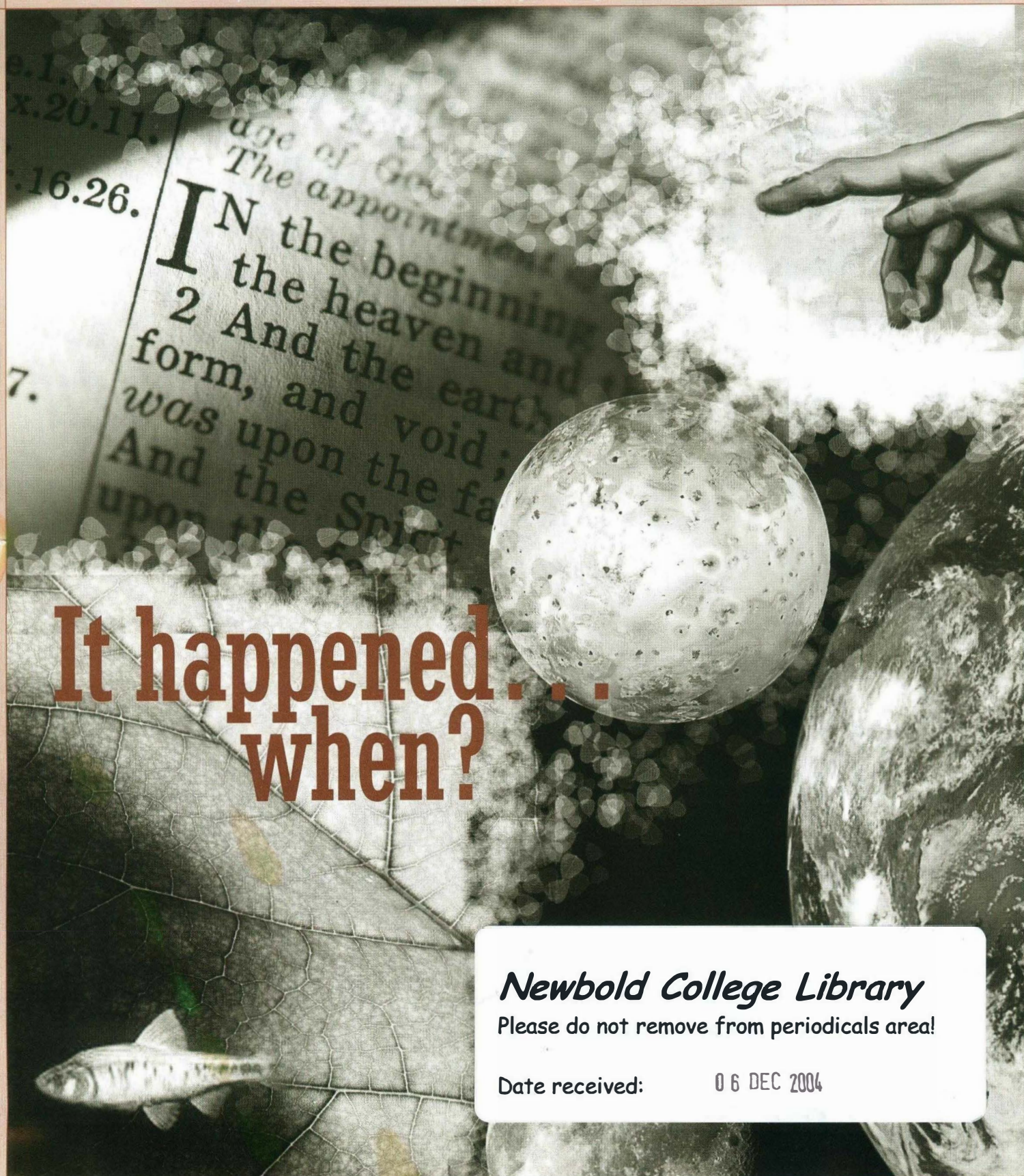


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ANALYSIS
OPINION

volume twelve | number four | july, august 2004



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I Don't Believe a Word of It

JOHN MCLARTY

We occasionally receive very nice e-mails. "You're doing a vital work. Keep it up." "Your journal is a refreshing voice in the church. Every leader should read it." "Adventist Today has given me new hope for the church. Its honesty and openness should serve as a model for the larger church." "I enjoy the blend of intellectual stimulation and open confession of faith I find in the pages of AT. It offers a picture of the kind of Adventism I can recommend to my friends and pass on to my children and grandchildren."

I treasure these compliments. I savor this kind of nice mail. But I don't believe a word of it.

That is, I don't "believe" in the biblical sense of putting my weight on them, ordering my life according to them. I don't bank on them because words, even nice words, are cheap. What I believe is money, freshly autographed sheets of paper with lots of zeroes on them. Because, to paraphrase Jesus, "You put your money where your heart is." People who believe in the work of *Adventist Today* put money into it. (Thank you to our many contributors!)

Obviously, if you are a subscriber, you've already made a significant statement. For many of our readers who are students or retirees on limited incomes, just the cost of a subscription is prohibitive. But the price of a subscription pays only about half of what it actually costs to produce the journal. So we depend on contributions to make up the difference. And we dream of contributions that will empower us to do more than print a journal and maintain a web site. (See note about our web site on the next page.) Progressive Adventism needs to sponsor conferences around the world to share the distinct perspectives of Progressive Adventism.

We are dreaming of a few additional patrons. People with tens of thousands of dollars available who want to make a difference in the future shape of the Adventist church. Several have recently stepped forward. But we need more

patrons. Patrons who can match the \$10,000 to \$25,000 gifts that *Adventist Today* has received in the recent past. Jeremiah's ministry depended on the patronage of several generations of a family in the nobility, the family of Shaphan. Elijah's friends were protected from the tyranny of Ahab by Obadiah, a member of the royal court. The early church benefited from the wealth and status of Nicodemus. Martin Luther was saved by the intervention of Frederick of Saxony. Progressive Adventism needs patrons in our day.

Adventist Today is a source of unfettered information within the Adventist community. We don't always get it right, of course. But we aim to provide factual, balanced reporting on events, issues and people of interest to Adventists. We serve as a platform for new ideas and for young Adventist

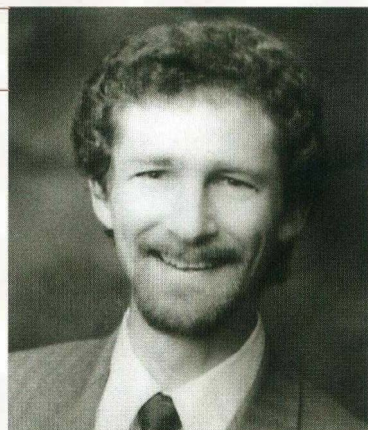
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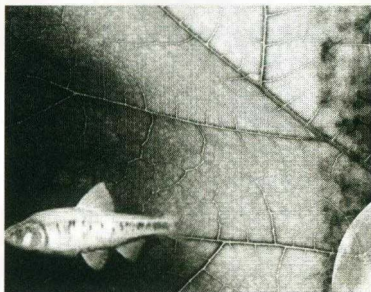
thinkers as they struggle to put their faith and life into words. We work to foster a vital, rich spirituality among Progressive Adventists. We want to help people work their way beyond their obsessions with the inevitable failures of Adventism as a human system to treasuring and advocating the best of Adventism as a divine creation.

But all of this takes money. We very much appreciate the hundreds of gifts of \$50, \$100, and \$500. But we also need the partnership of people who can give \$1,000, 5,000 or even \$25,000 or more. These kinds of gifts can make a quantum difference in the quality and impact of *Adventist Today*.

So if you have a compliment, send it along. I'll savor it. But if you send money, I'll believe it.

If you would like to talk to us about a major gift to *Adventist Today* give us a call at 1-800-236-3641. We'll be happy to outline some of our special needs or listen to your dreams about how we can help our church be more effective and our readers more joyous in God's service. □





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Living With Ambiguity

Some personalities (usually theologians) are comfortable enough and can live with ambiguity and uncertainty (AT May/June 2004) while others want or need "Assurance." I can accept "We don't know for sure," or cannot prove. Why not simply admit it in preambles and statements of beliefs? I can even say, "This is our explanation...our theory" that we choose to believe.

Robert Lee Marsh, M.D. | Via the Internet

Experts and Untried Schemes

I appreciate *Adventist Today* and have been a subscriber almost since the beginning. I especially appreciated your editorial in the March /April edition which I just received. I too get very tired of "experts" who sit in an office and dream up untried schemes and then try to tell me what to do. I make my living selling concrete forming systems. In 2000, after 33 years of full-time ministry, I retired but still pastor on a volunteer basis the group at Elm Haven Fellowship.

John R. Martin | Littleton, Colo.

Trust the Bible

I picked up a copy of *Adventist Today* (March/April 2004) and was struck by your editorial, "Earning the Right to Speak." I could not agree with you more. Your advice about listening to lectures (that includes sermons) needs to be on the basis of right, truth, and demonstration. (We can be reminded of the Jewish questioning of Christ, by whose authority do you do and say these things?) It seems to me that almost everyone wants to "influence" others in some way or form these days. The only way I know of to check out these things is by the Word of God (Scripture) in any and preferably all translations. Yet extremely few desire to read and study the Bible; at least in the way that has, many times, been suggested by a very trustworthy author. Read from start to finish and relate all its parts to the central theme, which is "salvation"...not only of man but of the universe.

Gene Schroeder | Sequim, Wash.

Faith and Science Concluding Report (by E-mail)

I just read your "first world" preview of the 2004 International Faith and Science Conference put out by *Adventist Today* (AT May/June 2004). Not only do your pseudoscientific opinions of origins and the flood prove that the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures is not with you but more importantly, your bigoted comments regarding the "uneducated converts" of the third world show me that you have "professional" pride and lack perspective on the realities of spiritual things. I guess Jesus' obvious recognition of the biblical accounts of creation and flood would categorize Him as third world, unenlightened, and nonscientific, too. You cry for diversity, yet you demean

and criticize those who disagree with you publicly. Your ilk represent the worst form of bigotry in the church yet.

Owen Bandy, Pastor | Calistoga, Calif.

Thanks for the Reports

Abundant thanks to John McLarty and Ervin Taylor for the reports (e-mail) on the 2004 International Faith and Science Conference and to Ms. [Sadek] for sending them. It was great to find out what was happening without having to wait. I'm curious whether the attendees were able to agree on the approval of any summary statement at the close of the event.

Robert Visser | Via the Internet

Evenhanded Reporting

Your reporting has been evenhanded. May the continued conversations become a collegial habit. Nobody gains by closing off honest discussion. Was puzzled by the reference to Galileo which I found to be a flawed analogy. The Bible never taught that the earth was either flat or the center of the universe/solar tradition rested on such novelties. Galileo was not contesting biblical thought but Catholic tradition. Or have I missed something?

Herbert E. Douglass | Lincoln, Calif.

The Gospel of Mary found?

Ron Corson wrote an interesting article on the best-selling book, "The DaVinci Code" in the January-February issue of *Adventist Today*. In the article, he states the "Gospel of Mary" was discovered in the Nag Hammadi scrolls, which were found in Egypt in 1945. I believe additional research will reveal that the first manuscript of said Gospel became known, in modern times, in 1896 when purchased by a Dr. Carl Reinhardt in Cairo. This was a Coptic fragment of the gospel. One or two older fragments in Greek script were found in Egypt in 1917.

The Nag Hammadi library, discovered in 1945, did not reveal any new copies of the Gospel of Mary.

John Hughes | Fresno, Calif.

Goldstein's Fundamental Views

As a reader of *Adventist Review* as well as *Adventist Today*, regardless of Erv Taylor's statement to the contrary (AT Sept/Oct 2003), I do instinctively (and biblically) second Brother Goldstein's fundamental views. In these theological wars (I prefer discussions), there will be winners! Regardless of the wise among us with their insights and protestations, I choose the Bible. The Scriptures are God-breathed for us (2 Timothy 3:16). Jesus rebuked the Jews for setting aside the authority of the Scriptures (Mark 7:7-9). Jesus said the Scriptures testified of Him and if the church believed in Moses, it should believe in Jesus, for Moses wrote about Him (John 5:39,46). Finally, to this country boy from Michigan, instruction from Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:18-20 is priceless: "Do not deceive your-

selves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a 'fool' so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: 'He catches the wise in their craftiness' and again, 'The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.'" I like Brother Goldstein's credentials: The Word of God!

Richard Lane | Livonia, Mich.

Linda Shelton and the 3ABN

The articles about 3ABN (AT May/June 2004) mentioned the dismissal of Mrs. Shelton. I had been in contact with them via mail. I made an inquiry about their financial status and received a reply that was indicative that he [Dan] was above board and not a profiteer. Further questioning about Mrs. Shelton and her net worth was not answered. These questions are not irrelevant. What will be the source of her livelihood?

Paul W. Jackson, M.D. | Wallingford, Penn.

The Church Needs Its Scientists

Thank you for reporting on the Faith and Science Conference and for making that report so readily accessible. I am one of those Adventist biology teachers who must try to balance the opposing conclusions based on evidence and tradition. My integrity as a scientist is in constant struggle with my desire for belonging to the community of believers. Therefore, this has long been a painful quest. When I read your quote of Jan Paulsen, "The church needs you. Please do not walk away," I sobbed. I thought that I had put it all in perspective, but the constant awareness that I could lose my job and position as a youth leader in the church because of honest inquiry apparently does take its toll. Thank you for your courage in speaking honestly. [My honest inquiry] carries with it the responsibility of not destroying the faith of my students that may be built more on evangelistic rhetoric than on a relationship with God. I have not yet found the most effective way of dealing with this volcanic issue but continue to modify day by day.

Gail Redberg | Walla Walla, Wash.

Ellen White's Hermeneutic

In her discussion of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Ellen White demonstrates a hermeneutical approach to passages with theological content at odds with the rest of Scripture.

"In this parable Christ was meeting the people on their own ground. The doctrine of a conscious state of existence between death and the resurrection was held by many of those who were listening to Christ's words. The Saviour knew of their ideas, and He framed his parable so as to inculcate important truths through these preconceived opinions. He held up before His hearers a mirror wherein they might see themselves in their true relation to God. He used the prevailing opinion to convey the idea

He wished to make prominent to all—that no man is valued for his possessions, for all he has belongs to him only as lent by the Lord" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 263).

This hermeneutic could have an interesting application to the first chapters of Genesis. Can it apply to theological content at odds with scientific thought?

The main idea in the first two chapters of Genesis is that God created. We are creatures, stewards, subject to the laws of God's universe. God is qualified to redeem and restore his creation.

Certainly, an omnipotent God is sufficiently powerful to create our universe in seven 24-hour days by fiat. But this belief is not necessary to my faith. God's act of creation could have entailed another process entirely, working with physical and biological laws that I do not yet have the capacity to understand. Eternity will be a great adventure in learning! God has equipped us to begin learning now, just as an appetizer.

Meanwhile, I am grateful for the message of the first 11 chapters of Genesis. As we're scratching our heads over the "nuts and bolts," God is probably chuckling. The message of God's creation cuts to our hearts, humbling our humanistic pride with news that we are creatures in an orderly universe of Divine design. The story of creation also ennobles us, reminding us that, male and female, we are made in the image of God. This is "the backstory" to Calvary, explaining why we are worth redeeming. It also adds the weight of motive and right to some of Jesus' last words: "I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

Jerilyn Webb Burtch | Palmer, Alaska

Letters Policy

Adventist Today welcomes letters to the editor. Short, timely letters that relate to articles appearing in the journal have the best chance at being published.

We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. In publishing letters, AT does not necessarily endorse the views represented, but believes in giving voice to differing viewpoints. We prefer messages sent on the Internet, addressed to atoday@atoday.com. Please include your complete address and telephone number—even with e-mail messages. Send postal correspondence to

Letters to the Editor, Adventist Today, P.O. Box 8026, Riverside, CA 92515-8026.

August 17, 2004

Don C. Schneider, President
North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church
1251 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, Maryland 20904

Mr. President:

I read with profound interest your letter addressed to conference presidents of the North American Division (NAD) that is being widely circulated on the internet. Although I am not an intended recipient I want to share with you some observations.

Your Letter Did Not Reassure Me

Your letter leads me to conclude that you believe all is well with the way things are going in North America. I, and thousands of other loyal denominational employees, are very uncomfortable with this stance. Your letter and the responses I have received via e-mail cause me to conclude our leadership is either out of touch or in deep denial.

I was hoping, after decades of discussion and debate, that the NAD leadership would have a meaningful response to the announcement by Ron Gladden and others that they have created an alternative system of governance to carry out our mission and doctrinal message. Unfortunately, it appears you and others in leadership are reacting to Ron as a person—not to the structural issues in our system that this new organization is providing a thoughtful, albeit experimental, solution to.

I appreciate that you provided in your letter the web address to the new organization (www.missioncatalyst.org) so I could learn firsthand what Mission Catalyst is proposing. This will help minimize wild rumors.

Annual Membership Growth in North America is Meager and Expensive

In 1863, when our denomination was founded in North America, the ratio of Seventh-day Adventists to non-Seventh-day Adventists in the world was 1 to 373,143.¹ Since our incorporation there has been explosive worldwide growth in membership and as of 2002 North America accounts for only 7.5 percent of the worldwide membership. However, it continues to provide more than 60 percent of the financial support for the world church's activities.

Our understanding of the gospel, as is summarized in the 27 Fundamental Doctrines of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination, is embraced with extraordinary vigor in many geographic regions of the world. In many regions, membership in the denomination is rapidly increasing. But there is an entirely different rate of acceptance in regions and/or in people groups that are on the leading edge of materialism, secularism, and the postmodern worldview.

This is illustrated in the following table that shows the ratio of Seventh-day Adventists to non-Adventists in different geographic regions (2002 data).

Ratio of SDAs to Non-SDAs by Geographic Region²	
Geographic Region	SDAs to non-SDAs
World	1 to 482
Mid-America Union	1 to 422
Minnesota Conference	1 to 794
My District	1 to 1,492

Communist Cuba has a ratio of 1 to 490; Bulgaria and Romania, which were both recently communist, have ratios of 1 to 1,012 and 1 to 309, respectively. African countries such as Kenya and Zambia have ratios of 1 to 50 and 1 to 24, respectively. These membership ratios stand in sharp contrast to the north-central suburbs of Minneapolis-St. Paul, where I am a pastor. Based upon membership ratios, where in our world is the mission field?

In the Mid-America Union Conference, annual growth in membership hovers around 2 percent. In 2003, there was a net increase in membership of only 465 people.³ To put this into perspective, there were 58,546 members who assemble in 519 different churches and companies.⁴ This means it took the collective labor of 126 members to increase membership by one. Or, expressed another way, each congregation only added 0.89 people to their membership.

Or, stated another way, in the Mid-America Union Conference, during 2002, there were 303 pastors employed on a full-time equivalent (FTE) basis.⁵ Assume for a moment each pastor earned \$65,000 annually (which includes a fully loaded benefits

Editor's Note: The following letter was written by pastor Jerry Holt to Don Schneider, president of the North American Division, in response to a letter Elder Schneider sent to church leaders across North America after Ron Gladden announced the launch of Mission Catalyst. The letter has been slightly edited for publication.

package). This represents an annual investment of \$19.7 million dollars. If these pastors were single-handedly responsible for the increase of the 465 members—and no other funds for evangelism were expended—the cost for each person added to Mid-American Union's membership would be approximately \$42,355.

Education, not Evangelism, is our Primary Focus

In North America, the majority of all baptisms are children born to parents who are members of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. This is biologic growth—not growth from new converts to Adventism or more importantly to Christianity (kingdom growth). Many members believe if we do not educate our children in Seventh-day Adventists schools they will leave the church. To this end, for more than 40 years in North America, we have collectively invested more in educating the children of our members than we have invested in public evangelism or in pastors who are not involved in administration and education.

For example, in the Mid-America Union, during 2002 in addition to the 303 FTEs employed as pastors (employed at the local, conference, and union levels) there were 630 FTEs employed at primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools operated by the conferences.⁶ These FTEs do not include people employed in the four non-conference operated day academies. This ratio of people employed in the pastorate and educational system is consistent throughout the North American Division.

Based on financial reports and actual practice, a person may fairly ask if the North American Division is in reality an educational system that employs some pastors—or an assembly of believers who is commissioned by the incarnate God to passionately proclaim the Good News to people who are going to hell unless they reconnect to the Author of Life? Another important question: Does the allocation of financial and time resources demonstrate the denomination is primarily focused inwardly toward our needs and the needs of our children—or primarily focused outwardly toward others and their eternal redemption?

We must also consider that the total enrollment in conference-operated schools in Mid-America is 4,031 students, which represents only 14 percent of total membership. This equates to an educational employee to student ratio of 1 to 6.⁷ Yet, in spite of this impressive ratio and massive financial investment we have failed to retain the majority of at least two generations of children who were born to Seventh-day Adventist parents. In addition, we have made little numerical impact on non-Adventist youth.

Jesus said, we can tell where our heart is by looking to see where our treasure is.⁸ When I follow the money in our Annual Statistical Reports it certainly appears to me our treasure is in our educational system and institutions, not in evangelism.

Conclusion

The above referenced examples are not the sum total of what is not going well in the North American Division. But, they are two very major issues and concerns among thousands of employees—and more importantly among a very significant number of members who return an honest tithe. Mission Catalyst, which is best characterized as a network of like-minded independent congregations, is merely suggesting a solution. It may be a disastrous solution, but for many people who have waited decades for reform, they are ready to experiment with any alternative.

Our failure to honestly address the underlying issues and to rapidly implement change will only provide a breeding ground for numerous congregations to move beyond our present system of governance and to explore other alternatives. Those who do so are only trying to find something that is more effective than what they believe presently exists.

Most respectfully,

Pastor, Jerry Lee Holt

The Edge Christian Worship Center, Minnesota Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

¹ The ratio is calculated by dividing total population by total membership. Source: www.adventistarchives.org/doc/stats/ratiosofsdaworldpop.pdf.

² 140th Annual Statistical Report—2002, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. www.adventistarchives.org/docs/asr/asr2002.pdf.

³ 2003 First and Fourth Quarter Secretary's Statistical Report by Division, Office of Archives, General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists.

⁴ Ibid, 2003 Secretary's Statistical Report.

⁵ This includes all non-retired: ordained, credentialed commissioned, licensed, and licensed commissioned ministers. Source: 140th Annual Statistical Report—2002, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics, page 44. www.adventistarchives.org/docs/asr/asr2002.pdf.

⁶ The written data contained in this paragraph was orally reviewed and confirmed by

Kathleen Jones (301-680-5028) who is responsible for preparing the statistics in the 140th Annual Statistical Report—2002. Included in the pastors' FTEs are people who serve full time as youth pastors, Bible teachers, college chaplains, and some school principals. Many pastors also invest time on school governing boards. Employees who work in secondary schools that are not conference-operated are not included in the education FTEs. The Mid-America Union has four day academies: SDA Schools of Lincoln, Midland Adventist Academy, Minnetonka Christian Academy, Mile High Adventist Academy. www.adventistarchives.org/docs/asr/asr2002.pdf.

⁷ Source: 140th Annual Statistical Report—2002, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Office of Archives and Statistics. www.adventistarchives.org/docs/asr/asr2002.pdf.

⁸ Matthew 6:21.

Three Angels Broadcasting Responds to Schwisow

WALTER THOMPSON

The story by Edwin Schwisow regarding Linda Shelton's recent termination from Three Angels Broadcasting contains a number of basic factual inaccuracies. Even more troubling, given that *Adventist Today* holds itself out as a Christian, Adventist publication, is the highly misleading slant the article gives to the events by its reliance on "reports" and "sources" from only one side of the matter. It seems that no one currently from Three Angels was spoken to regarding the claims of this story prior to its being sent to the printer.

As chairman of the board, I was involved with this matter early on, and led the independent fact-finding committee that investigated it. We sought intensely for reconciliation, but ultimately we were forced to recommend the termination of Mrs. Shelton from Three Angels. I list below the most troubling aspects of Mr. Schwisow's story.

1 The story of Danny and Linda's separation and divorce is a deeply personal, very sad event that has caused deep pain to all involved. To characterize the event as a "move that consolidates Danny Shelton" at Three Angels' helm and as a sort of "coup," as the article claims, is untrue and even offensive to those of us involved in the decision. For the president of a religious ministry to engineer or pursue a divorce to enhance his standing or position at the ministry would be very foolish. Such an extraordinary claim would require extraordinary evidence to support it. Your author has not even ordinary evidence to support it, but is merely engaged in a cynical kind of speculation.

Danny is still the president of Three Angels, and has the full confidence of the board. But these events have caused Three Angels leadership to recognize that Danny needs greater assistance and support in carrying out that role, and the board chairman and others have become more involved in oversight activities. One example is a recently appointed manager of operations to assist Danny in his responsibilities.

2 Mr. Schwisow's attempts to support his "theory" of the meaning of the events at Three Angels by a number of references to claims made by "sources close to Linda Shelton." While he would no doubt deny that he is according these claims the status of "facts," he uses them as though they were. To print and repeat allegations from one side of the story, without acknowledging the views and claims presented by the other side, is to accord the former an unchallenged and privileged status usually accorded only to verified facts.

Anyone who considers the recent events at Three Angels as a "coup" or a "coup-in-the-works" is sadly misinformed and ignorant of the multiple efforts made over several months by Christian leaders to bring reconciliation to both Danny and Linda and to Linda and Three Angels. The list includes Danny and Linda's local pastor; meetings with professional

Christian counselors; meetings with myself as board chairman; a review of the facts and further meetings and attempts at reconciliation by an investigative committee made up of Bill Hulse, an Adventist layman and mayor of Collegedale; Dr. Kay Kuzma, Adventist family expert and author; Nicholas Miller, an Adventist attorney from a national law firm; and myself. Only after multiple efforts by these persons to achieve reconciliation failed was the matter reluctantly taken to the board for final resolution. This sequence of events is no secret. Three Angels described these efforts to its supporters in a letter sent out earlier last summer. Since then, Pastor Mark Finley has made further attempts at reconciliation, all to no avail.

3 Likewise, the printing of claims regarding Linda's relationship with the Norwegian physician to be solely about her son's treatment is to promote a story which the facts do not support. Without going into detail, we have solid evidence that, prior to her divorce and termination, Linda spent considerable time with this physician, both on the telephone and in person, in a manner inappropriate for a leader of a Christian ministry, or for any married woman for that matter. These contacts, inappropriate in their length, subject matter, and subterfuge, continued despite requests by both Danny and other Three Angels leadership that they cease. It is also clear, even by Linda's own admission, that the vast majority of these interactions had nothing to do with medical treatments for her son. In the short time since her divorce, Linda has traveled to Europe twice for nearly five weeks to spend time with this physician. These recent trips, which were taken without her son, have caused many of Linda's formerly die-hard supporters to recognize the truth of the matter of Linda's inappropriate relationship, and to cease their efforts in defending her.

4 The claim that Melody Shelton has begun to regularly appear as co-host is untrue. Melody sings from time to time on Three Angels, but has never co-hosted a program, and tries to avoid public speaking. The truth is that a variety of people have been assisting Danny with hosting responsibilities, and even hosting programs on their own. Of necessity, others are playing roles that Linda has played at Three Angels, but no one has "replaced" Linda. It is doubtful in my opinion that anyone ever will or can replace her unique combination of gifts.

5 Mr. Schwisow cannot seem to decide if the Shelton's unfortunate split is an effort calculated to revive a flagging ministry, as he suggests in paragraph 11, or a grave disruption that will harm Three Angels' prospects over the coming year, as in paragraph 12. Fortunately, neither theory or projection is true. These unfortunate events, which have been strongly resisted rather than cultivated, have caused both the leadership and supporters of Three Angels to draw together in

prayer and support for the ministry. We have chosen to view these events with the eye of faith, looking for the opportunity the Lord always brings at a time of crisis. Due to this, Three Angels has significantly expanded, nearly doubled, its potential viewers, and financial support is well ahead of where it was last year at this time. Your author's prediction of a "less-than-banner-year," whether he meant number of viewers or financial support, is not supported by the facts.

In my view, this article is far from being simple news story that recites the facts in a fair and balanced fashion. Rather, it is a story with an agenda. I am not opposed to a story with an agenda, when it is not presented as a news story, when there has been a careful review of both sides of the matter, and where the author is quite certain of his or her facts. Such

is not the case here. Rather, a few facts have been mixed in with a number of allegations from one side of the story, and then it has been stirred together with an anti-Danny Shelton, anti-Three Angels slant.

I am in favor of a church of greater openness. Events, good and bad, at times need to be aired and reported on. But it is an axiom of Christian charity that we should seek to put the most reasonably positive construction on events rather than the most negative. Mr. Schwisow's story fails on this most fundamental and elemental of tests. We hope that *Adventist Today* will hold future stories regarding Three Angels and other Christian ministries and leaders to a higher standard.

*Walter Thompson, M.D., Chairman of the Board
Three Angels Broadcasting Network, Inc.*

Para-Church Ministry for Church Planting

JOHN MCLARTY

On Aug. 7, 2004, Ron Gladden announced publicly the launch of a para-church ministry called Mission Catalyst (MC). Mission Catalyst is a ministry devoted solely to planting congregations that will be focused on evangelism and growth. According to documents available on their web site, missioncatalyst.org, in addition to their evangelistic orientation, these congregations will be required to certify annually their adherence to a statement of beliefs which reads like a popularized, condensed version of the official Adventist 27 fundamental beliefs. Congregations will be required to send 10 percent of their regular income to the Mission Catalyst headquarters. Mission Catalyst pledges to use a majority of these funds to help fund future church plants. Congregations will be required to participate in a mission project at least 100 miles from their primary location.

Gladden met with Don Schneider, president of the North American Division (NAD), on Aug. 7 to inform him of the launch of the ministry and to explore the possibility of forming a working relationship with the denomination. So far no mutually acceptable protocol has been developed.

In a letter sent to conference presidents in North America, Elder Schneider wrote that he was saddened that Gladden could not work within the church system. He said he appealed again to Gladden on Monday after their Saturday night meeting, asking him to reconsider and to take down his web site announcing the new ministry. Gladden declined.

Gladden has been promoting church planting within the Adventist church for more than 10 years. Before his position was terminated in the spring of this year, the cost of his salary was shared by the Mid-America and North Pacific unions with some additional support from the NAD. When the unions decided to cut funding for Gladden's position, the North Pacific Union initially offered Gladden free office space if he would raise his own salary and expenses.

According to Gladden, his decision to launch Mission Catalyst is driven by his passion for lost souls. He sees the church as being hopelessly weighed down with an antiquated system that consumes far too much of the available resources. He argues that in North America, at least, the church is not structured for growth. We do not staff congregations for growth. And Gladden is passionate about church growth.

In contrast, Elder Schneider writes that since the NAD began the SEEDS conferences to promote church planting and growth, the denomination has "planted about 1,000 congregations, most of which are still healthy and growing." Elder Schneider wrote further that the Adventist church is growing in North America, having reached approximately one million members. He offered the following information.

Year	Tithe	Members	Churches
1984	\$303,981,068	676,204	4,241
2004*	\$748,996,026	998,450	5,652

*2004 figures may include an estimate for the final six months of the year.

These numbers are incontrovertible evidence of a measure of success. Measured in terms of membership, number of congregations and income, the church in North America has grown over the past 20 years. The apparent growth in number of congregations, however, is inflated. According to official statistics, there were 4,609 churches in NAD in 1993 (10 years ago), 4,706 in 1996 (when SEEDS started), and 5,024 today. (The number cited in the chart above, 5,652, includes companies that were not included in the figures for 1993 or 1996.) That means there has been a net increase of 318 churches in the NAD since SEEDS began and a net increase of 415 in 10 years.

During that time some long-established congregations have gone extinct. The exact number is not known, but is probably very small. Of the 318 net increase in congregations in North America many observers believe that most can be accounted for in the number of new congregations composed of first-generation immigrants.

Another question in connection with the apparent church growth described in the chart is the difference between membership and attendance or active participation in church. Very few Adventist congregations experience

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Faith & Science Conference

ELWIN DUNN

The final Faith and Science conference sponsored by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists met in the mile-high city of Denver during the week of Aug. 20 to 26. The official invitees were primarily church administrators and theologians and scientists working in Adventist schools. Other participants included representatives from the White Estate, a couple of pastors, a lawyer, a public college administrator, and an archeologist from the University of California.

The earlier conferences—an international conference held in Ogden, Utah, in 2002, and the division conferences in 2003—were convened to bring a better understanding of the biblical, theological and scientific issues surrounding the question of origins and to clarify the church's stance in relationship to these issues.

The person charged with the overall management of the meetings was Elder Lowell Cooper, vice president of the General Conference. In his opening statement he said participants had been invited to "become conversant with the issues and their effect on our collective life and witness, and to collaborate in developing appropriate responses that will be of value to the church." The sum of this experience would be conveyed in a report to the fall council meeting of the General Conference.

On the first day of deliberations, a series of papers were read summarizing presentations made at earlier conferences. Most Adventist theologians and Bible scholars, and many liberal Christian and secular Bible scholars, insist the Genesis account is clear: Life on earth first appeared as a result of God's direct commands during a week of six literal 24-hour days. This week happened about 6,000 years ago.

On the other hand, Adventist scientists and theologians acknowledge there is abundant evidence in nature that a much longer period is required to accommodate the formation of the rocks and fossils we find on the earth. To sum up the issue in its simplest, starkest form: Given our understanding of the biblical teaching about a "young" creation and the evidence in nature of an "old" creation, can these views be reconciled?

One Adventist theologian has proposed these facts be accepted as antinomies, that is, they are both irreconcilable and irrefutable. We have to honestly acknowledge the evidence points in two different directions and that there is no single, coherent explanation. Most of the theologians who spoke at this conference, however, believe the Bible tells us all we need to know, and any

questioning of this biblical "evidence" is wrong.

Faced with this tension, the primary question for church leadership is: To what extent should the church accommodate dissent in its beliefs on Creation? At the conference, many argued that straying from the church's belief in Creation would undermine many, if not all, of the church's doctrinal positions on the Sabbath, salvation, the bodily resurrection, the Second Coming and the Bible as the word of God. Others take a much less forceful position. In addition, papers dealing with authority, dissent, and academic freedom and responsibility specifically addressed the question of how the church should respond to diversity of thought among its teachers.

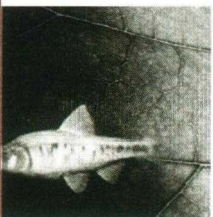
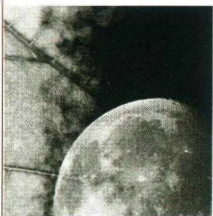
There was time for interaction both in small group breakout sessions and plenary Q & A sessions. It was in the latter where sharp disagreement was expressed. Those who might be labeled as "conservative" wished to tighten the language of the Fundamental Belief No. 6, which deals with Creation. Their objective was to create a mechanism or process that would require anyone not in agreement with their interpretation to either deny their convictions or lose their job.

Interestingly, college administrators, as a group, indicated quite strongly that while teachers needed to demonstrate their adherence to church beliefs, academic freedom was an essential part of a healthy teaching institution.

Conference Dynamics

The preponderance of individuals invited to this conference were conservatives. Those chosen as presenters were again, by and large, clearly people holding conservative views—that is, they gave less credence to conventional science and wanted the church actively to suppress the expression of any novel views. The first day's presenters were assigned the task of summarizing papers presented at earlier conferences. These presenters included people from the moderate or progressive wing of Adventism as well as conservatives. Most of these presentations were evenhanded in their summaries, whether the presenter agreed or disagreed with the content of the papers he was summarizing. However, one conservative reviewer was pointedly called to task during the Q & A session for misrepresenting the original author's views and for making his "summary" a platform for attacking his opponents and advocating his own point of view.

Progressives were largely ignored by the organizers of this conference. Inasmuch as all papers were assigned by the organizing committee (and none of the papers submitted by progressives were accepted), poster presentations offered the only "unfiltered" access to those



in attendance. Posters included a variety of topics and viewpoints, ranging from surveys of the views of origins held by college students and faculty in a South American college to a presentation on the challenge to evolution presented by the phenomenon of consciousness.

Progressive posters included ones by John McLarty ("Will the Church Pastor All Its Children?" published in AT), Brian Bull and Fritz Guy ("A Taxonomy of Adventist Approaches to Science and Religion"), Erv Taylor and Richard Bottomley ("Lines of Evidence for an Ancient Earth"), and this author's reprise of *Spectrum's* 1984 issue on Creationism in connection with the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Geoscience Research Institute. My poster pointed out that the material covered and conclusions drawn in 1984 were no different from those of the present Faith and Science Conference.

It appeared to me that some conservatives came to this conference prepared to serve as the "Taliban" of Adventism, as upholders of the faith. Anyone who was not with them should not be part of the whole. Several, who felt impelled to come to the microphones frequently, labeled those holding contrary views heretics.

There were contrary voices, especially among school and church administrators. There was general agreement that our schools should represent the best in Adventism, upholding our church's traditional beliefs while providing a safe place for the free interchange of ideas. Seventh-day Adventist education is just that—learning and practicing Adventist ideals while preparing our young people to enter a world largely made up of non-Adventists. To do this well, views and ideas propounded by those outside our faith tradition need to be part of any curriculum, but presented to inquiring minds with understanding and in the context of a foundation of Christian belief.

One of the dichotomies faced was what we expect of our educators, in contrast to what we expect of pastors or members in the pew. We want a "safe place" for the education of our young people, where they will "get it right." At the same time nearly everyone affirmed the need for our congregations to be inclusive enough to welcome into fellowship those who may not totally agree with every single one of our "fundamentals."

The future

Some of those present felt it quite important that a formal statement be delivered directly to the world church affirming the church's traditional view of Creation and the Flood. This, in spite of the clear statements by Elder Cooper that the General Conference plan was for any recommendations coming from this group to be directed to the General Conference Committee for any further action.

It is to be hoped that church leadership will have the wisdom to grant our schools and their educators the freedom to responsibly educate, while at the same time find a way for the average pastor and member in the pew to relate to the world we all live in. □

Para-Church Ministry for Church Planting

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sustained growth in attendance over time. Some pastors are known for their ability to increase attendance in the churches they pastor. But most of these pastors leave their congregations after a few years, and the attendance returns to what it was before they came. There is some evidence that this decline would happen even if the pastor stayed in the congregation. There are hardly any Anglo Adventist congregations in North America that have sustained growth in attendance over the past 10 years. And in many places, they have experienced dramatic decreases in attendance.

Gladdeen's project has yet to demonstrate it can do any better at growing congregations that embrace Adventist theology. But according to most observers, the Anglo church in North America is not keeping up with population growth, and many who study church life believe that if growth among immigrant populations is factored out, the Adventist church in North America is actually shrinking. Some observers think that even Black and Hispanic congregations are not growing among American-born populations. This is not to discount the value of the growth among immigrants, but to highlight the desperate need for increased effective-

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Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief No. 6

God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made 'the heaven and the earth' and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was "very good," declaring the glory of God (Gen 1; 2; Ex 20:8-11; Ps 19:1-6; 33: 6, 9; 104; Heb 11:3). □

Theologians Vs. Scientists

2004 INTERNATIONAL FAITH AND SCIENCE CONFERENCE

JOHN THOMAS MCLARTY

Enumclaw, Wash., Sept. 13, 2004—I am writing this two weeks after the close of the 2004 International Faith and Science Conference, working from my notes and from memory. In e-mail reports sent to our subscribers we tried to give rather objective information about the specific events of each day. In this summary, I will be more comprehensive and subjective.

Sitting through the deliberations on the final day of the conference, I could not escape the feeling that I was watching a contest between scientists and theologians. With the

debates and struggles within Islam in the back of my mind, I listened to theologians vigorously asserting the authority of the church over any science that might question the traditional teachings of the church. I heard scientists timidly responding that they could only bend their view of reality so far in an effort to bring it into line with what they were supposed to observe.

This was in marked contrast to the 2003 conference sponsored by the North American Division (NAD) of last year. There, I heard eloquent, forceful defenses of Adventist tradition and pointed, unmistakable challenges to that tradition. By contrast, in Denver, it appeared church leaders and conference organizers had deliberately structured the conference to ensure a conservative outcome. This was especially evident on the last day of the conference.

It was clear the theologians would win. They were in the clear numerical majority (if you include the administrators with the academic theologians). They claimed to hold

the high ground theologically. (Their God was more just and more merciful than the god of long ages.) They unquestionably held the high ground politically. (They were reaffirming Adventist history and our historic identity and knew that they enjoyed the support of the vast majority of Adventist laity.) They attacked those with more liberal positions with impunity, knowing that theologians rarely lose their jobs for being too conservative.

As the rhetoric of the conservatives grew more strident, there were cautions from surprising sources. Several older men, who have strong reputations as defenders of con-

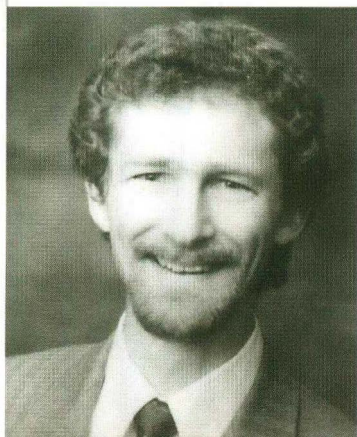
servative views, rose to caution against the narrowing of the church called for by the younger hotheads. Because of their unquestionable stature as defenders of historic orthodoxy, their protests against the lurching to the right appeared to have some effect. There were a few speeches by progressives, but they lacked the fiery call to arms that characterized the most outspoken conservatives and did not seem to find much resonance in the room.

The day ended with a statement by Jan Paulsen, General Conference president. He clearly sided with the theologians: Our church is not going to change its theology. It is not going to soften its commitment to teaching that life first originated on earth during a single creation week about 6,000 years ago. He could not have been more unequivocal. But then, after declaring the immutability of Adventist doctrine, he spoke pastorally to the scientists and other scholars whose work involves them in areas of study that raise questions about the church's historic teachings. To them he said, "The church needs you. Please do not walk away."

In my view, Elder Paulsen's speech was a masterpiece of pastoral guidance. He preserved the theology that holds our church together, and he created space within our church family for the ongoing work of scientists (and other scholars), even if it is controversial and troubling for conservative theologians. I was touched personally by his words, "The church needs you. Please do not walk away." And I have heard from scientists who also, to their surprise, found his appeal deeply moving.

All that I have written so far has to be qualified. My statements about the conference's being a contest between theologians and scientists reflect the way I "felt" it on the concluding Thursday. The reality, however, is much more complex than that. The conservative position (that all of life first appeared during a single week a few thousand years ago) is strongly advocated by some scientists, as well as theologians. The liberal position (that our understanding of the time and processes of creation should be informed by science) is strongly advocated by some theologians, as well as scientists. But having acknowledged this diversity among the people advocating various positions, I must tell you that as I sat and listened on that final Thursday, I could not help seeing in my mind's eye pictures of Galileo on trial before the Dominicans and thinking of reports of the tyranny of Iran's ayatollahs and Afghanistan's Taliban.

There was one significant difference in this conference when compared with Adventist creation science rhetoric of 30 or 40 years ago. In the "old days," Adventists regularly



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dismissed scientists who talked of a long chronology or evolution as evil people. These evolutionists were trying to prove there was no God so they could sin with impunity. Their science was a defense against moral accountability.

In this conference there was talk of the way one's presuppositions drive one's interpretation of data. If you begin with a paradigm that excludes divine activity, it is not likely that you will notice any evidence of God's involvement in the process. But there was public recognition by even stout conservatives that people can come to the "wrong" conclusions through honest study and sometimes because of very strong evidence.

Church leaders and conservative theologians repeatedly talked about the danger of changing any of our religious understandings. They did not make the fine distinctions that historians of theology might, between doctrine and theology. There was no notice given by the conservatives to the fact that if they themselves were tried by the standards of "Adventist Creation Science" extant in 1930, nearly all of them would have been ruled unfit to teach in Adventist schools. In 1930, Adventists, under the tutelage of George McCready Price, denied the reality of the geologic column. Most Adventists believed that the sun was actually created on the fourth day of creation week, after the earth had been formed and vegetated. In contrast, nearly all the conservative theologians at the seminary believe the universe, our galaxy and the solar system, including earth, are billions of years old. They dispute conventional geochronology only when it is applied to life on earth.

There has been movement in the thinking of the church. And there will continue to be. One definition used by Roman Catholics to define orthodoxy is that which has always been believed by all Catholics everywhere. When the doctrine of papal infallibility was voted in 1870, and when the bodily assumption of Mary was declared to be dogma in 1950, the Catholic Church asserted it was simply making a public statement of what the church had always believed. Historians would call this historical fiction. Adventists should eschew historical fiction. We have changed over time. We have changed our understanding of the gospel (1888), the judgment (shut door) and the nature of God (from Arian to Trinitarian). These are not trivial matters. And in the case of our belief about judgment, the older view was explicitly, publicly affirmed by Ellen White speaking as a prophet.

"Never changing" is not an appropriate objective for the church. Pursuit of truth is. Our love for each other will constrain the "prophets" who want to remodel the church according to their "new light," whether these prophets are theologians or scientists. However, our commitment to the ongoing work of the Spirit compels us to give careful attention to those who claim to see something new. If love of the communal status quo blinds us to new, even iconoclastic, truth, our love may become dysfunctional and our mission be stymied.

This conference ended where the first one began three years ago, with a strong affirmation that the Adventist Church believes and teaches what it always has: Life first appeared on earth during a week-long creation a few

thousand years ago. The final document gives voice to this conclusion. The majority of those present shared this conviction.

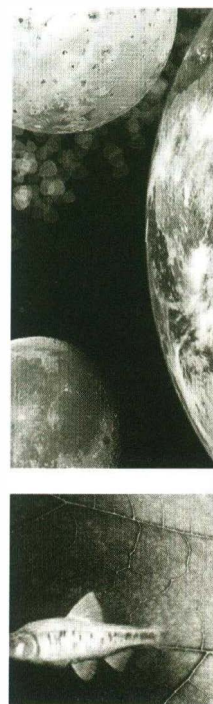
What is only hinted in the document is another fact: A significant percentage of the teachers in Adventist colleges and universities in North America find the more they study, the less confident they are that our traditional views on geochronology can be supported. These teachers love the church and its message and mission. They demonstrate that love by working under daunting academic loads for a fraction of the pay they could receive elsewhere. They were nearly invisible at the two international conferences, but they are the backbone of science education in Adventist schools. These conferences came up with no new initiatives to ferret out and purge these questioners. Nor was there a clear blueprint for science education in church schools that will be both scientifically effective and ecclesiastically "safe."

Congregations need the structure of a communally acknowledged, authoritative theology, but the individuals in the congregation can be adequately served only when a considerate, gracious, wise pastor bends and flexes that theology to fit the real lives of those who make up the congregation.

With the conferences concluded, the church faces old challenges: How to balance respect for individual conviction with a corporate confession of faith? How to treasure the truth once delivered to the saints while following the Spirit as he guides us into all truth? How to hold together in one community leaders and thinkers whose work focuses on radically different sources of truth?

Congregations are most effective in terms of growth and social cohesion when they preach a clear, explicit doctrine and are led by gracious, responsive leaders. Or to put it another way: Congregations need the structure of a communally acknowledged, authoritative theology, but the individuals in the congregation can be adequately served only when a considerate, gracious, wise pastor bends and flexes that theology to fit the real lives of those who make up the congregation and its neighbors. Similarly, science needs rigorous methods of research and investigation, but when we need the service of science, we don't call a microbiologist, we call the doctor. We trust the bus driver, not a traffic engineer, to get us to church.

I was pleased that the last word at the conference was neither strictly theological nor scientific. It was pastoral. For those who believe orthodox theology to be the most important characteristic of the church, these conferences offered reassurance: The church will not change. Your truth is secure. But for those who prize people, progress, and science, the president speaking as a pastor offered this reassurance: "The church needs you and values you." If a church works best when it is defined by a clear, explicit theology but is led by a compassionate, humane leader, maybe we're not in such a bad spot after all. □



A Historical Dilemma

ERVIN TAYLOR

The Denver International Faith and Science Conference was, in part, the culmination of a three-year odyssey of a church institution in search of a way out of a historical dilemma.

A dilemma is a situation that requires one to choose between two equally, or nearly equally, unpleasant alternatives. At the beginning of the 21st century, the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is faced with the collision of two characteristic but conflicted intellectual traditions within contemporary Adventism in the developed world. Both traditions are strongly associated with the Adventist education system, and both have their roots in the 19th-century American culture within which the Adventist church formulated its traditional core theological system.

The first half of the 19th century was a period of very rapid cultural change in the United States. The nation was

The “Bible only” tradition in Adventism was a major stimulant for the creation of a separate Adventist educational system. Our founders wanted our young people to be protected from the corrupting influence of “worldly” education.

roiled by major strains in the fabric of its norms and values. An influx of “foreign” populations and ideas, along with industrialization and the growth of urban centers, challenged many traditional American ways of thinking and living. At mid-century, the nation would be engulfed in a bloody civil war. Classical, sectarian Seventh-day Adventism was one of several major American religious sects that emerged during this period offering assurance and answers in the face of social and political turmoil.

The first intellectual tradition of Adventism derives from a 19th-century American variant of a “Bible only” fundamentalism—a conviction that all important truth can be derived from a purported “plain-sense reading” of the Bible. The classic Adventist development of this tradition was closely associated with the visionary experiences of one of its founders, Ellen G. White. Reared within the holiness and “shouting” Methodist tradition, she emphasized that the prayerful reading of the Bible would lead one to “present truth,” the Bible truth especially relevant to “God’s people” at a particular point in time. The focus of her religious “vision” was personal holiness in the light of the approaching end of time. The “present truth” she endorsed on the basis of

her early visions included the distinctive elements of Adventist theology, above all its eschatology, to which was added other concepts such as seventh-day Sabbath-keeping. Ellen White was very suspicious of “human reason” reflecting the anti-intellectual tendencies of an American frontier mentality. She certainly supported the study of science. However, in her view, “true science” would always be in harmony with her view of what the Bible taught.

Her opinions regarding earth history—for example, a literal six-day, 6,000-year-old creation and a subsequent worldwide flood—reflected the dominant views of her immediate religious environment. These views were a relatively minor part of the platform she assumed as she mapped out her understanding of God’s plan for ending sin and suffering. Her understandings with regard to the details contained in the opening chapters of Genesis were essentially a background element of her overall understanding of what the Bible taught. However, this background element became embedded or absorbed within the fabric of the master Adventist narrative or religious world view, the “great controversy,” for which White was largely responsible. By the time of her death in 1915, classical Adventism—both officially and in its popular, folk expressions—was seen by its adherents as a tightly integrated, interlocking system of not just “present truth” but “truth.”

The “Bible only” tradition in Adventism was a major stimulant for the creation of a separate Adventist educational system. Our founders wanted our young people to be protected from the corrupting influence of “worldly” education. They wanted them in an educational environment that would strengthen their confidence in the teachings of the Adventist church about the Bible. This early Adventist ethos would have readily and firmly aligned the small Adventist church with American Protestant Fundamentalists in the late 19th and early 20th century, except for several anomalous factors unique to the Adventist variant of American evangelical Christianity. One of these elements had an important, long-term impact on how the Adventist tradition approached a study of the natural world. This unique Adventist historical factor resulted from the pursuit of accreditation for a denominationally affiliated medical school. This introduces another major intellectual stream in Adventism: a commitment to science because of its connection with health care.

In creating colleges, Adventism followed in the pattern of many other American denominations. In the decades on either side of 1900, America was dotted with small, church-sponsored colleges. However, the one unusual aspect of the Adventist system was its focus on health and medically oriented education. In part, this grew out of the health reformist components of early Adventism although Ellen White’s own

persona! medical and psychological history was certainly a contributing factor. Adventist health work provided a political and economic counter-balance in the church to the dominance of the church's professional clergy. This was first played out in the controversial career of John Harvey Kellogg, a protégé of White, and in the battle for the control of Battle Creek Sanitarium and Hospital. In this conflict, the emergent clerical party controlling the denominational administrative and publishing apparatus asserted their dominance over the emergent professional class of physicians controlling Adventist medical institutions.

At the opening of the 20th century, the church reestablished a denominationally sponsored medical school, this time in California, the College of Medical Evangelists (now the School of Medicine, Loma Linda University). The development of other medical institutions and a network of medical professionals began to create alternative institutional power bases within Adventism. These medical centers had the potential for again challenging the dominance of the clergy in the Adventist church, and the development of medical education inescapably led to church members who possessed not only economic independence but also a deeply rooted regard for science in the context of modern "scientific medicine."

These two traditions within American Adventism were launched on an institutional collision course by a decision in the second decade of the 20th century to pursue accreditation for the church's medical school. In 1908, the Flexner Report had set into motion an expectation and then requirement that medical schools accept applicants only from accredited colleges. Ellen White had consistently urged the church not to settle for anything less than the highest possible credentials for the school and its graduating physicians. Across the country, urged on by the requirements of medical college accreditation, Adventist undergraduate colleges also began to pursue accreditation. One outgrowth of this process was that Adventist faculty began to obtain advanced academic degrees from non-Adventist universities in a wide variety of academic disciplines. This process was well under way by the late 1940s and rapidly escalated in the 1960s.

As a result of this process, Seventh-day Adventist "Bible teachers" began to give way to Adventist "theologians" and "biblical scholars." At the same time, many Adventist scientists acquired expertise in the study of the natural world. Some became acquainted with the empirical basis for conventional theories in anthropology, geology, paleontology, and evolutionary biology. A number of these individuals, once responsible only for "teaching science," became "scientists" in their own right. As these Adventist academics pursued their studies, they became aware of compelling data and theories that appeared to contradict classical teachings of the church in a number of areas.

I propose that the root cause of the contemporary problem that confronts the institutional Adventist church in the developed world with regard to its conventional teachings having implications about early earth and human history is largely a direct outgrowth of a tension between these two traditions within Adventist education—a conflict between a purported "Bible only" sectarian theology and a commit-

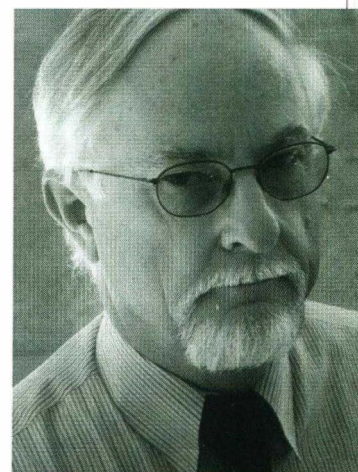
ment to science and science education. These two traditions are uncomfortably intermingled in the contemporary Adventist system of higher education in the developed world. Different elements of these two components are expressed in varying combinations at different North American Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities and account, in part, for the "liberal" and "conservative" labels attached to these institutions.

The two international Adventist Faith & Science Conferences and the North American Division Faith & Science Conference were showcases exemplifying the effects of placing the conceptual products of these two traditions in juxtaposition. With regard to the specific issues taken up at these conferences, the two traditions appear to have two very different understandings of what is the most accurate method of finding out what really happened in the past.

It should be emphasized that, with respect to the Adventist academic community, this is not a conflict between faith/religion/theology and science or between Adventist theologians and scientists. It is clear from the three-year series of conferences that both Adventist scientists and Adventist theologians profoundly differ among themselves as to what approach yields the "real truth" about geology and early human history.

Most members of both traditions insist that they value both the evidence from the Bible and from scientific research. However, those committed to what they insist is a "Bible only" viewpoint argue that concepts derived from a conventional Adventist interpretation of the biblical narratives must be privileged in any apparent conflict of understanding. The stated reason for this is that human perception and reasoning has been damaged as the result of sin. If a massive corpus of empirical, scientific data contradicts a theologically based understanding, theology must always win. An unstated reason that this approach is preferred, to quote an advocate of such a view, is that there is the fear that any deviation from a traditional Adventist understanding of earth and human history will "undermine the integrity of the Seventh-day Adventist message and mission." In part, I would further propose that this view derives from a fear that the credibility and thus authority of Ellen White in the contemporary Adventist church in the developed world would be fatally compromised if any element, however small, of her vision of what constitutes "biblical truth" is directly contradicted.

On the other side, members of the "respect for science" tradition respond that evidence from the biblical narratives and from scientific research should be given equal weight since "rightly understood" they are not in conflict. They further argue that any damage to human cognition caused by sin would impact not only the human understanding of science-based data but our interpretations of the biblical narratives as well. Some of the theologians in this group



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Welcome remarks

INTERNATIONAL FAITH AND SCIENCE CONFERENCE
DENVER, COLORADO, AUGUST 20 TO 26, 2004

STATEMENT BY LOWELL C COOPER, CHAIR ORGANIZING COMMITTEE OF IFSC

It is a pleasure to welcome you to Denver. Thank you for placing this conference in your calendar. For most of us this month has already held many other appointments. We regret that a number of individuals from educational institutions are unable to be with us because these days also mark the beginning of a new academic year on campus. Although we looked for alternative dates there simply was no way of avoiding major conflict with other events.

Greetings and welcome as well from General Conference President Jan Paulsen who will join us from Sunday evening to the close of our conference. As you know, Elder Paulsen values the importance of these conferences in the life of the church.

This conference marks the conclusion of a three-year series of consultations on issues in faith and science—particularly those relating to our understanding of origins. Some, perhaps most of us, have had the opportunity of participating in previous conferences in various parts of the world. Others are here for the first time. So perhaps it is well for us to spend a few moments this evening to consider why we are here, what will we be doing, and what is expected of this concluding conference.

Why Are We Here?

Seventh-day Adventists value both the knowledge which comes by divine revelation and that which comes from human observation, research and discovery. We treasure these as gifts of a wise and loving Creator. We are students of Scripture, drawing our worldview, our moral and spiritual reference points, from its teachings. We are also students and beneficiaries of science, embracing advances in knowledge and technology. The practice of science in fields of agriculture, communications, ecology, space exploration have occasioned enormous changes in the way we live. When our children get sick we pray over them and take them to the doctor. We plead for God's healing power in their lives and we give them medicines which science tells us will be helpful in their dealing with illness.

In many areas of life (that is, education, health, family life, etc.) these two sources of knowledge appear to be in harmony. Advances in scientific knowledge often confirm and validate the views of faith. However, in regard to the origin of the universe, of earth, and of life, we encounter

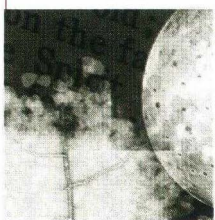
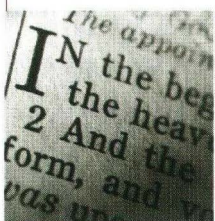
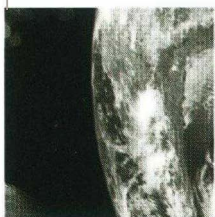
two very contradictory worldviews. Claims based on a study of Scripture are often viewed in stark contrast to claims arising from the scientific methodologies used in the study of nature. This tension has a direct impact on the life of the church, its message and witness.

We celebrate the life of faith. We advocate a life of learning. Both in the claims of Scripture and in the orderly processes of the nature we see indicators of the Creator's marvelous mind. Since its earliest days the Seventh-day Adventist Church has encouraged the development of mind and understanding through disciplines of worship, education, and observation. So it is not surprising that at times our conclusions differ and interpretations vary. We come along the path of learning from different starting points, from different directions and at different paces. For some the answers to questions about origins are a certainty. To others the answers are more elusive and call for investigation and discovery through scientific research.

Reports in the public media concerning the rapid advances in scientific knowledge, particularly in the natural and social sciences, are generally framed within certain assumptions about origins. These realities bring into greater prominence, within the church, the question of how to reconcile the differing explanations of origins offered by faith and science.

No one can deny that within the church itself there is a variety of views about origins. Perhaps this should be expected. It is fair to say that every Seventh-day Adventist belief invites study and reflection. Our belief statements are couched in such brevity. There is opportunity for investigation, questioning, and probing the dimensions of what each belief means and how it is to relate to life in our time. But such opportunity does not create room for emptying our beliefs of their content. In saying what we believe we must also be clear as to what we do not believe.

The Seventh-day Adventist understanding of origins affects and informs other dimensions of church life. The early chapters of Genesis have enormous importance for the life of the church. If we look to the Genesis record only to debate questions about six days and 6,000 years, we deprive ourselves of many priceless treasures. It is from our belief in and about creation that we derive an understanding of who we are, how we relate to each other and to our world, what our mission and message is. Our view about the creation story permeates and informs all our other views about life.



For these reasons church leadership sees wisdom and value in exploring the theological and scientific implications of various views of Genesis 1-11. The questions that will engage our attention are not new nor is this conference an attempt to resolve them once and for all. We are not here because the Seventh-day Adventist Church is uncertain about its beliefs. Acknowledging questions and exploring their implications should not be seen as a threat to one's spiritual life. Our task is to engage in interdisciplinary dialog that identifies the contributions and limitations that both faith and science bring to our collective understanding of our life, our universe, and our destiny.

There are several reasons which suggest that it is appropriate to review what our belief in Genesis 1-11 involves and how it can best be expressed and communicated.

Philosophical Reasons

There is an ever-present challenge of defining the relationship between theology and science—or faith and reason. Are these two streams of knowledge in partnership or in conflict? Should they be viewed as interactive or are they independent non-overlapping spheres of knowledge? The dominant worldview in most modern societies interprets life, physical reality, and behavior in ways that are markedly different from the Christian worldview. How should a Christian relate to these things?

Theological Reasons

How is the Bible to be interpreted? What does a fair reading of the text require of a believer? To what extent should knowledge from science inform or shape our understanding of Scripture and vice versa?

Scientific Reasons

The same data, from nature, is available to all observers. What does the data say or mean? How shall we arrive at correct interpretations and conclusions? How do we differentiate between good and bad science? Is science a tool or a philosophy?

Nurture and Education of Church Membership

How is a church member to deal with the variety of interpretations of the Genesis record, accompanied by various theories of origins among theologians, pastors, scientists, leaders, teachers in our educational system? What does the church have to say to students who find in their educational curriculum ideas that conflict with their faith? Maintaining silence concerning such issues sends uncertain signals; it creates uncertainty and confusion and provides fertile ground for unwarranted and dogmatic views.

Developing a Living Faith

Clarification and reaffirmation of a Bible-based theology of origins will equip members with a framework for dealing with challenges on this topic. Our understanding of Scripture needs to engage with the issues of the day.

The Faith and Science Conferences are not convened simply for the intellectual stimulation of attendees but as an opportunity to provide orientation and practical guidance for church members. We cannot pretend to keep our beliefs in a safe place, secure from all challenge. In doing so they will soon become relics. Our beliefs need to be engaged in meeting the problems of the day so that they remain a living faith, otherwise they will be nothing more than dead dogma.

"There is a strong *prima facie* case for re-examining the claimed cognitive content of Christian theology in the light of the new knowledge derivable from the sciences.... If such an exercise is not continually undertaken theology will operate in a cultural ghetto quite cut off from most of those in Western cultures who have good grounds for thinking that science describes what is going on in the processes of the world at all levels. The turbulent history of the relation of science and theology bears witness to the impossibility of theology seeking a peaceful haven, protected from the sciences of its times, if it is going to be believable."¹

It is for reasons such as these the church leadership took the initiative to convene a series of discussions about faith and science issues and their impact on the life of the church. Thus the three-year time frame during which several conferences have been held in various parts of the globe. Our purpose has been to bring together a group of scientists, theologians, and church leaders in a collective dialog. We expect that about 140 persons will attend this conference—with roughly equal representation from the three groups mentioned.

It should come as no surprise to us that the very existence of these dialogs is a source of considerable uneasiness on the part of some—maybe even some who are here in Denver. There is on the one hand a foreboding that discussing doctrinal issues is likely to lead to a watering down of our faith, that somehow the package of beliefs will be damaged, or perhaps that we shall soon

There is an ever-present challenge of defining the relationship between theology and science—or faith and reason. Are these two streams of knowledge in partnership or in conflict?

find ourselves on a slippery slope with nothing to hang on to. On the other hand there is a nagging fear that we shall disparage learning, scholarship and enquiry in order to preserve our beliefs from close scrutiny.

I have the confidence to believe that this group in Denver is sufficiently responsible to preserve us from either extreme.

So, why are we here? Not just for personal pleasure or continuing education. Representing various disciplines in

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Welcome remarks

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church life we've been invited to:

1. Become conversant with the issues and their effect on our collective life and witness.
2. Collaborate in developing appropriate responses that will be of value to the church.

What We Will Do

In many ways this conference will be unlike those that have preceded it. In the earlier conferences our purpose was to become informed about the evidence and the arguments that support or challenge our belief in creation.

What can be done to help us avoid the irresponsible use of science to validate Scripture—or to avoid the denigration of faith in order to accommodate some theories of science?

Thanks to a host of contributors there is a huge supply of scholarly papers dealing both with theology and science. Most of these can be obtained through the Geoscience Research Institute.

We begin our work session with a time of review and reflection on the information and ideas covered in earlier conferences. On Sunday we will spend our time listening to and discussing summaries of the theology and science questions that we've explored. This will be followed on Monday morning by looking at some of the implications that various ideas or theories about origins have with respect to other areas of life and belief.

When one deals with such kinds of matters in the life of a community it is inevitable that related issues arise. We cannot separate our beliefs from the ways that we put them into practice. Several questions immediately come to mind:

- The ongoing place of scholarship in the church. How does the church maintain the confessional nature of its teachings while being open to further development in its understanding of truth?
- Educational models for dealing with controversial subjects and the ethical issues involved for teachers and church leaders. How shall we teach science courses in our schools in a way that enriches, rather than erodes, faith?
- What ethical considerations come into focus when private conviction differs from denominational teaching?

How does my personal freedom of belief interface with my public role as a leader in the church? In other words, what are the ethics of dissent?

□ Administrative posture and processes in dealing with variations in or re-expressions of doctrinal views.

It is our addressing these questions that will most distinguish this conference from those that preceded it. We simply felt that there was no way to bring our series of discussions to some degree of closure without having an opportunity to consider these important questions as well.

What Is Expected of Us

The last portion of the conference will focus on arriving at consensus regarding a report, recommendations, affirmations, or appeals that can be forwarded to the General Conference president. The organizing committee has been tasked with the assignment of preparing a report which the General Conference president will include with his report to the Annual Council 2004. (The General Conference Executive Committee authorized this series of conferences and rightfully expects a report on what has been done.) We are inviting you to be a part of that report—to help create it. Accordingly there will be several periods during our time together when we shall break into smaller groups to discuss a number of questions, consider recommendations, or propose actions that the church might take in response to these matters.

We have not come to this conference with a pre-scripted outcome and report. Obviously we have some thoughts in mind but we seek a collective engagement in preparing a report. Our vision at present is that the report will contain a narrative section that describes what we have done over the three years. We suggest that the report may have a section on affirmations followed by a section of recommendations. Not a long list of general recommendations that will get filed away in some archive as an historical artifact. Instead we invite you to help create nothing less than an action plan for the entire church that addresses matters such as:

1. What can be done to help us, and indeed the whole church, deal with sensitive topics in our faith community? Have these conferences helped us toward that end? What can be done to help us avoid the irresponsible use of science to validate Scripture—or to avoid the denigration of faith in order to accommodate some theories of science? How can we carry on a helpful dialog without caricature or disdain for those who hold other views? What are the things that hold us together even while we differ?
2. What can be done to provide nurture and education to our members so that they will have a robust faith grounded in Scripture while living in a world that increasingly views science as the preferred, if not only, source of knowledge?
3. Is there anything more that should be done to assist Seventh-day Adventist students in dealing with educational curriculum, especially in the natural sciences, that may challenge their faith commitment?
4. What can be done to support and encourage those who teach theology and the sciences in our schools? One

of the Organizing Committee members remarked recently that we have long considered the religion teacher in our schools as one of the key individuals in our educational system. Has not the time come for us to recognize that the science teachers in our schools are at least equally critical to the success of our educational endeavors?

5. How can we support Seventh-day Adventist scholars, scientists and theologians, to engage, in public discourse about the two dominant and competing worldviews in our day? Or is our dialog to take place only within our community of faith? Is there a place, on the issues of faith and science, for Seventh-day Adventist scholarship in the public forum? How can we give it more visibility?

Is this too big a challenge for us to undertake at this brief moment together? The organizing committee feels this is too overwhelming—but it must be done and we need to begin somewhere. Obviously, there cannot be a sense of finality to the need for dialog on the questions that brought us here. But let us resolve to make a beginning rather than to shrink from so large a task.

In Summary

It is a privilege to have each of you as partners in this journey over the next few days. The organizing committee has looked forward both with anticipation and anxiousness to this event. We hope you will find the physical accommodations adequate and the schedule not too burdensome. We have every confidence that our time together will be beneficial to us individually but also to the church of which we are members. We believe that once again a conference of this nature can be conducted with openness, honesty, civility, and respect.

It can only be to our advantage that we learn to

speak with humility about origins. There are far more questions than answers. Let us be firm about what we can know while recognizing that in pressing further questions we also draw closer to wonderful and impenetrable mystery.

Among the pieces of memorabilia found in Charles Darwin's belongings after his death were two letters from his wife Emma. Her cautionary counsel is applicable for us as well: "May not the habit in scientific pursuits of believing nothing till it is proved, influence your mind too much in other things which cannot be proved in the same way, and which if true are likely to be above our comprehension." Charles Darwin made a notation on each letter. On one he wrote, "God bless you. C.D. 1861." The other has this note: "When I am dead, know that many times, I have kissed and cried over this. C.D."²

This International Faith and Science Conference begins with the celebration of the Sabbath. Here, in worship, adoration and study we find faith and reason in their highest partnership. Let us come together to learn, not only from each other, but from him who is the source of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding.

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else." —C. S. Lewis (1898-1963), *Is Theology Poetry?* □

Lowell Cooper is a General Vice-president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church world-wide.

¹ Arthur Peacock, *Theology for a Scientific Age*. Fortress, 1993, pages 6-7.

² Jean Pond, "Mutual Humility in the Relationship Between Science and Christian Theology," in *Science and Christianity, Four Views*. Richard F. Carlson, editor, InterVarsity Press, 2000.

A Historical Dilemma

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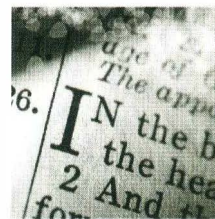
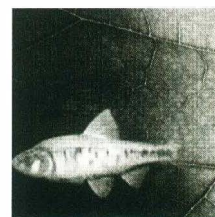
also argue that the purported "Bible only" position is highly selective about the portions of the Bible that are emphasized and that, in fact, a straightforward reading of the Genesis narratives and an understanding of the original Hebrew worldview underlying the statements contained in these narratives does not support the classical Adventist understandings of earth and human history.

Some might ask: Where is God in all of this? I can do no better to answer this than to quote a comment made by Dr. Jan Paulsen, the president of the General Conference at the Denver conference: "Knowing and understanding may not always be comfortable on this walk, but this is faith's world; it is a world of mysteries—it is the world of God's moving and doing."

The current dilemma facing church administrators is how to navigate between these highly divergent—even polarized—

views without upsetting the current balance between these two historic elements that are in tension within the contemporary Adventist academy in the developed world. As educational levels rise among members in the developing world, this tension will arise there also.

No one should underestimate the difficulties that church leaders face in attempting to reconcile these opposing forces and the damage that can be done to its institutions of higher education and to the image of the church among its educated members if the "solutions" are handled badly. Perhaps the best approach is to do nothing. As Dr. Paulsen recently suggested, perhaps we will just have to "live with" the tension. □



Institutional Integrity

LARRY DOWNING

He came out the door and followed me down the hall. The steps were rapid, almost a run. I turned round to see who was so persistent in his vigorous pursuit. As he came closer, a moment of perplexity and a hint of fear rushed upon me. His eyes stood out like organ stops. They locked onto mine and would not let loose. Color had rushed to his face. His features were contorted by what I perceived to be a combination of anger and frustration. He spat out the words, a verbal machine gun, each word punctuated by an outward jab of his finger towards my chest. "I have to tell you something," he said, his voice rising with each word. "Integrity! Integrity! Integrity! We're seeing a collapse of integrity!"

Denial is not a viable option! Openness and an active pursuit of credibility are the only avenues to a healthy future. An organization that prides itself on its integrity and faithfulness to Scripture can do no less.

A few moments before, this conference official had told me that he had had to relieve a successful pastor of his duties and put him on administrative leave. The experience, combined with too many others before, tore at his emotional core. His frustration and anger served to remind him anew how important and how fragile integrity is.

In 2003, a colleague and I were asked by Elder Larry Caviness, Southern California Conference president, to prepare an ethics document for the Southern California Conference. When we shared an early draft with a group of our pastoral colleagues, they gave mixed responses. Several expressed amazement that there was need for an ethics code. "It's just common sense," one pastor said. "Why state the obvious?" said another. These responses led to another question: "Why do people in the business of the church violate common sense and obfuscate the obvious?" The answers may lie closer at hand than we wished. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has paid a heavy price for our corporate violation of integrity.

A former classmate of mine, who as an academy and college student was very involved in the church, told me that he and his wife no longer attend the Adventist church. When I asked why, he said that our teachers were not truthful about the church and its teachings. When I asked for specifics, his response was quick and precise:

he did not believe the church leaders were forthright in matters relating to Ellen White, the doctrine of the sanctuary and righteousness by faith, eschatological interpretations, and the Sabbath.

He elaborated further. He said we were taught that Ellen White was an infallible prophet who was years ahead of her time in writing about health reform and medical insights. He later learned, he explained, that she plagiarized and was not original in many of her statements. This conversation is not unique. I hear similar remarks from others.

The sanctuary doctrine, age of the earth and the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White are examples of areas of church doctrine where integrity may not be the highest priority. Traditional Adventist teaching on each of the above points of faith has been challenged from within the church and from outside. A growing number of our theologians find our traditional positions on these doctrines untenable, but they cannot say so out loud. To preserve their employment they must pretend complete agreement. At the very least, our young people should be made aware of the significant level of intrachurch controversy that surrounds these doctrines.

When Adventist theologians are asked to defend these unique Adventist teachings they manifest evident unease and an unwillingness to talk on the record. I have personally asked Adventist scholars why they do not submit articles to professional journals on these topics. Their response: "Would you?" They have me!

Science is another problem area. A short earth history, which is promoted by the official church and advocated in academy and college classes, will not wash with many in today's scientific community. A classmate who is now a scientist asked me, "How can the church expect me to use one part of my brain when I go to church and another part when I go to my office?"

When an organization's brightest and best are ill at ease with what they are expected to affirm and defend because their sources do not allow them to arrive at their employer's end points, does not this suggest an integrity problem?

Affronts to the credibility of the church are not limited to the classroom. We who minister in local parishes witness how our members react when church leaders are caught up in moral and ethical transgressions. The negative impact of high-profile church scandals on our members is beyond calculation. These fiascos erode trust among our people, and people do not give their money to support organizations they do not trust.

A long-time friend described a personal experience. After retirement from a high administrative post in the

public school system, this person volunteered to assist a local Adventist school, assuming that church officials acted with integrity. This stereotype was soon shattered. "I felt like cold water had been thrown in my face. I am not sure whether people knew what they were doing was wrong or whether they just didn't care. This is what frightens me."

One remedy my friend suggested is for the church to be open. Why is so much done behind closed doors? The Sunshine Laws that govern state entities serve a purpose. "Why can't the church follow the same process?" my friend asked.

Openness would do more than help prevent the failures of integrity in administrative actions. It would also help prevent the loss of members because of their disillusionment at the discovery that not everything taught in our academy Bible classes is supported by the church's theologians.

An organization that holds to tradition, despite reliable evidence that counters that tradition, is at risk of alienating a crucial segment of the church: the bright, articulate and educated. When an organization ignores or denies evidence that is contrary to its accepted practice or belief systems, it puts at stake its most crucial asset: integrity.

The Adventist organizational structure is another concern. The local church is the goose that lays the golden eggs. But the goose is ill! The local congregation sends more than half its income to fund the organizational structure and programs. Those who study our system note that Adventists have a hidden mission statement that is not publicly acknowledged: The local church exists to support the structures above it. It is commonly understood that an organization with a hidden mission statement is in jeopardy. This practice is counter to organizational integrity.

To initiate change is risky and difficult. To obfuscate or deny there is a problem is a greater risk still. Denial is not a viable option! Openness and an active pursuit of credibility are the only avenues to a healthy future. An organization that prides itself on its integrity and faithfulness to Scripture can do no less.

The conference administrator's statements that began this article are valid. He has every right to be frustrated and angry when a pastor violates a sacred call. Integrity is the coin of the ministerial realm. Note, however, that misgivings about integrity are not limited to ministerial


behavior. Organizational leadership is part of the equation.

Leaders set the moral tone for their organizations. Leaders who demonstrate integrity and who value truth establish the organization on a positive course. When they deviate from a moral course, even in slight ways, they impair their effectiveness. If a leader knows that a system is broken, yet continues as if nothing is awry, his or her lack of action sends a message: The system is more important than people. The system takes precedent over the mission, unless the mission is to support the organization. And here we may be on to the bugaboo that will not go away.

Andrew McGill writes, "Loss of confidence is the critical issue facing leaders in both the private and the public sectors today.... America's ability to maintain a healthy democratic society and a free-market economy requires leaders who can reestablish public trust by building institutions that are firmly and clearly grounded in the highest ethical standards."¹ McGill's statement applies doubly to those who lead religious organizations. □

Dr. Larry Downing, Ph.D., is pastor of the White Memorial Church in Los Angeles, Calif., and teaches ethics at the School of Business, La Sierra University, in Riverside.

¹"Business Ethics Reality Stunned Americans as Enron, Others Misled Investors and Employees," in Noel M. Tichy and Andrew R. McGill, eds., *The Ethical Challenge: How to Lead with Unyielding Integrity*, Jossey-Bass, 2003, p. 24.



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Set Free from Rationality

PMINDLESS PHALOER

Rarely has there been a belief so ridiculous or contrary to the Scriptures that, once it becomes popular, some Christians haven't attempted to incorporate it into the faith. Of all the bizarre mismatches, though, none's worse than the attempt to harmonize what individuals observe, sense and try to measure with the instruction handed down by our learned spiritual superiors. Trying to merge proper belief with critical thinking is simply impossible. Nazism fits better with our theology than free thought.

Though in my childhood I was raised on thinking and the discussion of ideas, one day I found myself a born-again nonthinker who saw, immediately, an impossible

thinking. They claim God wants us to actually use our cognitive skills to learn about the earth he created and to contemplate his plan of salvation. Obviously these thinkers are misled. If God had wanted people to commune with him and be his friends, he would have given man a real mind to use.

Why, some of these people actually hold argue that it's okay to think and to stretch others' thinking about the teachings of the Bible. For example, one so-called "thinker" dared to suggest to me that somewhere in Deuteronomy there is a version of the Ten Commandments that doesn't mention creation. I told that person to stop thinking! He was going against everything we have been told. We are to simply ignore questions on topics where our enlightened truth-givers have already determined the "truth!" More than one of these "thinker-type" folk refuse to accept the obvious truth that God's physical creation fits the simple pattern described by a set of selected texts written by people who believed the earth to be flat.

What amazes me isn't so much that people can believe in thinking (after all, I used to), but that those who do so still want to be Seventh-day Adventists. I can respect someone who, believing that using one's mind is good, rejects the Adventist church entirely. I have no respect for those who think they can meld the two.

For anyone, especially young people, struggling with these issues, I say: Stop thinking! As long as you stick by the pre-selected Bible texts and quotations from Ellen White and stop thinking, you will not go wrong. Those in the church who have already decided to keep on thinking can find plenty of other churches outside ours. And to those teaching in our schools who believe in rational thought and yet take a paycheck from the church, I say: If you honestly reject closed-mindedness in favor of thought and open discussion of belief, turn that honesty into integrity and go where you won't have to cloak your views under the anfractuosities of language.

I speak, I believe, for at least a thousand Seventh-day Adventists when I declare that whatever may be demonstrated by careful observations, if it does not agree with accepted doctrine I will never support it. And for those who want to speak up with a new thought now and then, much less routinely—you'll have to fight us for every extra minute of free thought.

Remember that while ignorance is not necessarily bliss, if you just accept the gospel and science according to our learned theologians, and stop studying for yourself and asking questions, you at least won't feel ignorant. ■

Pmindles Phaloer is a reader of the Adventist Review and the Adult Sabbath School Study Guide.

I speak, I believe, for at least a thousand Seventh-day Adventists when I declare that whatever may be demonstrated by careful observations, if it does not agree with accepted doctrine I will never support it. And for those who want to speak up with a new thought now and then, much less routinely—you'll have to fight us for every extra minute of free thought.

abyss between what I now knew because I was "instructed" and all the so-called "knowledge" that comes from rationality and free thought. Within days of my new birth, someone gave me the article "Seventh-day Darwinians," by Clifford Goldstein. This article confirmed me in my convictions that the "truth" I was being spoon-fed was totally sufficient. I could stop thinking at last! Soon my new favorite phrase became "rational smashinal." The church's leaders have said it. I believe it. That settles it.

I realize some people still argue for rational thinking. Yet rational thought is still only a human endeavor, and as such it comes burdened with all the prejudices, foibles, fears, and presuppositions of anything human. However much I respect rational thought and stand in awe of those who actually think for themselves, most thinkers are just as bigoted and dogmatic (even worse, practical) as historical critics—and we all know how hell-bent "those people" are.

Now, it used to be that, for Adventists, clear thought was a threat from the outside. But unbelievable as it seems, now, even some in the church have accepted

Night at Big Lake Youth Camp

KEVAN LIM

I remember Jack. He was the camper who screamed in his sleep from 1:30 until 5:30, at precise hourly intervals, a regular cuckoo clock of a kid. The first time he screamed I thought an anaconda had got him, was squeezing the life out of his puny body, and with his last breath he had desperately pleaded for assistance from me, his almighty counselor. I vaulted out of bed with flashlight in hand.

The instant I turned it on, Jack stopped screaming. Actually, at the time I did not know the screamer was Jack. I walked around the cabin, shining the beam on each of the 12 campers, all of whom looked fast asleep. It reminded me of the wet spring nights in Gig Harbor. There the frogs constantly croak and chirp outside the windows, then fall silent and remain hidden when you stumble outside, Maglight in hand, ready to send the little green buggers flying into the trees behind your house, where hopefully a tomcat will finish them off.

But I rarely find those frogs. And I wasn't in my house in Gig Harbor, Washington. I was counseling at Big Lake Youth Camp, near Sisters, Oregon, during Adventure Camp, which means 7- to 9-year-old campers. I checked my alarm clock. 1:30 a.m. There were no anacondas in the cabin. I went back to bed.

The second time Jack screamed he provided some insight into why he was thus vocalizing.

"It's dark...I can't see..." he informed us, after he finished screaming. "It's dark..." he continued to whimper, until I flipped on my flashlight, after which all was silent. I still didn't know it was Jack who had screamed. I looked at my alarm clock. 2:30 a.m.

The third time Jack screamed I figured out it was him,

because in addition to screaming, he also tossed, turned, bumped into the wall, then rolled the other way until he rolled off his bunk. I shot the beam over in the direction of the bump—and there was Jack. He blinked, wide awake, when I came to assist him back onto his bunk.

"I'm okay," he said, after I asked if he was.

"Do you feel a little scared?" I asked.

"No," he replied.

"Well, your screams make it sound like you're frightened of something."

"I'm not screaming," he said, and climbed back onto his bunk, into his sleeping bag, and fell back asleep. The time was 3:30 a.m.

I also went back to bed, but by now I was scared, scared to sink into the consciousness where the thoughts and senses from the world of reality and the world of dreams overlap, where I cannot only lie in a bunk at Big Lake Youth Camp, but also sit in the driver's seat of a customized Honda S2000 (I drive a stock Civic); where I can not only toss and turn in a stuffy sleeping bag, but also drift and skid across fresh asphalt on an empty boulevard (Big Lake Youth Camp has bark chips and gravel roads); where I can not only hear the wails and screams of illegal slick tires, but also the wails and screams of Jack.

The time was 4:30 a.m. This time I stayed on my bunk and shined the flashlight in the general direction of the noise, which caused Jack's screaming to stop. After a minute I flipped off the flashlight. Jack remained silent. I slept for an hour more. At 5:30 I repeated the process. At 6:30 I woke the campers for worship, mumbling something about joy that cometh in the morning, and welcome to another day of camp. □

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