



# ADVENTIST TODAY

## RELIGION AND THE WACO CULT

- *Ex-Adventists at Mount Carmel*
- *History and Fatal Theology of Branch Davidians*
- *The Waco Syndrome*
- *David Koresh: Narcissistic Personality or Dysfunctional Religious Leader*
- *Koresh on Ellen White*

## NEWS

- *LSU & LLU: After the Divorce*

## ANALYSIS

- *Adventists and Abortion*

## OPINION

- *Let Freedom Ring*
- *Inauguration of a President*



*Introductory Issue*

**DAVID KORESH**

## Welcome to *ADVENTIST TODAY*

**THE PIONEERS OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH** were open-minded men and women, open to new vistas of the everlasting gospel appropriate for their time. Open-mindedness is a prime requisite for becoming a bona fide Seventh-day Adventist, and no less for continuing growth as a dedicated admirer of Jesus Christ. Surely we do not want people to close their minds once they become members of the church. Closed minds will never complete the gospel commission.

*ADVENTIST TODAY* aspires to follow the open-minded tradition of the pioneers. Open-mindedness means openness toward one another and willingness to listen to one another—attentively, perceptively, amenably. What a joy membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church can be if there is full and complete openness in such matters as our corporate quest for an ever more perfect and complete understanding of God's Word, relationships between church leaders and the membership of the church, and the conduct of church affairs!

*ADVENTIST TODAY* is a response to the widespread conviction that the church needs an open and straightforward medium of communication such as this journal aspires to be—a place where all segments and age groups can find common ground and share their aspirations and concerns for the church in forthright, responsible dialogue.

*ADVENTIST TODAY* is primarily a news journal that aspires to present the information thoughtful members of the church need in order to form a mature, accurate, and equitable understanding of matters of concern to the church in North America. There will also be a responsible expression of opinion about matters of current interest and concern.

Recent events in Waco, Texas have altered our original plans for this, the first issue of *ADVENTIST TODAY*. In order to make room for the cluster of articles on this topic—certainly one of major concern to the entire church—it has been necessary to reschedule some features originally intended for this issue.

Among these rescheduled features is a symposium in which teens, twenty-somethings, baby boomers, the establishment, and senior members of the church share their perspectives of the church, their relationship to it, and their hopes for what it can be.

The next issue of *ADVENTIST TODAY* will focus on conflict resolution. An article on Christian principles for resolving differences of opinion on issues and problems in the church will be illustrated by a cluster of case studies.

One of these will deal with litigation between the Arizona Conference and Adventist Health Systems/West with respect to ownership of proceeds from the sale of the Tempe Community Hospital. Another will present background information on a recent action taken by the Executive Committee of the Southeastern California Conference on the conduct of the Pacific Union Conference president at a recent SECC constituency session.

Other articles will focus on the relatively new Adventist Theological Society and its import for the church, on the issue of ordaining women to the gospel ministry, and on the provocative billboarding crusade in Orlando, Florida, and saturation of the city with a sensational edition of *The Great Controversy*.

Proponents of alternative points of view on these subjects have been invited to share their perspective of the facts. *ADVENTIST TODAY* will be the convenor and moderator, and our readers will be the jury.

Welcome aboard!

Raymond Cottrell

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Editorial Introduction.....2

**THE WACO CULT & RELIGION**

Ex-Adventists at Mt. Carmel: PR Problem or Learning Opportunity?.....4

History and Fatal Theology of the Branch Davidians.....5  
*Raymond Cottrell*

Interview with Pastor Charlie Liu.....8

The Waco Syndrome.....9  
*Raymond Cottrell*

David Koresh: Narcissistic Personality or Dysfunctional Religious Leader..10  
*Noel Gardner and Antonius Brandon*

Experiences in Loma Linda .....11  
*Dalton Baldwin*

Koresh on Ellen White .....12  
*Dennis Hokama*

**REPORT: LSU and LLU—AFTER THE DIVORCE** .....13

**ADVENTISTS & ABORTION**

Pro-life & Pro-choice: Can the Church Have It Both Ways?.....16

1992 Annual Council Guidelines.....17

A Higher Calling.....18  
*Ginger Hanks-Harwood*

Myths and Maybes.....19  
*John and Millie Youngberg*

Finding a Consensus.....20  
*Gerald Winslow*

**OPINION**

**Editorial:** Let Freedom Ring.....21  
*James Walters*

**Guest Editorial:** Inauguration of a President.....22  
*Kit Watts*

**Perspective:** A Joyful Moan.....23  
*Alden Thompson*

**Mission Statement**.....Back Cover

# Ex-Adventists at Mt. Carmel

## *PR Problem or Learning Opportunity?*

**THE ADVENTIST CHURCH** can take at least two approaches to the Waco incident. First, it can handle the situation as a PR problem. This approach is understandable and in many ways appropriate—and well underway. The church hired a crisis management firm to devise a strategy. Officials from the church have spoken of damage control and the need to “play down the Adventist connection,” and the Southern California Conference has attempted to restrict church-member contact with the media by sending out a directive to all its congregations.

Second, the church can seek to learn from the Waco incident. Such a response may be more involved than merely shoring up public relations, but it is no less important. The following cluster of essays offers perspectives that may help in this learning process.

Some will say that what happened in Texas has nothing to do with the Seventh-day Adventist church since this Waco cult was merely a “branch” or an “offshoot” of a group that split from the church over 60 years ago. True, the Branch Davidians developed out of the Shepherd’s Rod movement—a movement started in the 1930s by relatively few Seventh-day Adventists. Ray Cottrell’s article documents this development. However, in addition to this historical connection, the Branch Davidians have had ongoing connection to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

David Koresh, the notorious Branch Davidian leader, was reared as a Seventh-day Adventist in Dallas and was a baptized member before joining the self-named Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventists. Ninety

percent of Koresh’s followers are former Seventh-day Adventists, according to Marc Breault, a recent master’s graduate in religion from Loma Linda University, and for a time a member of the Branch Davidians.

David Koresh actively recruited in Adventist centers, including Loma Linda; Honolulu; Sidney, Australia; and Bracknell, England (see Dalton Baldwin’s article). In England one former Adventist pastor and four Newbold College theology students accepted Koresh’s perspective, claims Breault.

Many Branch Davidians continue to adhere to traditional Adventist emphases, such as healthful living and Saturday Sabbath observance. Their notoriety has come from their interest in prophetic interpretation and belief in

**Many Branch Davidians continue to adhere to traditional Adventist emphases such as healthful living and Sabbath observance.**

the imminent ending of the world—ideas hardly alien to Adventism.

Before Koresh developed the religious ideas for which he is now notorious, he attracted the interest of a number of traditional Adventists precisely because of his command of extensive passages from the Bible and Ellen White’s writings (see Dennis Hokama’s report). Unusual interpretations of obscure Bible texts have led Koresh to claim to be the modern David—even Jesus Christ—and to believe in a biblical warrant for active and violent cleansing of the world (note the interview with Charlie Liu).

The Seventh-day Adventist denomination wisely disavowed the Shepherd’s Rod movement long ago. The denomination abhors the tragedy at Mt. Carmel. Nevertheless, several questions deserve serious attention in the aftermath of Waco:

—Are there elements in the popular Adventist belief system that lend themselves to warped exploitation by charismatic leaders?

—Does the church’s emphasis on the “imminence” of God’s kingdom need to be re-evaluated?

—What type of Biblical interpretation (a “proof-text” approach or a historical-contextual perspective) is more or less likely to foster idiosyncratic beliefs?

—What concrete steps should the denomination take to help its members avoid the allure of any number of Adventist “fundamentalisms” that offer simple answers to complex issues?

—What is the relationship between personal psychology and religious belief?

—How could committed, sometimes highly educated, church members opt for Koresh’s line of belief?

These are at least some of the questions raised by the Mt. Carmel episode. Because of the considerable Adventist connection we believe that the denomination would do well to appoint a high-level study commission to examine the Koresh phenomenon and make recommendations. □

—The Editors

# History and Fatal Theology of the BRANCH DAVIDIANS

By Raymond Cottrell

ON FEBRUARY 28 AND APRIL 19, 1993, the Branch Davidians of Waco, Texas proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that twisted theology can be fatal—both to those who advocate it and to theologically innocent bystanders—long before the great, final judgment day.

The story began March 2, 1885, with the birth of Victor Tasho Houteff in Raikovo, Bulgaria. *Persona non grata* to both church and state, he was expelled from his native land in 1907 and migrated to the United States. On May 10, 1919, he was baptized a Seventh-day Adventist in Rockford, Illinois, and in 1923 moved to Los Angeles where he became a member of the Exposition Park Church and served as a Sabbath School teacher.

In 1928 Houteff began to advocate views about last day events incompatible with Adventist understanding of Bible prophecy. Matters came to a head the following year at the Tabernacle church in nearby Fullerton when, in defense of his views, he laid claim to the prophetic gift. In a business meeting on November 4, 1929, the church formally requested P. E. Brodersen, president of the Southern California Conference, to examine his teachings. In January 1930, Brodersen, together with J. E. Fulton, president of the Pacific Union Conference, and others, concluded that Houteff's views were so fanciful as not to be taken seriously, and dismissed the matter.

In 1930 Houteff hectographed his views under the title *The Shepherd's Rod*, the name by which he and his coterie of followers were known over the next 12 years. Persistent refusal on his part to cease promoting his ideas led the church, in a business meeting on November 20, 1930, to disfellowship him. In 1932 a second volume of *The Shepherd's Rod* appeared.

Relentless advocacy of his views led, in 1934, to a major hearing that involved representatives from the General Conference as well as the Pacific Union and Southern California conferences. The result was a pamphlet with the title *A Warning Against Error*, endorsed by the Autumn (now Annual) Council later that year as an official General Conference publication

and issued by the Pacific Press as *A Reply to the Shepherd's Rod*.

In February, 1935, Houteff moved to Waco, Texas, and in May settled ten miles east of town on a farm he named Mount Carmel Center. At various times as many as 90 to 125 people, including children, took up residence there. On January 1, 1937, Houteff married Marcella Hermanson, daughter of the Center's treasurer, and later appointed Marcella, his wife, as his successor. Administration of the community was strictly theocratic.

With the outbreak of war in the Pacific, Shepherd's Rod "ministers" faced the draft, and as a result in 1942 the Center formally organized as a church and adopted the name "Davidian Seventh-day Adventists." In 1955 Victor Houteff died and his wife became president.

## Bizarre Prophetic Interpretation Leads to Disaster

In order to understand what happened next, a brief summary of Davidian interpretation is necessary. Houteff professed agreement with all fundamental Seventh-day Adventist beliefs listed in the denominational *Yearbook* and the *Church Manual*. He maintained that his teachings could be fully supported by the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. He said that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was the true church, but that it is in need of reforms based on his particular interpretation of last-day events foretold in the Old Testament and in the book of Revelation.

He urged his followers to remain members of the church wherever possible and encouraged them to take advantage of every opportunity to advocate his views, even to the point of disrupting church services. Houteff identified two principal goals of the Shepherd's Rod as: (1) purification of the Seventh-day Adventist Church by the cleansing foretold in Ezekiel 9, through acceptance of his teachings and him as its leader, and (2) establishment of the Davidians in Palestine as the nucleus of the messianic kingdom and as a base for proclaiming the loud cry of the third angel of Revelation 14 and 18. The Old Testament scenario for last-day events, he said, was soon to be literally fulfilled—by the Davidians, resident in Palestine.

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The fatal flaw in this system of interpretation is that it ignores the setting to which the Old Testament passages were addressed and the numerous explicit Bible statements identifying these prophecies as conditional on the cooperation of Israel as the covenant people of Old Testament times.

According to Houteff, the investigative judgment and sealing of the living began in 1929 when he received the gift of prophecy and began his ministry. The sealed saints, 144,000 in number (including himself), would eventually be translated without seeing death. Their probation, together with that of unrepentant Adventists and Davidians, would close prior to the close of human probation and the second coming of Christ.

Separated thus from the "wheat," Adventist and Davidian "tares" would perish in the slaughter foretold in Ezekiel 9. After that the 144,000 Davidians, sealed for eternity, would proclaim the loud cry of the third angel, general probation would close, and Christ would return.

In order to effect this literal fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, Houteff claimed it would be necessary for him and his followers to migrate to Palestine in the near future. Unrepentant Jews, Arabs, and others would perish in

the great battle foretold in Zechariah 14 and Ezekiel 38 and 39. The Davidians would then lead out in establishing the eternal reign of Christ as Lord over all the earth.

On the basis of Revelation 11 Marcella Houteff predicted that a series of events commencing April 22, 1959, would result in the expulsion of Jews and Arabs from Palestine and open the way for the Davidians to migrate there and make Jerusalem their headquarters. She specifically identified the fulfillment of this prediction as a conclusive "test" of the integrity of their movement. She arrived at this date by identifying November 9, 1955, as the commencement of the "one thousand two hundred and sixty [presumably literal] days" of Revelation 11 because this "light" had come to her on that day.

Accordingly, she set April 16 as the time for the faithful to assemble at Mount Carmel Center preparatory to migrating to Palestine. The week of April 16 to 22 witnessed the arrival of 800 to 1,000 people, including children. Non-fulfillment of the anticipated events inevitably resulted in bitter disappointment

and the demoralization and fragmentation of the Davidians.

In the hope of reclaiming as many of them as

## David Koresh & Adventists: *The Early Connection*

Vernon Wayne Howell was born in 1959 to an unmarried woman, Bonnie Haldeman of Houston, Texas. However, Vernon grew up in Dallas where he was reared as a Seventh-day Adventist, says Newsweek (March 15, 1993). As a child Vernon was abused and repeatedly told that he wasn't worth anything, states former follower Marc Breault.

Howell's maternal grandmother said that Vernon was in many ways a "bright little boy." When he began school he was dyslexic and later went to a special school for a year or so, but didn't do well. He also attended Dallas Academy, an Adventist school. He dropped out by ninth grade.

He devoted himself to Bible study, possessing the ability to memorize many passages and link them together to form unique religious perspectives. When 18 he moved to Tyler, Texas, where he joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Church members didn't appreciate the long hair and casual dress of this guitar-playing boy. His grandmother reports that he became disillusioned with the Tyler church and moved to the Waco area where he joined the Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventists at their Mt. Carmel outpost.

—The Editors

possible, the General Conference sent Vice President A. V. Olson to preach in the Waco SDA church. Davidian leaders who attended the church service invited Olson to conduct a series of meetings at Mount Carmel Center from June 24 to July 7. At the close of the series, Marcella Houteff requested that the General Conference arrange further meetings with Davidian leaders.

These joint meetings took place at General Conference headquarters in Washington, D.C., from July 27 to August 7, with Vice Presidents W. E. Murray as chair and A. V. Olson as secretary. The other General Conference participants were H. W. Lowe, L. C. Evans (president of the Southwestern Union, which includes Texas), A. C. Fearing, D. F. Neufeld, and R. L. Odom. The General Conference and the Davidians both issued formal reports of the meeting, listed at the close of this article.

On December 12, 1961, Marcella Houteff renounced the teachings of "the Rod," and on March 11, 1962, resigned as president of the Davidians. Benjamin L. Roden assumed leadership of the largest remaining splinter group, with his wife Lois as its prophet. Upon Roden's death in 1978, his wife and his son George assumed command. But not for long.

### Enter David Koresh

In 1981 Vernon Howell joined the Mount Carmel Center community near Waco, then led by George Roden. In 1983 he began claiming the gift of prophecy. On November 3, 1987, animosity between Howell and Roden erupted into a gun battle. Howell was charged with attempted murder but set free by a hung jury, and became leader of the Branch Davidians. In 1990 he legally changed his name to David Koresh, David being the name of the ideal king of Israel, and Koresh the Hebrew name of Cyrus, who released the Jews from Babylonian exile, both presumably types of Christ.

Koresh considered himself a new incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of Revelation 5. He claimed ownership of everything and everyone, especially all women, and exemption from paying taxes. His male followers had to remain celibate, and he alone was permitted to inseminate. He is said to have had 19 wives, some of whom were 12 or 13 years old. He and his followers assumed the right to steal, kill, or do whatever necessary to silence critics and advance their own cause. Howell maintained tight control of every aspect of the lives of his followers, who were not allowed to think for themselves. Those who broke with him, he warned, were certain to go to hell.

In Shepherd's Rod (Davidian) terminology the word "rod" is the "rod" or "shoot" from the "stem" of Jesse (David), and the "Branch" is Christ as the Son of David (Isaiah 11:1)—hence the name chosen by the Waco group, "Branch Davidians."

None of the other, relatively small, Davidian groups across the country approve of Koresh or his policy and tactics. In the wake of recent events at Waco some of these groups have vigorously repudiated such behaviors. During the early decades of Shepherd's Rod history, its advocates made a practice of demonstrating publicly in the vicinity of church gatherings and often disrupted church services, at times resorting to somewhat bizarre tactics. Together with the Davidian interpretation of the slaughter foretold in Ezekiel 9:1-11, these milder forms of force may in some way have predisposed Koresh to more drastic actions.

The stage was thus set for the tragic events of February 28, 1993 that left 4 Federal agents dead and 15 wounded, and April 19, 1993 when 87 Davidians perished in a mass suicide.

### Primary Documentation

General Conference Committee, *A Reply to the Shepherd's Rod*, 1934, 32 pp.

*The Committee on Defense Literature of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, The History and Teachings of "The Shepherd's Rod,"* October 1955, 64 pp.

Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Report of a Meeting Between a Group of "Shepherd's Rod" Leaders and a Group of General Conference Ministers*, July 27—August 7, 1959, May 1960, 16 pp.

Universal Publishing Association (Davidian), *Report and Analysis of the General Conference Committee's Closed Hearing of "The Shepherd's Rod" July 27—August 7, 1959*, 1959, 64 pp.

Marc A. Breault, Letters to Dalton Baldwin, August 1, 1990, and September 18, 1991. Briefly associated with David Koresh prior to 1990, Breault describes the Branch Davidians as "a highly dangerous organization led by satanic forces."

Marc A. Breault, "Some Background on the Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventist Movement From 1955 to the Early Part of 1991," unpublished manuscript. May 27, 1991. □

# Interview with Pastor Charlie Liu

**Adventist Today:** What was your position previously?

Pastor Liu: I was the pastor at the Diamond Head Seventh-day Adventist church in Honolulu for four years.

**It was there that you had some connection with David Koresh?**

Yes, back in 1986 David Koresh visited at the request of a member and began holding home Bible studies and eventually took 14 of our members back to Southern California and then to Texas.

**Did he pose as an Adventist?**

No, he never tried to gain membership or parade as an Adventist.

**Did your members see him as an Adventist?**

As a former Adventist.

**The group's formal name is Branch Davidian Seventh-day Adventists, is it not?**

Right. They take the position that they are descendants of Adventists, but they have further light: they are a "branch from" the Adventist community.

**What sort of person is Mr. Koresh?**

He came across initially as a meek person. But when pressed about theology he could speak very fast and had a sense of a prophetic mantle. He was a soft-spoken, intense person.

**What sort of persons were your members who defected to him?**

They were a fairly broad spectrum of people in terms of education and

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Charlie Liu is an associate pastor of Campus Hill Church as well as chaplain and adjunct professor of religion at Loma Linda University.

income. Some were not high school graduates, others had graduate degrees. Some were rich and others poor. A number were newly converted to Adventism. Most were younger and idealistic and the type to put themselves on the line for some cause.

But nothing stands out as a characteristic unique to all 14. They just felt that here was a fellow who was putting together well a number of scriptural texts. Koresh had a broad appeal.

**You tried to keep your church members from defecting. What was their response to your Christian and Adventist lines of reasoning?**

A typical response was, "We have the new messenger, the new light. What you are reasoning from is the old light. Our leader is the only one who can open the seven seals and lay before us the truth of the very last days." I reasoned from Christian principles, pointing out the fallacy of playing to people's fears and using threats and manipulation.

They would say, "Christ's methods were the old way: we have the new." But in terms of Adventism, it was more difficult to appeal to them because we are based on some apocalyptic thinking that can play into this. That was a little tough for me.

**The imminent ending of the world was a key emphasis of this group?**

It was over emphasized, because Koresh said to ignore the present, and take no responsibility for family, friends or a world out there.

**We now know that Mr. Koresh believes himself to be divine and that all men and women belong to him—particularly the women. Did he advocate polygamy to your church members?**

He adamantly denied it at the time, but there were rumors of polygamy. I confronted him on the issue once after church services. I remember distinctly that we were standing right outside the front door, and he called his wife over to him and asked me, "Do you think I would ever be unfaithful to this woman? No I wouldn't." He also had his child there beside him and he said, "Do you think that I would shame this child by doing such a thing? No, I would never do that." He liked to ask questions and answer them himself.

**When you cast doubt on Koresh's claims, what did your affected members say?**

They would express a bit of doubt, but hedge. For instance, if I asked if they really believed Koresh was a messenger of God, they would reply, "I hope so." The manipulative methodology he used was fear. Church members were afraid to allow their rational selves to disbelieve the new "truths." So they hedged their bets by staying with Koresh.

**But why would an Adventist member be attracted to a new belief that instilled fear? That seems a paradox.**

It's clear to me that he offered a very black and white view of life. Koresh offered something that said: "Are you tired of thinking, of making decisions in your life? Come to me, I will do the thinking for you. Don't worry any more." That is appealing to a lot of people.

**How can a group that takes the Bible so seriously end up in that Waco shootout? Do you think there may be a link between a literalistic interpretation of the Branch's key chapters, Ezekiel 9 and Revelation 14, which do contain some violent language, and the recent violence at Mr. Carmel?**



I believe there is a definite connection. They believe they have a God-given call to bear arms, not only to defend themselves, but to bring about the end-time scenario. They see Ezekiel 9 as a call to cleanse the church—first Adventism, then Christianity and the world. In Revelation 14 they see seven angels, not Adventism's traditional three angels. The additional four angels are the prominent leaders of the Shepherd's Rod-Branch Davidian SDAs, beginning with Victor Houteff and culminating in David Koresh.

**What percentage of the 100-plus people at Mt. Carmel, in your opinion, are former Adventists recruited by Koresh?**

In Hawaii, the majority following him were Adventists. My guess is that the majority at Mt. Carmel are former Adventists.

**Your father, Sunny Liu, was a well known singing evangelist. What do you make of our traditional evangelistic approaches?**

When I was a kid, following my dad around, it was the era in Adventist evangelism of large and gaudy beasts of Revelation. We did build on a fear factor to some degree. At that time I thought it was exciting, but after studying theology and being a pastor I am bothered by our playing up a very eccentric belief system.

We are pitching toward people who may be unbalanced or who may be just looking for the sensational. I don't like to put it this way, but the people who may be attracted to a story in the supermarket tabloids of a five-headed baby from Mars could well be attracted to some of our approaches. Is this honoring God? Is this God's call that I see in Scripture?

We've probably done some things in the past that have set us up for what we're seeing now. Probably a lot of the people connected with this cult had some fascination with that sort of stuff. They may have had a connection with the Adventist church because of that, and then became disillusioned.

**We Adventists see some of our historic emphases, such as preparation for an imminent ending of the world, taken to bizarre ends at Mt. Carmel, and we are appalled.**

We have long had a remnant theology. That has motivated us to highlight the unique aspects of Adventism to the neglect of recognizing that first of all we are Christians. Our official creeds highlight that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the foundational belief. That belief in the gospel, if rightly highlighted, will keep us from bizarre, cultic behavior.

I think some followers of Koresh will come out of this episode bruised and damaged and in need of what the true gospel can do for them—to make them whole persons again. That's where the church community must be ready for them. I fear that we are not ready. Sometimes we are so eager to minimize the damage to the image of the church that we are not ready to heal people who have just gotten in over their heads in something like this. □

## Commentary On

# The Waco Syndrome

The key ingredient of the Waco syndrome that exploded in violence on February 28 is a naive lethal interpretation of the Bible that does not discriminate between objective reality and fantasy. As the Branch Davidians demonstrated on February 28 and April 19, 1993, the proof-text method of interpreting the Bible can be dangerous not only to a person's mental health but to his or her very life and that of theologically innocent bystanders as well.

As a literary document the Bible means what its divine Author and inspired writers intended it to mean, as determined by an objective, perceptive, competent reading of the text. Davidian interpretation ignores the intent of the Bible writers and the historical circumstances to which they addressed their inspired preview of the way in which God would work out His divine purpose for the covenant people. My article "The Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy" on pages 25 to 38 of volume 4 of the *SDA Bible Commentary* provides an effective antidote to the proof-text method of interpreting the Old Testament prophets.

The Branch Davidians justify the violence that erupted at Mount Carmel Center by their interpretation of Ezekiel 9, where the prophet is told to summon six "executioners," each with his "destroying weapon," and directs "a man clothed in linen" to "go through . . . Jerusalem, and put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it." The six executioners are then told to follow him and "smite" everyone without the mark. Davidians identify themselves as divinely commissioned to fulfill this prophecy. They also cite Christ's instruction to His disciples, on the night of His betrayal, to arm themselves (Luke 22:36-38). □

—Raymond Cottrell

# David Koresh: *Narcissistic Personality or...*

By Noel Gardner

**THOUGH I HAVE NOT** been able to interview David Koresh and do not know more about him directly, I sense that he is primarily a severe narcissistic personality. Narcissists are individuals who defend against a sense of deep inferiority by the creation of a grandiose fantasied self in which they see themselves as unusually powerful and superior. They may be very gifted and talented individuals, but they cannot tolerate any challenge to their grandiosity. They have a very inflated sense of self-importance.

My sense is that there was a kind of linkage when Koresh was attracted to some of the self-understanding that is in Adventism in terms of its uniqueness and specialness. The notion of uniqueness, as being special, the only true and final people of God, is a kind of notion that is waiting for trouble unless it is carefully understood. It is waiting for a linkage with some disturbed minds.

I am most struck that the formation of a cult like this seems to spring from two fundamental vulnerabilities in people. One is a need for certitude—to feel that one has absolute answers in the context of a very complex world that is filled with ambiguity and uncertainty. The need for certitude makes people extremely vulnerable. Erich Fromm talks about the many ways in which people cannot tolerate owning the responsibility of real choices in a world that's complex and filled with ambiguity—how they will flee from freedom because of the enormous anxiety and uncertainty it produces. That is a reflection of a lot of people who need some absolute answers. Often times they will take a fundamentalist position. The need for certitude makes some very well-meaning people highly vulnerable to being exploited in this kind of way.

The other vulnerability is the need for specialness, the feeling that one is unusually important, superior. When one has a need to be better than, or greater than, or more righteous than, or more filled with truth than anyone else, that need for specialness is a great vulnerability that can be exploited. The underlying core of "special" people often contains a great deal of doubt, and behind their apparently smug self-confidence there is a lot of perceived inferiority.

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Noel Gardner was an Adventist pastor before studying medicine. He is chief, Council Liaison Psychiatry, University of Utah and president of the Utah Psychiatric Association. This piece is an excerpt from a telephone interview.

Because of human vulnerability, a charismatic Koresh can step in and claim a lot of absolute authority, usurping scriptures to support his position and structuring an idealized view of the small group. □

## *...Dysfunctional Religious Leader*

### *A Response to Noel Gardner*

By Antonius Brandon

Consistent with the medical model, Noel Gardner follows a linear argument. He labels David Koresh and then proceeds to explore possible religious causes which may underlie his pathology. David Koresh's personal history seems to bear out that he is a conflicted person.

That does not, however, warrant a label of Narcissistic Personality (Disorder). Many religious leaders, out of personal conflict, have expressed a certain strength of character and focus, but in assigning them a personality disorder, we may miss the complex relationships involved in religious behavior.

Another way of looking at the Koresh phenomenon is to explore the social context of the Branch Davidians and recognize the interactions that require the type of leadership they developed. This view does not separate Koresh from the group that has become like a large family, but sees him as a part of a system that requires that individuals fulfill various roles.

With his background of abuse, anger and mistrust, he seems to fit in very well. With his ability to respond to the emotional needs of the group and their feedback to him, he is as much a creation of the group as its leader. As such, he may very well personify the dysfunctions of his religious community, tying the fate of its members to his own life or death. □

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Antonius Brandon was an Adventist evangelist before earning his doctorate in clinical psychology. He is a professor of marriage and family therapy in the Graduate School at Loma Linda University.

# Experiences in Loma Linda

By Dalton Baldwin

**MARC BREault** HAD JUST started graduate work in religious studies at Loma Linda University when at the local market he met Perry Jones, a recruiter for the Branch Davidians. He began Bible studies with the local Davidians and within four years Marc had become the right hand man to Vernon Howell, now named David Koresh.

For several years as a teenage Roman Catholic, Marc had attended a camp for the blind sponsored by Christian Record. He carefully studied Adventist teachings and became a member of the Japanese Seventh-day Adventist Church in Honolulu in 1979. Two years later he registered at Pacific Union College as a theology major. My son lived down the dormitory hall from Marc, and described him as "intelligent, thoughtful—a nice guy."

As he approached the completion of his collegiate studies he was crushed when his faculty counselors told him that they could not conscientiously encourage him to become a pastor. No conference was willing to hire him as a pastoral intern and send him on to the Adventist seminary at Andrews. He was legally blind, with only 5% vision in his left eye. (In order to focus well enough to read he had to bring the print a few inches from his eye.) He returned home to Hawaii bitterly disappointed. He felt that his beloved church did not respect his civil rights as a handicapped person.

A Loma Linda faculty member, after hearing Marc's story, hoped that his talent and commitment could be harnessed for the church and encouraged him to apply for graduate studies in religion. He enrolled at Loma Linda in 1986. Although he had some difficulty with reading assignments, he was an excellent student, asking thought-provoking questions, showing analytical depth in his answers, and expressing warm commitment.

I first became aware of Marc's contact with the Branch Davidians when he asked for permission to miss class for a week to attend Passover at Waco, Texas. I was not able to convince him that the Old Testament annual feasts had been fulfilled in Christ.

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**Dalton Baldwin** teaches theology and biblical studies at Loma Linda University.

My contention that the Branch Davidians engaged in fanatical, unbiblical interpretation did not seem to register.

When Phil Donahue, on his national TV show, recently asked Marc how he got hooked by the Davidians, he answered, "I was emotionally vulnerable. I had some bad experiences with my church. I wanted something more."

Vernon Howell proposed a music ministry which appealed to Marc. Marc was also caught up in the Branch's use of the destroying angels of Ezekiel 9 to describe their mission to establish a literal kingdom in Palestine and to purify Seventh-day Adventists. When Marc completed his master's degree at Loma Linda and did not receive a call for preaching or teaching, he joined the Branch group in Texas. He married Elisabeth Baranyai, whom he had met at the Loma Linda Branch Bible studies.

After leaving the Branch Davidians two years later, Marc described the group's theology as based "entirely on types." An early statement by Victor Houteff, in *The Shepherd's Rod*, Vol 2, p. 10 reads, "He makes wise the simple and confounds the prudent by showing that where there is no type there is **no truth**" (bold face in original).

The problem with using types to make predictions about future events is that the new predictive material is not present in the type but is produced by personal hopes, fears, conclusions, or imaginations of the interpreter. When there is a depreciation of "prudence" and an encouragement of inspirational feeling, fantastic and even dangerous predictions occur.

The fantastic element was demonstrated when Vernon Howell applied Song of Solomon 6:8 to himself. "There are threescore queens and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number." Howell taught that it had been predicted that he would have 140 wives. Shortly after Vernon Howell introduced the teaching that all women belonged to him, Marc and Elisabeth dropped out of the movement.

Since leaving the Branch Davidians, Marc Breault has been an active member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Melbourne. He and his wife have helped to deprogram 16 other former members. □

# Koresh on Ellen White

By Dennis Hokama

**IS IT JUST COINCIDENCE** that many conservative Adventists were uniquely vulnerable to the teachings of David Koresh?

A videotape of a Bible study Koresh conducted for a group of Los Angeles Seventh-day Adventists in 1987 gives some insights into this question. On February 28, 1987, exactly six years prior to the fatal shootout in Waco, Texas, I attended this Bible study organized by my father, a veteran Adventist minister and missionary. He had insisted that I come because I would get to meet someone who, he said, might be the next prophet of the church.

The speaker was David Koresh, then going by his birth name Vernon Howell. I waited impatiently for more than two tortuous hours for Koresh to come to his point, but he never quite did. At times, though, he came tantalizingly close. He spoke enigmatically and in riddles, using scripture and Ellen White's writings in a fashion which implied and hinted that he was White's successor, but he shied away from making that claim explicit.

In the question and answer session, I expressed skepticism regarding his interpretation of scripture, and then I asked the burning question on everybody's mind: Was Howell actually claiming to be the successor to Ellen White? After a brief preamble, true to form, he answered with another question:

Do you believe that it takes a living prophet to reveal to us present truth? That's the first question I have for you!

I replied rather lamely, quoting a familiar Adventist explanation, "After she dies her books will speak for her." Koresh ignored my reply and continued his counterattack:

Well, it's like this. She [Ellen White] tells us, if [sic] someone is to come in the spirit and power of Elijah, and when he comes, men will say, 'You are too earnest. You do not interpret scriptures properly. Let me show you how to teach your message.' Well now, the commentators say point blank, that this was herself. They say to go to *Selected Messages*. Well, she makes it even plainer in *Selected Messages*.

Much later, I discovered that Koresh was virtually quoting *Selected Messages*, Book I, page 412. By using this quote he effectively sought Ellen White's permission to engage in novel interpretations of scripture and implied that he was the one she had said would come with the Elijah message.

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**Dennis Hokama** teaches in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

David Koresh's monologue back in 1987 was an elaborate interpretation of the Old Testament prophets and Revelation that was interlaced with Adventist jargon. Although I now know that he was reportedly disfellowshipped five years earlier, I took his Adventism for granted. He used phrases like "We as Seventh-day Adventists," "As we were taught in Adventism," and "We know as Adventists."

A further indication of his familiarity with Ellen White's writings was a reference he made to *The Great Controversy*, citing a passage from a chapter he referred to as "The Bible: The Only Safeguard."

She says, 'Contained in the Bible is the revelation of events which are to transpire prior to the judgment, the closing of human probation, but,' she says, 'people are as ignorant of these truths as if they had never been written.'

Koresh's paraphrase was remarkably accurate. Ellen White had written: "The events connected with the close of probation and the work of preparation for the time of trouble, are clearly presented. But multitudes have no more understanding of these important truths than if they had never been revealed" (*The Great Controversy*, 1911 edition, p. 594).

As to the attractiveness of Howell's theological exposition from an Adventist perspective, an index was my seminary-trained father's assessment at the end of the two and a half hour session. He was enthusiastically supportive, and only the most energetic and severe criticisms of Howell's theology by his two skeptical sons dissuaded him from accepting Howell's invitation for further Bible studies.

The church was founded on a doctrine of "present truth" which holds that God has special messages for today, or "new light" that was not necessarily apparent in the scriptures nor essential for God's people in former times. As such, "present truth" is inherently dynamic rather than static. And yet since Ellen White's death, Adventists have frozen this concept.

In Howell's teaching, Adventism was presented with an opportunity to make good its claim to ongoing "present truth." He himself proclaims "present truth" and "new light" to gullible church members. He was reviving rather than contradicting the original spirit of Adventist theology.

Howell's proclamation struck a responsive chord in the hearts of many traditional Adventists, and this may explain why they were uniquely vulnerable to Howell's theology. □

# After the Divorce

## Loma Linda and La Sierra Universities

THE PAPERS OFFICIALLY divorcing the campuses of Loma Linda University (LLU) were signed in a solemn ceremony on Saturday night, August 25, 1990, in the student chapel of the Loma Linda campus. Board members and many interested faculty attended. Some cheered. Others cried—or at least felt like it.

Just as in domestic splits, so in corporate divorce, both sides experience painful adjustment. Although the Loma Linda campus appears to have fared better financially than the Riverside campus (now La Sierra University—LSU) both have experienced setbacks as well as successes since the split.

The LLU president, B. Lyn Behrens, is embattled but is assertively moving ahead with strong board support and an often acquiescent faculty. Fritz Guy, the first president of LSU, is a lame duck whose board and faculty have been seeking his successor.

### Loma Linda University

One of LLU's greatest successes under the leadership of President Behrens has been the removal of probationary accreditation status. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) not only lifted LLU's probation status of 1989 but also commended LLU for its mammoth effort to reorganize itself as a health science university. In addition, the 1992-3 school year began with record enrollment—over 2200 students—the School of Allied Health eclipsing the

Gary Bradley, LSU biology professor, and Cherie Rouse, LLU employee, contributed to this article written by the editors.

School of Medicine with the most students.

A major administrative push to enhance ethnic diversity in both the student body and faculty led to the appointment of Delbert Baker, Ph.D., former editor of *Message Magazine*, as the new director of diversity.

Several major projects have also been started. Ground breaking began on a \$16.2 million dollar recreation and wellness center, scheduled to be completed in 1994. To aid in the LLU Medical Center's goal of developing a large, multi-modality approach to the treatment of cancer and other diseases, fund raising for a \$20.3 million Research Institute has started, with the actual completion of the complex planned for 1996. Fund raising for these and other major projects has given the university a hopeful financial base for the future.

**The alumni response was quick and severe. Many expressed concern over the administration's unwillingness to listen to AAUP's criticisms.**

Setbacks have also plagued the University. On February 10 the Board of Trustees accepted "by mutual agreement" the resignation of its new School of Medicine dean—Douglas Will. When appointed in July of 1991, Will became the youngest medical school dean in the nation. His resignation, effective June 30, 1993, comes amid allegations of conflict of interest over a research project in which he has financial interest.

Another setback continues to disrupt the University's School of Medicine. Many dedicated faculty in

the School of Medicine as well as school alumni continue to be concerned about the administration's past firing of George Grames and Stewart Shankel. The tension is evident in the ongoing letter writing in the School of Medicine *Alumni Journal*. In the September/October 1992 issue, Will repeated the administration's defense of their actions and called the on-going discussion "more destructive than helpful to the mission of the School of Medicine."

The alumni response was quick and severe. Many expressed concern over the administration's unwillingness to listen to American Association of University Professors' (AAUP) criticism of administration heavy-handedness. Others were disgruntled about the "defensive, superficial 'trust us, we are right' tone of formal printed responses by LLU administration" that would lead LLU to be known in the academic community "not only for its infant heart transplant program, the proton accelerator, and its woman president but also for its cavalier treatment of dedicated, courageous members."

The AAUP criticized LLU for its allegedly denying adjudicative hearings before the dismissals were effected and its placing the burden of proof on the accused. Subsequently, a scientific polling of LLU faculty found that 93.4% agree that a predissmissal hearing should be mandatory; 87.2% agree that in such a meeting the burden of proof should rest on the administration. Steps are being taken to change policies accordingly.

*Continued on the next page*

## La Sierra University

Three years after being divorced, La Sierra University finds itself still searching for an identity and again searching for a president. After the divorce, LSU faced the challenge of assuming its own leadership in matters from the most mundane to the grand. A new administrative structure had to be invented. "And we are still struggling to find out who we are," stated Gary Bradley, biology professor.

In spite of these large challenges and the troubles of its first president, Fritz Guy, some achievements and improving vital signs do raise hopes for LSU. Although his presidency was short, Guy took a junior campus from the throes of an unwanted divorce to a university boldly seeking its place in the sun. He oversaw the successful lifting of probationary status in accreditation by the WASC. He also strove to strengthen faculty pay scales and pushed for a much more definitive role for the faculty in the institution's governance. At press time, a faculty senate with clear responsibilities and powers was working directly with the trustee Committee on Academic Programs to write a new faculty handbook.

The university has made rigorous efforts toward high academic quality, last spring hiring Garland Dulan, Ph.D., as provost to coordinate and oversee all academic features of the institution. Dulan had been academic vice president at Oakwood College for five years. Also, efforts have been made to improve standards for faculty promotions as well as for student admissions.

The results have not gone unnoticed. In a fall 1992 issue, *U. S. News and World Report* ranked U. S. colleges and universities, including LSU (as well as Andrews University) on its list of the top 300 national universities. The local newspaper, the *Riverside Press-Enterprise*, grading all California colleges and universities in the fall of

1991, called LSU one of the top three "good buys" and gave LSU a B+. "The reasons are probably our low student-teacher ratio and our high percent of faculty with doctoral degrees, 76%," said Adeny Schmidt, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

**After the divorce, LSU faced the challenge of assuming its own leadership.... "We are still struggling to find out who we are," stated one professor.**

Students have apparently noticed, too. For the '92-'93 school year, enrollment was up 8% (120 students) from a year earlier. The freshman class was especially large, and enrollment in the honors program increased by 40%. "One attraction is our diverse student body and another is our unique location, next to a major metropolis," stated Ivan Rouse, chair of the Department of Physics. "We can and do have good programs in the community where students can apply what they're learning in the classrooms." Rouse stated that more students are needed, however, even to have a critical mass in some departments.

Rouse admitted that LSU has always been painfully dependent on tuition funds for survival, and this has allowed little money for things like equipment and faculty development. Rouse complained that fund raising and development have not been done at full speed in recent years.

LSU possesses a significant real estate asset—360 acres adjacent to the campus. With highly regarded consultants, the university has completed a detailed plan to develop this land. The board has approved the plan, and the development corporation is now pursuing the necessary city approvals, community acceptance, and alumni input. The corporation expects to obtain final city approval and begin implementation by September.

LSU enjoyed a big boost in self-esteem with the success of its Global Village event last fall. Under the

leadership of religion professor Charles Teel, Jr., students and faculty created and occupied nine different examples of third world housing on campus, and invited the public to come and observe. More than 20,000 came.

The harmony in Teel's Global Village has not caught on among the faculty, who have described their own relations with words such as "animosity" and

"fratricide." "Arts and Sciences is perceived by our other schools as the shark in the swimming pool," stated Gary Bradley, biology professor. The faculty spent the winter heatedly debating whether Fritz Guy, upon leaving, should be granted tenured status as "University Professor" or should simply be fired.

In the face of great need for direction and leadership, the first LSU president, Fritz Guy, announced his forthcoming resignation on September 14, 1992, after the Board decided to perform an "administrative audit." This Board action was prompted by an impasse between the president and his vice president for student affairs, David Osborne, yet this was only the most prominent feature of a broader discontent regarding Guy's administration.

A number of senior faculty who were interviewed spoke of the negative side of Guy's administrative style. They say he micro-managed the institution, but then, in key decisions on personnel, he ineffectively utilized faculty input, vacillated, and procrastinated.

Even his critics, however, perceive Guy's many admirable qualities as a scholar-administrator. He has a strong academic orientation and speaks often of how the faculty are the heart of the university. He brought an ethical stance to his role. Guy is open to new ideas, yet knows where he stands and articulates a clear vision. Some faculty feel that Guy's pastoral nature made

him shy away from conflict situations that required decisive action. Further, not being a "political animal," Guy was led by his honesty to step on some toes of individuals with strong connections to church leaders. On the other hand, Guy has a keen sense of politically correct procedures at a more theoretical level. This led him to establish a sophisticated board of trustees.

According to Adeny Schmidt, the board of 24 members is much smaller than traditional SDA boards. Of these 24, only 9 are church employees. One is not a church member but is a very influential local businessman. Some have special expertise in higher education. The board also includes interested, committed alumni. "The board used to be huge," said Schmidt,

"with a very large proportion of church employees included regardless of their commitments or expertise."

Commenting that the board is superior to that of any other Adventist college, one professor stated that the board "matured rapidly, perhaps outgrowing Fritz." However, Frank Knittel, professor of English noted, "It is a travesty that our board chair also chairs the board of our closest competing college—one within our own union [Pacific Union College]. It is surprising that the board permits this; it is more surprising that the chair would agree to serve under these conditions."

At press time, first choice to succeed Fritz Guy was Lawrence Geraty, president at Atlantic Union

College. LSU was waiting for his response to their offer of the presidency.

LLU has great challenges as it faces an uncertain economics of health care and as it balances assertive central leadership with a core of faculty who are increasingly committed to due process and significant involvement in decision making. LSU still wobbles uncertainly on its baby legs. It is attracting good students and looks forward to improved finances once its land begins to be developed; however, to succeed, LSU must enroll significantly more students and must find a president who can unite and lead a capable but contentious faculty. □

## As we go to press . . .

**Lawrence T. Geraty**, president of Atlantic Union College, on April 9 informed officials of La Sierra University of his qualified acceptance of their offer for him to become president of LSU. In a telephone interview, he expressed his conviction that the trustees rather than the president should be primarily responsible for borrowing funds, as may be necessary, and that the Pacific Union Conference and the General Conference should forgive part of the university's present indebtedness. On a recent visit to the campus Geraty indicated that the possibility of productive fund raising by the president was one factor that attracted him to LSU, in contrast to limited possibilities where he is now.

With **Wilber Alexander's** announced retirement, Loma Linda University's Faculty of Religion will have a new dean next year. **Gerald Winslow**, chair of the religion faculty at Pacific Union College, has been invited to replace Alexander and is giving the invitation careful study. Winslow is known for his superb academic and administrative skills.

**James Londis**, another finalist for deanship of the LLU Faculty of Religion, is said by knowledgeable persons to be a likely candidate for the presidency of Atlantic Union College should that post become vacant. Londis is known for his personal charisma and prophetic vision.

Arrangements have been completed for the **Pacific Press Publishing Association** in Nampa, Idaho, to print and mail 28,000 copies of this, the first issue of *Adventist Today*, which are being sent gratis to a wide circle of prospective subscribers. PPPA is printer but not publisher. *Adventist Today* is the publisher and solely responsible for content.

Recognizing that *Adventist Today* and *Spectrum* are both committed to open, responsible discussion of news and issues of importance to Seventh-day Adventists, the **Association of Adventist Forums**, publisher of *Spectrum*, has offered to carry a complimentary advertisement for *Adventist Today*, welcome it editorially, and send the introductory issue to *Spectrum* subscribers. The publisher of *Adventist Today* appreciates and will reflect this friendly spirit of cooperation.

**Attorney General Janet Reno** has just concluded a news conference in Washington, D.C. in which she lamented the tragic loss of more than eighty lives in the fire that destroyed the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, Texas a few hours ago.

She assumed full responsibility for the decision to increase pressure designed to end the siege that began fifty days ago—peacefully, without further loss of life. The FBI took every possible precaution, she said, to do this responsibly, and President Clinton had given his approval. There is clear evidence, she emphasized, that the fire was deliberately set by persons within the compound, in what was planned as a mass suicide.

*Adventist Today* expresses deep sympathy with families that have lost loved ones in this holocaust. In our issue for July/August we will review the factors that contributed to this tragedy. □

—The Editors

## Pro-life and Pro-choice— Can the church have it both ways?

CAN THE CHURCH HAVE it both ways—pro-life and pro-choice? Through its newly adopted guidelines, the church “affirms the sanctity of human life, in God’s image,” and “respect for prenatal life.” Yet it also acknowledges that “exceptional circumstances” can exist, and the “final decision whether to terminate the pregnancy should be made by the pregnant woman after appropriate consultation.”

“The seeming ambivalence in this statement is easily explained,” according to Roland Hegstad, editor of the church’s *Liberty* magazine. “On the one hand, we don’t have a pope on the Potomac to tell us what we must do. On the other hand, we respect the church member’s right to make some very personal decisions.”

It is unusual for an official Adventist publication to provide insight into high-level church politics, but *Liberty* (January/February 1993) revealed what led to the passage of the abortion guidelines:

A surprise awaited delegates on Friday, October 9, when the CVHLC [Christian View of Human Life Committee] guidelines were brought to the floor [of the Annual Council, meeting last October in Maryland]. Former General Conference president Neal Wilson urged that no statement on abortion be made so close to the U.S. presidential election. In addition to being controversial, the proposed guidelines, he said, contained inconsistencies. The 1971 hospital policy should be retained. Wilson moved to cut off debate and send the guidelines back to CVHLC. Though vigorous, protests were few; Wilson’s motion carried.

However, Monday brought an unexpected development. General Conference president Robert S. Folkenberg took the unusual step of bringing the guidelines off the shelf and onto the floor. The church, he said, must take a stand on principle. He urged the delegates to reconsider their vote and approve the guidelines. After spirited discussion, including moves to jettison the

section containing the phrase “serious jeopardy to her health,” the guidelines were accepted, with only five dissenting.

The abortion statement that follows is the church’s first official position on abortion. The statement was purposely called “guidelines” in order to suggest their openness to revision and their non-dogmatic character. In keeping with this spirit of openness, the editors have invited three authors to share their critiques of these guidelines. To conclude this discussion section, the ethicist who drafted the guidelines presents a response to the two critiques. □

—The Editors

### FOR FURTHER STUDY

The editors recommend the recently released book *Abortion: Ethical Issues and Options* edited by David R. Larson. Published by Loma Linda University Center for Christian Bioethics, this book is a compilation of 16 essays by Seventh-day Adventist sociologists, ethicists, theologians, physicians, and lay persons. The book is distributed by the Review and Herald Publishing Association and is available in Adventist Book Centers. It is also available from:

**Abortion Book**  
Loma Linda University  
Center for Christian Bioethics  
Loma Linda, CA 92350

The cost is \$9.95 plus \$3.00 for shipping and handling. CA residents need to add 7.75% sales tax.



# Abortion Guidelines

Official Statement approved by the Annual Council  
October 1992

**MANY CONTEMPORARY SOCIETIES** have faced conflict over the morality of abortion. Such conflict also has affected large numbers within Christianity who want to accept responsibility for the protection of prenatal human life while also preserving the personal liberty of women. The need for guidelines has become evident, as the church attempts to follow Scripture, and to provide moral guidance while respecting individual conscience. Seventh-day Adventists want to relate to the question of abortion in ways that reveal faith in God as the Creator and Sustainer of all life and in ways that reflect Christian responsibility and freedom. Though honest differences on the question of abortion exist among Seventh-day Adventists, the following represents an attempt to provide guidelines on a number of principles and issues. The guidelines are based on broad biblical principles.

1. Prenatal human life is a magnificent gift of God. God's ideal for human beings affirms the sanctity of human life, in God's image, and requires respect for prenatal life. However, decisions about life must be made in the context of a fallen world. Abortion is never an action of little moral consequence. Thus prenatal life must not be thoughtlessly destroyed. Abortion should be performed only for the most serious reasons.

2. Abortion is one of the tragic dilemmas of human fallenness. The church should offer gracious support to those who personally face the decision concerning an abortion. Attitudes of condemnation are inappropriate in those who have accepted the gospel. Christians are commissioned to become a loving, caring community of faith that assists those in crisis as alternatives are considered.

3. In practical, tangible ways the church as a supportive community should express its commitment to the value of human life. These ways should include: (a) strengthening family relationships, (b) educating both genders concerning Christian principles of human sexuality, (c) emphasizing responsibility of both male and female for family planning, (d) calling both to be responsible for the consequences of behaviors that are inconsistent with Christian principles, (e) creating a safe climate for ongoing discussion of the moral questions associated with abortion,

(f) offering support and assistance to women who choose to complete crisis pregnancies, and (g) encouraging and assisting fathers to participate responsibly in the parenting of their children. The church also should commit itself to assist in alleviating the unfortunate social, economic, and psychological factors that may lead to abortion and to care redemptively for those suffering the consequences of individual decisions on this issue.

4. The church does not serve as conscience for individuals; however, it should provide moral guidance. Abortions for reasons of birth control, gender selection, or convenience are not condoned by the church. Women, at times however, may face exceptional circumstances that present serious moral or medical dilemmas, such as significant threats to the pregnant woman's life, serious jeopardy to her health, severe congenital defects carefully diagnosed in the fetus, and pregnancy resulting from rape or incest. The final decision whether to terminate the pregnancy should be made by the pregnant woman after appropriate consultation. She should be aided in her decision by accurate information, biblical principles, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, these decisions are best made within the context of healthy family relationships.

5. Christians acknowledge as first and foremost their accountability to God. They seek balance between the exercise of individual liberty and their accountability to the faith community and the larger society and its laws. They make their choices according to Scripture and the laws of God rather than the norms of society. Therefore, any attempts to coerce women either to remain pregnant or to terminate pregnancy should be rejected as infringements of personal freedom.

6. Church institutions should be provided with guidelines for developing their own institutional policies in harmony with this statement. Persons having a religious or ethical objection to abortion should not be required to participate in the performance of abortions.

7. Church members should be encouraged to participate in the ongoing consideration of their moral responsibilities with regard to abortion in light of the teaching of scripture. □

# A Higher Calling

By Ginger Hanks-Harwood

**THE SHAPERS OF THE ABORTION** statement have made a laudable attempt to formulate a set of guidelines informed by compassion and consistent with Adventist theology, while acknowledging the importance of individual decision-making.

The Guidelines helpfully highlight the principles of the sacredness of human life, individual moral agency, Christian accountability to God for personal choices and actions, and the church as a redemptive institution. The work recognizes the gap between God's intentions for humanity when the gift of procreation was given and the circumstances in which women find themselves today.

The Guidelines also contribute significantly to the vision of the church as a vehicle of grace for those struggling with or recovering from crisis pregnancies. Despite these strengths, the statement itself must be regarded as lacking in clarity and consistency, and fundamentally flawed by its silence on certain principles and issues. Further, the document must be viewed as potentially oppressive to women.

The Guidelines are of very little assistance to a woman who must make a decision considering abortion. The pertinent information is woven throughout the document rather than presented in a straightforward way. This makes the principles less accessible to a woman looking for guidance, obscures the ideological prejudices of the document, and shifts the center of the discussion away from the decision-maker.

I gleaned from the Guidelines the following concepts intended to assist a woman: (a) Prenatal life is a sacred, magnificent gift from God. (b) Abortion is never an action of little moral consequence. (c) "Abortion for birth control, gender selection or convenience are not condoned by the church" but "abortion should be performed only for the most serious reasons." (In other words, abortion is condemned.) (d) The woman's decision should not be coerced but should be guided by a commitment to biblical principles and the laws of God, her accountability to the faith community, and consultation with her family.

These statements need to be more closely examined and questioned. The only principle given to serve as a guideline for a woman trying to make her decision is the sacredness of life. The Guidelines do not invite a woman to consider the principle of stewardship in deciding whether to bring additional life into the world. Questions need to be asked: Does every decision for abortion have "moral

consequences"? Are the "exceptional circumstances" listed the only "most serious reasons"? On what basis may abortion be considered even in these cases, as no theological framework has been established that would provide for a different decision?

The Guidelines undermine a principle they wish to promote—individual moral agency. What liberty is the woman given to explore the moral aspects of the decision? The only choice offered a God-fearing woman is whether or not she will submit to God's pre-revealed will.

To speak generically of the necessity of conforming to the laws of God and accounting to the faith community may be misleading and destructive. The sanctity of life is not the only guideline for action given by God. To elevate the principles of divine law and accountability without speaking of grace does great disservice to women and the community. It shows little respect for the woman, little appreciation for the limitations of the human condition, and little understanding of the radical call to discipleship which allows us to make difficult decisions with confidence in God's redemptive presence and activity.

When the Guidelines speak of the church's response to abortion, their efforts fall short. While exhorted to be a caring community that assists those "in crisis as alternatives are being considered," little mention is made of the church's obligations to those same women after the decision has been made. Can the church support those who decide to terminate their pregnancies? What are the responsibilities of a church which encourages women to bring new life into the world when that new life will be neither welcomed nor supported by society?

The Guidelines appear most problematic when viewed as a whole, rather than considered point by point. They do not construct a vision of the faithful daughter of God as one who takes seriously her responsibility to God, to her body-temple, and to her community. They contain little to encourage women to view their own lives and bodies as sacred, nor do they clearly call for an ethic of reverence toward life which respects the lives of women who are already born. They do not acknowledge the unique role in the universe given to women by God: to be the ones who must say yes or no to new life.

The Christian woman does not find in the Guidelines strength for making difficult decisions. She does not find an invitation to testify to her community of God's presence with her in her journey and her struggles. When we have a statement which appreciates a woman's high and difficult calling, then we will be ready to say we have a useful set of abortion guidelines based on biblical principles. □

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# Myths and Maybes

By Millie and John Youngberg

**THE 1992 ANNUAL COUNCIL** vote taking a stand concerning abortion merits reflection. We praise God that the church has taken formal action, which is better than the lack of a statement which had left us rudderless. While the tenor of the document is positive, there are inconsistencies and loopholes.

On the positive side, the church did take principled action concerning the protection of human life at the end of the life cycle—euthanasia—and documented it well with a biblical rationale on the sanctity of life. Overt action cutting life short was rejected. A sick person is not justified in the “choice” of death by unnatural intervention. However, this same principle was not consistently carried over into the area of the beginning of the life cycle where people may choose to terminate human life.

It is not appropriate to terminate human life for those who have the power of choice. Is it appropriate to terminate human life for the helpless and innocent who have no choice—as in rape and incest? “Consistency, thou art a jewel.” Yet we prefer to see the church inconsistent when it is partly right, than to be consistently wrong.

## Myths

Many times we operate on the basis of myths that we would like to believe, even though hard evidence indicates otherwise. Here are myths relating to the abortion statement.

**Myth 1.** That this statement was based on Scripture. The lack of a strong biblical rationale was the main concern of the minority report. The majority report was perfected largely from the viewpoint of ethical considerations, and although it finally offered a series of Bible references like beads on a string, it was not born in Scripture.

**Myth 2.** That the statement represents a consensus. To charge a committee to come up with a consensus statement is illogical when members’ views are in opposition, and to a degree represent differing authority sources. Pastor Neal Wilson said it well: “Whose consensus?” Later the word “consensus” was removed from the final document.

**Myth 3.** That the statement reflected a consensus from the world field. The world field was asked to give input to the report; however, a large number of the world field reports had grave misgivings about the health clause and other areas of the report.

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**Myth 4.** That these resolutions are going to stop abortion on demand. When some individuals decide to have an abortion, they will obtain it under one category or another. Health and mental anguish may be invoked. However, let them go to non-SDA institutions. We need not comply with their demands.

**Myth 5.** That we have to make a statement which is applicable and practical to the whole unbelieving world. We cannot be all things to all people in all cultures. Our business is to restore the Edenic ideal among those who choose voluntarily to come out of the world.

**Myth 6.** That because a mother may feel deeply depressed over pregnancy at a given moment of time, that she will always feel that way should the little one live. Are we sure that we want to leave the health loophole, which will be construed to include mental health and severe depression? Feelings are so changeable. Things may look entirely different years later.

## Maybes

The Annual Council has taken a stand, but this still leaves unanswered questions:

**Maybe 1.** Maybe Adventists will take seriously the Council’s stand against abortion as birth control. Only time will tell. Only careful accounting, kept in our hospitals and honestly reported to the church, will tell.

**Maybe 2.** Maybe the Council’s resolutions are a first although imperfect step, and maybe the church will move toward a truly Bible-based, principled stand by the time of the 1995 General Conference.

**Maybe 3.** Maybe the one quarter of the delegates at the Annual Council who voted against the resolutions were right and maybe the three quarters who voted for the resolution were wrong. Truth isn’t always decided by a majority vote.

**Maybe 4.** Maybe the resolutions will not be implemented. Some institutions consistently boycotted the former “guidelines,” and maybe some will not suddenly have a change of heart at this time.

**Maybe 5.** Maybe some of the resolutions will be overturned (if not now, in the final judgment). “For every plant that my heavenly Father hath not planted will be plucked up.” We haven’t heard the last word on this yet, and we won’t until “the trumpet shall sound” at the final day. □

# Abortion: Consensus and Dialogue

By Gerald Winslow

WHEN THE GENERAL CONFERENCE appointed the Christian View of Human Life Commission, I wondered if such a group could accomplish its mandate. Issues such as euthanasia and abortion had produced deep rifts in cultures around the world. How could a group of about 30 church members, mostly men, resolve these issues? Against the odds, however, we met in hope.

A sign that such hope might be justified was the Commission's decision, at its first meeting, that at least half the membership must be women. The group knew that its work was bound to be incredible without appropriate gender balance. (Care was also taken to seek ethnic, racial, and international balance.) Another hopeful sign was the commitment of the Commission's chair, Albert Whiting, to invite participation from church members holding widely divergent views. A final reason for hope was the Commission's early agreement to aim for the widest possible discussion of our work, as it progressed, throughout the worldwide church.

The Commission's first topic was abortion. The accepted goal was to produce a "consensus statement" that would represent the best thinking of the group, based on our understanding of biblical principles. After more than three years of work and eight drafts of the statement, it was approved by the Commission with only one dissenting vote. The statement was referred to the General Conference officers and was adopted by a large majority of the participants at the church's Autumn Council in 1992.

I was surprised by the Autumn Council's adoption of the statement. The initially successful move to table the statement, when it was first presented to the Council, was what I had expected. I am not surprised, however, by vigorous criticism of the statement now that it has been adopted by the church.

Such criticism is presented by Professor Hanks-Harwood and the Professors Youngberg. Hanks-Harwood is unhappy with the statement because, in her view, it is not adequately sensitive to the needs of women who may face crisis pregnancies. She is concerned that some of the principles are aimed unfairly at pregnant women, effectively disrespect women's moral freedom, and ignore the complexity of decisions regarding procreation.

Hanks-Harwood's judgment will probably be a disappointment to women on the Commission who toiled to make the statement reflect the needs of women and who probably share many of Hanks-Harwood's general concerns about gender equity. Her charges of insensitivity to the personhood of women are difficult to understand when the Commission's statement on abortion makes it clear that the church should be committed to gracious

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support of women who face such difficult decisions. The statement also renounces all attempts to coerce women and is strongly supportive of their personal exercise of conscience. Nevertheless, the fact that a reader like Hanks-Harwood finds the statements to be inadequate is certain evidence that the discussion needs to continue.

The Youngbergs, on the other hand, are unhappy with the Commission's work because it is not adequately protective of the lives of fetuses. They find the statement on abortion not to be grounded in the Bible, not to be representative of the views of most church members, and not to be sufficiently rigorous in closing "loopholes" that could lead to "abortion on demand."

Millie Youngberg was the one member of the Commission who voted against the statement on abortion. One of her main objections was the fear that including threats to a woman's health as a possibly legitimate reason for abortion would open a "loophole" for any number of illicit abortions. She was not convinced by arguments of health care professionals on the Commission that it is difficult, and sometimes impossible, to distinguish threats to a pregnant woman's health from threats to her life.

She was also not apparently convinced by reminders from many Commission members that the Adventist commitment to care for whole people includes care for emotional as well as physical and spiritual health. Her concern about "loopholes," a word that shows up more than once in the Youngbergs' critique, appears to remain a major factor in their rejection of the Commission's work on abortion.

However, the talk about "loopholes" does provide an opportunity to think more clearly about distinct realms of moral authority. For example, it would be a great gain for clarity if discussion about abortion distinguished among (1) individual integrity, (2) institutional practice, and (3) social policy. The Commission's statement on abortion speaks to all three.

Is it coherent to call people to make personal decisions that protect God's gift of prenatal life, and ask Adventist health care institutions to do the same, while at the same time urging the state to permit wide latitude for the personal conscience of pregnant women? I believe so. It is, as I see it, the moral high ground, based on Scripture, and now adopted by our community of faith.

But I end this topic on this note: If we are wrong, if the Commission's statement on abortion is a poor reflection of Christian ethics, now is the time to offer correction. The final point in the statement invites all church members to join in the discussion. We should be grateful to Professor Hanks-Harwood and the Professors Youngberg for accepting this invitation. To enter such discussion on the side of biblical principles is to worship God with our ears and minds. □

# Let Freedom Ring

By James Walters

**ADVENTISM HAS SOME** wonderful doctrines. Among the most precious is religious liberty or freedom. This doctrine readily applies around the world, but the challenge is to allow freedom to inform life within the church.

A recent article in the *Adventist Review* celebrated the "surge" in religious liberty around the world. "Never has there been so much liberty in the world." Catholic Spain recently ruled that Adventist students throughout the nation possess the right to observe their seventh-day Sabbath rest. The article concludes by contrasting the "grandeur" of religious liberty with the "awfulness" of "ecclesiastical imperialism, and desolate religious uniformity enforced by government fiat."

Adventism founded its world-oriented *Liberty* magazine in 1906, a time when the entire denomination had fewer members than now reside in the greater Los Angeles area. Quite naturally this small church with unique doctrines sought religious freedom for its often-harassed Sabbath-keepers. But now integrity demands that this 7-million member denomination apply its doctrine of freedom to itself.

An integral aspect of religious liberty is freedom of information. Further, a free press is essential if Adventism is to remain true to itself—and if it is to retain the commitment of its increasingly educated membership. The denomination must recognize what the U. S. founders did in writing the First Amendment—that a free press is inseparable from religious liberty: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press." Church founder Ellen White gave high praise to America for its constitutional protection of "liberal" principles that are the "genius of its free institutions." To praise a nation for principles that the church does not also prize would be incongruous.

*Adventist Today* is designed to fill the need for a responsible journalistic publication in the denomination. The goal is to make good journalism a vital aspect of mainstream Adventism. *Adventist Today* will have the prerogatives and responsibilities of all good news organs in America—freedom, accuracy, and taste. And just as good journalism in the U.S. is rooted in American values, so *Adventist Today* works out of Adventism's core values.

The church needs a lively free press for at least four reasons:

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**An educated constituency.** Because the denomination has stressed education, a large professional membership demands that the church appeal to head as well as heart. The development of human minds "akin to that of the Creator." The unique human capacities are defined by Ellen White as "individuality—the power to think and to do." The spirit of such a statement is incompatible with the restriction of inquiry into and discussion of topics that are important to the church.

**Truthfulness.** The commandment "Thou shalt not bear false witness" has been drilled into the minds of every church school student. Now, adult members realize the many facets of truthfulness and honesty. In American society we have reasonable trust in the editorial judgments and the stories of a *Los Angeles Times* or *Washington Post*. What is read in a good Adventist news publication should be at least equally believable. It is regrettable that some "big news" items are passed in bits and pieces along the denominational grapevine rather than being openly dealt with by responsible writers.

**Maturity.** The so-called babybuster and babyboomer generations in the church show considerable cultural maturity. They see through and lament religious cliches and formal posturing. Young Adventist professionals and many older members desire straightforward talk about the church's core beliefs and their relevance to workaday life. Candor is a given; honest grappling with the church's and society's problems is important, and new perspectives on spirituality are yearned for.

**Church governance.** From its first *Church Manual* in the 1800's to the current one Adventism has claimed to be "representative" in church, governance. Hence, church members choose representatives to periodically convene in "constituency meetings." The representatives increasingly vote on items of major importance. However, their vote is only as good as their information on the issue at hand. Just as the free press performs an invaluable function in America, so a responsible journalistic publication in Adventism can help the general readership be more adequately informed about news and views on issues facing the denomination.

A variety of reasons can be cited for why Adventism may benefit from a free flow of information, but the most powerful impetus arises from Adventist history and our bedrock commitment to religious freedom.

## Letters to the Editor

ADVENTIST TODAY

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Letters for publication  
must be signed and brief.

Continued on the next page

# Seize the Day

By Kit Watts

AFTER WASHINGTON D.C.'s cloudiest, most dismal December on record, and with gray rain continuing right into January, one sunny day would have been a miracle. We had four in a row.

Workers erected miles of bleachers along the streets, white tents mushroomed across the mall, and friendly crowds, wearing backpacks and counting kids, flooded the metro stations. Bill Clinton was coming to town.

In fact, he was coming 'round the Virginia mountains. He may as well have been driving six white horses. Wending his way past graceful hills and white-fenced pastures, from Monticello through small towns filled with cheering crowds and along country lanes lined with waving people, he was coming.

And we all went out to meet him. From Maryland and D.C., from Arkansas and across the continent, from the prairies and the mountains, from the ocean white with foam...the bands were playing and the liberty bells were ringing. To our amazement, Bill and Hillary, Tipper and Al had connected with us.

And, despite ourselves, we all went out to meet him—even some who don't like Democrats, and some who don't like politics at all, and many, many who haven't waved a flag since the war in Vietnam drew the young to fill these same streets with chants of protest. We went out to be part of history on a sunny winter day, and perhaps, as Bill was soon to say, "to force the spring."

"It's the first squeak of patriotism I've felt in 30 years," a forty-something friend of mine admitted on the telephone. She's writing a doctoral dissertation and teaching on an Adventist campus.

Meanwhile, the media is making shredded cabbage of the new administration and its first missteps. Not even two weeks after Inauguration Day some snorted, "It's all down hill from here."

Having lived with disillusionment before, most baby-boomers I know remain cautious but less caustic than the press.

After all, Clinton has chosen a cabinet with more African-Americans and women than any two, maybe any ten, previous administrations put together. He has articulated a moderate position on abortion (available but rare, with a strong commitment to on-going education). He has moved to end discrimination against those who simply admit to the military that they are homosexual but who agree to live up to specified codes of behavior.

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He has launched a can-do task force to assess America's health care crisis and make proposals on how to meet the costs, giving Hillary a chance to show her stuff. Risky as that may be politically, and as unlikely as it is that anyone can unravel the nation from the terrible bind we're in, "Why not give her a shot at it?" we say. And yes, we hope the debt will come down and more jobs will open up.

"But even if he fails at all of this," my forty-something friend said, falling back to a worst-case scenario, "he's got the language right. And the language has power."

The ideals, the world view, the compassion, the equality, the inclusiveness we put into language can help change the world even when our own actions fall short. There's more to the phrase "In the beginning was the Word..." than most of us ever knew.

And so as Maya Angelou voiced it for all of us who today may also be "arriving on a nightmare and praying for a dream," as we inaugurate a new president and pass the torch to a new generation, "the horizon leans forward" and so do we. □

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## Let Freedom Ring—Continued

The forbears of Adventism were cast out of their home churches in the early 1840s. Why? They adhered to a foreign Advent truth that mainline congregations summarily rejected. Expulsion for belief in unpopular truth was traumatic. But it contributed to Adventism's profound respect for personal liberty. Later, an entire department of the church was established to promote the conviction that freedom of individual conscience is inviolable. The denomination's most visible contribution in this area is the respected journal *Liberty* with its half million subscribers.

Religious liberty became a cornerstone of Adventism due to others' religious intolerance. Because of early American colonists' experience of religious intolerance in the Old World, religious freedom became a central plank in American thinking. Ellen White saw providence at work in this new world of freedom: "The fundamental principle of Roger Williams' colony was that every man [and woman] should have liberty to worship God according to the light of his [or her] own conscience."

As an American denomination Adventism has long praised the U.S. constitution statement of religious liberty. Increasingly throughout the world the church has gained its own right to religious liberty. The challenge is for our denomination to now see that freedom of speech and information—the underpinnings of religious liberty—characterize our own life together. □

# A Joyful Moan

By Alden Thompson

**"THE PEOPLE COULD NOT** distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard afar" (Ezra 3:13, RSV).

"We wept, and wept, till the day dawn," Hiram Edison recalled.

For those of us still on earth some 150 years later, what is the meaning of his wrenching memory of October 23, 1844? From wilderness enclaves to the halls of academia, the question persists, driven by powerful emotions: hope, deep longing, fear, embarrassment. And now a new Adventist publication!

A story in Scripture matches our mood. Let's listen.

Excitement rippled through the Jewish community in Babylon. Rumor had it that Cyrus, the new Persian emperor, would let the Jews go home.

Could it be true? Or was it all a cruel hoax?

Some shrugged; others sneered. Still others, with glistening eyes, pleaded with God to make the rumor true.

And true it was.

Cyrus' decree was a generous one, too. He wasn't just sending the Jews back home, he was commanding them to rebuild the temple. That's right. He commanded them to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

And there was more. He was asking their neighbors to help with money, material, domestic animals—even free-will offerings for the house of Israel's God. God had heard the prayers of the saints; now the saints responded to the stirrings of the Spirit.

Whether driven by the love of God or the fear of Cyrus, gifts poured in: silver goblets, gold, choice merchandise, animals. Finally, as the crowning gesture of the king's good will, the royal treasurer brought out the sacred vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had snatched from Yahweh's temple in Jerusalem. Carefully he counted them out to Sheshbazzar of the tribe of Judah: 5,469 vessels altogether. God was smiling on His people.

The handy band of loyalists struck out across the desert: 42,360 plus 7,373 servants and 200 male and female singers. The numbers were impressive—unless one thought

of the thousands of Jews who decided they liked it better in Babylon after all. There were those who shrugged or sneered, the ones untouched by the moving of the Spirit.

But renewal doesn't have to start big. When the Spirit moves, It moves with those who are moved.

Arriving in Jerusalem, the people went straight to the temple ruins. They gave gifts of gold and silver and garments to the priests. They built an altar. They kept the Feast of Booths. Kneeling in the rubble of the old, they dreamed of the new, a new temple for the King of the universe.

The returned exiles rolled up their tunics and set to work. Good money went to masons and carpenters; cedars came from Lebanon. Yahweh would have a temple in Jerusalem again.

Thirteen months later the exiles laid the first new stone at the old temple site. As the foundation neared completion, a sense of exhilaration filled the air. A new temple was the goal. But after 50 years with no temple at all, just a new foundation was cause for joy. There would be a feast.

The priests and Levites did it up right. Vestments. Trumpets. Cymbals. "Yahweh is good," sang the people, "for his steadfast love endures forever." Such fun. Such joy. The hills of Jerusalem pricked up their ears and began to sing once again.

But it was a curious celebration. Sobs and moans punctuated the shouts of joy. The broken hearts were the old ones, the ones that remembered Solomon's magnificence, the hearts that almost died when the temple fell, then longed for years to see it rise again.

These faithful old saints wept when they saw the new foundation. This renewal of their dreams was a mere cottage, not a palace. They wept.

But the moans of the old could not restrain the young. This was their hope, their future. They shouted for joy. The weeping and the joy mingled together in one massive din, not a death rattle, but an unmistakable sign of resurrection and life.

In the turmoil of our life, some moments of starting again are like that. A renewed foundation rises from the rubble of the old—very different, yet much the same. Tears of apprehension blend with tears of joy. The result is a mortar blessed by God, bonding together His house of faith and our hope. □

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## Mission Statement & Editorial Policy

It is the mission and objective of *ADVENTIST TODAY* to provide a medium of communication that will assist thoughtful Seventh-day Adventists in North America in forming accurate, balanced opinions with respect to current events and issues within the church.

*ADVENTIST TODAY* will focus on information not otherwise readily available, accurately, responsibly, and in a non-partisan way dedicated to the well-being of the church and the fulfillment of its mission. As an independent publication it will not be under obligation to any person, special interest, or church entity.

*ADVENTIST TODAY* will endeavor to distinguish between news and opinion. Like everyone else in the church, writers and editors are entitled to their opinions. However, they will be responsible personally for what they write. The editors purpose to exercise reasonable editorial judgment in the selection of writers who will report the news accurately, fairly, and responsibly. We expect those who write for *ADVENTIST TODAY* to be open and straightforward and to write with candor—to tell it like it is but always in harmony with Christian principles. If the church is to prosper, it is imperative that we face up to reality.

Where events and issues involve significant differences of opinion, *ADVENTIST TODAY* will invite the proponents of the major points of view to present their differing perspectives. The first step in resolving differences is to establish the facts, to provide each side an opportunity to present its understanding of the facts, and for each to listen attentively and perceptively to the other.

It is a major objective of *ADVENTIST TODAY* to provide thoughtful church members in North America with basic information on all sides of matters of interest to the church at large.

In the certain knowledge that differences of opinion, even on matters of major importance, need not escalate into barriers between mature members of the body of Christ, let us express ourselves honestly and constructively. In dialogue with one another we must speak plainly lest we be misunderstood, but we can do so with respect for one another. We must listen as attentively and perceptively as we want others to listen to us. The tree of silence, be it voluntary or imposed, never bears the fruit of unity and peace.

In brief, *ADVENTIST TODAY* aspires to provide a place where church members and leaders alike can meet together on neutral ground as friends, share information, express their convictions, their concerns, and their hopes for the church constructively, think things through together, and develop a more mature consensus in areas of church life that affect all of us in one way or another.

To this end the editors of *ADVENTIST TODAY* dedicate themselves and this publication, which we hope, with God's blessing, will make a positive, important, and valuable contribution to the church. □

**This is a complimentary  
issue of *Adventist Today*.  
The editors hope you find it  
spiritually and intellectually  
stimulating and will choose  
to subscribe.**

***Adventist Today***

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