



*"...the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy"*

*"Everyone who prophesies  
speaks to others for their  
strengthening,  
encouragement  
and comfort"*  
1 Corinthians 14:3

# Safe Places

*Newsletter*

<http://www.buildingsafeplaces.org/>

August 2015

I can only imagine the variety and number of responses there were to the General Conference Session in San Antonio. One of the attendees, Tom De Bruin shared his thoughts with us in **Voices of God and the Church**. Jeroen Tunistra is working on his impressions and has said he will share them in another issue of *Safe Places*. Given the challenges the Adventist church faces, we are also appreciative of Dr. Valentine's willingness to share his presentation on the way we have dealt with issues in the past.

Since Caitlyn Jenner has recently brought her story of being transgender to the front pages, we focused our **Recent Research** on reports of five studies about this issue.

In our **Resource** section, five young adult members of the Intercollegiate Adventist Gay/ Straight Alliance Coalition (IAGC) shared their thoughts about being part of this resource for younger LGBTI Adventists and were kind enough to share their contact information, in case they can be of help to you. In this section we also shared a review of *Galileo's Middle Finger*, Alice Dreger's book about activism and ethics.

In **Voices from the Heart** we continue to focus on Jerry's McKay's story about his journey as a gay Adventist as well as our monthly video clip.

For those of you interested in learning more about the research on brain development, sex, gender, and orientation we are offering a new one-day training called *Hot Topics in Safe Places*. Our next presentation will be at the Long Beach, California Seventh-day Adventist Church on Sabbath, October 10. You are welcome to join us. If you have questions you can contact us at [editor@buildingsafeplaces.org](mailto:editor@buildingsafeplaces.org). There is a brief description on our website under "Training and Consultations."

As always, if you know of someone who might find this newsletter interesting and/or useful, please feel most welcome to share it with them. If you would like to respond to any of the articles, there are response links at the end of each one. If you would like to schedule a Safe Places training or meeting, you can contact us at [editor@buildingsafeplaces.org](mailto:editor@buildingsafeplaces.org).

In the meanwhile, we wish you gentle blessings,

Catherine Taylor and the Building Safe Places Team:

- Frieder Schmid, Ingrid Schmid, Dave Ferguson, Floyd Poenitz, and Ruud Kieboom.



### **In His Image: Discrimination and Equality**

Almost 25 years ago Nelson Mandela was released from prison. He has been an inspiration for many people, and I am sure he will remain one for generations. In 1993 his contribution to society was honored when he won the Nobel Prize for peace, together with F.W. de Klerk. Mandela's mission was founded in love and human rights.

[Read more on page 4](#)

### **1888 - The Unending Story of Seventh-day Adventist Reformation**

The 1888 Minneapolis Conference shaped the development of the Adventist church in the decades that followed. This presentation explores how the themes and insights of 1888 continue to inform Adventism in its endeavor to be a semper reformanda church, with particular emphasis on responding to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

[Read more on page 7](#)

### **Recent Research**

- \* Gender dysphoria is more common than we thought
- \* But most gender-dysphoric children won't become transgender adults
- \* It's true that transgender people face significant discrimination and stigma
- \* But medical interventions do lead to better psychological outcomes
- \* The biological basis of transgender identity is still mostly a mystery

[Read more on page 14](#)

### **Galileo's Middle Finger**

Soon enough," Alice Dreger writes at the beginning of her romp of a book, "I will get to the death threats, the sex charges, the alleged genocides, the epidemics, the alien abductees, the anti-lesbian drug, the unethical ethicists, the fight with Martina Navratilova and, of course, Galileo's middle finger. But first I have to tell you a little bit about how I got into this mess."

[Read more on page 16](#)

### **IAGC**

Intercollegiate Adventist Gay-Straight Alliance Coalition (IAGC) is a grass roots group of Seventh-day Adventist students and teachers who would like to create a safe, non-judgmental environment for LGBTI members of their academic Adventist community. As of August 2015, there are Adventist gay/straight alliances at nine North American Adventist colleges and universities. The student leadership of IAGC would like to build ways to support LGBTI Adventist students internationally.

[Read more on page 18](#)

### **Jerry McKay's Journey (part III)**

As with my childhood, themes characterize my high school years. The things I did as part of my spiritual discipline at home continued and evolved. My orientation was always present; and, like before, there were many times when it forced itself into my awareness in ways I could not ignore. In high school, naturally, the expectation to date increased; and I tried.

[Read more on page 19](#)



### In His Image: Discrimination and Equality



By Tom de Bruin

**A** *lmost 25 years ago Nelson Mandela was released from prison. He has been an inspiration for many people, and I am sure he will remain one for generations. In 1993 his contribution to society was honored when he won the Nobel Prize for peace, together with F.W. de Klerk. Mandela's mission was founded in love and human rights.*

**M**andela's fight for love and human rights is special to me. I lived in South Africa when he was released from prison. I remember the elections where De Klerk was voted president. I remember the hope that many had that he, from a position of power, would bring change. And change was direly needed.

#### Borders

**I** grew up in a country of borders. Everything in my life revolved around borders. There were borders to show you who you could play with and where you were allowed to be. There were even borders to show you which restroom you could use and if you could sit on the benches in the park. I was on the “right” side of the border—as far as that is possible, of course. I am white, so I could use the whites-only restrooms. I could sit on the benches, and I could live in the nice neighborhoods. If I had been born with a different skin color, my life would have been very different.

I grew up in a country of racism and discrimination. Just because you were a little different, because you were on the other side of some random border, you didn't belong.

Last year I went to South Africa with my wife. I saw some improvement—things look a lot better now. But my wife, having never seen how it was before, was very shocked.

#### Holland

**A**s the Dutch (or any other country, I am sure) we look at these atrocities in South Africa and we agree that it is idiocy. But, if we are really

honest, is it better here? It seems to me that, in Europe and even in “tolerant” Holland, it's getting worse and worse by the day. And I'm not just referring to extreme right-wing politicians. Certain football players are called monkeys on Facebook—and let's not even repeat what people are calling Muslims.

I see this even in the church. There is racism and discrimination in the local churches and at national events, not to mention the limitations for women and homosexuals set out in policy that seems very much like discrimination.

I can't really say anything about this, except that it is not the way it should be. Western civilization should not include discrimination, and Christianity *certainly* should not. Jesus taught us to look past borders. He spoke to women, who men were not really allowed to talk to in public. He ate with tax collectors: traitors to their country. He converted Samaritans: foreigners that were best ignored. He let the children come to him: the invisibles with even less status than slaves. Even the lepers and criminals, the lowest of the low, were welcome in Jesus' eyes. Jesus had time for them all. Jesus taught us to look beyond borders.

#### Divine Borders

**N**ow, God is clearly a God of borders—certain borders, anyway. At creation he created borders between light and dark, between wet and dry. The first humans showed us the border between good and evil. These are borders that belong with God, but there are other borders that God does *not*

like. I would call these borders “borders between people.”

Borders between people are the hot topic in the church right now. In most countries we have been discussing the ordination of women, LGBTI individuals, and the right to discriminate. Can we have a border between men and women in pastoral ministry? Can we have a border between straight and gay in visiting and joining the church? Do we have the right to discriminate based purely on the way we currently understand the Bible? These are difficult questions without easy answers, but let’s look at them one by one.

### Women in the Church

The church has been struggling with female pastors for longer than I have been alive. At the moment female pastors are accepted in some form in most countries in the world, but are given a lower status. Male pastors are ordained and can perform all the functions associated with that calling. Female pastors are commissioned and perform most functions. The biggest issue with the status quo is that a woman cannot become conference or union presidents. In 2013, the Dutch church chose to introduce complete equality between genders. Sadly, the General Conference just this week decided to maintain inequality.

This is a huge discussion worldwide. Hundreds of articles and books appeared in the last few years on this topic. My division, the Trans-European Division, wrote a 863 page report—comprehensive but way too long for most people. The Division asked me to write a shorter version.

### Some Theology

The ordination of woman is a complicated theological topic. The fact that there are no pastors in the Bible doesn’t help matters. Now we have to argue from texts that are only vaguely comparable to our situation. Clearly pastors cannot be compared to the priests in the Old Testament; Jesus is the only high priest now. So that only really leaves the New Testament.

There is no doubt that women played a role in the New Testament. And there is no doubt that this role is less apparent than that of the men. But the question that remains is “Why?” We could argue that that was God’s intention: women should not have positions of leadership in the church, or at least have ones of lower status than the men. I don’t believe that this is the correct answer. Let me tell you why.

### Simple Equality

Let’s start simple: the Bible is very explicit that it stands for equality. Galatians 3 is quite clear: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). This is hard to misunderstand; in the church certain borders play no role.

Paul names three borders in this verse: race or nationality, social standing, and gender. As far as Paul is concerned something special happens at baptism. Suddenly you are no longer white or of color, no longer Dutch or American; you are a Christian. You are no longer a white-collar or blue-collar worker; you are a Christian. You are no longer male or female; you are a Christian. Discrimination has no place in the church.



### Complicated Equality

The Bible is a complicated book, both divine and human. On the one side we have the Spirit inspiring people, on the other side we have authors, who, no matter what, remain human. If we look closely, it seems as if God, despite the human authors, is trying to tell us to be inclusive and emphasize equality. The Old Testament culture was very male-oriented. Women played almost no important role, and definitely could not have a leadership role. Despite this God kept calling women. Why? God names Miriam one of the three leaders of the Israelites (Numbers 12:4-8, Micah 6:4). He calls Deborah to be a prophet, a judge, and even a military commander (Judges 4:4-23). I am sure that the people then didn’t appreciate this.

The culture in the New Testament was not much different. Despite the culture, Jesus chose women to be the first witnesses to his resurrection

(Luke 24:6-7). And it was Martha who first recognizes Jesus as the Son of God (John 11:27). Paul talks about many women, and even calls them apostles (Romans 16:2, 7, amongst others).

It seems to me that God, despite all the cultural difficulties, insists on calling women. This statement is not immediately apparent, and of course there are enough texts that suggest inequality between men and women. But a patient Bible student will see the divine message between the discriminating, cultural words of humans. A message of equality.

For many people this is very clear, others trip up over some passages. And how could it be any different; culture will always play a role.

### LGBTI Rights

When I wrote this article in Dutch, it was about the *International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia*, which we celebrate on the 17th of May each year. This year was the 25th anniversary of the World Health Organization's removal of homosexuality from their list of diseases. That day, 25 years ago, was a great victory for the many people fighting for human rights.

Last year the General Conference organized a conference on sexualities in South Africa. I was invited to be there. When I was there, I was reminded of the role that South Africa and Mandela played in the fight for gay rights. It was like South Africa, after the horrors of apartheid, wanted to make sure that all discrimination was unconstitutional. In 1993 they outlawed discrimination on basis of sexual orientation in their constitution, and they were one of the first to allow same-sex marriage.

One of the first people to speak at the conference in South Africa was the local conference president. He discussed South Africa's terrible past and was proud of the fact that all rights of all people are safe in the new South Africa. Sadly, it did not take long before there were panels discussing our right to discriminate.



### The Right to Discriminate

A large amount of people in our church defend our right to discriminate. The idea is simple: imagine you have a hotel, can you refuse a gay couple? Or a bakery, can you refuse to bake a marriage cake on account of your religion?

This is a complicated issue. Many people's gut says that "all discrimination is wrong." But at the same time discrimination is very much part of how we do church. So while a hotel room might be open to gay couples, the baptismal water is not. And even if the couple gets a wedding cake, they won't be eating it after their marriage in church. As a church we are used to discrimination; we just don't always notice.

But the question remains: when can we discriminate? Is it always wrong? Could we bake cakes, but not baptize? Can we do both?

It might be the South African in me, but as far as I am concerned discrimination is always wrong. I don't care if it's about the color of your hair or your skin, your gender, your sexual orientation or your favorite color. Discrimination is wrong, all the time. And that is why it's so important to remember Paul: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Every time we discriminate, no matter the cause, we destroy this unity, this equality. But there's more than that.

### Those That Cannot Speak

You may never have thought of it like this, but discrimination always goes one way—from the people with power towards the people without it. The whites were in power in South Africa, and discriminated against the rest. The Europeans were in power in the 16th to 19th centuries and discriminated against the colonies. Men are in power in the church and discriminate against the women.

We see the abuse of power everywhere. The people that are least equipped to protect themselves are the ones that are pushed around the most. On this issue the Bible is very clear. I could name a hundred verses, but I'll just name one: "Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute" (Proverbs 31:8).

God's ideal is that Christians speak for those who cannot speak. Christians should fight against cultural trends and work for the destitute. As far as God is concerned, we should be standing up for

those we would normally be expected to discriminate against.

All in all, it's very simple. God created all people. He just wants us to see each other in his image.

*Tom de Bruin is Youth and Communications Director for the Netherlands Union Conference. This article was originally published on his website: [www.tomdebruin.com](http://www.tomdebruin.com).*



## *Church in the Crucible: 1888 – the Conference that shapes 21<sup>st</sup> Century Adventism*

### **1888 - The Unending Story of Seventh-day Adventist Reformation**

**T**he 1888 Minneapolis Conference shaped the development of the Adventist church in the decades that followed. This presentation explores how the themes and insights of 1888 continue to inform Adventism in its endeavor to be a *semper reformanda* church, with particular emphasis on responding to the challenges of the twenty-first century.



*By Dr. Gilbert M. Valentine, Ph.D.  
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#### **Part II**

[Part I was printed in the July issue of *Safe Places* and covered reforms made immediately after 1888.]

#### Twentieth Century Reforms

**D**uring the twentieth century the crucible of reform was kept warm by the fires of 1888 and continuing controversy and further refinement and reshaping of understanding occurred in a number of areas of Adventist teaching. For example, the painful and costly struggles over the interpretation of Daniel 8:13 known as “the Daily,” theological controversy in the first two decades of the new century were directly linked to the Christo-centric insights of 1888 and, as A.G. Daniells observed, the parties that ranged themselves on each side of this dispute as well as the

nature of the arguments involved, tended to follow the same alignments as had characterized the 1888 episode.<sup>[1]</sup>

Daniells and youth revivalist Meade MacGuire in the 1920s made Righteousness by Faith a theme of their camp meeting preaching and it became the basis for a limited revived holiness emphasis. Other than this, however, there was little other discussion of 1888 but the lengthening delay in the hoped for Advent began to introduce other questions in Adventist thinking. In 1928 Taylor G. Bunch suggested that the forty years since 1888 had been “wilderness” years because the church had failed to respond adequately to the renewal at that time. He expressed the hope that

the days of wilderness wandering would soon be over.<sup>[ii]</sup> Taking an opposite perspective, L. H. Christian, two decades later, asserted that, in fact, the 1888 episode had been a signal victory for the church and had transformed it.<sup>[iii]</sup>

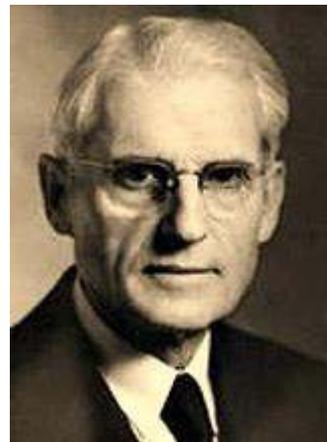
In 1950 after studying the subject for 20 years Robert J. Wieland and Donald K. Short presented a lengthy analysis entitled “1888 Re-examined” to church administration in Washington arguing that the continuing delay in the Second Advent clearly indicated that the church had not adequately responded to the righteousness by faith emphasis of 1888 and that there was need for public corporate confession and renewal. This confrontational analysis provided the background to the denominational responses from A.V. Olsen and L.E. Froom who both argued that Wieland and Short were wrong in their assessment. The approach by Froom and Olsen became much more significant in the context of the inter-faith dialogue with evangelical Christian leaders Donald Barnhouse and Walter Martin in the mid-1950s which led ultimately to the publishing of the controversial volume *Questions on Doctrine*.<sup>[iv]</sup> In this

volume denominational leaders attempted to demonstrate that at their core Adventists were orthodox with non-sectarian evangelical credentials. The positions taken in *Questions on Doctrine* in its attempt to show that the church was no longer Arian, or semi-

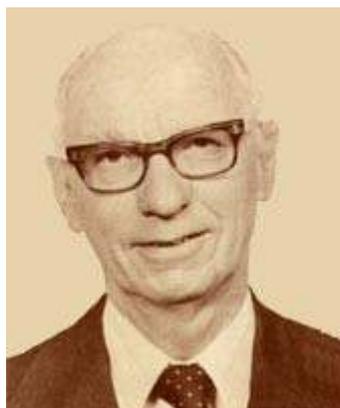
Arian, in its Christology stretched facts too far when it suggested that the church had been “clear” on the “sinful” human nature of Christ. The volume led to heated controversy with prominent evangelist and bible teacher M.L. Anderson who objected strenuously. At stake in these discussions was the concept of the nature of the “final generation” and the possibility or necessity of attaining Christian perfection in the end time. The nature of Christian perfection subsequently became a subject that embroiled the church in heated controversy through the 1960s



*A.G. Daniells*



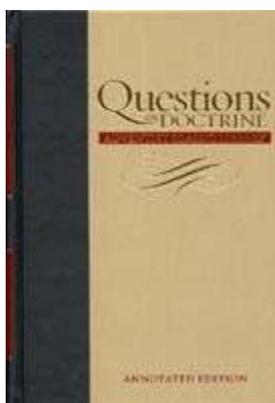
*Meade MacGuire*



*Robert J. Wieland*



*Donald K. Short*



*A.V. Olson*



*L.E. Froom*



*Donald Barnhouse*



*Walter Martin*



M.L. Andreassen

end time. The nature of Christian perfection subsequently became a subject that embroiled the church in heated controversy through the 1960s and 70s. Ellen White's statements about believers needing to stand after the close of probation without a mediator and that only when the church reached this level of piety could the Second Advent happen—a perspective known as “Last Generation Theology” (LGT)—became central to the discussion. In turn, this brought a strong reactionary response stressing the forensic nature of Justification.

Throughout the 1970s the church invested heavily in conferences and ministerial institutes to try and lower the temperature of this conflict and to find formulaic language that would enable both strands of thought in the church to live harmoniously together. At the present time, both strands of thought still exist in the church's expression of righteousness by faith. Can it be hoped that the more embracing “evangelical” concept of “grace” will become more normative for Adventist preaching? The Valuegenesis studies of V. Bailey Gillespie have highlighted the need for this, and Morris Vendon and Desmond Ford, among others, contributed significantly to the change of emphasis and kept the crucible hot. In this sense the 1970s can be seen as an example of *semper reformanda* for Adventism.



V. Bailey Gillespie

More than in any other area of Adventist teaching, however, the tensions created by 1888 with the Sanctuary doctrine have been the most disruptive and destructive. The interface between *sola gratia* and *sola scriptura* and the doctrinal understanding of the Investigative Judgment has been a particular focus and, as has often been observed, at about three-decade intervals, dissenters have challenged the orthodoxy of their time on the issue.<sup>[v]</sup> A.F. Ballenger challenged it in 1905 and W.W. Fletcher and L.R. Conradi struggled with it in the 1930s. In the 1950s Robert Grieve again raised the problems. The most significant difficulty and objection to the investigative judgment teaching has been the perception that it militates against the doctrine of Christian assurance.<sup>[vi]</sup>



A.F. Ballenger

Arthur Patrick



For a complex set of reasons, as Arthur Patrick explains in his cogent review of developments, the struggle became acutely apparent during the last half of the twentieth century.<sup>[vii]</sup> During the 1960s and 1970s and particularly in the decade after 1980, Adventism felt a need to marginalize or dismiss some of its historians and other researchers, as well as scores of its clergy—the latter especially in Australia and New Zealand.<sup>[viii]</sup> During this same period, however, a new generation of biblical scholars had emerged along with trained historians that have contributed to a slow maturation and the development of intellectual frameworks that would seem to have enabled the church even in unrecognized ways to respond favorably to the tensions.<sup>[ix]</sup> The church has needed to adjust to what Patrick calls “the professionalization of its historiography.”<sup>[x]</sup>

As early as 1999, systematic theologian Fritz

Guy had noted that Ford was “dismissed from the Adventist ministry in 1980 because of his disagreement with traditional Adventist views” but that “subsequent Adventist thinking in North America seems to have moved closer to his position and further away from that of those who dismissed him.”<sup>[xi]</sup> The evidence seems to confirm the observation of Paul Johnson noted at the beginning of this paper that “increased understanding,” can indeed arise out of such conflict.<sup>[xii]</sup>

At present the older term “investigative judgment” is still official, but it is now often being rephrased with a new descriptor: the pre-Advent judgment. In this expression the teaching says very little about a number of earlier orthodoxies. “In all aspects of it except for its chronology it has been deeply impacted by a better understanding of linguistic, contextual and other studies of Leviticus, Daniel, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and Revelation, as well as by a more mature grasp of Righteousness by Faith,” notes Arthur Patrick.

The long conflict in this area is a clear indication of an on-going *semper reformanda* in which an earlier teaching is “giving place increasingly to an understanding that more clearly presents Jesus in His role as the merciful and faithful high priest portrayed in Hebrews.”<sup>[xiii]</sup>



*Dr. Desmond Ford*

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### Part III

#### Twenty First Century Adventism and the Impetus of 1888

**T**here are numerous areas in the life and witness of the twenty-first century Adventist Church that might suggest the need for the *semper reformanda* principle. In addressing these areas the denomination might need to continue to learn from the insights derived from the recovered Christo-centric focus wrought out in the crucible of 1888. The following issues are addressed in no particular order.

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##### a) Grace and the End-times

It is a truth that every new generation of Christians needs to discover afresh the wonder of grace. Adventism is no different but it is confronted with a unique problem because of its emphasis on commandment keeping and its theology of the end-times.

The Valuegenesis project is a survey of the attitudes, lifestyle practices, and faith development of Adventist young people between the ages of 8 and 18. Originating out of the La Sierra University John Hancock Center for Youth Ministry, the survey has now been undertaken three times, each approximately ten years apart. Perhaps the most disturbing of all revelations in the first study (1990) was the finding that so many Adventist youth had no assurance of salvation. This was not because they were uninterested in spiritual things. Rather, according to the first report, “most Ad-

ventist youth desire a deeper and more certain relationship with God.” And this is reflected also in the later reports. The uncertainty about their standing with God, however, was so deep that “the thought of Christ’s return brings fear to the majority of Adventist youth, rather than eager anticipation.”<sup>[xiv]</sup>

This is particularly troublesome to an Adventist Church which sees its basic mission as proclaiming the “everlasting gospel” to prepare a people for the coming kingdom which coming should be anticipated with eagerness and joy. Unfortunately, the Valuegenesis study revealed that many Adventists, youth and older members alike, failed to experience such excitement. Instead, because of their uncertainty about salvation, they were afraid of the Second Advent! Since this problem remains the same as revealed in more recent studies (2000 and 2010), clearly, such a scenario calls for a close look at both the content and the

methods the denomination has traditionally employed in articulating its core mission.

Helmut Ott suggests that the insecurity and distress stem particularly from a faulty understanding of events *before* the Second Coming, namely, the end of “probation” and the “time of trouble.” He observes that the major cause of consternation is not that the world in its last days will suffer unprecedented turmoil, or that believers will face hostility, privation, and persecution. “What really troubles our young people is the theological and spiritual aspect of the final crisis. Specifically, their anxiety is rooted in the notion that, while at the present time their eternal destiny is based upon the imputation by faith of Christ’s saving merits, after probation closes, it will depend on the righteousness they developed in their personal lives.”<sup>[xv]</sup>

Many older Adventists would possibly concur on the basis of personal experience that as young people they felt an unease about final events, and felt not good enough to be saved. Adventist surveys reveal that most youth today fear that unless they reach perfection of character and learn to live without sinning before probation ends they will lose salvation during the time of trouble. “Valuegenesis data strongly warns that a works orientation is eroding the faith our youth have in Jesus.” Works orientation is defined by the researchers as “a belief that salvation is given to us because we are good or have done good works,” and they point out that it subtly erodes confidence in Christ because it shifts the emphasis to what a Christian does or does not do. In such an orientation, belief in God’s promises of salvation becomes a minor consideration. Rules and regulations become the major emphasis. Religion becomes self-centered rather than Christ-centered.<sup>[xvi]</sup> In contrast, the researcher’s definition of the opposite side of the theological spectrum describes a “grace orientation” that believes that salvation is given only because of the goodness of Jesus, His atoning death, and the perfect life He lived on earth. It focuses completely on God’s goodness in offering this gift, which can never be earned.<sup>[xvii]</sup>

Bailey Gillespie is now in the midst of his third wave of the Valuegenesis studies. Between his first and second surveys he reported a significant increase in the level of Christian assurance experienced by Adventist young people as 67% reporting uncertainty and confusion dropped to 50%.<sup>[xviii]</sup> The most recent studies undertaken in 2012

show that again there is an alarming renewed trend toward a “works orientation,” a preoccupation with behavior, a sense of the need to be perfect, and a lack of assurance. At the present time youth seem to experience the church as a behavior-based community. There is some thought that this trend could be associated with the rightward, more conservative climate emerging in the church, perhaps reflected in the rising ascendancy of organizations like the General Youth Congress [their current name is Generation of Youth for Christ] movement.



It is clear that the situation is complicated. Adolescence is a time of uncertainty, a prevailing inferiority complex, and the experience of low self-esteem in any event. These are characteristics of adolescent development, as Erikson has pointed out, whether youth are religious or not. But maybe for Adventist youth the problem is aggravated because perhaps the grounds for uncertainty are inherent in the end-time doctrinal structures we have as a church. The data is complicated also because the same Valuegenesis data reveals that very few read the writings of Ellen White anymore. So how are they imbibing the levels of uncertainty they experience? Perhaps the fire-breathing evangelical “left-behind” preachers have a wider influence than we have thought. Complicating the picture is the Valuegenesis data that reveals a diminishing number who believe in the Investigative Judgment. And perhaps the data is simply reflecting an interactive process that will resolve itself over time. In any event, the climate we create in our churches and the theological framework we provide for our youth is an area for ongoing *semper reformanda*.

### b) The Ordination of Women to Ministry

Perhaps the most pressing of issues that *semper reformanda* needs to deal with, and is addressing in the twenty-first century, is the matter of the role of women in ministry and in leadership. This is a matter of importance, for the issue has a direct impact on the unity of the church. It is not without significance that the foundational text

that has probably done more to galvanize the movement for the ordination of women in the Adventist Church since the 1970s is drawn from the same Galatians letter that was the focus of attention in 1888, but this time the focus is on “there is... neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ” (Galatians 3:28-29). The unity and the equality of all believers in Christ and the implications of this for ministry and the role of women has dawned only slowly on the church. In the nineteenth century the prophetic and eschatological challenge of Joel 2 and the New Testa-

ment Spiritual gifts passages had more impact on the church in laying the basis for validating the ministry of Ellen White. For many Adventists the strong continuing end-time orientation of Joel 2 may still have more weight but in actually bringing about change in the church it has been the resonating drumbeat of Galatians 3:28 that has motivated crucial sections of the church to move forward.<sup>[xix]</sup> This is clearly a matter of “watch this space” in the life of the church.

## Notes

[i] Bert Haloviak, “In the Shadow of the Daily: Background and Aftermath of the 1919 Bible and History Teachers Conference” (unpublished paper, 1979. [http://docs.adventistarchives.org/doc\\_info.asp?DocID=30](http://docs.adventistarchives.org/doc_info.asp?DocID=30) (Accessed March 2, 2013)

[ii] Taylor G Bunch, *Forty Years in the Wilderness; In Type and Antitype* (n.p, [cir. 1928])

[iii] L. H. Christian, *The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts*, (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1947) 129.

[iv] *Questions on Doctrine* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1957). The volume proved to be highly controversial and was never republished by the church. Andrews University Press, however, independently chose to reprint the book in 2003 as part of their “Adventist Classic Library” series. In this annotated edition George Knight noted that “Official Adventism may have gained recognition as being Christian from the evangelical world, but in the process a breach had been opened which has not healed in the last 50 years and may never heal.” Knight, ed. (2003). *Questions on Doctrine: Annotated Edition* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press.) p. v, 522.

[v] See for example, Raymond F. Cottrell, “The ‘Sanctuary Doctrine’—Asset or Liability,” a presentation to the San Diego Forum, 9 February 2002. Available in DF 597, Ellen G. White/SDA Research Centre, Avondale College.

[vi] The Valuegenesis studies undertaken at La Sierra University clearly demonstrate the difficulty the teaching presents to young people and provide a context for assessing this matter within the recent past. See eight publications by V. Bailey Gillespie and his colleagues, 1979-2001.

[vii] Patrick, “The Sanctuary/Investigative Judgment, 1844-2008: A short, documented history of an Adventist teaching,” <http://adventiststudies.com/2012/01/16/post-35/> (Accessed March 2, 2013)

[viii] Peter Harry Ballis, in research for a doctoral thesis (La Trobe University, 1992), identified 180 Adventist clergy in Australia and New Zealand who exited for various reasons between 1980 and 1988. Ballis analyses the variety of the operative impulses; his statistics do not include ministers whose careers were radically impacted by the same factors but remained in some type of church employ. The published form of the Ballis study is available as *Leaving the Adventist Ministry: A Study of the Process of Exiting* (Westport, CT.: Praegar, 1999).



[ix] R.W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant: Denominational History Textbook for Seventh-day Adventist College Classes* (Mountain View, CA.: Pacific Press, 1979). Cf. the revised edition: Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press, 2000) as well as published histories written or edited by Gary Land.

[x] Patrick, *Ibid.* Benjamin McArthur, “Where Are the Historians Taking the Church?” *Spectrum* 10:3 (November 1979), 9-14; Gary Land, “From Apologetics to History: The Professionalization of Adventist Historians,” *Spectrum* 10: 4 (March 1980), 89-100. Note a recent perspective on this process: Benjamin McArthur, “Point of the Spear: Adventist Liberalism and the Study of Ellen White in the 1970s,” *Spectrum* 36, no. 2 (Spring 2008), 45-55.

[xi] Fritz Guy, *Thinking Theologically: Adventist Christianity and the Interpretation of Faith* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1999) 90.

[xii] Evidence of increased understanding can be observed in *Adventist Today*, November/December 2006 and reports of the Sydney Adventist Forum presentations, 22 October 2005. The biography of Ford by Milton Hook (Adventist Today Foundation, 2008) offers a detailed if partisan perspective on developments. See also Arthur Patrick, “The Hook Book on Ford: A Thumbnail Sketch,” *Good News Unlimited*, July 2008, 12.

[xiii] Patrick, *Ibid.*

[xiv] *Risk and Promise: Report of the Project Affirmation Taskforces* (Silver Spring, MD: North American Division, 1990).

[xv] Helmut Ott “Another Look at Valuegenesis” *Ministry*, February, 1994. I rely on Ott for for some of the helpful analysis on this problem.

<https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1994/February/another-look-at-valuegenesis>

[xvi] *Risk and Promise*. See also V. Bailey Gillespie and Michael Donahue, *Valuegenesis: Ten Years Later* (Riverside, CA: Hancock Center Publications, 2004) 57-59.

[xvii] Barry Gane found similar patterns of confusion and uncertainty in the South Pacific Division. *Youth Ministry and the Transmission of Beliefs and Values: Valuegenesis Prject Report 3*, (Wahroonga, NSW: South Pacific Division, 1997) 92.

[xviii] Gillespie, *Ibid.*

[xix] The most recent analysis of this issue is by Jan Barna, *Ordination of Women in Seventh-day Adventist Theology: A Study in Biblical Interpretations* (Serbia, Eurodream, 2012). The literature covering the four decades of this struggle is now extensive. See also the doctoral study by Drene Somasundram (London: Middlesex University, 2008). Historical context is given in the published form of another doctoral dissertation: Laura L. Vance, *Seventh-day Adventism in Crisis: Gender and Sectarian Change in an Emerging Religion* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

The beginnings of Adventist discussion on this issue can be found in David Ferguson, Fritz Guy and David Larson, editors, *Christianity and Homosexuality: Some Seventh-day Adventist Perspectives* (Roseville, CA: Adventist Forum, 2008).





## Gender Dysphoria Is More Common Than We Thought

Prevalence rates for transgenderism are hard to pin down because the definitions are obscure, and the decision to identify as transgender is a subjective one. (Once a male has completely transitioned to a woman, is he still a trans woman?) But in recent years, clinics that

cater to transgender youth have recorded increasing numbers of referrals. Boston Children's Hospital began treating patients with gender identity disorder in 1998. Between then and 2010, the number of transgender patients increased fourfold. The clinic

reported roughly equal numbers of males and females coming in for treatment.

—“*Children and Adolescents with Gender Identity Disorder Referred to a Pediatric Medical Center*,” Spack, N. P., et al., *Pediatrics*, 2012

## But Most Gender-Dysphoric Children Won't Become Transgender Adults

For the majority of children, gender dysphoria does not persist throughout adolescence and adulthood. In follow-up studies of children diagnosed with gender dysphoria, less than 20 percent continue to report discomfort with their biological gender assignment and may seek out gender-reassignment services later in life. But which 20 percent? A 2013

study found that the intensity of gender dysphoria exhibited by children was tightly linked to future outcomes. Those who persisted in their gender dysphoria reported higher rates of dissatisfaction with their bodies and same-sex sexual orientation as children, and higher cognitive cross-gender identification; in statements, persists didn't just

wish they were the opposite sex, they believed they were already.

—“*Factors Associated With Desistence and Persistence of Childhood Gender Dysphoria: A Quantitative Follow-Up Study*,” Steensma, T.D., et al., *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 2013

## It's True That Transgender People Face Significant Discrimination and Stigma

Research has found that if gender dysphoria does persist past the onset of puberty, those feelings are likely to stick around through adulthood. And trans people walk a hard road in America. The largest survey of trans and gender-non-conforming people to date, which surveyed 6,450 individuals, found

that more than 40 percent of respondents had attempted suicide, compared to less than two percent of the general population. The majority of those surveyed also reported being bullied or harassed in school, 61 percent were the victim of a physical assault, and 64 percent had been sexually harassed.

—“*Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*,” Grant, J.M., et al., *National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force*, Washington, D.C., 2011

## But Medical Interventions Do Lead to Better Psychological Outcomes

Puberty-delaying drugs, cross-hormonal therapies, and sex-reassignment surgery have all been shown to be safe interventions for transgender people to pursue, and a meta-analysis of 28 studies shows that individuals who receive such treatments are psychologically better off. A 2010 study pooled data from 1,833 participants—1,093 trans women and 801 trans men—and found that sex reassignment improved quality of life and feelings of gender dysphoria in 80 percent of individuals,

psychological symptoms improved in 78 percent, and 72 percent reported improvements in sexual function. A separate study of 21 adolescents from 2006 found that hormonally suppressing puberty slowed down the adolescent growth spurt, but had little to no effect on bone mass and metabolism; in general, the patients were satisfied with the treatment. And it is completely reversible. According to the paper, “It can be considered as ‘buying time’ to allow for an open

exploration of the [sex-reassignment] wish.”

—“*Clinical Management of Gender Identity Disorder in Adolescents: A Protocol on Psychological and Paediatric Endocrinology Aspects*,” Cohen-Kettenis, P.T., and Delemarre-van de Waal, H.A., *European Journal of Endocrinology*, 2006; “*Hormonal Therapy and Sex Reassignment: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Quality of Life and Psychosocial Outcomes*,” Murad, M.H., et al., *Clinical Endocrinology*, 2010

## The Biological Basis of Transgender Identity Is Still Mostly a Mystery

People with sexual development disorders—ambiguous genitalia, for instance—exhibit hormonal and genetic abnormalities that appear to be linked to their experience of gender dysphoria. However, a 2013 review found that those abnormalities were absent or at least inconsistent in studies of trans people who did not have such

sexual development disorders. Early brain-imaging studies do offer some promising leads in the search for biological markers of transgender identity, but they have yet to be replicated. They show that even before medical treatments, trans men may have masculinized brains compared to people born female. Similarly, but

to a lesser degree, trans women’s brains show semi-feminized patterns of activity compared to those of people born male.

—“*Sex Steroids and Variants of Gender Identity*,” Meyer-Bahlburg, H.F.L., *Endocrinology and Metabolism Clinics of North America*, 2013



## Galileo's Middle Finger

By David Dobbs

“Soon enough,” Alice Dreger writes at the beginning of her romp of a book, “I will get to the death threats, the sex charges, the alleged genocides, the epidemics, the alien abductees, the anti-lesbian drug, the unethical ethicists, the fight with Martina Navratilova and, of course, Galileo’s middle finger. But first I have to tell you a little bit about how I got into this mess.”

As is so often the case, what got Dreger into trouble was sex. A historian of science and medicine, she criticized a group of transgender activists who had attacked a sex researcher for his findings on why some people want to change gender. Having hounded the researcher mercilessly, the activists attacked Dreger, too. The bad news is that this was hard on Dreger. (More on that momentarily. For now, I’ll just note they called her son a “womb turd.”) The good news is that from this mess emerged not only a sharp, disruptive scholar but this smart, delightful book.

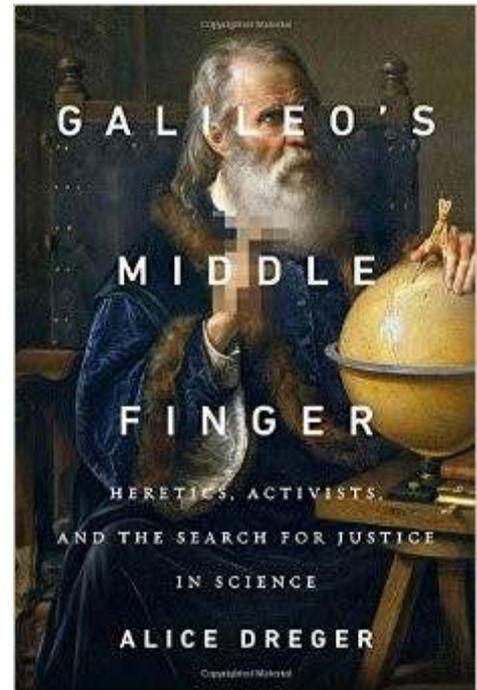
*Galileo’s Middle Finger* is many things: a rant, a manifesto, a treasury of evocative new terms (sissyphobia, autogynephilia, phall-o-meter), and an account of the author’s transformation “from an activist going after establishment scientists into an aide-de-camp to scientists who found themselves the target of activists like me”—and back again.

As its title suggests, the book is also a defiant gesture aimed at those who would deny empiricism. Yet this middle finger (Galileo’s actual middle finger, in fact, which Dreger stumbles across in Italy) is raised in affirmation as well. It points toward the stars that confirmed his cosmology—and toward empiricism’s power to create a fairer, more rational society. For Galileo is famous not just because he saw how the stars move. He’s famous because he insisted we see for ourselves how the world works, share what we see and shape our society accordingly.

Dreger brings a similar mission to activism and ethics. She insists that both be based on evidence, so that we respond to problems as they really are, rather than as we’d like to see them.

Of course, as Galileo and Dreger both found out the hard way, facts can anger people in power. This book’s energizing discovery is that sometimes those wielding such power are not the usual suspects, such as Big Brother or Big Business, but self-appointed guardians of the nonpowerful. In other words: activists.

Dreger learned this from her own activism. Her specialty is how Western medicine has treated people with “ambiguous” genitals, known historically as hermaphrodites and more recently as intersex people. In a



world where “social order was based on the presumption that it reflected natural order...medical and scientific men...opted to impose order on nature as best they could,” usually with scalpels.

Dreger became an activist because even after it was accepted that sex is a many-splintered thing, far more variegated than our binary ideas allow, surgeons continued to “fix” intersex infants. No matter that such surgery addressed social rather than medical concerns, dulled or destroyed sexual pleasure, violated every premise of informed consent, and sometimes killed patients via complications from anesthesia—all to normalize appearance.

Dreger joined with Bo Laurent, the leader of the Intersex Society of North America, in a decade-long effort to persuade doctors to let intersex infants grow up and sort things out for themselves.

This was her activist phase. Her anti-activist phase began when she decided to defend the research psychologist J. Michael Bailey, who created a firestorm with a 2003 book titled *The Man Who Would Be Queen*. The book, based on well-supported, peer-reviewed research by him and others, argued that some men want to change sex not simply because they are “born trapped in the wrong body,” as Dreger describes the common view, but because they were sexually aroused by the idea of themselves as women.

This notion enraged advocates who insisted that transsexuality came invariably from an unavoidable mind-body mismatch—a mistake of nature—and never from a variation in taste, which some might consider

an indulgence. These advocates sought not only to refute Bailey but to ruin him. When Dreger defended him, they targeted her, too.



In the end, as Dreger tells it, she and Bailey won a rough victory. When Dreger's book-length paper on the issue was written up warmly in *The Times*, formerly gun-shy allies were encouraged to speak out.

The fracas taught Dreger a somber lesson: when a motivated group with a playbook of ugly tactics spots a scientific finding they don't like, they can often dominate public discussion in a way that replaces a factual story with a false one. Only scientists of Galilean character can weather the storm. And even they, like Galileo, might be effectively exiled.

Dreger is not suggesting, as others are lately, that public shaming is out of control. She's well aware that some researchers abuse their positions. She knows firsthand what it is like to take on a researcher. The effort is enormous—and it might very well fail.

She illustrates this through the unsettling case of Maria New, a prominent pediatrician at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York. For almost three decades, New has been conducting what Dreger sees as a poorly regulated and dangerous experiment on the most defenseless patients: fetuses. New is attempting to prevent a hormonal condition called congenital adrenal hyperplasia, or C.A.H. In females, C.A.H. sometimes creates masculinized genitalia and, in some cases, medical issues that are usually manageable. If genetic tests find a mother at risk of giving birth to such a child, New prescribes her a powerful steroid, dexamethasone, that crosses the placental barrier to bathe embryo and fetus in a hormone meant to make development more typical.

According to Dreger, however, the genetic math involved means that only one in eight of those treated stands at actual risk. Meanwhile, eight out of eight are exposed to a hormone that the sparse literature suggests may create developmental problems that include mood disorders and severe cognitive deficits.

We don't know how common such problems are, Dreger says, because neither New nor anyone else has done thorough studies on efficacy or adverse effects. This, she asserts, allows New to deal from both sides of a rigged deck. Even as New tells patients that in years of prescribing dexamethasone she has seen no harmful effects, she asks for and gets money from the National Institutes of Health to see if the drug is safe. With this practice, Dreger says, New has created "a perpetual motion machine of N.I.H. funding."

If Dreger has this story even roughly right, New is violating numerous well-founded research and ethical standards while misleading both her funders and the parents of her patients—all to treat a condition that poses modest medical danger.

Clearly we need people like Dreger defending empiricism and calling out fraud. But how do we discern the charlatans? How do we collar the guilty without persecuting the innocent?

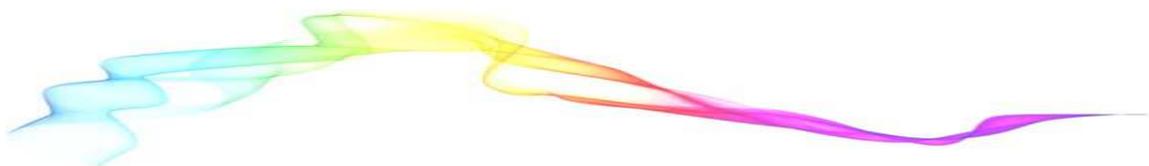
The easy (and correct) answer is that it's incredibly difficult. Dreger ends by noting that we usually get it right—but only after tempers have cooled, values have changed, the powerful have weakened, and the stakes are less urgent. We get it right, in other words, only when we view such disputes the way historians do.

"We are almost always too late," Dreger writes. "We can bear witness afterward, of course. And witnessing matters. But so many days, I find myself selfishly wishing that witnessing felt like enough."

Dreger's lament aside, I suspect most readers will find that her witnessing of these wild skirmishes provides a splendidly entertaining education in ethics, activism, and science.

[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/books/review/galileo-middle-finger-by-alice-dreger.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/books/review/galileo-middle-finger-by-alice-dreger.html?_r=2)

*Galileo's Middle Finger  
Heretics, Activists, and the Search for Justice in Science*  
By Alice Dreger  
337 pp. Penguin Press. \$27.95.





**I**ntercollegiate Adventist Gay-Straight Alliance Coalition (IAGC) is a grass roots group of Seventh-day Adventist students and teachers who would like to create a safe, non-judgmental environment for LGBTI members of their academic Adventist community. As of August 2015, there are Adventist gay/straight alliances at nine North American Adventist colleges and universities. The student leadership of IAGC would like to build ways to support LGBTI Adventist students internationally. You can reach the organization at <https://www.facebook.com/IAGCAdventist>.

**I**n a lunchtime group conversation, five leaders of IAGC described the organization from their individual perspectives. If you have questions or comments, each of them has been willing to share their e-mail contact information. Jefferson Clark is the current president of IAGC.

### Mischka Scott

IAGC is a way of giving us the family that we may have lost and a continuing chance to better know ourselves. This organization gives us a giant nationwide family we never knew we had. It is a path to freedom that helps us be more ourselves and to think for ourselves. IAGC is comprised of people of differing opinions and backgrounds who come together to give the generation after us something we never had: safety, love, acceptance, family. [mischkascott@gmail.com](mailto:mischkascott@gmail.com)

### Yeshara Acosta

It is the umbrella organization that brings together unofficially recognized gay-straight alliances on North American campuses. We have a voice where other campuses have none. IAGC brings us together and gives us strength in numbers. It gives each GSA a sense that they are not alone. It is a place that gives us permission to continue to grow spiritually.

[Shield.Yeshara@outlook.com](mailto:Shield.Yeshara@outlook.com)

### AJ Oetman

This is the way Adventism all over the world can have a connection and shared experience. Each of our individual GSAs are now not isolated and help us after we have left our area where we got our education. We are the bridge. [findthebeacon@gmail.com](mailto:findthebeacon@gmail.com)

### Jefferson Clark

For me the IAGC is an organization or network of like-minded individual LGBTI Adventists or allies that are seeking to create mutual respect and understanding for the LGBTI and religious communities on Seventh-

day Adventist campuses across America. IAGC helps us to be more aware of the presence of LGBTI students. There is a difference between acceptance and approval. IAGC creates a larger network of individuals that become family. We have someone to turn to in hard times, be they LGBTI- or faith-related. The leaders of the IAGC member groups act as facilitators and support for local members who struggle to understand their personal identity, both spiritually and sexually, in an environment where questions asked were previously not answered or ignored.

[IAGC.Southern@gmail.com](mailto:IAGC.Southern@gmail.com)

### Jonathan Doram

IAGC is a sign that we are all in solidarity with each other. It gives legitimacy to each GSA no matter their number. IAGC shows that you can reconcile your spirituality and sexuality and that there are other people who will help you walk this journey. We are here to help pastors, campus administrators, church administrators, and anyone who is a part of this church navigate the journey of having conversations about spirituality, faith, sexuality, and gender. Please contact me, so we can start a conversation. I am here to help, educate, and share.

[jonathan.doram@gmail.com](mailto:jonathan.doram@gmail.com)

### Jonathan Cook

I was involved with GASP [*Gay and Straight People*] at PUC when it was founded in 2008. I was able to witness the growth in membership of a grassroots, student-run club that was not officially sanctioned or recognized by the administration. It has been encouraging to see that the work at PUC and other Adventists campuses has grown to become a network that is now called IAGC. No longer can the church deny that the future will have significant contributions from LGBTIQ Adventist youth.

[coojonathan@gmail.com](mailto:coojonathan@gmail.com)



### Journey (Part Three)

By Jerry McKay

As with my childhood, themes characterize my high school years. The things I did as part of my spiritual discipline at home continued and evolved. My orientation was always present; and, like before, there were many times when it forced itself into my awareness in ways I could not ignore. In high school, naturally, the expectation to date increased; and I tried.

To this part of my story, I have added a new dimension. I contacted a friend from high school and asked him to share his observations of me during that time.



#### High School Years at Kingsway

When I was in grade twelve, Kelvin and I became roommates. We were so through the end of high school and on into college. He was a year younger than I was. Kelvin learned of my orientation years after we had gone our separate ways. I value his observations because they give external credibility to my very private inner reality. I have woven his observations into my story where appropriate.

Once my application to Kingsway was accepted, I received the school handbook. I read it from cover to cover. The expectations were typical of a Christian boarding school and covered topics like dress, music and entertainment, academic commitment, and social behavior. While they might have been a bit intimidating or repressive for some, I thought they were reasonable.

Unlike previous summers when I bemoaned the approach of the next school year, I was eager for the summer of 1971 to end.

I was not the only teenager from our church to be heading off to Oshawa that fall, but this was our year to do so. Like those that had gone before us, we were honored for our decision.

One Saturday evening in mid-August, after good fellowship and a feast of summer corn boiled over a fire in a church member's back yard, Barbara and I received the official off-to-Kingsway gift—an alarm clock. I felt privileged to be among a long line of such recipients.

Several days before classes were to begin, mom and I drove to Oshawa with the car full of things I thought I would need for the year. I was fifteen.

I laugh now when I think about the day I arrived. I had some colorful and coordinating shirts and pants in my suitcase, but the day we drove onto campus I was wearing a brand new light brown shirt and a pair of dark brown pants. Anticipating a world of modesty and moderation, I wanted to dress appropriately conservative.



*Kingsway College*

The first week was challenging. Once mom left, I was on my own. Everything was new—the campus, the dormitory, the cafeteria, the routine.

I was temporarily assigned the largest room on the top floor of the dormitory that first night. Unlike most two-occupant rooms, that one could have accommodated four people. From my twin bed in one corner, the room seemed cavernous.

Later that first evening when I tried to sleep, there was a lot of noise in the hall. It was the last week before school was to begin, so it was natural for the residents to be a bit rowdy. Because I knew no one, the noise and laughter only increased my sense of loneliness, and I felt some panic about my decision to leave home. I felt more alone that night than if I had been walking by myself on my uncle's 500-acre farm. I pulled the mattress off my twin bed and moved it into the walk-in closet. I felt better in that small quiet space.

The first person I met was Les. I remember chatting with him around a ping pong table in a dormitory lounge. He had been working on campus all summer, and so he was able to show me around. We soon learned we would be classmates. I was disappointed to learn, however, that he was about to head off for a Labor Day weekend retreat. Everyone who had worked on campus throughout the summer was eligible to go. Obviously, I was not. Waiting for Les and others to return made that first weekend very long.

Once the school year got under way, I settled in quickly. In many ways, my next four years at Kingsway were identical. They were a blur of work and study six days a week with worship and fellowship one day a week.

Adventist schools have always had a work-study philosophy. To accommodate such a program, grade nine and eleven students, for example, might work from 7 a.m. to noon while the grade ten and twelve students went to class. In the afternoon, the whole process was reversed.

My first job was at the school woodworking factory. I worked hard stacking lumber that had to be cut to specification, glued, and baked, and then planed before being made into furniture. Except for a few slivers and tired feet from standing for hours, it was clear that I

could manage hard physical labor, my orientation notwithstanding.

There was little about the public high school back home that compared with classes at Kingsway. I was in awe over being able to get credit toward my high school diploma by taking classes dedicated to the study of the Bible. That prayer was offered by a teacher or classmate before a math or science class amazed me. I put a lot of effort into my studies and my grades improved each year.

In addition to the required high school courses, I joined the band as an elective credit and tried to learn to play the trombone. It was not my instrument of choice because I was intimidated by the fact that you “slid” into each note rather than pushed a precise key, but the band director said they needed trombone players and that I had trombone lips.



*The School Band*

Even at Kingsway there was one class I disliked—physical education. I was never comfortable playing sports, especially team sports. They made me very self-conscious. At the best of times, I was not that comfortable in my own body, but when the teacher said my team was to be “the skins” for that period—those who were to play shirtless—I wanted to crawl into a hole.

The biggest change was living in a dormitory.

**T**he early 70s was part of the disco age, and even though it was a Christian school hints of that era were everywhere. Lava lamps were in, and the music of that decade could be heard playing softly in the rooms of seniors—they were allowed to have radios. Long hair was in style, but our hair could be no longer than the bottom of our earlobes. After all, we could not reflect the world too precisely. Some guys were constantly trying to push that boundary. I obeyed, of course.

With long hair came the hair drier for men. Previously, the hair dryer had been the domain of women and the beauty salon, but not in the 70s. On Sabbath mornings, especially, before heading off to church, the men's dormitory vibrated with the sound of those dryers, and you could barely breathe for the smell of

Brut cologne. And, yes, I had a hair dryer. And yes, I spent my fair share of time grooming accordingly. Even though our polyester shirts, plaid cuffed pants, and platform shoes were generally modest, Sonny and Cher, or more accurately, the gang from *The Mod Squad* could have walked across campus and barely been noticed. In retrospect, it was a great time to be living in the dorm.

Saying I liked dorm life is an understatement. I thoroughly enjoyed it. It felt like a large extended family. Roommates were like brothers and the deans, though responsible for many, were surrogate fathers. Being in the shadow of multicultural Toronto, the dorm reflected that reality. My first roommate, in fact, was Filipino. Overnight my Anglo-Saxon world had vanished.

Above and beyond the everyday events that made life enjoyable, it was the spiritual focus at Kingsway that was so meaningful to me.



*Prayer breakfast on Sabbath morning*

### *My Spiritual Life*

Going to Kingsway meant being exposed to the grander aspects of Adventism. The headquarters of the Adventist Church in Canada was across the street from the campus church, and just a few steps further down the street were the offices for the church in Ontario. There was a steady stream of important visitors and special speakers. I was a bit starstruck by it all. At this epicenter of Adventism in Canada, I felt as if I were at the gates of heaven, or at least, at the foot of Jacob's ladder.

Naturally, a Christian boarding school is a spiritual center. Not every student wanted to be there, and some cared little about matters of faith, but that was not my case. You get out of an experience what you put into it, and I put my heart into every opportunity for spiritual growth. I quickly found a circle of friends who were interested in making Jesus the center of their lives.

Dorm life also included a spiritual focus. We were required to attend morning and evening worship. That was no hardship for me; I thrived on it. In addition, friends and I created our own prayer and Bible study

groups that met before classes started or later in the evening.

Sabbath was the high point of every week. Everything that could be shut down was shut down on Friday afternoon so everyone could prepare for Sabbath. By sunset Friday, the dorms were at their cleanest, and the cafeteria served a special menu.



*The Cafeteria*

Vespers, at church, was simple and ushered in each Sabbath. After vesper, those students with guitars would lead an informal fellowship where we sang the contemporary Christian songs of the day. One of those songs was *For Those Tears I Died (Come to the Water)* by Marsha Stevens. That song in particular would have great significance to me a few years later. Those evening circles of singing, sharing, and prayer were matched in intimacy only with our Sabbath-morning prayer breakfasts.

Only the devout were up and out of bed by 7:00 a.m. on a Saturday morning in order to gather around a campfire, even in winter, for a breakfast of fruit, cinnamon rolls, and chocolate milk. Around those fires we sang, shared, and prayed together, again.

Compared to my tiny church back home, the church service at Kingsway was a spectacular event. There were hundreds of members compared to our 30. Our old upright piano and four-pedal two-console electric organ were eclipsed by a grand piano and a pipe organ, and the school choir was amazing.

After church, if you were fortunate, a family in the community would invite you over for some home cooking. In the afternoon, those who wanted to could join Sunshine Bands—our student ministry for the elderly—and tour a local nursing home to visit with and sing for the residents. Others just relaxed in their rooms.

The end of Sabbath was met with mixed emotion. Although Sabbath had been a time of rest, worship, and fellowship, the close of Sabbath meant it was time to pick up all the work and worries of the week. On the other hand, sunset meant the secular entertainment could begin. You never wanted to seem too eager for that, however!

As I mentioned previously, in addition to those scheduled religious events, I had my own spiritual practice. I was not the only one with personal devotional habits, so I don't mention this out of pride. Rather, I want to emphasize that despite my spiritual life my orientation persisted, even intensified. The first did not diminish the latter—to my dismay.

I continued the habit I had started as a pre-teen of reading the gospels in conjunction with Ellen G. White's book *The Desire of Ages*. This was not a hand-

on-the-door-knob-with-a-prayer-on-my-lips reflection before I tore off into my day. I literally tried to put in to practice White's suggestion of spending "a thoughtful hour each day in the contemplation of the life of Christ."

As often as I could, usually very early in the morning when it was still quiet, I found a secluded place to read and meditate. Sometimes it was in my room. Other times it was some other quiet corner of the dorm.

I'm not a speed reader at the best of times, and when it comes to reading spiritual material as part of my devotional life, I'm even slower. I reflect on words and ideas slowly, methodically, and intentionally.

Because *The Desire of Ages* is 800 pages and designed to facilitate reflection on the life of Jesus, it often took me more than a year to work through it. I used each chapter to walk with Jesus, visualizing his interacting with the people he encountered. I tried to enter deeply into what I thought He would want me to know about the Father and how those things should impact my interaction with others. During high school and on into college, I meditated and prayed my way through *The Desire of Ages* together with the gospels seven times.

I enjoyed that practice very much, and an hour was often too short. To this day, I get frustrated when life limits the time available for that kind of reflection.

Prayer, too, was always a pleasant experience for me. I had lists for family and relatives, classmates, and friends that I systematically cycled through month after month. Most of my prayer time, in fact, was spent praying for others. Any list I had for personal needs was short and simple. I never had a shortage of things to talk to God about.

Any time I did spend praying about my attractions was like inner ponderings focused on those plaguing "why" questions. That my attractions persisted was always a puzzle to me, because during high school and on into college, I was as spiritually focused and intentional about my faith as it was possible for me to be. Despite everything I did spiritually to develop my faith, my orientation persisted. This was very distressing and went against everything I believed should happen to a believer.



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### Fedalma's Story

<http://wearesdas.com/index.php/home-3/86-stories/116-fedelma-s-story.html>

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