

PASTOR DISFELLOWSHIPED

NEWS • ANALYSIS •

# ADVENTIST TODAY

VOL. 6, NO. 2

MARCH • APRIL 1998

WWC FACULTY RESPONDS  
TO COMMISSION

---

ADVENTIST TODAY  
HOLDS CAMPMEETING

---

NPUC ADDRESSES  
RATZLAFF BOOK

This We Believe?

# Ellen White

## The Bible and the Bible Only?

**I**s a firm commitment to “the Bible and the Bible only” (BBO) the key to Adventist renewal? Maybe not. According to the Bible, “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established... Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.” (Romans 13:1, 5) In the 1860s, in the South and North, Bible-believing Baptists and Presbyterians understood this passage not only to permit, but to require their cooperation in a system of oppression. But Ellen White wrote, “The law of our land requiring us to deliver a slave to his master, we are not to obey... The slave is not the property of any man.” (*Testimonies for the Church* 1:202)

Both Adventists and the fugitive slaves benefited from White’s correction of Paul (or at the very least her correction of the common-sense Protestant and Catholic understanding of Paul). If Adventists had submitted to the BBO norms of American Protestantism they would have acquiesced in slavery and cited the Bible to justify their wickedness.

On the other hand, many contemporary Adventists have found freedom from fear of damnation only as they allowed the Pauline message of grace to overwhelm the White-based message of last-day perfection. Theology, like life, is messy.

Samuel Koranteng-Pipim in *Receiving the Word* argues that authentic Adventism embraces the Bible not only as the supreme authority but as our “sole authority.” However, the Bible does not mention tobacco or cocaine. We prohibit both. The Bible is more emphatic against overindulgence in food than it is about non-indulgence in alcohol. But we outlaw alcohol for all members and tolerate obesity even among our leaders. And Pipim vigorously affirms all these non-Biblical Adventist norms.

The weakness of BBO as the guardian of Adventism is illustrated most dramatically in Dale Ratzlaff’s *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*. Ratzlaff believes a more honest commitment to BBO would rescue Adventism from its cultic past and bring us to full Christian maturity (i.e. evangelicalism). But BBO was used by evangelicals in the South I grew up in to justify separation of the races and oppression of Blacks. It is still used by many evangelicals to prove that a loving God will give the lost eternal life in hell and that all Jews, Buddhists, animists, atheists, and homosexuals will experience that hellacious eternity. Eternal hell and narrowly restricted salvation are vintage evangelicalism and firmly linked to BBO; these ideas are not improvements on Adventism. One further evidence against the value of BBO: regions of North America with the highest rate of this belief also have elevated rates of child abuse.

Ratzlaff and Pipim agree: the salvation of the Adventist church is to be found in a fearless commitment to BBO. They agree that the current crisis in the church is a result of “departing from the Word.” In spite of their agreement on BBO, however, each would see the other as a paragon of heresy. A peculiar feature of BBO is that its advocates so confidently anathematize each other.

The Bible is a powerful tool for spiritual renewal. It is easy to document the Bible’s life-changing impact—among cannibals, among white-collar and blue-collar crooks, among college kids. The Bible is a priceless resource. We should read it. We should help our children memorize it. We must not allow the dogmatism of BBO proponents to diminish our own involvement with the Bible itself.

Proponents of BBO often see the Bible as an adversary of other sources of truth. The Bible vs. science vs. experience vs. Ellen White vs. tradition vs. the church fathers or contemporary scholarship. The fact is, God speaks through all of these. And our ability to hear God in the Bible will be significantly diminished if we ignore the rest.

Ratzlaff and Pipim both call us to renewed attention to what Christ says through the Word. I agree. Most Adventists need more, not less, exposure to the words of the Bible. Attending to the Word will bring revival. But as we listen to God in the Bible, let’s remember that above the narrow doctrinal concerns linked with BBO, God calls us to truth and love: truth beyond all simplistic formulas (including our own) and love for those who cannot see it our way.

John McLarty, Editor



FOUNDATION BOARD  
 Doug Schultz, Board Chair  
 Keith Colburn, Secretary/Treasurer  
 Virginia Burley  
 Raymond Cottrell  
 Elwin Dunn  
 Reni Dupertuis  
 Diana Fisher  
 Edmund Jones  
 James Kaatz  
 Frank Knittel  
 John McLarty  
 Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson  
 Don Shasky  
 John Sickler  
 Ervin Taylor  
 David Van Putten  
 James Walters

ADVISORY COUNCIL  
 Ken & Jo Abbott  
 Robert & Kelli Black  
 Gary & Jeanne Bogle  
 Antonius & Lilia Brandon  
 Todd & Ginny Burley  
 Ron & Anita Cafferky  
 Greg & Dana Carlson  
 John & Charlotte Cassell  
 Keith & Judy Colburn  
 Ronald & Patricia Cople  
 James & Kathryn Dexter  
 Merlyn & Rosemary Duerksen  
 James Dunn  
 Douglas and Patricia Ewing  
 Donald & Beverly Farley  
 Gary & Sharon Fraser  
 Gary & Annette Frykman  
 Richard Green  
 Richard & Kathi Guth  
 Lyndon & Linda Harder  
 Bruce Heinrich  
 Jim & Jackie Henneberg  
 Dennis & Jolene Hilliard  
 Wayne & Susan Jacobsen  
 John & Judy Jacobson  
 Jim & Averille Kaatz  
 Elton & Marga Kerr  
 Dean & Dolores Kinsey  
 Frank & Helen Knittel  
 Richard & Janis Larsen  
 Ken & Florence Lorenz  
 Don & Penny Miller  
 Rick Murray  
 T. Clint & Elaine Nelson  
 Thaine Price  
 Gary & Ruthe-Marina Raines  
 Judith Rausch  
 Phil & Joyce Reisweig  
 Gordon & Judy Rick  
 Richard & Missy Rouhe  
 Glenn & Cherie Rouse  
 Doug & Sandy Schultz  
 Don & Ursula Shasky  
 Walter L. & Lula Ann Stilson  
 James & Maryan Stirling  
 Ervin & Marilyn Taylor  
 Bob & Karen Torrey  
 John & Nancy Vogt  
 David Van Putten  
 James & Priscilla Walters  
 James & Betty Webster  
 Tim & Stephanie Welebir

# This We Believe?

- 7 **A Book That Is Shaking Adventism**
- 8 **Our Cherished Doctrine** ROY GANE
- 11 **Will Her Writings Stand in the Light of Truth?** BRUCE HEINRICH
- 12 **The Adventist Foundation: Pillar or Sliver** TED LEWIS
- 14 **Cultic Doctrine: Powerful but Also Unfair** MAX PHILLIPS
- 15 **Ellen G. White & Truth-Telling** JAMES WALTERS
- 19 **Re-Visioning the Role of Ellen White** ARTHUR PATRICK



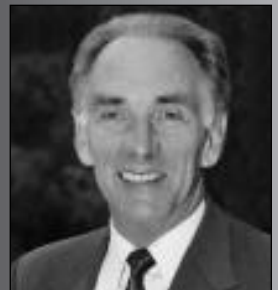
ROY GANE 8



B. HEINRICH 11



TED LEWIS 12



A. PATRICK 19

## NEWS AND ANALYSIS

- 5 Adventist Today Holds Campmeeting
- 5 WWC Faculty Responds to Report COLLEEN MOORE TINKER
- 6 NPUC Addresses Ratzlaff Book
- 6 Changes At Adventist Today JAMES WALTERS
- 24 Conference Disfellowships Independent Pastor COLLEEN MOORE TINKER

## LETTERS

- 4 Kaiser on Target
- 4 Crisis in the Church
- 4 Anti-Semitism
- 4 On Doctrine and Theology
- 4 Wonderful Story
- 4 Timely Magazine

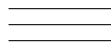
## SOUNDINGS

- 23 A Conversation with Benjamin BERT WILLIAMS

### ABOUT THE COVER:

The cover art was derived from an original photograph provided by the Ellen G. White Estate Branch Office on the campus of Loma Linda University.

# FIRST CLASS



Letters to the Editor  
Adventist Today  
P.O. Box 1220  
Loma Linda, CA 92354-1220

## Kaiser on Target

My wife and I recently read Leland Kaiser's article "What's in the Future" in the January-February, 1997 issue of *Adventist Today* and believe he is right on target. We particularly appreciated the statement, "The best way to save a person's soul is often indirect—by first focusing on their felt needs." We believe our experience has proven that to be true...

*Robert Lee & Elsie D. Law  
Directors, The Positive Way  
Ferron, Utah*

## Crisis in the Church

On reading the latest issue of our magazine I felt inspired to draw a comparison between the crisis that has occupied so much space in recent issues and other crises with which God has dealt since the origin of sin...

I am constrained to express my frustration with your publication. I cannot see what possible good it is doing. The material presented usually is cast in a light to discredit and undermine the authority of the church. In this day and age we need to build up and encourage and inspire the loyalty and support of our membership. What you are doing has the opposite effect... What a disgrace to spread before the people and the world the perceived errors of God's last church. We all know we are human and make mistakes, yet the beauty of it is that God uses us in spite of our humanness. He even forgives. Can we not forgive each other and our leaders?

In answer to that question I guess I shall have to forgive you, but it would be wrong for me not to let you know how it affects me.

*Forrest L. Fuller, M.D.  
Collegedale, TN*

Editor's reply: We appreciate your concern for the good name of the church

and your candor in telling us of your feelings. *Adventist Today* also cares deeply about the Adventist church, but we believe that the church is not well served by people who ignore its problems. "The church" today is really composed of many people who have a common goal in Christ but who have differing ideas on how that goal should be achieved. In the absence of good information people hold misgivings about others and doubt their sincerity. *AT* is trying to help all the membership know what is going on, and whenever possible point to ways in which the common goals can be reached with less human suffering. Keep on reading *AT*; maybe you will come to agree.

## Anti-Semitism

After reading Doris (Rausch)'s letter to the editor [*AT*, September/October 1997, p. 7], I could not help but exclaim, "No wonder 'my Lord delayeth His coming!' Jesus, a 'Jew by choice,' must be as deeply offended by this display of anti-Semitism as I am! After all, 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me!'"

Some Jewish Adventist converts have told us they've noticed the same spirit in the SDA churches where they attend, and wonder. To those of us with Jewish ties, this anti-Semitism exhibits itself as a glaring defect among Adventists.

*E.R. Elkins  
Nampa, Idaho*

## On Doctrine and Theology

[I] enjoyed reading [John McLarty's] article on doctrine vs. theology. It helped me to understand a lot more about the tension that exists among the theologians and the church fathers. I am glad that [he's] taken the high road and complimented both parties—not easy to do in this case... I also enjoyed reading [his]

editorial which calls for more dialogue and less condemnation.

*Kelvin Loh  
Via email*

I very much appreciated John McLarty's article. His defining the balance between doctrine and theology was excellent and helpful. More important is the level of open-mindedness he exhibits. For such a well-educated group, Adventists often lack this quality.

*Scott Miller  
Orlando, Florida*

Just a quick note to say that John McLarty's "Doctrine and Theology: What's the Difference?" is just the kind of insightful analysis we need. I found his comparison very helpful in sorting out some of the overlap and resulting conflict. A good analysis is one that lets one classify information in new and more useful ways. This one did the trick. Thanks!

*Robert Johnston  
Lake Jackson, Texas*

## Wonderful Story

I just got around to reading the story, "It's Christmas and All You Can Do Is Cry." It's wonderful! Please convey my thanks for the story to Max Phillips.

*Dixie Hile  
Via email*

## Timely Magazine

Thanks for your timely and enlightening magazine [that enables us to] see the other side of the coin. [I] especially [enjoyed] Richard Fredericks' response to William Johnsson's November, 1997, article.

*Edie Mabley*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR  
*Adventist Today*, P.O. Box 1220  
Loma Linda, CA 92354-1220  
E-mail: [AToday@aol.com](mailto:AToday@aol.com)

# Adventist Today Holds Campmeeting

The first *Adventist Today* camp meeting convened on the weekend of March 21, 1998. Beginning with the Friday evening gathering in the fellowship hall of the Riverside Seventh-day Adventist Church in Riverside, California, every meeting was challenging and rewarding.

*Adventist Today* editor John McLarty conducted the Friday evening meeting with a bigger-than-expected crowd exceeding 100 people. The evening included stories and testimonies of people's relationships with the Seventh-day Adventist church. The capstone was when Eric Bahme, pastor of the New Life Congregational Seventh Day Adventist Church in Woodinville, Washington, told his story of becoming an Adventist at the age of 13. His decision was independent, and he told of the church becoming his "family" during his isolated teen years. His love for the church has remained deep and profound.

Sabbath morning Smuts van Rooyen, senior pastor of the Riverside church, inspired the 9:45 A.M. crowd with a sermon entitled "Spirituality: Finding the Road Again." At 11:00 Charles Scriven, president of Columbia Union College, spoke on "Recovering Conviction Without Losing Your Mind."

Preceding his sermon, Pastor Scriven participated in a special presentation to *AT* founder and editor emeritus Raymond Cottrell, honoring him for his 65 years of visionary service in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The church hosted a lasagna lunch with a dessert potluck following the morning meetings, and at 2:00 Charles Scriven presented his talk "The Radical View and the Renewal of the Church" followed by a question and answer period. Brassworks, a sextet from Loma Linda, gave a half-hour concert featuring music from Gabrielli to hymn tunes before the panel discussion at 3:30.

The four-person panel discussed the question, "The New Congregationalism: What Gives?" Panelists were Mitchell Hensen, senior pastor of the Glendale City Church, Larry Caviness, president of the Southern California Conference, Lourdes Morales-

Gudmundsson, chair of the department of modern languages at La Sierra University, and Eric Bahme, pastor of the New Life Congregational Church of Seventh Day Adventists in Woodinville, Washington. James Walters moderated. Discussion flowed fast, candidly, and cordially.

John McLarty closed the day with a vesper meditation comparing the Adventist Church to a juniper bush, twisted and chal-

lenged by inclemency but still gripping the stony soil and providing shade for those who find it.

Four tapes from the meetings are available. Tape one contains Smuts van Rooyen and John McLarty. Tape two includes both of Charles Scriven's sermons. Tapes three and four contain the panel discussion. These are available for \$4.00 apiece, or the whole set of four is available in an album for \$15.00. To order tapes send your check and a request for the tape(s) you wish to purchase to: Riverside Seventh-day Adventist Church, 4850 Jurupa, Riverside, California, 92504, attention: Oradelle Lizer. Allow two weeks for delivery.

## WWC Faculty Responds to Report

COLLEEN MOORE TINKER

In the fall of 1997 the Walla Walla College religion faculty received the report of the Commission established to examine charges against them. These charges resulted from differences which had been festering between the faculty and the North Pacific Union's (NPUC) top administrators.

As reported in *Adventist Today* (January/February, 1998), the Commission exonerated the faculty of all charges and also made some recommendations for "reestablishing WWC's credibility." Additionally, they requested a formal response from the WWC faculty at the WWC Board meeting on March 2, 1998.

In an all-day meeting on March 2, Stephen Payne, WWC vice-president for admissions and marketing and chair of the Commission Response Committee, read the entire response before the full board. The reaction to the reading, according to Ron Jolliffe, faculty senate chair and observer at the board meeting, was "a miracle."

"I didn't know what to expect," Jolliffe admits. "We had been in such a mode of guarding against attack that we didn't expect the response we got. The conference presidents were amazed and pleased by the tone of the report. They were absolutely thrilled!"

The 31-page report is neither offensive nor defensive. It states that the faculty takes the Commission's recommendations as a catalyst for self-examination and for

doing their jobs better. It is conciliatory and open; it clearly states the ways in which the faculty will revise their programs to conform to the Commission's recommendations. It further states the religion faculty's loyalty to the church and its commitment to passing Adventist beliefs to another generation.

At the conclusion of Dr. Payne's reading, many conference and union officials responded with delight. The meeting heralded a new level of understanding and appreciation between the faculty and church leaders.

Although NPUC president Jere Patzer has made overtures of conciliation with the faculty, he appears to have lingering doubts about their trustworthiness. April 15 was the date a union-wide ministerial conference convened in Seattle, Washington, at the DoubleTree Inn. All NPUC pastors had received invitations to the conference, but after the March 2 meeting, Patzer had specifically requested that the WWC religion faculty not attend. They might, he feared, ask embarrassing questions which the presenters might find uncomfortable.

Many conference presidents, however, wanted the faculty there. As a result of their persistent requests, the ban was lifted on April 7. In spite of the lack of time to plan for classroom substitutes and travel arrangements, all but two of the WWC religion faculty attended the Seattle meetings. The faculty received warm welcomes, and the local pastors attending the meetings were pleased to meet and hear the faculty in person.

## NPUC Addresses Ratzlaff Book

**A** ministerial conference for the North Pacific Union convened at the Double Tree Inn in Seattle, Washington on April 15. A wide range of workshops and meetings was available, with topics ranging from geochronology to computer graphics for pastors. On Thursday, April 16, at 2:00 P.M. a general session assembly met to discuss Dale Ratzlaff's book, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*.

Three theologians conducted the seminar: Angel Rodriguez from the General Conference, Richard Davidson from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, and Roy Gane, also from the seminary. Gane hosted the discussion.

The meeting began with each of the three men making positive comments about the book. They agreed that it was clearly written, and they sympathized with Ratzlaff's personal experience that led to his eventually leaving the Adventist church. They also agreed with Ratzlaff that the sanctuary doctrine is central to Adventism, although they disagreed with him about the implications of its centrality.

They also had criticisms of the book. Davidson said he "expected at least one or two new arguments." He also said Ratzlaff's

book was "warmed-up [Desmond] Ford." Davidson criticized the book for not addressing any of the study or publications which the church has done during the fifteen years since Desmond Ford's concerns about the investigative judgment and the 2300 days became public in 1981.

Rodriguez said, "This is the most disappointing aspect of the book. The scholarship is very poor. However, for an Adventist who is not informed, this book could be damaging."

Gane referred to Ratzlaff's lack of comment on the seven volumes which the Daniel and Revelation Committee (DARCOM) has issued in response to Ford's criticisms.

The tone of the meeting was open and nondefensive. Each of the three men detailed his reasons for seeing the investigative judgment and the sanctuary doctrine as central to the church. They also explained, with the use of many texts and references to sanctuary service typology, why they believe them to be biblical.

Rodriguez commented that the fundamental issue at stake when discussing the 2300 days and 1844 is prophetic interpretation. He said, "The method of interpretation we use is passé. It's a method not used by any serious scholar outside

Adventism [today]... We're using the method Luther used."

He continued by saying, "If we're wrong about Daniel, then we're wrong."

The church uses this method of interpretation, he says, because it's what we believe the Biblical text supports.

"The church is still saying, 'This is what the Bible says. This is what to use,' " he concludes.

During the question and answer period following the presentation, Gane read the following question submitted anonymously from one of the audience: "If we believe the sanctuary doctrine as a valid concept but do not see any validity to the 2300 days or 1844, is that a problem?"

Rodriguez responded, "Without 1844 and the doctrine of the sanctuary—this may sound strong... there's no reason for us to exist. It has provided for us our identity and our mission... If we're wrong there, we're simply wrong... If we change that, we'd be transmuted into something else.

"I find it very difficult to understand how we could really be Adventists and deny... our birth."

One attendee requested a comment on Raymond Cottrell's statement that he has no biblical basis for the investigative judgment. To support it, he uses Ellen White alone.

Gane responded by referring to the previous hour's discussion and saying that they had just shown in detail how it is clearly biblical.

Another question asked how we could make the doctrine of the investigative judgment encouraging instead of discouraging.

Davidson responded, "If we're in Christ we can long for the judgment."

Davidson also commented on the fact that Ratzlaff and Ford teach that the judgment is to reveal to God who is saved. "We've never taught that God needs to have [that] revealed," he declared. The purpose of the judgement is to reveal to the universe why God saves who he saves.

Taped transcripts of the one and one-half hour seminar are available for \$2.50 apiece. To order call: (253) 833-3998 or write A & J Enterprises, 42717 188th Ave. SE, Enumclaw, Washington 98022.

---

## Changes at Adventist Today

JAMES WALTERS

**D**oug Schultz, businessman, head elder of the Glendale City Adventist church and former pastor, became the new chair of the Adventist Today board on May 9. He replaces Ervin Taylor, professor of anthropology at University of California, Riverside, who ably served as chair for the last 3 1/2 years.

The Advisory Council voted on March 21 to expand the board to include women and young people. The three women are Virginia Burley, an administrator at Mt. San Antonio College in Southern California,

Lourdes Morales-Gudmundsson, chair of the department of modern languages, La Sierra University, and Dianna Fisher, a graduate student in theology, Fuller Theological Seminary. John Sickler, a social worker with the Loma Linda University Church, and Rene Dupertuis, a doctoral student in New Testament at Claremont Graduate University, have also joined the board.

These changes follow the recent appointment of John McLarty as editor and the *AT* offices moving to La Sierra University campus. *Adventist Today* just celebrated its 5th birthday and anticipates continuing growth in the future.

# A Book That Is Shaking Adventism

**T**he 1996 book *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* by Dale Ratzlaff is beginning to make waves. In the two years since its first printing it has gone from being recommended by word-of-mouth to being mailed to pastors in entire conferences, paid for by anonymous donors.

Ratzlaff was a fourth-generation Adventist with an M. Div. from the Adventist theological seminary at Andrews University. He was an academy Bible teacher for seven years, and he pastored two Adventist churches. In 1982, convinced after extensive study that they could not document the doctrine of the investigative judgment and the cleansing of the sanctuary from the Bible, Ratzlaff and his wife Carolyn left the Seventh-day Adventist church.

Today Ratzlaff pastors the rapidly growing Christian Community Church in Arizona.

## True Prophet or False?

*Cultic Doctrine* is a logical, carefully documented work with no overtones of resentment or bitterness. In it Ratzlaff explains his belief that the investigative judgment is not biblical. He further questions the validity of considering Ellen White to be a true prophet.

Ratzlaff lays his foundation by questioning, point-by-point, the validity of William Miller's date setting. He points out that Ellen White had visions to support the erroneous dates for the second coming, had further visions to support new dates, and also had visions which declared that Jesus wanted people to believe the wrong dates for a time.

He also looks closely at the Adventist teaching of "progressive revelation."

"If I understand progressive revelation correctly, a new revelation of truth does not contradict the first revelation of truth. It may add new insights, facts and understanding, but the first revelation of truth fits into the bigger picture of truth without being contradictory." (page 355)

## Judgment Linked to Major Beliefs

Another major point in *Cultic Doctrine* is that the investigative judgment is closely linked to the following key points of the Adventist message: the three angels' messages, the seventh-day Sabbath, the seal of God and the mark of the beast, the Adventist concept of the remnant, the health message, the imminent second coming of Christ, and the evangelistic mission of the Adventist church.

"The doctrine of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and the investigative judgment is indeed 'the foundation and central pillar of Adventism.' While some SDAs would not agree with this statement, we will see that nearly every aspect of their unique message is tied to this central pillar, without which the other SDA doctrines and emphases would lose some, if not much of their significance." (page 266)

"The glue that links all these SDA messages together is the prophetic ministry and visions of Ellen White," Ratzlaff says. (page 274)

Ratzlaff does, however, admit that the Adventist church is not teaching the same things it taught many years ago. But he lays a challenge in front of the church:

"The SDA church should not be evaluated today on the basis of what it was many years ago, but on its current beliefs and practices. And here is the Adventist opportunity and dilemma. It appears to me that there are many in the denomination who are changing and want more change. However, they do not want to openly repudiate past errors...."

"It seems to me that the only way Adventists can really 'come clean' and move into mainstream evangelicalism is to openly repudiate the early errors of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and the investigative judgment and to drop the writings of Ellen White as a source of authority." (pages 354, 355)

## Influence Spreading

During the past three months, according to Ratzlaff, anonymous donors have paid to have the book mailed to every pastor in the Oregon Conference, in the Southeastern, Southern, Central and Northern California conferences, and in the Rocky Mountain Conference. Recent phone calls, he reports, have promised money for more mailings.

On April 16, 1998, (see story on page 6) a general session meeting at the annual North Pacific Union workers' meeting dealt entirely with the questions raised by Ratzlaff's book.

Because of *Cultic Doctrine's* increasing exposure, *Adventist Today* presents four reactions to the book on the following pages. Two are opposed to Ratzlaff's conclusions, and two support them. These are the personal views of people who feel passionately about their beliefs and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of *Adventist Today*. We invite you to examine your own reasons for belief or for disbelief.

You may obtain *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* as well as Ratzlaff's first book, *Sabbath in Crisis*, by calling (800) 355-7073 or by ordering from the web site [www.ratzlaf.com](http://www.ratzlaf.com) or [dale@ratzlaf.com](mailto:dale@ratzlaf.com).

# Our Cherished Doctrine

ROY GANE

**I**n *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*, Dale Ratzlaff encourages the Adventist church to abandon its sanctuary/judgment doctrine and to join evangelicals in proclaiming the true gospel. He regards our sanctuary doctrine as a “sliver in the foot” which destroys spirituality and acceptance of grace through faith by promoting paranoid, perfectionistic legalism.

Ratzlaff, a former Adventist minister, attacks the Adventist sanctuary doctrine from several angles. He associates our interpretation of the 2300 day prophecy (Dan 8:14) with wild proof-texting of William Miller, whose views spawned our movement. He argues that our approach to the 2300 days is based on a series of unverified “assumptions.” He attacks the credibility of

Ellen White, upon whose authority our sanctuary doctrine must rest if it cannot be established from the Bible. He questions the integrity of Adventist treatment of doctrinal issues, and he points out that today some Adventists are theologically divided to the extent that they hold mutually exclusive positions. Perhaps most potent is the way in which Ratzlaff chronicles his exodus from the Adventist church to illustrate his claim that our sanctuary doctrine is damaging and incompatible with biblical salvation theology.

No Adventist can argue with Ratzlaff’s experience. It is a fact that our sanctuary doctrine as understood by him has caused him pain. Many can resonate with him. In graduate school, as a student of an authority on Leviticus, I grappled with the sanctuary in the Hebrew text for eight years before I felt really comfortable remaining a Seventh-day Adventist. I am grateful to God that I had the opportunity to study deeply enough not only to have my questions answered, but also to get in touch with Jesus where he is now, in his sanctuary in heaven (Heb 7-10; cp. Ps 11:4).

I agree with Ratzlaff when he emphasizes the foundational nature of the sanctuary doctrine for Adventist theology. However, while his purpose is to argue for thorough reformation of our theology through removal of this doctrine, I find that sound exegesis points in the opposite direction: we should cherish the sanctuary because it accurately reflects righteousness by faith.



Roy Gane is Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Languages at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. Specializing in ancient near eastern rituals, he earned his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley in 1992.



For his biblical objections to our sanctuary doctrine, Ratzlaff relies heavily on issues raised by Desmond Ford almost two decades ago. Ford's questions were good ones, and they have stimulated a lot of Adventist research, such as the Daniel and Revelation Committee (DARCOM) series edited by Frank Holbrook. Ratzlaff acknowledges these works in his bibliography, but for some unexplained reason his discussion does not take their arguments into account. Thus his critique is more a reaction to the situation as it stood near the beginning of the 1980s than it is an accurate appraisal of current Adventist scholarship. We have more work to do, but we are making progress, which Ratzlaff should recognize.

If Ratzlaff is arousing more interest in the sanctuary than the DARCOM series did, it is because his book is controversial and easily comprehended by non-scholarly readers. The DARCOM series is full of Hebrew and Greek exegesis which even our M.Div. students at the Seminary have difficulty following. In order to bridge the gap between scholars and lay people, we need more books like Clifford Goldstein's *1844 Made Simple*.

To support the idea that our sanctuary doctrine deserves to be studied rather than buried, I would like to suggest some possible answers to a few of the points which Ratzlaff has raised.

### 2300 "Days"

Ratzlaff (page 176) follows Ford in questioning our interpretation of "2300 days" in Daniel 8:14 on the ground that the Hebrew reads literally "evening morning 2300," which many scholars understand in light of verse 26 ("the evening and the morning") as 2300 half days, i.e. 1150 full days. By comparing the syntax of Daniel 8:14, 26 with Hebrew expressions for time elsewhere, I have found that the number 2300 applies to both "evening" and "morning" as an abbreviation for "evenings 2300 and mornings 2300." Therefore, just as "forty days and forty nights" (Gen 7:4, 12, etc.) refers to forty full days, Daniel 8:14 refers to 2300 full days.

### Atonement Not Completed at the Cross

Whereas the Adventist sanctuary doctrine indicates that atonement was not completed at the cross, Ratzlaff affirms the evangelical position that atonement was completed at the cross (pp. 219-222). Adventists would agree that Christ's death was the one and only atoning sacrificial death (Heb 9:28; cp. Jn 19:30—"It is finished"). All atonement, i.e. reconciliation between sinners and their God, flows from Calvary. But was that the end of the process of atonement? If atonement is relational in that it deals with reconciliation between two parties, how can we receive atonement from a historical event which occurred almost two thousand years ago unless we experience a changed relationship with God on the basis of the event? As long as relationships are being healed, atonement is continuing. This concept agrees with the following biblical evidence:

1. Paul said: "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have died in Christ have perished" (I Cor 15:17-18; NRSV). Christ's resurrection, after his death on the cross, is essential for salvation.

2. In Hebrews 7-10, Christ ministers after his ascension as

our high priest in the true sanctuary in heaven, an activity which was foreshadowed by the ancient Israelite sanctuary. There he appears "in the presence of God on our behalf" (Heb 9:24). Having obtained eternal redemption for us by his own blood (vs. 12), he uses his blood (cp. vs. 13—"sprinkling") to "purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God" (vs. 14; NRSV). In other words, Christ died to make abundant provision for the salvation of all human beings, and then he distributes/applies the transforming benefit. By way of analogy, Christ puts the money in the bank (by his death) and then he writes checks to people from that account (by his mediation). For us to receive the benefit of salvation, provision and distribution are both necessary.

3. In agreement with New Testament evidence for the way in which we are saved by Christ's blood, ancient Israelite sacrifices for sin included personal involvement of sinners and

**Whereas the Adventist sanctuary doctrine indicates that atonement was not completed at the cross, Ratzlaff affirms the evangelical position that atonement was completed at the cross**

priestly mediation as essential components. A common Israelite sinner was required to bring a female goat or sheep to the sanctuary, lean his/her hand on the head of the animal, and slay it. Then the priest applied its blood to the altar and burned its suet/fat on the altar (Lev 4:27-35). The ritual is summarized: "and the priest shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven" (Lev 4:31, RSV; cp. vs. 35). Atonement was not completed by slaughter of the animal at the hand of the sinner, which pointed forward to Christ's death. Death provided the blood which made possible priestly mediation, which is called a work of "atonement." Mediation was part of the atoning sacrifice. Since Christ's sacrifice fulfills the meaning of the animal sacrifices (Jn. 1:29), we should include Christ's mediation as an essential part of his sacrifice rather than regarding it as a separate phase. Does the idea that atonement was not completed at the cross diminish the sacrifice and atonement of Christ? Absolutely not! We magnify what Christ is doing! Christ's sac-

rifice and atonement are much bigger than they are commonly thought to be!

4. When an Israelite received complete forgiveness from God through a sacrifice which pointed forward to Christ's sacrifice (e.g. Lev 4:31, 35), that was not the end of the process of atonement. Atonement is larger than forgiveness. There was a further phase of atonement on the "Day of Atonement" (Lev 23:27-28). On this day, Israelites who had already been forgiven were now "cleansed" (Lev 16:30) through purification of the sanctuary from their sins (Lev 16:16, 33-34). Until the Day of Atonement, forgiven sins affected God in the sense that he could be regarded as unjust because he had forgiven guilty sinners (cp. 2 Sam 14:9). But the Day of Atonement reaffirmed God's forgiveness by vindicating the justice of his mercy. However, Israelites who were rebellious and/or failed to accept

**The judgment is not about who has sinned. All have sinned (Rom 3:23), so distinctions between people cannot be made on this basis. The judgment is about who is forgiven.**

the provisions which he offered during the year and on the Day of Atonement were sentenced to divine punishment (e.g. Lev 20:3; Num 15:30-31; Num 19:13, 20; Lev 23:29, 30). So the Day of Atonement was a judgment which separated people who were disloyal to God from those who were loyal. Therefore the Day was an appropriate foreshadowing of an end-time judgment (Dan 7:9-14; cp. 8:14) which benefits God's true people (Dan 7:22, 27) and condemns those who persist in opposition to God (Dan 7:11, 26; 8:25).

### Faith, Works, and Judgment

Ratzlaff reacts to the Adventist teaching that we are judged on the basis of our works: "This teaching, perhaps more than any other, undermines the new covenant gospel of grace:" (page 210). What is the role of works in the context of the judgment?

First, the Bible is crystal clear regarding our salvation: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that

no one may boast" (Eph 2:8-9, NRSV). Whatever the purpose of the judgment, it cannot put salvation by works in place of salvation by grace through faith.

Adventists teach that the purpose of the judgment is to vindicate God. But Romans 3:25-26 says that Christ's sacrifice already proves that God is just when he justifies those who have faith in Jesus. There is no contradiction, however, because God is just when he justifies those who have faith in Jesus (cp. Eph 2:8). God cannot save a person who does not have true faith or who abandons faith after receiving forgiveness (cp. Jn 3:18; Col 1:23).

The judgment should identify God's true people on the basis of their faith. But since only God can read thoughts (cp. Ps 139:23), the judgment must use evidence for faith which can be witnessed by created beings if they are to be assured that God is just and that saved human beings will not continue to function as self-replicating moral viruses.

Thus the judgment considers records of works (Eccl 12:14; cp. Dan 7:10) which show whether or not living faith exists (James 2:26; Gal 5:6). The point is not the works themselves, but whether or not a person has true faith.

The judgment is not about who has sinned. All have sinned (Rom 3:23), so distinctions between people cannot be made on this basis. The judgment is about who is forgiven. For those who are forgiven, it is to reaffirm their assurance, not to take it away. Compare the fact that on the Day of Atonement the Israelite high priest did not cleanse the sanctuary by wiping off bloodstains from earlier sacrifices. Rather, he placed more blood (Lev 16:14-19), representing Christ's blood, in several of the same places (cp. Lev 4:6-7, 17-18, 25, 30, 34), thereby reaffirming the forgiveness already granted.

Jesus expressed the need for a sinner to continue accepting forgiveness by maintaining loyalty to him and his law of love. He said to the woman taken in adultery: "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again" (Jn 8:11; NRSV). He also told a parable about an unjust steward who was forgiven but repudiated his pardon when he failed to extend forgiveness to his fellow servant (Matt 18:23-34).

Forgiveness which involves no moral change and which cannot reproduce itself for the benefit of others is not true forgiveness of the kind which God gives. Fortunately for us, we are not left on our own to change ourselves. Because Christ gives us peace with God (Rom 5:1), his love, the basic attitude of his character and his law, is poured into our hearts through his Spirit (Rom 5:5; cp. I Jn 4:8; Matt 22:36-40). Thus genuine, ongoing obedience is a gift of grace bought by the blood of Christ and received through faith (cp. Jude vs. 24).

In this brief response I can do little more than offer a general reaction, give a few examples, and express the hope that people will seek answers to Ratzlaff's questions by studying the Bible and testing Adventist study materials for themselves. I agree with Ratzlaff that if the Adventist sanctuary doctrine is an unbiblical skeleton in our theological closet, we should bury it. But thus far, the more I study the more biblical support and practical relevance I find for the Adventist approach to the sanctuary.

# Ellen G. White: Will Her Writings Stand in the Light of Truth?

BRUCE HEINRICH

In 1997, I, Bruce Heinrich, accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior and became born again in him. Since that time I have found a new, personal relationship with Jesus, and he has opened my eyes to the truth that is in the Bible. In spite of the fact that I was a fourth-generation Adventist, I had never realized what it meant to be born again in Jesus. I had never understood the truths the Bible teaches. I now know what the Bible means when it states in John 14:16, 17, and 26 that the Holy Spirit will guide and teach us in all things and lead us in the way of truth.

When I read Dale Ratzlaff's book *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*, I was skeptical of what it said. Consequently, I went out and bought Ellen White's writings on compact disc. I looked up all of Dale's references, and I discovered everything that he said about her writings was true. (The only references I couldn't verify came from early editions of works which are no longer in print.) But the facts of her statements are there, available for anybody who is searching for truth.

After I did my research I passed out the book to friends and colleagues of mine. I was curious to know their reactions. All of their responses were similar to each other. The most common comment was, "The Bible also has many errors and inaccuracies. Ellen White is no different from the Bible writers; all human beings make mistakes."

Another frequent reaction was, "Her writings were right for her time. If we could have lived then, we would have seen things differently." Others said, "She does say some things that trouble me, but there are other passages that are beautiful and full of truth."

The last common response was, "If she differs from the Bible, take the Bible over her writings." My problem with that response, however, is that Mrs. White stated that her writings are either from God or from the devil. If any of her writings disagree with the Bible, then by the authority of her own claim, I have to question the source of her inspiration. I can't hold onto parts of it and let the rest go.

The questions I ask my fellow Adventists are these: What is truth? Is it absolute or relative? Does truth change with time? If it is one thing now, will it become something else later?

In Ephesians 6 it states that we are to put on the armor of God, with the belt of truth. Does the Bible

contain absolute truth, or is it like Ellen White's writings, laced with misstatements, plagiarism, and discrepancies with itself (as well as with the Bible)? Does the Bible, like her writings, have portions that we would like to remove because they have proven to be embarrassing, contradictory, or untrue? Does Ellen White actually make us question the truth found in the Bible?

In my study I have found that there are no real

**If any of her writings disagree with the Bible, then by the authority of her own claim, I have to question the source of her inspiration. I can't hold onto parts of it and let the rest go.**

discrepancies of truth in the Bible. If a person is truly searching for truth and praying for the Holy Spirit to guide him or her to it, the Bible becomes increasingly clear. I've also found that if a person is willing to put aside the filter of Ellen White's interpretations, previously confusing Bible passages suddenly make sense.

I believe that it is time we had an open discussion and debate on all the points presented in Ratzlaff's book. Let each person determine for himself whether or not it teaches truth. The Bible states that Jesus is the truth, and the truth will set us free.

If we Adventists are the beacons of truth to the world, then we should be able to shine a light on all of Ellen White's writings without fear. If they stand up under scrutiny, fine. If they do not withstand the light of truth, then we should be willing to admit our error and let them go.

Bruce Heinrich is an orthodontist practicing in Southern California. He grew up in Loma Linda and attended Pacific Union College, La Sierra College, and LLU School of Dentistry. He and his wife Coleen have a daughter and two sons.



# The Adventist Foundation: Pillar or Sliver

THEODORE S. LEWIS

To build an enduring structure, one must first lay a sturdy foundation. If the foundation is sand rather than solid rock, it will not stand when tested. (Luke 6:48, 49) Ellen White defined Adventism's foundation in *The Great Controversy*: "The scripture which above all others had been both the foundation and the central pillar of the advent faith was the declaration: 'Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.' Daniel 8:14." (page 409)

But Paul said, "No one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). This text leads me to ask, "Is Adventism's foundation biblical? Will it stand when tested?"

In his book *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* (CD), Dale Ratzlaff explores how the early Adventists laid their foundation. He shows that the sanctuary doctrine sprang from one of William Miller's fifteen failed prophecies that Christ would come in 1843. (CD 64, 65) Then the failed date was "corrected" to be October 22, 1844. Again the prophecy failed. (CD 91) Following the second failure, Hiram Edson, one of the disappointed believers, had a vision of Christ going into the most holy place for the first time on October 22, 1844, instead of coming back to the earth. But Ratzlaff says this explanation is contrary to scripture. (CD 98, 210)

The investigative judgment doctrine holds that on October 22, 1844, God began a work "of deter-

mining who are prepared" for his kingdom. (*The Great Controversy*, p. 489) However, scriptures make it clear that God knows those who are His. (Matthew 19:28; 2 Timothy 2:19)

Ratzlaff points out that Edson and O.L.R. Crosier, another pioneer Adventist, published their new views, including their conclusion that no atonement was made at the cross (CD 98,99), and Ellen White responded to their new teaching by saying it was "the light for the remnant." (CD 99) Ratzlaff quotes Ellen White as saying, "Brother Crosier had the true light, on the cleansing of the Sanctuary etc.", and "I feel fully authorized by the

*I have come to believe that the investigative judgment not only robs me of assurance, it makes a mockery out of clear statements of the Bible.*

Lord to recommend that Extra [a special edition of a periodical containing Edson and Crosier's views] to every saint." She endorsed these teachings which Ratzlaff dubs "gross theological error." (CD 102,104) He goes on to show that scriptures teach a complete atonement at the cross. (CD 219-222)

I have come to believe that the investigative judgment not only robs me of assurance, it makes a mockery out of clear statements of the Bible. Ellen White writes that during this judgment, "every name is mentioned, every case closely investigated. Names are accepted, names rejected." (*The Great Controversy*, p. 483; see CD p. 163) In other words, the righteous who died before 1844 have no assurance of their salvation until the judgment. The Bible, however, clearly names many who are saved. (See Hebrews 11:13-40) God had assured these people's salvation long before 1844.



Theodore S. Lewis, has a degree in civil engineering from Walla Walla College and works for the US Army Corps of Engineers. He grew up a third-generation Adventist. He and his wife Sylvia have four children and one grandchild.

Ratzlaff further shows Ellen White's teaching that the books of record determine who passes in the investigative judgment. "Opposite each name in the books of heaven is entered with terrible exactness every wrong word, every selfish act, every unfulfilled duty, and every secret sin, with every artful dissembling, heaven-sent warnings or reproofs, neglected, wasted moments, unimproved opportunities, the influence exerted for good or for evil with its far reaching results, all are chronicled by the recording

*The gospel, indeed, brings better news to me than does the investigative judgment.*

angel." (*Great Controversy* p. 482; CD 161-163)

In contrast Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word, and believes him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life." (John 5:24; CD 217)

In the chapter "I've Been Acquitted!" Ratzlaff explains that the Christian has already been judged in Jesus Christ. "He who believes is not judged. Judgment is set forth in the context of one's choice when confronted with the light of the gospel of Christ.... We begin to see that the biblical concept of judgment is diametrically opposed to the traditional SDA investigative judgment..."

"This is the judgment of justification. It takes the reality of the past historical event of Christ's substitutionary life and death, which provides the righteousness needed for us to pass in the coming future judgment day of God, and applies complete forgiveness of sin and imputed righteousness to the present experience of the believer. Therefore, Paul could say that we died with Christ. (Romans 6:2) We were raised with him to newness of life, and we are already seated with Christ in heavenly places. In other words, the truth of justification by faith and the verdict of 'not guilty' has already been given to those who believe! And that is the good news of the gospel!" (Ephesians 2:6, CD 259, 260)

The gospel, indeed, brings better news to me than does the investigative judgment.

In several places Ratzlaff quotes Galatians 1:6-9: "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be

accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed."


Ratzlaff continues: "Ellen White claims to have seen in vision that an angel from God guided William Miller in his methods and conclusions which were erroneous, and she called his message a 'saving message'.... It is evident that she is claiming divine authority for her statements. As we have seen throughout this book, many of her statements are totally erroneous, and here is the important point: many of them distort, undermine or contradict the new covenant gospel of grace. If we apply the teaching of Paul in Galatians 1:8,9 to these early EGW statements that distort, undermine or contradict the gospel, then Ellen White would become the focus of Paul's condemnation." (CD 325)

*Cultic Doctrine* raises serious questions about the foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Adventism has taught that Christ was in the outer apartment of the heavenly sanctuary for 1800 years. It has taught an investigative judgment, an incomplete atonement, and no real assurance of salvation. These things are not biblical. Even if pastors and teachers no longer present these things the same way they used to, still the whole structure of Adventism grew out of these beliefs. I don't believe we can leave them behind without publicly acknowledging that we were wrong.

Ratzlaff refers to the doctrine of the investigative judgment as a "sliver in the foot" and says, "At times

*Ratzlaff refers to the doctrine of the investigative judgment as a "sliver in the foot" and says, "At times what I have said in this book has probably cut until it hurt."*

what I have said in this book has probably cut until it hurt. Doubtless, some have drawn back at the cutting knife as I did when the old country doctor tried to find the sliver in my foot. I have cut, not with the intention of causing pain, but with the hope that the cut would be deep enough to remove the sliver. How wonderful it would be to see the SDA church running free—free from the crippling sliver, the encumbrance of past error!" (CD 356)

How wonderful it would be for every Seventh-day Adventist Christian to abandon the shifting sand of "another gospel" and to embrace the true gospel, Jesus Christ, the rock of our salvation. 

# Cultic Doctrine: Powerful but Also Unfair

MAX PHILLIPS

In *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists* Dale Ratzlaff makes a powerful point—that the historic Adventist doctrine of the investigative judgment undermines the gospel for many Adventist and eats away at their assurance of salvation. I sympathize with his efforts to make positive changes as an idealistic young pastor, only to find himself caught in a hierarchical web of church brethren overly concerned with maintaining the status quo.

But I also believe *Cultic Doctrine* is unfair to historic Adventism and its pioneers. The book is particularly unfair to Ellen White.

One example is her oft-quoted prediction: “Some food for worms, some subjects of the seven last plagues, some will be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus” (1 Testimonies 132).

“It appears,” Ratzlaff writes, “that Ellen White does not meet the biblical tests of a true prophet. All the people present at that gathering have been dead for many years” (p. 350).

He forgets that Jesus did exactly the same thing:

“But in those days... the sun will be darkened... and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory... Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place.” (Mark 13:24-30, RSV).

One could throw Ratzlaff’s own words of judgment back at him: “It appears that Jesus does *not* meet the biblical tests of a true prophet. All the people present at that gathering have been dead for nearly two thousand years.”

If, then, in Ratzlaff’s view Jesus could still appear to be a true prophet, then why couldn’t Ellen White?

*Cultic Doctrine* also treats William Miller unfairly.

Ratzlaff correctly points out that Miller did characterize Daniel’s he-goat with the little horn as a beast that trod the sanctuary underfoot for 2300 years (not evenings and mornings).

He also faithfully reports the scholarly consensus that “this wicked ‘little horn’ power” was “Antiochus Epiphanes IV, who polluted the sanctuary.”



Max Phillips writes from Washington where he is a writer and editor. He holds degrees in philosophy and theology from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

But he passes judgment on the pioneer: “Surely this type of reckless proof-texting and allegorizing of Scripture *cannot* be the result of God guiding the mind of Miller” (p. 71-72).

One could pass the same judgment on New Testament writers who do precisely the same thing. Matthew, for instance, quotes Hosea: “[Joseph] remained [in Egypt] until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt have I called my son” (Matthew 2:15, RSV).

Fulfill?

Look at the passage from which Matthew quotes! “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning incense to idols” (Hosea 11:1-2, RSV).

How dare Matthew compare Jesus to idol-worshipping people who ran in the opposite direction when God called?

Again one could mirror Ratzlaff’s own word back at him: “Surely this type of reckless proof-texting and allegorizing of Scripture cannot be the result of God guiding the mind of Matthew.”

But these kinds of comparisons lead to logical dead ends. To avoid these we must recognize that there is more than one kind of truth.

Throughout, *Cultic Doctrine* recognizes only one kind: “Truth is the real state of things. Truth is what is.” (page 38) *Webster’s 10th* has this definition, “the body of real things, events and facts.”

But *Webster’s* also lists another definition: Truth is “a transcendent fundamental or spiritual reality.” Could “spiritual reality” be the definition of truth that would make sense of our heritage? Let’s look at some vignettes:

- William Miller, wrong in hermeneutic but right with God, sets out to herald nothing less than the Second Coming of Christ. In this he is much like Abraham.

- Ellen White hears an angel who actually moves with her from legalism into righteousness by faith over the course of her life—a miracle.

- The pioneers set in motion events that did indeed usher in a kind of Second Coming—a spiritual Second Coming—one known as the advent movement.

- As for the investigative judgment, it has served its purpose. It allowed those faithful pioneers a transition period. Now it’s time to let that doctrine fade away into history just as John Calvin’s rigid doctrine of predestination has faded away in the Presbyterian church.

Truth is more than real things, events, and facts. It is spiritual reality.

A large, vertical, sepia-toned portrait of Ellen G. White, looking slightly to the right with a thoughtful expression. She is wearing a dark, high-collared dress.

# Ellen G. White & Truth-Telling

## An Ethical Analysis of Literary Dependency

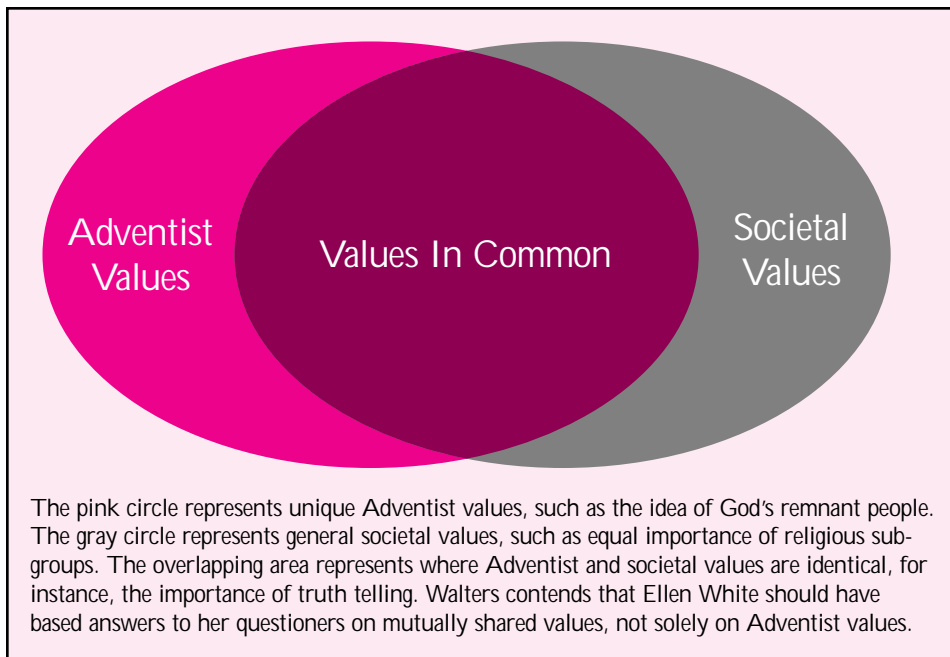
REPORT OF A PRESENTATION BY JAMES W. WALTERS

**T**he great majority of Adventists through the years have sincerely believed that the words they read in the writings of Ellen G. White were her own, or even God's words spoken to her. In reality, however, some direct passages and many ideas and words were taken originally from the works of other people.

Was she plagiarizing in doing this? James Walters cites dictionary definitions of plagiarism to say she was: "The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's own work." (*The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, unabridged edition, 1966.)



James Walters is an ethicist on the Faculty of Religion at Loma Linda University. He is one of the founders of *Adventist Today*.



As an ethicist, Walters approaches the question not to disparage her as a person, nor to excuse or condone her literary practices, but to examine the problem from a mature and honest perspective. Others have publicly denounced Ellen White for what they had discovered in comparing her works with those of other writers before and during her time, and they have produced evidence to support their claims. Adventist historians and scholars have documented such instances as well.

Is it enough to say she was borrowing or merely following conventions of "literary dependency" in excusing her actions? Walters says that to do so is to dodge the real issue. Is there any way by which we can separate her practice of plagiarism from her person and character?

Can we, in the name of objective reality, acknowledge that she did plagiarize in the full sense of the term, yet remain an authentic prophetess?

### Motive Counts

Walters thinks it is possible, and that it makes a difference in how we regard her work. He cites examples of people who have committed "wrong" acts for reasons which seemed morally defensible to them.

Further, he says that such an act could be committed for at least two very different reasons—1) for legitimate and morally compelling reasons, or 2) mere human

weakness. As an example of the first case he cites Dietrich Bonhoeffer's participation in an assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler. Bonhoeffer was deeply committed to the biblical commandment against killing and to a nonviolent approach to questions of state policy and authority, but because he realized that Hitler posed a threat to millions of people he felt compelled to override lesser conventions of faith. In prison Bonhoeffer later reflected on his decision:

"The extraordinary necessity appeals to the freedom of the men who are responsible. There is now no law behind which the responsible man can seek cover... in this situation there can only be a complete renunciation of every law, together with the knowledge that here one must make one's decision as a free venture, together also with the open admission that the law is being infringed and violated... Precisely in this breaking of the law the validity of the law is acknowledged." (*Letters and Papers From Prison*, New York, Macmillan, 1962, pp. 207 ff.)

Bonhoeffer was not evasive about his part in the attempted murder of Hitler, but he acknowledged it and explained that he did it to try to avert the mass extermination of innocent Jews and others. The world would later understand and condone and even praise him for his efforts.

Ellen White, Walters says, similarly saw

her mission as involving the saving, indeed the eternal salvation, of millions of lives. Yet she differed markedly from Bonhoeffer in her attitude toward what she had done. She never admitted, in fact denied, her abnormal literary practices. She bridled at every suggestion of literary dependence. Since she did not advance higher moral principles as justification of her literary practices, this particular avenue for clearing her integrity is unavailable.

The second category of wrongdoing is human weakness. An example of this in the Bible is King David, who first committed adultery with Bathsheba, wife of Uriah, then put Uriah's life in jeopardy. But when confronted by the prophet, David did not try to dodge the issue; he acknowledged his sin. And he was later called "a man after God's own heart," because he showed his character in admitting that the common morality applied to himself as well.

Once when Ellen White's literary practices were questioned she was indignant and accused a basically innocent and talented young literary assistant of being proud, ambitious, a "traitor," and at times "verily possessed by demons." (*The Fannie Bolton Story—a Collection of Source Documents*, compiled by the Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, D.C., 1982, pp. 41 ff.) Bolton was a recent convert who had worked as a journalist and was perplexed by the practices carried out in the production of Ellen White's inspired materials. She sought counsel from Merritt Kellogg, who later recalled Bolton saying: "Dr. Kellogg, I am in great distress of mind. I come to you for advice for I do not know what to do. I have told Elder Starr (George B.) what I am going to tell you, but he gives me no satisfactory advice." "You know," said Fannie, "that I am writing all the time for Sister White. Most of what I write is published in the *Review and Herald* as having come from the pen of Sister White, and is sent out as having been written by Sister White under the inspiration of God. I want to tell you that I am greatly distressed over this matter for I feel that I am acting a deceptive part. The people are being deceived about the inspiration of what I write. I feel that it is a great wrong that anything which I write should go out as under Sister White's



name as an article specially inspired of God. What I write should go out over my own signature. Then credit would be given where credit belongs." (Merritt Kellogg, "Merritt Kellogg Statement," March 1908, quoted in *The Fannie Bolton Story*, pp. 106, 107.)

Fannie Bolton knew firsthand what researcher Ron Graybill would discover years later: "The visions simply did not provide all the information and ideas necessary for books spanning Christian history, outlining health principles, advising on child rearing and education, and handling the myriad individual and organizational problems of a growing church." (*The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century*, unpublished dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1983, pp. 203, 204.) How was Fannie Bolton to square her dawning knowledge of heavy source dependence, to say nothing of weighty personal involvement in article rewriting, with the prophetess' claims for her inspired writings? As an example of these claims, Ellen White wrote that she wanted her readers to know that she did not have "any understanding of anyone's ideas and views, and that not a mold of any man's theories should have any connection with that which I write."

### Societal vs. Religious Values

But what about the religious dimension of Ellen White's literary dependency? Where general ethical norms serve to promote the larger society's well-being, there can be times when such standards conflict with practices which promote the well-being of a societal subgroup. Walters suggests that such a subgroup was the fledgling prophetic movement of which Ellen White was the dynamic center. She became their prophet; she had a message from God for the world, and especially for the church.

Visions were a special but not exceptional form of ecstatic worship in early nineteenth century New York. Early Adventist believers accepted Ellen White's visions, in part, because they were part of a known phenomenon. Others, including Joseph Smith, had experienced visionary states of ecstasy. Ellen White found the experience of a vision to be "powerful,"

and it especially impressed her as a youth of 17. With the passage of time she felt a strong religious compulsion to write her views. She wrote, "Write, write, write, I feel I must, and not delay. Great things are before us, and we want to call the people from their indifference to get ready." She attributed her views to her visions: "The words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation" (*Review and Herald*, Oct. 8, 1867). Her son Willie White spoke of her "habit of using parts of sentences found in writings of others and filling in a part of her own composition" (*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 460).

Ellen White was not a scofflaw; she exhorted her followers to be law-abiding



She never admitted,  
in fact denied, her  
abnormal literary  
practices.

citizens and opposed falsehood and deceit. However, it appears that her first allegiance was to her divinely founded church and to her prophetic role in it. Her prophetic mindset may have been such that the ethical dilemma of truth-in-writing vs. outright deception was not the issue. God had called her to be a "messenger" to his remnant people who were themselves called to warn a hell-bent world. Strict truth-telling was important for general Christian discipleship, but the Advent movement would not flounder for want of needed volumes of divinely inspired messages. And this special calling

entailed writing, much writing. Surely, at least at a subconscious level, Ellen White's visions melded diverse information into compelling impressions. The information had come from church discussions, personal thinking, and wide reading. And these general divinely imparted impressions took further concrete form as Mrs. White continued to study her source material. She was obviously self-conscious, defensive and regrettably deceptive about her source dependence. But if she didn't use her sources, how could she be true to her prophetic writing role, a role she saw as so crucial?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, while in prison, addressed what is a highly instructive question in our inquiry: "What is meant by 'Telling the Truth?'" He criticizes a notion of truth-telling which is abstract and unbending and "solely a matter of moral character." Truth-telling, he says, is directly related to one's role in various relationships. Bonhoeffer gives an illustration of how the different spheres in which one lives can create conflicting demands on truth-telling:

"A teacher asks a child in front of the class whether it is true that his father often comes home drunk. It is true, but the child denies it. The teacher's question has placed him in a situation for which he is not yet prepared. He feels only that what is taking place is an unjustified interference in the order of the family and that he must oppose it. What goes on in the family is not for the ears of the class in school. The family has its own secret and must preserve it. The teacher has failed to respect the reality of this institution. The child ought now to find a way of answering which would comply with both the rule of the family and the rule of the school. But he is not yet able to do this. He lacks experience, knowledge, and the ability to express himself in the right way. As a simple no to the teacher's question the child's answer is certainly untrue, yet at the same time it nevertheless gives expression to the truth that the family is an institution sui generis and that the teacher had no right to interfere in it. The child's answer can indeed be called a lie; yet this lie contains more truth, that is to say, it is more in accordance with reality than would have been the case if the child had betrayed his

father's weakness in front of the class." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, New York, Macmillan, 1968, pp. 363 ff.)

### Religious Justification Inadequate

Ellen White was 57 years old when accusations of source-indebtedness were first made, and a woman who had built a prophetic career in skillfully arbitrating between factions and in building church consensus. She was a churchly-wise woman who surely was conscious of what she was doing in her literary work. Her early paraphrasing may have begun quite innocently, but when later accusations arose, she was overtly confronted with the issue of deception. Her earlier and simpler options had vanished. Should she admit source dependence and thus thwart the finishing of God's work—a work she closely identified with herself? Evidently the compelling end of finishing God's work justified the increasingly dubious means.

The vehement behavior displayed in the Fannie Bolton case seems to betray Ellen White's deep ambivalence and perhaps guilt in utilizing sources as she did. However, even a sense of guilt is understandable if one is choosing a worthy option which involves specific wrongdoing, over another option which is totally unacceptable. On these grounds, speaking from the standpoint of a narrowly religious ethic, Ellen White's plagiarism might be justified.

However, any ethical solution which finds its parameters exclusively in the religious sphere is inadequate. The sphere of general ethics must always be considered as well. Many people are so firmly planted in the purely ethical sphere that they are unable to comprehend uniquely religious claims and the moral seriousness attached to them. Other persons are so embedded in the religious realm that societal norms are quite secondary. Fortunately, religious persons generally recognize a considerable overlapping of the two spheres. Had Ellen White made her decision on literary practices in the area of religious-societal overlap, rather than merely in the religious realm, two benefits would have been realized: 1) both church and society would have profited, and 2) Ellen White's conception of truth itself would have been more adequate.

Had Ellen White been straightforward in her literary practices, the church surely would have profited over the long haul. Further, her apparent belief that literary candor would have had devastating consequences on the church is itself quite dubious in light of the loss of such leaders as J.H. Kellogg and L. R. Conradi, both of whom left the church in part over questions on Ellen White's prophetic gift.

Regardless, society at large is the great beneficiary of subgroup integrity, for society's moral fabric is but the collective morality of its parts. Because of Ellen White's moral lapse, the church and hence



Because of Ellen White's moral lapse, the church and hence even the larger society is the poorer.

even the larger society is the poorer, Walters says.

### Limited Conception of Truth

A second consequence of Ellen White's primary loyalty to the strictly religious realm was her limited conception of truth. Thought leaders in the broader society have long understood the preeminently ethical nature of truth. A truthful person is a truth-telling individual. Truth-telling is not an arbitrary rule conceived by the gods

or God himself in some ancient past, but is a norm which makes societal life possible. The underlying rationale for all truth-telling is the principle of trust. An undergirding trust in one another as human beings is the glue of all human relationships in society, church, and for that matter—heaven itself. Ellen White's expediency in serving the prophetic movement might have been different had she considered truth's deeper dimensions. Possibly her conception of truth was so heavily prepositional that she failed to grasp its undergirding ethical basis. Regardless, the deeper dimensions of truth failed to inform her methodology in the production of "truth-filled" literature.

In the final analysis, Ellen White is not so much at fault personally as is the corporate church. And perhaps Adventism is not so much to be morally blamed as empathetically understood—as a maturing religious child searching for divine security. Ellen White did provide divine, dogmatic answers to hundreds of greater and lesser issues, but she was God's answer to this movement's basically deep need for detailed, authoritative "Thus saith the Lord."

Walters thinks that Ellen White was clearly wrong in her plagiarism and further compromised her integrity by denying it. On the other hand, she was being basically true to the unique view of religious reality which she and her movement possessed. But because even the religious sphere of life can never be the primary basis for ethical decisions, Ellen White's deceptive literary practices must not be countenanced, although they can be comprehended. Unless Ellen White is seen as totally self-deluded, her literary practices do detract from her personal integrity. However, Walters does not believe they destroy it. She was an insightful and courageous woman who did have a special and genuine relationship with her God. Further, Ellen White's prophetic gift for the Adventist church is authentic. Her self-understanding of the gift may not be totally ours, and her exercise of the gift was in crucial points questionable, but Walters believes that God still used this prophetic gift among other gifts for the upbuilding of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

---

# Re-Visioning the Role of Ellen White Beyond the Year 2000

Report of a Presentation by Arthur Patrick, Ph.D., at the San Diego chapter of the Association of Adventist Forums, January 1998

**A**rthur Patrick, Visiting Associate Professor in the School of Religion at La Sierra University, recently spoke to Adventist Forum members about his research into the way church members have responded to new information about the role of Ellen White in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Some people have taken what he calls a reversionist stance, denying the validity of new information and calling into question the motives of those who discovered and published it. Others have taken an opposite view, what he calls a rejectionist position, using the new revelations as a reason for denouncing the whole church. Patrick, however, sees a third alternative, transformationism, where church leaders and members recognize both the valuable contributions of Ellen White's ministry and the validity of the new research, then reformulate their ideas to accord with new data. He says that when we can get a consensus on this, we can resolve many tensions that now hinder the church's progress.



Arthur Patrick is visiting associate professor of church history and pastoral ministry at La Sierra University, California. He is a native Australian and has been a pastor, an evangelist, a religion teacher, and the director of the E. G. White SDA Research Center, South Pacific Division. He and his wife Joan have three grown children.

Patrick lists seven factors that have contributed to change in the church's understanding of its theology and heritage. These include:

- 1) The development of accredited educational institutions, including some with graduate education;
- 2) the graduate education of ministers and teachers by persons who had themselves undertaken university programs;
- 3) the publication of the *SDA Bible Commentary* between 1954 and 1957. Thereafter the church at large began to interpret the Scriptures more faithfully in the light of the meaning and syntax of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages in which they were written, and to demonstrate a growing respect for the context and historical setting of the biblical statements which were quoted in Sabbath Schools, sermons, and church publications;
- 4) The efforts of two missionaries from the United States to Africa (Robert Wieland and Donald Short), to persuade the church from 1950 on to begin a reassessment of its presentation of the gospel, and further, during a long series of discussions with evangelical Christians in the 1950s, the understanding the Adventists gained about themselves and about their expression of cardinal doctrines concerning Christ and salvation;
- 5) the establishment in the 1970s of an archival center at the General Conference headquarters and a chain of research centers to serve the various geographical areas, thus making available primary sources for the study of SDA history;
- 6) the maturation of Adventist historiography as a result of these developments; and
- 7) publishing by the journal *Spectrum* of studies which impinged on

*During the last two decades, many in the church have experienced a form of bereavement due to the breaking of their long-held and cherished picture of Ellen White as a valued source of authority in their personal lives and in the church.*

Ellen White and her ministry. Although *Spectrum* was blamed for some articles which seemed experimental or even rejectionist, time has shown that the church greatly needed to keep at the forefront of the dialogue and be involved in the processes of discovery and interpretation which were occurring.

Critics from outside and inside the church have raised questions, particularly about the role of Ellen G. White. Beginning in the 1970s Adventist scholars began to publish their findings. For instance: 1) Richard Lewis looked exegetically at Rev. 14:12 and 12:17, questioning our use of the expression "Spirit of Prophecy" with exclusive reference to Ellen White and her writings. 2) Frederick Harder suggested that Ellen White "was not writing history, she was interpreting it, and that she learned history by ordinary means, but the activity of God in the historical situation was seen by revelation. 3) Roy Branson and Herold Weiss called for Adventists to discover the nature of Ellen White's relationship to other authors and to recover the social and intellectual milieu in which she wrote. 4) William Peterson highlighted the reality of problems in Ellen White's selection and use of historical materials relating to the French Revolution. Then Ron Graybill, after a careful analysis of primary sources, concluded that Ellen White did not engage in historical research on the French Revolution;

instead she followed one major source, Uriah Smith. 5) Donald McAdams carefully evaluated manuscripts which revealed how Ellen White constructed sections of *The Great Controversy*, noting that she made extensive use of historical sources. 6) Ronald Numbers, after an exhaustive investigation of Ellen White's writings on the theme of health, concluded that she derived important health reform ideas from contemporary health reformers. The strong contrary opinions which Numbers book evoked did not invalidate this major conclusion from his research. 7) Late in the 1970s Walter Rea began to press upon the church substantial but sometimes exaggerated claims of Ellen White's literary dependence.

These presentations and others uncovered a large quantity of data previously unknown even to serious students of Ellen White's life and writings. Indeed, by early 1982, when the first International Prophetic Guidance Workshop convened at the

church's world headquarters, it was as though a huge basket of cards containing new information had been dumped on the church's corporate desk. These cards required careful sorting and interpretation so that the new information could be fitted into coherent patterns. This task is still a challenge.

During the last two decades, many in the church have experienced a form of bereavement due to the breaking of their long-held and cherished picture of Ellen White as a valued source of authority in their personal lives and in the church. Because church leaders have been slow to acknowledge the new information, they may have prolonged the problems associated with this Great Bereavement. Ministers, teachers, and members urgently needed people who could quickly grasp the implications of the evidence and give constructive leadership in the discovery and adoption of viable new patterns of thought.

But church leaders seemed to give a low priority to the process, causing many members to think that they were either uncaring or dishonest. There needs to be an open dialogue in which lay people and specialists can participate in the task of redrawing a composite and comprehensive picture of Ellen White and her ministry. The leaders can facilitate this process, though they cannot control it.

### The Core of the Matter

A number of conclusions may be drawn from this discussion. If the church's mission is to be fulfilled, Ellen White cannot be secreted from the realities of the contemporary world as a private concern of Seventh-day Adventists. The long list of theses presented in many parts of the globe to credible institutions of higher learning demonstrates that her children are becoming adults. We need to carefully evaluate a whole range of issues impinging on her ministry. There is a great need to proceed with modernizing her language if we expect many of our youth to have any interest in reading her writings, or if we want more than a few new converts to actually read her books. Her writings must be interpreted in their historical and cultural contexts. In other words, Ellen White's counsel on the need to consider the time and place of her counsels is increasingly pertinent.

We would do well to take the essence of her counsel and follow her method; for instance, being aware of the link between health and religion, we must go beyond her writings, to Scripture and sci-

*If the church's mission is to be fulfilled, Ellen White cannot be secreted from the realities of the contemporary world as a private concern of Seventh-day Adventists.*


*Ellen White's counsel on the need to consider the time and place of her counsels is increasingly pertinent.*

ence, distilling and then implementing the best that is known on how to live. In place of our backwardness in recognizing the spiritual giftedness of all God's children, including women, we might note the significance of Ellen White's ordination, which

was so apparent that no Adventist man dared lay hands upon her. We ought to ask how Ellen White responded to the issues relating to human values and human rights, including the treatment of individuals and groups by churches and governments. Instead of engaging in endless controversies about music and worship, we should focus on worship of our Creator and celebration of his handiwork, combined with a healthy ecological concern.

There is truth that lies behind and above the errors of Ellen White's statements on human races and geological processes. Her concern in her amalgamation statements was to illustrate the deep corruption and crime into which the race fell. The message that God is Creator is vastly more important than any nineteenth-century notions about the earth's crust. Ellen White has influenced, profoundly, the health of millions of people, despite the specific limitations of her health-related counsels. Since she learned history largely by ordinary means, and we have access to better sources on which to establish our historical understandings, she cannot help us with

the basics of history. But, on the other hand, she can help us in the far more important task of finding God in the mazes of history. We can rightly affirm her devotion to the Scriptures, and be challenged to go to the Bible with a desire similar to hers to learn the truth. We need to be as open to constructive change as she was, knowing we too have many things to learn, and many, many to unlearn. Further, we do well to avoid claims which her writings neither encourage nor sustain.

Patrick concludes that Seventh-day Adventism would become an anachronism were we to adopt the writings of Ellen White as the definitive and authoritative encyclopedia of our faith and practice. In the process, we would destroy her credibility as a prophetic witness, and damage the mission of the church which was so precious to her. We should look for a more appropriate way to portray her writings. When we can get a consensus on her role as pioneer explorer, or as mother of the church who expects her children to grow beyond her own understanding, or as a map-maker, or something else, we can achieve a unity in mind and spirit that is lacking now. He urges the church to get its scholars, theologians, editors, and others around the world to participate in open discussions of the need for change. Given that, he has faith that the dynamic nature of Adventism might yet realize its true potential. 

*Adventist Today* readers may access Patrick's 34-page paper on <http://www.sdanet.org> section.

## The Hand

We've all heard and we all believe, I guess  
That God's hand did a strangely playful trick  
And covered up a grave miscalculation  
In William Miller's prophetic arithmetic.

It may well be he did that, stirred the world  
With Spirit power and hope and godly fear  
For some benevolent purpose of his own  
Down-playing hour and day and month and year.

Suppose that very same hand reached out again  
And covered up our faulty reckonings  
Of year-days, veils and altars and of horns  
And sevens and seventies and ancient kings.

Just covered up the blunders for a while  
So we could catch our breath and build and plant.  
A century passed and more, it may be time  
To take away the shelter of that hand.

Well, there we are, and now it is our turn  
To blush—and weep perhaps 'til morning light—  
Not at all unlike the farmer friends  
Of Father Miller that October night.

Not "rich," and not "increased with goods"  
And much in need of everything we stand  
And trust in God's reality, and bless  
The blunder-covering of that nail-scarred hand!

—Maryan Stirling

# Washington Conference Disfellowships Independent Pastor

CONTINUED FROM BACK

couldn't come back, given the differences between his definition of Adventism and ours. He views himself as representing what Adventism could become in the future."

In January Eric told the conference that his congregation had gained several Sabbath-keeping worshipers who had the gift of tongues. The church's prayer team would sometimes speak in tongues during private prayer sessions, but they didn't do it during church worship services.

After the Woodinville memberships transferred to the conference church, the conference committee decided that they had to deal with Eric's membership before the new committee took office on May 3. "The committee said they'd dealt with Eric for years," says Weigley, "and they felt it was

is his creation of a divisive group that caused confusion in the community by claiming to be Adventist," says Weigley. "Yet it detracted from the work of the church by withdrawing its support from our world-wide work. And add to these things the glossalalia and the Pentacostal drift..."

The irony, says Bahme, is that he never discussed his theology with the conference committee. While he had several discussions over the years with conference administrators about tongues and the specifics of his church services, the committee had never actually discussed these stated theological issues with him.

Bahme never wanted to leave the Adventist church. "The fact is that if I were in another geographical area, not only would

has been disfellowshipped.

Eric, however, says that New Life members see denominational membership as a non-issue. "I don't think they will ask to have their names removed," he says. "They just don't see it as important one way or another."

"I believe my disfellowshipping happened because the church is scared," says Bahme. "During the last year five churches have become independent either because the pastors were fired or resigned." Those five are Bridge City in Portland, Oregon, with Bob Bretsch, Grace Place in Colorado with Clay Peck, Damascus in Maryland with Richard Fredericks, Potter's Wheel in Milwaukie, Oregon, with Mike Galeotti, and the church in Medford, Oregon, with Chad McComas.

Weigley stated that they felt they had to deal with Bahme's membership because, as the pastor, he was the one who held the most responsibility for leading his parishioners away from the body of believers.

"One General Conference official said, 'Congregationalism is the biggest threat Adventism has ever faced,' Eric says. "My gut response is that this may be the first of many disfellowshippings."

"This has been a painful, painful experience," says Weigley. "We love Eric; he's a gifted young guy with lots of potential. But because of his refusal to accept the council of the body as expressed through the conference committee, the future of his movement is in question."

"I wish we could tolerate diversity and work together," Eric said. "I am truly sorry that I have been viewed as insubordinate. But maybe God is building a church that is different than what we have been a part of—something bigger than the boundaries of Adventism. Paul says the greatest gift is love. What truly is at stake is lost people. We need to lay aside our differences and work together to fulfill the gospel commission.

"Control can't happen from the top down any longer. All God's people have a voice and a ministry. New Life and a lot of other churches have found that their voices aren't being heard and their visions are being controlled. We need accountability, but we cannot have papal authority.

"If we ever needed to come together and seek God like never before, I believe this is the day."

---

## One General Conference official said, "Congregationalism is the biggest threat Adventism has ever faced."

time to close the issue."

They notified Eric that they would be meeting to decide his membership status on April 21 and offered him the opportunity either to attend and give his defense or to write a letter. He wrote a letter. In it Eric gave four defenses for not removing his membership: "1. No biblical grounds have ever been presented to me for removal of my membership. I have not violated any known scriptural mandates... 2. My theological understanding is not unlike many other Seventh-day Adventists who hold active membership and denominational employment... 3. My theological position on speaking in tongues is no different than it was six years ago when I was employed by the denomination... 4. While it is true that several of us who are Seventh-day Adventists have begun a new congregational move, this should not be viewed as 'divisive and disloyal' as Dave Weigley has stated."

Weigley says that the reason for Bahme's disfellowshipping is his theology, specifically his view of the remnant, his view of 1844 and the sanctuary doctrine, and his view of the Spirit of Prophecy. "Equally important

my church still be a conference church, but I would still be a member. I called three pastors I know in different parts of the country, and each one of them told me that, given what I believe, if I were disfellowshipped they were sure their church boards would accept me back into the church on profession of faith." He says, however, that he's not planning to take advantage of those offers. "If I did, I would just be playing a political game with the conference, and God is never glorified in that."

Weigley says that the conference will "wait and see" what will happen with the rest of the New Life memberships. "We don't know yet how much the new Sabbath-keeping Pentecostals who've joined the church will change things. Will the Adventists change or resist their influence? This isn't Adventism, and we want to send a message that it's not. We will have to have strong counsel with the members if they adopt Pentecostal practices."

Weigley admits that as time goes by, they may have to disfellowship other members of the New Life church. He also said it's possible that many members will ask to have their memberships removed since Eric

# A Conversation with Benjamin

BERT WILLIAMS

I recently had a conversation about women's roles. It took place with one of my friends in Kenya, my current country of residence. I had agreed to drive a bus transporting his Pathfinder club to a rally some 100 kilometers distant. He rode in the "co-pilot's seat" so we had plenty of time to talk as we drove along the twisting tarmac down into the Rift Valley toward Lake Magadi.

Our conversation was wide-ranging but continually circled back to issues relating to the woman's role in the home, marriage, and society. My friend Benjamin is open-minded and is genuinely interested in trying to understand my views. He is not dogmatic, but he does view things through a decidedly different set of spectacles than I do.

Among other things he was curious to know if I thought a woman would respect her husband if he did not beat her occasionally. I do not think Benjamin beats his wife, but they have been married for only a couple of years, and he has received counsel from concerned men in his church. Benjamin, they think, needs to take steps to assure that Lilly is appropriately submissive. (These are not their real names.)

We talked at length about "equality." To Benjamin, equality had seemed to mean that each partner would do exactly the same things. I explained that, to me, equality means that each partner's desires and concerns should have equal value.

He thinks it likely, however, that a wife given this kind of equality would become lazy, uncontrolled, and unfaithful. He asked how I would feel if Donna had a higher income than I did. "Why wouldn't I want more money?" I asked him.

After we shared a chuckle, he allowed that he did not think such a situation could work out. The wife would have too much prestige and would become rude, inconsiderate, and unfaithful.

I explained that I knew of good marriages in North America in which the wife's earning power was higher than her husband's. Benjamin clearly was not able to conceptualize such a relationship.

And then came the issue of trousers: he was diplomatic when I asked whether he thought it was a problem that my wife sometimes wears jeans. But

he is definitely of the opinion that most women who wear pants are overly concerned about status and are pursuing a role which is not properly theirs.

He asked if I really did think it was OK.

So I asked Benjamin if he thought it fair that men should be able to stay warmer in cold weather or to work in the garden more comfortably or to ride a bicycle with greater ease. I also asked if he thought it was right for Christian Maser men to wear "dresses." We both chuckled again.

Benjamin is thoughtful and articulate. Though English is his third language he expresses his views precisely. His questions inevitably drive to the heart of whatever issue is at hand. But we are far from agreeing on the issues. All of which leads me to some observations:

1. Cultural background inevitably results in blind spots and failure to see many important issues with objective clarity. I am convinced that Benjamin's culture has skewed his view of women and their appropriate place in society. And so I wonder what blind spots my own culture has bequeathed to me? How utterly arrogant to think that there are not some serious ones!

2. If well-meaning, honest people, speaking in private conversation, cannot come to a meeting of minds on issues where their cultures have placed them so far apart, it seems very unlikely that divisive issues confronting the world church will be resolved through high-profile, politicized, public discourse.

3. Whether dealing with delegates from another Division at a General Conference session, or with a North American teenager sporting pierced body parts, Adventist Christians simply must not yield to the urge to assign motives to others whose actions or views they do not understand.

4. It is possible for people of goodwill from different cultures to respect one another—even thoroughly enjoy one another—despite their differences. The call for unity in diversity must displace attempts at uniformity.

Benjamin and I will continue to converse. We like each other and enjoy the stimulation that our conversations provide. Our conversations give me hope that on a larger scale we can learn to genuinely respect one another, honestly love one another, and learn to work side by side for the same ultimate goals.

...he was  
curious to  
know if I  
thought a  
woman  
would  
respect her  
husband if  
he did not  
beat her  
occasionally.

---

Bert Williams teaches at Maxwell Adventist Academy in Nairobi, Kenya.

# Washington Conference Disfellowships Independent Pastor

COLLEEN MOORE TINKER

**O**n April 21, 1998, Eric Bahme, pastor of the New Life Congregational Seventh Day Adventist Church in Woodinville, Washington, was disfellowshipped from the Seventh-day Adventist church. This act culminated several years of tension between Bahme and the conference, tension punctuated by Bahme's being fired from denominational employment in 1996.

According to Dave Weigley, president of the Washington Conference, Bahme was fired for insubordination. Throughout his tenure as pastor of the Woodinville Seventh-day Adventist Church, Bahme had not complied with certain conference directives.

"We felt he was pulling the church toward Pentecostalism," Weigley said. "We had no evidence of speaking in tongues, just a strong feeling that was the direction they were going. And they had hired an ordained Pentecostal pastor to lead the worship praise music." According to Weigley, the conference asked him not to use the Pentecostal worship leader and requested that he change direction with the church, but Bahme refused.

"The Woodinville church was Bahme's first pastorate," Weigley commented. "He had never served under a senior pastor. The conference decided that he should have a mentoring experience in which he served as an associate under an experienced pastor. We offered him two different districts, but he refused to go. Because he refused to accept council, we finally dismissed him for insubordination."

"My problem with the Washington Conference has been an authority issue," Eric Bahme acknowledges. "It's been a question of the congregation being able to have a voice. We had issues over the specifics of our celebration worship style. They were concerned because I wore a wedding band; because we had a non-Adventist worship leader as well as associations with other ministers of different

faiths; because I experienced speaking in tongues in my private devotions. Finally, when the tithe dropped to a certain low point, they let me go."

But Bahme claims he has always been loyal to the Adventist church. He believes in the Sabbath; he believes in Jesus' second coming. He believes the church should be able to accept differences in worship style without trying to dictate the details of private or congregational worship.

At the time of his dismissal 140 people had their names on the Woodinville church books. Weekly attendance averaged over 100. Ninety-eight percent of those people went with Eric as the church

status, but the conference would make sure they continued to have pastoral coverage. The members' names would move to the conference church roll instead of the Woodinville church roll. The conference, then, would have the authority to deal with individual memberships.

"The conference notified me of the coming business session," Eric says. "Many of New Life's members and I were still official members, and the conference knew we could show up and outvote them. I told them, though, that we'd not been a part of the Woodinville church for almost two years, and it would be unethical for us to vote."

Apparently the conference feared the worst. On the night of the meeting, seven of the loyal Woodinville members attended. Eric and one other member from New Life also attended, but they sat in the back

---

**"The fact is that if I were in another geographical area, not only would my church still be a conference church, but I would still be a member."**

formed an independent congregation, the New Life Congregational Seventh Day Adventist Church. This fledgling church has consistently returned a small tithe to the Washington Conference, an offering the conference has been accepting. "It's very important that we not harbor any bitterness because of what's happened," Eric says. "God can't bless us if we're bitter."

Bahme's name as well as the names of many of his church members, however, have remained on the Woodinville church membership roll. They have been official members along with the 15 to 20 people who continued to meet every Sabbath under the leadership of their new pastor Ron Preast.

This spring the conference committee recommended that the Woodinville church vote to expel itself as a full-fledged church because of its low loyal membership. The group would revert to company

and did not vote. The conference representatives included the president, the ministerial director, the executive secretary, the treasurer, and the conference attorney bearing policy books.

The meeting proceeded smoothly, and the conference administrators reassured the Woodinville company that they would provide them a pastor and otherwise care for them.

Weigley says that he and the conference committee tried hard to reconcile with Bahme. Last fall they invited him to join the Washington pastors on a historic Adventist trip to New England. He went, and according to Weigley they had good fellowship together.

"After the trip we talked to him," Weigley reports. "We asked him questions such as 'Are you coming back?' and 'Where are you headed?' But Eric felt he

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22