

Editor's Page

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As this double issue goes to press I have been reflecting on how our world has been changing. As a Biblical archaeologist and historian I am, of course, aware that change is always a part of life. However, our current cycle of change in the world seems to have a more negative feeling about it. My family, friends, and colleagues comment on it regularly—how the world seems to be more polarized. The constant threat of terrorism, threats from rogue nations, and calls for military interventions seems to be part of our daily news fare. Even within traditional, stable, western democracies, people have become very polarized in their socio-political views and opposing sides increasingly express outright animosity and hatred for their opponents.

This negative, polarizing culture of the socio-political world can be seen spilling over into Christianity—and sometimes seems to intrude into our own Adventist community. This raises a concern I would like to share—the danger that as we deal with challenging issues there will be an erosion of civility in our discourse and dialogue. More than ever we need more Christ-like kindness and understanding in our interactions, discussions, and dialogs.

This is not to say that anything goes. We (Adventists in general and ATS members in particular) are a community of believers who hold a core of key beliefs that we believe are based upon the teaching of Scripture. Thus, we assume some things to be true—such as our understanding of the Sabbath, the soon Second Coming, and the Bible as the foundation of faith (our other positions are found in our 28 fundamental beliefs statements).

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At the same time, we recognize that all of these truths still have facets to them that are not fully understood and still need to be explored and studied—this exploration and study is the purpose of a society like ours. We also recognize that in this process of exploring and studying we will often have differences of opinion. As these differences emerge, it is our hope and prayer that we will always treat each other in good faith and with Christian charity recognizing that none of us has a complete understanding of Biblical truth and that its fuller discovery is a journey that we must all take together.

There is no doubt that the Adventist church is going through a challenging time—there are serious discussions and disagreements, not only on our traditional doctrines (e.g., the Trinity, creation, prophecy, ecclesiology, etc.), but also on social issues that naturally and necessarily impact the church—issues of gender, racial discrimination, church organization, etc.

One of the purposes and goals of a scholarly society, like the Adventist Theological Society, is to facilitate reflection, research, and dialogue on issues that are important to the members of the society—and the community which it serves. We, of course, consciously do this within a positive position and framework that is intended to be supportive of both the church's beliefs and the Bible—upon which we believe those beliefs are based. Our hope is that ATS and *JATS* can continue to serve as a model for courteous Christian discourse, done within a faithfulness to God's Word and His message to a world that so clearly needs to hear it.

As always, we invite you to keep up with the latest ATS happenings by consulting our website: www.atsjats.org. You may also enjoy our additional website resources which can be found at: www.perspectivedigest.org and www.atsacademy.org. These all contain information and resources explaining important theological issues. We trust you will enjoy these resources from ATS and that you will be blessed and enriched by the articles published in this current double issue of *JATS*.

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