

# adventist today

NEWS ANALYSIS OPINION

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NEWS • ANALYSIS • OPINION

## ADVENTIST TODAY

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## Ten Years of Adventist Today: A Retrospective

JOHN MCLARTY

**F**or ten years *Adventist Today* has reported “on contemporary issues of importance to Adventist church members.” We are convinced the church will come closer to its ideals if the actions of its leaders and committees are held up for public scrutiny. Any hierarchical system affecting the lives of millions of people needs the check on power that comes from a free press.

But we are more than reporters. We are advocates—for justice, humility, mercy, truth. For the removal of ideological barriers to women serving in the church, for accountability of church presidents, for openness to human scholarship and experience, for church membership that holds together loyalty and respectful dissent, for a spirituality that connects with real life and the rich resources of Christianity, for Adventist theology and practice and for the idea that compassion and integrity are greater virtues than any uniquely Adventist idea or practice.

We are reporters; we are advocates. And we are pastors. Beyond issues of church governance and theological debate, we seek to foster spirituality rooted in a hunger for intimacy with God, touched by an awareness of human pain, and open to human experience. Healthy spiritual life is not characterized by a breathless fascination with what God will do at “the end of time.” Instead, it focuses on what God is doing now and how we can participate in that divine purpose.

Why *Adventist Today*? The church is facing decisions with potentially huge consequences. Changes in the salary structure for clergy and college teachers. How tithe income is distributed. Funding for Adventist higher education. Declining Anglo membership in North America. Divorce and remarriage policies.

These issues may not affect you personally, but they will affect your church.

Why *Adventist Today*? Because of theology. How does the passage of decades affect preaching about Jesus’ “soon return”? What to do about the disagreement between the church’s science employees and its

public statements about science? What about doctrines that are largely disbelieved or disregarded by the pastors of our larger churches? How much human brokenness can we tolerate in God’s spokespersons or God’s message—biblical or modern?

The more of the church engaged in the conversation, the more likely we will discern the mind of God. Through *Adventist Today* you will hear distinctive voices speaking to these issues.

Why *Adventist Today*? When your experience and learning contradict what you’ve always believed, how do you find a spiritual life that includes your experience without discarding God? When you are for a new piety that includes an awareness of scholarship and transcends it, it’s helpful to connect with fellow pilgrims. Our authors can serve as guides and companions as you learn to affirm God’s involvement without trivializing the unanswerable questions. You will be challenged to do more than talk about your faith.

To celebrate our first ten years, we are publishing this retrospective issue featuring some of our best articles from previous issues. Some were selected because they evoked a lot of mail, some because they represent crucial ideas, some because they are historically significant.

For those of you with good memories, I ask your indulgence. For those who have memories like mine, I invite you to take up and read. These articles are so good, you will wonder how you could have ever forgotten them.

If you are not a subscriber of *Adventist Today*, I invite you to pick up the phone and call our office manager, Hanan Sadek, at 800-236-3641. Give her your credit card number and ask for a year’s subscription. If you are a subscriber, call Hanan and ask for ten or twenty copies of this issue to share with members of

your Sabbath School Class, your children, your pastor, fellow alumni. (This special issue is available for \$4)

Ten years of reporting, advocacy, and pastoring. It’s been an adventure. It’s been a challenge. It remains our mission. ■



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## Unrepresentative Governance

Your latest issue (Nov/Dec. 2001) was a winner! From John McLarty's opening editorial to the back cover.

The report on the IBMTE illustrates the same method used by Congress when rushing through a favorite, but little recognized, attachment at a late midnight session: very little representation, but the eventual shocking discovery when daylight comes. We have not heard the last. As McLarty so aptly states, "What happens to us in the short run will come to you in the long run," and "not a single person had anything good to say about this program." So much for representative governance. Witch hunting will soon follow such a poorly devised policy.

Maryan Stirling's "The Chosen" further serves to illustrate the paucity of female representation in most institutions, including the SDA, and the results. It echoes Ellen Goodman's recent editorial on this subject recalling how women had often been the "moral guardians" of society, serving as "whistle-blowers" in the recent Enron debacle while the men remained silent. Women do have a different view of the world, perhaps more "nurturing"; but that has been sorely missing in most of the legislative sessions in the world's business and especially in religious institutions. Perhaps some of history's rush into wars might have been delayed or diplomatically resolved if an equal number of women thought first of all mothers' sons who were being so callously offered to Mammon.

As young men replace their fathers in all branches of power, they will increasingly call on women, having long recognized their unique ability and skills in relationships so vital to democratic governance. That day cannot come too soon.

**Elaine Nelson | Fresno, California**

## ATS "Big Lies"

One of the rules of political propaganda is that, even though a statement is totally false, if you repeat it over and

over enough times, people will come to believe it. This rule—and the idea that a "big lie" is not intrinsically more difficult to propagate if you simply repeat it more often than a "small lie"—was a key tactic of the Nazi movement in Germany in the 1930s.

Readers of AT can read a classic example of this in the comments of Ed Christian, editor of the *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* (ATS). In your recent interview of him (AT Nov/Dec 2001), he stated that the ATS is "an organization of centrist Adventist biblical scholars." First of all, most of the members of the ATS are not biblical scholars; the vast majority of ATS members are laypersons. A majority of SDA biblical scholars are members of the Adventist Society of Religious Studies (ASRS) and not the ATS. Second, to state that the ATS is a "centrist" organization is like saying that the Klu Klux Klan is "centrist" on the subject of race relations.

As has been well documented by Raymond Cottrell, the ATS actually represents a very conservative reaction to the progressive tendencies exhibited in North American Adventism in the 1970s and 1980s. One needs only to read the requirements for becoming an ATS member to confirm this. However, for some strange reason, ATS wants to propagate the false idea that it is "centrist." Only by reasoning in a manner that would make a Jesuit proud can one argue that the ATS is anything but a right-wing organization adhering, with few exceptions, to a fundamentalist agenda.

Shame on *Adventist Today* for publishing this piece of ATS propaganda.

**James Hilton | Loma Linda, California**

## Adventist Core

I was saddened to see the tone of the article (AT Nov/Dec 2001) comparing the

ASRS and ATS meetings in Denver last November. You were nearly triumphal in declaring that the ASRS meeting "appeared to be an open forum for the exploration of ideas," while proclaiming the ATS meeting to be "designed to promote a particular viewpoint." Since I sat immediately behind you in the ATS meeting, I think I can legitimately comment on the content of that assembly.

The ATS meeting was, in fact, very open. The discussions (several of which

“Maryan Stirling’s “The Chosen” further serves to illustrate the paucity of female representation in most institutions, including the SDA, and the results. It echoes Ellen Goodman’s recent editorial on this subject recalling how women had often been the “moral guardians” of society, serving as “whistle-blowers” in the recent Enron debacle while the men remained silent.”

you missed) were vigorous and tackled controversial issues. Somehow you failed to appreciate that fact. Instead, because it presented biblical views with which you disagree, it was "polemic."

How can there ever be open dialogue regarding theological issues when parties who disagree with you are denigrated? Is it not possible that there is an honest appreciation for the truth of Scripture in ATS, and ASRS finds that offensive because they no longer regard the Bible as the word of God who cannot lie?

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 23**

### Send Letters to the Editor:

atoday@atoday.com or  
Adventist Today, P.O. Box 8026  
Riverside, CA 92515-8026

# Science faculty vary in views on Creationism

FLOYD PETERSEN

*Adventist Today* recently asked the Center for Health Research, Loma Linda University, to conduct a survey of the views on life's origins held by members of science faculties at Adventist colleges and universities in North America. The accompanying graph shows their responses.

We mailed 200 questionnaires to teachers identified from the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* and from telephoning the colleges, and promised to keep answers confidential. The response rate was 60.5 percent, or 121 respondents—considered good for this type of survey. Of those returning a completed survey, 83.5 percent held a doctoral degree; 35.5 percent said their area of specialization was the life sciences, 37.2 percent the physical sciences, and 9.1 percent some other area.

Of those giving their age, the mean was 50.2 years, with the youngest being 31 and the oldest 79. Of the 112 who reported their gender, 8 percent were female and 92

percent were male.

It was interesting to note that younger respondents—under 50 years—tended to be more conservative than older ones. Those who had not attended Adventist schools and also did not have Adventist parents appeared, overall, to be slightly more traditional than others. Some attendance at Adventist schools, as a factor by itself, did not seem to make much difference; nor did having an Adventist parent, as a single factor.

In each area, some respondents omitted an answer or indicated they had no opinion. As to area of academic specialization, 18.2 percent declined to answer; 7.4 percent did not indicate their gender. As to origins of non-human life, 9.9 percent had no opinion. On origins of human life, only 2.5 percent had no opinion. Only 1.7 percent indicated no opinion about the nature of the Bible; and as to views about the Flood and the fossil record, 5 percent had

## EDITORIAL NOTE:

To make wise decisions, it is helpful to have accurate facts. The survey reported in this article was the first systematic assessment of what Adventist scientists actually think about a crucial aspect of theology. This survey continues to exert significant influence.

no opinion.

The results of our survey show fairly close agreement on the nature of the Bible but significant variation in views on the other topics. Perhaps the biblical account of so momentous an event as Creation is purposefully brief, allowing us the freedom to struggle over a universal reality. We might all be surprised when someday we hear the details explained by The One who was there. ■

*Floyd Petersen is assistant professor of biostatistics in the School of Public Health at Loma Linda University.*

## THE RESULTS

*Adventist Today* heard from 121 science faculty members in Adventist colleges and universities. The graph below shows the percent who selected each item as closest to their views.

God created live organisms during 6 days less than 10,000 years ago. . . . .	43.0%
God created live organisms during 6 days less than 100,000 years ago. . . . .	19.0%
God created over an unknown period within the last 100,000 years. . . . .	6.6%
God created first life millions of years ago and guided its development. . . . .	18.2%
Life shown by fossils evolved for billions of years by natural means. . . . .	3.3%
God created the first human beings less than 10,000 years ago. . . . .	44.6%
God created the first human beings less than 100,000 years ago. . . . .	26.4%
No one knows when God created human beings. . . . .	16.5%
Humans developed over millions of years with God's guidance. . . . .	6.6%
Bible is the actual word of God, to be taken literally word for word. . . . .	1.7%
Bible is God's word with human thought forms and perspectives. . . . .	92.6%
Bible is an ancient book of myths, history, and moral precepts. . . . .	4.1%
Most fossils result from the worldwide, Biblical flood. . . . .	64.5%
The Bible flood took place only in the near East. . . . .	21.5%
The Bible story of the flood reflects a myth. . . . .	5.0%
Life represented in the fossil record was created by God. . . . .	23.1%
Some forms in the fossil record were created by God; others evolved. . . . .	33.1%
Some fossilized forms were created by God, others are Satan's attempts. . . . .	15.7%
Fossils show life God created and then guided as it evolved. . . . .	15.7%
Neither God nor Satan made nor guided life shown in fossils. . . . .	6.6%

**E**ven though John Wesley never used the term, he is credited with a distinctive way of thinking about controversial issues called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. This term honors the way Wesley did his theological work as leader of the Methodist revivals and spiritual grandfather of Adventism. It is a method that formulates Christian views and values by

churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church" (1 Cor 14:34,35 NRSV).

"Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent" (1 Tim 2: 11,12 NRSV).

disruption of their relationships. In this disordered state of affairs, men often become more and more tyrannical. In the same sinful state, women often become ever more skillful in the arts of devious manipulation. The whole of Scripture traces this accelerating cycle of mutual abuse with stark and painful clarity. Although it is not pretty, this picture of things is true to life.

The good news is that this is not the end of the story. God is actively at work in every moment of every life to

# What Adventists Can Learn from JOHN WESLEY

DAVID R. LARSON

interweaving interpreted lines of evidence from four sources: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience.

Instead of basing his convictions on any one of these, Wesley interpreted and drew on evidence from all four. I believe we Adventists should do the same.

This method presupposes that God, though greater than the whole universe, is omnipresent. We can therefore learn about our Creator from Scripture and from other sources as well. Wesley's method also presupposes that humans are finite and fallible. We therefore need a



DAVID LARSON

system of checks and balances to keep us from going astray. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral invites us to follow truth about God and about ourselves wherever we find it. It also reminds us that, if they are all valid, our various interpretations will converge and cohere in mutually reinforcing ways.

The Wesleyan Quadrilateral provides a holistic method of studying Scripture. Let's apply it to the vexing issue of women's ordination facing the Seventh-day Adventists, Wesley's spiritual children, today.

"Women should be silent in the

In view of these verses, would we let Ellen White deliver a sermon in our church on Sabbath morning if she were alive today? No one alive today knows precisely and completely why women in the congregations to which these ancient letters were first addressed were advised to keep silent. Some make reasonable conjectures about the matter, but it would be a mistake to make such accommodations to human difficulties the standard by which everything must always be measured. Let's apply each of Wesley's four sources to this question.

### Bible

We learn from Scripture that no group of people is more human or more valuable than others. The creation stories of the Bible, unlike those found elsewhere, declare that all groups of humans are created out of the same dust of the ground, and that men and women, as symbolized by the rib of Adam from which Eve was fashioned, are composed of the same material. Neither is intrinsically superior to the other. Instead, men and women are created in the divine image as equal partners.

The Bible recognizes, of course, that men and women sin and that their faithlessness toward God results in a

bring about healing and reconciliation. The high point of this biblical drama so far occurred in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth—the One who most clearly revealed what God is like and what we can become. The stories Jesus told, the friends Jesus enjoyed, the supporters Jesus appreciated, and the disciples to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection all included women in surprising and soothing ways. For Jesus, healing the wounds between men and women caused by sin was a very high priority.

**“...interpreted lines of evidence from four sources: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience. Instead of basing his convictions on any one of these, Wesley interpreted and drew on evidence from all four. I believe we Adventists should do the same.”**

### Christian History

Unfortunately, this was not always the case for all of those who were disciples of Jesus in subsequent generations. Some historians have found that, already in the

1st century, it is possible to trace the origins of struggle between an impulse to prolong and extend the healing gestures of Jesus toward women and the contrary impulse to keep women in subservient roles as long as possible.

It is difficult to imagine, for instance, attitudes toward women more hostile than those of Tertullian in the 3rd century or more ignorant than those of Thomas Aquinas in the 13th. And yet there are occasions, as in some of the sermons to women by Martin Luther in the 16th century and in remarks about marriage by Jeremy Taylor in the 17th, in which the healing impulse emerges, even if only in partial and painful ways. It is not difficult to discern which of these impulses, the healing or the hurtful, is more harmonious with the life and ministry of Jesus—something that should make us exceedingly reluctant to do anything today that might place us on the wrong side of this ongoing and sometimes difficult struggle.

### Reason

We come to the same conclusion when we consider the matter from the perspective of that form of human reason we call moral philosophy. One of the basic rules of moral thought is that “equals in equal circumstances ought to be treated equally.” This rule does not deny that people differ and that these variations, if pertinent to the issue at hand, can justify treating people in alternative ways. It insists, however, that the differences be clearly relevant. For example, it is not necessary to be able to see, in order to perform as a singer; but it is necessary to have good vision in order to serve as a surgeon. For this reason, we are justified in excluding persons who cannot see from surgical specialties but not warranted in denying them singing careers if they can truly perform. Likewise, differences in gender, though in some contexts they justify treating men and women differently, appear irrelevant to questions of an individual’s qualifications for speaking at church. The burden of proof in this matter clearly rests upon us who assert otherwise. We must be able to show why the gender of a woman necessarily and automatically disqualifies her from being a speaker.

### Experience

We can learn what we ought to do from our own experience as well. Jesus said we can distinguish true from false spokespersons for God, not by their race, nationality, economic class, or gender, but by the harvest of their lives and words. “You will know them by their fruits,” he said. “Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit... Thus you will know them by their fruits.” (Matt 7:16-20 NRSV).

This is a most important test. An individual’s qualifications for speaking in church on Sabbath morning rest, in large measure, on the results, good or bad, of allowing him or her to do so. If there is serious doubt about the matter, there is no substitute for giving the individual an opportunity to be heard, albeit at first in contexts where his or her capacity to do damage is limited even if things don’t go well. Only in this way can we avoid the twin errors of including people who are not qualified and excluding them for the wrong reasons. What Gamaliel, who was “respected by all the people,” said of Peter and other friends of Jesus applies here as well: “If this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them—in that case you may even be found fighting against God!” (Acts 5: 38, 39 NRSV).

The various lines of interpreted evidence we have considered—Bible, Christian history, reason, and experience—all lead to the same conclusion: When it comes to deciding who will be permitted to speak in our churches on Sabbath morning, our guiding phrase must be “gifts, not gender.” This outcome is so compelling, all things considered, that if we resist it we often feel a need to introduce distinctions that soften our conclusions. One such distinction: allowing women to speak in church, but only in a way that does not challenge the authority of the male leaders of the congregation. But the very fact that we feel a

need to introduce this distinction, which is not explicitly stated in the New Testament, demonstrates how difficult it is to apply the Bible’s rare prohibitions of allowing women to speak in church both

“One of the basic rules of moral thought is that “equals in equal circumstances ought to be treated equally.” This rule does not deny that people differ and that these variations, if pertinent to the issue at hand, can justify treating people in alternative ways.”

literally and universally. If we apply these verses literally, we do not apply them universally. If we apply them universally, we do not do so literally but introduce distinctions that qualify their plain meaning. I find it more faithful to Scripture, Christian tradition, human reason, and our own experience to interpret these verses as they read, but to apply them only where they fit local needs.

As these considerations suggest, I am convinced the Wesleyan Quadrilateral enables us to think about the roles and places of men and women in the church in helpful ways. I am also convinced, however, that this method of studying the Bible is very fruitful, no matter what the topic. Besides, as spiritual grandchildren of John Wesley, we Adventists will do well to preserve and promote this valuable treasure from our own past. ■

*David Larson, Ph.D., Professor of Christian Ethics, teaches religion courses for health professions students and for graduate students in Christian ethics. He also serves as one of the teachers of a Sabbath School class at the LLU Church.*

### EDITORIAL NOTE:

The full, unabridged version of this article is available online or write to David Larson, Faculty of Religion, LLU, Loma Linda, CA 92350.

**I**n seminary, church ministries professor Don Jacobson called me a maverick. Ivan Blazen remarked about my independence when I wrote my final exam in his class. After writing several pages exegeting a passage in Romans, I then wrote something like, "The above is the 'right' answer. But I don't believe it. My understanding is as follows." Then I argued again for a position Blazen had vigorously opposed in class. Other students reported to me that one day when I was absent, history professor Mervyn Maxwell announced to the class that I'd

People who worked with H. M. S. Richards, Sr., tell of asking him about various challenges to historic Adventist beliefs. Not infrequently, instead of giving them the silver bullet which would kill their doubts, he would reply he was aware of the difficulty and didn't have a tidy answer; he just lived with the question.

I once had a devoted church member who was involved with the Shepherd's Rod movement. She believed that Victor Houteff was the prophetic successor of Ellen White.

Recently, a denominational official de-

**EDITORIAL NOTE:**

This article received more response than any other we published in 1998.

if not most, of our scholars (professional and amateur). The reality is that if any two people spend enough time studying any complex subject, they will come to at least slightly divergent conclusions. And what subject is more complex than God and human interaction with him?

And there was no golden era. James White strongly disagreed with Uriah

Smith over prophetic interpretation. He suppressed his views so the fledgling denomination would not have to invest energy in de-liberating competing viewpoints. In

# DOCTRINE AND THEOLOGY:

## What's the difference?

JOHN MCLARTY

never get a job as an Adventist pastor. And since then colleagues and employers have confirmed these early diagnoses, using phrases like "off the wall," "marching to a different drummer," "different."

So why am I glad to be an employee of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination? One reason is my understanding of the relationship between theology and doctrine. More on that in a moment, but first several vignettes.

I got a phone call the other day from a theologian known for his cogent defenses of the prerogatives and authority of the Adventist system. I've argued with him long and hard, but this time I listened. He was deeply troubled. His latest research was leading him to question the traditional Adventist (and evangelical) understanding of the Second Coming. What to do?

On another occasion I visited with a pastor in the Southwest. As a result of years of study, he was convinced life on earth was at least 600 million years old and that evolution was the process God used to create all life forms.

clared to the Adventist Media Center staff that if we were serious about getting ready for Jesus to come, we'd need to get the victory over eating milk and eggs.

In 1989 I met a friend, Richard Ruhling, M.D., outside the New Jersey campmeeting. He was distributing literature that proved beyond doubt that Jesus was going to return before the end of 1994.

Graham Maxwell wrote in *Servants or Friends* about a particular verse that is "a key to understanding the rest of Scripture and God's plan to restore peace in his universe. It is this offer of friendship recorded in John 15:15. . . . Friendship is the whole purpose and meaning of atonement."

What's the purpose of this list of "Adventist ideas"? To illustrate the huge range of thought within Adventism. There are some who would like the church to return to a supposed golden era when Adventism was a monolithic, coherent way of reading the Bible and understanding the world. To achieve this kind of uniformity we'd have to get rid of many,

the late 1800s there was intense disagreement over the process of salvation and the deity of Christ.

Thinking, studying people simply can't be confined in a small box. Thus it has always been. So what is the value of the denomination and its doctrinal statements? Simply this: it gives us a center from which to deviate—a center through which we can reconnect with one another in spite of our diversity. The church needs a formal core of doctrine that defines normative Adventism. Twenty-seven statements may be too many, but there must be more than "I believe in the Bible" or "I believe in Jesus."

Jaroslav Pelikan, in his five-volume *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, distinguishes between theology—which is the thought of individuals—and doctrine—the thought of the church. The two always live in tension. Doctrine usually is the reaction of the church to theology. That is, an individual articulates new ideas and the church reacts. Doctrine is always conservative. It expresses what the



church has already come to believe. At minimum, doctrine must be supported by a majority of those present and voting, whether we're talking about the Council of Nicea in 325 or the General Conference at Utrecht in '95.

Theology, on the other hand, because it is the work of individuals, is inescapably idiosyncratic. It describes one person's understanding of God. Sure, theology is done in dialogue with other theologians, doctrine, culture, etc. But still the finished product expresses the mind and heart of one person. Doctrine expresses the mind and heart of a community.

So how do we connect theology and doctrine? What should be the relationship between the church and theologians?

On one hand, theologians must acknowledge that the validity and the value of doctrine does not depend on the personal convictions of theologians. Doctrine is the heritage of their community; it is not the fruit of their personal quest. By their very nature, theologians are driven to proclaim their conclusions. But their conclusions are not doctrine. Their conclusions may lead to the formation or reshaping of doctrine; but when this happens, it is no longer the theologian's work; it becomes the work of the community.

On the other hand, the church must acknowledge that the more detailed its doctrinal statement, the less it can require theologians to affirm they are personally persuaded on every point. Administrators who insist both on a highly specific statement of doctrine AND the personal commitment of theologians to every point in the statement are defining a very small church, one that will be too small for many of our children.

The SDA denomination provides an ideological, social, spiritual, and yes, even institutional center from which creative thinkers can and will diverge. It provides a nexus, a connective center, through which all the mavericks, eccentrics, fanatics, and dissidents can connect with each other and with their parents, children, siblings, and high school and college classmates.

If we are going to have theologians—that is people (amateurs or professionals) who devote their lives to the exploration of words about God—we must expect a diversity of viewpoints. It is a denial of the creativity which is part of the image of God to insist that all theologians agree with each other or with every point of a detailed doctrinal statement.

At the same time, if we are going to have a community (and this is indispensable for wholesome spiritual life), we must insist that not all the ruminations of theologians deserve the label "doctrine." In fact, the community must be free to explicitly label some theology as "maverick," "eccentric," "aberrant."

Theology divides us because no two theologians agree on everything. Doctrine can unite us, even when we are arguing with it. The doctrinal core that the denomination transmits from one generation to the next forms the seedbed from which the infinite variety of our thoughts emerge. It provides the common ground for arguments among us, the common bond that keeps us from degenerating into a loose aggregation of clever, lonely individuals. There is a delicious sense of adventure in roaming beyond the confines of doctrine.

One's own discoveries are so much more exciting than hand-me-downs. If we silence our theologians, the church will lose the sparkle and vitality that interest our children in spiritual matters.

On the other hand, doctrine is an essential part of the glue that holds together the institutions in which most of us acquire the skills needed to engage in the adventure of theology. Neutralize the glue and the institutions fall apart. And if the institutions disappear, the church will lose a major part of the connectivity be-

tween generations. If we discard our doctrine, the church will lack the structure our children will need when it comes their turn to pass on the faith to their children.

Luther remarked that both popes and councils contradicted themselves and each other. He should have added theologians to the list. If "the church in session" is infallible, then we must all return to Rome, historically the mother church of western Christianity. And if theologians have the last word, then what do we say about the brilliant German theologians who advocated Nazism? What do we say about the amateur theologians David Koresh and Jim Jones?

**“ On one hand, theologians must acknowledge that the validity and the value of doctrine does not depend on the personal convictions of theologians. Doctrine is the heritage of their community; it is not the fruit of their personal quest. By their very nature, theologians are driven to proclaim their conclusions. But their conclusions are not doctrine. ”**

Somehow, the right way must hold church and theologians together.

Church history tells us that the interaction between the church with its established doctrine and theologians with their personal visions of God and truth cannot be reduced to a simple formula. Neither is always right; neither is always trustworthy. But neither is superfluous. A living, effective church needs both theology and doctrine. If we try to simplify things by suppressing either, we'll diminish our ability to do our God-given work. ■

**T**he great majority of Adventists through the years have sincerely believed that the words they read in the writings of Ellen G. White were her own, or even God's words spoken to her. In reality, however, some direct passages and many ideas and words were taken originally from the works of other people. Was she plagiarizing in doing this? James Walters cites dictionary definitions of plagiarism to say she was: "The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's own work" (The Random House Dictionary of the English Language, unabridged edition, 1966).

As an ethicist, Walters approaches the question not to disparage her as a person nor to excuse or condone her literary practices, but to examine the problem from a mature and honest perspective. Is it enough to say she was borrowing or merely following conventions of "literary dependency" in excusing her actions? Walters says that to do so is to dodge the

## EDITORIAL NOTE:

As this article illustrates, we refuse to hide from the truth or run from the church.

real issue. Is there any way by which we can separate her practice of plagiarism from her person and character?

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

### Motive Counts

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

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

# ELLEN G. WHITE AND TRUTH-TELLING:

## An Ethical Analysis of Literary Dependency

JAMES WALTERS  
(AS REPORTED BY JAMES STIRLING)

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

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

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

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

cause he showed his character in admitting that the common morality applied to himself as well.

Once when Ellen White's literary practices were questioned, she was indignant and

accused a basically innocent and talented young literary assistant of being proud, ambitious, a "traitor," and at times "verily possessed by demons." (*The Fannie Bolton Story—a Collection of Source Documents*, compiled by the Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, D.C., 1982, pp. 41ff.) Bolton was a recent convert who had worked as a journalist and was perplexed by the practices carried out in the production of Ellen White's inspired materials. She reported: "I am writing all the time for Sister White. Most of what I write is published in the Review and Herald as having come from the pen of Sister White. . . . I feel that it is a great wrong that anything which I write should go out as under Sister White's name as an article specially inspired of God. What I write should go out over my own signature. Then credit would be given where credit belongs." (Merritt Kellogg, "Merritt Kellogg Statement," March 1908, quoted in *The Fannie Bolton Story*, pp. 106, 107.)



JAMES WALTERS

## Societal vs. Religious Values

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

Ellen White was not a scofflaw; she exhorted her followers to be law-abiding citizens and opposed falsehood and deceit. However, it appears that her first allegiance was to her divinely founded church and to her prophetic role in it. Her prophetic mindset may have been such that the ethical dilemma of truth-in-writing vs. outright deception was not the issue. God had called her to be a "messenger" to his remnant people, who were themselves called to warn a hell-bent world. Strict truth-telling was important for general Christian discipleship, but the Advent movement would not flounder for want of needed volumes of divinely inspired messages. And this special calling entailed writing—much writing. Surely, at least at a subconscious level, Ellen White's visions melded diverse information into compelling impressions. The information had come from church discussions, personal thinking, and wide reading. And these general, divinely imparted impressions took further concrete form as Mrs. White continued to study her source material. She was obviously self-conscious, defensive, and regrettably deceptive about her source dependence. But if she didn't use her sources, how could she be true to her prophetic writing role, a role she saw as so crucial?...

## Religious Justification Inadequate

Ellen White was 57 years old when accusations of source indebtedness were first made—a woman who had built a prophetic career on skillfully arbitrating between factions and in building church consensus. She was a churchlywise woman who surely was conscious of what she was doing in her literary work. Her early paraphrasing may have begun quite innocently; but when later accusations

arose, she was overtly confronted with the issue of deception. Her earlier and simpler options had vanished. Should she admit source dependence and thus thwart the finishing of God's work—a work she closely identified with herself? Evidently the compelling end of finishing God's work justified the increasingly dubious means.

The vehement behavior displayed in the Fannie Bolton case seems to betray Ellen White's deep ambivalence and perhaps guilt in utilizing sources as she did. How-

**“In the final analysis, Ellen White is not so much at fault personally as is the corporate church. And perhaps Adventism is not so much to be morally blamed as empathetically understood—as a maturing religious child searching for divine security.”**

ever, even a sense of guilt is understandable if one is choosing a worthy option that involves specific wrongdoing, over another option that is totally unacceptable. On these grounds, speaking from the standpoint of a narrowly religious ethic, Ellen White's plagiarism might be justified.

However, any ethical solution that finds its parameters exclusively in the religious sphere is inadequate. The sphere of general ethics must always be considered as well. Many people are so firmly planted in the purely ethical sphere that they are unable to comprehend uniquely religious claims and the moral seriousness attached to them. Other persons are so embedded in the religious realm that societal norms

are quite secondary. Fortunately, religious persons generally recognize a considerable overlapping of the two spheres. Had Ellen White made her decision on literary practices in the area of religious-societal overlap, rather than merely in the religious realm, two benefits would have been realized: 1) both church and society would have profited, and 2) Ellen White's conception of truth itself would have been more adequate...?

Had Ellen White been straightforward in her literary practices, the church surely would have profited over the long haul.

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

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

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

Shortly after I began pastoring the Charlottesville, Virginia, Adventist Church, I learned that more than a dozen of my members were staff and students from a nearby self-supporting Adventist college I'd never heard of—Hartland Institute. It adjoined my church district; so I toured the campus and met the president, Colin Standish, and other staff members. At that time Hartland, though unaccredited, had an enrollment of about 100 Adventist students from around the world. It offered classes in religion, business, education, and other basics.

I was impressed with the earnestness of both staff and students and invited Dr. Standish, a former president of Columbia Union College and West Indies College, to preach in Charlottesville. I looked forward to working together with Hartland students in community outreach.

Unfortunately, my dreams never became reality. I began to hear strange and disturbing stories and discovered that the morale of my members was low. They saw the Hartlanders as "carpet baggers" from out of town who imposed their standards of morality on the church. Hartlanders controlled the church board, Sabbath School, even church potlucks and socials. Some of my members complained that Hartland students and staff were "running

elder, who was on the staff at Hartland, preached sermons about the "trend in the Adventist church toward worldliness and apostasy." He cited "a west coast Adventist pastor who practiced mass hypnotism on his congregation," a conference in the Pacific Northwest that "held a ceremony to burn E. G. White books," and other such wild allegations, as "evidences" of the Adventist church's condition. During my tenure, the elder left

and was later "ordained" as an Adventist minister by Steps to Life, an independen-

# The CHARLOTTESVILLE story

ALTON D. JOHNSON

dent Adventist fundamentalist ministry in Kansas.

Comparing notes with other pastors, I discovered that Hartlanders were generating controversy not only in my church but in all the local Adventist churches they were attending. (The staff and students did not attend a Hartland church on Sabbaths; they dispersed into the Adventist churches in the region.) As I read Hartland literature, particularly articles by Standish in *Our Firm Foundation*, it soon became apparent that not only was Hartland's spirit exclusive and intolerant, but its theology was also outside the Adventist mainstream.

## Adventist Fundamentalists: more fit for heaven, or just fitting a profile?

As I continued my study and observation of the practices and teachings of the Hartland staff and students, a fundamentalist profile began to take form. This profile characterizes not only Hartland and others in the right wing of Adventism but also the "religious right" and the "political right." This syndrome includes:

1. A strong individualism, which can lead to spiritual isolationism (or political nationalism) and do-it-yourself-ism. This fosters a "saving oneself" mentality—a de-

pendence on one's own good works to make one good enough to be saved. Such individualism can lead to paranoia, legalism, and literalism.

2. Paranoid tendencies—"see are the righteous few against the big corrupt Government or Denomination."

3. An unbalanced emphasis on "law and order". To the fundamentalist, the "law" is the "ultimate standard." It becomes the main inspiration for a person to become one's own Saviour: "If I can obey this standard perfectly enough, then I will be saved." The focus of the fundamentalist is also on resisting temptation, the punishment of sinners, and God's retribution and

vengeance, rather than on deepening a relationship with

Jesus, which will, of course, lead to the fruit of love, obedience, and other fruit of the Spirit. Similarly, political fundamentalists are fixated on law and order, a strong national defense, the death penalty, etc.

4. A literal interpretation of the Bible. Religious fundamentalists also believe in "verbal inspiration"—God inspired the words of Scripture rather than the prophets. Thus Standish thinks he has a biblical basis for saying that "leadership in the church has been given by God to men but not to women," and "the appointment of women elders [local church elders] has brought great grief to God's church and terrible division" (*Keepers of the Faith*, pp. 191, 192).

Likewise, the political fundamentalist believes in a literal or strict ("constructionist") interpretation of the U.S. Constitution.

## Fundamentalism breeds legalism

Fundamentalism, as its name implies, is concerned with fundamentals, or basics. Its thought tends to be concrete, black and white, literal minded. To the fundamentalist, "relative" is a bad word. (It is

## EDITORIAL NOTE:

Sometimes AT can publish news that denominational leaders would like reported but which is too controversial for denominational papers to cover.

the church" and "driving people away" with their sincere yet judgmental confrontations of members and visitors regarding jewelry, dress, make-up, etc. Others told of a young student from Hartland who, on one or two occasions just before I arrived, had, from the pulpit, enlightened the members regarding his ongoing battle with "secret sin." The members and I found the spirit of many Hartlanders divisive and detrimental to a spirit of love and unity in our local church family.

For example, in my absence, my head

“anathema” [Keepers, p. 75].) Fundamentalism gives undue weight to the Old Testament concept of “obey and live, disobey and die.” Since Adventist fundamentalists believe that E. G. White is a true prophet, they would do well to heed her statement that “in order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light which streams from the cross of Calvary” (5BC 1137). It is through this revelation that we must understand and interpret all that the Old (and New) Testament say about God, law, and obedience.

Adventist fundamentalists will select

from E. G. White’s writings a statement such as, “We have a heaven to win and a hell to shun.” At the

same time, they will minimize her statements that express unselfish love for God and others, a love inspired by his love for us.

Fundamentalists will virtually say we must love perfectly in order for God to save us. But apart from Jesus, we cannot love.

### Reviving the Charlottesville Church

Much of the controversy Hartlanders were arousing in the churches they attended centered upon their insistence that “faith plus works equals salvation.” I decided to preach a series on this subject, delineating the theological similarities between the apostle Paul, the reformers, and Ellen G. White on the one hand (salvation is by grace through faith alone); and, on the other, Hartland, Our Firm Foundation, and the Roman Catholic church (salvation is by faith plus works). By the end of the series, very few Hartlanders were still attending. They said I was preaching the “New Theology,” shook the dust off their feet, and left to reform other churches. A new, peaceful, happy family spirit—a sense of relief—was now pervading the congregation. Members who had been displaced and sidelined were once again assuming responsibilities. The preoccupation of the church with lists of do’s and

don’ts (works and standards) as virtually the means or root of attaining heaven was changing to a grace orientation—a grateful spirit, thankful that Jesus is the Root of our eternal life. They saw that when He is in the heart and in the Church, then works of loving obedience are the natural fruit of salvation—but not the root of justification. All was well, until a scandal broke at the General Conference.

### Crisis at Colin Standish’s Home Church: Orange, Virginia

When the church at nearby Orange, Virginia, lost its pastor, a General Conference auditor had been receiving mileage to preach and cover the Orange church on Sabbaths. When the auditor was fired by the General Conference for alleged misconduct, the Orange church was without a pastor.

The Potomac Conference annexed it to the Charlottesville church, a thirty-minute drive away. Although Charlottesville members were willing to share their pastor with Orange, the feeling was not mutual. This action by the conference created a major uproar among Hartlanders who attended the Orange church, including some who had attended Charlottesville until they heard my “heretical” series on justification by faith alone. As further fuel on the fire, a Hartland sympathizer had made a videotape (without permission) of a seminar I’d presented in another church on this subject. My emphasis was on Jesus and his grace—the Root of our salvation. The video was circulated among Hartland members and staff. Colin Standish and his followers were in a furor that this “new-theology, saved-by-faith-alone” pastor might become their spiritual leader.

The conference ministerial secretary informed me he would meet with the Orange church the next Wednesday evening and invited us to attend. When my wife and I arrived at the church, we were told to wait outside until we were called for; but we weren’t called in.

Hartlanders spoke out at the Orange meeting. After the meeting, I was “traded” (against my wishes and the wishes of the Charlottesville members) with the pastor of another church—we swapped districts. This move pacified Colin Standish and the

Hartland members because their new pastor was young, unordained, and without theological training in either an Adventist college or seminary. Hartland must have therefore assumed he would not be infected with the New Theology they believed to be rampant in Adventist theology departments. One of the reasons Hartland was founded was to restore and teach the “pure” Adventist doctrines.

At first I could not understand why the Potomac Conference would allow the Orange congregation (the majority of whom were Dr. Standish and his followers) to have a controlling voice in determining who was to be or not to be their pastor, when it was contrary to the recommendation of the North American Division that Hartland not be allowed a controlling voice in local church decisions. Ultimately I assumed it was easier for them to transfer me out than to “transfer” Dr. Standish and his followers.

Disheartened and uprooted from Charlottesville, we moved to our new church assignment and began house hunting. However, a few months later, when my wife’s old job as an editor at a university became available, she and I left the Potomac Conference. I am no longer pastoring.

Fundamentalism, religious or political, is a permanent segment of the spectrum of human thought and behavior. Of course, not all Adventist fundamentalists are sympathetic to Hope International or Hartland Institute. In many churches, the more moderate fundamentalists quietly endure what they consider to be the too-liberal ways of their church—patiently waiting for the final sifting of the tares from the wheat.

Wherever we may be on the spectrum—liberal, moderate, conservative, fundamentalist, or points in between—we should take to heart the E. G. White counsel from *Mind, Character, and Personality*: “We should love and respect one another, notwithstanding the faults and imperfections [too liberal, too strict] that we cannot help seeing” (vol. 2, p. 635).■

*Alton Johnson has been a pastor and chaplain in the U.S.A and has been a “dark county” evangelist in Canada, where he and his wife established two churches.*

**R**obert S. Folkenberg, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, resigned Monday, February 8, at a special meeting of the General Conference staff at 11:00 a.m. Eastern Standard Time.

Folkenberg, the General Conference Corporation, and the Inter-American Division were served a summons and complaint with a charge of fraud during the last week of December 1998. Also named as defendants were Walter Carson, a member of the General Conference (GC) legal department who once served as legal counsel and director for a nonchurch organization that had business dealings with the plaintiff; Ben Kochenower, an accountant not employed by the church; two businesses: Kanaka Valley Associates (a California limited partnership; and Sharing International, Tennessee), and [John] "Does" 1 through 50.

James E. Moore, a Sacramento entrepreneur, filed the suit on August 21, 1998, in the superior court of California in Sacramento County.

## EDITORIAL NOTE:

When the scandal surrounding Robert Folkenberg, then president of the General Conference, began breaking, *Adventist Today* reported on it via our web site, [atoday.com](http://atoday.com). At the height of the crisis the web site registered more than ten thousand visitors per day. In this case the web site led and the magazine followed. Then-managing editor Colleen Tinker spent countless hours providing most of our coverage of this affair.

According to Neil Wilson, former president of the GC, Moore, a non-Adventist, donated shares in some land to the church in the mid-1970s. Folkenberg, who was then in the Inter-American Division, facilitated the gift as

a benefit to the Inter-American Division (IAD). The IAD felt that the arrangement was "not reputable," according to Wilson, and suggested the shares be put into a small corporation. Folkenberg was part of the resulting corporation established in Tennessee for the purpose of safeguard-

Valley Associates," which "owned real property in California." In May 1993, the suit states, Moore made a written agreement with the defendants and also one Robert Dolan. (According to a limited partnership status report which *Adventist Today* obtained on January 27, 1999, Mr.

Dolan is the agent and the first general partner of Kanaka Valley Associates.)

Moore agreed to sell his interest in Kanaka Valley Associates for two promissory notes totaling \$8 million. According to the agreement,

the two notes were to be transferred to an offshore corporation called Sharing International, Barbados. From there the shares were going to be distributed to two other corporations. Fifteen percent was going to go to an organization called Sharing Interna-

tional, Tennessee; and 85 percent would go to a corporation called Vicarius Urbis Foundation. (Folkenberg had been an officer in Sharing International, Tennessee, before he became GC president.)

The suit claims that Moore agreed to grant Sharing International, Tennessee, 15 percent of the shares because of the defendants' promises to issue 85 percent of the shares to Vicarius Urbis Foundation. The defendants, alleges the suit, never issued the 85 percent to Vicarius Urbis Foundation. Moore learned of their failure to issue the money on or before August 21, 1996. . . .

### Ad Hoc Committee Reviews Evidence

An ad hoc committee appointed by the GC Administrative Committee met at the Dulles Airport Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C., on Monday and Tuesday, January 25 and 26, to review issues that were brought up as a result of the lawsuit and, that could affect the world church. These issues, said Neil Wilson and other sources, involved the nature of Folkenberg's continuing business dealings that grew out of the initial contact with Moore. The committee's directive was to examine the evidence and to

# Folkenberg Resigns

COLLEEN MOORE TINKER

ing the property for possible benefit to the church.

During the ensuing years, Folkenberg continued to have business dealings with Moore. According to Wilson and to another church representative who requested anonymity, Folkenberg was involved in the establishment of several more corporations—some of which grew out of the original deal, and some of which were related to different projects.

In 1989, according to the GC and Wilson, Moore was convicted of felony grand theft involving some land deals and served two years in a state camp.

When Folkenberg became president of the GC in 1990, he gave up his officer status in the corporations he had formed with Moore. He continued, however, to have personal dealings with Moore even though he knew of Moore's conviction and sentencing.

Moore's lawsuit was the catalyst that triggered the discovery of Folkenberg's continuing dealings with Moore.

### Complicated Suit

The suit—which is complicated and difficult to understand—says that Mr. Moore "owned an interest in the Kanaka

make a report with recommendations to the Administrative Committee and the world division presidents.

On Wednesday, January 27, the division presidents joined the GC Administrative Committee in Washington D.C. to hear the results of the committee's work and to review their findings.

According to a highly placed source who attended all three meetings, the ad hoc committee in concert with the division presidents and the administrative committee agreed that the evidence was serious enough to refer action to the GC Executive Committee. The Administrative Committee does not have the power to make decisions regarding the GC presidency; only the GC Executive Committee can do that. The next meeting of the GC Committee was scheduled for April, but the church "couldn't wait until April," according to our source.

A special meeting of the GC Executive Committee was set for March 1, at which time it would make a decision about the presidency.

In the meantime, our source says, the assembled committees unofficially advised Folkenberg to take time off between their meeting and March 1 to be with his family and to look for work.

Folkenberg "knows it's over," stated our source. But even though he was on unofficial leave, Folkenberg was still president of the GC.

General Conference policy states that in the absence of the president the secretary is next in authority. If there had been a disaster, stated our source, the GC would have tried to get in touch with Folkenberg. For ordinary business, however, they looked to secretary Ralph Thompson until March 1.

### Folkenberg Resigns

On Monday, February 8, Folkenberg read a short resignation speech addressed to G. Ralph Thompson, Secretary to the Executive Committee, in a special meeting of the GC staff convened in the chapel at GC headquarters at 11:00 a.m. He said that the controversy resulting from the lawsuit was detracting from God's work, so he would step down from his office.

"To avoid additional pain and conflict to my family and the church I love, I am removing myself from the controversy by tendering my resignation through you to the General Conference Executive Committee," he said. "I will continue to give my all to advancing the mission of the church, and I pray that through this action the church can maintain its focus on the task our Lord has entrusted to us."

Thompson, in Loma Linda, California,

**“To avoid additional pain and conflict to my family and the church I love, I am removing myself from the controversy by tendering my resignation through you to the General Conference Executive Committee,” he said. “I will continue to give my all to advancing the mission of the church, and I pray that through this action the church can maintain its focus on the task our Lord has entrusted to us.”**

for meetings later the same week, spoke at a denominational retiree's luncheon in the Loma Linda Civic Center on Wednesday, February 10. In a short address he briefly outlined the events leading up to Folkenberg's resignation. He mentioned Folkenberg's continued involvement with Moore. He stated that, among other things, Folkenberg had personally (as opposed to officially) introduced certain African church leaders to James Moore,

but that he had made these introductions on GC letterhead. This action, he said, gave the appearance of a conflict of interest.

In a short question-and-answer period following Thompson's talk, one luncheon guest asked if the GC Executive Committee would elect an interim president when they meet in March or if they would elect a president eligible for re-election.

Thompson replied that the committee would elect a president who would then be eligible for re-election in the year 2000.

An *Adventist Today* representative asked whether the GC would deal with the employment of Walter Carson, one of the associates in the GC legal department who is also named as a defendant in the Moore lawsuit.

Thompson replied that such action might be "down the road," but that the GC had no plan to do anything to change Carson's employment since he "was just the legal counsel to a corporation that was involved."

### Legal Update

The General Conference Corporation and the Inter-American Division have retained Sacramento attorney Phil Hiroshima to represent them. Hiroshima, an Adventist, has handled many of the GC's sensitive cases over the past twenty years.

Hiroshima has filed a demurrer, which is a request to the court to dismiss the lawsuit on the grounds that the complaint is insufficient to sustain the claim against the GC and the Inter-American Division.

The court will hear the demurrer on February 26, 1999, and in all probability it will allow Moore to amend his complaint in order to state the case with more specificity. If the church or any other defendant can show that it or he is not legally liable for the charges brought against it or him, the court can dismiss that party from the lawsuit even if other party defendants remain.<sup>11</sup>

Folkenberg's attorney has requested an extension to file a responsive pleading, but the church wants to pursue its defense without delay. ■

I grew up in an Adventist home in the Midwest. From the time I was a teenager, I knew I was different. I always got along better with the girls than with the guys, so I had lots of girls who enjoyed my company. But I had no desire to know them sexually; they were just close friends. Because I was sensitive to others, I did spend a lot of time in elementary school with a classmate who had been crippled by polio. Not surprisingly I did not excel in sports.

By the time I reached college, I had explored sex with those of my gender but not with the opposite sex. I knew I was different and that it wasn't something I could talk to my friends about, but I still did not know that the church considered this to be sin or even that what I felt had a name—homosexual.

I was also pondering what God wanted me to do with my life. In the eighth grade I had decided to become a heart surgeon, but then during a week of prayer my senior year in academy I felt called to the ministry. Not yet fully persuaded, the next fall at college I registered for premed classes. By the middle of that first semester, the conflict between my desire to be a surgeon and

## EDITORIAL NOTE:

We are convinced that part of being the church is listening carefully to the stories of our brothers and sisters, especially when their stories reveal to us a world of hurt beyond our own experience.

the persistent sense of call to the ministry came to a head. I was confused and asked God to give me unambiguous direction. I needed an A in chemistry to get into med school at Loma Linda. If I didn't get it I would know I was called to the ministry. (This was one of two times in my life that I have asked God for a sign, and his answers seemed to be clear both times). When the grades came out, I had missed an A by 12 out of a total of 1000 points possible.

# ADVENTIST PASTOR HUSBAND HOMOSEXUAL

ANONYMOUS

To be a minister I had to be married. For the next two years I dated a different girl every week or two. By the end of my junior year I was steadily dating the girl who would become my wife. But I was concerned about my same-sex feelings. When I sought answers I was told it was just a phase, and that when I met the right woman everything would fall into place.

I did marry a wonderful girl, but the orientation did not change. I went to seminary then into a pastorate. I was very successful and loved my work more than words can describe. But still, I had my orientation to deal with.

Over the next fifteen years, nearly every week I was in the office of a pastor or psychologist looking for help to change my orientation. I tried fasting and prayer. I tried behavior modification techniques in a highly touted change ministry. I even tried exorcism. But nothing worked. I often left a "help" session only to find the struggle more intense than ever.

Finally, my wife, seeing that nothing was going to change, filed for divorce. It was the end of the world. My marriage, my close relationship with my son who was the joy of my life, and my ministry were all finished. I attempted suicide.

Unsuccessful the first time, I made plans for a second attempt. However,

when it came time to follow through, I couldn't. Sitting there, I decided that my life would end in God's time, not mine.

During the twelve years since leaving the pastorate, I have gone through tremendous struggles to know who I am while holding onto my faith in God and a relationship with the church. After twenty-five years in desperate pursuit of the miracle of "change," I eventually had to accept the fact that I am a homosexual. Whatever relationship I have with God and his church must of necessity include that inescapable fact. I have heard stories of "change," but I can only bear witness of what God has done for me. He has not changed me. I prayed and fasted, sought counseling and the help of the most highly recommended "change" ministry. Others prayed for me, supported me, anointed me, even performed an exorcism. But God did not change me. Instead he loved and accepted me.

To be sure, there have been times when I wondered if God was really there and cared and whether the Adventist church was really a place for me to find spiritual support. But I am grateful for where I am now—at peace with God and living a fulfilled life—balancing work, an active role in my local Adventist church (something many gay Christians find impossible), and service to my community. ■



**O**ur July-August issue presented statements by the Arizona Conference (AC) as plaintiff and Adventist Health System/West (AHS/W) as defendant in a case before the Maricopa County Superior Court in Phoenix.

Each claims jurisdiction over proceeds of the sale of Tempe Community Hospital (TCH) to St. Luke's Hospital of nearby Phoenix.

In essence, the crux of the issue is whether the arrangement by which the hospital became a member of what is now AHS/W in 1973 involved a transfer of ownership (as AHS/W maintains) or an agreement by which AHS/W was to operate the TCH for the conference (as it maintains).

Both litigants agree that proceeds from the sale were dedicated to the medical/health outreach of the church in Arizona. Subsequently AHS/W invested the proceeds in an Arizona project that failed financially. AHS/W maintains that the failed project fulfilled its responsibility with respect to investing the proceeds in Arizona; the AC maintains that in accepting management of the hospital, AHS/W

is still obliged to establish and operate a medical or health-oriented facility in Arizona as originally agreed, or return proceeds of the sale to the AC for that purpose.



There are several as yet unresolved questions, and a judicial decision in the case has yet to be made. In the meantime it is appropriate to ask why the conference considered it necessary to take AHS/W to court—why the issue could not have been resolved amicably between the litigants themselves, or by arbitration within the church. This is probably the first time one entity of the church has entered into formal litigation with another church entity.

Inasmuch as AC and AHS/W are both

entities of the Pacific Union Conference (PUC), why was the PUC not able to resolve this issue in a way acceptable to both? One reason is that the president of the PUC is also the chair of the AHS/W board, a fact that inevitably gives rise to a

included an article that provided for an independent judiciary composed of dedicated, competent, respected persons to be elected at the same time and in the same manner as other conference officers and like them, to be responsible to the

## A credible adjudicatory system

RAYMOND COTTRELL

conflict of interest that would tend automatically to result in a decision against AC. The effect of this conflict of interest became painfully evident at the AC constituency meeting early this year.

Why, then, did the litigants not appeal to the next higher echelon of church organization—the North American Division—to mediate or adjudicate the dispute? The answer is simply that there is no adequate mediation or adjudicatory mechanism in church polity by which the division or even the General Conference could do so.

The United States constitution provides for a separation of powers—legislative, administrative, and judicial—with a system of checks and balances that prevents any one of the three from exercising arbitrary authority. Each is independent of the other two, yet subject to them. This independence invests the verdicts of the Supreme Court with a level of credibility we accept as a practical working arrangement even when we dislike its decisions.

In striking contrast, the Seventh-day Adventist hierarchical system of church polity gives administrators almost complete legislative and judicial, as well as administrative, authority. There is no effective separation of powers. Those who make policy administer it; and when questions arise as to whether they have done so properly, they are the ones who sit in judgment. There is no independent, and thus credible, adjudicatory apparatus.

Why has the church not developed a credible adjudicatory system? As a member of the Southeastern California Conference Constitution Committee from 1986 to 1992, I was asked to draft the constitution under which the conference has operated since 1989. My original draft

constituency. That article was eventually eliminated from the document because administration feared it would lose control.

The Tempe case underscores the urgent need for an independent judiciary at each level of church government to resolve otherwise unresolvable issues without bias or favoritism, in a way that is not only fair and just but also is perceived to be fair and just. Such a system would enhance rather than diminish the role of administration in the life and mission of the church. It would prevent conflict-of-inter-

### EDITORIAL NOTE:

*AT* exists, in part, to call our church to live out her high ideals. This article by co-founder and editor emeritus, Raymond Cottrell highlights a systemic change that could help us achieve a more just church society.

est situations. It would spare administration the unhappy necessity of making decisions that tend to undermine respect and confidence in church leadership. It would enhance confidence in the integrity of administrators and thus tend to unify the church.

An independent judiciary has been a major factor contributing to the success of the American system of government; it could do the same for the church. As history has demonstrated, the twin autocratic principles—"the divine right of kings" and "the king can do no wrong"—are incompatible with democratic principles and a democratic society. As the Tempe lawsuit unfortunately demonstrates, they are equally inappropriate and counterproductive in the governance of the church. ■

*Raymond Cottrell is the Editor Emeritus of Adventist Today.*

## The Challenge

**T** "Either you think or you believe; you can't do both."  
Says who?  
Powerful voices in our culture, maybe the whole culture, that's who. For Adventists, it's a dilemma that looms, haunts, lurks and mocks—you pick the verb. It's an urgent issue on every Adventist campus, a tension felt in every Adventist home.

I've heard the "educated" voices. I've read their views in print:  
"It's no longer necessary to convince educated Englishmen of the 20th century that..."

"I didn't think even Evangelicals believed that any more..."

"As every schoolboy knows..."

"Carl Sagan says that only those with an IQ between 85 and 120 can believe. If you're lower than that, you're not smart enough to believe; if you're higher, you're too smart..."

"Either you pursue the truth and destroy the church; or you give up the search for truth to preserve the church."

Those were all educated voices, some quite sophisticated. C. S. Lewis noted that the company of unbelievers makes faith harder, even when their opinions on any other subject are known to be worthless. True. And when the unbelievers' opinions are known to be highly valued instead of worthless, we feel very

# ADVENTISTS AND EDUCATION:

## Can the Marriage Be Saved?

ALDEN THOMPSON

skin: Jerome, Augustine, Wycliffe, Luther, Calvin, and Wesley. Now, it seems, one has to choose.

I don't like the choice. Not at all. I want to think and believe. And I believe we can do something about it—more than just huddling together after dark to talk about this funny business of being educated and Adventist.

But before we consider ways of saving the marriage, a glimpse of history will help us understand how the two partners have drifted apart. And it's not just an Adventist problem. I don't know of any church that has a tidy solution. Church historian Mark Noll, one of the first "evangelical" scholars to gain respect in the "secular" academic community, bluntly addressed the problem in his book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (1994). Noll argued that believers simply haven't developed good universities.

For me the issue was cast into bold relief several years ago when the academic dean from Whitworth College (Spokane, Wash.) told our faculty that of all the Presbyterian colleges founded in the 19th century in the U.S., only Whitworth has retained an explicit Christian identity. All the others have gone secular. In our own town, Whitman College is a constant reminder of that phenomenon: a respected liberal arts college with a handsome endowment—a kind of west coast ivy-league campus.

Ironically, the most persistent echo of

its Christian past is in the name of its athletic teams, the Whitman "Missionaries."

Adventists still have a cluster of colleges and universities. Some are at risk; each is struggling in its own way. But each is still fully bonded to the church. That's good. The challenge is significant, however, and deserves our careful attention.

### Diagnosis: Historical Perspective

Our dilemma can be variously described: faith vs. reason; grace vs. free will; divine sovereignty vs. human freedom. In the end, the tension is rooted in the ambivalent human response to authority: from fear and submission on the one hand to hostility and rebellion on the other. If fear destroys the spirit of inquiry, rebellion elevates it to the point of arrogant independence. Thus the biblical ideal of authority as something that liberates and enables is replaced by a view of authority as something that represses and restricts. On such a view, authority must either be passively accepted or totally rejected. But to describe the biblical ideal positively in terms of "enabling" already betrays my bias; the rebel sees only "repression" ("It is time this scriptural tyranny was broken," shouts a cover blurb on *Deceptions and Myths of the Bible*, 1975, 1995). And the war rages on.

At the risk of oversimplifying, it can be said the fruit of the medieval period was a church that restricted human in-

## EDITORIAL NOTE:

Most AT readers have experienced Adventist education, and most have felt the tension that often arises at the interface of piety and faith with academic and intellectual discourse.

vulnerable indeed. None of us takes kindly to condescension or scorn. Nobody wants to be dumb. Nobody.

In some ways, the tension between thinking and believing is a modern phenomenon; at least the stakes are much higher now than they used to be. In the past, great thinkers were revered as great men of God; the scholar and the saint could happily live inside the same

quiry in the name of God. In 1633 Galileo was forbidden to see what he had already seen, and Galileo was “wrong” until Rome finally declared him “right” in 1992. No wonder the Enlightenment announced the independence of human reason, ruling the divine out of court.

Culturally, however, believers still held the upper hand. At the beginning of the 19th century, atheism was seen as almost a form of insanity. With reference to the Bible, Sir Walter Scott could say: “Better had they ne’er been born, that read to doubt or read to scorn.”

But by the beginning of the 20th century, the tables had turned in “educated” circles: atheism was assumed; belief was scorned. Speaking of the Bible, the great American poet Wallace Stevens exclaimed: “I’m glad the silly book is gone.” By the 1920s, Fundamentalism had sent “believers” and “thinkers” into opposite camps. We’re still paying the price.

The Adventist scene is particularly striking, for our schools were established right in the middle of this war, shaped by a prophetic mandate in the name of God. Ellen White called for the rule of “sanctified reason.” Fundamentalism has left its mark on us, to be sure. But I’m convinced that without the prophetic ministry of Ellen White, Adventists would have no schools and we would simply be a tiny sabbatarian sect with a footprint similar in size to that of the Advent Christian Church or the Seventh Day Baptists.

Instead, Adventism is a tumultuous, unruly body, struggling with problems of diversity and church polity, burgeoning growth and unsettling decline. I think all this tumult and frenzy is linked in part with Ellen White’s dictum, that “Christ can be best glorified by those who serve him intelligently.”

### Rescue and Rehabilitation?

Can the marriage be saved? Indeed. And I believe Adventist education can do much to brighten the corner where we are. We can’t go far if we go it alone. But our unique heritage, our commitment to “sanctified reason,” will enable us to

capitalize on significant cultural trends that are making it easier to think and believe.

Two British authors deserve a great deal of credit: G. K. Chesterton and C. S. Lewis. Lewis described Chesterton’s *The Everlasting Man* (1925) as “the best popular apology for Christianity.” Though certainly no Fundamentalist, Chesterton wrote just as Fundamentalism was reaching its peak and provided believers with understanding as well as ammunition. He noted that the drive against traditional religion was fueled by “a particular mood of reaction and revolt,” with predictable effect on the ability to be evenhanded: “An iconoclast may be indignant; an iconoclast may be justly indignant; but an iconoclast is not impartial. And it is stark hypocrisy to pretend that nine-tenths of the higher critics and scientific evolutionists and professors of comparative religions are in the least impartial.”

Beginning in the 1940s, first by radio and then in print, the brilliant and devout university man, C. S. Lewis, introduced millions of readers to the life-transforming power of Jesus in his *Mere Christianity*. He himself had once been an atheist and spoke candidly of the uncertainties on both sides of the divide: both the believer and the atheist have their moments of terror when the other’s position seems so temptingly true.

Today, I see several hopeful impulses in the broader culture: a touch of humility among scientists, a renewed interest in mystery and spirituality, a readiness to hear the message of Scripture without insisting that it be merely a human book on the one hand or an absolute reflection of God on the other.

Adventists, like other conservative Christians, are inclined to focus on the errors of dominant cultural trends. Yet these trends often correct previous excesses. Just as the Enlightenment helped break the hammerlock of church authority, so Postmodernism is loosening the grip of Enlightenment rationalism by fo-

cus on the importance of the individual experience. That’s good.

Finally, I would suggest that the real reason for the war between faith and reason is the powerful impulse from both right and left to take Scripture as a final and absolute revelation of God. Both extremes assume that if God were to reveal himself, it must be in absolute terms. The left rejects such a position and the right defends it, and neither one is really hearing Scripture.

Adventists can walk a middle way. When Ellen White said that “God and heaven alone are infallible,” she was recognizing that Scripture points toward God but is adapted to catastrophic human circumstances and limited human understanding. Some may say that “such an expression is not like God.” No problem, for “God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible.” And that’s because God inspired

**“It would appear that while God was willing to risk his own name by allowing repentant sinners to work for him, the church is more concerned to protect its ‘good name.’ If God gives men and women a second chance, why can’t the church?”**

the “person,” not the “words.” Scripture points to God but is never the same as God.

The brokenness in our world touches all authorities, and they fall short of perfection. But they are still our authorities. The Bible is no exception. If Adventists can make peace with the Bible, we can help the world make peace with the Bible—and thus find peace with God, a God who took human flesh so that we might live forever.

That’s an exciting mandate for Adventist education. ■

*Alden Thompson, Ph.D., is Professor of Biblical Studies at Walla Walla College.*

**O**n July 18 Garry Hodgkin was at the epicenter of the most electrifying moments of the 2000 General Conference (GC) session. He was the architect of the dramatic reversal of the decision to refer the divorce and remarriage amendment to [the 2005 GC session in] St. Louis. Although the specific issue over which this dispute took place was divorce and remarriage, perhaps this incident, more than any other, symbolized the tensions between the East and West, between liberals and conservatives, between the developing countries and developed

countries in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. motion to cut off all debate, even as another delegate stood at another mike ready to propose an amendment to it. Both motions passed with little opposition. A document that had been left for dead after two days of intense wrangling had been resurrected and passed in about ten minutes.

On Sabbath afternoon, July 8, AT spoke with Garry Hodgkin about his role in the dramatic events of the previous morning. Elder Garry Hodgkin is the President of the South New Zealand Conference in the South Pacific Division.

AT: Elder Hodgkin, your actions on the

I was extremely disappointed that the chairman of Wednesday morning's session chose to prevent delegates from making any further amendments. I know he had good intentions, but it had the effect of suppressing discussion that needed to take place. I was unhappy about that and complained about it on the floor. I had to miss the afternoon session and was very disappointed to learn that the whole thing had been sent to St. Louis without any kind of a vote.

AT: Do you think that the document could have been finished if they had continued to proceed through it the way they

started under Kloosterhuis the day before? It was going quite slowly.

GH: Yes, I do. Of course there was a lot of disagreement; but as I saw it, almost all of the opposition revolved around just two sticking points: First, I Corinthians 7:10-15, which refers to abandonment by a nonbeliever as a ba-

# GRAND REVERSAL AT THE GENERAL CONFERENCE:

## An Interview with Garry Hodgkin

DENNIS HOKAMA

sis for divorce; and second, concern by some that the document lacked an understanding of role differentiation in marriage.

countries in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Much to the chagrin of many North American Division (NAD) delegates, the decision on the divorce and remarriage amendments to the *Church Manual* had been deferred for another five years on Wednesday afternoon of July 5. The "GC Bulletin" for July 5 trumpeted this decision under the heading "Meet Me in St. Louis: Divorce and Remarriage Document Referred."

If we had just dealt with those two issues head on, rather than trying to evade them or suppress discussion, I think the rest would have been fairly easy. I was certainly ready to accept the church body's decision on those two issues either way.

AT: So you return after the Wednesday afternoon business session only to discover that the matter has been tabled until St. Louis. What happened next? Did anyone contact you from the North American Division?

GH: No.

AT: Do you know anybody on the divorce and remarriage commission?

GH: No.

AT: Do you know anybody on the divorce and remarriage commission?

floor during the business sessions of Thursday and Friday (July 6 and 7) have had a dramatic impact on this session, and possibly on the world church. Your actions were obviously well planned, because the groundwork for your motion on Friday morning was laid down on Thursday afternoon. As we watched events unfolding from the press box, we could not help but wonder just how much planning went into this, and what you were expecting to accomplish. Samuel Pipim characterized the series of events as a "slick parliamentary move" from the floor a few minutes after the divorce and remarriage amendments had been passed due to your actions.

GH: Well, the issue of divorce and remarriage is one I have had to deal with continually throughout my ministry. It is an issue that cuts across all cultural, racial, and geographic lines. I felt it was crucial that we made progress on our biblical understanding as well as the practical ministerial procedures of dealing with this issue.



GH: No. Nobody contacted me about it. I had a burden for this issue, and wanted to return home feeling as if I had done my job as a delegate. Leaving a matter as important as this unresolved for another five years without even giving the delegates a chance to vote on it was, in my opinion, unacceptable. So I drafted a motion of what I thought needed to be said. Then I consulted with Laurie Evans, my Division president, as to the wording. Finally I consulted with Athal Tolhurst, the secretary of the constitution and bylaws committee, to make sure that I was on sound parliamentary grounds. I spoke with nobody else. There were two parts to my announcement on Thursday afternoon.

First, I announced my intention to make a motion to rescind the action taken on Wednesday afternoon to refer the proposed divorce and remarriage amendment to the manual committee. If that motion passed, it would put that document on the floor in the condition it was prior to its referral. Second, I announced my intent to call for a vote to approve that document in its entirety. That meant the document as it had been amended prior to the start of the business session on Wednesday morning.

AT: Did you think that your motions had a reasonable chance to pass?

GH: No, I didn't. I assumed they would be crushed. But I wanted to go home feeling I had done my job.

AT: At the time you made your announcement on Thursday, I understood the basic idea of what you intended, but I had no idea of its underlying parliamentary significance. That was very clever.

GH: (Hodgkin shakes his head in frustration) I must emphasize that this action was not intended as a "parliamentary tactic." I believe very strongly in open, fair, and complete debate. In the preamble to my "notice of intent," I observed that not all delegates were present; therefore, I asked the chair for permission to provide notice to the session of my intended motion.

Providing notice is a "two-edged sword." While it is true that a "notified" rescind vote requires a simple majority, [as opposed to 2/3 majority if "notice" is

not provided], the other side of the coin is that those who might oppose the proposition have opportunity to prepare their case and ensure delegates are present. I

**“ GH: I had provided a notice of intention to move such a motion (the floor was expecting it); therefore, I was not surprised that the chair was also “ready with his ruling.” AT: When you went to the mike, did you already have someone prepared to second your motion? GH: Yes. By then, some people in my division were ready to second my motion. ”**

believe this is fairer than moving an "unnotified" rescind motion.

AT: Judging from comments made by developing-country delegates from the floor subsequent to that action, and the applause they got from the stands, it is apparent that they think they were snookered. So far I have heard at least three delegates—Pipim from African Indian Ocean, Louny Morales and Hector Hernandez of Inter-America— complain about what they feel was an unfair vote. I have heard both Hernandez and Pipim say that only about 150 delegates were present out of the 2,000; whereas there were at least 600 when it was referred to the manual committee.

GH: Yes, I know that some feel this way; however I must emphasize that this was not an attempt to "snooker" anyone. That was the opposite of my intention. However, I reject the number of 150. I believe the number to have been much closer to the 500-600 that appeared to be present at most of the business sessions.

AT: On Friday morning you made your motion as planned. Judging from the way Follett made his comments upon hearing

your motion (i.e. explaining confidently that the motion to repeal needed only a simple majority because it had been announced previously), he seemed to have been expecting it.

GH: I had provided a notice of intention to move such a motion (the floor was expecting it); therefore, I was not surprised that the chair was also "ready with his ruling."

AT: When you went to the mike, did you already have someone prepared to second your motion?

GH: Yes. By then, some people in my division were ready to second my motion.

AT: So you were surprised that all debate on the issue was cut off after you made your motion to accept the divorce and remarriage document?

GH: Yes I was! When I came to the SkyDome that morning, I certainly expected more discussion than actually occurred.

As far as the conclusion of debate is concerned, I am really looking forward to seeing written record of the dialogue in the *Adventist Review*. I am very interested in observing the process that leads to the

## EDITORIAL NOTE:

A key element in the mission of AT is to offer our readers information regarding how decisions are made. Sometimes the "why and how" are as important as the "what" of a decision.

finalization of this debate.

AT: The vote then was passed with little opposition. How did you feel then?

GH: I was very surprised. I had recognized that there were those who would not support my motion. I had not attempted to "enlist support" from any other division and had spoken to no more than 6 to 8 people in my own division, yet the motion passed. ■

*Dennis Hokama was the Adventist Today news editor at the time this article was written.*

**I**n a succinctly written history of Seventh-day Adventism in America, Doug Morgan weaves together two major themes that provide a basis for understanding and evaluating Seventh-day Adventism.

The Adventist predilection for forecasting the future through a detailed approach to eschatology becomes one grounding theme for studying Adventist history from 1844 to the present.

Morgan's second theme examines Adventist history through the lens of its ethical involvement in society.

In his handling of the interrelationship between those two themes—Adventism's approach to eschatology and its involvement in ethics—Morgan has made a lasting contribution to understanding the essence of Seventh-day Adventism.

The jacket design of Morgan's book underscores his themes.

While the U.S. Capitol and Washington Monument stand tall and carefully

# ADVENTISTISM AND THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC: BY DOUGLAS MORGAN

REVIEW BY BERT HALOVIK

God's people, overwhelms all relationships between Adventists and America.

It is this interpretation of Scripture that understands the United States as an ultimately evil entity that has both spurred and hindered ethical involvement.

As Morgan's subtitle—"The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement"—suggests, Seventh-day Adventism has not retreated to an entrenched position but has made enormous positive contributions to the world.

America's right-wing fundamentalists. Adventists believed that the government's role was to protect freedom, not to enforce religious morality.



### Some limitations within the SDA Predictive Focus

While the Adventist eschatological schema has tilted the balance somewhat favorably toward positive ethical contributions to the American Republic, its focus upon a detailed predictive scheme of last-day events has resulted in some failures of ethical responsibility:

1. Adventist predictive eschatology left no possibility for a nuanced relationship to Roman Catholicism.

2. Adventist predictive eschatology precluded political activism in reaction to slavery. Convinced that America's moral state was irreversible, slavery was fated to exist until the parousia. Adventist work, in contrast to rhetoric for former slaves, did not begin until the 1890s.

3. Adventist predictive eschatology in the 20th century, inhibited desegregation, bred complacency toward racism, fostered sexism, denied equal wages for women, and fostered harmful attitudes toward eschatological "revisionists."

### Morgan in the Trenches

In total, Morgan offers a trenchant critique of a detailed, eschatological predictive scheme. Here are a few Mor-

**“I believe Morgan's handling of Ellen White offers us a way out the cycle of Adventism's predictive eschatological scheme. While Morgan has noted that Ellen White places a lasting, authoritative stamp on Adventism's apocalyptic view, in his analysis, Morgan offers an extremely helpful perspective of Ellen White herself not being bound by her own writings.”**

outlined, an ugly, frightening beast overpowers, almost swallows the two structures.

Adventism's interpretation of the United States as a destructive power, supposedly predicted by Scripture to oppose

ism to Prohibition, Adventists had something to say about what faith meant," says Morgan (p 71).

3. Adventist predictive eschatology kept the church from aligning itself with

### Some Positive Contributions of the SDA "Predictive" Schema

Here are a few of the positive contributions noted by Morgan:

1. Adventist predictive eschatology led to concern for oppressed minorities and marginalized groups in American society. This fostered strong and consistent action in behalf of religious liberty.

2. Adventist predictive eschatology thrust Adventists into the midst of some of America's greatest ethical dilemmas. "From slavery to imperial-

gan-in-the-trenches quotations:

1. "The Great Controversy remains a thoroughly antipapal document—not just with reference to the past but in its depiction of an end-time conspiracy against liberty—and thus offensive to many, no matter how presented" (p. 186).

2. "The billboard embarrassment did not deter the Adventist mainstream from the course it had pursued.... In regard to apocalyptic prophecy, then, the differences between the far-right fringe of Adventism and the mainstream leadership were more methodological than substantive" (p. 187).

3. "Defense of the controversial book (The Great Controversy) indicates that the church's theology of history perpetuates a sectarian distance from the dominant culture" (p. 195).

### **Morgan and the Progressives or Revisionists of Adventist Apocalyptic**

I consider Morgan's chapter 6, "A Pluralistic Remnant," encompassing the years 1976 to 2000 as the most "fun" part of a provocative book.

Here come such "revisionists" as Richard Coffen, Jonathan Butler, Charles Teel, Roy Branson, Chuck Scriven.

They are shown by Morgan as moving to revise the traditional Adventist apocalyptic scenario to give it ethical relevance in today's needy world.

Morgan considers them "voices calling for a new and progressive involvement with social issues" (p. 125). And they made themselves heard.

These well-educated, progressive scholars "reappropriated" the Adventist apocalyptic heritage by emphasizing their view of apocalyptic eschatology that did not center upon eschatological prediction. They utilized apocalyptic as a "resource for social ethics," says Morgan (p. 182).

How that story works out in its challenge to the church leadership tendency to focus upon the so-called "distinctiveness" of the church's identity is fascinatingly told by Morgan.

### **Possible Discussion Issues**

1. Morgan omits discussion of shut-door

theology of the 1844-1851 period. Would not such analysis somewhat explain why J. N. Andrews and the rest of Adventism saw no reform possible for the two-horned beast? Had not the U.S. political system already passed its period of probation?

2. Morgan seems to place the Adventist apocalyptic schema on a level of doctrine. Should the Seventh-day Adventist system of interpretation be seen within that perspective?

3. In his last paragraph, Morgan speaks of the Adventist "commitment to liberty and a pluralistic public order" that defined their vision of a truly "Protestant" America (p. 212).

How is limiting Adventist commitment to liberty for "Protestant" America really pluralistic?

### **Morgan and a New Paradigm for SDA Approach to Eschatology**

I believe Morgan's handling of Ellen White offers us a way out the cycle of Adventism's predictive eschatological scheme.

While Morgan has noted that "Ellen White places a lasting, authoritative stamp on Adventism's apocalyptic view" (p. 25), in his analysis and handling of various episodes, Morgan offers an extremely helpful perspective of Ellen White herself not being bound by her own writings.

Ellen White implied a recasting of apocalypticism in her responses to the extremism of A. T. Jones regarding African land grants, in the issue of the presentness of the formation of the image to the beast, and to the issue of not directly challenging Sunday legislation by urging Adventists to avoid intentionally working on Sunday.

In his concluding remarks, Morgan calls for an in-depth analysis of *The Desire of Ages* in tandem with that of *The Great Controversy*. If taken up, such analysis would certainly pave the way for a greatly needed Christological perspective within the Adventist approach to eschatology. His dream for an Adventism of the future is for an Adventism built upon a more healthy correlation between its apocalyptic origins and an optimum future for the world built upon the eschatology inaugurated by Christ. ■

## LETTERS

### **CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4**

The SDA church is founded on the principle that God has revealed himself to us in the Bible. It is our responsibility to carefully consider his word and to act in accordance with its requirements. It is not a "nice" book that can be read selectively for self-help, while parts of it are regarded as fable because they seem inconvenient. If one sentence is declared to be less than true, then where do you stop? Is the next sentence true? Or should it be thrown out as well? Since the standard for this is the opinion of finite man, the word of Infinite God becomes of no authority.

If any part of the Bible is not true, then you have no assurance of salvation. That rests on the trustworthiness of God. If he lied in his Word about past events, then how can you be sure that he told the truth about Jesus' atoning sacrifice? Your assurance depends on the utter truthfulness of the Bible. And this is what ATS upholds.

By contrast, Alden Thompson's book *Inspiration* declares that parts of the Bible are not true. And this is the pattern of the articles in *Adventist Today*. The Creation account is relegated to the dustheap of fiction, even though there is good evidence for its truthfulness. (See my article, "A Scientific Paradigm for the Genesis Flood," in the latest Journal of ATS.) Faith is only as valuable as the truth of its object. If you believe in the falsity of Genesis 1-2, then your faith in the cross is worthless.

I do not say these things to be harsh. Rather, the truth is unyielding. God makes exclusive demands, as pointed out by Ravi Zacharias in "Jesus Among Other Gods." I know in whom I have believed. Do you?

**Ted Noel, MD | Maitland, Florida**

# clean & unworthy

RICHARD TINKER

One of my earliest memories is my mom telling me to get ready for Sabbath. I had to pick up my toys, change my sheets, shine my Sabbath shoes, lay out my Sabbath clothes on the foot of my bed, and most important of all, take my bath. I scrubbed off all the accumulated dirt of the last couple of days, and even had to wash my hair. I was squeaky clean. Friday night I would crawl in between those fresh sheets in my clean pajamas feeling so clean and pure—so ready to be in God's presence at church the next day. It really felt good.

The next morning, after a hearty breakfast, I would put my Sabbath clothes on. These were clothes that I only wore to church on Sabbath. I had a Sabbath suit, shirt, tie, shoes, and even socks that never saw the light of day except on Sabbath. Soon I was all dressed up and even had Brill Cream in my hair for that great, greasy look. I was all ready to go to church. I had not a spot or blemish anywhere. I was perfect.

Is our focus on being cleaned up when we go to church teaching us something that isn't true? I would like to propose that for some, this practice of cleaning up for church has taught that God only accepts people and their worship if they are good—on the inside and the outside. They spend a lot of time making their outsides look clean and spotless so that they can come into God's presence. At church, everyone looks so righteous. Who needs Christ's robe of righteousness when we all look so good?

Nowhere does the Bible say that we have to purify ourselves, to become clean on the inside or outside, before coming to Christ. But many don't want to be in Christ's

presence if they feel unworthy. They don't realize that in Jesus' presence they can rejoice in the gift of the white robe of righteousness that he gives freely to anyone who will accept it.

Jesus' parable of the wedding feast illustrates how freely he offers his righteousness to cover our blemishes, and how free of conditions is his call to us.

"Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' " (Matthew 22:8-13).

Both good and bad people were at the wedding banquet. The condition for being there was not their goodness; it was their acceptance of the free wedding clothes.

From beginning to end, the Bible tells of God's love for us and of his longing to make us clean. He doesn't ask us to clean ourselves. Rather, "the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (Revelation 22:17).

Jesus opens his arms to all and says come. Come with your dirty insides and outsides. Come with your unworthy feelings. Come with your pain. Come as you are. He has the perfect solution for our dirt: his perfect, white and clean robe of his righteousness. he says, "Come." ■