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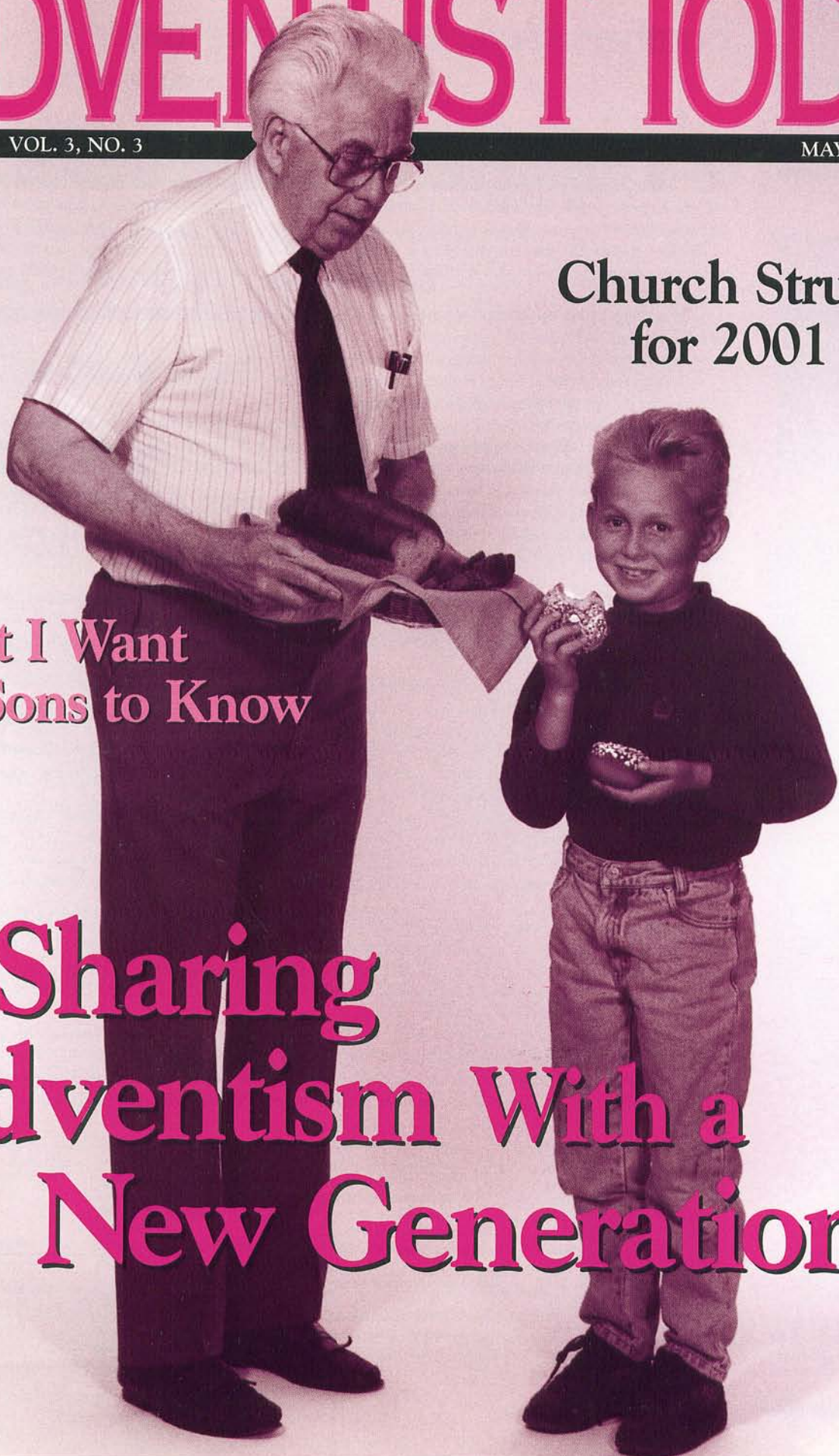
VOL. 3, NO. 3

MAY • JUNE 1995

**Church Structure
for 2001**

**What I Want
My Sons to Know**

**Sharing
Adventism With a
New Generation**



Southern Style Isn't for Everyone

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An American chef is preparing dinner when his maitre d' bursts in shouting that the restaurant is swamped with ethnic peoples—and even the nationals are now discontent. The South Americans demand enchiladas. Italians want spumoni, the Russians seek their borsch, the Danish request teacakes and the Armenians yell for shish kabobs. Even the Americans are rejecting southern-style vegetables and are calling for fresh California cuisine. What's a chef to do?

What's a General Conference president to do? For this is Robert Folkenberg's challenge, except the setting is the burgeoning Adventist family—not an American restaurant. The church has faced challenges before but never on such a grand scale:

—Ninety percent of membership is beyond US borders, the vast majority in developing countries with a unique blend of national identities and simple faith.

—Church growth is stagnant among Caucasians in the developed world.

—Young professionals in North America are losing confidence in the church hierarchy, and those who remain active in the church are increasingly selective in their giving.

—Members' agendas are in conflict: higher socio-economic groups demand social justice within the church (women's ordination, genuine representation in church elections); lower strata groups emphasize evangelism.

Adventism can lament its challenges as portents of doom, or the church can celebrate its challenges as signs of growth and maturity. I choose the latter.

Please allow me a personal analogy. I was happy to baptize my two teenage daughters into the Adventist church. Now I am gratified as they think through and nuance their personal faiths in ways that are a bit different from mine, but ways that are authentically their own. Indeed, for them to become mere Adventist "ditto-heads" would be a travesty.

A healthy family is genuinely interdependent, with parents inspiring responsible love, deserved loyalty and critical thinking. (On the other hand, the dysfunctional family is co-dependent on an authority figure.) From this perspective the challenges facing the Adventist world church are exciting, for they concern a robust church family that simply has growing pains:

—The "children" are maturing at varying rates.

—The kids are implementing their instruction well: do not be "mere reflectors" of others' thoughts.

—The "parents" have never been through this process before and aren't entirely sure of themselves.

At this difficult and promising time for the Adventist family, charity toward one another is needed. No name calling. No unfounded questioning of others' motives. This is a time for understanding of our diverse cultures and personalities, our different educational backgrounds and spiritual needs.

As our representatives gather at Utrecht for the quinquennial General Conference session, we can have honest and appreciative interaction, or we can simply go through the motions. Of course, we will praise God for the new converts who have joined this church family during the last five years. But we will also speak of how we order our life together—and whether greater autonomy should be granted divisions of the church to decide matters such as gender inclusiveness in ministry.

Appropriately in this issue, coinciding with the GC session, we have complementary focus sections: passing on the Adventist torch and structural needs facing Adventism.

Torch passing: A 12-year old and a grad student tell us what they think and feel about their church. Youth pastors and family counselors see troubled Adventist homes and churches as difficulties. Veteran chaplain Steve Daily invites us to ignite our torches with the Light of the World.

Structure building: Church historian George Knight and editor Raymond Cottrell—writing without collaboration—question Adventism's hierarchical organization as counterproductive and call for restructuring.

A strikingly similar theme emerges from both focus sections: Parents and church leaders, lighten up the control, and your families will do quite well, thanks. Don't force Southern-style cooking on all God's children.

Jim Walters



Jim Walters teaches Christian ethics at Loma Linda University. He is currently completing two books: *What Is a Person?—Brain Function and Moral Status* and *Rationing Health Care: Ethics and Aging*.

Cover:

How do you pass on your understanding of the "Bread of Life" to the next generation? We focus on this and more beginning on page four.

Photo: Bob Wheeler

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A Sad and Costly Omission

by Cheri Lynn Gregory



Cheri Gregory is a former junior high teacher in Southern California, currently putting most of her energies into raising two toddlers, leading parenting classes in her community, hosting a forum for America OnLine, and (occasionally!) writing.

Each Sabbath morning, I look for someone. Someone I've probably never met, but someone I hope will come. I look for another Generation Xer, someone "like me," post-college, pre-midlife, possibly with young children. Occasionally, this "someone" comes, a visitor, a once-a-month member. But most Sabbaths, I sit alone in the back, trying to keep my toddlers quiet, wishing for some company.

I know where many of them are. Some are enjoying their "freedom" from the bondage and oppression of the church of their youth. Some are so bitter they refuse to enter the doors of an Adventist church ever again. Some have simply drifted into mainstream American culture and don't feel "at home" in church any more. A few have found meaningful spiritual experience within another denomination.

And then there are the teenagers I teach, and those I watch slip out the back of church right after opening hymn. By nature, they want to belong, to be included, to be part of a cause. Some are active in their local churches—respected, needed, involved as much as many adults. Most, however, feel unneeded in their families and church communities. They are trapped in an artificial time warp between childhood and full adulthood, hungry for control and influence, but lacking maturity and understanding. They

become easy prey for an absorbing youth culture which drains them, and the church, of their creativity, sensitivity, commitment, and leadership.

What has happened to these two generations? My own is glaringly absent; the upcoming one is in the process of disappearing, too. Why are our traditional methods not working as well as they used to? Where are we going wrong?


Valuegenesis gave us many answers to this question. It showed us our strengths and weaknesses as families, schools, and congregations. Unfortunately, we have frequently used the data gleaned to pass the blame—"parents aren't doing their jobs . . . teachers don't care enough . . . congregations are too cold . . ." And in passing around the blame, we miss the call to individual responsibility.

We should be dismayed that fewer than 22 percent of our youth stated that they regularly discuss their faith with any adult—mother, father, teacher, or church member. In the process of passing on a belief system, we are not sharing our personal faith with our own children or encouraging them to share theirs with us. This is a sad, and costly, omission.

We take great pride in being an intellectual church. Correct knowledge and doctrine are vital to us. And our behavioral emphasis is a natural outgrowth. After all, if we have the right information, we'd better act on it. But as these two elements—knowledge and behavior—are emphasized to the exclusion of personal spirituality, then our message loses its relevance. Knowledge and behavior alone cannot build vital faith, loyalty to the church, or commitment to spiritual growth.

It is obvious that our church is in crisis; we're losing the younger generations at an alarming rate. But as we plan large-scale programs for the schools, churches, and conferences to try to reclaim our children (plans that other people will likely implement) let's not forget what we, ourselves, can do.

We each have a story to share, and there are plenty of youth who, once they feel safe, will listen and tell their own. They crave honesty and openness; they need the personal element in addition to the intellectual and behavioral. There is a real call to local "missions"—local schools, Sabbath School divisions, homes—that all need "witnesses," those who will simply tell what God has done and is doing in their lives.

We can "pass on" a degree of knowledge and behavior, but experience cannot be transferred. Our children must develop their own spiritual lives, have their own relationships with God. But even if experience cannot be transferred, it can be shared. And in sharing our own experiences, we pass on the vital spark from our lives to the next generations. 

Clasping Hands



I remember scooting and sliding my six-year-old body into the corner of our familiar oak pew. I liked my corner spot best because there was room to stretch; I could swing my arms and legs out into the aisle, and no one would be ruffled or annoyed by my quiet games. Mom and Jon, my little brother, sat to my right. Jon had plastered his Bible felts over several feet of the pew. At times I was tempted to play with him, to join in his curious creations, but I was six years old and beyond his more juvenile stage in life. I could be satisfied with simpler things like the tradition and comfort of my private corner niche.

I rested my head against the rigid oak walls, but usually not for long, as the hard wood always left me feeling sort of achy and uncomfortable. I watched a man across the aisle who sat with his arm resting lightly over the back of his pew, and in a cavalier attempt to appear mature and adult, I flung my own arm up and almost over the lofty wall behind me. Unfortunately, my awkward, child-sized hurls didn't quite land me the grown-up effect I sought so zealously, and so I surrendered deeper into the haven of my corner.

During these fidgety fits and important technical adjustments, Dad would step onto the platform and I'd forget my little pains—the unaccommodating pews, the temptation of the felts, everything—for that moment. When he preached I didn't really understand all of his words (except the stories, of course), but I knew he was smart and real and loving, so his words to me were golden. Sometimes his voice would build and build, ardent in its tone, and I would sit in awe, engrossed by his earnestness and his passion for God. I saw that everyone (except a sleeper or two) listened to him, and they were moved. And it made me proud. Proud to be his daughter, to be close to this handsome, powerful man.

That's why I sat on the aisle, really. To be closer to him when he walked by during the closing hymn. It

was our special tradition every Sabbath. When he breezed by the pew, we would briefly clasp hands. My tiny fingers would be encased in warmth and strength for just a few seconds, and I savored that gift of affection and loving recognition. But during precious moments like this one, I realized something. I became aware, perhaps only subconsciously, of the eyes of the congregation. I sensed them watching me.

At six, I couldn't have recognized what these eyes were to mean to me later—16 years later—as I walked alone into a very similar setting, but one which felt strangely familiar. So I hadn't been to church for awhile, maybe a month or two. It wasn't that I despised church, like many of my Adventist (or should I say "former" Adventist) friends. In fact, I missed it somewhat—particularly the security of the Sabbath/church tradition. It reminded me of Dad, and with my parents thousands of miles away and my brother Jon at another Adventist university, my life really lacked a sense of connectedness.

College life felt lonely at times, and I suppose I walked into early service that morning searching for a connection, for something warm and familiar. Five minutes late, I stepped into the sanctuary, edging my way toward the back row. My heels clanked offensively against the hard stone floor, and several faces turned and stared with hints of disapproval. When I slid into the pew, a woman across the row eked out a strained smile as she observed me. Her eyes were lifeless. The whole place felt flat, dead, stale. Voices droned through the responsive reading in monotone, and the dry solemnity of the process made me feel uptight. But I still wanted to fit in; I didn't want anyone to notice that I was different (or that I hadn't been to church in months). So I hid my discomfort in the order of the service: reading satisfactorily, kneeling appropriately, singing quietly. Yet through my contrived attempts to appear as if I belonged, my self-consciousness only intensified.

by Amy Eva



Amy Eva is managing editor of the *Criterion*, La Sierra University's student newspaper, and *Musings*, LSU's creative writing journal. She also teaches freshman composition at LSU, where she just completed her M.A. in English.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Roy Tinker is a 12-year-old sixth grader at Loma Linda Elementary who plans to be either an electrical or aeronautical engineer. He plays the piano and was a winner in the Riverside district Junior Bach Festival this spring.

What My Parents Have Taught Me About God and the Church

by Roy Tinker

I have learned from my parents that God is infinite and is love. He wanted to create a planet with people made in his image and likeness to fellowship with him. However, they sinned so he couldn't do that yet, it was delayed. He loved them so much that he—a God, actually died for something he had created, so they could live.

He created everything, including the earth, which he created in six days, and on the seventh he rested and called it a day of rest for humans. It was a day to rest from the work done during the week, and a day to learn more about and celebrate the wonderful relationship with God. It was set aside as a day to fellowship with God also.

The church today is divided into several groups, some who claim to serve God, and some who really serve God. It really doesn't matter what they believe in, as far as small details, as long as they love and serve God.

The Bible is God's holy word, and our manuscript or owner's manual for life. My parents have taught me things from the Bible, such as the golden rule and the ten commandments. I learned that if I apply them to my life, my life will be better and I will be happier.

I have learned the importance of taking care of others and that what I do affects millions of people, whether it be for the good or the bad. If I criticize someone, that criticism is applicable to myself.

I have learned the dangers of evil, and what Satan's tools are for getting people trapped. I have learned to stay away from them.

I learned that I can ask God anytime I want to help me, or I can just talk to him. He will come soon and take us all to heaven to fellowship with him. There we will live forever. God will change the world to what it was before, and God's people will live happily ever after in that wonderful paradise.

Clasping Hands

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

After just a few brief months of absence, I had become estranged, alien to this setting. Under a sober guise, I mentally tumbled through the sins of the past months. I had changed so much in such a short time; could they see right through me? Relatively speaking, my so-called Adventist "rebellion" wasn't worth the guilt, yet it crept over me and nestled itself

into my mind for the rest of the service. I didn't belong here. I couldn't even look up now, and I sat staring at my fingers fumbling with the bulletin, wondering why I felt so alienated. No one was watching me now, yet I sensed critical eyes. I had sensed them for years.

Glancing up quickly, I noticed that among this scattered group of churchgoers, I was probably the only one there under 40. None of my friends found any interest in this scene. And no wonder . . . it resonated

with coldness and artificiality. And perhaps my friends had vaguely sensed the same eyes that burdened me. Through the years I had allowed the weight of those eyes to undermine my worth, to chastise legitimate growth and experience, to leave me feeling inadequate and unacceptable. That day in church, I wanted to feel liberated from those eyes, to clasp His hand in my own way, from my own corner niche, and to savor those moments freely, without inhibition, in the presence of friends.

What I Want My Sons to Know

About God

by Colleen Moore Tinker



Colleen Moore Tinker is a former academy English and music teacher. She is the stepmother of 8-year-old Ray and 12-year-old Roy, is writer and editor for a publishing/advertising business she and her husband operate, and she teaches a Sabbath School class.

My childhood as a third-generation Adventist felt secure and predictable. I was aware of contradictions in my church; but because my parents had been willing to question authority, I felt comfortable existing in the church without agreeing with every point or interpretation of doctrine. I developed a strong emotional attachment to Adventism. I was a "good girl." I liked playing my flute and the piano for church. I liked being a leader among my peers. I liked having the respect of my parents' friends.

As an adult, I never expected to experience the soul-searching that resulted from my divorce. Divorce was anathema. It had no place in the life of a good girl. It certainly had no place in what had come to be my identity as a teacher and role model.

Further, I certainly never expected the shock waves that assaulted my attachment to Adventism when I remarried. Naively, my new husband and I were surprised at the swell of resistance we met from some (though certainly not all) of our fellow Adventists. We wanted to continue to be actively involved in our church, but we kept bumping into hidden hostility.

We became very clear in our individual convictions that our first responsibility was to be right with God and to make our relationships with Jesus our most important commitments. We determined that no one else could evaluate our intimacy with Christ, and no fellow members' misunderstanding would push us from the church we still loved in spite of its flaws.

Our experiences of divorce and remarriage have shaped what we teach our sons. During my six years as a stepmother, I have discovered that the most basic certainty I can pass on is that Jesus has chosen each of our boys because he loves them. No matter what anxieties and pain and abandonment they may feel, Jesus never leaves them. Even when they feel alone, he is there, and they can talk to him.

Of course we want our boys to grow up Adventist,

but truth to tell, if the day ever came when they had to choose between the church and Jesus, I hope their decisions would be swift and certain: Jesus. In our nightly worships with our sons we read the Bible and talk about what we read. We talk about the church, and we tell them that they must evaluate everything they hear in the light of the Bible.

We also talk about the Sabbath. We tell them that many have forgotten that it is perhaps the most amazing gift besides salvation that God has given us. Instead of being a test of readiness for heaven, it is a gift of time. It is a day when Jesus has promised us a special blessing if we will meet him then. It is a time when we can celebrate Jesus' invitation to share his rest, because his work for us is done. It is a day when we can nurture our relationships. It is a day when we turn off our computers (we are a fully wired, four-computer family) not because computers are secular, but because they are consuming and isolating. Some Sabbaths we have friends over for dinner. Some Sabbaths we pack our two shelties and collie into the back of the station wagon and head for a hike in the hills, sometimes experiencing serendipity with finds like bear or mountain lion tracks in the snow-soaked mud.

Most importantly, we talk about salvation. Our deepest wish for our sons is that they grow up believing that Jesus lived and died and rose for them. We want them to internalize the truth that his immeasurable gift is theirs if they choose to believe and to relate to him.

We want our sons to grow up being unafraid to question. As they advance in school and become exposed to diverse scientific and theological theories, we want them to be able to evaluate each one with open minds that are rooted in a bedrock of conviction that God is real, God is truth, and God is love.

Only the Holy Spirit can change a boy into a man of integrity. If our sons grow up with compassionate hearts, open minds, and spirits receptive to truth, we will be grateful.



Striving, Grasping, Worrying, Overprotecting and Driving Young People to *destruction*

the intriguing title *Fly Fishing Through the Midlife Crisis* caught my eye as I was browsing through a bookstore a few months ago. I know nothing about fly fishing, but I know something about midlife crises! By the time I had scanned the first three or four pages, I was hooked. My husband's upcoming birthday provided me with an excuse to purchase the book so I could read it.

Before I had finished the first chapter, I discovered a profound spiritual truth that explained something Paul and I had been trying to understand for years: why so many Adventist young people become alienated from family, church, and God. The last place I expected to find the answer to such a nagging question was in a book about fly fishing!

The first time we discussed this issue in depth was in 1965, when Paul and I and our eldest son, who was two years old at the time, were driving along the Blue Ridge Parkway en route to Hidden Valley Youth Camp, where Paul Sr. was to be chaplain for the summer and Paul Jr. was to become supervisor of the sandbox. As we considered the future of our family and what we hoped to accomplish in our ministry, we got into a philosophical discussion about the problems facing young people reared in the church.

Paul said he wished we could become experts on the subject. Although we were unaware of it at the

by Carol Cannon



Carol and Paul Cannon are founders and directors of The Bridge, a residential treatment program in Bowling Green, Kentucky, for adults with chemical and codependency addictions. They have been involved in adolescent, family, and substance abuse counseling for over 25 years.

time, this was to become our life script. I didn't recall that particular conversation until I picked up the book about fly fishing, but we did pursue our dream. In the last 20 years, we have spent up to eight hours a day listening to disillusioned Adventist young people talk about their struggles. We know today that they are not an aberration. Their problems are real.

The Church's Midlife Crisis

Typically, a midlife crisis gives time to reflect, to reassess what we doing and why, to examine our course, and to redirect our energies. It can be the touch point for change and renewal.

In the process of such an evaluation, Paul and I have come to some painful realizations about the relationship between us and the young people we care about, especially those referred to as lost sheep. We have taken a candid look at the way we as a church respond to such individuals. We have asked ourselves if our church is a safe place for sinners.

The Mote-and-Beam Syndrome

The older generation spends a fair amount of time speculating about the young—their deteriorating values, their lack of interest in spiritual things, etc. The implication is that the youth are the problem. One young man was approached by a member who

expressed concern that the young man's wife wasn't coming to church anymore. In a slightly chiding manner, the member suggested that if she would just get more involved, she would probably find church more meaningful. In other words, if she's not coming to church, it's because something is wrong with her. She, not the church, is at fault.

While we have no desire to chastise ourselves or anyone else, we think it is a mistake to focus our attention on what is wrong with young people who are leaving the church, rather than on what we are doing to push them out of our lives. It's always easier to do someone else's moral inventory instead of our own. We need to study our motives. Are we interested in correcting our own behavior, or do we just want to control others?

In recent years, the church has dedicated a significant amount of time, money, and effort to learning why our young people are abandoning their values, how we as adults are contributing to this ethical deterioration, and what we can do to reverse the trend. While the results of such research are informative, some of us are fearful that if the data gathered is simply used to guide us in controlling young people better, we may defeat our own purpose. If we merely want to become more effective in manipulating their lives to our satisfaction, we will push them even further away.

It is tempting to believe that if we try harder or better, we will succeed in saving our youth. What if they don't want to be saved on our terms? As one young man said about a church member who told him she would be praying for him, "I wish she'd quit praying for me and just accept me."

When Knowing Better Isn't Enough

On numerous occasions, we have heard puzzled parents say, "I don't understand why my child is doing such-and-such. He knows better." Why do our children violate deeply-held parental beliefs and values? Why do they get in trouble? Why do they leave the church? Is it because we aren't teaching them the right things? Is it because our methods are wrong? Or is it because of our inconsistencies?

What do we mean when we say that our children know better? What do they know? They know what the church requires. They know what their parents demand. And they know what society expects. What else might they know? They might know fear of impending doom, based on our eschatology. Many know the pain of loss—loss of nurturance from parents who are preoccupied with their own righteous pursuits. Some are angry because they have suffered spiritual abuse at the hands of authority figures who batter them with scripture

We have asked
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and Spirit of Prophecy in order to force conformity.

When we think we're teaching our children to obey Jesus, they may be learning to distrust him. "You make Jesus sad when you do such-and-such," children are regularly reminded. If a child can actually control God's mood, what does that say about God?

When we think we're teaching them to appreciate his death on the cross, they may be acquiring a distaste for everything it represents: "You deserved to die for your sins, boys and girls, but Jesus died for you. Isn't that wonderful?" Can an innocent three-year-old comprehend what he or she has done to deserve death?

When we think we're teaching our children to look forward to eternity, they may be learning to overlook the beauty of the moment. When we think we're teaching them high ideals, they may be learning low self-worth and fear of failure. When we think we're teaching them selflessness, they may be learning boundary-lessness.

When we think we're teaching them to focus on the needs of others, they may be learning not to practice healthy self-care. When we think we're showing them how to work, they may be learning that they are only valued for what they do. And when we demand perfection of them, they may be learning to abuse themselves for our approval. As one young woman said, "We're tired of being perfect. We just want to be normal."

Trying Too Hard to Do the Right Thing

If anything, the average Adventist parent tries too hard to do the right thing! To the extent that we are obsessed with saving our children, we become so single-minded in our approach to life that our children are robbed of the opportunity to achieve healthy balance and moderation.

While we are intent on making ourselves look good, making our families look good, making the church or school look good, even making God look good, our lives and the lives of our children are circumscribed. In spite of our efforts to create an ideal environment, our children develop serious problems.

Extreme behavior is extreme behavior, even if it is built around God and church. If temperance in all things is the biblical ideal, then we may need to learn to practice moderation in the way we exercise our faith and go about winning our children to it.

We probably don't need to know how to control our children better. We need to learn how to let them go.

A Parental Lament

The stunned voices on the other end of the line were the most heart-rending sound one could imagine. We've heard it many times: parents, numb with shock, calling at three o'clock in the morning, agonizing over the news that their son or daughter just overdosed on cocaine. "We never dreamed he/she was on drugs. Where did we go wrong?"

Parents who leave no stone unturned, who read all the books and follow all the rules, who are as conscientious in their child-rearing practices and as dedicated to God and the church as possible, are totally bewildered when their children get in trouble. Somehow, their best efforts fail.

We approach the next statement with caution, because many precious young people have died from drug overdoses and other drug or alcohol-related tragedies. We have lost loved ones in this manner, and we know the pain and guilt that a family suffers. And yet we must face the fact that our best efforts have gotten us exactly where we are today. Our best efforts have failed. Sadly, it may be our very striving, grasping, worrying and overprotecting that drives young people to self-destructive behavior.

Trying harder is not the answer. Doing it better is not the answer. Accepting our powerlessness is! The statement that we are powerless is not an indictment. It is an acknowledgment of reality. We cannot hold our children hostage. We cannot control their destinies. To the extent that we insist on doing God's job for him, we will continue to fail.

But it's difficult to surrender. Instead, we worry, we pray, we weep, we scold and shame. We do the same things over and over, expecting different results. We are like addicts who are out of control, spinning our wheels in the sand, digging ourselves in deeper and deeper when we simply need to stop. To surrender is to stop spinning our wheels. This does not equate with giving up. It just means letting go—letting go and letting God.

Help for Hurting Families

In the last 20 years, a limited number of services for Adventist families in crisis have come into existence. Funding for these organizations has been provided by the Association of Adventist Laymen's Services and Industries, Maranatha Volunteers International, and other caring leaders and members who have a burden for the young. To the best of our knowledge, these programs are staffed by Adventists who are, in most cases, professionally trained. Many of these agencies can be accessed through Adventist Self-supporting Industries, which has a representative in every local conference office. Some Adventist

Health Care System hospitals offer counseling and referral services as well.

An increasing number of Adventist families in crisis are finding support and encouragement through 12-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous and Alanon. These programs are spiritual, helpful, and harmonious with our Christian beliefs.

How to Catch Fish

We as a church have always considered ourselves fishers of men and women. But we have lost many of our own. In some ways, we are like a dysfunctional, neglectful family whose children suffer alone. We practice behaviors like workaholicism, perfectionism, control, blaming, shaming, scapegoating, caretaking, and rescuing addictively. And then we're surprised when our children develop problems. In our delusion and denial, we think we are rich and increased with goods when in reality we are wretched, poor, blind, and naked.

We need to stop trying to "fix" our young people. We need to stop trying to manage their lives and get lives of our own! We've got enough to do just addressing our own compulsions and obsessions. Experience has shown that if we will work on improving ourselves, our healthier actions will speak more eloquently than our words ever could.

It may be our very drivenness, our very intensity that is driving young people away. If it takes a savior to save sinners, then we need to remember who the Savior is. Perhaps the answer to the question of how to save Adventist young people is to stop trying to find the answer. We need to let go and let God, stop moving the chess pieces around, stop managing, refrain from shaming, and resign from the role of savior. Herein lies the spiritual lesson we learned from the book about fly fishing:

The author, Howell Raines, and a friend were grinding along a gravel road in the Blue Ridge Mountains in a loose-jointed old Chevy on their way to the Rapidan River to fish. Raines' companion, a man given to pronouncements, was pontificating about the beautiful trout that inhabit the river when he made this statement, which Raines calls the Rapidan Paradox: "These brook trout will strike any fly you present, provided you don't get close enough to present it."

This means that even though the fish are hungry, they are skittish. "To achieve mastery," Raines says, "is to rise above the need to catch fish." If we really want to save our children, if we really want to make the church safe for lost sheep and other assorted sinners, we may need to take a lesson from this. To achieve mastery is to rise above the need to control those we love.

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OLD TORCH, New Fire

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." JOHN 8:12 NRSV

"I have come to set fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled." LUKE 12:49 NEB

"A bright cloud overshadowed them. . . . When they looked up, they saw no one but Jesus himself." MATT 17:5,8

Torches can be dangerous things. They are typically very visible at Ku Klux Klan rallies, they have been used historically to burn prophets and martyrs at the stake, and Judas once used one to lead an angry mob to Gethsemane to betray the Son of God. In the wrong hands torches start unwanted fires, they hurt people, and they set off fire alarms. I once saw a dramatic church play unravel because a live torch being used in the play set off the church fire alarm. But torches can also be great symbols of hope, unity, and joy. The Olympic torch has become just such a symbol as it is passed from nation to nation and finally used to signal the beginning of the Olympic games every four years.

The church has also used the word "torch" to symbolize its message, or gospel, that is to be passed from generation to generation. Roger Dudley, author of the book *Passing on the Torch*, has written a great deal about the challenges we face as Adventists trying to ensure that the torch will be safely and effectively passed to our younger generations. He documents the increasing numbers of young people who leave the church because they don't want to take the torch from their elders, or who feel that the torch has lost so much of its fire that it must be reignited if they are to grasp it with any enthusiasm.

Adventists of all stripes today seem to agree that our North American church is facing the greatest identity crisis in its history. From a historical perspective, this crisis is developmentally or sociologically normal and is to be expected. Just as Lutheranism faced a major crisis three generations after the death of its founder, Martin Luther, and

by Steve Daily



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Methodism faced a major crisis three generations after the death of its founder, John Wesley, so Adventism is engaged in a major crisis four generations after the death of its most influential figure, Ellen White. This crisis revolves around groups that have emerged in the church with three very different visions of what God has called us to be as Adventists.

1. "Historical Adventists" believe that the torch is fading fast in the church today because we have "wandered away from the Ellen White blueprint," dropped our standards, and failed to hold strongly to the pillar beliefs upon which the movement was founded.

2. "Institutional Adventists" believe that the church must change with the times, but that we can still preserve the torch and reframe our "unique Adventist message" in a contemporary institutional package, with new creativity, better marketing, and a renewed trust in God.

3. "Radical Adventists" are inclined to think that God is not only calling the Adventist church, but every church that professes his name, to a revolutionary redefinition of what it will mean to be a church in the years to come. This group is committed to redefining the torch.

As one who has worked with Adventist academy and college students for the last 20 years, I have observed that our young people can be found in all three of these groups, but most are identified with the third group. This generation is known for its suspicion of institutional religion. It has an openness to God but also sees the phoniness of secondhand religion. Healthy churches today are those which are

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willing to take the risk of empowering their young people to redefine their faith for themselves.

This is a scary prospect in a denomination as tradition-bound as our own, but the alternative is even scarier. If we do not allow our young people to redefine Adventism as the Spirit speaks to them, in a way that will give them ownership and passion for who we are, then we sentence our movement to a stagnation and disintegration that will cost its life.

As one who identifies strongly with the third group, Radical Adventists, I believe that churches, like individuals, who will enter into the Wedding Feast of the Lamb will be those movements that are willing to put on the perfect garment of Christ (Matt 22:11, 12). They will subordinate their own unique doctrines and denominational identities to their greater identity in Christ (Rev 14:4). These churches will be committed to responding to Jesus' last prayer (John 17:21) that his followers would be one, by breaking down the denominational barriers that have separated us, in a true spirit of prayer and spiritual ecumenicity. These movements will have an openness to the Holy Spirit (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) and a passion for God himself (Matt 22:37) that will fully overshadow every other aspect of their existence. We as Adventists will have to choose between an eschatology that lifts us or the Sabbath up, and one that truly lifts up Jesus alone.

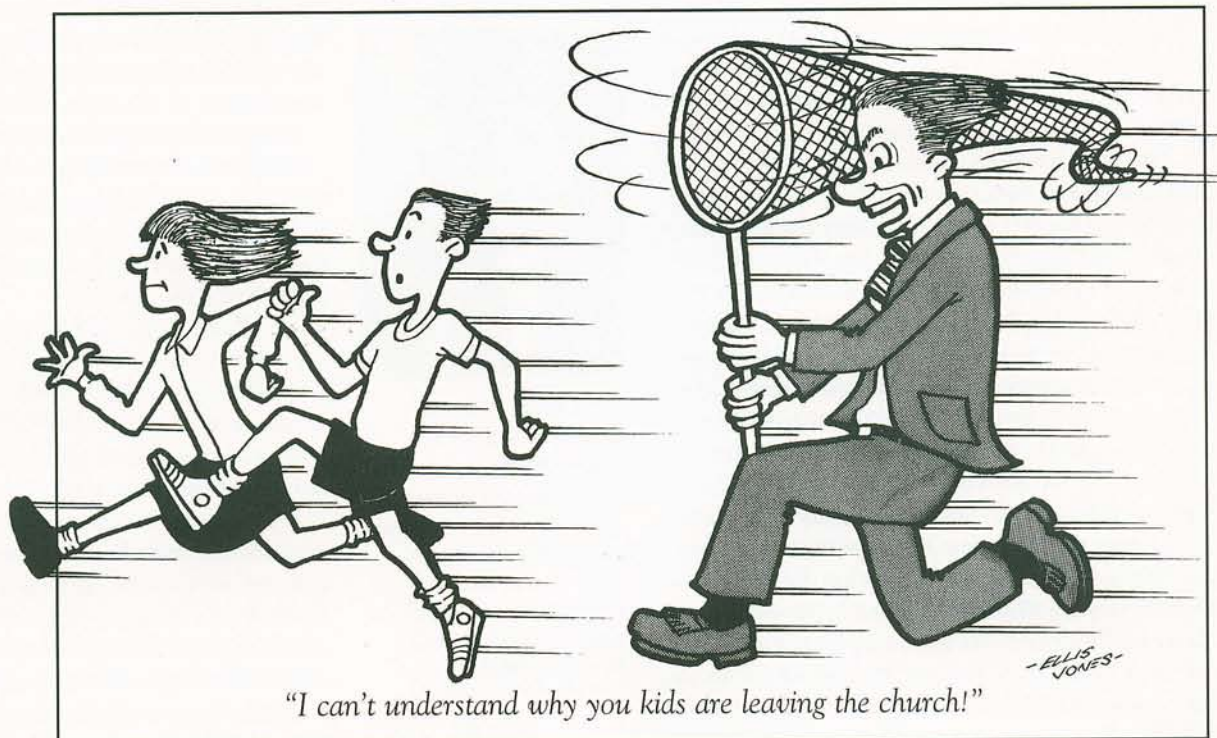
Some will immediately respond that such a view will make us vulnerable to the deceptions of the "Antichrist" and "apostate Protestantism," but Jesus

promises that if we seek him and his Spirit first, he will not give us over to deception (Luke 11:11-13). There is a great paradox in the promises of Jesus. By giving away everything we receive the most (Matt 19:29), by losing our self-interest we experience the greatest self-fulfillment (Lk 18:29, 30). Through death we find the greatest life (Jn 12:24, 25), and through hating the important people and things in life in comparison to Christ, we actually show them the greatest love (Lk 14:26).

I love my parents very much, and for years I struggled with the text which says that we are to hate father and mother or we have no part in Christ's kingdom. But in the last couple of years I have come to realize that God is calling his bride to have a passion for him that will dwarf every other passion. Unless I hate Adventism (which I dearly love) in comparison to my love for God, I have no part in Christ's kingdom. And the same can be said of the Sabbath, the Bible, my ministries, my service, and every other act I perform in Christ's name.

This is not the traditional Adventism that I grew up with, but I believe it is the spirit of the New Testament church and the early Adventist church, for these people had a passion to know God personally and intimately that was the all-consuming desire of their hearts. The paradox is that such a love for God in Adventism will actually save the church from its own ecclesiolatry.

It is only by redefining the torch that we can keep the torch burning.



CHURCH STRUCTURE for 2001

Seventh-day Adventism in 1995 is something and somewhere that it never expected to be. It has passed its 150th birthday and is still on earth. Those facts are realities that bring all other Adventist problems and tensions in their train, including problems in church organization.

To large numbers of Adventists, reorganizing the denomination's structures is past due. Many are calling for significant and responsible changes in a system that no longer seems to meet the needs of a church and a world that have been radically transformed since the denomination last reorganized in 1901-03.

I will explore five elements of a model for reorganization—elements important in any attempt at change.

A Balance of Power

Early Sabbatarian Adventism was anti-organizational. Following the lead of George Storrs, most believed that a church became "Babylon the moment it is organized." As a result, congregationalism became the rule, and it was only with great reticence that many Adventists opted for organization. But functional organization was necessary if Adventism was to focus its missiological "fire-power."

As a result, the Seventh-day Adventist Church organized between 1861 and 1863. By 1901, however, the denomination had outgrown its earlier structures. Beyond that, they had become too rigid. Consequently, between 1901 and 1903 the church reorganized in an effort to become more

by George R. Knight



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decentralized and more responsive to the needs of an ever-expanding mission.

Now, a century later, the reorganized structure has also become increasingly more rigid and bureaucratic. Some have even wondered aloud if Adventism hasn't "out-beasted the beast" in the area of hierarchical organization. In 1995 it may be the most tightly knit worldwide ecclesiastical organization in existence. Adventism has gone from one polar extreme to the other in the realm of organization. And yet there are rumblings of a desire among some for more centralization in order to keep things "under control." The reaction to these hierarchical tendencies on the part of many has been an inclination to revert to local control and congregationalism.

From the perspective of history, however, it appears that both extremes may be wrong. Here we can learn a lesson from America's founding fathers. By and large, those men were deists. But even though they had outwardly given up Christian doctrine, they carried deep in their beings a residual from Puritanism that has had a profound effect on the shape of American politics.

That residual was the Puritan doctrines of humanity and sin. In short, they believed that no one could be fully trusted. Thus the writers of the Constitution created a system of checks and balances in which no one group could gain control. That has resulted in three levels of government (local, state, and federal) with three independent governmental authorities (the executive, legislative, and judicial) at each level.

In spite of themselves, the founders of the United States created a government based on bib-

lical theology rather than on the Enlightenment view of the goodness of human nature. As a result, no group has been able to gain control of the nation. Various vested interests have tended to check each other. On the other hand, the advantages of diversity have been captured. The Adventist church needs to be as biblical as America's deistic founders. Lord Acton caught their idea when he penned that "power corrupts and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely."

The truth of that axiom is the reason why all organizational extremes are less healthy than a balance of powers. It will not do to merely turn over Adventism's structures so that hierarchicalism is out and congregationalism is in. What is needed is a system that places *significant* authority in *both* spheres. Checks and balances are needed even in the church. The Middle Ages demonstrated that government by "bishops and above" doesn't solve all the problems. Nor does government by local vestries.

The healthiest model of church organization will utilize congregational initiative, responsibility, and diversity to the fullest, while at the same time capturing the advantages of a structure that can amass and focus worldwide assets for the purpose of mission. Unity that is able to utilize diversity seems to be the model that was aimed at in the struggles of the New Testament church as it sought to find its way through the maze of its Jewishness, Gentleness, and various national and socioeconomic corridors.

Fewer Chiefs, More Indians

Parkinson's Law holds in essence that administrators in a bureaucratic structure breed more administrators. The law rests on two axioms: First, that an official's stature increases as he or she multiplies subordinates; and, second, that officials make work for each other.

Parkinson's Law is built into the very nature of bureaucratic structures. Perhaps it should be thought of as a disease rather than a law. Even the mighty IBM corporation recently has had to face its ravages. The result: massive reorganization and massive downsizing of nonproductive (i.e., administrative) structures. The alternative to such moves was eventual bankruptcy.

Whether we like it or not, the church is built on the corporate model. However, there is a major difference. IBM and other corporations have a board of directors that has the effectual power to mandate change. The church has no such effective body above and beyond the functionaries of the organization. Its highest governing bodies tend

to be loaded with members having vested interests as "career bureaucrats." Thus change becomes more difficult than with IBM. Beyond that, the church has options that IBM never had. For example, the church can appeal to the conscience of its constituents to "give more for the good of the cause."

But that is where some of the rub comes in. There are significant segments of Adventists who are tired of paying the cost of the administrative machinery. Too often these members look wistfully at congregationalism or opt to send their money somewhere other than what they perceive to be the "black hole" of the denomination's massive machinery. This problem needs to be addressed.

I once counted the number of ordained ministers in a certain state that were behind desks as opposed to those on the front lines. You may already have guessed the results. There were more generals planning strategy than there were warriors on the field. If I were the devil, that is the way I would have it. After all, he knows that if the war is to be won at all, it will be won on the front lines no matter how many picture-perfect battle plans are being drawn up.

What is needed for the successful completion of Adventism's only mission is not more structures but fewer. Perhaps the need is not to argue whether we should do away with union conferences or combine local conferences in North America, but to do away with both, creating in their wake some 20 regional administrative units that could serve constituencies that have moved out of the horse-and-buggy era and now have access to modern means of communication and transportation.

Adventism needs to put its tithe dollars back to work in "real ministry." For too long has the tithe subsidized a massive bureaucratic "industry." The church might actually be *more effective* in accomplishing its mission if no more than 20-30 percent of present administrative expenditures went to bureaucracy and bureaucratic real estate and support structures. Just think of what that would mean for ministry and mission. It could mean more than all the plans developed by people behind desks in the next hundred years. Of course such radical "readjustments" would mean that massive numbers of ministers would be redeployed. That brings us to a third element in a possible model.

Hierarchy and the Bible

The Peter Principle tells us that "in a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to his [or her] level of

Some have even wondered aloud if Adventism hasn't "out-beasted the beast" in the area of hierarchical organization.

incompetence." Thus, according to bureaucratic dynamics, an effective pastor or evangelist will make a good conference official. Of course, those who are mediocre pastor-evangelists will have to remain in the field, since they have already reached their level of incompetence.

The same goes for conference officials, according to the Peter Principle. If they have reached their level of incompetence, they tend to remain at the conference level. But if they still manage to succeed they are eligible to be "promoted" to their point of incompetence at the union, division, or General Conference levels. Now we know that this picture is somewhat oversimplified, but there is enough truth in it to spend some time considering it.

If I were the devil I would want to get as many *successful* church employees as far from the scene of action as possible. I would put them behind desks, cover them with papers, and inundate them with committees. If that wasn't enough, I would remove them to "higher" and "higher" levels until they had little direct and sustained contact with the people who make up the church.

Now the problem with significant reformation (reorganization) in a corporately-modeled church is that it threatens the status quo. After all, any conference functionary who moves "down" the hierarchical scale is thought of as being demoted. The ultimate "demotion," of course, would be into the pastoral-evangelistic ministry. To the corporate mind, being demoted out of management or middle management is a symbol of failure.

Thus even the very image of ministry in the hierarchical model has been shaped by the social structures of giant corporations and the medieval church with its division between "higher" and "lower" clergy. But it should be recognized that all such models are secular rather than biblical. All such models have swallowed the "myth of up and down" that governs the corporate world. (See my book *Myths of Adventism*, Review and Herald, 1985.)

The biblical model is different from the corporate model. It refutes the idea that some people or positions are more important than others. Rather, it is a model based on calling and spiritual gifts. According to Paul, God has given many different gifts to men and women. Not all are called to be administrators, teachers, or pastors, etc. (See 1 Cor 12:28-30; Eph 4:11-13.) And just because one is a good pastor or evangelist does not mean that he or she will make a good administrator, or vice versa.

Part of our problem is that the church has given up the biblical model for that of corporate America and the medieval church. And in that model, success means moving "up" the hierarchi-

cal ladder. Needless to say, on that ladder the social and financial rewards are sweeter at the top than at the bottom. One becomes more important as one climbs the ladder and is given more perks. While Adventism has attempted to camouflage its reward system, that system is still a distinct reality that shapes the aspirations and perceptions of the corporate body.

The reward systems in a functional Christian organization need to be reversed (in the face of non-Christian perceptions) to insure that the very best pastoral talent stays on the front line. In part that means that more decision-making authority needs to be transferred from those staffing support units to the people who are actually "in the work" of front-line ministry. Such an authority redistribution should include both clergy and laity.

Jesus specifically warned against a hierarchical up-and-down model when he noted that God is our leader and that we are all "brethren [and sisters]" (Matt 23:8). Pauline terminology equates that concept with the idea that we are all members of the body of the church, which has *one* head—Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:23).

While the Bible does provide for the gift of administration or leadership, the New Testament model is built upon the unworldly, uncorporate, unhierarchical, and generally unchurchly view that the true function of leadership is service. In that model administrators are neither above or below the pastor. Administrators are not seen as "bosses," but as facilitators and coordinators of pastoral ministry.

A move away from the corporate mentality and toward the biblical model would do much to make reform in Adventism a possibility, since it has the potential of removing large amounts of hierarchical vested interest. Without such a shift the church will continue to be a subset of corporate America. But complicating any significant moves toward change is the fact that the great preponderance of authority for decision making at all levels above that of the local conference resides in those who already have vested interests in the status quo as leading functionaries in the present corporate scheme of things. Creating change in such a system could be well-nigh impossible. Thus one of the most important and first changes that needs to be explored in Adventism is a broadening of the authority base for the denomination's "higher" levels.

A Ugandan for General Conference President?

It has been traditional in Catholicism that popes come from Italy. In Adventism, leadership

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has traditionally come from North America or, more recently, places that are very much like North America. Adventism has yet to successfully face the challenges of *genuine* internationalization. The worldwide church may be likened to a small congregation with a wealthy doctor or businessman whose tithe and offerings more than equal the total contributions of the remainder of the membership. In practical terms, how much say should that person have? If we put the issue on the scale of worldwide Adventism, we need to ask who should be in control—the industrialized world with the finance, or the third world with the membership (something like 85 percent)? That question is not as easy to answer as might be expected.

The problem is complicated by the fact that not all parts of the world have the same political sophistication and background in democratic procedures. But the mere fact that the issue is complicated does not mean it can be avoided. As the years go by, tackling the problem can only become more difficult. A tune-up will not suffice. Something even more radical than 1901 will be needed if Adventism is to successfully meet the challenges of internationalizing the church.

Perhaps the church could (or should) end up with some sort of a bicameral system or twofold formula for representation, with part of the vote being based on population and part of the vote being based on geographic region, as in the United States and Australian legislatures.

Structure Not Sacred

The reason for Adventist organization is mission. The findings of Andrew Mustard and Barry Oliver have demonstrated that Adventism's organizational structures are not based upon any ecclesiology or doctrinal foundation. Rather, both the 1861-63 organization and the 1901-03 reorganization were based on functionality for mission. That means that the structures set up at those points in time cannot rightly be seen as necessarily applying for all time. Structure is not an end in itself. Rather it is a means to forwarding the mission of the church. Thus reorganization is demanded when structures grow too cumbersome or are rendered less than optimally effective by changes either within the church or in the larger culture in which the church finds its mission.

While the 1861-63 organization was adequate for its North American constituency of 3,500 in the early 1860s, by the late 1880s it was becoming problematic. And by 1901 it was totally inade-

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quate for a 78,000-member church that had spanned the globe. Thus the reorganization. It should not be thought, however, that either organization in 1861-63, or reorganization in 1901-03, came easy. Initial organization came only after a decade of struggle, and reorganization took place only after 15 years of turmoil.

Studying these eras historically has led me to the hypothesis that Adventism makes significant structural changes only when it is on the verge of financial disaster and organizational dysfunctionality. Some believe we are approaching such a crisis in 1995. But this time organizational revolution will be much more difficult than it was in 1901-03, when the denomination had a largely North American membership of 78,000. The stakes are higher and the complications more complex in an international church rapidly racing toward the 9,000,000 mark.

On the other hand, even though the challenges facing any reorganization are of stupendous proportions, so is the necessity. *The time to dream dreams and make significant change is now. Change will come. The only question is who will control that change, and whether it be toward more functionality or less, in terms of Adventism's mission. It is wiser to take charge of the change process than to just let it happen. Perhaps the greatest question facing Adventism in the next decade is whether significant change will come about by accident or by Christian planning and sanctified action.*

FURTHER READING:

Laurence J. Peter and Raymond Hull, *The Peter Principle* (Morrow & Co., 1969).

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Barry David Oliver, *SDA Organizational Structure: Past, Present, and Future* (Andrews U., 1989).

C. Northcote Parkinson, *Parkinson's Law and Other Studies in Administration* (Ballentine Books, 1964).

WANTED:

Servant-Leaders

A pivotal issue facing Adventism is whether *hierarchy* or *servant* will more aptly describe Adventist leadership as we go into the new century. Christ himself sided with the servant model of leadership when he said to his disciples: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you;...whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve." (Matt 20: 25-28 NRSV)

A concern for control, secretiveness and closed-mindedness is a trait of hierarchies. Empowerment, disclosure and open-mindedness, on the other hand, are hallmarks of a servant-leader.

It has been my privilege to serve the church for 47 years before retirement and 18 years since, and during these 65 years I have closely observed the administrative styles of six General Conference presidents, often in intimate working relationship with them. Four of the six were my personal friends. In 1930 when I began church employment, the world membership was less than a third of a million; today it is approximately 8 million. Because our church purports to be democratic (representative) in governance, growth need not mean more administrative problems if issues are solved as close to the grass-roots as possible. But because Adventism is in fact quite hierarchical in practice, it is no wonder that the last three GC presidents have increasingly sought centralized

control. Thus a tone of hierarchical control is set for other levels of church organization.

Factors that Contribute to Closed-minded Church Leadership

I have identified seven major factors that contribute to closed-minded leadership in the church:

1. Ignorance. People who are not well-informed tend to feel insecure and are often predisposed to being closed-minded, especially when confronted by unfamiliar facts and situations about which they feel uncertain.

2. Peter Principle. Advancement to greater responsibility does not automatically equip a person with the knowledge and experience necessary to deal effectively and promptly with problems unique to that office. The so-called Peter Principle becomes evident when a person is projected into a position that requires more information, expertise, and good judgment than he or she has access to.

3. Growth. The phenomenal growth of the church around the world in recent years inevitably confronts world leaders with increasing social, cultural, educational, economic, doctrinal, and political diversity that challenges the wisest minds in their endeavor to preserve unity in the church. Anyone with a closed mind usually resorts to legislated uniformity and ever more rigid control as a panacea for preserving unity. In contrast, true unity is unity of spirit and purpose, under the aegis of the Holy Spirit. Attempts to impose and enforce uniformity tend to foment disunity, and usually prove counterproductive.

4. Ladder-climbing. Aspirations for acceptance and upward mobility within the hierarchy tend to lock leaders into a mode of responsibility to the hierarchy rather than of providing the church at large with genuine servant leadership. Preservation of the hierarchy becomes an end in itself. Inasmuch as authority in a hierarchy automatically flows down from the top, leaders at lower levels of administration tend to feel primarily responsible to the hierarchy rather than



by Raymond Cottrell

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to their respective constituencies, and to close their minds to the concerns and suggestions of those constituencies.

5. Administrative isolation. Most Protestant churches have only one intermediate administrative level between individual congregations and their highest governing bodies, or in a few instances, at most two. Through their local congregations, members have the opportunity to participate in the election of officers at all levels and in the formulation of church policy. The five-tiered hierarchical structure of Adventism, from the local congregation to the General Conference, tends to isolate upper echelon leaders (who make the major policy decisions) farther and farther from the concerns and collective wisdom of the members, and thereby thwarts the priesthood-of-all-believers principle.

6. Centralized authority. Whereas secular society has found a separation of legislative, executive, and judicial powers essential to responsible government, the hierarchical system combines these powers in one group of persons at each level of the hierarchy. Those who formulate policy are the ones who administer it and who sit in judgment over their own conduct when questions regarding it arise.

7. Divine right. Some leaders suffer from a messianic complex. Thinking they have a divine mandate to lead the church in a particular direction, they turn a deaf ear to any counsel that would divert them from their predetermined course.

These factors and doubtless others contribute to closed-minded leadership and a closed-minded church, foster disunity, alienate the confidence and participation of thoughtful members, and hinder the accomplishment of its mission.

A Proposal for Empowering the People

By 1901 the church model Seventh-day Adventists had adopted nearly 40 years earlier, in 1863, had become obsolete as the result of changes that had taken place. The major restructuring of 1901 has served the church well throughout the 20th century. However, other vast changes that have taken place since then, both in the church and in the world, point to the need for another major restructuring to prepare it for the 21st century. According to Tennyson:

“The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.”

Or, we might add, the church. The following tentative model of an open world church adequate to the challenges of the 21st century is designed to enable the church to fulfill its mission as effectively as possible. In order to do so the church must, among other things, restore the climate of openness that prevailed prior to 1966. Such a climate is essential to wholehearted cooperation between members and leaders. It is essential to unity. This model is designed to bring members and leaders closer together in the planning and conduct of church mission. Therefore, the roles, structure, and function of the General Conference and its world divisions must change.

1. Developed Divisions. A distinction should be made between developed and developing divisions, with “developed” defined as a church fully mature and operating in all aspects of its ministry and mission, an experienced indigenous leadership, and full self-support. Developed divisions would be completely self-governing. For them, the General Conference would serve as a coordinator, and its voted policies would be recommendations, subject to acceptance, modification, or non-implementation, as each developed division considers appropriate in its part of the world.

Within a developed division there would be only one administrative level between its local congregations and the division leadership—the local conference—for both of which the local congregations would be the constituency. Through their elected representatives they would participate in the election of both local conference and division officers and in the formulation of division policy and objectives. There would be a division of powers, with a clear distinction between legislative, administrative, and adjudicatory functions.

2. Developing Divisions. The relationship between these divisions and the General Conference would remain substantially as it is at present, and all world divisions would cooperate in bringing to maturity the developing divisions. In funding the maturation of the church in developing divisions—as voted by all divisions in counsel together—the mature divisions would commit themselves to building world Adventism.

3. Leaders. To assure the church of open-minded, competent leadership, there would be an official, voted job description for each elected and appointed leader in the conference and the division. Minimum qualifications for and responsibilities of each office would be clearly stated and would be normative for nominating or appointing a person to office. Each division and each of its conferences would elect a knowledgeable and experienced “senior statesman” known and respected for openness, fairness, and sound judgment, to conduct an orientation class for all elected or appointed personnel, following each election. The curriculum would include Christian principles of leadership, leadership qualities and relationships, and church polity.

This streamlining of the church for the 21st century could be expected to result in a high level of openness and unity under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This openness and unity would bring members and leaders closer together in the fulfillment of church mission. It would mitigate tensions to which present church polity contributes. It would help build a church to which talented, responsible people would want to belong, in whose fellowship and service they would be happy to participate, and in which a higher and more effective level of participation would be realized. It might even make the church relevant within the social-cultural milieu of every part of the world, and thus hasten the fulfillment of the mission Jesus Christ entrusted to it.

Servant-leadership is essential to the unity for which Christ prayed, and for accomplishing the mission he entrusted to the church—“That they all may be one . . . So that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (John 17:21 NRSV)

Church Leaders Favor Model Constitutions

The April 4-5 Spring Meeting of the General Conference (GC) has voted in favor of new, model union and local conference constitutions. The GC will ask the GC world session in Utrecht this summer to authorize the GC to "request" (not mandate) the adoption of these model constitutions by the union and local conference constituencies. An informed source at the GC describes this recent vote as marking "a fundamental change" in our church, "unprecedented in our history."

The local conference model specifies that "all purposes, policies and procedures of the conference" shall be "in harmony with the doctrines, programs, and initiatives adopted and approved by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in its quinquennial session." Both models set forth the mandated requirements in bold print. Their net effect would be to require all policies and procedures of a local con-

ference, for instance, to comply with all policies and procedures of the union, division, and General Conference. The constituency would have no voice or option but to comply.

These model constitutions were presented at the 1994 Annual Council last autumn, but could not be passed. Action was deferred to the Spring Meeting, a session not attended by the local conference presidents, who had strongly objected last fall. Two even more controversial administrative hot potatoes were not even mentioned at the Spring Meeting. They were so unpopular at Annual Council last fall that no attempt was made even to place them on the agenda of the spring meeting. These were (1) to take away from each local congregation the exclusive right to disfellowship a member, and (2) to give higher echelons of administration control over the credentials of key personnel in lower echelons.

The proposed model constitutions reflect an intention to further consolidate control of the church in the General Conference. The hierarchical organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is unique in Protestantism, particularly given early Adventism's strong opposition to any organization. The Folkenberg administration's current campaign for greater control began at last fall's Annual Council (see *Adventist Today*, Nov./Dec, 1994, p. 23). This campaign has a good chance of success because a great majority of delegates to the world session in Utrecht will come from developing areas where democracy is not strong.

Officials Deny Support for Christian Newspaper

Adventist church leaders are divided on a case now before the Supreme Court, and are sitting it out rather than declare support for either side. The case was brought by a University of Virginia student, Ronald Rosenberger, who in 1990 sought \$6,000 in university funds to publish *Wide Awake*, a publication whose mission was to "challenge Christians to... consider what a personal relationship to Jesus Christ means." The university was funding numerous school papers, including Jewish and Muslim ones, but denied money for *Wide Awake*, citing university guidelines barring funding of religious groups.

The complex issues raised in this case have stimulated open discussion of the Adventist church's views and practices on church-state relations. Some observers see the church heading in a more conservative direction than in the past, adhering to stricter notions of church-state separation, while others point out the growing need of our colleges for government funds and thus the painful cost of a conservative course.

Cottrell's Last Words on Waco:

In our last issue, we inadvertently left off the last few words of Raymond Cottrell's article on the Branch Davidians. Here are his concluding suggestions:

The disaster in Waco summons us first to eliminate every vestige of proof text principles...

Second, we should eliminate the sensational language and garish art... Instead, let us emphasize gospel principles that alleviate the ills of society and prepare men and women to meet their Lord in peace.

In Our Next Issue:

The General Conference World Session in Utrecht -
A Complete Report

CREATION

I am very disappointed with your recent flagrant attack on God's creation of the world. Do you have any editorial limits... or would you wish to see the Adventist church become a second Catholic church incorporating pagan ideas to attract and appease a broader audience? What is really your bottom line? Does truth come from God or from humans?

*Floyd Philips
Berrien Springs, Michigan*

In the article "Before Adam" by Ervin Taylor in your November/December issue, the author, dealing with the possible damage to the viability of the Sabbath which could be caused by a time frame of millions instead of thousands of years, said:

"...it seems to me that competent theological and historical scholarship published over the last two decades by Adventist scholars has effectively dealt with this theological problem. If I understand their statements correctly, these scholars argue that the integrity and validity of the Sabbath concept does not require a literal, fundamentalist interpretation of Genesis."

I would be grateful if you could tell me where I can find this information. I attended the 1985 Association of Adventist Forums Field Conference on Geology and Creation; I have looked through the notes in my file and although Drs. Hammill and Harder and [Cottrell] all dealt with the theological implications of the fossil evidence I do not see a direct reference to the Sabbath question. Any help you can give in this matter would be much appreciated.

*Sidney Rose
West Sussex, England*

FOLKENBERG REMARKS

I can only give a hearty amen to Robert Folkenberg's quoted statements in the January/February issue. It encourages me to see a man in his position not afraid to tell it like it is, especially in the Walla Walla College Church, and in his message October 22 in upstate New York. Everyone

knows there are many so-called scholars in the church not really with the church and its message. It is for sure these so-called scholars have not spent much time reading *Selected Messages* 1, pages 159-163, lately. And I don't think they have done much with 2 Timothy 3 either.

After reading Raymond Cottrell's comments on page 16 one cannot help but wonder why these Bible teachers and scholars he is affirming did not have the courage to go with Mr. Ford. The church would definitely survive without them. I personally will continue to "stand by the old landmarks" as long as the Lord continues to give me health and strength. Watch, work, and pray, remain my watchwords. I still believe Jesus is coming soon!

*Ben Green
Walla Walla, Washington*

Regarding "nurturing" as viewed by Elder Folkenberg in the recent issue of *Adventist Today*, I was rather disturbed! . . . I can't envision the Good Shepherd stepping on toes to communicate or minister to the flock, which consists of babes in the Word, abused children, and others suffering from malnutrition. . .

*Phyllis Williams Vineyard
Anaheim, California*

As a long-time subscriber, I have enjoyed many of your articles, including the recent ones on Russia. Some of your material I perceive as unnecessarily controversial. To promote controversy for its own sake is not only counterproductive, but many times destructive.

The attacks on our General Conference president I find particularly offensive. In his youthful inexperience he doubtless makes mistakes. There is certainly no dearth of experienced detractors eager to critique his performance. On the whole I believe we must give him excellent marks for what he is trying to accomplish.

I hope in the future your publication can become a force more unifying than divisive.

*L. Meade Baldwin, D.D.S.
St. Helena, California*

Thought that you might want to know some of the "flak" your back page article on Folkenberg generated. I left a posting on CompuServe Adventist Forum about the article and was promptly attacked for being a reporter of the news. Eventually Robert S. Folkenberg responded with e-mail stating he didn't mean what he really said. Since this time, I am aware of even more libelous comments by Folkenberg to the effect that those who want to eliminate conferences are "idiots." You may want to check that one out.

Again, thanks for a stimulating magazine...

*Don Talkington
Redding, California*

"NEW NOEL" TELEVISION PROGRAM

Virginia-Gene Shankel Rittenhouse was quite accurate in her criticisms of the Andrews University production aired on ABC-TV. But this is not the first time the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been offered free exposure on national TV and botched it badly. About 18 years ago, CBS offered us an hour over the total network on Easter morning, and our best communication wizards packaged a disjointed collection of musical numbers staged at the Camarillo (California) SDA church before CBS's cameras. It was not a representative service for that congregation; rather, groups were brought in from many sources which normally would not perform together. The goal appeared to be to provide something for every taste rather than presenting a modest, coherent presentation with some thematic unity.

A recent *Adventist Review* article presented the results of an updated survey of perceptions and understanding of Adventism in the North American populace. It seems our image is deteriorating, and name recognition has declined. The administrative response seems to be a panic-driven doctoring of our image (of which the ABC-TV program is an example), rather than a calm reassessment and enhancement of the substance and content of Adventism.

Our educated youth, particularly, recognize this difference between style and substance, and are leaving in droves. Adventism must focus on substance rather than image if it wishes ultimately to keep its members and attract new ones.

*Michael Scofield
Anaheim, California*

RUSSIAN EVANGELISM

Your Russian evangelism articles were insightful, helpful, and distressing. I am very concerned that such evangelism may say more about egotistic, ugly Americanism than about our loving God.

Tomenko's article says, "We must be honest with ourselves" about numbers of converts. I hear of thousands who are baptised, but according to knowledgeable friends who have just returned from Russia, many folk are dropped from membership because they attended church once, twice, or never. Many Russians seem to be hungry for anything American, accepting an evangelistic message even if not understood.

I was surprised that you ran a page of evangelist John Carter's commentary. Had you investigated his background with some of us in his Southern California Conference, you would have found that his methods are most controversial. First, both in personal and in TV presentations, he decries the opulence and lack of faith of the American people, especially Adventists. Some see this as preaching the "straight" truth, but the use of fear, guilt and social pressure to produce revival or gain converts is counterproductive.

Second, Carter uses religious innuendo and bigotry. I have a copy of the letter the Archdeacon of the Russian Orthodox church of Los Angeles sent to Carter decrying the inaccuracies of Carter's fundraising pamphlet *Sunrise Over Russia*. The archdeacon contends that the faith of many Russian Orthodox leaders under communism is misrepresented, and he concludes that "the church of the true God cannot tolerate lies."

I write because Carter's points in your magazine do not correspond to his public

practice. My plea is that we Adventists request our evangelists to be informed, accurate and, most of all, tolerant of others. A laudable end never justifies devious means.

*Douglas Schultz, D. Min.
Glendale, California*

LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

I was afraid you had checked our rating on a low week and decided we were making a false claim. But, if I understand your comments, you verified that *Lifestyle Magazine* is rated number one in its time slot in New York City, attracting more viewers than NBC's *Sunday Today Show* and more than Robert Shuler's *Hour of Power*, the most-watched religious program in America. But you are not impressed.

There are several reasons we consider the New York ratings important. First, a key element in our mission is to produce a program that attracts the general, secular audience, not those who usually watch religious programming. We attempt to do this with a staff of nine people and an annual budget smaller than the cost of a 1-minute ad during the superbowl.

We don't know a better way to measure our success than to see how our program rates in the largest television market in North America, in direct competition with the best secular and religious programs. Apparently we are on target. I know of no other Adventist program that is making this kind of impact.

Second, the total number of households watching *Lifestyle Magazine* in New York City each week varies from 70,000 to 116,000. That is about 175,000 to 290,000 people. Thousands of those people have written to us ordering free books and materials and telling us of major lifestyle changes, including new commitments to God. We consider those people important.

Third, the fact that *Lifestyle Magazine* is carried by ABC without our buying the time, like infomercials or all other religious programs, is important to other

station managers. This has encouraged more than 60 stations this year to begin carrying *Lifestyle Magazine* daily on a commercial basis.

We would like to be rated number one in a major day-part in every city in North America, and even the world, but that would require a significantly larger budget and a major shift in viewer preferences. In the meantime, we keep thanking God for our small victories.

*Dan Matthews
Faith for Today*

ADVENTIST TODAY

My wife and I appreciate *Adventist Today* very much. Be sure to keep up the page on latebreaking Adventist news.

*Elwin L. Liske
Portland, Oregon*

As senior pastor of the Roseburg Adventist Church, I, like many of my colleagues, find an increasing tension between right wing and left wing Adventists within my congregation. The church needs an honest, readable, scholarly, unbiased, Adventist publication that is not afraid to look at our history objectively without outside pressure to distort in any way the facts.

It is exciting to be an Adventist. It is even more enjoyable when one can be fully honest with oneself, with history, with the Bible, and with the writings of Ellen G. White.

*Scot A. LeMert
Roseburg, Oregon*

Thank you for all of your efforts at creating this "journalistic town hall." I look forward to the exchange of ideas.

Randy Wright

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Former Auditor Sues Church

CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE

him from exposing this huge drain of church funds.”

9. Folkenberg and McClure attempted to hide the facts relating to a former president of the Columbia Union and his spouse being transferred to the Adventist Health System with salaries far in excess of what they had been receiving.

10. In some conferences where tax benefits were being granted to persons who do not qualify by IRS regulations, the auditors “were denied access to the accounting records of church entities in violation of church policy.”

11. Folkenberg was “involved in outside business dealings” not compatible with church policy. He was also being provided with free lawn and garden services and maintenance of his home, and “various other unauthorized perks” not compatible with church policy.

Dennis alleges that no evidence has ever been produced to substantiate the charge that he molested Elizabeth L. Adels as a teenager and had adulterous relations with her as an adult between 1975 and 1982. “No such evidence exists in that the allegations are false,” Dennis says in his complaint. He also charges that the termination process did not provide adequately for him to defend himself, and that he was terminated without the usual financial arrangements accorded other workers in similar cases of alleged misconduct, even when the charges proved valid.

General Conference Response

On April 14 the General Conference issued a “Statement” that “adamantly” denies Dennis’ allegations. It also filed a “Motion to Dismiss” with the court. The Motion to Dismiss is based “on the ground that the Church’s action in disciplining an ordained minister and elected Church leader is protected under the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America, which allows churches to decide for themselves, free from state interference, matters of church discipline, policy, government, administration, faith and doctrine.”

The GC statement describes the termi-

nation process as follows:

“In mid-1994, the General Conference was made aware of allegations of serious sexual abuse brought by E. A. [Elizabeth Adels] against David D. Dennis. Because Mr. Dennis was an ordained minister and elected leader of the church, Elder Robert S. Folkenberg asked attorney Walter E. Carson and Kenneth J. Mittleider to investigate the matter. During the course of the investigation Mr. Carson visited E. A. in Ohio, who gave him a sworn affidavit setting forth in significant detail her claims of sexual abuse and adultery.”

Church business records indicate that Mr. Dennis was in Singapore and Nashville

The General Conference will not be pressured by Mr. Dennis’ allegations to rehire him or reissue his ministerial credentials.

at the times indicated in E. A.’s sworn affidavit. Letters allegedly sent by Mr. Dennis to E. A. and another woman contain expressions of endearment inappropriate for a married, ordained minister of the Gospel.

The GC Administrative Committee (ADCOM) then appointed a five-member panel chaired by Charles B. Hirsch to conduct an inquiry into E. A.’s allegations and heard from both E. A. and Mr. Dennis, along with other evidence. The panel found E. A.’s charges true, “and that David D. Dennis did act in a manner inconsistent with and unbecoming to an ordained minister and elected official of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” The panel forwarded its findings to ADCOM, which invited Mr. and Mrs. Dennis to meet with them, but they chose not to do so. ADCOM then recommended to the GC Executive Committee the report of the panel of inquiry, and ADCOM’s recommendation that Dennis be terminated immediately, his credentials be withdrawn, and his ordination annulled.

On December 20 the Executive

Committee considered the recommendations, and Mr. Dennis read and distributed a prepared statement. The Executive Committee received the ad hoc panel documents, and following extensive discussion took the following actions “by more than a two-thirds vote”: To remove Dennis as director of the GC Auditing Service, to terminate his denominational employment immediately, to make final settlement with him according to policy, to withdraw his ministerial credentials, and to record that by his conduct he had made his ordination void.

On December 22 Dennis requested the opportunity to present additional information and new evidence. He was invited to submit this in writing by January 10, but declined to do so.

“The ecclesiastical hearing and review process offered both E. A. and Mr. Dennis the opportunity to be heard, to confront each other, and to present evidence in support of their respective positions. The disciplinary actions taken against Mr. Dennis were based upon the finding that he engaged in sexual misconduct unbecoming of an ordained minister of the Gospel and an elected official of the Church. At no time during the investigation, the ecclesiastical hearing process, or at any committee meeting did Mr. Dennis claim that he was wrongfully charged with sexual misconduct in an effort to keep him from exposing corruption in the Church. This allegation was set forth for the first time in his lawsuit . . .”

“Mr. Dennis’ allegations to expose ‘corruption’ in such issues (as those cited in the preceding section) are without merit and irrelevant to the disciplinary actions taken against him.”

“The General Conference is confident that its decision with respect to David Dennis was justified and appropriate under all of the circumstances. The General Conference will not be pressured by Mr. Dennis’ allegations to rehire him or reissue his ministerial credentials.”

“The lawsuit has been referred to three law firms for the preparation of an appropriate defense. (law firms named.) All of the law firms are working together to vigorously defend this case, and they will take all necessary steps within the legal system to protect the good name of the Church and its leaders.”

childish things

This spring I'm going to my high school reunion. My 25th, if you're interested. (And if you're doing some arithmetic, keep it to yourself!) These are usually occasions for reflection, and this year I've been reflecting on the idea of identity — who we think we are, and what that means to us. When I was growing up in Lodi, California, I knew precisely who I was. I was Dr. and Mrs. Letcher's daughter. And at least until I moved away from home, that meant a great deal.

In countless ways, spoken and unspoken, I was reminded that being my parents' child was accompanied by privileges and responsibilities. The privileges, of course, were numerous. My parents were able to provide materially everything I needed, and as much of what I wanted as was good for me. Beyond that, I remember taking great pride in observing that my father's patients regarded him with respect and affection. I felt this secured my own place in the community.

The responsibilities of being my parents' child were the flip side of that vicarious pride. Throughout my younger years, my behavior was circumscribed by what I was told "other people would think." I was burdened with the notion that my every decision had a direct, inexorable link to my parents' reputation and standing in the community. Given most Lodians' manifest lack of interest in my adolescent development, this theory had some serious drawbacks. But as an instrument of parental control, it was flawless, at least for a time.

I pictured myself going to Lodi Supermarket to buy a gallon of milk and hearing Mr. Woo say, "Sorry. Go buy your milk at Albertson's. We've heard that music you listen to."

Or trying to buy bath powder at Matney's Dime Store and hearing Mr. Matney say, "We hear there's a mascara situation. We're very disappointed."

Where would it all end? Would the clerks at the Dairy Drive-In refuse my order for strawberry milk if they knew I rolled the waistband of my skirt after I got to school? It was too awful to contemplate.

by *Bonnie L. Casey*

Would the clerks at the Dairy Drive-In refuse my order for strawberry milk if they knew I rolled the waistband of my skirt after I got to school?



Bonnie Letcher Casey is a gourmet cook, writer, and editor in Washington, DC.

It's perfectly natural for children to tag their identities to their parents'. Only God, when asked to account for himself, could reply "I am," because he is perfect and whole. He doesn't exist in reference to anything or anyone else. But we are imperfect, fragmented, and spend a lifetime piecing ourselves together from refracted images. So what do we do when we grow up and don't need, or don't have, parents to tell us who we are, or show us who we don't want to be?

If we're lucky, we shift focus to define ourselves by our relationship to the divine. Who we are and how we behave is then circumscribed by what it means to be a child of God. I say "if we're lucky" because being a child of God also has its privileges and responsibilities.

If you grow up anything like I did, you heard a lot about the responsibilities of being a child of God. You were made to feel that God's reputation — risked at creation, shaped by the prophets, confirmed at the cross — now rested to an alarming degree on what you had for breakfast, what you listened to on the car radio, what you wore on your fingers and ears. As an instrument of social control, it worked very well for a long time.

The problem is that anyone who reads the words of Jesus for themselves finds out that being a child of God comes with just one responsibility. As outlined in the parable of the sheep and the goats, it is to pass on the love that has been shown to us. It's that simple, and that daunting.

Defining ourselves by our compassionate relationships to others is hard, lifelong work. It is the sole responsibility, the whole duty, of the child of God. Paradoxically, it is also the number one privilege. Most of the evils of our troublous times stem from people who have no connection to something outside themselves, no responsibility to others that gives purpose and definition to their time and resources.

I spent many years being the dutiful child of my parents, my community, my school and my church. On the whole, I don't regret it. It takes a lot more growing up to begin to see the fearful simplicity of our duty as children of God. For me, it's 25 years and counting.

Former Auditor Sues Adventist Church

by Raymond Cottrell

On February 22, 1995, David D. Dennis, director of the General Conference (GC) Auditing Service for 19 years, filed a complaint with the Montgomery County, Maryland, Circuit Court naming Robert S. Folkenberg, GC president, and others as defendants in a \$4 million lawsuit alleging wrongful termination of his services as of December 29, 1994, on false charges of misconduct, rescinding of his ministerial credentials and ordination, and defamation of character. On April 22 the GC filed a response with the court.

Others named in the suit are Alfred C. McClure, president of the North American Division; Kenneth J. Mittleider, a vice president of the GC; Walter E. Carson of the GC Office of General Counsel; Elizabeth L. Adels; the GC; and its legal entity, the GC Corporation.

Dennis Complaint

In his 22-page complaint Dennis alleges that the reason for his termination was “because he was an obstacle to improper financial dealings by the officers” of the GC and “in retaliation for his past actions [as auditor] to resist corrupt financial practices by those in control” of the GC. The complaint cites 11 specific instances of misconduct:

1. Dennis’ discovery and reporting of conflict of interest on the part of numerous church officials in the Davenport investment scam in the 1970’s and early 1980’s, in which they received inflated interest on personal investments, and “finders’ fees”.

2. Dennis’ repeated attempts to audit the financially ailing Harris Pine Mills.

Some of the defendants Dennis names “would not permit an audit,” and when the Mills went bankrupt in 1987 “the General Conference alone lost millions of dollars.”

3. In 1988 the GC voted “virtually unlimited salaries to administrators and business office personnel for the church’s numerous hospitals in the United States,” a significant departure from the traditional

D*ennis alleges that the reason for his termination was “because he was an obstacle to improper financial dealings by the officers” of the GC and “in retaliation for his past actions [as auditor] to resist corrupt financial practices by those in control” of the GC.*

practice of treating these people on a par with other church employees. In a letter to then-GC-president Neal C. Wilson, dated April 17, 1989, Dennis protested the political maneuvering by which this action was passed. What about fairness to other church employees equally in need of salary increases? he asked.

4. At the 1990 GC Session, Folkenberg “attempted to have plaintiff voted out of

office by the Nominating Committee, accusing him of “ethical wrong” for “writing to the former president exposing the hospital wage discrepancy.” This, Dennis alleges, “intensified his [Folkenberg’s] resentment toward plaintiff and his determination to retaliate against plaintiff.” Dennis was reelected in spite of Folkenberg’s opposition.

5. Dennis filed “numerous written reports” explaining that ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) “is not complying with guidelines” set by the respective government agencies that help fund its projects. “Considerable pressure,” Dennis says, “has been put on plaintiff to either not write negative reports, or to avoid audits where there is significant non-compliance.” Folkenberg, Dennis says, “has been very protective of this entity since it has provided him with several favored benefits.”

6. Folkenberg and Alfred C. McClure had accepted assistance in the form of salaries to their spouses, “who performed no work,” and McClure with interest-free home loans in the amount of \$140,000, a practice discontinued after Dennis reported it. These gratuities were taken from charitable donations to the Columbia Union Conference Worthy Student Fund.

7. Folkenberg devised measures to prevent Dennis, as director of the GC Auditing Service, from auditing the millions of dollars annually contributed to Global Mission. He “has resisted any further investigation” of these funds, which are under the control of Folkenberg’s brother. He has also redefined the role of the GC Auditing Service in a way to gain “full control of all auditing activities,” plaintiff’s dismissal being part of this move.

8. In 1992 increasing concern over the church’s diminishing financial strength led Dennis to study the annual cost of operating the union conferences of North America, which amounts to \$35 million annually. Dennis alleges that one of the reasons for terminating him was “to keep

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22