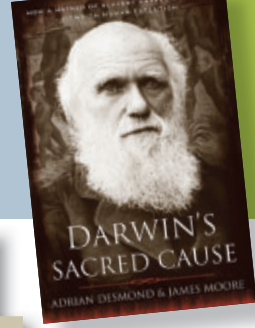


Women Pastors
Ordained



Roman Catholics
Off the Hook



Racism and
Darwin

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Adventist *Today*

Is There Room for
MAVERICKS
in the Church?



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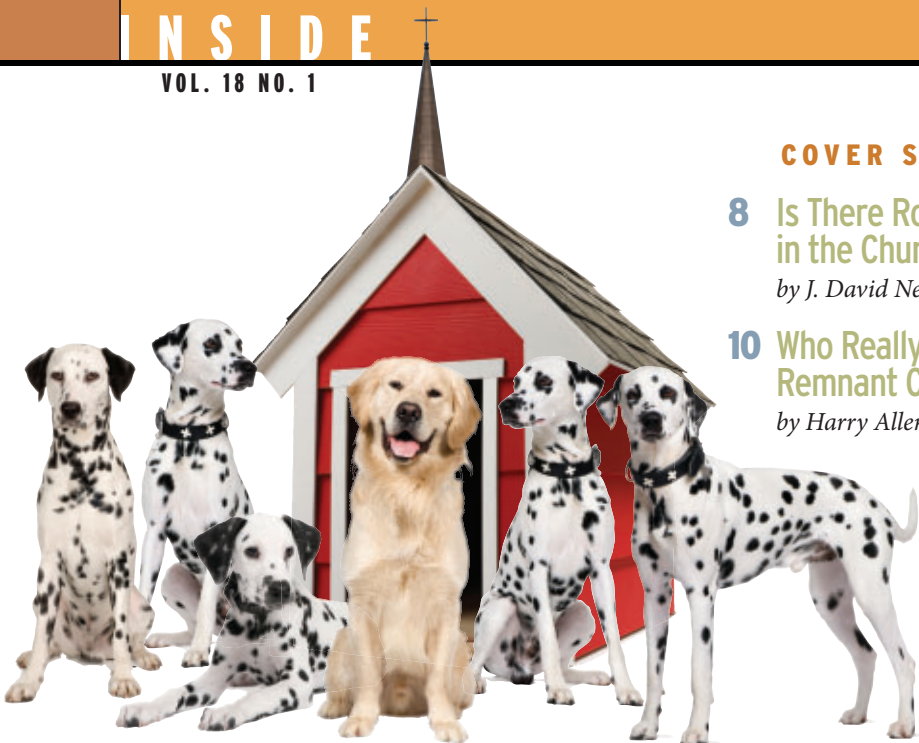
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Women Pastors Officially Ordained

J. David Newman

Stunning news about women’s ordination came out of the 2009 Annual Council of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Mark A. Kellner, news editor for *Adventist Review* and *Adventist World* magazines, reported on actions at the Annual Council. Here is what he wrote about women’s ordination.

“At its 1990 and 1995 General Conference session, the Seventh-day Adventist Church considered the issue of ordaining women to gospel ministry, and concluded on both occasions not to do so. While the topic is not on the planned agenda for the July 2010 General Conference session in Atlanta, some delegates from Europe, North America and Australia have periodically voiced their hope that a plan may emerge that would allow their regions to move forward with ordaining women to ministry. Only in China, where ordination is a function of both the regional Adventist authority and the government-led Three-Self Patriotic Movement, have female Adventist pastors been officially ordained.”¹

The last sentence in this paragraph is a bombshell. *Adventist Today* is in touch with the leaders in China to get more information on the background and events that led to the women pastors being ordained. We will keep you posted.

Mavericks in the Church

In this issue we look at the place of mavericks in the church. See the short piece by the *Adventist Today* editor titled “Is There Room for Mavericks in the Church?” Following that is a very “maverick” piece by a layman, Harry Allen, which takes a look at how Adventists got their remnant motif out of the book of Revelation. You may not agree with his conclusions, but you will be stimulated.

With the Seventh-day Adventist Church not far from its two hundredth anniversary of 1844, we print an article that first appeared in *Christian Century* almost 30 years ago. “Legalism or Permissiveness” seems to be the outcome for all religious groups that have been around for a while. The Adventist Church is no exception. See if you agree with Dr. L.A. King’s premise.

Are Roman Catholics Out?

One of the most provocative articles in this issue is by Loren Siebold, the senior pastor at Worthington Adventist Church in Ohio. Here is how he begins his article: “For over a century, even before the publication of *The Great Controversy*, we Adventists have regarded the Roman Catholic Church leadership, typified in the first beast of Revelation 13, as our arch-nemesis, our *bête noire*, the enemy that takes the evil part in the apocalyptic scenario against God’s remnant. Here are seven reasons why it may be time to question them in that role.”

Nathan Brown from Australia asks if God died for more than just people. The editor contributes another piece about the need for a loyal opposition. Alden Thompson is his usual thoughtful self in his column. Our book review is a “must read” with implications for Adventism and racism.

Our “7 Questions For...” column goes outside the Adventist family to interview Martin Doblmeier, who is producing a documentary on Adventists. And Adventist Man is his usual satirical self.

Last but not least, our recent issues turned up some great letters. Happy reading.

¹ <http://www.adventistreview.org/article.php?id=2908>

Only in
China...
have female
Adventist
pastors been
officially
ordained.

A few weeks ago, Adventist Today Foundation published the book *Fatal Accounts: The Audacity of an Adventist Auditor's Quest for Transparency*.

The author, David D. Dennis, explores among other things the Christian's responsibility at times to "blow the whistle" on those who use "fatal accounts" to discredit their political enemies and evade accountability.

During a recent question-and-answer period in Riverside, Calif., someone asked Dennis why, as auditor, he simply didn't "turn the other cheek" in the face of dishonesty and misrepresentation among some church leaders.

was calling for the kind of reform that could *save* the Temple—just as prophets had been doing since the dawn of Bible time. When misbehavior was institutional and public, Jesus rebuked it *institutionally and in public*. Those who sinned privately and out of weakness, Jesus admonished privately and with great compassion.

Ananias and Sapphira

It became fashionable during early apostolic times for the rich to sell their land and give to the church for the support of the Christian poor. Ananias and Sapphira, as a couple, pledged to sell some land and donate all proceeds to the Cause.

pastors privately want. Never mind that *Adventist Today* is publically calling for the removal of racial and gender walls in the church and for greater financial responsibility in the use of the billions of dollars annually donated by the faithful.

These causes cry out for advocacy! We, the people, must stand for the right in the here and now, or we become complicit in the very behavior our faith condemns.

As we begin a new year at *Adventist Today*, we are committed to building up the church by showing a better, more Christian way of behavior on behalf of God's children. David Dennis was fired because he took a stand against the

Turning the OTHER CHEEK BY EDWIN A. SCHWISOW

Dennis answered the question well, but it bears further scrutiny here. *Should good Adventists simply accept, sitting down, poor management, artifice, connivance, and even fraud among their leaders?*

The Whip of Discontent

Jesus believed otherwise. Time and again he spoke out forcefully against institutional evildoers, especially those who misused funds in the name of religion.

When he saw intransigent, institutional misbehavior repeated without apology or remorse, he stood up in the Temple court and symbolically drove the guilty from office—using perhaps the same whip that guided the donkey through the streets of Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

The Temple businessmen were hurting everyone, and Jesus possessed the charisma and factual information to credibly step forward and cry, "Enough!" He was not tearing down the church. He

But when the land sold at windfall prices in a flourishing economy, the couple held back some of the increase for themselves. Condemned openly by the apostle Peter (they had pledged the money publicly), the couple died publicly in horrible disgrace.

Public and institutional lying was not tolerated in the early religion of Jesus. It was openly exposed and committed to paper and ink as an example to future generations.

Adventist Today Advocacy

As *Adventist Today* develops greater skill in pointing the church to better and more biblical ways of doing its business, voices in high places have been raised, accusing *Adventist Today* of behaving in an unchristian manner.

Never mind that *Adventist Today* advocates the very kinds of financial reform that a majority of Adventist

misappropriation of funds and misguided policy. Yet he has refused to leave the church and preaches frequently in his local church, where he has been an elder for many years.

Like David Dennis, *Adventist Today* believes that the Adventist Church has a positive reason for being in the kingdom of God—and we want it to succeed. But when in the process the body of Christ is being mishandled and strung up on a golden cross of mismanagement and secrecy, we must stand up for "the least of these, my brethren."

Let's move forward together this new year, encouraging the best in Adventism and calling for a better way when hypocrisy and secrecy present their unfortunate faces in the portrait of our faith.

Edwin A. Schwisow is the director of development for Adventist Today.



End of Ministry

Loren Seibold's article, "The End of Ministry as We Know It" (Summer 2009), is an excellent reality statement. My favorite section was where he described the growth of lay ministries. The practice of conference administrators to increasingly rely on lay leadership to function as substitutes for the pastor is a clear and noticeable change.

Because of declining tithes and offerings, church administrators are hiring fewer pastors and causing the pastor's role to be less and less apparent. This trend is creating a leadership void.

The above practice has made the rise of questionable independent ministries easier and has created dissatisfaction among the members who see firsthand the effects of an excessive reliance on laity.

While administrators may feel they are adapting to realities, perhaps they should consider other strategies. A membership generally that is dissatisfied and poorly served by a legitimate pastor will be more susceptible to the kinds of influences Paul warns us about in Rom. 16:17-19.

Seibold speaks of the end of ministry as we know it, but it would also

follow that we are facing the end of congregations as we have known them. There are excellent television ministries, for example, to which many members have already committed their attention and resources.

DEAN RILEY
Banks, Alabama

Change and Gladden

I read your editorial (Fall 2009), and one paragraph really struck me. I had not been made aware of it at any time during all my years of Adventist education or the years since from churches or publications.

You quoted Ellen White as saying [paraphrase] God raises us up to do His work and will prepare us for current times. We will be humble, God-fearing, *not conservative, not policy oriented*. We will be moral in our independence and will move forward with God. We will not be deterred from the right direction but will share truth no matter what.

I immediately thought of a wonderful mentor of mine and how he was treated when he tried to share the truth and go forward and not be conservative or a policy man. I flagged the page so I could send an email.

Imagine my delighted surprise when I turned a page and the next article was written by this very same man! Ron Gladden is compelling, and I applaud you at *Adventist Today* for including him in your ongoing journey. Thanks so much. You are partially restoring my belief that something good can come out of our denomination that is current and practical.

CHERRY ASHLOCK
Redlands, California

Change Not Quite Right

While reading J. David Newman's editorial in the Fall issue of *Adventist*

Today ("Why Must We Change?"), I thought the leading quoted letter, allegedly from Martin Van Buren to President Jackson, was suspicious. A quick Google search confirmed my suspicions. See <http://www.snopes.com/language/document/vanburen.asp>

Use of convenient but fraudulent "evidence" in an argument undermines the credibility of the presenter and the case. That is unfortunate, because I agreed with the sentiments expressed in the editorial.

ROBERT JOHNSTON
Lake Jackson, Texas

Editor's Note:

Robert Johnston makes a valid point. I quoted from a published book, little suspecting that the author had not done due diligence.

Adventist Man Outrage

"Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires"—an excellent promotion for a good cause. It was done by a talking bear wearing a forest ranger hat and carrying a shovel. Millions of young and old people, including children, see it and respond favorably to the message. You respond by calling the parents of children who playfully talk to their animals "amoral pseudo-Christians."

Adventist Man, look at you, fantasy supreme in your T-shirt, cape, and mask trying to look like both Superman and the Lone Ranger.

I have no idea who writes as "Adventist Man," but your article in the Fall 2009 issue of *Adventist Today* is beyond common sense. It is outrageous.

BRADFORD EVANS
Glendale, California

Editor's Note:

It seems that satire is not obvious to everyone.



Ford Strikes a Chord

I started reading the article by Des Ford ("The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism," Fall 2009) and couldn't stop until I had finished every word! There is a very deep sadness inside of me and many others who have watched our beloved church NOT do the right thing in recent decades. "FDR" (Ford, Davenport, and Rae) stand for so much unnecessary pain that could have been avoided by leadership.

I applaud your continued efforts to nudge the brethren to reconcile with Des Ford while he is still alive. Thank you for printing the letter from Kevin Ferris. I join with thousands of other loyal Adventists around the world in asking our General Conference President, Jan Paulsen, to right this grievous wrong now! Almost three decades have passed since the debacle at Glacier View, and there has been more than ample time for observing not just the Christlike spirit of Des in the aftermath, but also the benefit of continued scholarship. We need to quit pretending as a church and admit that we have changed our view now in favor of much of what Des has been advocating.

Our administrators continue to wring their hands as members squeeze the bloated overhead by directing more and more of their title dollars into other areas, where they can see fruitfulness for the cause of God. If Jesus does not come back before another generation passes, future ones will force this issue for the brethren. More and more pastoral positions in the field will be cut along with some office staff; but the North American Anglo church will not grow. I join you in asking our Church to right this wrong now! Where are the administrators who will reform the system even if it means closing schools and voting themselves out of a job by eliminating *at least* one layer of the bureaucracy?

JERE WEBB
Eagle, Idaho

Ford: A Dissident View

I appreciate Dr. Ford and others who attempt to help us see Daniel 8:13-14, for example, in context. However, I still find his fascination with the Maccabean view of Antiochus Epiphanes completely bankrupt.

As an evangelical Adventist pastor, I rejoice in his continuation of Dr. Heppenstal's biblical message focusing us away from a very unhealthy view of judgment in the sanctuary to a solid hope in Christ, as "an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast." The spiritual harm that *The Great Controversy* (page 425) has done in teaching final personal perfection as our hope in the judgment is in the process of being healed in the modern church. Dr. Ford has contributed to that healing.

I must say, however, that Dr. Ford's apparent view that historicism is over as a tenable hermeneutic is preposterous. Have we lost our minds? I can think of no approach to prophecy that has been more empirically verified through historical analysis. Of course expositors have made mistakes in the details of applications. Science itself has chased a few rabbits down the wrong path.

Hippolytus was a historian and pastor of Porto, near Rome. He died in A.D. 235. In his writings he explains the prophecies of Daniel even in the days of the Roman Empire. He explains Daniel 2 and 7 in historicist fashion, predicting the rise of the 10 powers after the breakup of the Iron Kingdom of Rome and the appearance of antichrist after the dust settles.

Using the historicist method of interpreting prophecy, in the year A.D. 1689 an English Bible scholar named Drue Cressener (1638-1718) published his predicted date for the end of the 1260 days. "He began the prophetic period in the time of Justinian in the sixth century A.D., and by applying the year-day principle to these 1260 days, Cressener came to the conclusion: 'The time of the beast does end about the year 1800.'"

We could argue the merits of specific dates all day, while missing the larger

point that these prophecies accurately predicted the “general framework” for the rise and fall of the political dominance of Christianity after the fall of the Roman Empire. Hippolytus and Cressener both arrived at the basic outline of events yet future, with enough specificity to exclude luck or happenstance. How one can be an objective Biblical scholar and deny these facts is beyond my understanding.

DARREL LINDENSMITH
Mandan, North Dakota

“Found Wanting” Rings True

I’m writing in response to your article “Is God Finished With the Adventist Church?” (Summer 2009). I was impressed with your measured reasoning and clear point. The question you ask at its conclusion resonates with me: “... the haunting decree ‘Found wanting’ rings in my ears. How do we avoid that fate?” This may come as a surprise to you, but you are not the first one I have heard ask this question.

In the past two years, I have attended two of the premier universities the



Adventist Church has to offer: Andrews University and Southern Adventist University. The head pastors of the respective university churches have preached resounding sermons, and even series, on the question you bring up. If our job as a church body is to herald the second coming of Jesus, why are we still here? They have pointed out specifics of where we’re failing and how we can do better. I commend the three of you specifically for having the courage to

ask this difficult question. You have all recognized we have a problem and given suggestions on how we can fix it.

I must point out, however, that we’re missing a critical part of this equation for success. Pardon my elaboration of the point, if you will: state the problem, state the solution, act to solve the problem.

Speaking from personal experience, there is a well, an aquifer, an underground lake of untapped potential in the academies and universities of the church. We’re here. We’re interested. But we are as sheep without a shepherd.

Recognizing the problem is essential. Formulating a solution is a definite help. But without implementation of the recognized solution, the problem still remains.

There must be a churchwide, multigenerational, international, no-holds-barred effort within the church to recognize, plan for, and accomplish our mission. Without that effort, we are doomed to being weighed and found wanting.

DILLON JURIAN SZ
Collegedale, Tennessee

TO MAKE YOU THINK

One of the most controversial issues in the Adventist Church concerns theistic evolution and creationism. *Adventist Today* will cover this topic in a future issue, but here are some questions to consider. Readers’ ideas and thoughts are welcome.

Evolution teaches that death is a normal part of the creation process. The Bible teaches that death is an enemy. It did not exist when God first created the earth, and one day it will be abolished. How do you reconcile these two opposed ideas?

Science seems to show that this earth is millions of years

old—from the differing dating methods to the dating of the ice cores in Greenland. How do you reconcile science and the Bible? Do they have separate authority? Does one take precedence over the other?

When did sin come into existence? If sin and death have always existed, what did the death of Christ do for us?

Does any of this really matter? Will a person be saved regardless of their views in this area?

Do theistic evolution and creationism point to different purposes for life?

Send in your ideas, or even try us with an article.

Is There Room for **MAVERICKS** in the Church? BY J. DAVID NEWMAN



“Dreamers, heretics, gadflies, mavericks, and geniuses!”

This headline from an IBM advertisement caught my eye. Organizations—business and church—have always had a difficult time making room for creative, independent thinkers. How does IBM, the model of the modern corporate structure, relate to such people?

The ad went on to explain: “The story goes that Henry Ford once hired an efficiency expert to evaluate his company. After a few weeks, the expert made his report. It was highly favorable except for one thing.

“‘That man down the hall,’ said the expert. ‘Every time I go by his office he’s just sitting there with his feet on his desk. He’s wasting your money.’

“‘That man,’ replied Mr. Ford, ‘once had an idea that saved us millions of dollars. At the time, I believe his feet were planted right where they are now.’”

The ad continued: “At IBM, we have 46 people like that, and we don’t worry about where they put their feet either. They are the IBM Fellows.

“They earned the title by having ideas that made a difference. Their job is to have more ideas like that, but under a very special condition.

“It’s called freedom.

“Freedom from deadlines. Freedom from committees. Freedom from the usual limits of corporate approval.

“For a term of at least five years, an IBM Fellow is free to pursue any advanced project of value to IBM, even if chances for success may seem remote.

“As a result, some of the great innovations of our time have come from IBM Fellows.

“We may not always understand what they’re doing, much less how they do it. But we do know this: The best way to inspire an IBM Fellow is to get out of the way.”

Church Mavericks

Is there room for mavericks in the church? Can the church—with its structure, its policies, its rules, its committees—tolerate nonconformists?

The word *maverick* entered the English language courtesy of Samuel Maverick, a Texas cattleman who refused to brand his cattle since he ranched on an island. However, his cattle did

wander at times, and the term carries nuances both of their straying and of their owner’s independence and refusal to follow custom. Today it refers to a person who takes an independent stand.

Is there room in the church for people who take independent stands? Must individuals obey every policy and code? Must they gain approval from some committee for every project before investing time and money? Can a pastor change the worship service, ignore the *Church Manual*, flirt with innovative ideas, and still be loyal? Can a local conference change its constitution so as to be radically different from its sister conferences?

All of us know of some creative individual who grew impatient with the slow-grinding cogs of church machinery and left formal church employment to set up an independent ministry. Maybe that is the best way—having two streams, one being the official church structure, ponderous, glacial, safe, and sure; the other being independent ministries, each run by some individual with a vision, unfettered by decades and even centuries of tradition. Though distinct, these two streams may be linked by canals, and they may share common tributaries.

The Bible seems to favor this dual approach. In Old Testament times, the prophets, rather than the rulers or the priests, tended to be the dreamers, the gadflies, the mavericks. And while God called these individuals to fill the roles in which they served, he also blessed structure and organization even to the extent of inventing new ones when the old ways were no longer adequate.

Jesus—a Maverick?

Perhaps Jesus was history’s greatest maverick. The Pharisees considered him a maverick because he would not conform to the traditions of the elders. The Sadducees considered him a

maverick because he would not acknowledge their authority. Pilate considered him a maverick because he would not defend himself. The common people considered him a maverick because he spoke with authority and not as the scribes and Pharisees. His disciples considered him a maverick because he would not allow himself to be crowned king. His family considered him a maverick because he would not conform to their wishes. The devil considered him a maverick because he was the only human being that he could not bring under his sway.

Yes, Christ was the world's greatest nonconformist, the greatest maverick. He did not choose to be different in order to be difficult; he did so to reveal a better way. With unfailing kindness he attempted to show that structure should always serve people. He never acted more like a maverick than when he said of the

Yes, Christ was the world's greatest nonconformist, the greatest maverick. He did not choose to be different in order to be difficult; he did so to reveal a better way.

Sabbath that it "was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27, NIV).

The church and the state eventually crucified this maverick, for most organizations cannot long tolerate the nonconformist. They consider that policies are written to be followed, not flouted; obeyed, not objected to; heeded, not hindered; enforced, not eradicated.

No organization can long exist without structure to support it or rules to guide it. Yet IBM found a way to combine the strengths of the organization with the strengths of the independent operator. The church too must

wrestle with the challenge of encouraging the dreamer, learning from the heretic, tolerating the gadfly, and accommodating the maverick, even *Adventist Today*. It needs them as certainly as does IBM. **AT**

J. David Newman is the editor of Adventist Today and senior pastor of New Hope Adventist Church in Fulton, Md.

Writers Needed

Write for Adventist Today

We don't pay a lot (10 cents a word), but you will have the satisfaction of seeing your creativity in print and the chance to make a difference in the Adventist world.

WE NEED ARTICLES IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- How the Adventist faith intersects with culture
- How do we interpret the Bible in a relevant and culturally sensitive way?
- Adventist doctrine (not a rehash but presenting a new viewpoint—see the article in this issue on the remnant)
- Practice and tradition in the Adventist world
- Why are we still in this world? How relevant is the Adventist message? Indeed what is the Adventist message today?
- How do we reconcile science and faith?
- Tough issues such as abortion, homosexuality, poverty, the environment, the death penalty, creation and evolution
- Social justice
- The role of Ellen White today (e.g., are some of her prophecies conditional?)
- Historical theology (e.g., the development of the sanctuary doctrine as mostly taught today)
- Ecclesiology—one of the most pressing issues in the church today. When does church structure need to change, and how do we accomplish this?

What subjects would you like to see *Adventist Today* cover? Send in your ideas. Also, if you are not a writer, suggest possible writers for us. Shorter articles are preferred to longer ones.

Address all ideas, comments, and articles to J. David Newman, editor, adventisttoday1966@gmail.com.

Who Really Is the
**REMNANT
CHURCH?**

By Harry Allen



I was recently reading an article in *Adventist World* titled “Foundations for Ellen White’s Prophetic Call” by Dr. Gerhard Pfandl, associate director of the General Conference’s Biblical Research Institute. The article richly detailed that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy. In making his case, Dr. Pfandl listed a somewhat lengthy sequence of scriptures and dates, one familiar to Seventh-day Adventists, though also of a kind that we tend to politely ridicule when others similarly explain their doctrines.

Suddenly, I had an unusual thought. I found myself wishing that Adventism had an axiom analogous to *Occam’s razor*, which (quoting *Wikipedia*) says that “the explanation of any phenomenon should make as few assumptions as possible, eliminating those that make no difference in the observable predictions of the explanatory hypothesis or theory.”

But while considering this, it occurred to me that there already is such a prescript for studying the Bible. Pfandl’s article had even mentioned it at one point, affirming “the principle of interpreting Scripture with Scripture.” It’s the rule of *sola scriptura*. By applying the rule of “the Bible, and the Bible only” to the formulation of our doctrines, we Adventists believe that God has led, and continues to lead, us into the marvelous light of his holy truth.

Adventist Exceptionalism

In my opinion, however, we typically circumvent this rule whenever we attempt to invoke a theology of what I call “Adventist exceptionalism” (i.e., Seventh-day Adventist centrality in human religious history).

So, for example, consider this formulation of the remnant church, from the previously cited “Foundations for Ellen White’s Prophetic Call.”

“One of the identifying signs of the remnant church, which according to prophecy exists after the 1,260-day period, i.e., after 1798, is the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy, or the prophetic gift. The Seventh-day Adventist Church, from its very beginning, has believed that in fulfillment of Revelation 12:17 the spirit of prophecy was

manifested in the life and work of Ellen G. White.”¹

A consistent application of *sola scriptura* would lead us first to note that, contrary to what this synopsis and, as well, the 13th Seventh-day Adventist baptismal question/vow (“Do you accept and believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the remnant church of Bible prophecy...?) affirm, there is no “remnant church” of Bible prophecy, because the term “remnant church” does not appear in scripture. As such, any attempt to negotiate a meaning for this term must evade the Bible, thus denying *sola scriptura*.

But though it does not speak of a “remnant church,” the Bible certainly does speak of a *remnant*, perhaps most prominently doing so in Rev. 12:17, where it says: “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Here’s the way many Adventists handle this verse. They say, “I know what ‘the commandments of God’ are. But what’s ‘the testimony of Jesus Christ?’” So they turn to Rev. 19:10, where it says, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Suddenly the light goes on. “Wow! ‘The testimony of Jesus’ is ‘the spirit of prophecy,’” they utter, amazed at the plainness of scripture. “The Spirit of Prophecy, of course, is Ellen G. White.” (We know this because “The Spirit of Prophecy” is commonly used as a synonym for “Ellen G. White and/or her writings” in Adventist churches every week, and twice on Wednesdays.)

So the remnant are those “which...have” Ellen G. White. Seventh-day Adventists have Ellen G. White. So Seventh-day Adventists must be the remnant church! Indeed, challenge any die-hard Adventist on this formulation, and the first quiz they’ll pop you with is: “OK: Name another church that keeps the commandments of God—all of them,” even though, as I say again, the verse doesn’t say anything about churches.

Embarrassing Application

This methodology flies as “searching the scriptures” in many Adventist circles. But it’s actually pretty embarrassing. Applied this way, it’s almost as if the Bible is merely some kind of “secret decoder ring,” of the sort one might find as a prize in a box of children’s breakfast cereal. If this is the best we can do, then we haven’t really read the Word or grappled with its most pressing ideas. To the contrary, Rev. 12:17, I’d argue, is elegantly stating something far more critical, beautiful, and eternal than some static formula on the 13th Adventist baptismal question/vow. And what is that?

First, as should be obvious given its greater context within



the Holy Scriptures, the verse is about *obedience*. Most would no doubt agree, as, again, this is the meta-topic of the entire biblical text.

So here's where Occam's razor (or, in this case, *sola scriptura*) comes into play: When Rev. 12:17 speaks of "the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ," *it simply means just that*. Period.

In other words, if I, through Christ, keep the commandments of God and live as he lived—i.e., his actions, as well as the fact that his testimony was not solely what he spoke, but the life he lived—I am part of the remnant. If I don't, I'm not.

So if I'm part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church but *lie*, I'm not part of the remnant. If I'm part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church but, from the window of my tiny apartment, *burn* at the sight of my neighbor's enormous, luxurious car or home, I'm not part of the remnant. If I'm part of the Seventh-day

foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his" and "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

The Real Remnant

In other words, the remnant is *the church invisible*, to use a well-known term in our theology; it is a population known only to God, just like 2 Timothy 2 says. As follows, questions of whether we, Seventh-day Adventists, form the whole remnant or whether a remnant of a remnant will come out of us, etc., are highly misplaced. To approach it another way, when one truly examines the matter, the remnant is essentially the people Christ spoke about in Matt. 22:36-40: Those who love the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their mind, and who love their neighbors as themselves. We actually corrupt Rev. 12:17's meaning by imagining that it's about stuff as limited or local as our

IF I'M PART OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH WINDOW OF MY TINY APARTMENT, **BURN** AT THE ENORMOUS, LUXURIOUS CAR OR HOME, I'M **NOT PA**

Adventist Church but have *a thing for the ladies*, I'm not part of the remnant. Why?

Because that's what the Bible says. Not only should that be enough, but, when one thinks about it, *it doesn't get any better than that*. In other words, there's not a form of thought, speech, or action anyone can name or describe that goes higher than (1) keeping the commandments of God, and (2) living as Christ lived.

Now here's the interesting part about this: I can behave in the ways I've briefly described above and remain part of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I can even be "a member in good standing" and do so.

Immediately, that should make at least one fact clear: Remnancy, as expressed in Rev. 12:17, is not based upon church membership, as the 13th Seventh-day Adventist baptismal question/vow affirms. Or, let me express this more strongly: Being part of the remnant has nothing to do with being a Seventh-day Adventist, *nor can it*, because it is based upon people acting in ways that are beyond human review.

It's easy to verify whether or not someone is an Adventist: Just look at the books. But whether or not one is keeping the commandments of God and/or has the testimony of Jesus Christ isn't something one person can determine about another person. Even people who "outwardly" appear to be faithful may not be so, as 2 Tim. 2:19 (NIV) eloquently states: "Nevertheless, God's solid

datum and/or Ellen G. White. God has far higher thoughts than we do. "But," I can hear people say, "what about Rev. 19:10: 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy'? It promised that the gift of prophecy would be a sign of the remnant church!"

So we've been told. But does it *actually* say that? To really understand Rev. 19:10's meaning, I say, it's important to do something that Adventists seldom do when quoting it: Read it in context, as opposed to stripping it out and tossing the rest of the chapter away like so much gristle.

In Revelation 19, we find John undergoing what, at best, might be described as a sensory assault. Up to that point, he has been taken, in vision, into the very presence of God's throne. Each new and astounding experience has overpowered his eyes, ears, and even his nostrils, whirling him disorientingly within an overwhelming vortex of incomprehensible heavenly realities. His ears have been slammed by the magnificent praise of unending choirs. His pupils have been nearly fused shut with the nova-sun brightness of staggering images, "wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke" (Acts 2:19). Repeatedly, John describes the sound level as that of a deafening *roar*, the "roar of a great multitude" (Rev. 19:1, NIV). Meanwhile, his brain is overloading on spectacles that even today, in our age of 3-D, computer-generated special effects, would give anyone years of nightmares. Then, amidst all of this, John's guiding angel speaks directly to him, in verse 9:

“And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”

By this point, simply put, John is totally blown away by all he has experienced, and possibly, even more so, because he is now being given the charge of conveying to human audiences what he has seen. So in verse 10, he describes his response to the angel, and the angel’s response in kind:

“I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Now, in context, this statement is completely straightforward. What the angel is saying, in the clearest possible language, is this: “John, everything you’ve just seen is so utterly amazing, so beyond understanding, it will be millennia before anyone human

white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

“And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

Take a moment to absorb the unending power of those words. Read in context, all of the above forms the actual meaning of Rev. 19:10, the one that has seemingly evaded Seventh-day Adventists for decades, even though, when one looks at it, it’s all plainly there, in the shape of a complete and indivisible thought, one that makes perfect sense.

Non Sequitur

But when you think about the traditional Seventh-day Adventist reading of Rev. 19:10, in context *it does not make sense*, because when one inserts our explanation into the verse, all one gets is a non sequitur. Instead we read it this way: I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for **prophecy is one of the identifying signs of the remnant church.**

So how did we get here? We did it, in fact, by making at least two important theological errors: The first error we’ve made is with our translation of the Greek word *pneuma*, which is often translated as “spirit.” *Pneuma* does often mean “spirit.” But this is not the most accurate translation of it wherever it appears. For example, the supplementary notes in my own 1995 Zondervan NIV Study Bible transliterates “spirit” in Rev. 19:10 as “essence.”

Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words lists a septenary meaning for *pneuma* (from 18, total) of “purpose,” or “aim.”

Strong’s Concordance notes “vital principle” as one meaning of this sublime Greek term.

Any one of these new substitutions for *spirit* fits a contextual reading of Rev. 19:10 perfectly and sensibly. That is, the angel is saying this to John: “The vision of the future you’ve just seen is composed of—*made out of*—Jesus. His life is the *essence*, the *purpose*, the *aim*, the *vital principle* of prophecy—its content. That’s why the prophecy is so awe-inspiring and so fearsome to behold!”

This would not only be clear to John, but it would also reassure and comfort him, because the disciple whom Jesus loved *knew* Christ! Telling him that Christ’s testimony was the key to understanding the astounding vision he’d just witnessed put John back on an even keel. He knew Jesus! Jesus was an old friend!

Two Key Errors

So the first error is with our translation of *pneuma*. (I’m aware, by the way, that the translation I’m encouraging more or less renders

H BUT, FROM THE SIGHT OF MY NEIGHBOR’S RT OF THE REMNANT.

makes sense of what you write about it. It’s so astounding and awe-inspiring that, right now, you want to bow down to the first being you’ve come across, which happens to be me.

“*That’s completely unacceptable*, John. What you’ve just seen is the story of Christ the Lamb, the meaning of his sacrifice, and the unscalable heights of his triumph. I’m just like you and others who believe, John: *In awe of the God I serve*. Bow down to him, and him alone, because that’s what you’ve just seen: **What He Is**. Never take your eyes off of Jesus!”

The Most Profound Revelation

John will have no opportunity to do any such thing, however, because what immediately follows this statement, in verses 11-16, is the most profound, the most glorious, the most astounding, the most majestic, the most breathtaking vision of the Christ to be found in all of scripture:

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

“His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

“And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

“And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon

the Rev. 19:10 term “spirit of prophecy,” as we’ve tended to use it, both a misquote and a misnomer.) As Seventh-day Adventists, we’ve traditionally read Rev. 19:10 *sideways*, sort of like those people in *The Twilight Zone* who get a book called *To Serve Man* from a seemingly beneficent alien race, only to later realize that it’s a cookbook.

The second error, however, is far more grave, and it’s this: By rushing to fold and bend Rev. 19:10 into our worldview so that it will fit our belief in our own remnancy, we have denied Christ!

As many know, the notion of a biblical remnant is not unique to Rev. 12:17. It is an idea used throughout the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, in diverse contexts. For example, in his essay *The Remnant and the Adventist Church*, Biblical Research Institute director Angel Manuel Rodriguez notes that “The concept of the remnant runs throughout the Bible and comes to expression in a multiplicity of images and specific terms. . . In the Bible this concept is theologically employed as an indispensable element in the history of salvation.”

What makes this remnant in Rev. 12:17 utterly unique, however—and what we seldom (if ever) hear preached in an Adventist church, to our shame, because of our mercenary relationship with the verse—is this: **Rev. 12:17 is the first and the only time that a biblical remnant is specifically identified by Christ’s name and characteristics.**

The New Remnant

Am I clear? Remnants are usually identified by their adherence to the law, as they also are in Rev. 12:17; those “which keep the commandments of God.” But by this time we get to Revelation, a new and final covenant has been established, *and* a new remnant, one that will do to all previous remnants what Christ’s death did to the sacrificial system “of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer” (Heb. 9:13, NIV). His remnant, identified by his holy name, is the one that will supercede all others. Here Jesus, enveloped in the full and glorious corona of His Matthew 28/Revelation 1 power, is declaring a completely new age!

This is, as they say, *a moment*. This should give us holy pause and awe! But it doesn’t. We ignore it. We rush right past it. From an Adventist perspective, the term “the testimony of Jesus Christ” in Rev. 12:17 has a sole use: It’s a chip that we cash in, seven chapters later, so we can wrangle a neat semantic exchange which (a) declares us the remnant, and (b) rewards us with prophetic credentials. In other words, between those two chapters, we take Christ’s name and we *flip* it—the way real estate speculators flip houses, acquiring them not to inhabit them but merely to dump them later—in order to get what we *really* want.

Furthermore, doing this leads us into deeper tautologies, as, for example, “Is there a remnant that comes out of [our] remnant?” We do this, because we think these verses are about Adventists, not Christ. Yet on some level, we know Adventists alone cannot

be the fulfillment of them. But what we forget is that Christ *can* be, and Christ is! These words are about him! The second, major error we commit, then, is the one that all would-be Christians commit, day-in and day-out: Ignoring Jesus so that we can obsess over ourselves. So, to summarize, three points:

Not Adventist-Centric

1. The remnant of Rev. 12:17 is the people who, from God’s perspective, bear the character of Christ. In more direct language, the remnant are those who will be saved at his second coming.

2. There is no “remnant church,” except in the truest sense—that of “two or three...gathered together in [Jesus’] name” with Christ “in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20). In other words, the remnant church is an indiscernible network of affiliates whose names are known by God alone.

And, most of all:

3. The angelic pronouncement in Rev. 19:10—that “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”—in essence, affirms that Jesus is the prophetic impetus in human form—prophecy “in the flesh,” so to speak. This divine messenger redirects worship to Christ, that refocus being an ongoing theme in Revelation. The seraph is not making a statement, indirect or otherwise, about past, present, or future manifestations of the prophetic gift in people on Earth, or implications of the same.

In a church where we’ve been taught—as I’ve been, all my life—that the only way to explain these verses is through a labyrinthine proof-texting algorithm (one which, then, outputs our beliefs), it seems wrong at first to suggest that, actually, they are not primarily about us. But in fact, actually, they are about us. That is, they’re about the people who do God’s will, which is the only “us” about which the scriptures bear eternal concern. There is no other class of people God approvingly recognizes. Adventist exceptionalism is superfluous. We become central—exceptional—by doing God’s will. Those who do so, through Christ, are his remnant. **AI**

Harry Allen, Hip-Hop Activist & Media Assassin, publishes the blog Media Assassin at harryallen.info. There he writes about race, politics, and culture—much as he does for VIBE, The Source, The Village Voice, and other publications—which he has been doing for more than 20 years.

¹ Gerhard Pfandl, “Foundations for Ellen White’s Prophetic Call,” *Adventist World*, September 2008, p. 23.

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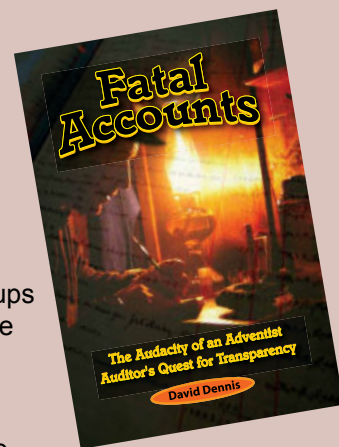
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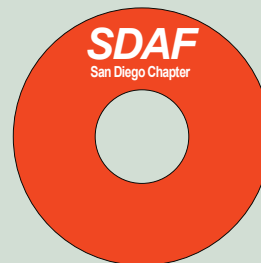
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LEGALISM *or* PERMISSIVENESS:

Do new movements of the Spirit, whose fiery beginnings offer such promise, inevitably face a decline into one extreme or another?
—L.A. King

AN INESCAPABLE DILEMMA?

I have been reading history—specifically, Quaker history. And what I have read has not made me happy; questions keep nagging at me. Troubling questions about the why of things, about weakness and error, about inevitability; questions of concern to every child of God. Go back briefly with me into Quaker history. In their early years (about 1650 to 1690), Quakers were marked by a fiery evangelism and an obviously and radically different style of life from that of their neighbors. They were like John the Baptist, calling upon all people—especially the religious establishment—to repent and bring forth lives suited to that repentance. They had, they declared, not merely heard the gospel proclaimed; they vividly experienced it, here and now in their own lives.

Setting out by twos, they ranged over the British Isles proclaiming that everyone might—no, must—have the same experience they had had. Fiercely devoted to their discovery of life in Christ, they faced mobs, imprisonment, even martyrdom. They offended many by their tactics, sometimes interrupting the minister in his sermon, sometimes taking over his congregation after his sermon and preaching their own message. Driven out of a town, they often returned the next day. Denied buildings to meet in, they

preached in marketplaces and commons, and on bare hillsides.

Quakers Offended

Quakers offended not merely by their preaching, but by their style of life as well. Flouting long established custom, they refused to remove their hats in the presence of social and political superiors. They addressed everybody, even the Protector Cromwell or King Charles, exactly the same way they addressed the humblest peasant. They refused to pay tithes for the support of the state church and to use what they regarded as pagan names for the days and the months. They dressed and lived quite simply. In worship services they sat in silence, without program or liturgy, without official minister. Quakers could by their appearance and way of life be instantly and infallibly identified—even from afar.

With no organization to shape or to enforce their practices, the Quakers nevertheless spontaneously achieved a remarkable unity in style of life, worship and ministry. Warm love and care for one another grew rapidly (early in their history they began the custom of making offerings to help those impoverished by persecution and other misfortunes). And despite so much opposition, they still expected to win enough adherents to transform the whole world and bring in the Kingdom of God.

Quakers Won Many

But if the Quakers offended many, they also won many. Thousands in the British Isles and in America became adherents. Even magistrates who tried them, and whom they defied and preached to in court, were on occasion softened, and sometimes

themselves became Quakers. Theirs was the most lively Christian movement in England during those years. One is reminded of the early chapters of Acts.

Presently, however, and little by little, Quakers began to change. Even in the period of persecution, they were gaining a reputation for good workmanship and honest dealing, and many of them began to prosper. After the persecution lessened, it became in some ways helpful to be a Quaker—helpful to business success. Then some with less fiery devotion began to join the Society of Friends, while some earlier members relaxed into easier ways. The danger loomed of a slow slippage down into permissive worldliness and mediocrity after the glorious high beginnings.

That relaxing of devotion alarmed the still-devoted members. How were they to preserve the old fire and life? Agonizing over the danger, they grasped onto what they hoped would be the remedy. From the beginning Quakers had stated in general terms their principles of worship and Christian living in what they called “testimonies.” These testimonies, neither highly detailed nor specific, had almost spontaneously been agreed on by early Quakers. Now, it seemed to the worried devout, was the time to make more use of the testimonies.

By spelling out the heretofore general statements of principle in specific detail, they decided, worldliness would be walled out of the Society of Friends. The slightest deviation from proper Quakerly conduct could thus be pinned down, chapter and verse. For example, the women’s meeting of York in 1712 declared: “We desire an alteration in these things ... as follows,

viz.: Friends' gowns made indecently, one part over long and the other too short, with lead in the sleeves; and that Friends should come to a stability, and be satisfied in the shape and compass that Truth leads into, without changing as the world changes; also black or coloured silk and muslin aprons, as likewise hoods or scarves not too long or broad ..."

Other matters also had to be specified. One involved headstones in cemeteries: Should Friends even have them? Should they lie flat or stand upright? What, if anything, should be engraved on them: name only, or life dates as well? A crucial one was marriage. Taking a spouse who was not a member of the Society and being married by other than the Friends ceremony were forbidden. Disownments (expulsion from membership) for this cause cost the Society, it is estimated, some 5,000 young members over the middle period of Friends history.

Opposition

This legalistic policy was not without opposition. Margaret Fell Fox (the widow of George Fox) called it a "silly, poor gospel." She wrote: "We must not look at colours, nor make anything that is changeable colours, as the hills are, nor sell them, nor wear them. But we must all be in one dress and one colour."

What was happening during this period in Friends' history was a change from bold expectation of conquering the world for Christ to fear of being infiltrated by the world and its spirit—a mood shift from the offensive to the defensive. The specifically worded testimonies, involving countless hours of discussion in meetings to work them out and then countless more hours to enforce them, were a means of separating themselves from the world which they feared. They were determined to remain pure, not only from the influence of unbelievers but also from that of other professing Christians.

They succeeded. Those who remained

as faithful members kept their distinctive style of life; but this life, once a means of winning people, was now regarded by non-Friends as quaint but hardly winsome. The flames of evangelism died away. Friends sat silent in their little enclaves and slowly lost members.

As the 18th century ended, many Friends were realizing that this closed policy was not truly a success, and in various ways they began to come out of their isolation. Some, deeply under the influence of the Wesleyan revival, adopted items from that movement: the programmed meeting, a paid ministry, hymn-singing, evangelism. The result in the United States is the so-called evangelical wing of Friends.

But that wing is not without its faults. While thoroughly evangelical, it is not flamingly evangelistic: it has many small congregations which barely maintain their numbers and add few or no members from any source other than their own children—and not all even of them. Evangelical Friends show almost no distinctiveness in style of life; they are not noticeably different from the members of other denominations or, in many areas of lifestyle, from the worldlings about them. Neither offensive nor defensive toward the world, they are largely similar to it and comfortable with it.

Highly Individualistic

These Friends are highly individualistic, as are many evangelicals of all denominations, living by the principle that every Christian has the right to form his or her own beliefs and style of life. Indeed, I once heard an evangelical Friends pastor say: "If I undertook to hold my congregation seriously to the testimonies, I would lose three-fourths of the membership," and his statement was received by Friends without surprise or disagreement. It is unlikely that George Fox would easily recognize this comfortable people as Friends, any more than he would have recognized those of the

defensive period.

But a history of this sort is not confined to Friends. The Anabaptists began in the 16th century with the same pattern of distinctive style of life, evangelistic fervor, warmth and unity of devotion—and persecution and success. Early in their history, however, there arose the fear of contamination by the world, to this day embodied in the Amish and Hutterian Mennonites. These groups have specific and strict rules, including prescriptions for apparel, and spend hours in working out and enforcing them—and in expelling those who fail to conform. Further, in the writing and speaking of more liberal Mennonites, there appear from time to time agonizings about their own loss of the distinctive Anabaptist life.

So also with the Wesleyan revival movement, which produced the Methodist Church. John Wesley, with the same intensity, preached the same experience of the gospel as did both George Fox and the Anabaptists—with the same success and some of the same persecution. But before he died, Wesley was to complain that the Methodists' distinctive style of life brought them prosperity—and worldliness. Among them there developed the same alarm over worldliness creeping in, with resulting split-offs like the Wesleyan and Free Methodist churches. And among mainline Methodists today there is the lament for the loss of the old fire and life and message.

The history of the wider church follows a similar pattern. First there was the church of Acts. Then hermits and monastic orders isolated themselves so as to guard their purity of faith and life. Presently, however, there developed and persists to this day the comfortable, permissive life of the majority membership.

Legalism or Permissiveness

Legalism or permissiveness—that is the dilemma of the church. It is not difficult

It is difficult in succeeding generations to reproduce the vividness of the original experiences, and so at least some later converts will have less than the original devotion.

to point out the flaws of both. The fault of the legalistic development is not in its motivation: the desire to preserve the values of an original movement. Striving to continue the good of a moving of the Spirit is right.

What *is* wrong is that the legalistic stance does not accomplish its aim. Rather than preserving the original character of the movement, legalism entombs and stifles it in prescriptions about the external marks of the changed life, neglecting the very life that produces those marks. The fruit of the Spirit is not acts themselves but qualities of the heart that produce acts. Various motives may account for the same acts, but a changed heart will, as the Epistle of James reminds us, invariably produce a changed life.

To quote John Audland, a Friend of long ago: “Force and compulsion may make some men conform to that outwardly, which otherwise they would not do, but that is nothing of weight, their hearts are never the better, but are rather worse, and more hypocrites than ever ... for it is God alone by His powerful word of life operating in the hearts of people that changeth them.”

Perhaps the most serious flaw in the legalistic stance is that it becomes almost inescapably a matter not of spontaneous unity but of we/they. We hold the high standards already; we know what is right. But they—the ignorant, the lax, the worldly—must be forced to live as we do. We will police them and preserve the faith. We will defend the old standards against them. Such an attitude cannot produce a loving fellowship, nor can it change hearts.

And so it fails, this well-motivated but wrongheaded effort to preserve a movement. The drift is from the propagation of the new life in the gospel to the preservation of a peculiar sect. The clever cage of rules by which alarmed members think to keep their treasure safe entraps them instead—and the treasure somehow slips out and away.

Failure of Permissiveness

But if legalism is isolating and ultimately futile, the permissive stance, although different, is, alas, no better. True, it rightly recognizes that outward compulsion does not bring about the gospel. It avoids isolation from the world, and the “I thank God I am not like others” attitude. The escape is costly, however, gained not by an inner fire and devotion leading to a radical and distinctive style of life, but by a reduction of both devotion and standards. The process is circular: lowered devotion brings lowered standards of life; lowered standards bring lowered devotion. The result is a more or less open and sincere lukewarmness—Laodicea, a gradual erosion of Christian distinctives.

Those adopting the permissive stance do not say: “My meditation on the Word and communion with the Spirit have given me new light on how I may serve my Lord more devotedly.” Rather, they say: “I have been too demanding of myself. I am permitted more ease in this matter.” But that ease is almost inevitably defined by desire, by the “latest insights” from psychology, sociology, new styles of biblical interpretation or whatever, but not by a consuming devotion.

This gradual easing drift produces its own hypocrisy: a denomination’s official statements, publicly professed, of an expected level of Christian behavior, but constant violation of that behavior in the members’ style of life. And that style inevitably will be individualistic, with a consequent low doctrine of the church. Each person will follow his or her own conscience: there is no mutual disciplining of fellow Christians in keeping with Matthew 18 and Galatians 6:1-2. The church becomes not the body of Christ, within which there is mutual love and care, but a collection of atomistic individuals, each of whom goes his or her own way without taking any responsibility for one’s fellows or accepting any concern from them.

Moreover, retaining contact with the world wins nothing. The permissive stance may, indeed, attempt evangelism, but only mildly, for it invites the worldling to a bland, culturally conformed Christianity. It does not proclaim: "If anyone will come after Christ, let him renounce himself and ..." It says instead: "Accept Christ, and you will be happy and comfortable. No sweat, no worry." And the worldling looks at the exemplars of this gospel, sees no great difference between them and himself or herself, and is not presently interested in fire insurance. The worldlings do not repel the evangelism, they simply disregard it.

Pointing to Faults

Pointing to the faults of the legalistic and the permissive stances is small comfort. Questions still nag. Is one or the other of these developments of a movement of the Spirit inevitable? Must it be so? Is there no escape from this dilemma? And once either has taken place, can there be recovery? Or must there be a new movement? If a new movement appeared, what would it be like?

Inevitable? To date, no denomination (we are assuming that all of them represented new movings of the Spirit) has maintained its original distinctiveness and power. For the most part the development has been to the relaxed, comfortable stance. And this seems likely *a priori*. It is difficult in succeeding generations to reproduce the vividness of the original experiences, and so at least some later converts will have less than the original devotion. Further, there is the constant eroding pressure to conform to the culture in which a group lives. Hence I must sadly admit that it seems that the outcome I have described for the Quaker, Anabaptist, and Wesleyan movements is inevitable for any movement. Defensive isolation keeps the form but loses the fiery life; relaxed permissiveness—the commonest development—keeps an institution from having great distinctiveness or impact.

Can such development ever be

reversed, so that an institutionalized movement regains its original character? Of course, the power of God must not be discounted, but I fear that restoration is most unlikely. It has not occurred in the three movements cited; I know of none where it has. And any such reversal would seem unlikely. An institution has structures, offices, boards, committees, vested interests, a "we have always done it like this" rigidity. These are all incombustible and can hardly be brought again to incandescence. Or, to change the metaphor, arthritis is not curable.

But out of one or more of these arthritic institutions the Spirit may bring forth a new moving, the old gospel again breaking forth in fiery life. If this should happen, what might the new movement be like? I offer some tentative suggestions, based on the Friends' beginnings.

New Beginnings

The genesis will center on a person or a small group dissatisfied with what they presently see and experience in their religious life. With Friends it was George Fox and the "Valiant Sixty." From such a person or group, the conflagration will spread like fire in dry grass to others similarly dissatisfied, and the movement will be born.

These people—and their followers for some time thereafter—will have a stirringly new insight into and experience of the old gospel—not a new gospel or anything additional, but a recovery of what has been lost or not fully understood. What is happening will be sensed as a new attempt to get back to primitive Christianity. But this attempt must be seen as new or different (or what is all the excitement about?), not only within the movement, but to outsiders as well.

Of course, a new insight or experience requires a new style of life to embody it. This new movement will have one that is radically different and countercultural, so

perceived by its members and by outsiders (who may deem it so peculiar as to be offensive). But to some it will seem right and challenging.

The members of this new movement of the Spirit will not be silent about their new life, but will proclaim it warmly and eagerly, persistently and boldly. They will use the word of their new experience and different style of life as an instrument of attack on the prevailing culture and as evangelism. What they will proclaim and propose will be not Band-Aids and Mercurochrome for the civilian walking wounded, but drill for combat troops. Members will meet not for a weekly self-confidence session and an all-week sucker, but for training with sword and shield. The movement's proclamation will be a truly prophetic witness, a ringing "Thus saith the Lord."

And all of this—the insight, the experience, the style of life, the witness—will come out of a strikingly spontaneous agreement. No long debate, no rules imposed, little institutionalization, but a striking unity of the Spirit. There will also be a remarkable mutual concern and love for one another.

Such were the churches of Acts, the Friends, the Anabaptists, the Wesleyans. Such, I believe, will be the look of any new movement of the Spirit. And it will prosper and grow—but for how long? No one can say. In the past, however, as one movement of the Spirit has passed into mediocrity, God has moved once more to break forth in a continuing display of his power. So, I believe, it will be again. **AT**

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What do **WE DO** if **WE DON'T** Agree?

Only Love Produces True Unity

By Don Watson

In our personal or corporate relationships with each other, what do we do when we have strong religious opinions about the beliefs and actions of others? As Christians, many of us have had problems knowing what to do.

For example, I've been to concerts at church where Christians have left the building because they felt the music was not what Christians should listen to. Then there was the church that planned a house warming for a couple who had just bought a house together, but they weren't married. Some felt the church was condoning adultery by planning a house warming for them. In another instance, two girls got pregnant in different churches. One girl received a baby shower from her church; the other girl was disfellowshipped. Or what about the dear Christian who expressed her belief that her child was now in heaven? Immediately, a member of one of our churches felt it a necessity to correct her "wrong" doctrine.

These were real situations, and in every case people were hurt. Some, right or wrong, decided never to return to church.

You may have had similar experiences. Even if we don't leave the church, these kinds of situations leave us cautious and critical, as opposed to Jesus' request of his Father: "That they all may be one."

A More Important Question

So, what do we do if we do not agree? I have come to wonder if this might be a more important question than what is right or what is wrong, who is right or who is wrong, and what is truth or what

is error. Jesus didn't say, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you *agree* with one another," but "if you *love* one another." Love is inclusive; it serves, it accepts, it listens, and it seeks to understand. Agreement may produce uniformity, but only love produces unity.

Our problem often comes because we have grown up believing strongly that we are right, that we are the remnant church, and so we find it difficult to fake listening to someone we know is "wrong." We identify with those who say: "It's hard to soar like an eagle if you are constantly surrounded by turkeys." If we are not careful, our "rightness" becomes arrogance instead of humility. Perhaps humility says, "Whatever I think I know, the wisdom of God is so far beyond anything I could ever comprehend that I can enter any discussion asking the Holy Spirit to teach me through my brother or sister—who may not even be a theologian or a member of my denomination."

Don't get me wrong. Love does not pretend there are no differences, but love seeks to embrace the kind of relationships in which these differences do not evoke condemnation. Love does not embrace my supposition that I am right and everyone else is wrong. In this difference, there is the potential to discover something new and wonderful about the person I love. I believe love says, "Sweet Holy Spirit, show me something about you and your child that I did not know or appreciate before now."

For instance, my wife and I may have different ideas about child training. If I will not listen to her, if I only disagree with her or argue with her because I believe my ideas are right and hers are

wrong, our differences will begin to alienate us; our love will slowly diminish. If I exercise my authority as the husband and command her to change her methods, things are apt to explode, and our relationship will rapidly diminish. And if I think I can get away with pretending to listen or to take her opinions seriously, I will have a rude awakening. Love, on the other hand, never utilizes force, coercion, condescension, or manipulation. It seeks to genuinely understand and appreciate the reasons why people believe or act the way they do, regardless of whether they agree or not.

Circles of Love and Acceptance

Suppose my friends from another faith believe their new baby should be baptized, and my faith does not? If I, even tactfully, try to "straighten them out," I will more than likely alienate them. Love seeks first to understand why it is important to them that their baby is baptized. If, with no intention of challenging their position, I ask them why they want their baby baptized, I will probably discover that they believe baptism is necessary in order to be saved. So while I may have a different opinion about the necessity of baptizing babies, I



can appreciate why it is so important to the parents. They want their baby to be saved, and that is wonderful! Rarely will a person

listen to our opinions if they feel we are judging them.

But if we draw circles of love and acceptance that include and embrace each other as family, we can eventually begin to feel comfortable seeking God for answers to our common questions and solutions to our common problems.

The secret is *not* being more skillful or tactful in “the way” we straighten people out, but to not straighten them out at all! We, followers of Christ, are to have a completely different intention—to share and enjoy the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of the Father with everyone we meet. In that relationship, *God* will transform us all and write his laws of love in our hearts.

Straightening Out the Sinners

The elders of the church came to Jesus dragging a woman who obviously had been caught in the act of adultery. [This is similar to one of the single ladies

at church beginning to “show” in her pregnancy. The talk begins—and it’s not about how we can throw her a shower; it’s more about how we can throw her into the shower and clean her up. Well, they were somewhat more severe back then.] They asked Jesus what they should do since the Law of Moses said that she should be stoned.

But come to think of it, maybe they weren’t any more severe than we are today. We stone people like that too, don’t we? We use words, looks, exclusion, and silence; this is just as deadly. None of us think today that Jesus was soft on sin. After all, he is God; right? But you wouldn’t know that by our actions. We treat people the same as the Pharisees, and it doesn’t even have to be for adultery. They can merely dress different, smell different, eat different, drink different, believe different; and we somehow think that if we don’t stone them, or at least try to straighten them out, we condone their sin or error.

Again, it isn’t because God doesn’t hate sin—he does! Sin kills us, and it required the death of his only Son to save us from it. But God knows that condemnation never changed anyone. Out-thinking someone in a debate will not transform that person’s life. The accepting, non-judgmental, unconditional love of Jesus is the only thing that will change any of us. It is the *only* thing that will give our teachings or opinions credibility.

A New Plan of Action

To summarize, **when people believe differently from you:** (1) Listen to them. (2) Ask enough questions to clarify

(i.e., Are you saying this? Is this what you believe? etc.), so they are sure you understand them. (3) Seek to appreciate why they believe what they believe. God is the only one who can show you what to appreciate about what they believe. (4) Finally, leave it right there. As your relationship with them grows and they see Jesus’ love and acceptance in you, they will eventually ask you what you believe.

When people do something I do not agree with: (1) God calls me to walk with them, spend more time with them, and allow his love to show them through me that they are accepted exactly as they are. (2) When it is the right time, the Holy Spirit will reveal to me (usually in the form of a question from them) what to say. (3) Again, listen. Ask questions so they can share with you why they did what they did. Make sure they know you understand them. (4) Try to appreciate why they did what they did or continue to do it. (5) Don’t suppose that God is calling you, even now, to straighten them out. That’s the Holy Spirit’s job. But in this process, God would like you to be there with this person as well.

You know, we might find out that *we* are the ones who are wrong or narrow-minded and that God is using someone else to transform *us*. Know this: if we will let him, God will change us more than he will change anyone else. We are the “chief of sinners.” That humble attitude will endear us to the hearts of God and those we love. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...” (Phil. 2:5). **AT**

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FOR OVER A CENTURY, EVEN BEFORE THE PUBLICATION OF *The Great Controversy*, we Adventists have regarded the Roman Catholic Church leadership, typified in the first beast of Revelation 13, as our arch-nemesis, our *bête noire*, the enemy that takes the evil part in the apocalyptic scenario against God's remnant.

Here are seven reasons why it may be time to question them in that role.

More than a hundred years have passed since our prophet approved these prophetic applications. Ellen White expected Jesus to return long before this.¹ We're not sure why that hasn't happened. But isn't it possible that some details of the apocalyptic scenario set out in the 1890s may have changed by the 2010s? It happened to Israel. Not all of the original Old Testament prophecies about them and their role came to pass. We call it "conditional prophecy."

Letting Roman Catholics Off

Seven reasons for rethinking our enemies list

By Loren Seibold

Principles might be more diagnostic than players. That we oppose those who would legislate matters that should be left to an individual's conscience is a principle I value, and I'm proud of Seventh-day Adventist efforts to protect religious liberty. But if it should happen that someone other than the Roman Catholic Church begins to act like the beast of Revelation 13, we will be more ready to respond if we are watching for a violation of the *principle* than if waiting for one specific group to offend.

Ellen White fingered Catholicism in a very different world. Historians have shown that 19th-century American anti-Catholicism grew out of a general anti-immigrant nativism.² In an era when we have had and could again have a liberty-loving Roman Catholic president, when Catholic immigrants have become our young work force, why can't we preach the gospel without identifying Roman Catholicism as Satan's exclusive tool?

The Roman Catholic Church of today is a much different institution than it was during Ellen White's time. The Second

the Hook

Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (1962-1965) radically altered that denomination's theology and practices. Vatican II declared the gospel central to church theology, made worship accessible, denied that Roman Catholics only can be saved, encouraged lay Bible study, and affirmed religious liberty. While not quite a Protestant Reformation, today's Catholic Church is not the same Catholic Church referenced in our 19th-century eschatological studies. Among other things, the Second Ecumenical Council weakened Vatican authority over world Catholics—as evidenced by the 78 percent of American Catholics who oppose their church's ban on contraception.³

By focusing on Roman Catholicism, we may miss more dangerous anti-Christian opponents. Far more Christians have been killed, persecuted, or denied their religious liberty by Communism, military Fascism, and Islamist extremism in the past century than by Roman Catholics; we've let these pass with minimal comment (in the case of Naziism, even offering some pusillanimous cooperation) as we continued to warn against the pope. Today religious liberty still has more dangerous enemies than Catholicism—in the United States, perhaps even some of our fellow conservative Protestants.

God has given us time to become a world church, and that changes the cast of characters in our eschatology. The “antichrists”—opposers of Christ—to many of today's world Christians are radical imams or cruel dictators. One site of Christian persecution right now is northern Nigeria, where Muslims burn churches and kill Christians.⁴ An eschatology that expects only Roman Catholics to initiate religious oppression, only in the United States, and only around the Sabbath question, may fail to speak prophetically should apocalyptic markers appear elsewhere.

Religious liberty has arguably improved in countries where Catholicism has influence. During my lifetime, the papacy has frequently been a force for peace and freedom. Pope John Paul II opened the first breach in the Iron Curtain, and Catholics have been more forthright in speaking against violence and oppression than many of our fellow conservative Protestants. Consider the irony that our evangelists are employing anti-Catholic teachings for soul winning in countries where the

papacy helped win them that freedom! (And the even greater irony that some of us still think that calling the Pope the Antichrist is necessary to win souls to Christ.)

Of course, we don't give the Roman Catholic church a free pass; we subject it to the same Biblical scrutiny we would any other influential world power. (And while we're at it, we'd do well always to scrutinize ourselves by the same metrics we use on others—which is Jesus' advice, not mine.⁵)

But perhaps we needn't single out Roman Catholicism any longer. Ellen White, who was often more flexible than her followers, wrote: “God wants us all to have common sense, and He wants us to reason from common sense. Circumstances alter conditions. Circumstances change the relation of things.”⁶

Roman Catholicism has served us well as an enemy: provocative enough to keep us energized, yet doing minimal actual damage to us. Such an important enemy made us feel significant, “in the know,” and in control, while not really disturbing our lives.

Opposing *current* enemies might thrust us into prophetic roles that take more commitment and action. My friend Bert B. Beach, speaking of Adventist eschatology, once said to me: “I'm suspicious when people are constantly focused on what's going to happen in the future. I think they're trying to avoid dealing with what's going on right now.”

I think Bert is on to something. Could we become as enthusiastic in taking on the religious persecution that's happening to Christians *right now*, in places like Nigeria, as we've been in accusing Roman Catholicism of planning to someday persecute us here? **AT**

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¹ She wasn't alone; the apostles expected Jesus in their lifetimes, too (see Matt. 24:34, Heb. 1:1-2, 2 Thess. 1:6-10).

² See Ernest Tuveson's *Redeemer Nation* and John Higham's *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*.

³ <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/050418/18american.htm>

⁴ And sometimes, sadly, vice versa.

⁵ “For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you” (Matt. 7:2, NIV).

⁶ *Selected Messages*, Vol. 3, p. 217.

Did GOD DIE for More Than

ANYONE WHO HAS SPENT TIME AROUND CAMP MEETINGS, evangelistic series, and other regular preaching has no doubt heard “the personalized version” of John 3:16. Usually leading up to or as part of an emotional appeal to accept Jesus as “your personal Savior,” it goes something like this: “For God so loved [*insert your name here*] that he gave his one and only Son, that [if [*insert your name here*]] believes in him, [*insert your name here*] shall not perish but have eternal life.”

For all the wonderful complexity we find in the Bible’s story of God, the heart of the gospel can be summarized in a single sentence that even a child can memorize and begin to understand. And this personalized version is a valuable way of emphasizing the personal love of God for each of us and the choice each of us has to make to accept God’s gift offered through Jesus. As such, this adaptation of the well-loved Bible verse portrays an awe-inspiring and life-changing truth. We need to know that both sin and salvation are realities we need to take personally—and seriously.

But Read It Again

But it is *not* what the verse says. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved *the world* . . .”—and the word is *kosmos*, meaning “the world as a created, organized entity.”¹ That “John 3:16 is about me” is an important starting point; that the plan of salvation so neatly summarized in this verse has implications for the whole of creation is something we need to spend more time exploring.

Of course, this is not about mounting an argument for universalism—that everyone will be “saved” regardless of their choices for or against God and his plan. Instead, the focus is on

God’s love that reaches out to all and his purpose of working through those who choose to cooperate with him to redeem and to ultimately recreate the whole creation. It is a broader understanding of salvation, stepping away from the temptation to self-centeredness, which so easily arises in our individualistic Western way of thinking and sometimes mars the understanding of salvation.

Yes, salvation is about me and my saving relationship with God—but it is not merely about me. Theologian N.T. Wright puts it like this: “Justification is not just about ‘how I get my sins forgiven.’ It is about how God creates, in the Messiah Jesus and in the power of the Spirit, a single family, celebrating their once-for-all forgiveness and their assured ‘no condemnation’ in Christ, through whom his purpose can now be extended into the wider world.”²

We can, perhaps, readily accept that God loves people other than just ourselves. He loves those we love, and we can rejoice in that. He also loves those we reach out to, and our recognition of this is often our motivation for reaching out in the ways that we do. But he also loves those we are afraid of, people to whom we don’t know how to show and share God’s love. God loves people—all people, everywhere, all the time. God’s favor is not limited to our favor.

Creation is one way we see this demonstrated. The Bible consistently points to the world around us as evidence of God’s goodness. Paul urges that all people have an opportunity to encounter God through his creation: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from



JUST PEOPLE?

BY NATHAN BROWN

what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20, NIV). Jesus also referred to the natural world and the created order as evidence of God’s love and a means by which all people are recipients of his grace: “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt. 5:45, NIV). As well as all the goodness of the natural world, life itself is a gift from God, and regardless of the individual’s response or attitude to God, every person is a recipient of that grace.

Creating the World

But even this reading does not do justice to the breadth of John 3:16’s “for God so loved *the world* . . .” If this summary of God’s love and his offer of salvation was limited to all the people in the world, we would need to go back and perhaps rewrite the Creation account in Genesis 1. If this were God’s sole focus, the Creation poem would be much shorter. Rather than carefully describing God’s specific acts of creation on each of the days, the whole story could be neatly summarized by something like, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and then said, ‘Let us make man in our image . . .’”

If God were only interested in “saving souls,” nothing important happens in Genesis 1 until verse 26. Instead, six times in the six recorded days before there is even mention human beings, we read “and God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). The refrain is even repeated on day six, right before the creation of Adam. It becomes obvious that as well as providing a home for the first people, God takes pleasure in each step and in each part of Creation. He even specifically blesses the

living creatures he has made (Gen. 1:22) before he blesses either humanity or the Sabbath.

Human beings do have a special place in Creation, and more attention is given to their creation in Genesis 1 and 2 than to the rest of the story. But it is interesting to note that the first “definition” of what it means to be human includes being created in the image of God and situated in relationship to Creation (Gen. 1:26). Creation is important to who we are as human beings in relation to God, and while humans are an intrinsic part of Creation, it is clear that God has a special regard and concern for the rest of the created order.

Praising and Groaning

When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, all of creation was affected. The reality of sin changed the relationships between God and humanity, between humanity and nature and, it seems, between God and all his creation (Genesis 3). God is still the Creator, and he still orders and sustains all of life. But perhaps in ways analogous to the change in the relationship between God and his people, God’s relationship to Creation is rendered less direct and more difficult.

Not that there are not still glimpses of God in the created world. As noted above, God still speaks and works in and through the natural world. And somehow the creation and the creatures themselves have voices that offer praise to God and echo the relationship for which they were created: “Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all



cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds... Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens” (Psa. 148:7-13, NIV).

But even in this ordered praise, the tones are muted, the celebration is incomplete and the brokenness is evident. The praise is mingled with groans (Rom. 8:22). Life is punctuated by death. Creation is beset by decay—and somehow yearns for re-creation: “The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to

to its original goodness. As such, we are called not only to accept his offer of salvation, but also to be participants in and agents of that salvation in our world today, in anticipation of the complete re-creation promised by God (Rev. 21:1-5).

This has significant implications for how we understand our role in God’s salvation and our relationship to the created world in which we have been created and re-created: We are not saved *from* the world of creation, but saved *for* the world of creation (Rom. 8:18-26). Humans were made to take care of God’s wonderful world, and it is not too strong to say that the

CONTRARY TO WHAT HAS BEEN ASSUMED THROUGHOUT MUCH OF CHRISTIAN HISTORY AND THEOLOGY, THE BIBLE IS CLEAR THAT THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF SALVATION IS RE-CREATION.

frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom. 8:19-21, NIV).

In a sense, the dislocation of creation because of human sin was most visibly demonstrated at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. C.S. Lewis described the Savior’s resurrection as the “great miracle” that introduced a entirely different kind of possibility into the world, but the death of the world’s Creator within the confines and limitations of that world must be no less a magnitude of “anti-miracle.” It is little wonder that nature turned away and violently revolted at this darkest moment in human history (Matt. 27:45-51).

But perhaps the natural world could not then understand that even in this darkest of moments, the Creator was working to re-create—that even a Creator’s death is an act of Creation. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son...” (John 3:16, NIV).

Agents of Re-creation

Contrary to what has been assumed throughout much of Christian history and theology, the Bible is clear that the ultimate purpose of salvation is re-creation. God’s plan is for the world to be restored

reason God saves humans is not simply that he loves them for themselves but that he loves them for what they truly are—his pro-creators, his stewards, his vice-regents over creation.”³

Because God so loved us, we are called to love what he loves. Because “God so loved the world”— as a created, organized entity—so must we. Because we have accepted God’s gift of salvation, we seek that same salvation and re-creation for our fellow human beings, our fellow creatures, and the whole created world. And in a specific and special way, we are now God’s agents for serving, preserving, helping, and healing in our world—and to all Creation. **IT**

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¹ *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 929.

² N.T. Wright, *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision*, IVP Academic, 2009, p. 248.

³ *ibid.*, p. 234.



Messages to Young People—Revisited

By Alden Thompson

This article was triggered by a surprising event at the Sunnyside Church in Portland, Ore., on Sunday morning, November 1, at the end of a seminar reporting on the Ellen White Conference held in the other Portland—the one in Maine.

The Maine event, held October 22-25 in Ellen White's hometown, was indeed astonishing, bringing together some 65 scholars, including 22 non-Adventists, to work on a first draft of a proposed scholarly book on Ellen White. Organized by a trio of Adventist historians—Julius Nam (Loma Linda University), Terrie Aamodt (Walla Walla University), and Gary Land (Andrews University)—the organizing team also included a significant former Adventist, Ronald L. Numbers, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, whose landmark book *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* (1976, 1992, 2008) has been reissued by Eerdmans.

The delegates included both forceful critics and strong supporters. George Knight told the conference that he never thought he would see all of these people together in the same room.

One noted critic, Walter Rea, was not there. That's not surprising, since this was a working conference of active scholars. Rea was an Adventist pastor, not a scholar. But I mention him because he helped nudge Adventists toward rethinking their attitudes toward Ellen White. After publishing several compilations of Ellen White quotations, Rea turned critic, publishing *The White Lie* (1982). The one sober sentence in that angry book is found in the first paragraph: "I learned to type by copying from her book *Messages to Young People*."

At Sunnyside, two of my faculty colleagues from Walla Walla University, Terrie Aamodt (history) and Bev Beem (English), and I were giving our participants' perspective on the conference. Bev was telling about her early experiences in reading Ellen White. Recently she had gone back to see what she had underlined in her copy of *Messages to Young People*.

I was surprised that she had good things to say about the book. My reaction to the book was otherwise; "hostile" would not be too strong a word. It simply felt like a long list of arbitrary negatives without explanation. Later, when I read in Ellen White's *Testimonies for the Church* that "Arbitrary words and actions stir up the worst passions of the human heart,"¹ a hearty amen escaped from my lips and I immediately thought of *Messages to Young People*!

Tragic Story

Not until I read the tragic story of Hannah More, the aged missionary convert who came to Battle Creek looking for fellowship and care, did Ellen White's list of lifestyle negatives make sense. The Whites were gone, and no one took an interest in Sister More. She left for northern Michigan to stay with missionary friends from her former Sunday-keeping church. There she died.

Is it significant that "The Case of Hannah More" is published in volume 1 of the *Testimonies*, beginning on page 666? Perhaps. The pages are tinged with smoke. But these words, for me, suddenly made sense of Ellen White's lifestyle negatives:

"I told that church that there were many among them who could find time to meet, and sing, and play their instruments of music; they could give their money to the artist to multiply their likenesses, or could spend it to attend public amusements; but they had nothing to give to a worn-out missionary who had heartily embraced the present truth and had come to live with those of like precious faith. I advised them to stop and consider what we were doing, and proposed that they shut up their instruments of music for three months and take time to humble themselves before God in self-examination, repentance, and prayer until they learned the claims which the Lord had upon them as His professed children. My soul was stirred with

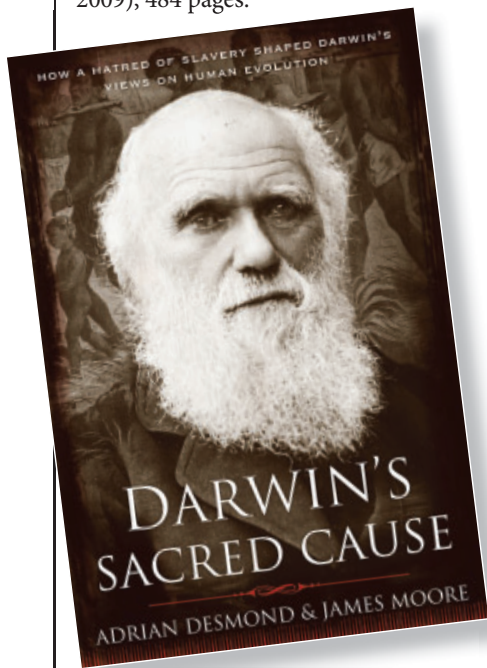
Continued on page 31

Not until I read the tragic story of Hannah More ...did Ellen White's list of lifestyle negatives make sense.

Racism and Darwin

Book Review by T. Joe Willey

Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin's Sacred Cause: How a Hatred of Slavery Shaped Darwin's Views on Human Evolution* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009), 484 pages.



“Some creationists fear Darwin because his theories contradict their literal biblical belief that creation occurred in six 24-hour days. But they do not get at the real dangers of Darwinism,” writes influential evangelical Christian Tony Campolo. The true threat is that Darwin’s “writings express the prevalent racism of the 19th century and endorse an extreme laissez-faire political ideology that legitimizes the neglect of the suffering poor by the ruling elite.”¹

Science historians Adrian Desmond and James Moore published a 700-page biography of Darwin in 1992 that was both comprehensively vivid and highly regarded. Their new book *Darwin's Sacred Cause* is filled with rich details about how American slavery and the

formation of racial identity shaped Darwin's views of human evolution. The mid-19th century “Unity versus Plurality” debate was one of the hottest topics of Darwin's generation. Impeccably researched and elegantly written, they paint a picture of Darwin's journey on the anti-slavery terrain as an anathema to the scientific-pluralism-and-slavery lobby. To use an expression from Darwin, Desmond and Moore “throw some light” on the origin of species, but not the complete story.

Their starting point is Darwin's own family, reaching back two generations into the British abolition movement. Darwin's wealthy grandfather, Josiah Wedgwood, financed the anti-slavery campaigner Thomas Clarkson, who was arguably the “Great Founding Father” of all abolitionism. Grandfather Erasmus Darwin was aghast at reports of a slave ship that threw 133 sickly slaves overboard so the owners could collect insurance on their “lost property.”

Drawing upon a wealth of notebooks, diaries, and unpublished family correspondence, Desmond and Moore are remarkably convincing that Darwin paid close attention to slavery and the racial sparring ground of scientists in Britain and America over the notion that blacks and whites were distinct species, and then how this pluralistic viewpoint was used to justify slavery. While reading *Darwin's Sacred Cause*, one gets the impression you are part of Darwin's family, listening to discussions with his friends around the kitchen table drinking coffee, walking in the garden, or in his study sanctioning his correspondence and looking for just the right word to make his points with the opposition. The scientific and religious characters in the story come alive, and the intellectual and moral surfaces are also exposed.

American Arrogance

Darwin was particularly put off by the arrogance coming out of the “American School” of anthropology that supported racism and the theory of polygeny, or the separate creation of animals and humans in different parts of the earth. His moral fire became a great flame when he heard the conflicting interpretations of Genesis and the speculation about multiple racial origins that were used to explain human diversity and, with it, the rationale for slavery backed by commonplace beliefs in the inferiority of dark-skinned people.

He had witnessed the excesses of slavery on the Beagle voyage (1831-1836), and he was revolted by its “heart-sickening atrocities.” Desmond and Moore point out that the “enormity of the crime in the eyes of the Darwins and their Wedgwood cousins was understandable: the African slave abductions had resulted in probably the largest forced migration of humans in history.”

Mid-19th century was a time when racial groups were relentlessly sorted into “superior” and “inferior” categories. Whites were imagined to have had separate and distinct origins compared to the blacks or Negro types, who, though somewhat human, were thought to be soulless beasts with striking resemblances to apes or chimpanzees.

Men and Monkeys

Darwin particularly disliked Harvard professor Louis Agassiz's theory of many aboriginal races in the world. Agassiz was America's best-known scientist at the time. But Darwin also did not like the provocative *Indigenous Races*, written by Josiah Nott and George Gliddon, which showed pull-out maps of the “Geographical Distribution of Monkeys, in their Relation to that of Some Inferior Types of Men.”

The “superior” group, or slaveholders, looked to the American School of anthropology—which Agassiz supported—to justify slavery that in turn was sanctioned in the rationale of pluralism to explain the diversity of race. Slaveholders also turned to the

Darwin believed that humans could be traced to a single ancestry and that all races belonged to the same human family.

Bible, using hermeneutic interpretations of Cain’s mark and Noah’s curse to gain sanction of slavery.

In the face of these issues and derogatory beliefs, Darwin precisely marshaled the argument for a unitary origin and brotherhood of all human beings by carefully researching varieties in other animals.

This is the basic premise behind what Darwin achieved in *The Origin of Species* and later in *The Descent of Man*. Desmond and Moore highlight concepts like “unity of descent” and “common descent” (what the American School of anthropology denied), that are now so familiar to biologists today in showing the unity of man.

Perhaps Desmond and Moore overstate the “sacred cause” behind the scientific writings of Darwin, but attempting to find the ornamental embellishments in this book will leave the reader in a state of wonderment, as well as thoughtful

and in awe regarding the intensity of the abolitionists’ debates over the justification of slavery, social equality, and the widely held disparaging views of other people.

Ellen White and Amalgamation

Reflective Adventists, perplexed by the mysterious “amalgamation of man and beast” statements found in Ellen White’s *Spiritual Gifts* (1864) published five years after *The Origin of Species*, will better understand the background from which her statements arise after reading *Darwin’s Sacred Cause*. That alone is worth the price of the book. The “varieties of race” pathway through the woods is well laid out in the historical account of the debate over human origins.

Adventist creationist George McCready Price, who thought Darwin’s works were of “Satanic origin,” looked for a way to support and interpret Mrs. White’s reference to the “amalgamation of man and beast” after the Flood. In the process, he noted that “if the Seventh-day Adventist people will all get behind these two ideas, Flood geology and plenty of species-making since the Flood [which would presumably include mixing and crossing of the races of mankind], and if these two ideas can become widely known as the Adventist official teaching on these subjects, I believe that it would not be long before the scientific world would ‘sit up and take notice.’”²

Darwin believed that humans could be traced to a single ancestry and that all races belonged to the same human family. Darwin would no doubt have been troubled by Mrs. White’s and Price’s amalgamation views on the varieties of species, and the suggestion that certain races of men derived from the sexual union of man and beast, in the same way that he steadfastly opposed Agassiz’s theory. Darwin’s friend Joseph

Dalton Hooker, who often visited him at home and followed him around in the garden, realized that Agassiz’s “multiple centre ideas were worse for your theory (Darwin’s) than any thing else.”

According to Desmond and Moore, one of the leading intellectual impulses and the moral core of Darwin’s evolutionary universe was his effort to eradicate the polygeny theory in *The Origin of Species* and to administer the *coupe de grâce* to Agassiz and other scientists who supported the aboriginal creation theory and consequently its hold over slavery. Darwin thought it was shameless and exaggerated that polygenists, slaveholders, amalgamationists, and slave-dealers alike were calling Hottentots “orang-utan-like humans,” and he set about to prove them wrong—a “sacred cause” indeed.

Darwin wrote in *The Descent of Man*: “When the principles of evolution are generally accepted...the dispute between the monogenists and the polygenists will die a silent and unobserved death.” Maybe not as quickly as he imagined, but for that moral quest alone he deserves all 200 candles on his cake.

T. Joe Willey received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, in neuroscience and was a postdoctoral fellow at New York University in Buffalo with Sir John Eccles, Nobel Prize laureate in medicine. He also taught neuroscience at the Loma Linda University School of Medicine.

¹ Tony Campolo, “The real danger in Darwin is not evolution but racism,” January 23, 2008. <http://www.philly.com/inquirer/currents/13930496.html>. Reposted at <http://richarddawkins.net/article,2172,The-real-danger-in-Darwin-is-not-evolution-but-racism,Tony-Campolo-Bill-Clintons-pastoral-counselor>.

² Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists from Scientific Creationism to Intelligent Design*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (Expanded Edition), 2006, p. 144.

7 QUESTIONS for...Martin Doblmeier *By Marcel Schwantes*

Award-winning documentary filmmaker Martin Doblmeier combines a lifelong interest in religion with a passion for journalism. Over the past 20 years, he has traveled on location to more than 40 countries to profile numerous religious leaders, religious communities, heads

of state, and Nobel Prize Laureates.

Journey Films, founded by Martin in 1983, is currently producing a new documentary film called, quite simply, *The Adventists*. It is a look at the intersection of faith and health through the work of the Seventh-day



Adventist Church. At a time when America is embroiled in a health-care debate, Adventists offer a unique approach to health and healing that has made them among the healthiest people on the planet. The DVD will be released in January 2010, and the broadcast on public television is being scheduled for Easter 2010.

I caught up with Martin to learn more about this unique film project and the great responsibility falling in his hands as he accurately depicts Adventist history.

As a non-Seventh-day Adventist filmmaker producing a documentary about Adventists, of all topics you could've chosen, why the focus on the health message and its medical work?

As someone with a background in religious studies who has been making films on faith and spirituality for more than 20 years, I certainly knew of Adventists. Several years ago I was invited to present one of my earlier films at Loma Linda University Church. My wife and I toured the medical school and hospital. I came to understand at a deeper and more personal level the connection Adventists make between faith and health. I feel the Adventist story has much to contribute. Also, the fact that science is studying Adventists to better understand how and why they are living longer brought out the lifestyle questions and what Adventists can show everyone related to healthy living. The theology behind the health-care message—the body is the temple of the God—caught my imagination, and that is what I will try to convey in the film.

Describe the research you have done to accurately portray scenes about the early history and health message of the church, and specifically, Ellen White's visions.

Part of what I love about my work—especially the research—is the opportunity to engage with scholarly, thoughtful, and faith-filled people. For both the historical component and the contemporary chapters of the film, I traveled to onsite locations, did extensive reading, met with historians and archivists, and finally conducted a significant number of on-camera interviews with historian George Knight, Ellen White's great-grandson Charles White, and others.

The accounts of the early history and the health-care message seem very consistent, and they formed the basis of my interpretation for the documentary. Early Adventist history includes some extraordinary characters, and I think the audience will be fully engaged, with no compromise when it comes to the true accounts.

Thanks to heavy media exposure and the longitudinal studies published over the years, it has been widely known and accepted that Adventists live longer than average due to our vegetarian diet and lifestyle habits. However, contemporary Adventism all over the world also comprises meat eaters, caffeine drinkers, and even, in some liberal circles, social consumers of beer and wine. What efforts have you made to avoid stereotypes?

The language of the film, both in the narration I write and in my selection of the sound bites from those people I interviewed, will emphasize how Adventists are living longer. But we are also careful to state that Adventism today is a wide tent. When you are looking at a population of about 1 million Adventists in the USA, it cannot be assumed that everyone follows the strict Adventist diet, and we mention that. It can also be said that not all Adventists are of the same mind on questions of creation and evolution, etc. Hopefully the thoughtful viewer will appreciate the distinctions.

Who is your intended audience, and how do you plan to distribute the documentary once it's released to the public?

The film will be shown nationally on PBS stations, likely around Easter 2010. Over the last few years our films have had great response during that time of year, when the stations are looking for programming with a spiritual storyline. We are releasing the DVD with extra bonus features in

January 2010. We are also developing educational materials to enable the film to be effective in schools, church groups, community conversations, etc. Also, as I have done with my previous films, I am hoping to do a national tour with the film, presenting it in churches, on college campuses, and in large group settings. Finally, we have a website for the film (www.theadventiststhefilm.com), which has clips of the film on YouTube.

What has been your personal experience interfacing with Seventh-day Adventists?

I often heard it said that within the Adventist community there are only one or two degrees of separation. That can be a little off-putting for the stranger who comes into the midst. But I have to say that wherever we went, whomever we encountered, we were welcomed and supported.

The process of making the film also raised critical issues for me in terms of faith and health. I thought I lived a rather healthy life, but I have made changes to my own lifestyle coming out of this experience. I made those changes not only to live a longer and healthier life, but because I want to honor the presence of God in my own body, and that is a key reflection I hope is conveyed in the film.

Did you discover any surprises within the Adventist communities?

One of the most refreshing aspects I discovered in the Adventist community is the reverence for the older generation. Because Adventists value healthy living, the “poster child” for the Adventist lifestyle has become the man or woman in their 80s or older, who is happy, healthy, and content. We were inspired by many of them in the process of making the film. Seniors have a valued place in the Adventist community, and that is so refreshing compared to our wider culture that seems to value youth at the exclusion of their seniors.

What is your ultimate hope for this film?

We did a number of quick interviews with people on the streets to see what they knew about Seventh-day Adventists. Most people did not have any idea of what Adventists were, or at best knew only a little something. My hope is to be able to put a face on Adventists for most Americans, to share with them not only the “secrets” of how to live longer and healthier lives, but also to share in a non-offensive way the profound understanding that our bodies belong to God and we have a responsibility to care for them. If I can accomplish that, I will feel the film has been a success.

Adventist Man

Alden Thompson from page 27

a sense of the wrong that had been done Jesus, in the person of Sister More, and I talked personally with several about it.”²

Grumblings

I once grumbled about *Messages to Young People* to a prominent brother in the White Estate. My line is that it is “the worst book Ellen White never wrote;” it was, after all, a compilation. I was told that the White Estate didn’t compile the book; it came from the General Conference Youth Department, and the brother who compiled it later “apostatized and left the church.” My reaction: “No wonder!”

But at Sunnyside I decided to find out how those at the seminar felt. Asking for a show of hands on their personal reaction to the book, I gave options from -5 to +5 with a neutral in the middle. The score: 30 positives, 5 neutrals, and 8 negatives, distributed as follows:

-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1+ 2+ 3+ 4+ 5+
2 2 2 2 0 5 10 4 6 9 1

I already knew that not everyone found the book troubling. One brother asked me to soften my “worst book Ellen White never wrote” comment because he had known at least one person who had come to Christ through its influence. Now I know there may be more than one, though I still think we can do better than *Messages to Young People*!

Adventists are still tussling with Ellen White. Outside Adventism the Bible triggers the same breadth of reactions. Maybe, as we try to come to grips with Ellen White, we can make peace with the Bible, too. If that could happen, it would be a wonderful gift from the Lord.

¹ *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 134, 1901.

² *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 1, p. 676, 1868.

Confused Adventist Cain: Black Skin 3ABN a Denomination?

Help, Adventist Man! I’m an Adventist who doesn’t know what I believe except that I disagree with what everyone else believes! Where can I go, and what can I do?

Adventist Man has heard your plight and wants you to know that you are not alone. In fact, there is an entire *Spectrum* of people who would be willing to listen to your confusion and complaints.

How can I become a best-selling author in the Adventist Church?

Well, here are two helpful hints for you, my aspiring writer friend. First off, Adventists like to read about Adventism—our beliefs, our lifestyle, our history, and so forth. This keeps us connected with the outside world, you see. The second way is to find a popular non-Adventist book and criticize it and the author, somehow linking it to spiritualism and Catholicism in a conspiracy. It really doesn’t matter how you connect the material because Adventists have more faith in these conspiracies than they do in the gospel.

Was the “mark” God put on Cain in Genesis 4:15 black skin?

Scholars are divided on this subject, but thankfully Adventist Man has the answer. You are on the right track; however, you have missed an important historical, geographical, and ethnical piece of the puzzle. Cain grew up in northern Africa with his newly fallen family, which would naturally give him, and his kin for that matter, dark skin. Therefore, God’s curse made him white.

How should we go about examining if our church structure is using tithe appropriately or is simply funding unnecessary levels of bureaucracy?



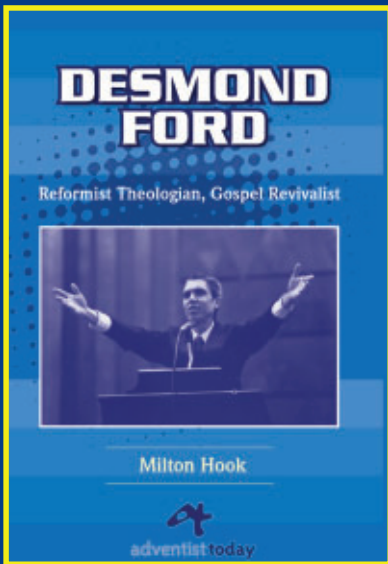
Elect a committee made up of upper-level management who are dangerously close to retirement, whose salaries depend on tithe dollars climbing to the top spheres of church structure, and have them decide on what’s right.

Is 3ABN another denomination?

If by denomination you mean having its own headquarters, media, publishing, administrators, camp meetings, record label, pastors, and mission projects, then yes. If you mean having a distinct message from the one recognized by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, you’ll have to ask the people who skip attending their local church to watch 3ABN.

Do you have a tough question? Adventist man has “the answer.” As a former member of “the remnant of the remnant,” Adventist Man was ranked 8,391 of the 144,000—and working his way up. Now he relies solely on grace and friendship with Jesus. You can email him at atoday@atoday.com.

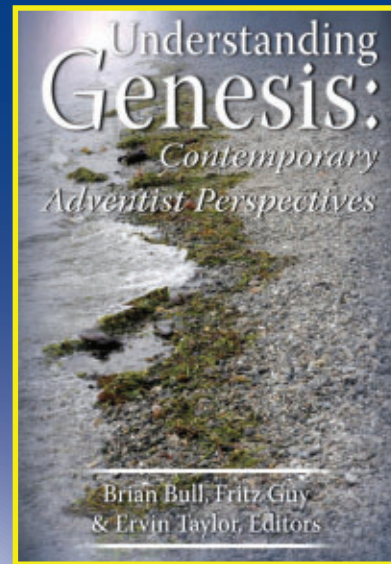
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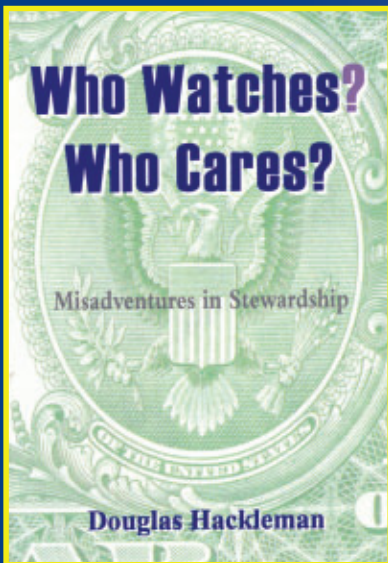
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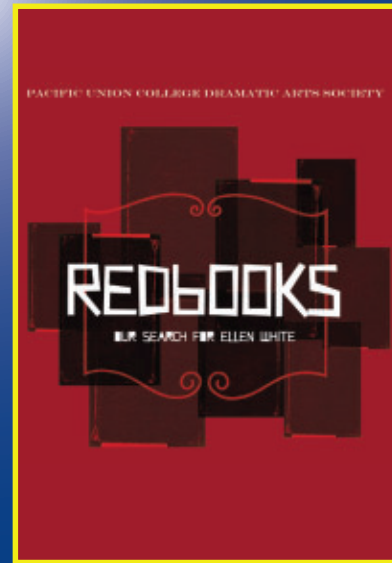
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