

 community through conversation

SPECTRUM



CLEOPATRA: New Insights for the Interpretation of Revelation 17

Burundi: A Church Captured | *“I Have Had to Adjust my View of Things”*

community through conversation

SPECTRUM

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ARTIST'S STATEMENT ABOUT THE ART



I have been interested in the visual arts since childhood, and my holidays are typically devoted to visiting art museums and archeological sites in Canada and Europe. In particular, I find myself drawn to European art of the 1400s, all of which is religious on some level. There is a tentative and exploratory quality to this period—both in Italy and Flanders—as if the artists felt they were on the brink of discovering a new way of seeing the world, but sensed that the goal would remain elusive. This distinctly “medieval” atmosphere continues in Northern Europe into the High Renaissance.

The tree in the design for this cover is based on the tree of knowledge of good and evil in a painting by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472–1553): *Adam and Eve*. As I became more immersed in work for the cover, I found I had ideas for an entire set of oil paintings, digital prints, and short video clips. The work morphed into what has now become the *Great Whore of Babylon Project*. The woman in this project seems to represent the neglected, dark side of the Pantheon (i.e., what readers of Nietzsche would think of as the Dionysian).

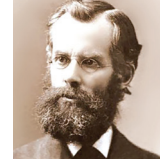
More examples of my work are available at www.johnhoyt.ca.



ABOUT THE COVER ARTIST: JOHN P. HOYT

John P. Hoyt is emeritus professor of art and education at Burman University, Canada, where he has taught since 1980. A graduate of Loma Linda University in French (BA) and biostatistics (MSPH), he earned an MFA in studio art at the University of California, Davis, and a PhD in curriculum and instruction at the University of Alberta. He is a member of the Alberta Society of Artists and Society of Northern Alberta Printmakers. He is represented by the Collector's Gallery of Art, Calgary, AB. This is his fourth cover for *Spectrum*.

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EDITORIAL

How Long Ago and Far Away BECOMES HERE AND NOW

BY BONNIE DWYER

When I read Stacey Schiff's biography of Cleopatra in 2010, the myths about the ancient monarch were more familiar to me than her actual history. I would not have been able to tell you when she lived, for instance. I knew more stories about Elizabeth Taylor's portrayal of her in the movies than of the actual woman. Thus, my particular fascination with the chapters in the Schiff book that included descriptions of the biblical Herod and brought her close to Bible times.

Not long after I completed the book, I attended a conference sponsored by the Association of Adventist Women at La Sierra University. A panel discussion on women in the Bible included a presentation by Kendra Haloviak on the Whore of Babylon in Revelation 17. To illustrate her remarks, Dr. Haloviak wrote various names on a whiteboard that were associated with the biblical character. The list sounded like it came straight out of the Cleopatra biography, so when

it came time for questions, I and another woman who had also just read the Schiff book, asked, could the author of Revelation have been referring to Cleopatra? The question intrigued Dr. Haloviak who took it upon herself to read the

I knew more stories about Elizabeth Taylor's portrayal of her in the movies than of the actual woman.

Schiff book and then many more books and articles. She turned her research into a paper for an academic, evangelical theological journal in the United Kingdom that was published in 2017. I am excited that in this issue we are able to share with you Dr. Haloviak Valentine's research. She always brings the Scripture

alive in new ways for me, and this article in our Bible section is no exception.

Likewise, it is an honor to be able to share the work of Carmen Lau, chair of the Adventist Forum Board. The Adventist stories about the Rwandan Genocide in 1994 had created questions for her about how church members could have participated in that event. While completing a



While completing a program in peace studies at the University of Alabama, she decided to travel to Rwanda to listen to genocide survivors.

program in peace studies at the University of Alabama, she decided to travel to Rwanda to listen to genocide survivors. Rather than writing an editorial for this issue, she has shared with us a report on her findings.

A more recent story from that same area that has intrigued me is what is taking place in the church in Burundi. The General Conference has repeatedly requested prayer for the church there but given few details about the situation. Godfrey Sang spoke to many church leaders in Burundi to write an amazing article for us. Drawing on the history of the country, the church, and these extensive interviews, he gives us the necessary context to be able to better understand the recent events.

Completing our collection of stories from Africa is a book review by Nancy Lecourt of Adu Worku's autobiography. Alumni of Pacific Union College will recognize Worku's name from the years that he served as the college librarian. His continued connection to the Ethiopian peo-

ple and culture may be a surprise. His story of giving back to the land of his birth inspired me.

For many of us, Africa is a faraway place and the stories that we know from there often come from long ago. We are pleased to welcome Godfrey Sang back to our pages to tell us another compelling story from Africa, along with others sharing their experiences and studies to bring to life some of the people and places of that vast continent.



BONNIE DWYER is editor of *Spectrum*.

NOTEWORTHY



A NEW PRESIDENT FOR AIIAS

Reflections on Roles for Women in Asia

BY GILBERT VALENTINE AND KENDRA HALOVIK VALENTINE

Ceremony and symbolism featured prominently at the November 2019 installation of Dr. Ginger Ketting-Weller as the eighth president of the Adventist International Institute for Advanced Studies (AIIAS) in the Philippines. The installation service was the centerpiece of a three-day program that began on Thursday evening with a consecration service homily given by seminary dean, Dr. Ricardo González, and concluded on Sabbath with Professor Ketting-Weller giving the sermon for the Sabbath-morning worship service. Planning for the special services was carefully scheduled in coordination with the institution's twenty-second annual theology conference attended this year by 530 off-campus participants. The installation ceremony attracted particular attention because Professor Ketting-Weller is the first woman to be appointed to the leadership of this important General Conference institution. AIIAS is one of four institutions of higher education operated directly by the General Conference and focuses exclusively on graduate studies for its approximately 650-member international student body, which in the first quarter this year represented sixty-two different countries.

Held on Friday afternoon, November 15, in the large Siew Huy Auditorium which doubles as the church for the AIIAS campus, the formal, impressively colorful, yet deeply spiritual installation ceremony was attended by AIIAS faculty, staff and students, local civic officials, institutional representatives from both the wider Adventist higher education and health care communities, and by numerous General Conference and regional church representatives. The event constituted an important historic milestone for AIIAS which General Conference

president Ted N. C. Wilson noted but was unable to personally attend. He sent greetings, exhortations, and congratulations by way of a video message. For anyone familiar with current issues and debates in Adventism, the powerful symbolism of the installation ceremony carried deep and far-reaching meaning about what is slowly occurring in the church even if attention was not overtly drawn to the significance of what was taking place.

Presiding over the ceremony, which celebrated the formal (and legal) transfer of presidential leadership responsibilities from retiring president, Stephen Guptill, to Professor Ketting-Weller, was Dr. Ella Simmons, vice-president of the General Conference and chair of the AIIAS Board of Trustees. One of only five commissioned women ministers currently employed by the General Conference, Dr. Simmons is the first woman to serve the world church as a vice president. Associated with her in the ceremony and offering the prayer of dedication, Dr. Lisa Beardsley-Hardy is the first woman to serve as director of Education at the

General Conference. As Dr. Simmons noted in her introduction, the three women had become acquainted with each other when they had previously served in senior academic leadership of important Adventist institutions in the United States.

In her homily Dr. Simmons began by speaking of the unique challenges facing the modern university president. She cited retired Admiral William H. McRaven's recent assessment of the task upon his early retirement as chancellor of the University of Texas. An academic institution presidency, he opined, "is the toughest job in the nation." There is "no analogue" for the role "in modern

The installation ceremony attracted particular attention because Professor Ketting-Weller is the first woman to be appointed to the leadership of this important General Conference institution.



LEFT: Held on November 15, 2019, the deeply spiritual installation ceremony was attended by AIIAS faculty, staff and students, local civic officials, and church and institutional representatives. RIGHT: AUP president, Professor Francisco D. Gayoba, conveys greetings to Dr Ketting-Weller.

business.”¹ But AIIAS is much more than a business or an ordinary educational enterprise. AIIAS was founded on spiritual values and Simmons outlined the distinctive spiritual leadership training mission that AIIAS had been called to fulfill for the church. Implementing this mission was the foremost task of the president.

Following her address, Simmons explained the meaning of the symbols of institutional authority and of the presidential office (the presidential medallion, the specially carved institutional mace, and the institute’s seal) and then presided over the passing over of the custody of the symbols from Dr. Guptill to Dr. Ketting-Weller. Of significance was the entrusting to the new president the safe keeping of the institute’s founding legal document, “Presidential Decree 2021,” signed by President Ferdinand Marcos on January 31, 1986, and gazette, signed a few weeks later, just hours before he left office. The granting of the decree allowing for the accreditation of AIIAS is viewed by church leaders as a clear testimony to providence leading in the establishment of this institution.

In the prelude to her formal charge to the new president, Dr. Simmons reflected on the biblical figure of the judge-prophetess Deborah, noting that what qualifies a person for leadership “is not gender but one’s relation-

ship to God.” She then spoke directly on behalf of the AIIAS board in charging Dr. Ketting-Weller to follow the example of Deborah and “to embrace God’s call to be a woman of power and influence, faithful in the fulfillment of your presidential duties.” The new president was called to be, however, “not just a woman who has authority” but a “woman living under the authority of God.” “I charge you to be “a modern-day Deborah,” she concluded.

It was clear. AIIAS is not just an academic institution with high standards, a superbly qualified faculty, and an international reach.² It is a theological seminary entrusted with the training of pastoral leadership as well the education of other church leaders through its graduate school. Spiritual concerns lie at the core of everything. The institution’s logo, designed in the late 1980s by theologian John Jones, prominently features stylized Greek letters alpha and omega as symbols of the divine and of eternity. Now, as the new custodian of that logo and the intentionally spiritual corporate culture, the new president was above all to be a spiritual leader. For her prayer of consecration Dr. Lisa Beardsley-Hardy invited the officials of the platform party including General Conference officials and the two constituent division presidents to gather around Dr. Ketting-Weller and her husband in order to affirm her as

Keeping a vibrant spirituality at the heart of AIIAS, she believes, is an important part of her leadership. During the Friday night service of consecration for the new president, by special request of Ketting-Weller, the AUP Indonesian Chorale sang the American Shaker hymn “I Will Be a Child of Peace,” composed by Elaine Hagenberg. Not only did the music provide a bridging of Dr. Ginger’s worlds of education and service—Asia and America—the lyrics summed up her spiritual commitment. The verse “O Holy Father I will be, a child of peace and purity; for well I know thy hand will bless, the seeker after righteousness” is repeated four times with key changes and growing musical intensity. To the careful observer, the performance and the lyrics of the piece resonated deeply with Dr. Ketting-Weller, clearly echoing her commitment to be such a child of peace in our world.

she was “set apart” for her spiritual leadership role. “As we lay our hands upon her,” prayed Beardsley-Hardy, “we ask You [Lord] to lay Your hand upon her to lead her as she leads the way into a bright future.” General Conference officers and division presidents participated in the distinctive, deeply spiritual moment and laid their hands on her, “setting apart” the new president for her spiritual leadership task.³ There was no discomfort, no resistance to the fact that this woman was being set apart to have authority over the men who served on her administrative team and taught theology in her classrooms. There was no thought that headship was somehow being inverted here. If some in the congregation wondered why the spiritual leadership of a seminary might be qualitatively different to the spiritual leadership of a local conference, they could perhaps be excused for doing so.

The ceremony concluded with short speeches of greeting and blessing from regional health care leaders from Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines, and from presidents of other institutions of learning. Dr. Francisco Gayoba, president of the nearby Adventist University of the Philippines was the first to convey congratulations. Then came greetings from further afield. Dr. Delbert Baker, vice chancellor of the new General Conference graduate school, the Adventist University of Africa in Nairobi, Kenya, who had offered the invocation, conveyed official and personal greetings. Dr. Andrea Luxton, president of Andrews University (Michigan, USA) and Dr. Richard Hart of Loma Linda University Health (California, USA) both conveyed official written greetings. Steven G. Rose, the financial vice president of Walla Walla University (Washington, USA)

presented an award from the Walla Walla University Board of Trustees who were delighted at the accomplishments of their distinguished alumna. (Dr. Ketting-Weller had served for a decade as vice president for academic administration at the institution.) La Sierra University faculty, Gil Valentine and Kendra Haloviak Valentine, also attended the ceremony and conveyed official congratulations from their newly appointed university president, Dr. Joy Fehr, and her faculty and staff. (Dr. Fehr is the first woman president of La Sierra University.)

The next day as the AIIAS church family and many visitors gathered for Sabbath worship, Dr. Ketting-Weller exercised her newly authorized spiritual leadership in preaching a deeply thoughtful exposition on Psalm 145:4: “One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.” Her theme emphasized the challenge to pass on the heritage of faith to each new generation and the task of leadership in this. Recounting the experience of her mother, Dr. Effie, who had been repeatedly disappointed in her goal of achieving an Ob-Gyn residency and, refusing to give up, had eventually succeeded. During her career she had gone on to deliver more than 17,000 babies. The mentoring provided Dr. Ginger by her mother through this perseverance had a lifelong impact and shaped the next generation. The young biblical Timothy, nurtured by a Christian mother and by the elders, was also a powerful scriptural example. There is much to be learned for leadership when the new generation enters into conversation with the elders and the elders listen to the young. Such conversation is critical for effective leadership, she emphasized.



Who Is the New AIIAS President?

In an interview with the authors a day prior to her installation, Dr. Ketting-Weller observed that being called to serve at AIIAS was “almost like a home-coming.” For the first eighteen years of her life she had lived in Southeast Asia, the

daughter of medical missionary parents. The experience of these growing up years had developed in her “a deep love for Asia” and “a deep love for my church and mission.” She believes that her “childhood shaped her” for her new task in the Philippines and gave her a familiarity “with the way the church works in this part of the world.”

Dr. Ginger was born in Bangkok where her parents, Drs. Sam and Effie Ketting, served at the Bangkok “Mission Hospital” on Phitsanulok Road near the city’s exotic and world-famous royal palaces. Her Dutch father had emigrated to Australia after World War II where he had become an Adventist and then moved on to the United States to study pre-med at Walla Walla College. It was at Loma Linda that her parents met and married. Ketting-Weller thus has the distinction of having three birth certificates: one from the Netherlands, one from Thailand, and one from the United States. In Bangkok, a younger brother, Case, enlarged the family.

When she was two and a half years old her parents transferred south to Phuket where her father served as physician and general surgeon at the mission clinic and was soon entrusted with drawing up the architectural plans for a new Phuket hospital building, opened in February, 1965.⁴ Her mother specialized both in pathology and in obstetrics and gynecology and her skills helped to build local trust in the Adventist medical work.

Ketting-Weller’s family moved to Penang when she was five years old, her parents taking appointments at Penang Adventist Hospital. Her father first served as general surgeon and then for ten years in the added role of medical director. Ketting-Weller attended a one-room school on campus and put down deep roots, developing school and church friendships among both national and expatriate families that have lasted through life. The current president of the Penang Adventist Hospital, Ronald Koh Wah Heng, for example, a friend of Ketting-Weller



Dr. Ginger Ketting-Weller, third from left in the front row, with other Walla Walla University faculty. (SOURCE: <https://archives.walla.walla.edu/westwind/fall01/fall01other/faculty.html>)

since their teen years, participated in the installation ceremony, presenting the new president with some Malaysian flags and bringing greetings from a wide circle of acquaintances. Ketting-Weller observed that this rich background had been a blessing, making it “surprisingly easy” to fit into her new environment where she needed to “interact with many cultures.” She found that she had been able to “quickly come to love the people around me.”

Four years at Far Eastern Academy (FEA) in Singapore in her mid-teens further extended her circle of friendships and helped develop a life-shaping spirit of service under memorable teachers such as Bible teachers Richard Cadabaro and Gordon Shumate. FEA also gave her the opportunity to pursue her interest in developing piano and church organ performance skills and gave her a first “sink or swim” teaching experience when she was asked to teach music to elementary school students. She preached her first sermon at age eighteen as part of a Bible class outreach program in Singapore.

Planning on going to Newbold for her college years, she encountered Malcolm Maxwell visiting FEA as a recruiter from Walla Walla College. He assured her that the College had eight pipe organs available for student use. This promptly persuaded her to change course and take her degree at Walla Walla, majoring in elementary education with a minor in music teaching (organ). During her junior year she maintained her interest in missions by becoming the student director of the college’s student missionary program and then, at the end of the year, decided to give ten months of student missionary service herself as an assistant residence dean at Toivolina Junior College

in Finland. Though the experience gave her the worst culture shock she had yet encountered, it also gave her even wider experience and provided a context and an occasion for further important spiritual development. During a period of discouragement and disappointment she found valued help in Phillip Yancey's *Disappointed with God*, and now looks back on the experience with gratitude. She graduated from Walla Walla with general studies honors in 1985.

Following graduation, two years of elementary teaching at the Adventist church school in Lincoln City, Oregon gave Ketting-Weller solid practical experience in pedagogy and classroom management. Upon the encouragement of her church pastor in Lincoln City she undertook her MA in educational administration and leadership through the school of Education on the La Sierra Campus when it was part of Loma Linda University. This led to a six-year stint teaching and serving as vice principal at Redlands Academy. Here she noticed that she enjoyed mentoring student teachers and she enrolled in a doctoral program at Claremont Graduate University. By 1994, Pacific Union College had called her to join their education department. Two years later she successfully defended her dissertation which had particular appeal to her and provided valued insights for church leaders. Her topic was an inquiry into identity development in adolescents who had moved cross-culturally and included an analysis of data from immigrants and the children of missionaries.

After seven years in Angwin, Ketting-Weller married Jim Weller who was then serving as principal of Rogers Elementary School in College Place, Washington. She

accepted an invitation to go back to her alma mater, Walla Walla College, to serve as associate vice president for academic administration under Dr. John Brunt. After a year of mentoring by Brunt, when he took a call to the senior pastorate of Azure Hills Church in California, Ketting-Weller was appointed to replace him as vice president for academic administration, the first woman to occupy this senior position at Walla Walla. She recalls a valuable early lesson learned at Walla Walla when leading the institution during a temporary absence of her president, Dr. Jon Dybdahl. Conscious of trying to emulate his style and relate to decisions as she thought he would do she was encouraged by Dybdahl upon his return to just "lead in your own skin." This piece of advice "was



Dr. Ginger Ketting-Weller in a recent picture with her husband Jim, who heads the K-12 AIIAS Academy. (SOURCE: <https://www.aaias.edu/en/news/644-aaias-welcomes-institution-s-eighth-president>)

one of the most freeing things a boss had ever said to me," she recalled. "It has been a precious gift." She began to recognize, reflect on, and strengthen her own approach and at this time felt privileged to be chosen and sponsored by the Milton Murray Foundation for specialized leadership training at Harvard University. "My style is to be a connector, to build and grow the people I work with," she observed when asked to reflect on her own approach

to leadership. The questions she asks herself in relationship to her associates and colleagues are, "How can I help you develop? How can I help you grow? What tools and experiences do you need?" She is resolved "to never stop learning and gaining new insights." Seeing other people flourish in the development of their capabilities as leaders gives her a deep sense of fulfillment.

After eleven years at Walla Walla, in 2012 Ketting-Weller accepted an appointment at La Sierra Uni-

"My style is to be a connector, to build and grow the people I work with," she observed when asked to reflect on her own approach to leadership.



Dr. Ginger Ketting-Weller, sixth from left in the back row, helps break ground for the AIIAS Academy building. (SOURCE: <https://www.aiias.edu/en/news/662-breaking-the-ground-for-the-aiias-academy-building>)

versity as dean of the School of Education. This had the advantage of enabling her to be close to her grandchildren and to access excellent care for her parents at Loma Linda in their declining years. During her seven-year tenure at La Sierra she successfully oversaw the launch of a new PhD program in leadership, while her husband Jim finished his own doctoral studies through Andrews University and served as junior high principal at Loma Linda Academy. Ginger's parents passed away nine months apart in 2017 and 2018, bringing to a close a precious time of her care for them in their last years.

The invitation to leadership at AIIAS came at a timely juncture for both Ginger and Jim, when the AIIAS board, convinced that their skill sets were an excellent fit for two open positions, placed a call for their services. A strong conviction that the hand of providence was leading persuaded them that this was a need they should respond to and they took up their duties on August 1, 2019. Jim heads up the K-12 AIIAS Academy which has just launched a challenging new building program to cope with an expanding scope and enrollment. The unique challenges and opportunities AIIAS faces as this distinctive Adventist institution proceeds through its fourth decade excite them both. Ketting-Weller believes that her new charge, with

its unusual acronym for a name, remains one of the best-kept secrets in the church and that it deserves to be much better known. While it is certainly more widely known outside of the United States, there is still room for greater awareness. Besides, "where else could you find graduate tuition rates for a semester unit for only \$115.00?" she asks, smiling.

AIIAS and the Future

Located on its tropical forty-nine acre compound in Silang, Cavite province, thirty miles south of Central Manila, the capital of the Philippines, AIIAS is a peaceful and delightfully picturesque, well-appointed campus home to its 170 resident students and their families and its

thirty-nine teaching faculty. Most student families reside in one of eight home units in each of the seventeen four-story apartment buildings on campus. The balance of its approximately 650 students, scattered through the various countries of Asia, undertake their studies in very modern educational fashion through AIIAS's distance learning centers (DLCs) or in online mode. Recently, the DLCs have also stretched from Eastern Europe to Africa and the Middle East and on to South America.⁶ Some student groups come to campus for month-long



A sculpture welcomes visitors at the AIIAS main gate.

The Philippines is widely recognized as being, in essence, a matriarchal society with a long history of women having a greater share in social equality than in other countries.

intensive periods as cohort groups. But the journey to where the forward- and outward-looking institution is today has not been easy nor without some intense birthing pains.

Adventist education began in the Philippines in June 1917, just six years after the 1911 establishment of the first Adventist church in Manila.⁷ Within a decade the training school on its five-acre plot of land in Manila had become a junior college and had outgrown its overcrowded facilities caring for students from all over the scattered island territory. It was one of the largest training schools outside of North America, and according to mission historian Donald Warren, “more than any other factor” it was the centrally located college that “binds together our work in all parts of the islands.”⁸ In 1931 the school moved to a larger site on the outskirts of Manila. By 1936 the Union College, fed by a number of regional academies, became the first institution outside North America to achieve senior college status and offer four-year degrees.⁹ That year

the Far Eastern Division secretary, W. P. Bradley, boasted that Philippines Union College (PUC) was the largest church college outside the USA and General Conference Education secretary, W. E. Nelson, noted an intention to make the college *the* “training center for advanced work for all countries in the Far Eastern Division.”¹⁰ Implementing this role was to eventually prove problematic.

With approval from the General Conference, PUC graduated its first Master of Education students in 1959. Graduates from an MA in Religion followed five years later in 1964. The college formally organized a theological seminary in 1972 and a year later the Association of Theological Schools in South East Asia approved its programs. In 1978, PUC, with its thriving graduate programs, moved to a more spacious campus in Silang, an hour south of Manila. At this juncture, however, a decision was taken to separate the theological seminary, although it was located on the same new campus, and fund it independently as an institution of the Far Eastern Division but with funds



The AIAS website appeals to potential students with its “exotic location” (shown here from a bird’s eye view): coral reefs, tropical beaches, a world-famous volcano, and rapids are all a short distance from the campus. (SOURCE: <https://www.aias.edu/en/91-aias/quick-links/academic-resources/125-why-choose-aias>)



ABOVE: The seminary building on the AIIAS campus
 LEFT: AIIAS students (SOURCE: <https://www.aaias.edu/en/91-aaias/quick-links/academic-resources/125-why-choose-aaias>)

flowing through the internal administrative structures of the Union College. The costs of water, electricity and other services were shared. Renamed as Asia Adventist Theological Seminary, the new entity's catchment area, as Adventist historian Floyd Greenleaf recounts, was "extended far beyond the boundaries of the Philippines to serve all of Asia."¹¹ The seminary flourished in its new location with its more generous and independent source of funding, its international reach, and the addition of further study programs.

Under the arrangement it was inevitable that jealousies and friction would develop. A Loma Linda affiliated public health degree (beyond the strict boundaries of theology), arranged before the separation but birthed during the awkward separation phase, led to misunderstanding over to whom it rightly belonged. Soon other tensions and further friction developed between the two entities as the need to more adequately meet the particular needs of in-

ternational students and faculty became more acute.¹² The securing of a separate legislative framework and different government educational regulations under the terms of President Marcos' decree also aggravated relations. The new regulatory terms establishing AIIAS as an international institution gave more flexibility concerning international faculty appointments than the regulations applying to national institutions. Although President Corazin Aquino's incoming administration reviewed and confirmed the Marcos decree as being in the best interests of the Philippines, PUC personnel continued to protest the separation as illegal and suspicions and ill-feeling remained among Filipino staff and students.¹³ As Greenleaf explains, "the impracticability of operating two institutions on a single campus was becoming obvious." The daily smarting experienced by PUC at the loss of funding for its graduate programs and the graduate programs themselves infected relations. "When friction and misunderstandings be-

came too serious to pass off as incidental,” it seemed to seminary and division administration that “moving the seminary away from the college appeared to be the best resolution.”¹⁴

In 1988, under Dean Werner Vyhmeister, a new campus was found fifteen miles away from PUC and a special presidential decree was obtained for the establishment of an international institution under a more flexible legislative and regulatory framework concerning faculty appointments than that which applied to national institutions. In 1991, AIIAS, with its greatly expanded range of programs (thirteen master’s degrees in six disciplines and three doctoral programs), moved to its new campus. As Greenleaf notes, the transition was exceedingly “painful” as PUC was obliged to revert to the “unpalatable” status of providing only undergraduate programs.¹⁵ Lawsuits, threats of deportation, and the sad loss of highly respected PUC leadership through stress-induced illness and death cast dark clouds over the separation.¹⁶ Would the skies ever brighten? Then, in 1996 when the Far Eastern Division separated into two new divisions (Northern Asia-Pacific and Southern Asia-Pacific), AIIAS became a General Conference institution with a mandate to serve both entities.

In an endeavor to recover its reputation and “preserve its traditions,” soon after the break, PUC began to seek university status and develop new graduate programs for its national student body. With government and church approval in 1996 it changed its name to Adventist University of the Philippines (AUP) and again offered graduate studies in education, religion, biology, nursing, and business. Doctoral programs followed. A dental school was opened in 2012 and the church’s first medical school in Asia was opened on the AUP campus and admitted its first class two years later in 2014. While there is overlap with AIIAS in a number of the graduate programs and the campuses are not far apart, which may seem an inefficient way to offer higher education, it is argued that both the student catchments and the sourcing of faculty are quite distinct. Furthermore, AIIAS’s student intake is limited by its charter to a maximum of 30% from the Philippines. AUP’s parent entity, the Northern Philippine Union, became a conference only in 2012 and now has almost 400,000 members but it supports two other senior colleges and a university (Northern Luzon University)

offering graduate studies.¹⁷ Church accreditors observe that the financial resources available to AUP will eventually demonstrate whether its ambitions are sustainable.¹⁸ While there are no formal cooperative or collaborative institutional academic links between AUP and AIIAS, nevertheless, on the personal level there is collegial amity and AIIAS faculty report no awareness of lingering resentment among church members. The highly respected AUP choral group, the Philippine Meistersingers, and the AUP president, Professor Francisco D. Gayoba, participated prominently in the installation ceremony and brought warm congratulatory greetings.

Dr. Ketting-Weller sees the present task of AIIAS as focused on developing thoughtful broad-vision leadership primarily for the two division constituencies but also for other places. When pressed, in an interview with associate *Review* editor, Gerald Klingbeil, to articulate what she sees as challenges to be faced in the near future she acknowledges that problems encountered in America associated with over-provision of higher education, with proliferation and duplication of programs, and tuition competition, may be replicated in the Asia region. The need for exercising courage in making difficult decisions when unplanned higher education growth occurs should be anticipated, she notes.¹⁹ Among the “greatest strengths” of AIIAS, Ketting-Weller observes, is the diversity represented in the faculty providing “a multicultural set of perspectives” for students. That diversity involves the perspectives of women teachers.

Many of the countries in the region around AIIAS have already experienced women leaders in national political life. Furthermore, the Philippines is widely recognized as being, in essence, a matriarchal society with a long history of women having a greater share in social equality than in other countries. Against that background, Ketting-Weller observes, “I don’t think of myself as a female administrator. I just think of myself as an administrator.” She simply wants to do her job well and from her experience thus far she senses that the faculty, staff, and students of AIIAS, regardless of the continent they come from, are very accepting and appreciative. The Filipinos seemed to be the most enthusiastically affirming of her arrival as “our first woman president” when she first came to campus, she recalled. She values the gift of the special hand-painted Filipino shawl with

which she was embraced on arrival. While there is significant diversity at AIIAS, she notes, there is a special connection to Filipino life and values. “We operate ‘in the Filipino Shawl’ here at AIIAS,” she explained to Klingbeil. Leaders in the church have observed that within the region there is also a natural, deeply rooted respect for people in positions of authority regardless of gender or race. Ketting-Weller is aware, however, from what numerous AIIAS women students have told her personally, that they see her as a model in leadership and they are intentionally learning from her. She is encouraged if somewhat daunted and humbled by this.

Women in Adventist ministry and church leadership are scattered sparsely throughout the division, often in departmental or chaplaincy roles, but they serve in a more concentrated way in congregational roles in China and Mongolia. According to the AIIAS registrar, 58% of the graduate-school students resident on campus in the current semester are women. And while only 10% of the ninety-six students studying in the Seminary are women from a variety of national backgrounds, they are encouraged to participate in leadership in local congregational worship. On campus at the time of Ketting-Weller’s installation there was also a special cohort of twenty-five ministers from China, fifteen of whom were women already involved in various pastoral leadership roles in congregations in China. Bringing the ministers to AIIAS for training is much less politically complicated than teaching the group at a distance-learning center in their home country. Courses are taught with translation by respected Chinese leaders and with the use of specially prepared materials. The issue of what titles they are given as pastor when terms are translated out of English is not a problem, reported one of the students. At home they are simply “set apart” to lead churches or to help in the ministry of their local church and, as a student explained, they are simply focused on

the great opportunities for reaching out to the multitudes around them.

The current discussion of the ordination of women in the world church does not seem to trouble the

waters at AIIAS or in the surrounding division territories, although propaganda produced by some agencies, according to one woman faculty member, has created the impression that the North American division is deep in apostasy. Another professor from Asia observed that the culture of the Philippines is not in any way averse to women in pastoral or any other leadership role, but it is respectful of authority. “If the General Conference simply tells us that it is OK to ordain women, we will do it,” he said. There is no issue. It is to be hoped that the new wave of women in leader-

ship of such places as AIIAS will model to other places how the spirit gives gifts to whomsoever the spirit gives without regard to ethnicity, gender, or social status—and the church of God will be blessed.

The new president
was called to be,
however, “not just
a woman who has
authority” but a
“woman living under
the authority of God.”

Endnotes

1. A recording of the installation ceremony is accessible at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_bGBQyV-NhE. See 27:55. Andy Thomason, “Is College President, ‘toughest job in the nation?’” *Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 1, 2018. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Is-College-President-the/243289>. Accessed December 4, 2019. Before heading up the University of Texas system, McRaven commanded the raid that captured Bin Laden.

2. Of the thirty-nine faculty listed on the AIIAS webpage, thirty-seven have doctorates and the other two academic librarians have terminal master’s degrees. <https://www.aiias.edu/en/academics/faculty> Accessed December 4, 2019.

3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_bGBQyV-NhE. See 1:34:45.

4. “Bhuket Mission Hospital Opens in Thailand,” *Adventist Review*, June 24, 1965: 14.

5. Gil and Kendra Valentine, Interview with G. Ketting-Weller, November 14, 2019.

6. Centers have been operated in Estonia, Kenya, Guyana, Dubai, Mongolia, and Chile.

7. L. Donald Warren, *Isles of Opportunity*, (Washington, DC:



The authors, Gilbert Valentine and Kendra Haloviak Valentine, interviewed Dr. Ketting-Weller a day prior to her installation.

Review and Herald, 1928), 180–183, 214–224, has a helpful account of the beginnings.

8. *Ibid.*, 221, 223.

9. Floyd Greenleaf, *In Passion for the World: A History of Seventh-day Adventist Education* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005), 169, 257.

10. *Ibid.*, 257, 381.

11. *Ibid.*, 382.

12. John Jones, who was teaching at the Theological Seminary at the time, recalls an anti-colonial sentiment on the part of some staff, understandable given the recent political past. Unfortunately, this sentiment at times impeded relating effectively to visa and academic processes for international students and faculty and complicated communication with regional church leaders who were involved with the graduate-student sponsorships. Interview with authors, Redlands, July 14, 2019.

13. Nancy Vyhmeister recounts the remarkable events which led to the obtaining of the decree in Chapter 10 of her unpublished biographical manuscript.

14. Greenleaf, *In Passion*, 382.

15. *Ibid.*, 384.

16. Nancy Vyhmeister, Chapter 10, 2.

17. The Northern Philippine Union is comprised of six local missions and two local conference organizations. <https://adventist.ph/information/local-regions/>. See also <http://www.adventistdirectory.org/ViewAdmFieldSubEntities.aspx?AdmFieldID=NPUM&EntityType=E&ShowContained=-1&Offset=0>. Accessed December 4, 2019.

18. Greenleaf, *In Passion*, 385.

19. Gerald Klingbeil, “Preparing Thoughtful, Careful, Broad-Vision Leaders: A Conversation with Ginger Ketting-Weller,” *Adventist Review*, December 3, 2019. <https://www.adventistreview.org/church-news/story14278-preparing-thoughtful-careful-broad-vision-leaders> Accessed December 4, 2019.



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NOTEWORTHY



Delegates to Bible Conference, Washington, D. C., July, 1919. (Source: *Adventist Review*)

“I HAVE HAD TO ADJUST MY VIEW OF THINGS”

Lessons from the 1919 Bible Conference

BY DENIS FORTIN



They were guarded. At least that is my impression after reading the transcript of the 1919 Bible Conference. A. G. Daniells, president of the General Conference, and W. W. Prescott, field secretary of the General Conference, may have been fairly open and candid about the comments they made but I think there is some hesitation in their answers. They are not as open and candid as I think they could have been or even wished to be.

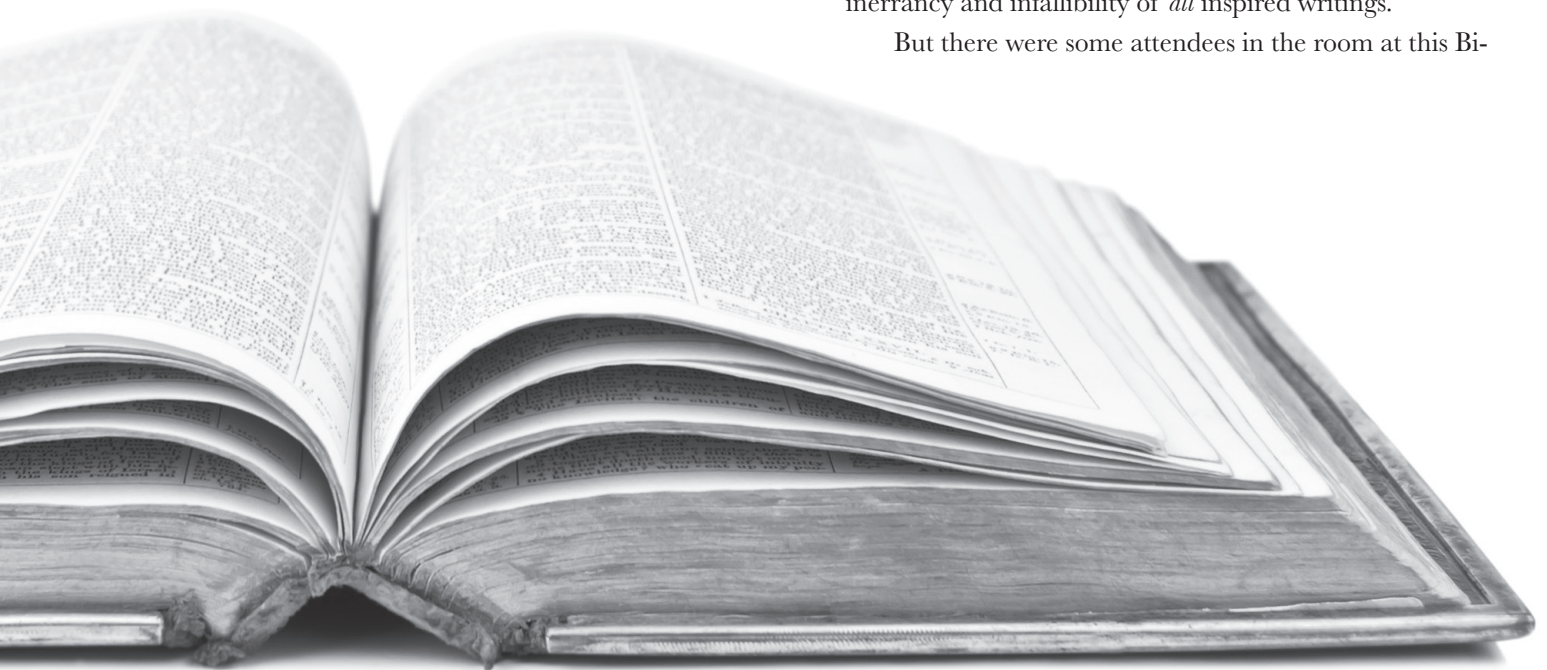
They knew that some of their colleagues in the room, church leaders, history and Bible teachers in Seventh-day Adventist colleges in North America, were inflexible in their views of some traditional Adventist teachings, and had a verbal view of inspiration. They were what we would come to call fundamentalists. They also viewed Ellen White's writings as inerrant and infallible in all matters of teachings, whether biblical interpretation, historical facts, or health and science information. Their reading of inspired writings tended to be simple and literalistic—taking the Bible and the writings of Ellen White as they read, with little consideration of context, culture or history, or even less one's own interpretive assumptions.

The six-week long event was in its fourth week.¹ The main purpose for the gathering had been to provide time for reflection and discussion of difficult subjects and points of interpretation teachers faced in their interrelated disciplines. They were facing some difficult challenges.

Their own study, and new discoveries and publications in the fields of biblical interpretation and history, were questioning some of the details of prophetic interpretation in Adventist teachings and doctrines. New information and insights challenged the accuracy of biblical and historical facts and chronologies that Adventists had used to buttress their interpretations of prophecies. Prophetic timelines were now quietly questioned or at any rate lacked the required certainty of evangelistic fervor to convince new converts.

And, consequently, the writings of Ellen White also were discussed. She had written numerous books and articles on biblical history, biblical themes, and biblical and Christian history. How were her writings to be used in matters of biblical and historical facts? Were her inspired writings the needed sword to cut the Gordian knots of their difficult challenges? Many teachers and evangelists used her writings to settle points of historical accuracy and biblical interpretation. In this, their position was similar to the Mormons who viewed the writings of their prophet as superseding the Bible. Their view of inspiration gave a hierarchical authority to Ellen White's writings. The Adventist position, supported by Ellen White, that there is no degree of inspiration between canonical and non-canonical prophets—a prophet is either inspired by the Holy Spirit or he is not—favored a predisposition toward the inerrancy and infallibility of *all* inspired writings.

But there were some attendees in the room at this Bi-



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ble Conference who knew better than to ascribe inerrancy and infallibility to Ellen White's writings. The problem though with this opinion is that if one were to say Ellen White's writings are not infallible or inerrant, what does this imply for the Bible? Holding the view that there is no degree of inspiration between canonical and non-canonical prophets inherently posed this unavoidable comparison and consequent conclusion. If one is not inerrant or infallible then nor is the other. As evangelical fundamentalism sought to organize a resistance to inroads made by modern critical biblical scholarship, for Seventh-day Adventists to challenge the inerrancy and infallibility of Ellen White's writings was tantamount to side with modern critical methodologies. Thus, almost inevitably, Seventh-day Adventist teachers and evangelists had no other moral and religious choice than to ally themselves with the evangelical fundamentalist perspective. What else could they do?

But, how honest would this position be?

Daniells and Prescott knew a lot more than they were willing to share. But what they shared with the attendees was earth shattering and unnerving for those who already leaned toward fundamentalism. And, as the Bible Conference proceeded and discussed some of these issues, rumors and insider revelations of the discussions were leaked to church members and leaders. An atmosphere of suspicion was obvious, which also created a hesitation to share more.

Daniells and Prescott had seen firsthand how Ellen White's books were prepared and they could not espouse their inerrancy and infallibility. The education of church members about Ellen White's writings, or lack of education more accurately, was a major point of concern. Many of the facts about her inspiration, how her writings were prepared, and their purpose, had not been clearly and honestly presented to church members. This in turn had led to a faulty view of their inspiration and the purpose of her writings.

On July 30, 1919, attendees held a special session to discuss with A. G. Daniells the use of Ellen White's writings in the teaching of Bible and history. Daniells began the conversation with the attendees by stating,

First of all, I want to reiterate what I stated in the talk I gave some evenings ago on this sub-

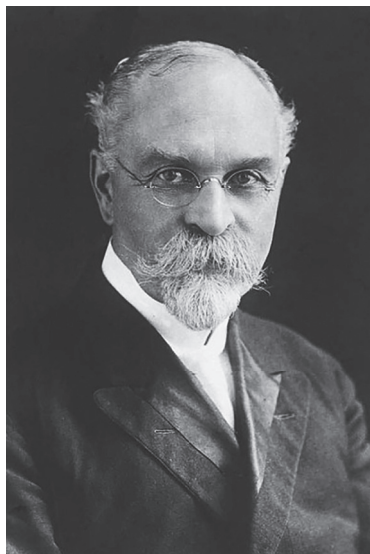
ject, that I do not want to say one word that will destroy confidence in this gift [of prophecy; i.e., Ellen White's writings] to this people. I do not want to create doubts. I do not want to in any way depreciate the value of the writings of the spirit of prophecy.²

But some things needed to be said about Ellen White's writings and the facts about their composition should demonstrate that her writings were not inerrant and infallible, nor were they intended to be the last word on matters of biblical interpretation, history, science, and health. Yet, Daniells was well aware that for some church members learning about this information could lead to a loss of faith and he knew he could then be branded as an unbeliever in Ellen White's ministry. He took the risk nonetheless and discussed how some books of Ellen White had been prepared to illustrate that she was not inerrant or infallible, and that her books were not to be the last word in matters of interpretation or history.

First, take her book *Sketches from the Life of Paul*, published in 1883. Soon after its publication the book had been criticized for its heavy dependence on Conybeare and Howson's *The Life and Epistles of the Apostle Paul* (1855). Entire chapters of her book followed the same sequence of events or commentaries as given by Conybeare and Howson. Many paragraphs and sentences were almost identical. The level of dependency was a shock to many readers. Of course, Ellen White had not intended to deceive anyone—she had recommended Conybeare and Howson's book “as a book of great merit, and one of rare usefulness to the earnest student of the New Testament history.”³ But there had been rumors of a lawsuit for plagiarism. For Daniells, this book and how it had been prepared demonstrated to him that Ellen White's inspiration was not a verbal inspiration but rather an inspiration at the level of unique guidance of what to select from another author to use as a spiritual commentary on biblical stories of the life of Paul. Conybeare and Howson's book was a work of careful scholarship—but not Ellen White's book, and it should not be taken as one, unless people were willing to claim indirectly that Conybeare and Howson's writings were somehow inspired as well.⁴

The preparation of *The Great Controversy* had also raised the same questions. After visiting Europe from 1885

to 1887, Ellen White had decided to revise *Spirit of Prophecy*, volume 4 (published in 1884), and make it a stand-alone book. The book came out in 1888 with a few extra chapters and many other chapters revised and/or expanded. By 1909, the printing plates for the 1888 edition were worn out and need-



A. G. Daniells (left) and W. W. Prescott (right)

ed to be redone. Ellen White decided to revise the book again and asked a few pastors to search for new quotes from known historians to replace the ones found in the 1888 edition. She wished to insert quotes that could be more easily found to support her historical and interpretational claims. In the introduction to the 1911 edition, she explained this process and the purpose for these historical quotes and her dependence on them. Prescott was the colleague who provided her with the most revisions to historical quotes and recommendations to edit offensive wording (if the book were to be offered to the non-Adventist public). At first, he explained, he had not wanted to do this research for her because he could not understand how his assistance could be incorporated into a book that claimed to be inspired. If Ellen White did not do all the work in the preparation of a book, including the selections from other authors, how could this book be considered “inspired.”

Prescott explained to the attendees at the Bible Conference that he had talked this over with W. C. White and said to him,

Here is my difficulty. I have gone over this and suggested changes that ought to be made in order to correct statements. These changes have been accepted. My personal difficulty will be to retain faith on those things that I can not [*sic*] deal with on that basis.

Prescott then commented to the attendees, “But I

did not throw up the spirit of prophecy, and have not yet; but I have had to adjust my view of things.”⁵

As I see it, a major part of Prescott’s concerns and difficulties had to do with the inspiration of a book that has been put together by people other than Ellen White. For Prescott, Ellen White was

certainly not verbally inspired. But his work on the last edition of *The Great Controversy* also challenged his understanding of thought inspiration. How could it even be “thought inspiration” when Ellen White’s thoughts in a book did not come from God but from books she selected materials from, and from an assistant who provided her with quotes from other books? If Adventists have rejected degrees of inspiration are there then levels of inspiration? And consequently, what is the purpose of the writings of a prophet who evidently has a level of inspiration that is even less comprehensive than thought inspiration?

These were difficult questions and experiences that Daniells and Prescott had to wrestle with and resolve in their own minds. Their experience with Ellen White led them to set aside any inclination toward verbal inspiration, but, to a large degree, even thought inspiration was not an entirely adequate model.⁶

The preparation of *The Desire of Ages* while Ellen White was in Australia was another example of why Daniells and Prescott could not subscribe to verbal inspiration. Ellen White herself had admitted that her assistant, Marian Davis, was her “bookmaker” and had helped her prepare the manuscript of the book. Like almost all of Ellen White’s books, *The Desire of Ages* was also a compilation and adaptation of White’s prior writings combined with material taken from other authors. Marian Davis had done much of this work under Ellen White’s supervision. How could this book even be considered thought inspired, given Davis’s huge involvement in its preparation?

My work on the 125th-anniversary edition of *Steps*

to *Christ*, published in 2017 by Andrews University Press, demonstrated for the first time how extensive and far-reaching Marian Davis's work was in the preparation of Ellen White's books. The intricate rearrangement of paragraphs and sentences taken from various documents in Ellen White's writings up to about 1890, primarily articles in the *Review and Herald*, *Signs of the Times*, and published testimonies in *Testimonies for the Church*, to create topical chapters in *Steps to Christ* amounted to careful editorial work and compilation. Such a careful work, at times fairly complex and elaborate, took time, lots of effort, and a keen editorial mind. In today's context, the work Davis did on *Steps to Christ*, and all other books she worked on,⁷ would be openly acknowledged at least in the preface of the book, if not on the title page.⁸ This is in part a reason why another assistant of Ellen White, Fannie Bolton, was dismissed from employment. Bolton felt recognition should be openly given to White's assistants and her insistence on this caused too much tension and misapprehension. Given what we know today about the preparation of Ellen White's books, we should have given this kind of explanation in the preface of every one of her books for a few decades by now. Although *Steps to Christ* was prepared under Ellen White's supervision and final approval, and almost all the content material taken from her prior writings, the final product is, in my estimation, the steps to Christ as Marian Davis understood Ellen White's thought on these steps to Christ. What model of inspiration explains how this book is inspired?⁹

At this Bible Conference, held just four years after Ellen White's death, some participants were candidly discussing the facts they knew about the preparation of her writings. Their conclusions arising out of their experience, and what they had seen in the preparation of her books, and what they had contributed to their revisions, led them to say that her books were to be used for both devotional and spiritual guidance, for individual church members and for the church at large, but not as final authority or infallible word on issues of biblical, historical, and scientific interpretations. They were as honest as they could be without giving the impression that they were denigrating the usefulness and inspiration of these writings. But they were guarded because they were setting themselves up for a massive amount of criticism if their honest views were made known or misunderstood.

The problem Daniells, Prescott, and others were facing was two-fold. First, if they affirmed that Ellen White's writings were not to be used as the final word on the interpretation or validation of controverted historical or scientific facts, they would be accused of not believing in their inspiration. Already, by 1919, Adventist expositors had almost convinced the entire membership that the inspiration of Ellen White's writings meant they were infallible and inerrant. Therefore, they *were* to be used as the last word in matters of controverted historical and scientific facts.

A second part of the problem they faced had to do with how the membership would react to knowing so many facts and details about how Ellen White really prepared her books. There was great fear among participants at the Bible Conference that if any of them openly admitted this information, the membership in general would lose faith in her writings. Already, Dudley Canright and some others had revealed a number of facts about this in their criticisms of Ellen White's writings, and Daniells and Prescott had no inclination to give any public validation to any of Canright's accusations and revelations—even though they likely knew he was right for some of them.

There was also a great fear among participants at the Conference that if any of them admitted openly that Adventist prophetic interpretation so far may have been wrong in some aspects of its interpretation, and that Ellen White's insights were not to be used to solve these questions, then again the membership would be disappointed and lose faith. A very strong sense of triumphalist infallibility dominated Adventist ethos and mindset by 1919. The same refrain had been used in 1888 with Jones and Waggoner's new interpretations of the ten horns of Daniel 7 and of the identity of the law in Galatians 3: If some biblical interpretations were based somehow on inaccurate facts and were to be admitted, then people could lose faith in the message. So how to be honest and yet be faith-building at the same time was a major conundrum they all faced.

On August 1, 1919, G. B. Thompson, also serving as field secretary for the General Conference, stated perhaps more ably than anyone else what the problem was.

It seems to me that if we are going to preach the Testimonies and establish confidence in them, it does not depend on whether they are verbally

If Adventists have rejected degrees of inspiration are there then levels of inspiration? And consequently, what is the purpose of the writings of a prophet who evidently has a level of inspiration that is even less comprehensive than thought inspiration?

inspired or not. I think we are in this fix because of a wrong education that our people have had. . . . If we had always taught the truth on this question, we would not have any trouble or shock in the denomination now. But the shock is because we have not taught the truth, and have put the Testimonies on a plane where she says they do not stand. We have claimed more for them than she did. My thought is this, that the evidence of the inspiration of the Testimonies is not in their verbal inspiration, but in their influence and power in the denomination.¹⁰

Quite a thoughtful insight I would say. So the question remains: One hundred years later, what role do we play as educators in the proper education of our church membership regarding these questions of inspiration, the preparation of Ellen White's books, and the role they should have in our heritage? Perhaps this is the kind of reflection we should have as we mark this centennial. What have we learned and how differently should we do our work of teaching?

Soon after the Bible Conference was over, it was decided that the transcripts of the meetings would not be made public. Much of what had been discussed was considered too incendiary and troubling. So, the transcripts were placed in a box in the GC archives and within a few years forgotten. The pattern of obfuscation Thompson cautioned about would be continued. Instead of honestly correcting the false information passed on about Ellen White's inspiration, the preparation of her books, the use of secondary sources, and the extensive role and assistance of her colleagues, church leaders and teachers preferred to hide the information and perpetuate misinformation

and developing myths about her inerrancy and infallibility, and the role of her writings in any future Seventh-day Adventist history and theology.

In my endorsement of Michael Campbell's book on the history of the 1919 Bible Conference, I state the following,

For over half a century, few people knew about the discussions that happened at this 1919 Bible Conference. Church administrators, pastors and teachers had wrestled with obvious challenges to many aspects of Adventist prophetic interpretation and the role the writings of Ellen White should have in biblical and historical interpretations. The opinions were clearly divided but the shadow of Fundamentalism created a context of hesitation and uncertainty in which honest and candid discussions were impeded and willfully buried. The truth seemed to be inconvenient. Had the transcripts of this Conference been made known shortly after it was held, Seventh-day Adventism would likely be vastly different today.¹¹

But the transcripts were not made available. They were buried and with them much information about the difficult challenges our colleagues faced one hundred years ago.

Of course, this lack of transparency was possible because church leaders were in charge and mechanisms of accountability were not functioning very well. There is nothing we can do about this burial of information, but as a historian and theologian I am led to wonder about the consequences of this decision and what it caused us unwittingly to become.

What lessons can we learn from this? A number of lessons I have learned from our predecessors' experience at the 1919 Bible Conference and what we have experienced as a church since then have led me to say, like Prescott, that I also have had to adjust my view of things.

Christian faith and beliefs are the outcome of a set of factors. Protestants in general speak of *sola scriptura*, the Scripture alone, as the rule of faith and practice. Of course, other factors come into the picture and it is never really only the Bible that informs or shapes what people come to believe and practice in their faith community. Most Protestant communities have confessions of faith or doctrinal statements that were adopted in order to consolidate various positions on matters of faith and practice. All of them give priority to Scripture, but over time they have given Scripture a primary position of authority rather than a sole authority, and as time goes confessions of faith take on more defining authority to set the boundaries of acceptable faith expressions within their communities.¹² Likely this is where we find ourselves as Seventh-day Adventists today with our Twenty-Eight Fundamental Beliefs, *Church Manual*, and endless numbers of church policies, along with the writings of Ellen White as now understood and emphasized. These documents provide the essential boundaries of what is acceptable within our community.

We are familiar with the Wesleyan quadrilateral to comprehend God's will and how people appropriate God's revelation: Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. The four sides of this quadrilateral are not of equal length (the quadrilateral is not a square); therefore, these four elements are not of equal authority in shaping a faith community. It is perhaps more helpful to understand this relationship as similar to a trapezoid with one side, Scripture, longer than the others, with experience and reason helping to understand the revelation of God through Scripture and as evidenced in the history of His people (tradition).¹³

Yet, the experience side of the trapezoid may be much longer than we think or wish to admit. The unconscious role of experience in the shaping of our faith community has been neglected in religious studies of our denomination.

By concealing the conversations of the 1919 Bible Conference, our community lost information about our

colleagues' honest questions regarding various matters of Adventist interpretations and about Ellen White's ministry and the purpose of her books. Instead, a certain perception of inerrancy and infallibility was passed on. As George Knight in his recent book chronicles and analyzes, what later generations received was a biased and mistakenly informed understanding of her writings. Ellen White's afterlife took on aspects of a mythology. What we have here is a natural evolution of a tradition or a received belief as it is shaped and crafted by some information and by the lack of other kinds of information. What later generations come to believe is different from what earlier generations knew. Unknowingly and unconsciously, but sometimes intentionally and purposefully, a community's experience of its faith shapes and transforms what future generations come to understand what God is saying to them.

In the theological context of the time, in the fundamentalist era of the 1920s to 1940s, for some pastors and teachers, fear of being ostracized or branded as unorthodox was a powerful deterrent to being honest and to revealing what they knew. What later generations come to believe is mediated through intermediary generations and experiences. In our case, the intermediary generations hid some information that did not harmonize with their view of revelation and inspiration and passed on a view that was in agreement with their horizon. The concealing of the transcripts of the 1919 Bible Conference and avoiding open discussions on difficult topics created a discontinuity in the reception of information about various aspects of our heritage.

In historical-theological studies we look at the development of doctrines, beliefs, movements, and ideas. In our Adventist discussions, we speak of truth being progressive when attempting to explain the changes that have happened among us, whether regarding some aspects of the relationship between faith and good works, from non-Trinitarian views of God to Trinitarianism, or developments in our eschatology. To some extent this model of progressive truth is inadequate and restrictive; it lacks



perspective and may be a touch too naïve. Certainly, people in successive generations transform and reshape beliefs as they discover new information, but also as their contexts influence them, and at times force them, to adapt their beliefs. Then, rather than experiencing the progressive discovery of new truths or new insights into truth, we should speak instead of the continuity, unity, clarity, and normativity of what is believed in relationship with the past. Successive generations often look for what pioneers taught, believed, and practiced, and seek to identify the marks of continuity and unity with the past statements of beliefs and practices. These past beliefs and practices are also clarified for a current generation and, finally, a new normative way of understanding beliefs and practices is accepted. The transformation of beliefs and practices is not only progressive, it is also affected along the way by a number of factors. What a community comes to believe is affected and shaped by its imperfect, even flawed, human life, history, and experiences.

I think it is easy to see that the study of our current beliefs and practices very often reveals this process. Take any discussion about ordination and you will see how we have tried to look for continuity with Scripture and early Adventist practices. We have sought to confirm our continuity with the past, seeking statements and precedents to endorse one or the other points of view. We also seek to understand Ellen White's thoughts on such discussions, seeking in her writings continuity, unity, and normativity.

Although this approach to the study of the development of beliefs and practices has good credentials, an adaptation of this model presents itself as perhaps more useful to reflect on the consequences and lessons to be learned from the 1919 Bible Conference and I'm grateful to Greg Howell for pointing this out (in a footnote) in his dissertation proposal at Regent University.¹⁴

The development of beliefs and practices of a given faith community, and how these beliefs and practices are interpreted, is not a static experience; it is part of a flow

of time and ideas, passed on from one generation to the next and massaged into either a reinvigorated reappraisal of those past beliefs and practices or as updated and amended beliefs and practices to fit new perspectives and a new context.

This is not to deny the denomination's desire to maintain intrinsic continuity with its past, but in terms of historical and theological development it is granted that with each successive generation a denomination's beliefs and practices undergo a development at the hands of those who take the heritage of the past and slightly reshape or even willfully transform it to meet the needs of new situations and problems that were not previously considered. Thus, the development or the evolution of beliefs and practices is not so much a "development" or a progressive discovery of truth, as it is a "reception."

In his study of the development of doctrines and beliefs, Ormond Rush offers four bipolar issues of a reception model of the "development" of doctrines which perhaps offers us a better way to understand the lessons to be learned from the 1919 Bible Conference.¹⁵

The first bipolar issue of what later generations receive from prior generations is a matter of both continuity and discontinuity. Continuity with the past is something to be constantly cherished and valued. Yet Adventist identity is not something static and it changes with each generation. Later generations receive the normative beliefs and practices from prior generations, as they continue to be handed down as fixed elements of the Adventist heritage or "tradition." Receiving these beliefs and practices, as part of a living reception, stimulates new concretizations

of these beliefs and practices in new contexts that become genuine responses to God's guidance in the church. Thus, new formulations or adaptations of beliefs and practices, that have not previously been part of the received "tradition," emerge appropriately and necessarily as part of a community's experience of divine guidance in its history. Continuity is thus paired with some discontinuity. It is



The 1919 Bible Conference was held only four years after Ellen White's funeral (pictured), in Battle Creek, Michigan.
(SOURCE: Courtesy of the Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.)

George Knight who said once that if James White were to be alive today, he would not join the Seventh-day Adventist Church because he would likely object to a number of our fundamental beliefs. (And in reverse, many of us would probably not be comfortable in James White's church.) While many of our current beliefs are clearly in continuity with the time of James White, some are also in discontinuity.

If there is some continuity and discontinuity with the past for each successive generation, there is naturally going to be both unity and plurality of beliefs and practices as well. In this second bipolar issue, unity of beliefs and practices, as stated in our Twenty-Eight Fundamental Beliefs, will be in tension with a plurality of interpretations and expressions of these beliefs and practices. According to Rush,

This plurality emerges from diverse cultural, linguistic, geographical, economic, political, philosophical horizons, producing receptions as diverse as Asian or Australian theologies, feminist or liberation theologies, or theologies emerging out of particular contexts or issues. The unity of faith is not disrupted by such plurality, but rather this plurality reveals the universal power of the living tradition to address the salvific needs of all peoples and its power to disclose in diverse contexts the mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ.¹⁶

In our own Adventist context, this would mean that each generation receives an understanding of beliefs and practices that will naturally be contextualized and emerge in some fashion as different from what emerges in a different environment. There is thus an element of newness in what appears because God's guidance of people in different contexts looks different for people from the exterior looking in. Is it any surprise therefore that we would be so diverse in our understanding of the role of a pastor and the meaning of ordination? But what needs to be embraced here is that this is part of God's will and guidance for his church; that both unity and plurality are willed of God. As one traces the history of the reception of our beliefs and practices from one generation to the next, we see a dialogue between God and his church that looks both identical and different.

Typically, Adventists, like other Christians, are uncomfortable with diversity and plurality of views and practices. So Rush asks, "But within this plurality and perhaps conflict of interpretations, who judges what is true, and by what criteria?" This reception model highlights the need for those who judge the legitimacy of various views to discern local expressions of beliefs and practices. It does not do away with the need for maintaining the unity of faith, but those who are entrusted with the responsibility of validating and maintaining what is true of one's received heritage must also be able to stimulate and promote dialogue between such plurality of receptions, and not just merely take hold of the negative task of judging deviance or non-compliance.¹⁷

A third bipolar issue in the reception of beliefs and practices is clarity and ambiguity. As each generation strives to express and articulate beliefs accurately, our cultural and linguistic limitations will inevitably cause some distortions. According to Rush, "Some doctrines and dogmas name a truth about God with such sufficient clarity that they endure as classics of the tradition. But no reception, past or present, is distortion-free."¹⁸

"So, what of those received elements that a community, from its present perspective, now rejects as being incompatible with its reception" of the heritage of the past? Rush answers that:

Some elements of the tradition, explicitly or by default, the community may deem to be less important in its construction of Christian identity, and allow those elements to recede to the background in its Gestalt of the tradition. Some elements it judges, from present sensibilities and horizons, to be in fact blockages to the full impact of the tradition's alterity. There is perceived to be in the tradition an ambiguity that is not simply a legitimate plurality of expression nor a benign conflict of interpretations, but is named to be an ideological distortion that continues to limit current expectation horizons.¹⁹

A good example of this phenomenon among us is the rejection of last-generation theology, a part of Adventist heritage that is now perceived as an ideological distortion of the Gospel. Another example is our rejection of our non-Trini-

tarian heritage, which is also now perceived as being a theological distortion of the biblical witness about God.

One last bipolar issue deals with both normativity and relativity. As we think of our own statements of fundamental beliefs (1931, 1980, 2015), we may see that Rush is right when he states that “doctrinal formulations [as in the Nicene Creeds] become classic, normative texts of the tradition because they bring the divine alterity to bear and effect horizontal change in the very way God is experienced, and therefore named.” These statements become “classic and normative therefore because they (1) encapsulate some content of christian [*sic*] belief, (2) engender committed worship, (3) illumine the perplexities of human existence, and (4) stimulate and empower committed christian [*sic*] praxis.”²⁰ As decades went by, we can see how our own statements of beliefs have become more and more normative. And today, in some segments of our church, our compendia of church policies and inherited practices appear to be even more normative than the Twenty-Eight Fundamental Beliefs.

But if some documents of our heritage act as normative statements of our beliefs and practices, there is an inherent relativity to all this, according to Rush. While statements of beliefs and practices are normative to set the boundaries of a faith community, they are relative as long as they are only on paper and not lived (or received) by the community. Their normativity is dependent on their reception and internalization. “Their normativity is relative to their power to continue conveying the truth” of our heritage “and empowering believers to live that truth.”²¹ Statements of beliefs “are relative in their function as encapsulations of some content of Christian belief” because they were written within a particular context. A quick comparison of our 1931 statement of beliefs with our current one will show that they were written within a different context.²² “Human horizons are always partial and moving, depending on one’s viewpoint.” The expression of truth and the clarity

of its language remain tied to our human horizon. And the language of our statements of beliefs is relative in a deeper theological sense. “The truest and clearest expression of belief never eliminates the otherness of God’s mystery.” In a sense, “truth is absolute for God, but not for us” and our understanding of truth and of God is always limited by the depth of our relationship with God.²³

Rush’s reception model of a faith community’s heritage is helpful to understand and analyze the consequences of and the lessons to be learned from the 1919 Bible Conference. One hundred years later, we can see that decisions made after the Conference impacted what future generations received from our heritage and how it shaped what we have become, what we now experience. For good and for bad, history cannot be undone. And there are consequences to the actions of former church leaders, teachers, and pastors.

The decision to not release the transcripts of the discussions, the lack of transparency about the writings of Ellen White, how they were prepared and their role in shaping our religious beliefs and theology, the lack of honesty about the difficult interpretational issues history and Bible teachers faced, created and allowed a context that shaped the Adventist religious experience for generations since then. The heritage we have received was unconsciously and unknowingly shaped by their decisions. We should not demonize them for what they decided. They lived in a real context, *their context*; they feared that people in general would misunderstand the information they had access to and had discussed together. After all, in the year following the end of World War I, the Great War to end all wars, our colleagues then had a genuine sense of the nearness of the *eschaton*. So why upset believers with information that was likely going to be misconstrued and misunderstood, and even cause them to lose faith in their message? A pragmatic, spiritual, and pastoral reason consciously guided their experience.

By concealing the conversations of the 1919 Bible Conference, our community lost information about our colleagues’ honest questions regarding various matters of Adventist interpretations and about Ellen White’s ministry and the purpose of her books.

Thus, history cannot be undone and one hundred years later our context has been shaped by their context. So, our experience as a denomination today is embodying the reception of their experience and their heritage, and we experience these four bipolar issues in our church. This is what we have received from A. G. Daniells, W. W. Prescott and others.

Today our faith, our beliefs and practices have been shaped by both continuity and discontinuity, by both unity and plurality, by both clarity and ambiguity, and by both normativity and relativity. In 1919, no one set out to pass on their heritage of our faith to the next generation with these issues and concepts in mind; but they did.

When, in the 1970s and 1980s, the transcripts of the 1919 Bible Conference were discovered in the archives of the General Conference, when colleagues became aware of Ellen White's dependency on secondary sources for some of her most important works, many church members and scholars were shaken by such "discoveries." But in 1919, these were known facts by many of Ellen White's most trusted colleagues and by her son, W. C. White. So when *Spectrum* published a number of stunning articles about Ellen White's literary sources, when Walter Rea, Ronald Numbers, and Desmond Ford published their studies,²⁴ they revealed to the Adventist membership what Daniells, Prescott and many others had feared would cause loss of faith. And it did indeed. And those who revealed this information were branded as unorthodox. The consequences of the 1919 Bible Conference are therefore still with us.

While we value unity of faith expressions we live with plurality. We are in continuity with our early pioneers in some aspects of our faith and we are in great discontinuity from them for other aspects. While we prize clarity of faith and practices, we see ambiguity at times and in some areas. While we prefer clear norms, we know much about relativity. We have a set of beliefs and practices that unites us and at the same time creates plurality among us, and that is because each of us understands our faith, beliefs and practices with a different set of cultural lenses that invariably creates various levels of clarity and ambiguity, and hence we ascribe to these beliefs and practices also different levels of normativity and relativity.

Yet, what I think we need to acknowledge candidly is that since the 1970s and 1980s the same kind of obfuscation and lack of authenticity has persisted. And I

wonder to what extent this lack of authenticity to deal with difficult subjects is also something we have received as part of our heritage. Have lack of authenticity and deficiency in historical and theological honesty become part of our denominational character? Some of these issues discussed in 1919 are still not honestly discussed today and are not addressed properly by us, teachers, and by church leaders. Sometimes for political gain and financial support, there is a systemic under-education of the membership about these various issues. We remain quiet and when teachers try to reveal some evidence about these facts to provide a more accurate view to their students, a prevalent anti-intellectual context, still conditioned by fundamentalism, rapidly endangers their professional career or brands them as unorthodox. So, we are guarded as much as Daniells and Prescott were a hundred years ago. And when some uninformed church members "discover" some "new" insights into all these issues, they are just as unprepared today to face the shaking of their faith as people were in 1919, or as we were a generation ago.

Sometimes I am not so hopeful when I see how some difficult issues regarding our beliefs and practices are handled by our church leaders: when leaders seem to force their understanding of our faith and practices as normative on the rest of the church, as if they are imbued with some perfect supernatural gift of wisdom the moment they take office.²⁵ But I see hope if we were to really embrace God's guidance in a different way, understanding the bipolarity of religious faith and its transmission and reception from prior generations: embracing the natural continuity and discontinuity with our past heritage, the unity and plurality of ways our past heritage is now received and constantly reshaped into a variety of customs and cultures, the clarity and ambiguity with which our past experience and the major documents of our heritage are understood, and both the normative and relative function they are given to shape our current and future horizons; all this as part of God's guidance for the large, international, multi-generational, multicultural and ever so diverse church we have become. If Prescott had to adjust his view of things, I think we are very much in need of the same experience. That is perhaps the best lesson we could learn from the 1919 Bible Conference.

Endnotes

1. The conference was held from July 1 to August 9, 1919, at Washington Missionary College (now Washington Adventist University) in Takoma Park, Maryland.

2. Quoted in George R. Knight, *Ellen White's Afterlife: Delightful Fictions, Troubling Facts, Enlightening Research* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2019), 127. The subject of conversation on July 30 was "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History."

3. An advertisement for Conybeare and Howson's book appeared in *Signs of the Times*, February 22, 1883: 96, with her endorsement: "The Life of St. Paul by Conybeare and Howson, I regard as a book of great merit, and one of rare usefulness to the earnest student of the New Testament history."

4. For a discussion of Daniells' experience at the 1919 Bible Conference and his views on inspiration, see Benjamin McArthur, *A. G. Daniells: Shaper of Twentieth-Century Adventism* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2015), 380–407.

5. Quoted in Knight, *Ellen White's Afterlife*, 168. For discussions of Prescott's views on inspiration, see Denis Kaiser, "Trust and Doubt: Perceptions of Divine Inspiration in Seventh-day Adventist History (1880-1930)" (PhD dissertation, Andrews University, 2016), 256-295; Gilbert Valentine, *W. W. Prescott: Forgotten Giant of Adventism's Second Generation* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2005), 276-283; and Gilbert M. Valentine, "The Church 'drifting toward a crisis': Prescott's 1915 Letter to William White," *Catalyst* 2 (November 2007): 32–94.

6. It should be observed that the now well-known document Manuscript 24, 1886, in which Ellen White explains her "theory" of thought inspiration, that she adapted from Calvin E. Stowe, *Origins and History of the Books of the Bible* (1867), was very likely not known by attendees of the 1919 Bible Conference and could not have framed their perception of Ellen White's inspiration nor of the biblical writers. This document was published for the first time in *Selected Messages*, Book 1, in 1958.

7. According to Robert Olson, Marian Davis prepared ten books: *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4 (1884), *The Great Controversy* (1888), *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5 (1889), *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1890), *Steps to Christ* (1892), *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (1896), *The Desire of Ages* (1898), *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6 (1900), and *The Ministry of Healing* (1905). Robert Olson, "Davis, Mary Ann 'Marian,'" *The Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*, ed. Denis Fortin and Jerry Moon (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2013), 362–363.

8. See Denis Fortin, "Historical Introduction," in Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, with historical introduction and notes by Denis Fortin (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2017), 1–20.

9. In the 1980s, as Adventists wrestled again with views and models of inspiration in response to the new findings of Walter Rea, Ron Numbers and others, George Rice, at the time professor of New Testament studies at the Seminary, published a most helpful study of Luke's model of inspiration and composition of his gospel. This model would have helped, to some extent, Daniells and Prescott in 1919. George E. Rice, *Luke, A Plagiarist?* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1983).

10. Quoted in Knight, *Ellen White's Afterlife*, 160. The subject of conversation on August 1 was listed as "The Inspiration of the

Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible." Thompson makes a distinction between an objective ontological criterion for the inspiration of Ellen White's writings (their verbal inspiration) and a subjective functional criterion (their role and function). His obituary gives more information about his personal and professional life, *Review and Herald*, July 24, 1930: 28.

11. Michael W. Campbell, 1919: *The Untold Story of Adventism's Struggle with Fundamentalism* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2019), 3.

12. See, Edith M. Humphrey, *Scripture and Tradition: What the Bible Really Says* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 9–17.

13. See Fortin, "Historical Introduction" in Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (2017), 24–26.

14. Greg Howell's proposal seeks to study Seventh-day Adventist biblical hermeneutics and do a historical review of the denomination's stance on biblical interpretation from 1957.

15. Ormond Rush, "Reception Hermeneutics and the 'Development' of Doctrine: An Alternative Model," *Pacifica* 6.2 (1993): 125–140. Rush credits Hans Robert Jauss (1921–1997) for his insights into reception theory of the development of doctrines and beliefs of a faith community.

16. Rush, "Reception Hermeneutics," 135.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., 135–136.

19. *ibid.*, 136.

20. Ibid., 137.

21. Ibid.

22. See my comparative study of our earliest statements of beliefs in Denis Fortin, "Nineteenth-century Evangelicalism and Early Adventist Statements of Beliefs," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 36, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 51–67.

23. Rush, "Reception Hermeneutics," 137.

24. Walter T. Rea, *The White Lie* (Turlock, CA: M & R Publications, 1982); Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976); Desmond Ford, "Daniel 8:14, the Day of Atonement, and the Investigative Judgment" (1980).

25. I still claim that our church polity is predominantly episcopal with some attributes of presbyterianism. Denis Fortin, "Church Governance in Times of Conflict," *Adventist Today* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 4–7.

Published online on August 27, 2018 <https://atoday.org/church-governance-in-times-of-conflict/#post-40958-endnote-ref-17>.



In 2019, DENIS FORTIN served as the president of the Adventist Society for Religious Studies. This paper was his presidential address at the meeting of the society in San Diego, November 2019. Fortin is co-editor of the *Ellen G. White Encyclopedia*. In 2017, he provided a historical introduction and notes for the 125th-anniversary edition of *Steps to Christ* by Ellen G. White. He is professor of historical theology at Andrews University.

NOTEWORTHY

NEW BOOK UNCOVERS THE ADVENTIST RELATIONSHIP WITH FUNDAMENTALISM

BY ALITA BYRD

Michael W. Campbell talks about his new book on the 1919 Bible Conference, arguments over the infallibility of Ellen G. White, and how the fundamentalist movement has shaped Adventism.

Question: In 1979, *Spectrum* was the first to publish the “lost” transcripts from the 1919 Bible Conference, where the inspiration of Ellen G. White was candidly discussed and argued over by a group of influential Adventist theologians and academics. You have studied the 1919 Bible

Conference extensively for many years and your new book, *1919: The Untold Story of Adventism’s Struggle with Fundamentalism*, explores this event and its aftermath in even more detail. Why do you feel this event one hundred years ago deserves greater scrutiny and examination with a new book?

Answer: The first time I became aware of the 1919 transcripts was when my professor at Southern Adventist University, Ben McArthur, had us read the transcripts as published in *Spectrum* for a senior history methods class. Subsequently, as Dr. McArthur assigned senior history projects, he had me work further on this epochal event.

I believe the 1919 Bible Conference continues to have relevance because it lifts the curtains upon a crucial



Photos courtesy of Michael W. Campbell.

conversation our church leaders had about the nature of revelation and inspiration, and in particular, the relationship of Seventh-day Adventism to fundamentalism. Most concerning for me is how Adventist thought leaders during the time surrounding the 1919 Bible Conference, in their opposition to modernism, embraced the rising fundamentalist movement. This largely uncritical embrace of fundamentalism proved to be extremely problematic for Adventism.

Tell us what you think were the most significant discussions of the 1919 Bible Conference.

The bulk of the 1919 Bible Conference transcripts concerns how to interpret Bible prophecy. Many people would quickly lose interest over the rather technical and cumbersome discussions, but they had relevance for Adventists right after World War I. Of particular note during this global conflagration was that some Adventist evangelists, who predicted the role of Turkey as fulfilling Daniel 11, found themselves embarrassed when the British defeated the Ottoman Empire, which meant that they were wrong and furthermore lost credibility (even if some church leaders had tried to squelch such an interpretation). Adventist church leaders realized that they needed

to fine tune their eschatological understanding.

At the 1919 Bible Conference these discussions about prophetic interpretation turned to Ellen White's writings in order to resolve their differences. This led to four pivotal discussions about the nature and authority of Ellen White's writings — the first major discussions since her death four years earlier — for which the 1919 Bible Conference has become so well known.

As important as these discussions about Ellen White were, they also demonstrate the influence of the rising historical fundamentalist movement. In the Adventist enthusiasm to reject modernism and evolution, Adventists uncritically embraced inerrancy and other problematic aspects of fundamentalism.

The memorable discussions between history and Bible teachers at the end of the meeting with church president A. G. Daniells reveal that

at least some teachers recognized that if Adventism adopted a rigid view of inspiration this was incompatible with the traditional stance about revelation and inspiration, particularly as applied to Ellen White's prophetic ministry.

Why were questions over the nature of Ellen White's inspiration important to the Adventist Church in 1919? If this discussion was so significant, why wasn't it discussed more before the 1970s?

These discussions about Ellen White's inspiration were pivotal because they demonstrate two different ways of interpreting inspired writings. This was the first time, that I am aware of, that Adventists began to self-identify as "progressives" versus the "traditionalists" (the proverbial liberals versus the conservatives) in Adventist history.

During these meetings one participant recognized that if they didn't do a better job educating the church that there would be trouble in the future—this statement haunts me—and sure enough, after 1919 the Adventist Church tilted toward fundamentalism.

While this has not been uniform—one can see in the 1950s a parallel between the rising evangelical movement following the ministry of Billy Graham (a group of moderates)—once again Adventists paralleled this development

within Adventism, and discussions with key evangelical leaders led to the publication of *Questions on Doctrine*. In a way, this struggle with fundamentalism (and later evangelicalism) has characterized most of Adventist theology all the way up to the present.

How did the transcripts come to be lost in the General Conference Archives?

My personal view is that the transcripts of the 1919 Bible Conference were simply forgotten. It is the kind of historical event that only becomes significant with the passing of time. This conference marked a very intimate moment so soon after the death of Ellen White when the church was at a crossroads—after which it effectively embraced fundamentalism.

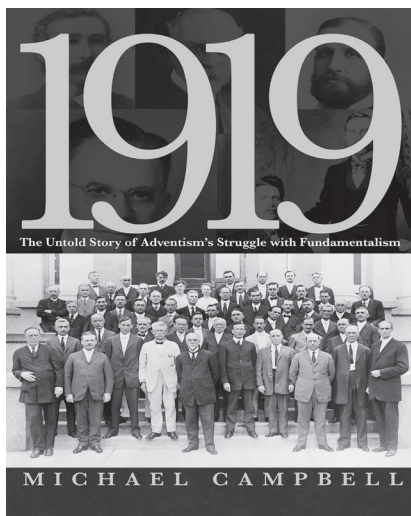
If the denomination "flirted" with fundamentalism in 1919, during the 1920s it grew into a full-

fledged affair. The main leader at the 1919 Bible Conference was the church president, A. G. Daniells, who by 1922 was removed from the church's top post. As the church became increasingly fundamentalist, particularly during the 1920s, the 1919 Bible Conference was simply forgotten. None of the participants felt it was necessary to leave behind memory statements, or believed it important to share with others that they were at this meeting.

The records were relegated to the basement of church headquarters, and remained there, until Don Yost [director of the General Conference Archives 1973–1995] stumbled across them. Discussions about revelation and inspiration in the 1970s suddenly made this much earlier conference very significant once again.

When the transcripts were discovered, why were they not published earlier? Were they seen as so controversial and potentially damaging to the church that only an independent publication like *Spectrum* could publish them?

I was fortunate to interview both Don Yost, who founded the GC Archives, and Don Mansell, who was working for the White Estate at the time the transcripts were found. As I understand it, from conversations with the two of them, Don Mansell first noticed several pub-



lished references in the *Review and Herald* about the 1919 Bible Conference as he was doing research for the very first edition of the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (that came out in 1976). They planned to eventually distribute copies to Adventist research centers, but a copy was leaked, and *Spectrum* published it before they could make the transcripts available. It seems there was an effort to control how people would learn about this event, and gradually make people aware of it, so Yost and Mansell were rather chagrined when the most scintillating parts (at the end) about Ellen White were published in *Spectrum*.

When I interviewed the late Roy Branson, who was the editor of *Spectrum* during this time, he confirmed the same story although he did say that no one specifically told him he was not allowed to publish them either!

I dare say that the publication of those transcripts in *Spectrum* may be the most significant, or at least one of the very most significant things, that *Spectrum* has ever done. I've done a number of oral histories with influential church leaders from this time period who mention that when these transcripts were released it fell like a bombshell upon Adventism. It seems that within Adventist fundamentalism a mythology had developed that Ellen White was an individual who was a hundred years ahead of her time, when in fact, she was very much a product of her time. In other words, some individuals had stressed the supernatural aspects of her prophetic ministry to the exclusion of the very human element.

When *Spectrum* published these transcripts, it forced Adventist leaders to recognize that a much earlier generation of Adventist thinkers had wrestled with the same issues, and that, therefore, there was a great deal more complexity to this matter of revelation and inspiration than what appeared on the surface.

One other way it made a difference is that it forced Adventist historians to re-write Adventist historiography—something that we see has impacted the narrative of our Adventist past, whether that is Herbert Douglass on the far right (with his textbook, *Messenger of the Lord*) to Ronald L. Numbers who re-published the transcripts in the third edition of his book, *Prophets of Health*, on the other side. Most recently, George Knight has included it as a chapter in his thoughtful study, *Ellen White's Afterlife*, which every Adventist ought to read.

Do the transcripts tell the whole story of the meet-

ings? Do you think anything important has been left out?

The transcripts are at best only a partial record of the meetings. Of the more than 2,000 pages, approximately 1,300 are actually unique (that is, not duplicates of other pages in the records). We also know that at certain points the transcriptionists were directed to stop recording the minutes (because they included the request in the transcribed minutes!). In my estimation, we have less than a quarter to one-third of the 1919 Bible Conference, which means we have to extend a certain sense of humility by recognizing that, like all history, we have a limited view of what occurred at this historic event. With that caveat, it is amazing what a rich treasure trove the minutes actually are.

I should also mention that it appears to me, as I sorted through the originals, that someone removed some of the minutes. For example, the records at the General Conference are missing any presentations by B. G. Wilkinson, but interestingly enough, at least a small amount surfaced in the records of the Center for Adventist Research at Andrews University. How they showed up there is a mystery, but apparently someone preserved them, and I recognized in going through some papers that these were some small portions from the 1919 transcripts that appeared in another collection. Now there are some notes in the minutes that Wilkinson apparently removed some material to review at some future point after the conference. Why he did this is unknown, but it does serve as a reminder that the transcripts are partial at best.

How did you first become interested in studying the 1919 Bible Conference? What form has your study taken?

After my experience as an undergraduate student at Southern that I already mentioned, I came back to the topic in graduate school. At the time I was thinking about a topic in twentieth-century Adventism since so much of Adventist history has been focused on the time period encompassing Ellen White's lifespan. I also had become very interested in scholarship on fundamentalism, having participated in a seminar by George M. Marsden at the University of Notre Dame. This challenged me to think about Adventist history in new and challenging ways.

As I continued to work with my adviser at the time, George Knight, he encouraged me to focus on one critical moment of the Adventist saga with fundamentalism, noting that I had the rest of my career to flesh out the rest of

the contours. So, I returned to my research, this time in much greater depth, on the 1919 Bible Conference as the focus of my PhD dissertation.

I decided, as we approach the centennial, to distill some of the most important findings into a small, approachable book so that the average church member—who may not be familiar with all of the little details—can hopefully learn about this important event from our Adventist past.

Your books and articles about the 1919 Bible Conference provide much of the information and scholarship around the topic. What points have you tried to make to people about 1919? What do you want everyone to know and understand?

I think one of the most important points is the danger of theological polarization. Both sides at the 1919 Bible Conference were much closer to one another than either one would have liked to admit, and at the end of the day, they had far more in common than they did in terms of their differences. Sadly, those who are closest to us can be the most difficult to get along with, and this proved true for Adventism at the 1919 Bible Conference. George Knight once said that there should be an eleventh commandment: Thou shall not do theology against thy neighbor. When we do theology by fighting others sometimes we push ourselves into the opposite extreme. This seems to be what happened in 1919 when church leaders “flirted” with the rising fundamentalist movement.

As Adventism became increasingly fundamentalist this had far-reaching consequences for Adventism in terms of race and gender, as well as theology (it paved the way for the promulgation of Last Generation Theology). And as we know, race and gender have been the two dominant issues over which Adventism continues to struggle up to the present day. So, I think there are many significant lessons that can be gleaned from 1919 and its aftermath, but most important of all, how we do theology matters and has far-reaching implications for the whole church.

Are you still making new discoveries and gaining new insights about 1919? Has your thinking about the conference changed at all over the years?

Absolutely! I love to learn new things and have made a number of significant discoveries since working on this as the focus of my dissertation. Some of the most helpful recent discoveries were made while I was facilitating

a doctoral seminar on Adventism and fundamentalism while at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS) where I served for five years previous to teaching at Southwestern Adventist University. I think that global perspectives are really important, and I had a terrific cohort of students from around the globe. I think we need to be thinking more about how we do Adventist theology from a global perspective. And I’ve discovered that the issues raised in 1919 continue to resonate around the world.

As I reflect on my dissertation, the most significant expansion I have done is the chapter on the Trinity. While I discussed it in my dissertation, the 1919 Bible Conference was a watershed event and instead of listing it as one of several minor issues, I reserved an entire chapter in my book to talk about the Trinity because it is far more significant than I realized. (Perhaps also because in the world church there has been a resurgence of anti-Trinitarianism, too.)

I’m spending more of my time now examining Adventist theology between the World Wars (1918-1939), which I think is a crucial time period for the development of Adventist theology. The historical fundamentalist movement was far more nuanced, with thinkers within the movement spanning a continuum. Adventist progressives never embraced modernism or a liberal variety of Christianity, but they do parallel the more moderate fundamentalists. Similarly, we see those who became much more rigid over inerrancy on the right who again parallel similar trends within Adventist traditionalists. Both sides of Adventism saw themselves aligned with the rising fundamentalist movement, even if some of the pivotal discussions in 1919 also reveal that at least some recognized this would be increasingly problematic for Adventism in the future. In many ways, my work on 1919 has pushed me to more critically examine the Adventist struggle with fundamentalism, and the influence of ideas and culture upon Adventism.



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NOTEWORTHY

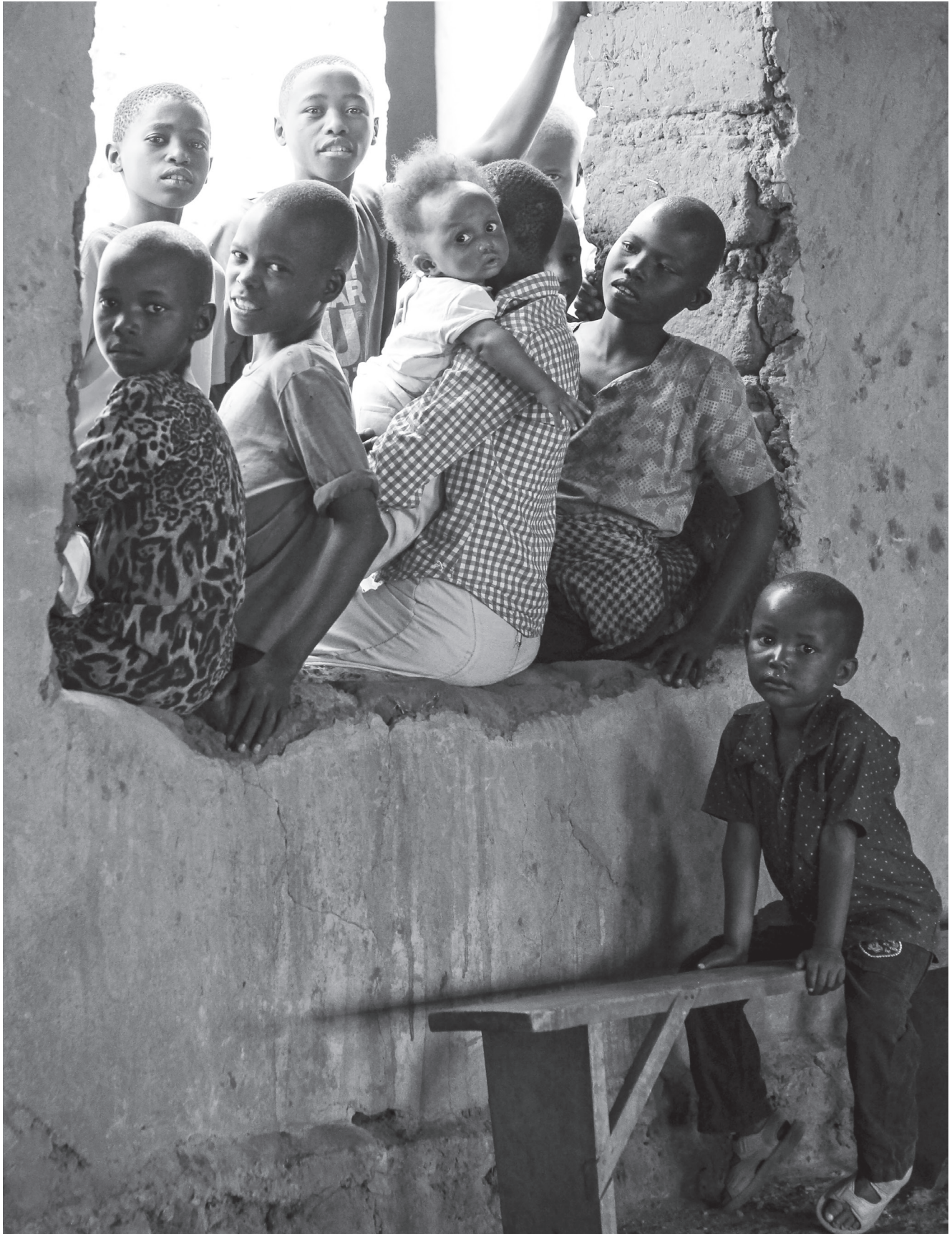


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WARNINGS FROM RWANDAN CHURCHES

*Political Identity Encourages Imitation, Extinguishes Imagination,
and Destroys Sanctuary—Oral Histories from Adventist Survivors*

BY CARMEN LAU

Unlike the Holocaust, the Rwandan Genocide featured systemic violent imitation, mostly occurring in churches and public spaces. Some say it was the fastest, most efficient genocide with an estimated 800,000 people killed in ninety days, but it had been planned for years, with a sustained propaganda message that Christian churches did little to counteract. In Rwanda, a Christian nation, religion did not create “ties that bind.” Instead, Christians killed other Christians. In 1994, Rwanda was 90% Christian, with 62% of the country identified as Catholic, 18% Protestant, and 8.6% Seventh-day Adventist.¹ The literature states that Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa belonged to all of these Christian groups. Although in late 1994, J. J. Nortey, president of the African Indian Ocean Division of Adven-

tists, asserted that 90–95% of the Adventists in Rwanda had been Hutu.²

German and Belgian colonial powers had effectively destroyed stable societal function in Rwanda, where three groups had lived relatively peacefully for hundreds of years. Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa had spoken the same language, honored the same religion, and intermarried.

Hutu, known to be farmers, were shorter with darker skin and formed the majority group of about 80%. Taller and lighter skinned, Tutsi, who were traditionally pastoralists, made up approximately 19% of the population. Twa, featuring a pygmoid body habitus, did not play a prominent role in recent Rwandan conflict. Ethnicity had fluid boundaries, with some scholars noting that wealth impacted the

Democratic majority ideology ignored the civil rights of the previously privileged Tutsi. Religion remained wedded to political power.

ethnic group to which people would identify. My research has shown that the institutional church—Catholic, Protestant, and Adventist—seemed to adopt the opinion on ethnicity that was held by those in governmental power.³

It is beyond the scope of this paper to describe fully the political situation. With humility, I offer a brief summary of the church's interactions in the context of ethnic groups in Rwanda. References to the "church" mainly refer to the Catholic Church, but all Christian groups seemed to act in tandem in the context of church/state/ethnic relationships.

Under the leadership of Bishop Classe, the Morthan Law of 1926 officially granted privilege to Tutsi, setting the stage for issuance of identity cards that would categorize people by ethnicity. In the tumultuous 1950's as colonialism waned on the African continent, Tutsi were concerned about losing power. A new class of Hutu elites, educated in Catholic seminaries, gave voice to grievances and critiqued Tutsi-dominated leadership. Liberation Theology influenced Hutu seminarians who wrote the Bahuto Manifesto. After initially favoring Tutsi, the church shifted in the era of the Hutu Revolution to favor Hutu. This kept Rwanda/Burundi in a state of racialized dichotomy suitable for colonial control. Democratic majority ideology ignored the civil rights of the previously privileged Tutsi. Religion remained wedded to political power.

After being one country until 1960, Rwanda/Burundi was divided so that Burundi featured a situation of ethnic societal interaction that was a mirror image of what happened in Rwanda. In Rwanda, Hutus, in control after 1960, enacted ethnic purges against Tutsi. In Burundi, Tutsi were in control in the mid-twentieth century and orchestrated violence against Hutu. The situation produced thousands of displaced people who sought refuge.⁴ By the mid-1960s, most Tutsi had left Rwanda, living in surrounding countries. Through decades of societal turmoil, people could count on sanctuaries to provide safety.

Framing

Living in Alabama with a long-standing interest in how Christians have had the capacity to be blind to the evil at hand, I collected stories from Adventist genocide survivors. In particular, I wanted to hear what they remembered being said in the churches. There are varied reasons that explain why people did, and did not, choose to participate in violence in Rwanda. My thesis assumed that those who participated used some sort of rationale, or deep narrative, to give support for the decision. Stories heard in Rwandan churches can be seen as influencing society in both directions: 1) top down, in light of the fact that powerful entities created narratives, and 2) bottom

up, when one considers that stories add justification or synergy to individual choices.

Stories are heard in a particular context. Newbury sees rural grievances as the most powerful piece of the context that fed bouts of violence in Rwanda in the 1959 Hutu uprising, and again in 1990 when violence escalated.⁵ When I decided to study Rwanda, I had a sense that people in my context, one of American Adventism, could learn from Rwandans. I believed

hearing genocide survivors' memories about what was said in churches would allow a person to reflect on what is being said in one's own culture. Exiled Russian poet Joseph Brodsky said, "You think evil is going to come into your houses wearing big black boots? It doesn't come like that. Look at the language. It begins in the language."

Cultures have a repertoire of frames on which to create meaning, values, and appraisals. Certain words or phrases become triggers to stimulate emotions of fear, anger, and resentment. Emotions are contagious, or imitative, spreading through groups of people and with potential to create mobs who act irrationally toward an "out group," or those with a different identity.⁶ The effect can be diagrammed this way:

Frames -> meanings/appraisals -> emotions & social psychological forces -> actions/behaviours

I believed hearing genocide survivors' memories about what was said in churches would allow a person to reflect on what is being said in one's own culture.

“In 1994, it was openly said to kill Tutsi. After worship, Adventists would join the government or political parties that were killing everywhere.”

Framing can lead to the three steps necessary for genocide:

- 1) Deepened demarcation of groups and broadening divisions.
- 2) Generation of fear, anger, contempt, resentment, and hate.
- 3) Rationalization of acts in an ends/means argument, for self-defense or a grand cause.

The narrative of Tutsi as usurpers, in place since 1960, deepened and became more real in 1990 with the propaganda newspaper, *Kangura*, which adopted biblical themes to propagate violence. Famously, the Hutu Ten Commandments urged zero tolerance for the notion that a Tutsi could have any redeeming attribute. Also, RTLM, known as “killer’s radio,” used jingles and a call-in talk radio format to normalize violent ideology.⁷

Hundreds of thousands of machetes and other weapons had been purchased and stored throughout the country in late 1993 and early 1994. Young people were indoctrinated and energized in a militia, *interahamwe*. Complicated by history, the genocide occurred because extremists adopted a scarcity-based, fearful narrative that labeled Tutsi as wily, impure usurpers who must be removed to purify the country for democracy. If moderates had been in a majority, it would not have happened. The extreme violence in April 1994 was triggered by a double assassination of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, both of whom were Hutu.⁸

Like all Christian groups, Adventists featured both heroes and villains. Carl Wilkens, the only American who stayed during the three-month genocidal period, was employed by Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA). Elizaphan Ntakirutimana, an Adventist ad-

ministrator in Mugonero, became the first pastor to be convicted of genocide at the United Nations Tribunal in 2004. Seven Adventist pastors were among the Tutsi who sought refuge in the Mugonero Church and complex, and these pastors became leaders for the flock of people who had sought sanctuary. Initially, it had been calm, with the Tutsi pastors collecting money for the police who guarded them. Toward evening on Friday night, April 15, the police guards left, saying, “Tomorrow you will be killed.” Thus, the title for Gourevitch’s book, “We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families.”⁹

Chapter Two of the book gives a detailed description of the Mugonero incident. Those Tutsi pastors, on Friday night, wrote three letters, one of which was to the Adventist president, Elizaphan Ntakirutimana, with a reference to the Bible story of Queen Esther’s advocacy for Israel, saying, “Your intervention will be highly appreciated, the same as the Jews were saved by Esther.” The chilling response from the church leader was, “You must be eliminated. God no longer wants you.”

With no set plan to find participants, my quest to understand the context started when I did favors for friends of friends by delivering supplies and money to people in Rwanda. Then, connections and reciprocity led me to find fourteen Adventists who met demographic guidelines and were willing to speak on the topic of what was said in churches before the genocide. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the promise of anonymity. However, I spoke to others who did not meet the demographic guidelines, and for this paper, I draw from the words of all Rwandan Adventists to whom I spoke.



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Story from the Daughter of a Tutsi Pastor Killed at Mugonero

My Father was an Adventist pastor at Mugonero. When at church school, Tutsi were asked to stand up, and there might be three out of fifty in the class. I was not allowed to continue secondary schools in Adventist schools or public schools. I had to go to DRC for school—this was ten years before [the] genocide. Father had a Hutu friend, also a pastor, who wanted to help me get opportunities in school and the friend was killed for this in a northern province in an area called Ruhengeri. They killed [him] because they said he was a spy. My brother tried to go to school in Gitwe (one of the first Adventist missions) He was #1 in class and was not allowed to go. This same Hutu friend of father advocated for my brother also, and that is part of why this friend was killed.

People in churches at that time followed what the government said. The government had slogans, and people in the churches joined in with the same slogans. The government said, “There is some percentage allowed,” and church leaders followed the quotas. That was the story in years before.

I left Mugonero for Kigali the day before the massacre. I had a big problem working there as a nurse. I saw that the Tutsi women did not get the same maternity care as the Hutu. I knew that was not right and could not work there any longer.

In 1994, it was openly said to kill Tutsi. After worship, Adventists would join the government or political parties that were killing everywhere. Perpetrators justified the killings with the reference that “Israelites also killed their enemies.”

Biblical Framework: What Bible Stories are Worthy of Imitation?

Which Bible story do we imitate? Destruction of the Amalekites or Esther saving her people? When I asked one person what texts perpetrators used, he opened his Bible to 1 Samuel 15 which describes the genocide of the Amalekites.

How does one use the Bible to imagine a way of living? How does one decide with which group to identify in scripture? Use of a “holy” book with “holy” language allows people to embrace the zeal of religious fervor when involved in a flurry of imitative violence based on ethnicity.

Eugene Peterson introduces the book of Amos in his biblical paraphrase this way: “Religion is the most dangerous energy source known to humankind. The moment a person (or government or religion or organization) is convinced that God is either ordering or sanctioning a course

or project, anything goes.”¹⁰ As Longman said, “Religious groups can help people accept the unacceptable, and this is what ultimately is necessary for genocide to occur.”¹¹

Several Adventist graduate students have added to the discussion. In a master’s thesis for Andrews University, A. Long discussed the problem with teaching a text-based religion to indigenous people. He contended that the idea of contextual understanding of scripture was beyond the general understanding of those in Rwanda. He said that this issue creates difficulty for imagining an identity. His view was that Rwandan spirituality was more social than spiritual, and he pointed to the problems that would come when churches supplanted traditional sources of authority. In a sort of forewarning, he cited examples of Adventists using the Bible to justify a particular course of action without consideration of bigger pieces of the religious faith.¹²

In a dissertation for a DMin at Andrews University, R. Peck, one-time president of the Rwandan Union Mission, wrote about the lack of theological education and pastoral training and called the situation a crisis. This was a long-term problem, as Peck cites a memorandum written by Elder R. E. Watts, division president in 1957, which told leaders in Rwanda not to open any work for at least a year because of the leadership crisis. Peck states, “The poorly trained leaders in Rwanda have been unable to adequately instruct and prepare new adherents from the traditional backgrounds.”¹³

Here is what I heard about the way Adventist perpetrators used scripture:

God has abandoned the Tutsi and instructed them to be killed in the hands of Hutu.

I also heard reference to Romans 13 and Daniel 2 as a basis for divine endorsement of governmental order. Thus, Christians in Rwanda were to obey and cooperate with the government, even during the Hutu Revolution when Tutsi were purged from Rwanda, and during the

genocide. Church cooperation with governmental ethnic mandates was implemented and imitated.

Yet, there are positive stories about heroes. Several people mentioned Jonah Barambe at Nyamirambo Adventist Church in Kigali, who visited church members as the genocide began and who spoke on the theme from Genesis 1 that “God created one man and there is one human nature. There are no ethnic groups.”

The idea of a common lineage leading back to Genesis 1 was repeatedly cited as a rationale, frame, or story that could have guided others not to imitate the violent words and actions of the dominant culture. While apparently not said in churches, some people said they heard this in small groups or it was something they held in their own hearts.

God created man and we are one tribe.

A few referred to the life of Jesus as the part of the Bible that should be imitated:

Jesus spoke with [the] Samaritan woman, and that shows ethnicity does not matter.

Story from a Man Whose Entire Family Was Killed at Mugonero Church

I started Adventist school here in Mugonero in 1967. Hutu/Tutsi problem has been since that time.

I asked, “Could the churches protest this?”

For the church, it did not complain. For them, no problem. Could not do it. During that time, Tutsi pastor got nice place only if [he] bribed a leader to allow this.

When the President’s plane crashed, we were informed the next day just with a warning to stay at home. We did not know what had happened. My cousin said that the President of the Union [Elizaphan Ntakirutimana] called all to come to the hospital for safety and told them the president of [the] country had died. Ever since 1959, we knew we could go to churches for safety and thought Adventists would be protected. We thought we would not face a problem here. It had not happened before. “It’s an Adventist area, it’s protected.”

In 1994, I was working with an American medical director

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In a sort of forewarning, he cited examples of Adventists using the Bible to justify a particular course of action without consideration of bigger pieces of the religious faith.

here in Mugonero. I and my family went to that person's home. While there, I could see from afar that my own home was being burned. We stayed with [the] medical director's family for about a week. Then a US Ambassador came and took that American back to go to US. The director said, "You can have my home." So, I stayed there and had been given the keys to the home. People came to the medical director's home and threw grenades. At that point, I decided to send my family to the church for safe keeping (with others), and I would stay at the medical director's home to watch over the property.

He showed me an injured index finger from the grenade.

I spent three months in the hills. I was shot in the leg. I lost all of my family.

Perpetrators said "God is not with you. You are no longer in the hands of God. You are now the people to die."

During the genocide, I went in one church and spent a little time. I saw people sing and set down the hymnals, and some killing happened and then people prayed again. From that church I just ran and jumped and exited. Maybe angels gathered me away.

I asked, "How has the church helped with peace after genocide?"

There is not help for peace now in the church. The church just wants people. There was no teaching in the church, it was like a political party.

I asked, "What message would you want to send to Adventists in the US?"

It is this: that the church is in a person's heart not in a building. I hear a voice of God but not in church. I hear God outside the church. Even now I go to church and do not hear God. It is not a goal to be saved by God but to express God. Maybe the Adventist members in the US are different. We are not to see God as saving but to try to express God. During Jesus Christ time, the church was love. But in Rwanda before genocide, the church leader can feed his family and

forget the people who have nothing to eat or wear.

The church and politicians work together.

More Mugonero Stories

If I were not a Christian, I would be in prison. I would have killed those who killed my family. Because I know them. I see them in church now. According to what I have learned in church, I must forgive. No one comes to ask for this. I just do it. Actually, now I feel free. Those others are burdened but for me, I am free. Because the leader in genocide was [the] Adventist president. Not one of the leaders would save one person, even a baby. The people who tried to save were not Adventist but indigenous, and not Christian.

There was an indigenous Hutu near Lake Kivu. He told his children they could not kill anyone in his house because if they did he would curse them. At night he took people across the lake to Congo. That man is well-known. After genocide, he decided he wanted to be baptized. But, he baptized himself, because he said, "the pastor's hands all have blood on them."

In testimony from Ntakirutimana's trial in 2004, survivors outside the Mugonero Church reported hearing perpetrators on Sabbath morning singing "I'm in the Lord's Army."¹⁴

Gitwe Stories: We're Marching to Zion

One person told me that during the genocide at Gitwe, one of the oldest Adventist mission stations, fellow Adventists sang the hymn, "We are Marching to Zion," as they swung machetes, claiming to do *umuganda*, a term still used in Rwanda to describe the monthly day of mandatory community service when streets are closed to be cleaned.

Another person described the tragedy of losing her mother and all of her children at Gitwe.

The Union President in charge of mission listed my mom as a

“refugee.” She was not a refugee. She had lived in Rwanda a long time. She was later killed with all five of my children, who had left the big city to stay with her for safety. The Church did not warn Adventists who were on the “list.” In Gitwe, that is the case. Instead, they brought them together. They should have said “guys, disperse.” That would have been a warning. That’s the Seventh-day Adventists in Gitwe. They should have warned them and said “guys, take care of yourselves” and not bring them together. To bring them together means you are part of it. They brought outsiders to do it. People they didn’t know.

Someone else told me this story:

One Friday night, Tutsi met in church and at 3 a.m. scattered to bush saying church members won’t look in the bushes on Sabbath. At 8 a.m. one Tutsi hid in a room (sort of a storage closet) of the church and was found by a deaconess. (He is still alive.) That deaconess was a neighbor. I know her. When she came early to the church, she found that man, and she went away to find killers. When she returned with killers, he was gone. So, they started searching around the church in the bush for all of us. One of us they hurt with a swinging machete. That was on a Sabbath morning

Identity and Imitation

Genocide is an act that rips apart the connectedness of humanity. Genocidal societies say, “The world is better without you.” Can we relate to that? Political turmoil is tearing the United States apart. Rwanda, viewed as a trophy of the African “mission field” by many in Western Christianity, shocked onlookers in the period during and after the genocide when it became obvious that Christians had killed Christians.

Now that we live in an information age, a manipulative elite can create narratives and conditions that make genocide possible. Baum states that low ethical standards and strong nationalism are often character traits of those who imitate group violence. Resisters can be characterized as having emotional maturity and the ability to disobey. In Rwanda, stories mandating a duty to extinguish evil Tutsi, *inyenzi*/cockroaches, had permeated the culture.¹⁵

“We never thought it would lead to genocide.”

What About Propaganda Radio?

The Rwandan Genocide was made possible by societal leaders’ sustained propaganda campaign that created urgency and fear with a backdrop of a smoldering civil war, precipitated by an invading army. Propaganda radio in Rwanda stimulated emotions of outrage, resentment, and fear, especially fear of the impure, and it worked by appealing to biblical themes. Apparently this impacted how the Rwandan church carried out the concept of “religious liberty.” I heard no description of people in churches contesting the loyalty to an identity that had been advocated by propaganda radio.

Asked whether the churches said it was evil or wrong, the answer was this:

No, the churches said nothing about it, that would be political.

Several interviewees remembered tunes and slogans from RTLM, saying:

One of the main voices in RTLM was an Adventist. It was difficult in the years before genocide because, for Adventists, one of our own was a powerful voice.

We had leaders very involved with political parties—the RTLM divided the church into two parties.

Propaganda radio in Rwanda stimulated emotions of outrage, resentment, and fear, especially fear of the impure, and it worked by appealing to biblical themes.

“That would be political.” What Does Separation of Church and State Mean?

Would it have been possible for the institutional church to resist the cultural norm of mandated quotas, with a claim that this would be against religious beliefs? In Africa, the identity of Christian schools and public schools had been merged for decades. It had been common in Africa for Christian administrators to collaborate with governmental leaders with a willingness to make concessions to political forces for what was hoped to be a greater good of providing education to more people. Scholars say Rwanda was the one place on the African continent where Christianity and politics were most closely enmeshed.¹⁶

I asked whether or not the churches were places where in public settings it would have been possible to call

the polarized culture “evil.”

Everyone replied that,

No, the church could not speak of the evil of propaganda radio, that would have been political.

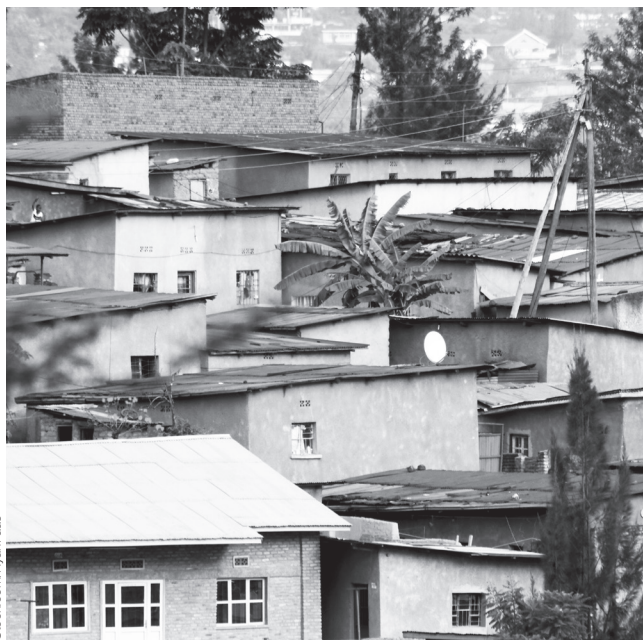
Some assert that the church’s hesitancy to speak against violence immediately and forcefully in 1994 validated the option for Christians to participate in genocide.¹⁷ Fein’s research on the Holocaust would support this assumption. Looking at the tepid response of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe prior to World War II, Fein saw a weak association between early church protest against deportation of Jews and the number of Jews saved in a particular region. For example, in three non-Roman Catholic states (Bulgaria, France, and Romania) where protest occurred, the majority of Jews were saved from death.¹⁸

In the Rwandan context, a large number of Adventist members, apparently, kept a political identity, which trumped other commonalities that could have been a basis for peacemaking.

The story is this. The church became political.

In my church there was a small group who participated in activity to prepare for genocide. In other words, they became political.

The church was divided and labeled ministers according to their



Hillside homes in Kigali, Rwanda

political biases, such as from the north or from the south.

At one point there was a division in the northern and southern parts of the country. There was a revolt in 1991 or 1992 when people from the south came storming to the doors of the Adventist Union office and complained that too many administrators were from the north.

After the presidential assassination, no one went outside or to church initially. services stopped. Later, some hid in church (in Kigali), but a pastor stood in the way and would not let in killers. People who were not political tried to stop the violence.

In our church we had leaders who were very involved with political parties. Those in church who refused to be involved with politics were killed first.

Church leaders wore clothing and signs of political parties.

People joined the Adventist church in Kigali but kept their ethnic identity.

We were taught to kill Tutsi before they killed us. Tutsi were said to be killers. That is the heart of the genocide. People thought their pastors would teach the word of God, but really the pastors still had a deeper identity that they had learned earlier.

Shaping a national story will shape group identity. Christians, attached to a national story, lose the ability to worship in a place where imagination of something different can take root. The one who controls the story is most powerful. In the years leading up to the 1994 genocide, many in Protestant churches likened national difficulties to “like it was in the time of Noah,” and, then, claimed that the principle of separation of church and state would not allow Protestant churches to speak about ethnicity, because such ideas would be considered political.¹⁹ One cannot always clearly see the implications that come from how one conceptualizes religious liberty. In Rwanda, the denomination did not achieve its goal to maintain a non-political identity.

“If the government gives an order, it is an order.” Whose Authority?

Some strands of Christianity emphasize the development of human agency and the cultivation of discernment that Baum asserted to be key to stopping genocide.²⁰ However, Christians, typically, have focused on obedience

“Perpetrators said ‘God is not with you. You are no longer in the hands of God. You are now the people to die.’”

to God and man. One cannot know in what ways such concepts had been emphasized in Rwanda.

In the context of separation of church and state, one would assume that, as a group, Adventists would choose to honor the authority of God with respect to the day on which to worship, but what about other issues? In reality, these choices may be difficult, particularly when the church has made pragmatic decisions in an effort to achieve a greater good. In my interviews, several people said that the Muslims in Rwanda were the only religious group that uniformly provided safe haven for all without regard to ethnicity.

I heard in church that it was the correct duty to honor the country and to kill the invaders, which were the Tutsi.

The church immediately accepted what the government said to do.

The Catholic church could have protested what the government said to do. The Adventist church was too small to make a difference.

I believe if an order came to kill today, that many Adventists in Rwanda would do it.

“Imagine all the people, living life in peace.”

What Is Prophetic Imagination?

Katongole, a Ugandan theologian at Notre Dame, critiques the Rwandan church for not being a “wild space.” This is a reference to a social context where people and roles and values are different than those in the predominant worldly culture.²¹

Brueggemann says generosity of listening must occur to trigger prophetic imagination.²² Prophetic imagination exposes the fraudulent nature of dominant culture.

Violent language kindles emotions of fear, impurity, and resentment. The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture.

Several cultural narratives provide a seed that can de-

velop into a genocidal frame.

Domination: Us over them

Revolution: Us overthrowing them

Purification: Us excluding them

Isolation: Us separating ourselves from them

Victimization: Us being defined by their injustice

Accumulation: Us with more shiny objects than them

For Brueggemann, prophetic imagination has three steps. First, a lament will pierce cultural numbness and call for shedding of the pretense that things are alright. Christian social justice is anguish, more than anger.

Then, prophetic imagination will call forth special memories of deliverance that can form a new identity. Consider the role of Negro spirituals in the sustenance of faith for slaves; songs of deliverance from Pharaoh stimulated a saving imagination.

Third, in an ultimate challenge to managed reality from the dominant culture, Brueggemann says praising God is the way to drown out loud cultural jingles.²³

“Did they make space for love?” Has the Prophetic Voice Been Co-Opted by the Culture of the Day?

The story of enemy-love is the most powerful cultural narrative for peace.

One survivor I spoke with stated

I don't know what was in their minds. I still ask that question. The only thing I can come up with is love. If it was in their hearts it would not have happened. The problem was no love.

Church is the conscience of the state, not its servant. When Rwandan Christians did not challenge language and narratives, churches morphed from sanctuaries to prisons of death.

“After genocide, he decided he wanted to be baptized.

But, he baptized himself, because he said,

‘the pastor’s hands all have blood on them.’”

In Rwanda, power consisted in the ability to make others inhabit a particular story or reality. In the USA, Dr. King said, “I have a dream.” He called for imagination of something different. He did not say, “I have a nightmare.” Such words would have cultivated fearful, identity-based actions. Rwanda did not have a charismatic leader to promote human rights for all.

The story of Rwanda, a Christian nation, can be instructive to Americans who identify as Christian. The Rwandan story illustrates the problem of a Christianity that does not attend to the nurture of human agency and make a space for appropriate defiance of those in authority.

Having a multi-dimensional identity that differs from political labels will yield a greater peace.

Imitation of Jesus will yield a greater peace.

Imagination of church as something different will yield a greater peace.

History shows that when the state or powerful groups coopt religion, that it will be religion that is weakened.²⁴

The story of Adventism in Rwanda leaves a person with many questions:

How does the church maneuver in the tension of avoiding politics vs. using free speech as a gift to advocate for the powerless?

Is our list of fundamental beliefs up to the task of nurturing a discipleship and incarnational Christianity that will leave a person with agency and the courage to disobey in areas other than the traditional touchpoint of Sabbath keeping?

What is the responsibility of the official church to “speak up” when culture denigrates the rights of others? Is our definition of religious liberty a robust one that we own? Or is it the definition put in place by political powers in the US?

What are the unintended consequences of collaborating with the government?

As a student of peace, I see churches as part of civil society that nurtures peace. Where were the churches? Where was my church?

To what extent can the church accept the multi-cultural nature of the Bible and the corresponding proposition that a plain reading is dangerous?

Consider the power of calm contemplation to soothe cultures at war. If Sabbath-keeping Creation believers cannot stand *against* identity-based scapegoating and *for* human rights, this might reflect a failure to remember and keep the Sabbath in its original shalom context. If Sabbath-keeping Creation believers do not reject an imitation of the dominant cultural warfare with its adoption of hardened, defensive identities, and speak in favor of each human as created in the image of God, then, I suggest, it is a botched Sabbath-keeping endeavor.

Take time to be holy. Take time to be human. Take time to imagine. Those are true meanings of Sabbath Sanctuary. Theology and Christian beliefs that do not affect culture are meaningless. Take time to imagine a church as more than a mass of people huddled at the airport departure gate, waiting for the Second Coming. Take time to imagine church as more than a tool for power. Take time to imagine a church that is a shelter from the storm.

I was burned out from exhaustion, buried in the hail
Poisoned in the bushes an’ blown out on the trail
Hunted like a crocodile, ravaged in the corn
Come in, she said
I’ll give ya shelter from the storm. —Bob Dylan

*The Rwandan story
illustrates the problem of
a Christianity that does
not attend to the nurture of
human agency and make
a space for appropriate
defiance of those in
authority.*

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BIBLE

From the Collection at The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Artist: William Wetmore Story (American, Boston, Massachusetts 1819–1895 Vallombrosa)
Date: 1858, carved 1869
Medium: Marble
Dimensions: 55 1/2 x 33 1/4 x 51 1/2 in. (141 x 84.5 x 130.8 cm)
Classification: Sculpture
Gift of John Taylor Johnston, 1888



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CLEOPATRA:

New Insights for the Interpretation of Revelation 17

BY KENDRA HALOVIK VALENTINE

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The Whore of Babylon as a graphic scriptural image frequently stirs the imaginations of contemporary readers of the book of Revelation. Christian preachers denouncing some perceived apostasy often use the image for its attention-grabbing effectiveness. But how do we explain the dissonance between the Apocalypse's depiction of an unlikely powerful female prostitute living in luxury and the real-life powerlessness and desperation that characterized the social status of the vast majority of prostitutes at the time Revelation was written, and still does today? Is the author dealing with an exceptional case?¹ The disconnect raises questions concerning the purpose and implications of such imagery. What aspects of culture, recent history, or personal experience might the writer have drawn upon? Building upon previous suggestions as to why such imagery might have been particularly gripping for Revelation's first readers, this paper suggests important new connections to the figure of Cleopatra.

It is argued here that the author critiques the Roman Empire by alluding to his prophetic literary tradition and contemporary coinage, but his most persuasive rhetorical allusion is related to the fact that both he and his readers lived in the post-Cleopatra era of the empire. The author

of the book of Revelation was influenced by depictions of Cleopatra as a whore, which, through Roman historical and literary works, had embedded themselves in the popular culture and historical memory of his day. The figure of Cleopatra provides important new insights into the use of the whore image in Revelation 17.

The Apocalypse's Whore

The book of Revelation dramatically describes the Roman Empire as τῆς πόρνῆς τῆς μεγάλης in a crucial part of the narrative toward the end of the book.² Those who have been listening carefully since the book's first phrase—"the revelation of Jesus Christ"—have heard numerous references to the "lamb." Beginning in Chapter 12, the lamb has been challenged by a dragon and the two beasts called forth by the dragon to do its bidding (13:1–10, 11–18). Revelation 17 describes a whore seated on the first of these two beasts:

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great whore (πόρνῆς) who is seated on many waters, with whom the kings of

the earth have whored (ἐπόρνευσαν) and with the wine of whose whoring (πορνείας) the dwellers on earth have become drunk.” And he carried me away in the spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her whoring (πορνείας); and on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of whores (πορνῶν) and of earth’s abominations” (17:1–5).³

An angel calls this woman a πόρνη (17:1) from the classical Greek verb πέρνημι (“to put up for sale”), understood in daily usage as a “street walker” or “brothel worker,” sometimes contrasted with ἑταίρα (“companion”). In Greek literature, the ἑταίρα acted as an independent female courtesan, regularly wooed with gifts from a man with whom she had an exclusive relationship.⁴ The πόρνη had no such expectations. She was “marked, even defined, by her absolute availability” to all. She worked the streets and brothels where the labor was hers, but the profits were not.⁵ While the ἑταίρα received goods, the πόρνη was a “good,” a commodity, not an individual.⁶ Given the additional description of the woman in Revelation 17 as having lavish attire and expensive accessories, one might assume that ἑταίρα more accurately reflected her social status. Even John seemed taken aback at the ambiguous vision (17:6, 7).⁷ This woman surely does not remind us of the desperate women who inhabit the dimly lit shop fronts of inner-city, red-light districts; women who look more like Fantine, the poor young woman in *Les Misérables* who, having exhausted all other options and in order to care for the child she loves, descends into prostitution.⁸

The author of the book of Revelation was influenced by depictions of Cleopatra as a whore, which, through Roman historical and literary works, had embedded themselves in the popular culture and historical memory of his day.

Rebecca Flemming asserts that by the time of the Roman Empire, the Greek words πόρνη and ἑταίρα were “used almost interchangeably.”⁹ Perhaps the idea of an independent, high-priced courtesan had always and only been a feature of fiction. But, because of its availability at least in literature, the choice of πόρνη for the woman of Revelation 17 would have emphasized her commodity status and numerous sexual partners.¹⁰

So, the perplexing imagery created a dissonance. Was she a confident courtesan on yet another literary page, or an ever-available brothel worker? Was she both? Was she something else altogether? Jennifer Glancy and Stephen Moore conclude that she was not typical of either.¹¹ How would John’s readers then have understood the perplexing

whore of the Apocalypse? A response must carefully consider first-century prostitution and the absolute vulnerability of the πόρνη as a slave.¹²

First-Century Slavery and Prostitution

In the first century, to be a πόρνη was in fact to be in the worst kind of slavery. Ordinary slavery was bad enough.¹³ The Greek word for “body” (σῶμα) was considered a synonym for “slave.”¹⁴ Slaves lacked control over their own bodies.¹⁵ Marked with tattoos, their bodies were willed to others at the death of their master, along with other property. The bodies of slaves were used for work, pleasure, punishment, or abuse.

An abundance of data underscores the first-century status of prostitutes as slaves. Whether born into slavery or placed there by a family member, the law “enabled women to be forcibly prostituted, to have their bodies repeatedly sold under them—their owner being the one who gained, as all monies legally accrued to him and from which he provided her livelihood as he chose.”¹⁶ A πόρνη was typically forced to work in a filthy brothel, often standing naked and exposed, attracting clients of low

social status where the price for sex might equal a loaf of bread.¹⁷ Such brothels were found throughout the cities of the empire.

This particular form of slavery was so distasteful that a sympathetic slave owner could make a covenant with a slave buyer, guaranteeing that his slaves would not be forced into prostitution.¹⁸ But there was always a cheap supply of female slave-prostitutes. The exposing and abandoning of children were common practice.

Given the profusion and distribution of sex workers in Roman cities, it seems reasonable to us to suppose that the term *πόρνη* would have conjured up first and foremost in the minds of the urban Christians addressed in Revelation a certain category of flesh-and-blood person that one encountered with considerable frequency in the streets, a fixture of the urban landscape, as opposed to a figure of high literature, or a literary or philosophical *topos*, or a scriptural type.¹⁹

A reader of Revelation 17, therefore, had to reconcile the daily image of the *πόρνη* seen standing in the entryway to the local brothel with a *πόρνη*-queen described as seated on a throne (17:9, 15; 18:7). Such a powerful, wealthy, and oppressive *πόρνη* definitely did not reflect prostitution in the first century. Elite women did not have sex with multiple partners, and brothel women were anything but powerful. So, why does the author of Revelation use such imagery?²⁰ Given the prevalence of prostitution, the sexual solicitation part of the scene would not provoke shock. Since prostitution was socially acceptable (better a man goes to the brothel to take care of his lusts than to another man's wife), the dissonance with the "great whore" was much less about sex and much more about power.

When she controlled goods and services rather than acted like the slave she was, her clients got nervous. This scene was provocative precisely because this *πόρνη* was powerful and of equal status to her clients. But what made the scene comprehensible? Several explanatory scenarios are suggested.

The Woman/City *Topos*

Ancient literature, including the Hebrew prophetic tradition, used the imagery of a woman to personify a city. "The use of a female image was suggested perhaps by the secure, encircling character of a city's walls, which would symbolize the womb or a mother's protective arms."²¹ Isaiah 66:7–13 powerfully illustrates that this concept of Zion birthing, nursing, and nurturing her children became a metaphor for God: "As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you" (Isa. 66:13). Occasionally, the prophets also used the woman/city *topos* to depict an enemy city's ultimate defeat. Jeremiah states of Babylon's demise, "your mother shall be utterly shamed, and she who bore you shall be disgraced."²²

Although a likely candidate, Babylon was not designated a city-whore in the literature of the Hebrew prophets. Neither Isaiah's outrage at Babylon's arrogance nor Jeremiah's heartbreak at Babylon's cruelty adopted such language. Instead, the whore imagery was most often used to describe God's own people in language that justified God's judgment on them. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza refers to the "conventional metaphor" where whoring meant idolatry.²³ In these examples, the female role was played by the idolatrous and unfaithful people of God who were admonished by the prophet to "stop playing the whore!"

The only two enemy cities referred to in this way within the Hebrew prophetic tradition were Nineveh

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"As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you."

(Nah. 3:4) and Tyre (Isa. 23:17; Ezek. 26–28). Richard Bauckham suggests that John,

quite deliberately fashioned a prophetic oracle against Rome which gathers up all that his prophetic predecessors had pronounced against the two cities of Babylon and Tyre. If Babylon gave Rome its name in John's oracle, it is probably Tyre that supplied the image of the harlot for Rome.²⁴

In Israel's prophetic tradition, Babylon was the nation that acted arrogantly against God and violently oppressed Israel, destroying its temple and exiling its people. In short, Babylon acted "beast-like." Thus "Babylon" is used by John to describe the beast-city that acted similarly (Rev. 13:1–10; 17:3, 9). In a prophetic judgment oracle against the city of Tyre, Isaiah described the city as a whore (Isa. 23:15–18). Tyre was known as a center for commerce and trade, but the prophetic tradition anticipates God's judgment upon it because of its economic exploitation of other nations for its own gain.²⁵ Tyre is described as seductive and selfish and John alludes to this in describing the whore-city of his day that acted similarly.²⁶ When the whore-city *topos* is used against the enemies of the prophets it is economic exploitation that is emphasized.²⁷ In these examples, the female role was played by the enemy city, and the prophet called his listeners to "stay away from the whore!"

For those who caught the allusions to prophetic literature, John criticized Rome for its oppressive violence and economic exploitation. Rome was a whore sitting on a beast; she is "no ordinary harlot."²⁸ In this way, John exposed "the seamy underside of commerce" for his readers who daily witnessed the arrival of foreign goods and slaves (Rev. 18:11–13).²⁹

Davina Lopez enriches our understanding of the

woman/city *topos* through her work with Roman visual art.³⁰ Since Romans often depicted conquered cities as ravaged women in their art, some version of this *topos* would have been present for at least some of the readers of the book of Revelation. An example of such art was the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias (completed during the reign of Nero) where conquered cities such as Armenia, for instance, were depicted in large decorative statues as women ravaged.³¹ Stripped naked and with the threat of sexual and physical violence, Armenia was forced into slavery/prostitution. She was no longer a powerful city/woman; she was a conquered city/whore. For those who had witnessed such art, Rome was the male conqueror of other nations/women. For John, the visual illustration of enemy cities as female slaves meant that even "Babylon the Great" was vulnerable.

The *Dea Roma* Coin: The Goddess Rome

Twenty-five years before the writing of the book of Revelation, a coin minted in and circulated around the Roman province of Asia depicted Rome as the goddess Roma. In the depiction, she sat on seven hills, with a sword in her left hand, and with her feet touching the river god Tiber. Also on the coin, a she-wolf is represented with two humans suckling her. The imagery is of Rome's mythic founding by the twin brothers Romulus and Remus.³²

Comparisons between the coin's imagery and the description in Revelation 17 are striking. On the coin, the goddess of Rome sat near water, mistress of the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. The book of Revelation also described a woman located near water (1, 15), but she was a whore, not a goddess. Both women sat on seven hills

On the coin, the goddess of Rome sat near water, mistress of the lands surrounding the Mediterranean Sea. The book of Revelation also described a woman located near water (1, 15), but she was a whore, not a goddess.

(9), which was the unmistakable way of referring to the city of Rome in the first century. While Roma the goddess held a sword in her left hand, Rome the whore held a cup;

a cup of “abominations and the impurities of her fornication” (4). Instead of a she-wolf standing near Roma the goddess, Rome the whore sat on a beast that had seven heads and ten horns (3, 7).

If John had this common coin in mind, his description in Revelation 17 unveiled what he saw as the true nature of Roma. Rather than a goddess, she was a whore. The claim of the *Pax Romana* was exposed as expanding the empire through immorality and violence (5–6). Rather than celebrate Roma’s mythic beginnings, John equated her with the arrogant and blaspheming beast that people worshiped in place of God (4–8). This scene reassured the faithful that the whore actually exhibited vulnerability and would soon meet her end in a judgment wrought by God (17).

In the description of her judgment, the whore at last seemed like a typical prostitute. Her body was used, abused, and then discarded. Instead of being wealthy, well dressed, and covered with jewels (4), she was stripped naked (16). Instead of being the oppressor of others (6), she was the victim of violence (16). Rather than intoxicated by blood (6), her blood was shed as she drank God’s judgment against her (17). Rather than a queen with power (18:7), she was “devoured.” This meant there was nothing left to bury, the ultimate shame; she had “no memory marker.”³³ Her fate was the commonly conceived fate of first century prostitutes—no longer beguiling, but gutted.

As Roma the whore was being judged, her true identity was unveiled—for those with eyes to see, her power was fragile. Revelation states that the name on her forehead is “Babylon the Great, mother of whores” (17:5). As readers focused on her forehead, they saw that she was in reality a tattooed slave herself,³⁴ not the master of sea and land as claimed on the coins. The slave trader was really a slave, propped up by a beast that could, and does, turn on her (17:16).

The coin provides useful background for how some readers might have made sense of the whore image. But there was another, richer possibility. Several decades before the circulation of the coin, the people of Asia Minor

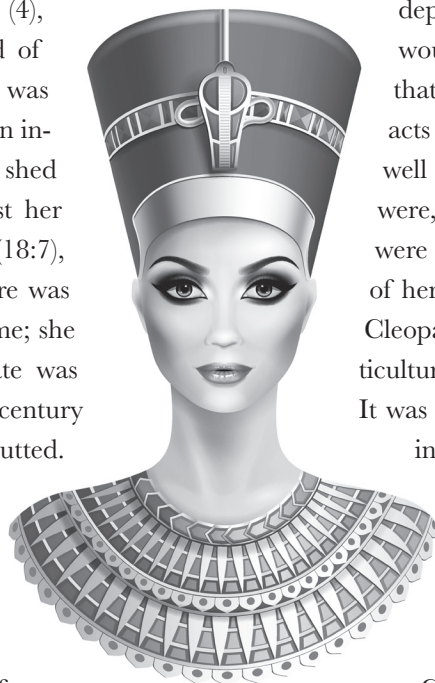
province had seen an actual powerful queen made into a whore by Rome. Although her own people celebrated her as a goddess, she and her nation had been ravished. This background to the whore imagery perhaps resonated even more readily than coins and Hebrew prophetic traditions with the first readers of the book of Revelation. That queen’s involvement in Asia Minor had profoundly shaped its history. Her story indelibly inscribed itself on the cultural memory of the people of that province. In order to have some appreciation of the enormity of her impact on that world, a brief review of her life and legacy is necessary.

Cleopatra: The Royal Whore

Cleopatra (69–30 BCE) was both a leader and a legend.³⁵ There are sharp discrepancies between the two—between what is known about the historical person Cleopatra, and how most writers of the past 2,000 years depicted her. Although Roman propaganda would successfully reduce her reputation to that of a powerful seductress, Cleopatra’s acts of brutality and cunning diplomacy, as well as her liaisons with powerful Romans, were, from her own perspective, simply what were necessary to ensure her survival and that of her people. As queen of Egypt (51–30 BCE) Cleopatra VII ruled from her palace in the multicultural city of Alexandria on the Nile Delta. It was a city unparalleled as a center of learning and famous for its extensive library.³⁶

Cleopatra saw it as her duty to protect and provide for her people against the overwhelming might of Rome as it swept eastward. Egypt’s vulnerability and sense of powerlessness motivated Cleopatra’s policy. An entire nation depended on her for its future.

Although she was a brilliant, highly educated woman respected by her contemporaries, in the popular mind of the first century CE, Cleopatra was first and foremost associated with sexual promiscuity, an image nurtured by the propaganda. What more did a writer need to do than to narrate Cleopatra’s history of illicit liaisons? She had a child with Gaius Julius Caesar while he was married to another woman, and three children with the already-mar-



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ried Mark Antony.³⁷ Roman authors described her as intoxicating and seductive, causing Roman men to make poor judgments. The Roman poet Lucan, for example, writing in the first century CE, described her as one who “possesses Egypt and is playing the harlot for Rome.”³⁸ But in a world where children shared by monarchs provided stability between empires, her behavior was not that of a seductress but of a politically shrewd survivor.³⁹

Schiff, and several other recent studies of Cleopatra, have provided correctives to the highly colored propaganda of Roman authors and poets that paraded as history. Michael Grant rediscovers Cleopatra’s leadership abilities prior to Rome’s propaganda war against her. Duane W. Roller’s analysis recovers Cleopatra’s remarkable scholarly, military, and personal achievements.⁴⁰ Diana E. E. Kleiner writes of the queen’s lasting impact on the art and architecture of the Roman Empire despite the propaganda against her.⁴¹

When Cleopatra began to rule the Egyptians as a woman in her late teens, she inherited a huge financial debt owed to Rome by her late father. Furthermore, her country’s wealth and natural resources made it particularly vulnerable to Rome’s expansionist plans.⁴² Cleopatra was obliged to rule as her predecessors had done, as a monarch allied with but subservient to Rome. Almost twenty years later, when, in 32 BCE, Octavian declared war on Cleopatra, she “had engaged in no hostilities toward Rome. . . . She had maintained order in her kingdom, supplied Rome when called upon to do so, materialized when summoned, aggressed upon no neighbors.”⁴³

The evidence indicates that Cleopatra was “unusually well educated even for a royal woman of the period.”⁴⁴ Stimulating intellectuals filled her court, many studying nearby at the famous Alexandrian library. Educated in philosophy, rhetoric, and oratory, she was an accomplished linguist and had mastered the language of her Egyptian

subjects, the first Greek monarch to do so.⁴⁵ When Julius Caesar left Alexandria after his almost-one-year liaison with the queen of the Nile, he took with him ideas about calendar reform, Hellenistic governance, public libraries, and building projects that would quickly make their way into Roman society. He would even create a golden statue of Cleopatra in the precinct of his Roman Forum.

After giving birth to Caesar’s son, Cleopatra identified with the deity Isis. Cleopatra maintained this identification throughout her reign, often appearing in public dressed as the goddess. “Isis was the ideal women’s goddess—the guardian of women, marriage, maternity, fertility, and children.”⁴⁶ Later, when Roman propaganda depicted Cleopatra as a whore, the epithet clashed violently with the view her Egyptian subjects held of her, as a champion of women and motherhood.

How did this skilled, able “ruler of outstanding ability and experience,”⁴⁷ called even by Josephus a woman “of the highest dignity of any of her sex at that time in the world,”⁴⁸ become, to use the title of Schiff’s final chapter, “the wickedest woman in history”? In short, Cleopatra became caught up in the last of the Roman civil wars. The wars convulsed Asia Minor and the Eastern Mediterranean and brought an end to the Republic. In this upheaval, she found herself on the losing side.

Cleopatra’s involvement in Roman affairs had been inevitable, given the importance of Egypt. “Egyptian grain could supply Rome for four months of the year.”⁴⁹ When it became clear that Octavian and Antony, the ambitious and contending co-leaders of Rome, would not be reconciled, Octavian began a propaganda war against Antony and the queen of Egypt—a war that gained momentum after the Donations of Alexandria in 34 BCE.⁵⁰

This event followed Antony’s minor victory in Armenia and involved a Roman-style Triumph down the streets

When Julius Caesar left Alexandria after his almost-one-year liaison with the queen of the Nile, he took with him ideas about calendar reform, Hellenistic governance, public libraries, and building projects that would quickly make their way into Roman society.

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of Alexandria with conquered royalty, captives, and treasures in train. The treasures of Armenia, along with its king, were presented to Cleopatra and her children. Anthony divided the eastern empire among Cleopatra's children, and later, by his decree, she was called the "Queen of Kings, whose sons are Kings."⁵¹

Octavian, who saw all this as a threat to his own imperial ambitions, made sure that the Roman people did not celebrate this queen's new titles and territories, even if her children did have Roman blood in their veins. In the literary accounts of Rome, the scheming queen had seduced Antony, who now showed more loyalty to her family and land than to his own.⁵² Grant points out that "the propaganda that she had ensnared Antony in oriental debauchery, and that this was what kept him away from the active life of a Roman, was a lie."⁵³ But that did not matter to Rome. As Grant observes, "successful propaganda does not depend on reason, or truth, but thrives on moral, emotional and scandalous issues." For Octavian, "Cleopatra proved a perfect battle-cry."⁵⁴

Roman writers challenged Cleopatra's new authority. When Antony had coins minted with the two of them depicted together, Rome squirmed. "What was a foreign woman doing on a Roman coin?" It was not just that Antony "shared denarii with a woman not his wife. He appeared to be distributing Roman lands to a foreigner."⁵⁵ This was a direct challenge to the Roman hegemony that Octavian envisaged; thus, he created and fostered Roman disgust with Cleopatra and then used it for his own political advantage. Octavian charged Antony with aligning himself with an enemy of Rome. Observes Schiff:

It would be difficult to say to whom Cleopatra was more vital in 32 [BCE]: the man to whom she was the partner, or the man to whom she was the pretext. Antony could not win a war without her. Octavian could not wage one.⁵⁶

In the waging of this war, propaganda was one of Octavian's most effective strategies. In the historical narratives of future generations, Cleopatra was ruthless and cunning, "the oriental woman who had ensnared the Roman leader in her evil luxury, the harlot who had seized Roman territories, until even Rome itself was not safe from her degenerate alien hordes."⁵⁷ Would she even dare to seat herself upon the seven hills?

After the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium, Romans were taught to think of the queen as that whore who had almost cost Rome its empire. As W. W. Tam states:

against Cleopatra was launched one of the most terrible outbursts of hatred in history; no accusation was too vile to be hurled at her; and the charges then made have echoed through the world ever since, and have sometimes been naively taken for facts.⁵⁸

The popular contemporary Roman poet Propertius (50–15 BCE), for example, used the image of Cleopatra as a whore to underscore the dangers of a powerful woman who could bring a man "enslaved under her rule." Propertius devoted no less than three full paragraphs to Cleopatra, paragraphs full of invective. "Truly that whore, queen of incestuous Canopus [a town in Egypt near Alexandria] . . . spread her foul mosquito nets over the Tarpeian Rock [a steep cliff of the Capitoline hill in Ancient Rome]."⁵⁹

By the time the author of Revelation wrote, Roman propaganda against Cleopatra had substituted itself for her actual history and had become embedded in the cultural memory of the empire, particularly in the eastern portion of it.⁶⁰ Asia Minor's cultural ties and complex interactions with Antony and Cleopatra meant that the region's history included the stories of the Greek queen of Egypt.

Cleopatra in the Cultural Memory of Asia Minor

As already noted, first and foremost, Cleopatra and Asia Minor had backed the wrong general in the Roman civil war. The cities of this eastern province had provided hospitality and resources for Antony at various stages of the conflict. In 41 BCE, Antony had arrived in Ephesus, a major port city in Asia Minor, to be greeted as a god by the Ephesians:

Antony now exercised wider control in the east than any Hellenistic ruler since Alexander, so that the divine honors seemed to come to him quite naturally. Besides, he needed to counter Octavian's proclamation that he was the son of a god. So, Antony was not just the son of a god, he was god: Dionysus, the world-conquering provider of happiness and immortality. . . . Ephesian inscriptions, too, proclaimed him God Manifest, son of Ares and Aphrodite (Mars and Venus), savior of all mankind.⁶¹

Antony then moved further east to the city of Tarsus located in Cilicia, the province bordering Asia. It was from this location that Antony summoned Cleopatra. It was a good political move in order to win over the people of that region. Antony and Cleopatra would meet in lands with a long history of her Hellenistic culture and heritage.⁶²

Plutarch's late first-century CE, highly inflated description of Cleopatra's trip to Antony in Tarsus alleged extravagance beyond imagination. Accompanied by over a hundred boats loaded with every conceivable luxury, she arrived on a barge whose stern was made of gold, whose sails were the purple of royalty, and whose oars were silver, "which kept stroke in rowing after the sound of the music of flutes" and other instruments. Cleopatra reclined under "a pavilion of cloth of gold tissue" with painted boys using "little fans in their hands" to keep the queen cool. Perfume filled the air. People ran along the river following the sight. Widespread rumor had it that "the goddess Venus was come to play with the god Bacchus for the general good of all Asia."⁶³

Whatever the truth of this first adult encounter between Antony and Cleopatra, it was a memorable event

for the people living in Tarsus. Cleopatra's style was luxurious and lavish. Rome called such luxury obscene. The "Lady of Abundance" was known for her pearls at a time when, "[i]f moral turpitude began with shellfish and metastasized into purple and scarlet robes, it found its ostentatious apogee in pearls." These "topped the extravagance scale in Rome."⁶⁴

For the people of Asia Minor, however, Cleopatra was royalty living in luxury as royalty was expected to live. Her heritage was that of a Ptolemaic queen of Egypt and she shared their Hellenistic culture. Worship of the Egyptian goddess Isis was popular in Asia Minor at this time, and Cleopatra further inspired such worship. She could protect them.⁶⁵ In addition, she gave hope for the future to the people living in Asia province.⁶⁶

By the time Cleopatra left Antony in Tarsus and returned to Egypt, she had agreed to provide supplies for Antony's upcoming war with the Parthians. Antony had agreed to have Cleopatra's only remaining rival sibling, Arsinoë, put to death. This was a tricky undertaking, as Arsinoë had taken sanctuary several years earlier in Ephesus at the famous temple to Artemis. Some in Ephesus, given their ties to the Ptolemaic line, had even declared Arsinoë queen of Egypt. Perhaps for that very reason, in 41 BCE Antony had her executed. This event would long stay in the memories of the Ephesians, not only because of their insistence that Antony pardon the priest who had served Arsinoë, but also because of the city's policy that the temple of Artemis was a sacred place of asylum.⁶⁷ An unusual octagonal structure in Ephesus has recently been identified by archaeologists as the tomb of Arsinoë, and that perhaps,

Mark Antony intended to conceal Arsinoë's assassination by an honorable burial as far away from her native city as possible. The time frame in which this building was erected as well as the historical circumstances are both indications of the assassinated Ptolemaian princess Arsinoë IV.⁶⁸

Antony and Cleopatra certainly left their mark upon the major cities of Asia Minor. In addition, at least in Roman propaganda, they would be known for what they did not leave. Plutarch recorded that Antony took a collection of 200,000 volumes from the much-revered Pergamum li-

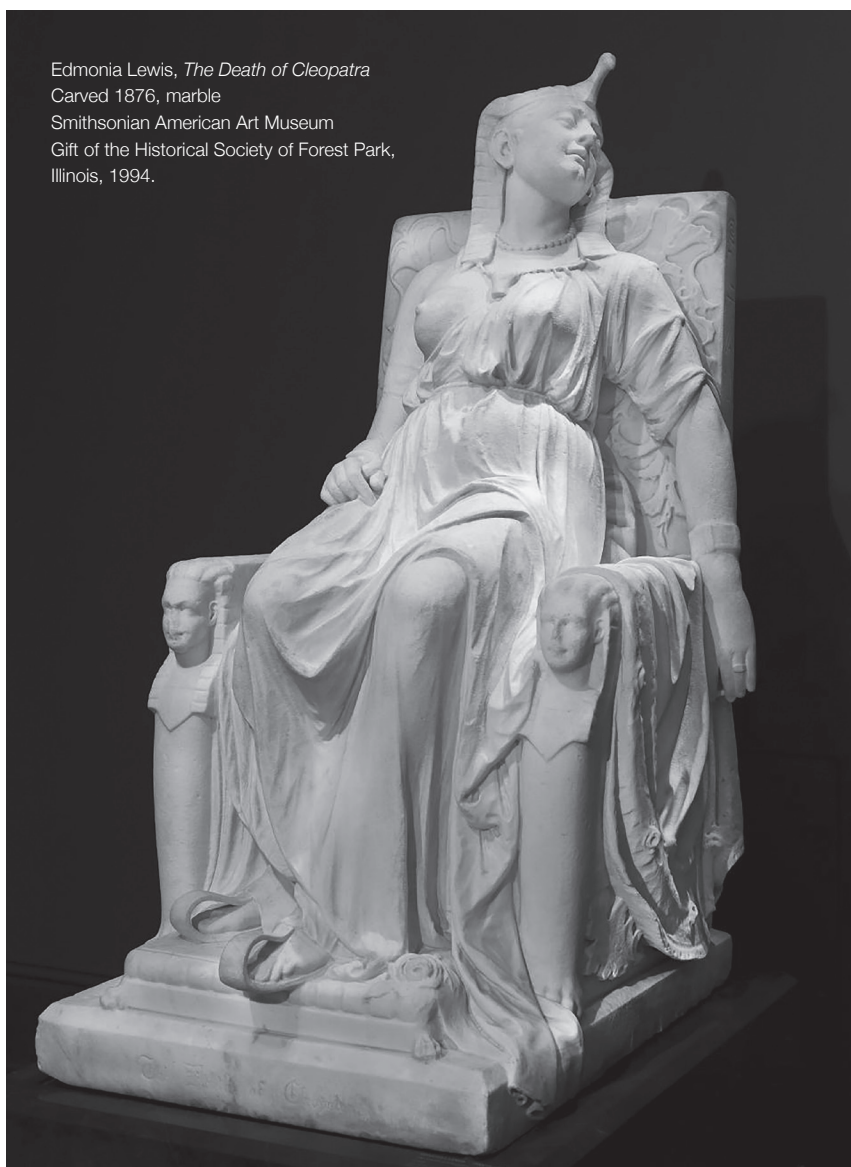
brary, first established under King Eumenes II (197–58 BCE) of the former Kingdom of Pergamum, and gave it to Cleopatra for her library in Alexandria.⁶⁹ True or not, the loss enhanced the legend.

Antony and Cleopatra settled in Ephesus for another extended period of time in 33–32 BCE, this time having gathered troops for the showdown with Octavian. The military camps alone provided material for telling stories to Ephesian children for many years to come. The couple “settled for the winter at Ephesus in Asia Minor. Antony’s military prowess and Cleopatra’s treasury still looked to be unbeatable.”⁷⁰ Michael Grant notes that:

For the first time since Alexander the Great, the whole sea-power of the near east was in the hands of one man. In addition to 300 merchant vessels, he had 500 warships, of which Cleopatra contributed 200. She also provided enough money and supplies to see his army through a whole campaigning season. Canidius Crassus [a Roman general] had now brought the bulk of it back from Armenia; there were 75,000 legionaries (30 legions), 25,000 light-armed infantry and 12,000 cavalry.⁷¹

Although sources suggest that Antony thought it best that Cleopatra return to Egypt before the battle began, she stayed in Ephesus encouraging the Egyptian forces in their joint military cause. Crassus supported Cleopatra’s presence, “considering that he could see no king of all the kings [of] their confederates that Cleopatra was inferior unto, either for wisdom or judgment, seeing that long before she had wisely governed so great a realm as Egypt.”⁷²

Antony and Cleopatra and their vast armies lost the battle of Actium (September 31 BCE) and suddenly Asia Minor was on the wrong side. After Actium, things dras-



Edmonia Lewis, *The Death of Cleopatra*
Carved 1876, marble
Smithsonian American Art Museum
Gift of the Historical Society of Forest Park,
Illinois, 1994.

tically changed in the province. In order to survive in the newly united empire of which they were a part, people living in Ephesus, Pergamum, and other Asian cities had to find ways to express their loyalty to Octavian, now Caesar Augustus. Within two years, the first imperial cult in Asia Minor was established at Pergamum (29 BCE).⁷³ Smyrna would follow in 26 CE, with a temple dedicated to Tiberius, Augustus, and the Roman Senate. And in 89 CE, Ephesus would create the Temple of the Sebastoi, the temple in honor of the line of Emperor Domitian (81–96 CE). No other province in the empire had more than one imperial cult. By the end of the first century, Asia had three. The imperial cult came to permeate life in Asia, a province desperately needing to be on the side of Augustus and his successors.

The historical necessity of the imperial cult, as well as the queen-whore imagery, would have resonated with readers in the Asia province as part of their cultural memory of the Greek queen of Egypt.

The enthusiastic embrace of the imperial cult in Asia accomplished for its cities what Herod the Great accomplished for himself personally. Josephus, writing during the second half of the first century CE, reflected the way the propaganda about Cleopatra had already permeated and was being propagated in much of the empire. Josephus told of the first encounter between Herod and Octavian following the latter's victory at Actium. In Josephus's account, Herod first took off his diadem and then defended his friendship with Antony, arguing that this was appropriate since Antony was his benefactor—the one who had made him king of the Jews. But, he hesitated to tell the new Caesar, he had told Antony to kill Cleopatra, but Antony would not listen. As Antony had made plans to advance on Octavian, Herod had been called away to defend his own territory against Arabia. He wanted Caesar to know that he had not been standing at Antony's side at Actium.⁷⁴ Josephus's Caesar responded by replacing Herod's diadem and saying: "Antony has done well in preferring Cleopatra to you; for by this means we have gained you by her madness."⁷⁵ They then began to feast together.

To underscore his loyalty, Herod made himself Cleopatra's enemy. The province of Asia Minor, the former territory of Antony and Cleopatra, was forced to give its loyalty to Caesar Augustus. In doing so, Asia also distanced itself from Cleopatra. Worship of Isis, goddess of Egypt, was out.⁷⁶ Worship of the emperor was in.

Cultural Memory and Revelation 17

By the time John wrote the book of Revelation to fol-

lowers of Jesus living in the major cities of Asia Minor, the imperial cult had been flourishing for several generations. All people were expected to participate in the cult, including frequent city festivals, games, and sporting events. Commerce and trade were associated with the cult through local trade guilds, and Asia was flourishing in its cooperation with the Roman Empire. Asia's exports were similar to those listed by John in his description of the goods traded by "Babylon" later in the book of Revelation.⁷⁷ In addition, worship of the emperors took place in a myriad of contexts. Emperors were worshipped in their own temples, at temples of other gods, in theaters, in gymnasias, in stoas, in basilicas, in judicial settings, in private homes and elsewhere. Imperial cults were everywhere.⁷⁸

John called his readers to refuse to participate in the cult, including the daily activities of the marketplaces, trade guilds, and shrines. To make his strongest rhetorical point, John portrayed Rome as a queen-whore. His readers were admonished to avoid all involvement in the imperial cult, including participating in commerce. Followers of Jesus were not to be seduced by the whore's luxuries, but to resist her economic exploits and violence. The ἀποκάλυψις was that the powerful queen was really a powerless πόρνη. It was just a matter of time, and she would be defeated. They must not go down with her. John believed that Christians in the province of Asia Minor were in a crisis.⁷⁹ "The crisis addressed in Revelation is primarily an ideological conflict, arising from the author's utter rejection of the claims of the Roman Empire to power and authority."⁸⁰ Christians must resist.

The way apocalyptic literature functions "is to shape

one's imaginative perception of a situation and so lay the basis for whatever course of action it exhorts."⁸¹ How might the whore imagery of Revelation 17 have shaped readers' imaginations and therefore their actions?

The historical necessity of the imperial cult, as well as the queen-whore imagery, would have resonated with readers in the Asia province as part of their cultural memory of the Greek queen of Egypt who had spent two of her last three years living in their region. Stories and physical landmarks remained. And the queen-whore's great city of Alexandria still flourished just 400 miles to the south. But who was the whore . . . really? Rome had resisted the whore, even if Antony and Asia had not. Rome had killed her: a woman of power made into a whore in Roman poetry and legend. For John, however, *Rome* was the whore to be resisted. Would such a shift have jarred John's first readers? Might some have welcomed it?

Wolfgang Iser argues that the experience of reading means that text and reader converge. This is possible through what he calls the "repertoire" of the text. He says,

The repertoire consists of all the familiar territory within the text. This may be in the form of references to earlier works, or to social and historical norms, or to the whole culture from which the text has emerged. In the literary text they thus become capable of new connections, but at the same time the old connections are still present, at least to a certain degree.⁸²

The meaning of πόρνη as a vulnerable slave working the streets was "familiar territory" but required "new connections" when John's work included πόρνη who was also a queen. For some readers, the Hebrew prophetic literary tradition, associating cities with female whores representing idolatry and economic exploitation, was "familiar territory." For other readers, statues in various locations of the empire depicting conquered nations as ravished women added visual images to the "familiar territory." For still others, the *Dea Roma* coin provided "familiar territory" and gave meaning to Revelation 17.

But another rich source of "familiar territory" is the legend of Cleopatra. Some readers would have drawn upon this culturally embedded story of the queen-whore of Roman propaganda which would also have given

meaning to the queen-whore of the Apocalypse. The story began with the arrival of a new god, Dionysus, his companion carried on a golden barge, and the union that gave hope to the peoples of the east. The story also included the great temple to Artemis, the famous asylum that failed to save the Greek queen Arsinoë. This strand of the story explained her unique tomb, a landmark reminder of the Cleopatra legend in the city of Ephesus. The story also told of the great library of Pergamum whose loss was lamented for generations. In Ephesus, the story included great military camps and hundreds of ships that were lost forever. Throughout Asia, every temple and shrine and religious site for the imperial cult recalled Cleopatra's story and the time when, like the Jewish Herod, the province proved its loyalty to Augustus by distancing itself from the last Ptolemaic queen of Egypt.

This paper proposes that the culturally embedded story of Cleopatra provided part of the book of Revelation's "repertoire," creating meaning as readers imagined the text's queen-πόρνη. Who else could play the part so well in this description of a whore whose sexual promiscuity, powerful liaisons, intoxicating femininity, and seductive ways made her extremely dangerous? "That Cleopatra was the most powerful woman in the ancient world's first century CE cannot be contested."⁸³ By John's day, Rome's view of Cleopatra had been well established: Cleopatra was a lover of luxury, and a ruthless woman who had blood on her hands.⁸⁴

John took familiar imagery created by Rome's literary history and used it for his own purposes.⁸⁵ He turned it against Rome, unveiling the way Rome itself worked. The Roman Empire was the "great whore," "with whom the kings of the earth have whored" (17:1-2). Rome wore "purple and scarlet," and was "bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls" (4). Cleopatra's golden cups may have held potions and poisons, but Rome held a cup "full of abominations and impurities" (4). Cleopatra might have been acclaimed as the "Mother of Kings," and to Rome, the mother of "bastard children," but for John, Rome was "Babylon the great, mother of whores" (5). She was responsible for the blood of thousands, "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues" (15). John used familiar imagery created to invoke Rome's enemy, but then turned it on Rome itself. In Rome "was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain

on earth” (18:24). After Cleopatra’s suicide, Rome celebrated. The enemy queen was no more. John’s audience would celebrate when Rome was no more. The figure of Cleopatra as an interpretive key to the imagery of Revelation 17 enriches and broadens the understanding of this important section of the Apocalypse.

Conclusion

Israel’s prophetic literary tradition, Roman statues of conquered nations, and Roman coins depicting the goddess Roma, provide important historical contexts with which to read Revelation 17. However, the legends surrounding Cleopatra supply the author of Revelation with his most powerful rhetorical resource for critiquing the Roman Empire, especially for those living in Asia Minor. Given this cultural backdrop, we can better appreciate how the imagery of the queen-whore might have gripped first-century readers and hearers of the Apocalypse. This paper argues that in John’s use of the imagery, a particular woman would have come to mind.

Of course, this reading raises questions. This reading acknowledges that John’s rhetoric works only by reinforcing Roman propaganda about Cleopatra and therefore calls for a reading against the text.⁸⁶ Readers must resist texts that reduce any woman’s story to whore, even as they celebrate the end of an unjust system where women are forced to play the prostitute in order to survive. How can readers resist both the seductive allure of the whore and the seductive allure of the violence that marks her end?⁸⁷ Such questions require further reflection beyond the scope of this paper.

For the Christian readers of the Apocalypse, Chapter 17 left no doubt as to whom the whore referred: “The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth” (17:18). At the end of the first century, that city was Rome. And the writer was convinced that Rome was doomed. This was a highly effective rhetorical device. Here was a text that used Rome’s own hatred-filled literary history against Rome. John moved his readers from historical allusions of Rome’s destruction of its enemy, Cleopatra, to the destruction of Rome, the system that sanctioned the slave trade, brothels, and humans as commodities. Christians must not be seduced by Rome.

Contemporary preaching seeking to interpret Revelation 17 can do so in a more informed way. Christians must

resist contemporary manifestations of both the whore and the whore-like empire that silenced her. For John, the destruction of Rome’s system was as sure as Cleopatra’s demise. The book of Revelation continues to call its readers to faithful living and steadfast resistance to Babylon.

Endnotes

1. Jennifer A. Glancy and Stephen D. Moore, “How Typical a Roman Prostitute Is Revelation’s ‘Great Whore?’”, *JBL* 130, no. 3 (2011): 551–69, suggest the picture is typical.

2. After the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Romans in 70 CE, Jewish literature referred to Rome as “Babylon.” See Rev. 17:5, 18, and Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch 35–40. For this and other reasons, the majority of scholars place the writing of the book of Revelation at the end of the first century, probably at the end of the reign of Domitian (81–96 CE).

3. I show the repeated use of πόρνη and πορνεία in the description by repeating forms of the English “whore” and “whoring.”

4. Leslie Kurke, *Coins, Bodies, Games, and Gold: The Politics of Meaning in Archaic Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 175–219, in a section called “The *Hetaira* and the *Porne*.” After making a similar distinction, Rebecca Flemming, “*Quae Corpore Quaestum Facit*: The Sexual Economy of Female Prostitution in the Roman Empire,” *JRS* 89 (1999): 38–61, uses the Latin word *meretrix* (from *mereo*, “a woman who earns”) throughout much of her essay. Such women were contrasted with the *matrona*, the respectable wife of a Roman citizen. See also Laura K. McClure, “Introduction” in *Prostitutes & Courtesans in the Ancient World*, edited by Christopher A. Faraone and Laura K. McClure (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 3–18.

5. Flemming, “*Quae Corpore*,” 46; “By and large prostitution forms part of the slave economy, so though the labour is hers the profits are not” (50).

6. Kurke, *Coins, Bodies*, 181–82, considers prostitution and the emergence of the coinage economy. A πόρνη was like the coin itself: interchangeable, indiscriminate, and public.

7. David E. Aune, in *Revelation 17–22*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 906–12, uses the word “perplexed” rather than “marveled,” suggesting the puzzlement of the seer.

8. Fantine’s story is narrated in a section of Victor Hugo’s novel aptly called, “The Descent.” Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. by Julie Rose (New York: Modern Library, 2009; French original, 1862), 158. See also pages 134–67.

9. Flemming, “*Quae Corpore*,” 47. Kurke doubts that the equal social status between the εταίρα and her male partner was ever more than fantasy. Kurke shows the fluidity of the terms in Greek art. Glancy and Moore, “How Typical?,” 557, also challenge the historical accuracy of the courtesan literary tradition.

10. Glancy and Moore, “How Typical?,” 555: “She is πόρνη, in John’s discourse of contempt, because she has had many sexual partners, and she has had many sexual partners because she is a πόρνη.”

11. Glancy and Moore, “How Typical?,” 562: “What the paradoxical figure of Babylon would have evoked for first-cen-

tury audiences, we would argue, is not the social type of the brothel slave, pure and simple, nor yet the literary topos of the courtesan, pure and simple—although in contrast to most previous scholarship we would see her as closer to the former than to the latter.”

12. Flemming, “*Quae Corpore*,” 41: “the basic premise that prostitutes broadly become such through enslavement (or, at least, that the great majority of prostitutes are slaves) is certainly borne out in numerous sources.”

13. Sandra R. Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 152: “The essential definition of the slave as property, at the disposal of the slave owner and the owner’s power over the slave trumped all the slave’s human relations.”

14. Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 10.

15. See the helpful discussions subtitled “Body Count,” “Bodies without Boundaries,” and “Surrogate Bodies” in Glancy, *Slavery*, 10–16. See also, Joshel, *Slavery*, 38–41, 151–52. K. R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) discusses the abuse of slaves’ bodies—both male and female—for economic motives. See especially “Fear, Abuse, and Violence,” 113–37.

16. Flemming, “*Quae Corpore*,” 56.

17. Glancy and Moore, “How Typical?,” 558. Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, *Women’s Life in Greece and Rome: A Source Book in Translation*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 381, illustrates the typical attitude to a prostitute.

18. Glancy, *Slavery*, 54. Flemming, in “*Quae Corpore*,” 53, discusses this as the “no prostituatur” covenant regarding the sale of slaves. Joshel, in *Slavery*, 71, notes that Emperor Hadrian (117–38 CE) put limits on the sale of female slaves for prostitution.

19. Glancy and Moore, “How Typical?” 556–57.

20. This leads Glancy and Moore, “How Typical?,” 562–69, to their conclusion concerning Tacitus’s construction of Valeria Messalina, who, precisely because she was an atypical “whore-empress,” might be the person John was alluding to in the book of Revelation. See Tacitus, *Ann.* 11.1–4, 12, 26–38 and Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.115–32, along with Sandra R. Joshel, “Female Desire and the Discourse of Empire: Tacitus’s Messalina” in *Roman Sexualities*, edited by Judith P. Hallett and Marilyn B. Skinner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 221–54. While I agree with Glancy and Moore that “John’s characterization of Babylon as πόρνη, both participates in and disrupts this pattern of discourse” (564), I believe the evidence suggests a different historical figure fictionally portrayed in Roman literature.

21. Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Apocalypse*, New Testament Message 22 (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1979), 118. See also, Yarbro Collins, “Feminine Symbolism in the Book of Revelation,” *Biblical Interpretation* 1, no. 1 (1993): 26.

22. Jeremiah 50:12–13, NRSV. For judgment oracles against Babylon, see Isa. 13:1–14:23; Isa. 47; and Jer. 50–51. For judgment oracles against Tyre, see Isa. 23 and Ez. 26–28.

23. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Babylon the Great: A

Rhetorical-Political Reading of Revelation 17–18” in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, edited by David L. Barr (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 243–69, citing 261. The metaphorical use of immorality/idolatry can be seen in Rev. 14:8; 17:2, 4; 18:3; 19:2.

24. Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 345–46.

25. *Ibid.*, 346: “Tyre’s commercial enterprise is compared with prostitution because it is association [*sic*] with other nations for the sake of profit. Thus we should expect the primary significance of John’s portrayal of Rome as the great harlot to be economic.”

26. Ezekiel’s judgment oracle against Tyre included its claim to be god (Ezek. 28:2, 9). Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 348, and others would suggest that John’s critique of Rome includes the imperial cult.

27. Schüssler Fiorenza, “Babylon the Great,” 262, agrees: “The conventional use of ‘practicing immorality’ as signifying idolatry is here redefined as political ‘intercourse’ that negotiates wealth, power and violent death.”

28. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 347.

29. Craig R. Koester, “Roman Slave Trade and the Critique of Babylon in Revelation 18,” *CBQ* 70 (2008): 766–86.

30. Davina C. Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul’s Mission* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008). See especially “The Fate of the Nations in Roman Imperial Representation,” 26–55.

31. Geraldine Thommen “The Sebasteion at Aphrodisias: An Imperial Cult to Honor Augustus and the Julio-Claudian Emperors,” *Chronika* 2, [Online Graduate Student Journal, Institute for European and Mediterranean Archaeology, 2012]: 82–91. Thommen includes a picture of ravaged Armenia from the Sebasteion (88). Available from <http://www.chronikajournal.com/resources/ChronikaVolume2.pdf>.

32. Aune discusses this coin in *Revelation 17–22*, 920–23. Flemming, “*Quae Corpore*,” 47, briefly discusses the word *lupa* for she-wolf, which is also a Latin slang word for prostitute.

33. Tina Pippin, *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 61–62, uses the phrase “There is no memorial marker” to refer to both the whore and the rulers of the world (Rev. 19:17–21).

34. C. P. Jones, “*Stigma*: Tattooing and Branding in Graeco-Roman Antiquity,” *JRS* 77 (1987): 151, calls her “a whore of the most degraded kind, a tattooed slave.”

35. In her recent biography of Cleopatra, Stacy Schiff, *Cleopatra: A Life* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2011), considers both aspects.

36. Michael Grant, *Cleopatra* (Edison: Castle Books, 2004 reprint of 1972 original), 181, calls Alexandria “a cultural centre without equal in the Mediterranean world.” Duane W. Roller, *Cleopatra: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 33, agrees.

37. Cleopatra became pregnant with Antony’s twins, Alexander Helios and Cleopatra Selene, while he was married to Fulvia. Cleopatra gave birth to their third child, Ptolemy Philadelphus, when Antony was married to Octavian’s sister, Octavia.

38. Lucan, *Bellum Civile* X.36 1–62.
39. Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995 reprint of 1975 original), 124, states: “the phenomenon of Cleopatra must be set firmly in the context of Ptolemaic queens, shrewd, able, and ambitious. She was not a courtesan, an exotic plaything for Roman generals. Rather, Cleopatra’s liaisons with the Romans must be considered to have been, from her viewpoint, legitimate dynastic alliances with promises of the greatest possible success and profit to the queen and to Egypt.” Pomeroy also states of Cleopatra that her “competence as a ruler was never questioned, and Egypt remained loyal to her” (187).
40. Roller, *Cleopatra*, 103–28.
41. Diana E. E. Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2005).
42. Roller, *Cleopatra*, 56, asserts that “she was determined to do better” than her father in resolving the difficulties with Rome. Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*, 78, states: “What the young queen undertook was the quintessential balancing act. Cleopatra apparently resolved to continue an association with Rome that would support the superpower’s expansionist aspirations while allowing Egypt to maintain a strong and independent national identity.”
43. Schiff, *Cleopatra*, 258.
44. *Ibid.*, 43.
45. Roller, *Cleopatra*, 123–28.
46. Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*, 166; Roller, *Cleopatra*, 114–15. Grant, *Cleopatra*, 118–19, describes Isis as: “Sweetly thoughtful, graciously sympathetic, paradoxically both sexual and pure, she taught women how to find pardon and peace.”
47. Grant, *Cleopatra*, 237.
48. Josephus, *A.Ĵ.* XV.4.2.101.
49. Roller, *Cleopatra*, 104–05.
50. *Ibid.*, 130: “These attacks and carefully laid rumors were the basis for the negative tradition about Cleopatra that found literary expression in the writers of the Augustan era and which has pervaded the popular view of the queen ever since.”
51. Grant, *Cleopatra*, 161–71; Schiff, *Cleopatra*, 231–35.
52. Plutarch, *Antonius*, 26, a contemporary of the author of the book of Revelation, said that the donations “greatly offended the Romans and made them much to dislike it, when they saw that for Cleopatra’s sake he deprived his country of her due honor and glory, only to gratify the Egyptians.”
53. Grant, *Cleopatra*, 156. Plutarch, *Ant.* 13.1, introduced Cleopatra as one “who did waken and stir up many vices yet hidden in him, and were never seen to any; and if any spark of goodness or hope of rising were left him, Cleopatra quenched it straight and made it worse than before.” Josephus, *B.Ĵ.* 1.12.5, also a contemporary of the author of Revelation, said Antony was “in love with Cleopatra to the degree of slavery.”
54. Grant, *Cleopatra*, 190. See also Plutarch, *Antonius*, 33: “Now after Caesar had made sufficient preparation, he proclaimed open war against Cleopatra, and made the people to abolish the power and empire of Antonius, because he had before given it up unto a woman.”
55. Schiff, *Cleopatra*, 235. For an English translation of the coins, see Grant, *Cleopatra*, 168–69.
56. Schiff, *Cleopatra*, 260.
57. Grant, *Cleopatra*, 201. Grant also notes: “Cleopatra’s enemies also developed the idea that she was a harlot. Such an interpretation came easily to Romans who regarded sensuality as typically Greek.” (178). Plutarch, *Antonius*, 21, would refer to Cleopatra’s “sweet poison of her love” over Antony so “that he had no other thought but of her.”
58. W. W. Tarn and M. P. Charlesworth, *Octavian, Antony and Cleopatra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 122.
59. *Elegy* by Propertius IU.11:1–72.
60. The poetry of the poet Propertius (50–15 BCE) and other literary forms of propaganda about the queen-whore of Egypt by Lucan (39–65 CE), Josephus (37–100 CE), and Plutarch (46–119 CE) would have been written by the time John wrote the book of Revelation (96 CE). Josephus wrote *Bellum judaicum* in 75 CE and *Antiquitates judaicae* in 94 CE, though *Contra Apionem* was not written until 97 CE. Plutarch’s *Antonius* is considered late first century. These works clearly show that Cleopatra was available in the literary imagination as a figure for John’s “great whore.” Given what we now know about Cleopatra from Roman propaganda, there are echoes aplenty. As the “great whore” she was the “mother of whores” (Rev. 17:1, 5), with control of waterways and therefore people (1). Kings of the earth had been seduced by her and had shared her wine (2). She was arrayed in “purple and scarlet,” with “gold and jewels and pearls” (4). Her hand had held many golden cups (4) full of her love poisons. Her partners in sexual immorality and drunkenness had turned on her and had utterly destroyed her (16), and the gods had willed her overthrow in the restoration of Rome by Octavian (17).
61. Grant, *Cleopatra*, 110–11. See also, Plutarch, *Antonius*, 12.
62. Christine M. Thomas, “At Home in the City of Artemis: Religion in Ephesus in the Literary Imagination of the Roman Period,” in *Ephesus: Metropolis of Asia*, edited by Helmut Koester, HTS (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995), 81–117, argues for the dominance of Greek cultural values in this region even after the Roman conquest.
63. See Plutarch, *Antonius*, 13.
64. Schiff, *Cleopatra*, 96, 121. Lucan, *Bellum Civile*, X.142, describes Cleopatra’s extravagance by saying she was “weighed down by her ornaments.”
65. Collins, “Feminine Symbolism,” 20–33, states that the female metaphor “may reflect an ancient Near Eastern understanding of goddesses as protectors of particular peoples or cities. This protective goddess, often called the Fortune of the city, was usually portrayed with a crown that looked like a city wall” (26).
66. W. W. Tarn believes that a document he identifies as the *despoina*-prophecy reflected the hopes of the Hellenists for a child who would bring together East and West and usher in an age of peace and reconciliation. Given his dating of the materials, Tarn thinks that the best interpretation of the child is the son Alexander Helios, born to Antony and Cleopatra. Vergil would apply the prophecy to Octavian, making Augustus the

leader of the new era. See “Alexander Helios and the Golden Age,” *JRS* 22, no. 2 (1932): 136–60.

67. Thomas, “At Home,” 98, states: “One aspect of the temple captured the imagination of Roman-period writers more than any other: the inviolability of the sanctuary.” And also: “Widespread knowledge of the asylum offered by Artemis served the fame and prosperity of the city, attracting a number of wealthy and important figures, many of them aristocratic political refugees” (106).

68. Hilke Thur, “The Processional Way in Ephesus as a Place of Cult and Burial,” in *Ephesos: Metropolis of Asia*, edited by Helmut Koester, HTS (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995), 157–99, citing 182. See also Peter Scherrer, “The City of Ephesos from the Roman Period to Late Antiquity,” also in *Ephesos: Metropolis of Asia*, 1–25: “an octagonal structure adjacent to the Tomb of Androklos is now identified as having been built for Arsinoë IV, the sister of Cleopatra VII” (6).

69. Plutarch, *Antonius*, 33.

70. Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*, 112.

71. Grant, *Cleopatra*, 193–94.

72. Plutarch, *Antonius*, 31. Plutarch says that Crassus spoke such words because he was bribed.

73. Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 32, states: “Asia’s first provincial cult was forged in 29 BCE in the aftermath of major struggles for control over the Mediterranean world. Asia had backed the wrong general (Antony) and then needed to affirm its support of the new ruler (Octavian). The unusual aspects of the arrangement . . . are the result of efforts to negotiate differences in cultic systems because of changing political realities. . . . [T]he cult in Asia . . . became the starting point for an expanding phenomenon of provincial imperial worship throughout the empire.”

74. Josephus, *B.J.* I.20.1.388–90.

75. *Ibid.*, 391.

76. Although Augustus prevented the building of temples to Isis in the city of Rome after 28 BCE, it seems that the Isis cult went out of favor in Asia following the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra. Yarbro Collins, “Feminine Symbolism,” 24, sees similarities between the woman of Rev. 12:1–6 and the Egyptian goddess Isis. If Yarbro Collins is right, John may have been incorporating myths that were still part of the religious consciousness of the people of Asia Minor, even if such beliefs had been forced underground.

77. Arguing that John’s primary audience was made up of Christians in Asia Minor who were involved in commerce, Kirsi Siitonen, “Merchants and Commerce in the Book of Revelation,” in *Imagery in the Book of Revelation*, edited by Michael Labahn and Outi Lehtipuu (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 154, notices: “John’s list includes the main export products of the province of Asia: different textiles, wine, oil, marble, gold, silver, iron and emeralds.” See Rev. 18:11–14.

78. Steven Friesen, “Satan’s Throne, Imperial Cults and the Social Settings of Revelation,” *JSNVT* 27, no. 3 (2005): 363. See also Friesen, *Imperial Cults*, 23–131.

79. Interestingly, 4 Ezra 15:46–49 refers to Asia as “Babylon” and includes whore imagery to depict its idolatry. The author of 4 Ezra wrote after 70 CE and was probably a contemporary of the author of the book of Revelation.

80. John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed., The Biblical Resource Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 273.

81. *Ibid.*, 42.

82. Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 69.

83. Kleiner, *Cleopatra and Rome*, 16.

84. Cleopatra’s visits to Tarsus (41 BCE) and Ephesus (32 BCE), and her tour of Herod’s kingdom (36 BCE) accompanied by her fleets and her vast throng of retainers, were all more recent to John’s readers than even the Civil War is to current American readers. The apostle Paul’s grandfather, if in Tarsus at the time, may well have witnessed the queen’s celebrated visit to that city. It is not difficult to imagine that the grandparents of the author of the Apocalypse recalled her stay in Ephesus.

85. In her work on Revelation 12 (the woman-mother and child) and the combat myth in Revelation, Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, HDR 9 (Missoula: Scholar Press, 1976), 188, argues that the “Apollo myths and cult were made to function as political propaganda for the empire,” but the author of Revelation co-opted the Roman propaganda and used the myth for the Messiah figure over and against Rome. I am suggesting a similar rhetorical strategy by the author in the use of the Cleopatra legend created by Roman propaganda. The enemy of Rome (Cleopatra as whore) becomes Rome as enemy (Rome as whore). See also Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth*, 245. Part of the genius of the imagery of apocalyptic literature is its ability to hold multiple layers of meaning.

86. Schüssler Fiorenza, “Babylon the Great,” uses the phrase “read against the grain” in her rhetorical-political interpretation of Revelation 17.

87. Here I join many who wrestle with such questions and the book of Revelation, including Greg Carey, “Symptoms of Resistance in the Book of Revelation,” in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, edited by David L. Barr (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 169–80.



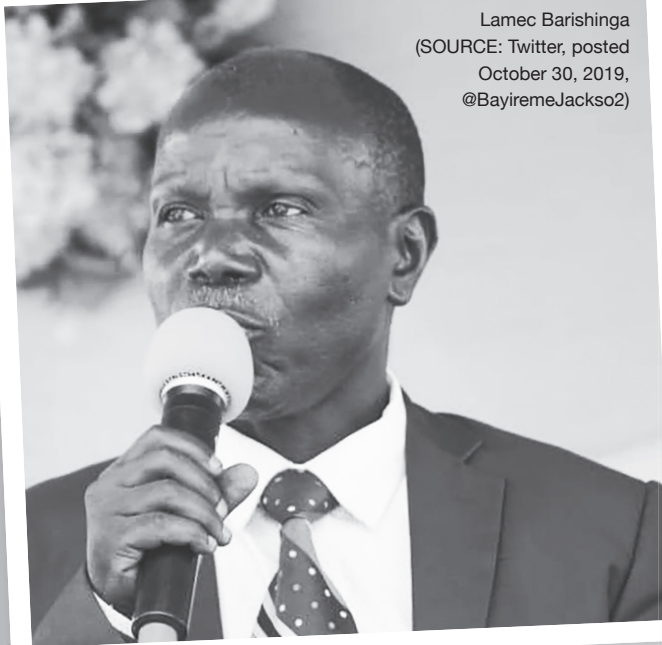
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IN-DEPTH

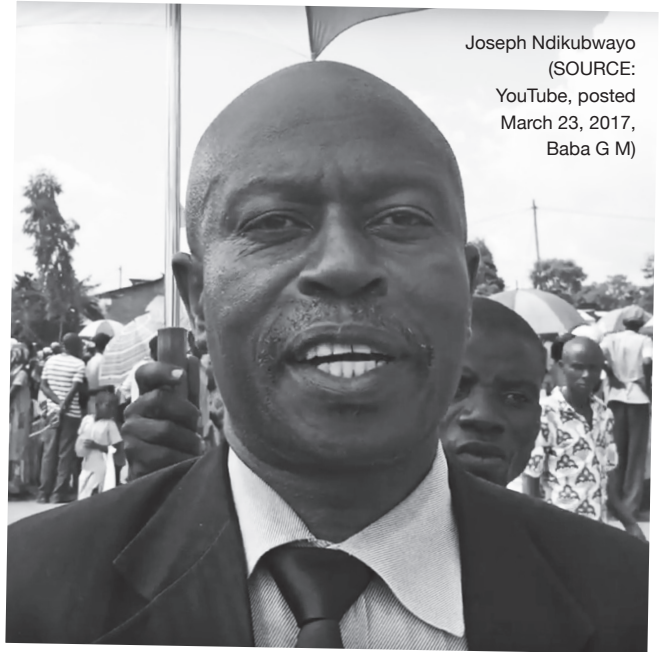


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iStock.com/Oleg Chepurin



Lamec Barishinga
(SOURCE: Twitter, posted
October 30, 2019,
@BayiremeJackso2)



Joseph Ndikubwayo
(SOURCE:
YouTube, posted
March 23, 2017,
Baba G M)

A CHURCH CAPTURED

The Battle for Control of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Burundi

BY GODFREY SANG

On October 24, 2019, the president of the Burundi Union Mission (BUM), Lamec Barishinga, was arrested just as he tried to leave Bujumbura, Burundi for Nairobi, Kenya to attend the East-Central Africa Division (ECD) year-end meeting. The arrest sent shockwaves across Adventist circles around the world. This was the culmination of a series of conflicts between the ECD,

BUM, and the General Conference (GC) over the presidency of BUM. Joseph Ndikubwayo, who was named president of BUM in 2015, maintains that the East-Central Africa Division unfairly replaced him with Barishinga in 2019, and the General Conference ratified that ECD decision. Ndikubwayo continues to function as president of BUM with the support of the government, while Barishinga sits in jail.

The crisis in the Adventist church in Burundi is like no other in the world. Multiple layers of socio-historical and ethno-political issues, including complications of regional tensions and cross-border rivalries, sensitivities over focus by the international community, and an impending general election have all conspired, one way or another, to create a crisis unlike any other in Adventist history. Caught in the middle of it are ordinary Adventists who are now unable to attend church in the manner they did before or even freely associate with one another due to divergent opinions and loyalties. Institutional leaders are under government custody and police have repeatedly been called to intervene in often violent skirmishes that have involved loss of property. Images of police beating up members inside churches went viral and the General Conference president, Ted N. C. Wilson, called for prayers for the church in Burundi. At the heart of the crisis are issues of institutional legitimacy, the management of transitions, and the place of government in religious affairs.

Historical and Contextual Background

Burundi is a landlocked nation in Eastern Africa, bounded on the north by Rwanda, on the east and south by Tanzania, and on the west by Lake Tanganyika and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the early fourteenth century, the Hutu began occupying the present highlands of the country following the eastward Bantu migration from the Congo Basin. They are said to have imposed their language and customs on the Twa people, the area's original inhabitants. A century later, the Tutsi arrived from the north and developed an organized kingdom, establishing themselves as feudal rulers. The Tutsi kings, or *mwamis*, became the monarchs of distinct kingdoms in Burundi and Rwanda.

The area that is now Burundi was colonized in the

late nineteenth century by Germany, jointly with what is today Rwanda, under the name Rwanda-Urundi.¹ The Belgians took over when Germany lost its colonies during WWI and administered it under military occupation from 1916 to 1922. Thereafter, Belgium obtained a League of Nations mandate to rule over the territory which lasted until April 1946, when the region became a United Nations Trust Territory under Belgium. When the United Nations granted independence to the territory in 1962, the area was divided into two countries: the Republic of Rwanda and the Kingdom of Burundi.

Burundi is one of Africa's smallest countries with an area of 10,747 sq. mi. (27,834 sq. km.), but it has one of the highest population densities on the continent. Most Burundians live in family groupings dispersed throughout the highlands, and villages are uncommon. The official languages are Kirundi (which differs slightly from the Kinyarwanda spoken in Rwanda) and French. Kiswahili is also widely spoken along Lake Tanganyika.²

The chief ethnic groups in Burundi are the Hutu and the Tutsi, who traditionally comprised 85% and 14% of the population respectively, with the Twa making up the difference.

As in Rwanda, the Hutu-Tutsi ethnic rivalry has been the dominant feature of Burundian society for a long time. This has almost always defined the national socio-political discourse and the church is usually never left too far behind in the complications of the ethnic matrix of society. Unlike in Rwanda, marriages between Hutu and Tutsi were common in Burundi but that did not quite remove ethnic tensions, partly because society is strongly patrilineal, making identity quite inflexible. Unlike most countries where different ethnic groups live in separate homelands, the Hutu and Tutsi live together, speak the same language, and are separated only by their heritage.

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The politicization of ethnicity and social stratification along ethnic lines, coupled with deep poverty, have served to cause ethnic particularism and unending resentments between the two dominant groups. This severe and often violent problem in Burundi is compounded by high unemployment, high population density, environmental stress, and, to some extent, external factors.³ The situation even crossed borders, and rivalries between Rwanda and Burundi and other nations within the region only added to domestic ethnic tensions. These, and other inexplicable reasons, have played their part in incubating ethnic (and consequently political) instability which in turn has severely affected Burundi's productive capacity, locking the nation in a vicious circle.

PART I

The Coming of Adventism to Burundi

The Adventist church in Burundi began in 1925 with the work of D. E. Delhove, a Belgian Adventist missionary who had worked in Kenya and Rwanda. He settled at a site at Buganda in Cibitoke, some 31 miles (50 km) from Usumbura in the west of Burundi, where he established the Buganda Mission. He remained there for a year, after which the work was taken over by one of the Rwandese missionaries who had accompanied him.

Maxine Duploux, a French missionary, took over in 1927. In 1931, the Urundi Mission was organized and officially became a part of the Congo Union Mission (CUM) which was transferred from the Northern European Division (NED) to the Southern African Division (SAD).

A second mission station was established in 1936 at Ndora, not far from Buganda. In 1937, Hans J. Moolman of South Africa arrived to run the Ndora Mission while Valentine Davies and his wife ran the Buganda Mission. By this time there were eleven schools attached to the Buganda Mission and twelve teachers working there.⁴

The Adventist schools did not discriminate among the tribes and indeed everyone was invited to become a member. The missionaries tended to play down the tribal differences, because they were only interested in the expansion of the church.

In 1932, C. W. Bozarth, president of the Central African Union Mission, which now included Rwanda-Burundi, reported on the progress of the hospital at

TERMS

Mwamis – Tutsi monarchs

Umusozi – fiefdom of mwamis, usually a single hill

Ubugabire system – the Tutsi system of rulership in which most of the Hutus became serfs subjugated by and economically dependent on the minority Tutsi

Ganwa – leaders who vied for the thrones of the Mwamis

Imboneza – a group allegedly led by Simbare Aloise that intimidates and harasses those opposed to Joseph Ndikubwayo

Adventist Women and Men Organization (AWMO) – a group of lay Adventists who write letters and urge support of Lamec Barishinga

Ngoma, where Dr. J. H. Sturges was stationed,⁵ plus, the four fields under the CAUM: the North Ruanda Mission Field, the South Ruanda Mission Field (which covered the Gitwe Mission and was also the headquarters of the CAUM), and the West Urundi Mission Field, which was based at Buganda.

Missionary J. L. Robinson wrote in 1932, about his experiences in the four mission stations at the CAUM. He had come as a special guest to the camp meetings and reported the tremendous growth of the church at that time. Within the first seven months of 1932, some 2,100 new converts had joined the church. The entry into the area, already heavily dominated by the Catholic church, caused a stir in the established denominations and the Adventist evangelists were actively barred from evangelizing by both the chiefs and the Catholic White Fathers.⁶ In the Tutsi/Hutu rivalry, many Tutsi had become Catholic. Interest in the Adventist church peaked in August when well over 3,500 people attended camp meeting at Gitwe and 4,200 attended the Rwankeri camp meeting. It was reported that over 9,000 attended camp meetings that year.

Bands of Missionary Volunteer (MV) members went into the countryside and daily reports of their activities were sent back to mission stations. The growth was fast-

TIMELINE

National Burundi events in regular font;
Church events in italics

- 1916-1922 Belgians take over colonies, including Rwanda-Urundi, lost by Germany during WWI. Then it obtained a League of Nations mandate to rule which lasted until 1946.
- 1925 *First Adventist mission established in Urundi*
- 1928 *Adventist work in Rwanda-Urundi organized.*
- 1931 *Urundi Mission organized as part of Congo Union Mission, which is transferred from the Northern European Division to the Southern Africa Division*
- 1946 United Nations takes over Urundi and rules it as a trust territory
- 1962 UN grants independence to the Republic of Rwanda and the Kingdom of Burundi
- 1963 *The Central African Union Mission renamed the Ruanda-Urundi Union*
- 1964 Burundi and Rwanda break off diplomatic relations.

The Ruanda-Urundi Union renamed the Central African Union because of the diplomatic standoff. Burundi Field reorganized to sever ties with Rwanda.

Burundi prime minister shot and killed by Rwandan Tutsi, raising ethnic tensions
- 1965 Joseph Bamina, another Hutu, appointed prime minister

Leopold Biha appointed prime minister

Hutu policemen attempt a coup

Mwami Mwambutsa flees the country
- 1966 Crown Prince Charles Ndzeye declares himself Mwami Ntare V
Defense Minister Michel Micombero leads a coup and declares Burundi a Republic
- 1967 *Africans now running the Adventist Church in most other African countries, but the Europeans are deemed to be neutral in Rwanda/Burundi*

er than the Adventists had anticipated and, by the end of 1935, they had more than doubled their growth numbers to two-and-a-half times the estimates.⁷ In December 1932, the first 100 songbooks in the Runyarwanda language were brought to Urundi.⁸ These were all taken up with enthusiasm, even though by this time the language spoken in Urundi was differentiating itself from that spoken in Ruanda. In the future, it would be a source of contention between the two nations.

Bozarth testified to the enthusiasm for the Gospel that he found, declaring, “Never have I seen people so eager to accept and follow the truth as they are in Ruanda-Urundi today.” What might be of importance to note is that, particularly in Burundi, it was the majority Hutu people who were joining the church in such large numbers. The church had been founded in Cibitoke where the rural population was primarily Hutu.

Meanwhile, the colonial authorities strengthened their hold on power but preferred to work through the existing power structures. This meant the stratification of society along ethnic lines—in this case, the Tutsi were treated as superior while the majority Hutu were considered second-class citizens. Much has been written about the Belgian colonial authorities and their methods in the Congo and in Ruanda-Urundi, but suffice it to say that in the latter, they particularly enhanced the pre-colonial inequalities along the ethnic lines. They did not seek to institute any social reforms and insisted on maintaining the status quo.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the Belgians encouraged the *mwami* to phase out the *ubugabire* system in 1955.¹¹ By this time however, much of the Hutu anger over Tutsi domination was not directed at the colonial power of Belgium but to the local Tutsi themselves.¹²

In 1959, ethnic antagonisms in Rwanda erupted into violence. The Rwandan Tutsi king was deposed and he fled the country. An exodus of some 200,000 Tutsi followed, many of whom went to Burundi, while others crossed over to Congo. In the run-up to independence, various African countries criticized the move to split the two nations, fearing civil war.

In the Adventist church, the Ruanda-Urundi Union was organized in 1960, separating it from the Congo Union Mission, which had been established in 1925.¹³ W. R. Vail was appointed the first president. The veteran missionary had first come to the Congo Mission back in

1933 and had even served at Buganda Mission in Urundi. The secretary-treasurer was M. B. Musgrave. The new offices moved from Elizabethville (Lubumbashi) to Usumbura (the capital of Ruanda-Urundi). At this time, the Ruanda side had three fields—North Ruanda, South Ruanda, and West Ruanda—while the Urundi side had only the Urundi Field.¹⁴ Of the four, only the Urundi Field and the West Ruanda Field were fully Africanized by independence. The North Ruanda Field was headed by H. E. Kotz while the South Ruanda Field was under F. L. Bell and the West Ruanda Field was under Ezekiel Semugeshi.¹⁵

The senior African official in the union at this time was S. Ntizekura (departmental secretary for church development). In the Urundi Field, the president was Mariko Sembagare, vice president was Ezekiel Munyankiko, and secretary-treasurer was Labani Biyayire.

Independence and Continuity

When the UN General Assembly voted in 1962 to end its trusteeship and grant independence, it created the Republic of Rwanda and the Kingdom of Burundi. Burundi became a constitutional monarchy under Mwami Mwambutsa IV. André Muhirwa, a Tutsi, became premier, replacing Prince Louis Rwagasore, son of King Mwambutsa IV, who had been assassinated shortly before independence. Muhirwa, a relative of Rwagasore, only lasted a year before being replaced by Pierre Ngendandumwe, a Hutu. He too did not last long and in 1964 he resigned after Mwami Mwambutsa IV dismissed four Tutsi ministers for allegedly fomenting anti-Hutu sentiments. He was replaced by Albin Nyamoya, also a Hutu. The first few months of independence were characterized by political volatility.

Meanwhile, the Adventist church continued to grow tremendously in the joint Ruanda-Urundi region. By 1963, the joint population of the church in both Rwanda and Burundi stood at 55,583 members, by far the largest of all the Southern African Division's seven unions (29%).

Reorganization of the Adventist Church

In 1964, Burundi's relations with neighboring Rwanda (whose government was now dominated by the Hutu) became frosty, and the two nations broke off diplomatic

relations.¹⁶ Meanwhile, the Ruanda-Urundi Union was renamed the Central Africa Union, partly because the two nations had broken off diplomatic relations, necessitating a change of name. It continued to be based in Bujumbura and this obviously made it difficult for the Adventist church to operate in both Rwanda and Burundi now that the two nations were not seeing eye to eye.

The Burundi Field, which also incorporated two provinces in Rwanda, was reorganized to sever the ties with Rwanda. A second field was organized in Burundi, the East Burundi Field based in Gitega, while the older Burundi Field was renamed the West Burundi Field and remained in Ndora. The West Burundi Field came under Labani Biyayire while the East Burundi Field was headed by Ezekiel Munyankiko, with Eliya Nyagatema as his deputy.¹⁷ The union was still in European hands, with W. R. Vail giving way to A. H. Brandt that same year. Frank Unger became the secretary-treasurer.

Meanwhile, Mwami Mwambutsa IV reappointed Ngendandumwe as prime minister in January 1965. Shortly after his appointment he was shot and killed by a Rwandan Tutsi, raising ethnic tensions and worsening the already bad cross-border tensions. Joseph Bamina, another Hutu, was appointed to replace him.¹⁸

After a tense election held in May 1965, the Hutu gained a majority in the National Assembly but Mwami Mwambutsa IV appointed Leopold Biha, a Tutsi, as prime minister. This move proved quite unpopular, further raising ethnic tensions. In October 1965, a group of Hutu policemen attempted a coup, accusing the Mwami of causing intrigues to hold on to power. Loyalist police led by Captain Michel Micombero, said to be the son of a Tutsi father and a Hutu mother, thwarted the rebels. But then the Mwami fled the country to Switzerland causing a power vacuum.

On July 8, 1966 his son, Crown Prince Charles Ndizeye, just 19, deposed the absent king and declared himself Mwami Ntare V, ending his father's fifty-one-year reign. Only months later, on November 28, Michel Micombero, who had been named defense minister, led a coup which deposed the Mwami and declared Burundi a republic. He placed the Mwami under house arrest and appointed himself president at the age of 26. He established a National Revolutionary Committee to help stabilize his regime and develop the economy. Tutsi domination con-

tinued, with most of them filling powerful government positions, including the cabinet.

Further Changes in the Adventist Church

In 1967, A. H. Brandt was replaced by P. G. Werner as the head of the Central African Union. While most other church organizations in Africa were now being run by Africans, the Europeans were deemed to be neutral in Rwanda-Burundi, still in the grip of ethnic and cross-border tensions. In Burundi, minor tensions erupted in 1969, along ethnic lines and the government thwarted what was possibly a coup in the making led by Hutu rebels with the suspected assistance of the Belgian government.¹⁹

In the Adventist church, Phineas Manyori replaced Ezekiel Munyankiko in the East Burundi Field in 1969, while Ezekiel Munyankiko moved to the West Burundi Field replacing Biyayire.²⁰ By 1971 there were forty-one churches in the West Burundi Field with 6,930 members while East Burundi Union had six churches with 361 members.²¹ The union remained under Werner but the new administrative secretary was Eliazafani Ntakirutimana, a Rwandan Hutu. Born in Kibuye, Rwanda in 1924, Ntakirutimana would be convicted of a role in the Rwandan Genocide of 1994 by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, together with his son Gerard. He served ten years in prison and died in January 2007, a month after being released. His son remains in prison.

The appointment of Ntakirutimana and other senior Rwandese pastors to the church in Burundi, only served to create local Burundian resentment at what they termed as an influx of Rwandese pastors. When the Central Africa Union was dissolved, most Rwandese pastors returned to Rwanda, again creating a vacuum in Burundi since not many Burundians had received senior pastoral education to serve in higher capacities. This fact (and many others) would slow the work in Burundi which today still holds the status of “union mission” while Rwanda has already attained “union conference” status. This means that Rwanda has attained higher autonomy, electing its officers rather than having them appointed by the division as is the case for Burundi, and the cause for the current conflict.

Deepening Ethnic Conflict

In April 1972, a Hutu uprising led to widespread massacres claiming at least 100,000 lives, mainly Hutu.

The violence arose following the arrest of Ntare V upon his return from exile in West Germany, despite a written guarantee that he would be allowed a safe return. On April 29, an attempt by Tutsi royalists failed to free Ntare V. Instead, he was killed alongside thousands of Tutsis. The Tutsi-led reprisals were particularly brutal.²² Nearly 100,000 Hutus were killed in targeted massacres of any Hutu with a secondary education, including teachers, civil servants, and religious leaders, among others.²³ Three of the former cabinet ministers were also among those killed.²⁴

The uprising was eventually quelled, but unrest continued, and nearly 50,000 Hutus fled to nearby countries. Over the months, the number would rise to over 200,000.²⁵ The following year matters were no better as reports came in that the fleeing refugees had organized themselves into rebel forces. Government forces fought them and at least 10,000 Hutu rebels were said to have been killed. The government accused Belgium, Israel, Tanzania, and Rwanda for supporting Hutu rebels and severed ties with Israel. The effect of this was a perennial sense of suspicion between the Bujumbura government and regional nations harboring Burundian refugees. The UN estimated that 85,000 Hutus had fled Burundi and over 500,000 had been internally displaced.

The Hutu being in power in Rwanda led to deep suspicion between Burundi and Rwanda. In March 1973, the Burundi government launched airstrikes targeting refugee camps in Tanzania, leading to a diplomatic standoff and blockade of Burundi by withholding goods in the port of Dar es Salaam.

In July 1974, a new Republican Constitution was promulgated. The next year regional tensions eased when the Rwandan president, Juvenal Habyarimana, visited Burundi and neighboring Zaire moved Burundi refugees to at least 90 miles from the border. This served to quell jitters of cross-border attacks from armed rebels.

In 1974, Phineas Nsengiyumva took over the East Burundi Field replacing Manyori. The church in this region was not growing as fast and by 1975 it had nine churches, up from six in 1971, and 840 members.²⁶ The following year the Central Africa Union, which still comprised the two nations, replaced Werner with L. C. Robinson. Roy Stotz remained secretary while E. Nyagetema became the executive secretary for Burundi and S. Sembeba became

the executive secretary for Rwanda.²⁷ Ntakirutimana became the Stewardship and Church Development director at the union.²⁸

The following year, in November 1976, Burundi President Michel Micombero was deposed by the military and 30-year old Lt. Col. Jean-Baptiste Bagaza became the new president. The Constitution of 1974 was suspended. Bagaza, a Tutsi, tried to create national reconciliation to bring together the Hutu and Tutsi. But ethnic tensions continued. Targeted killings occurred in 1979 and many Hutu sought refuge in Rwanda.

At a Franco-African summit held in Kigali, President Bagaza was incensed by a pamphlet put out by a religious group critical of the Tutsi hegemony in Burundi. He left the summit early and from June 1 began the expulsion of twelve Belgian Catholic missionaries, followed by fifty-two others ten days later. They were accused of, among other things, drafting and distributing anti-government tracts.

Burundi Adventist Church Placed Under the Africa-Indian Ocean Division

Meanwhile, in 1979, DeWitt S. Williams replaced Werner at the Central African Union.²⁹ In 1980, the Africa-Indian Ocean Division was organized to replace the dissolved Southern African Division. Part of the territory of the Southern African Division went to the Trans-Africa Division based in Harare, Zimbabwe. The Africa-Indian Ocean Division was based in Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

Within the Burundi church, in 1980, Saul Senkomo took over as president of the East Burundi Field. Senkomo, a veteran translator of Adventist literature and the Sabbath School lesson into the Kirundi language, would eventually rise to become Burundi Union Mission president.

In 1980, President Bagaza instituted reforms in the country's sole party, Uprona, which was dominated by the Tutsi, and thus largely ignored by the Hutu. In November 1981, a new constitution established Burundi as a single-party nation with a directly elected president. The most vocal opposition to the government became the clergy, creating frosty relations between the church and the state.

A national referendum was held and the constitution passed with 98.6% of the vote. The nation's sole legal po-

TIMELINE CONTINUED

- 1971 *Eliazafani Ntakirutimana named executive secretary of the Central African Union under P. G. Werner. Ntakirutimana would later be convicted of war crimes in the Rwandan genocide.*
- 1972 Hutu uprising followed by brutal Tutsi reprisals
- 1974 New Republican Constitution adopted
- 1976 President Micombero deposed as president. He is replaced by Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, a Tutsi. The 1974 Constitution is suspended. Bagaza, incensed by a religious pamphlet, expels Catholic missionaries.
- 1980 *The Africa-Indian Ocean Division organized to replace the dissolved Southern African African Division*

S. Senkomo, a veteran translator, takes over as president of the East Burundi Field
- 1981 New Constitution establishes Burundi as a single-party nation with a directly elected president
- 1984 Bagaza reelected. Ten Belgian missionaries expelled. Suspicion of foreign missionaries and blaming them for the violence between Hutu and Tutsi.

Decree banning all denominational activity, including church attendance

African-Indian Ocean Division dissolves the Central Africa Union Mission and designates Burundi as an attached field, consequently the West Burundi and East Burundi Fields are dissolved. Home churches flourish and denominational activity continues in the absence of a formal church structure.

Meanwhile, Rwanda is elevated to union mission status with American Robert G. Peck appointed as president
- 1987 Bagaza deposed. Pierre Buyoya, also a Tutsi, becomes head of the Military Committee of National Redemption that now leads the country. The National Assembly is dissolved and the constitution suspended.

Restrictions eased on churches and 200 political prisoners released

TIMELINE CONTINUED

- 1987 *African-Indian Ocean Division reorganizes the church. Silas Senkomo named president of the Burundi Mission*
- 1988 Ethnic violence erupts
- Hutu prime minister Adrien Sibomana appointed
- 1989 *Adventist church in Burundi regains its properties that had been nationalized*
- 1990 National referendum on charter passes
- National Security Council replaces Tutsi-dominated Committee for National Salvation
- New draft constitution creates a part-presidential and part-parliamentary system of government. Prime minister to be appointed by the president and accorded wide range of powers.
- 1992 New constitution adopted, includes a multiparty system, directly elected president as head of state, National Assembly, and a prime minister as head of government
- Buyoya survives an attempted coup
- 1993 Melchior Ndadaye, the first Hutu elected president in national elections. Silvie Kinigi, a Tutsi, named prime minister, the first (and only) woman to hold the position.
- Ndadaye deposed in a Tutsi-led coup after only three months in power
- Thousands die in ensuing ethnic violence
- Cyprien Ntaryamira, another Hutu, comes to power as president. He attends a regional peace meeting with Rwanda's president Juvenal Habyarimana. Their plane is shot down approaching Kigali, killing them both.
- 1994 Ethnic bloodbath in Rwanda ensues. More than one million Tutsi and moderate Hutu killed.
- Sylvestre Ntibantunganye, president of the Burundi National Assembly, announces the death of the Burundi president and appeals for calm.

litical party at that time remained the Uprona. The constitution reaffirmed freedom of religion and freedom for private schools (these were mostly run by the Catholics, who were at odds with the state already).

In August 1984, Bagaza was reelected to the presidency as the single candidate of Uprona, garnering 99.63% of the 1.7 million votes cast. The Hutu majority only had five of nineteen ministerial positions and ten of the sixty-five seats in the National Assembly. Frosty relations with the church saw the expulsion of ten Belgian missionaries accused of spreading slanderous information about Burundi in Europe. This was the culmination of suspicion by the government that foreign missionaries favored the Hutu majority and were blamed for being responsible for the mass communal violence between the Hutu and Tutsi, which had occurred in neighboring Rwanda before and after independence in 1962, and also in Burundi itself in 1972 and 1973.

Closure of the Adventist Church in Burundi

In 1984, President Bagaza issued a decree to ban all denominational activity including church attendance. All churches, including the Catholic church where two-thirds of Burundians belonged, were closed and Catholic schools were nationalized. Bagaza banned weekly religious services and nationalized the Catholic radio station. Adventists resorted to meeting in homes and conducting their affairs clandestinely.

The previous year, DeWitt Williams had left his position as the Central African Union president and the position remained vacant until Ntwali Ruhaya was appointed in an acting capacity. For the first time, the union was coming under non-European hands. Ntwali Ruhaya had served as the field secretary for the Africa-Indian Ocean Division, now based in Harare, Zimbabwe, as well as the president of the East Zaire Field.³⁰

Dissolving the Central Africa Union Mission

The police violence, press censorship, and religious suppression in Burundi were criticized by human rights groups internationally. As a result of the closure of denominational activity, the Africa-Indian Ocean Division dissolved the Central Africa Union Mission and designated Burundi as an "attached field" under the division (then based in Abidjan, Ivory Coast). This meant that the en-

tire country was downgraded to “mission field” status and consequently the West Burundi and East Burundi Fields were dissolved. The affairs of the church (now in hiding) were managed in the first year by U. Habingabwa as the secretary and D. Barute as treasurer. There was no president.

On the other hand, Rwanda was elevated to union mission status and Robert G. Peck was appointed as its president.³¹ Robert Peck, an American, had been the secretary of the Iowa-Missouri Conference.³² The Rwanda Union Mission offices were now located in Kimihurura in Kigali. Just like the Catholic church, the Adventists in Burundi lost prime church property, including their address at 126 Avenue Prince Louis Rwagasore.

Meanwhile, home churches flourished and denominational activity continued to thrive in the absence of a formal church structure.

Restoration of the Adventist Church in Burundi

On September 3, 1987, Bagaza’s eleven-year rule ended when he was deposed in a military coup while attending a conference of French-speaking nations in Quebec, Canada. He was not permitted to reenter the county. The new leader, 38-year-old Major Pierre Buyoya, also a Tutsi, became the head of the Military Committee of National Redemption. The National Assembly was dissolved and the constitution was suspended, as the Military Committee for National Salvation assumed executive and legislative authority. Two weeks into his presidency, he eased restrictions on the church and released more than 200 political prisoners.

There was joy in Burundi in Adventist circles when the government lifted the ban on religious activities towards the end of 1987. The Africa-Indian Ocean Division quickly reorganized the church and appointed Silas Senkomo, formerly the head of the East Burundi Field, as the new president of the Burundi Mission. While under the ban, the church grew, with evangelism work continuing, baptisms taking place under the cover of darkness,

and mission work going on in silence. The church added to its numbers well over 10,000 in that short period, with membership now over 31,000, compared to about 19,000 members prior to the closure. The number of churches

also jumped to ninety-two.³³ The growth of the church remained largely in the Cibitoke province which held more than 70% of all Adventists in Burundi at that time.³⁴

In 1988, ethnic violence erupted in northern Burundi, ignited by a particularly inflammatory speech by a Tutsi administrator. President Buyoya moved to assuage Hutu resentment of their subordinate status by appointing a Hutu prime minister, Adrién Sibomana, who was the governor of the Muravya Province (see map). He also appointed more Hutu to

the Cabinet to match the number of Tutsi.

In 1989, the Adventist church in Burundi regained its properties that had been nationalized, including the address at 126 Prince Louis Rwagasore Avenue. There was a revival in membership with the baptism of many who could not be baptized in hiding.³⁵

In May 1990, President Buyoya launched a draft “National Unity pact” which came from the recommendations of the National Commission on the Question of National Unity. It was to be submitted to the extraordinary session of the Uprona and subjected to a national referendum. Buyoya instituted a National Security Council to replace the Tutsi-dominated Committee for National Salvation. The new National Security Council would have both military and civilian members, including the Hutu prime minister, Adrién Sibomana.

The following year, the charter was passed in a national referendum by 89% of the votes cast. Concerns about the unrest in Rwanda (led by exiled Tutsi rebels based in Uganda) spilling over to Burundi continued to cause tensions. Further political reforms were instituted with President Buyoya announcing a new draft constitution that would create a part-presidential and a part-parliamentary system of government. There would be a prime minister

In 1989, President Bagaza issued a decree to ban all denominational activity including church attendance. . . . Adventists resorted to meeting in homes and conducting their affairs clandestinely.

appointed by the president and accorded a wide range of powers.

The new constitution, adopted in March 1992, introduced a multi-party system, with a directly elected president as head of state, an eighty-one-member National Assembly, and a prime minister as head of government. Shortly before the referendum however, Buyoya survived an attempted coup. About thirty Tutsi soldiers were arrested. The government blamed the former president, Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, and former Tutsi ministers Isidore Nyaboya and Cyprien Mbonimpa for the coup attempt. By this time, Buyoya's reforms were strongly opposed by the clandestine Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People (Palipehutu), which had been engaged in armed struggle against the Tutsi-controlled military. Burundi accused Rwanda of sheltering and financing the Palipehutu fighters.

More Conflict in Burundi

With the new constitution in place, elections were called and on June 1, 1993, history was made when the nation elected Melchior Ndadaye the first Hutu president, resoundingly defeating incumbent Pierre Buyoya. Ndadaye appointed Silvie Kinigi a Tutsi, as the new prime minister, the first (and only) woman to hold the position.

In October that year, after only three months in power, Ndadaye was deposed in a Tutsi-led military coup and killed. Kinigi fled to the French Embassy in Bujumbura and the Organization of African Unity sent in 200 troops to protect the government. The coup however collapsed as senior military officers failed to back it and there was also little popular support for it. Meanwhile thousands died in the ensuing ethnic violence and hundreds of thousands more fled to neighboring countries as refugees.

When the coup collapsed, another Hutu president, Cyprien Ntaryamira, came to power. While attending a regional peace meeting with Rwanda's president, Juvenal Habyarimana, their plane was shot down as they approached Kigali, killing both of them instantly. This triggered an ethnic bloodbath in Rwanda unlike any that had been witnessed anywhere in the world, save perhaps the Holocaust. More than one million Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed in what became an international tragedy of unimaginable proportions. Reprisals were muted in Burundi and this was partly attributed to efforts by previous governments aimed at national unity and reconciliation

between the two ethnic groups. Sylvestre Ntibantunganye, then president of the National Assembly, announced the death of Ntaryamira and appealed for calm. He saved the day for Burundi.

Meanwhile, on March 10, 1994, the General Conference hosted two Burundi cabinet ministers at a luncheon in their honor while on tour in Washington, DC. The two, the minister of finance, Salvator Toyi, and the minister of state for external relations and cooperation, Jean-Marie Ngendahayo, were received at the General Conference in Maryland, a sign that the Adventist church was receiving favorable regard back in Burundi.³⁶

Burundi After the Rwanda Genocide

The Rwandan Patriotic Front came to power in Rwanda, while in Burundi the Hutu-led Frodebu entered a power sharing-deal with the Tutsi-led Uprona. Frodebu got the presidency and the foreign ministry while Uprona got the premiership and the interior ministry. Defense and justice ministries would go to "neutral" figures. They also agreed that presidential decisions would have to be countersigned by the prime minister. Sylvestre Ntibantunganya of Frodebu became president on September 30, 1994. His rule, however, lacked real power, which remained with the army. Reprisal attacks by both sides of the ethnic divide caused significant tensions.

According to Human Rights Watch, foreign governments actively took sides in the Burundi affair which kept the conflict alive. They accused the French, Chinese, and South African arms dealers, in league with Colombian drug syndicates, of fanning the conflict. In January 1996, President Ntibantunganya warned that Burundi was on the brink of collapse. In March, the Security Council voted against recommendations by UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to send UN guards to protect aid workers in Burundi and to establish a force in Zaire capable of intervention in Burundi. Further proposals for bringing stability, particularly by the armed Hutu opposition Forces for Defense of Democracy (FDD), came to nothing.

In 1995, President Ntibantunganya appointed Sylvestre Mvutse, an Adventist, as the governor of Cibitoke province, the traditional heartland of the Adventist Church in Burundi. Mvutse was a former student of the Adventist University of Central Africa and was married

to the daughter of Silas Senkomo, the late union mission president.³⁷

The Return of Buyoya

The constitution was suspended and the National Assembly dissolved after another Tutsi-led military coup on July 25, 1996. Ntibantunganya was deposed and former president Buyoya was reinstated. A transitional constitution was adopted in June 1998 that made the president both head of state and head of government and eliminated the position of prime minister.

In July 1997, sporadic fighting broke out in Cibitoke and Bubanza provinces. Remember that Cibitoke was the traditional birthplace of the Adventist church and lots of Adventists were affected by the fighting.

On August 28, 2000, an important milestone was achieved when a transitional government was agreed upon following the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. It would be in place for five years. This failed to create a ceasefire but created an important background for future power-sharing agreements. Then, in October 2001, a new constitution was approved that provided for a three-year transitional administration designed to share power between Hutu and Tutsi parties. It also created a new, two-chamber legislative body. In 2003, a new cease-fire agreement was signed between the government and the largest Hutu rebel group, now known as CNDD-FDD (created by the merger of the National Council for the Defense of Democracy and the Forces for the Defense of Democracy).

Nkurunziza Comes to Power

The CNDD-FDD performed well in the elections of 2005, and the National Assembly voted in Pierre Nkurunziza as president. He was sworn in in August for a five-year term. He won the next election and was sworn in for a second term in August 2010. In April 2015, Nkurunziza caused controversy by announcing that he would be seeking another term in office in what his opponents interpreted as a third term, against the constitution. Tensions mounted when demonstrators opposed to him took to the streets in protests. Several people were killed, and a government crackdown saw the closure of some radio stations. This prompted the intervention of the international community, including the United Nations and the African Union. Tens of thousands fled the country.

TIMELINE CONTINUED

- 1994 *General Conference hosts two Burundi cabinet ministers at luncheon in Silver Spring*

Ntibantunganya becomes president in October

Human Rights Watch reports foreign governments took sides in Burundi, keeping the conflict alive
- 1995 *Ntibantunganya appoints Sylvestre Mvutse, an Adventist, governor of Cibitoke province, heartland of the Adventist church*
- 1996 Ntibantunganya announces Burundi on the brink of collapse

Tutsi-led military coup deposes Ntibantunganya and former president Buyoya reinstated
- 1997 Sporadic fighting in Cibitoke and Bubanza provinces, affecting Adventists
- 1998 Transitional constitution adopted making the president both head of state and head of government, eliminating prime minister position
- 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement brings in transitional government
- 2001 New Constitution approved providing for three-year transitional administration designed to share power between Hutu and Tutsi parties
- 2003 Cease-fire agreement signed between the government and the largest Hutu rebel group known as CNDD-FDD
- 2005 Pierre Nkurunziza elected president by the National Assembly. He serves two five-year terms, and then announces he would seek a third term, not allowed under the Constitution.
- 2015 Tensions mount after Nkurunziza's announcement of wanting a third term. United Nations and African Union intervene as thousands flee country.

Nkurunziza survives an attempted coup
- 2015 Nkurunziza reelected

Burundi Union Mission re-constituted. East Central Africa Division names Joseph Ndikubwayo president; Paul Irakoze, executive secretary; Leonard Biratevye, treasurer.

TIMELINE CONTINUED

- 2018 Nkurunziza announces he will step down after the 2020 elections.
April – Leonard Biratevye removed from office for financial mismanagement.
July – TMI Evangelistic Campaign, 43,000 people baptized.
November – ECD dismisses Joseph Ndikubwayo as president and names Lamec Barishinga to replace him.
- 2019 *Lamec Barishinga arrested and imprisoned*

In May 2015, Nkurunziza survived a coup attempt mounted by his former head of intelligence, General Godefroid Niyombare. The elections, held in July 2015, saw Nkurunziza beat his closest rival, Agathon Rwaswa, by a total of 69.41% of the ballot to Rwaswa's 18.99%. In May 2018, Burundi held a national constitutional referendum to establish a seven-year term limit in what would have seen Nkurunziza remain in office until 2034 (if he ran in 2020 and remained for two terms). The referendum raised tensions and was condemned by the opposition, the Catholic bishops, and the international community. He continues in his third term with elections due in August 2020. In June 2018, he announced that he would step down after the 2020 elections.

PART II **The Present Crisis in the Adventist Church in Burundi**

In September 2015, the Burundi Union Mission was reconstituted and the new officers named by the East Central Africa Division (ECD) were Joseph Ndikubwayo as president, Paul Irakoze as executive secretary, and Léonard Biratevye as treasurer. Due to the ethnic situation in Burundi, the national government had adopted a system of ethnic balancing where if the president was Hutu, it would follow that the first vice president would be a Tutsi. This arrangement was adopted by many organizations across the board, including the Adventist church. The only problem was that there were only two Tutsis serving as ordained minis-

ters in the Adventist church in Burundi. These were Lambert Ntiguma and Paul Irakoze. Ntiguma had already served his term as executive secretary in the outgoing administration. So, it fell on Irakoze as the next available Tutsi to take up the position.

Paul Irakoze was born in October 1979, in Cibitoke in North West Burundi. He studied at Bugema University in Uganda and graduated in 2010 with a BA in theology. After his graduation, he became a pastor in Gitega District for a year and then became field secretary in the East Burundi Field. He was ordained in 2013 in Bujumbura. In 2015 he became executive secretary, taking over from Ntiguma who had held the executive secretary post for five years.

President Ndikubwayo is a second-generation Adventist, the son of Silas Senkomo, a veteran Adventist pastor and translator of Adventist literature. Ndikubwayo was born in March 1963 in Bujumbura and attended the Adventist University of Central Africa (AUCA) in Rwanda before proceeding to the Adventist Seminary of West Africa in Nigeria (now Babcock University) where he obtained an MA in religion (issued by Andrews University) in 1994. When he returned, he was appointed chaplain at Lycée Maranatha de Kivoga. Afterwards he became the Education director for the Burundi Attached Territory, which at that time was under the Africa-Indian Ocean Division (AID). In 2014, he obtained a DMin in global mission in leadership from AUA (issued by Andrews University). In September 2015, he was appointed the president of the Burundi Union Mission.

Ndikubwayo became the second president of the Burundi Union Mission after it had been elevated to union mission status in 2012 and the fourth head of the church since the ban on denominational activity had been lifted by the government in 1987. In 2000, the Burundi Mission was authorized to create three fields— East Burundi, North Burundi, and West Burundi. In 2003, the Burundi Field had been transferred from the Abidjan-based Africa-Indian Ocean Division (AID) to the Nairobi-based East-Central Africa Division (ECD) and it retained its status as an attached territory. In 2012 it was elevated to a union mission, so its officers would still be appointed by the division.

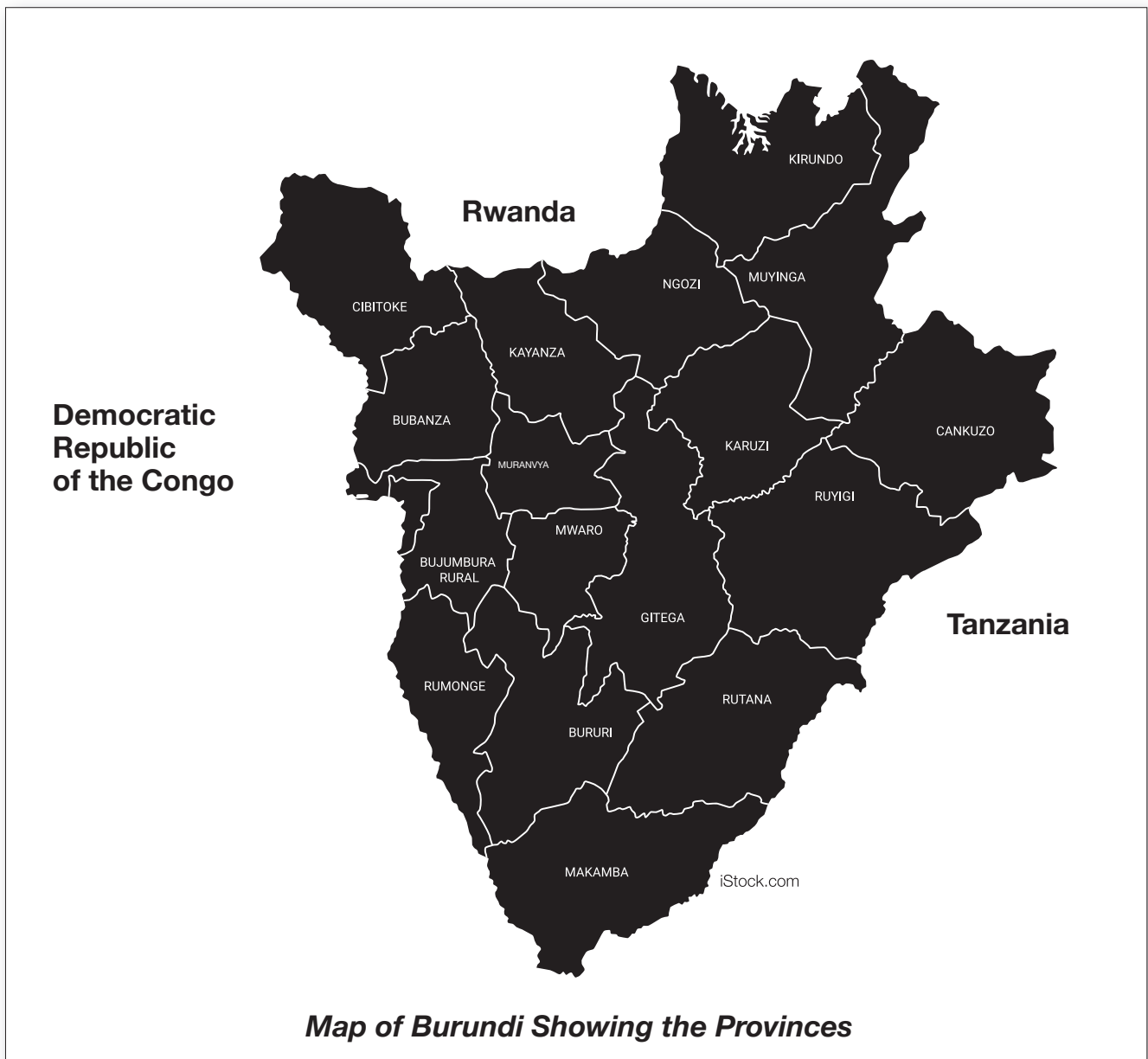
The Making of a Dysfunctional Administration

In the early days after their appointment in 2015, Secretary Irakoze pointed out what he considered to be mistakes in their administration. First, he was uncomfortable that the president's wife, Blandine Ngahimbare (Mrs. Ndikubwayo), worked at ADRA Burundi as the head of finance. Being a senior position of accountability that requires independence of action, the secretary amicably approached the president about it, asking if he would have her serve elsewhere or at least in another capacity. He reasoned with the president that finance was normally sensitive, particularly when handling donor funds, and the position could easily attract a conflict of interest since he (the

president) was the board chair of ADRA Burundi.³⁸ The president strongly objected to the secretary's sentiments and even dismissed his concerns as a non-issue. This issue refused to die and would set in motion a chain of events that would culminate in the dissolution of ADRA Burundi. (For more on the hiring of Mrs. Ndikubwayo, see the section under ADRA Burundi).

A Crisis of Accountability

In 2017, Secretary Irakoze commenced his MDiv studies at the Adventist University of Africa in Nairobi, Kenya. He needed a ticket to fly to Nairobi to attend classes. Treasurer Birateye blatantly refused to grant him the



ticket stating that it was not in the budget. Irakoze argued that he was entitled to travel by air by virtue of his office and did not see why he should be denied the ticket. He explained that he felt insecure travelling by road since many roadblocks were manned by some of the militia operating in Burundi. Biratevye complied and issued the ticket, but he charged it to Irakoze's personal account. Eventually, the charges to Irakoze's personal account, even for official duties, would amount to over BIF 8,000,000 (\$4,200) all of which were treated as a personal debt.

Housing was another point of contention. President Ndikubwayo discovered that Secretary Irakoze and Treasurer Biratevye had rented houses costing more than the agreed-upon allowance. The treasurer was paying BIF 600,000 (\$320) instead of the agreed BIF 500,000 (\$267). Both the secretary and treasurer were entitled to be housed by the BUM at a cost of BIF 500,000, while the president was entitled to BIF 600,000 in housing. The treasurer was paying the same for all of them. The president asked that the difference be charged to their personal accounts, but the treasurer did not act.

On another occasion, the secretary discovered that the treasurer had been transferring funds from a church-owned rental house (\$600/month) into his private account for more than two years. He also discovered that the lessee had been provided with fake church receipts. When Irakoze pointed out the matter to the president, Ndikubwayo played it down and warned Irakoze to keep off the matter. The secretary wondered why he would protect what was clearly a case of theft by a senior officer of the union. When asked about the matter for this story, Ndikubwayo stated that he was not aware of the house rental funds going into the personal account of the treasurer.

Seeing that there was no action by the president on the errant treasurer, Irakoze reported the matter to the division. The move only served to escalate their differ-

ences. Ndikubwayo began to suspect that Irakoze was working closely with the treasurer at the division, Jerome Habimana, to frustrate him. Habimana is Rwandese but, like Irakoze, is a Tutsi. The matter now took on an ethnic dimension, fanned by the traditional cross-border rivalry between Burundi and Rwanda. When a General Conference Auditing Services (GCAS) audit conducted in October 2018, covering the financial years 2016 and 2017, discovered that six months' rent in that period amounting to US\$3,600, "was not recorded in the accounts of the Union..."³⁹ it exonerated the secretary, but the same report also implicated him in a book project which he had initiated.

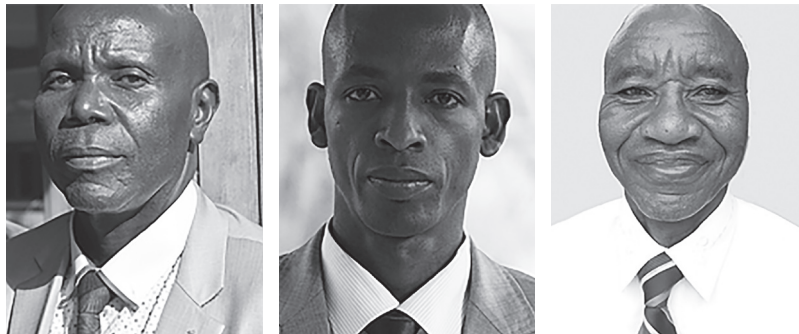
The Book Project

In 2016, Secretary Irakoze was impressed by a book

entitled *Steps to Personal Revival* by a German author, that was translated into Kirundi under the title *Intambuko kuyindi yo kuzuzwa Mpwemu Yera*. The secretary felt that the book would benefit the people of Burundi and decided to print

100,000 copies to be shared out to the 200,000 church members.

The secretary approached a German donor, who agreed to finance the printing estimated at US\$50,000. He asked the secretary if he could send the money to him via Western Union. The secretary declined stating that such funds would best be handled through official church channels. He gave him the ECD accounts and the money was wired there. The treasurer, Biratevye at that point, was responsible for handling the money after it was released by the division. He successfully converted the US\$50,000 into local currency and banked the funds in the union accounts. The signatories to the accounts were the president, secretary, and treasurer with the instruction that any two could sign the funds provided one of them was the treasurer. The secretary co-signed most of the cheques but did this also because there were times



Burundi Union Mission leadership as listed on the ECD website: President Lamec Barishinga, left; Secretary Paul Irakoze, middle; Treasurer Daniel Bavugubusa, right. (SOURCE: East Central Africa Division: ecdadventist.org/burundi).

he would have to be away in Kenya as a student at the Adventist University of Africa.

According to Irakoze, there were many issues he noted in the transactions regarding the books, but when he confronted the treasurer about them, no credible answers were forthcoming. So Irakoze reported the matter to the division, which requested GCAS investigate the book project.

By the time the auditors scheduled a visit in 2018 to Burundi Union Mission, various other financial issues had arisen including a change in the treasurer's position.

For his part, prior to the October 2018 visit by GCAS, Irakoze accepted a call to travel to Australia to conduct a series of evangelistic campaigns with the Burundi community over there, so he was away in Australia when the auditors arrived at the BUM offices.

GCAS sent two auditors, one a Rwandese (a Hutu) and the other a Cameroonian. The primary interviewees were the now removed treasurer, Biratevyé, the new treasurer, Bavugubusa, and the president, Ndikubwayo. The secretary returned to find the audit nearing its end and answered queries asked. What he did not realize was that, in his absence, a large part of the explanation of the book project's finances had been done by Biratevyé and the president, who, according to him, used the chance to get back at him.⁴⁰ Both of them had been bitter that the secretary had occasioned the dismissal of Biratevyé, even though the division had not considered the book project in his dismissal, rather the general mismanagement of his docket.

Treasurer Biratevyé reportedly told the auditors that he had co-signed the cheques with the secretary and that he had shared the proceeds from the book with him. The auditors also discovered that the invoices and receipts filed in the BUM offices had not emanated from the book printers.

The replacement treasurer, Daniel Bavugubusa, defended the absent secretary, arguing that he could not have been involved in the misappropriation of the funds when in fact he had initiated the whole process and had been the whistleblower to the fraudulent activities of the former treasurer that eventually led to the auditors being appointed.⁴¹

The auditors made their findings in a report that was released to the division on October 18, 2018. A section

of the five-page document, in French, under the sub-title “*Manque d’Intégrité et mauvaise gestion de l’Impression de livres*” (Lack of Integrity and Mismanagement of Book Printing) stated:

The audit procedures revealed that certain transactions appearing to order books and evangelization materials printed in a certain printing press in the amount of 41,845,380 BIF were fraudulently recorded with the fake vouchers. The outgoing Treasurer has admitted that he has been forced to support 18,174,380 BIF on his own, and two that he has confirmed that he has shared the funds with the Executive Secretary, which he has categorically denied. However, the Executive Secretary confirmed to us that he did not see the 7,131 books (Kwuzuwa, Mpwemu Yera) at the price of 13,050,000 BIF of December 13, 2016 which he was co-signing with the Treasurer. The surprising thing is that on March 29, 2017, the Executive Secretary signed again with the Treasurer another check for 5,585 books (Kwuzuwa, Mpemu Yera) at the price of 10,621,000 BIF he confirmed to us that he did not see those books.⁴² These two book orders were recorded in the account “Revival Expenses” that the Executive Secretary was in charge because it was the one which had requested the funds for this project.⁴³ Other book orders were posted to the “Evangelism Expense” and “Department Expense” accounts. No vote of the committee authorized the printing of all those books which had false documentation and no control was put in place to monitor the use of these funds by the benefactor who agreed to finance the translation impression of this book because the administration could not provide us with how these books were printed and how they were distributed to the members of the church. With the exception of a general vote BUM 17EXECOM No. 006 of January 30, 2017 which was taken by the Executive Committee which does not indicate the amount and the number to print worded in these terms “Vote to print and distribute to members of the

Church delivered it “Kwuzuwa, Mpemu Yera” no other information was mentioned in the minutes in relation to this project.⁴⁴ In summary, the revenues of 2016 and 2017 that were recorded in the ledger were 169 159 499 BIF while the expenditures were BIF 236 374 252.77 with a difference of BIF 67 214 753.77 which was financed by the Union’s operations in 2016 and 2017 for this project.⁴⁵

When the questions were put to him, the secretary explained that the funds had primarily been handled by the (now former) treasurer, Biratevye, who had withdrawn the amount in cash from the division accounts, exchanged it into the local currency, and banked it in the church accounts. He explained to the auditors that from the inception, the project had faced challenges including an occasion when the president made a request to use part of the funds to purchase a new vehicle for his personal use. The secretary declined, stating that he would see to it that the funds were only used for the intended purpose. When the writer asked Ndikubwayo about this, he stated that he had only asked that part of the money be used to purchase a vehicle for the office, not for his personal use. He said that some departments did not have a vehicle and a new one would be useful for the work.⁴⁶

Secretary Irakoze also stated in his defense that there were many opportunities to misappropriate the funds even before they had hit the church accounts, but he had no incentive to do so then and even less thereafter. He stated that he co-signed the accounts and had to leave for AUA where he was pursuing his graduate studies. Speaking to this writer, the secretary wondered why the auditors seemed determined to impute wrongdoing on his part when in fact his conscience was clear, and he had not re-

ceived a single cent of the whole amount.

Ndikubwayo expressed shock when he had discovered that Irakoze was “heavily indebted” to the BUM. He told this writer that he discovered that Irakoze owed well over BIF 8,000,000 (about \$4,200) to the BUM. To this charge, Irakoze stated that all his entitlements were by virtue of his office, and expenses for official duties had been charged to his personal account by Treasurer Biratevye. He explained that one could not draw such amounts without a vote.⁴⁷

The Removal of Treasurer Biratevye

When the division removed the treasurer on April 30, 2018, the reasons it gave for doing so included the spiraling debt levels at the BUM and failure to deposit trust funds in ECD accounts in the required time. Although Biratevye regularized the financial position regarding the trust funds before he left, the damage was done. The move to dismiss him was quickly interpreted along ethnic lines, and only served to worsen the working relations between the president and the secretary.

The president protested the removal of the treasurer, claiming he was innocent and a victim of ethnic machinations. He denounced the newly appointed treasurer, Daniel Bavugubusa, saying that he had not been consulted first on the appointment. Two days later he was on hand to oversee the handover, but it would not be an easy ride for Bavugubusa who, at some point, suffered a severe beating, allegedly by members of the dreaded *Imboneza*.

Just before the handover to the new treasurer took place in May 2018, the outgoing treasurer, Léonard Biratevye is said to have forged division signatories and withdrawn BIF 70,000,000 (between US\$ 35,000 and 40,000) from the ECD accounts at the Banque de Crédit de Bujumbura (BCB). The money was transferred to his

When the division removed the treasurer on April 30, 2018, the reasons it gave for doing so included the spiraling debt levels at the BUM and failure to deposit trust funds in ECD accounts in the required time. Although Biratevye regularized the financial position regarding the trust funds before he left, the damage was done. The move to dismiss him was quickly interpreted along ethnic lines, and only served to worsen the working relations between the president and the secretary.

wife's account held in the same bank. The signatories of the ECD accounts held at the BCB are ECD officers. In this case, the letter had the signatures of the ECD treasurer, Jerome Habimana, and associate treasurer, Michael B. Caballero. The BCB received the letter on May 7, 2018 with instructions to transfer the funds to the account of Léa Ndayizeye (Mrs. Léonard Birateve) at the same bank.⁴⁸ The instructions were put into effect immediately.

By the time this happened, Birateve had already been removed as treasurer just one week earlier, on April 30. It appears the bank had not yet been notified of the change in treasurers. Rather than send him packing, the ECD gave him a soft landing and he was assigned other duties within the BUM. Being an IT specialist, it was thought he could still be of service to the church and so he retained his staff housing and was only given new responsibilities. He handed over to the new treasurer, Daniel Bavugubusa on May 15, 2018. Prior to the handover, he is suspected of having made alterations in the central computer server, rendering it unworkable. The new treasurer discovered that the server was corrupted and there was only one person who had the capability to do this. When he was contacted to come around and work on it, he flatly declined to cooperate. Haggai Abuto, a Kenyan working with the ECD, was sent over to check on the server.

When Abuto arrived, he requested Birateve to assist him, but he refused to cooperate. He was still living in a house rented for him by the BUM and was still drawing a salary. On August 22, 2018, Irakoze wrote to him asking him why he should be paid a salary and housed if he was not willing to offer his services to the church.⁴⁹ He never responded but instead sent a letter to the ECD complaining about harassment by the secretary. It is interesting to note that as late as August 2018, he continued to draw a salary from the church, a good three months after the BCB heist.

Birateve was eventually terminated from his position when his role in the transfer of funds came to light. The move only served to escalate the crisis.

The Ndikubwayo Administration and the Establishment of the *Imboneza*

One day in 2016, shortly after he had assumed office, the secretary received in his office Élisée Manirakiza, the pastor of Kamenge District in Bujumbura. He reported

CHARACTERS

Lamec Barishinga – imprisoned current president of the Burundi Union Mission

Joseph Ndikubwayo – president of the Burundi Union Mission chosen in 2015 by the East Central Africa Division. Although the ECD replaced him in 2018, he continues to function as president.

Paul Irakoze – secretary of the Burundi Union Mission

Leonard Birateve – treasurer of the Burundi Union Mission, accused of financial irregularities and removed from office in April, 2018

Daniel Bavugubusa – Burundi Union Mission treasurer named to replace Birateve

Blasious M. Ruguri – president of the East Central Africa Division

Alain G. Coralie – secretary of the East Central Africa Division

Jerome Habimana – treasurer of the East Central Africa Division

D. E. Delhove – first Adventist missionary to Burundi

Maxine Duplouy – French missionary who ran the Bugunda mission for a period, also served as secretary and treasurer of the Ruandi-Urundi

Silas Senkomo – veteran Adventist pastor and translator of Adventist literature into Kirundi, former president (1987-1994) of the Burundi Mission, and father of Joseph Ndikubwayo

Pierre Nkurunziza – president of Burundi

Sylvestre Mvutse – an Adventist, governor of Cibitoke province, heartland of the Adventist Church. (He is married to the daughter of the late Union President Senkomo.)

Lambert Ntiguma – president of Southwest Burundi Field

Eric Steven Nsengiyumva – grandson of the first Burundian pastor, BUM Evangelism and Communication director who oversaw the TMI Campaign, named to replace Ntiguma as president of the Southwest Burundi Field

to him that President Ndikubwayo had visited his district and had met with a group of individuals of questionable character, forming a group called *Imboneza*. This group, said to be led by one Simbare Aloise, was meant to intimidate those opposed to Ndikubwayo. During the escalation of the differences with the president, the secretary was confronted in his office by a man named Bukuru said to be allied to the *Imboneza* and who warned him saying, “If you don’t work with the union president, *we will work on you.*” He was taken aback by the open threat coming from a clandestine group said to be closely allied to the president. When this writer asked Ndikubwayo about the existence of *Imboneza*, he categorically denied any knowledge of the group.⁵⁰ Incidents blamed on the group were to escalate the crisis in the months that followed.

At the start of the Ndikubwayo administration, a series of meetings were held involving former church officials and senior church members to discuss the crisis in the church. The meetings were sanctioned by ECD President Blasius Ruguri, who personally asked Ndikubwayo to clean up the issues in the BUM. Just after the departure of Treasurer Léonard Biratevye, there were many documents and letters being sent back and forth discussing the problems in the church in Burundi. Most of these letters, written by anonymous individuals, were exchanged on social media and reached the highest echelons of the church. The letters were forwarded depending on whoever the sender supported or whatever position they wanted to advance. One such letter was written by one Philippe Ndagijimana, thanking the division for the action to remove Biratevye, while another, by one Alexandre Niyonkuru, condemned the action by the division. On June 15, 2018, President Ndikubwayo called for a meeting to discuss the letters just a month after the new treasurer had taken office. It so happened that at that time, Secretary Irakoze was absent, away at the AUA.

It was the letter by Niyonkuru, whom nobody seemed to know, that raised most alarm. He accused Irakoze and Lambert Ntiguma (former BUM secretary and now presi-

dent of the South West Burundi Field) of being behind the removal of Biratevye. The ethnic dimension introduced by Niyonkuru was obviously designed to ignite ethnic passions against the two persons, both Tutsi. Niyonkuru even roped in Jerome Habimana at the division in a manner as to make it look like a Tutsi conspiracy and widening the scope to include Rwanda, Burundi’s perennial rival.

During the meeting, President Ndikubwayo read out the letter which accused Ntiguma (who was present at the meeting) of looking for the files of Burundian Hutu students when he was a student in Baraton “between the year 2000 and 2004.” Well, Ntiguma graduated from Baraton in 1997, so Niyonkuru got his facts wrong. But the point was made. Placing Ntiguma on the spot seemed

to advance the point that he was not to be trusted. His tenure as BUM executive secretary had witnessed divisions in the church and issues had arisen surrounding him in 2000. During that time, he served as the Communication and Trust Services director while Ndikubwayo was the Education director. So, they knew each other very well.⁵¹

Yet another letter, written by Ndagijimana, seemed to suggest

that Niyonkuru was in fact Ndikubwayo himself disguised as a frustrated church member, and it was not clear whether the said Ndagijimana was only adding another twist to the game. But when this writer asked Ndikubwayo whether he was Niyonkuru, he categorically denied it.

Whatever the identity of the letter writers, one can only imagine the discomfiture visited upon Ntiguma in a meeting where such toxic cross-ethnic charges were being leveled against him. However, Ntiguma brought up a matter during the meeting where he accused President Ndikubwayo of physically assaulting three officers of his South-West Burundi Field (SWBF). Ndikubwayo declined to discuss the matter and called for an early adjournment giving the reason that he had a baptism to conduct at Rutovu the following day and he needed to leave.

Ndikubwayo called a follow-up meeting on July 30, 2018. Secretary Irakoze and the new treasurer, Bavugubusa, declined to attend citing lack of consultation. Irakoze

*The ethnic dimension
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"BUM President Pr Joseph Ndikubwayo joined members at SDA Kiriri Church." (SOURCE: Twitter @RemyBiva • Posted January 4, 2020)

stated that as executive secretary he should have been the one calling the meeting and setting the agenda. He also stated that the minutes of the previous meeting had not even been released ahead of this meeting, which he said was not according to procedure. Crucially, Ntiguma also refused to attend the meeting and so the ethnic card came into play.

The meeting took place anyway. Ndikubwayo, who interpreted the boycott by the three officers as a challenge to his authority, decided that the former BUM president, Uzziel Habingabwa, (now a retired pastor), the North Burundi Field president, Enoch Ntunzwenimana, and union departmental leader for Children's Ministries and Women's Ministries, Mrs. Louise Nzeyimana, should meet with Irakoze and Bavugubusa in their offices to find out why they were boycotting the meetings. Irakoze told them that he objected to the non-procedural way of calling the meetings and setting the agenda.

Meanwhile in the meeting itself, the matter of the

physical scuffle between the officers of the SWBF and the union president was discussed. Ndikubwayo stated that it was he who had in fact been assaulted because the officers of the SWBF had stood by him in a manner as to suggest that they would want to physically assault him. He played down the matter, but the officers involved had not attended the meeting, including the SWBF president, Ntiguma.

Another matter that came up was the issue of the BUM rented house. The accountant said that BUM Secretary Irakoze had told her that he had received a call from Switzerland Cooperation, an international NGO operating in Burundi which had rented the house, about the bank account number. The NGO had received a different bank account number from the official BUM accounts, and she told him that it was the treasurer (Birat-eye) who was responsible for issuing accounts.

A third meeting was called on August 6, 2018. Again, Irakoze and Bavugubusa failed to attend. Lambert Ntiguma attended for a few minutes but left in a huff. Ndikub-

wayo stated that Ntiguma accused him of working like an “Anglican Bishop,” without the other structures of the church (citing the absence of the secretary). According to Ntiguma, the GCAS report was tabled by Ndikubwayo just to paint Irakoze as a thief. He questioned why the president was discussing financial matters in the absence of the treasurer. Their absence was again interpreted as insubordination and their failure to attend would be interpreted to mean that they were behind the letters sent to the division to tarnish the name of the church in Burundi. One of the twelve resolutions voted for in that meeting was to request Irakoze to “reconsider his call to ministry and work accordingly.” A similar resolution was reached on Bavugubusa and Ntiguma. The meeting attendees also voted to “request that ECD leadership follow-up on the culture of leaders despising leaders.” This was in apparent reference to the trio that had not attended the meeting.

Matters Implode

In August, Ndikubwayo sent summaries of the meetings to the ECD and complained that the two officers who failed to attend the meetings were undermining his authority. Irakoze also decided to write to the ECD to object to the “distorted report” and denounce the meetings as not having been called according to procedure. Two days after the last meeting, on August 8, 2018, Irakoze privately sent a draft of his letter to the ECD treasurer, Jerome Habimana, to see if it would be acceptable to the ECD. After reading it, Habimana wrote back to him stating that it was okay and made personal remarks in Kinyarwanda that were seemingly against Ndikubwayo. He accused Ndikubwayo of being bitter at the removal of Birateveye and for being “a politician.” He accidentally copied the letter to the ECD president, Dr. Blasius Ruguri, ECD Secretary Alain Coralie—and to President Ndikubwayo.⁵²

The email deeply angered the subject of the discussion. Ndikubwayo wrote back to Ruguri stating that he had always said that his problems emanated from the ECD.⁵³ This became an issue of the perennial ethnic animosities between the Hutu and the Tutsi and the evidence was now in black and white. The age-old rivalries and accusations that the Rwandese were interfering with the work in Burundi now came to the fore. If nothing else, this unintended action (we can only assume as much) would end up being the straw that broke the camel’s back.

In response, Ruguri asked Ndikubwayo not to escalate the matter, hoping that it could be dealt with internally. He even promised to meet him on the sidelines at a meeting held in Rwanda with the GC leadership. That meeting did not take place. Information about the email was only revealed when the ECD decided to replace Ndikubwayo with Barishinga. In the ensuing crisis, Ndikubwayo used the email to affirm his position and to support his innocence. This then reduced the crisis to a Hutu-Tutsi rivalry: Jerome Habimana and Paul Irakoze on one side and Joseph Ndikubwayo and Leonard Birateveye on the other side.

Ntiguma’s Altercation with Ndikubwayo

On October 26, 2018, Ndikubwayo called for a meeting of all the field officers to take an audit of all the books (*Intambuko kuyindi yo kuzuzwa Mpwemu Yera*) that were delivered to the field offices. Ntiguma attended the meeting as the president of the South West Burundi Field. During the meeting, Ntiguma could not hide his discomfort at the subject of discussion and also the fact that the secretary and treasurer were not in attendance. He told Ndikubwayo, “I wonder how you, alone are sitting in front while your colleagues cannot come.” Ntiguma walked away but not before telling Ndikubwayo that he would not finish his term. He said, “You used to talk about me and Pastor Jethron, but we, were able to finish out term, but you, will soon be removed.”⁵⁴

Ndikubwayo did not take the words kindly and coming from an individual of another ethnic group only served to worsen the matter. Ndikubwayo and Ntiguma had not been friends for many years; their differences had seemed to grow exponentially when both were officers in the BUM. Ntiguma’s words would turn out to be prophetic.

Removal of Ndikubwayo

Two days later, on October 28, 2018, Ndikubwayo, Irakoze, and Bavugubusa were all summoned to the division offices in Nairobi. They were given the chance to air their issues in separate meetings. Two days later, on October 30, 2018, Ndikubwayo was given the chance to explain himself at a meeting chaired by ECD President Blasius Ruguri. Present were ECD Secretary Alain Coralie and ECD Treasurer Jerome Habimana. Ndikubwayo was asked why he was leading a dysfunctional Secretar-

iat. He replied that he and Irakoze did not have a good working relationship, noting that Irakoze refused to attend the meetings he had called. He also pointed to the GCAS audit report stating that it had severely implicated Irakoze for colluding with Biratevye to steal church funds. Those privy to the meeting, who requested anonymity, say that Ndikubwayo was asked why he was working with a report that was clearly marked as “an Interim Audit” and not a final one. What would he do if the final one was released with information materially different findings from the interim audit? He was also asked why he was handling a document that was only meant for the ECD, the entity that had called for the audit and not him. He was unable to offer any credible explanations to the questions.

During the meeting, Ndikubwayo was also taken to task about the BIF 70,000,000 (about US\$37,000) which had been fraudulently removed from the division accounts at the BCB by Biratevye. The letter authorizing the transfer had been signed on May 7, 2018, the same day Ndikubwayo had written a letter to the ECD protesting the dismissal of Biratevye and refusing to sanction the handover to Bavugubusa. Ndikubwayo replied that he was not aware of the fraudulent transfer of the money by the former treasurer, Biratevye. He said that since he was not in any way a signatory to that account, he was not aware of any movement of funds in the account. The ECD officers also asked Ndikubwayo about his confrontational attitude with regard to some of the staff in the BUM.


Another accusation against Ndikubwayo was that he sat on the National Security Council (Conseil National de

Securité), a government position, while at the same time he held an ecclesiastical office. He was appointed to the largely advisory position by President Pierre Nkurunziza in 2015. When asked by this writer about this, Ndikubwayo stated that on a trip to Kenya in 2015, he received a call from the Burundian presidency stating that he had been appointed a member of the CNS. On arrival at the division in Nairobi, he informed President Ruguri that he had been appointed to the organization. Ruguri congratulated him for it, as did the GC president, Ted N.C. Wilson, when he heard about it. They said that the church would receive favor in the eye of the government of Burundi. The CNS met once every three months and he was not paid for that.⁵⁵

Those opposed to Ndikubwayo said that he could not hold a government position while serving as a senior official of the church even if that role was only advisory and unpaid. The question arose that if the ECD and the GC were aware of it, why had they not acted sooner in removing him?

After the meeting with the ECD officers, Ndikubwayo asked if they could have a joint meeting with Irakoze and Bavugubusa. This was not to be. It appears that the decision to remove Ndikubwayo from the position of union president had already been made. He was privately approached by Secretary Coralie and the GC associate secretary, John H. Thomas, who asked him if he would consider resigning. He declined, stating that he did not see a good reason why he should.⁵⁷

The following week, on November 6, 2018, a full ses-



BURUNDI UNION MISSION

Organized 1931; reorganized 1960, 1964, 1984, 2002, 2012, 2018

TERRITORY: Burundi; comprising the East Burundi, North Burundi, North-West Burundi, and South-West Burundi Fields

STATISTICS (June 30, 2018): Churches, 451; membership, 160,594; population, 11,845,000 (online statistics)

SOURCE: <https://www.adventistyearbook.org/entity?EntityID=13597>



Joseph Ndikubwayo and family (left); Lamec Barishinga and family (right). (SOURCE: Facebook Profiles Photos)

sion of the ECD Executive Committee met. Ndikubwayo, a committee member by virtue of his office, was not given the chance to defend his position. The Committee voted to replace him with immediate effect.⁵⁸

A Botched Transition

To replace Ndikubwayo, the ECD Committee appointed Lamec Barishinga, a native of Bujumbura Rural, who had trained at the Adventist University of Central Africa (AUCA) in Mudende, Rwanda where he obtained an education degree. He also studied at University of Eastern Africa Baraton where he obtained an MEd. He was ordained in 2002, on the same day as Joseph Ndikubwayo and Lambert Ntiguma. While they were kindred in calling, they couldn't be further in ideology.

To oversee the handover, the ECD sent Associate Secretary Tom A. Ogal and Assistant Treasurer Dan Agwena, both of them Kenyans, to Bujumbura. Ndikubwayo was on the same flight. News of the removal of Ndikubwayo had already made it to Bujumbura and when they landed they met a hostile environment on the ground. In the airport they were met by church members, including the newly appointed President Barishinga.⁵⁹

They went to the BUM offices where an advance

party had come to meet them. Some of those who had come were said to be members of the *Imboneza*. The ECD representatives Ogal and Agwena convened the union staff and the departmental directors. Perhaps sensing the tension, they did not state the reasons behind the removal of Ndikubwayo and declined to answer any questions but promised that in two weeks other officials would come from the ECD to formally announce what had happened. They went to Ndikubwayo's office to oversee the handover but he requested more time saying he would be ready on Friday.

Ogal and Agwena did not expect Ndikubwayo would cause any trouble and assumed the handover would happen on Friday as he had promised. They returned on the evening flight back to Nairobi. Barishinga agreed to wait until Friday for the handover. It was not to be.

When the plane carrying the ECD officers took to the skies, the situation in Burundi began to unravel, beyond what anyone had anticipated. Some individuals allied with Ndikubwayo quickly wrote to the government to stop Barishinga's assumption of office. The legal structure in Burundi is such that any leader of any organization must first receive recognition by the government. Due to years of instability, one cannot make such changes affecting the

population without the knowledge and approval of the government. The Interior Minister must sign a letter of approval for any such official to be recognized by the government and to operate legally.

On November 8, 2018, Secretary Irakoze wrote to the Minister for the Interior, Pascal Barandagiye, to inform him that Barishinga was the new union president. By the time the letter reached him, the protest letter by those opposed to the removal of Ndikubwayo had already reached him. The Interior Minister responded on November 29, 2018 stating that Ndikubwayo was elected for five years and had been removed after just three years without grounds. He stated that he considered his removal was illegal.

Ndikubwayo Fights Back

The ECD had probably not anticipated Ndikubwayo's capacity to fight back. He argued that he had been unfairly treated by the division committee which had voted for his removal "without a reason." He placed his predicament squarely on the workings of Paul Irakoze and Jerome Habimana at the division who had profiled him behind his back. He used Habimana's email as his evidence. The argument soon changed to the impending ECD elections of 2020 and the speculation that a Rwandese was eyeing the presidency of the ECD and so he (Ndikubwayo) had to be removed because he was perceived to be against such a candidacy. While it was not clear which Rwandese he was referring to, the mere mention of a Rwandese being the effective leader of the eleven-nation region, including Burundi, was enough to make his case.

Ndikubwayo was able to convince the authorities in Burundi that Jerome Habimana, being a Rwandese Tutsi, sitting in the ECD Committee, was against him only because of his ethnicity. Although Jerome sits on the committee, he has only one vote out of thirty-one and the other members could easily overrule his interest if he had one. Of course, Ndikubwayo also sat on the same committee. Exploiting the traditional suspicions of Rwanda, Ndikubwayo successfully made his case with the authorities who interpreted the actions of the ECD Committee (which is made up of foreign nationals), as interference in the internal affairs of Burundi. The Burundi authorities now refused to recognize his replacement, Barishinga.

Ndikubwayo had only served three of his five years in office and as such he made the point that it was unfair to remove him when he was not yet done with his term. According to Ndikubwayo, the law in Burundi prohibited the removal of the head of a non-profit before the end of their term. This made a strong argument for him because the Burundian president, Nkurunziza at that time, was embroiled in a dispute about the limitation of his term of office.

A Fractured Church

The church was now properly divided between church members supporting Ndikubwayo and others supporting Barishinga. The government backed Ndikubwayo, while Barishinga had the ECD/GC defending him. To back up his claims of injustice, Ndikubwayo had the GCAS Interim Audit report which did not accuse him of any wrongdoing, but which instead accused both Irakoze and Biratevye of financial impropriety, but for which only Biratevye had been fired. These were, in Ndikubwayo's thinking, serious injustices. The argument now took the dimension that Irakoze could not be fired because he was working closely with fellow Tutsi, Jerome Habimana, to foster a Rwandan interest in Burundi. It was easy for Ndikubwayo to make the case that he had been unjustly treated.

In addition, Ndikubwayo also had with him the written confession of deposed treasurer Biratevye, stating that he (Biratevye) had shared the stolen funds with Irakoze and even enumerating the amounts. When asked by this writer about this specific allegation, Irakoze categorically denied having received any money from Biratevye. He suspected that Biratevye had been pressured by Ndikubwayo to implicate him.⁶⁰ He stated that during the interview with the auditors, Biratevye had implicated him, but the new treasurer, Daniel Bavugubusa, strongly objected to it, arguing that Irakoze being the whistleblower, could not have reported the problem if he knew he too was dirty.⁶¹

Irakoze Arrested

It was on the basis of the documents provided by Ndikubwayo that individuals allied to him filed a case at the anti-corruption court. They also wrote to the Interior ministry and the *Organe de Régulation et de Conciliation des Confessions Religieuses* demanding the immediate arrest of

After three weeks, Irakoze was presented to a judge at the Mukaza court but the case had changed. Instead of being accused of stealing church funds, he was accused of “atteinte à la sûreté intérieure et extérieure” (undermining internal and external security).

Irakoze on charges of corruption and abuse of office. They went to court under a certificate of urgency on Thursday, November 8, and Irakoze was arrested on Monday, November 12, 2018, the day Irakoze had called together the executive committee to install Barishinga. As Irakoze sat in his office waiting for the meeting to start, Ndikubwayo entered his office with five police officers and pointed them to Irakoze. He was arrested just before the meeting could take place and it was consequently called off.

Irakoze was taken into custody in what would be a five-month stint in prison.

Initially, he was marched to the BSR (*Bureau Spécial du Recherche* or Special Bureau for Investigation) a special section of the police force where he was kept for two days. The ECD acted fast and sent a letter to the authorities stating that the Anti-Corruption Authority could not act on an interim audit report and that Irakoze should be discharged pending the release of the final audit report. On receiving the letter, the Anti-Corruption Authority realized that Irakoze had not misappropriated public funds and so released him into the civil courts. Here, Prosecutor Thacien took up his case. Instead of presenting him to a judge, he sent him to the Central Prison at Mpimba.

Two other church officials were also arrested on November 12, Ntiguma and Fidelite Niyomubutazi, an accountant at the union. All three are Tutsi, illustrating the ethnic dimension of the crisis. Some church members (majority Hutu) came to their defense pleading their innocence. From their intervention, Fidelite was later released because she was the mother of young children, but Ntiguma was kept in police custody for a night and released the following day. Irakoze remained in prison.

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being accused of stealing church funds, he was accused of “atteinte à la sûreté intérieure et extérieure” (undermining internal and external security). He was basically being accused of being a spy—for Rwanda.⁶² They said he wanted to give BFI 800,000,000 (US\$ 428,000) to Rwanda-based Burundian rebels. He faced a jail-term of up to thirty-two years.

ECD Officers Arrive to Testify for Irakoze

The lawyers in charge of the case requested that the ECD send officers to testify for Irakoze. Tom Ogal and Dan Agwena were sent to testify and to try to secure the release of Irakoze. On December 12, 2018, they arrived on the first flight to Bujumbura and went to their hotel to await the meeting with Irakoze’s lawyer. The lawyer had gone to court and stayed longer than he had expected. He arrived at 2 p.m. and it was difficult to go to court thereafter, so they secured another appointment for the following day and rescheduled their evening flight.

The following morning, they were in court and gave their testimony, which was translated into French. As soon as they finished, they received word that they had been accused of being Rwandan spies who had come to bribe the judges to release Irakoze. Knowing they were in danger, they made their way to the airport to see if they could immediately fly back to Kenya. But they could not get an immediate flight out of the country. While they chose to await a 6 p.m. flight, it was then only midday. They felt insecure sitting out the six hours ahead of them. Fearing that security agents could pounce on them at any moment, they left the airport for their hotel to plan their escape, possibly by road through Tanzania.⁶³ Their Burundian associate made frantic calls to find out what was happening and they informed the ECD in Nairobi about the sudden

turn of events. The ECD officials in Nairobi acted fast and contacted the Kenyan Embassy in Bujumbura, requesting them to secure the safety of the two officers. The Embassy in turn reached the Burundi Government which gave the assurance that they would not be harmed. They returned to Nairobi on the evening flight.

It later emerged that the *Imboneza* may have been behind the messages.

Irakoze Fails to Secure His Freedom

Back in court, the prosecutor Thacien told the judge that Irakoze had an Australian visa and was a flight risk. The judge agreed with him and kept Irakoze in prison indefinitely. Later, Irakoze learned word had gone around that he held a Rwandese passport and had, using that passport, travelled to Australia. Irakoze showed this writer a copy of his Burundian passport and the Australian visa in it. The charges made things worse for him. He was sent back to the Central Prison of Mpimba, where 4,800 male inmates and 300 female inmates are housed in a space designed for about 800 people. Dangerously congested, violence, drugs, delinquency, and disease were the norm at Mpimba.

Doubtless, being incarcerated in Mpimba represented a difficult position for Paul Irakoze, who had never been in jail before, but like his Biblical namesake, he chose to spend his prison time doing God's work. He conducted Bible studies and organized an evangelistic campaign attended by a quarter of the prison population. Many joined regular Bible study classes. A baptism followed and forty-seven people were brought to the Adventist faith.⁶⁴

Intervention by the Adventist Women and Men Organization

On January 3, 2019, the Adventist Women and Men Organization (AWMO) wrote to President Ruguri at the ECD pleading for his intervention. Witnessing how the

church was so deeply divided and the senior official Irakoze remained in prison, the AWMO pleaded with Ruguri to restore “unity, tranquility and cohesion in the church” without which they could not achieve their mission.⁶⁵ The AWMO stated that they had written to various banking institutions that held church accounts notifying them that the officials of the church had been changed, thwarting attempts by Ndikubwayo to access the funds. It is not clear whether they were successful; however, Ndikubwayo was able to obtain a letter from the Interior Minister Barandagiye overturning any attempts to bar him from accessing the church funds.

According to an AWMO document, they had organized and sponsored a prayer meeting at the North-West Burundi Field to seek unity among church members and “to issue directives to members on how to behave in times such as this including not allowing Pastor Joseph (Ndikubwayo) to address church members anymore.”

AWMO also began a campaign to denounce Ndikubwayo and collected 12,410 signatures from across the country that they submitted to the president of Burundi, Nkurunziza, and to the first and second deputy presidents, the Interior Minister, Barandagiye, the Administrator General of the National Intelligence Service, and the Secretary General of the National Security Council. They attached the church's *Working Policy* on how leaders are appointed and some of the actions by Ndikubwayo that had caused his ouster. According to the AWMO letter, the government had chosen to

listen to a former BUM president who, apparently, was allied to Ndikubwayo, thereby complicating the situation. The AWMO then requested a high-level intervention session by the church to meet with the government officials in a bid to unlock the stalemate.

In yet another petition to the Interior Minister, the AWMO cited certain “regrettable actions” by Ndikub-

Doubtless, being incarcerated in Mpimba represented a difficult position for Paul Irakoze, who had never been in jail before, but like his Biblical namesake, he chose to spend his prison time doing God's work.

wayo saying that on November 25, 2018, Ndikubwayo authorized one of his guards to attack and beat up the BUM treasurer, Daniel Bavugubusa.⁶⁶ This action was said to have been carried out by the *Imboneza*. The AWMO also said that on December 13, 2018, accompanied by hired goons (read *Imboneza*), Ndikubwayo “smashed all the doors of the office of the Adventist Church Mission in Bujumbura and began robbing the Mission’s funds.”⁶⁷

The letter, signed by Evariste Sindayigaya (vice president), Johnson Nikobiri (secretary general), Marc Niyikiza (treasurer) and Floride Buyoyi (assistant treasurer) concluded:

You would understand, Excellency Minister, that your decision to keep this Pastor as President and Legal Representative of the Adventist Church, while the hierarchical authorities of the Adventist Church have removed him, will not miss adverse consequences on all levels. Considering that Burundians are fervent believers in general and Adventists in particular, in the foregoing, we would like to ask you to consider and restore the necessary value to the text that governs the Seventh-day Adventist Church... As for us, we reaffirm our commitment to respect the law and the Constitution of Burundi which gives us freedom of worship.⁶⁸

The government maintained its position.

Ndikubwayo’s Explanation

On January 4, 2019, Ndikubwayo wrote an eight-page document analyzing the development of the crisis from the moment he was fired onwards. He identified the letter writer Ndagijimana as being Evariste Sindayigaya (the AWMO vice president) but did not disclose the identity of Alexandre Niyonkuru. He then outlined the cause of the crisis, pegging it squarely on the circumstances related to his removal from office. He protested his removal as an unfair dismissal without any reason while Irakoze, whom he insisted had stolen the money with Biratevyé, was allowed to remain.⁶⁹ He also protested the appointment of Barishinga, claiming that his wife Sifa Esther (Mrs. Lamec Barishinga), who served as the BUM cashier, had been an accomplice in the theft “by allowing for five times the

embezzled funds to transit through her bank account.”⁷⁰

He suggested that as a way forward, the ECD should remove Barishinga with immediate effect. He also demanded that the GC send a fact-finding mission to Burundi and stated that the relationship with the government of Burundi be safeguarded. He also demanded that the ECD Treasury leadership (he did not name Jerome Habimana) immediately release the funds for the proposed Burundi Adventist Hospital which he said had been withheld since 2010. He also demanded the immediate replacement of Irakoze.

Finally, he demanded that the ECD leadership, which had refused to recognize his administration, should transfer the BUM to another division or have it attached to the GC directly. The ECD did not act on his letter but instead instituted a series of actions to wrest control of the church from Ndikubwayo.

The ECD Intervention

As things took a downward spiral, the ECD wrote to the BUM Executive Committee to explain the reasons for the removal of Ndikubwayo, because Ndikubwayo insisted that he was innocent since there was no document that had outlined the reasons for his removal. The ECD secretary, Alain Coralie, decided to clear matters. In a letter dated January 15, 2019, Coralie explained the reason for the removal of Ndikubwayo in accordance with *Working Policy* B45 20:

Here are the points which constituted the argument of gross negligence which were at the basis of the dismissal of Pastor Joseph Ndikubwayo as president of the Union of Burundi:

- Lack of collaboration with his fellow administrators, contrary to the *Working Policy* Article XI despite the many warnings by the administrators of the higher organization.
- Unilateral decision-making contrary to the *Working Policy* of the Adventist Church which pronounces that decision-making must be agreed by the three administrators (President, Executive Secretary, Treasurer). See *Working Policy* B45. There are numerous examples: the attempt to dismiss the four administrators of Lycée Maranatha de Kivoga; an attempt to

implant the Adventist University in Kivoga Primary School classrooms.

- Quarrels in public with fellow administrators and other failings of pastoral ethics.
- Lack of follow-up and lack of professional ethics when handing over and taking over the new and former Treasurer of the Union which led to the seizure of 70,000,000 BIF from the accounts of the BCB.⁷¹

The belated letter was too long in coming. By this time, Ndikubwayo was no longer working with the ECD-recognized BUM Executive Committee, but rather with the ones he had chosen. He had replaced some of the pastors with those allied to him and even dismissed some of the field presidents that had failed to recognize him. So, in short, there was no one to implement Coralie's letter, and even if there had been, they were not inclined to obey him. With hindsight, this letter should have been released on the same day Ndikubwayo had been ousted and issued to accompany the ECD officers who had been sent to install Barishinga. Ndikubwayo continued as though nothing had happened.

Ndikubwayo's Defense

Separately, Ndikubwayo disputed the grounds for his removal. With regard to the issue of the 70,000,000 BIF, he stated that he was not a signatory to that account and wondered why he would be held responsible for the transactions of an account to which he had no access. He said the signatories of that account should have been held responsible for the loss of the money since they should have acted sooner, or at least notified him about it.⁷²

Defending his administration, Ndikubwayo noted

he had presided over what was billed as one of the most successful TMI (Total Member Involvement) Evangelism programs in which 44,000 new members were baptized in Burundi in 2018 alone. This increased the membership by 25% in that short window. His administration had also given a greater visibility to the Adventist youth—the Pathfinders marching during national days had impressed many. They had even attracted the attention of the Burundian government and President Nkurunziza (who is a very religious man) was very impressed with them. During his administration, there had also been an unprecedented growth in income.

However, for some reason, the growth of income had not quite improved the financial position of the union mission which continued to grapple with significantly high debt levels, a situation that had also contributed to Biratveye's ouster.

The GC Intervention

In the period between March 7 and 9, 2019, Dr. Gagnoune Diop, the General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Affairs director, went to Burundi to try and sort out the situation. He met with Interior Minister Pascal Barandagiye and with the *Organe de Régulation et de Conciliation des Confessions Religieuses (ORCCR)*. The minister reportedly told the GC team, which included Alain Coralie (ECD secretary), that it would be in the best interest of the Adventist Church to replace both Ndikubwayo and Barishinga with a neutral third person. This was also the position of the ORCCR.

After the meetings, Diop wrote a letter stating that the General Conference did not see a reason to remove a duly elected church official (referring to Barishinga). He then named the treasurer, Daniel Bavugubusa, as the le-

Ndikubwayo was no longer working with the ECD-recognized BUM Executive Committee, but rather with the ones he had chosen. He had replaced some of the pastors with those allied to him and even dismissed some of the field presidents that had failed to recognize him.

gal representative of the church in Burundi. A native of Kayanza, Bavugubusa was educated in Bujumbura at the University of Burundi where he obtained a diploma in commerce and at the University of Bugema (2006–2009) where he obtained a BBA in accounting. Diop accidentally identified Bavugubusa as a “pastor” but he was actually an accountant by profession.

Those allied to Ndikubwayo immediately identified the mistake and convinced the Interior Minister that it was further evidence that the General Conference could not be trusted. They also stated that the positions of legal representative and union president could not be separated quoting the *Church Manual* as their evidence.

This position angered the Interior Minister who now stated that he would not recognize Barishinga but would only recognize Ndikubwayo. Ganoune Diop fired back a letter dated March 26, 2019, stating that he would report what he termed as Burundi’s violation of religious liberty to the Africa Union, United Nations, the European Union, and the World Bank. This only served to further anger Burundi, a nation which at that time was grappling with international criticism on the issue of the presidential term limits, crackdowns on dissent, and other human rights violations.

While in Burundi, Diop also met a senior military officer who was friendly to Adventists, having grown up in the Adventist church. The officer was a member of the National Security Council which is chaired by Burundi President Nkurunziza. This is also the body of which Ndikubwayo is a member. The officer promised to lobby the government on behalf of Barishinga. Interestingly, this senior officer was relieved of his job at the CNS early in November 2019⁷³ and was later redeployed. By then, Ndikubwayo had already been removed from his membership in the National Security Council.

Irakoze Released and Situation Worsens

Irakoze successfully appealed his case at the Court of Appeal, and was released with the condition that he not leave Bujumbura. His passport was withheld. He walked out of Mpimba on April 3, 2019 after nearly five months in jail.

The failure by the Burundi Government to recognize Barishinga created a serious power vacuum in the church. Factions loyal to either side regularly disrupted the meetings of the other causing, in some cases, the intervention of the police. Gihosha SDA Church witnessed sectarian skirmishes and videos of police beating up members allied to one of the factions were widely circulated on social media. At Kamenge SDA Church, Communion was

disrupted by factions allied to the opposing sides. The *Imboneza* were said to have been behind the chaos witnessed in the church. Various other churches’ services continued normally but many Adventists chose to remain at home altogether, fearing getting caught in the wrong place.

On May 4, 2019, worshippers at Jabe SDA Church in Bujumbura saw skirmishes when busloads of people disrupted worship and attacked the pastor for allegedly supporting Ndikubwayo. Police were called and running battles were witnessed in the church. A few days later, Barishinga and Ntiguma were arrested because of that and were released on a bond for good conduct. Police thereafter were

placed on high alert on Sabbaths and kept watch on Adventist facilities just in case there was violence.

On July 7, 2019 the Rusenyi SDA Church in Muyinga province witnessed skirmishes in which a police officer was injured. Shots were fired in the air. Later that month, on July 27, Buganda Mission in Cibitoke also witnessed running battles with the police. The vehicle belonging to the commune administrator was damaged. On September 21, 2019 Ngozi SDA Church witnessed battles with

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the police and on October 12, at Musenyi SDA Church, a similar situation unfolded with their youth led by Alfred Miharurwa.

At Muramvya Province, the governor, Laurent Nicimbeshe, issued a decree suspending the operations of the Adventist Church until the wrangling parties found a solution. He had met with them twice but failed to find consensus. The bone of contention was the appointment and deployment of Elie Manirambona on October 5, 2019, by the faction associated with Ndikubwayo. The church congregants rejected the new pastor stating that they did not recognize actions by Ndikubwayo, despite the fact that Ndikubwayo controlled church accounts and funds. Ndikubwayo did manage to get the Muramvya governor to suspend his decree. But that was not the end of the violence.

A Road to Nowhere

At the time of Ndikubwayo's removal as president, the ECD wrote to freeze the union's bank accounts. However, he was able to obtain a letter from the Interior Minister Barandagiye to unfreeze the accounts. Then he appointed new field presidents loyal to him, but the ECD countered by withdrawing their pastoral credentials.

On 15 April 2019, Barishinga lead a team to meet with the government ombudsman tasked with hearing complaints against the government. Barishinga complained that Interior Minister Barandagiye was seeking to impose a leader on the Adventist Church by failing to recognize Barishinga's appointment. Then he met with journalists from local and international media, including the VOA and BBC. This action angered the government. It was assumed to be the implementation of Ganoune Dipop's plan to shame the government with the international community. The ombudsman asked them to meet for another hearing on April 18. The day before, on April 17, Interior Minister Barandagiye wrote to GC President Wilson stating that the insistence that Barishinga be the union president, was "a contradiction to the discussions we had with your delegation."

Government Intervention

To mediate the situation, Minister Barandagiye invited both Barishinga and Ndikubwayo to a meeting at the Hotel Source du Nil in Bujumbura the following day,



ABOUT THE EAST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION

The East-Central Africa Division is comprised of 11 countries. Amid a population of about 307 million, the Seventh-day Adventist Church counts more than 2.5 million members worshipping at more than 11,000 churches.

This division is home to the Adventist University of Africa in Kenya, which provides theological training to pastors across the continent. It also operates several other universities and many secondary schools.

The church in Rwanda has more than half a million members and is well regarded in the community. Rwandans are required to perform community service for basic country development on the last Saturday of each month, but the government allows Adventists to perform these duties on Sunday instead to accommodate Sabbath-observance.

The Adventist Development and Relief Agency has major operations throughout the division.

Kenyan long-distance runner Abel Kirui, an Adventist church member, won the silver medal in the men's marathon at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London.

SOURCE: <https://www.adventist.org/church/world-church/east-central-africa/>

when the Barishinga team was scheduled to meet with the ombudsman. Instead of going to the Minister's meeting, Barishinga chose to attend the meeting with the ombudsman. The ombudsman decided that he could not go ahead with the meeting when in fact Minister Barandagiye was trying to bring the two factions together. He directed them



"The president and legal representative of the BUM Pr Joseph Ndikubwayo." (SOURCE: Twitter @RemyBiva • Posted December 28, 2019)

to attend the meeting with the Minister. Barishinga declined, giving the reason that he had not been cleared by the ECD to attend that meeting.

The meeting took place anyway, with Ndikubwayo in attendance. Minister Pascal Barandagiye explained that Diop had gone against what had been agreed upon, which was to remove both Barishinga and Ndikubwayo and install someone else. Ndikubwayo probably should have at least explained to the Minister that it was difficult, unless under exceptional circumstances, for the GC to overturn decisions of the ECD Committee. Minister Barandagiye then declared that Ndikubwayo would have to continue in the position now that the GC had reneged on the earlier agreement. As a lawyer, and formerly the Justice Minister, Barandagiye stated that the law had to be followed in the matter and that anyone disagreeing with him could go to

court to challenge his decision. He called for the church to hold fresh elections (which was not actionable because the status of Burundi Union Mission did not allow that). Only a union conference that has a constituency can do that. Under *Working Policy*, any change in a union mission presidency would have to be made by the same the ECD Committee.

ECD and the Kenyan Crisis

About this time, the crisis in the Central Kenya Conference (CKC) was unfolding. Church members there who were unsatisfied with the church elections at the CKC, had created a new unsanctioned Nairobi Cosmopolitan Conference (NCC) to rival the CKC. The pro-Ndikubwayo group in Burundi quickly pointed to the crisis in Kenya stating that the ECD had failed to resolve a local

matter and that the stand-off in Burundi was yet another illustration that the ECD was incapable of being a neutral arbiter.

Meanwhile, Ndikubwayo was operating the church like there was no issue at hand. He began making key personnel changes, removing field presidents, starting with Ntiguma. He also transferred pastors allied to Barishinga and installed new pastors in congregations he felt were against him.

To contain the worsening situation, in March 2019, the ECD Committee decided to revoke the credentials of key pastors who refused to recognize its decision to install Barishinga as BUM president.

Four pastors, Eric Steven Nsengiyumva, Benjamin Bidandaza, Nyandwi Elie, and Pascal Ntirandekura had their credentials revoked. According to the official communication, they had continued to resist church policy and the ECD's orders to recognize Lamec Barishinga. They were removed by the BUM Executive Committee, a decision then ratified by the division. In April 2019, Ndikubwayo's credentials were also revoked.

Prior to the credential removal, Nsengiyumva had been appointed by Ndikubwayo to take over from Ntiguma as president of the South-West Burundi Field in December 2018.⁷⁴ (It was seen as Ndikubwayo getting back at Ntiguma over their longstanding rivalry.) Nsengiyumva is a third-generation Adventist, the grandson of Kaduha, the very first Burundian to be ordained a minister. Earlier in 2018, Nsengiyumva had distinguished himself while serving as the BUM Communication director and evangelism coordinator by conducting a very successful TMI (Total Member Involvement) Evangelistic campaign. By engaging all the Burundi members to bring friends to the campaign, some 44,000 new members were added to the church roles, swelling the union's membership by an unprecedented 25%.

Another of the pastors, Benjamin Bidandaza, had served as the president of the East Burundi Field while Elie Nyandwi was the BUM departmental director for Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, Education, and Youth Ministries.⁷⁵ Nyandwi was appointed president of the North West Burundi Field by Ndikubwayo. He also appointed Pascal Ntirandekura president of the North Burundi Field in what was clearly a reward for loyalty to him. Nyandwi and Bidandaza were doctoral students at the AUA. When

their credentials were removed, their student scholarships were also terminated.

The ADRA Burundi Debacle

After the problems in the Burundi Union Mission started, the next frontier in the battle to control the church opened at ADRA Burundi. The country director, Joel Ngba, a missionary from Cameroon, faced a serious dilemma: to work with a church leader appointed by the ECD but not recognized by the government, or to work with the one removed by the ECD but recognized by the government of Burundi.⁷⁶ Ngba believed that ADRA Burundi's interests as a humanitarian organization would best be served by staying neutral and refraining from getting involved in the leadership crisis. He refused to attend meetings called by either Ndikubwayo or Barishinga, stating that he needed a clear position from the ECD or GC on the leadership in Burundi.

This position did not sit well with either side of the divide. But Ngba was in a difficult spot, not wanting to rub the government the wrong way, given its sensitivities with international NGOs. In fact, all international NGOs had already been suspended from operating in Burundi in October 2018 by the government, including ADRA Burundi. At the start of November, ADRA Burundi was exempted because of the nature of its work, its track record and its affiliation with the Adventist church. Now that it had been exempted, Ngba did not want to annoy the government. It was only after an intervention by the ADRA network hierarchy that Ngba was finally asked by the Africa regional office to remain neutral.

Then, in the middle of the battle for the control of church in Burundi, the ECD Committee recommended the shutdown of ADRA Burundi and Ngba was given permanent return to his native country. The ECD had decided to employ a "scorched earth" policy to limit the influence of Ndikubwayo. To do so they were willing to scuttle ADRA Burundi.

Ngba had been appointed in December 2016 by the General Conference on a five-year contract to serve as ADRA Burundi country director. He arrived with his family and placed his children in local schools. When he was terminated via email on May 16, 2018, he was only given three days to leave Burundi. Bjorn Johansen from ADRA Denmark was appointed to replace him.

Ngba tried unsuccessfully to protest the move saying that he needed time for his children to at least complete the school year. Ngba received Johansen and used the short window he had to introduce him to government officials and arranged a handover. But the change in leadership did not go down well with the government officials who said that Johansen's appointment was an affront to the people of Burundi. They also interpreted it as part of the ECDs effort to control the church in Burundi.

The government accused Johansen of coming to Burundi without a work-permit and slapped him with a *persona non grata*, forcing him to leave Burundi. He was accused of not following the law in obtaining the consent of the Ministry of Cooperation before taking office in Burundi. Knowing the sensitivities that the Burundi government had with international NGOs and foreign interference, it was probably a bad idea to replace Ngba with a European expatriate. It might have been better if it had been another African. On the converse, the ECD committee had probably not expected Ndikubwayo's hand in the turn of events.

Ndikubwayo declared that if Ngba was to leave, then he would have to appoint the new country director himself. Seeing the danger of that, the ECD decided to close ADRA Burundi altogether. They asked Ngba to calculate the entire costs of winding up. He made the calculations and informed the ADRA Africa regional office that it would take at least \$320,000 in liabilities to be settled immediately. There would be more costs. He informed them that there were also legal issues and cases in court that needed to be settled before winding up. When he sent the numbers to the division, it presented them with a difficult position since the money was not immediately available to make the settlements. The ECD then decided to withdraw the ADRA license, preventing use of its name or logo.⁷⁷ According to Ngba, what was at stake were the jobs of seventy staff members, and the welfare of their families and thousands of vulnerable Burundians benefiting from ADRA's programs.

The government of Burundi immediately issued a li-

cense to former ADRA Burundi (now without a name) but this time as a local NGO. It continues with its activities and Ngba remains in Burundi in the same capacity. Currently funding comes from Germany and Norway and a long-expected partnership with the UN/FAO was nearly scuttled by the leadership crisis. Naturally, this turn of events has caused great satisfaction to Ndikubwayo's camp. And he remains the chair of the board.

Anti-Corruption Authority Gets Involved

In July 2019, just after Ngba was given a permanent return (and failed to leave), he was summoned by the Anti-Corruption Authority to answer charges against him and ADRA. ADRA had supposedly not followed hiring and procurement procedures, among other charges. He was interrogated for three hours, confronted by what he described as misinformation believed to have been deposited by those opposed to Ndikubwayo.

The Anti-Corruption Authority later went to ADRA Burundi and requested several items, including financial statements and documents related to procurement since January 2018, which corresponded to the period when Mrs. Ndikubwayo joined ADRA Burundi. They are yet to press any charges, if at all.

In August 2019, Ngba and his family went back to Cameroon. While there he was informed by his union that no official information had reached them about his permanent return. In September he went back to Burundi and continued working. Donors (ADRA Germany and ADRA Denmark) requested him to help supervise the closing of their projects and are paying

his salary. He told this writer that he plans to go back home at the beginning of next year though his permanent return has not been confirmed by the Cameroon Union at the time of this publication.

The hiring of Mrs. Ndikubwayo as the finance director at ADRA doubtless escalated the crisis in ADRA Burundi. For a while, ADRA Burundi had operated without the position. Country director Ngba got the consent of the board and the ADRA regional office to hire one.

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After the hiring announcement was issued, Ndikubwayo told Ngba that his wife had been out of work for a while and she wanted to apply for the job. He also said that he was opposed to his wife's request, because he would be attacked for it. Ngba told the president that he did not see any problem in hiring her and in fact insisted that she should apply if she was qualified. Besides, he argued, the hiring decision was made by the HR committee and the board. Ngba insisted that if Mrs. Ndikubwayo was qualified, she should apply. He did not anticipate any problem. He was wrong.

Treasurer Biratevye got wind of the vacant position and went to see Secretary Irakoze to discuss the situation, telling him that he had heard the president wanted to employ his wife as head of finance in ADRA. Biratevye already had someone else in mind for the position and wanted Irakoze to assist him in getting the other person the job. Biratevye then said that it wouldn't be a good idea for the president's wife to take the position because it would be a conflict of interest. Irakoze agreed. They decided to speak with Ndikubwayo about it and tell him that he could not be the chairman of the ADRA Board while his wife was at the same time head of finance at ADRA. Ndikubwayo rebuked them and sent them away.

Mrs. Ndikubwayo had been out of work for seven months after the end of her contract with a US-AID-funded project. For the position of finance director, ADRA Burundi received eight applications and résumés, including hers. The résumés were evaluated by the Human Resources Committee headed by the programs director, Samuel Nzokirantevye. Mrs. Ndikubwayo turned out to be the best. Her previous experience at an international NGO (USAID) doubtless helped. It is important to note that Mrs. Ngba was the head of HR at ADRA Burundi and was a member of that committee.

Irakoze called Ngba and told him about his concerns on the issue of conflict of interest. Apparently, Ngba went to Ndikubwayo and told him what the secretary had said. Ndikubwayo then confronted Irakoze and told him to keep out of the matter.

In October 2017, Ndikubwayo was scheduled to attend the annual meetings at the GC in the USA. It happened that the board date was set for October 8, 2017 when he would be away. Ndikubwayo suggested that the board meeting be postponed until he returned from

America. Ngba stated that there were pressing matters that needed to be dispensed of and suggested that the president could assign someone else to chair the meeting while he was away. It then fell on the secretary, Irakoze, to chair. He added it was proper for him to chair the meeting considering that Ndikubwayo's wife was the subject of a vote. Irakoze agreed to chair the meeting.

On October 8, 2017, Irakoze arrived at 10 a.m. at the ADRA offices to chair the meeting. When he looked at the agenda, he immediately picked out Mrs. Ndikubwayo's name and pointed out that he still felt that there would be a conflict of interest if she were to take up the position. Ngba objected and for an hour their discussion went back and forth. Ngba explained that he would be her direct supervisor and not Ndikubwayo and that the possible conflict of interest situation would be explained during that same board meeting for all to understand. Irakoze was not convinced. Ngba asked him where his wife was employed. He said that his wife was the cashier at the Bujumbura Mission. He asked if that was not in fact a "conflict of interest." Besides, Ngba's own wife was the head of Human Resources at ADRA Burundi and he did not consider that it created a conflict of interest as he did not supervise her directly. He had also reported that situation in his declaration and his wife had also declared in her contract that she was the spouse of the country director.

Irakoze picked up his phone and said he would call the division to find out what they would have to say. Ngba objected to the call and told him that he didn't find it necessary to consult the division on a matter concerning ADRA when the ADRA regional office had already been consulted. Irakoze finally started the meeting and Ngba, who was the secretary, introduced the matter of Ms. Nga-hibare. She was approved. Even though he chaired the meeting and the name had passed, Irakoze was still uncomfortable with the appointment. Shortly afterwards, he approached the president to see if he could revoke the appointment, a fact that would escalate their differences.

Mrs. Ndikubwayo's Tenure at ADRA Burundi

Mrs. Ndikubwayo was hired in October 2017 on a one-year contract which was to end in December 2018. When she began working there, attacks on ADRA Burundi by those opposed to Ndikubwayo increased substantial-

ly. Ngba presented this concern to the regional office in Nairobi. Closer to the end of her contract, in November 2018, Ndikubwayo was relieved of his position. For Ngba, the new development would mean that if Ndikubwayo was to be deployed far from Bujumbura, Mrs. Ndikubwayo would have to go with him, and considering the conflict that had arisen following her hiring, he opted not to renew her contract. Neither Ndikubwayo nor his wife objected to this action.

The hiring of Mrs. Ndikubwayo was repeatedly mentioned as evidence that Ngba supported Ndikubwayo, particularly after Ndikubwayo had declined to vacate office, leading to a major standoff. In May 2019, he was terminated and given a permanent return to go back to his native Cameroon. The hiring of Mrs. Ndikubwayo doubtless, contributed to his woes.

Barishinga Arrested

Lamec Barishinga was first arrested on May 7, 2019, because of some violence that broke out in the Jabe SDA Church in Bujumbura. The youth who were arrested implicated Barishinga, saying that he and Lambert Ntiguma were the ones who had sent them to cause disruptions in that church.⁷⁸ Both pastors were arrested based on the testimony. It is not clear if the youth were sent by them or by another with the purpose of putting the two in trouble. It is also not clear if they were part of the *Imboneza*. What happened can only be interpreted as part of the tensions associated with the transition. The prosecutor took them to a judge and they signed a document pledging that they would not break any laws of the country. They were all released together with the youth based on that pledge.

Early in October 2019, Barishinga was due to travel to the US to attend Annual Council at the General Conference.⁷⁹ He failed to obtain a US Visa and sent instead a video message to the GC. In that video, he pleaded for support from the world church. After the video had been played, GC President Ted Wilson and the attendees offered a special prayer for Burundi.

Barishinga then wrote a six-page letter to the church members in Burundi using the official letterhead of the church. Those opposed to him immediately accused him of impersonation of the president, as Ndikubwayo remained the legal representative of the church despite his ouster by the ECD. The interior minister, Barandagiye, had issued a letter in April 2019 stating that Ndikubwayo would remain the legal representative of the Adventist Church.

On his way to attend the year-end meetings at the ECD, on October 24, 2019, Barishinga was arrested and sent to Mpimba Prison. He occupies the same cell which Irakoze occupied earlier in the year. At the time of writing this paper, he remains in prison. Others have joined him lately including Lambert Ntiguma, Élisée Manirakiza (the pastor of Kamenge District), Deo Sabimana, and Saidi Gilbert Bimenyimana, among others. Some of them have since been released but Ntiguma, at the time of this report, was yet to be released.

The Matter Goes to the Burundian Parliament

In October 2019, just after Barishinga was arrested, Interior Minister Barandagiye was asked by members of Parliament to explain the crisis in the Adventist church. He stated that he personally did not care whether Nd-

Lamec Barishinga was first arrested on May 7, 2019 because of some violence that broke out in the Jabe SDA Church in Bujumbura. The youth who were arrested implicated Barishinga, saying that he and Lambert Ntiguma were the ones who had sent them to cause disruptions in that church.

ikubwayo or Barishinga oversaw the Adventist Church and that his only concern was that their appointment had to be done within the law. He said that the removal of Ndikubwayo was not fair since he had not completed his term, and the ECD had not given any reason for his removal.⁸⁰ He said, “We fail to understand if these people are doing God’s work or doing another business.”⁸¹

He also stated that after the Barishinga faction had appealed his decision to the head of state, he was no longer responsible for the case since the head of state was to make the final decision. He stated that the presidency advised that the General Conference should be invited to resolve the matter and they were duly invited. They agreed that Joseph Ndikubwayo would remain interim leader until they could elect a new leader to replace him.⁸²

Conclusion

The complexities of the situation in the Adventist church in Burundi are greater than we can cover in these pages. On the face of it, the problem is a battle for control between the GC/ECD on the one hand and Joseph Ndikubwayo and the National Government of Burundi on the other hand. But it is much deeper than that. The elephant in the room is toxic ethnicity where the actions of an individual are viewed through an ethnic prism and as such, the individual is despised and can do nothing honorable despite professing the same faith. Ethnic nationalism compounded by limited opportunities, the traditional rivalries between the two nations of Burundi and Rwanda, as well as the former’s sensitivities about interference in its internal affairs, have all played their part in the whole affair. Institutional corruption, noted in the whole issue, reflects waning spirituality and a deviation of the collective moral and ethical calling. In the process, the credibility of the Adventist church and its institutional

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legitimacy in Burundi has been badly dented, undermining its mission and weakening public trust in the institution. At the heart of concerned observers are the 44,000 new members who in 2018 joined the church following the successful TMI program and who are probably wondering whether they made the right decision. The church in Burundi needs someone to climb down from their high horse if only for the sake these new members, young in the faith. All the players must realize that the church is bigger than all of us and that further escalation threatens the ability of the Adventist church to meet its local and global mission.

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6. Ibid., no. 10 (October 1, 1932): 4.

7. Ibid., no. 12 (December 1, 1932): 12.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., no. 1 (January 1, 1933): 5.

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37. Telephone interview with Samuel Ndikumana, Germany, November 19, 2019.

38. Interview with Paul Irakoze, Nairobi, November 13, 2019.

39. Burundi Union Mission *Entretien de fin d'Audit. Resume d'Audit des Etats Financiers au 31 decembre 2017* (Burundi Union Mission Audit Interview. Financial Statement Audit Summary as of December 31, 2017), 4.

40. Interview with Paul Irakoze, Nairobi, November 15, 2019.

41. Interview with Daniel Bavugubusa, Nairobi, November 15, 2019.

42. According to the secretary, he signed the document and immediately left for school at AUA (Adventist University of Africa) where he was undertaking his graduate studies (MDiv), a program he had started in 2017. Much of the printing was done while he was away.

43. The funds for the project were from a private donor and were not church funds.

44. According to Irakoze, the fluctuation of the volatile Burundian Franc to the USD was the reason they could not determine exactly how many books they would print.

45. *Entretien de fin d'Audit*, 3–4. (Translated using Google Translate.)

46. Interview with Joseph Ndikubwayo, November 26, 2019.

47. Interview with Paul Irakoze, *Op cit*.

48. From a letter dated May 7, 2018, purportedly from ECD officers Jerome Habimana and Michel Caballero. The ECD has since distanced itself from the letter and the transfer of funds.

49. From a letter dated August 22, 2018 to Biratevye written by Secretary Irakoze.

50. Telephone interview with Joseph Ndikubwayo, November 26, 2019.

51. Divisions in the church in Burundi are not new. Right from the year 2000, the cross-ethnic accusations had been witnessed, but it was somewhat contained.

52. From an email written by Moise Niyuhire dated November 11, 2018. The document and its attachments were widely circulated on social media.

53. Ibid.

54. Document authored by Ndikubwayo on January 4, 2019 trying to explain the origin of the crisis.

55. Interview with Ndikubwayo, November 26, 2019.

56. Those objecting the removal of Ndikubwayo on the grounds that he sat in the National Security Council, cite the fact that a previous Burundi Union president, Uzziel Habingabwa (1994–2005), had served as a member of the Elders Council of Burundi and the church had not objected. His father, Senkomo, was also a presidential advisor. Those opposed to them state that the positions held by his predecessors are not exactly comparable to his and the context of their service was also, as we have seen in the history of Burundi, markedly different

57. Telephone interview with Joseph Ndikubwayo, November 26, 2019.

58. Vote number ECD2018-105 of November 6, 2018.

59. Interview with Dan Agwena, Nairobi, November 26, 2019.

60. Interview with Paul Irakoze, Nairobi, November 13, 2019.

61. Ibid.

62. Interview with Paul Irakoze, Nairobi, November 13, 2019.

63. Interview with Dan Agwena, Nairobi, November 26, 2019.

64. From an article written by Paul Irakoze entitled “There is Hope in Signing with the Knees” about his prison experiences.

65. From a letter dated January 3, 2019 written to Division President Dr. Blasius Ruguri by the Adventist Women and Men Organization of Burundi.

66. From *Petition Sur La Destabilisation De L’eglise Adventiste Du Septieme Jour au Burundi*. (Petition on The Destabilization of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Burundi) authored by the Adventist Women and Men Organization of Burundi, dated January 3, 2019. It was presented to government authorities as protest at the continued recognition of Ndikubwayo despite certain “regrettable actions” that befell his calling as a pastor.

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Letter by Ndikubwayo dated January 4, 2019

70. Ibid.

71. From a letter dated January 15, 2019 by ECD Secretary

Alain Coralie to the Executive Committee of the Burundi Union Mission. The letter, written in French, was translated through Google Translate.

72. Telephone interview with Joseph Ndikubwayo, November 26, 2019.

73. Presidential Decree No. 100/167 of October 31, 2019 relating to the appointment of the Permanent Secretary of the Conseil National de Sécurité signed by President Pierre Nkurunziza and First Vice President Gaston Sindimwo. Col. Pierre Claver Nzisabira was appointed to replace him.

74. The West Burundi Field was split in 2014 to create the South-West Burundi Field and the North-West Burundi Field

75. Ibid.

76. Interview with Joel Ngba, November 25, 2019.

77. The first plan was to immediately close ADRA Burundi in June 2018. The high cost of compensating staff and providers was estimated to be in excess of \$500,000, which discouraged the action initiated by the ECD and ADRA International who decided to allow some donors (in particular ADRA Germany and ADRA Denmark) to complete their funded projects by end of December 2019. This is the date when all ADRA Burundi staff contracts naturally end. This allowed ADRA International to withdraw the license given to ADRA Burundi to operate as ADRA. Withdrawing the license meant that ADRA Burundi could no longer use ADRA’s name and logo or initiate any action in the name of ADRA.

78. Interview with Paul Irakoze, *op cit*.

79. The Annual Council was due to be held between October 10–16, 2019 in Silver Spring Maryland. Thereafter, he would attend the ECD Annual Council later that month.

80. He had probably not seen Coralie’s letter of January 15, 2019.

81. Video clip from the Burundian Parliament in which Barandagiye is responding to members.

82. Ibid.



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REVIEW

VISION

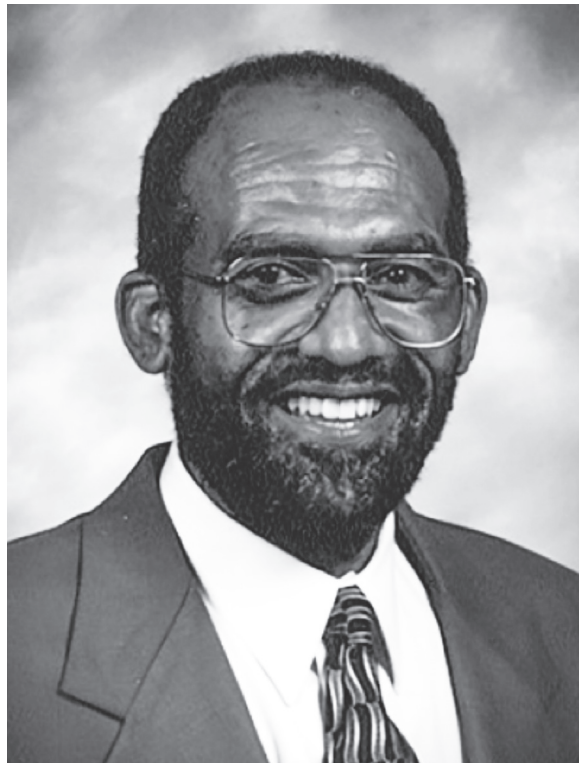
A Profile of Adugnaw Worku

BY NANCY HOYT LECOURT

A slender man in his early seventies paces the stage in a long white shirt and fitted white trousers, the colors of the Ethiopian flag draped across his chest, a yellow band encircling his forehead. His glasses glint in the bright lights of Lakewood Stadium, in Atlanta, as he recites a poem in Amharic to an eager crowd of 30,000 on Ethiopia Day in June 2019.

The poet implores the youthful Ethiopian crowd to recognize the deadly consequences of ethnic animosities, warning that ethnic violence will destroy the delicate fabric of Ethiopian society, reminding them of the common values and aspirations that have kept them together for millennia.

His name is Adugnaw Worku, and he left Ethiopia in



1971 to continue his education in Australia and the United States. Because of his political activism—writing essays, speaking on the radio, sharing poems like this one that the Communist government found troublesome—he was in exile for twenty-nine years, unable to return to his village to visit family and friends for fear of being detained. Education has made him dangerous.

He has led a double life. He is also a mild-mannered Adventist librarian, retired after a long career, most of it as library director at Pacific Union College. His calm, reassuring manner and sense

of humor, with an Ethiopian proverb always at the ready, made him easy to work with, a respected colleague and friend. These two lives—activist poet, academic librarian—did not appear to overlap much. Most of his col-

leagues could not have imagined him on stage, passionately reciting political poems, fearing retribution from the Communist government of Ethiopia.

I first heard Adu tell his life story, or at least part of it, many years ago. But now, with the publication of his autobiography, *The Restless Shepherd*, I have learned many more details of his amazing life, like the kidnapping of his mother (by his father, in a bid to marry her—it worked) and his own near burial as a baby (he was rescued by his grandmother). And these aren't the really amazing parts.

He was born in 1945 in a tiny mud hut in a rural village most easily described by lack: no electricity, no plumbing, no medical care, no schools or shops, no transportation, no mail, only word of mouth communication between villages. The men worked the land, ploughing the fields with oxen. The women cooked over open fires in windowless huts, after grinding grain by hand for eight hours a day. It was the Iron Age, basically. The survival rate for infants was about 50%. For those who lived, there was one destiny: for a girl, an arranged marriage around age twelve (or younger); for a boy like Adugnaw, to become a shepherd at age seven and a farmer at age twelve.

End of story.

But then, when he was fifteen, everything changed—not in the twinkling of an eye, but in the putting out of one, his left, by the branch of a thorn bush while he was walking in the dark with friends. After a few weeks of terrible pain—remember, there is no health care—he starts to understand what his new future holds: he will be a one-eyed subsistence farmer, unable to earn a proper living, mocked behind his back, and called “You ugly, blind you!” to his face. He begins to settle into despair.

Then his father's older brother suggests that he go to the Adventist hospital in the highlands, where the White mission doctors can cure anything. It is two days' walk and he has no shoes. But it is his only salvation. He imagines getting his sight back, his eye healed. His mother gives him a bag of “travelling food” (a roasted mixture of garbanzos and barley), and he finds a group of merchants

who are going his way, so that he can travel safely and not get lost.

He arrives at the mission compound just before sundown and sees electricity for the first time. He is full of questions about the roaring generator and sparkling lights, but the people just tease him for being a country boy. He sleeps fitfully that night; then dawns the day when his life trajectory will take a turn, though not the one he expects:

I woke up early on Monday morning hopeful and nervous. This was the day! This was the moment! . . . I was looking forward to a magical moment of healing and restoration. . . . When I reached the hospital, a gentleman ushered me in and directed me to wait until called. I had never seen a place like this before. (93)

Finally, he was ushered into an examination room, where he saw a White man for the first time: Dr. Christian Hogganvik of Norway, assisted by Mr. Dessie Gudaye, his associate and translator. “Dr. Hogganvik's skin color and his language fascinated me. I had a sense that I could see right through his pink ears.” Dr. Hogganvik asked him many questions and examined his eye. “The moment of truth had arrived. I was a nervous wreck.”

“Finally they turned to me and dropped a bombshell. ‘Young man, I am so sorry to tell you that I cannot help you. Your eye problem is beyond my expertise. I am not an eye specialist. If you can, go to either Asmara or Addis Ababa.’” Adu was stunned. Couldn't the missionary doctors heal every illness? Asmara and Addis Ababa were both a month of walking away—impossible. He left the hospital in tears.

And then, not in the examination room but on the grounds of the mission compound a few minutes later, *then*, came the turning point of his life. He noticed a noisy group of young students playing volleyball or chasing each other; others were quietly reading or writing. He was mesmerized. “I couldn't take my eye off them. They

And then, not in the examination room but on the grounds of the mission compound a few minutes later, *then*, came the turning point of his life.

were a smartly dressed and healthy-looking bunch. What a marked difference between them and myself.” (94) The spark that would light the fire of his life’s passion was ignited in that moment: “Lucky them! I thought. I was so jealous. I longed to be one of them. While still sitting there, a forbidden thought crossed my mind. . . . I was possessed by a mysterious and powerful emotion that I could not ignore.” He would defy his father, his poverty, and his destiny, and go to school. He prayed, “Dear God, please help me! I need a miracle now. Please help me, dear God!” I prayed that prayer over and over and over. In essence, I was asking God to make the impossible possible.” (95)

With the drive and persistence that he has shown throughout his life, Adu simply pushed ahead with his dream. “At fifteen and a half years old I became a proud first grader.” Most of the rest of this fascinating book tells of the many seemingly insurmountable obstacles on his way to an education, the hunger and hard work, the ingenuity and social skills he deployed to get through elementary school as a penniless student at Adventist mission schools in Ethiopia, and then continue his education at an Ethiopian Adventist boarding academy and then abroad.

Along the way, the power of Christian education became so clear both to Adu and to his family that eventually his two brothers and one sister were able to get an education as well. When his parents paid a surprise visit to him during his eighth-grade year, they realized what education could do:

For the first time in their lives my parents took a hot bath in a modern bathtub. Also for the first time, they slept in a clean, comfortable bed. We laundered their clothes. . . . They could not believe that life could be so clean, so comfortable, so convenient, and so magical. (140)

Using forks and spoons instead of their fingers was also a first for my parents. My father loved sweets, and he ate his dessert with relish. Seeing electric lights for the first time was the ultimate wonder for them. My father’s observation captured what they were experienc-

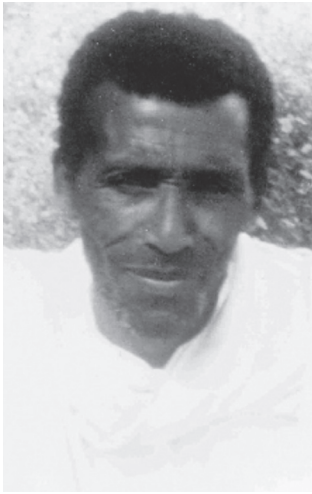
ing when he said, “These people don’t need to go to paradise; they are already in it. They live fully, but we merely exist.” (141)

As a result of this visit, Adu’s father decided that his other children should attend school as well. This would be completely unheard of in the village, a radical break with tradition, but both his parents were independent thinkers, and in the end, with the support of a missionary teacher and her family, this new dream came true. “I, for one, was keenly aware that a profound family history was in the making. No one in our village, or the surrounding villages, had sent any of their children to school, much less all their children.” (142)

It would mean a lonely life for his parents, in a culture where family is so important. “They would have no help at home or on the farm, and no one would sympathize with them. In fact, they would be ridiculed for their countercultural decision. . . . Rumors soon circulated that my parents had actually sold their children to foreigners.” But they believed it was their responsibility to give their children the best life they could.

When Adu completed high school in 1970 (at age 25), he decided to continue to attend Adventist schools and was able to fly to Avondale for college. “Explaining my impending departure to Australia was mission impossible. They didn’t even know a country called Australia existed.” (160) There at Avondale, he was introduced to the gospel by Desmond Ford. After graduating, his dream of going to America was finally fulfilled. He enrolled at Andrews University for two master’s degrees and completed his education at age 39 with a third master’s degree in library science from the University of Southern California—even winning USC’s Outstanding Achievement Award for two years running. A long, successful career on the beautiful Napa Valley campus of Pacific Union College, with an educated Ethiopian wife, Zewuditu (whose own story makes a compelling separate chapter), and two intelligent, healthy (and charming) sons was eventually the reward for his hard work.

“Rumors soon circulated that my parents had actually sold their children to foreigners.” But they believed it was their responsibility to give their children the best life they could.



Adugnaw Worku's father and mother (in America, right), some of the photos included in his book.



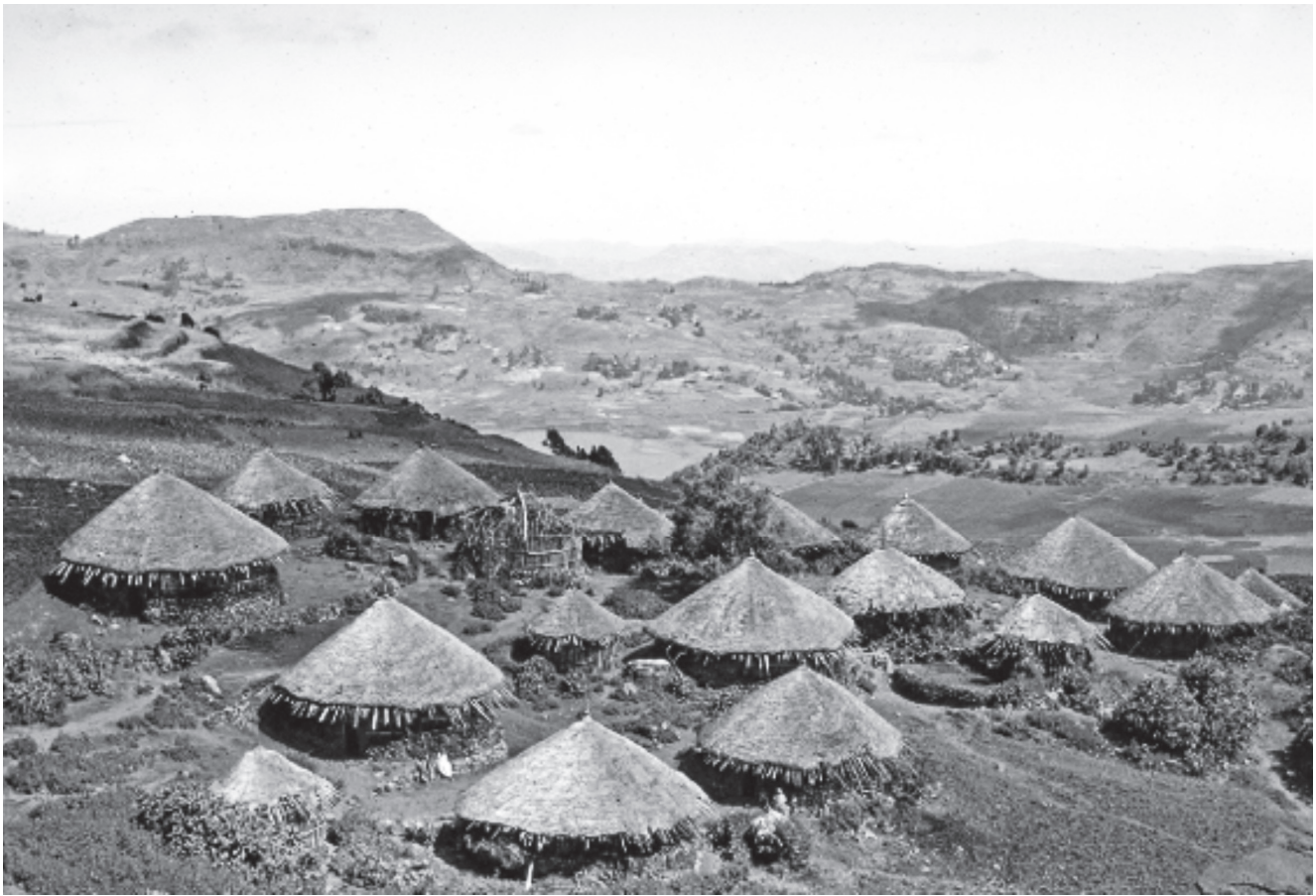
With his education complete in 1984, Adu had longed to return to his village, as promised. But it was not to be. The 1974 coup that overthrew Haile Selassie had resulted in a takeover by a Marxist-Leninist military junta, followed by years of economic instability, famine, and civil war. Adu considers himself a member of a “lost generation in search of itself,” exiles who are “emotionally Ethiopian and intellectually Western, committed to liberal democracy” (206). He became part of the growing Ethiopian diaspora. “In hindsight, returning to Ethiopia would have been an unmitigated disaster. . . . When I read that the communist government in Ethiopia was charging parents for the bullets it used to kill their children . . . I grasped the gravity of the situation as never before” (207). He applied for political asylum, got a work permit, and settled down rather reluctantly.

In 1996, Adu renounced his Ethiopian citizenship and became a United States citizen. “I was pleased and proud to be an American citizen, but renouncing my Ethiopian citizenship felt like a stab in the stomach. I felt like a traitor.” (217).

Finally, in 2000, Adu became convinced that the political situation had calmed enough that he could return home for a visit. The presence of so many people who looked and spoke like himself, the sound of doves cooing and Orthodox priests chanting, the smell of his mother’s cooking—everything told him that he was home. He saw the house that he and his family had purchased for his parents, and visited the villages, fields, and hills of his childhood. It was wonderful.

But it was also disturbing. He saw a barren, deforested landscape, empty villages, women still grinding grain

Most of his colleagues could not have imagined him on stage, passionately reciting political poems, fearing retribution from the Communist government of Ethiopia.



Worku includes many photos in his book from his childhood (Photos courtesy of Adugnaw Worku).

with stone grinders, cooking on open fires, fetching water from unclean rivers, and travelling farther and farther to find firewood.

Everything was exactly the same as I remembered it decades before. In fact, some things had gotten worse—far worse. . . . The rapid population increase and land nationalization under the communist government [resulted in] family farms . . . reduced to small plots. . . . The level of poverty I saw was much more acute than before (263).

He was also shocked by the continued practice of female genital mutilation, early marriages, and pervasive superstitions. He

had a lengthy argument trying to convince some of the villagers that there was no such thing as the Evil Eye, but they just laughed. “I was convinced more than ever that only education would change hearts and minds and liberate people from baseless, superstitious beliefs. . . . Thank

God for education and its transformative power.” (263)

And thus began his third life, as a philanthropist. Upon his return home to California, he began planning how he could make lasting improvements to the lives of his people in “the old country.” After five years of careful, prayerful planning he found caring people with the financial resources to help fund his dreams. He created a team on the ground to design the projects, get cost estimates, and implement construction, with “accountability,

For those who lived, there was one destiny: for a girl, an arranged marriage around age twelve (or younger); for a boy like Adugnaw, to become a shepherd at age seven and a farmer at age twelve.

sustainability, and transparency” as the guiding principles. High expectations and regular inspections, honesty and integrity—these were the methods. The team also cultivated local ownership and responsibility. “Once projects were complete we would hand them over to the community and walk away.”

He began with water. In 2005–06 he and the team were able to dig three community water wells, and a fourth for the elementary school. “For the first time ever, the villagers had access to clean water close to home.” Next came tuition, room, board, and supplies for twenty-three outstanding students. Then in 2007, one of his agents on the ground asked him to consider building a high school in the village.

It seemed impossible at first, but in 2009 a donor caught the vision and the project began. In five months, Adu’s team built an administration building, offices for faculty and staff, and a large classroom building. Local government provided teachers, administrators, furniture, and supplies. “This was team work at its best. . . . When school opened in mid-September, 233 ninth graders, of whom girls outnumbered boys by 33, showed up.”



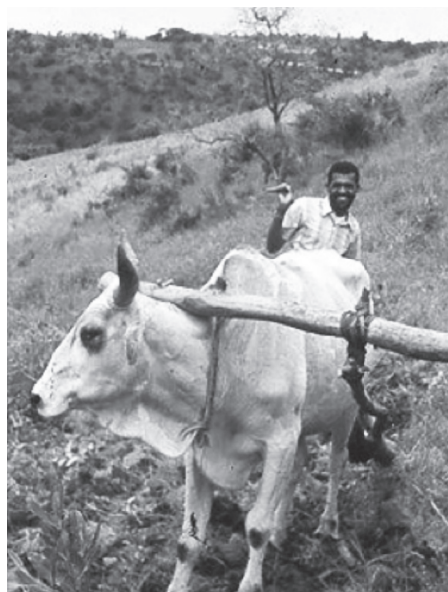
Worku’s grandmother Enkua-Honech and Worku’s parents in front of his grandmother’s hut where he was born.

when the high school was completed, Adu and Zewuditu, along with some donors, returned to visit the school. Adu received a hero’s welcome.

The ceremonies and speechifying, the feasting and dancing, were overwhelming, but the most intense moment came when Adu asked for his relatives and childhood friends to gather with him in the center of the field. “I had not seen many of them for more than four decades.” Many he did not recognize. “Some . . . had poor eyesight. Others had gone blind altogether.” Yet they had travelled miles to be there that day. They reminisced about shepherding, remembered playing games together, and recalled those who were no longer among the living.

Adu couldn’t help comparing his own comfortable and fulfilling life to theirs. “Education in my case, and a lack thereof in theirs, had made all the difference. We were all keenly aware that the school we had built would make a huge difference for their grandchildren and for generations to come.” (276)

And so, at last, Adu’s story comes full circle and his theme resonates into the future: the power of education to change lives. With his parents’ deaths he feels keenly his responsibility to assume their mantle of responsibility to help his people. “Going forward, my primary mission is to help as many rural Ethiopians as I possibly can, especially women and girls, so that they can achieve literacy, independence, and freedom from harmful practices. Education is key.” (280) (For more details, visit the



Worku’s sister Wudie (far left) and his family’s farm (right).



Worku with Demamu, his first grade teacher (left) and Worku with his wife and sons (right).



Zoz Amba Foundation website at <http://zozamba.org>.) Through a variety of community partnerships, he and Zewuditu are committed to the eradication of female genital mutilation and early marriage.

We will also endeavor to provide women and girls with access to clean water, modern flour mills, feminine pads, and ongoing training in basic health, hygiene, and nutrition. Above all, we will try to make sure that girls stay in school and graduate. Only then will they be able to make sustainable change in their lives and in community attitudes. (280–81)

Yet amidst all the positive changes for his own life, his family's, and now that of his village, there is also the ambiguity of loss. While Adu's life struggle, in some respects, was to escape the confines of traditional culture, he is also well aware of its strengths:

Freely expressing affection without sexual connotation, respecting our elders, looking after our neighbors, taking care of strangers, sharing

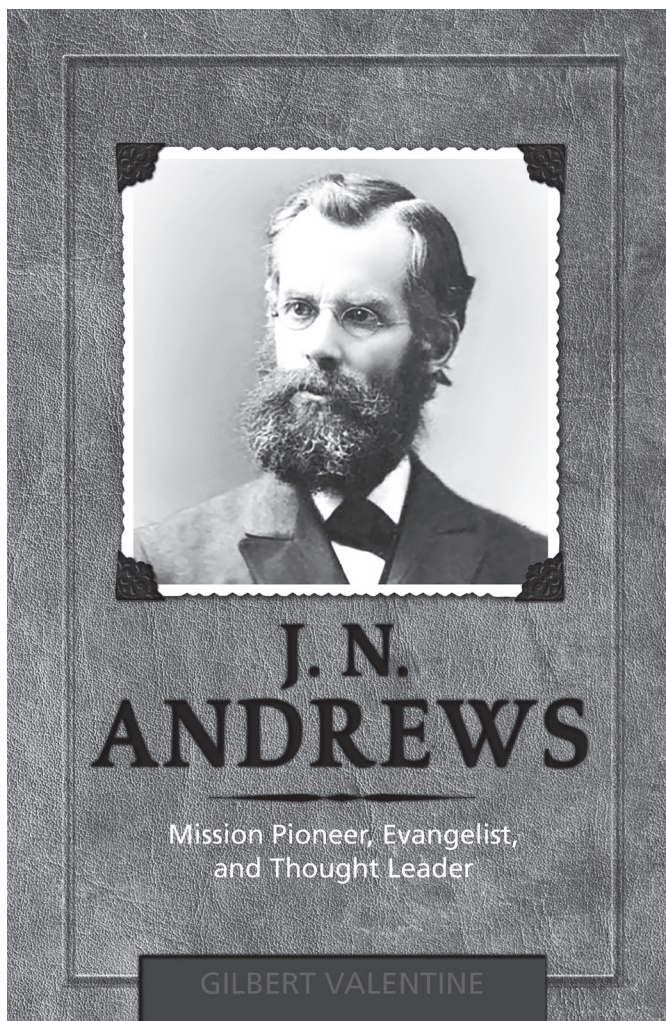
what we have with others, visiting the sick, attending funerals, socializing with everyone, and raising children together are some of our traditional core values. (192)

In the end, Adu remains “a peasant” (224). “For reasons I can't fully explain, I am neither comfortable with nor do I fully appreciate urban culture.” While he appreciates the easy convenience of modern life, and values education above all, he still prefers the simple things of rural life, and sees the limitations of the fast-paced, materialistic lifestyle in the Global North. “I remain Ethiopian to my core,” he says—and by the end of *The Restless Shepherd*, we understand why.



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REVIEW



Review of Gilbert M. Valentine. *J. N. Andrews: Mission Pioneer, Evangelist, and Thought Leader*. Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2019. 733 pages. Adventist Pioneer Series, George R. Knight, editor.

AN MA-RATED PIONEER BIOGRAPHY

BY DOUGLAS MORGAN

In this, the first scholarly biography of John N. Andrews, Gilbert Valentine provides a richly detailed, sensitive, and insightful portrayal of the most influential shaper of Seventh-day Adventism, next to Ellen and James White.¹

But to say that alone would leave at least half untold.

Yes, the biography is a magisterial account of Andrews as “mission pioneer”—the first to be sent overseas by the General Conference; as “thought leader”—a Mel-

anchthon in relation to James White as Luther, organizing, polishing, and building a deeper foundation for Adventist teachings; and as “evangelist,” remarkably combining successful proclamation of the message in public meetings with his intellectual and literary attainments. However impressive such comprehensiveness and balance, though, that is not what most distinguishes this book and makes it unprecedented in the writing of Adventist history.

Instead, Valentine’s standout achievement is fair-minded but rigorous probing of the relational dynamics of a life largely defined through interaction with the Whites, Adventism’s charismatic founding couple. Embedding Andrews’ story in that relational context, Valentine takes us on the deepest and most revealing dive into the social, psychological, and religious world of early Seventh-day Adventism that, to my knowledge, has ever been published. He has accomplished this through mastery of a mammoth and diverse array of primary sources—diaries, correspondence, newspaper and periodical articles, committee minutes, conference reports, and civic records, all in addition to Andrews’ large output of books and tracts. The variety of perspectives represented from both inside and outside Adventism adds to the exceptional quality of this body of sources. Taking full advantage of them, Valentine shows us a John Andrews driven above all by sacred duty, navigating the tensions created by a fervent, sometimes fevered, quest of a people to fulfill an impossibly vast, divine mandate in a resistant world, encumbered by their flawed humanity.

“Are we not Protestants?” This four-word question quoted from an 1860 entry in the diary kept by John’s wife, Angeline Stevens Andrews, nails the most pervasive tension running through Valentine’s narrative.² For John and Angeline Andrews and for others prominent in these formative years of Seventh-day Adventism, the Protestant principle that vests authority in the individual believer’s convictions formed by Scripture clashed with the duty of

deference to the gifts of leadership necessary to unify the body of believers.

Their perplexity was not about the authenticity of Ellen White’s visionary gift but rather the nature and scope of the prophetic authority thereby conferred upon her. Nor was conflict primarily about the subordination of her testimonies to the Bible in matters of faith and doctrine. James White affirmed that with forceful clarity more than once in the 1850s. But while John Andrews could readily see in Ellen White’s ministry a manifestation of the New Testament gift of prophecy, he could not so readily see that gift as endowment with singular, preeminent authority in leading the church. What most made attributing such authority to her gift problematic was its link with the authority of what Valentine identifies as “the entrepreneurial skill and fund-raising charisma”³ possessed by her hard-charging, often domineering and unstable husband, James.

Angeline Andrews’ diary reflections on the possibility of an overreach in claims for prophetic authority in 1860 came amidst a furor precipitated by a nineteen-page missive of severe rebuke from Ellen White to Angeline’s sister, and wife of Uriah Smith, Harriet Stevens Smith, and an overlapping letter to John Andrews. The prophet’s concern centered on their mainly

covert and passive resistance to James White in his struggle to overcome opposition to the organizational steps he saw as essential to the movement’s very survival. But Ellen White developed the case for her reproof, which included a devastating critique of Harriet’s Christian character in particular, by drawing upon instances of interpersonal conflicts involving the White, Andrews, and Stevens families in Maine during the half-dozen exhilarating but

chaotic years (1845–1851) during which the sabbatarian Adventist movement was born.

That birth took place within the “shut-door” or “bridegroom” wing of post-1844 Adventism character-

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ized by an insistence that, appearances to the contrary, Christ's kingdom had begun in a new and decisive way on October 22, 1844.⁴ Various unusual behaviors became associated with this belief, such as the no-work communitarianism instituted by John Andrews' father, Edward, and others in Paris, Maine, out of the conviction that the eternal Sabbath had commenced in 1844. The transgression of sexual mores involved in such practices as "promiscuous" foot-washing and holy kissing in disorderly meetings placed "shut door" Adventists in Maine more generally, including Ellen Harmon, in jeopardy with law enforcement.

We tend to want the story of our pioneers to move quickly beyond all of this. But Valentine keeps us here for a stay that proves more than worthwhile, in part for the detail and brilliance of his depiction of the societal context. Neither sensationalizing nor sanitizing the story, he shows us how John's deep bond with Ellen and James began as they experienced and sorted through the radical spiritual enthusiasms that put them on the margins of civil society.

Sixteen-year-old John Andrews was among the gathering in Paris in March 1845 encouraged by Ellen Harmon's testimony about her visions, but her experience was one in a profusion of visionary and ecstatic spiritual manifestations. Surprising as it may seem, given that he would become best-known for intellectual achievements, John Andrews' own call to ministry came through a charismatic phenomenon—an outbreak of *glossolalia*, with the requisite interpreter per 1 Corinthians 14, at a meeting in 1849.

By the time they came to Paris to live for a few months in 1850–1851, James and Ellen White were asserting a unique authority for her spiritual gift—something weightier than simply one among many New Testament gifts at work in the church. Conflicts developed over day-to-day matters that arose amidst close social interaction in settings both cramped for space and pressured by poverty, even as John Andrews and others in the Paris sabbatarian community were still grappling with how the preeminence claimed for Ellen's gift related to the authority of the Bible. A template of Andrews-White-Stevens interconnections formed during these months with multiple and crisscrossing lines of tension that would exacerbate recurring conflict between the central leaders of the Seventh-day

Adventist denomination throughout its three formative decades.

John Andrews never openly resisted the Whites' leadership. Yet, in part because of their recognition of his value to the cause—"the ablest man in our ranks" (Ellen) and "the brains of the movement" (James)⁵—he received periodic verbal thrashings for being insufficiently forceful or effective in support of their agenda.

Recurring complaints published by James White in the *Review* about the failure of leading brethren to express vigorous support for organization measures, seconded by exhortations from Ellen, prompted a series of confessions from John Andrews in late 1861 and early 1862. He expressed "deep regret" over the damage caused by his silence on organization and acknowledged that he had "not exerted that direct influence in behalf of the testimony of the Spirit of God, given through vision to sister White, that I ought to have done."⁶

Andrews was cultivating what Valentine calls the "spiritual gift of submission."⁷ In so doing, he was working out a rationale for it based on recognition that their spiritual gifts endowed them with capacities that made submission to their leadership appropriate. He understood Ellen White's "direct inspiration from heaven," not as supernatural dictation but the Holy Spirit bringing pertinent passages of Scripture to her "remembrance in such a manner as no other one among us can expect it." Andrews concluded that James White uniquely held an "apostolic office" for which he was equipped with "the gift of seeing at a glance."⁸ Rather than gradually building up to an understanding, James "gets correct views first." Neither required the intensive, time-consuming process of scholarship and reflection that was Andrews' forte.

Configuring the relationship in this way required virtually unquestioning acceptance of the Whites' leadership. It did work, as Valentine points out, keeping the church together through the turbulence of birth and growth during the 1860s and 1870s. Andrews' contributions to this process were indispensable. In addition to his highly regarded expositions on doctrine and prophecy, he fulfilled urgent assignments effectively. These included securing federal recognition of Adventists as non-combatants (1864) and stepping in as president of the General Conference (1867–1869) and as editor of the *Review and Herald* (1868–1869) when James White and then Uriah



(SOURCE: whiteestate.org)

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Smith, respectively, were sidelined due to varying circumstance.

Yet the functionality of the “authority and submission” model was de-stabilized by James White’s erratic and at times sharply severe manner. Valentine sees patterns today associated with bi-polar disorder in White’s mood swings. These symptoms were exacerbated by the strokes he began experiencing in 1865, causing him to be suspicious of colleagues, and lash out in even more harsh and extreme ways at their perceived resistance and incompetence. Periodically, when tensions increased to the crisis level, we see Andrews confessing his failings even though at times he seems uncertain as to exactly what he has done wrong or what is expected of him.

Working with James White, says Valentine, became “increasingly like working with a porcupine” who might be “sharpening his quills” unawares.⁹ In 1873, with spiraling conflicts putting White at odds not only with Andrews but virtually all of his leading colleagues, formalizing corporate submission to his leadership seemed to be the only solution. George I. Butler, then serving as General Conference president, with his later-notorious tract “Leadership,” did this in terms functionally similar to Andrews’ earlier designation of White as “apostle.” Adventist historians would later see Butler’s exposition of the need for a “quasi-monarchical” leader as evidence of a penchant for authoritarian leadership on his part. It may indeed shed light on his later handling of theological conflict with A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner in the late 1880s, but Valen-

tine emphasizes that in 1873, the entire leadership signed onto it as a pragmatic necessity.¹⁰

However, the utilitarian value was also short lived. Recognition of the dangerous implications of the leadership doctrine led to its complete repudiation just four years later at the General Conference of 1877, leaving a confused legacy on church governance for future generations. Perhaps even more deeply problematic was the damage done to Andrews’ self-confidence and long-term effectiveness, as well as that of the other leaders in the repeated cycle of accusation and alienation followed by confession and submission.

Valentine also draws attention to ways John Andrews’ story speaks to the tension between expectation of an imminent end to the present world and ongoing life within it, one that has driven the Adventist story right from the beginning. An early disparagement of marriage among the shut-door Maine Adventists and, in an incredible incident that must be left for book readers only, the handling of death, represented a radical attempt to collapse the tension and follow the logic of certainty about an imminent second advent as consistently as possible.

An expanding sense of mission reconfigured the tension to that between the imperatives of urgency in delivering an apocalyptic warning message, on the one hand, and effectiveness in doing so on the other. The latter required investment of time and funds needed for books to be researched, written, printed, and distributed, preachers to be supported, and, eventually, institutions to train them.

In his role as “resident theologian,” Andrews helped the church begin to negotiate an instance of this tension when the passage of time led to the question of whether Second Advent believers had a responsibility to counteract the societal evils, such as the liquor traffic and slavery, that they expected God soon to eradicate. During the 1850s, intense conviction that the final events were already beginning contributed to the sense that the only meaningful response to injustice and oppression was to call others to repentance in preparation for Christ’s return. Such individual change, to be genuine, would have to include repudiation of these socio-political sins, but not direct legislative or political activism or even voting. In 1859, with regard to intemperance on the local level of Battle Creek, Michigan, and in 1864 with regard to slavery in the national presidential election, Andrews was at the forefront of a rather rapid shift in Seventh-day Adventism toward viewing, in the words of an 1865 General Conference resolution, “the act of voting” as “highly proper” if “exercised in behalf of justice, humanity, and right.”¹¹

It was Andrews who introduced in 1851 the position followed by other Adventist writers that the institution of slavery was a key indicator that the United States was turning into the persecuting second beast of Revelation 13:11–17. The intensity of his rhetoric against slavery leads Valentine to the remarkable observation that Andrews’ “objection to the institution of slavery and his support for its abolition was almost as passionate as his belief in the seventh-day Sabbath and the nearness of the end of the world.”¹²

Andrews only partially succeeded in coming to terms with Ellen White’s admonitions against devoting excessive time to in-depth research and producing lengthy works of scholarship in view of the urgency of getting the message out. In the run-up to the publication of his 512-page

second edition of *History of the Sabbath* in 1873 (expanded from the 340-page first edition of 1862), she urged haste, declaring, “Truth presented in an easy style, backed up with a few strong proofs, is better than to search and bring forth an overwhelming array of evidence.”¹³

Valentine makes clear that the mission of delivering the apocalyptic warning message to the world was just as all-consuming to Andrews as it was to Ellen White. For Andrews, though, scholarship was about rightly representing and supporting the claims of the message, and thus the time and effort expended on doing so in a meticulous and thorough manner was well-invested in the interests of mission, even if at the cost of some diminishment in how rapidly and widely the message was disseminated.

This tension between the legacies of the two pioneers endures to the present. Yet Valentine credits Andrews with a posthumous victory, seen while Ellen White was still alive, in the 1911 revision of her book *The Great Controversy*: “One

of John Andrews’s most lasting contributions is the way in which he helped the church . . . to care about footnotes and the related specifics.”¹⁴

The place of scholarly and literary rigor was also among the tensions surrounding the achievement for which Andrews is best known: serving as the denomination’s first formally recognized overseas missionary. But that issue was part of the broader, classic missiological tension over what constitutes the indispensable, non-negotiable core of the gospel and what can be adapted to the varying practices and traditions of local cultures.

Previous scholarship has given Andrews mixed reviews as a missionary.¹⁵ Valentine contends that the attention given to criticisms in Ellen White’s letters to Andrews, circulated among Adventist leaders at the time and later made available to researchers, has overshadowed Andrews’ achievements as a missionary and thus skewed perceptions in the negative direction.

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Valentine acknowledges that the limitations of Andrews' appreciation of European culture did hamper his efforts to consolidate a strong base for his mission in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, where he joined a group of believers initially won to Adventist beliefs through the earlier, independent mission of M. B. Czechowski. However, Valentine credits Andrews with quickly perceiving the unworkability of the "American model" based on small-town public evangelistic meetings. Not only was European society far less open to allowing religious innovators the use of public spaces for evangelism, he realized that he stood little chance of breaking down prejudice and suspicion without genuine fluency in both written and spoken French.

Andrews thus made publication of a French-language periodical, *Les Signes des Temps*, the centerpiece of his mission strategy. And, he would not settle for articles hastily translated from English into awkward French, or accept anything less than perfection in grammar and placement of diacritical marks. The message, he believed, needed to be presented with a quality commensurate with its supreme importance. His work and adaptation of methods to the cultural context received firm vindication from Stephen Haskell, who conducted an observational visit or "audit" in 1882, and affirmed the importance placed on the French periodical.

That is not to say that Andrews had no shortcomings or personality traits that inhibited his accomplishments in Europe. It was on these weak points that Ellen White's letters tended to dwell, and her most central concern had to do with his marital status.

Coping with the competing needs of family and "the cause" is a fourth area of tension that stands out in this biography. Andrews' sense of duty—and this testifies to its power—pulled him away from his family, with whom he enjoyed deep and warm emotional bonds, rather than

unpleasantness or frustration at home pushing him away to find fulfillment elsewhere.

Melodrama is not Gil Valentine's style, but there is a tragic element that haunts the family vs. sacred-duty tension in Andrews' experience that at times makes me want to weep. Tension, struggle, conflict, and a deep sense of inadequacy seem to overshadow his life. Brightness sometimes breaks through the generally cloudy atmosphere, most especially in the love he shared with Angeline and their children, Charles and Mary. But his extensive travels in response to the call of duty made those moments all too few and far between.

Tragedy struck suddenly when a stroke took Angeline's life in 1872, after fifteen years of marriage. In the European mission that began in 1874, the grief-stricken father and children enjoyed much more extended time working as well as living together, but then Mary contracted tuberculosis. Valentine takes us into 16-year-old Mary's room in Battle Creek Sanitarium for scenes of deep poignancy as her condition worsens. Despite Dr. Kellogg's warnings of the risk, Andrews stayed at his daughter's side for long hours, in part seeking to compensate for his extended absences in earlier years.

After Mary's death in 1878 and his subsequent return to Europe, John Andrews indeed began experiencing his own symptoms of consumption. He continued to work with incredible tenacity as the degree of debilitation ebbed and flowed but generally worsened. Then, in 1883, on his deathbed but still dedicating every hard-earned breath and ounce of energy to his signature mission achievement, *Les Signes des Temps*, his successor delivered to him an inexplicably harsh testimony from Ellen White, leading him to the tearful conclusion that he had been a failure in the cause to which he had devoted his entire life so fully.

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(SOURCE: record.adventistchurch.com)

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Much of the difficulty revolved around the fact that marriage counseling was one aspect of Mrs. White's prophetic ministry to which Andrews found it impossible to submit, readily, at least. She had emphatically opposed his marriage to Angeline, though when she realized how far their relationship had gone, she conceded that it would be better to proceed rather than break the engagement. After Angeline died, John could not bring himself to accept Ellen's repeated urging that he re-marry and not enter the European mission in 1874, or return to it in 1879, without a wife. While part of me wants to applaud his refusal to enter a marriage for which he was not emotionally prepared, it seems undeniable that a pragmatic partnership could have been enormously beneficial in providing a healthier and more balanced domestic environment for his children, with multiple possibilities for enhancing the mission he was called to lead.

It is the intimate and richly textured character of the narrative that makes this Andrews biography stand out as a new landmark in Adventist historiography. The unflinching candor and attention to the realities of human weakness, pride, and conflict may cause some readers discomfort. This may be particularly true of the way in which Valentine brings to light the humanity, fallibility, and mixed motivations intertwined with the functioning of Ellen White's prophetic calling. It contrasts sharply with the approach of selecting only, or mainly, evidence that supports a narrative of triumphant, saintly heroism. The latter approach may more quickly evoke inspiration, but is too shallow and shifting a foundation to withstand the storms generated when suppressed truth breaks out. Valentine's work, for me at

least, contributes to a deeper and more lasting basis for admiring and respecting Ellen White's prophetic leadership as the key to keeping the movement united and dynamic.

No historical work is agenda-free, and the interpretive risks Valentine takes are part of what make this a great book. That which may provoke reaction in the damage-control mode on the part of some may be welcomed by others as part of a fascinating and deeply human drama with a trajectory that led to a world church both driven by gospel mission and invested in scrupulous scholarship. Whatever the case, the issues Valentine raises deserve extended discussion and debate from the standpoints of varied perspectives and areas of expertise. His remarkable thoroughness and even-handedness, both in setting forth and analyzing the evidence, invites and sets the tone for that kind of constructive conversation.

It takes the perspective of a larger horizon to see anything beyond tragedy in John Andrews dying with his diseased body wracked with pain and his spirit broken by perceived failure in the mission that defined and gave purpose to his life. Yet, despite his despondence, he gave clear testimony to a faith that held. Gilbert Valentine gently nudges readers toward the possibility of a providential reading of the history he presents and is all the more compelling in doing so by refusing to limit or force the evidence to fit cherished preconceptions.

I give this biography an MA rating (recommended for mature audiences) not only because appreciating it requires a grown-up awareness of life's complexities but because it is the kind of historical writing that can strengthen and energize mature faith.

Endnotes

1. “Most influential shaper” is my take, informed by the biography, but not a claim Valentine directly asserts. Thus, anything objectionable about the superlative should not be attributed to him. I do not view the characterization as contrary to George Knight’s argument summed in the subtitle of *Joseph Bates: The Real Founder of Seventh-day Adventism* (Review and Herald, 2004). As I see it, Andrews’ role as “shaper” came on the heels of Bates’ role as originator.

2. Quoted in Gilbert M. Valentine, *J. N. Andrews: Mission Pioneer, Evangelist, and Thought Leader* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2019), 240.

3. Valentine, *Andrews*, 158.

4. Merlin Burt introduced “Bridegroom Adventism” as a more satisfactory descriptor in his dissertation, “The Historical Background, Interconnected Development, and Integration of the Doctrines of the Sanctuary, the Sabbath, and Ellen G. White’s Role in Sabbatarian Adventism from 1844 to 1849” (Andrews University, 2002). The belief was that on October 22, 1844, Christ as “bridegroom” had entered the wedding feast as typified in the parable of Matthew 25, which also signified his reception of the kingdom from God the Father, per Daniel 7.

5. Valentine, *Andrews*, 27.

6. *Ibid.*, 246.

7. *Ibid.*, 250.

8. *Ibid.*, 414. On White as “apostle” see 252.

9. *Ibid.*, 425.

10. In his discussion of this topic, Valentine draws on recent work by Adventist historian Kevin Burton. This is one of numerous instances illustrating that Valentine is as thorough in engaging and crediting the work of other scholars as he is in working with primary sources.

11. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Third Annual Meeting, May 17, 1865, Records of the General Conference Of Seventh-Day Adventists 1863 to 1876, 12. <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Minutes/GCSM/GCB1863-88.pdf>.

12. Valentine, *Andrews*, 304.

13. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 437.

14. *Ibid.*, 717.

15. See Raymund Ladyslaw Dabrowski, “The Forerunner: M. B. Czechowski,” J. R. Zurcher, “Missionary to Europe,” Baldur Ed. Pfeiffer, “The Pioneer to Germany,” Bernard J. Sauvagnat, “The Missionary Editor,” and Daniel Augsburg, “The Adventist Colony at Basel During the Final Years,” among other essays in *J. N. Andrews: The Man and the Mission*, edited by Harry Leonard (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1985).



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a Sabbath Sonnet

BY KEVIN GRAY

This day too many sheep fall into wells
To keep my mind on that which brings me peace.
I always drift, distracted by the noise;
Echoes of the perpetual bleating.

An ox cries, too, felled by thoughtless blunder,
And will not wait; and burdened by this beast
Of burden, I work and worry and fret,
And this day becomes any other day.

But when You took him in Your hands to heal,
Were Your thoughts of energy expended,
Of stolen time, of restlessness of mind,
Or of the love in the ailed man's cured eyes?

I want to rest my mind in the beauty
Of Creation. Be calm, just for today.



PHOTO BY MARTIN SCHMIDL ON UNSPLASH

KEVIN GRAY has been published by the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* and is the September 2019 winner of the Gotham Writers Stories Everywhere Competition. He is a commercial real estate broker and army veteran, and resides in Richmond, Virginia with his wife, daughter, dog, and cat.