

Perspective Digest

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Epistles

Multiple

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"To be known and read" by all. . . .

Smoke Signals

You and I share similar views of "The Fires of Hell." The area in which we differ the most is with respect to God's retributive judgment. I believe that God will be no more "active" in the final judgment than He was in inflicting His wrath on Christ at Calvary.* It seems to me that at the very end of time, neither God and His children nor Satan and the lost could derive anything but pain from the time of retributive justice. As I see it, every aspect of God's character stems from the infinite Love demonstrated by Christ on the cross; a love that, as you know so well, extends even to His enemies.

Keith Gilbertson
Cokato, Minnesota

* I agree that Christ will be no more active in the final judgment than He was in inflicting His wrath on Christ at Calvary. Nor will He be any *less* active. —R.R.H.

I'd feel it's rank heresy if we call God's divine glory hell—even if referred to as divine glory hell! Explain yourself, please!

Blossom Vassar
Livingston, New York

• I'd rather let the authoritative author of Hebrews explain: "Our God is a consuming fire" (12:29, KJV). Who does the fire consume?

Please peruse the "scenes in the coming judgment" described by Ellen G. White in *Testimonies*, volume 4, pages 384 to 387. The setting for this executive judgment, as Scripture and *The Great Controversy* make plain, is the environs of the Holy City. The vision given Ellen White "on the morning of October 23, 1879, about two o'clock," concludes with God uttering the solemn words of Revelation 22:11 and 12 ("He that is unjust, let him be unjust still. . ."). Then follow these words: "The book then closed, and the mantle fell from the Person on the throne, revealing the terrible glory of the Son of God."

It is, indeed, true: Sin has made the glory of God an unbearable radiation to His fallen creation. —R.R.H.

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The denomination owes you an enormous thanks for the "The Fires of Hell." Good show, very good show, as our British friends say. The article by John Stott is glorious good news. Those of us far out in the pews trust you and others about you to thank this man for his courage in coming out with what is no doubt very unpalatable to the majority of Christian minds.

Your article is enlightening about some names of which most of us were unaware. We owe recognition to Edward Fudge, who came out with "The Fire That Consumes" a number of years ago. Stott appears to quote L. E. Froom. How remarkable and how wonderful!

I would wish for you to feature a good condensation of how and why our founders chose this unpopular truth. After reading Froom, one still wonders at the thin lines and avenues that this merciful attribute of God had to traverse in order to come down to us. One can be sure that the perilous pathway led through and past the rack and scaffold.

Dear brother, do not let this matter rest. Let us lift up and praise and support those of our fellow

Christians who take this stand. We are not alone anymore in our peculiar annihilationist position. We can be instrumental in opening the eyes of the world. "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes" (Matt. 21:42, KJV).

H. N. Sheffield, M.D.
Madera, California

Suffer a Woman to Explain

If the order of creation—man and then woman—has no significance so far as authority is concerned, as Jo Ann Davidson says in her column [PD3/97], how do you account for Paul's explanation why women do not have authority over a man? "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. *For Adam was first formed, then Eve*" (1 Tim. 2:12, 13, KJV). If the issue here can be explained as cultural, why, then, Paul's appeal to the order of creation?

Surely ecclesiastical authority is conferred through ordination: "God had abundantly blessed the labors of Paul and Barnabas during the year they remained with the believers in Antioch; but neither of them had as yet been formally ordained to the gospel ministry. . . . Thus they were authorized by the church

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not only to teach the truth, but to perform the rite of baptism, and to organize churches, being *invested with full ecclesiastical authority*" (*Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 11, 1911, italics supplied).

Further, if woman was to be equal with man, why did Paul, in the context of a head covering, emphasize that "man [was not] created for the woman; but the woman for the man"?

John Witcombe
Spokane, Washington

Jo Ann Davidson replies:

• As I mentioned in the column, the creation order of Genesis 1 and 2 was dramatically changed as a result of sin. It was only then that God Himself "rearranged" His inaugural intent of equality between husband and wife. Paul is commenting on the post-Fall complication.

Moreover, one must be careful in interpreting Paul's *letters*, and consider first the situation that he was addressing at that time. If the correspondence to Timothy in Ephesus was all that Paul had written on the relationship of men and women, an explanation might be difficult. However, Paul five other times addresses the issue in his other letters, and each time the

Greek explicitly pinpoints the counsel as being addressed to *husbands and wives rather than to men and women in general*. Furthermore, the letter to the Philippian church never touches the issue of gender leadership, yet that church was organized and led by women! Is Paul contradicting himself and suggesting one thing for Ephesus and another for Philippi? Those who think they see contradictions in Scripture disparage Paul as hopelessly confused because he isn't consistent with himself when writing to Ephesus, Philippi, and Galatia.

I take the position that Paul is under inspiration even in these canonical letters, and that he is not contradicting himself with his counsel to Ephesus and Philippi. This "Pharisee of the Pharisees," who before his conversion would have prayed every day, "I thank God I am not . . . a woman," after the Damascus Road confrontation with the Messiah, would then pen that radical statement to the church in Galatia, "There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28, NKJV). And when writing to the church in Philippi give admonition to the

women leaders there without ever breathing a word for them to step down! When writing to Pastor Timothy in Ephesus, he advises what to do regarding the various heresies troubling the new church there, probably related to the goddess worship that was prominent.*

One simply cannot take Paul's counsel directed to husbands and wives and extrapolate it to all men and all women. I find Paul definitely maintaining the biblical teaching of men being the head of their families. But 40 times he insists on the model of the human body for the church, with Christ as the head and the many members functioning as the different parts of the body. And holding tenaciously to the position that different canonical writers do not contradict each other, I believe that Peter and Paul have it right—at the foot of the Cross, the priesthood of *all* believers is privileged, and all are called to serve (1 Peter 2:5, 9, 10).

I personally am not seeking ordination, nor am I one of those who feel convicted to champion such cause. I share these views merely to answer your query. I do hope you will have the opportunity to read the soon-to-be-published volume by the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary faculty

(*Women for God*) that discusses the various biblical, theological, sociological, and historical aspects of this issue.

*For further study, read Sharon Gritz's book on the Timothy passage (*Paul, Women Teachers, and the Mother Goddess at Ephesus: A Study of 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Light of the Religious and Cultural Milieu of the First Century* [University Press of America, 1991]). She thoroughly probes the background of this passage.

Down to Earth

We have long needed something like *Perspective Digest*. So many articles are written in a theological stratosphere that some of us earthlings have a hard time understanding. As Peter said about Paul, some things are hard to be understood. Surely you can make things easy and they need to be, because the subjects these theologians are dealing with are important to the person in the pew. So let's get down to earth where I think I am.

I am not a Greek or Hebrew scholar; my one year of Greek was taken at PUC during my senior year with George Caviness as my study-

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mate. I would never have gotten through without his help. He struck a deal with his father, L. L. Caviness, that if George and I would prepare the final examination in Greek, he would give us a grade for doing it. What little Greek I learned I never used; I went to Korea for decades of service.

During two years at Andrews, I saw my classmates poring over the writings of such theologians as Bultmann.* I felt the time might be better spent in mastering the volumes of Ellen G. White. What is the chaff to the wheat? Still, we shouldn't ignore the work of biblical scholars. So cheerio for your trying to make them readable.

James (and Irene) Lee
Coalmont, Tennessee

* Your observation about Bultmann reminds me of the intern assigned to help me during a revival series in Miami some years ago. Beginning at the airport, where we met, he shared his enthusiasm for Bultmann. Later, as we drove to visit people interested in

Bible truths, he quoted Bultmann. One day I suggested we call on a lady he had visited a few times. "It's no use," he said, "all she wants to do is argue."

I told him that he was riding with a man who liked to argue with people who liked to argue. Within a few minutes of our arrival, the lady told me, "I just don't see why you say Christians should be baptized by immersion."

"Sister," I said, "I see you have a Bible. Will you meet me in the third chapter of the Gospel of John?" Within moments, I had asked her why John went to Aenon, near Salim, to baptize. After a long pause, she replied by reading from verse 23: "Because there was much water there." "And why do you think he went to a place where there was much water to baptize if it could have been done out of a teacup?" I asked. Silence. "And now," I said, "let's visit the sixth chapter of Romans. . . ." I baptized her, by immersion, two weeks later.

After we left her home, the intern spoke wonderingly: "I didn't know," he said, "that you could use the Bible so directly in getting decisions." I was prepared. He had delivered himself into my hands. "And what did you think I would use?" I asked. "Bultmann?"—R.R.H.

Magnify the Vision

Thank you for publishing Robert Folkenberg's ringing defense of the three angels' messages in "Magnify the Vision." In this day of theological fragmentation within Adventism and cavalier nullification of our message and mission on the part of some self-styled progressives among us, our General Conference president's clarion call needs to be heard throughout the church. I wish his sermon could be printed in tract form and given to every Adventist. In many of our churches members yearn to hear present truth preached, not merely as the "official party line," but as the sincere and passionate conviction of their spiritual shepherds and as the operative power of their lives. Nominal commitment to truth is as injurious in its own way as open defiance of truth.

Folkenberg's message reminded me of the following words in the Spirit of Prophecy: "The great apostasy, which is developing and increasing and waxing stronger, . . . will continue to do so until the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout. We are to hold fast the first principles of our denomina-

tional faith, and go forward from strength to increased faith. Ever we are to keep the faith that has been substantiated by the Holy Spirit of God from the earlier events of our experience until the present time" (*This Day With God*, p. 352).

I thank the Lord that not everyone is bamboozled by theological liberalism's disparagement of sound doctrine in the name of exalting Calvary. It is a specious evangel and a false dichotomy that pits Calvary against doctrinal truth.

Pastor Brian Jones
Clintonville, West Virginia

Approved Weapons

I am very concerned about two books recently published. They are written by a very gifted and brilliant man, a college professor. They contain many good ideas but, I feel, go much too far. In response to invitations, the author has spoken in my conference.

How do we deal with such a matter? How do we combat, yet with love and fairness?

Name withheld
Alberta, Canada

• See pages 58 and 59 of *PD 2:3* for wise counsel on how to meet

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differences of opinion on matters of faith. If you proceed, contact the author. State your viewpoint without challenging his integrity.

Should your own convictions remain unmodified, you may have reason to share your thinking with the conference official(s) who invited him. If concerned still, there remain the editorial committee of the publishing house and the head of his college department. Courteous questions and cogent arguments will likely bring courteous responses. However, I have found that disagreements are best shared in person, where prayers can be shared, the gentle voice heard, the tear in the eye seen, the warm handclasp felt.—R.R.H.

Is a Prayer Umbrella Holding Off the Latter Rain?

Number 8 on the Adventist Theological Society's list of goals is "To pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit." Would it not please the Holy

Spirit more if we became repetitious in thanking Him for His constant abundance already pouring?

Sometimes I feel that our constant praying for the outpouring has become an umbrella! As a biological Adventist, 70 years old, I do not recall a push being made for thanking the Holy Spirit. Perhaps this suggestion should be an agenda item for the upcoming Bible Conference in Jerusalem.

Also, I am reminded that Jesus said, "I will send the Holy Spirit, who will teach you all things." He did not say, "The Bible will teach you all things." Right?

H. D. Schmidt
Loma Linda, California

• Right. But the Holy Spirit teaches you the truths that He inspired the Bible writers to record.—R.R.H.