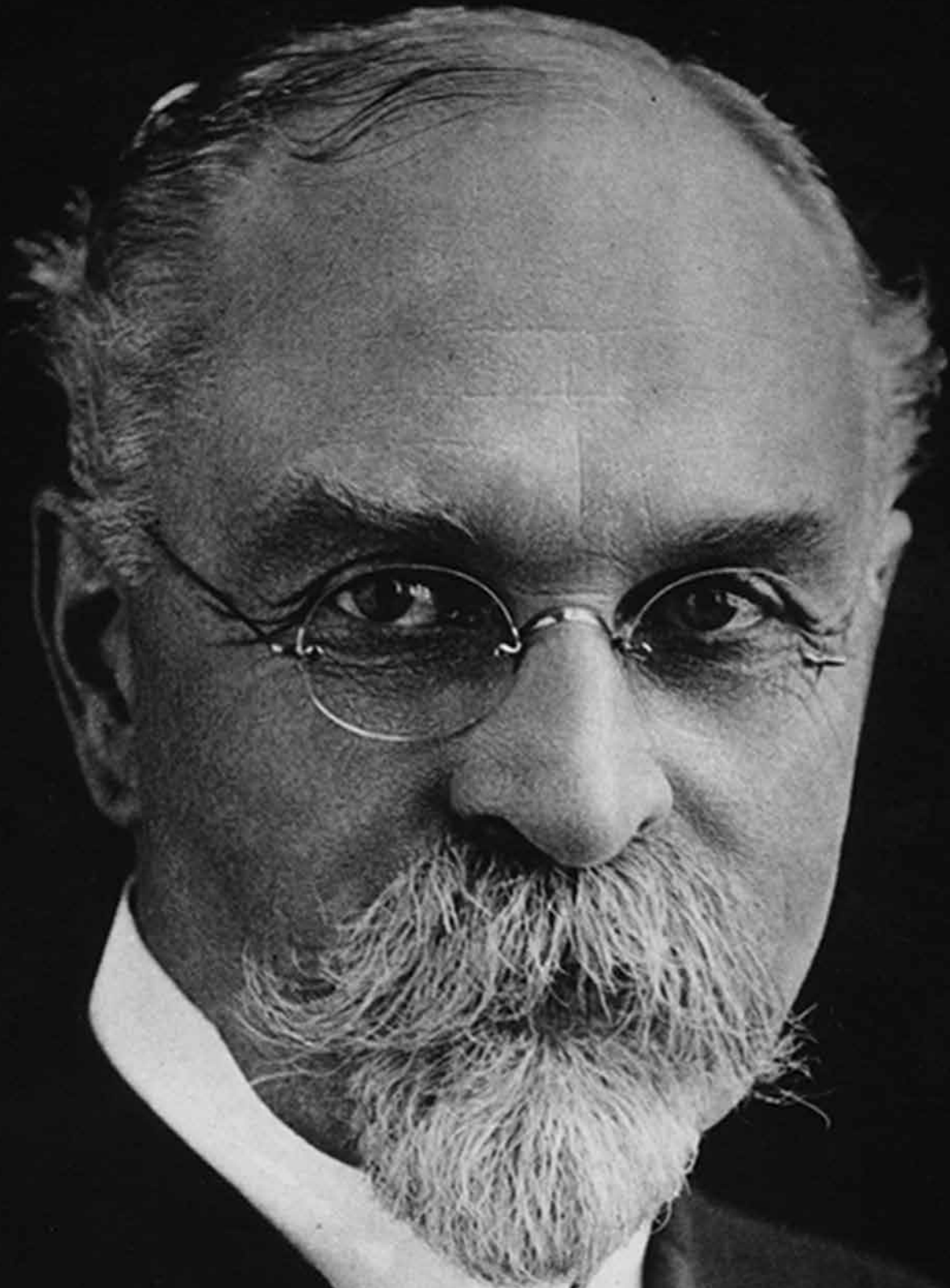
Canale squirmed but finally responded: “Yes. Based on what you’ve told us, I would baptize him.”

The others on the panel agreed. They, too, approved baptizing the scientist and receiving him into church membership. Ted Wilson, Ed Zinke, Leonard Brand, Art Chadwick, and Michael Hasel were all present. None of them disagreed. On that occasion they were right.

I tell these stories to scientists and pastors who call asking, “Is there room for me in the church?” Then I assure them: “Yes, there is a place for you in the church. Don’t let anyone tell you otherwise.”

John McLarty is senior pastor of the Green Lake Church in Seattle and a contributing editor for Adventist Today.

I flatly contradict the president’s claim that no one is a real Adventist except those who believe in 6 days/6000 years.



Arthur Grosvenor Daniells (1858-1935) was, by a wide margin, the longest-serving president the Seventh-day Adventist Church has known. His 21 years in office was seven years more than the next-longest-serving General Conference (GC) president. The longevity of this early Adventist leader certainly gave him opportunity for influence, but his significance is measured in more than years. Daniells presided over the Adventist Church during the time when it moved from being the church of its founders to that of the second generation. Furthermore, he famously helped put the church on a modern, bureaucratic foundation. That may seem faint

an accomplished preacher? Rise through the ranks? Have international experience? Network well?

Judged against such criteria, Daniells might seem an ill-equipped candidate for president. Born in West Union, Iowa, in 1858, he had the usual mid-19th-century grammar school education. And although he traveled to the new Battle Creek College in 1875 for a year's schooling, illness prevented further college study. So he left Battle Creek and bade farewell to formal education. But since previous Adventist leaders had scarcely more formal schooling, Daniells was not considered academically deficient.

A. G. DANIELLS

and Lessons of Leadership

BY BENJAMIN McARTHUR

praise, but if the denomination was to move forward as a world church, there was no alternative.

Inevitably, we remember Arthur Daniells primarily as an outstanding administrator. But he did not just administrate—attend committees, approve budgets, fill vacancies, etc. Daniells was a true leader. That is, he desired to take his people to a particular destination. His destination was not a place, but a mission. And he never for a moment wavered from that mission.

Leadership has become a popular academic topic in recent years, and there is probably no better case study within Adventism than Arthur Daniells as president of the General Conference. Although a long manuscript on him could easily be produced, I will present here just eight maxims. I will not argue that Daniells exemplified ideal leadership in every particular. In some cases he illuminates what ought not to be done. On balance, however, evidence supports the notion that he deserves the historical plaudits as the greatest president this denomination has known.

1. Effective leaders come to their task well prepared.

How exactly does one prepare for becoming General Conference president? Get advanced education? Become

Preaching was not his strong suit, either. Daniells worked hard to overcome a stammer in his early career. He was a journeyman preacher, who improved with time and became capable of delivering the standard Adventist gospel. Once again, no more was expected of GC presidents in his day.

And so Arthur Daniells did rise through the ranks. He punched his ticket many places, accruing significant overseas experience (by far the most of any GC leader up to that time). After his early marriage to Mary Hoyt (when she was 22 and he was only 18), the newlyweds briefly taught school in Iowa before Arthur felt convicted to enter the ministry. After working in north Texas (living with James and Ellen White briefly), the Daniells family returned to Iowa, where Arthur became a conference evangelist in the early 1880s. Church leaders saw enough grit in him that, in 1886, they asked him to go to New Zealand and develop the work there. He accepted the challenge, staying four years before crossing the Tasman Sea and undertaking a decade's labor in Australia.

Throughout the 1890s, Daniells labored alongside Ellen White and her son Willie. Their decade's ministry together was

foundational for this future Adventist leader. The prophetess lavished attention and advice on Arthur; Willie and he bonded as brothers. Daniells also obtained his first administrative experience in Australia. His return to America in 1900 was originally planned as a furlough; he expected to return to the Antipodes Islands. But the GC Session in Battle Creek held a surprise, and Daniells didn't return to Australia for 13 years.

Daniells' procession from Australia to America, with long stops to examine church work in South Africa, England, and Germany, gave every illusion of a Julius Caesar working his way toward Rome. Perhaps because he was away from America for so long, far from controversies over 1888, Daniells found wide favor. People suspected (rightfully so) that Ellen White held him in esteem. In the months leading up to the session, the Kellogg camp even started a rumor that he was already the anointed figure. In any event, Daniells quickly emerged as the alpha male at the 1901 GC Session. He chaired an informal meeting of leaders the night before the session opened, at which the prophetess pleaded for organizational change. The next day, he took the podium and explained how the union conference system worked in Australia. Immediately afterward he made a motion to alter session rules, empowering an ad hoc committee to study radical organizational change.

Not surprisingly, when the dust cleared, Daniells was the denomination's new president. Had he seized the moment? Or was he the instrument of larger forces at work? The latter is more likely. It is doubtful that he saw the mantle of leadership descending until he was enveloped. But he didn't shrink from the responsibility; he understood that he was as suited for leadership as any other candidate.

2. Effective leaders have a sure grasp of organization and personnel.

Adept political leaders understand the workings of governmental organizations. The most skilled of them (exemplified by Lyndon B. Johnson) also study the strengths, weaknesses, ambitions, and foibles of colleagues. Fortunately, Arthur Daniells did not resemble the former American president in this regard. He never seemed eager to know intimate details of his workers' lives. He subscribed to the Victorian rectitude that drew a clear distinction between personal and public and desired to leave certain matters unsaid. Of course, a leader inevitably finds out more about people than he or she might wish, and on occasion remedies must be applied. It is a mark of Daniells' professionalism and respect for the privacy and dignity of his

people that, even in his private correspondence, he dealt tenderly with difficult personnel matters.

While A.G. Daniells did not relish dealing with unavoidable personnel issues, his eyes lit up when it came to matters of organizational structure. If one accepts the notion that genius can be manifested in many endeavors of life, then one might appropriately speak of Daniells as possessing administrative genius. He seemed born to the task, mature at an early age (to marry at age 18 was unusual for his time, an indication that he was ready to get on with life).

Like most accomplished leaders, Daniells didn't scorn the details but rather took pleasure in getting things "just right." For example, in the forgettable debate over the size of the ingathering pamphlet for 1917, Daniells grudgingly agreed when then-NAD President E.I. Evans recommended that the pamphlet be shortened for reasons of economy. But he rejoined, "We would be making a serious mistake, were we to reduce the size of the Harvest Ingathering Paper to 16 pages." He assented to make it 24 pages, if necessary, but insisted that a booklet of fewer pages would be "altogether too small for the important matters that should be brought before the world in connection with our faith and work."

It is clear from his letters and recorded speeches at GC Sessions that Daniells loved thinking about organization. He intuitively grasped potential structural problems and, conversely, how things might work better. When traveling, after an exhausting day in the field, he could sit down and pound out a 10-page letter filled with astute analysis regarding local church work. He appeared energized by the task. As his yearlong trip to Australia, India, Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Japan, Korea, Manchuria, and China drew to a close in 1915, he communicated a detailed vision of how the divisional structure in these far-flung places should be constructed.

Acknowledging Daniells' organizational genius is not to credit him with being the sole architect of the 1901-1903 church reorganization. He certainly wasn't. But he had the firmest grasp on the potential benefits of the change and which future alterations might be useful. Like Henry Ford, who didn't invent the car but understood how to build it more durably and cheaply, Daniells carried around in his head a template of how an ideal church organization would operate.

3. Effective leaders hold and successfully convey a vision for their organization.

Arthur Daniells was Adventism's greatest cheerleader. No nagging doubts restrained his enthusiasm about its mission. Our

modern tendency to find ever-present irony clouded none of his judgments. Seventh-day Adventism held a last-day's prophetic message for the world. Obligations had been put on us, with a prophet provided for our guidance. We had no excuses for not carrying out our duty.

Such crystal-clear marching orders characterized Daniells' leadership from beginning to end. He had inculcated them from his youth and seemed never to question them. Such heartfelt convictions are admirable and, in a leader, critical. Some of us with 21st-century sensibilities might wish for a little more introspection on his part—some hint that he wrestled with knotty theological or missiological issues. He may have had his private moments of doubt. If so, he hid them well. He possessed

I love to think of that young man, busy all day long for people who have no money with which to pay for his services." In his challenge to the Loma Linda graduates, he asked: "You who are going through the medical school—what do you say to that? What are you in for?"

And yet, to embrace and champion the Adventist cause did not prompt a refusal to scrutinize aspects of it. This GC president had a burden for church members to better understand the nature of Ellen White's inspiration. An unofficial but widespread belief in verbal inspiration led to chronic problems within the church. Daniells believed that if Adventists knew more about how her books were compiled, the unsettling charges of plagiarism by some critics might

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certainty of belief wedded to a forceful personality, which is not a bad formula for leadership.

How did Daniells convey his convictions? He had (next to Ellen White, and perhaps the editor of the *Review*) the biggest pulpit in the church. During summers and autumns, his life was a round of camp meetings, where he delivered countless Sabbath sermons. He also held ministerial institutes, where in more intimate settings he could vivify the pastorate. And, of course, the pages of the *Review* were always open to him.

Daniells enjoyed recounting stories of dedication and sacrifice, especially about the mission field. He told a graduating class of medical students at Loma Linda a story about another fresh-from-medical-school graduate he had met a few years earlier at George Washington University's graduation ceremony. When Daniells inquired if the newly minted Dr. Russell was still planning to go to Korea, the young man replied, "I will be off in two hours." A delighted Daniells reported: "He did not ask about his wages. He did not ask about having a sanitarium.

be neutralized. He reminded his colleagues of one of White's favorite Bible texts, which she applied to her gift: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." The 1919 Bible Conference would be the occasion, Daniells hoped, at which these matters might be candidly discussed and then conveyed to the wider church. He felt the time was right for an open discussion. "Fifteen years ago we could not have talked what we are talking here today," he told attendees. "It would not have been safe."

Daniells opened the conference by reading a long passage from a Testimony, admonishing the church to never rest content with current understandings, to always seek new truth. He then laid before his colleagues White's command: "Agitate, agitate, agitate." Endorsing an apparent call to insurgency seems uncharacteristic for the administrative temperament. It was a measure of Daniells' passion for the Advent gospel that he was prepared to override the normally risk-averse inclinations of office in order to make, as White wrote, "the subjects which we present to the world a living reality." Daniells may have unconsciously seen himself as

an Adventist Martin Luther, refusing to compromise a truth for expediency. “That is not honest and it is not Christian,” he said, regarding unsound beliefs in verbal inspiration, “and so I take my stand there.”

And yet, in the end he backed down. Would the transcripts of the 1919 Bible Conference be published, so that Adventist laymen could be edified by the frank discussions? No. Daniells finally determined that they should be filed away, where they would gather dust for the next half-century. It would be too unsettling for members to see their leaders arguing historic points of prophetic interpretation and the nature of inspiration. The president feared that the price for “sinking the shaft deeper and still deeper into the mine of truth”¹ would be too high. So instead of insisting on the narrow path of difficult self-examination, Daniells allowed the church to turn onto the boulevard of doctrinal complacency. The weathered president had encountered a situation with threats and complexities beyond his ability to solve.

4. Admirable leaders take reliable counsel, share credit, and accept blame.

A.G. Daniells was strong-willed and, by Ellen White’s testimony, occasionally imperious. But he wasn’t an egoist. The mission was everything to him. To that end, he was wonderfully open to counsel.

Daniells benefitted from reliable advisors, who generally had the best interest of the church at heart. His friendship with Willie White, for example, developed in part because Willie was the gatekeeper to his mother but actually went far beyond that. The two men shared a religious sensibility. Daniells also worked intimately with William W. Prescott in Australia (for a year), but even more so in America, where the friendship blossomed. Prescott was smart, well educated, and theologically sophisticated. “It has been such a help to me to have him for a counselor,” Daniells effused to Willie White. “He is better acquainted with the men in the field than I am. ... He forms a quick, accurate judgment, and has a lot of courage.”² A younger and newer acquaintance, who also became a trusted advisor, was William A. Spicer. Spicer, who would succeed him as General Conference president, had “an intelligent statement or proposition to make regarding the weighty matters, Daniells once wrote.”

While Daniells did not often second-guess himself (which may be a prerequisite for maintaining sanity as a leader), he was capable of reversing a decision and admitting error. In 1913, after having previously opposed the idea, he endorsed the

creation of several world division conferences, including one for North America. By 1917 he reconsidered further. Creating large constituent groups around the world held the danger of fragmentation. Worse, the North American Division could seriously impede the ability of the GC to tap into the rich resources of America for worldwide mission support. “The North American Division Conference should never have been organized,” he wrote to Spicer. “I believe the arrangement is fundamentally wrong. And as I took part in creating it, I feel that I should ... do what I can to undo the wrong.”³ The 1918 General Conference Session went on to refashion church structure.

He also was capable of revising his interpretation of prophecy. Prescott persuaded him that Uriah Smith’s influential theory of “the daily” in Daniel 8:11-13 needed rethinking. Daniells freely admitted his change and championed the new view, despite much pushback from others.

And, what must have been most difficult of all, on occasion (such as the 1919 Bible Conference) he could confess how Ellen White had chided him for his “tendency to dominate over my brethren.”⁴ This admonition had become well known in the church, so Daniells had no way to hide it. Even so, when a leader is willing to publicly admit a character flaw, he commands our respect.

5. Wise leaders understand that they should defer to people who get messages from God.

This advice came easily to Arthur Daniells. He loved Ellen White. He had utter confidence in her prophetic office. Still, for a leader with the will of Daniells to submit regularly to another (and that “other” being an elderly, diminutive woman) requires explanation.

In part he could do so because, temperamentally, he was a chain-of-command person. Though he had no military experience, he thought in terms of hierarchy and oversight. The buck stopped on his desk. Yet, at least until 1915, he also had informal accountability to a prophetess.

When advice or reproof came through Ellen White, Daniells listened. And counsel came often. It came amidst the organizational restructuring of 1901 and 1903, when White called for change of structure. Daniells owed his selection as leader at least in part to her approval.

Once in office, though, Daniells would not be spared the prophetic rod. Ellen White, who probably never fully recovered from her sense of being banished to Australia by denominational leaders, would occasionally see Daniells exercising the same

“kingly power” that she had chided other GC leaders for in the 1890s. Almost always he would endure her rebukes meekly, never questioning their divine origin, wanting to do his best to advance the cause. But sometimes her counsels were a trial. Her call for church support for her son Edson’s publishing endeavors in Nashville was one difficult message. The unfortunate Edson dreamed large (and Adventists in the South owe him a debt). But his profligate ways annoyed church leaders. The denomination, after taking over Edson’s printing house, was on the brink of shuttering it, with Ellen White’s reluctant assent. But a mother’s protective love and a prophet’s insight about the importance of nurturing the work in the South caused her to reconsider. Light was to “shine forth”⁵ from Nashville to the entire South. Daniells

A shaken Daniells hastened to mend fences. “At first I felt almost overwhelmed with perplexity and discouragement,” he admitted to her. A familiar pattern emerged in these exchanges. Daniells would stand up for himself by defending his actions, then modulate into a passive-aggressive tone, voicing his willingness to step down, which in turn evoked conciliatory and encouraging notes from Ellen White. In this case, Daniells was finally prepared to lay aside everything in Washington and take on evangelism in Gotham. It was a transformative experience. Daniells, the great champion of foreign missions, now caught a vision of American city work, and for the remainder of his presidency would promote it. Ellen White had to press hard, but in the end she effected important change.

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found her about-face “disconcerting.”⁶ He could not understand such a quick change of instruction. But he and the GC Committee acceded to her request with as much grace as they could muster, and in the end she was right. Southern Publishing turned a corner and became profitable.⁷

Daniells found it harder to yield to the prophet’s pleadings for him to spearhead more aggressive evangelism into the cities, particularly New York. He didn’t resist as a matter of principle; rather, he was preoccupied with the demands of a worldwide church. Ellen White displayed considerable patience with him over several years. But finally, in 1910 she had had enough of his dithering. “If Eld. Daniells is not so changed that he can recognize clearly the special movings of the Spirit of God,” she said, “let him step aside and let another take the responsibility.” Her testimony became even more pointed. “The light has come to me decidedly that for his own soul’s sake, he should not continue to occupy the position he has occupied.”⁸

6. Brave leaders know that important people sometimes need chastening and that even a prophetess can merit correction.

Ellen White occasionally exasperated A.G. Daniells, but John Harvey Kellogg positively drove him to the brink of homicide.

Daniells never doubted the power of the medical work as an agent for Adventism’s advance. It was Kellogg’s ambition and attitude that bothered him. Ironically, it was Kellogg who had moved Daniells’ nomination as GC president in 1901. But the honeymoon was cut short. One might have predicted that two strong wills would inevitably clash. Kellogg, in his obsessive-compulsive manner, could see only the medical work; further, he was sure he was always the smartest person in any gathering of Adventist leaders. Indeed, he could be withering in his scorn of the ministry. In his view, nearly all church leaders (but particularly Daniells) were impediments to his grand plan for the expansion of medical work. When he located ideal property for a

sanitarium in England, Kellogg wanted approval—and funding—right away. But Daniells' dread of more denominational debt caused him to dig in his heels. The result was confrontation: Kellogg went nose to nose with Daniells.

Space does not permit here a proper telling of this tangled story. Suffice it to say that Kellogg resented Daniells over the matters of debt, control of medical properties, and the resistance of church leadership to the theology in his book *The Living Temple* (sales of which were to help fund the rebuilding of the Battle Creek Sanitarium). We may take pride in Kellogg's national prominence. But we must also recognize that he was a strange man, devious, given to odd enthusiasms, and perhaps just a step or two short of crossing the line into outright charlatanry. That Daniells called his bluff and stood firm is something for which Adventism should all be grateful.

We might now see their storied conflict as a tempest in a teapot. But more was at stake than a petty contest of wills. It determined who would run the church: whether the medical work would be satisfied as the right arm of the ministry—and not the left arm and two legs as well. From a sociological perspective, the Daniells-Kellogg affair symbolized the difficulty of assimilating a new class of educated medical professionals into a church generally comprised of people from modest backgrounds and education. This new group bridled at taking orders from a less-educated ministry. Ultimately, Adventism retained a vigorous commitment to medical work. After all, Daniells helped champion a new medical college at Loma Linda in 1909. But the church (and John Harvey Kellogg) first had to learn that no one person is essential to progress.

As it turned out, that lesson also applied to prophets. Ellen White's death in the summer of 1915 was a sobering event for the church. Gone was one of its final links to 1844 and, of course, its symbol of God's particular providence. Would another prophet arise? Church leaders had to be open to that possibility. Secretly, I believe, they hoped not. The presence of charisma amidst a rapidly bureaucratizing church was a complication they would sooner avoid. Daniells understood the complications from experience. Still, in most situations Daniells yielded to her and later came to appreciate her counsel.

There was one occasion, however, when Daniells remained doubtful of her advice and stood firm. This concerned her proposal in 1908 that church members sign a pledge forgoing meat consumption. "I am instructed to bear a message to all our people on the subject of health reform: for many have

backslidden," she wrote to Daniells. Many felt, she wrote, "that they cannot get along without flesh meats."¹⁰ But God can help them overcome, she insisted. White continued her admonition with words that must have caused great discomfort for the church's most notorious carnivore. "Because of the example set by influential men in the indulgence of appetite, the truth has not made the impression on health that it might have done. I appeal to you now to set an example in self-denial." She wished for Daniells to not only lead by example, but also to devise a temperance pledge that church members would sign. "I am sure if you will begin in Washington to do this work of reform ... the Lord will help you to present a pledge that will help the people to return from their backslidings."¹¹

But Daniells recognized that White was asking a difficult thing, too difficult for many church members. He understood that vegetarianism was not deeply ingrained in the membership. He put off responding to her request as long as he could, until Willie prompted him to reply. The potential for trouble was too great, Daniells told him. "We have ministers and brethren who are not well balanced. Let these men get among our Scandinavian, German and Russian brethren" who had not embraced the health message "and try to force this pledge and we shall have trouble."¹² When Daniells and Ellen White sat down together in Elmhaven that summer, he pointed out how strict vegetarianism would be a problem in many parts of the world. Daniells' reasoned resistance caused White to reconsider. At the 1909 General Conference, she delivered an address on "Faithfulness in Health Reform," including the issue of meat eating. But she left out any hint of a pledge.

7. Prudent leaders know when to step down, but they resist being bullied from their post.

A.G. Daniells led his church from 1901 to 1922, which is 21 years by my math. This was too long. A leader, however accomplished, necessarily makes unpopular decisions, ruffles feathers, and says "no" once too often. The time comes to move on.

But Daniells failed to recognize this truth. And I find this surprising, because repeatedly he spoke to colleagues about his weariness, discouragement, and inclination to step down. He pushed himself to the limit, year after year, until he was forced by deteriorating health to take time off. But when the next GC Session rolled around, he was always willing to take another term.

Why? I think Daniells fell under that dangerous delusion of indispensability. His wife, Mary, told a conference president before the 1922 session that her husband would step down if

only a qualified candidate were known. This is a sad comment, if it reflects her husband's view. Certainly Daniells understood that W.W. Prescott was too controversial a figure to be accepted as president. But William Spicer, the current GC secretary and Daniells' right-hand man, was eminently qualified; indeed, Spicer was elected GC president in 1922 and went on to have a highly successful tenure. We can only conclude that the acrimony of the 1922 San Francisco GC Session could have been avoided if A.G. Daniells had gracefully acknowledged that his run was over.

There's a chance he might have done this, if he hadn't felt that he—and his legacy—was under attack. But as things played out, his opponents launched a quite vicious campaign against him,

the gift of prophecy works, Washburn placed him beyond the pale. Washburn enjoyed the advantage of the zealot's freedom from scruples. For example, in a 30-page letter he distributed to delegates before the session began, he reproduced a letter Daniells had written to him.¹³ But he altered the letter, removing an apology and request for reconciliation from Daniells.

Nevertheless, these two men's agitations would not have borne fruit if discontent had not already existed within the ranks. Again, Daniells was too large a target, for he had exercised power too long. It would have been remarkable if none of his colleagues had possessed the human frailty of wishing to see the strong brought low. Daniells certainly had his defenders, who waged

Instead of insisting on the narrow path of difficult self-examination, Daniells allowed the church to turn onto the boulevard of doctrinal complacency. The weathered president had encountered a situation with threats and complexities beyond his ability to solve.

and he determined not to surrender without a fight. The petty events surrounding the nomination of the GC president hardly befitted a movement wishing to persuade the world of its end-time prophetic message.

The campaign was orchestrated by Judson Washburn and Claude Holmes, two figures of long church employment. Holmes, a self-proclaimed defender of Ellen White's prophetic office, had compiled the greatest collection of Ellen White writings outside the White Estate. I view him as well-meaning but naïve, probably not grasping the impact of his behavior on the church. Washburn's behavior I can't excuse. Ironically, he grew up near Daniells in Iowa and they had been friends years before. But for more than a decade Washburn had been harboring suspicions about Daniells's orthodoxy (and probably resentment against his friend's success). After Daniells promoted the new view of "the daily" sacrifices in Daniel 8:11-13 and then, at the 1919 Bible Conference, advocated a more nuanced understanding of how

a vigorous (probably overly vigorous) campaign on his behalf in the weeks leading up to the 1922 GC Session. Promises were made to key delegates from the Columbia Union Conference if they would give their support for his one final term. Those who opposed this Moses of Adventism were "openly branded as 'Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.'" ¹⁴ This spat was reported with journalistic glee by San Francisco newspapers.

At long last, Daniells sensed that the game was up and ultimately withdrew his name in favor of Spicer. But not before he gave a spirited and quite proper defense of his record as leader. The acrimony surrounding the GC Session bespoke the emerging fundamentalist spirit in the church. Reaction against administrative and educational elites was in the air. Daniells' perceived unsoundness on the Spirit of Prophecy made him an easy target. Such will it ever be in a movement like ours.

Continued on page 30

AM I NOT ACTUALLY A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST?

By Richard W. Coffen

ADDRESSING ABOUT 400 EDUCATORS ON AUG. 15, 2014, AT THE International Conference on the Bible and Science, General Conference President Ted N.C. Wilson asserted that (what follows is a verbatim excerpt) “If one does not accept the recent six-day creation understanding, then that person is actually not a ‘Seventh-day’ Adventist.”¹

Possibly Wilson allows for terrestrial geology²—just not the biosphere—to be 4.54 billion years old.³ During the past 45 years, as a result of private conversations with Adventist scientists and my own personal reading, I have come to surmise that *both* the age of Earth *and* the existence of life on it greatly exceed 6,000 years. Is it, therefore, true that I, a third-generation church member and retired denominational employee, am actually not a Seventh-day Adventist?

Before continuing, I must clearly state: As a literate individual,⁴ I affirm that the first Genesis narrative (1:1 through 2:3) actually refers to successive 24-hour days during a six-day creation week that culminated with God’s rest on the seventh day. Hence, I happily avow God as Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer.⁵

Nevertheless, it seems to me that we’d be better served (and truer to divinely inspired literature) to read that account as we’d peruse Jürgen Moltmann’s *God in Creation* (*cognitive* speech, which addresses *theoretical constructs*) instead of poring over it as though it were James Watson’s *DNA: The Secret of Life* (*informative* speech, which addresses *empirical matters*).

Despite wishing to avoid confrontation, I’ll nevertheless share my response to Wilson’s remark.

1. The General Conference president has no say regarding my church membership. As a “policy man,” Wilson knows that decisions regarding individual membership rest with the local church. He hasn’t even one solitary vote regarding my membership status!

2. He isn’t academically “equipped” to address authoritatively biblical and/or scientific issues. Wilson’s M.Div. is a professional (taught) degree as opposed to an academic (research-based) degree;⁶ his M.S. is in public health, and his Ed.D. focuses on *Ellen G. White’s Theory of Urban Religious Work as It Relates to Seventh-day Adventist Work in New York City*. His *academic* credentials in science and theology are absent.

Ignoring Wilson’s other remarks and education, here’s what I *think* I’ve come to understand.

3. Whirring Genesis 1 and 2 in an intellectual blender does a disservice to God’s Word. Anyone who either reads these two accounts as one unbroken narrative or produces an amalgamated storyline needs to learn how to read once again! Such mixing

adds to Scripture by producing a third narrative—an *extra-biblical tale* sans divine inspiration.

4. Singling out divine activity in seven consecutive, 24-hour days forces readers to opt for the first narrative of Genesis over against the second. No Bible believer should have to pick and choose like that. Were the second account a “zoom-in, call-out” of the first narrative, then particulars such as God’s method of creating and the sequence of his activities wouldn’t conflict with the data detailed in the first narrative.

Summary of Some Dissimilarities in Genesis 1 and 2

Genesis 1	Genesis 2
Backdrop: Watery chaos	Backdrop: Arid desert
According to one translation of verse 1, Creator was not indebted to pre-existing matter	Creator used pre-existent matter
God’s M.O. of creation: speaking	God’s M.O. of creation: planting, molding, operating on, carrying, etc.
Talkative Deity	Taciturn Deity
Timeline: six or seven 24-hour days	Timeline: None
Divine skill: No trial and error; instantaneous effect	Divine skill: Trial and error in making “helpmeet” for man; delayed effect
Creator spoke flora and fauna into existence	Creator planted flora and molded fauna from clods of dirt
Divine assessment: “It is good”	Divine assessment: “It is not good”
All trees provided for food	All trees but one provided for food
Divine name: Elohim	Divine name: YHWH Elohim

5. Manuscript “families” disagree on chronology embedded within Genesis genealogies.

Chronologies of Genesis 5, 10, and 11—Some Time Spans Between Creation and Abraham⁷

Masoretic Text	LXX Alexandrinus	LXX Vaticanus	Samaritan Pentateuch
1,948 years	3,334	3,414	2,249

A discrepancy of nearly 1,500 years for an interval of 6,000 (or 4,540,000,000) years isn’t statistically significant, but the manuscript evidence posits a millennium-and-a-half difference for an approximately 3,500-year time period—almost a 57 percent variance!

6. Biblical genealogies are “trimmed” like topiary.

Notice the symmetry in genealogies from the varying traditions. Much too neat!

Genealogical Chronologies⁸

Samaritan Pentateuch	1,307 years Creation to Flood	1,307 years Flood to Joseph’s Death
Septuagint	2,262 years Creation to Flood	2,262 years Flood to Destruction of Samaria
Masoretic Text	1,656 years Creation to Flood	1,656 years Flood to Destruction of Jerusalem

Similar “trimming” emerges in details of Matthew’s genealogy of Jesus versus Luke’s.⁹

7. Believers have produced widely diverse estimates of the age of Earth.

Some Proposed Year Dates for Creation Week¹⁰

Name of Historian	Date
Harold Camping	11,013 B.C.
Alfonso X of Castile	6984 or 6484 B.C.
Gentil	6204 B.C.
Clement of Alexandria	5592 B.C.
Byzantine Orthodox Church	5509 B.C.
Sextus Julius Africanus	5504 B.C.
Gregory of Tours	5500 B.C.
Eusebius of Caesarea	5203 B.C.
Jerome	5199 B.C.
Seder Olam Zutta	4339 B.C.
James Ussher	4004 B.C.
Martin Luther	c. 4000 B.C.
Sir Isaac Newton	3998 B.C.
Johannes Kepler	3993 B.C.
Christian Longomontanus	3964 B.C.
Venerable Bede	3952 B.C.
Joseph Scaliger	3949 B.C.
John Lightfoot	3929 B.C.
Jose ben Halafta	3761 B.C.
Hillel II	3761 B.C.

The discrepancy among these calculations amounts to 7,252 years, more than a millennium in excess of the often-accepted estimate of 6,018 years for the age of our planet!

It's true that these disparities don't provide a scriptural basis for a 4.54 billion-year-old planet. Nonetheless, the data indicate that Genesis does *not* provide *empirical* evidence sufficient for the reconstruction of a historical model of precisely *what* God did, *how* he did it, and *when* he did it.

8. Archaeological evidence requires more time than “approximately” 6,000 years.¹¹

Let's agree that the skill of writing postdates Noah's flood.¹² From biblical data, when did this flood occur? Bible-believing scholars differ.

Some Proposed Dates for Noachian Flood¹³

Name	Date
Petavius	3982 B.C.
Barry Setterfield	3536 B.C.
Gentil	3155 B.C.
Eusebius	2959 B.C.
Curt Sewell	2519 B.C.
James Ussher	2349/2348 B.C.

This sampling reveals a deviation of 1,633 years!

In the following chart, compare those calculations with the range of dates historians provide for the invention of writing.

Some Generally Accepted Dates for the Invention of Writing¹⁴ (cf. Ussher's date for the Flood—2349/2348 B.C.)

Place	Date
Egypt	c. 3400 B.C.
Sumer	c. 3300 B.C.
Elam	c. 3200 B.C.
India	c. 2600-2500 B.C.
Akkadia	c. 2500 B.C.

In each instance, writing *predates* the Noachian Flood if Ussher's chronology is accurate. Such a conclusion is completely unacceptable to secular historians and Ellen White!

Archaeologist Daniel Nadel has provided general dates for some of the oldest ancient Near Eastern civilizations.¹⁵ The time periods he suggests coincide with the best estimates provided by other archaeologists. The oldest excavated site in Israel

**OUR SPIRITUAL LEADERS ARE SURELY
DISINGENUOUS TO DENOUNCE EVOLUTION
AND ITS SUPPORTERS WHILE FREELY USING
PETROLEUM-BASED PRODUCTS SUCH
AS GASOLINE, DIESEL, JET FUEL, PAINT,
PLASTICS, ANTISEPTICS, BALLPOINT PENS,
DEODORANTS, COMPACT DISCS, CAULKING,
TOOTHPASTE, EYEGLASSES, ETC.**

is Tel Ubeidiya, whose artifacts date back 1,500,000 years.¹⁶ Gesher Benot Ya'akov was inhabited about 800,000 years ago.¹⁷ Excavations on Mt. Carmel and in Galilee have uncovered civilizations older than 45,000 years. Ohalo II flourished around 23,000 years ago.¹⁸ The Natufian culture dates back to between 11,000 and 15,000 years ago.¹⁹

It's foolish for those of us who aren't archaeologists to argue against such dating. Doing so makes us appear naïve at best and silly at worst!

9. Practically, Wilson and others who believe in a short chronology for planet Earth lend credence to evolutionary theory.

They regularly refuel their vehicles and fly tens of thousands of miles annually to serve the world church, thereby tacitly acknowledging the practical value of evolutionary concepts. So?

It's generally recognized that one evidence for the validity of a scientific theory is its predictive value. Geologists for the petroleum industry do *not* locate new sources of crude oil by using models based on Young Earth Creationism and a global flood. These models don't have predictive ability for locating oil reserves. However, evolutionary models play a prominent role for the scientists whose job it is to guide the oil companies.

Our spiritual leaders are surely disingenuous to denounce evolution and its supporters while freely using petroleum-based products such as gasoline, diesel, jet fuel, paint, plastics, antiseptics, ballpoint pens, deodorants, compact discs, caulking, toothpaste, eyeglasses, etc.

In this discussion I've not addressed radiometric dating, sediment and ice core dating, tree ring dating, the age of the astronomical universe, etc. Nevertheless, although the evidence for "deep time" for the age of planet Earth as Biosphere 1 is *not* incontestable, it is quite persuasive, and we laypersons should bite our tongues when tempted to malign scientists and belittle empirical evidence.

Possibilities and Probabilities

On the one hand, I'm willing to concede that Wilson and others who espouse a short chronology versus "deep time" might *possibly* be right. But (and this is a gigantic BUT), on the other hand, despite being a layperson in such matters, I strongly suspect (based partially upon the limited evidence cited in this article and other data, as well) that they are *probably* incorrect.

It seems to me, therefore, that it behooves those of us who cherish Scripture to avoid judging our fellow believers and to leave verdicts to our Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Judge. Surely the infinite Creator—and he alone—*actually* (to use Wilson's terminology) knows the precise details relating to *what* he did, *how* he did it, and *when* he did it. All the rest of us must humbly confess our ignorance, as well as our incomplete knowledge. Therefore, we should live charitably with our fellow believers who don't share our particular perspective. 🏠

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¹ Ted N.C. Wilson, "God's Authoritative Voice," *Adventist Review Online* blog post, Aug. 18, 2014 (<http://www.adventistreview.org/affirming-creation/god's-authoritative-voice>).

² Ervin Taylor, "Does Wilson II, the President of the Adventist General Conference, Believe That the Earth Is Billions of Years Old?" *Adventist Today Online* blog post, Sept. 3, 2014 (<http://atoday.org/wilson-ii-president-adventist-general-conference-believe-earth-billions-years-old.html>).

³ Fraser Cain, "How Old Is the Earth?" *Universe Today* blog post, May 30, 2013 (<http://www.universetoday.com/75805/how-old-is-the-earth>).

⁴ For 34 years I served as a book editor for my denomination, evaluating thousands of manuscripts.

⁵ Consequently this means that *God* is non-contingent, whereas *I* and all other life forms within the biosphere that we call planet Earth are contingent upon him.

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Master_of_Divinity

⁷ Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Meaning of the Chronogenealogies of Genesis 5 and 11," *Origins*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1980, pp. 53-70 (<http://www.bible.ca/b-bible-chronology-hasel.htm>).

⁸ See for partial evidence: <http://creation.com/biblical-chronogenealogies>; Ernst Bertheau, "Different Computations of the First Two Periods of the Book of Genesis," John Nicholson (trans.), *The Journal of Sacred Literature*, Vol. 2, No. 3, July 1848, p. 118; Joseph Rawson Lumby, "The Chronology of the Bible," *The Cambridge Companion to the Bible*, 1892, p. 143; Doug Clark, "The Bible: Isn't It About Time?" in Brian Bull, Fritz Guy, Ervin Taylor (eds.), *Understanding Genesis: Contemporary Adventist Perspectives* (Riverside, CA: Adventist Today, 2006), p. 123.

⁹ To achieve the proper number, Matthew omitted kings Joash, Amaziah, and Uzziah, following the LXX reading. Also, he left out Jehoiakim. Additionally, in verses 13 to 15, Matthew includes people not mentioned in the Old Testament. (See W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible*, Vol. 26, Matthew, pp. 4-5.) Luke's genealogy includes 36 individuals elsewhere unattested. Also, Matthew lists 12 persons from Zerubbabel to Jesus, while Luke provides 21 names for the same timespan. This isn't an exhaustive list of the differences between the two genealogies. There are many more. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, Anchor Bible Series, Vol. 28 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), pp. 490-497.

¹⁰ Compiled from various sources.

¹¹ Archaeological dating is based on various methodologies, including calculations based on carbon 14, pottery styles, calligraphy, plus grammatical and syntactical styles, among others.

¹² Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 83: "The antediluvians ... had no written records." In his same speech, Wilson claimed that White is "a defining element in historical accuracy ... and scientific and theological contribution," which she never claimed for herself and which counters the hard evidence in the files at the Ellen G. White Estate.

¹³ Compiled from various sources.

¹⁴ Compiled from various sources.

¹⁵ Daniel Nadel, *Biblical Archaeological Review*, September/October 2014, pp. 24-25, 64.

¹⁶ <http://archaeology.about.com/od/uterm/g/ubeidiya.htm>; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubeidiya>.

¹⁷ <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/304/5671/725>.

¹⁸ http://archaeology.about.com/od/oterm/qt/ohalo_ii.htm; http://mushecht.haifa.ac.il/archeology/ExhibitionC_eng.aspx?id=7.

¹⁹ <http://sawiggins.wordpress.com/2010/09/01/natufia-to-say/>; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natufian_culture.



TODAY'S FACES OF

ADVENTISM IS INCREASINGLY POLARIZED TODAY, AND THIS CAN be managed as a healthy tension or allowed to morph into a divisive crisis. I'm convinced the present polarization over women's ordination should be accepted as natural in today's church and viewed as a step toward a more mature denomination.

Worldwide Adventism is increasingly diverse, in both its demographics and its understanding of the Bible and of Ellen White. In this article¹ I make two normative claims: first, that a widely diverse denomination is not just natural, but that this diversity is good, even God-ordained; and second, that our

there will be an estimated 45 million Adventist members—or 60 million people, if affiliated relatives are counted. Members in 2005 were predominately found in Africa (35 percent), Latin America (33 percent), and Asia (21 percent).⁴

North American Adventism is disproportionately immigrant, aging, and shrinking in relative size. In the United States, immigrants constitute 12 percent of the population, whereas in Adventism immigrants constitute more than 31 percent of the membership. The largest blocs of immigrant members are Hispanic (a 100 percent increase from 1990 to 2008) and

AUTHENTIC, DIVERGENT ADVENTISM

The Case for a Big Tent

BY JIM WALTERS

church can remain unified in diversity if we maintain twin, interrelated qualities that are highly prized in our religious tradition—a high view of individual conscience, with a concomitantly high view of church unity.

An Increasingly Diverse Church, Demographically

A hundred years ago, Seventh-day Adventists were 150,000 members strong and lived mainly in New England, Michigan, and California. Although sociologists of religion accurately call early Adventism a sect, today the denomination is approaching 20 million members. The membership is situated predominately in Africa, Latin America, and Asia—with only 9 percent of the church residing in North America, Europe, and Australia (and only .014 percent living in the original Adventist strongholds in the United States.).²

World Adventism is young, vibrant, and growing exponentially. Today's 18 million³ Adventists compare to 5 million Bahias, more than 13 million Jews, 15 million members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and 30 million Sikhs. In 2025

Asian/Pacific (a 200 percent increase). Although relatively small in number, the multiethnic membership has risen from 1 percent to 4 percent, while membership among Blacks—long a disproportionately large segment (30 percent) of the North American Division—increased only marginally. Perhaps most interesting is that an American denomination that began near wholly White has seen this segment markedly decrease—from 62 percent to now less than half in fewer than 20 years.⁵ The early emphasis on education is dramatically seen in immigrant members, with 23 percent saying their children “must” attain a doctoral degree (vs. 5 percent of native-born church members).⁶

The church in North America is increasingly gray-haired. The median age in the denomination is 51, compared to age 36 in the broader culture. Nearly half of White Adventists are over 60 years of age, whereas Hispanic Adventists are likely to be under 44 years of age. In addition, demographic shifts are matched by other significant changes. Church institutions have never been stronger, as exemplified by the \$15 billion-plus annual revenue reported by Adventist Health Systems and by the more than

15,000 students and employees associated with Loma Linda University and its associated medical entities. Nevertheless, the North American church is dramatically decreasing as a percentage of world Adventist membership (from 7 percent in 2005 to a projected 4 percent by 2020).

An Increasingly Diverse Church, Hermeneutically

As the Seventh-day Adventist church becomes exceedingly diverse in its demographics, differences in biblical interpretation among its theologians are likewise growing more prominent. However, it would be a gross mistake to conclude that the theological conservatives reside in the less-developed world and that liberals inhabit more-developed lands. Generally

on Enlightenment universal reason while failing to apply the same postmodern scrutiny to his own Enlightenment ideology: a thoroughly modernist notion on the “absolutely true” biblical view of life’s origin.⁹ Now, it isn’t that Osborn and Canale disagree on the Bible’s pivotal role in understanding life’s origin; rather, it’s an issue of differing methods of hermeneutics (biblical interpretation). Osborn explains what he thinks is *really* foundational about biblical literalism: “It is *not* the authority of Scripture, which nonliteralists also fully accept, but rather belief in philosophical foundationalism itself as the unquestionable stage on which all hermeneutical battles must be played out.”¹⁰ Of course, Osborn wrote this prior to publication of the *Minority Report*, but it surely applies to the



The primary issue in Adventism today is not whether the literalists or the nonliteralists are right, but whether or not both can appreciate a common heritage and love one another as sister Christians, with considerable allowance for conscientiously held differences.

speaking, disproportionately more progressive Adventists are found in Adventist populations that have greater education and wealth and have multigenerational members. Understandably, Adventist converts of limited education would perceive issues such as women’s ordination—the urgent practical issue driving the theological attention in this paper—differently than lifelong members of considerable education. However, differing views of the Bible and ordination are more complex than demographics would suggest.

I illustrate my point on clashing hermeneutical presuppositions by citing the Edwin Reynolds and Clinton Wahlen *Minority Report* on women’s ordination⁷ and Ron Osborn’s *Death Before the Fall: Biblical Literalism and the Problem of Animal Suffering*.⁸ Of these three Adventist scholars, who are church members in good standing, perhaps Osborn has the most distinguished denominational pedigree, as he is related to the Wilson family that has given the world church two General Conference presidents.

Osborn’s analysis of biblical literalism is fair and insightful, though he opposes literalism and is a bit severe. He cites Fernando Canale, emeritus professor of theology and philosophy at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, as mounting an appropriate, sophisticated postmodern attack

way Scripture is treated in that report.

If Reynolds and Wahlen ever read Osborn’s book, they might protest: “We’re not guilty of modernist philosophical foundationalism; that’s a postmodern construct, and we’re viewing the Bible as it’s been read by the faithful for 2000 years before modernity, and by most devout Christians yet today.” If Reynolds and Wahlen would give such a response, they’d be forgetting that the most influential theologians throughout Christian history (e.g., Origen and Luther) were not literalists. And further, Reynolds’ and Wahlen’s supposedly consistent biblical literalism surely reflects the spirit of the Enlightenment’s enthronement of universal, *a priori* reasoning—except that it’s now the Bible that is based on theoretical deduction. For Reynolds and Wahlen, the Bible—not Reason—is what exists prior to and independent of experience or examination.

Reynolds and Wahlen fairly and accurately apprise the “trajectory” perspective, an alternative to literalism, but then reject it because it would necessarily rely on human reason for implementation, thus abandoning the biblical *a priori*. The trajectory approach views “selected portions of Scripture as time- and culture-bound and, therefore, tinged with the individual’s or his community’s prejudicial views on such topics, rather than God’s thoughts which are valid for all places and all time.”¹¹

Both Progressives and Traditionalists Can Find a Basis in Ellen White's Writings

Progressive Statements:

1. "When new light is presented to the church, it is perilous to shut yourselves away from it. ... To condemn that which you have not heard and do not understand will not exalt your wisdom in the eyes of those who are candid in their investigations of truth. And to speak with contempt of those whom God has sent with a message of truth, is folly and madness. ... [The church's youth] are not to make up their minds that the whole truth has been unfolded, and that the Infinite One has no more light for His people. If they entrench themselves in the belief that the whole truth has been revealed, they will be in danger of discarding precious jewels of truth that shall be discovered as men turn their attention to the searching of the rich mine of God's word."¹

2. "The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. ... God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen."²

3. "All who in that evil [last] day would fearlessly serve God according to the dictates of conscience, will need courage, firmness, and a knowledge of God and His word; for those who are true to God will be persecuted, their motives will be impugned, and their best efforts misinterpreted, and their names cast out as evil."³

4. "Every association of life calls for the exercise of self-control, forbearance, and sympathy. We differ so widely in disposition, habits, education, that our ways of looking at things vary. We judge differently. Our understanding of truth, our ideas in regard to the conduct of life, are not in all respects the same. There are no two whose experience is alike in every particular. The trials of one are not the trials of another. The duties that one finds light are to another most difficult and perplexing."⁴

5. "The necessities of life must be attended to, the sick must be cared for, the wants of the needy must be supplied. He will not be held guiltless who neglects to relieve suffering on the Sabbath. God's holy rest day was made for man,

and acts of mercy are in perfect harmony with its intent. God does not desire His creatures to suffer an hour's pain that may be relieved upon the Sabbath or any other day."⁵

Traditionalist Statements:

1. "I have been shown that no man's judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any one man. But when the judgment of the General Conference, which is the highest authority that God has upon the earth, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be maintained, but be surrendered."⁶

2. "Satan has taken full possession of the churches as a body. The sayings and doings of men are dwelt upon instead of the plain cutting truths of the word of God."⁷

3. "The Bible is not to be tested by men's ideas of science, but science is to be brought to the test of this unerring standard."⁸

4. "The general method of educating the youth does not meet the standard of true education. Infidel sentiments are interwoven in the matter placed in schoolbooks, and the oracles of God are placed in a questionable or even an objectionable light. Thus the minds of the youth become familiar with Satan's suggestions, and the doubts once entertained become to those who entertain them, assured facts, and scientific research is made misleading on account of the way its discoveries are interpreted and perverted. Men take it upon themselves to rein up the word of God before a finite tribunal, and sentence is pronounced upon the inspiration of God according to finite measurement, and the truth of God is made to appear as a thing uncertain before the records of science."⁹

5. "Every truth that He has given for these last days is to be proclaimed to the world. Every pillar that He has established is to be strengthened. We cannot step off the foundation that God has established."¹⁰

6. "In every age there is a new development of truth, a message of God to the people of that generation. The old truths are all essential; new truth is not independent of the old, but an unfolding of it. It is only as the old truths are understood that we can comprehend the new."¹¹

A Statement on Conscience That Transcends Both Traditionalism and Progressivism

"The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the truth though the heavens fall."¹²

A Statement on Unity That Transcends Both Traditionalism and Progressivism:

"One man may be conversant with the Scriptures, and some particular portion of the Scripture may be especially appreciated by him; another sees another portion as very important... . This is all in the order of God. But if a man makes a mistake in his interpretation of some portion of the Scripture, shall this cause diversity and disunion? God forbid. We cannot then take a position that the unity of the church consists in viewing every text of Scripture in the very same light. The church may pass resolution upon resolution to put down all disagreement of opinions, but we cannot force the mind and will, and thus root out disagreement."¹³

¹ Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1946), p. 51.

² White, *Selected Messages Book 1* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), p. 21.

³ White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), p. 431.

⁴ White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905), p. 483.

⁵ White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898), p. 207.

⁶ White, *Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 3* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1875), p. 492.

⁷ White, *Spiritual Gifts, Vol. 1* (Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Assoc., 1858), p. 189.

⁸ White, *The Signs of the Times*, March 13, 1884.

⁹ White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing, 1923), p. 328.

¹⁰ White, *Selected Messages Book 2* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), p. 290.

¹¹ White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1900), p. 127.

¹² White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), p. 57.

¹³ White, *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), p. 1092.

Reynolds and Wahlen don't grapple with their presuppositions, as Osborn does regarding his own, but this inadequacy could merely be due to a lack of time and space. Rather, they just dive into their topic, making modernist assumptions about the value and timelessness of biblical assertions—except that they denigrate the “degenerate Western culture of modernism and postmodernism.” These authors appear to assume that if Bible readers are faithful and honest, the simple, literalist reading of Scripture will ring self-evidently true.

Although Reynolds and Wahlen don't explicitly identify themselves with Scottish Common Sense Realism/19th-century Princeton Theological Seminary literalism, there are uncanny similarities. Scottish realism taught that ordinary experience

Osborn says that he follows the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, adding an Adventist twist: “I believe in the paramount authority of Scripture in matters of faith, illuminated though not bound by the interpretative traditions of the church across time, which must be continually tested in the light of both reason and experience to discern present truth.”¹⁴

The primary issue in Adventism today is not whether the literalists or the nonliteralists are right, but whether or not both can appreciate a common heritage and love one another as sister Christians, with considerable allowance for conscientiously held differences. The major challenge for literalist members is to account for the intrinsic dynamism that is evident in Scripture and in Adventist history and to prioritize the “weightier matters



I'm now more modest about my belief that people can freely choose to change their minds merely because they hear theologically and philosophically compelling arguments.

assures the existence of real objects that can be felt and the existence of certain “first principles,” upon which sound moral and religious beliefs can be based. This philosophy, criticized by critics as merely an attack on intellectual change, had considerable influence in Europe; in America, it influenced Thomas Jefferson and especially Princeton's Charles Hodge.

Hodge's combination of Scottish realism and biblicism resulted in a verbal, dictatorial view of inspiration. Hodge's biblical literalism “was an innovation to meet the new ‘scientific’ standards of objectivity required in the minds of many in the modern age,” writes Nicholas Miller.¹² Hodge defended slavery, and his Princeton protégé Benjamin Warfield “believed that Paul's injunctions against women speaking in the churches were ‘precise, absolute, and all inclusive.’”¹³ If literalist Calvinism has influenced Reynolds and Wahlen, they are part of a grand Adventist tradition of learning from Methodists, Baptists, the Christian Connexion, and eclectic health reformers. Very different streams of religious and philosophical thought, on the other hand, influenced Osborn. (Certain passages in Ellen White's writings can be appealed to by both the literalist/traditionalist and by the nonliteralist/progressive; see sidebar on page 19 for examples.)

With more space in his book for methodological explanation,

of the law.” The major challenge for nonliteralist Adventists is to guard against the secularist tendencies that a multifaceted approach to truth allows and to hold on to and develop central Adventist emphases that enrich postmodern members' lives and can contribute to the larger world.¹⁵

[The contrast between religious literalists and nonliteralists is particularly pronounced in Judaism. And it appears clear that today's Judaism—in any and all of its forms—survives only because of the 2500-year, uninterrupted history of Torah (Orthodox) Judaism. Although there is a fundamental difference between Christianity and Judaism, Jesus Christ, literalist Adventism, and Orthodox Judaism have at least three interesting parallels: (1) both adhere to a strict interpretation and application of religious beliefs, (2) both adhere to some type of gender segregation, and (3) both believe that their most sacred Scriptures were transmitted directly by God and are hence eternal and unalterable. See sidebar on Jews and Adventists for a limited elaboration.]

Diversity: Natural, Good, and God-Ordained

I now turn from a largely descriptive account of a disparate and changing worldwide Adventism to argue that our diverse denomination is as interesting as a lush meadow—composed of

flowers, grasses, and, yes, weeds—in the High Sierra in the flush of spring.

Diversity is “in” these days, if what is being taught in our universities is any indication. For example, my own Loma Linda University School of Religion teaches a relatively new course, Health Care Disparities. My field of bioethics is a relatively new area of academic focus that arose precisely because of the growing plurality of moral views and an increased sense of self-determination; American society is no longer defined by “Ozzie and Harriet” families of four.

It’s one thing to affirm diversity and formally accept that people are different; it’s quite another to actually *appreciate* the deep-seated, fundamental difference that characterizes individuals and groups. I myself have formally accepted difference for a long time but have been superficial about genuine appreciation of true otherness. Two illustrations will suffice.

I was the young pastor at the Adventist church in Claremont, California, in 1979 when *Spectrum* published excerpts of transcripts from the 1919 Bible Conference.¹⁶ I was spiritually and intellectually blown over. By the mid-1900s, Ellen White had been elevated to paper-pope-like status in Adventism, and now we had transcripts of elite thought leaders—some who were close friends and colleagues of the prophet—who, four years after

her death, were acknowledging her human side and grappling with how to guide a membership with inflated ideas. I recall talking at length with a fellow young Los Angeles pastor, the late Ed Johnson, about putting together a traveling seminar for conference churches. Part of the genius of Adventism is “progressive revelation” and “present truth,” and surely the 1919 Bible Conference transcripts would qualify. Of course, church members everywhere would want to know! How naïve I was about human nature.

Similarly, when I was a junior professor of religion at Loma Linda University 30 years ago and the cyclical concern for women’s ordination was again cresting, I fought along with others for our world church to adopt women as equals in ministry. Hadn’t Gordon Hyde, chairman of Southern’s religion department in the mid-1960s, predicted that the church was ready to take this step? But the denomination was changing demographically, with exponential growth south of the equator and near-stagnation in the North American Division and Europe. Accordingly, I found myself fighting for increasingly smaller regions of the church, finally linking efforts with Penny Miller to help found the Gender Inclusiveness Task Force in Southeastern California Conference (SECC) in January of 1989, only to have our multiyear efforts stymied by the sympathetic conference president Lynn Mallery,

Jews and Adventists: An Analogy in Support of Literalist Adventism’s Constructive Role in a United, Big-Tent Adventism

Admittedly, it’s a bit preposterous to suggest a strong analogy between 3,000-year-old Judaism and 170-year-old Adventism. But there are a few striking similarities in their adherents: both Jews and Adventists are People of the Book, have distinctive beliefs and education, and are typically considered outsiders. Of course, Judaism can point to a string of luminaries: Moses, David, Jesus, Maimonides, Einstein—and the winners of 194 Nobel Prize awards and 42 Pulitzer Prize awards. Adventism can point to Ellen White, our co-founder and most prolific writer; to Loma Linda University, the only AAMC-accredited denominational medical school in the United States; and to a burgeoning number

of highly competent professionals. But frankly, Adventism can’t even begin the comparison game.

Contemporary Judaism in the United States has the same challenges as all of its religious brethren: an open, free America of unbounded opportunity and the assault of historic and scientific scrutiny on traditional beliefs. But it was devout adherence to traditional beliefs—despite persecution and vast changes in societal ideologies—that sustained the Jews over millennia and made them thrive. The success of Jews as a people in the United States—despite being only 0.2 percent of the population—is likely the result of at least three factors: (1) endogamy, (2)

the benefits that accompany a sense of being a divinely chosen people, and (3) the long-standing emphasis on learning. For example, Jonathan Rosenblum, a graduate of Yale Law, was dissatisfied with his life as a big-firm Chicago attorney and traveled to Jerusalem to study with Hasidic scholars. He found that the study of Torah was “more challenging and rigorous than anything I experienced at the pinnacle of American academia,” as he related in his essay “Ultra-Orthodox Bring Pride, Charity and Vitality Back to Jewish People.”¹

¹ <http://forward.com/articles/177438/ultra-orthodox-bring-pride-charity-and-vitality>

who feared that then-GC president Robert Folkenberg would stage a special SECC constituency showdown.

When Folkenberg was asked to resign in January of 1999 and replaced by Jan Paulsen, Lynn Mallery was newly emboldened. On October 21 of that year, the SECC executive committee voted a recommendation by Mallery and the Gender Inclusive Task Force “that equal credentials be granted to all [SECC] pastors, both male and female.” Now elected conference leaders had ended gender discrimination within their own territory, leaving other conferences to recognize the legitimacy of these pastors as they would. At the time I thought, and I still think, that SECC did the right thing. I also thought that if all other church leaders prayed fervently about the issue, they would come to the same

because emotional elements in one’s history emerge early, long before one consciously *thinks* about gender equality/inequality. Those early emotions form a moral vector that the conscious mind will later clothe with language and argument. “Man can do what he wills but he cannot will what he wills,” said German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer.¹⁸

As important as the human brain is (more specifically, the prefrontal cortex or PFC), neuroscience has shown that it’s not an autonomous “moral center.” It is morally neutral (amoral), organized around endurance and success. Patricia Churchland, neuroscientist and philosopher, contends that our subconscious brains are initially in the pre-value process of “negotiating” their way through day-to-day social life.¹⁹ Cultural dos and don’ts,



I contend that Adventism can remain organizationally together and united in Christ if we highly prize the interrelated concepts of individual conscience and communal unity.

conclusion. *On this last point, I now think I was wrong.* My mind has changed (or, I’m attempting to change it) as I’ve learned more about human nature—particularly from the neurosciences. In a word, I’m now more modest about my belief that people can freely choose to change their minds merely because they hear theologically and philosophically compelling arguments. We are learning that the human brain is incredibly complex, and its processes defy the popular conception of a more-or-less neutral weighing of evidence.

Neuroscience: the Profound Influence of Nature and Nurture

Cognitive psychologist Steven Pinker, in his Pulitzer prize-nominated *The Blank Slate* (2002), contends that we have a “moral sense” and that it’s essentially rooted in our emotions.¹⁷ The emotions are inseparable from the social aspect, and humans are intrinsically social. We have long praised *rational* and castigated *emotional* decision-making, but neuroscience doesn’t support this bifurcation. Psychopaths have a strong rational capacity, compared to their emotional sense. The fact that decisions are infused with both factual and emotional/social elements helps explain why equally smart and adjusted persons can have opposite moral positions on issues such as women’s ordination. This occurs

traditional practices, parental upbringing and role modeling, etc., are significant factors in forming the selves we become. Every decision we make and every experience we have contributes to the person we become.

Not only is our subconscious self formed by our life experiences, both emotional and factual, but our genetically derived neurochemicals are even *more* basic. This point is driven home by Churchland’s description of the peptide oxytocin, a chemical that helps bonding between mother and infant. Scientists have studied the contrast between prairie voles and montane voles: prairie voles mate for life, with the male sharing parental duties by licking and nurturing his offspring, and sometimes a neighbor’s pups. In contrast, montane voles do not mate for life, and the males do not actively care for even their own pups. Why? Prairie voles have more oxytocin receptors in the brain. However, if prairie voles’ oxytocin receptors are blocked, they will *not* pair-bond. When Churchland learned about prairie voles’ oxytocin levels, she was “stunned.” She’d always thought that pair-bonding was a conscious choice, perhaps guided by esoteric moral norms.²⁰

Within the past 30 years, neuroscience has shown that the main determinants of personal life lie beyond conscious control. Cognitive physiologist Benjamin Libet performed pivotal,

path-breaking experiments in contemporary neuroscience in the early 1980s, demonstrating that the main components of personal choice lie in the unconscious. A person's conscious sense of decision is preceded by at least 300 milliseconds (three-tenths of a second), during which the unconscious circuitry is processing a decision that emerges in one's conscious brain for final approval.²¹ Neuroscience researchers have found that the so-called Response Potential (the time from unconscious initiation to conscious awareness) can be as long as seven (7) seconds.²² Sam Harris reports that one fMRI study shows Response Potential of 10 seconds.²³

Most neuroscientists and knowledgeable philosophers conclude that such experiments are evidence for determinism and lack of free will, despite Libet's denial that his experiment undercuts personal freedom. Harris, always colorful, says: "From the perspective of your conscious mind, you are no more responsible for the next thing you think (and therefore *do*) than you are for the fact that you were born into this world."²⁴ Other thinkers, such as philosopher of science and religion Philip Clayton, contend that the widely recognized theory of emergence (emergent complexity) persuasively explains why the human brain is not reducible to its known component parts. In this regard, Clayton and his colleague Steven Knapp affirm that "persons really exist, ideas influence behavior, and it does make a difference that you strive to follow the Golden Rule and live in harmony with your fellow human beings."²⁵

The debate over free will has undeniable importance, and it wages on, but we've said enough for our purposes. Regardless of our degree of free will, virtually all neuroscience scholars agree that humans are vastly more determined by nature and nurture than traditionally thought.

From the Adventist Christian standpoint, today's neuroscience has special relevance for understanding the differences that now torment our denomination: biblical hermeneutics and women's ordination. Neuroscience need not weaken either literalists' or nonliteralists' firmly held convictions; it *can*, however, make us all more knowledgeable and humble about possible origins of our cherished positions, and it may make us more charitable toward those of opposing convictions.

Adventist Reasons to Accept Neuroscience's Ideas: Nature Is Good, and Pride Is Bad

All of us, from the most sophisticated to the supposedly naïve, "see through a glass darkly" and, therefore, have good reason to be gracious toward our brothers and sisters whose worldviews are assembled differently.

We Adventist Christians possess two perspectives that can aid us in accepting neuroscientific insights: (a) our concept of nature as God's second book, and (b) our view, along with historic Christianity, that pride, obsession with self, is a grave sin.

The human brain, with 86 billion neurons and 100 trillion synapses, is arguably the most complex and least well-understood three pounds of matter in the known universe, with the issue of consciousness continuing to confound. But given the advances in all branches of science, including the science of the brain, it isn't surprising that conventional ideas are challenged. Regarding the brain, the challenge is to the traditional idea of unfettered freedom in choosing the right, good, and true.

And Christians can particularly appreciate that the human "I" is not the center of the universe—even our little social universes—but is only one of many neuro loci in a society of persons who comprise this huge, wonderfully complex universe of which our world is but a small part. We aren't as powerful and decisive as conventionally thought. Our options are limited. We are part of a grand process covering generations and myriad influences—a part of God's created order. We can lament that we aren't more in control, or we can accept our limited control humbly—and thankfully.

James M. Gustafson, at the University of Chicago in the 1970s, was humbled by the advances of human knowledge on many fronts, and as a Christian he made sense of it in his two-volume *Theocentric Ethics*, concluding that God is in control and that we work with our Creator as intelligent, responsive partners. As important as human life is—and as important as church issues such as biblical interpretation and women's ordination are—we live in the larger context of this being our Creator's world. We are here and now only because the Transcendent One radically chose to create self-conscious beings. We must fight against self-absorption in praise to the creative Source of our very being. Yes, we should take ourselves seriously, but we must not confuse our often self-serving constructs with God's larger Plan, of which we—like Job—are largely unaware. In light of the human predicament, H. Richard Niebuhr, Gustafson's mentor, boldly declared that "*whatever is, is good*, affirmed by the power of being, supported by it, intended to be..."²⁶ Our "relative" human ideas "will be made to fit into a total process producing good—not what is good for me (though my confidence accepts that as included), nor what is good for man (though that is also included), nor what is good for the development of life (though that too belongs in the picture), but what is good for being, for universal being, or for God, center and source of all existence."²⁷

Niebuhr is making a theological/philosophical statement about

the universe and life as a whole; his “*whatever is, is good*” is a confession of faith and of ultimate trust about life itself. Niebuhr is *not* making an ethical judgment about how we are living our lives from day to day.

One reaction to the further dethroning of Man from the center of the universe is fear of moral relativism; anything goes, because we are powerless puppies at the end of our genetic/social leashes. Ethical relativism, the idea that every person’s or every culture’s ethics are as good as others, is tempting in our postmodern culture, but such a position is contrary to the Christian tradition, to the consensus of the best of moral philosophy, and to contemporary neuroscience, at least as seen in the writings of Steven Pinker.



Given our Western, post-Enlightenment focus on the individual, with our prized patient autonomy in the hospital and our cherished civil rights in court, we may miss the importance the New Testament attaches to church.

Pinker’s basic point in his book *The Blank Slate* is that humans possess “fixed human natures,” as opposed to the popular notion of being born with blank slates.²⁸ He points to our “language instinct,” which allows a baby to subconsciously learn the sound of words, their pronunciation, and their meanings. And further, he contends that we possess a “moral sense.” “No creature equipped with circuitry to understand that it is immoral for you to hurt me,” says Pinker, “could discover anything but that it is immoral for me to hurt you. As with numbers and the number sense, we would expect moral systems to evolve toward similar conclusions in different cultures or even different planets.... [We possess] an intrinsic logic of ethics rather than concocting it in our heads out of nothing.”²⁹

So the point of this excursion into human diversity—a diversity that is natural, pervasive, and largely not chosen—is not to say that all ideas are equal, but to show how current differences are understandable and to be respected. My personal hope is that as we conscientiously pray and think together as Adventists, we will come closer and closer to the ideal in our divine creation.

A High View of Conscience

I now turn to the second part of my constructive argument, the first part being my contention that God has given us a big,

wonderfully diverse world—and church membership—with individual initiative playing a beautifully minor role *by design*.

In this second part of the argument, I contend that Adventism can remain organizationally together and united in Christ if we highly prize the interrelated concepts of individual conscience and communal unity.

The notion of conscience or conscientiousness is surely not unique to Adventists, or to Christianity. It is a distinguished concept in the history of ideas. The early Axial Age thinkers reflected on conscience as seen, for example, in the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Reference to conscience appears in such diverse religious traditions as Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Confucism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Also ancient

thinkers, thought to be more secular, spoke of conscience, as seen in the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius’ reference to moving “from one unselfish action to another with God in mind. Only there, delight and stillness.”³⁰

Roman Catholic theologians have wrestled with the concept of conscience for millennia, and it was a major theme of Enlightenment thinkers such as Immanuel Kant. Kant began his *Critique of Practical Reason* with the well-known words: “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within.”³¹ Kant was joined by diverse thinkers such as Spinoza, Hegel, Lock, and Mill in grappling with issues of how conscience is related to objectivity, disinterestedness, universality, and consistency—to scratch the surface. But it was Bishop Joseph Butler who cogently spoke of conscience as a “universal moral faculty” and defined it as a “constitutional monarch.”³² Butler drew upon the early 18th-century development of psychology, a fledgling discipline that viewed the mind as comprised of three “faculties”—those of reason, volition, and feeling—and his conception of conscience most clearly sided with the idea that through one’s reason, one can distinguish right from wrong. But Butler, with all his Enlightenment theorists who were thoroughly modernist

in their worship of reason, stands in contrast to B.F. Skinner's behaviorism, which viewed conscience functionally—as learned behaviors in reaction to certain stimuli.

Ellen White, a prodigious writer, was no stranger to the discussion of conscience, with no fewer than 325 entries to this and related terms cited in the three-volume *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*. Although not a philosophical theorist, White understandably reflected the modernist “faculty” notion of conscience, except she believed that God instilled it. References from the *Index* that reflect this view would include “preserve a [conscience], before God,” “awakened, at conversion,” “capable of hearing faintest whisper of Christ’s voice,” etc.

White’s particular religious experience and the history of her fellow Adventist believers help to explain Adventism’s strong emphasis on conscience. The history of the Advent conscience begins with hundreds of faithful, Bible-believing souls responding to the preaching of William Miller, teaching that the end of the world was approaching.

Miller didn’t intend to begin a new denomination and, in fact, he counseled his followers to remain in their original congregations until he was himself disfellowshipped from his church. Regardless, early Advent believers founded their own denomination more from practical than purely ideological reasons, although the latter emerged larger and larger. The practical concerns were accounting for funds given for church workers, identification of genuine preachers, and particularly ownership of the vital printing facilities. The special history of the Millerites, who adopted the cleansed-sanctuary interpretation of Oct. 22, 1844, also made for a special bond among believers. This bonding led to Bible conferences, summer camp meetings, home Bible study groups, and eventually to organized state conferences and the official General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in 1863.

The very idea of “organization” was traumatic for these early Adventists, because their original congregational experience was similar to William Miller’s. And the pronouncement of George Storrs, an early Adventist preacher writing in *The Midnight Cry*, would ring loud and clear for years, even decades to come: “No church can be organized by man’s invention but what it becomes Babylon the moment it is organized.”³³ The individual believer is saved by Christ alone, and no special doctrine or organized group adds to that—and often detracts. Storrs described a full circle of persecuting sect to persecuting sect: first believers flee the original sect, then come organized conferences with their resolutions, which are successively advisory, dictatorial, and then penal—with disfellowshipment; the circle is complete.

Four decades after Storrs’ trumpeting of religious liberty, *Liberty* magazine was established in 1886 in the context separation of church and state for Sabbath protection.³⁴ There is a bold socio-spiritual thread from the 1886 founding of *Liberty*, stretching back to the independent-minded New England believers who followed conscience in believing the 1844 truth, though it meant sacrifice of dear family and church connections.

That thread of conscience runs deep in Adventist blood and is still strong. It is seen when church evangelists appeal to believers in other denominations to follow individual conscience in studying the Bible for themselves. It is evident in the official statement of the General Conference on abortion, a short document citing “individual liberty,” “personal freedom,” and like ideas no less than a half-dozen times in establishing the denomination’s moderate view on the subject.³⁵

The idea of conscience arose at a panel discussion, “Good Science and Literal Bible: What Gives,” at Loma Linda University in October of 2014. Physician Paul Giem, a leading biblical literalist who has his own Sabbath School class at the Loma Linda University Church, was asked whether he thought that equally intelligent and educated Adventists who come to conclusions about such issues as theistic evolution should follow individual conscience. His final answer was that they should, but he added that following conscience in this case could and should lead one to leave Adventism, because such beliefs conflict with established church doctrine. Had that line of reasoning been pursued by the panel, a further question could have been why a “present-truth,” “progressive-revelation” Adventist should leave the denomination when, at earlier times in church history, the then-unorthodox anti-“closed-door” and anti-Arian believers pointed the way toward more adequate Adventist positions. Further, if two Adventists are active members in good and regular standing, equally steeped in and appreciative of the tradition, then on what basis is one to judge which direction conscience should lead? The typical Advent follower in, say, 1849 believed that salvation was limited to the 1844 believers and that Christ was the first created being. As Adventism evolved, most conscientious members abandoned the shut-door view and, with a few exceptions, the Arian position. The point of a high view of conscience is that the conscientious member should be true to his or her own self.

A High View of Church

The primary issue facing the Seventh-day Adventist church today is not women’s ordination, just as the basic issue facing the New Testament church was not food offered to idols, whether or not to

circumcise, or a Cephas vs. Apollos controversy. The root issue is how do members of the church deal with our differences?³⁶

The primary message of the New Testament is what God has done for us: so loving us that he sent his Son to give eternal life (John 3:16). That is the gospel, the good news. It not only gives us hope for life beyond, but it puts meaning into our everyday lives: God, the God of the universe, loves you and me! Jesus not only personally proclaimed God's love, but also made provision for long-term proclamation—through his church. Hence we read: "I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18, RSV).

Our friends the Roman Catholics have taken this passage and based their church on it, making Peter their first pope. No group of Christian believers has taken the idea of church more seriously and raised the concept to unparalleled heights. Catholics teach that through the Eucharist, the believer partakes of the actual body and blood of Christ and thereby enters into the communion of all the saints on earth, in purgatory and in heaven, comprising a spiritual solidarity of the mystical church body under Christ its head.

If Catholic theology has too high a view of the church, we Protestants risk taking too low a view—as though a personal, one-to-one relationship with Jesus is all that matters. Given our Western, post-Enlightenment focus on the individual, with our prized patient autonomy in the hospital and our cherished civil rights in court, we may miss the importance the New Testament attaches to church. Beyond Matthew's account of Jesus establishing the church, both the Revelator and St. Paul use marital language to describe Christ's relationship to his church: the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7) and Christ as head of the church, as a husband is head of his wife (Eph. 5:23)!³⁷

Paul speaks of being "in Christ" no fewer than 216 times, and John uses the phrase 26 times. Being in Christ suggests spiritual rest and assurance, and although it is undeniably personal, being "in" Christ is for Paul inseparable from being "in" his church: "For as in one body we have many members, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one of another" (Rom. 12:4-5, RSV). Talk about a spiritual union of Christ and individual members as church!

This spiritual union of Christ and members defines church and, because of the preciousness of this ideal, Paul downplays the value of penultimate concerns that preoccupy too many believers. His list of threatening, secondary, disputed issues is long, including: vegetables, unclean meat, food, drink, wine, festivals,

new moons, regulations, and human precepts and doctrines (Romans 14 and Colossians 3).

The apostle's counsel for church unity *through* respect for conscience could not be starker: "One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind. . . . But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Rom. 14:5, 10, NASB).

A denomination that abandoned a shut-door view of the sanctuary, harbored Arian church leaders for years, and has accepted polygamist African converts along with their multiple wives, can surely withstand the threat to organic division posed by an issue such as selective women's ordination. Christ is the core. We find our salvation and unity "in Christ."³⁸

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¹ Although I take full responsibility for this manuscript, I thank the following individuals who have contributed in different ways: Ivan Blazen, Carla Gober, David Larson, Ted Levterov, Paul Mwansa, Ervin Taylor, and Richard Rice.

² Although in many regards Adventism is a denomination, even in its United States homeland it retains significant sectarian traits, as indicated by Keith Lockhart and Malcolm Bull in their insightful *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007). These traits include: a high rate of converts vs. low rate of retention of those born into the church; elevator effect of entering the church poor and exiting it with means; poor assimilation rates of new ethnic minorities of color; extensive growth but little societal influence; institutions still outweighed by revivalism; and prominence of high-tension doctrines (cf. p. 360 f).

³ There were 18,028,796 Seventh-day Adventists worldwide as of Sept. 30, 2013, according to the church's Archives, Statistics and Research department.

⁴ Most of the statistics used in this paper come from two of Monte Sahlin's presentations: "The Globalization of the Adventist Church" at Columbia Union College in November of 2007 and "Ethnic and Cultural Diversity: Colleagues or Competitors?" at Oakwood University in 2009.

⁵ Year 1990 to 2008 shifts in percentages of North American Division members' ethnicities: Asian, 2% to 7%; Black 23% to 27%; Hispanic, 6% to 12%; White, 62% to 50%; and Multiethnic, 1% to 4%. The 2008 percentages of the Adventist membership compared to the U.S. citizenship: Asian, 7% to 3%; Black, 27% to 12%; Hispanic, 12% to 10%; White, 50% to 67%.

⁶ In a report presented at Oakwood University in 2009, Monte Sahlin stated that when Adventists were asked whether a woman who had young children should have a career, 67 percent of immigrant members said yes, compared to 38 percent of native-born members.

⁷ Edwin E. Reynolds and Clinton Wahlen, *Minority Report*, North American Division Theology of Ordination Study Committee, November 2013.

⁸ Ronald E. Osborn, *Death Before the Fall: Biblical Literalism and the Problem of Animal Suffering* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014).

⁹ Osborn, p. 116.

¹⁰ Osborn, p. 45 (Osborn's italics).

¹¹ Reynolds and Wahlen, p. 195.

¹² Nicholas Miller, "The Ordination of Women in the American Church," (<http://www.adventistarchives.org/nicholas-miller.pdf>), p. 10.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁴ Osborn, p. 21.

¹⁵ A significant contribution to church retention/evangelism would be for a contemporary Adventist thinker to write a book with such a title as *Adventist Insights for Postmodern Consideration*, with perhaps four chapters: (1) You Are Not Just Intelligent, Cosmic Flotsam (Creation), (2) Hope Is an Underrated Christian Virtue (Eschatology), (3) Healthy Is Holy, and (4) Rest Is Sacred (Sabbath).

¹⁶ The significance of this conference of the top administrative, theological, and editorial leaders is underscored by the relatively small world membership at the time—178,239. That is less than the number of members in the single state of California (190,900) in 2013 (<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2014.pdf>).

¹⁷ Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (New York: Viking, 2002), pp. 270–274.

¹⁸ *On The Freedom of the Will* (1839), as translated in *The Philosophy of American History: The Historical Field Theory* (1945) by Morris Zucker, p. 531.

¹⁹ Patricia S. Churchland, *Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells Us About Morality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).

²⁰ *ibid.* Oxytocin functions similarly in human brains, and Churchland indicates that oxytocin has a spillover effect that can extend to other kin, friends, and sometimes strangers.

²¹ Libet attached research subjects to an EEG and asked them to watch a clock's "second hand" to record the instant they had the first inkling to perform an agreed upon act—such as flicking the finger. And he compared the clock-time with the EEG tracings that showed when the brain first registered the unconscious finger flicking activity. Libet's "clock" had a large red dot on the second hand that revolved once in 2.65 seconds, thus providing very accurate measurements. See Benjamin Libet, A. Gleason, E.W. Wright, and D.K. Pearl, "Time of Conscious Intention to Act in Relation to Onset of Cerebral Activities (Readiness Potential): the Unconscious Initiation of a Freely Voluntary Act," *Brain*, Vol. 106, No. 3, 1983), pp. 623–642, and Benjamin Libet, Anthony Freeman, and Keith Sutherland, *The Volitional Brain: Towards Neuroscience of Free Will* (Thorverton, UK: Imprint Academic, 1999).

²² Brandon Keim, "Brain Scanners Can See Your Decisions Before You Make Them," *Wired News*, April 13, 2008.

²³ Sam Harris, *The Moral Landscape* (New York: Free Press, 2011), p. 103. Harris has furthered his argument in his bestseller *Free Will* (New York: Free Press, 2012), a book praised by many and criticized as misguided by even some of Harris' colleagues.

²⁴ Harris, *The Moral Landscape*, p. 104.

²⁵ James W. Walters, Philip Clayton, and Steven Knapp (eds.), *Confronting the Predicament of Belief: The Quest for God in Radical Uncertainty—A Loma Linda Dialogue with Clayton and Knapp* (Edmond, OK: CrowdScribed, 2014), p. 171. Also in this book, Clayton and Knapp write: "The study of emergent complex systems, or what we called *emergence* for short, takes the barb out of the advances of scientific knowledge. If immunology is highly dependent on the unique history and features of a given organism, why would we think that the unique features of what it is to be an individual human being will be eliminated by the study of her brain's prefrontal cortex? Complex biological systems produce emergent properties that are unique to those particular systems and interactions. With the myth of full reduction now dispelled, we can study the amazing correlations across systems without worrying that the emergent properties of our conscious experience will turn out to be 'nothing but' the firing of neurons, chemical reactions, or 'matter in motion,'" p. 166.

²⁶ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Responsible Self, an Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 125 (italics in the original).

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ To drive home his point about an encoded slate, Pinker refers to the well-known phenomenon of identical twins who display similar traits in later life. He cites his favorite example: "the pair of twins, one of whom was brought up as a Catholic in a Nazi family in Germany, the other of whom was brought up by a Jewish father in Trinidad. Nonetheless, when they met each other in the lab in their 40s, both walked in wearing identical navy blue shirts with epaulets. Both of them kept rubber bands around their wrist. Both of them, it turned out on questioning, liked to dip buttered toast in coffee, to flush the toilet before using

it as well as after, and to pretend to sneeze in crowded elevators to watch the other people jump." (Steven Pinker, "The Blank Slate," *The General Psychologist*, Vol. 41, No. 1, Spring 2006, p. 4.)

²⁹ Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature* (Viking Press, 2002), p. 192.

³⁰ Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 167 CE, translated by Gregory Hays (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2003), Book 6, p. 70.

³¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, 1788, translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott (BibliotechPress, 2014), p. 123.

³² W.E. Gladstone (ed.), "Sermons," in *The Works of Joseph Butler* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), Vol. II.

³³ Quoted by Richard W. Schwartz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979), p. 47.

³⁴ *Liberty* magazine has had a circulation as high as 500,000 in its long history.

³⁵ <http://www.adventist.org/en/information/official-statements/guidelines/article/go/0/abortion/>

³⁶ In making this observation about controverted issues in both the New Testament church and Adventist denomination, I am not dealing with the question of whether or not equality of women and circumcision are on the same moral plane. They are *not* morally equivalent! Equality of woman and man is a given, in my moral book. However, that is not how the New Testament writers or the great majority of our 18 million Adventists view the matter, and I'm attempting to deal with world Adventism (reflecting diverse regional attitudes). Gender discrimination is wrong, but so is spousal abuse, racial bias, etc. The New Testament church not only treated women unequally, but it had many other grievous problems; yet Paul pleaded with the sinning saints to be one "in Christ."

³⁷ In contending for a high view of the church, I am making a theological—not an organizational—argument. I personally favor semi-autonomy for the divisions of world Adventism, as was argued for by Raymond F. Cottrell as part of an Association of Adventist Forums task force, and reported by James W. Walters, "The Need for Structural Change," *Spectrum* magazine, October–December 1984.

³⁸ When I was a student colporteur, I was taught practices that I now view as unethical and one that is now illegal. For example, I closed a sale to one mother by showing the contrasting four-color, double-spread pictures at the end of *The Bible Story*, volume 10—one of the glorious second coming, the other of boulders falling on the damned. And immediately after receiving her hundred-dollar check, I'd rush to cash it at her bank before her husband could return home from work and cancel it. My colporteur days came to mind after completing this paper: In making as persuasive case as possible for keeping Adventism together, am I a huckster for my church in the name of Christian unity?

Just as there is a limit to what an abused spouse (Christian or otherwise) should allow, so there is a limit to what Adventist members should tolerate in their church leaders. My understanding is that manipulative, deceitful, and arguably abusive tactics have been used by some in high-level deliberations to intimidate others who would contemplate independent ideas. If the reports of such behaviors are true, they cannot be tolerated. The responsibility for addressing such behavior lies first at the feet of fellow leaders. In addition, church members must be informed via a vital Adventist free press, and they must vehemently protest immoral (to say nothing of unChristian) behavior. In the name of best-practices in government, industry, and the nonprofit sector worldwide (to say nothing of Christian churches), this behavior must be named for what it is and appropriate actions taken. Finally, if after widespread, intense discussion such purported behavior is not seen by the general church as aberrant, but is appreciated due to perhaps different cultural/legal/moral expectations, steps toward organic separation should be taken.



"It Has Seemed Good to the Holy Spirit and to Us"

By Alden Thompson

Are you fearful when you think of the upcoming San Antonio General Conference? If so, a concluding line from the council decision of Acts 15 offers hope: "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28, NRSV). Turmoil in the early church over Jewish-Gentile relations ultimately melted into a beautiful conclusion, testifying to God's power for his waiting people.

Could it happen again? Yes. The clue lies in Jesus' simple response to the disciples' embarrassed query after they had helplessly faced a demon-possessed boy. Earlier they had seen great success (Mark 6:13), but not now. They came to Jesus asking why. He replied: "This kind can come out only through prayer" (Mark 9:29, NRSV).

Cynicism rooted in past examples of "manipulative" prayer must not rob us of a great truth: Personal and communal prayer can make the difference at San Antonio.

Reflections on my own devotional experience have helped to clarify the picture for me. For a long time, personal devotions were a puzzle. Though I was devout, my devotional life was erratic. I had adopted the Big Three, popularized by Morris Venden: pray, study, and share. But, for me, all of that had become merely an external list rather than something from the heart. God was a Scoutmaster with a chart. On any given day, I could keep him happy by completing the Big Three. Then I could leave him behind in my study and get on with life. I didn't really need him anymore. I discovered, however, that sometimes the checklist didn't work; I could miss my devotions and not even miss them. It was embarrassing, discouraging.

If anyone else had described my devotional life like that, I would have been horrified. And I have been deliberately vivid in my description here to make the point. But I also believe that the truth was hidden from me by a kindly Providence until the time was right.

And that time came when I began to see the significance of the diversity in Scripture as matching the diversity in today's church. The result? A transformation. Here's the story.

Three Conversation Partners: Scripture, Reason, and Holy Spirit/Prayer

In my traditional mode, the conversation partners in my devotional experience often quarreled. Three examples follow:

1. Applications. If reason suggested that an inspired passage didn't apply to me, I felt guilty for exalting reason over revelation.

2. Contradictions. Once a contradiction in Scripture appeared on my horizon, the most earnest prayer could not cleanse my mind. Raw willpower could not make it go away. Trying to shout it down only triggered anger and frustration.

3. Holy Spirit/Prayer. Too easily I ended up calling on the Spirit as a last resort. Lost keys? Search the house! Turn it upside down. But as the deadline loomed, we'd finally fall on our knees and pray. Having exhausted all *human* resources, we would turn to the divine. That's better than no prayer at all, but hardly the ideal.

The third example differs in kind from the other two. And we'll come to that. But I found resolution regarding the first two examples thanks to some crucial help from Ellen White. I finally was able to conclude conscientiously—with a certain uneasy jubilation, to be sure—that the problems were actually the solution. Not all inspired passages apply equally to all people. Furthermore, the differences between the Gospels are not just apparent; they are real and often intentional. "Why do we need four Gospel writers instead of just one?" asked Ellen White. Because the minds of people "differ," she answered! Homogenizing the Gospels masks crucial differences between word choices, additions, and deletions.

In that respect, the opening lines of the chapter “In Contact With Others” in *The Ministry of Healing* are astonishing. “Our ways of looking at things vary,” she wrote. “We judge differently. Our understanding of truth, our ideas in regard to the conduct of life, are not in all respects the same.”² A thoughtful church member told me: “If you hadn’t identified Ellen White as the author, I would have said that it came from a postmodern.”

Let’s skip the labels and simply ask if she is right. Any parent with more than one child already knows. As Deborah Tannen put it, “Treating people the same is not equal treatment if they are not the same.”³

Cynicism rooted in past examples of “manipulative” prayer must not rob us of a great truth: Personal and communal prayer can make the difference at San Antonio.

And now let’s turn to the Holy Spirit and prayer, the third example. The key is shifting from mere petitionary prayer to what might be called “purifying prayer,” an echo of the Pauline idea of praying “without ceasing” (Rom. 1:9; 1 Thess. 2:13; 5:17; 2 Tim. 1:3). It’s not words, but attitude. Nothing is so angering or so encouraging as the promise “I’ll be praying for you!” Same words, but radically shaped

by the speaker’s sincerity and tone of voice. If we are honestly inviting the Spirit to purify our thoughts, we will reflect his will, not merely our own. Reason is essential, but it must be “sanctified,” the result of purifying prayer. In the words of Ellen White, “Take counsel of sanctified reason, surrendered wholly to God.”⁴

If not all parts of Scripture apply equally to all people, it should also be clear that Scripture does not automatically apply itself in our daily lives. Examples do not simply jump from my Bible into my life or into this column. The examples in Scripture are waiting for application. That’s the work of “sanctified reason.” But sanctification and purification are the work of the Holy Spirit, invited by unceasing prayer.

Joyfully, my conversation partners never quarrel anymore. “Inspired” writings provide the cases or examples; reason decides what to do with them; the Spirit, invited by prayer, purifies our reason. And I now know that contact with God is essential for daily living. Every class, every student, every article is a call to prayer. I now no longer leave the Scoutmaster behind in my study. Through prayer, he is my constant companion as I face the challenges of each day.

Finally, after I have done my personal homework, I am ready to join my brothers and sisters to ponder the work of the church. So we come together as the apostles did in Acts 15. We, too, will make important decisions when “it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” (Acts 15:28, NRSV).

At San Antonio, the Lord could send a vision to make it happen, just as he did with Peter in Acts 10. After all, it is his church, not ours.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913), p. 432.

² White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905), p. 483.

³ Deborah Tannen, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Vol. 37, No. 40, June 19, 1991, p. B3.

⁴ White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1902), p. 214.

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8. Dedicated leaders continue contributing even after they are no longer in charge.

What would an emotionally wounded A.G. Daniells do next? There was never a doubt in his mind. He got up the next morning and went to work, now as GC secretary under W.A. Spicer. It was always about the mission. Personal disappointments must be put away.

But this was by no means the end of Daniells' contributions to Adventism. Perhaps his greatest post-presidential contribution to the denomination lay in heading its Ministerial Association (created at the contentious 1922 General Conference Session). With Daniells newly free of the presidency, he devoted himself to helping full-time, professional ministers upgrade their skills. The office of ministerial secretary, which most Seventh-day Adventist conferences established as part of their administrative structure, was one fruit of his labors.

This effort was coincident with full embrace of the 1888 message on righteousness by faith. Daniells intensively studied Ellen White's writings from that era and concluded that her message then must be the church's now. It is probably accurate to say that Daniells himself enjoyed a spiritual revival, impelling him to devote his energies to ensuring that Adventist ministers partook of that assurance of salvation. His 1926 book *Christ Our Righteousness* (largely a compilation of Ellen White writings) became highly influential and widely used as a text, and it is still in print.

A.G. Daniells retired in 1931, but he had one additional book left in him. Accusations that he had questioned Ellen White's inspiration surely rankled. He did not want that cloud to shadow his

legacy. Thus, in the years before his death in 1935, he penned *The Abiding Gift of Prophecy* (which was published after his death). In best Adventist fashion, he traces the long history of God's work through various prophetic figures, describing how the gift was driven underground during the Middle Ages, enjoyed a more open flourishing during the Reformation, and finally found its manifestation in Ellen White. The book becomes a very personal work in its final chapters, as Daniells recounts the ways White aided him and served the church. No one reading it, Daniells must have thought, could ever again question his loyalty.

Just weeks before he died, Daniells mustered the strength to compose a final charge to his colleagues in the Adventist ministry. Those men upon whom God placed such responsibility remained his greatest preoccupation. "I speak to the aged; I address those in the prime of life; and I speak to the young," he wrote. "God calls for spiritual revival and a spiritual reformation in our ranks, and this must come through a truly spiritual ministry." Daniells told how some years earlier God had given him this burden. "It changed my own life and vision," he testified.

A.G. Daniells will always be known best as an administrator, a presider over committees—in modern parlance, a "suit." But better yet, he ought to be remembered as an individual of passion. It was, after all, his passion for the gospel that kept him calling those committees day after day. 📖

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¹ Ellen G. White, Manuscript 8a, 1888, published in *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), p. 140.

² Letter from A.G. Daniells to W.C. White, July 1, 1901.

³ Letter from A.G. Daniells to W.A. Spicer, Oct. 9, 1917.

⁴ "Report on Question-box Service on the Subject of the Spirit of Prophecy, Aug. 28, 1906.

⁵ E.G. White Letter 208, 1902, quoted by A.G. Daniells, *Abiding Gift of Prophecy*, p. 327.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 328.

⁷ Arthur Grosvenor Daniells, *Abiding Gift of Prophecy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1936), pp. 326-329. Online at <http://www.whiteestate.org/books/agp/AGPTOC.HTML>

⁸ Letter from W.C. White to A.G. Daniells, June 20, 1910.

⁹ Letter from A.G. Daniells to W.C. White, July 4, 1910.

¹⁰ Letter from E.G. White to A.G. Daniells, March 29, 1908.

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² Letter from A.G. Daniells to W.C. White, July 17, 1908.

¹³ J.S. Washburn, "An Open Letter to Elder A.G. Daniells and an Appeal to the General Conference," 1921.

¹⁴ Letter from "Dan" [D.A. Parsons] to B.E. Beddoe, Sept. 5, 1924.

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EDITORIAL PHILOSOPHY

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the editorial board. One of the purposes of this magazine is to encourage dialogue between those of differing viewpoints within the Adventist Church. Thus, we will publish articles ranging throughout the conservative-liberal continuum.



Adventist Man

A SATIRICAL LOOK AT ADVENTIST LIFE

Iggy's Great Idea

A year and a half ago in this column, I mentioned that our gothic *Adventist Today* building—like every other eminent Seventh-day Adventist institution—is infested with Jesuits. These furtive young men in robes expertly dart into secret doors whenever we catch sight of them. Their only recreation seems to be playing table tennis in our break room, and the other day I cornered one by getting between him and his trapdoor. I asked him his name, but he refused to tell me.

"Okay, I'll call you Iggy," I said.

"Why Iggy?"

"After Ignatius Loyola. Pull up that chair, and I'll make you a cup of cocoa." I went over to the snack bar and ripped open a couple of packets of Swiss Miss. While I stirred them into the hot water, I glanced over my shoulder.

"Still here, Iggy?" I asked. "How come you didn't vanish?"

"I'm here because you Adventists need help."

"Yeah?" I walked over and handed him a steaming cup, then sat down across the table from him. "Like we're gonna seek help from the Jesuits."

He took a sip. "No, I'm serious. You guys need a pope."

"Get real, Iggy. We're not into infallibility."

"Who said anything about infallibility?" Iggy picked up his papal-crested Ping-Pong paddle and tapped its edge on the table to emphasize his remarks. "When did Francis ever utter anything and claim it was infallible?"

"So what's your point, then?"

"You Adventists need a father figure," Iggy insisted, sipping some more cocoa. "Somebody who will travel around the world gathering crowds of people, dispensing goodwill and sage wisdom to governmental leaders, kissing babies. Generating a lot of media interest."

"We've already got a General Conference president and a GC Executive Committee."

"They're *suits*," he said flatly. "How can a platoon of black suits stir up any emotion? You need a father figure, not a CEO."

I mused a moment, then took a sip of cocoa. "Know what, Iggy? Maybe you're right."

"You need a pope," he repeated.

"Not a *pope*," I said, my eyes afire with sudden inspiration. "We need a *dad*! A *Pop*!" I drained my cocoa cup, scarcely mindful of the scalding pain, and leaped to my feet. "Iggy, you're onto something! We'll elect someone as The Pop!"

"And he'll have to be dressed properly," Iggy said. "Not in a black suit."

"A *robe*," I said. "And not one of your flashy, jewel-encrusted ermines, but a *bathrobe*, like dads used to wear while watching TV. And bedroom slippers."

"And some kind of a hat."

"None of your tiaras, Iggy," I said firmly. "And no little beanie skullcap." I thought for a moment. "A baseball cap."

"With a three angels logo on the front?"

"Iggy, you're a genius. What else?"

"The Pop will need something for people to kiss when he gives them an audience."

"Rings are taboo," I said. "How about his TV remote? The Pop can hold it out, and people can kiss that. And wouldn't he need a vehicle to get around in?"

Iggy shook his head. "Not good for the carbon footprint. Go back to the old sedan chair, where several men carry him around."

"Cut it out," I snapped. "You keep trying to ensnare us back into your papal coils. No sedan chair. We'll get The Pop a La-Z-Boy recliner."

"But how will he travel to other parts of the globe?"

"Google Earth and Skype," I said. "He'll never have to leave his living room."

"Something's still bothering me," Iggy said. "What if the lining of his baseball cap scratches his bald spot?"

"Simple," I replied. "We'll get somebody to cut out a little decorative circle of woven cloth and rubber-cement it to the inside of the top."

Iggy grabbed for a napkin. "Let me borrow your pencil. Here's what we'll write on that little circle of woven cloth, right inside his cap." He carefully hand-printed for a few seconds, then pushed the napkin over to me.

"VISCOUS FRILLY DOILY," I read aloud.

"Exactly," he said. "And the Roman numerals add up to something in the 800s rather than 666!"

"Good job, Iggy! No more six abuse!"

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