

A portrait of Galileo Galilei, an elderly man with a long, full white beard and mustache, wearing a dark, high-collared garment. He is looking slightly to the left of the viewer with a serious expression. The background is dark and indistinct.

TEACHING IN THE SHADOW OF

GALILEO

ACADEMIC FREEDOM ON SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CAMPUSES

“No teacher in our schools,” Ellen White wrote in 1891, “should suggest the idea that, in order to have the right discipline, it is essential to study text-books expressing pagan and infidel sentiments.”¹ Nineteen years earlier, in her first statement about education, she declared that young people should not read novels and love stories because they were injurious to mental health.² By 1884, she had extended her warning to “infidel authors,” specifically naming Thomas Paine and Robert Ingersoll.³ When writing *The Ministry of Healing*, published in 1905, she added the Greek tragedies to her list of dangerous literature, quoting an undocumented source that they were filled with “incest, murder and human sacrifices to lustful and revengeful gods.”⁴

BY FLOYD GREENLEAF

In 1987, the General Conference approved an official statement about academic freedom that described the Christian professor as “responsible” and “mature” with a responsibility “to investigate, teach, and publish within the area of his academic competence, without external restraint, but with a due regard for the character and aims of the institution which provides him with credentials, and with concern for the spiritual and the intellectual needs of his students.”⁵ Referring to the Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists, the statement added that “[i]t is expected that a teacher in one of the Church’s educational institutions will not teach as truth what is contrary to those fundamental truths.”

How did Seventh-day Adventists arrive at the current official denominational stance on academic freedom, given Ellen White’s advice, which some would now regard as censorship? What does the official statement mean to Adventist educators in the 21st century?

We need to keep in mind that Mrs. White’s statements fell short of a mandate. She seldom issued an ultimatum. She characterized herself as a messenger, and in keeping with that role, she typically proffered her advice as messages from God but left her hearers to decide how to respond. Also worth remembering is that Ellen White wrote her advice about reading habits and curriculum content at a time when the concept of academic freedom as educators later defined it had not yet emerged in American education. She intended her statements to maintain the authority of Scripture and to uphold its spiritual power. Probably without realizing it, she had staked out the central theme in debates about academic freedom that later broke out in Adventist schools.

The primary purpose of academic freedom has been to protect teachers when they handle controversial topics in their attempts to expand the boundaries of knowledge, but it also touches aspects of education beyond research, publication, and curriculum. Educators commonly view rank and tenure, job security, and institutional autonomy as issues of academic freedom. Also within the purview of academic freedom are institutional expectations for part-time or contract teachers as opposed to full-time tenured faculty, and the role of faculty in proprietary schools. Academicians and administrators around the world understand and practice academic freedom differently, depending on their educational, political, and social traditions. In certain places it may not exist, while in some Western countries, especially the United States, academic freedom is one of the defining

characteristics of higher education.

Adventist teachers have experienced many of the same issues of academic freedom as their peers in public and private education. However, belief in the primacy of Scripture has been the central issue of academic freedom in Adventist education. Also of importance has been the question of how concepts of morality should shape curriculum. This article will address two problems of academic freedom affecting Adventist schools: (1) doctrinal orthodoxy and (2) the conflict between revealed truth and empirical data, which forms the basis of the debate between evolution and creation.

Historical Background of Academic Freedom

Although some scholars trace the notion of academic freedom to medieval times, it was during the 19th century in Europe that the concept began to acquire its modern form. During that revolution-racked period, the German professoriate exerted new efforts to guard against interference by politically intrusive princes. The many American students attending German universities during this era returned home with newly formed convictions about academic freedom. Motivated by these concepts, U.S. teachers organized the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in 1915 for the express purpose of preserving their “right” to research and teach both conventional and controversial ideas under the mantra of the pursuit of truth. AAUP’s 1915 *Declaration of Principles* dubbed the religious school an “instrument of propaganda.”⁶

Twenty-five years later, AAUP and the Association of American Colleges (AAC) jointly issued the “1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure,” which declared that institutions had the right to determine what they would teach and who should teach it, and that teachers were free to investigate and disseminate information in published form and in the classroom. Thus, academic freedom consisted of two parts, freedom for institutions and freedom for teachers.

The 1940 statement allowed only minimal restraints on academic freedom. Professors were to be decent and honest when they questioned conventional wisdom and knowledge. They were to restrict themselves to their professional expertise. Academic freedom did not allow them to violate the law or treat their colleagues with incivility when defending their ideas. Their publications and classroom discussions were to be serious, not flippantly controversial. For example, professors could not advocate that the moon is a poached egg. AAUP conceded that religious

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institutions could place additional caveats on instructional personnel, but administrators had to make the restrictions clear before employing teachers.⁷

Three decades later, AAUP withdrew its endorsement of exceptions for religious schools, and in 1988, sought to brand Christian campuses as unauthentic seats of learning. The attempt failed, but AAUP continued to regard religious schools as intellectually unfree environments. However, by 1996, the subcommittee on academic freedom acknowledged that such institutions “contribute to the pluralistic richness of the American intellectual landscape.”⁸ AAUP also initiated conferences specifically for faculties of Christian schools to discuss and, if possible, resolve issues of academic freedom peculiar to their campuses.⁹

Unforeseen obstacles had probably prompted AAUP to reduce its pressure on religious schools. Some have suggested that AAUP has ceased to be an effective enforcer of academic freedom, that it has become more of a labor union than a professional organization, and that both individuals and institutions ignore its censures of specific schools for alleged violations.¹⁰

AAUP also felt pressure from religious schools. In 1990, Pope John Paul II issued *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, a statement that required all professors of Catholic theology to be members of the church and to receive a mandate from the local bishop in order to teach. Further, *Ex Corde* said that while professors were entitled to freedom of inquiry, not all inquiry was legitimate. Reaction from the Catholic academic community was both positive and negative,¹¹ but it was apparent that the church’s many reputable institutions, such as the University of Notre Dame, were in no real danger of censure by AAUP.

It was also significant that religious education continued to thrive. During the 1990s, enrollments on evangelical campuses rose sharply.¹² Regional accrediting associations had recognized many of these schools, so it came as no surprise that AAUP stated in 1996 that it would usually not be “appropriate” to censure them for limitations on academic freedom.¹³ Although the wording in accreditation standards differs among the regional accrediting associations, all support the concept that academic freedom should be appropriate to the mission of individual institutions.¹⁴

AAUP’s quarrel with religious schools hinged on conflicting philosophies of truth. Academia in general has committed itself to a search for truth through investigation, testing, and questioning in the context of neutrality and uninhibited dialogue. This kind of truth is empirical, measurable, and amoral. It is discoverable through inductive processes. Information so acquired is descriptive. It is true because it describes measurable reality as accurately as testing permits.

Teachers in religious schools accept and use inductive processes. Christians may research and discover descriptive truth in the same manner as atheists. Both could arrive

at the same conclusions when developing pharmaceuticals, fire retardants, and efficient fuels. This kind of search is not theological, even though committed Christians may seek to improve the well being of humanity for theological reasons. Their convictions do not presuppose a bias in the data they gather from research.

But Christians and atheists may study geology or paleontology and reach opposing conclusions even though they use established research methods and compile credible data. They have parted company with AAUP on the philosophy of truth.

Religious institutions teach that the search for truth extends beyond neutrality and descriptive truth because all reality leads to God, who has a moral presence in the universe. Christians recognize that knowledge of biblical matters may sometimes depend on evidence resulting from inductive search, but final understanding of such evidence depends on revealed truth because it derives from God’s self-disclosure in Scripture. Understanding ultimate truth thus inevitably leads to the theological and moral, which by definition is prescriptive.

Despite the idealistic claims of secular academics that they engaged in the logical and neutral pursuit of truth, and years of collaborative promotion by AAUP and AAC, the assertion that academic freedom is a right remained an open question. In 1940, the New York Supreme Court blocked the appointment of Bertrand Russell to the faculty of City College, declaring in *Kay v. Board of Higher Education of New York City* that he was morally unfit to teach college students and that academic freedom was not a convincing argument to hire him.¹⁵

This ruling did not cause AAUP to fold its tents and retreat. For six years it had been holding joint discussions with AAC about academic freedom, and before the end of 1940 the two organizations issued the statement that became the gold standard for American education. In time, the courts issued a different ruling.

After hearing the case of *Sweezy v. New Hampshire*, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a landmark decision in 1957 that defended unorthodoxy and dissent in an academic setting. The net effect of the ruling was to protect teachers whose lectures treated controversial topics, in this case activities alleged to be subversive. Ten years later, in *Keyishian v. Board of Regents*, the Court stated that the country was “deeply committed to safeguarding academic freedom, which is of transcendent value to all of us.”¹⁶

Although the notion of academic freedom in the





Left to right: Battle Creek College,
Battle Creek, Michigan;
Uriah Smith; E. J. Waggoner

United States derives from the constitutional principle of free speech, it is not a provision of the Constitution itself, nor does it appear in law. Its status as a right in the U.S. is the outcome of judicial precedents, and the debate about its philosophical nature goes on. As recently as 2008, Stanley Fish, a law professor at Florida International University, called it a concept comparable to the traditions of the medieval guild system rather than a right.¹⁷

Academic Freedom and Theology in Adventist Schools

Until the 1960s, Seventh-day Adventist campuses were comparatively untouched by the debate over academic freedom. Given the rumors that AAUP was on the verge of rescinding its support for exceptions to religious schools, leading lights in Adventist education began to ponder the role of academic freedom on denominational campuses. Their activity coincided with the years immediately after Emmanuel Missionary College and the College of Medical Evangelists achieved new status as Andrews and Loma Linda universities. On both campuses, issues relating to scholarly activities were part of the atmosphere.

Acting on a proposal from the General Conference (GC) officers and the union presidents, who also chaired the college boards, the 1964 Autumn Council affirmed the primacy of Scripture in Adventist scholarship. The following year, Adventist college and university administrators in North America appointed a committee of five institutional presidents to submit, within two years, a more comprehensive statement about academic freedom. These discussions sparked debate and produced a

spate of articles in the *Journal of True Education*.¹⁸ In 1987, after approximately two decades of discussion and trial balloons, the denomination issued “A Statement on Theological and Academic Freedom.”

Although Adventist educators did not debate academic freedom *per se* until about 90 years after the first denominational college opened its doors, Ellen White’s statements indicate that the issue existed from the days of Battle Creek College. One of the first cases erupted in 1889 when President W. W. Prescott hired E. J. Waggoner to lecture on justification by faith, the topic that had split the Minneapolis General Conference session the previous November. Prescott also asked Uriah Smith, who had implacably opposed Waggoner’s views at Minneapolis, to conduct some classes. But Smith and his sympathizers did not appreciate Prescott’s evenhandedness. Their incendiary reaction led to a meeting of the theological adversaries in an effort to settle the disagreement peaceably. Waggoner left the campus, but Prescott himself taught some of Waggoner’s classes and followed his theology.¹⁹

Although academic freedom as we understand it was unknown at the time, the incident had all the ingredients to instigate a debate over the right of honest dissent. Both sides of the argument—Smith and his circle opposed by Waggoner and Prescott, supported by denominational leaders, including Ellen White—saw the issue as the protection of theological truth as Adventists *should* teach it. It was a case of traditional orthodoxy *vis-a-vis* an attempt to modify orthodoxy.

Orthodoxy was also the issue seven years later when about a dozen teachers left Battle Creek because the college president believed that they had imbibed ideas incompatible with Adventism while obtaining professional training at secular institutions. As irony would have it, most of

them found employment at local church schools. Frederick Griggs, the best known of the group, became principal of South Lancaster Academy (South Lancaster, Massachusetts) and later one of the most powerful voices in Adventist education.²⁰

Once again, orthodoxy was the question at Walla Walla College (College Place, Washington) in 1938 when the college board dismissed three religion teachers, alleging that they held deviant views about the sanctuary, one of Adventism's defining doctrines. William Landeen, the college president, also resigned. According to Walla Walla historian Terrie Aamodt, the board opposed him on general principles.²¹

Other incidents relating to academic freedom occurred during the last half of the 20th century. One of the most widely known unfolded in the 1970s when many ministers began preaching what many loosely called "new theology." Critics accused them of teaching, among other things, cheap grace that undermined the law of God. Australian Desmond Ford came to symbolize the movement, especially after 1979, when he challenged the denomination's long-standing teaching on the sanctuary and the theological meaning of 1844. At a hearing a year later, the denomination upheld its traditional view, but in the wake of the new theology movement, some dismissals occurred. Among them was Ford himself.²²

A different angle on the issue of academic freedom and theological orthodoxy in an academic setting appeared during the 1990s in a series of events related to ministerial education. Actions in 1994 in effect affirmed that the church had the right to determine how its ministers would be trained, and placed ministerial education under the purview of the General Conference as it functioned through the divisions. A 1998 measure established the International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (IBMTE) to control theological training, using the world divisions as seats of authority.²³ In spirit it resembled *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* though it differed in functional details.

While the world divisions in general conformed to the new measures, tertiary institutions in the North American Division resisted IBMTE. The crux of the issue was a provision that required each teacher of religion to sign what amounted to a loyalty oath and to undergo periodic scrutiny according to criteria established by the IBMTE. This procedure determined whether religion teachers would continue to be certified to teach. NAD universities and colleges argued that IBMTE established an external body that usurped the authority of their institutional boards by controlling employment, which violated the terms of their secular accreditation. In like manner, they

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asserted, the new authority infringed on institutional academic freedom. North American tertiary administrators also believed that the proposed loyalty oaths were unnecessary because institutional policy statements already contained controls that spelled out expectations relating to loyalty and due process.²⁴ After more than a decade, many issues in the relationship between the IBMTE and the North American Division union-operated schools remain unresolved.

Academic Freedom and Science in Adventist Schools

Issues of academic freedom involved many fields of study, but the most significant ones related to science and Scripture. Through the 1920s, Adventist schools treated evolution as a theological problem. Although George McCready Price, a self-taught geologist, had long advocated that Adventists should confront evolutionists on their own scientific ground, denominational science teachers did little to follow his advice.

Even after public outcry made a martyr-hero out of a high school biology teacher in Tennessee whom the court convicted in 1925 for teaching evolution, the denomination continued to react slowly to the threat that evolution represented to creationism and Adventist education. Five years passed before the General Conference officially affirmed the traditional Adventist belief in creation as contained in Genesis.²⁵ When a revised set of Fundamental Beliefs appeared in the 1931 edition of the *SDA Yearbook*, creation was not included.²⁶

In 1938, denominational math and science teachers began meeting periodically to discuss professional issues, among them the problem of teaching creation in the face of the mounting strength of evolution among both scientists and the general population. In 1957, after radio-carbon dating posed additional challenges to Adventist views about the age of the earth, the General Conference founded a permanent body, the Geoscience Research Institute, to investigate questions of origins, the age of the earth, and the biblical flood.²⁷

As early as 1929, there was some pluralism among Adventist teachers on these topics,²⁸ but those early questions did not threaten denominational belief in a divinely created universe. However, as the work of the GRI continued, Adventist scientists discovered more questions that were difficult to answer, which magnified the pluralism of the denomination's scientific community. Adventist scientists supported the divine origin of the earth and the universe, but increasing variations appeared in their explanations of the creative process, which further challenged the denomination's long-standing view of the age of the earth.

By 2001, the situation reached such proportions that

the General Conference organized a three-year sequence of faith and science conferences. Because these questions had spread around the globe, the world divisions were invited to conduct regional conferences and participate in two plenary sessions. The basic topic was not the truthfulness of creation but the “interplay of faith, science, and philosophy” as it affected Adventist understanding of the Genesis account.²⁹ The discussions, then, sought to develop better understanding about how to integrate a belief that had become a subject of scientific inquiry into a confessional faith.

The product of the conferences was “An Affirmation of Creation,” which upheld the doctrine of the literal, six-day creation and a young earth. The statement also recognized the legitimacy of scientific methodology, commended Adventist scientists for their contributions to the church, and recognized the “growing” nature of Adventist understanding of biblical matters. The document recommended a revision of Fundamental Belief Six in order to rectify what some thought was “a lack of clarity” in the official statement of belief in creation. The Annual Council adopted the document but declined to revise the Fundamental Belief.³⁰

The 2004 Annual Council culminated the faith and science conferences but did not end the debate. Before the decade was over, La Sierra University (Riverside, California) became the epicenter of a storm of allegations about teachers promoting evolution in their classrooms, which drew an appeal from General Conference President Jan Paulsen to Adventist college and university professors, as well as other church employees, to “reflect our stand as a community on Creation.” Paulsen recognized the legitimacy of informing students about the “concepts of evolution,” but stated that the home of Adventist students was in the world of faith.³¹

Observations About Academic Freedom Within Adventism

A decade into the 21st century, Seventh-day Adventist education finds itself precariously balanced between the denomination’s long-standing belief in biblical creation and variations of belief that test that position. Several elements of academic freedom are important to remember.

Despite AAUP’s campaign to portray religious schools as unable to engage in the genuine pursuit of truth, it is unlikely that limitations on academic freedom will disappear. Calvin College philosopher Lee Hardy has observed that AAUP took its original stand on academic freedom in 1915, during an era when the prevailing opinion expected that science would replace religion and remake the world. AAUP asserted that only neutrality by the schools would achieve success in the pursuit of truth and allow this transformation to occur.³²

But Gary A. Olson, provost at Idaho State University, has argued persuasively that limits are necessary, given the proclivity of many academics to unprofessional behavior.³³ His words offer a pessimistic commentary on the expectations of a prior generation that untrammelled intellectual activity would change the world.

As for neutrality, it has proved to be not only an elusive but also a dubious goal, especially in view of the growing need to teach students to make choices in a complex and changing world. In 2006, the board of directors of the American Association of Colleges and Universities, AAUP’s comrade in arms in the battle for academic freedom, published an official statement which says that merely teaching both sides of an issue is not enough; teachers in higher education must also help students learn to weigh information and make value judgments.³⁴ This view does not presuppose a specific set of beliefs, but members of the academy find it difficult to teach values in an intellectual vacuum.

With a 33-year career at Calvin College, Duke University, and Notre Dame behind him, George Marsden

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denied that science and the scientific method furnish the greatest hope for humanity. Religious education, despite its constraints on the spirit of inquiry, offers meaning and more realistic explanations of human limits.³⁵

Lee Hardy adds that people do not participate in academic activity with blank minds. All intellectual searching begins with assumptions, he states, and using religious belief as the beginning point for intellectual exploration does not inhibit the pursuit of truth, but rather enhances it by providing a framework of meaning and purpose.³⁶

Educators almost uniformly agree that caveats under which religious higher education function are unquestionably constraints on the traditional interpretation of academic freedom. However, both the academic community and the public are less prone than they were a century ago to accept the claim that science will transform the world.

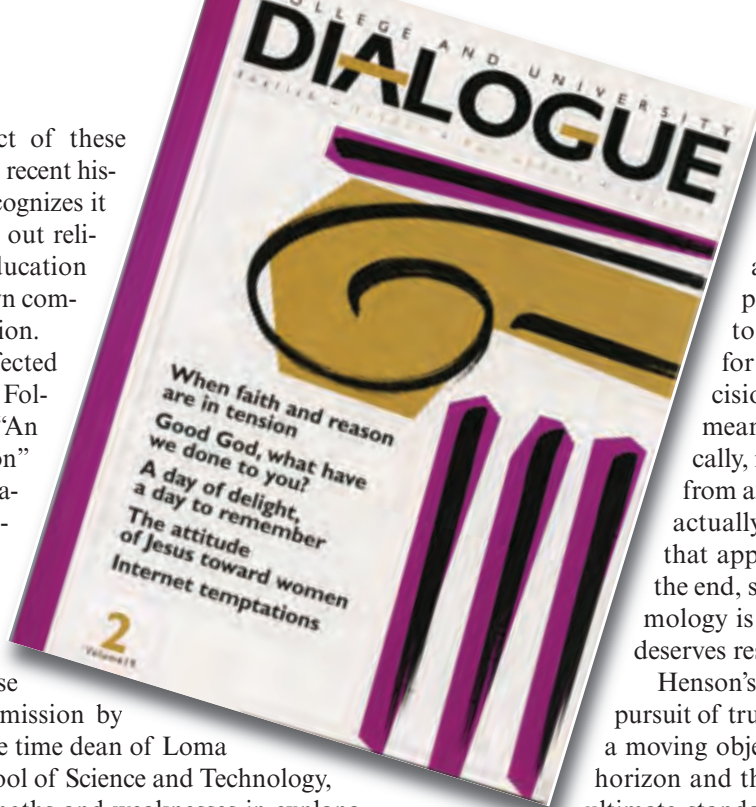
Arguments in favor of responsible limitations founded on creedal beliefs have become more sophisticated and philosophical, and educators operating within these constraints declare that they experience as much if not more intellectual satisfaction as those who claim to be neutral (if, indeed, neutrality is even possible). We can only spec-

ulate about the impact of these trends on AAUP, but its recent history suggests that it recognizes it cannot completely rule out religious influences in education without violating its own commitment to free discussion.

All of this has affected Adventist education. Following the adoption of “An Affirmation of Creation” in 2004, some denominational publications increased the rate and the penetrating quality of articles about the debate over evolution. Representative of those in *Ministry* was a submission by Ronald L. Carter, at the time dean of Loma Linda University’s School of Science and Technology, who discussed the strengths and weaknesses in explanations employed by both creationists and evolutionists to support their beliefs. While rejecting evolution as an explanation of origins, he confessed his intellectual respect for it and urged his readers to obtain more reliable information about evolution in order to avoid expressing mistaken opinions about its claims. Some elements that many consider to be evolutionist, he stated, are compatible with the biblical account of creation.³⁷

In 2007, *Dialogue*, a publication housed in the General Conference Department of Education, printed an article by Geoscience Research Institute Director James Gibson discussing the tension between faith and reason as illustrated by the conflict between creation and evolution. Gibson suggested modifications in the interpretation of the Genesis story that, in his view, would not violate Adventist belief. He also reminded his readers that all proofs derive from assumptions and that assumptions determine proofs. While neither creation nor evolution is conclusively provable in the inductive sense, each rests its appeal to authenticity on *a priori* assumptions. Adventists should expect to base their belief in the biblical account of creation on faith, not on scientific proof.³⁸

Gibson’s article states that people dealing with the same data reach different conclusions because of contrasting epistemologies. But Andrews University mathematician Shandelle Henson points out that quarrels arise because thinkers in pursuit of truth do not understand the nature of epistemologies.³⁹ Beginning her explanation of the pursuit of truth with the pure deductive processes of mathematics, she moves to inductive procedures of science—where math becomes the measuring tool to test truth. To define truth, deductive and inductive reasoning must work together. Henson places the arts and humanities where human wisdom, judgment, and expression set



the norm, as beyond the domains of deductive and inductive reasoning. She observes that as one moves from the pure logic of mathematics to humanities in the search for truth, one sacrifices precision of knowledge for meaning and values, but ironically, mathematics itself derives from axiomatic truths, which are actually unproven assumptions that appear to be self-evident. In the end, she concludes, each epistemology is valid in its own way and deserves respect.

Henson’s model suggests that in the pursuit of truth, truth itself has become a moving object on the epistemological horizon and that even mathematics, the ultimate standard of objective measurement, rests upon unproven assumptions deemed to be truth. Truth has come full circle.

Nineteenth-century Adventists founded the church’s education system on a commitment to revealed truth, but nearly 130 years later, the creation-evolution debate has moved the pursuit of truth to the scrutiny of inductive research tested by deductive mathematical processes. Truth is not always a fixed position; sometimes it is an advancing point in the continuum of understanding.

A comparison of the 1872, 1931, and 1980 statements of Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Beliefs reinforces this idea. While we claim a historical continuity in beliefs, the many differences among the statements demonstrate that what we regard as fundamental and how we phrase our articles of beliefs have obviously changed over time.

George Knight has aptly reminded Adventists that “present truth” conveys the notion of dynamic rather than fixed beliefs. Referring to three Fundamental Beliefs, he explains that the actual content has changed from what the founders of Adventism and many 19th-century denominational leaders taught.⁴⁰ The reasons for these changes vary, but they all pivot on the church’s understanding of Truth, which shifts from generation to generation. Clearly, in relation to academic freedom, changes that we visualize as improvements could never have occurred without the freedom of theologians and academicians to challenge either an existing belief or the way we express it.

The 2004 Annual Council did not reject the recommendation to revise Fundamental Belief Six because the church cannot change its Fundamental Beliefs. That Belief does not say anything about the age of the earth because the Bible itself is silent about it. It would be contradictory for Adventism to adopt a Fundamental Belief

about the age of the earth founded on extra-biblical sources, including Ellen White, and maintain its claim to *sola scriptura*. This situation leaves the question of the age of the earth open to discussion.

In the 19th century, Ellen White inadvertently began the Adventist discussion about academic freedom by upholding God's Word. Although she advocated total abstinence from some of the things on which people fed their minds, she also recognized that acquainting oneself about an issue is not the same thing as accepting it as truth. In 1889, she called for a more educated ministry to counteract the growing intellectual skill of those who promote unbelief. "Study should never cease," she advised. "[I]t must be continued all through the period of his [the minister's] labor, no matter how well qualified for the labor he may think himself to be."⁴¹

Guidelines for Teachers

Are there any guidelines for Adventist teachers to follow when handling controversial issues under the umbrella of academic freedom? Some rules of thumb are helpful, but teachers must establish their own *modus operandi* according to their disciplines and personal style. With respect to the freedom that Adventist scientists have to study relationships linking origins, the age of the earth, and the biblical flood, it is wise to remember that controversy is inherent in these topics. We can expect new ideas to arise, but in the classroom, it is important to heed Shandelle Henson's advice to honor the validity of differing epistemologies when weighing the meaning of knowledge and concepts.

Jesus once told a story about a man burning in hell who simultaneously held a conversation with Abraham. Although actual people and places are named in the story, the parable was not intended to teach anything about the proximity of heaven and hell or the existence of an eternal hell, but rather conveyed a truth about the principles of eternal justice. We accept this lesson, not because it is the product of inductive search but because it is revealed truth. In a similar manner, an old fable that proposes a truth based on wisdom and insights into human nature conceivably could declare that the moon is a poached egg, but teachers cannot utter such a preposterous claim in science classes. New ideas require scrutiny; they destroy religious belief only if we allow them to do so. In this context, it is also good to remind ourselves that new ideas are often challenges to our understanding of Scripture and how inspiration works rather than attacks upon scriptural integrity. Epistemological integrity is important.

Cindy Tutsch of the Ellen G. White Estate and Leonard Brand of Loma Linda University point to another critical guideline when they advise teachers that the basic tenor of the Adventist classroom should be supportive of Scripture. Students should not remain in doubt about teachers' commitment to the authority of

Scripture.⁴² And the Bible is unequivocal about the role of faith in one's confession of belief. It is not a sign of spiritual weakness to admit that human limitations of both knowledge and understanding exist.

Another biblical example illustrates the point. After Job and his comforters strenuously debated about God's character and His response to human frailties, Jehovah Himself interrupted their conversation with a few questions of His own. "Where were you," He asked, "when I laid the earth's foundations? Tell me, if you know and understand." What follows is a lengthy sequence of questions about the natural world that neither Job nor his friends could answer. "Doubtless you know all this; for you were born already," God says at one point, almost taunting human pretension, "so long is the span of your life!"⁴³ No one can miss the point. Neither God nor His creation is *completely* reducible to human understanding, much less to formula and theory.

This is a truth from wisdom that scientists have long accepted. In 1629, while proclaiming the reality of the Copernican explanation of the universe in opposition to the long-held Ptolemaic system, the Italian mathematician and scientist Galileo complained that those "who were totally unskilled at astronomical observations ought not to clip the wings of reflective intellects by means of rash prohibitions."⁴⁴ But he also confessed his belief in the ultimate source of knowledge and admitted the responsibility that accompanied free investigation and publication. Claiming that God gave humans the "right to argue about the constitution of the universe," he added that "*we cannot discover the work of His hands*. Let us, then, exercise these activities permitted to us and ordained by God, that we may recognize and thereby so much the more admire His greatness, *however much less fit we may find ourselves to penetrate the profound depths of His infinite wisdom*."⁴⁵

About four centuries of investigation, reflection and discussion have enabled us to add exponentially to what Galileo knew about the universe, but this knowledge has not enabled us to improve on his advice. ✍

This article has been peer reviewed.



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